

Psychosufistic Elements in Addressing the Phenomenon of Viralism in the Digital Sphere

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ABSTRACT

The digital age's rapid information spread fuels viralism unchecked circulation of misinformation and unethical content eroding morality and social harmony, especially among Muslim youth. Existing legal and educational measures often overlook deeper issues of spiritual imbalance and weak self-regulation. This study aims to identify the mechanisms and contributing factors of digital viralism and analyze the psychosufistic approach as a potent, holistic solution. Employing a thematic analysis of relevant literature and textual sources, the study focuses on the core elements of the Sufi tradition including *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), *maqāmāt* (spiritual stations), and *aḥwāl* (spiritual states). These components of psychosufism are essential for cultivating positive internal values in Islam. Collectively, these values are demonstrated to enhance psychological resilience and promote ethical digital engagement. Findings suggest that psychosufistic practices serve a dual function, (i) they act as a spiritual-psychological therapy for anxiety and moral decline, and (ii) they are effective preventive and educational tools for cultivating disciplined, ethical, and responsible digital citizenship. The study concludes that the integration of psychosufistic principles offers a holistic framework for comprehensively addressing viralism, significantly contributing to the spiritual, psychological, and moral well-being of Muslim society in the digital era.

Keywords: English Language Learning; Islamic Education; Islamic Knowledge; Religious Motivation; University Students

INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization and the digital revolution has reshaped human interaction, creating a new communication environment defined by borderless information. This transformation, particularly propelled by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), has fundamentally altered people's way of life (Nugroho & Wibawa, 2022). According to Schwab (2024), the 4IR is characterized by the impact of technological advancements such as smartphones that make virtually all individual decisions and actions easily traceable and accessible. This era is characterized by the rapid integration of physical, digital, and biological technologies, driving innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, stem cell research, and renewable energy sources.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) simultaneously champions collaboration and cooperation to enhance the well-being of global human networks, while introducing profound new challenges in information control and management. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) have become central to the massive dissemination of content to the public. While the ease of access and availability of information at one's fingertips grant individuals significant autonomy in managing content, the resulting overwhelming influx of information generated by various individuals and groups has, unfortunately, led to considerable societal confusion and disorientation (Ab Hadi et al., 2023).

The *Kamus Dewan* defines "viral" as a virus. However, in the context of cyberspace and the Internet, "viral" typically refers to images, videos, or information that spread rapidly across social media from one user to another. Such messages or materials circulate without boundaries, as though all information is literally at one's fingertips. According to Mokhtar & Hassan (2021), technological advancements in information dissemination have had a profound impact on societies worldwide, both positive and negative. In Malaysia, the spread of information has generally led to negative consequences. This phenomenon, known as viralism, encompasses the dissemination of fake news, slander, provocation, gossip, and other harmful content that generates public anxiety and unrest. More seriously, it threatens the harmony and peace of Malaysia's multi-religious and multi-ethnic communities, believed to stem from moral decay within society itself (Ghani et al., 2020). Allāh SWT states in Surah an-Nur, which means:

Translation: Indeed, those who love to spread indecency and slander among the believers will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. Moreover, Allāh knows, while you do not know [An-Nur: 19].

Based on the meaning of Allāh's words above, the phenomenon of viralism, which results in negative consequences, is strongly prohibited in Islam. Viralism reflects an excessive attitude that causes harm, anxiety, discomfort, disrupts public order, and creates chaos in the nation. Viral dissemination is sometimes inaccurate and cannot be controlled (Mokhtar & Hassan, 2021). This term is often associated with harmful elements, much like the concept of social ills. Society generally views social ills as negative characteristics from the perspective of religion or lifestyle (Hanapi et al., 2021). The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) states, which means:

Translation: The faith of a servant will not be upright until his heart is upright, and his heart will not be upright until his tongue is upright. A servant will not enter Paradise so long as his neighbor is not safe from his harm [Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, no. 13048, Vol. 20].

Issues of viralism, such as slander and the spread of fake news, must be addressed. At the same time, social media should serve as a platform for disseminating beneficial information to maintain societal stability. Recognizing this issue, the government established the website *Sebenarnya.my*, launched by the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia (MCMC) on March 14, 2017. To raise public awareness of the dangers of slander spread through social media, appropriate strategies are needed, including research in communication, law, and religion, to reduce the dissemination of information that could undermine social stability (Salleh et al., 2020).

This issue is deeply rooted in the erosion of moral and ethical values within society. The indifference displayed toward the consequences of one's actions on social media reflects a fundamental disregard for the principles of *iḥsān* (excellence, benevolence), respect, and social well-being (Dhiman, 2023). Islamic tradition posits that the human soul (*naḥs*) possesses inclinations toward evil and sin, and an undisciplined soul can readily lead to psychological distress and unhappiness. The psychosufistic approach (*tasawwuf*) addresses this through *tazkiyat al-naḥs* (purification of the soul). This discipline aims to train, cleanse, and elevate the soul, drawing it closer to Allāh SWT by systematically eradicating negative traits and cultivating positive virtues. In essence, *tasawwuf* serves as a spiritual education or discipline of knowledge, dedicated to purifying the soul, refining character, cultivating excellent moral conduct, and deepening one's awareness of the relationship with Allāh SWT (Mursalin, 2024).

Therefore, the primary objective of this study is two fold: (1) to identify the key scenarios and underlying factors contributing to the phenomenon of viralism, and (2) to analyze the principles of psychosufism as a viable, holistic solution for addressing this challenge within society, particularly among the global Muslim community.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a structured qualitative literature review using thematic analysis to examine the phenomenon of viralism in the digital sphere and identify psychosufistic elements that may contribute to addressing its psychological, spiritual, and moral dimensions. The review was designed to synthesise existing scholarly literature and relevant Islamic textual sources rather than to collect primary data from human participants. This approach is consistent with the conceptual orientation of the study, which examines viralism through the interaction between digital behaviour, psychological well-being, spirituality, moral development, and Islamic values. The analysis focused particularly on the psychosufistic concepts of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *maqāmāt*, and *aḥwāl*, which constitute the central conceptual elements examined in the study. These concepts are already identified in the manuscript as the principal components of the psychosufistic approach.

Sources and Search Strategy

Relevant literature was identified through searches of Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect, with additional materials obtained from authoritative Islamic sources and relevant Malaysian institutional publications. The search covered literature published primarily between 2015 and 2025, while earlier classical and foundational works were retained when they were directly relevant to the conceptualisation of Sufism, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *maqāmāt*, *aḥwāl*, and Islamic psychology. The existing manuscript draws substantially on both contemporary studies and classical Islamic scholarship, including works associated with al-Ghazālī, al-Qushayrī, Ibn Khaldun, and other scholars.

