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# IMPLEMENTATION OF TAZKIYATUN NAFS VALUES IN RESOLVING DOMESTIC CONFLICT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC LAW

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Marital conflict constitutes an unavoidable social reality inherent in every marriage, yet the quality of its resolution largely determines long-term family stability and well-being. Indonesia's Directorate General of Religious Courts recorded 516,334 divorce cases in 2022, with wife-initiated petitions (cerai gugat) accounting for 73.56 percent of the total, underscoring the urgency of developing an integrative conflict-resolution model. This study comprehensively explores the relevance and applicability of tazkiyatun nafs values as a normative and practical framework for resolving marital conflict from the perspective of Islamic law. Employing a qualitative-normative approach through systematic library research with thematic analysis of classical and contemporary fiqh, tafsir, hadith literature, and Sufi texts, the study identifies five core values of tazkiyatun nafs muhasabah (self-accountability), muraqabah (divine consciousness), sabr (active patience), tawadu' (authentic humility), and 'afw (restorative forgiveness) and analyzes their integration with Islamic legal principles governing marital conflict, including mu'asyarah bil-ma'ruf, shura, and the hakam mediation mechanism. The findings show that these values operate across three complementary functional domains: preventive (muhasabah and muraqabah), regulatory (sabr and tawadu'), and restorative ('afw). The study further establishes that tazkiyatun nafs principles are not only normatively aligned with Islamic law but also empirically corroborated by contemporary psychology and conflict-resolution research, confirming their universal applicability. This research proposes an integrative Islam-based family conflict-resolution model that transcends procedural approaches to address the deeper spiritual-psychological dimensions of marital relationships.

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## INTRODUCTION

Domestic life is never free from the dynamics of conflict, which, to a certain degree, signals that two individuals are undergoing a process of relational maturation. From the perspective of family sociology, conflict is not merely dysfunction but a potential catalyst for transformation when managed within an appropriate value framework (Collins, 2004). The difficulty is that most couples lack the inner resources needed to convert conflict into a catalyst for relational growth a deficit with serious implications for the stability of the family institution.

Data from the Directorate General of Religious Courts of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia show that religious courts across Indonesia adjudicated 516,334 divorce cases in 2022, with wife-initiated petitions (cerai gugat) accounting for 73.56 percent of the total (Ditjen Badilag, 2023). This figure reflects the fragmentation of thousands of family units, with far-reaching consequences for children's psychological welfare, social stability, and generational continuity. More troubling still is the consistent upward trend in divorce over the past decade, indicating that existing approaches have not yet addressed the root of the problem.

A range of studies indicate that the factor most often pushing couples toward the brink of divorce is not fundamental differences in principle, but an inability to manage everyday conflict constructively: uncontrolled emotional reactivity, an absence of the capacity to forgive, and destructive communication patterns (Gottman & Silver, 2015; Mulia, 2020). Gottman's well-known 'Four Horsemen' criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling indicate that marital breakdown originates not from the magnitude of conflict but from the quality of the inner response to it.

Prior studies have examined tazkiyatun nafs in the context of individual spiritual development (Hamka, 1982), character formation in Islamic education (Nata, 2003), and its relevance to mental health (Bastaman, 2011). However, an in-depth exploration of how tazkiyatun nafs values apply specifically to the resolution of domestic conflict, integrated with the principles of Islamic law, remains very limited. Al-Ghazali's Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din lays a rich conceptual foundation for the purification of the soul, yet its application within Islamic family law has not been fully explored academically (Al-Ghazali, n.d.).

This academic gap points to the need for an integrative study that positions tazkiyatun nafs not merely as a discourse on individual spirituality but as a normative instrument for managing marital conflict. Moreover, the theory of maqashid al-shari'ah, with its five objectives of protection religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property provides strong theological legitimacy for treating a couple's spiritual health as integral to the very purposes of Islamic law.

