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THE RELEVANCE OF HUMAN NATURE IN ISLAM TO EDUCATION AND THE MODERN ERA

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Abstract

The concept of fitrah in Islam plays a fundamental role in understanding the nature of humanity. The Qur'an and Hadith affirm that every human being is born in a state of fitrah, a pure innate disposition oriented towards monotheism, truth-seeking, morality, and social harmony. However, contemporary challenges such as globalization, digitalization, and moral decline often divert human beings from this natural inclination. This study aims to analyze the Islamic concept of fitrah and its relevance to education and contemporary issues. This research employs a qualitative approach with library research as the main method. Primary sources include the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical works by scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Taymiyyah, while secondary sources consist of contemporary literature in Islamic education, Islamic psychology, and Sufism. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis and thematic synthesis to formulate an integrative conceptual framework. The findings indicate that fitrah embodies spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions that must be cultivated through education. Islamic education serves as the primary medium for actualizing fitrah, with the family, school, and society playing essential roles. In facing modern challenges, strengthening fitrah requires fitrah-based education, Islamic counseling, and practices of tazkiyatun nafs. This study concludes that a multidisciplinary integration of theology, education, Islamic psychology, and Sufism produces a conceptual framework of "fitrah-based education" that is highly relevant to addressing the challenges of globalization and the digital era.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of fitrah is one of the fundamental ideas in Islam that explains the essence of human creation. The Qur'an explicitly mentions this in Surah Ar-Rum: 30, which states that humans are created in a state of fitrah, which is a natural tendency towards truth and monotheism (Pranoto, Raharjo, Lutfiyah, et al., 2025). The Hadith of the Prophet also confirms that every child is born in a state of fitrah, and it is their parents who can make them Jewish, Christian, or Magian. Thus, fitrah is understood as a sacred innate potential that must be nurtured so that it develops in the right direction (Muna et al., 2024). A deep understanding of fitrah is very important, because it provides a solid foundation for Islamic education, character building, and civilization development (Usman et al., 2022).

However, contemporary social phenomena reveal an alarming crisis. The era of globalization and digitalization has brought about cultural transformations that are not always in line with spiritual values (Putri & Nurhuda, 2023). A report bystates that 212 million Indonesians, or around 77% of the population, are active internet users, with an average social media usage time of 3 hours and 18 minutes per day. This high intensity of digital media use also influences the social and spiritual behavior of the younger generation. (2022) reports that more than 30% of adolescents in Southeast Asia experience psychological pressure due to exposure to digital media, which has implications for an increase in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and deviant behavior. In Indonesia itself, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI, 2021) has noted an increase in cases of child abuse triggered by interactions on social media.

This situation shows that humans are facing serious threats in the form of moral degradation, hedonism, and a spiritual identity crisis. From an Islamic perspective, this situation can be understood as a deviation from human nature (Zaatariyah et al, 2023). Therefore, a conceptual study is needed to restore humans to their basic nature, especially through education and character building (Pranoto et al., 2026).

A number of previous studies have attempted to examine fitrah from various perspectives. (2021) emphasizes the importance of fitrah-based child education as a means of developing human innate potential. (Usman et al., 2022) explain that fitrah is not synonymous with John Locke's tabula rasa theory, but rather contains the innate potential to accept tawhid (Pranoto, Ikhrom, Raharjo, Junaedi, et al., 2025).emphasize the relevance of the concept of fitrah to the selection of Islamic education methods, whilelinks fitrah to philosophical discussions in contemporary Islamic education.goes further by linking fitrah and tazkiyatun nafs as a way of purifying modern humans from the influence of hedonism and materialism (Musonif et al., 2026).

However, these studies have limitations. First, the majority are still normative and descriptive in nature, so they have not produced a comprehensive cross-disciplinary conceptual synthesis. Second, most studies focus only on education, psychology, or Sufism separately, without integrating the three. Third, the relevance of fitrah to contemporary challenges such as globalization, digitalization, and moral crisis is still rarely explored in depth(Pranoto, Raharjo, Savana, et al., 2025).

