



THE SUPREMACY OF SHARIA OVER DESIRE: HOW SHARIA RESTRICTS A PERSON'S DESIRES

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain how Sharia plays a role in controlling human desires through spiritual, moral, and psychological mechanisms derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Islamic scientific literature. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method, examining three main sources: a thesis on the concept of nafs, Reflection Journal, and Ramli's study on the dimensions of the soul in the Islamic perspective. The data were analyzed thematically to understand the patterns of controlling human desires according to Sharia and its relevance in the context of modern life. The results of the study show that Sharia law does not only discuss desires as a negative potential, but also as a natural element that can be directed towards goodness. Several control mechanisms were found, including tazkiyatun nafs, mujahadah, strengthening of reason, and self-restraint (kafful nafs). These mechanisms work through a series of worship, spiritual exercises, and moral habits aimed at subduing destructive desires. These findings also show that failure to control desires leads to personal and social damage, while successful control brings humans peace of mind and moral integrity. This study concludes that Sharia provides a system for controlling desires that is relevant to modern life and opens up opportunities for further research based on an empirical approach.

Keywords: Sharia, control of the self, purification of the self, mujahadah, islamic morals and spirituality, islamic psychological perspectives, and islamic literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Desire is an integral part of human nature that is always present in every aspect of life. From an Islamic perspective, desire is not merely an emotional impulse or psychological tendency, but an inner element that influences a person's moral choices and direction in life. The Qur'an mentions the term nafs in various contexts, ranging from the meaning of "self" and 'soul' to "impulses that influence human actions." This diversity of meanings shows that desire has an important position in Islamic studies, whether in the fields of Sufism, fiqh, or Islamic psychology. Because of the dualistic nature of desire—it can lead to good or evil—Islam places its control as one of the core teachings of Sharia.

Sharia as a guideline for Muslims not only regulates the relationship between humans and Allah, but also plays a role in regulating internal impulses and tendencies so that they do not develop into destructive behavior. Many verses of the Qur'an and hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad emphasize the urgency of controlling desires, such as in Surah Yusuf verse 53, which states that *nafs ammarah* tends to invite evil except for those who are given mercy by Allah. This verse provides a theological basis for understanding that humans need divine guidance in dealing with inner urges that can lead them astray. In Islamic scholarship, scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Qayyim, and Al-Kindi have explained that without Sharia discipline, desires can stifle reason and weaken morals.

The development of the modern era has further strengthened the urgency of controlling desires. Society now faces conditions that allow individuals to fulfill their desires quickly, without limits, and often without moral consideration. Phenomena such as corruption, abuse of power, digital addiction, consumptive behavior, and moral decadence show how desires can control humans if not properly directed. It is in this situation that Sharia comes into play as a value system that is not only spiritual but also functional in maintaining personal and social balance. Sharia provides tools for self-control such as fasting, prayer, and remembrance of God, as well as moral prohibitions that serve as a barrier against impulsive urges.

This study was conducted to explain how Sharia builds a systematic and comprehensive mechanism for controlling lust. Using a literature study method, this study examines various classical and contemporary sources, including a thesis that reviews the concept of lust, the Reflection Journal that describes the psychological dimensions of lust, and Ramli's study that explains the structure of the soul in Islam. This approach was taken to provide a comprehensive picture of the relationship between desires and Sharia, as well as how these mechanisms are applied in modern life.

This research is important because controlling desires is directly related to achieving the *maqasid* of Sharia, which are the basic objectives of Sharia that protect religion, life, reason, lineage, and property. Many moral and social problems in society stem from humans' failure to control their desires. Therefore, this study aims to contribute scientifically to understanding the concept of desire control, while strengthening the relevance of Sharia as a system that harmoniously regulates personal and social life.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. This approach was chosen because the topic under review—namely, how Sharia limits human desires—is conceptual in nature and requires a deeper understanding of the values, meanings, and objectives of Islamic teachings. Phenomenology allows researchers to explore the core meaning of Sharia texts and the opinions of scholars on controlling desires, rather than simply collecting descriptive data. The data sources are as follows Primary data includes verses from the Qur'an that discuss the dangers of following desires, such as QS. Al-Ma'idah: 77, QS. Al-Kahfi: 28, and QS. Shad: 26. In addition, hadiths that command Muslims to exercise restraint and the works of classical scholars such as Imam Al-Ghazali and Al-Syatibi are used as the main references. These primary sources form the normative basis for understanding how Sharia works as a constraint on human desires. Secondary data consists of scientific journals related to: Islamic law and *maqasid sharia*, Islamic psychology and human behavior, Islamic ethics and *tazkiyatun nafs*, empirical research on the relationship between worship and emotional stability, articles discussing contemporary moral issues such as drugs, corruption, and consumptive behavior. This literature is used to strengthen interpretations

