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The Relevance of Holistic and Humanistic Education in Islam

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relevance of integrating holistic and humanistic approaches within the framework of Islamic education. Holistic education is conceptualised as a comprehensive approach that develops all dimensions of human potential — physical, intellectual, spiritual, moral, social, and emotional. In parallel, humanistic education emphasises the cultivation of human values, self-awareness, and individual potential, aligning these with the teachings of Islam. Together, these approaches respond to contemporary educational challenges that often overemphasise cognitive achievement while neglecting moral, emotional, and spiritual growth.

This study employs a library research method, drawing data from books, peer-reviewed journals, and academic articles on holistic education, humanistic education, and Islamic thought. Sources were accessed through libraries and electronic databases and were analysed thematically to identify key concepts and points of convergence between the two educational approaches and Islamic principles. Findings were validated through source triangulation and cross-comparison with previous studies to ensure credibility and accuracy.

The discussion reveals that holistic education — consistent with Islam's view of humans as a unity of body and soul — complements humanistic education, which fosters dignity and individual potential in line with the Qur'ānic concept of humans as *khalīfah* (vicegerents of the earth). Integrating these approaches helps counterbalance the narrow focus on cognitive learning prevalent in modern education, which risks dehumanisation and the neglect of character formation.

The study further offers practical implications, encouraging Islamic educational institutions to design programs that nurture multiple dimensions of students' development, adopt inclusive and student-centred pedagogies, and cultivate supportive environments that promote moral and spiritual growth. Such initiatives are expected to enhance the quality of Islamic education and prepare a generation that is knowledgeable, ethically grounded, socially responsible, and spiritually conscious.

Ultimately, this study proposes a balanced educational model that harmonises Islamic values with contemporary educational theory, offering a spiritually grounded, inclusive, and transformative learning framework for addressing modern educational challenges.

KEYWORDS: Holistic Education, Humanistic Education, Islamic Education, Character Development, Human Values

INTRODUCTION

Education is commonly understood as the guidance provided by one person to facilitate the development of another toward a specific goal (Alkrienciehie, 2013). Human beings require education to improve the quality of their lives. As emphasised in *al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah*, the human need for education is what distinguishes humans from animals and plants — namely, the ability to act purposefully and to strive for continuous improvement in life (Nahlawy, 1998). Within this context, Islamic education plays a fundamental role, particularly in Indonesia with its majority Muslim population, as the cornerstone of human resource development and character building. Its ultimate aim is to shape a society and culture that reflects the values of an Islamic community. In this sense, Islam fulfils its role as *rahmatan lil-ʿālamīn* — a mercy to all creation.

Nevertheless, Islamic education continues to face a range of complex challenges, from conceptual and theoretical issues to operational and practical ones. These unresolved problems have contributed to Islamic education lagging behind other educational systems, both quantitatively and qualitatively, resulting in its perception as "second-class" education. Consequently, many Muslim students pursue education in non-Islamic institutions. Imron Rossidy (2009) argues that the root cause of these challenges lies in the dualistic nature of the modern education system, which is shaped by secularism and has brought about crises in multiple aspects of life. From this perspective, it can be concluded that the dichotomy between religious and general sciences continues to create a significant impact on the holistic development of Muslim societies.

The backwardness of Islamic education can be attributed, in part, to the narrowing of its conceptual scope — focusing almost exclusively on the *ukhrawi* (hereafter) aspects of life while neglecting the *dunyawi* (worldly) dimensions, or emphasising spiritual development in isolation from physical and intellectual growth. At the same time, modern educational development has been heavily influenced by the model of "mass education," which tends to produce students who are cognitively capable but limited to left-brain development — emphasising language and logical-mathematical skills. As a result, disciplines that foster right-brain development — such as art, music, creativity, imagination, and character formation — often receive minimal attention. Where they are included, the approach remains largely cognitive, emphasising memorisation rather than appreciation and meaningful engagement that could inspire students' intrinsic motivation to explore and learn (Khairunnas, 2013).

Such a narrowly cognitive approach can reduce education to the mere pursuit of high grades, leading some students to adopt any means necessary — even unethical ones — to achieve top scores. This indicates a deeper problem: education has shifted away from its formative and transformative role toward a mechanistic and competitive process.

Education, however, should do more than impart cognitive skills. It should introduce learners to fundamental issues faced by humanity and equip them to formulate meaningful solutions. In doing so, education fosters self-awareness — enabling learners to understand who they are, their purpose, and the values that guide their lives. A person's life becomes truly meaningful when they can contribute peace, happiness, and enlightenment to those around them. Education that embraces this vision is known as holistic education (Musfah, 2012).

Among education scholars and practitioners, holistic education is seen as a viable solution to the shortcomings of today's education systems. By emphasising the balanced development of cognitive, affective, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions, holistic education aims to produce graduates who are not only academically capable but also emotionally intelligent, ethically grounded, and socially responsible. At its core, holistic education represents a comprehensive approach — one that sees, understands, approaches, and treats the learner as a complete and integrated human being.

The true nature of education as a process of humanisation is often overlooked, resulting in what Paulo Freire (1972) terms dehumanisation — the erosion of human values within the educational process. This condition arises from a significant gap between the concept of education and its actual implementation within institutions. Such a disconnect prevents education from fulfilling its sacred mission of elevating human dignity and nurturing fully developed individuals.

Consequently, education has not succeeded in truly humanising students. Instead, as previously discussed, contemporary education tends to focus narrowly on cognitive achievement, reducing the measure of success to the grades learners obtain. This grade-oriented approach transforms education into a form of coercion, pressuring students to master predetermined content rather than inspiring them to explore, reflect, and grow as whole human beings.

Islam, as a divine teaching, places profound emphasis on the wisdom and dignity of humanity across all ages. Since its emergence in the 6th century, Islam has consistently upheld and promoted universal human values. As Moussa (n.d.) explains, *"Islam is the last of all the divine messages. The nature of this message must be of a kind that makes it fit for all humanity in every age, generation, and time."* This aligns with the mission of Prophet Muhammad SAW, who was sent as a bearer of mercy and compassion for all creation — *"a Mercy to the worlds"* (Qur'an, 21:107).

Islamic teachings, therefore, safeguard and guarantee the preservation of human values, ensuring justice and dignity for all. Every Muslim is called upon to recognise, respect, and uphold the honour of others. This responsibility is not merely social but spiritual — a pathway to realising the human side of humanity, which is a fundamental duty in shaping and sustaining a just and flourishing society.

Education, as a process of humanising human beings (humanisation), originates from the philosophical tradition of humanism. This is consistent with the basic meaning of humanism as "human education" (ZA, 2015; Edward, 1972). In Islam, the educational system has, from its inception, been built upon humanistic values, aligning with its essence as a religion centred on the dignity and development of humanity. To suggest that the concept of humanistic-Islamic education is merely a Western construct rebranded as Islamic would be a naïve misunderstanding (ZA, 2014).

Islamic education should introduce learners to the fundamental issues faced by humanity and equip them with the capacity to address these challenges with wisdom and compassion. Through this process, learners gain an awareness of their essential nature — understanding who they are, their purpose, and the manner in which they ought to live. A human life becomes meaningful when it brings peace, happiness, and enlightenment to others. Education that cultivates this vision is known as holistic education (Musfah, 2012).

