



Holistic Islamic Education and the Development of Human Fitrah Potential

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of writing this article is to explore the essence of Islamic education and the development of human innate potential through the study of holistic education concepts. However, existing studies have not clearly explained how holistic education operationally contributes to the development of human fitrah, creating a research gap in the integration between Islamic educational philosophy and practical holistic learning frameworks. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by synthesizing conceptual foundations and identifying concrete mechanisms through which holistic education supports the realization of human fitrah. The research adopts a literature review approach, in which relevant works on the topic are comprehensively examined and analyzed to draw conclusions and gain insights from the study. The analysis shows that human nature (fitrah) plays a crucial role in human growth and development, while holistic education serves as a significant alternative for fostering various human potentials in a comprehensive (holistic) manner. Moreover, holistic education enables individuals to achieve balance between their physical and spiritual needs. Holistic education can be implemented through an integrated learning process based on direct experience searching for, exploring, and discovering scientific concepts and principles in a holistic, meaningful, and authentic way. Through such a learning process, students are greatly supported in developing their potential within an enjoyable learning atmosphere (“learning is fun”), emphasizing deliberation and interaction with their environment. This approach allows students to become their true selves (“learning to be”), not limited to the traditional three domains of learning, but attentive to all their needs and potentials in order to cultivate character and personality in an integrated and comprehensive (holistic) manner.



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INTRODUCTION

Allah Subhānahu Wa Ta‘ālā created humankind in this world with the primary purpose of worshipping Him (Mukhlis, Suradi, et al., 2023; Mukhlis, 2025b). The status of human beings is more distinguished than that of other creatures He created. However, among human beings themselves there are different levels, determined by the degree of piety or the number of good deeds performed. As creatures with their own uniqueness, humans have always been an engaging subject of discussion (Park et al., 2025). The problems that have recently emerged in the field of education stem from a lack of understanding of education that is aligned with the essence of humanity (Durrani & Makhmetova, 2025). In Islam, humans are born with fitrah, a pure state free of sin and with the potential for faith. Human character, whether good or bad, is not determined by innate traits at birth, but is influenced by education and the surrounding environment. Despite the richness of discourse on human nature and fitrah, contemporary educational practices often fail to integrate these foundational Islamic concepts into educational design, leading to a conceptual gap between human fitrah and actual educational implementation.

The essence of Islamic teachings lies in instilling humanitarian values. In practice, human dignity and worth can only be realized when a person draws near to Allah (Lafrarchi, 2020). Islam is a religion that accords with human *fiṭrah* and brings immense benefit to human life (Andon & Free, 2025). In Islam, *fiṭrah* is understood as the innate nature present from birth. From the very beginning of creation, the natural constitution of human beings has carried a tendency to embrace monotheism as the religion of *fiṭrah* (Wei et al., 2021). Islam, as the religion suited to human *fiṭrah*, aims to guide humans to become complete persons.

Etymologically, the term “*fiṭrah*” derives from the Arabic *fiṭratun* (فطرة), which bears meanings such as behavior, character, original state, religion, or creativity. The word is rooted in *al-faṭr*, which denotes something that is opened up or split apart. In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), *fiṭrah* is defined as basic nature, talent, or innate disposition from birth (Prabhu & Mehta, 2023). Meanwhile, education is one of the crucial elements in shaping human beings toward a better condition (Cerisola & Panzera, 2021). Education is an integral part of building national life. Education needed by society including Islamic religious education becomes a critical element for shaping people who have faith, are pious toward Allah SWT, and possess sound physical and mental health.

Education is not merely aimed at increasing students’ academic knowledge, but also plays a role in building their personality and character. In addition, education seeks to cultivate moral conduct and the soul, and to develop politeness, sincerity, and selflessness in social relations (Váradi, 2022). Thus, the primary goal of education is to shape a whole personality while also nurturing the learner’s soul.

As it develops, Indonesia’s current education system faces various challenges, including the emergence of polemics and debates around the terms “general education” and “religious education.” All the potentials possessed by human beings as creatures of Allah *Subḥānahu Wa Ta’ālā* must be developed comprehensively through holistic education (Kumari et al., 2022). In the educational process, religion must play the primary role as a fundamental foundation, to be integrated thereafter with general knowledge. This approach aims to build comprehensive understanding and to shape perfectly educated human character.