and examine the relevance of Sharia concepts to modern phenomena. Data collection techniques were gathered through library research. The process was carried out in stages, starting with: Determining search keywords such as: "maqasid syariah", "hawa nafsu", "self-control in Islam", "tazkiyatun nafs", 'fasting', "corruption in Islam", and other relevant keywords. Searching for literature through AI consensus, Google Scholar, university journal portals, digital books, and scientific works accessible through the campus library. Selecting literature based on inclusion criteria, namely topic relevance, suitability to the research objectives, clarity of methodology, year of publication (preferably 2018–2024), and credibility of the journal or publisher. Read, mark, and collect important points, such as definitions of scholars, legal objectives, normative arguments, stories related to controlling lust, and supporting research findings. Compile thematic summaries to facilitate grouping at the data analysis stage. This collection method was chosen because the research is conceptual, so the quality of references is the most important aspect. Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative analysis model that included several stages, such as filtering and selecting data based on its relevance to the research focus. Verses, hadiths, opinions of scholars, and data from journals were organized into themes such as the role of sharia in controlling desires, the principle of maqasid, and examples of worship as self-control. The reduced data was then presented in the form of thematic descriptions. Each theme was analyzed to see the relationship between the basic principles of Sharia and human behavioral phenomena as well as moral challenges in the modern era. The research conclusions were obtained from the relationships between the analyzed themes. The researcher sought to construct a comprehensive picture of the role of Sharia in limiting lust. The validity of the data is strengthened through source triangulation, namely comparing classical literature, contemporary literature, and empirical research to avoid interpretive bias. Although this study did not involve humans as respondents, the researcher still maintained scientific ethics, such as accuracy in citing sources, not twisting the meaning of verses or hadiths, and maintaining objectivity in assessing the opinions of scholars and modern literature. The limitations of this study lie in the limited amount of literature that specifically discusses the explicit relationship between Sharia and lust. In addition, the study did not involve empirical data, so it could not assess the effectiveness of lust control in direct practice. Further research using an empirical approach is recommended to strengthen the findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Nature of Desires in Sharia Law

Any discussion of desires in Sharia law cannot be separated from a basic understanding of nafs in the Qur'an and Islamic scholarly tradition. Scholars, philosophers, and exegetes describe nafs as an inner element that drives human behavior. In Anugrah Akbar Muthalib's thesis, for example, nafs is described as an aspect that encompasses the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions, which influence human actions through internal impulses. In the Qur'an, the term nafs appears in hundreds of verses and carries a broad meaning, ranging from "self" and 'soul' to "impulses that influence human moral choices."¹

In Sharia law, lust is seen as a potential that is not entirely bad. It can move humans towards goodness when directed, but it can also lead to evil if left unchecked. The mufassir emphasize this

¹ Skripsi_Nafsu_Final Cover Okcd – Anugrah Akbar Muthalib.Pdf,

when interpreting QS. Yusuf [12]:53, a verse which states that nafs "always urges towards evil except those whom Allah has mercy upon."²

From the perspective of this thesis, this verse serves as a basis for understanding that human desires have an innate tendency that must be guided by reason and the heart so as not to give rise to destructive actions. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of reason, which is capable of guiding and weighing the impulses of the nafs through the processes of tadabbur, tafakkur, and inner awareness. Thus, Sharia does not view the nafs as an enemy, but rather as a human aspect that needs to be directed towards the right path.

