



**TAZKIYAH AL-NAFS AND DIGITAL PIETY:
Redefining Spiritual Practices among Older Muslim
Women**

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Abstract: This study explores the redefinition of spiritual practices through the lens of *tazkiyah al-nafs* and digital piety among urban Muslim women in the domestic sphere. Amid spiritual marginalization and urban isolation, the research examines how technology serves as a spiritual mediator and a “virtual *ṭariqah*” that facilitates religious independence. Using an interpretive phenomenological design, data were collected from ten elderly Muslim women in Jember who integrate artificial intelligence (AI) and digital devices into their daily rituals. The findings reveal the emergence of “Cyber-Sufism,” where participants actively de-institutionalize Sufi practices by establishing “*personal Islamic boarding schools*” at home. From a psychospiritual perspective, they undergo a digitally mediated dialectic of *takhallī* (reducing existential anxiety), *taḥallī* (independent spiritual learning), and *tajallī* (attaining inner peace/*nafs al-muṭma’innah*), which aligns with the theory of gerotranscendence. The study argues that this transformation creates a new spiritual agency, turning domestic spaces into sacred micro-ecologies. This research recommends developing Sufi-based digital literacy to support the aging generation in the era of disruption. The study argues that Cyber-Sufism fundamentally reconfigures the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, offering a new theoretical model of autonomous spirituality that challenges the traditional dependency on institutionalized religious structures in late-life spiritual development.

Keywords: Cyber-Sufism; *Tazkiyah al-nafs*; Gerotranscendence; Older Muslim Women; Domestic Spirituality

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Introduction

THE PHENOMENON of an aging population has become one of the most crucial sociological and psychological challenges of the 21st century. The World Health Organization (WHO) projects that by

2050, one in six people worldwide will be over 65.¹ In Indonesia, this demographic transition presents its own complexities. Statistical data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) reveals that the elderly population reached 29.2 million in 2024 (approximately 11.75% of the total population), with the Jember region of East Java recording one of the highest aging indexes in the country.² This regional trend is consistent with findings that highlight the urgency of addressing elderly policies in East Java, where increased life expectancy is not always accompanied by adequate spiritual and social support structures.³ In urban areas, elderly Muslim women are increasingly vulnerable to spiritual marginalization, a condition triggered by the shift in social structure from extended families to nuclear families.⁴ This structural change has a systemic impact on the disruption of religious value transmission and the weakening of the position of the elderly, who are traditionally positioned as the center of family wisdom.⁵ Social isolation amid the hustle and bustle of urban life contributes significantly to declining psychological well-being, particularly when physical mobility limitations and limited support from the immediate environment hinder older adults'

¹ A. Javed, "Mental Health of Older Adults: An Agenda for Action," *Consortium Psychiatricum* 3, no. 1 (2022): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.17816/cp156>. M. J. Oddone, *Prólogo* (2023), 7–12, <https://doi.org/10.31391/8x2ygf81.3>. M. De Bona and D. O. P. Aragão, *Saúde Mental e Qualidade de Vida Na Contemporaneidade e Os Desafios Para Pessoas Idosas* (2025), 63–96, <https://doi.org/10.29327/5469891.1-3>.

² Badan Pusat Statistik. *Statistik Penduduk Lanjut Usia 2024*. Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024.

³ I. B. Wirawan, M. Mayastuti, and J. Kristyono, "Trends, Problems, and Policies of The Elderly Population in East Java Indonesia," *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 37 (2022): 448–60, <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v37i1.7726>. E. Rosemalla and N. azka Wahida, "Analysis Connection Spiritual Aspects With Quality Levels Life Elderly Regency Gorontalo," *International Journal of Public Health* 1, no. 1 (2024): 12–22, <https://doi.org/10.62951/ijph.v1i1.7>.

⁴ Sehrish Malik, "Spiritual Empowerment: A Conceptual Model of Mindfulness-Based Healing for Muslim Mothers," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* (US) 96, no. 2 (2026): 129–36, <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000871>.

⁵ Eduardo Duque and José F. Durán Vázquez, "The Family in the Mirror: Generational Values and Attitudes of the Portuguese Regarding the Family," *Religions* 16, no. 9 (September 2025): 1151, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16091151>.

participation in communal religious practices at mosques or *majelis taklim* (Islamic study groups).⁶

However, amid the pressures of urban isolation, a technological paradox has emerged that redefines contemporary religious practices. The domestic space, which has long been positioned as a profane-private space, is beginning to transform into a new locus of sacredness through the phenomenon of digital religiosity.⁷ Older muslim women no longer use digital devices solely for pragmatic communication with their children or grandchildren, but also as a medium for seeking existential meaning and achieving spiritual maturity.⁸ The presence of digital dhikr applications, online religious study channels, and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based smart assistants enables older people to remain connected to the transcendent dimension without overcoming geographical or physical barriers.⁹ This integration of technology marks the birth of digital piety practices that function

⁶ D. K. Bajabir et al., "Social Isolation in Older Adults and Its Effect on Their Well-Being," *Journal of Healthcare Sciences* 04, no. 12 (2024): 898–904, <https://doi.org/10.52533/johs.2024.41232>. F. Poukhovski-Sheremetyev and I. Gold, "Lonely but Not Alone: Integrating Social Alienation and Mental Health in Urban Environments," *European Psychiatry* 68, no. S1 (2025): S955–56, <https://doi.org/10.1192/j.eurpsy.2025.1939>.

⁷ M. B. F. Wafi, N. Ilhami, and T. Taufiqurohman, "Transformasi Perilaku Beragama Masyarakat Muslim Kontemporer: Fenomena Al-Qur'an Di Era Digital," *IN RIGHT: Jurnal Agama Dan Hak Azazi Manusia* 11, no. 1 (2022): 39, <https://doi.org/10.14421/inright.v11i1.2503>. H. A. Campbell, "Looking Backwards and Forwards at the Study of Digital Religion," *Religious Studies Review* 50, no. 1 (2024): 83–87, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.17062>.

