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Verses of Negligence and Their Relevance to Contemporary Digital Phenomena: A Thematic Interpretation Study from a Psychology Perspective

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has created new forms of distraction, excessive media use, and shifts in attention and social orientation. This study aims to examine the Qur'anic concept of ghaflah and its interpretive relevance to contemporary digital phenomena from a psychological perspective. This study employs a qualitative library research approach using the thematic interpretation method (Tafsir Mawdu'i). Primary data consist of Qur'anic verses related to ghaflah and their interpretations in classical and contemporary tafsir, while secondary sources include scholarly literature on psychology and digital media. Data were analyzed through content analysis by identifying the meanings and characteristics of ghaflah, categorizing the findings thematically, and interpreting their relevance to contemporary digital behavior. The findings indicate that ghaflah encompasses several dimensions, including neglect of spiritual responsibility, excessive attachment to worldly interests, inadequate use of human perceptual capacities, and distraction from fundamental life purposes. These characteristics show conceptual and interpretive relevance to contemporary digital phenomena, particularly excessive digital use, compulsive scrolling, information overload, and social validation. Rather than establishing an empirical relationship, the study demonstrates that psychological perspectives on self-awareness, self-regulation, attention, and social comparison provide analytical frameworks for understanding how digital environments may intensify patterns of distraction and loss of orientation described in the Qur'anic concept of ghaflah. The novelty of this study lies in constructing an interdisciplinary dialogue between Qur'anic interpretation and contemporary psychology while maintaining the theological distinction between ghaflah and psychological constructs. The study concludes that ghaflah provides a relevant Qur'anic framework for reflecting on digital behavior and highlights the importance of conscious, self-regulated, and ethically oriented technology use.

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Introduction

The development of digital technology has changed the way people live in terms of communication, getting information, learning, and interacting. Social media, smartphones, and various digital platforms make it easy to access information, but they also bring a constant stream of stimuli. Excessive digital use can lead to easily distracted attention, wasted time, and a reduced ability for individuals to control their behavior (Iskandar, Burdah, Amin, & Ihsanillah, 2026). This phenomenon becomes important to study from an Islamic perspective through the concept of *ghaflah*, which is a state of heedlessness or neglect that causes people to lose awareness of things that should be a priority, including awareness of God and life's responsibilities.

The Quran describes *ghaflah* as a condition when people don't use their abilities to see, hear, and think optimally to learn lessons. In the context of digital life, this concept is relevant to various behaviors like excessive social media use, doomscrolling, endless entertainment seeking, and dependence on notifications and digital validation (Sinulingga & Dalimunthe, 2026). From a psychology perspective, this condition can be linked to fragmented attention, low self-regulation, impulse control, and tendencies to seek instant gratification.

Studies on *ghaflah* have mostly been placed within religious discussions, while research on digital phenomena often uses psychological concepts like digital distraction, problematic social media use, and self-control. Therefore, there's room to integrate Quranic interpretation studies with psychological perspectives to better understand contemporary digital phenomena. This study uses a thematic (*maudhu'i*) interpretation method to identify and analyze verses about *ghaflah*, then connects them with concepts of attention, self-awareness, self-regulation, and human behavior in the digital environment.

Thus, the study "Verses of *Ghaflah* and Their Relevance to Contemporary Digital Phenomena: A Thematic Tafsir Study from a Psychological Perspective" is expected to provide an integrated understanding of *ghaflah* as both a spiritual and psychological issue. This study also emphasizes the importance of using technology consciously, proportionally, and responsibly so that digital developments do not make people lose control over their attention, time, and spiritual orientation.

Studies on *ghaflah* in the Qur'an have been carried out through various interpretative approaches. (Jiddan & Alif, 2026), studying the verses about heedlessness through the perspective of Tafsir al-Ṭabarī and finding that heedlessness includes neglect in remembering God, worship, the afterlife, as well as learning lessons. (Nurhamidah, Rif'an, & Norhidayat, 2026) Through the study of thematic exegesis, it also explains *ghaflah* as behavior that makes people neglect their duties to Allah and get carried away by worldly life. Meanwhile, developments in digital research show that problematic social media use is related to anxiety, fear of missing out (FoMO), and various psychological well-being issues.

Recent research has even started connecting the concept of *al-ghaflah* with a distracted society in the digital era. (Ridho, Kusnadi, & Firdaus, 2026) Using thematic interpretation to show the similarities between the narrowing of consciousness in *al-ghaflah* and digital distraction mechanisms, as well as linking it to mindfulness and self-control. However, the study places *ghaflah* more as a Qur'anic ethical framework, while a more systematic mapping of *ghaflah* as a psychological consciousness phenomenon,

especially regarding attention, self-regulation, impulse control, problematic digital use tendencies, and psychological well-being, can still be deepened. So, the research gap isn't about the lack of connection between ghaflah and the digital world, but rather the suboptimal integration between the interpretation of ghaflah verses and contemporary psychological constructs in explaining human digital behavior.

The novelty of this research lies in developing the study of ghaflah through thematic interpretation explicitly combined with a psychological perspective. The study not only identifies the meaning of ghaflah in the Qur'an but also maps its dimensions into psychological concepts such as attention, self-awareness, self-regulation, impulse control, and problematic use of digital media. This approach allows ghaflah to be understood as a Qur'anic concept that has spiritual, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions all at once. Using thematic interpretation is also relevant because this method allows verses with similar themes to be collected and analyzed systematically to address contemporary issues.