Reflection Journal Volume 2 Year 2025 provides an overview that desires work as emotional and biological drives that influence daily behavior. These drives can be positive or negative, depending on how they are managed. If uncontrolled, desires can foster destructive behaviors such as aggression, corruption, abuse of authority, and even digital addiction in the modern era. In a social context, the journal explains that lust contributes to manipulative actions, power struggles, injustice, and other forms of social damage. Therefore, society establishes norms and rules to control such impulsive behavior. In the framework of Sharia, these rules come in the form of laws, prohibitions, and moral guidelines that serve as barriers to prevent humans from following the negative impulses of lust. This view is in line with Sharia, which views humans as rational and moral beings. When reason and Sharia rules guide lust, humans are able to protect themselves from personal and social harm.³

The case of Prophet Yusuf AS is one of the strongest examples in the discussion of lust in Sharia. In various verses in Surah Yusuf, we see how lust affects the behavior of the people around Prophet Yusuf: His brothers were overcome with jealousy, envy, and ambition to the point that they intended to kill Yusuf. This action stemmed from the urge of desire that wanted only the benefits and attention of their father. Zulaikha was overcome by lust and tried to seduce Yusuf, even though she was already married. This shows how desire can cloud a person's common sense and morals. The travelers who found Yusuf sold him as a slave because of their greed for wealth, as another form of worldly desire. These examples illustrate that lust is not only internal, but also has an impact on social structures and interactions between individuals. However, unlike these characters, the Prophet Yusuf became a role model for how to control lust through piety and closeness to Allah. The Ta'lim Journal emphasizes that Yusuf's piety became a shield that enabled him to resist temptation and endure various trials.⁴

According to the results of a study by Anugrah Akbar Muthalib, nafs is understood as the inner structure of humans that not only includes psychological aspects but also involves physical and spiritual elements. These three elements act as internal drives that influence human choices and actions. Sharia is seen as a guide that serves to direct the drives of the nafs so that they remain within moral boundaries. Without the control of sharia, these drives have the potential to lead humans to destructive behavior.

B. Sharia Mechanisms in Controlling Desires

In Islamic tradition, desires are understood as an inner potential that always accompanies humans. They can lead to goodness if directed, but can also be a source of moral deviation when left to follow their natural tendencies. Sharia is present to provide boundaries and guidance so

² Rahmat ibnuansyah and others, 'solusi efektif pencegahan hawa nafsu pada kisah nabi yusuf dalam al-qur'an oleh', in agustus, no. 2 (2022), IV <https://www.google.com/amps/m.republika.co.id/amp/nfubal>.

³ Raihansyah athallah and others, 'hawa nafsu manusia dalam perspektif islam: pengaruh terhadap perilaku', reflection: islamic education journal, 2.2 (2025), pp. 62–67, doi:10.61132/reflection.v2i2.647.

⁴ Raihansyah athallah and others, 'hawa nafsu manusia dalam perspektif islam: pengaruh terhadap perilaku'.

that these urges do not stray from divine values. The three journals studied show a similar pattern: that controlling desires is not a one-time process, but rather a gradual mechanism that shapes a person's spiritual maturity.

Studies on *nafs* place lust, desire, and emotional tendencies as the driving elements of human actions. In the *Journal of Nafs: An Islamic Perspective*, these urges are described as barriers between the heart and the path to God, so that spiritual journey cannot be achieved without subduing lust. The division of the *nafs* into *ammarah*, *lawwāmah*, and *muṭma'innah* provides a framework for understanding how sharia works to direct the dynamics of the soul. The *nafs ammarah* is the area most in need of sharia regulation, while the *nafs lawwāmah* reflects the moral awareness that arises after a person has slipped beyond the boundaries of sharia. As for the *muṭma'innah*, it is a condition in which the soul is in harmony with the values of Sharia.⁵

One of the main mechanisms offered by Sharia in regulating the desires is *tazkiyatun nafs*, which is the purification of the soul through worship and spiritual training. In Ramli's study, *tazkiyah* is carried out by subduing physical desires, reducing dependence on worldly pleasures, and increasing remembrance of God. Practices such as fasting, night prayers, and remembrance of God are not mere rituals, but forms of self-discipline that train a person to resist momentary desires for long-term inner peace.⁶

