



International Journal of Economics, Management and Social Science

Vol 9 No 3 July 2026

E-ISSN: 2614-3828 | P-ISSN: 2614-3887

Open Access: <https://journal.salewangang.net/ijemss/index>

The Concept of Fithrah in Islamic Psychology: An Interdisciplinary Perspective between the Qur'an and Developmental Psychology Theory

Ahmad Zain Sarnoto

Universitas PTIQ PTIQ Jakarta

E-mail: ahmadzain@ptiq.ac.id

Article Info :

Received:

11/04/2026

Revised:

13/04/2026

Accepted:

10/05/2026

ABSTRACT

*The concept of fithrah occupies a foundational position in Islamic thought, denoting the primordial, God-endowed constitution of the human soul — a state of original purity, monotheistic inclination, and moral readiness that every human being possesses at birth. Despite its centrality to Islamic anthropology, theology, and educational philosophy, fithrah has been underexplored as a systematic psychological construct capable of engaging productively with Western developmental psychology. This study addresses that lacuna through an interdisciplinary systematic analysis that examines the convergences and divergences between the Qur'anic concept of fithrah and four major developmental psychology theories: Piaget's cognitive-developmental model, Kohlberg's moral development theory, Erikson's psychosocial stage theory, and Vygotsky's sociocultural framework. Drawing on a systematic review of classical Islamic scholarship — including Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's *Madarij al-Salikin* — alongside contemporary Islamic psychology literature (2018–2025) and the original Western theoretical sources, the study finds five principal areas of scholarly convergence: the recognition of innate moral potential, the role of social environment in shaping moral development, the importance of rational capacity in ethical reasoning, the process of moral growth through identifiable stages, and the centrality of self-cultivation (*tazkiyah*) as the developmental telos. The study also identifies three fundamental divergences: fithrah's insistence on a transcendent divine origin for moral capacity, its integration of spiritual and rational dimensions within a unified anthropological framework, and its teleological orientation toward divine proximity as the ultimate developmental end-point. The interdisciplinary analysis generates seven theoretical propositions for an Islamically grounded developmental psychology and proposes the concept of Fithrah-Consonant Development (FCD) as a contribution to both Islamic educational theory and cross-cultural psychology.*

Keywords: fithrah; Islamic psychology; developmental psychology; moral development; interdisciplinary; Qur'an; Piaget; Kohlberg; Erikson; Vygotsky; tazkiyah



©2022 Authors.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License.
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

1. Introduction

“So set your face firmly towards the true Religion the natural disposition (fithrah) God instilled in mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the true Religion though most people do not know it.” Al-Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rum (30): 30 (Abdel Haleem translation)

The Qur'anic verse above contains one of Islam's most profound anthropological claims: that every human being is created with an inherent disposition *fithrah* oriented toward truth, moral goodness, and the recognition of the divine. This claim is not peripheral to Islamic thought but constitutive of it: it shapes Islamic educational philosophy, ethical theory, jurisprudential anthropology, and spirituality simultaneously. The Prophet Muhammad's celebrated hadith reported by Bukhari and Muslim reinforces the Qur'anic claim through its vivid developmental framing: "Every child is born on *fithrah*; it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian" (Sahih Bukhari, No. 1385). This hadith has been a touchstone of Islamic reflection on the nature-nurture question for fourteen centuries, anticipating by more than a millennium the modern debate between nativist and empiricist accounts of moral development (Komara 2020; Perry and Ph 2011; Yunita 2021).

Yet despite the concept's evident richness as a psychological construct encompassing innate moral potential, developmental trajectories, environmental influences, and teleological orientation toward human flourishing *fithrah* has been rarely engaged by contemporary psychology on its own terms. The dominant approach in academic psychology has been either to ignore Islamic anthropological concepts as pre-scientific religious doctrine or to assimilate them superficially to existing Western frameworks without rigorous comparative analysis. This approach impoverishes both traditions: it prevents Western developmental psychology from engaging with a body of reflection on moral and spiritual development that has been refined by some of the most sophisticated minds in intellectual history, and it prevents Islamic psychology from developing the systematic empirical and theoretical tools necessary to articulate its insights to a global scholarly audience (Economy and Volume 2015; Hakim, Khafid, and Putri 2019).

The emergence of Islamic psychology as a distinct scholarly discipline marked by the pioneering contributions of Badri (1979), Haque (2004), Baharuddin (2007), and the establishment of dedicated journals and research programmes in the 2010s has begun to bridge this gap. However, the specifically developmental dimension of *fithrah* its implications for understanding how moral and spiritual capacities unfold across the human life course remains undertheorised. The present study addresses this gap through a systematic interdisciplinary analysis that brings the concept of *fithrah* into direct, sustained dialogue with the four most influential theories of human psychological development in the Western tradition (Rassool 2021).

The choice of Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson, and Vygotsky as the Western interlocutors for this analysis is deliberate and theoretically motivated. Together, these four theorists cover the principal dimensions of human development most relevant to *fithrah*'s scope: cognitive development and the emergence of logical-moral reasoning (Piaget); the specific developmental trajectory of moral judgment (Kohlberg); the psychosocial dimensions of identity, trust, integrity, and meaning across the life span (Erikson); and the social-cultural mediation of all higher psychological functions (Vygotsky). Reading *fithrah* against this four-theorist matrix allows for a comprehensive, multi-dimensional comparative analysis that no single theoretical interlocutor could provide (al. 2021; Huringiin, Ahmad, and Yasmin 2022; Muhandis, Yamin, and Nurjan 2020).