Thus, the main contribution of this research is offering an integrative conceptual model between Qur'anic interpretation and digital psychology, explaining how the state of ghaflah can appear in the form of loss of attention, weak self-control, attachment to digital stimuli, and neglect of spiritually and socially valuable activities. This perspective broadens the study of ghaflah from moral-spiritual discussions to a multidimensional analysis relevant to human life in the digital era, while also showing that Qur'anic values can be used as a reflective framework for understanding and facing psychological challenges arising from technological developments.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with library research and thematic interpretation (Tafsīr Mawḍū'ī) methods. The qualitative approach is used to understand and interpret a phenomenon based on meaning, context, and textual data sources, while library research places documents, books, manuscripts, scientific articles, and various written sources as the main sources of study (Creswell, 2018). In the study of the Qur'an, the Thematic Tafsīr method is carried out by collecting verses that share similar themes, then analyzing their content, relationships, and interpretations comprehensively to gain a complete understanding of a Qur'anic concept. This approach is considered suitable for this research because the study focuses on the concept of ghaflah in the Qur'an and its relevance to contemporary digital phenomena from a psychological perspective.

The research procedure follows the basic principles of thematic interpretation, which places the theme at the center of data organization. The first step is to determine the research theme, which is the concept of ghaflah and its relevance to contemporary digital life. Determining the theme is the initial step in thematic interpretation because the researcher needs to establish the issue to be studied before collecting and classifying verses (al-Farmawi, 1996). The second step is to gather verses related to the theme of ghaflah by searching for the word ghaflah and its various derivatives, such as ghāfil, ghāfilūn, and ghāfilīn. This search is conducted using the Qur'an and *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi as one of the tools to identify the terms and locations of verses related to the research theme. The third step is to group the verses based on their meaning, the context of the discussion, *asbāb al-nuzūl* if available, and the relationships between verses (*munāsabah*). The fourth step is to

compare the interpretations of classical and contemporary mufasir to identify similarities, differences, and the development of the understanding of ghaflah.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include Quranic verses related to ghaflah along with their interpretations in several authoritative tafsir books. The books used include *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* by Ibn Kathir, *al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an* by al-Qurtubi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Munir* by Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Sayyid Qutb, and *Tafsir al-Mishbah* by Muhammad Quraish Shihab. Using both classical and contemporary tafsirs is intended to get a broader perspective on interpretation as well as to see the continuity and development of the meaning of the concept of ghaflah. Meanwhile, secondary sources consist of research methodology books, national and international journal articles, as well as research results that discuss psychology, self-regulation, attention, social media use, digital distraction, doomscrolling, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), information overload, and spirituality in digital life (Sugiyono, 2022).

After gathering all the verses related to ghaflah, the study doesn't automatically treat all those verses as a unit for in-depth analysis. The verses are chosen purposively based on substantive criteria and how they fit the research focus. Purposeful data selection allows the researcher to pick the sources that are most relevant to the research goals and questions (Creswell, 2018). The selection criteria in this study include: (1) verses that explicitly use the word ghaflah or its derivative forms; (2) verses that clearly depict human negligence; (3) verses whose content relates to attention, awareness, life orientation, self-control, or attachment to worldly life; and (4) verses whose content has conceptual relevance for dialogue with contemporary digital phenomena. Based on these criteria, the study focuses on an in-depth analysis of Q.S. al-Anbiya' [21]: 1, Q.S. al-Munafiqun [63]: 9, Q.S. al-A'raf [7]: 179, and Q.S. al-Hadid [57]: 20. The selection of these four verses is based on their thematic clarity regarding dimensions of negligence related to accountability in the hereafter, attachment to worldly interests, use of human potential, and orientation toward worldly pleasures and pride.

Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation and systematic literature review. In library research, documentation is used to gather and organize data from various written sources relevant to the research object (Moleong, 2024). Every verse that is found is recorded based on the name of the surah, verse number, the derivation form of ghaflah, the context of the verse, and the meaning it contains. Then, interpretations from each mufasir are compared to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of ghaflah. Comparative tafsir is done by paying attention to the verse's context, *asbab al-nuzul* if available, and the inter-verse relationships (*munasabah*) so that the interpretation is not taken out of the Qur'an's context. In the next stage, psychology literature is used to identify concepts relevant to the characteristics of ghaflah, especially attention, self-awareness, self-regulation, impulse control, and problematic digital media use behaviors.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis through the stages of data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and synthesis. Content analysis allows researchers to identify patterns, categories, and meanings found in textual data systematically (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2024). At the reduction stage, information that isn't directly related to the concept of ghaflah and the focus on digital phenomena is

set aside. Next, the data is grouped into thematic categories derived from interpretations, such as negligence toward God and the afterlife, being overly absorbed in worldly life, suboptimal use of the mind and heart, and losing sight of life's purpose. This categorization is done based on comparative reading of the tafsir books used as primary sources.

After the categorization process, each theme was compared conceptually with relevant psychological perspectives. The concept of self-awareness was used to understand dimensions of awareness of oneself and behavior, while self-regulation was used to understand an individual's ability to set goals, monitor, and control behavior. The concept of executive function was used to explain aspects of attention control, impulses, and decision-making, while Cognitive Load Theory was used as a perspective to understand the limitations of information processing in a stimulus-rich environment. The perspective of Social Comparison Theory is also used to understand the tendency of individuals to evaluate themselves by comparing with others, especially in the context of social media. The use of these theories is not meant to equate psychological constructs with ghaflah, but rather as an analytical framework to discuss the possible conceptual relevance between interpretation findings and psychological phenomena in the digital environment.