In addition to purifying the soul, Sharia also encourages *mujahadah* and *riyāḍah*, which is sincerity in fighting lust through conscious and focused efforts. This mechanism is closely related to *taufiq*, Allah's help in strengthening the mind to distinguish which impulses should be followed and which should be rejected. Unlike the passive attitude of someone who allows themselves to be controlled by lust, *mujahadah* requires active efforts to maintain purity and purify one's orientation in life.⁷

The next mechanism is the strengthening of reason as the guardian of sharia boundaries. In Al-Ghazali's tradition, reason is not only a tool for thinking, but also a moral instrument that functions to direct behavior in accordance with Allah's will. A trained mind will weigh what is beneficial, while a mind clouded by lust is easily led astray to actions that harm oneself and others. Thus, reason acts as a supervisor that ensures that desires remain within the bounds of sharia.

Sharia sources also emphasize the importance of self-restraint (*kafful nafs*) as the basis of moral control. The Qur'an, through QS. An-Nāzi'āt 79:37–41, affirms that salvation in the hereafter belongs to those who are able to restrain their desires and direct their lives towards piety. This verse shows that controlling desires is not only a matter of interpersonal ethics, but also a spiritual consequence that determines the final journey of humans.⁸

Ultimately, the Sharia mechanism in controlling desires is not just a set of prohibitions or restrictions, but a system of spiritual guidance that leads humans to spiritual maturity. The three journals analyzed agree that without Sharia control, desires can lead humans to moral deviation and social destruction. Conversely, when Sharia becomes a guideline, the soul can achieve the

⁵ Fathul khair, muhammad amri, and indo santalia, 'nafs perspektif pemikir islam', *adiba: journal of education*, 3.1 (2023), pp. 13–20.

⁶ Ramli ramli, hamzah harun, and andi aderus, 'kajian kritis tentang jiwa (an-nafs) dalam pemikiran islam (perspektif pendidikan islam)', *indo-mathedu intellectuals journal*, 5.3 (2024), pp. 3881–94, doi:10.54373/imeij.v5i3.1401.

⁷ Rahma ayuningtyas fachrunisa and luatul chizanah, 'al-ghazali's psychological construct of nafsu', *international journal of islamic psychology*, 3.1 (2020).

⁸ Khair, Amri, And Santalia, 'Nafs Perspektif Pemikir Islam'.

highest peace, namely the condition of an-nafs al-muṭma'innah, where a person is no longer enslaved by worldly desires but lives in complete submission to Allah.

C. Results of research discussions

This section aims to interpret the results of research on the sharia mechanism in controlling sexual desire, while linking the findings to broader Islamic literature and the contemporary social context. The results of the study show that Sharia provides a comprehensive framework for humans to regulate their inner urges so that they do not exceed moral boundaries. These findings show that controlling desires is not only a religious commandment, but also part of the process of character and civilization building.

One important finding is that Sharia views desires as a potential that can lead to two sides: good and evil. The division of desires into ammarah, lawwāmah, and muṭma'innah shows that humans are in a dynamic process towards spiritual perfection. This explanation is in line with the views of Sufi scholars such as Al-Ghazali, who stated that a person's spiritual journey is largely determined by their ability to control their desires. This shows consistency between research findings and classical theory, in which nafs ammarah requires strong Sharia control so that it does not dominate the mind and heart.

Other findings show that Sharia not only provides rules in the form of prohibitions and commands, but also provides spiritual and psychological mechanisms to regulate the impulses of desire. The practice of tazkiyatun nafs, for example, is not merely a ritual of purification, but a mental exercise that creates distance between a person and their impulsive urges. When a person fasts, they are not only refraining from hunger or thirst, but also training their brain to delay immediate gratification. From a modern psychological perspective, this mechanism is closely related to what is known as self-regulation and delayed gratification, abilities that greatly influence character formation and long-term success. Thus, the findings of this study show that Sharia is in harmony with contemporary psychological concepts related to self-control.

In addition, the discussion found that strengthening reason is a very important Sharia mechanism in curbing desires. Both Al-Ghazali and Al-Kindi emphasized that reason is a moral instrument, not merely a tool for logical thinking. It becomes a balance that directs desires towards goodness and hinders destructive impulses. In the modern context, many destructive behaviors such as corruption, domestic violence, addiction, and abuse of authority occur not because of a lack of knowledge, but because of the weakening of reason due to the dominance of desires. These findings demonstrate the relevance of Sharia in addressing the moral issues of contemporary society.