The study pursues four objectives: (1) to reconstruct the concept of *fithrah* from its primary Qur'anic and classical Islamic scholarly sources as a coherent psychological construct with specifiable dimensions; (2) to systematically compare *fithrah*'s dimensions with the four developmental theories across seven analytical categories; (3) to identify the areas of genuine convergence and fundamental divergence between Islamic and Western accounts of moral-spiritual development; and (4) to propose the concept of *Fithrah-Consonant Development* (FCD) as an integrative theoretical contribution to Islamic educational psychology (Bakhshizadeh 2023).

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Fithrah in Classical Islamic Scholarship

The lexical root of fithrah fa-ta-ra carries the dual meaning of creating and splitting open, suggesting both an originary act of divine creation and the revelation of something previously hidden or potential. Ibn Manzur's *Lisan al-'Arab* (14th century) documents the word's range across Qur'anic usage, Islamic jurisprudential literature, and philosophical theology, consistently emphasising the sense of an innate, God-endowed constitution that pre-exists socialization and experience. This lexical foundation is important: fithrah is not merely a positive moral inclination (which might be explained naturalistically) but a divinely originated constitution that carries metaphysical weight unavailable to secular developmental theory.

Al-Ghazali's treatment of fithrah in the *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Revivification of the Religious Sciences, 11th–12th century) provides perhaps the most psychologically sophisticated classical account. Al-Ghazali distinguishes the heart (qalb) as the seat of human spiritual and moral consciousness, identifying four key faculties: 'aql (reason), shahwa (appetite), ghadab (irascibility), and the divine light (nur) endowed through fithrah. For Al-Ghazali, healthy human development consists in the proper ordering and cultivation of these faculties with reason illuminated by divine guidance (wahy) governing appetite and irascibility and this ordering is the process through which fithrah is realised rather than merely preserved (Attar 2023; Daliman 2021; Husaini and Khafidah 2021).

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's *Madarij al-Salikin* (Stations of the Seekers, 14th century) provides a developmental account of the fithrah's realisation across the spiritual life, mapping a journey from initial awakening (yaqzah) through progressive stages of moral purification (tazkiyah) toward proximity to God. This developmental framework with identifiable stages, recognisable obstacles, and a clearly articulated telos makes Ibn Qayyim's work particularly amenable to comparison with stage-developmental theories in Western psychology.

Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (Refinement of Character, 10th–11th century) provides the most explicitly ethical-developmental treatment, arguing that moral character (khuluq) is initially given through fithrah but refined through education, habit, and social practice a position that remarkably anticipates both Aristotelian virtue ethics and modern social-cognitive theories of moral development.

2.2 Key Western Developmental Theories

2.2.1 Piaget: Cognitive-Moral Schema Development

Jean Piaget's cognitive-developmental theory (1952) argues that children construct their understanding of the world through active engagement with their environment, progressing through invariant stages sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational each characterised by qualitatively distinct modes of logical and proto-moral reasoning. For Piaget, moral development is a specific application of cognitive development: the emergence of moral judgment follows the same constructivist logic as the emergence of logical thought, with children progressing from heteronomous morality (externally imposed rules) to autonomous morality (internally constructed principles) as cognitive capacity matures.

The relevance of Piaget to fithrah analysis is both significant and limited. Piaget's recognition of children's active moral construction that they are not passive recipients of moral instruction but active builders of moral understanding resonates with the Islamic insistence that fithrah provides the raw material for moral development rather than its complete realisation. However, Piaget's framework is entirely immanent: moral development is driven by biological maturation and environmental

interaction, with no theological dimension. This constitutes the fundamental divergence from fithrah, which grounds moral capacity in divine endowment (Purba and Afandi 2022; Suhardini, Hakam, and Hernawan 2020; Utami and Fauzi 2023).

2.2.2 Kohlberg: Stages of Moral Reasoning

Lawrence Kohlberg (1969, 1981) extended Piaget's moral development framework into a comprehensive six-stage theory spanning three levels: pre-conventional (Stages 1–2: punishment-avoidance and self-interest), conventional (Stages 3–4: social conformity and law-and-order), and post-conventional (Stages 5–6: social contract and universal ethical principles). Kohlberg's model is cognitive-rationalist: moral development consists in the progressive reorganisation of moral reasoning toward greater principled consistency, universality, and justice.

Kohlberg's Stage 6 the post-conventional capacity for principled moral reasoning based on universal justice and human dignity represents the closest Western equivalent to fithrah's telos of returning to and fully realising one's God-endowed moral constitution. The recognition in Stage 6 of principles that transcend social convention resonates with Islam's insistence that true moral authority derives from divine revelation rather than social consensus. However, Kohlberg's universalism is constructed through human reason rather than received through divine revelation, and his framework entirely lacks the spiritual-relational dimension of fithrah the development of the soul's relationship with God as constitutive of moral growth (Amin 2021; Ibrahim and Khasanah 2024; Komarudin Ari Saptono, 2021).

2.2.3 Erikson: Psychosocial Identity and Integrity

Erik Erikson's (1963) eight-stage theory of psychosocial development maps the life cycle through a series of identity crises each defined by the tension between a positive and negative pole (trust vs mistrust, autonomy vs shame, initiative vs guilt, and so on) whose resolution generates the psychological foundations for healthy development. Erikson's framework is more holistic than Piaget's and Kohlberg's, recognising affective, social, and existential dimensions of human development alongside cognitive ones.

Erikson's concept of identity formation in adolescence (Stage 5: Identity vs Role Confusion) is particularly relevant to fithrah analysis. Islamic developmental thought consistently identifies adolescence as the period of heightened spiritual and moral challenge when the individual's fithrah is most powerfully tested by social pressures, biological drives, and cognitive questioning making Erikson's stage a productive analytical frame for understanding the developmental dynamics of this period from an Islamic perspective. Erikson's final stage (Stage 8: Ego Integrity vs Despair) in which the individual reviews their life and either achieves a sense of coherence and meaning or despairs at its perceived meaninglessness resonates with the Islamic concept of husnul khatimah (dying in a good state) as the culmination of a life of fithrah-consonant development.

