

Dimensions of Fitrah in Islamic Education: An Analysis of Harry Santoso's Thought in the Book Fitrah Based Education

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Abstract

Islamic education is essentially inseparable from a deep understanding of the nature of human beings as creatures created with fitrah (innate disposition). The concept of fitrah in Islam encompasses very rich and complex dimensions, ranging from the potential of faith, reason, to moral and social inclinations. This study aims to critically analyze the thoughts of Harry Santoso as contained in his book entitled Fitrah Based Education (FBE), a work that offers a new paradigm in the world of contemporary Islamic education. Using the method of literature study and content analysis, this study examines how Harry Santoso formulates the dimensions of fitrah and integrates them into a holistic educational system. The results show that there are seven main fitrah dimensions proposed by Harry Santoso, namely fitrah of faith, fitrah of learning, fitrah of talent, fitrah of development, fitrah of sexuality, fitrah of aesthetics, and fitrah of social. Each dimension has significant pedagogical implications for the way children are educated in families and educational institutions. This study concludes that the Fitrah Based Education approach offers an integrative solution that is relevant to the crisis of modern Islamic education, by placing fitrah as the main foundation of the learning process.

Keywords: *fitrah, Islamic education, Harry Santoso, Fitrah Based Education, holistic*

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Introduction

Education is one of the principal pillars of human civilization that has never been free from debate and intellectual dynamics in every era. In the context of Islam, education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge or skills, but rather a long journey to humanize human beings in accordance with their nature and the purpose of their creation. The Qur'an itself, from the very first verse revealed — the command “iqra” or “read” — has affirmed that learning and self-development are an inseparable part of human identity as a servant of Allah.

However, the reality of Islamic education in Indonesia today still faces a number of fairly serious challenges. An education system that tends to be oriented solely toward cognitive outcomes, the neglect of children's innate potential, and insufficient attention to the spiritual and emotional dimensions of the learning process remain persistent problems. Ironically, at the very moment the world is moving toward competency- and character-based education, many Islamic educational institutions remain trapped in rigid, outdated patterns that are unresponsive to the needs of human fitrah [1].

Amid this intellectual unease, Harry Santoso emerges with a fresh offering through the concept of Fitrah Based Education (FBE). As an education activist long engaged in issues of parenting and tarbiyah (Islamic upbringing), Harry Santoso builds a pedagogical framework grounded in the belief that every child is born with extraordinary potentials that he calls fitrah. This idea is not merely an abstract theory but a system that can be implemented in real life, both within the family and at school [2].

This research aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of Harry Santoso's thought, particularly regarding the dimensions of fitrah he proposes in the book *Fitrah Based Education*. This study is important given that few academic studies have systematically examined and evaluated the concept of FBE from the perspective of Islamic educational science. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to the development of a more integrative and humanistic strand of Islamic educational thought.

The main question this research seeks to answer is: how does Harry Santoso formulate the dimensions of fitrah within the context of Islamic education, and what are the pedagogical implications of each dimension for educational practice? The novelty of this research lies in its effort to systematize and critically evaluate the concept of FBE using an established framework of Islamic education theory [3].

Literature Review

The concept of fitrah has become one of the most fundamental discourses in the philosophy of Islamic education. Etymologically, the word fitrah derives from the verb “fatara,” meaning to create something for the first time or in accordance with its original state of creation [4]. The Qur'an mentions this term explicitly in Surah Ar-Rum, verse 30, which is often used as the primary basis for discussions on the nature of humanity in Islam. In the view of the majority of scholars, fitrah refers to the natural human tendency to know and worship God, although its scope is far broader than that.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, one of the great medieval scholars, viewed fitrah as the basic human capital that encompasses aspects of knowledge, will, and the capacity to distinguish between good and evil [5]. This view was later widely cited and developed by contemporary thinkers in Islamic education. Al-Ghazali, through his monumental work *Ihya Ulum al-Din*,

also paid great attention to the dimension of fitrah, particularly in relation to moral education and character formation.

