

Psychology and Contemporary Mental Health: A Conceptual Framework Of Fitrah, Nafs, Qalb, And 'Aql For Human Well Being

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims to develop an integrative conceptual framework grounded in Islamic Psychology by incorporating the concepts of fitrah, nafs, qalb, and 'aql to address contemporary mental health challenges. The paper argues that mental health can be understood as a process of realignment with humanity's innate disposition (fitrah, nafs, 'aql, and qalb), rather than merely the absence of psychopathology.

Design/methods/approach – This study employs a qualitative conceptual approach through critical literature analysis and theoretical synthesis. Classical Islamic psychological sources and contemporary mental health literature were systematically reviewed and analytically mapped to construct an integrative framework linking Islamic anthropological constructs with modern psychological dimensions of cognition, emotion, behavior, and well-being

Findings – The study finds that positioning fitrah as the ontological foundation of human psychology enables a holistic model in which psychological well-being emerges from the harmonious interaction of fitrah, nafs, qalb, and 'aql. Mental and behavioral disorders are conceptualized as multidimensional disruptions involving spiritual misalignment, dysregulated desire, emotional imbalance, and impaired moral cognition.

Research implications/limitations – As a conceptual study, the findings are limited by the absence of empirical validation. The framework requires further testing through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research to assess its applicability across clinical and cultural contexts.

Originality/value – This study offers an original contribution by integrating fitrah into Islamic Psychology as a foundational construct for mental health, providing a spiritually grounded and culturally responsive model that enriches global mental health discourse and opens new avenues for interdisciplinary research.

Keywords: Islamic Psychology, Mental Health

A. INTRODUCTION

Mental health issues are one of the most pressing, multifaceted global problems of the 21st century, involving significant disease burden, treatment gaps, and numerous socio economic and cultural challenges. Increasing rates of depression, anxiety, stress related disorders, and existential distress have been reported across various cultural contexts. The WHO states that approximately 5.1% of people globally experience mental and behavioral disorders that lead to long-term disability, with an estimated 1.1 billion people experiencing a mental health disorder by 2021 (World Health Organization (WHO), 2025). Mental disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety are widespread throughout society (Kumar et al., 2024). Furthermore, in 2019, the global community experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated mental health issues, increasing psychological distress, and this occurred among vulnerable groups such as children, young women, adolescents, and individuals experiencing social isolation (Sculco et al., 2025).

The various challenges facing the public in achieving mental health include: first, the gap between treatment needs and access to services, particularly in low- and middle income countries (Wainberg et al., 2017). Second, stigma and cultural barriers (Simkhada et al., 2021). Third, mental disorders impact economic well-being, academic achievement, and holistic health (Pike et al., 2013). Although advances in psychology and psychiatry have led to the development of powerful diagnostic tools and therapeutic interventions, they sometimes neglect the spiritual aspect of human well-being. Yet, integrating spirituality into a therapeutic approach is a revolutionary step toward achieving mental health (Kefalogianni & Fragakis, 2024).

In response to the various challenges facing mental health, mental health practitioners are increasingly interested in integrating spirituality into their therapeutic approaches, grounded in culture. Islamic psychology, for example, offers a holistic framework that integrates spiritual, mental, and physical dimensions to understand human mental health (Omais & Antônio dos Santos, 2025). Islamic psychology is known as the science of the nafs (self or soul), integrating Islamic principles with psychological theories addressing human behavior, health, and mental well-being from an Islamic perspective (Çaksen & Çaksen, 2022; Rassool, 2021). The nafs is the core of Islamic psychology, emphasizing self-reflection, self-control, and self-improvement to achieve moral excellence and personal growth (Rassool & Keskin, 2025).

In Islamic psychology, *fitrah*, *aql*, *ruh*, and *qalb* are fundamental terms aimed at understanding individual behavior and experiences (Rassool, 2023). Islamic psychology understands humans from the teachings of the Quran, which provides insight into emotions, traits, and moral frameworks. It also explores the concepts of patience, gratitude, contentment, and serenity, which can be linked to mental well-being (Keskin, 2025; Rassool & Keskin, 2025). Islamic psychology, rooted in the Islamic worldview (*ru'yat al-kawn*) and classical studies, has reemerged as a significant field of research. Rather than simply Islamizing Western psychology, Islamic psychology seeks to articulate an indigenous understanding of the human soul based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the intellectual heritage of Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.

At the heart of Islamic psychology is a holistic conception of the human being that integrates body, mind, and spirit. Key constructs such as *nafs* (self or ego), *qalb* (heart), and *'aql* (intellect) provide a multidimensional framework for understanding behavior, cognition, emotion, and spirituality. However, despite growing academic interest, there remains a lack of integrative conceptual models that systematically connect these Islamic

constructs to contemporary mental health discourse. The goal of Islamic psychology is to synthesize Islamic values with contemporary psychological theories, promoting a approach encompassing the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the human being (Hussein Rassool, 2023; Rassool, 2021). This integration is evident in the practice of Islamic counseling therapy, which combines Islamic values with modern psychological techniques to help address individual mental health (Faizal et al., 2025; Rauf et al., 2025).

This article addresses this gap by proposing a conceptual framework that integrates *nafs*, *qalb*, and *'aql* with modern understandings of mental health and well-being. The main objectives of this paper are: (1) to critically examine the contemporary mental health paradigm and its limitations; (2) to explore foundational concepts in Islamic Psychology; (3) to develop an integrative framework for human well-being based on Islamic anthropology; and (4) to discuss implications for mental health practice and future research.

