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Abstract

Modernity, characterized by the acceleration of digitalization, does not appear to be directly proportional to human well-being; as noted by the WHO, more than one billion people worldwide live with mental health disorders, a fact further confirmed by the concerns expressed by the Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Muhammadiyah regarding the widespread moral and ethical crisis in Indonesia. Amid these circumstances, the concept of the Zero Mind Process (ZMP) in Ary Ginanjar Agustian's Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) has gained popularity as a mechanism for purifying the seven mental shackles, yet the term "purification" he uses resonates with takhalli in ethical Sufism without ever having been explicitly linked in previous academic studies, which have thus far proceeded separately within the realms of popular psychology and education on one hand, and academic Sufism on the other. Based on this problem, this article aims to describe the conceptual structure of ZMP, examine the takhalli interpretation of this structure of mental shackles, and identify the epistemological points of convergence and divergence between the two. The research employs a qualitative approach in the form of library research using a conceptual-comparative analysis method, involving a cross-discourse reading of the ESQ 165 text and ethical Sufi literature on takhalli. The results of the study show that the seven mental shackles of ZMP can be systematically mapped into the categories of amrad al-qalb, such as su'uzan, takabur, huzn, hubb al-dunya, 'ujub-ghaflah, hasad, and ghadab. Further discussion confirms that ZMP and takhalli converge on the belief that self-transformation must begin with inner purification as a preparatory stage, yet they differ fundamentally in their epistemological foundations, the depth of the process, and their ultimate orientation; thus, epistemologically, ZMP requires a more solid foundation in tazkiyatun nafs so as not to be reduced to a secular and instantaneous technique for clarifying the mind.

Keywords: *Zero Mind Process, ESQ Ary Ginanjar, Takhalli.*

Abstrak

Modernitas yang ditandai akselerasi digitalisasi ternyata tidak berbanding lurus dengan kesejahteraan batin manusia, sebagaimana dicatat WHO bahwa lebih dari satu miliar penduduk dunia hidup dengan gangguan kesehatan mental, sekaligus dikonfirmasi oleh kegelisahan Ketua Umum PP Muhammadiyah atas krisis moral-etika yang meluas di Indonesia. Di tengah kondisi ini, konsep Zero Mind Process (ZMP) dalam Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) karya Ary Ginanjar Agustian populer sebagai mekanisme penjernihan tujuh belenggu mental, namun istilah “penjernihan” yang digunakannya beresonansi dengan *takhalli* dalam tasawuf akhlaki tanpa pernah dipertemukan secara eksplisit dalam kajian akademik sebelumnya, yang selama ini berjalan terpisah antara ranah psikologi-pendidikan populer dan tasawuf akademik. Berangkat dari problem tersebut, artikel ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan struktur konseptual ZMP, mengkaji pembacaan *takhalli* atas struktur belenggu mental tersebut, dan merumuskan titik temu serta titik beda epistemologis antara keduanya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berjenis kajian pustaka (*library research*) dengan metode analisis konseptual-komparatif, membaca teks ESQ 165 dan literatur tasawuf akhlaki tentang *takhalli* secara lintas wacana (*cross-discourse reading*). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa ketujuh belenggu mental ZMP dapat dipetakan secara sistematis ke dalam kategori-kategori *amrad al-qalb* seperti *su’uzan*, *takabur*, *huzn*, *hubb al-dunya*, *ujub-ghaflah*, *hasad*, dan *ghadab*. Diskusi lebih lanjut menegaskan bahwa ZMP dan *takhalli* bertemu pada keyakinan bahwa perubahan diri harus dimulai dari pemurnian batin sebagai tahap persiapan, namun berbeda secara mendasar dalam sumber epistemologi, kedalaman proses, dan orientasi akhir, sehingga ZMP secara epistemologis memerlukan pijakan *tazkiyatun nafs* yang lebih kokoh agar tidak tereduksi menjadi teknik penjernihan pikiran yang sekuler dan instan.

Kata kunci: Zero Mind Process, ESQ Ary Ginanjar, *Takhalli*.

INTRODUCTION

Modernity, characterized by rapid technological advancement and the digitization of daily life, does not appear to be directly correlated with human well-being. This is what in the psychology of happiness studies is called as the technological paradox.¹ The World Health Organization (WHO), in its report *World Mental Health Today*, notes that more than one billion people worldwide live with mental health disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most prevalent conditions across all countries and income levels.

² At the national level, Haedar Nashir, Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Muhammadiyah, stated that the Indonesian people are grappling with a moral and ethical crisis that has spread to various aspects of public life,³ this is further confirmed by a study on the moral decline of the younger generation in the digital age, caused by

¹ Roni Ismail, “Religious Happiness in William James’s Thought: An Analysis of Religious Maturity”, *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Ushuluddin*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2025; p. 109-123; <https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v26i2.7643>

² World Health Organization, *Over a Billion People Living with Mental Health Conditions – Services Require Urgent Scale-Up*, September 2, 2025, <https://www.who.int/news/item/02-09-2025-over-a-billion-people-living-with-mental-health-conditions-services-require-urgent-scale-up>.

³ Gusti Grehenson, “Haedar Nashir: Indonesia Tengah Hadapi Krisis Moral Dan Etika,” December 20, 2024, <https://ugm.ac.id/id/berita/haedar-nashir-indonesia-tengah-hadapi-krisis-moral-dan-etika/>.

the rapid pace of digitalization and the weakness of character education as a safeguard.⁴ This structural crisis at the national level ultimately trickles down to the most personal level that is, the inner turmoil of the individual: a heart filled with prejudice, ambition, and a misguided outlook on life, causing the individual to lose clarity of thought and action. It is at this point that the discourse on purifying the heart and mind, whether in the form of popular workshops or classical spiritual traditions finds its relevance and appeal in today's Indonesian society.