The search strategy combined keywords relating to the two principal dimensions of the study. Keywords for the digital phenomenon included “viralism,” “viral content,” “social media,” “misinformation,” “fake news,” “disinformation,” “slander,” “fitnah,” “digital behaviour,” and “information sharing.” Keywords relating to the psychosufistic dimension included “psychosufism,” “Sufi psychology,” “Islamic psychology,” “Islamic psychotherapy,” “Sufi therapy,” “*tazkiyat al-nafs*,” “*maqāmāt*,” “*aḥwāl*,” “*dhikr*,” “*muhāsabah*,” and “spiritual well-being.” Boolean combinations such as “viralism AND social media,” “misinformation AND Muslim youth,” “psychosufism AND psychological well-being,” “*tazkiyat al-nafs* AND behaviour,” and “*maqāmāt* AND Islamic psychotherapy” were used to identify literature relevant to the research objectives.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included when they met the following criteria: (i) addressed viralism, misinformation, fake news, social-media behaviour, or related digital communication problems; (ii) examined psychological, spiritual, ethical, moral, or behavioural dimensions relevant to digital engagement; (iii) discussed psychosufism, Sufi psychology, Islamic psychology, Islamic psychotherapy, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *maqāmāt*, *aḥwāl*, or related spiritual practices; (iv) were published in scholarly journals, academic books, conference proceedings, dissertations, or authoritative institutional sources; and (v) were available in English, Malay, or Indonesian. Classical Islamic texts were also included when they provided foundational explanations of the psychosufistic concepts examined in this study.

Sources were excluded if they were unrelated to the research objectives, duplicated another record, lacked sufficient scholarly or textual credibility, consisted solely of commercial or promotional material, or discussed viral content without addressing its behavioural, psychological, ethical, spiritual, or social implications. Materials that mentioned social media only as a technological platform without relevance to viralism or responsible digital behaviour were also excluded.

Screening and Selection Procedure

The identification and selection of sources were conducted in four stages. First, potentially relevant records were identified through database and supplementary searches using the predetermined keywords. Second, duplicate records and clearly irrelevant sources were removed. Third, titles and abstracts were screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Sources that appeared relevant were subsequently examined through full-text assessment. Fourth, the remaining sources were evaluated for their direct relevance to either (a) the scenarios and contributing factors of viralism or (b) psychosufistic principles that could address psychological, spiritual, and moral dimensions associated with viralism. The final body of literature was therefore not selected solely according to publication frequency but according to its conceptual relevance to the two research objectives. This selection is particularly important because the manuscript seeks both to identify the underlying factors contributing to viralism and to analyse psychosufism as a holistic response.

Data Extraction and Thematic Analysis

Data were extracted from the selected sources using a structured extraction framework. For each source, information was recorded concerning the author and year, study context, research focus, principal findings, concepts examined, and relevance to the research objectives. Particular attention was given to evidence concerning the causes and manifestations of viralism, including misinformation, uncontrolled information sharing, information overload, irresponsible online behaviour, and inadequate verification practices. These issues are prominent in the existing manuscript.

The extracted material was then analysed thematically through a six-stage process adapted from Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach. First, the researchers repeatedly read the selected literature to develop familiarity with the content. Second, meaningful statements relating to viralism and psychosufism were identified and assigned initial codes. Third, related codes were grouped into preliminary categories. Fourth, the categories were reviewed and consolidated into broader themes. Fifth, each theme was clearly defined and labelled according to its conceptual meaning. Finally, the themes were synthesised narratively and interpreted in relation to the research objectives.

The analysis generated two broad analytical domains. The first concerned the drivers and manifestations of digital viralism, including ease of social-media access, uncontrolled information overload, irresponsible sharing behaviour, misinformation, slander, provocation, and difficulties in verifying information. The second concerned psychosufistic mechanisms for addressing viralism, particularly *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *dhikr*, *maqāmāt*, *aḥwāl*, self-reflection, emotional regulation, spiritual discipline, and moral cultivation. The manuscript similarly identifies ease of access to social media, information overload, and irresponsible behaviour of netizens as important contributing factors.

The final synthesis was undertaken by comparing and integrating findings across the selected sources. Similar concepts were merged, overlapping themes were consolidated, and relationships between digital problems and psychosufistic responses were identified. For example, irresponsible information sharing was conceptually linked to the need for *tabayyun*, *muhāsabah*, self-discipline, and *tazkiyat al-nafs*, while emotional instability and psychological distress were examined in relation to *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl*. This analytical process enabled the study to move beyond a descriptive review of the literature towards a conceptual explanation of how psychosufistic principles may contribute to more disciplined, ethical, and responsible digital engagement. The manuscript already frames psychosufism as involving psychological, spiritual, and emotional dimensions and identifies practices such as repentance, patience, gratitude, reliance on Allah, and self-reflection as relevant mechanisms.

Trustworthiness of the Review

To enhance the trustworthiness of the synthesis, the researchers compared findings across different types of sources and prioritised peer-reviewed academic literature and authoritative Islamic texts. Claims were retained in the thematic synthesis when they demonstrated clear conceptual or empirical relevance to the research objectives. Where scholarly interpretations of concepts such as *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* differed, the analysis

retained the distinction between spiritual stations attained through human striving and spiritual states understood as divine gifts, rather than treating the concepts as interchangeable. This distinction is supported by the literature reviewed in the manuscript.

Overall, the methodology provided a structured procedure for identifying, screening, analysing, and synthesising literature concerning digital viralism and psychosufism. The resulting themes were subsequently used as the conceptual basis for explaining how psychosufistic principles can function not only as spiritual and psychological interventions but also as preventive and educational mechanisms for promoting ethical digital citizenship.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Scenario of Viralism Phenomena in the Digital Sphere

Globalization and the digital revolution have fundamentally reshaped every aspect of human life, redefining traditional boundaries and perspectives. This phenomenon is a powerful catalyst for transforming thoughts, lifestyles, and worldviews, posing a significant intellectual and ethical challenge, particularly for contemporary Muslims. The boundless nature of this openness, driven by technological sophistication and the rapid, often uncontrolled dissemination of information via advanced communication systems, has generated numerous negative consequences for both society and human culture (Sa'ari & Muhsin, 2012). In the modern world, the younger generation is demonstrably more vulnerable to these adverse effects and frequently becomes the primary victim. This susceptibility stems from their easy exposure to various forms of information dissemination that often contradict Islamic teachings, thereby corrupting their thinking, culture, and way of life, and ultimately exacerbating social problems (Sa'ari, 2001).

In contemporary society, social media stands out as a defining new medium, emerging directly from the advancement of digital technology. This platform has introduced a fundamentally new form of human interaction, allowing communication to transcend physical boundaries and occur entirely within a virtual space. Social media is undeniably a powerful tool, offering significant assistance across various domains, including professional endeavors and personal life. However, this medium also poses substantial dangers to society, including provocation, cybercrime, slander, and similar malicious actions (Mohd Hamizi & Hamzah, 2023). As its use continues to surge in the modern communication era, its effects on various aspects of social life are increasingly profound (Mokhtar & Hassan, 2021). Indeed, non-users are often perceived as outdated because applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok provide fast, continuous, and highly engaging interactive opportunities.