⁸ A. Al Fahrezi and A. Muhammad Noor, "Islam Dan Tantangan Dalam Era Digital: Mengembangkan Koneksi Spiritual Dalam Dunia Maya," *Al-Aufa* 5, no. 1 (2023): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.32665/alaufa.v5i1.1618>. A. Jadidi et al., "Spiritual Needs of the Muslim Elderly Living in Nursing Homes: A Qualitative Study," *Journal of Religion & Health*, 2021, 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10943-021-01263-0>.

⁹ M. Espinoza, *AI and the Elderly Empowering Lifelong Learning BT - Advances in Computational Intelligence and Robotics Book Series* (2025), 187–236, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-5097-4.ch007>. N. Eskinazi et al., "The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Improving Digital Wellness among the Elderly: A Comparative Bibliometric Analysis," in *Preprint* (2025), <https://doi.org/10.2196/preprints.71248>.

as spiritual coping mechanisms and emotional stability supports in an era of disruption.¹⁰

In this study, digital piety is understood beyond the use of tools; it is a form of spiritually mediated technological engagement, in which elderly Muslim women actively reconstruct the process of tazkiyah al-nafs within their domestic spaces.¹¹ The home no longer functions solely as a physical dwelling, but is transformed into a sacred micro-ecology where lived spiritual experiences take place phenomenologically.¹² This transformation marks a radical shift from institution-based religiosity to autonomous spiritual agency, in which elderly Muslim women negotiate meaning, soul purification, and transcendence through everyday digital practices.¹³ Therefore, this study uses a phenomenological approach to deeply capture how these experiences of digital piety shape a strong sense of spiritual independence in old age.

Although discourse on older people continues to evolve, Islamic gerontology studies still leave a substantial research gap. Conventional gerontological approaches are generally trapped in a deficit model that views aging merely as a phase of biological decline and cognitive degradation, often neglecting the potential for spiritual growth that often peaks in old age.¹⁴ Conversely, in

¹⁰ Tarsikah et al., "Ketramplan Kader Sebaya Dalam Edukasi Mempengaruhi Pengetahuan Remaja Tentang Kesehatan Reproduksi," *Jurnal Idaman* 6, no. 2 (2022): 77–83.

¹¹ A. N. Ahmad Syahir et al., "Integrating Mobile Health with Islamic Psychospiritual: Digital Approaches to Psychological and Spiritual Well-Being," *Teosofi* 15, no. 1 (2025): 229–58, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2025.15.1.229-258>. A. Hasibuan, I. F. A. Nasution, and M. A. Masuud, "Tarekat in the Digital Age: Transforming Spirituality for the Age of Technology," *Religia* 27, no. 1 (2024): 13–30, <https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v27i1.2306>.

¹² D. R. Ichwan and E. K. Ekosiwi, "A Synthesis Between Phenomenological and Naturalism Approach in Interpreting Home: A Home Bubble Theory," *Jurnal Filsafat - Fakultas Filsafat Universitas Gadjah Mada* 33, no. 1 (2023): 28, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jf.67198>. M. J. Hyde, "The Home of All Other Homes: A Phenomenological Inquiry," *Journal of Disability & Education* 2, no. 2 (2023): 103–19, <https://doi.org/10.5840/jde2023229>.

¹³ A. N. M. Panigoro, "Islam Digital Dan Negosiasi Otoritas Keagamaan," *Alhamra Jurnal Studi Islam*, 2025, 71–90, <https://doi.org/10.30595/ajsi.v6i1.20916>.

¹⁴ A. J. Bishop, "Gerontological Inquiry of Religiosity and Spirituality:

the Islamic educational tradition, discussions of tazkiyah al-nafs tend to be normative and institutional, with the hegemonic assumption that purification of the soul can only occur effectively within the ecosystem of Islamic boarding schools,¹⁵ or through the authoritative guidance of a murabbi.¹⁶ Contemporary reality shows that urban seniors are actually negotiating spirituality independently through digital media, a form of “autonomous piety” that has not yet been seriously mapped in the roadmap of Islamic educational psychology.¹⁷

This study is based on three main theoretical pillars that are dialectically interrelated. First, Lars Tornstam’s theory of Gerotranscendence is used to explain the shift in the psychological orientation of older adults from rational material interests to a broader transcendent cosmic consciousness.¹⁸ Second, Imam al-

Remembered or Forgotten Variables in the Study of Aging and Human Development?,” *International Journal of Aging & Human Development* 94, no. 1 (2022): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00914150211035709>. H. Nilsson, *The Four-Dimensional Model of Mindful Sustainable Aging: A Holistic Alternative*, 2022, 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030.2022.2083743>. Chika Jonita Lestarie Pospos et al., “DUKUNGAN SOSIAL DAN KESEPIAN LANSIA DI BANDA ACEH,” *Seurune : Jurnal Psikologi Unsyiah* 5, no. 1 (January 2022): 40–57.

¹⁵ K. A. Putra, “Konsep Pendidikan Spiritual Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Guru Madrasah* 3, no. 2 (2024): 104–17, <https://doi.org/10.69548/jigm.v3i2.44>.

¹⁶ S. Hamdani et al., “Pendekatan Tazkiyyah Al-Nafs Dalam Pengukuhan Akidah Mualaf,” *Jurnal Sains Insani* 8, no. 2 (2023): 268–74, <https://doi.org/10.33102/sainsinsani.vol8no2.506>. S. Anwar, A. Fikri, and Y. P. Izza, “Implementation of The Concept of Tazkiyat Al-Nafs Imam Al-Ghazali in The Cultivation Of Student Moral Education at The Al-Aly Bojonegoro Modern Islamic Boarding School,” *Al Ulya* 10, no. 1 (2025): 176–86, <https://doi.org/10.32665/alulya.v10i1.4210>. H. Abd Hamid and M. H. Mohamat Hadori, “Teknik Tazkiyatun An-Nafs Dalam Meningkatkan Kesadaran Diri Santri,” *At-Tawazun Counseling Journal* 1, no. 2 (2022): 70–79, <https://doi.org/10.35316/attawazun.v1i2.2058>.