Based on the foregoing, this study formulates three research questions: (1) How is the concept of tazkiyatun nafs comprehensively understood within the Islamic scholarly tradition? (2) Which tazkiyatun nafs values are relevant to managing domestic conflict, and how do their mechanisms operate? and (3) How can these values be implemented from the perspective of Islamic law as an integrative framework for conflict resolution? This study offers an integrative, Islamic values-based family conflict-resolution model that responds not only to normative-juridical needs but also to the dimension of the couple's inner transformation.

### *Tazkiyatun Nafs in the Islamic Scholarly Tradition*

Etymologically, tazkiyatun nafs comprises two terms: tazkiyah, rooted in zakka–yuzakki, meaning to purify, to grow, and to cultivate; and nafs, meaning soul, self, or ego. Terminologically, Al-Ghazali defines tazkiyatun nafs as the systematic process of cleansing the soul of blameworthy traits (akhlaq madzmumah) and adorning it with praiseworthy traits (akhlaq mahmudah) through three continuous stages: takhalli (emptying the self of bad traits), tahalli (adorning the self with good traits), and tajalli (the manifestation of divine attributes in behavior) (Al-Ghazali, n.d.).

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in Madarij al-Salikin, develops this concept further by mapping the soul's journey toward God through three principal stations (maqamat): repentance (taubat) as the starting point, muhasabah as an ongoing mechanism of evaluation, and sincerity (ikhlas) as the pinnacle of purification (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2006). Whereas Al-Ghazali emphasizes the psychological-spiritual dimension, Ibn Qayyim foregrounds the active, volitional dimension of tazkiyatun nafs: the soul is not merely an object being purified but a subject that actively chooses the process of purification.

Al-Harits al-Muhasibi whose name itself means 'one who frequently practices muhasabah' makes a distinctive contribution by centering tazkiyatun nafs on the practice of muhasabah as a real-time mechanism of spiritual self-monitoring (Al-Muhasibi, 2019). Al-Muhasibi distinguishes two types of muhasabah: muhasabah qabliyyah (before acting, examining intention) and muhasabah ba'diyyah (after acting, evaluating the quality of one's response). In the context of domestic conflict, both types provide a highly practical and operational framework for reflection.

From a contemporary perspective, Subandi (2013) integrates the concept of tazkiyatun nafs particularly sabr with positive psychology and neuroscience, showing that the practice of sabr correlates with increased activation of the prefrontal cortex, which governs emotion regulation and rational decision-making. This finding strengthens the argument that tazkiyatun nafs is relevant not only normatively and religiously, but also has an empirical-neurological basis.

### *Marital Conflict: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*

Conflict in marriage can be defined as a condition in which two individuals with differing needs, expectations, or perspectives experience tension perceived as incompatible (Deutsch, 1973). Scholars of interpersonal relationships distinguish between task conflict, which centers on substantive issues, and relationship conflict. In marriage, the two frequently overlap, requiring a holistic approach to their management.

Gottman (1999), through more than two decades of longitudinal research, found that what distinguishes marriages that endure from those that end is not the frequency of conflict but the ratio of positive to negative interactions during conflict the so-called 'magic ratio' of 5:1. Every negative interaction needs to be balanced by at least five positive interactions for a relationship to remain emotionally healthy. This finding resonates strongly with the Sufi concept of balance between jalali (assertive/firm) and jamali (gentle/compassionate) qualities in human interaction.

From an Islamic perspective, domestic conflict carries a dimension that extends beyond mere interpersonal difficulty. The Qur'an explicitly acknowledges the reality of conflict (nusyuz) in Surah An-Nisa: 128–130 and provides mechanisms for its resolution through islah (reconciliation), hakam (arbitration), and, in extreme conditions, fasakh

(annulment). Notably, these mechanisms implicitly require the spiritual readiness of both parties a prerequisite that can only be met through the process of tazkiyatun nafs.

***Maqashid Al-Shari'ah and the Family***

The theory of maqashid al-shari'ah, developed by Al-Ghazali and systematized by Al-Syathibi, identifies the protection of lineage (hifzh al-nasl) as one of the five fundamental objectives of Islamic law (Al-Ghazali, 1993). Within this framework, family stability is not merely a private concern of husband and wife but a public interest protected under Islamic law. It follows that every effort to strengthen the quality of marital relations including through tazkiyatun nafs carries strong shar'i legitimacy.