The accelerated pace of scientific and technological advancement necessitates more frequent and dynamic communication within society. Consequently, social media has become a primary nexus for both interpersonal interaction and the broad exchange of views and ideas, impacting Malaysian society across all generations (Gazi et al., 2024). Despite its utility, the misuse of this powerful medium poses significant threats. As noted by Rahman et al. (2022), unregulated social media use contributes to a range of problems, including cybercrime, the spread of misinformation, defamation, religious tensions, and incitement to violence. Furthermore, it frequently serves as a platform for expressing dissatisfaction or opinions in unethical ways that directly jeopardize societal harmony and security. While various social media applications have transformed the speed and manner in which messages are delivered and received, the unrestricted access to information inherent in these systems has unfortunately allowed for the rampant spread of fake news, resulting in the frequent misuse of this digital convenience (Wei et al., 2023).

The spread of news without consideration is referred to as the first-to-share syndrome or news-sharing syndrome. The National Security Council (MKN) emphasizes that every piece of information published or shared through social media must be verified to ensure its authenticity. Irresponsible and careless social media users only accelerate the spread of false news. In the digital world, viralism refers to the process of rapidly disseminating information or content through digital platforms. The viral phenomenon is unique because digital technology allows information to spread quickly and reach a broad audience (Permana & Yusmawati, 2019). The term virus originates from the idea that viruses spread rapidly, as defined by the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)

from English before being adopted into Indonesian. In social media, viral refers to content that users repeatedly share and engage with.

The phenomenon of *viralism* serves as a stark symptom of unhealthy digital behaviour, characterized by the rapid dissemination of false news, slander, provocation, and excessive gossip. This behaviour generates significant negative impacts in society, triggering public anxiety and social stigma (Peters et al., 2020). The sheer volume of fake news has created an environment where distinguishing between factual information and deliberate misinformation is increasingly complex. Generally, society is overwhelmingly exposed to the circulation of false information across social media platforms, encompassing both domestic and international issues (Ramli et al., 2022). Qadir and Ramli (2024) defines viral sharing as the process by which content is transmitted exponentially from one user to another through digital and mobile social networks. A critical concern is that users' repeated exposure to duplicate viral content can lead to it being perceived as accurate, even when it is inaccurate. When this false information is neither promptly removed nor corrected, the situation rapidly deteriorates (Mokhtar & Hassan, 2021).

The recent COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed a significant wave of viralism in Malaysia, deeply unsettling society, particularly concerning the Movement Control Order (MCO), the National COVID-19 Immunisation Programme (PICK), and related public health issues. The World Health Organization (WHO) has termed the widespread circulation of false news about COVID-19 an infodemic (Choi, 2024), which has proliferated rapidly across social media platforms, including TikTok (Basch et al., 2021). This phenomenon severely undermined government efforts to curb the pandemic by generating heightened anxiety and distrust among Malaysians (Haron & Daud, 2021), thus further burdening medical professionals, especially doctors, in managing the crisis.

The 15th General Election (GE15) presented a similar scenario, which significantly heightened sentiments of hatred and hostility across society—among candidates, voters, and party supporters alike. This was especially pronounced among the younger generation, who heavily utilized social media as a primary campaigning platform (Boyman & Jawan, 2022). Such conflicts often arose from mutual provocations designed to gain electoral advantage, which posed serious risks to the prospects of moderate democracy in Malaysia (Bakar et al., 2021). Furthermore, fake news served to fuel slander (*fitnah*) within society—an act strongly prohibited and in clear violation of Islamic communication ethics (Muhammad et al., 2025). Definition of *fitnah* as communication—whether individual or collective—intended to cast a negative stigma on a person or event, based on false information that damages their dignity, credibility, or reputation. Therefore, the spread of negative viralism in Malaysian society must be urgently curbed to prevent slander that threatens the harmony of the nation's multi-religious and multi-ethnic community.

Factors Contributing to the Occurrence of Viralism Phenomena

Today, in the rapidly evolving era of globalization and advanced global technology, the dissemination of information has become increasingly accessible. Social media has become an integral part of daily life worldwide, particularly in Malaysia among Generations Y and Z, who use it openly and without boundaries (Ishak et al., 2016). Social media allows users to create and share content freely due to its interactive nature. Two basic human needs drive the widespread use of social media: gaining an understanding of tragedies and sharing information (Craig, 2005). In Malaysia, social media usage has shown a significant increase, with 17.5 million internet users and 11 million Facebook accounts (Astro Awani, 2013). Youth aged 18–34 constitute the largest group of Facebook users (socialbakers.com, 2013). Studies show that Facebook is the most preferred platform among young people compared to other social networking sites (Hamid et al., 2013), driven by factors of enjoyment, friendship, and usefulness (Lin & Lu, 2011). Today, people interact more through virtual platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. In the modern era, society utilizes social media to discuss current issues, share gossip, and engage in debates with one another.

More critically, this medium is exploited to gain profit and popularity worldwide, eventually leading society toward hostility and chaos (Zulkifli Mohamad al-Bakri, 2019). The phenomenon of *viralism* is hazardous, as highlighted by Mohamad Zulkifli et al. (2020): content that is useless or harmful is regarded as idle speech, resulting in wasted time and financial loss. Social disorder, conflict, division, and enmity within society can be triggered by the spread of dubious information, slander, and fabricated stories. *Fitnah* refers to accusations

directed at someone with the intention of damaging their reputation, whether through news, stories, or other means of communication. Findings indicate that there are two main types of fitnah spreading on social media. First is deliberate fitnah—accusations intentionally made to tarnish someone's dignity. Second is unintentional fitnah—when received and shared information has been altered before further dissemination (Salleh et al., 2020).

Several cognitive and sensory components contribute to this phenomenon. Sensory stimuli—how information is perceived through hearing, sight, taste, and smell—affect how information is understood. Furthermore, one's perspective is shaped by life experiences, which in turn influence memory, attention, expectations, and motivations toward information. Additional factors include the process of observation—how individuals record, store, and recall data based on prior impressions. Finally, information processing is required, wherein people integrate past knowledge, review acquired information and restructure it according to their current understanding. All these factors have the potential to distort information disseminated on social media, leading to fitnah, whether consciously or unconsciously (Salleh et al., 2020).

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406 CE) stated that the effectiveness of communication through writing depends on the following criteria (Mowlana, 2024):

- i. The accuracy of both the recipient and the contributor of information. This principle remains relevant in today's social media landscape, as hasty actions may favor certain parties, and the public should exercise caution when accepting information without verification.
- ii. Excessive trust in the transmitted or writing style may cause individuals to accept information uncritically, thus enabling the spread of false news.
- iii. Misinterpretations often occur when information is understood based on personal interpretations that are inconsistent with the original meaning intended by the communicator.
- iv. Ambiguous implicit meanings can lead to misunderstanding if not explained in simple and clear language. Therefore, Ibn Khaldun's ideas can be applied in the era of computers and the Internet as a basis for critical and responsible media literacy, thereby reducing the likelihood of false information spreading.
- v. Failure to place an event in its actual context or situation. Ambiguity or complexity of events often results in misjudgment, which can only be avoided through deeper study.
- vi. Flattery acts of praising or exaggerating the fame or greatness of influential individuals can lead to inaccurate information, particularly concerning the individuals involved.
- vii. Detachment from the essential nature of something. Only through knowledge and precision in interpreting natural principles can one distinguish between truth and falsehood, particularly in relation to natural laws.
- viii. Exaggeration, where excessive narration or description of something leads to overstatement that goes beyond reasonable limits.