¹⁷ R. Annah and S. Al Ayubi, “Negotiating Ideal Piety in Digital Age: A Mixed-Methods Study on Muslim Cyber Ethics in Indonesia,” *Komunike* 17, no. 1 (2025): 115–38, <https://doi.org/10.20414/jurkom.v17i1.13904>.

¹⁸ D. Pamuk, S. A. Faezi, and M. Efe, “Quo Vadis Gerotranscendence? A Systematic Literature Network Analysis of Existing Themes and Emerging Trends in Gerotranscendence Theory with a Focus on International Applications,” *Journal of Religion & Health*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-025-02349-9>. M. Tip, A. W. Braam, and W. van der

Ghazali's *tazkiyah al-nafs* framework is reconstructed to include the stages of *takhallī* (purification of the ego), *taḥallī* (inner adornment), and *tajallī* (enlightenment) to explain how the process of soul purification can unfold in the context of individuals without the physical guidance of traditional teachers.¹⁹ Third, the concept of Digital Piety is presented as an analytical bridge that explains how technology functions as a medium for spiritual engagement.²⁰ There, these three frameworks demonstrate that technology is not merely a threat to the authenticity of tradition but can also serve as a dialogical partner in the journey toward *nafs al-muṭma'innah*.²¹ The integration of Gerotranscendence, *tazkiyah al-nafs*, and Digital Piety in this study is grounded in an epistemological synthesis of holistic human development. Gerotranscendence provides a psychological framework for understanding aging as a process of cosmic reorientation, while *tazkiyah al-nafs* offers the spiritual pathway for navigating this transformation. Digital Piety facilitates spiritual engagement within a digital environment, particularly for older adults facing physical limitations. Rather than treating these perspectives as separate theories, this study synthesizes them to explain how digital engagement can support the traditional Sufi path of soul purification.

Building upon this synthesized framework, the novelty of this research lies in the reconstruction of the *tazkiyah al-nafs* model,

Vaart, "Gerotranscendence as a Life Perspective Among Nursing Home Residents: A Qualitative Study Into Positive Ageing While Dependent on 24/7 Care," *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.16488>.

¹⁹ H. A. Iqbal et al., "The Qur'anic Approach to Self Purification (Tazkiyah e Nafs): A Research Based Study," *Guman* 7, no. 2 (2024): 27–36, <https://doi.org/10.63075/guman.v7i2.725>. M. Hasyim, "Pendidikan Karakter Holistik Di Era Disrupsi: Mengintegrasikan Konsep Tazkiyatun Nafs Imam Al-Ghazali," *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2024): 113–20, <https://doi.org/10.54437/urwatulwutsqo.v11i1.1748>.

²⁰ S. Samantaray, S. Rout, and R. K. Panda, "The Digital Divine: Exploring the Synergy of Cyberspace and Spirituality," *IEEE Conference Proceedings (ASSIC)*, 2025, 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1109/assic64892.2025.11158651>.

²¹ S. Sn. Riyadi, R. Rozaanah, and N. A. Abdulghani, "Integrasi Teknologi Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Tasqif* 2, no. 2 (2025): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.51590/tsqf.v2i2.17>.

which has undergone de-institutionalization. The reconstruction of Sufism studies is currently shifting to emphasize character and social identity grounded in Quranic Sufism, highlighting the importance of internalizing social character in Sufism.²² This research expands this horizon into the digital realm, where the values of Quranic Sufism are manifested through the practice of Cyber-Sufism by older women in the domestic space. Unlike previous studies that emphasize the role of kiai or the communal environment of Islamic boarding schools, this research highlights the spiritual agency of elderly Muslim women in building a “personal Islamic boarding school” defined operationally as the autonomous transformation of domestic spaces into structured environments for religious study and spiritual retreat supported by AI. This finding directly challenges the sociological stigma that portrays technology as an erosion of devotion. It demonstrates that a “sacred micro-ecology” an environment where spiritual stimuli such as automated adhan or AI-guided zhikr dominate the sensory experience can actually strengthen the sovereignty of worship and the spiritual autonomy of the elderly.²³ Through a phenomenological approach, this study explores how urban Muslim women interpret spiritual independence as a form of higher levels of self-actualization.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic educational psychology that is more inclusive of older people. Understanding how technology mediates the process of spiritual purification opens up space for educational institutions and families to formulate more relevant support strategies for the aging generation in the digital age. This reconstruction of tazkiyah

²² Muchammad Fauzan Zenrif et al., “The Reconstruction of Social Sufism Studies: Quranic Sufism As the Basis of Internalizing Social Character and Identity,” *Ullumuna* 28, no. 2 (2024): 620–54, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i2.1113>.

²³ L. Danita and M. E. Yanti, “Kajian Tentang Ibadah Online Bagi Kaum Lansia Di Masa New Normal Pandemi Covid-19,” *Kharismata: Jurnal Teologi Pantekosta* 4, no. 2 (2022): 356–67, <https://doi.org/10.47167/kharis.v4i2.138>. S. A. Shamsi and S. Shahidifar, “Spiritual Care: A Forgotten Tool in the Lives of Elderly People,” *Journal of Nursing Advances in Clinical Sciences* 2, no. 4 (2025): 221–22, <https://doi.org/10.32598/jnacs.2412.1131>.

al-nafs based on digital autonomy not only offers a response to the spiritual isolation of urban older adults but also redefines Islamic education as a lifelong, transformative process (*lifelong learning*), with formal institutional barriers or physical limitations no longer constraining it.²⁴

This study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to capture the *double hermeneutic*, a process in which researchers seek to understand how participants make sense of their own spiritual experiences (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is particularly suited to this study because it enables an in-depth exploration of how older Muslim women perceive the relationship between technology and spirituality.