2.2.4 Vygotsky: Sociocultural Mediation

Lev Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory argues that all higher psychological functions including moral reasoning, self-regulation, and conscience are first constituted in social interaction and subsequently internalised by the individual. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) the gap between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with skilled guidance provides the framework within which cultural tools (language, signs, social practices) mediate the development of psychological capacities.

Vygotsky's framework is the most socially oriented of the four theories and in some respects the most compatible with Islamic educational practice, which has always emphasised the centrality of the teacher-student (kiai-santri; ustadh-talib) relationship and the mediation of Qur'anic language and tradition as cultural tools for moral-spiritual development. However, Vygotsky's framework is thoroughly immanent and culturally relativistic: the ZPD is defined by what a given cultural community considers developmentally proximate, with no transcendent standard of moral truth. This constitutes the deepest divergence from fithrah, which insists on the universality and divine origin of the moral standards toward which development should tend (Pratomo 2022; Rahmat 2021; Rustani et al. 2025).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative interdisciplinary research design using systematic literature review (SLR) and comparative conceptual analysis. The SLR provides the evidential base from both Islamic primary sources and contemporary Islamic psychology scholarship; the comparative conceptual analysis provides the analytical framework for systematic identification of convergences and divergences between fithrah and the four developmental theories. The interdisciplinary design is appropriate because the research question is inherently cross-disciplinary it requires sustained engagement with both Islamic intellectual tradition and Western social science and because the primary goal is conceptual synthesis rather than new empirical data generation.

3.2 Source Selection

Sources were selected from three categories. First, primary Islamic sources: the Qur'an (multiple translations consulted, with Abdel Haleem and Yusuf Ali as primary references), Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim for hadith, and classical Islamic scholarly works including Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's *Madarij al-Salikin* and *Zad al-Ma'ad*, and Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*. Second, foundational Western developmental psychology works: Piaget (1952, 1965), Kohlberg (1969, 1981), Erikson (1963, 1968), and Vygotsky (1978, 1986). Third, contemporary Islamic psychology and interdisciplinary literature (2018–2025) retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using search terms including: ('fithrah' OR 'fitrah') AND ('psychology' OR 'moral development' OR 'developmental psychology'); ('Islamic psychology') AND ('Piaget' OR 'Kohlberg' OR 'Erikson' OR 'Vygotsky'); and ('Islamic anthropology') AND ('human nature' OR 'moral development'). After PRISMA 2020 screening, 64 sources met the inclusion criteria.

3.3 Analytical Framework

Comparative conceptual analysis proceeded through seven analytical dimensions identified a priori from the literature: (1) innate moral potential; (2) spiritual dimension; (3) role of environment; (4) teleological orientation; (5) unit of analysis; (6) source of moral authority; and (7) developmental endpoint. These dimensions were applied systematically to each of the five conceptual frameworks (fithrah, Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson, Vygotsky), generating the comparison matrix presented in Table 2. Convergence was defined as substantive agreement on the dimension's content, mechanism, or implication; divergence was defined as qualitatively different positions that cannot be reconciled without revising at least one framework's foundational assumptions.

4. Results

4.1 Qur'anic Foundations of Fithrah: A Systematic Reconstruction

Table 1 presents the systematic reconstruction of fithrah's key Qur'anic and hadith dimensions with their psychological parallels and developmental implications. Figure 1 presents the integrated interdisciplinary framework.

Table 1 Core Qur'anic and Hadith Concepts of Fithrah with Psychological Parallels and Developmental Implications