This sensationalist tendency may also be driven by writers or journalists seeking to boost the sales and visibility of their newspapers, magazines, or other publications. However, relevant experience and knowledge are crucial for effectively evaluating the authenticity of such reports (Khaldun, 2011). A study by Adnan (2015) further emphasizes the necessity of carefully examining news before its public dissemination. An individual's educational background, level of critical thinking, communication experience, and cognitive interaction are all key components that significantly influence their ability to determine accuracy.

Ease of Access to Social Media

Due to its affordability and accessibility, social media platforms have attracted the interest of young people as a means of disseminating information more effectively. Social media has become an essential tool for the

transmission and sharing of information. However, the uncontrolled circulation of information may result in the dissemination of misleading or harmful content. Social media users are inevitably exposed to both authentic and false information. What is even more concerning is that today's society often accepts news obtained from social media without first evaluating the credibility of the sources. With the increasing number of Internet users each day, there is ample space for individuals to share their views and opinions on social media.

From the Islamic perspective, however, every individual is required to exercise careful verification (*tabayyun*) before accepting and disseminating any information. This is because, in Islam, spreading false news is considered a grave slander (*fitnah*). As Allāh SWT declares:

Translation: “And (remember that) *fitnah* is more grievous than killing” [Al-Baqarah: 191]

Islam strictly prohibits its followers from disseminating false or unverified information. The objective of this prohibition is to prevent *fitnah*, which can tarnish a person's dignity and reputation. Therefore, Islam teaches its adherents to practice *tabayyun*, meaning to deliberate carefully when receiving information. Reliable and authentic sources must be referred to in this verification process (Ab Hadi et al., 2023).

Uncontrolled Information Overload

Users' online sharing habits frequently focus on news (66.9%), public services (60.9%), and entertainment/humorous content (56.1%) (Jerome et al., 2024). However, this act of sharing turns negative when individuals are subjected to excessive amounts of information simultaneously. Contemporary society no longer relies solely on mainstream media, having shifted to readily available alternative sources through social media. Consequently, the sheer diversity and volume of information originating from countless sources can induce confusion and lead to poor decision-making among the public (Ashaari et al., 2019). This condition makes it exceptionally difficult for individuals to verify the authenticity of all content fully. Furthermore, the necessary process of retrieving and cross-checking information demands both sufficient time and a high degree of media literacy (Ab Hadi et al., 2023).

Irresponsible Behavior of Netizens

A significant factor fueling the spread of false information is the tendency of netizens to prioritize being the first to disseminate news (Azahari & Jasmi, 2022). This cultural inclination proves difficult to change, often leading individuals to share misinformation unintentionally and causing issues to go viral. To combat the proliferation of fake news, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) established the *sebenarnya.my portal* (Daud & Zulhuda, 2020). However, MCMC data shows that only 20.3% of users were even aware of the portal, and 59.4% of those aware had never actually used it. This report indicates a significant gap in users' ability or willingness to verify information, despite the government providing an official platform. To ensure the public optimally utilizes such government-provided resources, various public service campaigns must be intensified. This initiative is crucial for fostering future generations of responsible digital citizens and effectively curtailing the culture of spreading false news.

The Concept of Psychosufism

The term psychology derives from the Greek words *psyche* (soul) and *logos* (knowledge/study), initially translating to the science or study of the soul (Abdul Rahman, 2019; Mokhtar, 2003). Modern psychology has evolved to define itself as a scientific discipline concerned with the processes and states of the mind that emerge from patterns of thought (Britannica, 2021). Vidal (2024) further concludes that it is a branch of medicine focused on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental disorders and illnesses. In contrast, Islamic psychology is argued to have existed since the advent of Islam, as taught and demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Yudiani, 2013). This perspective is deeply rooted in divine revelation, which discusses the human soul (*nafs*) by highlighting the differences in the souls, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of believers and disbelievers (Hidayat, 2014). It provides a framework for understanding the soul's relationship with mental health (Wazir, 2020), addressing psychological disorders, and offering therapeutic healing (Masroom & Wan Dagang, 2013).

Psychosufism represents the integration of modern psychological principles with the spiritual methodology of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*). It is a holistic approach that views the individual as a balanced system of physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. This approach effectively combines religious elements and Sufi values, aiming to address emotional and psychological issues, foster inner peace (*sakinah*), and enhance overall spirituality (Sobri et al., 2022). Psychosufistic practices are employed to calm the mind, reduce stress, and enhance self-awareness. Sa'ari and Borhan (2008) define it as the practical or applicative aspect of Islamic spiritual psychology, focusing on tangible methods for achieving spiritual and psychological equilibrium.

Islamic psychotherapy is a distinct branch of healing that centers on psychological wellness rooted in religious values. As Zainal (2016) notes, it originates from the classical concept of *'ilm al-naḥs* (knowledge of the soul), a discipline developed from the Islamic Golden Age to the modern era to revive spiritual strength and deepen one's faith and conviction.

This discipline is therefore defined as the holistic process of treating an individual's inner self, encompassing mental, spiritual, moral, and physical healing as guided by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Drawing on these foundational sources, Muslim scholars have developed various therapeutic approaches aimed at producing balanced individuals capable of fulfilling their role as *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on earth. Ultimately, Islamic psychology refers to the treatment of mental, spiritual, moral, and physical illnesses using methods derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, the practices of the pious, and established Islamic knowledge (Kasim et al., 2024).

Psychosufism is best understood as both a conceptual framework and a therapeutic methodology for treating mental, spiritual, emotional, and moral disorders. Its foundation rests firmly upon primary Islamic sources—the Qur'an, Sunnah, the practices of the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (pious predecessors), and knowledge that aligns with Shari'ah principles. Rajab (2024) highlights that psychosufism represents the emotional resilience humans derive from religious practices, specifically faith, worship, and ethics, which collectively ensure psychological harmony. Conversely, Sa'ari (2019) views it as the thought and study that integrates psychological and spiritual elements, particularly in understanding mental processes and spiritual cognition from an Islamic perspective. Given this comprehensive scope, the Islamic approach in psychosufistic treatment provides an empirical foundation for studying the human relationship with spirituality, leading to the conclusion that Islamic psychospirituality and psychosufism are essentially synonymous terms.

In contemporary times, the emergence of various spiritual diseases among Muslims poses a significant threat to societal development. Stress, depression, and anxiety are now ubiquitous challenges, affecting everyone when facing life's complexities, whether stemming from inner conflicts or social interactions (Kirkbride et al., 2024). These psychological and spiritual crises can be effectively addressed by returning to and actively practicing religious teachings. This necessity has sparked a greater societal awareness of the importance of religiosity. Therefore, the field of psychology must integrate psychosufism, applying religious knowledge in the healing and development of the soul and spirit (Mokhtar & Mohd Noor, 2021). Zulkipli et al. (2023) emphasize that therapeutic processes within this framework involve specific steps designed to help individuals overcome disturbances by managing their emotions, thought patterns, and behaviors, ultimately aiming to develop human potential based on Islamic sources and in accordance with the Shari'ah.