Humanistic education provides the space for the growth of awareness regarding human values and the meaning of life. It emphasises not only social and spiritual values but also the formation of students' character as an integral goal. Crucially, a humanistic approach must involve all elements of the educational ecosystem: policymakers, institutions, communities, teachers, educational staff, and students themselves, who stand at the centre of the educational universe.

It is essential to explore the relevance of holistic and humanistic education in Islam, as doing so allows us to uncover various definitions and perspectives that link these concepts with the broader domains of Islamic studies. This discussion aims to provide readers with a clearer understanding of how education should function — not merely as a means of transferring knowledge, but as a process that nurtures and develops all dimensions of the human being: intellectual, spiritual, moral, emotional, and social.

Through this exploration, it is hoped that readers will appreciate the importance of education as a transformative force, enabling human beings to realise their full potential and achieve the higher

objectives of education in Islam. In this way, educational goals can be properly fulfilled, contributing to the cultivation of well-rounded individuals who embody balance, wisdom, and responsibility in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Holistic

The term "holistic" is derived from "holism," a concept first introduced by J.C. Smuts in his 1926 work *Holism and Evolution*. According to Smuts, holism describes the natural tendency of systems to form wholes that are greater than the sum of their parts. The word itself originates from the Greek term holos, meaning "all" or "whole." Holism, therefore, emphasises the integration and interdependence of parts within a system, highlighting how they collectively create a more complex and meaningful whole (Nobita, n.d.).

According to Noah Webster, the term "holistic" is derived from the English root word whole, meaning "entire" or "complete." It is also etymologically related to the words heal and health, sharing the same linguistic root as whole. This indicates that the concept of holistic thinking is connected not only to completeness but also to well-being and restoration. Sholeh and Musbikin (2005) note that before being applied to the field of education, the term holistic was first introduced in the health sciences, particularly in medicine, where it refers to viewing the human body as an interconnected system in which each part influences the whole.

In essence, holistic represents a comprehensive approach — one that sees, understands, approaches, and treats a phenomenon as an integrated and unified whole. When applied to education, Ibn Hadjar (2001) explains that a holistic perspective emphasises the integration of linear and intuitive thinking, the connection between mind and body, the interrelationship among various branches of knowledge, and the dynamic link between the individual and society.

To illustrate these ideas visually, please refer to the figure below.
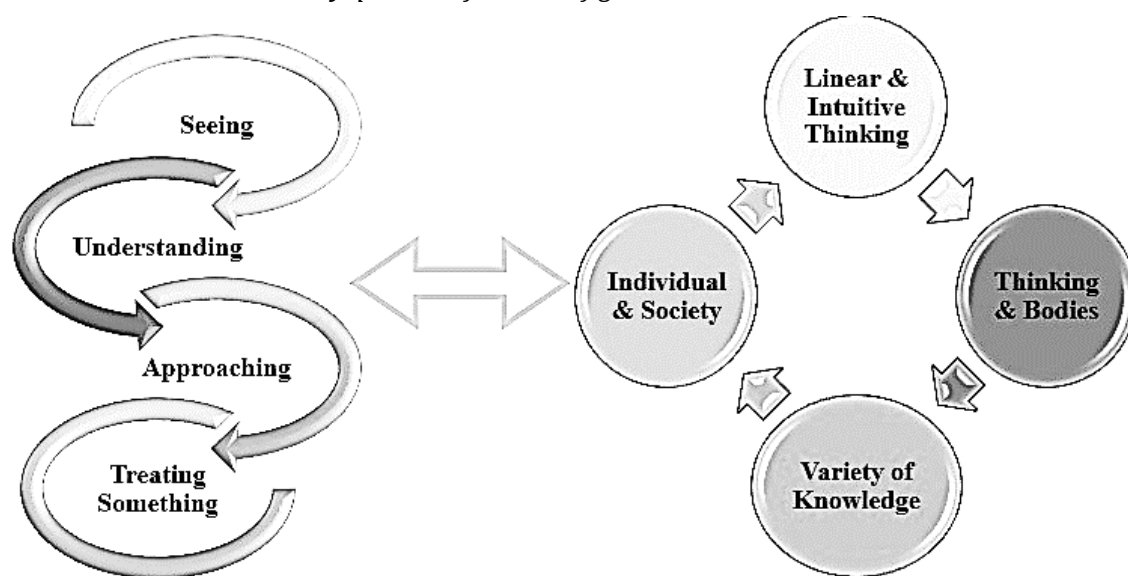
Figure 1: Relationship Between Holistic Approach & Holistic Focus Pattern in Education:

Figure 1 above can be understood as a representation of the holistic approach pattern — a cycle of seeing, understanding, approaching, and treating phenomena as interconnected and unified. This pattern closely aligns with the holistic focus in education, which is comprehensive in nature. It integrates linear and intuitive thinking, fosters harmony between mind and body, connects various domains of knowledge, and bridges the relationship between individuals and society.

In this sense, the holistic approach pattern and its educational focus form an inseparable framework for addressing the diverse challenges of life. Within the context of education, such an approach provides a balanced and integrated way of nurturing learners, enabling them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, thereby equipping them to respond effectively to real-world problems.

Holistic Education

One of the primary goals of education is to explore and nurture the potential within students. This can be achieved by engaging them in meaningful learning processes that incorporate diverse activities. Active participation in such activities not only develops students' abilities but also broadens their perspectives, enabling them to approach and solve problems creatively. The use of varied learning models significantly influences students' overall development and helps prepare them to face future challenges with confidence and competence.

Holistic education represents a comprehensive learning approach that goes beyond the mere transfer of knowledge. It emphasises the active involvement of students in experiences that make the learning process enjoyable, relevant, and transformative. Rather than focusing solely on cognitive outcomes, holistic education encourages activities that stimulate emotional, social, creative, and moral growth.

Several key aspects of learner development that can be cultivated through the application of holistic education are illustrated in the following figure:
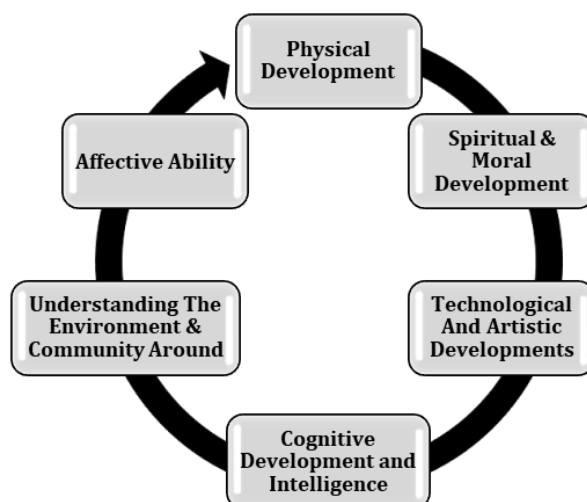

Figure 2: Six Aspects of Development That Can Be Explored Through Holistic Education

According to Jejen Musfah (2015), drawing on the views of Ron Miller, holistic education is defined as:

> *"Holistic education is a philosophy of education based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to humanitarian values such as compassion and peace. Holistic education aims to call forth from people an intrinsic reverence for life and a passionate love of learning."*

This can be interpreted to mean that holistic education is a philosophy that emphasises the development of the whole person. It seeks to guide individuals in discovering their identity, meaning,

and purpose through deep connections with society, harmony with nature, and alignment with universal human values such as compassion, empathy, and peace. Holistic education, therefore, moves beyond mere academic achievement to foster character formation, emotional growth, and a lifelong passion for learning.