Ary Ginanjar Agustian addressed this phenomenon through his concept of the Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ), particularly its initial stage known as the Zero Mind Process (ZMP), a mechanism for “purifying” the heart and mind from seven mental shackles, which include negative prejudices, erroneous life principles, past experiences, subjective interests, narrow perspectives, non-objective comparisons, and blind fanaticism, so that a person can return to their pure, natural state.⁵ The term “purification” used by ZMP resonates conceptually with one of the central maqams in ethical Sufism, namely takhalli, the stage of ridding oneself of blameworthy traits as a prerequisite for the stages of tahalli and tajalli. This topic is important and urgent to examine because ESQ and ZMP have become widely adopted frameworks for mental and spiritual development in Indonesia, ranging from corporate training and educational institutions to government agencies and therefore their epistemological validity from an Islamic scholarly perspective must be scrutinized to ensure that their popularity is not based on a lack of a solid conceptual foundation.

A number of previous studies have addressed this area from two distinct perspectives. Choliq et al. examined the application of ZMP in teacher training and concluded that ZMP helps educators recognize their own potential, manage their emotions, and develop a reflective attitude,⁶ however, their study did not address a conceptual analysis of its epistemological structure. Anggreni, Damis, and Haritsah explore the meanings and origins of takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli, as well as their relationship to maqamat and ahwal,⁷ while Mardhiah, Khalilurrahman, and Anshari emphasize the relevance of the takhalli-tahalli-tajalli trilogy as an ethical-spiritual framework for strengthening

⁴ Nailayafa Afifa et al., “Degradasi Moralitas Generasi Muda Di Era Globalisasi: Relevansi Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Sebagai Benteng Karakter,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 9, no. 3 (2025), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v9i3.34399>.

⁵ Ary Ginanjar Agustian, *Rahasia Sukses Membangun Kecerdasan Emosi Dan Spiritual ESQ: Emotional Spiritual Quotient Berdasarkan 6 Rukun Iman Dan 5 Rukun Islam* (Jakarta: Arga Tilanta, 2009).

⁶ Muthmainnah Choliq et al., “ZERO MIND PROCESS DALAM PEMBELAJARAN BAGI GURU : TINJAUAN PERSPEKTIF ISLAM,” *Pijar: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 3, no. 3 (2025): 296–310, <https://doi.org/10.58540/pijar.v3i3.982>.

⁷ Ferlita Anggreni, Rahmi Damis, and Afifuddin Haritsah, “Makna Dan Asal Usul Tasawuf Takhalli Tahalli, Dan Tajalli Serta Hubungannya Dengan Maqamat Dan Ahwal,” *Al-Ikhtiar: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 3 (2026), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71242/0yqjn912>.

the moral character of modern humans.⁸ Both of these studies of Sufism focus on the realm of classical Sufism itself and have not yet addressed popular self-development phenomena such as ESQ. As a result, these two lines of research, ZMP in the realm of popular educational psychology and takhalli in the realm of academic Sufism have, to this day, proceeded along their respective paths without an explicit conceptual intersection; consequently, there has not yet been a study that specifically maps the seven mental shackles of ZMP into the categories of diseases of the heart (*amrad al-qalb*), which are the objects of takhalli in ethical Sufism.

Based on the background and research gaps outlined above, this study aims to: (1) describe the conceptual structure of the Zero Mind Process and the seven mental shackles as formulated in Ary Ginanjar Agustian's ESQ 165; (2) conceptually examine how the takhalli perspective in ethical Sufism interprets and maps the structure of these mental shackles; and (3) to identify the epistemological similarities and differences between the mechanism of spiritual purification in ZMP and the process of spiritual purification in takhalli, as a conceptual contribution to the development of research on the integration of Sufism and contemporary self-development psychology.

This study employs a qualitative approach in the form of library research, using a conceptual-comparative analysis method. Primary data were obtained from Ary Ginanjar Agustian's ESQ texts and ethical Sufi literature on takhalli, which were then analyzed through cross-discourse reading to identify the similarities and differences in their epistemological structures. This approach was chosen because the subject matter is conceptual and textual in nature; thus, content analysis and a hermeneutic reading of both discourses are considered the most appropriate methods for uncovering both the depth and the epistemological limitations of ZMP's mechanism for purifying the soul, as compared to the process of soul purification in takhalli.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Zero Mind Process and *Takhalli*

The Zero Mind Process (ZMP) is the introductory stage of the comprehensive Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) framework formulated by Ary Ginanjar Agustian, a self-development practitioner who founded the ESQ Leadership Center and was later awarded an honorary doctorate by Yogyakarta State University for his contribution to developing the character-building model known as "The ESQ Way 165."⁹ The number

⁸ Sahla Mardhiah, Khalilurrahman, and Anshari, "Tasawuf Akhlaki," *SHAF: Jurnal Sejarah, Pemikiran Dan Tasawuf* 3, no. 2 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.59548/js.v3i2.594>.

⁹ Agustian, *Rahasia Sukses Membangun Kecerdasan Emosi Dan Spiritual ESQ: Emotional Spiritual Quotient Berdasarkan 6 Rukun Iman Dan 5 Rukun Islam*.

165 in this model is not merely a symbol, but a structural formulation: one (1) refers to the witnessing of the One True God (ihsan), which gives rise to the “God Spot” or the point of fitrah within human beings; six (6) refers to the Pillars of Faith, reformulated as six fundamental principles of mental development (Mental Building), and five (5) refers to the Pillars of Islam, formulated as five steps toward personal and social resilience. ZMP occupies the very first position in this structure, because before these principles and steps can be established, the human heart and mind must first be cleansed of the impurities that cloud them.