In the Islamic education system, the knowledge bestowed by Allah upon humanity needs to be explored through reading activities, both of the *qur’ānic* verses and the cosmic signs in creation. In this way, such knowledge can bring great benefit to human life (Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, & Zulbaidah, 2025; Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, Zulbaidah, et al., 2025). A holistic educational approach offers a solution for shaping the whole person (Zuk et al., 2024). This begins with building an all-encompassing educational paradigm that involves reconstructing the philosophical paradigm as the initial foundation, improving methods as the processual stage, and producing individuals of character as the ultimate goal.

The aims of holistic education can be realized when the curriculum focuses on comprehensive individual development. Individuals who are aware that learning is a lifelong activity, who possess a continuously evolving mindset, and who understand that everything is interconnected, exemplify the characteristics of a holistically developed person (Wan et al., 2021). Individuals with holistic development will cultivate broader perspectives in facing various problems, making it easier to find solutions (Adams, 2024). Therefore, holistic education is crucial to adopt in addressing today’s educational challenges.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Descriptive research relies on narrative to present research findings. The main objective of this type of research is to provide a clearer understanding of a particular event or phenomenon. In descriptive research, the issue raised must be fact-based, have a strong scientific foundation, and be focused rather than merely a personal opinion (Pollard et al., 2021). The present study was conducted by reviewing literature relevant to the topic, which was then analyzed comprehensively to draw conclusions and gain deeper

understanding (Cheng et al., 2023). Specifically, the inclusion criteria for the literature review consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reputable academic publications published between 2015–2024, written in English or Indonesian, and directly addressing Islamic education, holistic education, or the concept of human *fitrah*. The data sources were obtained from major academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories, using keywords including “Islamic education,” “holistic education,” and “human *fitrah* development.” The analytical framework employed thematic content analysis, in which selected literature was coded, categorized, and synthesized to identify recurring themes, theoretical patterns, and conceptual relationships relevant to the study. The research was carried out by reading journals and publications related to the subject under study, with the aim of producing an article that discusses a particular issue or topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Essence of Human Existence

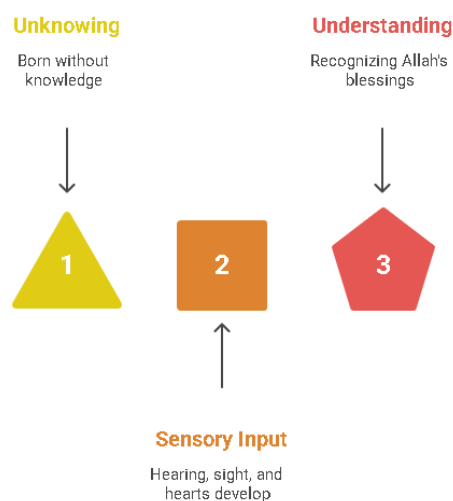
Humans are beings with physical and spiritual dimensions and are the noblest of creatures. Physically, humans come from clay and subsequently develop into beings with concrete form and bodies. As living beings, humans share similarities with other creatures, particularly mammals. The process of human creation begins from sperm (*nutfah*), which develops into a clot of blood (*'alaqah*), then a lump of flesh (*mudghah*), and ultimately forms a fetus that develops in stages more perfectly and completely than animals (QS. At-Tin: 4). After the fetal body is almost complete, Allah breathes His Spirit into it, making humans the most perfect among His creations even the angels were commanded to prostrate to Adam (QS. Al-Hijr: 29).

Developing the Potential of Human *Fitrah*

Human *fitrah* entails the understanding that every person is born in a pure and pristine state, with the potential to know Allah and to carry out human duties well. This *fitrah* serves as the foundation for moral and spiritual knowledge, as well as an impetus toward the truth. Within the framework of Islamic education, *fitrah* functions as a basis that strengthens the development of individual character, morality, and spirituality. The Qur'an explains that Allah created humans in a state of knowing nothing, then gave them hearing, sight, and hearts so that they might be grateful. Allah says in Sūrat an-Nahl verse 78:

“And Allah brought you out of your mothers' wombs while you knew nothing, and He made for you hearing, vision, and hearts, that you might be grateful.”

