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REIMAGINING MUSLIM YOUTH'S ATTITUDES
TOWARDS DIGITAL PIRACY IN THE CONTEXT OF
ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ETHICSHafizatun Najahah Adnan^{1*}, Nasiibah Ramli²¹Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia hafizahnajahah@gmail.com <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0004-4815>²Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia nasiibah@utm.my <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8146-7651>

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Abstract:

Digital piracy is a growing concern in the intellectual property (IP) landscape, particularly among university students, who often represent the largest demographic of digital content consumers. While legal and technical solutions have been implemented, ethical and spiritual interventions remain underutilized. This study examines the impact of Tasawwuf education, an Islamic discipline focused on spiritual purification and ethical self-governance, on shaping the attitudes of Muslim university students toward digital piracy. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the study extends the model by incorporating religious elements, such as al-Istiqamah (steadfastness) and al-Sukun (inner peace), derived from Tasawwuf Akhlāqi. A quantitative survey was conducted involving 93 Muslim students from public Malaysian universities. Results show that religiosity, when operationalised through Tasawwuf education, significantly predicts ethical awareness and behavioural restraint toward digital piracy. The findings suggest that integrating Tasawwuf-based moral pedagogy into formal Islamic education can contribute towards ethical IP conduct in the digital age. This paper recommends a fiqh-based ethical model for IP awareness among Muslim youth and calls for fatwa institutions and higher education bodies to incorporate spiritually anchored digital ethics into curricula and awareness campaigns.

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Keywords:

Digital Piracy, Fiqh, Fatwa, Higher Education, Islamic Ethics, Intellectual Property, Muslim Youth Tasawwuf, Theory of Planned Behaviour.



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Introduction

The accelerated global technological diffusion has augmented information sharing, concurrently fueling the global rise of digital piracy, posing severe ethical, economic, and security risks. Despite advancements in legal frameworks, technological safeguards, and awareness campaigns, digital piracy persists, driven by factors such as accessibility, social norms, and individual attitudes (Fakude & Kritzinger, 2022; Rekha & Pillai, 2014). Research indicates that while ethical awareness and institutional compliance can influence behaviour, they are insufficient to fully deter piracy, as individuals often act contrary to their moral understanding in real-world scenarios (Hati et al., 2020). The need for a deeper, intrinsic approach to ethical cultivation, one that transcends external enforcement and fosters internal moral resilience, is accentuated.

Islamic ethics, derived from the principles of Tasawwuf and the rich tradition of Islamic jurisprudence, provides a comprehensive framework for addressing moral dilemmas, including those arising in the digital realm. In this context, the integration of Tasawwuf *Akhlāqī* into digital ethics education offers a promising avenue for addressing the moral dimensions in protecting intellectual property. Rooted in the Islamic tradition of *ihsān*, Tasawwuf emphasises spiritual refinement and ethical self-discipline, making it a compelling framework for nurturing ethical resistance to digital piracy (Mannopov et al., 2025). Tasawwuf *Akhlāqī* provides a holistic approach that aligns moral development with spiritual striving and remembrance, fostering a sense of accountability that is both personal and transcendent (Mannopov et al., 2025). Unlike conventional deterrence models, which rely on fear of punishment or external controls, inadvertently stimulating users to circumvent these controls actively, this approach seeks to cultivate a moral compass through educational and moral interventions that reshape intrinsic human values (Arslan et al., 2025; Aydın, 2025).

Intellectual property is not explicitly mentioned in the Quran, Sunnah, and the Schools of Jurisprudence; therefore, analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) is applied according to Shariah rules on property, contracts, and public interest (Barqawi & Abu Baker, 2025; Naim, 2021). While Islamic jurisprudence has historically debated the legitimacy of intellectual property, contemporary scholars increasingly advocate for frameworks that integrate Shariah principles with modern IP laws to ensure justice and fairness (Ishola et al., 2018; Naim, 2020, 2021). By focusing on the role of Tasawwuf in shaping ethical attitudes, this study contributes to how

Islamic values can guide responsible digital behaviour, offering practical insights for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders in fostering a digitally ethical Muslim youth.

