

Tazkiyah al-Nafs in Al-Ghazali's Thought: A Sufi Framework for Enhancing Mental Resilience among Generation Z

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Abstract

Generation Z, often referred to as the "Strawberry Generation," is characterized by marked psychological vulnerability arising from social pressures and intensive digital exposure. This condition requires an approach that is not only technical but also spiritual, such as the concept of tazkiyah al-nafs in Islamic teachings. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the potential of tazkiyah al-nafs as a mental resilience strategy for Generation Z based on al-Ghazali's thought. This research employs a qualitative approach using the library research method with content analysis techniques. The data sources include Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, scientific articles, and thematic books related to tazkiyah al-nafs and mental health. The findings indicate that tazkiyah al-nafs provides a systematic spiritual framework for cultivating mental resilience. The stage of takhalli teaches the release of blameworthy traits such as anger, envy, and worldly attachment, which often constitute the roots of emotional instability. Tahalli instills virtues such as patience, gratitude, trust in God, and humility, which strengthen psychological stability and foster a sense of life meaning. Meanwhile, tajalli represents a phase of spiritual illumination in which individuals attain inner peace and profound transcendental awareness.

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Collectively, these three stages enhance coping capacity and establish a holistic structure of long-term resilience. This study contributes to integrating Sufi values into the framework of modern Islamic psychology while expanding the discourse on spiritual interventions as concrete solutions to mental health challenges among young generations.

Keywords: *Tazkiyatub al-Nafs; Generation Z; Mental Health; Islamic Psychology; Imam Al-Ghazali.*

Abstrak

Generasi Z, yang dikenal sebagai “Generasi Strawberry”, karena kerap menunjukkan kerentanan psikologis akibat tekanan sosial dan paparan digital yang intensif. Kondisi ini memerlukan pendekatan yang tidak hanya teknis, tetapi juga spiritual, seperti konsep tazkiyah al-nafs dalam ajaran Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis potensi tazkiyah al-nafs sebagai strategi resiliensi mental bagi Generasi Z berdasarkan pemikiran Al-Ghazali. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis library research dengan teknik analisis isi. Sumber data mencakup kitab *Ihya’ ‘Ulumuddin*, artikel ilmiah, dan buku-buku tematik terkait tazkiyah al-nafs dan kesehatan mental. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tazkiyah al-nafs menawarkan kerangka spiritual yang sistematis dalam membentuk ketahanan mental. Tahapan takhalli mengajarkan pelepasan diri dari sifat-sifat tercela seperti amarah, iri hati, dan cinta dunia, yang menjadi akar dari ketidakstabilan emosi. Tahallli menanamkan nilai-nilai seperti sabar, syukur, tawakal, dan tawaduk, yang memperkuat kestabilan psikologis dan menumbuhkan makna hidup. Sementara itu, tajalli merupakan fase pencerahan spiritual di mana individu mencapai kedamaian batin dan kesadaran transendental yang mendalam. Ketiga tahapan ini tidak hanya memperkuat kemampuan coping, tetapi juga membentuk struktur resiliensi jangka panjang yang holistik. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap integrasi nilai-nilai tasawuf ke dalam kerangka psikologi Islam modern, sekaligus memperluas wacana intervensi spiritual sebagai solusi konkret dalam penanganan masalah kesehatan mental generasi muda.

Kata Kunci: *Tazkiyah al-Nafs; Generasi Z; Kesehatan Mental; Psikologi Islam; Imam Al-Ghazali.*

Introduction

The term “Strawberry Generation” is often used to refer to Generation Z, who appear attractive on the surface yet tend to be fragile when facing pressure.¹ This characterization stems from

¹ Lydiawati Soelaiman and Galuh Mira Saktiana, “Religiosity and Entrepreneurial Intention: A Study of Strawberry Generation,” *Kinerja* 28, no. 2 (September 2024): 159–72, <https://doi.org/10.24002/kinerja.v28i2.8455>.

their habit of living in an instant, digitally driven environment that accelerates access to information while simultaneously amplifying social expectations that are not always realistic.² This phenomenon is not merely a perception; it is reflected in their high dependence on external validation, such as social media that demands continuous self-image management.³ As a result, many individuals of Generation Z struggle to build personal resilience when confronted with failure, social conflict, or daily life pressures.⁴

The prevalence of mental health disorders among Generation Z continues to rise. More than 40% of this generation report experiencing chronic stress, particularly related to concerns about the future, employment, and social relationships.⁵ In the educational context, Gen Z nursing students describe academic and emotional pressure as major burdens, yet also as processes that shape mental endurance.⁶ At the same time, this generation is open toward the integration of technology and spirituality as a psychological

² Anisha Seirajana, "Resepsi Khalayak Terhadap Upaya Mematahkan Stigma Strawberry Generation Pada Generasi z Dalam Film Mencuri Raden Saleh," *Lektur: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 7, no. 4 (January 2025), <https://doi.org/10.21831/lektur.v7i4.23104>.

³ Syari Fitrah Rayaginansih, Siti Cahyati, and Irfan Fahriza, "The Impact Of The Digital Era On The Mental Health Of Generation Z," *Journal of Education and Counseling (JECO)* 4, no. 2 (June 2024): 95–102, <https://doi.org/10.32627/jeco.v4i2.1080>.

⁴ Krishnan Kavitha, V. P Joshith, and Sonal Sharma, "Beyond Text: ChatGPT as an Emotional Resilience Support Tool for Gen Z – A Sequential Explanatory Design Exploration," *E-Learning and Digital Media* 0, no. 0 (June 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/20427530241259099>.

⁵ Garima Srivastava and Sanjay Pachauri, "Generation Y and Generation Z's Substantial Technology Use and Mental Health Ignorance: A Descriptive Analysis," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Application of AI and Statistical Decision Making for the Business World, ICASDMBW 2022, 16-17 December 2022, Rukmini Devi Institute of Advanced Studies, Delhi, India* (EAI, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4108/cai.16-12-2022.2326174>.

⁶ Gerri-Lyn Boyden et al., "Understanding Resilience Among Generation Z Baccalaureate Nursing Students: A Hermeneutical Phenomenology Study," *Journal of Nursing Education* 63, no. 7 (July 2024): 460–69, <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20240505-02>.

recovery, such as using spiritual applications and AI platforms to express feelings privately.⁷

Additionally, Gen Z's stress patterns are closely linked to global economic conditions and career uncertainty. Studies show that work–life balance greatly influences levels of anxiety and burnout among young workers.⁸ In terms of personal finance, Gen Z tends to adopt digital strategies such as loud budgeting platforms or social investing as forms of economic resilience.⁹ Although technologically adaptive, these conditions further intensify emotional pressure due to continuously high performance expectations.¹⁰ Therefore, the complexity of challenges faced by Gen Z requires multidisciplinary approaches that span psychology, economics, and culture.

The mental health situation of Generation Z in Indonesia shows a similar degree of urgency. Approximately 34.9% of adolescents experience mental health issues, with 5.5% suffering from severe mental disorders.¹¹ The prevalence of psychological disorders in North Sulawesi reaches 10.85%, making this a

⁷ Susanna Y Park et al., “A Spiritual Self-Care Mobile App (Skylight) for Mental Health, Sleep, and Spiritual Well-Being Among Generation Z and Young Millennials: Cross-Sectional Survey,” *JMIR Formative Research* 7 (September 2023): e50239, <https://doi.org/10.2196/50239>;

⁸ Adekunle Adedeji et al., “Work-Life Balance and Mental Health Outcomes for Generation Z in Germany,” *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine* 65, no. 12 (December 2023): 987–91, <https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000002934>.