The final stage of the analysis, which is synthesis, is used to build a conceptual relationship between the meaning of ghaflah in the Qur'an and contemporary digital phenomena. At this stage, phenomena like excessive social media use, doomscrolling, FoMO, information overload, and digital distractions are not positioned as direct forms of ghaflah. Instead, these phenomena are analyzed based on how well their characteristics align with and their interpretive relevance to the dimensions of ghaflah identified through tafsir analysis. This approach is necessary because ghaflah is a Qur'anic concept with theological, moral, and spiritual dimensions, while doomscrolling, problematic social media use, cognitive load, and self-regulation are constructs that developed within the tradition of psychology. Therefore, the relationship between the two is built as a conceptual dialogue rather than as an empirical connection (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2024).

The integration of exegesis and psychology is carried out in a contextual and interpretative way. Ghaflah is still positioned as a Qur'anic concept related to human awareness of God, the afterlife, moral responsibility, and life orientation. Meanwhile, psychological theory is used to provide explanations about the mechanisms of attention, awareness, motivation, self-regulation, and behaviors that appear in digital life. Thus, this study does not claim that all technology use is ghaflah, but only identifies certain digital behaviors that have characteristics that can be interpreted through the framework of negligence described in the Qur'an. This stance also maintains the epistemological distinction between the Qur'an as a normative source and psychology as a scientific construct.

The validity of interpretation is carried out through cross-checking of sources and comparing interpretations. Cross-checking is done by comparing the interpretations of classical and contemporary mufassirs to find consistencies and differences in the understanding of the verses being analyzed. Using multiple sources also allows researchers to reduce reliance on a single perspective and improve accuracy in the interpretation process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, the results of Qur'anic interpretation were re-examined through academic psychology literature and digital studies

so that the conceptual relationships built have an adequate theoretical foundation. This process has been carried out consistently from the gathering of verses, selection of analysis units, comparison of interpretations, categorization, to synthesis. With this procedure, the research aims to produce a systematic interpretation of the concept of *ghaflah* while also explaining its interpretative relevance to psychological and spiritual challenges in contemporary digital life, without claiming any empirical connections that haven't been tested through field research.

Results

The Concept of Ghaflah in the Verses of the Qur'an

The results of the thematic exegesis analysis indicate that *ghaflah* in the Qur'an represents a state of human heedlessness, characterized by failure to give due attention and turning away from awareness of Allah's guidance. An examination of the relevant Qur'anic verses reveals the use of the term *ghaflah* and its various derivatives in diverse contexts. Based on an analysis of the verses and the interpretations of Qur'anic exegetes (*mufasssirūn*), the concept of *ghaflah* is not limited to ordinary forgetfulness. Rather, it also encompasses a condition in which human beings disregard admonitions, the Hereafter, and the signs of Allah's greatness. The classification of the Qur'anic verses examined in this study can be summarized as follows:

Table 1. Classification of the Concept of Ghaflah in the Qur'anic Verses

Qur'anic Verse	Form of <i>Ghaflah</i>	Main Findings from the Exegesis
Q.S. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 1	Heedlessness toward the Day of Judgment	Human beings remain heedless of the certainty of the Day of Judgment despite having received repeated warnings.
Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn [63]: 9	Heedlessness caused by wealth and children	Wealth and children may become causes of heedlessness when they lead people to turn away from the remembrance of Allah.
Q.S. al-A'rāf [7]: 179	Heedlessness in utilizing human faculties	Human beings possess hearts, eyes, and ears, yet fail to use them to understand and learn lessons from the signs of Allah.
Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]: 20	Heedlessness caused by worldly life	Worldly life is portrayed as play, amusement, adornment, boasting, and competition, all of which are temporary in nature.

Based on the table above, Q.S. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 1 demonstrates that *ghaflah* is associated with human heedlessness concerning the certainty of the Day of Judgment. The verse depicts a condition in which people have already received warnings but nevertheless remain heedless and turn away. Thus, the central elements of *ghaflah* in this verse are indifference toward divine warnings and a lack of awareness of the consequences of the Hereafter.

In Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn [63]: 9, negligence is depicted through people's attachment to wealth and children. The verse warns that wealth and children should not make people forget to remember Allah. The interpretation shows that objects that are basically part of human life can become a source of negligence when attachment to them causes people to neglect their duties and focus on Allah. So, this verse highlights the aspect of negligence related to being overly absorbed in worldly interests.

Q.S. al-A'rāf [7]: 179 shows a form of heedlessness related to not using human potential properly. The verse mentions the heart, eyes, and ears as tools humans have, but they are not used to understand the signs of Allah's power. Based on the interpretation analyzed, this situation shows a gap between the abilities humans have and how they use them to gain awareness and lessons. So, the heedlessness in this verse is about humans failing to use their perception and understanding.

Meanwhile, Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]: 20 describes worldly life in several forms, such as games, distractions, adornments, pride, and competition in wealth and offspring. The verse presents worldly life as something temporary and not meant to be the ultimate focus for humans. The analysis shows that ghaflah (heedlessness) in this verse is related to being absorbed in pleasures and worldly symbols that can distract people from being conscious of the afterlife.

Overall, the results of the thematic interpretation show that the concept of ghaflah in these four verses can be grouped into four main types: (1) neglecting the Day of Judgment and human accountability; (2) neglect due to attachment to wealth and family; (3) neglect in utilizing the potential of the heart, hearing, and sight; and (4) neglect due to being distracted by worldly life. These four types show that ghaflah in the Qur'an has different objects and contexts, but all are related to humans losing focus on the orientation and purpose of a more fundamental life.