Literature Review

Digital Piracy And Ip Enforcement In Muslim Societies

The prevalence of digital piracy, illegal content dissemination, and forgery has posed worldwide challenges, including to Muslim societies, as these acts seem trivial, much like a misdemeanour, yet violate the rights of others and devastate economies, businesses, and consumers. The Business Software Alliance revealed that 37 per cent of the software in the world is unauthorised, with an estimated monetary value of \$46.3 billion (BSA Global Software Survey, 2018). Malaysia itself ranked fifth out of eight Asian countries, with a 59% video piracy occurrence rate, with women at the helm in shaping these piracy trends through their propensity for K-dramas (Azmi, 2024).

The global commerce of spurious goods tends to take place in regions with unenforceable intellectual property laws (OECD, 2025). Reports on the foregone revenue of industries in Malaysia have raised critical concerns and led to government intervention in addressing this predicament. Over the years, laws were revised in 2022, with adjustments made to the Copyright Act 1987, including the adoption of new penalties and a firm regulatory framework. Leveraging the power of local media, campaigns against the exploitation of copyrighted content are advocated (OECD, 2025), alongside restrictions on access to illegal content on piracy websites.

Even though such approaches have proven effective in curbing access to illegal sites, they remain inadequate in confronting Malaysian digital piracy attitudes, as this habit of pirating is persistent. The enforcement of the law has prompted adaptation in piracy consumers' behaviour, demonstrating their persistence by switching to other platforms ("2024 Cap Consumer Survey Shows Increase in Piracy on Social Media and Messaging Platforms in Asia Pacific," 2024). Thereupon, integrating efficacious religious responsibility is advocated as a cohesive effort in Muslim societies through contemporary fatwas and Islamic spirituality on digital piracy.

Islamic Ethics, Fiqh and IP

Intellectual property is recognised as a distinct form of property known as al-māl within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence. The term al-māl applies only to that which has value by which it can be sold at a price, and compensation is liable from anyone who destroys it, even when the value is small and it is not something that is usually discarded, for instance, a worthless coin (al-fals) and the like (al-Suyūṭī, 1983). According to Dar al-Ifta al-Missriyyah (*Huqūq Al-Milkiyyah Al-Fikriyyah Wa Al-'Alāmāt Al-Tijāriyyah Al-Aṣliyyah*, 2007), rights to intellectual property are legally and customarily established with the same rulings that apply to ownership, by which they are exclusive rights held solely by the owner. This Islamic law and fatwa clearly align with the concept of hurmah (sanctity) of property in the Qur'an and Hadith, which is unequivocally recognised. It is mentioned in the Qur'an: "O believers! Do not devour one another's wealth illegally, but rather trade by mutual consent" (*The Quran*, n.d.-a). The obligation to protect the property rights of fellow Muslims, together with a stern prohibition

against their violation, is firmly affirmed by the Apostle of Allah (ﷺ), who emphasised the mutual inviolability of Muslims' property ("Kitāb Al-Buyū", n.d.).

The Islamic ethic of Tasawwuf acknowledges the ethical dilemmas of intellectual property through the values of spiritual integrity and moral akhlaq, as one of its fundamental principles is to adorn oneself with good etiquette. Tasawwuf is about pursuing all moral characters and avoiding all immoral characters (al-Qushayrī, 1989). The commands to embody Islamic ethics in digital settings are affirmed in Sharia through the call to do good and uphold noble character. The Qur'an states that "Indeed, Allah commands justice, grace, as well as generosity to close relatives. He forbids indecency, wickedness, and aggression" (*The Quran*, n.d.-b).