Within the framework of ZMP, the human heart is likened to a mirror that is essentially clear and capable of reflecting the light of the divine inner voice (God Spot), but whose surface is often covered with dust or grime due to environmental influences, experiences, and erroneous ways of thinking. It is these “dust particles” that Ary Ginanjar refers to as the seven mental shackles, which include negative prejudices that cloud one’s ability to think clearly about an event or another person; misguided life principles that cause one’s life direction and purpose to lose their proper foundation; past experiences that constrain one’s perspective on new situations; and personal interests or ego that make judgments subjective, a narrow perspective that prevents a person from seeing the full picture; non-objective standards used in evaluating oneself or others; and blind fanaticism that closes one’s mind to truths outside one’s own group or beliefs. These seven shackles are viewed as obstacles that must be recognized and cast off so that a person can return to their pure, natural state before moving on to the next stage of emotional and spiritual development.

On the other hand, the tradition of ethical Sufism has long recognized a framework for the purification of the soul that is structured in stages: takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli. Takhalli, as the first stage, is understood as the effort to purge oneself of blameworthy traits (madzmumah) that are viewed as spiritual impurity, that is, inner filth that hinders a servant’s closeness to his Lord, just as physical impurity hinders the validity of worship.¹⁰ The reprehensible traits that are the objects of takhalli include takabur (arrogance), riya (showing off in worship), hasad (envy), ujub (excessive self-pride), su’u al-zhan (suspicion), and excessive love for the world (hubb al-dunya). Purification from these diseases of the heart is regarded as an absolute prerequisite before a seeker can enter the stage of tahalli, that is, adorning oneself with praiseworthy virtues such as patience, gratitude, and trust in God, which in turn paves the way for tajalli, namely the revelation of divine light within a purified heart.¹¹

¹⁰ Muhammad Basyrul Muvid, *Tipologi Aliran-Aliran Tasawwuf* (Yogyakarta: Bildung, 2019).

¹¹ Abd Rahman, *Tasawwuf Akhlaki: Ilmu Tasawwuf Yang Berkonsentrasi Dalam Perbaikan Akhlak*, ed. Ahdar Djamaluddin (Parepare: Kaaffah Learning Center, 2020).

The principle of *takhalli* in ethical Sufism does not exist in a vacuum, but is grounded in the fundamental texts of Islam. The Qur'an, for example, affirms that on the Day of Judgment, neither wealth nor lineage will be of any use before God, except for those who come with a *qalbin salim*, a heart free from disease (Quran 26:88–89), meanwhile, the hadith narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim refers to the heart as a *mudghah*, a lump of flesh that, if sound, will bring goodness to the entire body, and if corrupt, will corrupt the entire body. These two primary sources serve as the foundation for Sufis in their belief that the purification of the heart occupies a central position in one's religious practice, rather than merely serving as a complement to outward deeds.¹²

From the discussion of the two subjects of study above, it is evident that both ZMP and *takhalli* regard the process of inner purification or cleansing as the foundational step prior to the development of higher levels of personal qualities; ZMP precedes Mental Building and Personal/Social Strength, just as *takhalli* precedes *tahalli* and *tajalli*. It is this structural similarity that forms the subject matter of this study; a more detailed analysis and mapping of both the points of convergence and divergence will be discussed in the following section.

Mapping the Seven Mental Shackles of ZMP to Heart Disease (*Amrad al-Qalb*)

The concept of the Zero Mind Process (ZMP), developed by Ary Ginanjar Agustian within the framework of the Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ), was initially introduced as a method for clarifying the mind, a prerequisite for the emergence of the divine inner voice, or "God-Spot."¹³ Within this framework, the seven mental shackles are epistemologically positioned as cognitive barriers that prevent people from thinking clearly and listening to their own inner nature. Although this perspective is practical and easy to apply in the context of contemporary spiritual intelligence training, it actually leaves an epistemological question unanswered: Where do these shackles originate, and why are they able to systematically and repeatedly dominate human thought?

It is this question that opens the door to an interdisciplinary exploration between ZMP and the body of knowledge in Islamic psychology and Sufism. Upon closer examination, what ZMP refers to as "mental shackles" is, in essence, not a standalone cognitive phenomenon, but rather an outward manifestation of an inner condition long recognized in the Islamic tradition as *amrad al-qalb* (diseases of the heart). Sufi scholars assert that a sick heart (*qalbun marid*) is one that fails to fulfill its purpose to recognize,

¹² Anggreni, Damis, and Haritsah, "Makna Dan Asal Usul Tasawuf Takhalli Tahalli , Dan Tajalli Serta Hubungannya Dengan Maqamat Dan Ahwal."

¹³ Muhammad Khoirul Afif and Eny Fatimatuszuhro Pahlawati, "Kecerdasan Emosional Dan Kecerdasan Spiritual Menurut Dr. Ary Ginanjar Agustian," *Jurnal Studi Keagamaan, Sosial Dan Budaya* 7, no. 2 (2022): 260–72.

submit to, fear, and love Allah due to the stains of sin that have not been cleansed through repentance, and is thus inhabited by reprehensible traits such as arrogance, envy, resentment, and anger.¹⁴ From the perspective of contemporary Islamic psychology, the heart (qalb) is not understood merely as a biological organ, but rather as the center of spiritual and psychological well-being that connects the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human beings simultaneously.¹⁵ Consequently, disturbances in the qalb will never remain confined to the inner realm alone, but will inevitably manifest outwardly in the form of distortions in the way one thinks, feels, and acts exactly what ZMP refers to as “shackles.”