The study involved ten older Muslim women in Jember, a region characterized by the distinctive *Pandalungan* culture, which blends Javanese and Madurese traditions. This cultural setting is significant because the transition from traditionally communal *Pandalungan* religious practices to individual forms of digital piety reflects a distinctive process of cultural adaptation that differs from Western-centric models of aging. Participants (INF-1 to INF-10) were selected through purposive sampling based on their daily use of AI-based assistants for spiritual purposes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and reflective observations and analyzed thematically to identify patterns of spiritual meaning and religious agency, providing a holistic understanding of spiritual independence in later life.

Digital Construction of Piety: Transforming Domestic Spaces into Sacred Micro-Ecologies

The study's results show that elderly Muslim women actively reconstruct the meaning of domestic space by integrating digitally mediated piety into their daily routines. The concept of "sacred micro-ecology" in this study is grounded in the theory of mediatized sacredness, where the domestic sphere is reconfigured

²⁴ Sri Safitri Oktaviyanti, Albertus Bagus Laksana, and Dicky Sofjan, "Focolare As Instrument For Unity Toward A Cohesive Society In Indonesia," *Theology International Conference*, 2025.

into a spiritual sanctuary through digital mediation.²⁵ This transformation demonstrates that the home is no longer positioned solely as a private, functional space but is interpreted as a spiritual locus for *tazkiyah al-nafs*. Findings from the ten urban older Muslim Women (INF-1 to INF-10) reveal an ontological shift. Technology, often portrayed in gerontological discourse as a source of technostress, has instead become a relational mediator for spiritual reflexivity. As shown in Table 1, Informants INF-1, INF-3, and INF-7 consistently emphasized that AI-based voice assistants and automatic *murattal* applications are not merely assistive technologies,²⁶ but catalysts that foster a sense of spiritual proximity facilitated by immersive digital environments.²⁷

Table 1. Phenomenological Findings on Cyber-Sufism among Older Muslim Women

Informant	Key Technology	Lived Spiritual Experience
INF-1	Voice Assistant (AI)	Feels like the house is more “alive” and sacred because of the automatic recitation of the Qur’an.
INF-2	Dhikr Application	Eliminates the fear of forgetting the count of dhikr; feels more focused.
INF-3	YouTube & Zoom	Autonomy in choosing teachers; feeling like a student even at home.
INF-4	AI Voice Commands	Ensure precise prayer times without relying on others.
INF-5	Smart TV	The Kaaba’s constant visualization transforms it into a “mihrab”.

Source: Authors' interviews with informants (2025).

The data presented in Table 1 indicate that digital technology fosters a sense of empowerment and independence. By utilizing

²⁵ Campbell, “Looking Backwards and Forwards at the Study of Digital Religion.” B. Babler, “The Mediatization of Religious Practices in Urban Daily Life: The Peruvian Case,” *Religions* 14, no. 5 (2023): 649, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050649>.

²⁶ R. Trisia, “Maintaining Spiritual and Balance Technology in the AI Era,” *JKP: Jurnal Konseling Pendidikan* 13, no. 2 (2025): 150–55, <https://doi.org/10.29210/1150800>.

²⁷ I. Waseu, “Peran Teknologi Artificial Intelligence (AI) Dalam Memperkuat Dakwah Islam Di Era Digital,” *Dialogika* 1, no. 3 (2025): 257–65, <https://doi.org/10.62383/dialogika.v1i3.561>.

gadgets for *dhikr* and studying religion, the informants have effectively redefined their domestic spaces into a 'Virtual Mihrab'.²⁸ Phenomenologically, this is not a claim of a literal "voice of God" through speakers, but rather a perceived divine auditory presence mediated through digital recitation.

From an idiographic perspective, for instance, INF-6 and INF-10 use digital *shalawat* and podcasts at night to mitigate existential anxiety. Here, the double hermeneutic process occurs: while the informant interprets the automatic sound as a "peaceful lullaby" that eliminates insomnia, the researcher interprets this as a strategic use of spiritual scaffolding. This scaffolding supports the physical frailty of older people, helping them remain spiritually autonomous despite limitations. This interpretation avoids a "jump to theory" by first clarifying how the individual's daily routine (such as Friday night digital *shalawat*) serves as a personal Islamic boarding school—defined operationally as a self-managed, digitalized ecosystem for spiritual maturation.

Psychologically, the transformation of the home into a "sacred micro-ecology" has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of informants. In this context, building on the concept of *sacred micro-ecology* introduced earlier, participants described how digital religious technologies transformed their homes into spaces that supported everyday spiritual practices. The interviews with INF-2 and INF-5 reveal that the presence of automatic *azan* sounds and digital *dhikr* guidance creates a sense of security and spiritual autonomy. This empirical finding aligns with previous literature which suggests that while physical mosque attendance may be limited by health or crises, spiritual care can be sustained through communal-virtual rituals.²⁹ Furthermore, digital mediation allows

²⁸ Z. Hidayat and A. Zein, "SUFISM AND VIRTUAL PIETY: A Narration of the Millennial Murshid in North Sumatra," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 1 (2022): 133–52, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jiis.2022.16.1.133-152>. P. R. Nurhakim et al., "Digital Sufism: The Transformation of Piety in Gus Ulil's Online Teachings," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 22, no. 2 (2024): 191–218, <https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v22i2.13872>.