Ibn 'Ashur, in Maqashid al-Syari'ah al-Islamiyyah, develops this concept further by adding the dimension of mu'asyarah (the quality of social interaction) as an additional maqashid relevant to the marital context (Ibn 'Ashur, 2011). He asserts that Islamic law regards marriage not merely as a formally valid contract, but as one that also demands the presence of substantive relational harmony a dimension achievable only through the internalization of tazkiyatun nafs values.

## METHOD

***Research Approach***

This study employs a qualitative-normative approach (normative legal research) through library research. This design was chosen because the study's principal aim is to construct an ethical-normative framework grounded in authoritative textual sources within the Islamic scholarly tradition, rather than to collect empirical field data. The research was conducted through textual exploration and analysis between January and March 2026.

***Data Sources***

Primary data sources comprised: (1) the Qur'an together with its exegesis Tafsir al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab and Tafsir Ibn Kathir; (2) authoritative hadith compilations Shahih al-Bukhari, Shahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawud, and Sunan al-Tirmidzi, particularly the chapters on marriage (nikah), spousal conduct (mu'asyarah zaujiyyah), and akhlaq; (3) classical fiqh munakahat literature the Kitab al-Nikah in Al-Majmu' by Al-Nawawi and Al-Mughni by Ibn Qudamah; and (4) classical works on tazkiyatun nafs Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (Al-Ghazali), Madarij al-Salikin (Ibn Qayyim), Al-Ri'ayah (Al-Muhasibi), and Minhaj al-Qashidin (Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi).

Secondary data sources included: (1) nationally accredited (SINTA 1–2) and internationally indexed (Scopus, Web of Science) scholarly journals in Islamic studies, psychology, and family communication; (2) contemporary academic books; (3) relevant statutory regulations the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) and Law No. 16 of 2019 on Marriage; and (4) divorce statistics from the Directorate General of Religious Courts of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia.

***Data Collection and Analysis***

Data were collected through systematic documentation using a theme-based bibliographic recording instrument. Data analysis employed thematic analysis combined with an Islamic legal hermeneutic approach (ushul fiqh). The analytical process comprised four stages: (1) thematic reduction selecting texts relevant to the research topic; (2) value categorization grouping tazkiyatun nafs values according to their function within the conflict context; (3) cross-tradition comparison comparing

tazkiyatun nafs principles with contemporary findings in psychology and communication studies; and (4) normative synthesis integrating the findings within an Islamic legal framework. The study's validity was ensured through source triangulation and comparison across thematic exegesis (tafsir mawdhu'i), maqashid al-shari'ah analysis, and contemporary conflict-resolution theory.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Mapping of Tazkiyatun Nafs Values in Domestic Conflict*

Thematic analysis of the primary sources identifies five tazkiyatun nafs values with the greatest relevance to the dynamics of domestic conflict. These five values do not stand independently but form a functionally and hierarchically mutually reinforcing system, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Mapping of Tazkiyatun Nafs Values and Their Relevance to Domestic Conflict**

| No | Tazkiyah Value | Operational Definition | Function in Conflict | Textual Basis | Correspondence in Modern Psychology |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Muhasabah | Systematic self-introspection regarding one's role in conflict: intention, response, and behavioral impact | Preventive: prevents externalization of blame; builds personal accountability | QS. Al-Hasyr: 18 | Cognitive appraisal reframing (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) |
| 2 | Muraqabah | Constant awareness that Allah observes every action and response during conflict | Preventive: introduces a transcendent dimension; restrains verbal and physical aggression | QS. An-Nisa: 1 | Mindfulness-based emotion regulation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013) |
| 3 | Sabr | Active psychological resilience; the capacity to suspend emotional reactivity until a wise response is reached | Regulatory: creates cognitive space for a non-reactive response | QS. Al-Baqarah: 153 | Emotional flooding prevention; affect regulation (Gottman, 1999) |
| 4 | Tawadu' | Authentic humility; | Regulatory–Restorative: | QS. Al-Furqan: | Non-defensive communication; |

