



Digital addiction and the adolescent social interaction crisis: Integrating social displacement theory and Islamic ethics

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ABSTRACT

Background: The post-pandemic surge in digital usage has fundamentally altered adolescent social interaction patterns, characterized by declining interpersonal skills and weakened self-control. This study analyzes the adolescent social interaction crisis by integrating Social Displacement theory with an Islamic psychospiritual framework. **Methods:** This research employs an integrative literature review with thematic analysis. The analysis links the displacement mechanism, the shift of energy toward digital activities, with the Islamic psychological structure, specifically the dynamics between *nafs al-ammara*, *al-qalb*, and *al-'aql*. **Findings:** Compulsive digital intensity triggers social displacement and signifies a collapse of internal regulation. The dominance of *nafs al-ammara* undermines the rational function of *al-'aql*, leading to *israf* (excessiveness) and *ghaflah* (heedlessness) that degrade empathy and relationship quality. The principle of *wasathiyyah* is deemed insufficient if viewed merely as outward moderation, as digital challenges are inherently cognitive and internal. **Conclusion:** This study proposes *tazkiyatun nafs* and *riyadah al-nafs* (through practices ranging from *muraqabah* to *tajalli*) as a self-regulation recovery framework. While this model shows potential in mitigating digital addiction, further empirical validation is required. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This study offers an integrative approach combining Social Displacement with Islamic psychospiritual dynamics to comprehensively explain the adolescent social crisis.

KEYWORDS: digital addiction; Islamic ethic; social displacement.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a social transformation that pushed nearly all human activities into the digital sphere. This shift has contributed to an increase in digital addictive behaviors, characterized by excessive use, emotional dependence, and the onset of anxiety when separated from devices. Based on research data conducted by Ozturk & Ayaz-Alkaya (2021), which shows an increase in the frequency of digital addiction among adolescents from 13.6% before the pandemic to 24.4% during the pandemic, as displayed in Figure 1 (Ozturk & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2021). Generation Z and millennials have become the largest population of active social media users in the world (Matthew Woodward, 2021), making these generations the most vulnerable to digital effects.

Based on the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) report in 44 countries in 2022, it shows that an average of 11% of adolescents are involved in social media use,

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experiencing a significant increase from 7% in 2018 (WHO, 2024). This increase indicates that there has been a problem in the realm of self-control and the quality of social interaction. Research conducted by Supriatin (2025) shows that as many as 34% of children aged 10-24 in Indonesia experience feelings of loneliness due to frequent gadget use and 1 in 4 adolescents experience stress due to lack of social interaction. These changes in behavior patterns are marked by declining empathy, increasing individualism, and a shift in moral values. Digital addiction is not just a technological issue, but has manifested as a crisis of social interaction and character degradation of the younger generation (Supriatin, 2025).

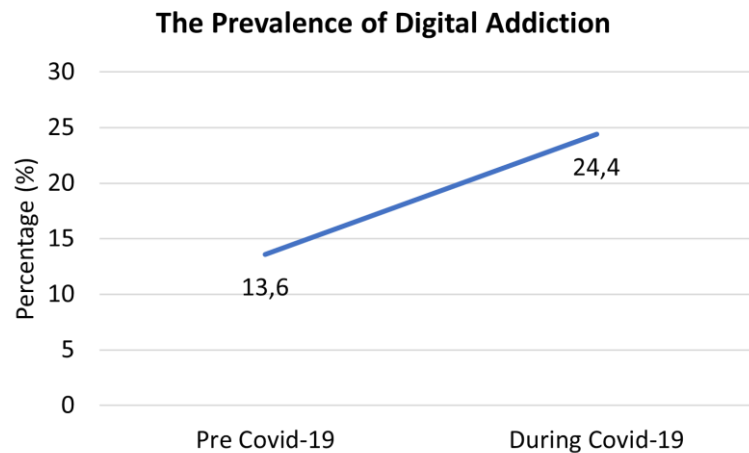


Figure 1. Frequency of Digital Addiction among Adolescents (data reconstructed from Ozturk & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2021)

The phenomenon of digital addiction is further amplified by the dominance of video-based platforms among adolescents. A Pew Research Center survey shows that 95% of American teens aged 13–17 use YouTube and 67% use TikTok, with 35% of them accessing at least one platform almost constantly. This high intensity of use creates an addictive digital environment, encouraging the pursuit of instant validation and momentary gratification (Matthew Woodward, 2021). These fragmented and algorithm-based interaction patterns shift the needs of adolescents from deep relationships toward shallow recognition, thereby impacting and weakening the quality of social interaction. From an Islamic ethical perspective, this condition has the potential to erode the values of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *adab* (etiquette), demanding an analysis that is not only quantitative but also explains the mechanisms of self-control failure in the face of persuasively designed technology.