From this understanding, it can be concluded that holistic education equips learners with the ability to understand and respond to a wide range of life's challenges — including issues of social justice, multiculturalism, and religion. Its goal is to cultivate students who possess global insight, strong character, and the capacity to propose solutions to humanitarian and peace-related issues. Importantly, holistic education does not require the introduction of new subjects in schools or madrasahs; rather, it calls on educators to integrate learning with the social, religious, economic, and legal realities surrounding students. Through this approach, learners not only become aware of current societal problems but are also encouraged to engage actively in addressing them.

Ratna Megawangi (2005) further explains that holistic education is an educational method that builds human beings as complete individuals, developing all dimensions of potential — including social-emotional growth, intellectual ability, moral and character formation, creativity, and spirituality.

For a clearer understanding, please refer to the figure below.
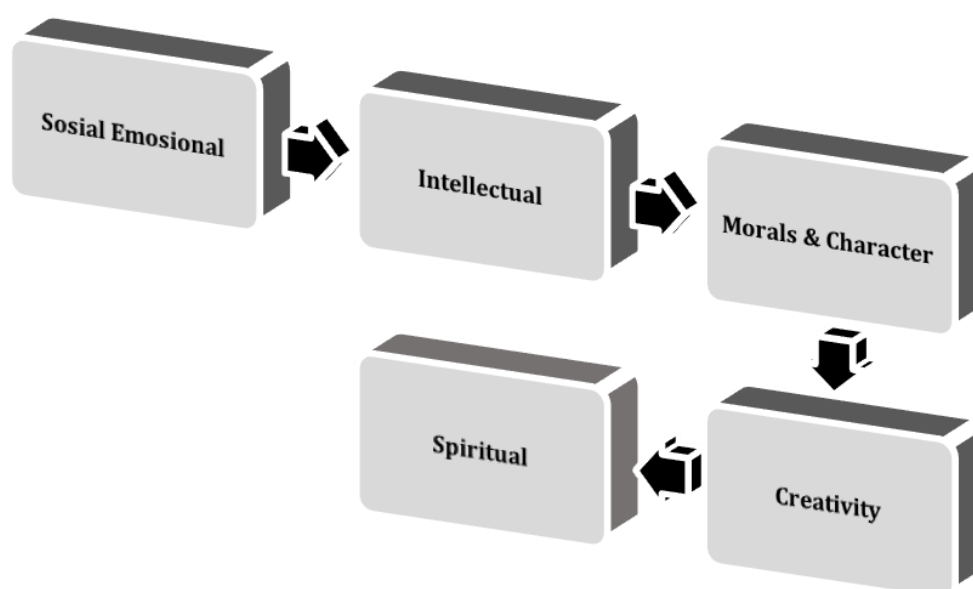
Figure 3: Potentials Developed Through Holistic Education

The perspective above aligns with the view of Saifuddin Sabda, who explains that the holistic education approach is an effort to nurture a whole and balanced development in each student across all aspects of learning. These aspects include the spiritual, moral, imaginative, intellectual, cultural, aesthetic, emotional, and physical dimensions of human potential. Importantly, all these dimensions are directed toward cultivating awareness of one's relationship with God, which is regarded as the ultimate purpose of life in this world (Saifuddin Sabda, n.d.).

Furthermore, the emergence of holistic education can be seen as a thoughtful response to the ecological, cultural, and moral challenges of the 21st century. It aims to prepare young people — as the next generation — to live wisely and responsibly, to foster mutual understanding in a pluralistic society, and to participate actively and sustainably in the development of their communities (Rubiyanto & Haryanto, 2010).

Holistic Education in Islam

In its broadest sense, education is a process of humanising human beings — a deliberate effort to nurture and develop human potential. Education should therefore aim to produce individuals with a holistic character, where intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions are harmoniously cultivated. Within this context, holistic education characterised by Islam seeks to develop human potential in its entirety, viewing the human being as a unified whole — integrating body and soul, individual and society, as well as the relationship between humanity and the Creator. It encompasses the unity of sustaining, nurturing, and developing life in all its dimensions (Maksum & Ruhendi, 2004).

Thus, holistic education is an educational endeavour that develops human beings with a complete and balanced perspective — as individual, social, and spiritual entities. It seeks to produce individuals who are spiritually strong, intellectually sound, and morally upright, guided by the values of Islamic teachings. In essence, Islamic holistic education is an effort to actualise a person's talents and abilities so that their full potential becomes a source of great value, both for themselves and for the community.

From an Islamic perspective, holistic education can be represented by the concept of kāffah (comprehensiveness). This is reflected in the Qur'anic injunction in Surah al-Baqarah (2:208):

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِى السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةًۖ وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِۗ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ

Meaning: "O you who believe, enter into Islam (peace) thoroughly and do not follow the steps of Satan! Indeed, he is a real enemy to you."

This verse underlines that Islam calls for the comprehensive engagement of all aspects of life, including education. In other words, education must nurture the whole person — physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually — in accordance with the guidance of Allah.

Furthermore, the Qur'an also emphasises the exalted nature of human beings in Surah At-Tīn (95:4):

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ فِيْٓ اَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيْمٍۖ

Meaning: "Indeed, we have created man in the best possible form." Surah At-Tīn (95:4).

The term "best" in Surah At-Tīn (95:4) can be understood as encompassing three key aspects that are closely related to education, as illustrated in Figure 4 below. These three aspects serve as essential requirements for achieving the ultimate goal of education — the formation of a complete and balanced human being. This is accomplished by integrating natural knowledge acquired through rational and empirical inquiry with revealed knowledge conveyed by the Prophets and Messengers. The result is a person capable of balancing the vertical dimension of life (relationship with Allah) with the horizontal dimension of life (relationship with fellow human beings and the natural world) (Masruri, 2009).

This view is further supported by Ali Ashraf (1993), who asserts that from an Islamic perspective, education must aim at the growth of a comprehensive human personality in a balanced manner. This involves the training and development of the soul, intellect, rational self, emotions, and senses. Education must therefore promote human growth across all dimensions — spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, and linguistic — both individually and collectively. Crucially, all these dimensions must be directed towards goodness and perfection, with the ultimate goal of Muslim education being the realisation of complete submission to Allah (Islam), at the level of the individual, the community, and humanity as a whole.
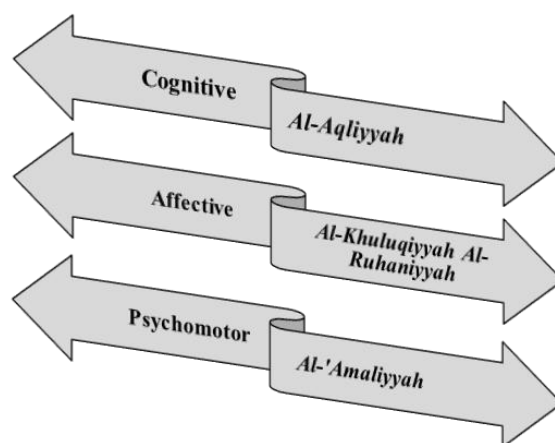
Figure 4: Three aspects of education related to Allah's creatures (the best)

Holistic education is ultimately oriented toward the formation of the perfect human being (al-insān al-kāmil), whose perfection is measured by devotion to Allah SWT and the attainment of inner peace. In the Islamic worldview, the purpose of acquiring knowledge is not merely intellectual enrichment but the cultivation of piety (taqwā) and the fulfilment of one's role as 'abd (servant) and khalīfah (vicegerent) of Allah.