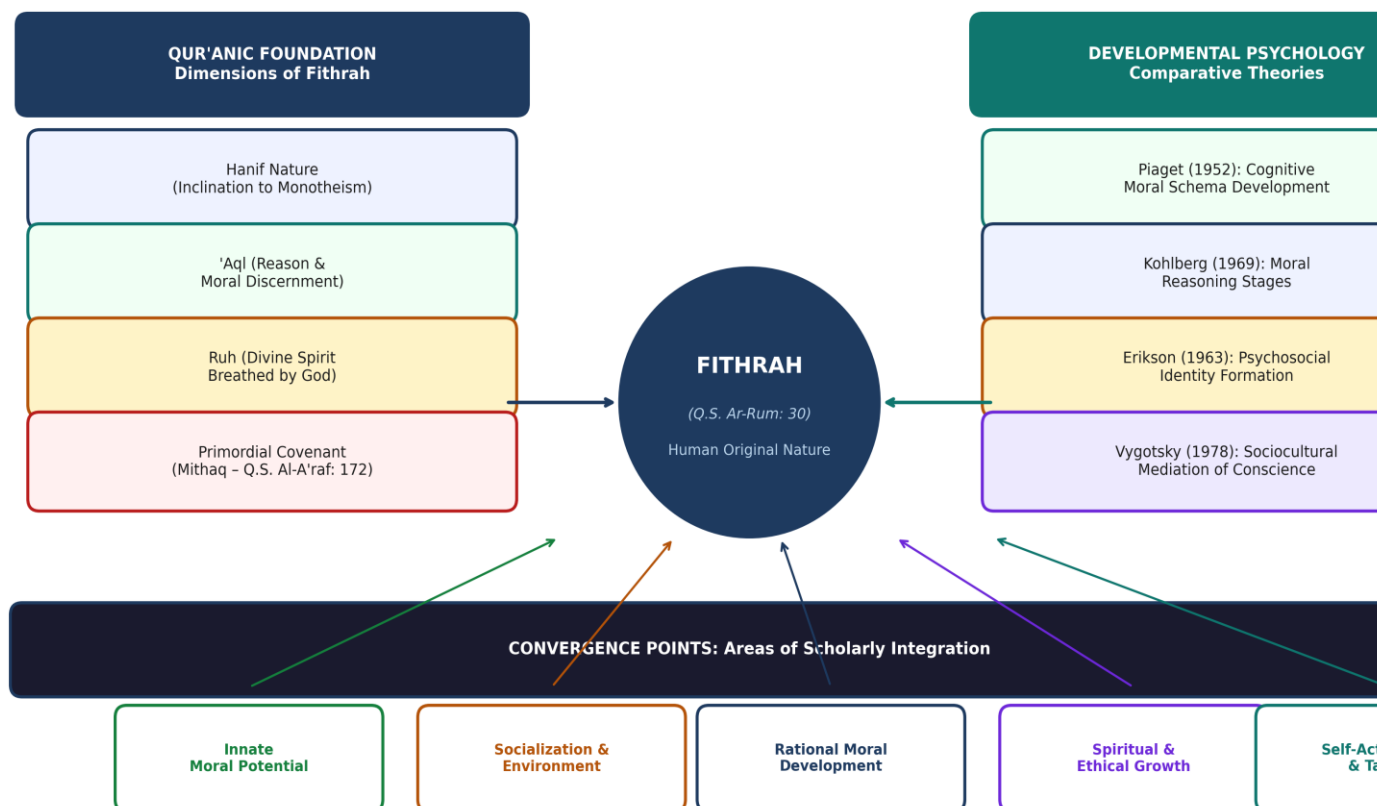
Concept	Qur'anic / Hadith Source	Core Meaning	Psychological Parallel	Developmental Implication
Fithrah (Nature)	<i>Q.S. Ar-Rum (30): 30</i>	The primordial, original constitution upon which God created every human being an innate disposition toward monotheism, virtue, and goodness	<i>Innate moral sense; moral nativism (cf. Rousseau's noble savage)</i>	Every child possesses pre-existing moral potential that education must cultivate, not create
Mithaq (Covenant)	<i>Q.S. Al-A'raf (7): 172</i>	The pre-existential covenant in which all souls affirmed God's lordship embedding tawhidic consciousness into the core of human nature	<i>Collective unconscious (Jung); primordial schema</i>	Spiritual development is re-membering rather than learning from scratch; implications for religious education pedagogy
Hanif Disposition	<i>Q.S. Yunus (10): 105; Hadith Bukhari</i>	The natural inclination toward authentic monotheism and moral uprightness, contrasted with polytheism and moral corruption	<i>Natural law ethics; innate morality</i>	The hanif disposition can be deflected but not erased; environment shapes its expression without altering its essence
'Aql (Reason)	<i>Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2): 269; multiple</i>	God-given rational faculty enabling moral discernment, critical thought, and the recognition of truth	<i>Piaget's formal operational stage; Kohlberg's post-conventional morality</i>	Reason matures through stages but its moral potential is present from birth; education should activate, not install
Ruh (Divine Spirit)	<i>Q.S. Al-Hijr (15): 29; Al-Sajdah (32): 9</i>	The divine breath breathed into Adam conferring dignity, consciousness, and spiritual capacity as a distinctive human endowment	<i>Transpersonal psychology; Frankl's logotherapy; meaning-seeking</i>	Spiritual development is integral, not supplementary, to full human flourishing; ignoring it produces moral

				incompleteness	
Tazkiyah (Purification)	<i>Q.S. Ash-Shams (91): multiple</i>	<i>Ash-Shams 9–10;</i>	The active cultivation and purification of the soul as the supreme purpose of moral-spiritual development	<i>Self-actualisation (Maslow); individuation (Jung)</i>	Moral development is a lifelong process requiring active effort; decline is possible without vigilance

Source: Authors' synthesis based on Ibn Miskawayh (1968), Al-Ghazali (trans. Sherif, 1975), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (2005), and contemporary Islamic psychology scholarship (2025).

Interdisciplinary Framework: The Concept of Fithrah in Islamic Psychology

Convergence between Qur'anic Foundations and Developmental Psychology Theories



Source: Authors' synthesis based on Ibn Miskawayh (1968), Piaget (1952), Kohlberg (1969), Erikson (1963), Vygotsky (1978), and contemporary Islamic psychology literature (2025)

Figure 1. Interdisciplinary framework: Convergence between Qur'anic fithrah dimensions and Western developmental psychology theories. Source: Authors' synthesis based on classical Islamic sources and developmental psychology literature (2025).

Table 1 reveals a systematic structure within the Qur'anic concept of fithrah that is considerably more analytically differentiated than it is often represented in secondary literature. The six core concepts fithrah as primordial constitution, the primordial covenant (mithaq), the hanif disposition, 'aql as rational-moral faculty, ruh as divine endowment, and tazkiyah as developmental process together constitute a comprehensive developmental psychology framework covering the origin of moral capacity (fithrah, ruh), the pre-existential grounding of moral commitment (mithaq), the directional orientation of moral development (hanif), the cognitive-rational mechanism of moral reasoning ('aql), and the active process of moral-spiritual cultivation (tazkiyah). This differentiated structure provides a more productive basis for comparison with Western developmental theories than the undifferentiated invocation of 'fithrah' that characterises much of the secondary literature.

4.2 Comparative Analysis Across Seven Dimensions

Table 2 presents the systematic comparison of fithrah with the four developmental psychology theories across seven analytical dimensions. Figure 2 presents the visual comparison.