Current research in digital psychology indicates that the algorithmic design of platforms systematically maximizes engagement through personalization, instant feedback, and inconsistent reinforcement patterns, where digital rewards appear erratically, which correlates with an increased risk of digital addiction (Li et al., 2026). Within the framework of the attention economy, social media operates by exploiting the user's attention and reward systems through notifications and potentially addictive designs (Giraldo-Luque et al., 2020). The Attention Economy is a system where human attention becomes the primary commodity that is competed for, processed, and monetized by digital platforms. These findings emphasize that digital addiction does not stem solely from individual weakness, but from a technological architecture designed to be persuasive. Empirically, gadget addiction is proven to correlate significantly with adolescent mental health disorders. Research conducted by Rika Sarfika (2024) on 283 adolescents in West Sumatra shows a significant relationship between smartphone addiction and mental health issues ($p < 0.001$), with approximately 32.8% of addicted adolescents falling into the abnormal mental health category (Rika Sarfika et al., 2024). This is further reinforced by findings regarding increased anxiety, stress, emotional regulation disorders, as well as a decline in the quality of social interaction and psychological well-being (Meita Dhamayanti et al., 2019; Vendi Eko Kurniawan et al., 2025).

The crisis of social interaction among adolescents can be explained through the Social Displacement theory by Robert Kraut, which states that the massive allocation of time to digital media replaces face-to-face interaction, which is essential for social development (Hall & Liu, 2022; Kraut et al., 1998). In the context of digital addiction, adolescents tend to prefer the comfort, control, and instant validation of virtual interactions over the emotional complexity of real-world relationships (Lin et al., 2023). At the micro level, this replacement inhibits the development of social skills, such as the ability to read nonverbal cues and manage conflict. Meanwhile, at the macro level, the impact accumulates into a degradation of the quality of social interaction and a weakening of collectivist values. Although the Social Augmentation theory by Ionut Damian et al. argues that technology can strengthen social relationships (Damian et al., 2014), in situations of digital addiction, this function shifts toward displacement due to a failure of self-control.

The shift from augmentative functions to displacement indicates that the primary issue lies not only in the characteristics of the technology but also in the mechanisms of individual behavioral regulation in facing it. From a social psychology perspective, the Social Cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura emphasizes the importance of self-regulation mechanisms in controlling behavior (Bandura, 1991). Meanwhile, in communication studies, the Uses and Gratifications theory pioneered by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch views the audience as active agents who use media to fulfill specific psychological and social needs, including the needs for entertainment, escapism, and social validation (Hans Karunia et al., 2021).

The roots of self-control failure can be explained through an Islamic theoretical framework that positions the intellect (*al-'aql*) as the center of rationality and the controller of the self (*al-nafs*). In this perspective, *al-'aql* functions to distinguish between right and wrong (*tamyiz*) and to suppress the dominance of base desires (*hawa nafsu*), serving as a prerequisite for achieving *tazkiyyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) and balanced social behavior (Shahril Nizam Zulkipli et al., 2022). When this function weakens, the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah*, which according to Al-Ghazali, is the lowest and most destructive level of the soul, takes over rational control and drives the pursuit of instant gratification (Kalbi & Basharat, 2020). This condition gives rise to *israf* (excessive) behavior that exceeds the boundaries of Sharia (QS. Al-A'raf/7:31) (Departemen Agama RI, 2005) and *ghaflah* (heedlessness) toward the trust (*amanah*) of time and social responsibilities. In the digital context, the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah* manifests as social displacement; thus, the crisis of social interaction among adolescents can be understood as an issue rooted in moral and spiritual dimensions.

The behaviors of *israf* and *ghaflah* triggered by the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah* constitute a violation of the *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* framework, which aims to protect the well-being and essential needs of humanity (Nur Afifah Fadzil et al., 2025). This condition erodes the principle of *wasathiyah* (moderation), which includes *tawazun* (balance) and *i'tidal* (justice) in managing the allocation of time and attention between the physical and digital worlds (Elly Yuliawati & Ispawati Asri, 2024). Substantively, digital addiction also contradicts two primary goals of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*: *hifz al-'aql* (protection of the intellect), as it impairs rational and cognitive functions, and *hifz al-nafs* (protection of the soul/self), as it impacts psychological well-being and the quality of social interaction (Faruq et al., 2025).