Effective treatment for digital-era moral crises must emphasize practices that strengthen religious consciousness and internalize spiritual values, aligning rigorously with Islamic principles. This approach directly follows the methodologies of earlier righteous scholars and Muslim intellectuals (Suhaimi et al., 2023). Shaykh Abul Hasan al-Shadhili defines Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) as the personal experience of attaining awareness of the Divine presence through devotion and profound love. It encompasses spiritual practices and acts of worship that continuously direct individuals towards God (Dewi, 2020). Viewed as a form of moral and spiritual education, Sufism aims to cultivate virtuous values while systematically abandoning negative behaviors. Thus, it is a discipline dedicated to purifying the soul and refining character, comprising practices that heighten spiritual awareness and promote moral improvement (Mursalin, 2024).

Al-Ghazālī (2000) profoundly emphasized that the soul (*al-naḥs*) is the foundation of spiritual understanding, morality, and the motivation behind human physical actions, which ultimately shape behavior. A healthy soul

leads to righteous behavior, while a corrupted soul results in immoral conduct (Al Ghazali, 2016). The human soul is categorized into three primary levels:

1. Al-Nafs al-Ammārah (The Commanding Soul): The unrefined state is inherently inclined toward evil and base desires.
2. Al-Nafs al-Lawwāmah (The Reproachful Soul): The soul that recognizes its sins, blames itself, and marks the beginning of the spiritual journey and repentance.
3. Al-Nafs al-Muṭma'innah (The Tranquil Soul): The highest state of peace and serenity, achieved through reliance on and closeness to God (As-Shidqi & Naan, 2022).

The Qur'an acknowledges that the human soul is naturally inclined to evil unless it is granted divine mercy. Consequently, untrained souls frequently lead to psychological problems and unhappiness, underscoring the essential role of religion, since humans are inherently homo religiosus—beings inseparable from faith.

Sufism, often synonymous with *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), is the established methodology for training and cleansing the self. Its essence is to purify the heart and soul, avoiding blameworthy traits and drawing closer to God (As-Shidqi & Naan, 2022). From an epistemological perspective, Sufism is recognized as an approach to understanding psychological dimensions through *dhawq* (intuition, inner experience), and inspiration (Tasmuji & Ahmad Khoirudin, 2022). Sufi therapy, also referred to as psychospiritual therapy, is a healing method rooted in these Sufi practices that has been applied for centuries as spiritual treatment. The core of this therapy posits the Sufi path as a mediator in addressing psychological illnesses, while affirming that ultimate healing power belongs exclusively to Allāh (Waslah, 2017). The Arabic term *al-tazkiyat* derives from *zakā'* (purity), signifying purification, growth, and blessing, and appears six times in the Qur'an with a consistent meaning (Zaini & Sa'ari, 2016). The term *al-nafs* itself carries multiple meanings, including spirit, essence, or self. According to Imam al-Ghazālī, *al-nafs* encompasses the corrupting forces of anger and desires, yet it also refers to the very essence of human identity. Thus, *al-nafs* is an unseen force within humans that fuels life, feelings, and will, capable of being influenced toward either good or evil.

The primary responsibility of the prophets and messengers was to guide humanity toward the purification of the soul. *Tazkiyat al-nafs* is the goal of the pious, as it determines their standing before God on the Day of Judgment. The term combines two meanings: purification from spiritual corruption and growth in moral excellence (Zainol et al., 2021). Consequently, *tazkiyat al-nafs* is considered the most important element of Sufism, as it involves cleansing the heart and removing blameworthy traits that hinder a person's relationship with Allāh (Hidayatullah & Azra, 2008). Scholars such as Ibn Qayyim, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that purification of the soul requires *musyarathah* (self-commitment), *murāqabah* (self-vigilance), *muhāsabah* (self-reflection), *mu'aqabah* (self-discipline), *mujāhadah* (striving for self-improvement), *mu'atabah* (repentance), and *mukāshafah* (spiritual unveiling). Each stage guides the believer in overcoming ego-driven impulses, strengthening faith, and attaining proximity to Allāh (Mujib, 2015; Taufiqurrahman, 2019).

The Sufi path is also characterized by the stages of *takhallī* (emptying the self from vices), *tahallī* (adorning the self with virtues), and *tajallī* (achieving spiritual illumination). These values cultivate noble character and moral responsibility, including honesty, patience, respect, compassion, and pursuit of knowledge (Noordin & Rahman, 2017; Siregar & Maragustam, 2015). Thus, psychosufism is essentially concerned with the purification of the soul and moral development, producing individuals of noble character who are pious. Practices such as prayer, fasting, meditation (*tafakkur*), night vigil (*qiyām al-layl*), and remembrance of God (*dhikr*) are integral elements of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (Mohamad et al., 2017). Muslim scholars such as al-Ghazālī, Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī al-Makkī, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh, and al-Māwardī have long discussed methods for addressing mental illness through Sufi practices, showing that psychological disorders are not new phenomena. For instance, Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī's concept of *maqāmāt* (spiritual stations) can be understood as Islamic psychotherapy (Syed Muhsin & Sa'ari, 2015). Sufi approaches to healing include *dhikr*, prayer, blessings upon the Prophet, meditation, spiritual music, and other practices that draw individuals closer to Allāh (Syukur, 2012). In line with the growing awareness of Islamic spirituality, the development of psychosufistic frameworks has become a necessity. This involves a gradual process of soul purification reflected in various *maqāmāt* such as *tawbah* (repentance), *ṣabr*

(patience), *rajā'* (hope), and *khawf* (fear of God). These therapeutic elements hold significant spiritual value in Sufism and contribute to shaping a more stable psychology and personality, particularly among the youth.

Psychosufistic Elements in Addressing the Viralism Phenomenon

Tasawwuf (Sufism) is a discipline that discusses human psychology to help individuals resolve and overcome life's problems by drawing closer to Allāh SWT. Sufi scholars play a crucial role in educating and guiding the Muslim community towards enhancing the quality of worship, drawing closer to Allāh, eliminating blameworthy traits (*takhallī*), and cultivating praiseworthy traits (*taḥallī*) (Hanin Hamjah et al., 2020). *Tasawwuf* is essentially an effort to enable human beings to attain happiness and inner peace while also serving as a preventive measure against psychological disturbances. The materialistic and hedonistic attitudes towards life, as well as excessive desires to control every aspect of life without proper direction, are among the factors that negatively impact modern society, including the rise of psychological issues. Many people are inclined towards pursuing a modern lifestyle that is detached from religious consciousness, which they often consider less relevant in their daily lives. Hence, following the spiritual path of the Sufis in drawing closer to Allāh SWT involves several stages.