In the tradition of modern Islamic educational thought, a number of figures have sought to reformulate the concept of fitrah in a more contextual manner. Muhammad Quthb, for instance, emphasizes the importance of education that is aligned with human fitrah in his book “Manhaj al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyyah” [6]. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, through his idea of the Islamization of knowledge, also touches on the dimension of fitrah as a basis for the epistemology of Islamic education. All of these views demonstrate that fitrah is not a static concept but a dynamic construct that continues to be reinterpreted according to the demands of the times.

Harry Santoso himself situates his work along this continuum of thought. He borrows insights from Western developmental psychology, particularly Howard Gardner's idea of multiple intelligences, while integrating them into the framework of tawhid (the oneness of God) and Islamic tarbiyah [7]. This approach reflects a serious effort to bridge the classical Islamic scholarly heritage with the development of contemporary science, giving rise to an educational model that is both relevant and firmly rooted in Islamic values.

Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach using the methods of library research and content analysis. The primary data source is Harry Santoso's book entitled *Fitrah Based Education: Melejitkan Fitrah Anak dengan Paradigma Baru Parenting dan Pendidikan* (2017), while the secondary data sources include various journal articles, books, and other scholarly works relevant to the theme of this research.

The data collection process was carried out through a close reading of the primary source, followed by the identification of key themes related to the concept of fitrah and its implications for education. The collected data were then analyzed using qualitative content analysis techniques, namely by identifying, categorizing, and interpreting the content of the text systematically and objectively [8].

To ensure the validity and reliability of the analytical results, this research employs source triangulation, namely by comparing and confirming the findings from the primary source against various relevant secondary sources. In addition, a critical review was also conducted by taking into account alternative perspectives within the treasury of Islamic education, in order to provide a more comprehensive and balanced assessment of Harry Santoso's thought.

Result

4.1. The Concept of Fitrah in Harry Santoso's Perspective

Harry Santoso builds his thinking on a simple yet powerful premise: every child is born into the world in a state of fitrah, carrying basic capital already granted by Allah SWT before they even come into existence on earth. This premise is not merely a theological statement but a pedagogical conviction with far-reaching practical consequences. If children already carry fitrah within them, then the task of parents and educators is to discover and develop that fitrah, rather than to shape the child according to adult expectations.

In contrast to the behaviorist view that sees the child as a “blank slate” (tabula rasa) upon which the environment can write anything, Harry Santoso instead believes that every child is born with unique and specific seeds of potential. The task of education is to water and nurture those seeds, not to replace them with seeds deemed better by parents or society. In many respects, this view is more consistent with the classical Islamic educational tradition that honors the uniqueness of every individual as a creation of Allah [9].

Harry Santoso also asserts that fitrah is not solely a matter of spiritual potential or faith, but encompasses the entirety of the human dimension. He formulates seven interrelated dimensions of fitrah that mutually support one another in shaping a whole and balanced human personality. These seven dimensions form the very heart of the entire Fitrah Based Education concept.

4.2. The Seven Dimensions of Fitrah in Fitrah Based Education

The first dimension is the fitrah of faith, which Harry Santoso regards as the most fundamental dimension underlying the entire structure of human fitrah. The fitrah of faith refers to the natural human tendency to know, long for, and connect with the Creator. In the context of education, this fitrah must be awakened from an early age through exemplary role modeling, the telling of inspirational stories, and heartfelt spiritual experiences. Harry Santoso warns that a dormant or poorly developed fitrah of faith will become a source of the various identity and spiritual crises faced by today's younger generation [2].

The second dimension is the fitrah of learning, or the fitrah of reason and knowledge. Human beings are born with a strong desire to know and understand the world around them. The intense curiosity found in young children is a clear manifestation of this fitrah of learning. However, Harry Santoso strongly criticizes the conventional education system, which gradually extinguishes this curiosity through exam pressure, rote memorization without understanding, and tedious teaching methods. Fitrah-based education, by contrast, must be able to nurture and cultivate children's desire to learn so that it keeps burning throughout their lives [10].

Third is the fitrah of talent, a dimension that is highly relevant to modern psychological development. Every child, according to Harry Santoso, is born with a unique talent that constitutes their special mission on earth. This talent is not merely a technical skill that can be learned, but a calling of the soul which, when pursued, gives rise to genuine happiness and maximum benefit to the surrounding environment. The task of parents and educators is to help children discover their true talent, rather than imposing a talent deemed more prestigious or profitable.