In this study, *al-'aql* is understood as the capacity for cognitive regulation that enables individuals to exercise self-control, moral judgment, and rational decision-making. Conversely, *al-nafs* refers to impulsive and affective drives associated with the pursuit of immediate gratification. *Nafs al-ammarah* is conceptualized as the tendency of impulses to dominate the cognitive control system, which in modern psychology is equivalent to weakened self-regulation and increased impulsivity. Furthermore, *tazkiyyah al-nafs* is understood as the process of strengthening self-regulation and aligning behavior with moral values, while *israf* and *ghaflah* are interpreted as forms of behavioral dysregulation in the form of excessive use and the neglect of social responsibilities. Meanwhile, *Maqasid*

al-Shari'ah refers to the primary objectives of Islamic law aimed at preserving human welfare, such as the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.

Although the issue of digital addiction has been discussed in psychological literature and Islamic ethics, the integration between contemporary social theories and Islamic ethical principles remains limited. Social Displacement studies generally utilize quantitative approaches within Western contexts and emphasize psychological or relational impacts without a moral-religious dimension (Huang & Lu, 2022; Karakose et al., 2023). In contrast, studies on Islamic ethics focus more on the aspects of *akhlak* (character/morality) in digital media use but have not yet systematically linked them to the crisis of social interaction among adolescents (Al Nuaimi & Abderrahmane Azzi, 2022; Chowdhury, 2024). Therefore, an integrative theoretical framework is required to connect displacement perspectives, digital psychology, and Islamic ethics to understand digital addiction more comprehensively within the context of muslim youth.

This research seeks to fill this literary gap by comprehensively analyzing the crisis of adolescent social interaction as a consequence of digital transformation, through a critical integration of social theory and Islamic ethics. Specifically, this study has three research objectives, which aim to: (1) synthesize literary findings regarding the relationship between digital addiction, social displacement, and the crisis of social interaction in adolescents; (2) integrate Social Displacement theory with an Islamic ethical framework in explaining digital addiction as a form of social relationship disruption and moral imbalance; and (3) formulate the conceptual and practical implications of an Islamic ethical approach, specifically through the strengthening of self-control values, in efforts to prevent and address digital addiction among adolescents.

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

This research is a literature review with a conceptual approach focusing on the theoretical and conceptual study of scientific literature relevant to the theme of digital addiction and its influence on social interaction from an Islamic perspective. This approach was chosen because the research is not oriented toward field data collection, but rather toward a critical analysis of concepts, theories, and previous research findings to build a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena in the digital era. A conceptual approach allows researchers to explore, clarify, and integrate theoretical concepts to produce a new framework of understanding or conceptual development (Jaakkola, 2020).

The method used is an integrative literature review, a literature synthesis method that allows for the combination of empirical and conceptual sources to produce a complete theoretical understanding (Johnson et al., 2013). This study does not merely summarize research findings but also integrates various perspectives to build a more comprehensive conceptual framework (Cronin et al., 2008). The integrative review is considered relevant for conceptual research due to its ability to systematically connect empirical findings with theoretical reflections.

The selected literature includes both empirical and conceptual articles relevant to the research focus, in accordance with the characteristics of an integrative review that allows for the use of various types of scientific sources. Literature sources range from nationally accredited journals to reputable international journals, supported by normative sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith as the foundation for the Islamic perspective.

The inclusion criteria for the literature include: (1) empirical or conceptual articles relevant to the research variables; (2) publication in nationally accredited or reputable international journals; (3) a substantive connection to the themes of digital addiction and social interaction; and (4) a publication timeframe relevant to the development of contemporary digital studies. Articles that do not meet these criteria were excluded from the analysis.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

Data sources were obtained through a search of scientific journal articles using academic databases such as Google Scholar and other academic search engines as literature exploration tools. The search strategy was conducted using keywords relevant to the research focus, including digital addiction, social interaction, social displacement, and social augmentation. To strengthen the theoretical foundation, the search also included terms related to theoretical frameworks such as self-regulation in Social Cognitive Theory, uses and gratification in media studies, as well as normative Islamic concepts like *wasathiyah* and *tazkiyatun nafs*.

The analysis process was conducted through thematic analysis, by grouping literature findings based on conceptual patterns, relationships between variables, and trends in theoretical perspectives. Thematic analysis in conceptual research serves to identify main idea patterns and organize a conceptual synthesis systematically. The synthesis results were then used to build a conceptual framework that explains the dynamics of digital addiction and its implications for social interaction from an Islamic perspective (Novendawati Wahyu Sitasari, 2022).