⁹ David Spohn, “Financial Resilience and Innovation among Generation Z in the Face of Economic Adversity,” *European Journal of Management, Economics and Business* 1, no. 3 (November 2024): 39–51, [https://doi.org/10.59324/ejmeb.2024.1\(3\).04](https://doi.org/10.59324/ejmeb.2024.1(3).04).

¹⁰ Lya M. Cartwright-Stroupe and Jean Shinnars, “Moving Forward Together: What Hope, Efficacy, Optimism, and Resilience Tell Us About Generation Z,” *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing* 52, no. 4 (April 2021): 160–62, <https://doi.org/10.3928/00220124-20210315-02>.

¹¹ Iwan Shalahuddin et al., “Pendidikan Dan Promosi Kesehatan Mengenai Kesehatan Mental Pada Siswa Kelas XII SMAN 1 Pangandaran,” *Jurnal Kreativitas Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (PKM)* 7, no. 5 (April 2024): 2134–46, <https://doi.org/10.33024/jkpm.v7i5.14290>.

significant issue among the adolescent population.¹² Moreover, online gaming addiction is found in 13.9% of adolescents and is statistically correlated with depression, anxiety, and severe stress.¹³ This phenomenon demonstrates that Indonesia's local context reinforces global patterns, wherein digital pressure serves as a primary trigger of mental vulnerability.

Furthermore, surveys of high school students show that awareness of mental health issues is beginning to form, but practical literacy remains low.¹⁴ This condition is worsened by weak social support within families, particularly in broken-home households, which significantly impacts the mental well-being of female adolescents.¹⁵ If depressive symptoms are not addressed during adolescence, the risk of developing severe depression in young adulthood increases substantially. Longitudinal studies indicate that adolescents with depressive symptoms are 6 to 10 times more likely to experience persistent depression by the age of 22 compared to those without such symptoms.¹⁶ On the other hand, religiosity and spirituality have been shown to correlate positively with increased resilience and reduced intensity of psychological symptoms.¹⁷

¹² Keensy Aimee Mangindaan, Asep Rahman, and Hilman Adam, "Gambaran Literasi Kesehatan Mental Pada Peserta Didik SMA Negeri 9 Manado," *Jurnal Bios Logos* 14, no. 1 (February 2024): 9–16, <https://doi.org/10.35799/jbl.v14i1.53720>.

¹³ Cindy Monika Agatha, "Hubungan Adiksi Game Online Dengan Kesehatan Mental" (Universitas Pelita Harapan, 2020).

¹⁴ Catur Retno Lestari et al., "Edukasi Mental Health Awareness Melalui Screening Kesehatan Pada Gen Z Sebagai Upaya Promotif," *Jurnal Kreativitas Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (PKM)* 8, no. 1 (December 2024): 79–89, <https://doi.org/10.33024/jkpm.v8i1.17765>.

¹⁵ Amhar et al., "Dukungan Sosial Sebagai Determinan Kesehatan Mental Pada Remaja Dengan Keluarga Broken Home," *Journal of Communication and Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (June 2023): 25–36, <https://doi.org/10.61994/jcss.v1i1.135>.

¹⁶ Katherine M. Keyes, Noah T. Kreski, and Megan E. Patrick, "Depressive Symptoms in Adolescence and Young Adulthood," *Jama Network Open* 7, no. 8 (August 2024): e2427748, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.27748>.

¹⁷ Ratu Haya Aulia Nabilla et al., "Gen Z Darurat Suicide: Hubungan Spiritualitas Melalui Pemaknaan 'Tembang 'Lir-Ilir' Dan Regulasi Emosi Dengan Resiliensi Gen

Resilience becomes a key element in addressing mental health challenges and the Strawberry Generation phenomenon. Studies indicate that resilience acts as a buffer against work-related stress and strengthens emotional engagement in professional environments.¹⁸ Individuals with high resilience are better able to withstand pressure without experiencing significant declines in mental functioning.¹⁹ Even in high-pressure environments—characterized by risks such as drug abuse or heavy workloads in formal institutions—personal resilience serves as a key indicator of long-term adaptation among Gen Z. Studies from Indonesia and China show that abilities such as self-regulation, social support, and transformational leadership play crucial roles in building this resilience.²⁰ Consequently, cultivating resilience in Gen Z is not merely a personal strategy but also a strategic agenda in education, public policy, and national character development.

Research on mental health and *tazkeiyah al-nafs* has been widely explored in recent years. Studies on young people's mental health reveal that Gen Z and millennials face significant psychological challenges due to social pressure, toxic work environments, and persistent stigma surrounding mental health issues.²¹ In the

Z,” *Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal* 7, no. 1 (January 2025), <https://doi.org/10.47467/reslaj.v7i1.5247>.

¹⁸ Rahmi Lubis et al., “Job Stress and Turnover Intention in Generation Z Teachers: Resilience as a Moderator,” *Psikologika: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Psikologi* 29, no. 1 (January 2024): 125–42, <https://doi.org/10.20885/psikologika.vol29.iss1.art8>.

¹⁹ Winda Ony Panjaitan Olivia, “Resilience in Female of Gen Z,” *International Journal of Accounting, Management, Economics and Social Sciences (IJAMESC)* 2, no. 3 (June 2024): 974–79, <https://doi.org/10.61990/ijamesc.v2i3.260>.

²⁰ Muhamad Rachmat Gunawan et al., “Enhancing Gen-Z Resilience Against Narcotics and Drugs Influence Among Smart Cities in Indonesia,” in *2024 International Conference on ICT for Smart Society (ICISS)* (IEEE, 2024), 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICISS62896.2024.10751012>; Peng Han et al., “The Early Career Resilience Experience of Generation Z Newly Graduated Registered Nurses in Standardized Training in the Emergency Department: A Qualitative Study in Shanghai,” *BMC Nursing* 23, no. 1 (June 2024): 391, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-02043-3>.

²¹ Siti Khadijah Zainal Badri and Sheryl L.F. Chieng, “Prevalence of Toxic Work Environments and Their Impact on Wellbeing: Preliminary Findings among

workplace, Gen Z increasingly demands stronger mental health support from employers,²² while millennials report more days of stress compared to Baby Boomers.²³ Spirituality-based digital applications have also begun to support mental health practices.²⁴ Additionally, Gen Z's high levels of openness and individualism correlate with psychological vulnerability,²⁵ along with delayed life milestones that carry emotional consequences.²⁶ These factors reinforce the urgency of psychospiritual approaches to support youth mental well-being.

Meanwhile, research on *tazkiyah al-nafs* has focused on character development and purification of the soul through classical Islamic frameworks. Implementation in Islamic boarding schools includes stages of self-control and spiritual development,²⁷ and it has been integrated into character education to meet digital

the Millennial Population,” *KnE Social Sciences* 8, no. 20 (December 2023): 393–408, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v8i20.14617>; Srivastava and Pachauri, “Generation Y and Generation Z’s Substantial Technology Use and Mental Health Ignorance: A Descriptive Analysis.”

²² Amy Nichols and Simon M. Smith, “What Do Gen Z Really Want from a Workplace?,” *Strategic HR Review* 24, no. 2 (April 2025): 75–79, <https://doi.org/10.1108/SHR-10-2024-0082>.

²³ Susanna Mage et al., “Caregiver Mental Health Outcomes: Are There Differences Across Generations?,” *Innovation in Aging* 4, no. 1 (December 2020): 25–26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igaa057.082>.