Both Islamic law and ethics exert significant influence and are vital in the contemporary digital landscape of Muslim-majority countries. The legal recognition of digital and intellectual property rights from a Sharia perspective may serve as the basis for rulings through the issuance of fatwas in the Muslim community. Once a fatwa is gazetted, it is binding upon the Islamic community in a state of Malaysia (Nasohah, 2005). In contrast, Islamic ethics underscores the shaping of a strong internal moral foundation to address ethical challenges of digital behaviour through education and the dissemination of Islamic teachings. It is demonstrated that Sharia constitutes a potentially effective framework for the ethical governance of digital behaviour, particularly in addressing the complexities of information ethics while providing coherent theological guidance (Nasohah, 2005) (Abdallah, 2010).

The Role of Tasawwuf in Ethical Behaviour

The significance of introducing Tasawwuf education as a form of ethical instruction is well established in contemporary studies (Ilahiyah & Suharyat, 2023; Polat, 2017). Researcher asserts that Tasawwuf emphasises spirituality and ethics, suggesting that spiritual perspectives serve as common ground among Islamic confessions rather than focusing solely on the normative dimensions of Islam (Polat, 2017). Tasawwuf represents a branch of Islamic religiosity that necessitates inner (spiritual) transformation, particularly in relation to the attainment of *ma'rifatullāh* (knowledge of Allah) and the purification of moral character (al Ghazali, 2018)(Sa'ari, 2002). The application of Tasawwuf teachings through ideal exemplars provides students with a constructive model for developing awareness in their interactions with others and fostering respectful attitudes towards humanity (Noorthaibah & Julaiha, 2020). Accordingly, Tasawwuf education offers a personalised and human-centred pedagogical approach and contributes to the prevention of violence through the integration of humanistic values (Haq, 2019).

Specifically, in this study, Tasawwuf education is conceptualised as a dimension of intellectual religiosity grounded in the principles of *al-Istiqāmah* and *al-Sukūn*, derived from Imam al-Ghazālī's theories, which are regarded as central to the essence of Tasawwuf (al-Ghazālī, 2014). *Al-Istiqāmah* is characterised by perseverance in four domains: steadfastness in worship and obedience, restraint from sin (*al-Ma'siyah*), avoidance of futile and excessive worldly pursuits, and endurance in the face of trials and tribulations (al-Ghazālī, 2006). Through *al-Istiqāmah*, a Muslim remains firm in adherence to God's commands and refrains from engaging in digital piracy, which contravenes Islamic law, in order to preserve faith. In contrast, *al-Sukūn* denotes a state of calmness and composure, encompassing kindness and consideration towards others, and the willingness to accommodate their needs without

imposing one's own desires, provided such actions do not conflict with Sharia (al-Ghazālī, 2014). *Al-Sukūn* further signifies a condition of inner tranquillity and self-restraint (*As Sukun*, n.d.). Thus, by embodying *al-Sukūn*, the cognitive and behavioural dispositions of Muslim students may be shaped towards the ethical use of digital technology.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to examine the contribution of ethical education to Muslim university students' attitudes towards digital piracy. A sample of 105 Muslim students from public universities in Malaysia was obtained through a survey as the primary data source, in addition to references from the Qur'an, hadiths of the Apostle (ﷺ), and classical turāth literature. Furthermore, articles, journals, and other relevant materials on Islamic ethics and technology were incorporated as secondary sources. The study employs content validity evaluation based on expert judgment. Internal consistency is subsequently assessed using Cronbach's alpha as a statistical measure. The research utilises five main constructs derived from the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Islamic religiosity framework, namely devotion to Tasawwuf education, attitude, perceived behavioural control, subjective norm, intention, as well as al-Istiḳāmah and al-Sukūn.

Results and Analysis

Devotion to Tasawwuf Education is positively associated with Tasawwuf religiosity in the context of digital piracy. However, the results indicate that the relationship between Devotion to Tasawwuf Education and al-Istiḳāmah and al-Sukūn (as dimensions of Tasawwuf religiosity) is significantly negative ($\beta = -0.460$, $t = 4.443$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that al-Istiḳāmah and al-Sukūn, representing Tasawwuf religiosity towards digital piracy, tend to weaken as participants' devotion to Tasawwuf education increases.