This common ground forms the basis of the argument in this section: that the ZMP framework, although rooted in the modern tradition of self-development, which is oriented toward management and popular psychology is essentially reinterpreting, through different language and approaches, what has long been explored in greater depth by Islamic psychology and classical Sufism through the concept of *amrād al-qalb*. By linking three interrelated concepts the role of ZMP as a process of spiritual purification, the concept of “diseases of the heart” in Islamic-Sufi psychology, and the path of tazkiyah as a mechanism for their resolution.¹⁶

As understood in Islamic literature, the heart is the center of moral consciousness, intention, and the orientation of human behavior, as well as the hub that integrates the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.¹⁷ When a disturbance occurs in the heart, it never remains confined to the inner realm but manifests on the surface as distortions in the way one thinks, feels, and acts. In the available literature, ZMP is understood as a process of calming the mind, cultivating self-awareness, and purifying the heart and mind so that people may more freely choose how to respond to their life experiences. In Islamic psychology, this worthy goal is explained through tazkiyat al-nafs, the purification of the soul and heart from vices and sins, so that people may be better prepared to receive wisdom, attain inner peace, and strive toward noble character.¹⁸ Based on this

¹⁴ Rizal Fauzi, “Al-Amradh Al-Qalbiyyah Dan Terapinya Dalam Ilmu Tasawuf,” *Hikamia* 2, no. 2 (2022): 102–15.

¹⁵ Abu Bakr Sirajuddin Cook and Salih Yucel, “Soundness of The Heart: An Analysis of The Unique Qualities of The Qalb Salim,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 12, no. 1 (2022): 1–21.

¹⁶ Ahmad Sodikin and Husnul Haq, “Manifestation of Mujahadah on the Cultivation of Emotional Intelligence of Santri Ponpes Nurul Falah Temanggung,” *Amorti: Jurnal Studi Islam Interdisipliner* 2, no. 4 (2023): 192–99.

¹⁷ Ratna Roshida Ab Razak, “HEART CENTRED SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH: A 3As DA’WAH FRAMEWORK FOR MEANING AND RESILIENCE,” *Jurnal Yadim: International Journal of Islam And Contemporary Affairs* 6, no. 1 (2026): 115–38, <https://doi.org/10.61465/Jurnalyadim.V6.334>.

¹⁸ Maryatul Kibtiyah et al., “Aplikasi Tazkiyatun Nafs Dalam Psikoterapi Islam,” *Hisbah: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Dan Dakwah Islam* 21, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.14421/hisbah.202>.

framework, the seven mental shackles of ZMP can be systematically mapped onto the following categories of *amrad al-qalb*.

The first obstacle in ZMP namely, negative prejudice is essentially a reflection of *su'uzan* (suspicion of ill intent) and hardness of heart, which have long been studied in the Sufi tradition as forms of spiritual corruption. The distortion of judgment that manifests as negative prejudice is not a cognitive error in and of itself, but rather a symptom of a heart that is clouded and spiritually unbalanced, as a result, losing the ability to assess reality objectively and in accordance with human nature.¹⁹ In the context of spiritual psychology, a hardened heart (*qaswat al-qalb*) tends to shut itself off from the truth and project suspicion onto others as a defensive mechanism against its own inner turmoil. The mechanism for spiritual liberation offered by Islamic tradition is not merely a cognitive reframing technique, as found in popular psychological approaches, but rather *muraqabah* (awareness of divine oversight), *taubat*, and the cultivation of *husnuzan* (thinking well of others) as a path to the comprehensive restoration of the heart's spiritual orientation.²⁰

The second shackle a narrow and rigid worldview can be understood as a manifestation of *takabur* (arrogance) and excessive ego dominance. An inflated ego causes people to reject truths from outside themselves and to follow only their own framework of thought, thereby losing flexibility and openness to wisdom.²¹ In the study of Sufi psychology, arrogance is viewed as one of the most fundamental diseases of the heart because it blocks the path to objective truth and makes desire (*hawa*) the sole determinant of one's thoughts and actions.²² The path of *tazkiyah* relevant to this bondage is *takhallī* that is, the process of emptying oneself of the trait of arrogance as a preliminary step before being filled with noble qualities a process that is far more structured and gradual than merely affirming a more open approach to life, as offered in the conventional ZMP approach.

The third constraint relates to traumatic experiences and associated emotions, which in Islamic tradition correspond to the state of *huzn* (deep sorrow), resentment, and emotional wounds that have never been fully processed. A troubled state of mind resulting from unprocessed trauma will affect a person's behavior and the clarity of their responses to subsequent life experiences, causing the individual to tend to react

¹⁹ Ema Fitriya, Nur Hani'ah, and Hanifatul Khoifah, "TASAWUF DALAM PERSPEKTIF PSIKOLOGI : HARMONI SPIRITUAL DAN KESEHATAN MENTAL," *AJMIE: Albikam Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Education* 5, no. 2 (2024): 291–306.

²⁰ Fauzi, "Al-Amradh Al-Qalbiyyah Dan Terapinya Dalam Ilmu Tasawuf."

²¹ Sumaia Almajri et al., "Islamic Psychology : An Integrative Approach to Human Behavior and Mental Well-Being," *Bulletin of Islamic Research* 3, no. 4 (2025): 687–704.

²² Rizqa Ahmadi and Abad Badruzaman, "Khitāb 'Ilm Al-Nafs Al-Šūfi: Tatabbu' Al-Judhūr Wa Al-Nazariyyāt Wa Al-Taṭbīqāt," *Refleksi: Jurnal Kajian Agama Dan Filsafat* 20, no. 1 (2021): 117–36, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ref.v20i1.20435>.

defensively or destructively to situations that are actually neutral.²³ Islamic psychological literature adds that such psychological and spiritual disturbances can also manifest as *khauf* (excessive fear) and prolonged, unresolved remorse. Unlike the ZMP approach, which tends to offer instant emotional release through cognitive awareness, the Sufi tradition offers the path of *sabr* (patience), *ridha* (acceptance of God's will) and deep introspection as a more holistic and sustainable process of healing emotional wounds.