²⁹ M. Abdallah, "When a Crisis Empties Mosques: A Case Study of Muslim Responses to the Pandemic's Challenges in Regards to Spiritual Care and Communal Rituals in Austria and Germany," *International Journal of Practical*

elderly individuals to maintain religious behaviors similar to those practiced in traditional gatherings like *Majelis Taklim*, thus preventing spiritual isolation.³⁰ This autonomy is strategically included in the analysis through the lens of Islamic educational psychology because it addresses the core developmental task of the elderly: achieving spiritual maturity through independent *Tazkiyah al-nafs*. From this perspective, technology serves as a "spiritual scaffold" that frees the elderly from physical dependence on others, such as children or grandchildren, for basic religious needs.³¹ This independence ultimately fosters spiritual agency, enabling the elderly to autonomously control the rhythm and quality of their daily worship, which is essential for attaining a peaceful soul (*nafs al-muṭma'innah*) in old age.³²

Furthermore, this phenomenon indicates the de-institutionalization of sacred spaces. Whereas piety was previously measured by physical presence in formal institutions such as Islamic boarding schools or mosques, digital piety allows urban Muslim women to construct personal Islamic boarding schools in their domestic sphere.³³ This aligns with the concept of lived religion, in which sacred experiences are embedded in daily routines mediated by technology.³⁴ Informants INF-4 and INF-9 noted that interaction with AI fosters a sense of spiritual companionship. From a phenomenological standpoint, technology serves as a relational mediator for spiritual reflexivity,

Theology 26, no. 2 (2022): 223–39, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2021-0034>.

³⁰ M. N. Fallah, "Enhancing Religious Behavior and Well-Being in Elderly Through Majelis Taklim Al-Sulthan: A Case Study," *HEUTAGOGIA: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 1 (2024): 71–86, <https://doi.org/10.14421/hjie.2024.41-06>.

³¹ F. I. Nuha, "Determinasi Diri Pada Lansia Penghafal Al-Quran," *BRPKM* 1, no. 1 (2021): 607–20, <https://doi.org/10.20473/BRPKM.V1I1.26788>.

³² L. S. Hapsari and I. K. Rahman, "Implementation of Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Based Islamic Education for Elderly to Achieve Nafs Al-Muthmainnah," *Al-Liqo: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2022): 189–201, <https://doi.org/10.46963/alliqo.v7i2.588>.

³³ Wafi, Ilhami, and Taufiqurohman, "Transformasi Perilaku Beragama Masyarakat Muslim Kontemporer: Fenomena Al-Qur'an Di Era Digital."

³⁴ Babler, "The Mediatization of Religious Practices in Urban Daily Life: The Peruvian Case."

helping older people achieve concentration free from urban distractions.³⁵

Analysis of the narratives shows that this sacred micro-ecology functions as an independent laboratory for *tazkiyah al-nafs*. The process of *Tahallī* (inner adornment) continues as digital assistants facilitate the recitation of prayers, filling the elderly's solitude with meaningful stimuli.³⁶ The experiences of INF-6 and INF-10 show that the perceived divine auditory presence mediated through digital recitation effectively reduces existential anxiety and loneliness.³⁷ Thus, digital piety expands the reach of faith into private life, providing a stable space for contemplation.³⁸

This finding challenges the traditional boundary between the sacred and the profane. Through digital mediation, every corner of the domestic space can be reconfigured into a *mihrab*.³⁹ For these informants, digital piety is a manifestation of self-autonomy that strengthens their gerotranscendence orientation transcending physical limitations to achieve a broader cosmic connection.⁴⁰

³⁵ T. J. Trothen, "Intelligent Assistive Technology Ethics for Aging Adults: Spiritual Impacts as a Necessary Consideration," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (2022): 452, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050452>. G. Ledingham, E. Cotterill, and H. Dogan, "Designing an Information, Communication and Entertainment Interface for SMART Retirement Living," preprint, 2021.

³⁶ Hapsari and Rahman, "Implementation of Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Based Islamic Education for Elderly to Achieve Nafs Al-Muthmainnah." M. Ma'muroh, A. Abqorina, and A. 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 (2024): 833–44, <https://doi.org/10.47709/educendikia.v4i02.4989>.

³⁷ R. A. Marziali et al., "Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation of Older Adults through Voice Assistants: A Literature Review and Bibliometric Analysis (Preprint)," *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, ahead of print, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.2196/50534>.

³⁸ J. T. M. Simaremare, "Preferensi Spiritual Di Era Digital," *JTVD* 6, no. 1 (2024): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.62926/jtvd.v6i1.70>.

³⁹ K. Gibson and K. Brittain, "The Domestication of Remote Monitoring: The Materialisation of Care?," *Journal of Aging Studies*, 2023, 101168, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2023.101168>. M. Mat Daud, F. Mohd Ali, and W. M. D. Wan Zaki, "A Review on Smart Home Design and Technology for Elderly," *Journal of Information System and Technology Management* 9, no. 37 (2024): 77–85, <https://doi.org/10.35631/jistm.937006>.

⁴⁰ Lars Tornstam, *Gerotranscendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging*

Technology is not a substitute for faith; rather, it functions as spiritual scaffolding, but a form of spiritual scaffolding that supports the aging generation.⁴¹

Table 2. Phenomenological Findings: Spiritual Independence of Muslim Elderly Women

Informant	Age	Key Technologies	Frequency of Use	The Essence of Spiritual Experience (Lived Experience)
INF-1	68	Voice Assistant (AI)	every dawn & dusk	Feeling that the home is more “alive” and sacred because of the automatic recitation of the Qur'an.
INF-2	65	Smartphone (Dhikr App)	5 times a day (after prayer)	Eliminating the fear of forgetting the count of dhikr; feeling more focused.
INF-3	72	Smart Speaker (AI)	continuously (background)	Overcoming loneliness with the sound of recitation; feeling like there is a “friend” to discuss things with.
INF-4	63	YouTube & Zoom Live	3-4 times a week	Feeling like you are still a “student” even at home; autonomy in choosing a teacher.
INF-5	70	Tablet (Digital Mushaf)	every morning	Helping blurry eyes (zoom feature); feeling empowered to read on your own.
INF-6	67	Religious Podcasts	at night before bed	Eliminating insomnia; the sound of prayer becomes a peaceful lullaby.
INF-7	75	AI Voice Command	prayer times	Ensuring precise prayer times; feeling disciplined without having to ask

(Springer Publishing Company, 2005). J. P. Wortman, E. S., & Lewis, “Gerotranscendence and Alaska Native Successful Aging in the Aleutian Pribilof Islands, Alaska,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 36, no. 1 (2021): 43-67., <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10823-020-09421-9>.