The findings in this study are the result of a conceptual synthesis based on empirical and theoretical literature reviews. The statistical data presented do not originate from the author's field research but are used as an argumentative basis to build a conceptual model regarding the relationship between social displacement and psychospiritual imbalance from the perspective of Islamic ethics.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Digital intensification and the disruption of adolescents' internal regulation

Table 1. Time Spent on Digital Devices among Adolescents before, during, and after COVID-19

Time period	< 2 hours	> 2 hours
Pre-COVID-19	34.8%	65.2%
During COVID-19 / Lockdown	14.1%	85.9%
Post-COVID-19 / Current	18.5%	81.5%

(data reconstructed from Aisyah Yafis Iqlima et al., 2024)

Empirical data synthesis reported by Aisyah Yafis Iqlima et al. (2024) reveals a significant surge in adolescent screen time from the pre-pandemic era through the Covid-19 lockdown, with only a marginal decline in the post-pandemic period. Prior to Covid-19, 65.2% of adolescents utilized devices for more than two hours per day; this figure escalated to 85.9% during the lockdown and remained at a high level post-pandemic at 81.5%, as presented in Table 1 (Aisyah Yafis Iqlima et al., 2024). This pattern indicates that the pandemic contributed to an intensification of digital media usage that tends to be sustained. In the context of this study, these findings serve as a conceptual synthesis basis to construct an integrative model regarding adolescent psychospiritual imbalance.

The pattern of increased digital usage can be understood through the Social Displacement Theory framework, which posits that heightened digital activity potentially replaces face-to-face interactions (Hall & Liu, 2022). Correspondingly, Vogels et al. (2022) reported that between 2014 and 2015, smartphone ownership among adolescents increased from 73% to 95%. In the 15–17 age group, this figure reached 98%, significantly higher than the 13–14 age group at 91% (Vogels et al., 2022). These data reinforce the illustration of digital access intensification among adolescents as the structural context for the occurrence of social displacement.

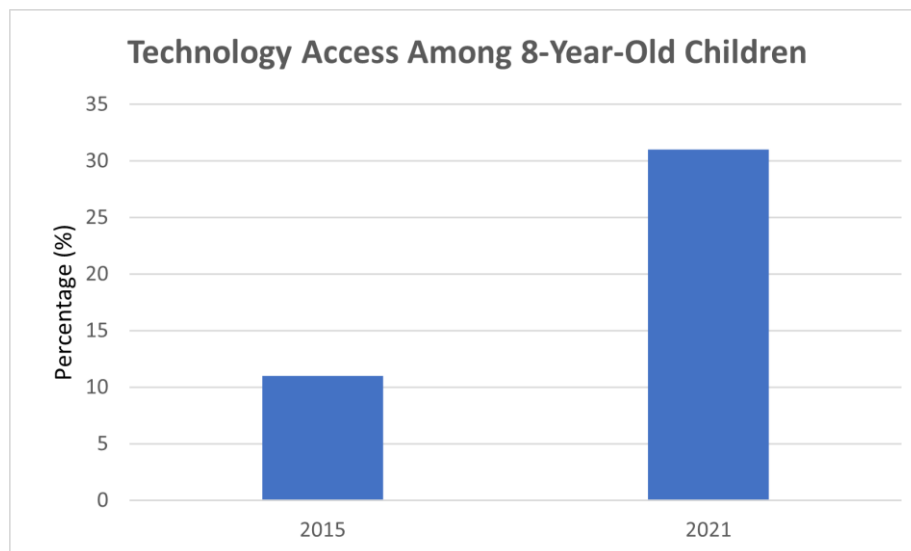


Fig. 2. Technology Access among 8-Year-Old Children in 2015 and 2021 (data reconstructed from Rideout et al., 2022)

Rideout et al. reported an increase in technology access among 8-year-old children from 11% in 2015 to 31% in 2021, indicating earlier digital exposure and the expansion of digitalization into younger age groups, as shown in Figure 2 (Rideout et al., 2022). This trend potentially amplifies the shift of social interaction time toward more individualistic digital activities. The transition between platforms further strengthens this displacement pattern, considering that popular platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat rely on short-form content algorithms that encourage rapid and repetitive consumption, which in the literature is associated with increasingly intense digital engagement.