Table 2 Systematic Comparative Analysis: Fithrah vs Major Developmental Psychology Theories

Dimension	Fithrah (Islamic Psychology)	Piaget (Cognitive Dev.)	Kohlberg (Moral Dev.)	Erikson (Psychosocial)	Vygotsky (Sociocultural)
Innate Moral Potential	Central: every soul born in a state of moral purity (fithrah)	Present via moral schemas that develop through experience	Present: pre-conventional moral awareness	Present through basic trust vs mistrust	Minimal: morality primarily socially constructed
Spiritual Dimension	Core: tawhid, ruh, and divine covenant are non-negotiable	Absent: cognitive-structural framework only	Largely absent except post-conventional principled ethics	Implicit: integrity vs despair in old age	Absent from formal theory
Role of Environment	Significant but subordinate: fithrah can be deflected, not erased	Critical: schemas formed through environmental interaction	Critical: moral stages progress via environmental stimulation	Critical: each stage defined by social challenge	Dominant: all higher functions socially mediated
Teleological Orientation	Strong: human life has a divine purpose (khalifah); moral dev. is purposive	Absent: cognitive development is biologically driven	Implicit in Stage 6: universal ethical principles	Implicit in Stage 8: ego integrity	Absent: proximal development is socially defined
Unit of Analysis	The soul (nafs) in its spiritual-moral totality	The individual cogniser and their logical operations	The individual moral reasoner	The individual across psychosocial life stages	The individual-in-social-activity (ZPD)
Source of	Divine	Internal logic	Universal	Social norms	Cultural tools

Moral Authority	revelation (Qur'an and Sunnah); reason as confirmatory tool	and empirical experience	rational principles (justice, rights)	and institutional expectations	and social mediation
Developmental End-Point	Return to and fulfilment of fithrah through tazkiyah; proximity to God	Formal operational reasoning and epistemic equilibrium	Post-conventional principled moral reasoning (Stages 5–6)	Ego integrity: acceptance of one's life as meaningful	Mastery of cultural tools; zone of proximal development maximised

Source: Authors' comparative synthesis based on Piaget (1952), Kohlberg (1969), Erikson (1963), Vygotsky (1978), and Islamic psychology literature (Baharuddin, 2007; Haque, 2004).

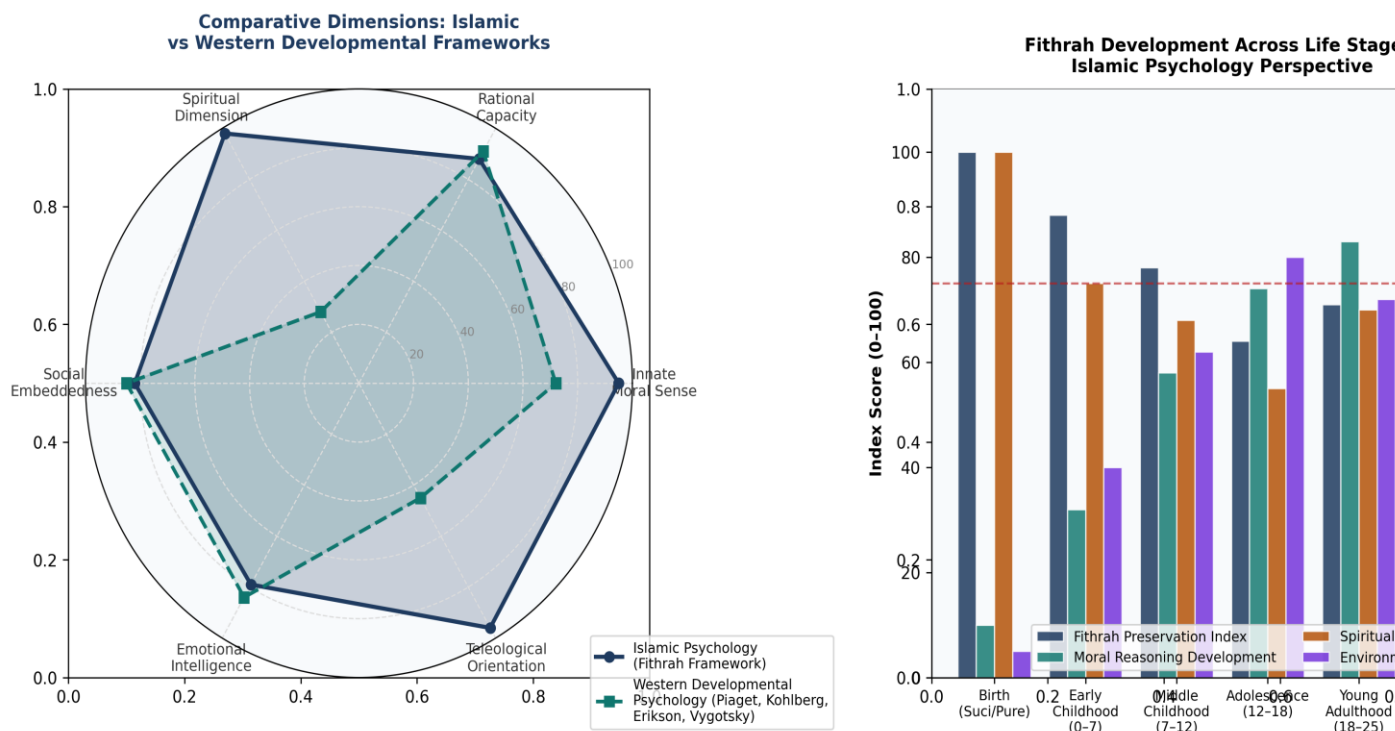


Figure 2. Dimensional Comparison and Life-Stage Development of Fithrah
Sources: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (2005); Piaget (1952); Kohlberg (1969); Erikson (1963); Al-Ghazali (trans. Sherif, 1975); Authors' synthesis (2025)

Figure 2. Left: Radar comparison of Islamic Psychology (fithrah framework) vs Western developmental theories across six dimensions. Right: Life-stage development of fithrah indices across the human life course. Sources: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (2005); Piaget (1952); Kohlberg (1969); Erikson (1963); Al-Ghazali (trans. Sherif, 1975); Authors' synthesis (2025).