Based on these gaps, this study attempts to present a comprehensive literature analysis of the concept of human nature in Islam by reviewing sources from the Qur'an, hadith, classical thought, and contemporary literature in the fields of philosophy, Islamic psychology, and Sufism. This study also emphasizes the relevance of fitrah to Islamic education and modern issues, thereby presenting a new conceptual framework that is more contextual (Pranoto, Assharofi, Savana, Nisa, et al., 2025).

Thus, the research question is: How does the concept of human nature in Islam relate to education and the challenges of the modern era. The objectives of this study are to: (1) describe the concept of human nature in Islam from the perspective of the Qur'an, hadith, and the thoughts of prominent figures; (2) analyze the relevance of human nature to Islamic education; and (3) examine how human nature can be the answer to the challenges of the modern era. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich Islamic scholarship related to the study of human nature with a multidisciplinary synthesis approach. Practically, this research can serve as a conceptual basis for the development of Islamic education curricula, Islamic counseling, and character building that are relevant to the needs of the modern generation (Pranoto, Ulfatussyarifah, Savana, Assharofi, et al., 2025).

METHOD

This study uses qualitative research with a library research approach. This approach was chosen because the research topic focuses on tracing, analyzing, and synthesizing the thoughts of scholars and intellectuals regarding the concept of human nature in Islam. Library research is relevant for examining normative concepts that are widely disseminated in primary and secondary sources, without the need to collect field data (Zed, 2008) (Creswell & Poth, 2018) (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

The data sources for this study consist of: Primary sources, namely the Qur'an, hadith, and the works of classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali's Ihya Ulum al-Din, the thoughts of Ibn Sina, and Ibn Taimiyah's views on fitrah. Secondary sources, in the form of contemporary literature in the fields of Islamic education, Islamic psychology, and Sufism. Examples include (Oktori, 2021) research on fitrah-based child education, (Usman et al., 2022) on fitrah as the potential for tawhid, (Hanifa & Maksum, 2022) on the relevance of fitrah to educational methods, and (Anbiya, 2023) who links fitrah with tazkiyatun nafs.

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. First, content analysis was used to extract the main ideas from both classical and contemporary literature (Yuwono & Nurhuda, 2024). This process involved identifying recurring themes, categories, and key concepts. Second, thematic synthesis, which involved connecting various findings from the literature into broad themes relevant to the research focus: (1) fitrah as an innate human potential, (2) its relevance to Islamic education, and (3) contemporary challenges that affect fitrah.

Through this approach, the research does not produce empirical data, but rather a conceptual framework about human nature in Islam (Nurhuda, 2024). This framework is constructed by integrating theological perspectives (the Qur'an and hadith), classical philosophy, Islamic psychology, Islamic education, and Sufism. Thus, the results of this research are expected to provide a more comprehensive theoretical basis for developing a contextual Islamic education model based on human nature in the modern era.

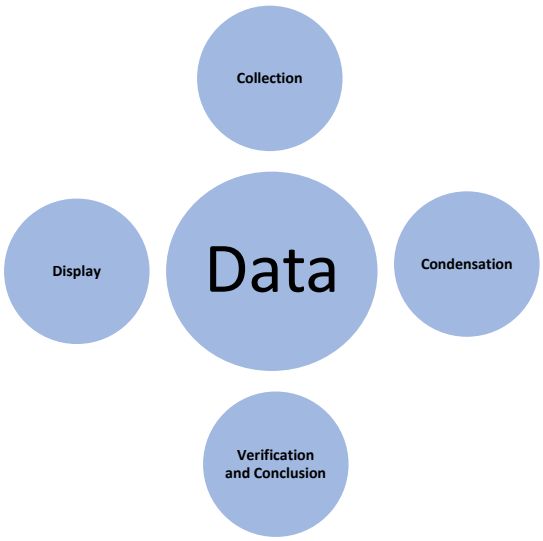


Figure 1. Research Procces

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Human Nature in the Perspective of Islam

The concept of fitrah in Islam affirms that humans are born with innate potential that is pure. This potential includes a spiritual tendency toward monotheism, an intellectual capacity to seek truth, and a moral orientation to distinguish between good and evil. This is confirmed in QS. Ar-Rum: 30, which states that Allah created humans according to His fitrah, as well as in the hadith of the Prophet, which states that every child is born in a state of fitrah. Thus, fitrah becomes the foundation of humanity that is natural and inherent in every individual (Shihab, 2013) (Kathir, 2017).