The impact of displacement is reflected in the daily lives of adolescents. As many as 61% of adolescents reportedly neglect their activities and 67% experience sleep disturbances (Radesky et al., 2023). These findings indicate that digital media has significantly affected daily functioning. Furthermore, social media addiction is negatively correlated with social skills at -0.354 and contributes 27.9% to low interpersonal skills (Semra Tetik et al., 2025). Various studies also link excessive use with increased risks of anxiety, depression, and decreased life satisfaction, which ultimately weakens the quality of face-to-face interaction and family relationships (Amirthalingam & Anika Khara, 2024). Empirically, these findings show a significant correlation between digital usage intensity and socio-emotional functional impairment. Within the conceptual framework of this study, these data are interpreted as early indicators of displacement that develops into internal regulation failure.

Social Displacement occurs when time and energy are diverted to digital media, thereby reducing engagement in face-to-face interactions (Hall & Liu, 2022). In adolescents, this shift is often compulsive because digital interactions offer rapid gratification with relatively low emotional demands. Numerous studies associate the intensity of social media use with social isolation, decreased involvement in offline activities, sleep disturbances, and increased symptoms of anxiety and depression (Manurung et al., 2022; Rima Sasfira & Hagi Julio Salas, 2025). Social isolation during childhood and adolescence is even linked to long-term cognitive and emotional impacts, including increased physiological stress and the risk of mental health disorders (de Laia Almeida et al., 2021). These findings indicate that displacement does not only have a behavioral dimension but also implications for psychosocial development.

However, the Social Augmentation perspective asserts that digital media can also strengthen social connections, increase autonomy, and provide emotional support, especially for adolescents with social withdrawal tendencies (Haddock et al., 2022; Tulane et al., 2022). This ambivalence suggests that the impact of digitalization depends on the intensity and patterns of usage. In cases of compulsive use, for instance, a duration of up to

12 hours per day (Muhammad Oktarianto et al., 2025), augmentative benefits tend to be overshadowed by the loss of self-control. In this context, displacement is no longer understood merely as a shift in medium but as an indicator of the weakening of an individual's internal regulation.

At a theoretical level, these empirical patterns can be understood through compulsive usage intensity, which indicates a failure of self-regulation mechanisms as explained in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1991). However, this theory primarily emphasizes cognitive processes and behavioral control without explicitly addressing the moral dimension of an individual's internal drives. Similarly, Uses and Gratifications Theory views individuals as active agents who select media to fulfill specific psychological needs but does not fully explain why these choices can develop into self-defeating addictive patterns (Hans Karunia et al., 2021).

These limitations suggest that the issue of digital addiction is not only related to the failure of cognitive control but also to a more fundamental structure of internal drives. In this context, Islamic moral psychology offers an analytical framework regarding the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah*, which weakens the regulative function of *al-'aql* in controlling behavior. Thus, this section represents a conceptual synthesis based on literature modeled in an integrative manner. The referenced empirical data serve as an analytical foundation to identify patterns and conceptual relationships, while the proposed psychospiritual model is the result of theoretical interpretation of these findings, rather than direct empirical testing.

3.2 The psychospiritual regulation crisis in the digital addiction phenomenon

Within the framework of Islamic moral psychology, *nafs* is understood as a psychological structure encompassing instinctive drives as well as moral-spiritual potential. *Nafs* is not merely "desire" in a negative sense, but the entirety of self-dynamics within which reside *al-'aql* (rationality), *qalb* (the heart), and impulsive tendencies (Tita Rosalina, 2023). Thus, human behavior is understood as the result of the interaction between internal drives and rational regulative capacities.

In terms of classification, *nafs* develops through three levels: *nafs al-ammarah* (impulsive-egoistic drives), *nafs al-lawwamah* (reflective-evaluative consciousness), and *nafs al-mutma'innah* (the stable, tranquil soul) (Abdallah Rothman & Coyle, 2018). In the context of digital addiction, the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah* can be understood as an internal mechanism that drives compulsive behavior and the pursuit of instant gratification. When this drive dominates, reflective functions weaken, and the individual tends to prioritize immediate pleasure over moral considerations or long-term consequences.

This regulative function is executed by *al-'aql*, which serves not only a cognitive role but also as a moral controller that maintains spiritual balance (Shahril Nizam Zulkipli et al., 2022). The weakening of *al-'aql* leads to increased impulsivity and a decreased ability to prioritize social and spiritual responsibilities. In Islamic terminology, this condition is related to *ghaflah*, namely a reflective heedlessness toward moral obligations (Akhmad Dasuki et al., 2025). In a contemporary context, *ghaflah* manifests as a continuous distraction by digital activities, leading to the neglect of academic duties, family relationships, and social commitments.