Based on the results of the contextual analysis, the characteristics of ghaflah found in those verses have connections with several contemporary digital life phenomena. Neglecting priorities and life goals can be seen in excessive use of digital media; being absorbed in worldly pleasures shares similarities with the dominance of digital entertainment content; while neglect in directing attention is linked to digital distractions and overconsumption of information. The mapping of the interpretation results with these digital phenomena can be summarized as follows:

Table 2. The Relevance of the Concept of Ghaflah to Contemporary Digital Phenomena

Concept of Ghaflah	Characteristics in the Verses	Relevant Digital Phenomena
Negligence toward the orientation of the Hereafter	Ignoring warnings and the accountability	Excessive use of digital media that neglects essential activities
Negligence due to wealth and worldly interests	Attachment to material interests	Pursuit of status, popularity, likes, followers, and digital validation
Negligence in utilizing one's potential	Failing to use the heart, eyes, and ears to understand the signs of Allah	Digital distractions, information overload, and information consumption without reflection
Negligence due to worldly pleasures	Excessive indulgence in entertainment, adornment, and competition	Unlimited scrolling, excessive entertainment content, doomscrolling, and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

The results show that contemporary digital phenomena have several characteristics that can conceptually be understood through the category of ghaflah found in the Qur'an. However, the study doesn't suggest that every use of digital media is a form of ghaflah. This relevance is mainly seen in digital usage patterns that distract attention, make us lose track of time, let short-term pleasures dominate, and make people's main goals and responsibilities lose priority.

In conclusion, these findings are reinforced by a hadith of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ which states, 'Know this! Surely there is a piece of flesh in the body. If it is good, the whole body is good. If it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Know that it is the heart' (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). This hadith emphasizes that the condition of the heart plays an important role in shaping human awareness, attitudes, and behavior. So, ghaflah should not only be understood as negligence in using reason, sight, and hearing, but also as neglect of the heart in accepting Allah's guidance, making the care of the heart an important part of avoiding ghaflah.

The Relevance of the Concept of Ghaflah in the Qur'an to Today's Digital Usage Phenomenon

The research results through thematic exegesis analysis of Q.S. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 1, Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn [63]: 9, Q.S. al-A'rāf [7]: 179, and Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]: 20 show that the concept of ghaflah has several main characteristics, namely negligence towards accountability in the hereafter, being absorbed in worldly interests, not fully utilizing human potential in understanding Allah's guidance, and attachment to pleasures, adornments, and worldly pride. These characteristics were then mapped to various forms of contemporary digital use that show similar patterns of attention, distraction, and orientation. The mapping results are presented in Table 2.

Table 3. The Relevance of the Concept of Ghaflah in the Qur'an to Today's Digital Usage Phenomenon

Qur'anic Verse	Concept of Ghaflah	Characteristics Identified in Tafsir	Relevant Phenomena	Digital
Q.S. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 1	Negligence toward the Day of Judgment	Humans remain in a state of heedlessness and turn away even though warnings concerning accountability have already been conveyed.	Zombie Syndrome and purposeless social media use	Scrolling and
Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn [63]: 9	Negligence due to wealth and children	Worldly interests can cause people to become heedless of remembering Allah when such interests become the center of attention and the primary orientation of life.	Gadget addiction, FoMO, and excessive attachment to digital devices	
Q.S. al-A'rāf [7]: 179	Negligence in utilizing one's potential	Humans possess hearts, eyes, and ears, but do not use them optimally to understand and learn from the signs of Allah.	Information overload, digital distractions, and unreflective information consumption	
Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]: 20	Negligence due to worldly pleasures and pride	Worldly life is portrayed through play, amusement, adornment, boasting, and competition in wealth and children.	Flexing, the pursuit of likes, followers, views, and social validation	

Research findings show that Q.S. al-Anbiyā'/21:1 is closely related to the phenomenon of Zombie Scrolling Syndrome (ZSS).

إِقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

"The reckoning (of deeds) is getting closer to humans, while they remain careless and turn away."

Based on Q.S. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 1, ghaflah is shown through humans being negligent and turning away from the certainty of the Day of Judgment. This verse places negligence in the context of ignoring warnings and human accountability. When mapped to contemporary phenomena, this characteristic is relevant to digital media use, which makes people keep engaging in activities without a clear purpose while neglecting more important tasks. One form that shows this characteristic is Zombie Scrolling Syndrome, which is the behavior of endlessly scrolling through digital content without a clear goal.

The next research results show that Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn/63:9 is relevant to the phenomenon of gadget addiction.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتْلُوهُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ج وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْخَسِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

“O you who believe, do not let your wealth and children distract you from remembering Allah. Whoever does that, they are the ones who will surely lose out.”

Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn [63]: 9 shows a form of heedlessness related to wealth and children. The verse warns that ownership and family interests shouldn't make people forget to remember Allah. According to the interpretation, worldly things don't automatically lead to heedlessness, but they can become a source of distraction when being too attached to them takes your focus away from your duties to Allah. In the digital context, this idea is relevant to being overly attached to devices, apps, social media, and all kinds of digital activities that take up too much of your attention and time.

Research also found that Q.S. al-A'rāf/7:179 has a very strong connection with the phenomenon of information overload.

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَهُمْ
أُذُنٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

“Truly, We have created many among the jinn and humans who are destined for Hell (because of their misguidance). They have hearts which they do not use to understand (God's signs), eyes which they do not use to see (God's signs), and ears which they do not use to hear (God's signs). They are like livestock, even more misguided. They are the ones who are heedless.”

