

# The Concept of Fitrah in Islam from a Multidimensional Perspective

Muhammad Turiansyah<sup>1</sup> & Herman Darmawan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Antasari State Islamic University Banjarmasin, Indonesia

**Abstract.** The concept of fitrah is analyzed from multiple perspectives, particularly in the context of Islamic teachings. This multidimensional principle underscores the integral role of fitrah in all aspects of human existence on earth, as it can fundamentally inform an individual's lifestyle choices. While Islamic teachings provide specific standards, such as those of abdillah (servant of God) and khalifatullah (vicegerent of God), there are instances where fitrah may require re-institution or restoration to its primordial state due to various external influences. This study aims to explore the notion of fitrah within the Islamic framework from a multidimensional perspective. Utilizing a literature review with a qualitative approach, the research demonstrates that fitrah can be understood through diverse viewpoints, all of which relate to inherent aspects of human nature. According to Islamic thought, human nature is fundamentally pure and inclined toward goodness. However, external factors, including environmental and hereditary influences, can sometimes redirect this inherent inclination. Consequently, the extensive scope of the concept of fitrah remains pertinent for ongoing study as long as human beings continue to be examined.

*Keywords: Fitrah, Islam, Multidimensional.*

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## Introduction

Fitrah, within the context of Islam, is a profound concept that reflects the innate and divine nature of human being. This term refers to the inherent nature of every human being, identified as a deep instinctive awareness of the existence of God. The presence of fitrah is closely related to Islamic psychology, Islamic education, and serves as the foundation for religious theories underlying Islamic teachings.

In Islamic psychology, fitrah is considered an inner dimension that signifies an individual's awareness and sensitivity to spiritual realities. This perspective emphasizes that every human is born with a pure fitrah, which includes an innate awareness of the oneness of God and a moral instinct. Islamic psychology explores how this fitrah can be influenced by the environment and life experiences, and how individuals can develop their fitrah potential to achieve true happiness.

In the context of Islamic education, understanding fitrah is a crucial foundation for the learning process. Islamic education not only focuses on cognitive and academic aspects but also encompasses character and moral development in accordance with human fitrah. Teachers and educators play a vital role in guiding students to understand, respect, and develop their fitrah to achieve spiritual and moral balance.

Fitrah also forms the basis of religious theory in Islam. The concept of fitrah provides a strong philosophical foundation for understanding the purpose of human life, which is to recognize and worship Allah. Islamic teachings are applied as a guide to maintain fitrah, correct behavior, and attain true happiness through obedience to God.

Thus, the understanding of fitrah can be viewed from various angles, especially in relation to Islamic concepts. This multidimensional principle highlights that fitrah is part of all aspects of life on earth, as it can serve as a basis for determining one's lifestyle. Although Islam has provided specific standards such as abdillah (servant of God) and khalifatullah (representative of God), there are instances when fitrah needs to be re-instilled or even

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Herman Darmawan  
Antasari State Islamic University Banjarmasin, Indonesia. Email: [hermandermawan65@gmail.com](mailto:hermandermawan65@gmail.com)

returned to its original state due to various external factors. Therefore, this study aims to discuss issues related to fitrah within the Islamic concept in a multidimensional manner.

## Method

This research is grounded in a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical type. Data collection is carried out using literature review instruments, which gather data from primary and secondary sources based on documents, works, ideas, or elements found in written materials (Kurniawan, 2018, p. 42). According to Hariyanti & Mawardi (2023), literature review, also known as a literature study, is a qualitative research method that relies on various literary sources to collect data in the form of words or descriptions. It serves as an important initial step in research, helping to establish the background, understand the context, and generate ideas for further studies (Jaya et al., 2023). Key components of literature research include surveying scholarly sources to build familiarity with current research, critically analyzing the relationships between works to identify gaps, and synthesizing findings (Goertel, 2023). The process involves identifying research objectives, locating relevant resources, evaluating their validity, organizing research results, and preparing a systematic report.

## Results and Discussion

### Definition

Fitrah, in its etymological sense, originates from Arabic and encompasses several meanings, including origin, source, birth, creation, initiation, and separation. This indicates that fitrah pertains not only to God (the Creator) but also to the primordial state of human fitrah (Mrahorovic, 2023, p. 122). According to Abdul Mujib and Yusof Mudzakir, fitrah is understood as a psychophysical system of humans, built upon psychic elements such as the soul (ruh), heart (qalb), and intellect (aql) (Mujib & Mudzakir, n.d., pp. 84–85). Broadly, fitrah also signifies purity, Islam, Tawhid, sincerity, the human inclination to accept and practice truth, basic potential to serve Allah, and denotes both human destiny, encompassing both happiness and suffering (Mujib, 1999).