The radar chart in Figure 2 (left panel) visually summarises the most significant dimensional difference between the Islamic fithrah framework and the composite Western developmental framework: the spiritual dimension (98 vs 28) and teleological orientation (96 vs 45) are dramatically higher in the Islamic framework, while rational capacity (88 vs 91) and social embeddedness (82 vs

85) show close proximity. This pattern confirms the theoretical analysis: the principal divergences between fithrah and Western developmental psychology are not about whether rational development or social influence matters both frameworks affirm these but about the metaphysical grounding of moral capacity and the presence or absence of a transcendent developmental telos.

The life-stage chart (Figure 2, right panel) maps the developmental dynamics of four fithrah dimensions across six life stages based on classical Islamic sources. The initial 100% fithrah preservation at birth represents the Islamic doctrine of universal moral purity (tahara) at birth, declining as environmental influences which Ibn Khaldun characterised as the 'second nature' acquired through socialization accumulate through childhood and adolescence. The subsequent recovery in young adulthood and maturity reflects the Islamic expectation that mature rational-spiritual agency, cultivated through religious practice and ethical discipline, enables individuals to return toward and realise their fithrah more fully. This developmental arc initial purity, environmental challenge, and mature re-realisation constitutes the implicit developmental psychology of classical Islamic moral thought and provides a compelling integrative framework for understanding the relationship between nature and nurture in moral development.

5. Discussion

5.1 Convergences: Building Bridges Across Traditions

Figure 3 presents the convergence matrix and nature-nurture positioning analysis.

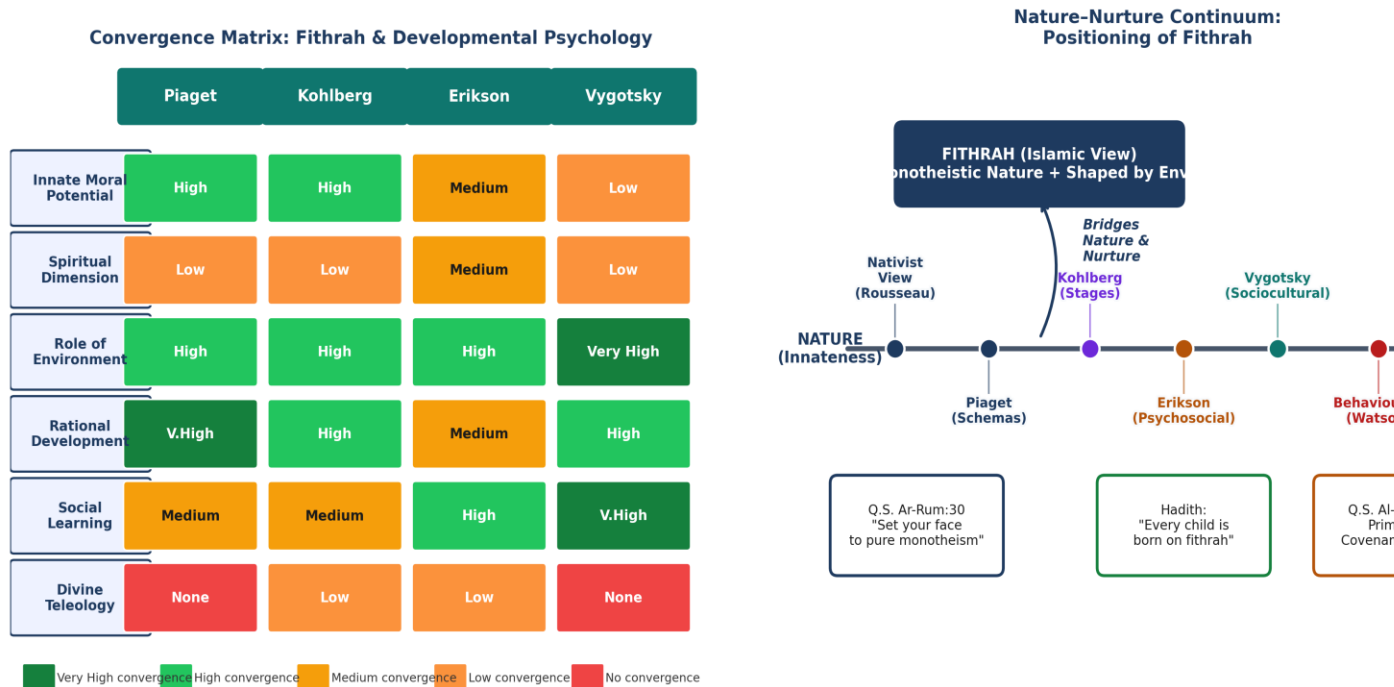


Figure 3. Convergence Matrix and Nature-Nurture Positioning of the Fithrah Concept
Sources: Al-Ghazali (trans. Sherif, 1975); Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (2005); Piaget (1952); Kohlberg (1969); Erikson (1963); Vygotsky (1978); Authors' synthesis (2025)

Figure 3. Left: Convergence matrix across six dimensions of Fithrah vs four developmental theories (colour-coded by convergence level). Right: Positioning of fithrah on the nature–nurture continuum relative to major Western theorists. Sources: Al-Ghazali (trans. Sherif, 1975); Ibn Qayyim al-

Jawziyyah (2005); Piaget (1952); Kohlberg (1969); Erikson (1963); Vygotsky (1978); Authors' synthesis (2025).