Islam affirms that all knowledge originates from Allah SWT, for He alone possesses complete knowledge of all things and graciously imparts it to humankind. This is clearly expressed in Surah Ar-Raḥmān (55:1–4):

اَلرَّحْمٰنُ (١) عَلَّمَ الْقُرْاٰنَ (٢) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ (٣) عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ (٤)

Meaning: "*(Allah) is the Most Merciful; He has taught the Qur'an; He created man; He taught him to explain (eloquence).*"

These verses underscore that knowledge — both revealed and rational — is a divine gift. Consequently, education in Islam must orient the acquisition and application of knowledge toward recognising the Creator, cultivating moral and spiritual excellence, and achieving peace within oneself and society.

Surah Ar-Raḥmān (55:1–4) further indicates that knowledge can be understood in two principal forms: the Qur'an, which is to be read and internalised, and Al-Bayān, which is to be spoken and explained. Importantly, the reference to the Qur'an here is not limited to the *qauliyyah* verses (textual revelation) but also includes the *kauniyyah* verses — the signs of Allah evident in the universe and the phenomena of creation. Thus, true education integrates revealed knowledge and scientific exploration, leading to a comprehensive understanding of reality.

A perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is the reflection of such a holistic education. Ahmad Tafsir outlines the characteristics of a perfect Muslim according to Islam, which can be summarised as shown in the figure below:
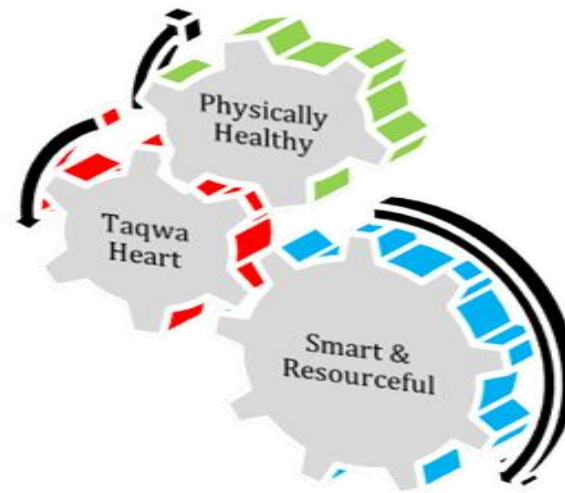
Figure 5: Characteristics of a Perfect Muslim According to Ahmad Tafsir (2010)

Figure 5 can be interpreted to mean that a Muslim can be categorised as a perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) when several key characteristics are present. Physically, they must be healthy, strong, and skilled, ensuring that they are capable of contributing actively to society. Spiritually, they must embody taqwā — a deep awareness of Allah SWT that leads them to fulfil His commands and avoid His prohibitions, cultivating a conscious heart and God-fearing. Intellectually, they must be able to analyse and solve problems accurately, quickly, and wisely using scientific, rational, and philosophical approaches, while also contributing to the growth of knowledge and wisdom.

From these explanations, it can be concluded that Islamic holistic education ultimately seeks to produce a generation that is balanced and perfected in all dimensions — physical, spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social. This aligns closely with the objectives of Islamic education as articulated by Mahfud Junaedi (2010):
1. Fostering noble morals (*tazkiyat al-akhlāq*).
2. Preparing learners for life in this world and the hereafter.
3. Mastery of knowledge in both religious and worldly sciences.
4. Acquiring skills to work productively and contribute to society.

This perspective is further reinforced by Al-Abrasyi, who asserts that Islamic education (*al-Tarbiyah al-Islāmiyah*) aims to prepare human beings to live perfectly and happily, to love their homeland, to be physically strong, morally upright, orderly in thought, refined in feelings, skilled in their work, and eloquent in both speech and writing (Al-Abrasyi, n.d.).

Taken together, these views emphasise that Islamic holistic education is not merely about intellectual development but is an integrated effort to nurture well-rounded individuals capable of fulfilling their role as Allah's servants and vicegerents on earth.

Overall, the explanations above illustrate that Islamic holistic education seeks to shape the learner into a complete human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) — a true servant of Allah — through a lifelong educational process. This process is neither instant nor static; rather, it evolves in tandem with the changing circumstances and developments of society. Education, as the very process of life itself, must therefore remain dynamic, ensuring that its goals adapt to new contexts while remaining rooted in divine guidance.

In this regard, Islamic education requires specific operative objectives that serve as practical guidelines, enabling education to produce meaningful outcomes — such as the creation and

development of new knowledge and the cultivation of a critical, reflective attitude toward life. By recognising the central role of the human being in the educational process — including the potentials of fitrah (innate disposition), spiritual consciousness, and the divine design of human nature — the ultimate aim of Islamic education is to actualise these potentials. When these ideal values are fully realised, they shape individuals who are whole, independent, and balanced in all aspects of their existence.

Humanistic

The term humanist is defined in the Popular Scientific Dictionary as a doctrine that emphasises human interests and ideals (Al-Barry & A.T., 2008). Humanism, as a philosophical school of thought, aims to revive the sense of humanity and to aspire toward a better, more dignified way of life (Farida, 2015).

In Arabic terminology, humanism is often expressed through concepts such as *al-Adab, al-Adabiyyāt, Anwāʾ al-Adab, Durūb al-Adab, Funūn al-Adab, ʿIlm al-Adab, ʿIlm al-ʿArab, ʿIlm al-ʿArabiyyah, al-ʿUlūm al-ʿArabiyyah*, and *ʿIlm al-Lisān.* These terms relate to the refinement of character, literature, and language, all of which contribute to the cultivation of a noble human being. In its intellectual development, humanism is often associated with ethics — the study of norms and rules governing moral conduct (Makdisi, 1990).

Humanistic theory emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to two dominant psychological schools: psychoanalysis — which argued that human development is shaped by early childhood experiences and unconscious motivations — and behaviourism, which held that human behaviour is determined largely by environmental conditioning. Humanistic theorists challenged these views, asserting that human behaviour cannot be fully explained by unconscious conflicts or mechanical stimulus–response patterns. Instead, they emphasised the importance of subjective conscious experience, personal meaning, and self-direction in understanding human behaviour (Desmita, 2012).

In the field of education, humanistic learning theory views the learning process as beginning and ending with the learner. It prioritises human values and the development of the whole person. This approach is often summarised with the phrase "humanising human beings" (Ningsih, 2005).