Excessive behavior in digital media usage can further be understood as a form of *israf*, which is the act of exceeding proper limits in the utilization of resources (Zein Muttaqin, 2019). While in the context of wealth, *israf* means the wasteful spending of assets, in the digital context, it refers to the wasting of time, energy, and attention on unproductive content consumption. The combination of *ghaflah* and *israf* indicates a disruption of the principle of *tawazun* (balance) in an individual's life (Abdallah Rothman & Coyle, 2018).

Integratively, the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah*, the weakening of the *al-'aql* function, the emergence of *ghaflah*, and the practice of *israf* explain that digital addiction is not merely a behavioral issue, but a reflection of psychospiritual imbalance. Within this framework, social displacement is understood not only as a shift in the medium of interaction but as a

consequence of the failure of internal control. When *nafs al-ammarah* dominates and *al-'aql* loses its regulative power, adolescents prefer the comfort of the virtual world over real social engagement (Elly Yuliawati & Ispawati Asri, 2024).

The phenomenon of social displacement itself has been a concern since the surge in global internet adoption in the late 1990s. Although several findings suggest that online interactions can be complementary to offline relationships (Zheng et al., 2024), high usage intensity among the iGen or Gen Z still poses a risk of reduced face-to-face interaction practice and direct social skills. Various studies show a negative correlation between excessive internet use and sociability, increased loneliness, and the potential for negative behaviors such as cyberbullying (Downey & Gibbs, 2020). Additionally, digital media also plays a role in the spread of misinformation and social issues that complicate the dynamics of social relationships (Reyes et al., 2022).

From an Islamic ethical perspective, this pattern finds a causal explanation at the internal level. Immersive digital media reinforces the instant-gratification tendencies of *nafs al-ammarah*, while the weakness of *al-'aql* hinders the process of introspection and ethical filtering. Consequently, individuals lose the ability to set priorities and fall into repeating maladaptive behavioral patterns (Khan & Asma Nisa, 2024). Thus, digital addiction is not only a social phenomenon but, fundamentally, a crisis of moral-spiritual regulation.

Overcoming the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah* and countering *ghaflah* serve as crucial points in restoring psychospiritual balance. Strengthening the function of *al-'aql* through reflective discipline and *tazkiyatun nafs* enables a shift from *nafs al-ammarah* toward *nafs al-lawwamah* as the initial stage of moral awareness. Without such control, impulsive drives will continue to dominate, reinforcing the cycle of social displacement and spiritual deviation.

Islamic psychotherapy approaches in contemporary psychological literature assert that self-regulation disorders are not understood merely as behavioral dysfunctions, but as a systemic imbalance between the spiritual, cognitive, and affective dimensions of a human being. Islamic psychotherapy models position *tazkiyatun nafs* as the primary mechanism for restoring internal regulation, emphasizing the integration of the heart, intellect, and spirit within the personality structure (Mirnani Denta, 2025). When this integration is disrupted, individuals lose their capacity for self-regulation based on transcendental awareness, allowing impulsive drives to dominate more easily.

The literature also explains that *nafs al-lawwamah* functions as a reflective phase within psychological dynamics. It represents a stage where the conflict between impulsive drives and moral consciousness becomes active, thereby opening a space for self-correction (Mirnani Denta, 2025). In the context of digital addiction, feelings of guilt following excessive use or the realization of wasted time can be understood as the activation of the *lawwamah* dimension. However, without systematic reflective habituation, this conflict does not evolve into psychological stability but instead halts at a repetitive cycle of compulsion and regret.

Practices of *muraqabah* and *mahasabah* in Islamic psychotherapy are positioned as techniques for strengthening awareness and self-control. Psychologically, both function as metacognitive regulation systems that reinforce the control of *al-'aql* over external stimuli (Mirnani Denta, 2025). In a hyper-stimulant digital environment, the absence of these reflective practices leaves individuals vulnerable to continuous distraction and the loss of moral priorities.

Other findings indicate that the self-regulation crisis among the younger generation is also related to a weak orientation toward meaning and values (Agus Abdul Rahman, 2017). Digital media provides rapid gratification but offers little profound meaning for life. Consequently, individuals tend to be dominated by momentary pleasures. From an Islamic psychological perspective, this vacuum of meaning can reduce a life orientation grounded in spiritual goals and weaken the awareness of the hereafter as a foundation for controlling behavior.

Furthermore, the formation of self-control and moral stability is heavily influenced by the process of value internalization since early developmental phases (Noer Hidayah, 2025). Adolescents who lack a strong spiritual foundation and self-reflective capabilities tend to be more vulnerable to identity confusion within digital spaces. This indicates that social displacement is not solely caused by technology, but is the result of an interaction between the psychospiritual vulnerability of the adolescent and a digital environment that encourages impulsive behavior.

