THE CONCEPT OF HYPOCRISY IN THE QURAN AND ITS COMPARISON WITH CARL GUSTAV JUNG'S THEORY OF PERSONA

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of hypocrisy (nifaq) in the Qur'an and compares it with Carl Gustav Jung's theory of persona in analytical psychology. The main objective is to identify the similarities and differences between hypocrisy as a moral–spiritual phenomenon and persona as an adaptive psychological mechanism. Employing a qualitative approach through library research and comparative textual analysis, this study draws on primary sources such as the Qur'an, classical and modern exegeses, and Jung's works. The findings reveal that both nifaq and persona describe a dissonance between one's inner and outer selves. However, they differ fundamentally in nature: nifaq in the Qur'an is morally destructive, rooted in deceit and ill intent, whereas persona in Jung's framework is adaptive, becoming harmful only when the individual loses authenticity. The study underscores the importance of honesty, self-reflection, and the integration of spiritual and social identities in developing authentic human character in the modern era.

Keywords: hypocrisy, nifaq, persona, Qur'an, Carl Gustav Jung, analytical psychology

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas konsep kemunafikan (nifaq) dalam Al-Qur'an dan membandingkannya dengan teori persona Carl Gustav Jung dalam psikologi analitik. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami kesamaan dan perbedaan antara kemunafikan sebagai fenomena moral-spiritual dan persona sebagai mekanisme psikologis adaptif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka dan analisis komparatif terhadap sumber-sumber primer, seperti Al-Qur'an, kitab tafsir klasik dan modern, serta karya Jung. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa baik konsep nifaq maupun persona sama-sama menggambarkan ketidaksesuaian antara diri batin dan diri lahir. Namun, keduanya memiliki perbedaan fundamental: nifaq dalam Al-Qur'an bersifat destruktif secara moral karena didasarkan pada kebohongan dan niat jahat, sedangkan persona dalam teori Jung bersifat adaptif dan hanya menjadi negatif ketika individu kehilangan keaslian dirinya. Temuan ini

menegaskan pentingnya kejujuran, refleksi diri, dan keseimbangan antara identitas sosial dan spiritual dalam membentuk karakter manusia yang autentik di era modern.

Kata kunci*: kemunafikan, nifaq, persona, Al-Qur'an, Carl Gustav Jung, psikologi analitik*

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, studies on morality and human psychology have become increasingly crucial due to the complexity of emerging social phenomena, including hypocrisy in both spiritual and social dimensions of life. Modern humanity faces multifaceted moral challenges caused by shifting values and norms, where hypocrisy often arises as a response to social pressure and the demand for conformity. As Admizal (2018) explains, hypocrisy can cause significant problems both at the individual and societal levels. Individuals exhibiting hypocritical behavior frequently mask their true selves, making it difficult for others to identify their real intentions (Azka & Supriadi, 2020). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of hypocrisy is essential not only for moral awareness but also for maintaining psychological and social harmony.

Modernity has reshaped moral structures within society. According to Novikov et al (2021), the position of the individual and their moral responsibility toward society have become increasingly vital in modern civil life. As individuals transition from legal consciousness to moral consciousness, they are expected to internalize moral values in their daily actions. Khlyzova et al (2020) emphasize that education is the foundation for fostering moral understanding in society, while Mahmud et al (2024) assert that moral education plays a pivotal role in building character and combating hypocrisy by instilling honesty and integrity. Hence, moral and psychological education serve as fundamental instruments in preventing the rise of hypocrisy in contemporary society.

From a sociological standpoint, Durkheim's theory positions morality as a product of social interaction between the individual and the collective conscience (Musa, 2024). In a society that is becoming more individualistic, the risk of moral decline increases when people prioritize self-interest over social responsibility. Koval et al (2021) argue that the transformation of value hierarchies in modern societies has generated new norms that may contradict traditional moral frameworks, increasing the likelihood of hypocritical behavior. Furthermore, Higuchi (2021) notes that moral communication in the digital age has been distorted by media dynamics that often obscure truth, while Ge (2023) highlights how social media pressures Generation Z to conform to contradictory moral standards. These factors create fertile ground for hypocrisy to flourish in contemporary contexts.