Figure 6 below illustrates this perspective.

From Figure 6, we can conclude that Abraham Maslow is considered the "father" of the humanistic school of psychology. He argued that human behaviour is motivated by the drive to understand, appreciate, and actualise one's fullest potential. His most well-known contribution is the Hierarchy of Needs Theory, which remains influential today. Maslow proposed that humans are driven to fulfil their needs in a progressive sequence, moving from the most basic needs to higher-order ones.

According to Maslow's hierarchy, human needs are organised as follows (Komara, 2014; Solichin, 2019):
1. Physiological Needs – Basic survival needs such as food, water, air, and shelter.
2. Safety Needs – Security, stability, health, and protection from harm.
3. Love and Belonging – Emotional needs for relationships, friendship, and social connection.
4. Esteem Needs – Recognition, respect, self-confidence, and a sense of achievement.
5. Self-Actualisation – The highest level, characterised by personal growth, creativity, and the fulfilment of one's potential.

In Maslow's view, as each level of need is satisfied, individuals are naturally motivated to pursue the next, culminating in self-actualisation, where one lives authentically, meaningfully, and purposefully.
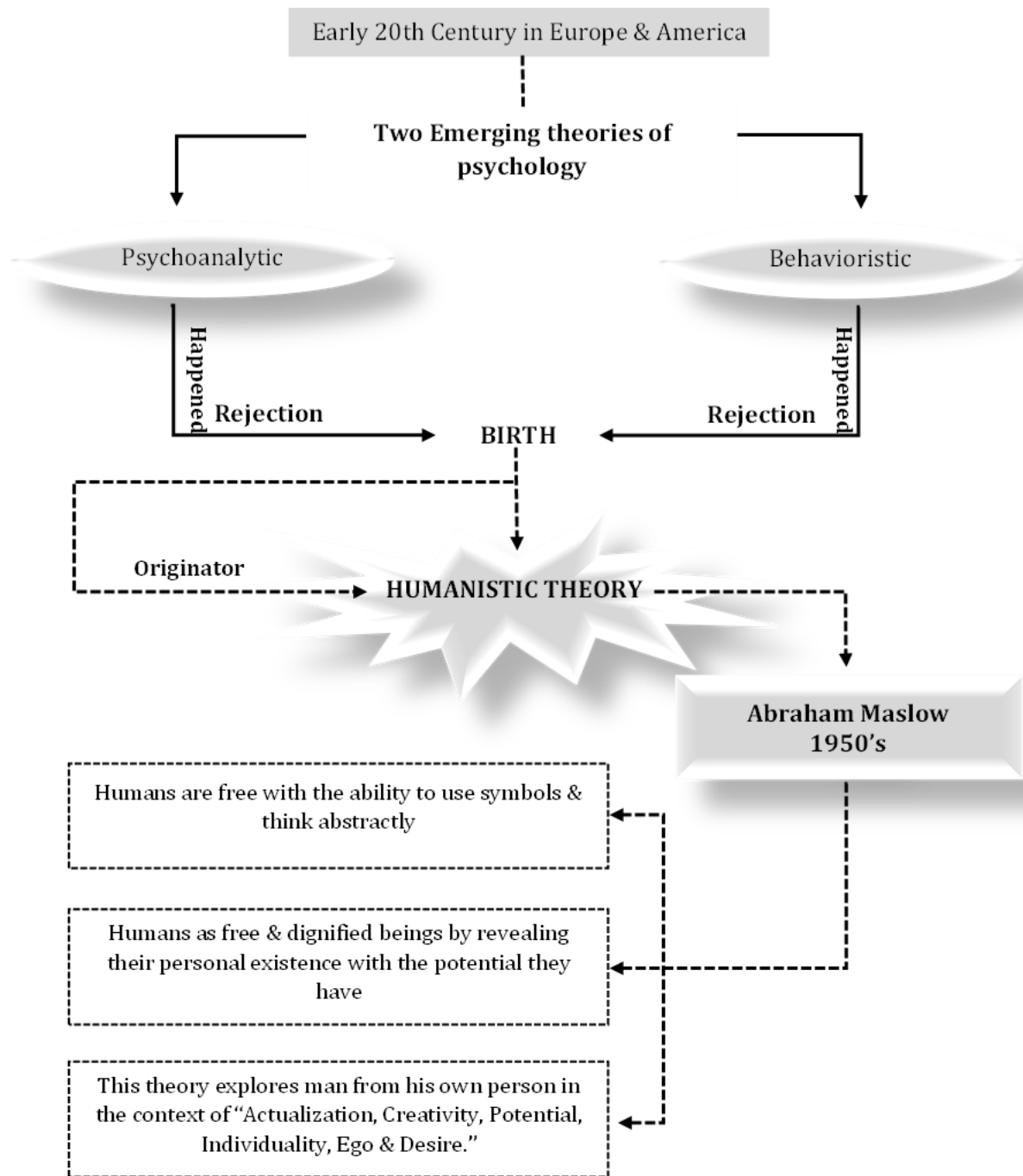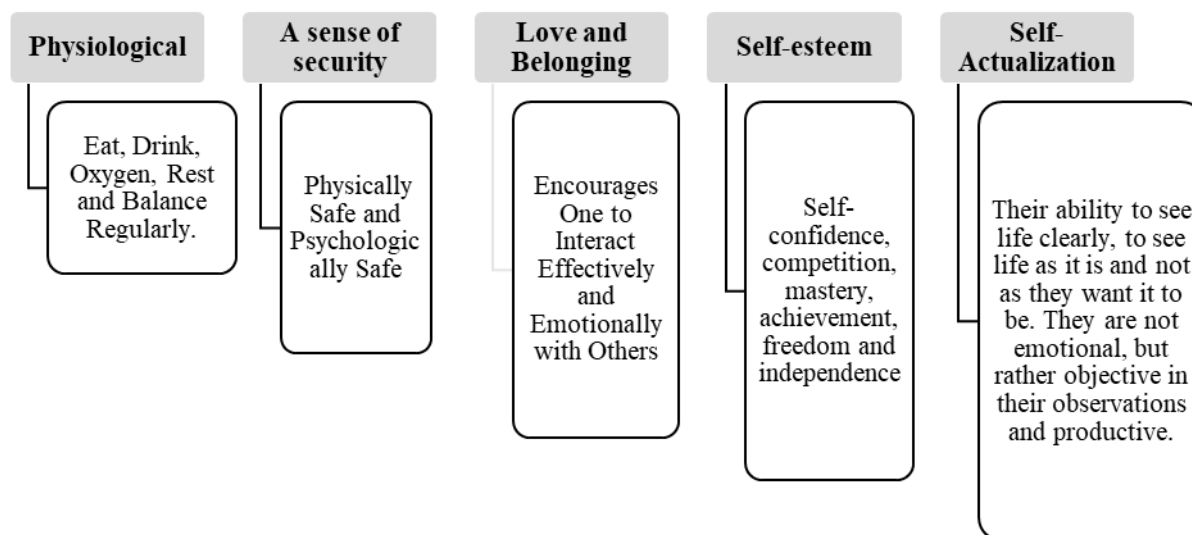
Figure 6: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Humanistic Approach

Figure 7 illustrates Maslow's hierarchy of needs, showing that the priority of need fulfilment is determined by the level of needs. This means that once an individual satisfies their basic physiological needs, they are naturally motivated to pursue the next level of needs, continuing step by step until reaching the highest level — self-actualisation. When applied to learning theory, humanism becomes a framework whose primary focus is the humanisation of the learner.

