

Procrastination in the Quranic Perspective: A Comparative Study of Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Munir in Dialogue with Temporal Motivation Theory

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Abstract

Procrastination is a universal behavioral phenomenon defined as the voluntary and irrational delay of intended action despite awareness of its negative consequences. While contemporary psychology has produced robust theoretical frameworks to explain this phenomenon, most approaches remain confined to cognitive and behavioral dimensions, overlooking the moral and spiritual layers embedded in religious traditions. This article investigates how the Quran constructs the concept of procrastination through a comparative thematic analysis of Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab and Tafsir Al-Munir by Wahbah al-Zuhaili, and examines the convergences and divergences between these Quranic constructions and Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT) developed by Piers Steel. A qualitative library research method with a thematic-comparative exegetical approach was employed. Primary data consisted of Quranic verses thematically related to procrastinatory behavior, analyzed through the interpretive lenses of both tafsir works. The findings reveal that while the Quran does not deploy the modern psychological term procrastination, it captures its essential features through the concepts of al-taswif (deliberate deferral of righteous acts), al-kasl (motivational inertia), and al-ghaflah (spiritual-cognitive negligence). The antitheses of these concepts appear in the imperative forms of musaraah (urgent forward movement) and fastabiqul khairat (competitive pursuit of goodness). Comparatively, Tafsir Al-Misbah foregrounds contextual-psychological and ethical readings, while Tafsir Al-Munir emphasizes normative-theological and consequentialist framings. Dialogue with TMT reveals significant structural parallels on the mechanics of delay, impulsiveness, and diminished value perception, while the Quranic perspective extends these into dimensions of spiritual accountability, transcendental motivation, and temporal ontology grounded in faith. The article concludes by proposing an integrative self-improvement model that synthesizes behavioral-cognitive strategies from TMT with the spiritual-regulatory principles derived from Quranic exegesis.

Keywords: Procrastination, Quran, Tafsir Al-Misbah, Tafsir Al-Munir, Temporal Motivation Theory, self-improvement, Islamic psychology.

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INTRODUCTION

Procrastination occupies a peculiar position in the landscape of human behavior. Universally recognized, behaviorally documented, and psychologically theorized, it refers to the intentional yet counterproductive delay of actions that individuals recognize as necessary and important. Steel (2007) offers the canonical psychological definition of procrastination as the voluntary delay of an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay. This definition encodes three foundational features: the voluntary character of the delay, the irrationality of choosing a worse outcome, and the persistent gap between intention and action. Over decades of empirical research, procrastination has been linked to declining academic performance, occupational underachievement, deteriorating mental health, and compromised quality of life across diverse populations.

One of the most comprehensive psychological accounts of procrastination is offered by Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT), formulated by Piers Steel and Cornelius J. König. TMT synthesizes multiple earlier theories into a unified motivational equation in which a person's utility to act is determined by the interaction of four variables. Expectancy refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to successfully complete a task. Value indicates the attractiveness, significance, or intrinsic worth ascribed to the task. Impulsiveness captures the individual's susceptibility to distraction and preference for immediate gratification. Delay reflects the temporal distance between the present moment and the point at which outcomes are received or deadlines fall due. When expectancy and value are diminished while impulsiveness and delay are heightened, procrastination becomes the predictable behavioral consequence (Steel & König, 2006; Steel, 2007).

Despite its considerable explanatory power, TMT operates predominantly within the rational-cognitive paradigm. Its motivational equation is modeled on the logic of behavioral economics and does not account for the moral, spiritual, or transcendental dimensions of human motivation. For a significant proportion of the global population, especially within religious traditions, the regulation of behavior and time is deeply interwoven with spiritual convictions and ethical imperatives that lie outside the purview of secular psychological theory. This limitation opens a productive space for interdisciplinary dialogue between contemporary psychological frameworks and the moral and behavioral prescriptions found in sacred texts.

Within Islam, time is treated not merely as a resource to be managed but as an ontological endowment of the highest moral significance. The Quran addresses the mismanagement of time and the postponement of virtuous action through several thematic clusters. The term *al-taswif*, rooted in the Arabic word *sawfa* (meaning soon or later), captures the habitual deferral of righteous deeds and repentance. *Al-kasl* denotes motivational weakness, spiritual listlessness, and a loss of inner drive. *Al-ghaflah* refers to cognitive and spiritual negligence, a condition of inattentiveness to one's higher purpose and ultimate accountability. Against these tendencies, the Quran sets the imperatives of *musaraah* (hastening toward good) and *fastabiqul khairat* (competing earnestly in goodness), constructing a normative framework that functions as a Quranic antithesis to procrastination (Shihab, 2002; al-Zuhaili, 1991).