From Ignorance to Gratitude



From this verse, it can be concluded that the concept of the essence of humanity is a divine endowment given to human beings, encompassing physical and spiritual potential with distinctive foundations, traits, and modes of action that is, potential present from the outset of their creation (Mukhlis et al., 2024; Mukhlis, Maryam, et al., 2023). This concept relates to human creation and the potential Allah has bestowed upon them, which includes an understanding of human nature. As a concept, *fiṭrah* refers to the capability Allah grants to humans to be optimally utilized throughout their lives in this world. Furthermore, *fiṭrah* can also be understood as the natural human inclination to accept the truth. It is a divine gift embedded within humans, intended so that they may know Allah (*ma'rifatullāh*).

In addition to the basic *fiṭrah* of affirming monotheism, humans possess other aspects of *fiṭrah*, namely:

1. Talent, referring to a person's natural abilities that support academic or professional development, focusing more on the human capacity to process and utilize information.
2. Instinct (*gharīzah*), namely an inborn capacity enabling actions without prior learning.
3. Desire or impulse, known in Sufism as *Nafs al-Ammārah*, which tends to drive humans toward sin; *Nafs al-Lawwāmah* vacillates between sin and obedience, while *Nafs al-Muṭma'innah* urges obedience to Allah.
4. Personality, encompassing innate psychological traits related to a person's moral, social, and ethical behavior, shaped by the individual's internal strengths.
5. Heredity, namely inherited factors, both psychological and physical, passed from parents to their children.
6. Intuition, a psychic or spiritual capacity by which humans receive guidance from Allah and are led beyond spiritual consciousness; those with intuition are typically individuals capable of purifying the soul.

From the foregoing explanation, we understand that Allah has granted humans an advantage over other creatures. Humans possess the potential to grow and continually develop in tandem with their *fiṭrah* and ever-expanding knowledge, in order to attain a true understanding of that *fiṭrah*. The various forms of *fiṭrah* described above should be a central focus in education especially Islamic education so that humans can develop their *fiṭrah* and achieve a profound understanding of the essence of *fiṭrah* itself.

Holistic Education

Human beings, who possess physical and spiritual dimensions and are endowed with *fiṭrah*, ought to develop and apply these in daily life. In the context of education, humans serve as both subjects and objects that undergo learning (Ni et al., 2025). Education affords humans the opportunity to develop to the fullest. Hasan Langgulong states that the aim of education is to optimize human *fiṭrah*, namely to transform those potentials (*fiṭrah*) into skills that yield tangible benefits for the individual.

Hasan Langgulong also emphasizes that education plays a vital role in transmitting Islamic knowledge and values to future generations, who will subsequently fulfill their roles in the world while maintaining the Hereafter as the ultimate goal (Fenech et al., 2022). The potentials and abilities that humans possess are gifts from Allah that must be appreciated and therefore need to be maximally developed (Chanifah et al., 2021). Developing these potentials plays an important role in facing life's challenges, including advances in science and technology, cultural development, and enhancing the quality of faith and piety to Allah Subhānahu Wa Ta'ālā.

Many education scholars have discussed terms related to education in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, such as *tarbiyah*, *ta'līm*, *tadrīs*, *ta'dīb*, and *tazkiyah*. Although these five terms differ in emphasis, they are interrelated and form a unified whole within the Islamic education system, particularly in the nurturing of learners. In *ta'līm*, the primary focus is the process of conveying knowledge; in *tarbiyah*, the emphasis is on guidance. *Ta'dīb* stresses mastery of knowledge, while *tadrīs* focuses on structured cultivation (Mukhlis, Janwari, et al., 2023; Mukhlis & Abdullah, 2025). *Tazkiyah* functions as the core value and ultimate aim of Islamic education. These five

concepts underpin the formulation of educational goals, methods, curriculum, and management intended to guide learners to be well-prepared for present and future life (Mosia et al., 2025). The Islamic education curriculum and content must align with Islamic creed (*'aqīdah*). Islamic educational methods possess distinctive features that set them apart from general education, namely through the application of Qur'anic methods (Luis & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2025). In practice, various media and tools may be used so long as they do not contradict Islamic creed. Moreover, assessment in Islamic education includes measurement and evaluation encompassing intellect, heart, and deeds.