²⁴ Park et al., “A Spiritual Self-Care Mobile App (Skylight) for Mental Health, Sleep, and Spiritual Well-Being Among Generation Z and Young Millennials: Cross-Sectional Survey.”

²⁵ Jacqueline Moss et al., “Generational Differences in Entitlement, Intolerance, and Openness to New Experiences,” *Psi Beta Research Journal - Brief Reports* 4, no. 1 (December 2024): 25–32, <https://doi.org/10.54581/LPZI4579>.

²⁶ Jean M. Twenge, “Generations: The Real Differences between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America’s Future,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 75, no. 3 (December 2023): 212–14, <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF12-23Twenge>.

²⁷ Ma’muroh Ma’muroh, Abqorina Abqorina, and Amrin Amrin, “The Concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs by Al-Ghazali and Its Implementation at Pesantren Darut Tasbih Tangerang,” *Edu Cendikia: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 4, no. 02 (November 2024): 833–44, <https://doi.org/10.47709/educendikia.v4i02.4989>.

era challenges.²⁸ *Tazkiyah al-nafs* has also been used as a foundation for strengthening teacher personalities,²⁹ and as a solution to contemporary consumerist culture.³⁰ Buya Hamka emphasizes *dzikir* and *muhāsabah* as pillars of *tazkiyah* in forming strong personal character.³¹ From the available literature, no study has specifically examined *tazkiyah al-nafs* as a form of resilience for addressing mental health issues among the Strawberry Generation in an empirical and contextual manner.

Given the widespread mental health problems experienced by Generation Z, this study aims to examine the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* and analyze its potential as a resilience framework in addressing contemporary psychological challenges. Given that Generation Z frequently experiences stress, anxiety, and burnout due to social pressure and intensive digital exposure, a contextual and applicable psychospiritual approach is essential. Considering that Generation Z frequently experiences stress, anxiety, and burnout due to social pressure and intensive digital exposure, a contextual and applicable psychospiritual approach is needed. *Tazkiyah al-nafs*, as a concept of soul purification in Islamic tradition, offers a foundation for developing inner resilience and self-regulation. Unlike previous studies that primarily position *tazkiyah al-nafs* within moral or

²⁸ Muhammad Hasyim, "Pendidikan Karakter Holistik Di Era Disrupsi: Mengintegrasikan Konsep Tazkiyatun Nafs Imam Al-Ghazali," *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (August 2024): 113–20, <https://doi.org/10.54437/urwatulwutsqo.v11i1.1748>.

²⁹ Abdul Ghofar, Usman Abubakar, and Muhammad Azhar, "Tazkiyatun Nafs as A Strength Base of Teacher Personality Competency," *IJISH (International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities)* 1, no. 2 (October 2018): 128–40, <https://doi.org/10.26555/ijish.v1i2.559>.

³⁰ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Erva Dewi Arqomi Puspita, and Muqit Nur Rohman, "Tazkiyat Al-Nafs of Syekh Nawawi Al-Bantani (1814-1897 Ad) As an Antidote to Consumerism Culture," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 32, no. 1 (March 2024): 45, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v32i1.25583>.

³¹ Rizka Sarofah Rizka et al., "Tazkiyatun Nafs Terminology: Buya Hamka's View," *Journal of Research in Islamic Education* 5, no. 2 (December 2023): 118–27, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jrie.v5i2.4153>.

character development, this study proposes a novel perspective by reframing it as a structured psychospiritual resilience framework for Generation Z, integrating classical Sufi constructs—such as *muhāsabah*, patience, and spiritual reinforcement—into the context of contemporary mental health challenges.

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method combined with conceptual content analysis to examine Al-Ghazali's thought on *tazkiyah al-nafs* as a mental resilience framework for Generation Z within the perspective of Islamic psychology.³² Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of this study is Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' Ulūm al-Dīn*, which is selected due to its comprehensive and systematic exposition of ethical, spiritual, and psychological dimensions of the self, making it the most authoritative work for understanding the concept of self-purification within Al-Ghazali's intellectual framework. Other works, such as *Kitāb Mīzān al-'Amāl*, *Kimyā al-Sa'ādah*, *Ma'ārij al-Quds fī Ma'rīfah al-Nafs*, and *Al-Arba'īn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, are used as supporting sources to complement specific aspects of the discussion, particularly in relation to ethical refinement, spiritual development, and the structure of the soul. Secondary sources include recent peer-reviewed journal articles (2020–2025) focusing on mental health, psychological resilience, and spiritual coping among Generation Z, published in English and Indonesian, with selection criteria prioritizing studies that explicitly address youth mental health and resilience in contemporary contexts.



Diagram 1. Conceptual Framework of Gen Z Sufism

The data analysis technique used in this research is qualitative content analysis, which enables the systematic identification,

³² Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2008).

categorization, and interpretation of conceptual meanings within the selected texts.³³ The analysis is conducted through a thematic coding process based on four analytical categories: (1) the characteristics of Generation Z, (2) the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, (3) the dimensions of *takballī*, *tahallī*, and *tajallī*, and (4) the concept of psychological resilience (see diagram 1). First, data related to the characteristics of Generation Z are coded to identify key psychological challenges faced in contemporary contexts. Second, this study analyzes relevant texts to extract core concepts of *tazkiyah al-nafs* as a framework for self-purification. Third, the dimensions of *takballī*, *tahallī*, and *tajallī*—interpreted through Al-Ghazali’s works—are thematically coded and mapped onto the specific psychosocial challenges of Generation Z. Finally, these findings are synthesized to construct a conceptual linkage between spiritual development and mental resilience, highlighting how the process of self-purification contributes to emotional regulation, meaning-making, and existential stability.

Thus, the psychological challenges experienced by Generation Z can be understood as increasingly complex and multidimensional, involving not only emotional conditions such as stress, anxiety, and depression, but also deeper issues related to self-worth, identity formation, and emotional regulation. Continuous exposure to social media, academic competition, and uncertainty about the future may intensify psychological pressure that is often difficult to manage. As a result, many young individuals tend to experience emotional exhaustion, loneliness, and difficulties in maintaining mental balance. This condition indicates that the mental health challenges of Generation Z should not be understood merely as individual problems, but also as social consequences of living in a highly competitive, fast-paced, and increasingly digitalized environment.

³³ Nanang Martono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif: Analisis Isi Dan Analisis Data Sekunder (Sampel Halaman Gratis)* (RajaGrafindo Persada, 2010).

Psychological Challenges of Generation Z

Generation Z refers to individuals born between the mid-1995s and early 2010s who have grown up in an intensely digital environment.³⁴ According to Jean M. Twenge, this generation is characterized by a high level of technological connectedness and a stronger tendency toward individualism compared to previous generations.³⁵ This condition shapes patterns of social interaction that are largely mediated through digital platforms, leading individuals to construct their identities based on external validation.³⁶ As a result, standards of success and social acceptance are increasingly influenced by representations on social media, which often do not reflect reality, thereby contributing to heightened psychological pressure.

This digital condition significantly shapes Generation Z's psychological vulnerability to various mental health problems. Sao et al. which found that excessive social media use is directly associated with heightened levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, particularly among individuals with higher psychological vulnerability.³⁷ Moreover, intensive digital interaction reinforces the habit of social comparison and dependence on external validation, causing many individuals to base their self-worth on the judgments of others. In line with this, Harefa et al. explain that social media use among Generation Z not only triggers anxiety and depression,

³⁴ Hananel Rosenberg, Menahem Blondheim, and Chen Sabag-Ben Porat, "Who in the World Is Generation Z? The Rise of Mobile Natives and Their Socio-Technological Identity," *Societies* 15, no. 11 (November 2025): 314, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc15110314>.