From the perspective of humanistic learning theory, the learning process can be considered successful when the learner gains a deeper understanding of both their environment and themselves. In other words, learners must strive gradually to achieve self-actualisation, realising their fullest potential. The principal role of educators, therefore, is to guide students in their personal

development — helping each learner discover their own uniqueness, nurturing their talents, and assisting them in actualising their potential.

In a humanistic perspective, education recognises the learner's intrinsic potential and grants them the freedom to explore and shape their own life path (Santrock, 2009). Learners are viewed as independent subjects capable of setting personal goals and are guided to take responsibility for their own lives and for their role in the broader community.

Physiological	A sense of security	Love and Belonging	Self-esteem	Self-Actualization
Eat, Drink, Oxygen, Rest and Balance Regularly.	Physically Safe and Psychologically Safe	Encourages One to Interact Effectively and Emotionally with Others	Self-confidence, competition, mastery, achievement, freedom and independence	Their ability to see life clearly, to see life as it is and not as they want it to be. They are not emotional, but rather objective in their observations and productive.

Figure 7: Breakdown of Levels of Human Needs Organised in Tiers

The characteristics of humanistic learning theory are closely related to the principles of existentialism, which emphasise individual freedom and personal responsibility. According to Jahja (2011), its characteristics include:
1. Two Modes of Human Existence – Being-in-itself (existence as a fact) and being-for-itself (existence with self-awareness and purpose).
2. Freedom – The learner has freedom to choose what to learn, to develop their potential, and to create something new.
3. Awareness – Learners possess the ability to imagine possibilities, anticipate consequences, and take deliberate action.

In the humanistic view, the ultimate goal of learning is to help humans become truly human. Success in learning is measured by the learner's ability to recognise themselves and their environment and to strive toward the highest possible level of self-actualisation. Importantly, humanistic theory seeks to understand learning from the learner's own perspective rather than from an external observer's viewpoint.

The application of humanistic theory in educational settings should therefore:
1. Encourage inductive thinking (learning from specific experiences toward general principles).
2. Prioritise practical experience and active participation.
3. Create opportunities for dialogue and discussion, allowing learners to express their ideas, reflect on their experiences, and develop confidence in articulating their thoughts before others.

This learner-centred approach helps develop autonomy, critical thinking, and creativity — essential traits for lifelong learning and personal growth.

Humanistic Education as a Pathway to Holistic Growth

As highlighted in the introduction, education is fundamentally a process of humanising human beings. Since its inception, the educational system — particularly within the Islamic tradition — has been grounded in humanistic values that uphold and elevate human dignity. Humanistic education aims to create space for the development of human awareness, encouraging learners to discover meaning in life and internalise social, spiritual, and moral values as central components of their growth.

The implementation of humanistic education must therefore be collaborative, involving all stakeholders — policymakers, educational institutions, communities, teachers, support staff, and students — with the learner positioned at the heart of the educational process. Such an approach ensures that education addresses the full spectrum of human potential rather than being confined to rote intellectual training.

Unfortunately, in many formal educational settings today, the learning process is often less democratic, leaving little room for creativity, imagination, and independent thought. This is problematic because creativity and critical thinking are vital competencies for students to navigate challenges and remain competitive in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world (Arbayah, 2013).

The ultimate purpose of education is to fully develop the human person — intellectually, emotionally, morally, and spiritually. It cannot be restricted to cognitive development alone but must nurture the whole person. Tilaar and Riant Nugroho (2012) remind us that what distinguishes humans from animals is the divine gift of reason (ʻaql), which allows for reflection, moral choice, and self-improvement. Existentialist thought further underscores that while humans are born into the world in a state of helplessness, they are ultimately responsible for their own existence. Education thus becomes the pathway through which humans discover their purpose, cultivate self-awareness, and fulfil their responsibilities toward themselves, society, and ultimately, God.

According to the findings of Saifullah and Tabrani, success in education today is often measured solely by students' Intellectual Quotient (IQ). As a result, learners who score lower on IQ tests are often labelled as "slow" or "underachieving," even if they excel in Emotional Quotient (EQ) or Spiritual Quotient (SQ). This is one of the ironies of the current education system — a system that overemphasises cognitive ability while underestimating emotional and spiritual dimensions of development. Ideally, the spiritual dimension should serve as the guiding compass that directs both IQ and EQ, ensuring that intellect and emotion are used ethically and purposefully. Unfortunately, this dimension is frequently ignored (Idris & ZA, 2017).

Furthermore, research by Mellissa Acosta (2016) highlights that the tarnished face of education can also be attributed to restrictive and discriminatory practices that suppress students' freedom and creativity. Dehumanisation is evident in many formal education settings where traditional methods dominate — rote memorisation, dictation, and rigid question–and–answer sessions. These methods are often followed by written examinations that reward memorisation rather than understanding or critical engagement. As Tan (2014) argues, such approaches merely perpetuate the status quo and fail to prepare students to live meaningfully or think critically about the values embedded within the material being taught.

In light of these challenges, humanism offers a comprehensive approach that regards human beings as unique individuals with vast potential to become complete and balanced persons. Humanistic education is fundamentally learner-centred — a process that begins and ends with human needs and values. It prioritises the development of human dignity, granting learners the freedom to make choices, form beliefs, and explore meaning.

Within this paradigm, the role of the teacher shifts from being the sole transmitter of knowledge to serving as a facilitator and guide. Teachers monitor, mentor, and direct students' learning journeys, encouraging them to actively engage with their own educational process. Learners become the main actors who interpret and construct meaning from their experiences. When students gain awareness of their own potential, they are empowered to develop it positively, becoming not merely recipients of information but active participants in their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth.

Humanistic Education in Islam

Islam, as a divine and sacred teaching, places profound emphasis on the dignity and wisdom of humanity throughout the ages. Its teachings guarantee the protection and preservation of human values for all people. Every Muslim is required to recognise, respect, and uphold the honour of others. This obligation represents a key way of realising the human side of humanity, which is a central mission in shaping and sustaining human life.

Humanism, in this sense, reflects the unity of humankind and the responsibility of every person to humanise other human beings — treating them with dignity, justice, and compassion. Like progressivism, humanism focuses on the centrality of human welfare and development. Therefore, this humanistic dimension must be present in education. Although various educational philosophies may differ in their interpretation of the human aspect, they share the same fundamental object — the human being.

This concept is in harmony with the message of the Qur'an in Surah Āli 'Imrān (3:110):

$$\text{﴿ كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللهِ}$$
$$\text{وَلَوْ اٰمَنَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ مِنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَاَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ١١٠ ﴾}$$

Meaning: "*You (Muslims) are the best people born to mankind (as long as) you enjoin the good, forbid the evil, and believe in Allah. Had Ahl al-Bitab believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them believed, but most of them were unbelievers.*" Surah Āli 'Imrān (3:110):

This verse highlights that the Muslim community is called to be an example of human excellence, enjoining good, forbidding evil, and grounding all actions in faith. Education, therefore, becomes a tool to cultivate these qualities, preparing individuals to fulfil their moral and social responsibilities in accordance with divine guidance.