Two contemporary exegetical works are especially suited to investigate this Quranic framework. *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab, the foremost Indonesian Quranic

scholar, is characterized by its *adabi ijtimaci* approach, which foregrounds the social, contextual, and ethical dimensions of Quranic interpretation. Shihab consistently draws connections between Quranic teachings and contemporary psychological and social phenomena, making his work an ideal lens for examining procrastination through Islamic discourse. *Tafsir Al-Munir* by Syrian scholar Wahbah al-Zuhaili offers a comprehensive approach integrating linguistic, jurisprudential, rational, and societal dimensions. Al-Zuhaili's meticulous attention to normative consequences and legal-ethical obligations complements Shihab's more contextual orientation, and together these two works constitute a rich comparative basis for exploring the Quranic construction of procrastination.

Existing scholarship has investigated procrastination from the perspectives of educational psychology (Ferrari et al., 1995), behavioral medicine (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013), organizational behavior (Wang & Zong, 2023), and Islamic counseling (Saputra et al., 2024). Thematic studies of time management in the Quran have appeared (Yuniati & Nugroho, 2025), as have interdisciplinary models of Quranic self-regulation applied to digital procrastination (Adzima & Saputra, 2024). However, no study has specifically examined the thematic-comparative construction of procrastination across *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir Al-Munir*, nor has any prior work systematically dialogued this comparative Quranic framework with TMT for the purpose of constructing an integrative self-improvement model. This article addresses that gap.

Accordingly, this study is guided by three research questions. First, how do *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir Al-Munir* construct and interpret the concept and causes of procrastination as reflected in Quranic verses? Second, what prevention and remediation model does the Quran offer against procrastination through these two interpretive works? Third, where do the Quranic constructions of procrastination converge with and diverge from Temporal Motivation Theory, and how can this dialogue inform an integrative self-improvement framework?

METHOD

This study employs qualitative library research as its foundational methodology. Library research in Islamic and Quranic scholarship refers to a systematic process of gathering, examining, and interpreting textual data from primary and secondary sources in order to construct conceptual and analytical frameworks that address the research problem. No fieldwork, experimentation, or empirical data collection was undertaken, as the inquiry is directed at textual, conceptual, and interpretive material rather than at behavioral observations of specific populations.

The primary data sources consist of three categories. First, the Quranic text itself, with reference to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs translation for contextual clarity. Second, the complete volumes of *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab (Shihab, 2002) and *Tafsir Al-Munir fi al-Aqidah wa al-Syariah wa al-Manhaj* by Wahbah al-Zuhaili (al-Zuhaili, 1991), which serve as the principal interpretive lenses through which Quranic verses on procrastination are read and analyzed. Third, the foundational works in which Steel's

Temporal Motivation Theory is formulated, particularly Steel (2007) and Steel and König (2006), which provide the psychological framework for interdisciplinary dialogue.

Secondary data include academic journal articles, theses, dissertations, and monographs related to procrastination research, Islamic psychology, Quranic time management, self-regulation, and comparative tafsir methodology. Classical Arabic lexical resources were also consulted, particularly al-Mujam al-Mufahras li Alfaz al-Quran al-Karim by Muhammad Fuad Abd al-Baqi and Mujam Maqayis al-Lughah by Ibn Faris, to trace the semantic genealogy of key Quranic terms associated with procrastination.

Data collection proceeded through documentation and systematic literary review. Key Quranic terms were identified and traced across the entire Quranic corpus using lexical indices. Verses containing the terms al-taswif, al-kasl, al-ghaflah, musaraah, and fastabiq, along with semantically related expressions, were gathered and organized thematically. The interpretations offered by Shihab and al-Zuhaili for each relevant verse were then extracted, categorized, and placed in comparative juxtaposition.

The analytical method integrates thematic exegesis with comparative and dialogical analysis. Thematic exegesis (tafsir maudhui) involves gathering all Quranic verses pertaining to a specific conceptual theme, reading them in mutual relation rather than in isolation, and synthesizing a holistic Quranic position on the theme (al-Farmawi, 1977). Comparative exegesis (tafsir muqaran) then introduces the contrast between Shihab's and al-Zuhaili's interpretive orientations, identifying points of convergence, divergence, and complementarity. The dialogical phase brings the synthesized Quranic framework into structured conversation with the four dimensions of TMT, seeking not to reduce one framework to the other but to achieve a mutually enriching interdisciplinary synthesis suitable for constructing a self-improvement model.