³⁵ Twenge, "Generations: The Real Differences between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America's Future."

³⁶ Nicholas Santer, Adriana Manago, and Rachel Bleisch, "Narratives of the Self in Polymedia Contexts: Authenticity and Branding in Generation Z.," *Qualitative Psychology* 10, no. 1 (February 2023): 79–106, <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000232>.

³⁷ Ruchi Sao et al., "Social Media and Gen Z's Mental Well-Being: Impact of Excessive Usage on Anxiety, Stress, and Depression Levels Analysis," *Purnusbartha- A Journal of Management, Ethics and Spirituality* 17, no. 1 (December 2024): 23–38, <https://doi.org/10.21844/16202117102>.

but also leads to sleep disturbances, reduced social functioning, and increased feelings of loneliness caused by psychological isolation.³⁸ Furthermore, keles et al. show that continuous exposure to social media can worsen psychological distress, as individuals tend to compare their real lives with the idealized representations displayed in digital spaces.³⁹ These conditions indicate that the psychological challenges faced by Generation Z are not merely individual problems, but also structural consequences of living in an increasingly digitalized social environment.

Beyond the influence of social media, the mental health challenges of Generation Z are also shaped by increasing academic demands and the complexity of social life. Suliman et al. demonstrated that the imbalance between academic responsibilities and personal life, worsened by excessive digital exposure, significantly contributes to higher levels of stress, depression, and burnout among students.⁴⁰ Academic competition, uncertainty about future careers, and the pressure to constantly achieve success often create emotional exhaustion and psychological instability. This finding is supported by Akbar et al., who identified that the rising prevalence of mental health disorders among Generation Z is driven by a combination of digital fatigue, academic pressure, and unstable social dynamics.⁴¹ These conditions show that

³⁸ Juli Tri Vemina Harefa et al., “Stress, Anxiety, Depression and Social Media in Generation Z: A Scoping Review,” *Journal of Mental Health Concerns* 4, no. 3 (August 2025): 174–87, <https://doi.org/10.56922/mhc.v4i3.1362>.

³⁹ Betül Keles, Niall McCrae, and Annmarie Grealish, “A Systematic Review: The Influence of Social Media on Depression, Anxiety and Psychological Distress in Adolescents,” *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 25, no. 1 (December 2020): 79–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851>.

⁴⁰ Shireen Suliman et al., “Is Medical Training Solely to Blame? Generational Influences on the Mental Health of Our Medical Trainees,” *Medical Education Online* 29, no. 1 (December 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10872981.2024.2329404>.

⁴¹ Bintang Mukhammad Burhanudin Akbar, Dini Rahma Dwi Prawesti, and Wikan Swadesi Arum Perbani, “Big Picture Mental Health of Generation Z in The World,” *Jurnal Kesehatan Komunitas Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (April 2024): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.58545/jkki.v4i1.223>.

Generation Z faces multidimensional psychological pressures that affect not only emotional well-being but also their ability to build resilience and maintain mental stability. Therefore, addressing these challenges requires approaches that go beyond conventional psychological interventions and include deeper emotional and spiritual dimensions.

Mental Characteristics of the Strawberry Generation

The term “Strawberry Generation” refers to Generation Z, a cohort born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, who are often perceived as bright and impressive on the outside but fragile when confronted with pressure.⁴² In comparative studies, Gen Z demonstrates significantly lower resilience levels ($\bar{p} < 0.05$) than Gen X when facing crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴³ Their character is shaped by the digital era, instant culture, and protective parenting styles which, while enhancing technological adaptability, simultaneously weaken emotional endurance.

Although often labeled as fragile, Generation Z possesses strengths in creativity and technology. Studies show that technology-based learning methods such as flipped classrooms and gamification are highly effective for them.⁴⁴ This is evident in cultural revitalization initiatives, such as the digitalization of Wayang Kulit by Gen Z youth, which demonstrates their ability to harmonize traditional values with modern innovation.⁴⁵ Their

⁴² Chandra Apriyansyah, Sri Sukatmi, and Lily Muliana Mustafa, “Mitigating Strawberry Generation Risks Through Multiple Learning Strategies in Kindergarten,” *Child Education Journal* 5, no. 2 (November 2023): 120–32, <https://doi.org/10.33086/cej.v5i2.4345>.

⁴³ Tali Te’eni Harari, Yaron Sela, and Liad Bareket-Bojmel, “Gen Z during the COVID-19 Crisis: A Comparative Analysis of the Differences between Gen Z and Gen X in Resilience, Values and Attitudes,” *Current Psychology* 42, no. 28 (October 2023): 24223–32, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03501-4>.

⁴⁴ Su-Fen Cheng, “Application of Creative Teaching,” *Hu Li Za Zhi The Journal of Nursing* 65, no. 6 (December 2018): 4, [https://doi.org/10.6224/JN.201812_65\(6\).01](https://doi.org/10.6224/JN.201812_65(6).01).

⁴⁵ Vinothini Kasinathan, Geetha A. Rubasundram, and Wong Chai Fuu,

aesthetic sensitivity and adaptive abilities make them pioneers in various forms of creative content.

Social and environmental awareness also characterizes Gen Z. Research notes that they experience eco-anxiety as a genuine concern over the global climate crisis, particularly in Global South countries.⁴⁶ In the realm of investment, 72% of Gen Z respondents consider sustainability important, although only a minority actively invests in green products.⁴⁷ In spirituality, applications such as Skylight show that intensive use can reduce anxiety by up to 2.58 points (\bar{p} 0.001) on the DASS scale.⁴⁸

However, behind these strengths lies a darker side. A study in Turkey reveals that most Gen Z university students feel pessimistic about the future, driven by career uncertainty, economic pressure, and aspirations to migrate abroad.⁴⁹ In workplace settings, HR professionals report that Gen Z experiences burnout more quickly due to a gap between personal expectations and organizational realities.⁵⁰ Even in nursing education, 58% of first-year students

“Revitalizing Ancestral Values through Technology: Using Wayang Kulit to Engage Gen Z in Cultural and Educational Innovation,” *Journal of Ecobumanism* 3, no. 7 (October 2024): 2940–52, <https://doi.org/10.62754/joc.v3i7.4429>.

⁴⁶ Irida Tsevreni et al., “Generation Z Worries, Suffers and Acts against Climate Crisis—The Potential of Sensing Children’s and Young People’s Eco-Anxiety: A Critical Analysis Based on an Integrative Review,” *Climate* 11, no. 8 (August 2023): 171, <https://doi.org/10.3390/cli11080171>.

⁴⁷ Inga Pašiušienė et al., “Exploring Generation Z’s Investment Patterns and Attitudes towards Greenness,” *Sustainability* 16, no. 1 (December 2023): 352, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16010352>.

⁴⁸ Park et al., “A Spiritual Self-Care Mobile App (Skylight) for Mental Health, Sleep, and Spiritual Well-Being Among Generation Z and Young Millennials: Cross-Sectional Survey.”

⁴⁹ Gül Dikeç et al., “The Perceptions of Generation Z University Students about Their Futures: A Qualitative Study,” *Sci* 5, no. 4 (December 2023): 45, <https://doi.org/10.3390/sci5040045>.