The verse above explicitly identifies the characteristics of khayr al-ummah as enjoining what is right (*amar ma'ruf*), forbidding what is wrong (*nahi munkar*), and having faith in Allah SWT. In a sociological context, these three qualities can be translated into humanisation values, liberation values, and transcendence values. Together, they form a comprehensive framework for guiding human life and social interaction, with humanisation emphasising:
1. the value of humanity,
2. the unity of mankind,
3. the value of balance, and
4. *rahmatan lil-'ālamīn* (being a mercy to all creation).

The formation of all the potential within learners can only be achieved if education genuinely fulfils its mission of humanising humans. This concept of education as a process of humanisation originates from Islamic teachings and is known as humanistic-Islamic education (Meraj, 2016). This aligns with the fundamental meaning of humanism as "human education." The Islamic education system, founded on humanistic values since its earliest days, is consistent with its essence as a religion of humanity.

From an Islamic perspective, Ahmad Tafsir (2017) stresses that educators are entrusted with the responsibility of developing students' potential in a comprehensive way — addressing their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions — so that each aspect of their being can develop optimally.

Humanistic education in Islam, therefore, is more than a pedagogical model; it is an integral part of Islamic thought, teaching humans to uphold dignity, justice, and compassion. Islam, as a religion of rahmatan lil-'ālamīn, guides human beings toward becoming perfect and balanced individuals. Islamic education serves as an agent of enlightenment, rescuing humanity from ignorance and moral decline, and must be grounded in a strong foundation, clear direction, and well-defined purpose. Only with such a framework can Islamic education fulfil its mission to produce individuals who are knowledgeable, faithful, and God-conscious (Supriyatno, 2009).

The Qur'an functions as the worldview and foundation of Islamic humanism. Abdulkarim Soroush argues that the Qur'an possesses an undeniable human aspect, and contemporary Muslims must recognise this dimension to distinguish between the eternal (al-thawābit) principles of religion and those that are changeable (al-mutaghayyirāt) according to time and context (Saeed, 2016). This perspective highlights that Islamic humanism is not static but dynamic, enabling education to remain relevant in addressing the needs of modern society while remaining rooted in divine guidance.

Humanism in Islam means humanising humans in accordance with their divinely appointed role as *khalīfah* (vicegerents) on earth. The Qur'an employs four key terms to refer to human beings, each highlighting a unique dimension of human nature and function.
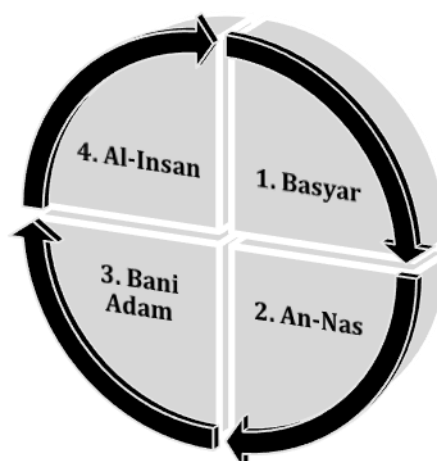

Figure 8: Four Terms for Human Beings in the Qur'an

Figure 8 on the side is briefly explained as follows:

Figure 8 can be briefly explained as follows:

1. ***Al-Bashar*** (ٱلْبَشَر): Derived from the same root as *basyarah* (skin), this term emphasises the physical dimension of humanity. Humans are called basyar because their skin is visible and distinct from that of other animals, signifying their unique biological constitution (Sahabuddin, 2007).

2. ***An-Nās*** (ٱلنَّاس): This term is generally associated with the social dimension of human life, reflecting the fact that humans are created as social beings who interact and build communities (Jalaluddin, 2003). Related to this is the Qur'anic verse in Surah al-Ḥujurāt (49:13):

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَّاُنْثٰى وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ شُعُوْبًا وَّقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوْا ۚ اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰىكُمْ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ

Meaning: *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."* Surah al-Ḥujurāt (49:13):

This verse highlights that social diversity is meant to promote mutual recognition, respect, and cooperation, with piety (taqwā) as the ultimate measure of human worth.

3. ***Banī Ādam*** (بَنِي آدَم): This term, which appears seven times in the Qur'an, emphasises humans as rational and moral agents. The expression Banī Ādam calls attention to human responsibility and accountability, directing humanity toward proper conduct and ethical behaviour in all aspects of life (Shihab, 2001).

4. ***Al-Insān*** (ٱلْإِنسَان): The term *al-Insān* is frequently used in the Qur'an to describe humans as unique moral and spiritual beings. This designation highlights humanity's distinctiveness, as no other creature is granted the same moral responsibility and spiritual potential. In many Qur'anic contexts, al-Insān refers to human beings with their psychological characteristics — encompassing their capacity for reflection, gratitude, and moral choice (Sahabuddin, 2007).

Together, these four terms — *al-Bashar, an-Nās, Banī Ādam,* and *al-Insān* — offer a comprehensive picture of humanity as physical, social, rational, and moral-spiritual beings. This multi-dimensional understanding is the foundation for a humanistic approach in Islamic education.

From a humanistic perspective, learners are viewed as beings with innate potential and the freedom to actualise it. When humanism is applied to education, it emphasises the importance of understanding each learner in accordance with their fitrah (innate nature). Rather than enforcing blind dogma, Islamic humanistic education encourages students to seek understanding actively, cultivating creativity and critical thinking.

In this sense, education is not merely about "educating humans to be human," but about elevating humanity toward a more civilised state. Humanistic education in Islam is thus interpreted as a process of self-improvement and moral refinement, ultimately serving as a process of tamaddun (civilisation-building).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a library research approach, focusing on the systematic collection and critical analysis of literature related to holistic education, humanistic education, and Islamic perspectives on education. Data were gathered from a range of credible sources, including books, peer-reviewed journals, and academic articles accessed through libraries and electronic databases.

The analysis involved identifying key themes, concepts, and points of convergence between holistic and humanistic education and the principles of Islamic teachings. Particular attention was given to how these educational approaches can be integrated to address contemporary challenges in the field of Islamic education.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, a process of source triangulation was employed, comparing data from multiple scholarly sources and cross-referencing with existing research. This

method strengthened the accuracy of interpretations and ensured that conclusions drawn were well-founded and academically rigorous.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that holistic education in Islam represents a comprehensive approach that seeks to see, understand, approach, and treat all aspects of human life as an integrated whole. When applied to education, the holistic paradigm emphasises the integration of linear and intuitive thinking, the harmony between mind and body, the interconnectedness of various branches of knowledge, and the relationship between the individual, society, and the Creator.

Holistic education characterised by Islamic values aims to develop human potential in its entirety, recognising the unity of physical and spiritual dimensions, the individual and social dimensions, and the responsibility of humans as God's vicegerents (*khalīfah*). This approach views education as not merely the transfer of knowledge but as a transformative process that sustains, nurtures, and develops life in all its dimensions.