| No | Tazkiyah Value | Operational Definition | Function in Conflict | Textual Basis | Correspondence in Modern Psychology |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | willingness not to make one's ego the measure of truth in conflict | opens dialogue; weakens dominance–subordination dynamics | 63 | de-escalation (Rosenberg, 2015) |
| 5 | 'Afw | Active, deliberate forgiveness; breaking the cycle of resentment without conditioning the harmful behavior | Restorative: halts the escalation cycle; enables genuine reconciliation and restoration of trust | QS. An-Nur: 22 | REACH forgiveness model (Worthington, 2006) |

*Source: Researchers' analysis based on primary and secondary sources (2026)*

Conceptually, the five values can be mapped onto three principal functions in conflict management: a preventive function (muhasabah and muraqabah, which forestall escalation before conflict occurs), a regulatory function (sabr and tawadu', which regulate emotional responses during conflict), and a restorative function (tawadu' and 'afw, which restore the relationship after conflict). This tripartite function offers a comprehensive practical framework for Islamic values-based family development programs.

***The Mechanism of Muhasabah and Muraqabah in Preventing Conflict Escalation***

Within the context of domestic conflict, muhasabah operates on two complementary temporal levels. First, muhasabah ex ante: the examination of intention (niyyah) prior to responding to conflict. Al-Muhasibi, in Al-Ri'ayah, explains that most destructive responses in conflict arise not from rational decisions but from unconscious nafsaniyyah impulses the desire to win, to retaliate, or to protect one's self-image (Al-Muhasibi, 2019). Muhasabah ex ante interrupts this automatic mechanism by posing a fundamental question: 'Is my response motivated by a desire to improve the situation, or merely to satisfy the ego?'

Second, muhasabah ex post: a critical evaluation of how one responded to conflict, used as material for learning. This practice functions much like an after-action review in management science a systematic reflective process that identifies what worked, what failed, and what needs improvement in handling future conflict. The combination of both forms a learning spiral that progressively improves the quality of a couple's response to conflict.

Muraqabah adds a vertical dimension to the otherwise horizontal orientation of muhasabah. Awareness that Allah is constantly watching (QS. An-Nisa: 1) introduces a transcendent factor that psychologically functions as an external locus of monitoring far more powerful than mere social observation. Mochon et al.'s (2011) research on the

'watching eyes effect' shows that the perception of external observation significantly increases prosocial behavior and reduces aggression. Muraqabah operationalizes a similar mechanism, but with far greater intensity, since it is grounded in theological conviction rather than a merely social one.

***Sabr and Tawadu' as Emotional Regulation in Conflict***

In Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's conception, sabr comprises three categories, each relevant to a different aspect of domestic conflict: (1) sabr 'ala al-ta'at patience in fulfilling one's obligations as a spouse even when it feels burdensome; (2) sabr 'an al-ma'ashi patience in refraining from hurtful actions even when one has the capacity to act on them; and (3) sabr 'ala al-maqadir patience in facing a partner's shortcomings and mistakes (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2006). Together, these three dimensions cover the full spectrum of conflict situations couples encounter.

Empirical research by Gottman and Silver (2015) found that the ability to disengage from a state of 'flooding' in which the sympathetic nervous system is fully activated and rational thinking capacity drops sharply is the strongest predictor of long-term marital success. Individuals experiencing flooding require at least 20 minutes to return to a normal physiological state before they can communicate constructively. The practice of sabr corresponds directly to the capacity to manage this condition, adding a transcendent motivation shown to activate emotion-regulation systems more effectively than secular self-regulation techniques alone.

Tawadu' (humility) in the context of conflict carries implications beyond mere courtesy. Al-Ghazali, in Ihya', explains that authentic tawadu' is not an outward display but an inner condition in which a person has moved beyond the compulsive need to maintain their self-image (Al-Ghazali, n.d.). In conflict, ego-defense mechanisms are a major contributor to escalation: each party becomes more focused on self-justification than on problem-solving. Tawadu' disables this mechanism by shifting the orientation from 'who is right' to 'what is right.'