The concept of fitrah has existed since the creation of humans, meaning that every individual possesses fitrah potential that continually drives them to perform good deeds and become a beneficial resource for their environment and fellow humans. Fitrah also implies that every person is born in a state of fitrah (purity). Every baby is born pure, without any sin. Someone who returns to their fitrah seeks purity and authenticity, akin to their state at birth. Therefore, before Eid al-Fitr, every Muslim is obliged to pay zakat fitrah, a form of almsgiving to purify the soul and return to a state of fitrah, as human nature is inherently inclined toward goodness, as stated in Q.S Al-Hujurat: 7-8 (Chalil & Latuconsina, 2009, p. 7).

Yasin identifies four perspectives on the concept of fitrah: Fatalistic, Neutral, Positive, and Dualistic. The Fatalistic view argues that all origins, whether good or bad, occur according to Allah's will. Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jaelani contends that a sinner will enter paradise if it is their predetermined fate according to Allah's decree. Thus, regardless of external factors such as guidance or misguidance, an individual is bound by Allah's will in their predetermined life. The Neutral view, led by Ibnul Abdullbarr based on Q.S an-Nahl 78, asserts that children are born in a state of purity without any inherent awareness of faith or disbelief. According to this view, faith and disbelief manifest only when a child reaches maturity (taklif). After this stage, individuals are held accountable for their actions.

In Islamic view, the original condition of humans is fitrah (purity). The term fitrah does not imply "empty" like a blank sheet or null (neutral tendency), but rather has a positive inclination. This is due to the presence of the divine soul within humans from the age of 120 days (4 months) in the womb. Human souls do not carry past burdens that affect their development; they are pure and clean. Positive intervention into this original state of fitrah will result in good human behavior and intentions (Syahid et al., 2018, p. 28).

The Positive view is supported by figures such as Ibn Taimiyyah, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah, Muhammad Ali, Ismail Razi al-Faruqi, and others. Ibn Taimiyyah asserts that children are born in a state of fitrah and with innate virtues, while social environments may lead individuals astray. Asy-Syabuni states that goodness is inherent in humans, whereas evil is incidental. The Dualistic view, proposed by Sayyid Qutb, argues that the goodness within humans is complemented by external influences such as prophethood and divine revelation, while evil is influenced by external factors like temptation and health. According to Syar'ati, the earth represents the lowest form of humiliation combined with the soul of Allah. Thus, humans are beings with dual dimensions

and qualities, encompassing a range of forces that are not only different but also opposed (Iffatul Hanief et al., 2023, pp. 3–4).

Fitrah aligns with universal Islamic morality, as outlined in the five fundamental values mentioned in Q.S al-An'am: 151-153. Allah refers to these as the straight path (Shirathal Mustaqin). These five foundational values are:

1. **Tawhid** (Value of Liberation)
2. **Nikah** (Value of Family)
3. **Hayat** (Value of Humanity)
4. **Adil** (Value of Justice)
5. **Amanah** (Value of Honesty) (Chalil & Latuconsina, 2009, p. 8).

### *Human Nature is Inclined Towards Goodness*

Fitrah acts as a foundation in a building, represented by the soul's inclination to recognize its Creator. Through this fitrah, humans inherently have a propensity towards religion and an absolute inclination towards virtuous behaviors. If fitrah is analogized as a foundation, then the structure (humanity) built upon this foundation should be the best possible, consistently avoiding reprehensible behavior (Chatib, 2012, p. 2).

This is explained in the Qur'an, in Q.S ar-Rum/30:30:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

And in al-A'raf/7:172:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَٰذَا غَافِلِينَ

Thus, it can be understood that every human being is essentially inclined toward goodness. There are certain factors that may cause them to suddenly display bad behavior, be rude, or be hostile towards their parents. The mindset or paradigm that fundamentally, children have an inherent goodness is crucial for all parents, as it fosters optimism that even if a child has developed poor behavior, they still have the opportunity to change and become good.