⁴¹ P. Kowureng, J. E. Abraham, and N. R. Daeli, “Pelayanan Pastoral Di Era Modern Dalam Memperkuat Spiritualitas Lansia Di Panti Asuhan,” *Scripta* 18, no. 2 (2024): 120–30, <https://doi.org/10.47154/sjtpk.v18i2.792>.

				your children.
INF-8	61	AI Tajwid Correction Application	every afternoon	Feeling embarrassed if you make a mistake in front of a physical teacher, AI becomes a place to learn without feeling inferior.
INF-9	66	Smart Display (Visual Prayer)	Throughout the day	Visualizing prayers in the living room makes the house feel like a "mihrab."
INF-10	69	Digital Sholawat Group	every Friday night	Feeling connected to the community (Ummah) even while physically at home.

Source: Authors' interviews with informants (2025).

The data synthesized in Table 2 demonstrates a significant shift toward the de-institutionalization of *tazkiyah al-nafs* practices. Informants (specifically INF-4 and INF-8) exhibit a conscious effort to construct independent spiritual learning systems within their domestic spheres, effectively relocating the locus of soul purification from traditional Islamic boarding schools to a sacred micro-ecology at home. From an idiographic perspective, the researcher interprets the use of AI-based assistants (INF-1) and voice commands (INF-7) not merely as functional aids, but as a form of spiritual scaffolding. This scaffolding helps restore the participants' self-esteem by reducing their dependency on family members for religious activities.

Furthermore, this phenomenon illustrates a profound double hermeneutic process: while the elderly women interpret their digital interactions as a means to achieve inner peace (*nafs al-muṭma'innah*), the researcher analyzes these practices as a strategic renegotiation of agency. Technology serves as a transformative medium that enables these women to bridge the gap between their physical frailty and their transcendental consciousness, ultimately strengthening their gerotranscendence orientation within the private realm of domestic life.

Reconstruction of Independent Tazkiyah al-nafs: The Dialectics of Takhallī, Taḥallī, and Tajallī

The research findings demonstrate a systematic reconstruction of the stages of soul purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) among the elderly, where technology functions as a "spiritual prosthesis" for physical limitations. This process is not a mere substitution of traditional methods but a specific mechanism that integrates Lars Tornstam's Gerotranscendence theory with Al-Ghazali's classical Sufi stages. This mechanism operates through three dialectical stages:

Takhallī (Digital Purification): In this stage, technology acts as a filter to eliminate the "ego of incompetence" and existential anxiety associated with aging.⁴² For informants such as INF-2 and INF-7, AI-based tools and digital Dhikr applications are interpreted as "additional body parts" that overcome cognitive forgetfulness and physical dependence, effectively purifying the soul from the mental burdens of old age.⁴³

Taḥallī (Digital Adornment): The elderly "adorn" their souls through a self-curated learning ecosystem a "Personal Pesantren."

⁴² Hapsari and Rahman, "Implementation of Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Based Islamic Education for Elderly to Achieve Nafs Al-Muthmainnah." S. Safitri Mariantiny, "Revitalisasi Konsep Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Dalam Pendidikan Akhlak Berbasis Spiritualitas Al-Ghazali Untuk Generasi Digital Melalui ICBT," *Jurnal Al-Ibanah: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman, Kemasyarakatan Dan Pendidikan* 10, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.54801/2banah.v10i2.366>. N. Mudau and R. Tshifhumulo, "Technology's Influence on Pentecostalism: Shaping Perception and Religious Impact," *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v2i1.50>. F. O. L. Lontoh and D. A. Wibowo, "Digital Pentecostalism in Indonesia: Transformation of Worship and Virtual Community," *Theological Studies / Teologiese Studies* 81, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10592>.

⁴³ L. Scheepers and G. van den Berg, "The Value of Providing Online Students with Dedicated Affective Support, Particularly during Times of Crisis," *Open Praxis* 14, no. 3 (2022): 190–201, <https://doi.org/10.55982/openpraxis.14.3.497>. Hasibuan, Nasution, and Masuwd, "Tarekat in the Digital Age: Transforming Spirituality for the Age of Technology." M. Ni'mah, S. J., Nurhuda, A., & Al Fajri, "Pendidikan Islam Dalam Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Lanjut Usia," *Fitrah: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan* 15, no. 1 (2024): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.47625/fitrah.v15i1.542>. L. Hakim, A. Kodir, and M. H. B. Haron, "Integrative Islamic Education for the Elderly: A Holistic Model from Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud in Malaysia," *Deleted Journal* 11, no. 1 (2025): 176–88, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v11i1.45186>.