This study further demonstrates a positive relationship between Tasawwuf religiosity and individuals' attitudes opposing digital piracy. Specifically, al-Istiḳāmah and al-Sukūn, as representations of Tasawwuf religiosity, are positively associated with attitudes toward digital piracy. The validity of this relationship is confirmed ($\beta = 0.458$, $t = 4.969$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that stronger spiritual orientation contributes to more ethical attitudes. Additionally, al-Istiḳāmah and al-Sukūn are positively associated with perceived behavioural control ($\beta = 0.393$, $t = 3.641$, $p < 0.001$) and subjective norms ($\beta = 0.423$, $t = 3.928$, $p < 0.001$). These significant positive relationships suggest that a well-developed spiritual disposition enhances individuals' perceived control over their behaviour and positively shapes their perception of social expectations.

Attitude toward digital piracy is also found to be associated with intention; however, the relationship is significantly negative ($\beta = -0.366$, $t = 3.555$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that more negative (i.e., ethically unfavourable) attitudes toward digital piracy are linked to a reduced intention to engage in such behaviour. It was hypothesised that perceived behavioural control would be positively associated with intention. However, the findings reveal no significant effect of perceived behavioural control on intention toward digital piracy ($\beta = 0.036$, $t = 0.258$, $p = 0.398$). Similarly, the proposed positive relationship between subjective norm and intention is not supported, as no significant association is found ($\beta = -0.098$, $t = 0.782$, $p = 0.217$). These

results suggest that perceived social pressure and behavioural control do not significantly influence individuals' intention to engage in digital piracy.

Overall, this study affirms the pivotal role of Tasawwuf education in shaping behavioural determinants, particularly within religious and cultural contexts. The inclusion of religiosity within the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is supported, indicating that extending the TPB framework is both theoretically and structurally justified. This extended model offers a promising approach to enhancing the understanding of how to counter digital piracy attitudes in a Muslim-majority context, highlighting the importance of integrating the intellectual religiosity of Tasawwuf education into behavioural theories.

Discussion

Theoretical Framing and Islamic Ethical Foundations

Digital piracy is defined as the illegal replication of digital data, such as music and software, using computer systems (Gunter, 2009). The propensity to commit digital piracy is heavily influenced by an individual's self-control, neutralisation techniques, personal attitudes, beliefs, and broader socio-cultural factors (Sahni et al., 2017). To mitigate this, Tasawwuf education offers a spiritual reinforcement approach that fosters the moral consciousness required for consistent ethical behaviour in digital spaces. While Islamic law (Sharia) establishes the external framework governing lawful (halal) and unlawful (haram) acts, Tasawwuf strengthens the internal ethical intent behind legal compliance, creating a harmonious balance between outward law and inward spirituality. Derived from the spiritual theories (al-Ghazālī, 2014), the core essence of Tasawwuf education manifests as al-Istiqāmah (steadfastness) and al-Sukūn (tranquility), both of which stem from nurtured personal religiosity. Furthermore, these Tasawwuf principles align directly with the objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah, particularly in safeguarding wealth (hifz al-mal) and protecting intellect (hifz al-'aql). This spiritual discipline cultivates ethical responsibility in utilising digital resources, thereby fulfilling these foundational Maqasid goals.

The Impact of Tasawwuf on the Theory of Planned Behaviour

Integrating Tasawwuf into Islamic higher education can encourage students to forego the immediate pleasure of pirating original content. Specifically, embedding the value of al-Istiqāmah fosters consideration for creators, while nurturing al-Sukūn promotes self-respect and respect for intellectual property. Consequently, students acquire religious knowledge while embodying the ethical virtues necessary to exercise self-control over digital piracy.