QS. al-A'rāf [7]: 179 describes heedlessness through humans' inability to use their hearts, eyes, and ears to understand the signs of Allah. Analysis of the exegesis shows that humans have various tools to acquire and understand information, but these tools are not always used to gain awareness and learn lessons. In a digital context, this trait is relevant to information overload, which is when people receive a huge amount of information through different digital channels, making the process of sorting, understanding, and reflecting on that information increasingly complex.

Next, the study found that Q.S. al-Ḥadid/57:20 has a clear relevance to the rise of flexing culture and social validation on digital media.

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَهْوٌ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ
أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهْبِجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ
وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ ﴿٢٠﴾

"Know that the life of this world is just play, distractions, adornments, and showing off among yourselves, as well as competing in the amount of wealth and children. (Its example is) like rain whose plants impress the farmers, then wither, and you see them yellow, then crumble. In the Hereafter, there is severe punishment as well as forgiveness from Allah and His pleasure. The life of this world (for heedless people) is only a deceptive enjoyment."

Next, Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]:20 describes worldly life through games, distractions, adornments, boasting toward each other, and competition in wealth and offspring. The interpretation shows that this verse depicts the temporary nature of worldly life and the risk of making it the main focus. In the digital context, these characteristics are relevant to flexing culture, hunting for likes, followers, and views, as well as various forms of image crafting and social recognition through digital media. This phenomenon shows how material symbols and public acknowledgment can become part of interaction patterns and self-image formation in the digital space.

Based on the overall analysis results, there are four main patterns of the relevance of the concept of ghaflah with contemporary digital usage, namely: (1) neglect of priorities and responsibilities through purposeless digital use; (2) excessive attachment to digital devices and activities; (3) inability to filter and reflect on the flow of information; and (4) distraction by image, entertainment, and social validation. These results show that contemporary digital phenomena have characteristics that can be mapped with the category of ghaflah identified through thematic interpretation analysis.

This finding is further reinforced by the words of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: "Know! Indeed, in the body there is a piece of flesh. If it is good, then the whole body is good. If it is corrupt, then the whole body is corrupt. Know that it is the heart" (HR. Bukhari and Muslim). This hadith emphasizes that the condition of the heart plays a fundamental role in guiding human attitudes and behavior. In the context of ghaflah (heedlessness) and digital use, negligence is not just about how much time is spent on digital devices, but also about the state of the heart losing awareness of purpose, responsibility, and spiritual orientation. Therefore, excessive, purposeless, and unreflective use of technology can be a form that conceptually has the characteristics of ghaflah, while using digital media consciously, proportionally, and with a focus on benefit shows an effort to protect the heart from negligence.

Discussion

The Concept of Ghafalah in Quranic Verses

Research results show that ghafalah in the Qur'an cannot be reduced to the meaning of "forgetfulness" in a simple sense. Ghafalah describes a situation where a person loses attention to something that normatively should be the center of their life orientation. Interpretation (Atmaja & Wantini, 2025) It shows that ghafalah is related to being insensitive to Allah's guidance, ignoring the afterlife, and being absorbed in worldly interests. This finding is important because it indicates that the main aspect of ghafalah is not just a lack of knowledge, but the failure to use that knowledge as a basis for awareness and action.

That understanding has a conceptual meeting point with the theory (Kumaidi, Iska, & Saskia, 2025). In that theory, self-awareness allows individuals to evaluate their behavior based on certain standards or goals. When an individual's attention is no longer directed to those standards, behavior becomes more easily controlled by external stimuli and momentary urges. Similarly, the concept (Ula, Afiyah, Rijal, & Siswanto, 2026) placing the ability to set goals, monitor behavior, and perform self-evaluation as an important part of controlling actions. From this perspective, ghafalah can be understood as a Qur'anic concept that includes dimensions of awareness and self-regulation, but it is not identical to those psychological constructs. The difference lies in the source of orientation: psychology generally discusses awareness and regulation within the framework of personal goals, whereas ghafalah in the Qur'an is rooted in humans' relationship with Allah, moral responsibility, and an orientation toward the hereafter.

So, an important contribution of this finding is showing that ghafalah has a broader meaning structure than just being a matter of forgetfulness. It includes the relationship between attention, awareness, value orientation, and actions. This perspective also helps explain why someone can know a value or truth but still act against it. In psychology, this issue can be discussed through self-regulation and behavior control mechanisms, while from the Qur'an's perspective, it's seen within the framework of spiritual awareness and moral responsibility.

One of the theoretical contributions of this study is showing that ghafalah can be understood through the relationship between attention to long-term goals and the tendency to follow short-term impulses. For example, Q.S. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 1 describes people who are aware of accountability, yet remain heedless and turn away. Conceptually, this condition is similar to present bias, which is the tendency to give more weight to immediate benefits or satisfaction rather than future consequences (Puspitasari, Ni'mah, Bustomi, Ubudiyah, & Siswanto, 2026).

The relationship becomes even more relevant when placed within the framework of executive function. (Khoiriyah, Dzakiy, & Ismail, 2025) explaining that executive functions play a role in impulse control, goal maintenance, cognitive flexibility, and decision making. From this perspective, ghafalah is not accurately described as an executive function disorder, because the two come from different scientific traditions. However, they do have an analytical area that can be connected, which is the issue of how humans maintain orientation towards more important goals when facing immediate impulses.