B. METHODS

1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative conceptual research design aimed at developing an integrative theoretical framework for mental health grounded in Islamic Psychology. Rather than testing hypotheses empirically, the study focuses on theoretical synthesis and analytical interpretation to bridge classical Islamic psychological constructs with contemporary mental health discourse. This approach is appropriate for addressing epistemological gaps and advancing theory in emerging interdisciplinary fields.

2. Data Sources

The study draws upon two primary bodies of literature. First, classical Islamic sources were examined to extract foundational psychological concepts, including *fitrah*, *nafs*, *qalb*, and *'aql*. These sources include seminal works by classical Muslim scholars such as Al Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. Second, contemporary academic literature on mental health and psychology was reviewed, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles published within the last decade that address mental health, well-being, spirituality, and culturally responsive psychology.

Relevant literature was identified through academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using keywords including "Islamic psychology," "mental health," "spiritual well-being," "*fitrah*, *nafs*, *'aql*, *qalb*" and "religion and mental health."

3. Analytical Approach

The analysis followed a thematic and comparative synthesis process. Key psychological constructs from Islamic sources were first identified and thematically categorized. These constructs were then analytically compared with contemporary psychological concepts related to cognition, emotion regulation, behavioral control, and well-being. Through iterative analysis, conceptual correspondences and theoretical intersections were mapped to construct an integrative framework.

The concept of *fitrah* was positioned as the ontological foundation of human psychology, while *fitrah*, *nafs*, *qalb*, and *'aql* were analyzed as dynamic and interrelated dimensions of human functioning. This analytical process enabled the formulation of a coherent model explaining mental health as a state of alignment between innate disposition, cognition, emotion, behavior, and spirituality.

4. Trustworthiness and Rigor

To enhance analytical rigor, the study applied theoretical triangulation by

engaging multiple scholarly traditions and sources. Interpretive consistency was maintained through repeated cross-examination of classical texts and contemporary literature. Reflexive analysis was employed to minimize interpretive bias, particularly in translating classical Islamic concepts into modern psychological terminology.

5. Ethical Considerations

As a conceptual and literature-based study, this research did not involve human participants or primary data collection. Therefore, ethical approval was not required. Nevertheless, scholarly ethical standards were maintained through accurate citation, faithful interpretation of sources, and avoidance of misrepresentation of classical or contemporary scholarship.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. *Contemporary Mental Health Paradigms*

Contemporary mental health is heavily influenced by the biopsychosocial model. The biopsychosocial model is a comprehensive framework that integrates psychological, biological, and social factors to understand mental health and illness. This model has become the dominant paradigm in contemporary health psychology and psychiatry (Lugg, 2022; Mahapatra & Sharma, 2024). The biopsychosocial model was developed by George Engel in 1977, where previous concepts recognized that mental health is influenced by psychological and sociocultural factors (Lugg, 2022). This model emerged due to the response to the limitations of the biomedical model which only focuses on biological aspects (Mahapatra & Sharma, 2024). The biopsychosocial model is a major framework for mental health care that is widely used in research, education and clinical practice, which is able to provide a holistic understanding of mental illness and health (Lugg, 2022; Mahapatra & Sharma, 2024).

This model encourages clinical practitioners to collaborate across disciplines to help address individual health problems (Ventriglio et al., 2025). This model has significantly advanced the field by promoting interdisciplinary understanding and reducing the dominance of purely biomedical explanations. Furthermore, the emergence of positive psychology has shifted attention away from the pathology of strength, resilience, and subjective well-being. With its focus on strengths, positive emotions, and adaptive coping strategies, positive psychology complements traditional mental health approaches and contributes to a more holistic understanding of mental health (Lianov & Burke, 2023).

Historically, until the late 20th century, psychology had not been able to give serious attention to the spiritual aspect, despite its founders' strong interest. However, a shift occurred with the emergence of the post-secularist and materialist paradigms (Shakhova & Zhdanova, 2025). More and more mental health research is being supported by spirituality, for example by the effects of increasing resilience and providing meaning to life. (Cuevas-Cuevas et al., 2024; Hinterberger & Walter, 2024). The mainstream models that have been developed only treat spirituality as a peripheral variable, that is, they only include spirituality as a holistic care model but do not integrate it into core psychological theory or practice (Fayard & Hagele, 2025).

Some therapeutic approaches have begun to integrate elements of spirituality, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and psychodynamic therapy. However, spirituality is often considered complementary, not the core, of treatment (Berghmans, 2023; Chandler et al., 2022). In this regard, mental health professionals face significant challenges when integrating spirituality into their therapy. These challenges include inadequate training, conceptual ambiguity, and ethical concerns, all of which contribute

to professionals' lack of confidence in addressing spiritual issues (Ekşi et al., 2026). Besides that, there is a large dominance of secular education which is unable to embrace the spiritual aspect (Ekşi et al., 2026). Functionally, mental health can be defined as reducing negative symptoms such as stress, increasing productivity, and improving adaptability. While deeper questions about the meaning of life, purpose, and moral orientation still need to be explored, this gap can lead to dissatisfaction among individuals who consider spiritual and religious beliefs central to their identity and problem-solving mechanisms. In recent years, culturally and spiritually based therapies have attracted considerable attention from professional practitioners. While the integration of religion and spirituality can improve therapeutic outcomes, this approach remains eclectic and lacks a coherent anthropological foundation, particularly when applied to Muslim populations.