This study demonstrates that al-Istiqāmah and al-Sukūn, as distinct dimensions of Tasawwuf religiosity, positively influence both Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) and Subjective Norms. This stands in contrast to the findings of (Arli et al., 2017), who noted that intrinsic religiosity had no significant effect on PBC toward digital piracy. The current findings suggest that Tasawwuf religiosity enhances an individual's ability to regulate their digital actions, resist unethical piracy practices, and develop sharper social insights through an affiliation with religious virtues. Furthermore, the significance of religiosity within the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) framework aligns with (Casidy et al., 2017) reinforce the premise that religious teachings positively shape attitudes toward digital piracy. The observed efficacy of

religiosity on piracy attitudes is highly consistent with prior literature (Arli et al., 2017; Casidy et al., 2016; Tomczyk, 2019).

Reconciling Attitude, Social Pressure, and Behavioral Intentions

A key finding of this study is the significant negative relationship between Attitude Toward Digital Piracy and Intention. This indicates that the behavioural intentions of individuals with strong religious affiliations cannot be accurately predicted by their explicit attitudes toward digital piracy. This outcome directly clashes with classic studies by (Cronan & Al-Rafee, 2008) and (Sunardi & Hartono, 2024) which assert that positive attitudes inherently enhance intentions to pirate digital goods. To explain this discrepancy, this study proposes that these Muslim university students remain unaffected by the typical external factors that shape explicit attitudes; instead, their behavioural choices are driven by implicit attitudes deeply embedded within their cultural and religious contexts.

Additionally, Intention toward Digital Piracy was found to be uninfluenced by Perceived Behavioural Control and Subjective Norms. This, too, contradicts mainstream TPB literature, which typically demonstrates that increased behavioural control (Cronan & Al-Rafee, 2008; Pham et al., 2020; Yoon, 2011) and strong subjective norms (Ajzen, 1985; Aleassa et al., 2011; Peace et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2009) elevate piracy intentions. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that Muslim university students actively choose to disengage from digital piracy even when execution is easy. Their religious affiliation proves more persuasive than their perceived behavioural ease, and their final intentions are governed by internal moral attitudes rather than social pressure from peers. The final confirmed conceptual model, combining Tasawwuf religiosity and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

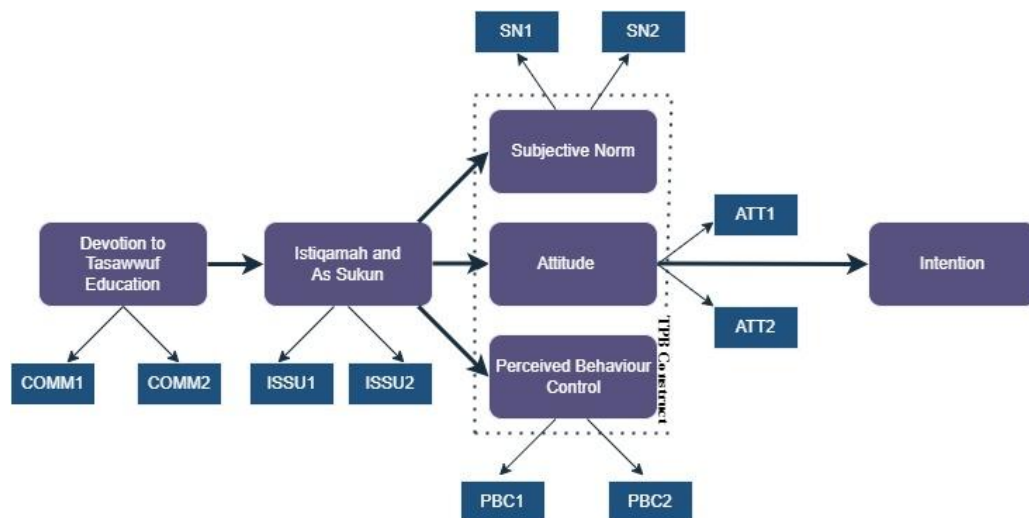


Figure 1: Confirmed Conceptual Model

Methodological Considerations and the Over Justification Effect

This study revealed that Devotion to Tasawwuf Education is adversely correlated with al-Istiqāmah and al-Sukūn. While (Rorer & Widiger, 1983) caution that failures in construct