The analysis proceeds through three stages. The descriptive stage maps and explains the concept of procrastination, the principles of thematic-comparative exegesis, and the structure of TMT. The interpretive-comparative stage reads Quranic verses through Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Munir to construct the Quranic framework of procrastination. The analytical-dialogical stage places this Quranic framework in structured dialogue with Steel's theory to identify points of convergence and divergence, yielding an integrative and holistic model of self-improvement.

RESULTS

The Quranic Vocabulary of Procrastination

The Quran does not employ any single term that directly corresponds to the modern psychological concept of procrastination. Rather, the phenomenon is captured across three primary conceptual clusters, each representing a distinct but interrelated dimension of the delay phenomenon. These clusters are al-taswif, al-kasl, and al-ghaflah. Their antitheses, which constitute the Quranic prescription against procrastination, are expressed through musaraah and fastabiqul khairat.

Al-Taswif and the Anatomy of Deferral

Etymologically, al-taswif derives from the Arabic root sawwafa, related to the particle sawfa, which functions as a future-tense marker in Arabic and carries the connotation of indefinite postponement (Ibn Faris, 1979; Ibn Manzur, 1990). Its semantic field encompasses the habitual practice of pushing virtuous actions, obligations, and repentance into an unspecified future, often on the assumption that adequate time remains available. This semantic character makes al-taswif the most direct Quranic analogue to the psychological concept of procrastination.

Three Quranic passages are most closely associated with this concept. Surah al-Nisa 4.47 addresses those who have been given the Scripture and urges them to believe before divine consequences arrive. The verse constructs an urgent temporal boundary, a before-and-after structure that frames inaction as morally perilous rather than merely inefficient. Tafsir Al-Misbah reads this verse through an ethical-contextual lens, emphasizing that the warning targets a deliberate and conscious withholding of response to a truth already accessible. Al-Zuhaili's Tafsir Al-Munir situates the verse within a theological-juridical framework, underscoring the normative obligation to respond to divine guidance without delay and the severity of transgression that persistent deferral represents (Shihab, 2002, Vol. 2, p. 464; al-Zuhaili, 1991, Vol. 5, interpretation of Q. 4.47).

Surah al-Munafiqun 63.10 presents what this study designates as the ultimate procrastination narrative. The verse depicts a person who, upon being confronted with death, pleads for even a brief reprieve so that they might give in charity and join the ranks of the righteous. The divine response denies this request entirely, affirming that God does not delay the soul when its appointed time has arrived. The phrase lawla akhkhartani ila ajalin qarib (would that You might defer me for a brief while) encodes the quintessential structure of procrastination: the recognition of a valued act, the persistent deferral of its execution, and the desperate yet futile petition for more time at the moment when time has conclusively expired. Shihab interprets this scene as a warning against treating opportunities for righteous action as inexhaustible, foregrounding the ethical urgency of present action over anticipated future readiness. Al-Zuhaili frames it as a normative lesson about the absolute finality of divine determination and the catastrophic consequences of neglecting charitable obligations during one's lifetime (Shihab, 2002, Vol. 14; al-Zuhaili, 1991, interpretation of Q. 63.10-11).

Surah al-Anfal 8.48 describes the machinations of the adversarial force that adorns wrongdoing, instills false confidence, and subsequently abandons its allies at the moment of reckoning. While this verse does not explicitly address al-taswif, it illuminates the psychological mechanisms that enable and sustain deferral. The illusion of safety, the distortion of moral self-assessment, and the false promise of continued opportunity all function to suppress urgency. Both Shihab and al-Zuhaili acknowledge the manipulative logic at work, with Shihab emphasizing the psychological dynamics of false reassurance and al-Zuhaili situating the betrayal within a systematic theological account of deception and moral culpability. The intersection of this verse with the procrastination literature is best understood as functional rather than lexical: it illuminates why individuals persist in deferral even when the costs are known.

Al-Kasl and the Motivational Dimension of Procrastination

The second Quranic term in the procrastination cluster is al-kasl, derived from the root kasila, meaning to be sluggish, listless, or deficient in will and energy (Ibn Faris, 1979). Classical lexicographers identify al-kasl as the semantic antonym of himmah (aspiration and vigor) and najash (swift purposeful movement). The term appears in the Quran in its plural form kusala in two key verses: Surah al-Nisa 4.142 and Surah al-Tawbah 9.54.