Within Islamic theology, hypocrisy (*nifaq*) is a deeply moral and spiritual issue. The Qur'an describes *nifaq* as a discrepancy between what individuals profess and what resides in their hearts. As articulated in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:8–9), there are people who claim to believe yet harbor disbelief, attempting to deceive God and believers alike. Rahmi & Mubarok (2025) identify two types of *nifaq*: *nifaq al-i'tiqadi* (related to belief) and *nifaq al-'amali* (related to actions), both of which reveal moral inconsistency. Suriadi

(2022) links this to the concept of prophetic intelligence, emphasizing spiritual health as a shield against hypocrisy. Thus, *nifaq* represents not only moral corruption but also spiritual dissonance that threatens the integrity of faith.

In contrast, Carl Gustav Jung's theory of persona provides a psychological framework for understanding similar dynamics within the self. Jung defines persona as the "mask" individuals wear to adapt to societal expectations and to present a desirable image to others. While persona serves an adaptive purpose, it can also conceal the authentic self, creating internal conflict when the external image diverges from one's true identity. This notion aligns conceptually with the Qur'anic depiction of hypocrisy, where external righteousness hides inner moral decay. Jung (1953; 1968) warns that excessive identification with the persona can lead to psychological imbalance—a condition reminiscent of the moral fragmentation described in the Qur'an regarding the hypocrites.

The relationship between nifaq and persona opens an interdisciplinary dialogue between Qur'anic exegesis and analytical psychology. Studies such as those by Akzam & Yaacob (2024) and Septiyani et al (2025) demonstrate that combining religious interpretation with psychological theory enriches our understanding of human character. Aisyah (2025) argues that collaborative interpretive methodologies, integrating classical and modern perspectives, can yield more socially relevant readings of the Qur'an. Similarly, Mabrur & Abas (2023) propose a hermeneutic approach that situates scriptural interpretation within psychological and social contexts. This synthesis offers an ethical-psychological framework that deepens our comprehension of selfhood, morality, and sincerity.

Although numerous studies have explored hypocrisy from theological and psychological viewpoints, few have attempted to compare the Qur'anic concept of *nifaq* with Jung's persona. This research fills that gap by employing a comparative textual analysis to examine both concepts. By integrating classical Islamic exegesis with Jungian psychology, the study aims to uncover the intersections and divergences between the moral-spiritual and psychological dimensions of hypocrisy. Such an interdisciplinary approach not only broadens the discourse on human character but also contributes to the development of a holistic understanding of integrity and authenticity in contemporary moral psychology.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a comparative textual analysis design. The primary focus was to examine and compare the concept of hypocrisy (nifaq) in the Qur'an and Carl Gustav Jung's theory of persona through an interpretive and analytical reading of primary and secondary texts. Data were collected using the library research method, which involved gathering materials from classical and modern Qur'anic commentaries, linguistic dictionaries, academic books, journal articles, and works related to Jungian psychology. The main sources included the Qur'an and major exegeses such as Tafsir al-Maraghi, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, and Fi Zhilal al-Qur'an, while Jung's foundational works—The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious and Two

Essays on Analytical Psychology—served as the psychological reference points. This method allowed the researcher to explore how the Qur'anic terminology and moral characteristics of hypocrisy align or diverge from Jung's conceptualization of the persona as a psychological mask.

Data analysis was conducted through content and comparative analysis techniques. First, the researcher identified key Qur'anic terms related to nifaq—analyzing their lexical patterns, grammatical forms, and contextual meanings in various verses—to uncover their moral and spiritual implications. This was followed by a thematic synthesis of Jung's theory of persona, emphasizing its structural components, such as ego-ideal, social expectations, and adaptive behavior. Subsequently, both frameworks were examined using a comparative analytical framework, aimed at identifying points of convergence (e.g., the duality between inner and outer self) and divergence (e.g., moral condemnation versus psychological adaptation). The results were interpreted hermeneutically to highlight the ethical and psychological dimensions of human character, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding that bridges Islamic theological ethics and analytical psychology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Lexical-Form Analysis of *Nifaq* in the Qur'an