The conceptual implication becomes important in understanding digital life. The digital environment provides fast, repetitive, and easily accessible stimuli so that attention can continuously be directed toward short-term gratification. However, this study does not

conclude that using digital media is *ghaflah*. The relationships drawn are based on conceptual analogy and interpretative relevance: certain digital behaviors have characteristics that resemble the mechanisms of heedlessness described in the Qur'an, especially when those activities shift priorities, consume attention, and reduce an individual's ability to maintain more meaningful goals.

Findings from Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn [63]: 9 and Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]: 20 show that negligence doesn't always come from something inherently negative. Wealth, children, beauty, pride, and various worldly pleasures can have positive value, but they turn into sources of distraction when attachment to them shifts a person's main focus. This perspective adds an important nuance to the relationship between religion and worldly life: the issue isn't the existence of the world, but rather the place the world holds in a person's value hierarchy.

Temuan tersebut dapat dipertemukan dengan *Self-Determination Theory* yang dikembangkan The findings can be connected with the Self-Determination Theory that was developed (Ahmad, Rofiah, & Tamam, 2024). This theory differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic orientations in human motivation. When external achievements like status, wealth, image, and recognition become the dominant orientation, psychological well-being can become more vulnerable compared to when individuals have goals that align with more basic psychological needs. Perspective (Supriatman, 2026) Regarding materialism, it also reinforces the argument that an excessive material orientation can be related to various less adaptive psychological consequences.

In the digital space, this issue takes on a new form through the culture of image-making and social validation. Likes, followers, views, and comments can serve as indicators of social recognition that are constantly available. Findings (Saputra, 2026) shows that the use of social media is related to the process of social comparison and self-evaluation. Thus, the relevance of Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]: 20 to digital culture is not in equating flexing with heedlessness, but in the similarity of orientation structures, that is, when attention and self-assessment are increasingly determined by external symbols and social recognition.

QS. al-A'rāf [7]: 179 gives another dimension to the concept of *ghaflah*, which is humans failing to use the potential of their hearts, sight, and hearing to understand and learn lessons. This verse expands the discussion from 'what humans pay attention to' to 'how humans use the abilities they have to understand.' In this context, the issue isn't just the amount of information received, but the ability to select, process, evaluate, and give meaning to that information.

This framework has a conceptual connection with (Muhlisa, 2025), which explains that human information processing capacity has its limits. When too much or too complex information is received, processing ability can be overloaded. In the digital environment, this condition can be amplified by the continuous and simultaneous flow of information. (Shareef, 2026) It also shows that the presence of a smartphone can affect cognitive capacity even when the device isn't being actively used.

However, this finding does not mean that information overload is *ghaflah* in the theological sense. The relationship between the two should be understood as an interpretive bridge. *Ghaflah* provides a normative framework regarding the importance of awareness and the proper use of human potential, while cognitive psychology explains the

limits of attention and information processing capacity. Bringing the two together gives a richer understanding of digital human challenges: not just how to get as much information as possible, but how to maintain the ability to choose valuable information and reflect on it critically.

The findings of this study show that the relationship between ghaflah and digital phenomena shouldn't be built on the claim that certain psychological terms are direct equivalents of Qur'anic concepts. Ghaflah is a construct with theological, moral, and spiritual foundations in the Qur'an, while present bias, self-regulation, cognitive load, social comparison, and behavioral addiction come from the psychology tradition with different assumptions and methods. So, the contribution of this study really lies in the effort to build an epistemological bridge between the two.

Through this bridge, exegesis provides a framework regarding value orientation, life goals, and the moral dimension of negligence, while psychology offers conceptual tools to understand processes of attention, motivation, decision-making, self-regulation, and behavior. This integration allows ghaflah to be read contextually without losing its theological character. Conversely, psychological theories can be used to explain behavioral mechanisms that phenomenologically resemble the characteristics of ghaflah.

This integrative approach becomes important because the digital phenomenon is not just a matter of technology, but also a human issue in managing attention, time, motivation, social relationships, and life orientation. Therefore, this study expands the discussion of ghaflah from moral-spiritual considerations towards a dialogue with contemporary psychology, while also broadening the study of digital psychology by incorporating spiritual and normative dimensions derived from the Qur'an.

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of three layers of analysis: Quranic interpretation, psychology, and contemporary digital phenomena. Previous studies on ghaflah generally focused on theological and moral meanings, while research on digital behavior mostly used psychological constructs such as self-regulation, behavioral addiction, attention distraction, cognitive load, and social comparison. This study brings the two traditions together by placing digital phenomena as a new context to read the relevance of the concept of ghaflah, rather than as a replacement for the meaning of ghaflah itself.

Theoretically, this approach contributes to the development of Islamic psychology studies by showing that Qur'anic concepts can be used as a conceptual source to understand consciousness, self-control, value orientation, and human behavior. Practically, these findings suggest the importance of developing digital literacy that not only emphasizes technical skills and digital security but also self-awareness, attention management, media use control, and value orientation. From an Islamic perspective, practices like dhikr, muḥāsabah, strengthening awareness of the hereafter, and controlling desires can serve as value sources for creating a more reflective pattern of technology use.

Thus, this study does not place digital technology as a direct cause of ghaflah. Technology is understood as an environment that can either strengthen or weaken human tendencies in managing attention and life orientation, depending on usage patterns and individual regulation abilities. This stance also avoids technological determinism and directly equating psychological constructs with theological concepts. The main contribution

of this research lies in forming an integrative perspective that allows ghaflah to be understood as a Qur'anic concept with spiritual meaning, but one that can also be productively engaged with psychological theory in explaining human awareness challenges in the digital era.