2. Basics of Islamic Psychology

Islamic psychology, known as the science of self or soul, integrates Islamic values into psychological theories to understand the human soul, mind, and behavior from an Islamic perspective. Its four main principles: *fitrah* (natural disposition), *nafs* (self), *aql* (intelligence), and *ruh* (soul), were developed long before the advent of modern psychology. The principle of *fitrah* is a natural human tendency, or innate characteristic, that inclines toward goodness and obedience to Allah SWT (Rassool, 2023). The principle of *nafs* (self) which refers to the soul in various states and stages of the soul in humans, namely the calm self (*nafs al-mutma'inna*), the commanding self (*nafs al-ammara*), and the self that criticizes (*nafs al-lawwama*) (Rassool, 2021, 2023). The principle of *Aql* (intelligence) as a human ability to think and understand the world, and this is highly valued in Islam. (Rassool, 2023).

Islamic psychology has its roots in the work of early Muslim scholars who integrated the knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah with their understanding of human nature and behavior (Rassool, 2021; Rassool & Luqman, 2022). This science has developed with the findings of contemporary research, creating a holistic approach that examines the physical, social, psychological and spiritual dimensions of humans (Rassool, 2021; Rassool & Luqman, 2022). Applications and practices of Islamic psychology in the form of prayer practices, reading the Qur'an, and other exercises to help improve human spiritual and mental well being (Hasanović et al., 2021; Rassool, 2023). In addition, in Islamic counseling, Islamic values such as *ikhtiyar* (effort) and *tawakkul* (surrender to Allah) are integrated into modern psychological techniques to help resolve problems of self-efficacy, self-resilience and motivation (Faizal et al., 2025).

This proves that this construction is not merely theoretical, but is closely related to spiritual growth and ethical perfection (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). The process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is emphasized in Islamic teachings, which involve self-control, introspection, and the development of good human qualities while suppressing bad tendencies (Hartati, 2018). Al-Ghazali viewed the soul as a dynamic entity that plays a vital role in decision-making and behavior. He believed that the soul is not static, but is capable of growth and change due to the influence of external forces and internal human desires (Akib et al., 2023). Al-Ghazali argued that the human soul is subject to a hierarchical nature derived from God. Human receptivity to divine suggestions and receptivity to evil depend on the soul and its potential development or moral decline (Richmond, 2022).

Rational power should be able to overcome the power of anger in order to achieve moral superiority, this is also what causes the dynamic nature and ebb and flow of human morals (Cihan, 2016). Moral decline stems from the failure to purify the heart, purifying the heart involves practical religious rituals and is in accordance with Islamic law by

integrating rational and spiritual methods for holistic healing (Firmansyah & Octavia, 2023). Meanwhile, Ibn Sina and Ibn Qayyim contributed to the understanding of human cognitive, emotional, and psychological processes. Ibn Sina offered an analysis of the psychological apparatus (Pajević et al., 2021; Pajević et al., 2021) and the importance of maintaining balance which includes life balance, dietary recommendations, lifestyle adjustments, and body fluid balance (Arroisi, Arif, et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Ibn Qayyim focused on the interdependence between psychological health and spiritual well-being and the cognitive-behavioral model.

Al-Ghazali conceptualized the human soul as dynamic and malleable, capable of experiencing moral ups and downs. He emphasized purification of the heart as central to psychological and spiritual well-being. Ibn Sina offered a detailed analysis of cognitive and emotional processes, while Ibn Qayyim highlighted the interdependence between spiritual well-being and psychological health (Ain Norman & Eisa Ruhullah, 2024; Arroisi, Arif, et al., 2024; Pajević et al., 2021; Pajević et al., 2021; Rassool, 2021; Rassool & Luqman, 2023). Unlike Western psychology, which often adopts a value-neutral stance, Islamic psychology explicitly integrates ethics and spirituality into its understanding of mental health. Psychological disorders are not simply viewed as functional impairments but can also be understood as signs of spiritual imbalance or moral disorientation.

1) *Tren Terkini dalam Penelitian Psikologi Islam*

Over the past decade, researchers' interest in Islamic psychology can be said to have increased, this can be seen from the image above, but unfortunately in 2025 researchers' interest in Islamic psychology decreased (see image 1. Document by year).

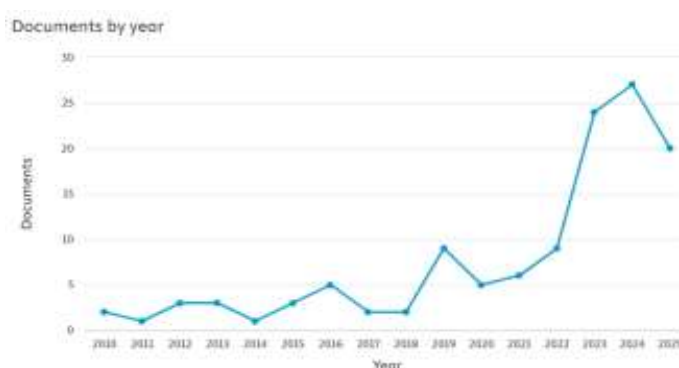


Figure 1. Document by year

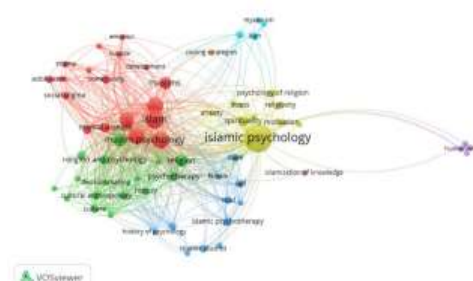


Figure 2. Bibliometric Map of Islamic Psychology

The bibliometric map shows the direction of multidimensional development of psychological research, encompassing philosophical, spiritual, cultural, and clinical aspects. The emergence of dominant themes of mental health and