Technology serves as a "faceless teacher" for INF-4, INF-8, and INF-10, allowing for autonomous learning (such as *tajwid* through AI correction or online lectures) without the social stigma or shame often encountered in traditional institutional settings.⁴⁴ This creates a state where the elderly actively choose "spiritual nutrition" that suits their emotional needs.⁴⁵

Tajalli (Digital Enlightenment): The final stage is reached when digital mediation facilitates a state of gerotranscendence. The continuous sound of *dhikr* and *murattal* creates a sense of transcendent "companionship" for INF-3 and INF-6, leading to a cosmic awareness where the self feels connected to the *Ummah* and the Creator despite physical isolation at home.⁴⁶

This reconstruction proves that spiritual independence in old age is supported by a humanistic approach to Islamic education that builds emotional and spiritual intelligence.⁴⁷ While the digital

⁴⁴ M. A. P. Nugroho, A. L. Yani, and I. Mukarromah, *The Effect of Humor Therapy on Increasing Elderly Self Esteem at UPT Tresna Wreda Social Services Jombang*, 3, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.63983/hm34w352>. B. J. Christinal et al., "Memory Montage: Amnesia Support Appa," 2025, 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1109/icetetsip64213.2025.11156607>. Mariantiny, "Revitalisasi Konsep Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Dalam Pendidikan Akhlak Berbasis Spiritualitas Al-Ghazali Untuk Generasi Digital Melalui ICBT." J. Gomes-Osman et al., *Aging in the Digital Age: Using Technology to Increase the Reach of the Clinician*, 2021. A. Amilusholihah and N. J. H. Ramadhan, "Exploring The Implementation of Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Education: A Systematic Literature Review," *Ngaji* 5, no. 1 (2025): 3–17, <https://doi.org/10.24260/ngaji.v5i1.95>.

⁴⁵ M. Miski, "Pembelajaran Al-Qur'an Secara Digital: Pergeseran Sistem Isnad Dan Peneguhan Otoritas Baru," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 9, no. 1 (2023): 133–46, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v9i1.1795>. Danita and Yanti, "Kajian Tentang Ibadah Online Bagi Kaum Lansia Di Masa New Normal Pandemi Covid-19."

⁴⁶ V. M. C. P. Rodrigues, "Technology at the Service of the Elderly," *Aquichan* 20, no. 1 (2020): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.5294/AQUI.2020.20.1.1>. L. Corti et al., "Technological Grandparents: How Communication Technologies Can Improve the Well-Being of the Elderly?," *AI & Society*, 2023, 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-023-01645-w>.

⁴⁷ Shamsi and Shahidifar, "Spiritual Care: A Forgotten Tool in the Lives of Elderly People." M. N. Mumtazah, "Integration of Science and Qur'anic Education: A Solution to Heal Inner Wounds in the Modern Era," *Spiritus* 3, no. 1 (2025): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.59923/spiritus.v3i1.426>. L. Tornstam, *Gerotranscendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging*. (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2005).

transformation presents both opportunities and challenges within the Islamic worldview,⁴⁸ it ultimately enables a form of lifelong learning where digital competence becomes the key to spiritual maturation.⁴⁹



Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Digitally Mediated Tazkiyah al-nafs

As visualized in Figure 1, the conceptual model demonstrates a clear mechanism where digital technology functions as a

⁴⁸ A. Hamdani, R. Hermawan, and M. Samiran, "Pandangan Dunia Islam Dan Transformasi Digital: Antara Peluang Dan Tantangan," *Tsaqofah* 5, no. 6 (2025): 6205–18, <https://doi.org/10.58578/tsaqofah.v5i6.7217>.

⁴⁹ M. S. Abubakari and K. Kalinaki, *Digital Competence in Islamic Education for Lifelong Learning* (IGI Global, 2024), 1–31, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-1410-4.ch001>.

"spiritual scaffolding." Technology mediates the classical Sufi stages, allowing the elderly to achieve inner peace (*nafs al-muṭma'innah*) autonomously, thereby transcending their physical and social limitations within the domestic sphere.

The phenomenon of Cyber-Sufism in Jember reflects a broader global movement toward "Digital Religion." Globally, elderly populations are increasingly utilizing digital platforms to overcome social isolation.⁵⁰ However, this study identifies a unique Indonesian characteristic: while Western "Digital Religion" often focuses on general mindfulness or a sense of communal belonging (e.g., the *Electronic Church*), Muslim women in the Pandalungan culture specifically utilize technology for systematic soul purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). This represents a shift from "Institutional Piety" to "Autonomous Agency," which aligns with the global shift toward "Liquid Religion," where sacred authority is no longer centralized but is negotiated through personal digital engagement.

The synergy of these stages proves that *tazkiyah al-nafs* in old age is a proactive process. By negotiating with digital devices, the elderly achieve a form of "spiritual hijrah" within their own homes, making a new theoretical contribution to Islamic educational psychology: that spiritual independence is supported by digital competence in lifelong learning.⁵¹

Spiritual Agency and Digital Transcendence: Achieving Nafs al-muṭma'innah in Old Age

The findings of this study underscore the emergence of spiritual agency defined as the capacity of elderly individuals to act independently and maintain religious sovereignty despite structural constraints.⁵² This agency is the core driver of digital transcendence, a state where the elderly use technology to go

⁵⁰ Campbell, "Looking Backwards and Forwards at the Study of Digital Religion."

⁵¹ Z. Abidin et al., "Humanistic Approach in Islamic Education: Building Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence in the Digital Age," *ZIJIS* 1, no. 1 (2024): 29–35, <https://doi.org/10.61233/zijis.v1i1.5>.

⁵² Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What Is Agency?," *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 4 (1998): 962–1023.

beyond their physical limitations to reach a broader cosmic connection.