The fourth shackle the dominance of worldly interests and priorities is strongly correlated with the concept of *hubb al-dunyā* (excessive love for the world), greed, and the dominance of the *nafs al-ammārah* (the soul inclined toward evil). A soul dominated by worldly desires will constantly pursue instant gratification and neglect the divine orientation that should be the primary compass of human life. Within the Qur'anic paradigm, the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is, in fact, positioned as a structural response to this tendency of the *nafs ammārah*, whereby the human soul must undergo a series of stages of purification before it can attain tranquility (*nafs al-muṭma'innah*). The mechanism for liberation offered here is not merely a rational reordering of life's priorities, as is common in ESQ training, but rather *mujahadat al-nafs* a sincere struggle against carnal desires as a spiritual process that demands long-term discipline and consistency.

The fifth shackle a narrow perspective can be linked to two ailments of the heart: *'ujub* (excessive self-admiration) and *ghaflah* (spiritual negligence). A negligent heart tends to easily lock itself into an egocentric perspective, thereby losing the ability to view reality from a broader and more transcendent perspective. At the mechanistic level, a heart that is distant from the awareness of God is described as a condition that gives rise to anxiety, negligence, spiritual aridity, and a clouded mind.²⁴ Conversely, studies on the *qalbun salim* (sound heart) in the Sufi tradition emphasize that a broad perspective can only be achieved through an awareness of one's own limitations in the presence of God.²⁵ The relevant paths to liberation from these shackles are *tadabbur* (deep contemplation) and *dhikr* (consistently remembering Allah), which serve to reopen the spiritual awareness that was previously obscured by negligence.

The sixth shackle the tendency to engage in unhealthy social comparisons is explicitly linked to *hasad* (envy or jealousy). Islamic psychological literature explicitly identifies

²³ Imroatul Istiqomah, Fikri Hidayatul Rukmana, and Muhammad Shohibul Mujtaba, "Mental Diseases According to Hamka and the Methods of Treatment (A Review of Hamka's Tasawuf Modern Book)," *NUKHBATUL 'ULUM: Jurnal Bidang Kajian Islam* 10, no. 2 (2024): 170–86, <https://doi.org/10.36701/nukhbah.v10i2.1708>.

²⁴ M. Iqbal Irham, "Sufism Psychotherapy: Huda Al-Qalb Method For Mental Health," *JAWAB: Journal of Asian Wisdom and Islamic Behavior* 1, no. 2 (2023): 94–103, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59371/jawab.v1i2.58>.

²⁵ Muhammad Liza Ridwanda, "Manajemen Qalbun Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an: Telaah Psikologi Islam Tentang Kesehatan Mental," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadis Studies* 6, no. 1 (2025): 115–31.

envy as one of the primary diseases of the heart that undermines both social harmony and the inner peace of the individual experiencing it..²⁶ Unlike situational jealousy, *hasad* in the Sufi tradition is understood as a dual-natured, destructive disease of the heart. It not only damages social relationships with others but also erodes the inner peace of the person harboring it, as they constantly feel inadequate in the face of others' achievements. The path of *tazkiyah* offered to overcome these shackles is the consistent cultivation of gratitude and the purification of the heart from a competitive mindset that is purely worldly in nature.

The seventh and final constraint, emotional outbursts is directly linked to the concept of *ghadab* (uncontrolled anger). Emotions that are not properly managed indicate a lack of harmony among the three fundamental components of the human self: *nafs* (soul/desire), *qalb* (heart), and *'aql* (reason). In studies on emotional regulation from a Sufi perspective, *dhikr* is regarded as the primary strategy for mitigating emotional reactivity, as it serves to restore awareness of Allah's presence (*hudūr al-qalb*) amid emotional turmoil, thereby enabling individuals to respond to situations in a more balanced manner..²⁷ The path to liberation from these shackles offered by Islamic tradition includes *sabr*, *dhikr*, and the systematic cultivation of emotional control, not merely short-term stress management techniques..

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the Zero Mind Process framework and the concept of *amrāḍ al-qalb* in the Islamic-Sufi tradition are not two separate paradigms, but rather two aspects of the same psychospiritual reality, viewed from different perspectives. The seven mental shackles identified by ZMP namely, negative prejudices, narrow life principles, traumatic experiences, worldly concerns, narrow perspectives, social comparison, and reactive emotional outbursts, when examined through the lens of Islamic psychology and classical Sufism can consistently be mapped onto specific forms of *amrāḍ al-qalb* such as *su'uzan*, *takabur*, *huzn* and *dendam*, *hubb al-dunyā*, *'ujub* and *ghaflah*, *hasad*, and *ghadab*. This analysis confirms that the cognitive barriers described by ZMP are in fact rooted in a deeper spiritual disorientation of the heart; therefore, resolving them cannot be achieved through mind-clearing techniques alone, but requires a comprehensive and ongoing process of *tazkiyatun nafs*.

²⁶ Almajri et al., "Islamic Psychology : An Integrative Approach to Human Behavior and Mental Well-Being."

²⁷ Roro Niken Putri Syawalika and Armitha Faydra Daniswara, "DZIKIR SEBAGAI STRATEGI REGULASI EMOSI DALAM PERSPEKTIF PSIKOLOGI TASAWUF : STUDI LITERATUR," *Jurnal Studi Islam, Sosial Dan Pendidikan* 4, no. 1 (2025): 47–54.