Surah al-Nisa 4.142 characterizes the hypocrites as those who, when they rise for prayer, do so in a state of kusala, seeking only to be seen by people, and remembering God only minimally. The triadic structure of the verse is analytically significant. Motivational inertia (kusala) is linked to performative religiosity (riya, meaning showing off) and to the atrophied quality of spiritual remembrance. This configuration reveals that al-kasl in the Quranic frame is not primarily a physiological phenomenon but a spiritual-motivational one rooted in the absence of genuine conviction, internalized value, and intrinsic orientation toward the divine. Performing without inner engagement, acting for social recognition rather than spiritual purpose, and maintaining only the barest formal compliance with religious duty all characterize the procrastinatory logic embedded in this form of kasl.

Shihab's reading of this verse foregrounds the psychological disconnection between outward religious behavior and genuine inner motivation. In Al-Misbah, kusala is interpreted as evidence that the worshipper does not perceive the intrinsic value of prayer as a spiritual encounter; rather, they perform it under social compulsion and abandon it whenever that compulsion is removed. Al-Zuhaili's reading in Al-Munir is more theologically structured, linking the laziness of prayer directly to the systemic characteristic of hypocrisy as a disposition that corrupts all acts of worship from their foundations. Both interpretations converge on the conclusion that kasl is not incidental to the condition of spiritual hypocrisy but is constitutive of it: where inner orientation is absent, motivational energy will always be borrowed, fragile, and contingent on external pressures (Shihab, 2002, Vol. 2, pp. 162-163; al-Zuhaili, 1991, Vol. 3, p. 283).

Surah al-Tawbah 9.54 reinforces this reading by pairing kusala in prayer with karihun (reluctance or aversion) in charitable giving. The verse states that God does not accept the expenditures of the hypocrites because of their rejection of God and His messenger, their lazy approach to prayer, and their reluctant giving. The conjunction of kasl and kurh reveals that the Quranic concept of motivational inertia extends across domains of worship and covers any act of moral or religious obligation that is undertaken without genuine inner commitment. Shihab emphasizes that the quality of the inner motivational source determines the spiritual quality of the outward act. Al-Zuhaili frames this as a systematic causal sequence in which rejection of faith corrupts the foundations of all worship, making every subsequent act deficient regardless of its external form.

Al-Ghaflah and Spiritual-Cognitive Negligence

Al-ghaflah occupies the third conceptual layer of the Quranic procrastination framework. Derived from the root ghafala, it connotes a state of inattentiveness, heedlessness, or spiritual-cognitive disengagement from one's purpose, obligations, and ultimate accountability (al-

Raghib al-Asfahani, 2009). Unlike al-taswif, which involves a deliberate decision to defer, or al-kasl, which describes motivational weakness, al-ghaflah captures the more diffuse condition of not attending to the moral and spiritual stakes of one's choices at all. The term appears in multiple Quranic verses, with Surah al-Araf 7.179, Surah Yunus 10.7, Surah al-Zukhruf 43.36, and Surah al-Kahf 18.28 being the most analytically significant.

Surah al-Araf 7.179 describes those who possess hearts, eyes, and ears yet do not use them to comprehend, see, or hear the signs of God, likening them to livestock but regarding them as even more astray, and identifying them as al-ghafilun. The three-organ structure of the verse is analytically compelling. The heart (qalb) is the organ of understanding and moral evaluation; the eyes and ears are the organs of receiving and processing information about the world. The verse does not say these capacities are absent, but rather that they are not directed toward their divinely intended purposes. In the context of procrastination, this structure illuminates what might be termed directional negligence: the individual possesses sufficient cognitive resources but consistently fails to deploy them in service of their moral and spiritual telos. Shihab draws attention to the distinctively human capacity for reflective understanding and argues that its failure to operate represents a regression below the level of mere instinctual life. Al-Zuhaili frames the verse as establishing the basis of moral accountability: these capacities were given as instruments of guidance, and their disuse is therefore a matter of culpable negligence, not mere limitation.

Surah Yunus 10.7 introduces a second source of ghaflah, namely worldly satisfaction and the absence of eschatological expectation. The verse characterizes those who do not hope for the meeting with God, who are content with worldly life and feel at ease within it, and who are heedless of divine signs. Here negligence arises not from cognitive failure per se but from value displacement: when the world is treated as the final horizon, transcendental goals lose their motivational purchase. Both Shihab and al-Zuhaili identify the connection between the absence of hope in the hereafter and the normalizing of present comfort as the mechanism through which spiritual urgency is systematically extinguished (Shihab, 2002; al-Zuhaili, 1991, Vol. 10, p. 230).