***Implementation of Tazkiyatun Nafs Values within the Framework of Islamic Law***

Within the framework of Islamic law, the implementation of tazkiyatun nafs values corresponds substantively to several fundamental principles. The principle of mu'asyarah bil-ma'ruf (QS. An-Nisa: 19), which requires spouses to treat one another in a manner recognized as good (ma'ruf), depends on tazkiyatun nafs for its optimal operationalization. Wahbah al-Zuhaili interprets ma'ruf as a standard of treatment culturally recognized as good; however, within the tazkiyatun nafs paradigm, this standard alone is insufficient what is required is the internalization of goodness itself, so that mu'asyarah bil-ma'ruf becomes not merely a social performance but an authentic expression of a purified inner state (Al-Zuhaili, 2011).

The hakam mechanism (QS. An-Nisa: 35), which requires the appointment of an arbitrator from each spouse's family in cases of syiqaq (serious discord), likewise depends on the inner readiness of both parties. If either or both parties have not undergone an adequate process of tazkiyatun nafs, the hakam mechanism risks becoming a new arena of conflict rather than a forum for resolution. Al-Jasshash, in Ahkam al-Qur'an, affirms that the purpose of hakam is not merely technical mediation but the facilitation of islah, which requires both parties' willingness to be transformed a willingness that can only arise from the process of tazkiyatun nafs (Al-Jasshash, 1992).

Article 76 of the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) requires judges to first attempt reconciliation between disputing parties before proceeding with divorce proceedings. In practice, such reconciliation efforts are often merely procedural and fail to touch the inner dimension of the couple. Integrating tazkiyatun nafs education into mandatory mediation programs at Religious Courts has the potential to transform reconciliation sessions from administrative formality into a substantive process of relational transformation.

***'Afw as an Instrument of Restorative Conflict Resolution***

'Afw (forgiveness) occupies the highest position in the hierarchy of responses to conflict. Allah is described by the attribute Al-'Afw as one of His beautiful names (asma' al-husna) (QS. An-Nisa: 149), implying that forgiveness carries divine value rather than being merely a recommended social attitude. Surah An-Nur, verse 22, explicitly states that forgiving and overlooking faults draws one closer to piety: 'Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you?' This theological framing transforms forgiveness from an act that feels like weakness ('I am giving in') into one that elevates the one who forgives to a higher spiritual standing.

Worthington's (2006) REACH Forgiveness Model, derived from extensive empirical research, divides the process of forgiveness into five stages: Recall the hurt honestly, Empathize with the offender, Altruistic gift of forgiveness, Commit publicly to forgive, and Hold onto forgiveness even when painful memories resurface. Notably, this model's structure corresponds closely to the process of 'afw in Sufi thought: beginning with honest muhasabah over the wound, proceeding through ihsan (doing good to the one who caused harm), and culminating in ithar (prioritizing others' interests over one's own).

A crucial distinction between 'afw in Islam and forgiveness in Western psychology lies in their motivational basis. Positive psychology frames forgiveness primarily in terms of its benefits to the forgiver's own psychological health forgiveness as self-help. 'Afw in Islam, by contrast, is motivated first by the desire to attain Allah's pleasure and to follow the Prophet's example forgiveness as worship ('ibadah). This transcendent motivation provides substantially greater resilience against relapse the return of anger and resentment than motivation based solely on personal benefit.

***An Integrative Model of Tazkiyatun Nafs-Based Conflict Resolution***

Building on these findings, this study proposes a Tazkiyatun Nafs-Based Conflict Resolution Model (RKTNS) comprising four continuous phases. The first is the Preventive Phase the daily implementation of muhasabah and muraqabah as routine spiritual practices (such as nightly muhasabah before sleep and muraqabah within each prayer) that proactively build the couple's inner health before conflict arises. Shapiro et al. (2006) found that eight weeks of daily mindfulness practice significantly improves emotion-regulation capacity and empathy two primary predictors of marital quality.