validation can stem from a wide range of systemic issues, measurement error is unlikely to be the cause here, given that validity and reliability tests were confirmed and the data displayed no skewness or outliers. Instead, this study suggests that socio-psychological factors may have skewed participant responses due to the over-justification effect, wherein external rewards inadvertently diminish intrinsic motivation (Newman & Layton, 1984). In this context, religious practices heavily driven by social approval or external expectations may weaken the link between personal faith and genuine spiritual fulfilment.

Implications for Fatwa and Policy

The integration of Tasawwuf-based ethics, alongside established fatwa rulings, offers a holistic Islamic approach to addressing contemporary moral challenges related to digital conduct and intellectual property. Study (Al-Rafee & Rouibah, 2010) applied fatwa injunctions as a form of religious guidance to deter digital piracy behaviour and reported a significant reduction in the intention to engage in such activities. The incorporation of Tasawwuf principles, particularly *al-Istiqāmah* and *al-Sukūn*, may further strengthen ethical reasoning and shape the internal moral dispositions underpinning legal compliance.

Within the Malaysian context, where approximately 61.3 per cent of the population is Muslim and predominantly adheres to the Sunni school of thought (*USCIRF – Annual Report 2023:Malaysia*, 2023), the development of Sharia-compliant public education modules on intellectual property protection grounded in Islamic law and ethics could facilitate the translation of religious rulings into practical guidance for everyday digital behaviour. Such initiatives may be operationalised through pedagogical frameworks, public awareness campaigns, and digital literacy programmes that promote ethical digital practices and support digital piracy prevention strategies. These efforts would provide both internal (moral-spiritual) and external (regulatory) guidance within a coherent religious narrative.

Furthermore, government agencies such as Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), and public higher education institutions (IPTA) play a critical role in fostering collaboration and advancing the implementation of these Islamic legal and ethical frameworks. JAKIM can provide theological endorsement and ensure alignment with Sharia principles, while MCMC can reinforce regulatory mechanisms that reflect ethical responsibility in digital environments. Concurrently, IPTA can develop academic curricula and student-centred programmes grounded in Islamic digital ethics, thereby promoting awareness of intellectual property rights and contributing to digital piracy prevention. Such integrated efforts can equip Muslim communities with practical guidance for engaging responsibly within the digital landscape.

Conclusion

Countless anti-piracy approaches have been performed from the technology and operation, as well as legal enforcement, to address piracy and other forms of copyright theft (Pham et al., 2020; Sudler, 2013; Yoon, 2011). Existing studies consistently indicate that regulatory interventions alone are insufficient to transform individuals' attitudes and behaviours towards digital piracy, highlighting the need for complementary ethical and religious approaches. Islamic jurisprudence provides a strong normative foundation for protecting intellectual property through principles of justice, trustworthiness, and the prohibition of unlawful

appropriation; however, the practical integration of these principles into digital behaviour remains fragmented. Integrating Islamic ethics of Tasawwuf into digital ethics, as well as issuing a fatwa on the permissibility of pirating digital content under Islamic law, may strengthen strategies to curb digital piracy, as lasting ethical behaviour stems from self-discipline rooted in moral conscience. A holistic approach, integrating Islamic legal principles, Tasawwuf-based spiritual education, public policy, and digital literacy initiatives, offers a more sustainable pathway for cultivating responsible digital citizenship among Muslim communities. Future research should further examine how Islamic spirituality and ethical education influence digital behaviour and evaluate collaborative strategies involving religious institutions, policymakers, and educational institutions to strengthen intellectual property protection in the digital era.

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