The findings also show that Sharia mechanisms such as mujahadah and riyāḍah play a major role in shaping a person's spiritual resilience. Sincerity in fighting desires is not an instant process. It requires consistent practice, environmental support, and strong spiritual awareness. This is why Sharia emphasizes the importance of a community of believers, assemblies of knowledge, and a good social environment. Without a supportive environment, controlling desires becomes more difficult. In this context, the study reinforces the idea that Sharia is not only an individual legal system, but also a social system that builds a moral culture in society.

When compared to previous studies, the results of this study confirm the view that controlling desires is at the core of Sharia's objectives or maqasid Sharia. Hifz al-din (preserving religion), hifz al-nafs (preserving the soul), hifz al-mal (preserving wealth), and hifz al-'aql (preserving reason) are all fundamentally related to a person's ability to control their desires. Much of the damage in society—from corruption to environmental degradation—stems from

humanity's failure to control excessive desires. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the argument that Sharia functions as a fence that protects the social structure from destruction due to the domination of desires.

In terms of practical implications, this study illustrates that controlling desires through Sharia is not only relevant to spiritual life, but also to mental and social health. The practice of tazkiyah and strengthening the mind can help individuals manage stress, deal with inner conflicts, and make wiser decisions. For society, the application of Sharia principles on a social scale can reduce risky behaviors and create a culture of discipline and responsibility. These findings are particularly important in the modern era, which is full of distractions and consumerist temptations.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the data used is based on literature, so it does not directly describe the psychological dynamics of society. The research findings would be richer if supplemented with interviews, field studies, or behavioral observations. Second, the literature used is mostly from classical and religious studies, so comparative analysis with a modern psychological approach can still be developed further. Third, this study has not covered the different variations of Islamic culture, even though the application of Sharia is greatly influenced by the social context and customs of the local community.

Future research could focus on the integration of Sharia with modern psychology, particularly in the fields of behavioral control and self-discipline. Comparative research on the effectiveness of tazkiyah practices on emotional stability can also contribute significantly to character education in the digital age. In addition, field research observing how communities apply mechanisms of desire control in daily life will enrich our understanding of the relevance of Sharia in the modern social context.

Overall, this discussion confirms that Sharia offers a comprehensive and realistic mechanism for controlling desires. It works on the spiritual, mental, and social levels simultaneously. Research findings prove that when these mechanisms are followed, humans can achieve peace of mind, social harmony, and a better quality of life. Conversely, if desires are left unchecked, their destructive potential can damage oneself and the environment. Therefore, controlling desires through Sharia is an urgent need for modern humans, especially in the midst of a life that increasingly prioritizes unlimited freedom.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that lust is a fundamental part of the human psyche that has dual potential: it can lead to goodness, but it also has the potential to lead to moral deviance if left unchecked. Sharia law exists not only as a set of normative rules, but as a comprehensive mechanism that guides humans in regulating these internal urges. The results of a study of three main sources—a thesis on nafs, the Reflection Journal, and Ramli's study—reinforce the understanding that controlling lust is one of the core teachings of Islam and is the foundation for personal and social welfare.

Sharia develops various control instruments, ranging from tazkiyatun nafs, mujahadah, strengthening the function of reason, to kafful nafs as emphasized in the Qur'an. These instruments not only have spiritual value but are also relevant in the context of modern psychology, particularly in efforts to build self-discipline and the ability to control impulses. The findings of the study show that when Sharia mechanisms are implemented consistently, the urges of the nafs can be directed towards divine values that foster inner peace, moral integrity, and behavior that is beneficial to society.

Conversely, if desires are left unchecked, they can develop into greed, selfishness, and destructive actions that undermine social order. Therefore, controlling desires through Sharia law is an urgent necessity for modern humans living in an environment full of temptations and distractions. This study confirms that Sharia law not only regulates the relationship between humans and God, but also plays an important role in shaping human civilization and character.

Overall, this study contributes to understanding how Sharia works to limit desires through spiritual, mental, and social approaches simultaneously. These findings also open up space for further research using empirical approaches, so that concepts of desire control can be tested in real-life contexts and contribute more broadly to the development of Islamic psychology and character education.

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