The first stage is *mujāhadah*, an inner spiritual struggle that requires individuals to resist their desires and remain undistracted by worldly pleasures. In psychology, happiness itself influences a person's psychological condition. Therefore, Sufi therapy functions as a complementary and balancing aspect of existing therapeutic concepts (Al Halim & Mohamed, 2024). Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that the first stage of *tasawwuf* is repentance (*tawbah*), which means turning away from and abandoning sins. According to Khan (2015), sins themselves cause psychological pressure on the individual who commits them, serving as a source of stress and depression that may lead to illness. The second stage is *wara'*, which is the purification of the heart and all bodily faculties (Al-Najjar, 2004). *Tasawwuf* teaches moderation and control of desires, which in psychology contributes to reducing stress. The third stage is *zuhd*, meaning detachment of the heart from anything that distances a person from Allāh, while avoiding worldly temptations and the pursuit of vanity (Muqit, 2020). In this sense, *zuhd* can be applied to regulate human behavior from excesses, whether positive or negative. The fourth stage is *qana'ah*, which means contentment or acceptance. It refers to an attitude of being satisfied with and grateful for what one has, while avoiding feelings of dissatisfaction and inadequacy (Faris, 2005). The fifth stage is *tawakkul*, which refers to surrendering oneself to Allāh after exerting effort. This combines rational thought, action, and spiritual consciousness to develop a strong personality and mental resilience. In Islamic psychotherapy, *tawakkul* serves as prevention, healing, and development in the effort to attain sound mental health. This attitude helps individuals overcome anxiety, stress, depression, disappointment, and trauma (Al Halim & Mohammed, 2024).

Essentially, psychosufism is a method to restore, heal, strengthen, and awaken a person's spiritual aspects, enabling them to serve as a natural remedy for their problems or challenges. In psychosufism, therapy aims to purify the soul from spiritual illnesses in order to achieve the ultimate purpose of human life: attaining the pleasure of Allāh SWT and experiencing happiness in both this world and the Hereafter. In *tasawwuf*, *tazkiyat al-nafs* refers to the process of purifying the soul and strengthening the relationship between human beings and Allāh SWT. Within Sufism, *tazkiyat al-nafs* is regarded as the path towards closeness to Allāh through spiritual practices and disciplines. It involves transforming the soul from a state of corruption into one that is pure and clean. This indicates a conscious effort to abandon actions that contradict religious principles and replace them with virtuous qualities such as honesty, trustworthiness, humility (*tawadhu'*), patience, generosity, and forgiveness.

According to scholars such as Sayyid Hawwa (1988), *tazkiyat al-nafs* transforms a person from disbelief to faith, from hypocrisy to sincerity, and from negative traits such as miserliness and resentment to generosity and forgiveness. When the soul becomes purified, one's behavior will also be filled with noble values appreciated by society and approved by Allāh SWT. In the Sufi tradition, this purification process is carried out systematically through teachings known as *maqāmāt* (stations of spiritual discipline) and *ahwāl* (states of spiritual experience). The goal is to improve both outward and inward character, enabling individuals to live closer to Allāh SWT (Miskawayh, 1961).

Tazkiyat al-nafs

Tazkiyat al-nafs is a form of spiritual therapy highly recommended for every Muslim, particularly the youth, to address various social problems and spiritual ailments that arise from negligence in facing the currents of globalization and the rapid advancement of information technology. This concept generally refers to the process of cleansing, purifying, and nurturing the soul (Sa'ari, 2002). Tazkiyat al-nafs is a determined effort to purify the soul from reprehensible traits. It is a process of transition from a state of a tainted soul burdened with sins to a state of purity and cleanliness. For instance, a heart that deviates from the principles of Shariah can be purified by adhering to the teachings of Islam. This may involve transformation from disbelief to faith, hypocrisy to honesty and trustworthiness, and from vengefulness to forgiveness, humility, and discipline. The focus of this endeavor is not to eliminate the nafs entirely, but to train it to act according to the demands of Shariah and creed. To achieve perfection in this purification process, an individual requires spiritual nourishment and the adornment of noble attributes.

The term nafs is commonly used in both Arabic and Malay (Nulhakim, 2019). Thus, tazkiyat al-nafs refers to the process of purifying the soul from negative traits, such as envy, arrogance, and ostentation, while adorning it with virtues like sincerity, patience, and reliance on Allāh (tawakkul). The goal of this process is to achieve spiritual and physical well-being by purifying the soul, thereby enabling effective control over one's emotions. Furthermore, tazkiyat al-nafs encompasses spiritual practices (maqāmāt) such as repentance (tawbah), asceticism (zuhd), patience (ṣabr), reliance on Allāh (tawakkul), and gratitude (shukr) (Syed Muhsin, 2012). These practices aim to draw closer to Allāh SWT, bring tranquility to the soul, and foster spiritual harmony. Maqāmāt also represent stages in the spiritual journey of a servant, to attain Allāh's pleasure and enhance inner peace and spiritual well-being. Through the internalization and practice of maqāmāt and continuous self-discipline, tazkiyat al-nafs enables an individual to achieve serenity and closeness to Allāh SWT. In summary, tazkiyat al-nafs is the effort to cleanse the soul, heart, and self from corrupt traits and replace them with virtuous qualities. This process requires patience and perseverance (Hamjah, 2010).

Dhikr refers to the act of remembering Allāh SWT through the utterance of sacred words (kalimah ṭayyibah). The concept of dhikr also includes seeking forgiveness (istighfār), reciting the Qur'an, sending blessings upon the Prophet, supplication (du'ā'), and prayer (ṣalāh) (Kamus Dewan, 2005). Dhikr signifies freeing oneself from negligence and forgetfulness and serves as a spiritual and physical remedy when performed earnestly, continuously, and sincerely. Remembering Allāh SWT is an act of worship that revives the heart, softens it, and nurtures compassion. Dhikr has the capacity to enliven and purify the heart, removing impurities and bringing inner peace. As a result, the heart is detached from world distractions (Mokhtar & Mohd Noor, 2021).

Mansor and Hanapiah (2011) notes that various psychological issues may stem from neglecting the practice of dhikr. Some individuals prefer quick fixes such as sedatives, which may have long-term harmful effects. Constant remembrance of Allāh SWT offers a more straightforward and safer approach rooted in Islamic teachings. Studies have shown that silently invoking the name of Allāh can alleviate mental distress. Each letter of the divine name carries vibrational energy and frequencies that can regulate breathing and stabilize heart rate, contributing to this effect. Moreover, Mokhtar and Mohd Noor (2021) found that dhikr keeps the believer's heart focused on Allāh SWT and away from prohibited matters, thereby cultivating tranquility when facing life's trials. Dhikr also enhances self-confidence, relaxes the body, and brings inner calm.

According to Yahya and Sa'ari (2016), dhikr serves as a means of purifying the soul. It involves taḥallī (adornment with praiseworthy traits) and takhallī (removal of blameworthy traits). Among youth, dhikr is often practiced as a means of self-soothing, especially when experiencing difficulties or stress. In such moments, they commonly engage in istighfār and seek forgiveness from Allāh SWT. Beyond its calming effect, dhikr influences thought and behavior. Individuals inclined towards dhikr and remembrance of Allāh SWT are naturally motivated to do good and avoid evil, resulting in virtuous character (Mansor & Hanapiah, 2011). The spiritual strength derived from dhikr is unique, as it is grounded in the belief that Allāh SWT is ever watchful and mindful of His servants (Hamjah, 2015).