⁵⁰ Catarina Gomes et al., “Practical Recommendations for a Post COVID-19 Resilient Generation Z Workforce,” *Human Systems Management* 42, no. 1 (January 2023): 105–11, <https://doi.org/10.3233/HSM-220050>.

exhibit moderate to high anxiety levels according to the GAD-7 scale.⁵¹

As a form of escape, Gen Z often turns to impulsive behaviors such as overeating. Studies show that although they are aware of healthy lifestyles, stress triggers emotional eating, leading to obesity and feelings of guilt.⁵² Social media dependency further disrupts emotional balance. In a survey of 415 respondents, Gen Z scored an average of 7.7/21 for anxiety and 6.7/16 for stress, indicating a borderline tendency toward emotional disorders.⁵³ Other research shows that Gen Z is more likely to share personal data on social media due to reference-group pressure and a strong need for social acceptance. Positive attitudes toward personalized advertising and susceptibility to group pressure significantly increase their intention to disclose personal information.⁵⁴

High emotionality also makes Gen Z more vulnerable to social pressure. In Germany, work–life balance was found to be a significant predictor of stress ($\beta = -0.404$; $p = 0.001$) and anxiety ($\beta = -0.256$; $p = 0.001$).⁵⁵ During the shift to online learning amid the pandemic, many Gen Z nursing students experienced loneliness,

⁵¹ Deborah Flynn and Stuart Barker, “Comparison of First-Year Nursing Students’ GAD-7 Scores: A Pilot Study Focusing on Generation Z,” *British Journal of Nursing* 33, no. 12 (June 2024): 546–51, <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjon.2023.0080>.

⁵² Constantinos-Vasilios Priporas, Durga Vellore-Nagarajan, and Irene (Eirini) Kamenidou, “Stressful Eating Indulgence by Generation Z: A Cognitive Conceptual Framework of New Age Consumers’ Obesity,” *European Journal of Marketing* 56, no. 11 (November 2022): 2978–3006, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-06-2021-0386>.

⁵³ Vibha Sharma and Dr. Krishan Veer Singh, “The Influence of Generation Z’s Addiction to Social Media on Their Emotional Well-Being,” *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice* 29, no. 4 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.53555/kuecy.v30i4.2549>.

⁵⁴ Zoltán Rózsa et al., “Generation Z’s Perception of Privacy on Social Media: Examining the Impact of Personalized Advertising, Interpersonal Relationships, Reference Group Dynamics, Social Isolation, and Anxiety on Self-Disclosure Willingness,” *Oeconomia Copernicana* 15, no. 1 (March 2024): 229–66, <https://doi.org/10.24136/oc.2956>.

⁵⁵ Adedeji et al., “Work-Life Balance and Mental Health Outcomes for Generation Z in Germany.”

academic stress, and loss of motivation.⁵⁶ Another study highlights gender differences in adolescent internet use: females tend to use digital media for emotional and social engagement—such as building relationships and seeking appearance validation—whereas males engage more in competitive activities like online games and activity-based bonding.⁵⁷

One root cause of the ‘Strawberry Generation’ phenomenon is overly protective parenting that provides minimal exposure to life’s challenges. A qualitative study in the Ozark community in the U.S. shows that parental stress and intergenerational trauma influence the emotional and behavioral patterns of Gen Z children.⁵⁸ In medical education, excessive use of social media and poor work–life balance are linked to increased symptoms of depression and burnout among medical students.⁵⁹ Conversely, parenting style itself does not show a direct significant relationship to these risks.⁶⁰ Rather, it is dependence on external support systems that weakens their personal resilience.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Jingying Chen et al., “Development and Status of Moral Education Research: Visual Analysis Based on Knowledge Graph,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (January 2023): 1079955, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1079955>.

⁵⁷ Adriana M. Manago, Abigail S. Walsh, and Logan L. Barsigian, “The Contributions of Gender Identification and Gender Ideologies to the Purposes of Social Media Use in Adolescence,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (January 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1011951>.

⁵⁸ Sarah Oerther, “Parenting Generation Z Pre-Teen Children in Rural Communities in the Ozark Mountains: A Paradigm Case from an Interpretive Phenomenological Study,” *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* 60, no. 11 (November 2022): 12–16, <https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20220907-01>.

⁵⁹ Abdullah Alsabaani, Abdullah Ali Alshahrani, and Abdullah Saeed Abukaftah, “Association between Over-Use of Social Media and Depression among Medical Students, King Khalid University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” *The Egyptian Journal of Hospital Medicine* 70, no. 8 (January 2018): 1305–11, <https://doi.org/10.12816/0044639>.

⁶⁰ Ying Zhang and Weimin Gou, “The Effect of Passive Social Media Use on Learning Burnout in Middle School Students,” *Region - Educational Research and Reviews* 6, no. 10 (October 2024): 123, <https://doi.org/10.32629/rerr.v6i10.2713>.

⁶¹ Cartwright-Stroupe and Shiners, “Moving Forward Together: What Hope, Efficacy, Optimism, and Resilience Tell Us About Generation Z.”

High academic and social pressures further exacerbate their mental conditions. A study shows that the duration of clinical practice—whether short or long—does not significantly improve Gen Z's job readiness, indicating the need for psychosocial rather than merely technical approaches.⁶² Moreover, their low attachment to historical values or the collective experiences of previous generations weakens long-term resilience foundations, including in the context of major humanitarian tragedies such as the Hiroshima bombing.⁶³ Here lies the real challenge: how to cultivate a generation that is not only intelligent but also mentally and emotionally strong.

Reinterpreting *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* in Contemporary Context

Tazkiyah al-nafs refers to the process of purifying the soul, which focuses on controlling internal impulses while cultivating positive spiritual qualities.⁶⁴ This concept is grounded in the understanding that an individual's inner state is not solely shaped by external factors, but also by internal dynamics such as desires, ego, and destructive tendencies. In Islamic thought, the soul is regarded as the center of consciousness that determines human behavior and overall life balance. Therefore, the process of purification is not limited to moral formation, but also aims to establish emotional stability and enduring inner peace.

This perspective suggests that psychological disturbances cannot be separated from an individual's spiritual condition. Rassool and Luqman demonstrate that, within Islamic psychology, spiritual diseases such as envy, arrogance, and excessive attachment

⁶² Catherine A. Schmitt and Rachele J. Lancaster, "Readiness to Practice in Generation Z Nursing Students," *Journal of Nursing Education* 58, no. 10 (October 2019): 604–6, <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20190923-09>.

⁶³ Danielle Samler and Christian N. Ciobanu, "Waking Up Generation Z," *Peace Review* 32, no. 3 (July 2020): 332–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2020.1867350>.

⁶⁴ Wahyu Adytia Wardana, "Integration of Islamic Spiritual Values in Tazkiyatun Nafs for the Recovery of Narcotic Addiction Clients," *Al-Wa'iyah* 1, no. 2 (November 2025): 52–68, <https://doi.org/10.51590/wai.v1i2.14>.

to worldly matters are closely associated with psychological distress, and therefore require spiritually grounded interventions such as remembrance of God, patience, and strengthening of faith as therapeutic approaches.⁶⁵ This indicates that *tazkiyatun nafs* functions not merely as a normative concept, but as a therapeutic mechanism capable of regulating emotions and fostering deep self-regulation.

The conceptualization of *tazkiyah al-nafs* is further systematized in the works of Al-Ghazali, who integrates spiritual, ethical, and psychological dimensions into a coherent framework. In *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Dīn*, Al-Ghazali explains that the human soul possesses dual tendencies, inclining both toward virtue and vice. As such, self-regulation is not merely a moral act, but an internal process that determines the quality of one's inner life.⁶⁶ This perspective highlights that mental well-being, within the Islamic framework, is deeply connected to spiritual awareness and the ability to manage internal impulses.