Quranic Antitheses and the Prescription against Procrastination

The Quran does not merely diagnose procrastinatory tendencies; it prescribes their antidotes through a set of imperative moral injunctions. Three verses are foundational to the Quranic prescription against procrastination.

Surah Ali Imran 3.133 commands, Hasten toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who are mindful of God. The imperative verb sariu (hasten) addresses the entire believing community, framing urgency in the pursuit of forgiveness and paradise not as an individual psychological strategy but as a collective religious obligation. Both Shihab and al-Zuhaili treat this imperative as a direct counterpoint to all forms of delay, with the breadth of paradise serving as a motivational amplifier that renders present action the only rational response.

Surah al-Inshirah 94.7-8 offers the most practically applicable Quranic instruction for ongoing productive engagement. The verses direct that when one task is completed,

immediately take up another, and orient all effort toward one's Lord. This principle of seamless transition from one commitment to the next constitutes a Quranic analogue to modern behavioral techniques such as time-blocking and task-chaining, where the completion of one unit of work serves as the immediate cue for beginning the next, eliminating the idle interval during which procrastination typically inserts itself.

Surah al-Baqarah 2.148 and Surah al-Maidah 5.48 both carry the injunction *fastabiqul khairat*, meaning compete earnestly in acts of goodness. This framing introduces the dimension of constructive urgency into the Quranic ethical lexicon. Rather than addressing procrastination through avoidance-focused prohibitions alone, the Quran supplements these with a positive aspirational framework that redefines temporal orientation around the productive pursuit of virtue.

Comparative Interpretive Orientations

A systematic comparison of the interpretive approaches of Shihab and al-Zuhaili reveals consistent patterns of emphasis that reflect the distinctive methodological orientations of the two tafsir works. These differences are not contradictions but complementary emphases that together produce a richer and more comprehensive Quranic account of procrastination than either work would yield in isolation.

Shihab's *Tafsir Al-Misbah* consistently prioritizes the contextual and psychological dimensions of procrastination. In his readings of verses on *al-taswif*, Shihab foregrounds the phenomenology of moral self-deception: the way individuals convince themselves that deferral is reasonable, that conditions will improve, and that their future selves will possess greater resolve. His engagement with *al-kasl* emphasizes the disconnection between outward compliance and genuine motivational involvement, highlighting the social and psychological dynamics of performing without inner conviction. On *al-ghaflah*, Shihab tends toward an experiential-psychological account of how human consciousness loses contact with its guiding purposes and becomes absorbed in immediate concerns. This psychological sensitivity makes *Al-Misbah* especially valuable for connecting Quranic ethics to contemporary behavioral science, creating natural bridges between Quranic moral reasoning and the motivational analysis offered by TMT.

Al-Zuhaili's *Tafsir Al-Munir* approaches these same concepts through a more systematically normative lens. His readings of *al-taswif* verses place the deferral of obligatory acts within a jurisprudential framework of moral accountability, treating procrastination not merely as a psychological failure but as a culpable violation of divine-human obligation. His treatment of *al-kasl* frames laziness in worship as a symptomatic manifestation of deeper theological deficiency. On *al-ghaflah*, al-Zuhaili's reading is governed by a logic of normative consequence, in which negligence is defined by the gap between available guidance and willful disuse of the capacity to receive it. This normative-theological orientation gives *Al-Munir* a distinctive moral gravity that complements the psychological sensitivity of *Al-Misbah*.

Despite these differences in emphasis, both tafsir works converge on several foundational conclusions. Both affirm that procrastinatory tendencies involve a fundamental failure of inner motivational orientation, not merely a problem of time scheduling. Both treat the

urgency of present action as a moral and spiritual imperative, not merely a practical recommendation. Both link the tendency to defer to a distorted relationship with the value and purpose of divinely mandated acts. And both articulate the antitheses of procrastination not merely as behavioral prescriptions but as expressions of the fundamental human vocation of purposeful stewardship of time in the service of God.

DISCUSSION

Dialogue between the Quranic Framework and Temporal Motivation Theory

The structured dialogue between the Quranic construction of procrastination and TMT yields a set of convergences, divergences, and productive complementarities. These are organized below according to the four dimensions of Steel's motivational equation.