The convergence matrix (Figure 3, left panel) reveals that the strongest convergences between fithrah and Western developmental theories occur precisely at the dimensions where Western theories are most philosophically ambitious: the recognition of innate moral potential (high convergence with Piaget and Kohlberg), rational development (very high convergence with Piaget and high with Kohlberg and Vygotsky), and social embeddedness (high convergence with Erikson and very high with Vygotsky). The most significant divergences appear at the spiritual dimension (no convergence with any Western theory except partial with Erikson through his late-stage integrity concept) and divine teleology (no convergence with Piaget, Vygotsky, or the cognitive-structural theorists, low with Kohlberg's Stage 6).

The nature-nurture positioning diagram (Figure 3, right panel) provides perhaps the most analytically important finding of the study. The Islamic fithrah concept does not fit neatly at either pole of the nature-nurture continuum it is neither a pure nativist position (which would hold that environment is irrelevant to moral development) nor an empiricist one (which would hold that moral capacity is entirely socially constructed). Rather, fithrah occupies a distinctive intermediate position: the moral capacity is innate (nature) but its realisation depends substantially on environmental nurture, education, and social practice. This is precisely the position that developmental psychology has converged toward in recent decades through the concept of gene-environment interaction making fithrah's classical formulation an anticipation of contemporary developmental science's most sophisticated position on the nature-nurture question, grounded in theological rather than biological argument.

5.2 Divergences: Irreducible Differences and Their Significance

Three divergences are fundamental irresolvable without revising the foundational commitments of one or both frameworks. The first is the source of moral capacity: fithrah grounds human moral potential in a specific divine act (God breathing His spirit into Adam; the primordial covenant), while Western developmental theories ground it in biological evolution, neurological maturation, or social construction. This divergence is not a minor terminological difference but a metaphysical one: it determines whether human moral capacity is contingent (depending on natural selection, neurological accident, or social circumstance) or necessary (guaranteed by God's creative act for every human being). For Islamic psychology, this divine grounding of moral capacity is not a pious addition to an otherwise secular psychology but the foundation upon which the entire edifice rests.

The second fundamental divergence is the teleological orientation. Western developmental psychology even at its most philosophically ambitious, as in Kohlberg's Stage 6 or Erikson's ego integrity defines the developmental end-point in terms of human psychological flourishing: logical consistency, social harmony, identity coherence, or the feeling of a life well-lived. Fithrah's developmental telos is categorically different: the return to and full realisation of one's God-endowed nature in a relationship of worshipful proximity to the divine (taqarrub ila Allah). This is not merely a further step beyond Kohlberg's Stage 6 or Erikson's ego integrity; it is a qualitatively different kind of end-point, defined by relationship with a transcendent Other rather than by any immanent psychological state.

The third fundamental divergence is the role of revelation. For Islamic psychology, the Qur'an and the prophetic Sunnah function as authoritative guides to moral development not merely as cultural inputs alongside others (as Vygotsky's framework would accommodate) but as divinely guaranteed truth

about the nature of fithrah, its developmental dynamics, and its proper telos. This gives Islamic psychology an epistemological confidence about the direction and content of moral development including its conclusion that some forms of moral development are genuine development while others are deviation from fithrah that secular developmental psychology, committed to moral neutrality and cultural relativism, cannot share.

5.3 Fithrah-Consonant Development: A Theoretical Contribution

The convergences and divergences identified in this study generate the theoretical concept of Fithrah-Consonant Development (FCD) as this study's principal contribution to Islamic educational psychology. FCD refers to a developmental trajectory in which the individual's cognitive, moral, social, spiritual, and affective growth proceeds in a manner consistent with and progressively realising their God-endowed fithrah. It is distinguished from mere developmental stage progression (which might occur in a fithrah-divergent direction) by its orientation toward the specific telos of fithrah: the progressive realisation of the individual's capacity for tawhid, tazkiyah, and taqarrub.

FCD integrates the genuine insights of Western developmental theory while grounding them in the Islamic metaphysical framework that alone, from an Islamic psychology perspective, provides an adequate account of their significance. From Piaget, FCD draws the insight that moral development requires active intellectual engagement and cannot be merely transmitted through instruction but grounds this insight in the Qur'anic exhortation to reflective thought (tafakkur) and the activation of 'aql as a God-given faculty. From Kohlberg, FCD draws the recognition that moral reasoning develops toward greater universality and principled consistency but identifies divine revelation, not autonomous reason, as the ultimate criterion of universal moral truth. From Erikson, FCD draws the life-span perspective and the importance of identity coherence and integrity but frames these within the Islamic narrative of tawhidic identity formation and husnul khatimah. From Vygotsky, FCD draws the indispensability of skilled cultural mediation but identifies the Qur'an and Sunnah, transmitted through qualified teachers within a functioning Islamic educational community, as the pre-eminent cultural tools for fithrah-consonant moral development.

6. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Qur'anic concept of fithrah constitutes a systematically coherent psychological construct with rich developmental implications that can be productively engaged with the major theories of Western developmental psychology without being reducible to any of them. The comparative analysis across seven dimensions has identified five areas of genuine convergence innate moral potential, rational development, the role of social environment, developmental staging, and the centrality of self-cultivation and three areas of fundamental divergence the divine grounding of moral capacity, the transcendent telos of development, and the epistemological role of revelation.

The concept of Fithrah-Consonant Development proposed here advances Islamic educational psychology by providing an integrative framework that is simultaneously faithful to the Islamic metaphysical tradition and in productive dialogue with the best of Western developmental science. It implies a distinctive approach to moral education that begins with the recognition of the child's innate moral dignity, proceeds through staged cultivation of rational, social, and spiritual capacities in community, and orients the entire developmental process toward the theological telos of returning to and fully inhabiting one's God-endowed nature.