A concordance-based reading shows that the lexeme cluster related to "hypocrite/hypocrisy" appears 37 times across multiple morphological patterns (Al-Baqi, 1987). The Qur'anic usage spans verb forms (*fi'il mâdî*), verbal nouns (*ism maṣdar*), and agentive nouns (*ism fâ'il*), with a dominant tendency toward plural (*jam'*) forms—indicating that the text frequently frames hypocrisy as a collective moral-spiritual phenomenon rather than a purely individual lapse. Reported surface forms include: نافقوا (2×; *fi'il mâdî*), النفاق (1×; *ism maṣdar*), نفاقا (2×; *ism maṣdar*), المنافقات (5×; *ism fâ'il*), المنافقون (7×; *ism fâ'il*), منافقون (1×; *ism fâ'il*), and المنافقين (19×; *ism fâ'il*). This distribution provides a descriptive baseline for subsequent thematic interpretation.

Etymologically, nafaqa carries the sense of exposing a contradiction between outward display and hidden reality (Munawwir, 1997). Semantically, the Qur'an codifies *nifaq* as a grave moral-spiritual disorder, dedicating an entire sūrah—al-Munāfiqūn—to its features and consequences. In contemporary definitional terms (e.g., KBBI), hypocrisy denotes professing loyalty or belief outwardly while inwardly denying it (Bahasa, 2016). The lexical evidence thus aligns with a conceptual core: the disjunction between appearance and intent, which becomes the pivot for the ethical and psychological readings that follow.

Thematic Synthesis of Hypocritical Traits in the Qur'an

A cross-verse thematic scan yields eight recurrent traits: (1) lying (Āl 'Imrān 3:167), (2) turning away from truth (al-Nisā' 4:61), (3) ostentatious worship (al-Nisā' 4:142), (4) fear of exposure (al-Tawbah 9:64), (5) sowing division among believers (al-Tawbah 9:107), (6) promoting vice and obstructing virtue (al-Tawbah 9:67), (7) foolishness/obtuseness to signs (al-Tawbah 9:126), and (8) arrogance (al-Munāfiqūn 63:8). Collectively, these markers sketch a pattern of cognitive-moral dissonance: hypocrites curate a favorable public image while strategically resisting commitments that would test sincerity.

From a discourse standpoint, these traits function as diagnostic indicators that the Qur'an invites readers to discern at both intrapersonal (self-scrutiny) and socio-communal levels (guarding communal integrity). The emphasis on plural forms and communal harm (e.g., division, obstruction of *ma'rūf*) underscores the social externalities of hypocrisy—why it is not merely a private vice but a threat to moral order.

Exegetical Insights: Uncertainty, Self-Interest, and Flight from Reality

Exegetical reflections (e.g., Shihab, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c) converge on epistemic and affective instability as the engine of hypocritical conduct: inner uncertainty of faith breeds instrumental lying and performative virtue. The well-known analogy between a consistent singer and a sporadic, uncommitted singer clarifies the habitual nature of sincerity: belief matures through repeated, coherent enactment, whereas hypocrisy thrives in intermittent, strategic displays.

Azka & Supriadi (2020) reinforce this picture with digital-thematic Qur'anic analysis, highlighting ambivalence toward tawḥīd and evasion of firm stances. Such ambivalence enables self-interested calculus—concealing faults, prioritizing gain, and normalizing deception as a coping strategy. Shihab's view that lying signals weakness—an inability to face costs of truth—frames hypocrisy as a flight from reality, sustained by fear and short-term utility rather than principled commitment.

Jung's Persona: Adaptive Masks, Structural Components, and Risks

In Jungian analytical psychology, persona designates the socially adaptive "mask" mediating self–society relations (Jung, 1953; 1968; Alwisol, 2004). Its sources include external normative demands and internal social ambitions (Olson & Hergenhahn, 2013; Stein, 1998), and its functions range from enabling smooth interaction to signaling role competence. Merchant (2020) articulates three structural components: ego-ideal (how one aspires to be), perceived expectations (what others demand), and regulatory awareness (what balances or neutralizes the first two). Properly calibrated, persona supports role-taking without eroding authenticity.

However, the model warns of over-identification: when individuals "become their masks," the adaptive façade ossifies into self-alienation (Merchant, 2020; Rahmawati, 2018). The psychological risk then mirrors a moral one: losing sight of the true self under the weight of external validation. This clarifies why persona, though value-neutral as an

adaptation, can drift toward distortion if not anchored by reflective self-knowledge and ethical self-regulation.