spirituality signals a shift in research focus from a normative approach to a more empirical one. These findings will strengthen Islamic psychology as an interdisciplinary discipline relevant enough to address various mental health challenges, particularly among Muslims. However, challenges remain. Much research is descriptive or limited to clinical applications without adequate theoretical integration. Furthermore, a conceptual framework is needed that can rigorously and systematically bridge classical Islamic thought with contemporary psychology. Future studies should empirically test the proposed model, develop valid measurement instruments, and explore interdisciplinary collaborations between psychology, theology, and education.

2) Conceptual Framework of Fitra, Nafs, Qalb, and Aql

a. Fitrah: Innate Tendencies and Psychological Integrity

The concept of fitrah is associated with the idea that humans are born with an innate ability to accept and cultivate religion, particularly Islam, and that this natural tendency can be cultivated or changed through life experiences (Arif, 2023; Bor, 2017; Bor & Şahin, 2018). Fitrah is a central concept in Islamic psychology, influencing individual behavior and overall well-being. Fitrah is seen as the foundation for understanding the self (nafs), reason (aql), and soul (ruh) (Akhir, 2012; Rassool, 2023; Rassool & Keskin, 2025). The characteristics of nature include an innate tendency towards goodness, honesty and justice (Husain et al., 2024; Kadirov et al., 2016). There is a moral and spiritual tendency, this involves an instinctive tendency to recognize and worship God, and to distinguish between right and wrong (Demirci et al., 2008; Husain et al., 2024). Fitrah is related to the natural state of purity and morality that every human being possesses from birth (Bor & Şahin, 2018; Husain et al., 2024). In education, fitrah is used to shape religious teachings, emphasizing the innate divine nature and its role in shaping a balanced approach to religious education (Ebrahimi et al., 2025). The ethical implications of fitrah include the protection of human dignity, mental health, and the prohibition of harmful acts, in line with Islamic values (Muhsin, 2025).

Fitrah in Islamic psychology refers to the innate nature or natural state that humans possess from birth, encompassing qualities such as purity, morality, and an instinctive tendency towards faith in God (Husain et al., 2024). This concept provides a basic framework for understanding psychological well-being as alignment with one's innate nature. Key aspects of nature and psychological well-being. First, fitrah is seen as the natural state of human beings, which includes innate goodness and a tendency towards faith (Husain et al., 2024). Aligning oneself with this innate nature is essential for psychological well-being. The Fitrah Scale, which was developed to measure this concept, includes factors such as Happiness, Moral Honesty, Piety, Innate Goodness, and Faith in God, all of which contribute to an individual's overall well-being (Husain et al., 2024).

Islamic teachings emphasize a holistic approach to well-being, integrating the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Rothman et al., 2024). This holistic view aligns with the concept of fitrah, which suggests that well-being is achieved by maintaining balance and harmony in all aspects of life.

The principles of Maqasid al Shari'ah, which aim to promote well-being and prevent harm, further support the idea that well-being includes the fulfillment of both material and non-material needs (Rasool & Isa, 2020). Different types of prayer, such as supplication (du'ā') and remembrance (dhikr), have been shown

to have a positive impact on psychological and subjective well-being, highlighting the importance of spiritual practices in maintaining mental health (Güldaş, 2021). Both the Islamic perspective and modern psychology emphasize character development as essential to well-being. However, while modern psychology focuses on self-actualization, the Islamic perspective includes purification from worldly evils and gaining God's approval as part of self-actualization (Rothman et al., 2024). Early Muslim scholars such as Abu Zayd al-Balkhi and Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of balancing good and bad traits, which is in line with the concept of fitrah and its role in achieving psychological well-being (Rothman et al., 2024).

Mental and behavioral disorders may thus be interpreted not only as clinical dysfunctions but also as manifestations of disconnection from fitrah, resulting in inner conflict, loss of meaning, and moral disorientation. Contemporary psychology increasingly acknowledges similar ideas through concepts such as authentic self, intrinsic motivation, and self-congruence. Addressing disconnection from nature through spiritual and psychological interventions can reduce mental disorders and improve well-being. This aligns with strategies to enhance authenticity, intrinsic motivation, and self-congruence in contemporary psychology (Abo Shereda et al., 2025; Arif, 2023; Fantus et al., 2024; Jou, 2022; Keskin, 2025; Klingemann et al., 2025; Reis & Lesandrini, 2025; Subandi et al., 2024). Integrating fitrah into Islamic Psychology positions mental health as a process of restoration (islah) and realignment with the human being's original disposition. This concept offers a preventive and developmental dimension to mental health, emphasizing nurturing environments, ethical cultivation, and spiritual awareness from early life.