The Common Ground Between ZMP and Takhalli

The Zero Mind Process (ZMP) and takhalli can be brought together within a common foundational framework: the process of purifying the heart prior to the development of character, decision-making, and a more mature life orientation. In ZMP literature, this concept is described as a contemplative approach to calming the mind and building self-awareness; in an educational context, it is used to help teachers recognize their own potential, manage emotions, cultivate a reflective attitude, and strengthen mental resilience.²⁸ Within the ESQ framework, ZMP is also positioned as the initial stage of emotional purification prior to the development of mental strength, personal strength, and broader social application.²⁹ Meanwhile, in the Sufi tradition, takhalli is the first stage of tazkiyatun nafs that is, the process of purifying the self of blameworthy traits before filling the soul with praiseworthy traits and before attaining tajalli, or a higher level of divine consciousness.³⁰

Therefore, the first conceptual common ground between the two lies in the belief that authentic self-transformation must begin with the purification of internal elements, not directly with external behavior. In Al-Ghazali's writings, the human soul is often tainted by base desires and diseases of the heart such as arrogance, envy, hypocrisy, and self-admiration, so that spiritual education and cultivation must begin with the purification of the inner self so that humans may return to their pure, natural state.³¹ This is consistent with the finding that at-takhalli is the process of purifying the heart of vices such as arrogance, envy, hypocrisy, and delusion, followed by at-tahalli, which involves instilling virtuous values.³² Even in the digital realm, the takhalli-tahalli-tajalli model is also positioned as a form of internal self-regulation that is more preventive than mere external control, with takhalli specifically serving to purge kizb, hasad, and riya' as the psychological motives behind information chaos.³³

²⁸ Choliq et al., "ZERO MIND PROCESS DALAM PEMBELAJARAN BAGI GURU : TINJAUAN PERSPEKTIF ISLAM."

²⁹ Moh Saifulloh, "Digital Communication Ethics from a Sufi Perspective : The Takhalli-Tahalli-Tajalli Model Against Information Disorder," *INJECT (Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication)* 11, no. 2 (2026): 2175–2202, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18326/inject.v11i2.7031>.

³⁰ Afifah Nabil Hasna Aisy, Salsabila Nur Hasan, and Lukman Tirjaya Abadi, "HAKIKAT JIWA DALAM HARMONI AKAL, NAFSU, DAN RUH: KAJIAN PEMIKIRAN IMAM AL-GHAZALI," *EL-FIKR: Jurnal Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam* 6, no. 1 (2025): 92–109.

³¹ Kurniawan Syah Putra, "Konsep Pendidikan Spiritual Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Ilmiah Guru Madrasah (JIGM)* 3, no. 2 (2024): 104–17, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.69548/jigm.v3i2.44>.

³² Noraini Ismail et al., "A Study of At-Takhalli and At-Tahalli Practices among University Students A Study of At-Takhalli and At-Tahalli Practices among University Students," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences* 1, no. 7 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v11-i7/10524>.

³³ Saifulloh, "Digital Communication Ethics from a Sufi Perspective : The Takhalli-Tahalli-Tajalli Model Against Information Disorder."

The second point of convergence lies in the shared emphasis on self-awareness as a prerequisite for change. ZMP is explicitly grounded in the importance of self-awareness, particularly so that individuals can face modern challenges with greater mental and emotional stability. In the tradition of tazkiyatun nafs, the process of takhalli does not begin with outward actions alone, but rather with muraqabah, muhasabah, and mujahadah that is, the awareness to monitor oneself, recognize inner flaws, and then engage in continuous self-discipline..³⁴ Other sources emphasize that the process of spiritual purification encourages individuals to recognize their own spiritual weaknesses and flaws such as pride, envy, excessive anger, and worldly attachment, and then replace them with noble character through introspection and self-control..³⁵

A third point of convergence is evident in the role both play in deconstructing the ego. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, spiritual life begins with an inner struggle against the ego, which has been tainted by the material world, because the lower self tends to drag humans toward arrogance and evil. In various studies, takhalli is described as the process of combating negative traits, freeing oneself from the shackles of desire, and subduing an egocentric outlook on life so that the soul is prepared to embrace higher values..³⁶ As for ZMP, although the language used is more psychological than Sufi in nature, the goal is similar: to create a clearer mental state so that a person's responses are no longer entirely governed by impulsive urges, self-interest, or emotional turmoil.

The fourth point of convergence is that both are considered preparatory stages, not end goals. In the ESQ model, ZMP is not the pinnacle, but rather the first step before mental building, personal strength, and total application. In tazkiyatun nafs, takhalli is also consistently positioned as the foundation before tahalli and tajalli..³⁷ This means that the process of self-emptying or self-purification is not an end in itself, but rather a prerequisite for the subsequent process of cultivating virtue, developing moral character, and maturing one's life orientation. This is consistent with the finding that the practices of at-takhalli and at-tahalli complement one another in the development of a Muslim's

³⁴ Asmaji and Hamdani, "KONSEP PEMBINAAN SPIRITUAL MENUJU MAQAM IHSAN DALAM PERSPEKTIF AL-GHAZALI DAN SAID HAWWA," *IMTIYAZ: Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 4 (2025): 986–98, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46773/imtiyaz.v9i4.2845>.

³⁵ Sugeng Sejati et al., "Tazkiyatun Nafs (Purification of the Soul) for Enhancing Muslim Family Resilience in the Digital Era," *DAWUH: Islamic Communication Journal* 7, no. 2 (2026): 118–38, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62159/dawuh.v7i2> DAWUH:

³⁶ Ismail et al., "A Study of At-Takhalli and At-Tahalli Practices among University Students A Study of At-Takhalli and At-Tahalli Practices among University Students."