Maqāmāt

Maqāmāt is the plural of the word *maqām*, which means rank, status, station, or stage. According to Nguyen (2016), in Sufism, *maqāmāt* refers to the spiritual position of a servant before Allāh SWT, attained through worship, *mujāhadah* (strenuous effort), and continuous spiritual training to build a strong relationship with Him. Technically, *maqāmāt* also signifies the efforts of a Sufi to elevate his standing before Allāh SWT through valuable spiritual practices (Ni'am, 2020). The renowned Sufi scholar Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm bin Hawāzin al-Qushayrī defined *maqām* as a stage of character attained by a servant as a result of consistent effort during his spiritual journey (*sulūk*). Thus, a person's *maqām* reflects his spiritual condition at a particular stage, resulting from diligence and *mujāhadah* in devotion to Allāh SWT (Al-Qushayrī, n.d.).

According to Syed Muhsin (2012), *maqāmāt* represent spiritual steps taken by Sufis to attain Allāh's pleasure, purify the soul of negative traits (*mazmūmah*), and refine their character, all of which require great perseverance. *Maqāmāt* embody an individual's efforts to draw nearer to Allāh SWT through purification of the soul and improvement of spiritual life quality. They also serve as a foundation for effective emotional management. Meanwhile, Zaini & Sa'ari (2016) highlight that Sufi psychotherapy or *psychosufism* is one of the most well-known Islamic psychotherapeutic approaches. This methodology emphasizes *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) and strengthening one's relationship with Allāh SWT through internalization of *maqāmāt*. Within Sufism, the practice of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and values such as repentance (*tawbah*), patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and trust in Allāh (*tawakkul*) reinforces emotional and spiritual resilience. Sufism thus functions as a medium of spiritual therapy through practices such as *dhikr*, supplication, prayer, fasting, *muhāsabah* (self-reflection), and *tadabbur* (contemplation). These practices help individuals discover their potential, draw closer to Allāh SWT, and cultivate virtuous character. Hence, the psychosufistic approach serves as a means of managing stress, controlling emotional disturbances, and attaining balance across physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions.

Psychosufism also provides a framework for emotional regulation. This approach helps youth resolve problems, face life challenges, gain a deeper understanding of themselves, and identify their strengths and interests (Ismail, 2018). It focuses on strengthening the relationship with Allāh SWT through practices such as *muhāsabah*, repentance, patience, gratitude, and reliance on Allāh. Such processes are vital for improving emotional management and resolving inner conflicts. Therefore, psychosufism not only serves as spiritual healing but also helps young people attain peace of mind when facing difficulties, while strengthening their spiritual, psychological, and emotional well-being.

This methodology is rooted in *tazkiyat al-nafs*, which refers to the purification of the soul encompassing the elements of the self (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūḥ*), and intellect (*aql*). It aims to help youth draw closer to Allāh SWT, understand the meaning of life's trials, and strengthen their faith through specific practices. Its goal is to nurture good values and guide youth to return to Allāh SWT in times of adversity (Noordin & Rahman, 2017). This process not only purifies the spiritual aspect but also strengthens the mind by detaching from forbidden matters (Mutholingah & Zain, 2021). Internalizing *maqāmāt* helps youth understand the Sufi path and the importance of cultivating a strong soul and spirituality. Those who deeply internalize *maqāmāt* acquire inner strength to face life's challenges with composure, make wise decisions, and handle difficulties with positivity and control.

The internalization of *maqāmāt* values emphasizes building an intimate relationship with Allāh SWT through self-awareness and emotional regulation. For instance, *maqām al-tawbah* emphasizes the importance of purifying the soul from negative emotions, such as hatred and resentment, which often lead to emotional tension. *Maqām al-ṣabr* cultivates patience in the face of life's challenges and enhances mental resilience. *Maqām al-shukr* focuses on gratitude, which reduces stress and promotes mental well-being. Similarly, *maqām al-mahabbah* (love) fosters divine love and strengthens the bond between humans and Allāh SWT, thus establishing emotional balance. Altogether, understanding the values of *maqāmāt* such as repentance, patience, gratitude, and trust in Allāh is crucial for guiding youth toward positivity, resilience, and composure in facing challenges. Psychosufism, through *maqāmāt* and *tazkiyat al-nafs*, therefore offers a holistic approach to emotional regulation by integrating spiritual, psychological, and mental well-being (Sholikah, 2024).

According to Ibrahim et al. (2022), worldly distractions of the mind and soul give rise to societal problems. Al-Ghazālī's wisdom in his magnum opus *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* provides a psychotherapeutic framework through the concept of *maqāmāt* to heal the mind and soul. Human attachment to the world often results in disappointment, crime, and power struggles. *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* explains *maqāmāt* such as *tawbah*, *ṣabr*, *zuhd*, *tawakkul*, *maḥabbah*, *ma'rifah*, and *riḍā*. These seven stations serve as the foundation for shaping the identity of a true believer. In Sufi thought, the objective evolves from communication with Allāh SWT to uncovering the hidden essence of truth (*bāṭin*). To reach the final stage of divine love, one must undergo stages of repentance, asceticism, trust, poverty (*faqr*), remembrance, patience, gratitude, and contentment (Mitha, 2019). Al-Ghazālī employed *maqāmāt* as part of his Sufi psychotherapeutic method for *tazkiyat al-naḥs* (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

Thus, *maqām* or *maqāmāt* in Sufism can be understood as spiritual stations that constitute essential stages in the journey of human perfection, traversed by those walking the path of *sulūk*. They are the result of perseverance in *mujāhadah* towards Allāh SWT (Armstrong, 1995), and they manifest permanently in one's spiritual life (Al-Suhrawardī, 1966). Various types of *maqāmāt* have been discussed by Sufis, including *muhāsabah*, *tafakkur*, *zuhd*, *ikhhlāṣ*, *tawakkul*, *riḍā*, *shukr*, *faqr*, *yaqīn*, and *tawḥīd*. All of these possess profound spiritual value and significantly influence spiritual transformation, particularly in shaping young people into mature, balanced, and spiritually grounded individuals.

In psychosufism, psychological healing through *maqāmāt* is appropriate as an integrative approach to reducing social symptoms and moral decline triggered by technological sophistication in the era of globalization. As Sufi approaches are rooted in profound knowledge and spiritual values, psychotherapists must be creative, selective, and open in applying them. The *maqāmāt* process brings the Sufi closer to Allāh SWT, granting inner peace and serenity. According to Nasution (1993), *maqāmāt* are defined as preliminary efforts involving both outward and inward practices, such as repentance, asceticism, patience, trust, love, and gnosis (*ma'rifah*). A positive life is the outcome of a Sufi's obedience in traversing *maqāmāt*. This process instills qualities such as fear of Allāh (*khauf*), humility (*tawādu'*), piety (*taqwā*), sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*), gratitude (*shukr*), and tranquility of the soul. These traits draw divine protection and guidance through *muhāsabah*. Upon practicing these, a Sufi experiences *al-aḥwāl*, which are spiritual states divinely bestowed upon the heart. *Al-aḥwāl* manifest in various emotional experiences such as joy or sadness, longing or aversion, fear or delight, calmness or anxiety, and others (Al-Naisaburi, 1999).