b. *Nafs*: Self and Behavioral Regulation

Nafs in the Koran refers to oneself or the soul which plays an important role in Islamic psycho-spirituality (Akib et al., 2023; Rassool & Keskin, 2025). The concept of *nafs* refers to the self or ego and includes drives, desires, and emotions. *Nafs* is the second element in humans after the body, and *nafs* is considered very important for monitoring and regulating human decisions and behavior (Akib et al., 2023). There are several levels in the *nafs*, each of which represents a stage of human spiritual and moral development, namely: *nafs al-ammara* (the self that rules and tends to low desires), *nafs al-lawwamah* (the self that criticizes itself), and *nafs al-mutma'innah* (the calm self). This stage demonstrates the development of a human being from a morally weak state to a state of spiritual serenity and moral excellence (Arawi et al., 2021; Çelik & Yildirim, 2018) and a strong relationship with God (Rassool & Keskin, 2025). In Islamic psychology, the *nafs* encompasses physical, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions (Rassool, 2021; Toprak, 2024).

From a psychological perspective, the *nafs* can be a key component for emotional regulation (Rassool & Keskin, 2025). The *nafs* is viewed as a dynamic entity, fostered through self-discipline and spiritual practices for personal and moral growth (Rassool, 2021; Rassool & Keskin, 2025). The integration of the *nafs* (self-centeredness) into psychological practice offers a holistic framework by combining spiritual and psychological insights. This approach is beneficial for individuals with an Islamic background, especially those with prior alignment of cultural and spiritual values (Hartati, 2018; Toprak, 2024). The integration of the science of the *nafs* (self-centeredness) into contemporary psychology represents

an innovative therapeutic intervention sensitive to religious values, potentially leading to holistic therapies that can serve diverse populations (Toprak, 2024).

The *nafs*, dominated by uncontrolled desires and internal conflict, can lead to psychological disorders. Therefore, cultivating awareness and discipline regarding the *nafs* is crucial for achieving psychological well-being (Pavlova, 2023; Rassool & Keskin, 2025). The *nafs*, as defined in Islamic psychology, encompasses self-reflection, self-improvement, and self-control (Rassool & Keskin, 2025). In addition, it is also said that *nafs* leads to dimensions of psychological well-being which include self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, having a purpose in life and having better personal growth (Ruiz Domínguez & Blanco-González, 2019).

c. *Qalb*: Spiritual-Emotional Center

The concept of the heart (*qalb*) holds a central position in Islamic psychology, serving as the center of consciousness, moral perception, and intention. This is supported by several important points, namely:

a) Spiritual and rational balance

In Islamic psychology, the heart is viewed as a spiritual representation that works alongside the mind to achieve intellectual and spiritual balance. This balance is essential for achieving inner peace, known as *nafs mutmainnah*, through consistent spiritual struggle (Arroisi, Muslih, et al., 2024).

b) Center for thought and reflection

The heart is an integral part of the process of *tafakkur* and *ta'aqul* (thinking and contemplating), as stated in Surah al-Hajj, verse 46. The heart plays a role in higher order thinking skills (HOTS) and is essential for understanding and applying knowledge (Ismail et al., 2021).

c) Moral and ethical guidance

The heart is not only the center of consciousness, but also the center of moral and ethical guidance that shapes character and behavior. Ghazali's personality model is rooted in Islamic teachings and emphasizes the role of the heart (*qalb*) in moral and ethical self-development (Basharat, 2020).

d) Spiritual Leadership

The concept of the heart (*qalb*) is crucial in Islamic leadership. It focuses on the spirituality of leadership, aiming to create a balance between intellectual and emotional satisfaction (Azzuhri et al., 2024; Mutalib & Rafiki, 2021).

e) Psychological and Emotional Well-Being

The role of the heart (*qalb*) extends to emotional and psychological well-being. The heart (*qalb*) is connected to the spiritual aspects of mental health, influencing individuals to overcome grief and hardship through faith-based resilience (Çınaroğlu, 2024). Furthermore, the heart's involvement in spiritual well-being is crucial for patients with chronic illnesses, such as heart failure, where spiritual well being is linked to overall health perception and symptom management (Eroglu & Metin, 2024).

In other words, the concept of the heart (*qalb*) occupies a central position in Islamic Psychology as the center of awareness, intention, and moral perception. It is not just a center of emotions, but also a spiritual faculty capable of providing insight and transformation. A healthy heart (*qalb Salim*) is associated with inner peace, sincerity, and emotional balance. Modern psychology increasingly recognizes the role of meaning, values, and emotional coherence in mental health.

The concept of the heart offers a framework for understanding how spiritual disconnection or moral dissonance can manifest as emotional distress.

d. *Aql*: Cognition, Reason, and Moral Judgment

The definition offered by al-Harith al-Muhasibi contributes to the understanding of 'aql, namely as an instinct or innate ability. This definition shapes Islamic thought on rationality (Abdulsater, 2022). 'Aql in Islamic thought is not merely a brain or cognitive function, but is considered a spiritual ability. This ability is innate and present in humans and is also closely related to other spiritual elements, such as the ruh, qalb, and nafs (Akhir, 2012). Discussing 'aql is also related to the concept of morality, demonstrating that intellectual reasoning in Islamic teachings is also a moral and ethical endeavor (Akhir, 2012). 'Aql represents the intellectual and rational ability responsible for understanding, reflection, and ethical reasoning. In Islamic thought, reason is not autonomous but works in harmony with revelation and moral values.