Convergences on Expectancy and Value

TMT's Expectancy dimension holds that procrastination increases when individuals hold low self-efficacy beliefs. When a person doubts their capacity to succeed, the expected utility of attempting the task falls, and avoidance becomes the psychologically rational response (Steel, 2007; Steel & König, 2006). This parallels the Quranic account of al-kasl, wherein the absence of deep conviction in the reality and significance of divine reward diminishes the motivational impetus to engage in worship and righteous action. The spiritual analog to low self-efficacy in the Quranic framework is tawakkal, the confident reliance on God's assistance and support, which functions as the antithesis of spiritual self-doubt. Where TMT prescribes strategies to strengthen self-efficacy through mastery experiences and goal-setting, the Quran prescribes the cultivation of tawakkal as the foundational motivational resource that sustains action across the entire range of human endeavor.

The Value dimension of TMT parallels the Quranic concept of niyyah (intention) and the internalization of spiritual purpose. In TMT, tasks with low perceived intrinsic or extrinsic value are systematically deferred as individuals allocate their effort toward activities that promise more immediate or more certain returns. The Quranic account of al-kasl, particularly as expressed in the kusala verses, reveals that when acts of worship are perceived as intrinsically valueless or are motivated entirely by social display rather than genuine religious conviction, motivational energy is fragile and context-dependent. Al-Misbah's reading of these verses points directly to the insufficiency of externally motivated religious compliance, arguing that lasting motivational sustainability requires genuine internalization of the spiritual worth of each act of worship. Al-Munir reinforces this by positioning kasl as a symptom of value corruption at the level of faith itself.

Convergences on Impulsiveness and Delay

The Impulsiveness dimension of TMT captures the individual's susceptibility to distraction and their preference for immediately gratifying stimuli over commitments with deferred returns. This dimension finds its most direct Quranic parallel in al-ghaflah, particularly as described in Surah al-Kahf 18:28, where following one's desires and allowing attention to be captured by the ornamentation of worldly life is identified as the mechanism

of spiritual negligence. The concept of *lahw* (distraction) in Surah al-Munafiqun 63.9, where wealth and children are warned against as potential sources of spiritual distraction, also maps directly onto the TMT account of impulsiveness as the tendency to be pulled away from important long-term commitments by the attractive immediacy of lesser pursuits.

The Delay dimension of TMT holds that the motivational utility of any act decreases as its outcomes become more temporally remote, a phenomenon known as delay discounting (Steel & König, 2006; Zentall, 2021). The Quranic account of *al-taswif* maps onto this dimension in a profound way. The phenomenon of *panjang al-amal* (extended wishful thinking), in which a person imagines the future as an indefinitely open space and defers necessary action into an always-retreating tomorrow, constitutes a Quranic description of delay discounting in its spiritual and moral form. The procrastinator who defers repentance and righteous action does so partly because the stakes, whether divine reward or spiritual self-transformation, appear temporally remote and thus cognitively discounted relative to present comforts. Surah al-Munafiqun 63.10's depiction of the ultimate procrastinator who discovers, only at the moment of death, the full motivational force of the acts they had always deferred, represents the extreme logical conclusion of temporal self-deception.

Divergences and Complementarities

While the structural parallels between the Quranic framework and TMT are substantial, critical divergences distinguish the two frameworks in ways that are analytically productive rather than merely oppositional. Three principal divergences merit sustained attention.

First, TMT operates within a purely immanent motivational framework in which the value of any outcome is determined by individual subjective assessment and the consequences experienced within ordinary temporal experience. The Quran, by contrast, situates the value of action within a transcendent framework that encompasses both the present world and the hereafter. An act that offers no immediate reward may nonetheless carry the highest Quranic value if it is oriented toward the pleasure of God and contributes to eschatological flourishing. This means that the Quranic framework fundamentally expands the temporal horizon within which motivational value is calculated, incorporating a dimension that TMT's utility equation structurally cannot accommodate. Faith functions, in the Quranic account, as a mechanism for extending the agent's temporal perspective beyond the biases of delay discounting, by making outcomes in the hereafter psychologically present and motivationally potent.

Second, TMT's framework is explicitly value-neutral regarding the content of the goals being pursued. The theory predicts the probability of action for any valued outcome, regardless of whether that outcome is morally significant, trivial, or harmful. The Quranic framework, by contrast, is constitutively normative. It does not merely predict whether action will occur but evaluates whether the action ought to occur, toward what purpose it is directed, and whether the agent's motivational hierarchy reflects the proper ordering of human priorities. This normative dimension means that the Quranic treatment of procrastination is not concerned merely with the psychology of delay but with the ethics of temporal stewardship.