Furthermore, the process of *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be understood as a gradual and integrative progression involving the removal of negative traits, the cultivation of virtuous qualities, and the attainment of higher spiritual awareness. In this context, the stages of *takballī*, *taḥallī*, and *tajallī* are used as an analytical framework to interpret Al-Ghazali's exposition on self-purification. The stage of *takballī* involves the purification of the self from negative traits such as anger, envy, and arrogance, which are described by Al-Ghazali as sources of imbalance within the soul.⁶⁷ The stage of *taḥallī* focuses on cultivating positive virtues such as patience, gratitude,

⁶⁵ G. Hussein Rassool and Mugheera Luqman, "Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyah's Islāmic Psychology: Psychological and Spiritual Diseases," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 25, no. 2 (April 2023): 144–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2022.2068467>.

⁶⁶ Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' Ulūm Al-Dīn*, ed. Zainuddin Abi al-Fadhl Al-'Iraqiy, 1st ed. (Beirut-Lebanon: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2005).

⁶⁷ Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Ma'ārij Al-Quds Fī Madārij Ma'rīfah Al-Nafs*, 2nd ed. (Beirut-Lebanon: Dar al-Afaq al-Hadidah, 1988).

and reliance on God, which contribute to inner stability and ethical refinement.⁶⁸ Finally, *tajallī* represents a higher stage of spiritual realization, characterized by inner tranquility and clarity of meaning, corresponding to what Al-Ghazali describes as the culmination of spiritual development.⁶⁹ This framework demonstrates that *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be viewed as a holistic process encompassing emotional, cognitive, and spiritual dimensions.

In contemporary contexts, *tazkiyah al-nafs* holds significant relevance as an alternative framework for addressing the mental health challenges faced by Generation Z. Terblanche and Abrahams argue that Islamic psychology provides a holistic model integrating self-reflection, spiritual growth, and social support as key components of well-being.⁷⁰ While Okan et al. demonstrate that spiritual coping mechanisms significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and depression and enhance psychological resilience through adaptive internal processes.⁷¹ This is particularly relevant for Generation Z, whose mental health is increasingly shaped by digital pressure and identity uncertainty; consequently, spiritually grounded practices are vital for strengthening their emotional regulation and resilience.⁷² Therefore, *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be understood as a psychospiritual resilience framework that complements modern psychological

⁶⁸ Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Kīmīyā' Al-Sa'ādah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur'an, 1987).

⁶⁹ Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Kitāb al-Arba'in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Cairo: al-Istiqāma, 1920).

⁷⁰ Dawood Terblanche and Shamila Abrahams, "Integrating Maqāsīd Al-Sharī'ah into Islamic Psychology: Towards a Holistic Approach to Mental Health and Well-Being," *Al-Wasatiyyah* 3, no. 3 (November 2024): 114–49, <https://doi.org/10.58409/ipsajias.v3i3.37>.

⁷¹ Nesrullah Okan et al., "Harnessing Spiritual Coping to Foster Resilience: Insights from Post-Trauma Mental Health after the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12, no. 1 (June 2025): 857, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05318-5>.

⁷² Luluk Ifadah et al., "The Self and Students' Mental Health: Integrating Spirituality and Islamic Education," *At Tuots: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (June 2025): 288–98, <https://doi.org/10.51468/jpi.v7i1.935>.

approaches by incorporating deeper dimensions of meaning and existential awareness.

The Urgency of Al-Ghazali's *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* in the Contemporary Era

Tazkiyah al-nafs, or purification of the soul, is a fundamental component of Islamic spiritual teachings. This concept emphasizes freeing the soul from blameworthy traits and attaining true recognition of God. Al-Ghazali, through the principle of *takhalluq bi akhlāq Allāh*, underscores the importance of *tazkiyah al-nafs* as the path to genuine happiness—achieved by embodying divine attributes in one's behavior.⁷³ In the contemporary era marked by hedonism, identity crises, and the pressures of daily life, *tazkiyah al-nafs* has become increasingly relevant as a method for maintaining mental health, strengthening character, and cultivating spiritual resilience.⁷⁴ Al-Ghazālī formulates the classical Sufi concept of soul purification through three essential stages: *takhallī* (emptying), *taḥallī* (adorning), and *tajallī* (illumination). These stages form a sequential and complementary structure of spiritual development.

The first stage, *takhallī*, involves purifying oneself from spiritual diseases such as ostentation (*riyā'*), self-admiration (*'ujub*), envy (*ḥasad*), and excessive worldly attachment.⁷⁵ Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the struggle against desire (*nafs*) is a dynamic process that cannot be addressed with gentleness alone. He states, “*When the passions surge and are difficult to restrain, mere gentleness is of no*

⁷³ Yousef Casewit, “Al-Ghazālī’s Virtue Ethical Theory of the Divine Names: The Theological Underpinnings of the Doctrine of Takhalluq in Al-Maqṣad Al-Asnā,” *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 4, no. 1–2 (December 2020): 155–200, <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340042>.

⁷⁴ Rassool and Luqman, “Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawzīyah’s Islāmic Psychology: Psychological and Spiritual Diseases.”

⁷⁵ Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Kitāb Mīzān al-'Amal* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, 1979).

benefit; you must constantly pull against them as they pull against you'.⁷⁶ In the modern era, this effort is vital as a form of resistance against ego domination and digital distractions. Correspondingly, Khalil asserts that repentance (*taubah*) and seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*) constitute practical forms of *takhallī* and serve as foundational steps for spiritual transformation.⁷⁷

Once the inner space is purified, Al-Ghazali describes *taḥallī* as the stage of adorning the soul with praiseworthy virtues such as patience, gratitude, detachment (*zuhd*), and humility. He emphasizes the importance of righteous deeds rooted in spiritual awareness, stating, "Perform all righteous acts, and you shall be elevated and honored in this temporary world, and on the Day of the Hereafter you shall attain closeness and nobility from your Lord, Mighty and Majestic".⁷⁸ Thus, *taḥallī* is not merely ethical practice but a process of educating the soul toward a higher spiritual station. Makmudi adds that this stage is cultivated through *dzīkir*, *muhāsabah*, and consistent virtuous actions integrated into daily life.⁷⁹

The culmination of this spiritual journey is *tajallī*, a state in which the purified and adorned soul reflects divine light. Al-Ghazali refers to human *fiṭrah* as the natural vessel for witnessing God's oneness, writing that "the children of Adam are created upon *fiṭrah*, believing in God, Mighty and Majestic; indeed, everything is known to them by this natural disposition".⁸⁰ *Tajallī* is not an elitist experience exclusive to Sufi mystics but the peak of complete existential awareness. Subandi et al. describe *tajallī* as the product of integrating purification and adornment of the soul, resulting in tranquility, meaning in life, and

⁷⁶ Al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

⁷⁷ Atif Khalil, "Atonement, Returning, and Repentance in Islam," *Religions* 14, no. 2 (January 2023): 168, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020168>.

⁷⁸ Al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

⁷⁹ Makmudi Makmudi, "Concept of Spiritual Education: A Perspective of Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah," *Al-Wasathiyah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (July 2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.56672/alwasathiyah.v1i1.11>.