The Relevance of the Concept of Ghaflah in the Quran to Today's Digital Usage Phenomenon

Ghaflah as a Concept of Awareness, Value Orientation, and Self-Regulation

Research findings show that ghaflah in the Qur'an has a broader meaning than just forgetting or not knowing something. Based on interpretation (Aldbyani & Al-Harbi, 2026), *Ghaflah is related to the condition when people don't pay proper attention to Allah's guidance, the afterlife, and the purpose of their creation. So, the main issue with ghaflah isn't about lacking information, but about people's failure to make that knowledge and awareness the basis for their orientation and actions. This understanding provides an important foundation for seeing ghaflah as a concept that has theological dimensions and is also connected to the process of human awareness.*

From a psychology perspective, those characteristics have a conceptual overlap with self-awareness theory (Khadafi, Pelita, & Gunawan, 2025). Self-awareness allows individuals to evaluate their behavior based on the standards they believe in. When attention is no longer focused on those standards, behavior is more easily influenced by external stimuli and momentary urges. This is also related to the concept of self-regulation. (Rosyad, 2025), which emphasizes an individual's ability to set goals, monitor their behavior, and evaluate the results of their actions. However, ghaflah cannot be equated with self-awareness or self-regulation. Those psychological concepts explain the mechanisms of awareness and behavior control, whereas ghaflah has a more specific normative foundation, namely the relationship between humans and God, moral responsibility, and the orientation of the afterlife. So, psychology serves as a tool to explain mechanisms related to negligence, while the Qur'an provides a value framework regarding the direction of that awareness.

This finding is important because it expands the understanding of ghaflah from a moral-spiritual issue to a concept that can be discussed in relation to psychological processes without losing its theological character. Within this framework, ghaflah can be understood as a state when attention, awareness, and behavior are no longer aligned with the goals and values one believes in. This perspective lays the groundwork for understanding why certain digital phenomena can have interpretive relevance to ghaflah, even though they come from different social contexts and theories.

One important implication of the research findings is the issue of humans' ability to maintain focus on long-term goals when faced with urges that provide immediate gratification. This is especially evident in the interpretation of Q.S. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 1, which describes humans as being heedless and turning away even though accountability is drawing near. This meaning can be related to the concept of present bias, which is the tendency to place more weight on benefits or satisfaction gained now compared to benefits obtained in the future.

This relationship is strengthened by studies on executive function. (Zabidi, Jumat, & Majid, 2026) explaining that executive functions play a role in impulse control, goal

maintenance, cognitive flexibility, and decision-making. Thus, there is a conceptual alignment between the issue described in ghaflah and the psychological issue concerning the ability to maintain goals when an individual faces immediate stimuli or gratification. However, this study does not place ghaflah as an executive function disorder. The relationship between the two is interpretive: psychology explains the cognitive mechanisms that allow someone to neglect long-term goals, while the Qur'an provides a moral and spiritual dimension regarding the consequences of such neglect.

In the digital context, this relationship becomes increasingly important because the digital environment provides fast, repetitive, personal, and easily accessible stimuli. Features like infinite scrolling, notifications, content recommendations, and information updates can keep users' attention for a long time. Research on Zombie Scrolling Syndrome has started to appear in academic literature, but the concept is still relatively new. For example, a phenomenological study in 2025 used the term to describe prolonged and unconscious scrolling patterns among some Gen Z users. Therefore, in this research, ZSS is more appropriately seen as an illustrative phenomenon rather than a direct equivalent or form of ghaflah. More established terms like doomscrolling, compulsive scrolling, and problematic social media use can be used as supporting concepts when discussing digital behavior more broadly.

Findings regarding Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn [63]: 9 and Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]: 20 show that heedlessness doesn't always come from something inherently bad. Wealth, children, jewelry, and various worldly pleasures have a positive role in human life, but they can become a source of distraction when attachment to them shifts the main focus of life. Interpretation (Srinivasan & Aithal, 2026) shows that the issue emphasized by the Qur'an is not the existence of the world, but the position of the world when it becomes a goal that overrides the focus on God.

That perspective can be connected with Self-Determination Theory (Safitri, Nurmansyah, & Azid, 2025), especially regarding the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. Goals that are too focused on wealth, status, image, and external recognition can lead to different consequences compared to a more intrinsic orientation. (Anderl, Alsuhaymi, Heydarnia, Dhaene, & Nikolaienko, 2026) It also shows that an excessive materialistic orientation is related to various psychological well-being issues. Thus, the interpretive findings regarding attachment to the world can be understood more broadly as a matter of value hierarchy: something that was originally a means can turn into the center of life orientation.

Digital space expands this issue through the formation of image-conscious and social validation culture. Likes, followers, views, and comments can become indicators of social recognition that are available continuously. (Farhani, Taghavi, & Majeed, 2026) explaining through Social Comparison Theory that individuals have a tendency to compare themselves with others as part of the self-evaluation process. Research (Hua, Hu, Bai, & Crang, 2026) shows that using social media can be related to social comparison, perceptions about other people's lives, and self-evaluation.

The findings suggest that the flexing culture shouldn't be immediately labeled as 'ghaflah actualization.' A more accurate term is that this culture has an interpretive relevance to the dimension of ghaflah because both show the possibility of human attention shifting towards external symbols, social recognition, and temporary pleasures. With this

formulation, research can still connect the message of Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]: 20 to digital phenomena without erasing the epistemological differences between the Qur'anic concept and social psychology constructs.