When compared to Western philosophical theory, the Islamic concept of fitrah differs fundamentally from John Locke's idea of tabula rasa. Locke argued that humans are born in a neutral state, like a blank slate that has not yet been filled with anything. According to this view, all human knowledge, behavior, and morality are the result of sensory experiences and education provided by the environment (Locke, 1979). This means that humans do not have an innate tendency toward good or evil, but are entirely determined by external influences.

On the contrary, Islam asserts that humans are not born in a neutral state, but already have an innate tendency toward truth and monotheism (Nurhuda & Azizah, 2022). The environment does play a major role, as explained in the hadith that parents can make their

children Jewish, Christian, or Magian. However, the role of the environment in Islam is not to "create" potential from scratch, but rather to direct or cover up the existing nature. Thus, nature in Islam is closer to the concept of spiritual and moral predisposition, while Locke's tabula rasa emphasizes entirely on external influences without acknowledging the existence of innate potential.

2. Relevance to Islamic Education

Islamic education plays an important role in developing and preserving human nature. From birth, humans possess innate potential in the form of faith, reason, and morality, but without proper educational guidance, this potential can be misdirected (Oktori, 2021). emphasizes that the purpose of Islamic education for children is to preserve the purity of human nature so that it is not influenced by negative environments. In other words, education is a means of actualizing human nature towards human perfection.

Education methods based on human nature have their own distinctive characteristics. According to (Hanifa & Maksum, 2022) education should not only be oriented towards the transfer of knowledge, but also spiritual, moral, and social development. This is in line with the objectives of Islamic education, which is to produce individuals who are balanced in all dimensions of their lives. By emphasizing human nature as a foundation, education can produce a generation that has strong faith, intellectual intelligence, noble character, and social sensitivity.

The relevance of human nature to Islamic education is also evident in the important role of the family, school, and community in guiding children's development. The family is the first environment to instill values of faith, the school acts as a formal institution for the development of knowledge, and the community is a space for the actualization of social values. These three complement each other in ensuring that human nature is not corrupted, but develops towards the ideal goal of Islam, namely the formation of a perfect human being.

3. Relevance to Modern Challenges

The modern era poses great challenges to human nature. Globalization has introduced secularism and materialism, which often conflict with Islamic spiritual values. Digitalization adds new challenges, where social media and the internet shape the mindset and behavior of the younger generation. Data from (Essential et al., 2023) shows that Indonesians spend an average of more than three hours per day on social media. This shows how powerful the influence of digital technology is on shaping human behavior.

This phenomenon has implications for the emergence of various moral and psychological issues. (Report, 2022) notes that 30% of adolescents in Southeast Asia experience psychological stress due to exposure to digital media, including depression, anxiety, and deviant behavior. In the context of Indonesia, a report by (KPAI, 2021) shows an increase in cases of child abuse triggered by interactions in the virtual world. All of this points to a degradation of human nature, especially in spiritual and moral aspects, which should be the main guide in life.

Islam offers a solution by returning humans to their natural state through education and character building (Nurhuda et al., 2024). Islamic education based on human nature can be an important instrument in protecting the younger generation from the negative influences of globalization and digitalization. By emphasizing the values of faith, morals, and social responsibility, education can guide human potential to remain pure, relevant, and able to face modern challenges constructively.

4. Multidisciplinary Integration: Psychology, Education, and Sufism

A literature review shows that understanding of human nature can be enriched through the integration of various disciplines (Amrona et al., 2024). Islamic psychology views human nature through the dynamics of the nafs (soul), which includes the nafs ammarah, nafs lawwamah, and nafs mutmainnah (Aini et al., 2023). This concept shows that the human soul has both positive and negative potentials, and education plays an important role in guiding the soul towards tranquility that is in harmony with fitrah.