The fourth dimension, the fitrah of development, shows that every child has natural developmental stages that cannot be forced. Harry Santoso divides children's developmental phases into several periods, each with its own characteristics and needs. The 0–7 year phase is the golden period for building the foundation of faith and emotional attachment; the 7–14 year phase is the time for developing manners, moral character, and responsibility; while the 14–21 year phase is the time for exploring social roles and contributions. Understanding this fitrah of development is essential so that educational interventions are properly targeted and not counterproductive [11].

Fifth is the fitrah of sexuality, a dimension that is often regarded as taboo yet receives serious attention from Harry Santoso. He emphasizes that a healthy sexual identity consistent with fitrah does not form on its own, but requires the active role of both father and mother in

raising the child. The father plays an important role in shaping masculine identity in boys and helping girls understand the world from a balanced perspective, while the mother plays a role in cultivating gentleness and emotional sensitivity. According to Harry Santoso, the absence or dysfunction of these roles can seriously affect the development of a child's fitrah of sexuality [2].

The sixth dimension is the fitrah of aesthetics and language, which encompasses the human capacity to perceive beauty, express oneself, and communicate meaningfully. This fitrah is manifested in children's love of art, music, literature, and other forms of creative expression. Harry Santoso urges that education provide adequate space for the development of this aesthetic fitrah, as he believes that a soul trained to perceive beauty will find it easier to sense the presence and majesty of Allah SWT.

Seventh is the fitrah of social and moral life, which relates to the natural human tendency to live together, help one another, and build a just and harmonious social order. Children are born with the potential for empathy, compassion, and a sense of justice, which, if properly developed, will become the foundation for a noble social character. Fitrah-based education must give children the opportunity to interact, collaborate, and empathize with others, so that their social fitrah flourishes and becomes a provision for contributing to the good of the community [12].

4.3. Pedagogical Implications of the Dimensions of Fitrah

A deep understanding of these seven dimensions of fitrah carries highly significant implications for the practice of Islamic education, both within the family and at school. First, educators need to shift their orientation from “output-driven education,” which only pursues grades and academic achievement, toward “fitrah-driven education,” which focuses on recognizing and developing children's innate potential. This paradigm shift is not merely a matter of teaching technique, but concerns a fundamental change in the way educators view learners.

Second, the role of parents in the FBE system is far more central than in the conventional education model. Harry Santoso strongly emphasizes that the home is the child's first and foremost madrasah, and that parents are the best teachers, one that cannot be replaced. This means that the movement to reform Islamic education cannot rely solely on school curriculum reform, but must also address and transform parenting patterns within the family.

Third, the concept of FBE demands genuine personalization of education. Because every child has a unique combination of fitrah, the “one size fits all” approach to education must be abandoned. Teachers and parents need a high degree of sensitivity in order to read and respond to each child's uniqueness. This certainly requires greater competence and a stronger commitment from educators [13].

Conclusion

Harry Santoso's thinking in Fitrah Based Education offers a fresh and relevant pedagogical framework for the development of contemporary Islamic education. By formulating seven dimensions of human fitrah—the fitrah of faith, learning, talent, development, sexuality, aesthetics, and social life—Harry Santoso not only provides a comprehensive conceptual map of human nature, but also translates these theological concepts into practical guidance for educators and parents.

The greatest strength of FBE lies in its ability to bridge the classical Islamic scholarly heritage with the development of modern science, as well as to bridge the transcendent dimension (faith and spirituality) with the immanent dimension (talent, social life, and development). This model offers a holistic solution to the identity crisis and educational crisis currently faced by the Muslim community, by placing fitrah at the center of gravity of the entire educational process.

The implication of this research is the need for a more systematic and organized movement to integrate the principles of FBE into both formal and non-formal Islamic education curricula. In addition, further empirical research is needed to measure the effectiveness of FBE implementation across diverse contexts, so that its contribution to the world of education can be felt in a more tangible and measurable way.

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