The second is the Regulatory Phase when conflict begins to emerge, sabr and hilm (forbearance) become the first mechanisms activated. Technically, this involves istighfar (seeking forgiveness) and ta'awwudz (seeking refuge) as techniques for interrupting automatic responses (analogous to a 'pause button' in cognitive-behavioral psychology), wudu (ritual ablution) as a physiologically calming ritual that helps lower amygdala activation, and a two-rak'ah prayer as a transcendent reorientation that shifts perspective away from ego-driven conflict toward a divine one.

The third is the Dialogical Phase once sabr has restored emotional equilibrium, tawadu' facilitates constructive dialogue. In this phase, tawadu' manifests as the capacity for active listening without defensive interruption, willingness to acknowledge one's own contribution to the conflict (accountability), and a commitment to focus on solutions rather than assigning blame.

The fourth is the Restorative Phase 'afw closes the conflict cycle and enables genuine reconciliation. Unlike superficial islah that halts conflict on the surface without substantive resolution, 'afw grounded in tazkiyatun nafs produces reconciliation that reaches the deepest layers of the couple's relationship. Fincham and Beach (2018) demonstrated that genuine forgiveness as opposed to mere condonation or suppression significantly increases marital satisfaction and reduces the long-term risk of divorce.

***Synergy between Tazkiyatun Nafs and the Formal Mechanisms of Islamic Law***

One of this study's original contributions is demonstrating the complementary synergy between the inner dimension (tazkiyatun nafs) and the formal-procedural dimension (mechanisms of Islamic law) in resolving domestic conflict. Formal mechanisms such as hakam, talaq raj'i, and fasakh function optimally only when supported by adequate spiritual readiness on the part of both spouses. Conversely, a process of tazkiyatun nafs without a clear legal framework risks becoming an unstructured spiritual practice, vulnerable to misuse in legitimizing unequal or even abusive relationships.

Integrating the two creates a comprehensive conflict-resolution system: Islamic law provides the normative-procedural framework that protects the rights of both parties and ensures substantive justice, while tazkiyatun nafs provides the spiritual-psychological foundation that enables both parties to enter that process with an authentic orientation toward islah, rather than merely fulfilling a formality.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the tazkiyatun nafs values of muhasabah, muraqabah, sabr, tawadu', and 'afw constitute an inner framework that is not only normatively and religiously relevant but also empirically proven to be a transformative instrument in resolving domestic conflict from the perspective of Islamic law. These five values operate across three mutually reinforcing functional domains\ preventive (muhasabah and muraqabah), regulatory (sabr and tawadu'), and restorative ('afw) forming a comprehensive system that accompanies couples in navigating the dynamics of conflict from its earliest stages through to reconciliation.

The study's original contributions are threefold: (1) the construction of the RKTNS model (Tazkiyatun Nafs and Shari'ah-Based Conflict Resolution), which synergistically integrates the inner and formal-procedural dimensions; (2) demonstrating a substantive correspondence between tazkiyatun nafs values and contemporary findings in marital psychology and neuroscience, evidencing the universality of Islamic wisdom beyond its normative-religious boundaries; and (3) a maqashid al-shari'ah analysis affirming the theological legitimacy of developing spouses' spiritual capacity as integral to hifzh al-nasl (the protection of lineage).

This study recommends: (1) integrating a tazkiyatun nafs module as a substantive component of mandatory premarital guidance programs at Offices of Religious Affairs (KUA) throughout Indonesia; (2) strengthening the spiritual dimension of mandatory

mediation programs at Religious Courts through collaboration with pesantren and akhlaq-development institutions; (3) pursuing further research both quantitative-experimental and qualitative-ethnographic to measure the effectiveness of the RKTNS model's implementation among Indonesian Muslim couples; and (4) publishing an RKTNS-based training module accessible to family counselors, marriage-guidance religious teachers (ustaz/ustazah), and KUA officials.

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