Q.S. al-A'rāf [7]: 179 gives another perspective on negligence, which is the failure to use the heart, sight, and hearing to understand and take lessons. This finding shows that the issue of negligence is not only related to what humans pay attention to, but also to how humans use their capacity to process and evaluate information.

That dimension can be discussed in relation to Cognitive Load *Theory*. (Alwan, Nugroho, & Hidayat, 2026) explaining that human working memory has its limits, so an increase in information load can affect processing ability. (Aulia, Bestari, & Lestari, 2026) It also shows that information overload can make it hard for people to choose and evaluate information. In a digital environment marked by fast and simultaneous streams of information, this issue becomes even more relevant.

However, information overload is not the same as ghaflah. Cognitive Load Theory explains the limitations of our information processing mechanisms, while ghaflah describes a state of negligence in a spiritual and moral context. The intersection of the two actually becomes a conceptual contribution of this research. Ghaflah raises the normative question of what our ability to understand and receive information is used for, while cognitive psychology explains why this ability can be limited when faced with excessive stimuli. In this way, this study builds a connection between value dimensions and cognitive mechanisms without equating the two constructs.

Overall, the research findings show that the relationship between ghaflah and digital phenomena needs to be built through an epistemological bridge, not by equating terms. Ghaflah is a Qur'anic concept rooted in humans' relationship with God, an orientation towards the afterlife, moral responsibility, and the state of the heart. On the other hand, present bias, self-regulation, cognitive load, social comparison, and problematic smartphone use come from the psychology tradition, each with its own definitions, methods, and theoretical assumptions.

Therefore, the contribution of this research is not to prove that doomscrolling, smartphone addiction, or information overload is ghaflah, but rather to show that some characteristics of these behaviors can be understood through the framework of ghaflah. This bridge allows two academic traditions to complement each other: interpretation provides a normative framework regarding the direction of awareness and life goals, while psychology offers explanations about attention, motivation, self-regulation, decision-making, and behavior. This position also prevents the research from falling into two types of reductionism: reducing ghaflah to merely a psychological issue or turning all digital behavior into a moral-religious problem.

Based on the overall discussion, the novelty of this research lies in developing an integrative framework that connects Quranic interpretation, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and behavioral psychology to understand contemporary digital phenomena. Previous studies on ghaflah mostly focused on theological, moral, and spiritual dimensions, while research on digital behavior tends to use psychological constructs like self-control, behavioral addiction, distraction, cognitive load, and social comparison. This study brings these two areas together by taking digital phenomena as a new context to test the interpretative relevance of the concept of ghaflah.

Theoretically, this approach contributes to the development of Islamic psychology studies by showing that Qur'anic concepts can be discussed alongside psychological theories without having to be forced into identical psychological constructs. Self-awareness helps explain the dimension of consciousness; self-regulation explains behavior control; present bias and executive function explain the conflict between immediate gratification and long-term goals; Cognitive Load Theory explains the limitations of information processing; while Social Comparison Theory helps explain orientation towards social recognition. All of these perspectives then gain a normative orientation through the concept of ghaflah, which places human awareness in relation to God and life's purpose.

These theoretical implications also show that responding to digital issues isn't enough just by limiting technology use. The perspective of ghaflah draws attention to the quality of human awareness and orientation when using technology. Because of this, *zikr*, *muḥāsabah*, strengthening the focus on the hereafter, controlling one's desires, and using reason critically can be seen as Qur'anic values relevant to enhancing self-awareness and self-regulation. However, this connection should be viewed as a conceptual implication, not as empirical proof that certain practices directly boost specific psychological functions.

So, this study offers the understanding that digital challenges aren't just about technology, but rather about the relationship between technology, attention, motivation, self-regulation, value orientation, and human awareness. Technology can be either a productive tool or a source of distraction, depending on how individuals manage their attention and place it within the hierarchy of life goals. In this framework, ghaflah provides a Qur'anic perspective for understanding the risk of losing orientation, while psychology offers conceptual tools to explain the mechanisms involved. Combining the two is the main contribution of this study in understanding human life amid digital transformation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the concept of ghaflah in the Qur'an is a multidimensional concept that includes theological, spiritual, moral, and psychological dimensions, and it has strong relevance to various phenomena of digital technology use in contemporary society. Through a thematic tafsir approach, the study found that ghaflah is not only understood as negligence towards Allah and the afterlife, but is also related to decreased self-awareness, self-regulation, attention control, and increased addictive behaviors due to digital distractions like Zombie Scrolling Syndrome, gadget addiction, information overload, flexing culture, and social validation seeking. These findings show that digital technology is not the main cause of ghaflah, but rather a factor that reinforces human psychological tendencies when not balanced with self-control and spiritual awareness. Therefore, this study implies that Qur'anic values, such as *dhikr*, *muḥāsabah*, strengthening the focus on the hereafter, self-control, and critical use of reason, can be used as a foundation for building digital literacy, character education, guidance and counseling services, and mental health development based on Islamic values. However, this study still has limitations because it uses a literature-based approach, so the analysis is conceptual and has not yet been supported by empirical data on digital media users' behavior. Besides that, the study only focused on the concept of ghaflah and hasn't really integrated it more broadly with other Qur'anic concepts or various psychological approaches. So, it's suggested that future research use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods to empirically examine the

relationship between ghaflah, digital media use, self-regulation, and mental health, while also developing a psycho-spiritual intervention model based on Qur'anic values that can be applied in education, counseling, or promoting a healthy, wise, and ethical digital culture.

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