Holistic education seeks to produce graduates with balanced intellectual, emotional, and spiritual quality and with competencies suited to the demands of the era. Its implementation aims to develop learners' potentials comprehensively (Indika et al., 2025). Through this approach, learners can understand various global issues and seek solutions to current problems (Heidari et al., 2024). Holistic education also emerges as a response to the challenges of globalization, disruption, and development that is increasingly materialistic, as well as to more individualistic living conditions and the difficulty of meeting life's needs (Betaubun & Rokhmah, 2025). In this context, holistic education in the Islamic perspective is highly relevant (Ajayi, 2025). The key difference between holistic education in Western and Islamic perspectives lies in the philosophical and religious foundations underlying each (Sedghi et al., 2025). In the Western view, the human being is central, whereas in the Islamic perspective, Allah Subhānahu Wa Ta'ālā is central, based on the principle of *tawhīd*.

Holistic education and Islamic education share common paradigms and thus reinforce each other. Islamic education leads to holistic outcomes, just as holistic education likewise seeks comprehensive human development (MacPherson, 2025). By making Islamic values the primary guide, holistic education will produce learners who develop in a complete and Islamic manner. Holistic education can be implemented in the learning process through various methods, one of which is integrated learning (Suraswadi et al., 2025). Curriculum development is influenced by various factors political, social, cultural, economic, scientific, and technological (Parfa Koskinen, 2020). Systematically analyzed, the curriculum comprises four main components: objectives, content, implementation strategies, and assessment. Curriculum development entails both curriculum principles and instructional development.

In integrated learning, learners gain direct experience by seeking, exploring, and discovering concepts and principles of knowledge in a comprehensive, meaningful, and authentic manner (Ma de Fátima et al., 2025). Educators should begin with themes aligned to the competency standards and basic competencies (*SK-KD*) while also considering learners' developmental stages (Shaleh & Umiarso, 2024). The learning strategies employed should foster a pleasant yet challenging atmosphere, stimulating learners to develop in accordance with their potentials.

By applying holistic education grounded in Islamic values, people can actualize themselves in real life to attain happiness in this world and the Hereafter (Mukhlis, 2025a; Mukhlis & Saidah, 2025). The potentials and good character infused in humans since their creation by Allah Subhānahu Wa Ta'ālā need to be developed through the active roles of teachers and parents (Teoh et al., 2021). The participation of all stakeholders in education is vital to ensure that educational objectives are properly achieved, producing learners who develop holistically and embody Islamic character.

CONCLUSION

Fiṭrah plays a crucial role in human growth and development throughout life. Education especially religious education has the capacity to lead individuals toward true perfection (*Insān Kāmil*). Therefore, human fiṭrah must be a primary concern in Islamic education so that learners can optimize the potential within themselves. The diversity of human fiṭrah is a blessing that must be developed and refined through education so that learners achieve balance in the development of their personal potentials.

Education bears responsibility for guiding learners to develop their fiṭrah within the framework of Islamic teachings and to cultivate their physical and psychological potentials. Consequently, a deep understanding of human fiṭrah is essential in designing holistic Islamic

education. Holistic education enables individuals to live meaningfully, responsibly, and to contribute positively to society and their environment.

Education enables people to actualize themselves in real life, shaping them into educated individuals through the knowledge they acquire and through the reinforcement of virtues intrinsically embedded in human beings from the outset. Holistic education is a highly relevant approach for developing the many facets of human potential comprehensively. It also helps ensure a balance between human physical and spiritual needs. People who attain this balance will become individuals with Islamic character, prepared to face life's challenges wisely.

Holistic education can be implemented through integrated learning that provides hands-on experience in exploring and discovering concepts and scientific principles holistically, meaningfully, and authentically. Through this approach, learners are encouraged to develop their potentials in an enjoyable learning environment (learning is fun) that prioritizes collaboration in interaction with others. This education also enables learners to become themselves (learning to be), not limited to the traditional three domains, but attentive to all aspects of their needs and potentials, with the aim of forming an integrated and holistic character and personality.

Based on these findings, the study contributes to the field by reinforcing the centrality of *fiṭrah* as a foundational construct in Islamic education and by positioning holistic education as an effective pedagogical framework for nurturing it.

Practically, educators are encouraged to design curricula that integrate cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions to ensure that learners' *fiṭrah* is developed in a balanced and purposeful manner.

Future educational practice should adopt experiential and interdisciplinary learning models that not only strengthen Islamic character formation but also prepare learners to navigate contemporary challenges with wisdom and resilience.

For future research, the concept of *fiṭrah* can be further examined through empirical studies to identify specific pedagogical strategies that most effectively support holistic learner development in diverse educational contexts.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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