Comparative Analysis: Convergences and Divergences

1. Convergences

Both frameworks spotlight a surface–depth split: the Qur'anic *nifaq* condemns an outward performance that conceals inward opposition, while Jung's persona recognizes a socially presented self that can diverge from interior reality. Each acknowledges the impression-management dynamic, explaining why audiences may misread character from curated signals.

2. Divergences

Crucially, the normative valence differs. The Qur'an treats *nifaq* as a moral-spiritual pathology with communal consequences; it is intrinsically blameworthy because it is anchored in deceit and bad faith. Persona, by contrast, is a psychological mechanism that is adaptive by default and becomes problematic only when excessive or unreflective. Put differently: *nifaq* is condemnable duplicity, whereas persona is role-appropriate self-presentation that may slide into inauthenticity if it eclipses the self.

Modern Moral-Psychological Context and Media Dynamics

The interdisciplinary lens helps situate these findings within contemporary moral sociology. Modernity heightens individual moral responsibility (Novikov et al., 2021) and underscores education as a bulwark against duplicity (Khlyzova et al., 2020; Mahmud et al., 2024). Durkheimian insights (Musa, 2024) explain how collective conscience and social integration shape moral outcomes; shifting value hierarchies can legitimize new norms that dilute traditional restraints, creating incentives for strategic impression-management (Koval et al., 2021).

Digital media further complicates moral communication: anonymity, virality, and algorithmic pressures can blur truth claims (Higuchi, 2021). Generation Z's exposure to plural, often conflicting norm sets (Ge, 2023) intensifies role multiplicity and persona-switching. Within such environments, the Qur'anic warnings about performative virtue regain salience, while Jung's counsel against mask-identity fusion offers a psychological guardrail.

Expanding the Lens: Social Desirability as a Complementary Construct

The social desirability literature clarifies how people edit self-presentation to meet perceived standards: individuals tend to endorse socially acceptable responses, sometimes at the expense of accuracy (Oktapialdi et al., 2018; Puspatara et al., 2020). Methodologically, this predisposition can bias self-report data, reinforcing the importance of triangulating claims about sincerity or moral stance. Substantively, social desirability helps explain why adaptive persona can slide toward performative inauthenticity—and

why Qur'anic diagnostics of *nifaq* remain empirically relevant in contexts of status signaling and reputation management.

Integrative Implications

Taken together, the Qur'anic portrayal of *nifaq* and the Jungian account of persona converge on the need for alignment between the inner and outer self, yet they speak from different normative registers. The Qur'an provides a prescriptive ethical critique of duplicity with communal stakes, whereas Jung provides a descriptive-analytic account of role performance with psychological risks. In modern societies marked by media saturation and shifting norms, moral education (family, school, community) emerges as a vital counterweight—cultivating integrity, self-reflection, and role discernment so that adaptive persona does not degrade into hypocrisy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that hypocrisy represents a human condition characterized by a fundamental dissonance between outward appearance and inward intention. Both the Qur'anic concept of nifaq and Jung's theory of the persona illuminate this divide, emphasizing the gap between what is shown and what is truly felt or believed. The two frameworks share a focus on the duality of self-presentation; however, they differ in moral orientation. In the Qur'anic perspective, hypocrisy is a moral and spiritual corruption aimed at concealing evil intentions under the guise of virtue, thus carrying grave ethical consequences. By contrast, Jung's persona functions as a psychological adaptation that enables social interaction and conformity to norms, not inherently sinful but potentially harmful when it eclipses one's authentic self. Together, these perspectives reveal how both moral and psychological dimensions of human behavior converge on the need for sincerity and self-awareness.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations, particularly the scarcity of comprehensive literature integrating Qur'anic exegesis with Jungian analytical psychology. The limited interpretive depth restricts a fuller exploration of nifaq as discussed in classical and contemporary tafsir. Future research should therefore expand the comparative framework by incorporating a broader range of exegetical sources and deepening engagement with Jung's later analytical writings on selfhood and individuation. Such interdisciplinary expansion would enhance the intellectual rigor of this discourse and offer richer insights into the moral-psychological dynamics of authenticity, self-presentation, and ethical integrity in human life.

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