Third, the Quranic framework introduces the concept of *muraqabah*, the consciousness of God's continuous witnessing of all human actions, as a mechanism that fundamentally alters the motivational landscape. *Muraqabah* creates a form of constant non-external accountability that cannot be simulated by any TMT-derived intervention. Where TMT-based strategies for reducing impulsiveness and strengthening commitment operate through environmental design, deadline manipulation, and behavioral self-monitoring, the Quranic framework adds a spiritual regulatory layer in which every moment carries the full weight of divine presence. This layer does not replace behavioral strategies but transforms their motivational foundation, grounding action in a mode of temporal consciousness that is irreducible to the calculus of individual utility.

An Integrative Self-Improvement Model

The dialogue between the Quranic framework and TMT yields the foundation for an integrative self-improvement model that draws on the complementary strengths of both traditions. This model addresses the four dimensions of TMT while incorporating the distinctive spiritual-regulatory resources of the Quranic tradition. The model is presented not as an empirically tested intervention protocol but as a conceptual framework for holistic self-improvement grounded in both psychological and Islamic principles.

Addressing Expectancy through Tawakkal and Mastery. The expectancy dimension of procrastination is addressed in the integrative model through the combination of *tawakkal* (trusting reliance on God) with behavioral self-efficacy strategies. *Tawakkal* does not counsel passivity but rather active engagement accompanied by the confident belief that God supports the sincere striver. This spiritual orientation is combined with cognitive-behavioral techniques such as progressive goal decomposition, self-efficacy modeling through observation of others' success, and the deliberate celebration of incremental achievements. The psychological mechanism of strengthening expectancy through mastery experiences (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) is given a spiritual anchor in the Quranic promise that God does not allow the labor of any diligent person to be lost.

Addressing Value through Niyyah and Purposeful Meaning-Making. The value dimension is addressed through the cultivated practice of *niyyah*, the deliberate setting and renewal of intention before any action. In the Islamic tradition, the act of *niyyah* does not simply label an action as religious; it orients the entire motivational system of the agent toward God and transforms even mundane activities into potential acts of worship. Combined with the Ryan and Deci (2000) framework of self-determination theory, which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as the foundations of intrinsic motivation, the Quranic emphasis on *niyyah* enriches the value dimension by adding a transcendental layer that secular self-determination theory cannot access. Practically, this means that procrastination interventions should include not only strategies for increasing the perceived relevance or enjoyability of tasks but also guided reflective practices for connecting daily responsibilities to higher spiritual purposes.

Addressing Impulsiveness through Muraqabah and Environmental Design. The impulsiveness dimension is addressed through the integration of *muraqabah*, the continuous

consciousness of divine witnessing, with behavioral strategies for reducing the availability and salience of distractions. Muraqabah differs fundamentally from external monitoring systems because it is not subject to the limitations of surveillance technology or the unreliability of social accountability partners; it is, in principle, omnipresent and cannot be circumvented. Combined with environmental structuring techniques such as digital distraction management, designated work environments, and scheduled breaks, muraqabah provides the deepest possible motivational foundation for sustained attentional regulation. The Quranic practice of *zikr* (remembrance of God) is also prescribed as a regular mechanism for returning fragmented attention to its proper orientation, functioning as a spiritual analog to mindfulness-based attentional regulation practices.

Addressing Delay through Zuhd al-Ajal and Deadline Management. The delay dimension is addressed through the cultivation of what this study terms *zuhd al-ajal*, the existential sobriety produced by the Quranic awareness of the unpredictability of one's remaining time. The Quran's repeated emphasis on the proximity of death and the finality of one's appointed term functions to compress the perceived distance between present inaction and ultimate consequence, thus counteracting the temporal discounting mechanism that underlies procrastination. Combined with practical deadline-management strategies such as intermediate milestone creation, reverse scheduling, and public commitment, the Quranic awareness of temporal finitude provides the deepest possible motivation for present action. The Quranic principle of *fa idha faraghta fanshab*, meaning when you have completed one task immediately take up another, offers both a behavioral and a spiritual prescription for eliminating the idle intervals during which procrastination typically takes hold.