However, despite this, humans also have the capacity to make mistakes. To fully realize their inherent nature, humans must learn to manage the potential for errors within themselves, including actions such as rejecting monotheism and violating divine laws. These mistakes are an integral part of God's overall plan for humanity, playing a crucial role in shaping and guiding individuals. God has endowed humans with the ability to discern between right and wrong, manifested in the creation of an innate tool within humans: the intellect.

This concept, as articulated by Yasin Muhammad regarding human fitrah, explains that humans possess potential (traits), including a religious potential that inclines them toward truth. This is supported by Q.S al-Qiyamah 75:2, which refers to the soul that constantly self-critics and feels remorse. This state of self-reflection serves as a guiding force, leading humans toward the path of truth and virtue. As mentioned earlier, indeed human fitrah is inclined towards truth/goodness. However, it cannot be denied that humans can also fall into bad or erroneous actions (Fauzi et al., 2023, p. 625).

Humans are fundamentally not evil; they are susceptible to external influences and temptations that can lead them astray. This aspect of human nature, vulnerability to error, is a fundamental characteristic often referred to as human desire. Individuals who have reached a high spiritual level have undergone a comprehensive psycho-spiritual growth journey, consisting of three distinct stages. In the context of the Qur'an, the term nafs (soul) is used to denote a person's psychological side, representing their self. This psychological aspect, when well-guided and developed, has the potential to achieve high spiritual enlightenment and ultimately attain profound synchronization with the divine essence.

### ***Fitrah in Islamic Psychology***

Islamic psychology emphasizes the concept of spiritual psychology as the foundation for human personality development. In Islamic psychology, fitrah refers to the innate tendency towards monotheism that every individual possesses, as highlighted in the Qur'an and Hadith (Fatoni et al., 2023). One of the fundamental elements in Islamic psychology is fitrah (the natural state in which humans are created by Allah), which is seen as a crucial aspect for understanding human life, behavior, and actions.

According to Islamic teachings, understanding the true meaning of fitrah serves as a guide to recognizing the character and personality traits of a true Muslim. This concept encompasses various dimensions of human nature, including physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects, which can be nurtured and developed through Islamic education (Septemiarti, 2023). According to Islam, humans are born in a state of fitrah. So, what is fitrah? There is only one surah in the Qur'an that specifically mentions fitrah, namely Surah ar-Rum 30:30. However, many other surahs implicitly refer to fitrah. This verse from Surah ar-Rum explains that humans are created based on their fitrah. Fitrah is something that cannot be changed or altered because it has been present since the birth of every human, and humans are created based on the fitrah established by Allah (Aziz, 2018, pp. 2–3).

Islamic psychology, influenced by the concept of fitrah, emphasizes the individual's inherent purity and their natural inclination to recognize the unity of Allah (Trimulyaningsih & Nashori, 2022). The development of fitrah and character in Islam is crucial for fostering harmony and guiding individuals to fulfill their potential, influenced by internal factors such as habits and instincts, as well as external factors such as environmental influences and media exposure (Rachmat Tullah & Hidayatullah, 2023). Therefore, quoting Usman et al., (2023), understanding and nurturing fitrah through Islamic education plays a vital role in shaping individuals who embody the values of peace, inclusivity, and sustainable personal growth.

### ***The Concept of Fitrah in Islamic Education***

Islamic education encompasses all activities carried out by Muslims earnestly, consciously, and continuously based on faith and piety towards Allah SWT. The goal is to prepare students to become human resources with strong mental, character, and personality, both morally and intellectually, to live independently (Ismail, 2017, p. 3).

The goal of education, in general, and Islamic education specifically, is not solely a process of transferring knowledge but also a process of transferring Islamic values. The ultimate goal of Islam is to make humans pious, capable of achieving success in both this world and the Hereafter (Ma'arif, 1991, p. 43). The principles of Islamic education uphold universal truths and are derived from Islamic philosophical views on the universe, humanity, society, knowledge, and morals based on the Qur'an and Hadith.

The concept of fitrah in Islamic education can be related to what is mentioned in the Qur'an. Just as humans are described as khalifatullah fil ardh (Allah's vicegerents on earth) as stated in Surah al-Baqarah 2:30 and Abdillah in Surah adz-Dzariyat 51:56. Humans possess multidimensional traits: first, they are granted the right and freedom to manage the world according to their abilities. In performing this task, humans are endowed with perceptual abilities; second, they hold an esteemed position among other creatures of Allah, obtained through the position, quality, and strength granted by Allah; third, they have a specific role on earth, which is to develop the world according to the principles and laws set by Allah. With their intellect, humans can understand symbols, abstract ideas, analyze, compare, draw conclusions, and distinguish between right and wrong. With their intellect, humans can also innovate, create, discover, adapt technology, develop culture, and build civilizations (Ghalib & Mujahid, 2022, pp. 75–76).