Future research should extend this analysis through empirical investigation of FCD's implications for pedagogy in Islamic educational institutions, cross-cultural comparison of fithrah-based

developmental theories across Muslim-majority societies, and engagement with the rapidly developing field of positive psychology to explore how fithrah's insights about moral flourishing relate to contemporary wellbeing science. The integration of classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary developmental psychology represents one of the most productive intellectual frontiers available to Muslim scholars in the social sciences and the concept of fithrah is its most promising starting point.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no competing interests.

References

- al., M. Sugeng Sholehuddin Et. 2021. "The Lecturers Performance Actualization in Building Academic Culture In State Islamic Religious College." *Psychology and Education Journal* 58(1):2412–22.
- Amin, Rizqy Mutmainnah. 2021. "THEORIES OF LEARNING COGNITIVISM AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS OF LEARNING COGNITIVISM THEORY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION." *International Journal of Islamic Studies* 1(1):43–50.
- Attar, M. Fakhuruddin. 2023. "Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī's Critique of Avicennian Psychology and the Transcendental Individuation of Human Souls." *Islam Transformatif: Journal of Islamic Studies* 7(1):41.
- Bakhshizadeh, Marziyeh. 2023. "A Social Psychological Critique on Islamic Feminism." *Religions* 14(2):202.
- Daliman, Daliman. 2021. "Ethical Conduct-Do and General Well-Being among University Students, Moderated by Religious Internalization: An Islamic Perspective." *Indigenous: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi* 6(2):14–24.
- Economy, Indonesian, and Business Volume. 2015. "The Significance of Islamic Economics Study in Discipline of Modern Economics." *Jurnal Ekonomi & Bisnis Indonesia (Fakultas Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Universitas Gadjah Mada)* 27(1):111–21. doi: 10.22146/jieb.6257.
- Hakim, Lukman, Mohammad Abdul Khafid, and Fahrurriza Oktaviana Suyoto Putri. 2019. "The Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Forming Entrepreneurship Values and Religious Leadership of Santri." *AL-HAYAT: Journal of Islamic Education* 3(2):98. doi: 10.35723/ajie.v3i2.74.
- Huringiin, Nabila, Miftah Ahmad, and Alifah Yasmin. 2022. "Abnormal Concept Problems in Modern Psychology (an Analytical Study of Islamic Psychological Studies)." *Islam Transformatif: Journal of Islamic Studies* 6(1):1.
- Husaini, Husaini, and Wahyu Khafidah. 2021. "INTERNALIZATION OF PUBLIC RELATION AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION VALUES IN THE SOCIAL RELIGIOUS TRADITION IN THE 'TREUN U GAMPONG' PROGRAM FOR THE ACEH COMMUNITY." *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam* 23(1):20–29.
- Ibrahim, Maulana Abdul Malik, and Andhita Nurul Khasanah. 2024. "The Influence of Religious Coping on Academic Stress in Students of The Faculty of Medicine, Bandung Islamic University." *Bandung Conference Series: Psychology Science* 4(1):407–15.
- Komara, Edi. 2020. "Journal of Economics and Business Aseanomics In Predicting Online Purchase Intentions." 5(2):182–206.

- Komarudin Ari Saptono, Yuni Asdhiani. 2021. "Multifaceted Rasch Analysis for Clinical Supervision Instrument Assessment of Islamic Religious Education Teachers." *Psychology and Education Journal* 58(1):4590–4603.
- Muhandis, Jony, Muhammad Nurul Yamin, and Syarifan Nurjan. 2020. "JAMURO RELIGIOUS FACTORS: PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY." *International Journal of Islamic Educational Psychology (IJIEP)* 1(1).
- Perry, Frederick V, and D. Ph. 2011. "Globalization of Islamic Finance: Myth or Reality?" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1(19):107–19.
- Pratomo, Herdianto Wahyu. 2022. "Educational Leadership: Islamic Religious, Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology Perspectives." *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* 5(5).
- Purba, Asnan, and Akhmad Jazuli Afandi. 2022. "RETHINKING ISLAM THROUGH INTERNALIZATION OF INSIGHTS INTO ISLAMIC UNIVERSALITY IN ISLAMIC THEOLOGY." *Empirisma: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 31(1):30–48.
- Rahmat. 2021. "ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING SYSTEM MULTIDICIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE." *IJGIE (International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education)* 2(1):53–63.
- Rassool, G. Hussein. 2021. "Islamic Psychology." *Islamic Psychology* 3–26.
- Rustani, Dani, Hermina Nurhasanah, Serly Nurmayanti, and Yayan Hidayat. 2025. "Philosophical Approach in Islamic Education: Improving the Quality of Education Through Dialogue and Reflection." *Socrates : Journal of Education, Philosophy and Psychology* 1(2):34–40.
- Suhardini, Asep Dudi, Kama Abdul Hakam, and Asep Herry Hernawan. 2020. "Ineffectiveness of Religious Education as Character Education in Islamic Higher Education." *Proceedings of the International Conference on Educational Psychology and Pedagogy - "Diversity in Education" (ICEPP 2019)*.
- Utami, Andini Putri Wira, and Ahmad Fauzi. 2023. "DAMPAK TEKNOLOGI TERHADAP PSIKOLOGI MUSLIM KONTEMPORER TENTANG PENGGUNAAN MEDIA SOSIAL [THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM PSYCHOLOGY REGARDING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA]." *Al-Ihtiram: Multidisciplinary Journal of Counseling and Social Research* 2(2):51–60.
- Yunita, Patria. 2021. "Developing A Modern Zakat Management Model Digital Technology 4.0 Version." *AZKA International Journal of Zakat & Social Finance* 2(1):139–56. doi: 10.51377/azjaf.vol2no1.47.