Consequently, digital addiction can be understood as a dysfunction of the *nafs* hierarchy, specifically the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah*, the metacognitive weakness of *al-'aql*, the erosion of reflective consciousness (structural *ghaflah*), and the absence of systematic *tazkiyah* practices in modern life. Contemporary Islamic psychotherapy literature reinforces that the solution to this crisis is internal-transformative rather than merely technical or behavioral. The restoration of psychospiritual balance must begin with the reconstruction of consciousness, the strengthening of reflective discipline, and consistent spiritual habituation to achieve a gradual shift toward *nafs al-mutma'innah* as a form of balanced and morally mature psychological stability.

It should be emphasized that the construction of the psychospiritual regulation crisis in this study is not intended as a direct empirical causal claim, but rather as an interpretative formulation built through the integration of empirical findings with the framework of Islamic moral psychology. Therefore, the proposed model is conceptual-integrative and opens space for further empirical testing in subsequent research.

3.3 Practical implications of the psychospiritual framework in addressing digital addiction

Excessive behavior in digital usage can be understood as a manifestation of the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah*, which is ethically categorized as a form of *israf* (wastefulness). In this context, *israf* is not limited to material waste but encompasses the squandering of cognitive potential, emotional energy, and social interaction rights (Zein Muttaqin, 2019). Theoretically, this construction finds its equivalent in the concept of Problematic Internet Use (PIU), characterized by deficient self-regulation and psychosocial functional impairment (Harsa Afifatur Rahmi & Lisya Chairani, 2025). Thus, digital *israf* can be positioned as an ethico-spiritual formulation of the PIU phenomenon, occurring when an individual maladaptively allocates time, attention, and energy to virtual activities at the expense of academic obligations, social duties, and interpersonal relationships.

As an antithesis to this condition, the principle of *wasathiyyah* emphasizes the importance of balance and moderation in the use of resources, including time, attention, and mental energy. From a psychological perspective, this balance correlates directly with self-regulation capacity and impulse control. Empirical findings based on experimental designs with school-age children demonstrate that providing self-control training as a treatment results in a significant increase in the ability to manage internet use and a decrease in addictive tendencies (Tessa Hestyana Sari et al., 2022). This confirms that the actualization of *wasathiyyah* in the digital era is not merely normative but possesses an empirical foundation in the strengthening of self-regulation as a protective factor against PIU.

However, an external moderation approach does not fully explain the internal dynamics when individuals are confronted with persistent and intense digital stimuli. PIU literature indicates that the core issue lies not only in the duration of use but also involves emotional regulation dysfunction, a preference for online interaction as social compensation, and weak self-control (Harsa Afifatur Rahmi & Lisya Chairani, 2025). In this context, digital *israf* reflects a simultaneous dysfunction across the dimensions of attention, emotion, and spirituality. Therefore, a psychospiritual approach is required that does not merely regulate outward behavior but also transformatively integrates the inner structure (*al-nafs*) and moral rationality (*al-'aql*).

This framework finds relevance in the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs*, which is the process of purifying the soul from negative tendencies while simultaneously strengthening the orientation of *tauhid* (divine oneness) in the praxis of life (Musrifah, 2019). Conceptually,

the practices of *riyadah al-nafs*, such as *muraqabah* (reflective awareness) and *muhasabah* (self-evaluation), correspond directly with the strengthening of self-awareness and self-regulation in modern psychology. Empirical support for self-regulation approaches shows that restricting media use, diverting to meaningful activities, and impulse control exercises are effective in preventing and reducing internet addiction (Afidatul Hanim & Tengku Kamarulbahri, 2024; Tesha Hestyana Sari et al., 2022). Thus, *tazkiyatun nafs* can be positioned not only as a normative concept but as a psychospiritual intervention framework that possesses both theoretical legitimacy and empirical support.

Furthermore, *tazkiyatun nafs* can be formulated into a phased intervention model. The first stage, *takhalli* (self-control), is oriented toward breaking automatic habit patterns and strengthening digital behavior boundaries as a response to the deficient self-regulation found in PIU (Harsa Afifatur Rahmi & Lisya Chairani, 2025). The second stage, *tahalli* (self-development), serves as a substitution for maladaptive behaviors through the internalization of values and the formation of positive habits. The third stage, *tajalli* (self-empowerment), emphasizes the building of long-term psychological and spiritual resilience (Ma'muroh et al., 2024), so that individuals do not merely reduce digital usage intensity but also acquire emotional stability and a more robust orientation of meaning.