⁸⁰ Al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

a deep transcendent relationship with God in daily living.⁸¹

The implementation of *tazkiyah al-nafs* in contemporary life extends beyond the individual and into the collective sphere. For example, the urban Sufi community “Kopiah” in Jayapura practices spiritual cultivation through *dzikir*, jurisprudence study, and faith-based discussions that internalize the principles of *takballi*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*.⁸² This contextual approach addresses the needs of urban societies, offering a spiritual alternative to modern environments often characterized by superficiality. In the field of education, *tazkiyah al-nafs* is applied in character development for teachers and students. Insani et al. illustrate how Javanese women in the text *Serat Murtasih* undergo these stages as spiritual practices within domestic life.⁸³ The concept can be adopted in character education curricula, where teachers serve as spiritual exemplars shaping students who are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally and spiritually mature. Over the long term, this fosters an educational ecosystem balanced between intellect and heart.

In legal and cultural contexts, *tazkiyah al-nafs* is also implemented through systems such as the Butonese *Fiqh Kankilo*. Alifuddin et al. note that soul purification in this tradition is expressed through customary ceremonies and legal norms emphasizing inner cleanliness.⁸⁴ This demonstrates that Islamic spiritual values can

⁸¹ M. A. Subandi, Lu'luatul Chizanah, and S. Subhan, “Psychotherapeutic Dimensions of an Islamic-Sufi-Based Rehabilitation Center: A Case Study,” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 46, no. 2 (June 2022): 582–601, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-021-09738-1>.

⁸² Muhammad Thohri and Prosmala Hadisaputra, “Typology and Strengthening Strategy of Urban Sufism among the Kopiah Community in Jayapura,” *Ulumuna* 26, no. 1 (June 2022): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v26i1.475>.

⁸³ Nur Hanifah Insani, Erna Andriyanti, And Endang Nurhayati, “Exploring Javanese Female Sufism In Serat Murtasih: A Study Of Women’s Representation Of Religious Values In The Domestic Realm Within Modern Western Contexts,” *Hamdard Islamius* 47, no. 2 (June 2024): 89–115, <https://doi.org/10.57144/hi.v47i2.707>.

⁸⁴ Muhammad Alifuddin et al., “Fiqh Kankilo and the Purification System of the Butonese People: A Socio-Legal Historical Perspective of Islamic Law and Legal Pluralism,” *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (July 2024): 1165,

harmonize with local wisdom, making *tazkiyah al-nafs* a flexible and contextual concept rather than a rigid one. A similar perspective is presented by Khalid et al. in their interpretation of Surah *Al-Shams*, highlighting the importance of deeds and intention in the purification process.⁸⁵

In therapeutic and rehabilitative settings, Laksana et al. show the success of applying *tazkiyah al-nafs* in drug rehabilitation programs.⁸⁶ In the Sufism Healing rehabilitation pesantren, participants undergo *takhallī* to cleanse themselves from addiction, *tahallī* to instill spiritual values, and *tajallī* as a stage of enlightenment and reintegration into society. This approach has been shown to significantly improve patient behavior and psychological stability, demonstrating that *tazkiyah al-nafs* is not only theologically relevant but also effective as a practical intervention for modern spiritual crises.

Al-Ghazali's Tazkiyah al-Nafs as a Mental Resilience Strategy for the Strawberry Generation

In facing the pressures of modern life, Generation Z—often referred to as the 'Strawberry Generation' due to perceived emotional fragility—requires approaches that transcend technical solutions and incorporate spiritual dimensions. *Tazkiyaal-nafs*, the Islamic process of soul purification, can serve as a holistic strategy for strengthening mental resilience. Al-Ghazali teaches that inner steadfastness is attained through subduing the ego (*hawa nafsu*) and recognizing God's attributes through the stages of *takhallī*,

<https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.21578>.

⁸⁵ Muhammad Ilham Khalid et al., "Tazkiyat Al-Nafs Fī Sūrah Al-Syams Min Khilālī Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-'Azīm Li Ibn Ka'ir (Tafsīran Wa Istīnbā'an)," *Civilization Research: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2022): 94–116, <https://doi.org/10.61630/crjis.v1i1.9>.

⁸⁶ Andri Winjaya Laksana et al., "The Sufism Healing as an Alternative Rehabilitation for Drug Addicts and Abusers," *Qijis (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 11, no. 1 (August 2023): 149, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v11i1.15025>.

tahallī, and *tajallī*.⁸⁷ Within this framework, resilience is not merely endurance but rising again with spiritual awareness. The mental resilience of today's youth is frequently tested by the flood of digital information, academic pressures, and increasingly complex social expectations.

Gomes et al. shows that Gen Z is more prone to anxiety, stress, and burnout.⁸⁸ Here, *tazkiyah al-nafs* becomes significant as an inward mechanism for stress regulation. The stage of *takhallī*, for instance, trains individuals to identify and release traits such as anger, envy, and worldly attachment—factors that destabilize emotions. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the ongoing struggle in managing the ego, noting that the heart reaches stability only through a continual process of pulling and being pulled by one's desires⁸⁹. This demonstrates that mental stability is not an instant result but the product of consistent inner effort. This stands in contrast to the instant-oriented character of Gen Z, shaped by fast-paced digital culture. Thus, *takhallī* is not merely emotional detoxification but a transformation of character that strengthens the capacity to withstand social and existential pressures.

Table 1. Mapping the Resilience of Tazkiyatun Nafs to Generation Z's Challenges

Gen Z Problems	Tazkiyatun Nafs	Positive Impact
Stress, anxiety, easily experiencing burnout	<i>Takhallī</i>	Calms the mind and reduces negative emotions

⁸⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

⁸⁸ Gomes et al., "Practical Recommendations for a Post COVID-19 Resilient Generation Z Workforce"; Sharma and Veer Singh, "The Influence of Generation Z's Addiction to Social Media on Their Emotional Well-Being."

⁸⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

Gen Z Problems	Tazkiyatun Nafs	Positive Impact
Dependence on social media and external validation	<i>Takhallī – Tahallī</i>	Cultivates patience and gratitude; reduces dependence on others' approval
Loss of life meaning	<i>Tahallī</i>	Develops a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in life
Easily giving up when facing failure	<i>Tahallī – Tajallī</i>	Develops patience and tawakal; views failure as a lesson
Feeling lonely and isolated	<i>Tajallī</i>	Enhances closeness to God and inner tranquility
Consumptive and hedonistic lifestyle	<i>Takhallī – Tahallī</i>	Encourages simplicity and self-control
Emotional instability and poor self-regulation	<i>Takhallī–Tahallī–Tajallī</i>	Builds comprehensive mental and spiritual resilience

The stage of *tahallī*, which instills virtues such as patience, gratitude, and humility, is highly relevant for Gen Z, who often face performative pressure on social media. When self-worth is frequently assessed through external validation, the internalization of divine values through *tahallī* offers a stable psychological anchor. In the context of positive psychology, *tahallī* nurtures meaning in life and self-confidence that does not depend on outside acknowledgment.⁹⁰ The practice of *tahallī* also activates spiritual resilience by expanding the meaning of hardship. When Gen Z faces failure or loss, values such as *ri'ā* and trust (*tawakkal*) do not promote passive surrender but serve as reorientations of meaning that fortify inner endurance. Thus, *tahallī* not only shapes moral character but also builds constructive psychological coping strategies.

⁹⁰ Makmudi, "Concept of Spiritual Education: A Perspective of Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah."