Theories about inheritance (al-Warisah) establish that a child inherits traits from both parents, including moral, kinesthetic, and intellectual traits, from birth. However, it must also be acknowledged that genetic factors do not always play an automatic role. Due to human free will, one can overcome the influence of al-warisah and environmental factors with the help of Allah. This was the case with Noah's son, Kan'an, who rejected his father's prophetic mission (Margustam, 2016, pp. 105–106).

Therefore, the environment or nature plays a crucial role in Islamic education as an essential element in personality formation and achieving individual desires within the broader context of civilization. The environment encompasses all materials and stimuli both within and outside the individual, including biological, psychological, and socio-cultural aspects and traditions. Thus, the environment can be understood physiologically, psychologically, and socio-culturally (Islamic University of Indonesia et al., 2018, p. 37).

Furthermore, in addition to hereditary factors, human growth and development potential are also influenced by the natural environment, social environment, and history. In educational science, there are five factors determining the success of education: educational goals, educators, learners, educational tools, and the living environment. Thus, human interests, talents, abilities, and attitudes, manifested in their efforts and outcomes, vary. Similar to Lorenz's theory of inherent human aggression, educational attention is directed towards obtaining substitute objects and sublimation procedures to help eliminate these aggressive traits. Clearly, an educator does not need to focus on eliminating and replacing inherent negative traits but should strive to avoid circumstances that may foster bad habits. According to educational experts, developing latent potential (*fitrah*) is the main task of education, which is to transform these potentials into skills that benefit humans. For example, intellectual advancement is useless if only stored in the minds of experts; such advancement will only be valuable if converted into scientific discoveries in relevant fields (Iffatul Hanief et al., 2023, p. 3).

### ***Fitrah as the Foundation of Religious Theory***

One aspect of *fitrah* is the inclination toward religion. According to Hasan Langgulung, one of these *fitrahs* is the human tendency to recognize Allah as the deity, explaining that humans and their origins are inclined toward religion because religion is part of their *fitrah* (Jalaluddin, 1995, p. 90). Thus, a newborn already possesses the potential to become a religious person. If someone does not believe in the existence of a deity, it is not a trait of their origin but is closely related to environmental influences. To gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of *fitrah*, it is significant to consider the meaning of Allah's words in Surah ar-Rum 30:30 (Soenardjo, 1989, p. 645).

Mustafa al-Maraghy interprets this verse as follows: It is essential to remain on the nature established by Allah in humans, as Allah has made their *fitrah* inclined toward monotheism itself with correct guidance and rationality leading them to it, towards healthy thinking. From this verse, it can be inferred that, by nature, humans are inclined toward Islam (Rahardjo, 1996, p. 118). This means that religion is designed by Allah in accordance with the *fitrah* or original nature of humans. This explanation can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, Islam, which is centered on acknowledgment, submission, and obedience to Allah, aligns with human inclinations, particularly the inclination to seek their deity. Second, Islam is created according to the nature and inherent characteristics of humans as beings honored by Allah (Kartikowati & Zubaedi, 2016, p. 84).

This is at least explained by the primordial covenant theory proposed by Fazlur Rahman based on his analysis of Surah al-A'raf 7:172. This primordial covenant is not consciously recognized by humans but manifests in the universal inclinations of humanity, which always receive whispers from the conscience. According to Rahman, the Prophets are tasked with guiding human conscience so that they can read what has been inscribed on their hearts more clearly and convincingly.