'Aql serves as the basis for ethical decision-making in Islamic therapeutic practices. This encourages professional practitioners to consider the moral implications of their interventions, ensuring that they align with Islamic values and the well-being of clients (Fahm, 2025; Latif et al., 2024). This ethical framework is crucial in addressing the unique needs of Muslim clients who may feel that mainstream psychological approaches do not respect their religious values (Rothman & Coyle, 2020).

Islamic psychology emphasizes a holistic approach to therapy, integrating spiritual practices such as daily prayer and supplication into mental health care plans. This integration not only addresses psychological symptoms but also nurtures clients' spiritual health, strengthening the connection between reason and ethical therapeutic practice (Latif et al., 2024; Rauf et al., 2025). Some treatment modalities influenced by 'aql include prophetic psychotherapy, which internalizes Islamic values and teachings in therapy, developing 'aql through strengthening worship and moral behavior (Zulkipli et al., 2025). This method has been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression among Muslim clients (Rauf et al., 2025). Furthermore, there is the Islamic Integrated Logotherapy technique, which combines traditional therapy methods with Islamic principles. This therapy has been shown to help substantially reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression (Khan & Hanif, 2025). Cognitive processes such as perception, interpretation, and decision-making are central to contemporary psychological theory. Integrating 'aql into a mental health framework highlights the importance of reflective thinking, moral judgment, and purposeful cognition in achieving well-being.

3) An Integrative Model for Human Well-Being

To conceptualize human well-being as a harmonious interaction between fitrah (natural disposition), desires (nafs), khalib (the Creator), and reason (intellect), it is important to understand the role of each element in Islamic psychology and how it contributes to psychological health. These concepts are:

a. Fitrah

Defined as the innate disposition or natural state of human beings from birth, encompassing purity, morality, and an instinctive tendency to believe in God (Husain et al., 2024). Understanding and aligning oneself with one's fitrah is crucial for shaping behavior and overall well-being, as fitrah represents the inherent goodness and moral compass of an individual (Husain et al., 2024). The

Fitrah scale encompasses factors such as happiness, piety, moral virtue, innate goodness, and faith in God, demonstrating how fitrah influences moral development by promoting self-quality (Husain et al., 2024). Fitrah relies on a positive view of human beings, indicating that individuals possess resilience and are capable of growth and development. This aligns with the strength perspective in social work, which views humans as capable of overcoming adversity (Abdullah, 2015).

Fitrah is a fundamental concept in Islamic psychology that shapes the understanding of human nature and influences mental health practice. Fitrah provides a framework for resilience and coping skills, and guides therapeutic approaches that integrate spiritual and psychological well-being. As contemporary Islamic psychologists explore and apply this concept, fitrah holds promise for improving mental health services in Muslim communities and encouraging a holistic approach to healing and personal development.

b. Nafs

Defined as the self or soul, representing a person's desires and inclinations (Nursoy Demir et al., 2024; Rassool, 2023). Human psychological health is achieved when the nafs is regulated, meaning desires are controlled and aligned with ethical and spiritual values (Nursoy-Demir et al., 2024; Rassool, 2023).

c. Qalb

Defined as the self or heart, it is considered the center of emotions and intentions in Islamic psychology (Nursoy-Demir et al., 2024; Rassool, 2023). Emotions and intentions need to be purified to ensure that they are sincere and aligned with spiritual and ethical principles. This purification process is crucial for achieving psychological well-being (Nursoy-Demir et al., 2024; Rassool, 2023).

d. 'Aql

Defined as the intellect or cognitive faculty, which guides reasoning and decision making (Nursoy-Demir et al., 2024; Rassool, 2023). For psychological health, cognition must be guided by wisdom and ethical insight, ensuring that decisions and actions are moral and beneficial (Nursoy-Demir et al., 2024; Rassool, 2023).

The integrative model of well-being in Islamic psychology emphasizes a holistic approach encompassing physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Nursoy-Demir et al., 2024; Omais, 2025; Rothman et al., 2024). This model suggests that well-being is achieved through the harmonious interaction of fitrah, nafs, qalb, and 'aql, each of which plays a crucial role in maintaining balance and promoting overall health (Nursoy-Demir et al., 2024; Omais, 2025; Rothman et al., 2024). The spiritual dimension is central to this model, with the primary goal of aligning all aspects of the self with divine principles and pursuing God's spiritual pleasure (Omais, 2025; Rothman et al., 2024). Modern clinicians are encouraged to adopt a paradigm that integrates these elements, going beyond conventional definitions of mental health to include spiritual and ethical dimensions (Nursoy-Demir et al., 2024; Toprak, 2024).

Character development strategies, as suggested by early Muslim scholars, can be applied in contemporary contexts to enhance psychological resilience and emotional well-being (Gillani & Khan, 2025; Rothman et al., 2024). The development of standardized tools, such as the Fitrah Scale, can help assess and guide individuals in aligning themselves with their innate dispositions and achieving holistic well-being (Husain et al., 2024). The proposed integrative model conceptualizes human

well-being as a harmonious interaction between fitrah, nafs, qalb, and 'aql.