³⁷ Ayu Wandira, Muhammad Saleh, and Ahmad Fuadi, "Konsep Tazkiyat Al-Nafs Al-Ghazali Sebagai Metode Dalam Pendidikan Akhlak," *Khaqanah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2023): 39–52.

personality, fostering spiritual and emotional strength, and can be used to address social issues, stress, and depression.³⁸

The fifth point of convergence lies in the ultimate goal, which is to lead humanity to spiritual cognitive clarity. Within Hamka's framework, the goal of tazkiyatun nafs is to attain *an-nafs al-muṭma'innah* that is, a soul that is serene, spiritually mature, filled with peace and mindfulness, and close to God. Within Al-Ghazali's framework, a purified soul is the primary prerequisite for ma'rifatullah and love for Allah, whereas an impure soul is, in fact, the primary obstacle to such knowledge and closeness. Thus, both ZMP and takhalli aim to restore a clearer inner state, although their ultimate terminology differs: ZMP places greater emphasis on clarity, reflectiveness, and psychological resilience, while takhalli emphasizes the purification of the soul, moral character, closeness to Allah, and readiness to become an *insan kamil*.³⁹

Differences and Limitations of ZMP Compared to Takhalli

Lately, there have been countless self-improvement methods offering ways to achieve a calmer mind and a higher quality of life. One that is quite well-known in Indonesia is the Zero Mind Process, commonly abbreviated as ZMP. This method is the foundational component of the ESQ (Emotional Spiritual Quotient) concept formulated by Ary Ginanjar Agustian. In fact, the basic concept of ZMP is still related to the idea of "spiritual quotient" previously developed by Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, which was later adapted by Ary Ginanjar along with three other components: mental building, personal strength, and social strength.⁴⁰ In practice, ZMP is used to help people recognize their potential, manage their emotions more effectively, think more reflectively, and improve the way they interact with others.⁴¹ Because of its practical benefits, ZMP is widely used in education, leadership training, and employee development programs.

Takhalli begins from a very different starting point. It is the first stage of a three-part process of tazkiyatun nafs, or purification of the soul, in Sufism, which is then followed by tahalli, the process of imbuing the soul with virtuous qualities and culminates in tajalli, the revelation of divine light. Tazkiyatun nafs is understood by scholars as a method of self-transformation that integrates three aspects simultaneously, the theological, the

³⁸ Ismail et al., "A Study of At-Takhalli and At-Tahalli Practices among University Students A Study of At-Takhalli and At-Tahalli Practices among University Students."

³⁹ Alya Oktavia Sari et al., "Peran 3T (Takhalli, Tahalli, Dan Tajalli) Terhadap Resiliensi Akademik Mahasiswa Tingkat Akhir," *Arus Jurnal Psikologi Dan Pendidikan (AJPP)* 5, no. 1 (2026): 524–32.

⁴⁰ Dahlan Jaeni, *SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT (SQ) MENURUT DANAH ZOHAR & IAN MARSHALL DAN ARY GINANJAR AGUSTIAN SERTA IMPLIKASINYA TERHADAP DOMAIN AFEKTIF DALAM PENDIDIKAN ISLAM*, 2019.

⁴¹ Choliq et al., "ZERO MIND PROCESS DALAM PEMBELAJARAN BAGI GURU : TINJAUAN PERSPEKTIF ISLAM."

ethical, and the psychological with the ultimate goal of drawing closer to Allah and attaining true happiness.⁴² Specifically, *takhalli* means ridding oneself of reprehensible traits such as arrogance, showing off, and envy, as a prerequisite before one can be adorned with noble character.

The problem is that, in society, these two terms are often considered synonymous, as if both were simply about clearing the mind or calming the heart. In fact, upon closer examination, ZMP and *Takhalli* stem from different perspectives on human nature itself.⁴³ Equating the two not only oversimplifies the issue but also risks reducing something that is transcendent and otherworldly in nature to merely a worldly technique for coping with stress. Therefore, it is important to clearly identify the differences and limitations of ZMP when compared to *Takhalli*.

ZMP operates within the field of cognitive psychology. Its primary focus is to help individuals recognize their potential, manage their emotions, cultivate a reflective mindset, and improve the quality of their social relationships.⁴⁴ In practice, ZMP is relatively easy to teach. With just a short training session, individuals can learn techniques for self-reflection, emotion management, or self-awareness exercises.⁴⁵ It is more like a skill that can be mastered in just a few days or a few weeks of training.

Takhalli draws on an entirely different source of knowledge namely, revelation and spiritual experience, that has been alive in the Sufi tradition for centuries. A classic example of this can be seen in Ibn Tufail's thoughts on the restoration of the soul, which emphasize that the human soul must be purified gradually in order to return to its pure, natural state.⁴⁶ This kind of model did not arise from observations in a psychology laboratory, but rather from studies of Qur'anic exegesis and the spiritual experiences of the early Sufis.⁴⁷ The practice of *takhalli* requires years of dedication through *mujahadah*, the struggle against one's desires, *riyadhah*, physical and spiritual discipline such as reducing food and

⁴² Muhammad Dzikri Abdillah, Riko Reinaldi, and Mutiara MY, "AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF TAZKIYAH AL-NAFS IN THE QUR'ANIC TAFSIR AND THE BOOK MI'RĀJ AL-SA'ĀDAH BY AḤMAD AL-NARĀQĪ The Concept of Tazkiyah Al-Nafs (Purification of the Soul) Serves as The," *Tanzil: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 8, no. 1 (2025): 25–50.

⁴³ Fitriya, Hani'ah, and Khoififah, "TASAWUF DALAM PERSPEKTIF PSIKOLOGI: HARMONI SPIRITUAL DAN KESEHATAN MENTAL."