The practical implementation of this framework is reflected in the "Self-Navigation" Model, which is based on self-regulation training in educational settings. This intervention has been proven to reduce internet addiction levels and increase the self-regulation capacity of participants (Imam Setyawan & Achmad Mujab Masykur, 2022). The consistency of these findings with experimental research conducted by Tesha Hestyana et al. on self-control training for schoolchildren reinforces the argument that the integration of spiritual values and psychological approaches has an empirical basis to be operationalized systematically in both preventive and curative contexts (Tesha Hestyana Sari et al., 2022).

The ultimate goal of the *tazkiyatun nafs* process is the cultivation of *ukhuwah* as the antithesis to social isolation (Muhammad Suaib Tahir, 2024). PIU literature shows a significant correlation between problematic internet use and the disruption of social relations as well as decreased psychological well-being (Harsa Afifatur Rahmi & Lisya Chairani, 2025). Therefore, the success indicators of a psychospiritual intervention are not measured solely by the reduction in digital usage duration, but by the restoration of social interaction quality, emotional stability, and psychosocial balance.

Thus, this conceptual synthesis has direct implications across three practical domains. First, in the context of counseling, the *tazkiyatun nafs* framework can be developed as a self-regulation-based psychospiritual counseling model, structured through the stages of *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli* to address digital addiction comprehensively. Second, in the educational sphere, the integration of self-regulation training with the internalization of *wasathiyyah* values can be formulated as a preventive digital literacy program that fosters impulse control, ethical responsibility, and balanced technology use. Third, in the context of mental health interventions, this approach offers a rehabilitative framework that is not only oriented toward reducing addiction symptoms but also toward restructuring emotional regulation, restoring life meaning, and reconstructing the quality of social relationships.

Operationally, this model can be translated into: (1) psychospiritual counseling modules based on the *takhalli-tahalli-tajalli* stages; (2) reflective digital literacy curricula in schools that integrate self-regulation training and *wasathiyyah* values; and (3) rehabilitative programs based on *tazkiyatun nafs* within adolescent mental health services. This formulation underscores that the contribution of the study does not end at the conceptual level but possesses structured implementational potential.

Overall, this study produces an integrative conceptual synthesis that connects Islamic ethico-spiritual constructs (*israf*, *wasathiyyah*, and *tazkiyatun nafs*) with contemporary psychological frameworks (PIU and self-regulation) to understand and design interventions for digital addiction. This synthesis affirms that digital addiction is not merely a behavioral issue, but a matter of self-regulation disintegration that demands simultaneous and sustainable psychological and spiritual transformation.

4. Conclusions

Based on an integrative literature review and thematic analysis, this study has successfully synthesized findings showing a relationship between digital intensification, social displacement, and the disruption of self-regulation in adolescents. Increased duration and intensity of digital media use are proven to correlate with weakened offline social engagement, impaired socio-emotional functioning, and decreased self-control capacity. These findings strengthen the argument that the phenomenon of digital addiction cannot be understood partially as a technological issue, but rather as a multidimensional symptom involving the interaction of behavioral, social, and psychological factors. Furthermore, this study integrates Social Displacement Theory with an Islamic moral psychology framework to explain digital addiction as a psychospiritual regulation crisis. The dominance of *nafs al-ammarah*, the weakening of the regulative function of *al-'aql*, and the emergence of *ghaflah* and *israf* practices indicate that digital addiction reflects an internal imbalance that transcends mere behavioral aspects. Within this framework, social displacement is understood not only as a shift in the medium of interaction but as a consequence of self-regulation dysfunction rooted in the individual's psychospiritual dynamics.

At the implicative level, this study formulates that a psychospiritual approach, particularly through the framework of *tazkiyatun nafs*, has practical relevance in the prevention and management of digital addiction. The integration of the *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli* stages with modern self-regulation approaches offers an applicable foundation for interventions in counseling, education, and mental health services. This approach is not only oriented toward the reduction of addictive behavior but also toward the reconstruction of self-regulation, the restoration of meaning orientation, and the strengthening of social relationship quality for adolescents in the digital age. However, this study has limitations as it is conceptual, based on literature synthesis, and has not yet involved direct empirical validation of the proposed model. Therefore, the findings in this study should be understood as a preliminary theoretical formulation. Future research is suggested to conduct empirical testing through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods designs to validate the proposed integrative model, test the effectiveness of psychospiritual interventions, and explore their implementation within adolescent counseling, education, and mental health contexts.

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