Within this framework, the practice of Cyber-Sufism appears to contribute to the perceived psychological well-being of the informants. Rather than claiming a clinical "therapeutic effect," which would require medical validation,⁵³ this study observes that technology acts as a "digital healing assistant" that facilitates a form of "Social Sufism" where Sufi values are reconstructed into virtual networks to alleviate existential anxiety.⁵⁴ Social Sufism in this context represents a shift where traditional communal solidarity (*jama'ah*) is redefined through virtual networks, allowing the elderly to maintain collective spiritual resilience without physical proximity. Technology, in this case, serves as spiritual scaffolding that supports the physical fragility of older people, enabling them to remain spiritually upright and maintain their dignity (*izzah*).⁵⁵

This manifestation of agency is clearly seen in informants INF-5 and INF-7. For INF-5, mastering digital *mushaf* features has restored a sense of self-efficacy, reducing the feeling of being a "family burden" a key factor in preventing geriatric depression.⁵⁶ Similarly, INF-7 uses voice assistants to reclaim spiritual independence, breaking the cycle of physical dependence on others for worship schedules.⁵⁷

⁵³ Harold G. Koenig, Dana King, and Verna B. Carson, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The Research and Clinical Implications," *Journal of Religion and Health* 51, no. 4 (2012): 1245–56.

⁵⁴ Kamaludin, Ihsan, and Maya Najihatul Ula, "Sufism Healing Method for Drugs Rehabilitation: A Case Study in PP. Suryalaya Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 23, no. 2 (2020): 384–401, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v23i2.351>.

⁵⁵ Tornstam, *Gerotranscendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging*. F. Ahmadi Lewin, "Gerotranscendence and Different Cultural Settings," *Ageing and Society* 21 (2001): 395–415, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X01008285>.

⁵⁶ A. C. Horstmann et al., "Alexa, I Do Not Want to Be Patronized: A Qualitative Interview Study to Explore Older Adults' Attitudes Towards Intelligent Voice Assistants," 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3570945.3607342>.

⁵⁷ Trothen, "Intelligent Assistive Technology Ethics for Aging Adults: Spiritual Impacts as a Necessary Consideration."

Furthermore, this powerful agency triggers a shift toward gerotranscendence. Informants INF-3, INF-9, and INF-10 reported a decrease in death anxiety as they shifted their focus from urban materiality to an eschatological orientation.⁵⁸ This condition aligns with the attainment of *Nafs al-muṭma'innah*, a calm soul that has found stability through the perceived divine presence in their domestic "mihrab".⁵⁹

However, this digital transformation is not without its risks. While the findings are predominantly positive, some informants hinted at digital fatigue, where the constant influx of religious notifications caused sensory overload.⁶⁰ Additionally, there is a risk of digital misinformation due to the absence of a physical *murshid* to clarify complex teachings.⁶¹ Finally, while technology grants independence from family, it creates a new dependency on technological infrastructure and internet connectivity.⁶² Thus, achieving a calm soul in the digital age requires a constant negotiation between the benefits of autonomy and the vulnerabilities of the digital landscape.

⁵⁸ Pamuk, Faezi, and Efe, "Quo Vadis Gerotranscendence? A Systematic Literature Network Analysis of Existing Themes and Emerging Trends in Gerotranscendence Theory with a Focus on International Applications." Teresa Abreu, Filipa Araújo, and Oscar Ribeiro, "How to Promote Gerotranscendence in Older Adults? A Scoping Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20 (2023): 1–18.

⁵⁹ Pamuk, Faezi, and Efe, "Quo Vadis Gerotranscendence? A Systematic Literature Network Analysis of Existing Themes and Emerging Trends in Gerotranscendence Theory with a Focus on International Applications." Y. Azkia et al., "An Irshad-Based Approach in the Digital Age Through the Dhikr Practices of Habib Luthfi Bin Yahya," *Al Irsyad* 4, no. 1 (2025): 39–50, <https://doi.org/10.54150/alirsyad.v4i1.391>.

⁶⁰ S. Syaifuddin, A. Fahrudin, and G. I. A. Sabda, "The Experience of Transcendental Communication in Tahajud Prayer Among TikTok User @dynsonly," *Syiar | Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 5, no. 1 (2025): 115–30, <https://doi.org/10.54150/syiar.v5i1.728>.

⁶¹ Samantaray, Rout, and Panda, "The Digital Divine: Exploring the Synergy of Cyberspace and Spirituality."

⁶² Mariantiny, "Revitalisasi Konsep Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Dalam Pendidikan Akhlak Berbasis Spiritualitas Al-Ghazali Untuk Generasi Digital Melalui ICBT." M. Huda, D. Junaedi, and F. Azmi, "Developing Digital Ethics Pedagogy in Islamic Education: Challenges and Frameworks," *Journal of Moral Education and Technology* 12, no. 1 (2024): 32–50.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the practice of Cyber-Sufism among elderly Muslim women in urban areas is not simply a technical adaptation to physical limitations, but rather a sophisticated, autonomous strategy for reconstructing *tazkiyah al-nafs* (soul purification) in the domestic sphere. Phenomenological findings demonstrate that the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital media has transformed these tools into “spiritual assistants” that effectively replace the role of traditional institutional religious authorities, which are often difficult for older people to access due to mobility barriers.

Through a digital dialectic encompassing the stages of *takhallī* (reducing existential anxiety), *taḥallī* (inner nourishment through self-learning), and *tajallī* (achieving inner tranquility or *nafs al-muṭma’innah*), these older women have successfully overcome spiritual marginalization and urban social isolation. The home no longer functions as a profane space, but is reinterpreted as a sacred micro-ecology or virtual *mihrab* that facilitates the process of gerotranscendence. This spiritual independence marks a significant de-institutionalization of Islamic education, in which digital piety serves as an empowering instrument that restores the religious agency and dignity (*izzah*) of older adults.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a more inclusive Islamic educational psychology by proposing a model of “autonomous piety” as a form of lifelong learning. However, this study is limited by its small sample size and localized context within the Pandalungan culture of Jember, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader or different cultural settings. Methodologically, the reliance on qualitative interviews and personal narratives may also introduce subjective biases in interpreting spiritual experiences. Future research should involve longitudinal studies or larger-scale mixed-method approaches to investigate how digital piety impacts the long-term psychological resilience of diverse elderly populations across different religious traditions and geographical regions.

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