⁴⁴ Choliq et al., "ZERO MIND PROCESS DALAM PEMBELAJARAN BAGI GURU: TINJAUAN PERSPEKTIF ISLAM."

⁴⁵ Muhamad Shendyka et al., "Implementation of Tazkiyah An-Nafs as an Effort to Build a Relationship with God," *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan* 19, no. 2 (2025).

⁴⁶ Jarman Arroisi and Erva Dewi Arqomi Puspita, "Soul Restoration in Islamic Tradition (Ibn Tufail's Perspective of Tazkiyya an-Nafs Model)," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 28, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.24014/Jush.v28i2.10990>.

⁴⁷ Abdillah, Reinaldi, and MY, "AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF TAZKIYAH AL-NAFS IN THE QUR'ANIC TAFSIR AND THE BOOK MI'RĀJ AL-SA'ĀDAH BY AḤMAD AL-NARĀQĪ The Concept of Tazkiyah Al-Nafs (Purification of the Soul) Serves as The."

sleep, and reciting zikir, muraqabah, maintaining the awareness that one is always being watched by Allah, and muhasabah, continuous, uninterrupted self-reflection.⁴⁸ This is not merely a theory; it is also clearly evident in the daily lives of Sufi communities. For example, the zikr practice in the Qadiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah Order has been shown to gradually shape the spiritual character of its followers.⁴⁹ In short, ZMP is a technique that can be learned, whereas Takhalli is a way of life that must be truly lived.

ZMP targets what might be called mental blockages, such as negative preconceptions, past trauma, narrow perspectives, and negative thought patterns that prevent a person from thinking clearly. Takhalli, on the other hand, goes much deeper, targeting what is known in Sufism as “diseases of the heart,” such as envy, showing off, uncontrolled anger, arrogance, and various forms of self-centered impulses.⁵⁰ These illnesses are viewed as the root cause of all outwardly visible negative behaviors. In the practice of Islamic psychotherapy itself, the concept of tazkiyatun nafs has even been applied in practice to treat such disorders.⁵¹ While ZMP focuses on cognitive symptoms, Takhalli truly delves into the deepest source of the problem.

CONCLUSION

The analysis outlined above leads to one inevitable consequence: contemporary society, particularly the fields of self-development training and character education, is facing an epistemological crisis in understanding the root causes of its own psychological problems. The proliferation of ESQ-based training programs, secular mindfulness practices, and various self-help methods that promise “a clear mind” in a matter of days actually reflects a collective longing for authentic inner peace; yet this longing is often met with solutions that merely scratch the surface of the symptoms. When a nation continually relies on emotional regulation techniques without ever addressing the root causes of the bitterness driving it, what results is not healing, but a repeating cycle: prejudice subsides momentarily only to resurface, and anger is technically suppressed but flourishes in other areas of life. Theoretically, these findings call on the fields of psychology and human resources training management to no longer treat frameworks such as ZMP as standalone, value-neutral entities, but rather as one expression of a human spiritual struggle that is

⁴⁸ A. Nurhidayah Br and Darussalam Syamsuddin, “Langkah Spiritual: Pendekatan Metodologis Menuju Puncak Capaian Sufistik,” *AL-QALAM: Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Pendidikan* 17, no. 1 (2025): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-qalam.v17i1.3550>.

⁴⁹ Ardianto Ardianto et al., “Konsep Zikir Dalam Tarekat Qadiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pembentukan Kepribadian Spiritual,” *Attadrib: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 9, no. 1 (2026): 62–75, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54069/attadrib.v9i1.1172>.

⁵⁰ Yuliyatun Yuliyatun et al., “Internalization of Spiritual Teachings Sheikh Ahmad Mutamakkin in the Formulation of Integrative Sufi Counseling,” *COUNSENESEA: Indonesian Journal of Guidance and Counseling* 7, no. 1 (2026), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36728/cijgc.v7i1.6419>.

⁵¹ Kibtiyah et al., “Aplikasi Tazkiyatun Nafs Dalam Psikoterapi Islam.”

far older and more deeply rooted. In practical terms, educational institutions, leadership training programs, and employee development programs need to consider integrating tazkiyatun nafs not as a mere religious formality, but as a comprehensive framework that addresses the root causes rather than merely alleviating the symptoms. This also has implications for how people assess the competence of a “trainer” or “coach”: if purifying the heart requires years of spiritual struggle, then claims of instant transformation through a two- or three-day training program should be viewed in proper perspective, as a first step, not the ultimate goal of the journey of self-purification.

Nevertheless, this study still leaves a number of unexplored areas that warrant consideration in future research. First, the conceptual framework developed here remains theoretical and textual in nature and has not yet been empirically tested; future research could develop measurement instruments to verify whether individuals experiencing the seven mental shackles of ZMP indeed exhibit a psychometrically equivalent pattern of *amrad al-qalb*. Second, a broader comparative study is needed between ZMP and models of tazkiyatun nafs proposed by other figures besides Al-Ghazali and Hamka, such as the thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah or Al-Muhasibi to determine whether this categorization of the seven shackles is consistent across Sufi schools of thought.

Third, future research could explore in greater detail how the processes of *tahalli* and *tajalli*, which have not been extensively addressed in this discussion, can be conceptualized as a structural continuation of the intersection between ZMP and *takhalli*, thereby providing a more comprehensive map of the journey from the stage of purification to that of spiritual enlightenment. Fourth, research on the effectiveness of integrating tazkiyatun nafs into ESQ-based training programs in the field, for example, through case studies of specific educational institutions or corporations, will provide a more concrete practical contribution to the development of spiritual training models that are more deeply rooted in Islamic tradition rather than merely adaptations of popular psychology.

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