The integrative model is further structured around three complementary spiritual-regulatory practices that the Quranic tradition prescribes as systematic mechanisms for overcoming procrastinatory tendencies. *Muhasabah*, or regular self-accounting, involves the periodic deliberate evaluation of one's use of time and the correspondence between one's actions and one's stated values and commitments. It functions as a spiritually grounded form of self-monitoring that goes beyond behavioral tracking to include an evaluation of motivational quality and moral integrity. *Mujahada al-nafs*, the disciplined striving against the appetitive self, provides the volitional framework for overcoming the resistance and discomfort that routinely accompany the initiation of challenging tasks. *Tazkiyatun nafs*, the purification and development of the soul through sustained spiritual practice, addresses the deepest level at which procrastinatory tendencies are rooted, namely the disordered relationship between the self and its genuine priorities.

Implications and Limitations

This study carries several significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it demonstrates that the Quran constructs a sophisticated and internally coherent account of procrastinatory behavior that operates on cognitive, behavioral, spiritual, and eschatological levels simultaneously. This account both corroborates key elements of contemporary psychological theory and extends them in ways that secular frameworks structurally cannot replicate. For Islamic psychology specifically, the study establishes a systematic taxonomy of

Quranic procrastination concepts, al-taswif, al-kasl, and al-ghaflah, along with their antitheses, musaraah and fastabiquil khairat, that can serve as the foundation for empirically grounded Islamic psychological research on self-regulation and temporal motivation.

For practitioners, the integrative self-improvement model proposed in this study offers a framework that Muslim educators, counselors, and organizational leaders can adapt for context-specific intervention programs. The synthesis of TMT-derived behavioral strategies with Quranic spiritual practices provides an approach that resonates with both the psychological and religious dimensions of Muslim clients' experience, potentially enhancing intervention effectiveness and cultural relevance. Future research might empirically test components of this integrative model with specific populations such as university students, professionals, or religious learners, using both self-report and behavioral measures to evaluate the comparative effects of secular behavioral strategies, Islamic spiritual practices, and their combination on procrastination reduction and productive self-regulation.

Several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. The analysis is restricted to two tafsir works, selected on the basis of their representativeness and contemporary influence. The inclusion of classical works such as Tafsir al-Tabari or Tafsir Ibn Kathir, or of other contemporary works such as Fi Zilalil Quran, would provide additional comparative depth. The dialogue with TMT does not encompass other prominent psychological theories of procrastination, including those advanced by Pychyl (2013) and Ferrari (1995), and future work should extend the interdisciplinary dialogue to encompass these frameworks. Additionally, the self-improvement model proposed here is conceptual rather than operationally developed; its practical application awaits empirical specification through future research. Finally, the study's reliance on library sources and textual analysis means that it cannot capture the dynamic, situational, and interpersonal dimensions of procrastination as it actually manifests in lived experience.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the Quran constructs a rich, multi-layered, and internally coherent account of procrastination through the conceptual vocabulary of al-taswif, al-kasl, and al-ghaflah, and their antitheses of musaraah and fastabiquil khairat. The comparative analysis of Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Munir reveals that while both works converge on the fundamental diagnosis of procrastination as a failure of inner motivational orientation rooted in spiritual and moral deficiencies, they differ in their interpretive emphases. Shihab's Al-Misbah foregrounds the psychological-contextual dimensions of motivational inertia, conscience, and moral self-deception, producing an analysis that naturally interfaces with contemporary psychological discourse. Al-Zuhaili's Al-Munir prioritizes the normative-theological dimensions of obligation, accountability, and systematic moral failure, producing a framework of greater jurisprudential and ethical gravity.

The dialogue with Temporal Motivation Theory establishes significant structural parallels between the Quranic framework and Steel's motivational equation, particularly on the mechanics of delay, impulsiveness, and diminished value perception. At the same time, the Quranic framework extends the analysis of procrastination in several critical respects that

TMT cannot accommodate. By incorporating transcendental motivation, eschatological time consciousness, the normativity of human temporal stewardship, and the spiritual regulatory practices of muraqabah, muhasabah, and tazkiyatun nafs, the Quranic tradition offers resources for self-improvement that go significantly deeper than behavioral and cognitive strategies alone.

The integrative self-improvement model proposed in this study synthesizes these complementary resources into a framework that addresses all four dimensions of TMT while adding the spiritual regulatory layer that the Quranic tradition uniquely provides. The prevention and overcoming of procrastination, in this integrative understanding, is not merely a matter of behavioral efficiency or motivational engineering but a dimension of the broader human task of moral and spiritual development, lived out within a consciousness of time as a divine trust and accountability as a sacred responsibility.

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