The harmonious interaction between fitrah, nafs, 'aql, and qalb fosters a balanced and resilient psychological state. Fitrah provides a moral foundation, nafs drives action, 'aql offers rational guidance, and qalb ensures emotional and spiritual well-being. This integrated approach is crucial for achieving and maintaining psychological well-being in the context of Islamic psychology. Psychological well-being is achieved when desires are regulated (nafs), emotions and intentions are purified (qalb), and fitrah and cognition are guided by wisdom. *kesejahteraan*.

4) Implications for Mental Health Practice

a. Psychotherapy and Counseling

Recognizing fitrah can guide therapists in cultivating a sense of moral and spiritual alignment in clients. This understanding can help clients reconnect with their innate goodness, which is crucial for emotional healing (Husain et al., 2024). Integrating fitrah into therapy can lead to the development of holistic models that combine scientific and spiritual insights. For example, the *Ilm an-Nafs* model provides a framework aligned with the values of Muslim patients, offering a more comprehensive understanding of emotional suffering (Toprak, 2024).

Understanding the levels of nafs can help therapists identify where clients may be experiencing difficulty. For example, clients dominated by nafs al-ammara may experience greater emotional distress due to impulsive behavior, while clients at the nafs al-lawwama level may struggle with guilt and self-criticism (Rassool & Keskin, 2025; Rothman & Coyle, 2020). Encouraging clients to reflect on their actions and motivations can help them progress through the levels of nafs. Incorporating Islamic practices such as prayer and dua can support emotional healing and strengthen the connection with the natural instinct (fitrah). Islamic psychology emphasizes self-reflection and self-control as key practices for purifying the nafs (self-consciousness). This process aligns with psychological principles aimed at achieving moral excellence and personal growth (Rassool & Keskin, 2025). Techniques such as self-reflection can help individuals understand their emotional states and regulate their responses, which is crucial for managing emotional distress (Rassool & Keskin, 2025).

Integrating Islamic concepts such as fitrah and nafs into therapy can make interventions more relevant to Muslim clients. This approach acknowledges their spiritual beliefs and can enhance the therapeutic alliance (Islam & Chadwick, 2025; F. Khan et al., 2023). By focusing on innate goodness (fitrah) and self-development (nafs), therapists can help clients build resilience. Techniques such as self-reflection, moral reasoning, and spiritual practices can be used to improve emotional well-being (Husain et al., 2024; Latif et al., 2024; Rassool & Keskin, 2025). Emotion regulation therapy (ERT) focuses on managing intense emotions and negative self-references, which are common in stress disorders such as depression and anxiety (Sculpt et al., 2019). Understanding the nafs can complement ERT by increasing self awareness and control over one's desires and emotions.

Understanding and integrating these Islamic psychological concepts can benefit clients from diverse backgrounds, not just Muslims. This fosters a more inclusive therapeutic environment that respects and acknowledges diverse spiritual beliefs (F. Khan et al., 2023; Rothman & Coyle, 2020). Several studies have shown that therapy that incorporates a spiritual dimension can lead to better emotional outcomes, as clients feel more understood and supported in their

beliefs (F. Khan et al., 2023; Toprak, 2024). Integrating fitrah and nafs into therapeutic practice promotes a holistic approach to mental health, considering both spiritual and psychological dimensions. This can result in more comprehensive and effective interventions for addressing emotional distress (Cornwall, 2024; Rassool & Keskin, 2025). An integrative framework supports a spiritually sensitive therapeutic approach that addresses cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions. Islamic psychotherapy can incorporate practices such as self-reflection, ethical development, and spiritual awareness.

b. Education and Character Development

The framework of fitrah, nafs, 'aql, and qalb can be effectively utilized in educational programs to enhance psychological resilience, moral development, and spiritual well-being among students.

a) Psychological Resilience

Emotional intelligence (EI), included in the concept of 'aql, is crucial for psychological resilience. Studies show that EI is positively correlated with critical thinking and academic achievement, suggesting that increased EI can improve students' ability to cope with stress and challenges (Akbarilakeh et al., 2018; Christodoulakis et al., 2023; Fereidouni et al., 2024). Integrating emotional intelligence (EI) into educational programs can foster resilience by helping students manage their emotions and develop coping strategies (Antonioni et al., 2025; Booth & Neill, 2017; Nashwan & Nazarene, 2025). Furthermore, practicing mindfulness has been shown to improve critical thinking skills and emotional intelligence, which are crucial for mental resilience. Implementing mindfulness training aligned with the concept of nafs in educational settings can help students develop better emotional regulation and empathy, thus contributing to their overall psychological resilience (Molbassynova et al., 2026).

b) Moral Development

Character education significantly influences moral development, which falls under the concept of nafs. Programs that focus on character education and create supportive learning environments can enhance students' motivation and moral values (Ristiana et al., 2025). Integrating moral education into the curriculum, using frameworks such as Al Mawardi's model of human morality, can help students develop a strong sense of ethics and responsibility (Kour et al., 2025; Selo et al., 2015; Vardhan, 2025). Furthermore, physical education programs that incorporate moral education can foster moral and social competence among students. These programs, designed in alignment with cultural values, can effectively promote moral development (Jadwiszczak et al., 2025).

c) Spiritual Well-Being

Spiritual well-being is influenced by spiritual teaching practices, community engagement, and a positive classroom environment. These factors significantly impact students' overall well-being, suggesting that integrating spiritual teachings into educational programs can enhance students' spiritual growth (Beauvais et al., 2014; Suasthi, 2022). Integrating Al Ghazali's concepts of nafs (self), qalb (heart), ruh (spirit), and 'aql (soul) into educational models can address spiritual emptiness and promote holistic spiritual development. This approach has been shown to significantly improve students' spiritual understanding and engagement (Faqihuddin et al., 2025).