The culmination of *tazkiyah al-nafs* is *tajalli*, the illumination of consciousness by divine light. In the domain of resilience, *tajalli* functions as a contemplative space where individuals reconstruct life experiences through a transcendent lens. Subandi et al. explain that *tajalli* brings tranquility and spiritual meaning that contribute to long-term mental endurance.⁹¹ Amid rising burnout and crises of meaning among students and young professionals, the concept of *tajalli* may offer a complementary dimension in addressing existential distress. Alahri et al. demonstrate that spiritual well-being is strongly associated with reduced anxiety and depression, while also enhancing resilience through a deeper sense of connection with a higher meaning and purpose.⁹² In this context, *tajalli* can be understood as a form of heightened spiritual awareness that facilitates meaning-making beyond immediate material concerns.⁹³ Rather than replacing cognitive-based approaches, it may complement them by introducing an existential and spiritual dimension in resilience-building, particularly among younger individuals facing identity uncertainty and psychological pressure.

As a practical example, urban Sufi communities such as Kopiah in Jayapura demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating *dzikir* and *muhāsabah* to maintain psychological stability among their members.⁹⁴ In this community, *tazkiyah al-nafs* is practiced collectively, forming a spiritual support system. For Gen Z—who frequently feel isolated—this approach is relevant for fostering emotional cohesion and shared meaning. In educational settings, *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be incorporated into character development

⁹¹ Subandi, Chizannah, and Subhan, “Psychotherapeutic Dimensions of an Islamic-Sufi-Based Rehabilitation Center: A Case Study.”

⁹² Mehdi Bazi Alahri et al., “The Protective Factor of Depression and Anxiety in the General Population in the Postcoronavirus Era: Coping, Spiritual Well-Being & Resilience,” *Medical Science* 17, no. 139 (September 2023): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.54905/disssi.v27i139.e351ms3220>.

⁹³ Al-Ghazali, *Ihyā’ Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

⁹⁴ Thohri and Hadisaputra, “Typology and Strengthening Strategy of Urban Sufism among the Kopiah Community in Jayapura.”

curricula. Insani et al. illustrate how Javanese women in the *Serat Murtasiyah* text undergo the process of *tazkiyah* in their domestic lives.⁹⁵ This model can be adapted to modern education to cultivate resilience through the integration of spiritual values in learning and daily routines.

In the field of mental health, rehabilitation pesantren such as Sufism Healing demonstrate that the structure of *tazkiyah* effectively reduces relapse and improves psychological stability among recovering addicts.⁹⁶ This shows that spiritual values are not merely idealistic discourse but have real transformative power in addressing chronic mental conditions. Conceptually, Al-Ghazali's framework of the soul—comprising *qalb*, *nafs*, and *ruh*—offers a structural understanding of resilience. In the research conducted by Achmad Reza, et al also examined that humans are creatures that have physical and non-physical entities.⁹⁷ Non-physical includes the soul (*nafs*), spirit (*ruh*), heart (*qalb*), and reason (*'aql*) where if you contract a disease it is more difficult to cure than a physical disease, because its nature is easy to change.⁹⁸ When the *qalb* is illuminated by the *ruh* through the process of *tazkiyah*, the *nafs* no longer dominates emotional reactions but instead submits to spiritual harmony. This forms psychological resilience based on inner stability rather than behavioral control alone.

Through synthesizing classical Sufi values with modern psychosocial challenges, *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be understood as a

⁹⁵ Insani, Andriyanti, and Nurhayati, "Exploring Javanese Female Sufism In Serat Murtasiyah: A Study Of Women's Representation Of Religious Values In The Domestic Realm Within Modern Western Contexts."

⁹⁶ Laksana et al., "The Sufism Healing as an Alternative Rehabilitation for Drug Addicts and Abusers."

⁹⁷ Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi, Imam Fuadi, and Ilham Dwitama Haeba, "Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Sebagai Terapi Penyakit Jiwa (Tinjauan Hadis)," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 22, no. 1 (2024): 95–120, <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v22i1.12409>.

⁹⁸ Sahidi Mustafa, "Konsep Jiwa Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 2, no. 1 (2018): 123–35, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v1i2.2485>.

cultural and spiritual intervention for strengthening the mental resilience of Gen Z (See Table 1). By reviving spiritual awareness, cultivating moral character, and reconnecting humans with transcendent reality, *tazkiyah al-nafs* addresses not only mental crises but also broadens life's horizon of meaning. Therefore, integrating *tazkiyah al-nafs* into mental resilience approaches for the Strawberry Generation is not only feasible but urgent. It bridges spirituality and psychology, linking the wisdom of classical scholars with the realities of contemporary youth. Al-Ghazali's classical insights show that *tazkiyah al-nafs* is not just an idealistic concept but a cultural strategy capable of addressing the spiritual and psychological crises of the younger generation. It fosters resilience that is not reactive but reflective—not merely surviving, but growing consciously.

The concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be understood as a potential framework for strengthening the mental resilience of Generation Z because it addresses the deeper dimensions of psychological vulnerability rather than focusing solely on visible symptoms. Contemporary psychological approaches often emphasize stress management, emotional regulation, and behavioral adaptation, while Al-Ghazali's framework highlights the importance of inner purification as the basis of psychological stability. Traits such as envy, excessive attachment to worldly success, and dependence on external validation may be interpreted as forms of spiritual imbalance that weaken resilience. Through the stage of *takhallī*, individuals are encouraged to recognize and gradually reduce these inner disturbances through self-awareness and spiritual discipline.

Furthermore, the stages of *taḥallī* and *tajallī* suggest that resilience in Islamic psychology is not merely associated with enduring hardship, but also with transforming life difficulties into meaningful spiritual growth. *Taḥallī* introduces values such as patience, gratitude, and *tawakkal*, which may help Generation Z reinterpret failure, rejection, and uncertainty in a more

constructive way. Meanwhile, *tajalli* represents a deeper awareness of transcendental meaning, allowing individuals to develop inner tranquility and existential clarity. From this perspective, *tazkiyah al-nafs* may offer a complementary model of resilience by integrating emotional regulation, moral development, and spiritual awareness within a holistic psychospiritual framework.

Conclusion

This study highlights the relevance of al-Ghazali's *tazkiyah al-nafs* as a resilience framework for Generation Z facing digital-era challenges. Through the analytical framework of *takballi*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*, the process of self-purification can be understood as a dynamic mechanism that supports emotional regulation, strengthens positive character, and enhances meaning-making. These findings suggest that *tazkiyah al-nafs* contributes not only to psychological resilience but also to existential well-being. Therefore, this study provides a vital psychospiritual bridge between classical Islamic wisdom and modern mental health practices.

The main contribution of this research lies in integrating classical Sufi perspectives into the framework of modern Islamic psychology, especially in addressing the mental health challenges faced by Generation Z. Using a literature-based approach, the study successfully connects Al-Ghazali's thought with psychological phenomena such as stress, anxiety, and burnout. However, a key limitation of this study is its theoretical nature, lacking direct empirical data from Gen Z respondents. Moreover, it does not yet explore variations in responses to *tazkiyah al-nafs* across demographic factors such as gender, educational background, or religiosity levels. Despite these limitations, the proposed conceptual framework offers a strong foundation for developing spiritually based interventions in mental health for adolescents, adults, and children.

Given these limitations, future research is encouraged to employ mixed-method or field-based qualitative approaches

involving in-depth interviews with Generation Z to capture firsthand insights into their perceptions and experiences of *tazkiyah al-nafs*. Further studies should also test the effectiveness of the *takballi*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli* stages in reducing stress indicators or improving resilience scores through experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Additionally, developing measurement instruments for *tazkiyah*-based resilience could be a crucial step in strengthening the validity of this approach within applied Islamic psychology. The integration of this concept should also be examined in educational environments, *da'wah* communities, and Islamic mental health services to ensure broader practical and policy-level impact. []

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