In the realm of Islamic education, fitrah is used as the philosophical basis for curriculum development. Fitrah-based education emphasizes a balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. (Hanifa & Maksum, 2022) emphasize that Islamic education based on fitrah will produce individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have noble character and play an active role in society (Putri & Nurhuda, 2023). Thus, education becomes a tool for transformation that preserves the purity of fitrah while preparing a generation that is ready to face the challenges of the times.

Sufism adds a practical dimension that is no less important. The concept of tazkiyatun nafs is seen as a method of self-purification that aims to maintain the purity of human nature from the negative influences of the modern environment (Anbiya, 2023). Spiritual practices such as dhikr, muhasabah, and muraqabah serve to strengthen the heart so that it remains pure, allowing the fitrah to function optimally. The integration of psychology, education, and Sufism provides a comprehensive picture of how the fitrah can be understood and developed comprehensively in human life.

Analysis/Discussion

Based on a literature review, it can be concluded that human nature has four main dimensions: spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social. The spiritual dimension reflects the human tendency to believe in God, the intellectual dimension is the potential of the mind to seek truth, the moral dimension is the tendency toward goodness, and the social dimension is the drive to live in a just and harmonious society. These four dimensions are interrelated and form an integral framework of humanity.

This conceptual synthesis shows that Islamic education has a central role in maintaining the balance of these four dimensions of human nature. Through a nature-based curriculum, education can produce a generation that is faithful, knowledgeable, moral, and contributes to society. This also responds to the needs of the times, where moral crisis and spiritual degradation demand comprehensive solutions.

Thus, this research contributes by presenting a new conceptual framework that combines theological, psychological, pedagogical, and Sufi perspectives. This framework can serve as a foundation for the development of Islamic education that is contextual to the digital and globalization era, while remaining grounded in the basic values of human nature.

CONCLUSION

This literature review shows that the concept of fitrah in Islam is understood as an innate sacred potential possessed by every human being. Fitrah includes a spiritual tendency toward monotheism, an intellectual ability to seek truth, a moral orientation to distinguish between good and evil, and a social drive to build harmony. The Qur'an (QS. Ar-Rum: 30) and the hadith of the Prophet explicitly affirm that fitrah is inherent in humans from birth, so that education and environment only play a role in guiding or covering it up. Thus, fitrah is not a neutral condition as in John Locke's tabula rasa view, but rather a spiritual and moral predisposition that requires guidance.

Islamic education occupies a central position as a means of actualizing human nature. Through education, human potential can be preserved, developed, and directed towards perfection. Spiritual nature is realized through the strengthening of faith, intellectual nature is honed through the pursuit of knowledge, moral nature is shaped through moral education, and

social nature is nurtured through community involvement. The role of the family, school, and community is very important in ensuring that human nature does not deviate, but rather develops in a balanced manner. Thus, Islamic education not only serves to transfer knowledge, but also to nurture humans to become complete individuals who are spiritually, intellectually, morally, and socially whole.

On the other hand, modern challenges such as globalization, digitalization, hedonism, and moral crisis demand a more systematic strengthening of human nature. Reports from (Report, 2022) and (Essential et al., 2023) show how the digital era has influenced the behavior, mentality, and spirituality of the younger generation. Therefore, fitrah-based education must be combined with an Islamic counseling approach and character building. The integration of Islamic psychology, education, and Sufism is key to preserving the purity of human fitrah from the destructive influences of modernity.

As a recommendation, further empirical research needs to be conducted to test the implementation of fitrah-based education in various contexts, including schools, Islamic boarding schools, and families. This literature review has presented a comprehensive conceptual framework, but field testing is still very much needed so that the concept of fitrah does not remain at the theoretical level. Empirical research can answer how the fitrah-based curriculum is implemented, the extent of its effectiveness in facing the challenges of the digital era, and what strategies can strengthen the fitrah of the younger generation amid the tide of globalization. Thus, the academic and practical contributions of this research can be more evident in developing Islamic education that is relevant to the times.

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