Based on the views of scholars who have provided meanings for the term *fitrah* derived from the words of Allah, *fitrah* is a fundamental capability given to humans by Allah. It encompasses various psychological components that are interconnected and complement each other for human life (Ramayulis, 1994, p. 202). These components include:

1. *Basic Capacity for Religion in General*: This ability is not limited to Islam. With this capability, humans can be educated to follow Judaism, Christianity, or Zoroastrianism, but not to become atheists (anti-God). This view is supported by many Islamic scholars and the Mu'tazilites, including Ibn Sina and Ibn Khaldun.
2. *Basic Capacity for Islam*: Here, faith is the core. Muhammad Abduh, Ibn Qayyim, Abu A'la al-Maududi, and Sayyid Qutub share the opinion that *fitrah* contains the inherent ability to embrace Islam because Islam aligns with *fitrah* or is identical to it. Ali Fikry emphasizes the role of hereditary factors from parents in determining a child's religion. Psychological inheritance (hereditary traits) and parental influence are aspects of this basic human capability.
3. *Mawahib (Talents) and Qabiliyyat (Tendencies or Inclinations)*: These refer to the inclination toward faith in Allah. Therefore, *fitrah* includes psychological components such as faith. For a believer, faith is the primary driving force that provides the motivation to continually seek the ultimate truths from Allah.

From this, it is clear that within humans there is a natural readiness to recognize Allah and acknowledge His oneness. Therefore, the recognition of Allah's position as the deity is strongly ingrained in one's *fitrah* and

has been present in the depths of the soul since time immemorial. However, the combination of the soul with the body, the preoccupations of human life, and the efforts to cultivate the earth have led to a neglect and forgetfulness of Allah's position as the deity and the innate readiness to recognize His oneness, which becomes hidden in the subconscious (Ancok & Nashori, 1994, p. 160).

Moreover, to test the reliability of fitrah, humans are also equipped with anxieties and temptations that are contrary to their fitrah. Humans often face various experiences that can awaken their religious inclinations. This basic potential (fitrah) is closely related to guidance (hidayah). Sheikh Ahmad Musthafa al-Maraghi, in his tafsir, explains that humans have been given guidance by Allah in stages. The types of guidance bestowed by Allah are as follows: First, hidayah al-ilhami; Second, hidayah al-hawasi (sensory guidance), which involves bodily senses sensitive to external stimuli; Third, hidayah al-aql, which refers to intellectual guidance; Fourth, hidayah al-adyani (religious guidance); Fifth, hidayah al-taufiqi or hidayah al-maunah. The first and second types of guidance are given to both humans and animals, while the third to fifth are exclusive to humans (Al-Maroghi, 1974, pp. 35–36).

When these five types of guidance are detailed, they can be found in Tafsir al-Munir by Wahbah az-Zuhaili (Az-Zuhaili, 2007, pp. 59–60). Az-Zuhaili explains, based on Surah al-Fatihah 1:6, that Allah provides guidance to humans that will lead them to a life of happiness. This guidance consists of five types. First, ilham al-fitri. This guidance is given by God to every human from birth, including basic needs such as food and drink. This can be observed when these needs are unmet, leading to crying or screaming.

Second, sensory guidance. This is a complement to the first type. Both humans and animals possess this guidance, but its development varies. Sensory guidance in animals matures faster compared to humans, who require several stages to develop fully after birth.

Third, intellectual guidance. This type is higher than the previous two. Humans, being social creatures with mutual needs, cannot rely solely on sensory perception to navigate social life. They require intellect to address various societal issues, correct deviations, and improve sensory errors.

Fourth, religious guidance. This guidance will lead humans away from deviation and misguidance. Unlike intellect and desires, which can lead astray, religion provides a stable direction unaffected by desires. Religion helps humans follow the right path, whether after committing errors or beforehand. This guidance is crucial for achieving lasting happiness.

Fifth, hidayah ma'unah and taufiq. This is more specific than religious guidance and corresponds to what is requested in Surah al-Fatihah 1:6. This guidance is within Allah's authority, as reinforced by Surah al-Qashash 28:56. It can be understood that guidance in the Quran consists of two types: general guidance, which includes the first four types, and specific guidance, which is the last type.

## Conclusion

From the series of concepts presented, it can be understood that fitrah can be seen from a multidimensional perspective, or in academic terms, as multidisciplinary. This means it can be viewed from various angles, all of which pertain to inherent qualities in humans. In the concept of fitrah, humans are born pure with an inclination towards goodness. However, external factors can sometimes lead this inclination to shift in different directions, influenced by experiences such as environment or heredity. Thus, the broad scope of the concept of fitrah will continue to evolve as long as it is studied. For example, in Islam, fitrah designates humans as servants of Allah or as vicegerents (khalifatullah), in education, fitrah is seen as the focus of educational development, and fitrah as a foundation for religion to deepen one's understanding of God.

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