Al-Aḥwāl

This section discusses *al-aḥwāl*, which are spiritual endowments in the form of states such as *khauf* (fear), *tawādu'* (humility), *taqwā* (piety), *ikhhlāṣ* (sincerity), *shukr* (gratitude), and *ṭmī'nān* (tranquility), granted to a Sufi by Allāh SWT. These states cannot be attained solely through human effort; instead, they are bestowed by Allāh due to continuous obedience and worship. A Sufi who consistently performs righteous deeds receives these divine gifts, often without being consciously aware of them (Rajab, 2007). The term *aḥwāl* is the plural form of *ḥāl*, meaning "state." As explained by al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910), *ḥāl* refers to spiritual experiences that purify the heart through the practice of *dhikr*. It is a temporary state of the heart that cannot be attained or sustained by personal effort. Thus, *ḥāl* is a divine gift, while *maqāmāt* are spiritual stations achieved through human striving (*al-mujāhadah*), discipline (*al-riyāḍah*), and acts of worship. In summary, *aḥwāl* represent spiritual states bestowed as a manifestation of divine grace, while *maqām* refers to enduring spiritual stages attained through a servant's effort. Accordingly, *aḥwāl* denote spiritual experiences accompanying a *sālik*'s (traveler's) journey, whereas *maqāmāt* indicate the established stations traversed by the *sālik* (Nī'am, 2020).

Determining the number of *ḥāl* is challenging, as they manifest in diverse forms and experiences. However, in his work *al-Luma'*, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988) enumerated ten types of *aḥwāl*: concentration (*murāqabah*), closeness (*qurb*), love (*maḥabbah*), fear (*khauf*), hope (*rajā'*), longing (*shawq*), intimacy (*uns*), serenity (*ṭmī'nān*), contemplation (*mushāhadah*), and certainty (*yaqīn*) (Nasr, 1980). Nevertheless, scholars differ in their views on the relationship between *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt*. Some scholars regard *aḥwāl* as integral to *maqāmāt*. For example, al-Ghazālī (1993) considered *maḥabbah* to be the highest *maqām* compared to other *maqāmāt*, while al-Ṭūsī classified it as an *ḥāl*.

Table 1: Relationship Between Digital Viralism and Psychosufistic Elements

Digital Viralism Factor	Psychosufistic Response	Mechanism	Expected Digital Behaviour
Rapid spread of information	Tazkiyah al-nafs	Purification of intention and control of impulsive reactions	Think before sharing
Misinformation and false news	Maqāmāt – wara‘ and tawbah	Develops caution, moral awareness and willingness to correct mistakes	Verify information and avoid spreading falsehood
Fitnah, slander and provocative content	Aḥwāl – khawf, rajā’ and murāqabah	Awareness of accountability before Allah and consciousness of one's actions	Avoid harmful comments, accusations and defamatory sharing
Information overload	Self-regulation	Controls attention, emotions and behavioural impulses	Pause, evaluate and selectively engage
Emotional reactions to viral content	Maqāmāt – ṣabr and tawakkul	Develops patience and reduces reactive behaviour	Avoid immediate emotional responses
Desire for likes, attention and virality	Tazkiyah al-nafs and muḥāsabah	Examines motives and reduces ego-driven behaviour	Share for beneficial purposes rather than popularity
Uncontrolled sharing	Dhikr, muraqabah and self-regulation	Strengthens mindfulness and awareness of consequences	Practise responsible sharing
Harmful or unethical digital content	Spiritual and moral cultivation	Internalises Islamic ethical values	Promote beneficial, respectful and truthful content

Based on Table 1, digital viralism is closely related to *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *maqāmāt*, *aḥwāl*, and self-regulation because the rapid spread of information can trigger impulsive sharing, emotional reactions, misinformation, fitnah, and attention-seeking behaviour. *Tazkiyat al-nafs* helps purify intentions and control desires, while *maqāmāt* such as *ṣabr*, *tawbah*, *wara‘*, and *tawakkul* cultivate patience, caution, and moral discipline in responding to digital content. *Aḥwāl*, including spiritual awareness and *murāqabah*, strengthen consciousness of one’s accountability before Allah. Together, these psychosufistic elements enhance self-regulation, enabling individuals to pause, verify information, control emotions, consider consequences, and avoid harmful content before engaging or sharing. Consequently, psychosufism can transform internal spiritual awareness into responsible digital behaviour characterised by truthful information sharing, respectful communication, avoidance of fitnah and harmful content, and constructive participation in digital spaces.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of viralism that has swept across the global community, particularly in Malaysia, clearly demonstrates how the sophistication of digital technology and social media exerts a direct impact on behavior, culture, and value systems. The rapid and borderless dissemination of information has given rise to various adverse effects, such as fake news, slander, provocation, hatred, and public anxiety. This situation not only disrupts the harmony of a multi-ethnic society but also undermines the morality and psychological well-being of the younger generation, who are the primary users of social media. Although various measures have been taken by the government and related institutions, the problem persists because its root lies in spiritual weakness and the lack of self-control, which cannot be resolved solely through legal mechanisms or external forms of education.

In this regard, the psychosufistic approach offers a more holistic dimension of solution as it integrates the strengths of psychology with Sufi values grounded in the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Psychosufism emphasizes *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) through spiritual disciplines such as repentance (*taubah*), patience (*ṣabr*), asceticism (*zuhd*), gratitude (*shukr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), and self-reflection (*muḥāsabah*), which directly cultivate spiritual strength and restrain the ego inclined towards evil. Furthermore, the concepts of *maqāmāt* (spiritual stations) and *aḥwāl* (spiritual states) in Sufism provide a systematic framework for nurturing the soul to attain higher levels of spiritual awareness. The practice of these values serves not only as a form of psychospiritual therapy to reduce stress, anxiety, and emotional disturbances, but also as a means of shaping a Muslim identity characterized by noble character, maturity, and the ability to critically filter information before sharing it.

From the perspective of *da'wah* (Islamic propagation) and education, the psychosufistic approach serves as an important instrument in guiding society—particularly the youth—to be more cautious in using social media and not easily drawn into destructive viralism. The internalization of Sufi values such as *takhallī* (purging vices), *tahallī* (adorning virtues), and *tajallī* (spiritual illumination) cultivates commendable traits that encourage honesty, trustworthiness, respect, patience, and responsibility. This aligns with the mission of Islam as a *rahmatan li-l-‘ālamīn* (mercy to all creation), which emphasizes the balance between spiritual, physical, and intellectual dimensions. Thus, psychosufism is not only therapeutic but also preventive, educational, and formative in human development.

In conclusion, this study asserts that solutions to the problem of viralism cannot rely solely on external mechanisms but must be complemented by internal strengthening through the psychosufistic approach. The integration of spirituality and Islamic psychology is believed to foster a more disciplined, mature, and ethical society in navigating digital communication. Ultimately, this approach is expected to contribute to the development of a resilient, harmonious, and virtuous Muslim community, capable of withstanding the challenges of globalization while drawing closer to Allāh SWT, for well-being in this world and eternal happiness in the Hereafter.

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