Some possible implementation strategies include:

1. Curriculum Development

Develop a curriculum that integrates emotional intelligence, self-awareness, character education, and spiritual teachings. This holistic approach can address various aspects of student well-being and development.

2. Teacher Training

Provide professional development for teachers to equip them with skills in fostering emotional intelligence, resilience, and moral development in students. Teachers play a crucial role in creating a supportive and nurturing environment (Antoniou et al., 2025; Nashwan & Nazarene, 2025; Stillman et al., 2018).

3. Community Engagement

Involve the community in educational programs to support students' spiritual and moral development. Community engagement can provide additional resources and support for students (Suasthi, 2022).

Utilizing the fitrah, nafs, aql, and qalb framework in educational programs can significantly improve psychological resilience, moral development, and spiritual well-being among students. By integrating emotional intelligence, self-awareness, character education, and spiritual teachings into the curriculum, educators can create a comprehensive and supportive learning environment that meets students' holistic needs.

c. Global and Cross-Cultural Relevance

Although rooted in Islamic tradition, this framework offers universal insights applicable to diverse cultural contexts, contributing to a more inclusive global psychology. Integrating these concepts provides a multidimensional perspective aligned with scientific and religious perspectives, offering a more comprehensive understanding of human psychology (Toprak, 2024). This approach helps distinguish between psychopathology and spirituality, providing a sense of security and relevance for clients from diverse cultural backgrounds (Toprak, 2024). It has also been argued that integrating fitrah, nafs, 'aql, and qalb into psychological practice ensures that interventions are culturally sensitive and aligned with the values and beliefs of Muslim clients (Rassool & Keskin, 2025; Toprak, 2024). Educational programs that integrate these Islamic concepts can prepare students and professionals to better understand and address the psychological needs of diverse populations (Baharudin et al., 2017). Meanwhile, therapeutic models based on these principles can offer a more explanatory and holistic framework, potentially resulting in more effective and culturally relevant therapy (Toprak, 2024). Cultural congruence can enhance engagement and positive outcomes, as seen in other culturally tailored interventions (Akartuna et al., 2025; Niven, 2010).

5) Future Research Directions

The conceptual framework proposed in this study opens several important avenues for future research in Islamic Psychology and mental health. First, empirical validation of the fitrah-nafs-qalb-'aql model is required to examine its explanatory and predictive value. Future studies may employ quantitative methods to develop and validate psychometric instruments that operationalize these constructs and assess their relationships with mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, resilience, and psychological well-being.

Second, qualitative and mixed-methods research is needed to explore how alignment or misalignment with *fitrah* is experienced and interpreted by individuals across different cultural and socio-religious contexts. In-depth interviews, phenomenological studies, and narrative analyses could provide rich insights into the lived experience of mental distress and recovery from an Islamic psychological perspective.

Third, future research should examine the clinical applicability of the proposed framework. Intervention-based studies may investigate the effectiveness of spiritually integrated therapeutic approaches grounded in Islamic Psychology, including counseling models that address cognitive ('aql), emotional-spiritual (qalb), and behavioral (nafs) dimensions. Comparative studies with conventional psychotherapeutic approaches would be particularly valuable in assessing clinical utility.

Fourth, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research is essential to evaluate the relevance of the *fitrah*-based model beyond Muslim populations. Collaborative studies involving psychology, psychiatry, theology, education, and public health could assess how spiritually grounded models contribute to global mental health initiatives and culturally responsive care.

Finally, future research should explore the preventive and developmental implications of *fitrah* in educational and community settings. Longitudinal studies examining moral development, spiritual well-being, and mental health across the lifespan may help establish Islamic Psychology as a proactive, not merely remedial, approach to human flourishing.

D. CONCLUSION

This article has developed an integrative conceptual framework that bridges Islamic Psychology and contemporary mental health discourse through the interrelated constructs of *fitrah*, *nafs*, *qalb*, and '*aql*'. By positioning *fitrah* as the ontological foundation of human psychology, the proposed model reframes mental health not merely as the absence of mental disorders, but as a dynamic process of alignment with the human being's innate disposition toward meaning, moral awareness, and transcendence.

The framework demonstrates that mental and behavioral disorders can be understood as multidimensional disruptions involving misalignment with *fitrah*, dysregulation of desire (*nafs*), imbalance in emotional and spiritual consciousness (*qalb*), and impairment in ethical-cognitive reasoning ('*aql*'). Through this holistic lens, Islamic Psychology offers a coherent and value-integrated understanding of human well-being that complements and enriches dominant psychological paradigms, which often marginalize spiritual and moral dimensions.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, this study highlights the practical relevance of Islamic Psychology for psychotherapy, counseling, education, and preventive mental health initiatives. The integrative model provides a culturally responsive and spiritually grounded framework that is particularly relevant in addressing the global mental health burden, especially within religious and non-Western contexts.

While this study is conceptual in nature and limited by the absence of empirical testing, it lays a robust theoretical foundation for future interdisciplinary research. Ultimately, this article positions Islamic Psychology not as an alternative or peripheral approach, but as a legitimate epistemological partner in the development of a more holistic, humane, and meaningful global mental health paradigm.

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