Education, therefore, has a strategic role as both an instrument of human resource development and a form of human capital investment. Beyond improving the quality of life, education shapes moral and ethical foundations, strengthens national identity, and empowers society. Given its central importance, education is best understood as a process of humanisation — enabling humans to grow and develop physically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. In this way, education becomes essential not only for the formation of individual personality but also for determining one's social contribution and status in society.
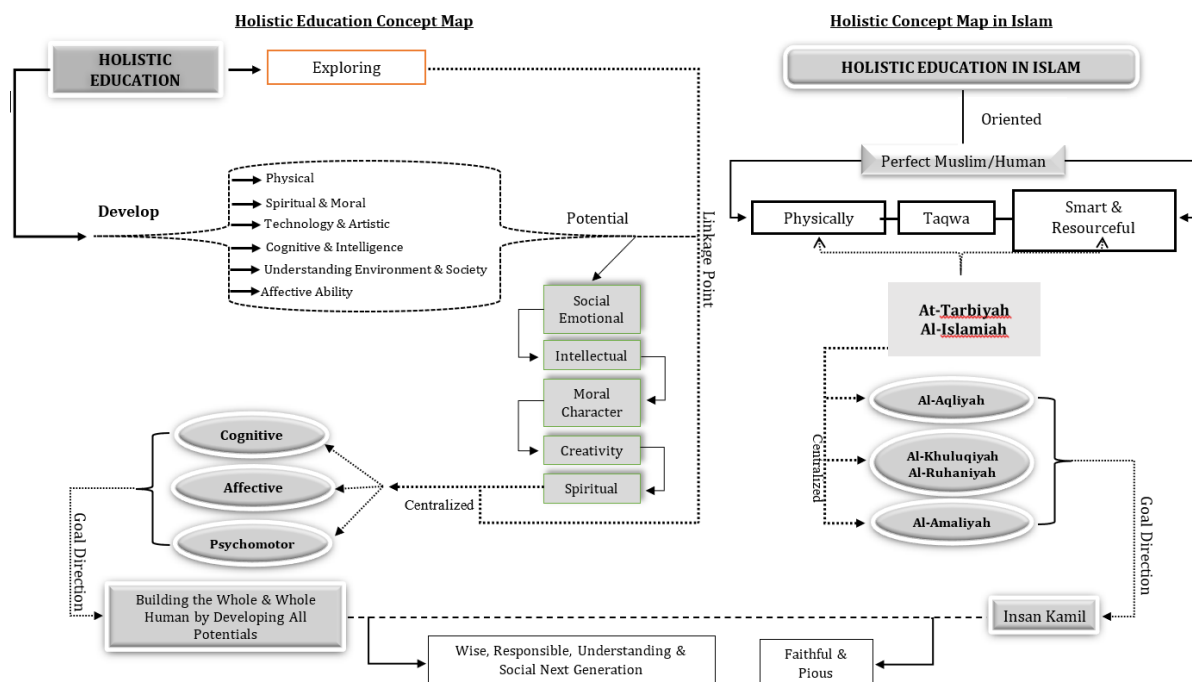

The study also reveals a significant relevance between holistic and humanistic education, which may be termed "Holistic-Humanistic Education." Both approaches share an orientation toward human-centred development, providing space for learners to cultivate awareness of human values and life's meaning. This education prioritises social and spiritual values and focuses on character formation as its ultimate goal.

Crucially, humanistic education must be implemented as a collaborative approach, engaging all stakeholders — policymakers, educational institutions, communities, teachers, education personnel, and students — with the learner placed at the centre of the educational universe. In line with UNESCO's four pillars of education, this approach emphasises:

1. Learning to know – building intellectual curiosity and critical thinking.
2. Learning to do – equipping learners with practical skills to apply knowledge.
3. Learning to live together – fostering mutual respect, tolerance, and cooperation.
4. Learning to be nurturing, self-awareness, moral, and promote personal growth.

Together, these pillars form a comprehensive educational framework that supports the development of well-rounded individuals who are intellectually competent, morally grounded, socially responsible, and spiritually conscious — reflecting the ideal of *al-insān al-kāmil* (the complete human being) envisioned in Islamic education.
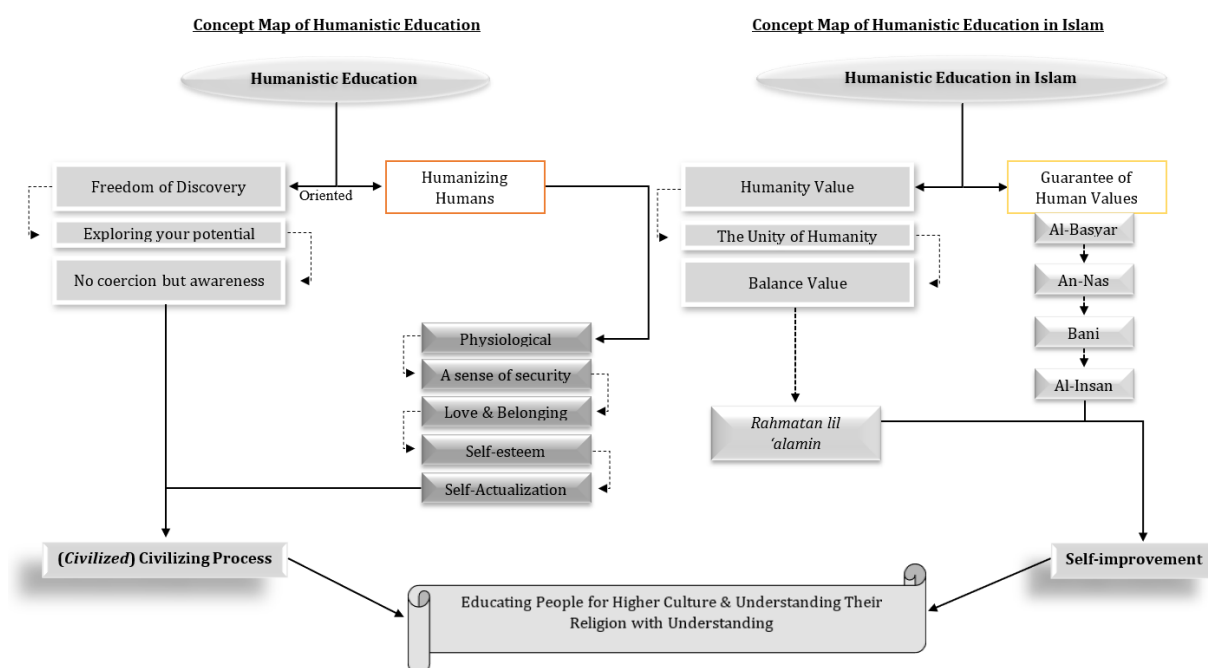
The application of humanism in Islamic education is both urgent and necessary to demonstrate Islam's role as a teaching of *rahmatan lil-ʿālamīn* (a mercy to all creation). It nurtures empathy and compassion toward others and fulfils the central purpose of education in Islam — to humanise humans in accordance with their role as *khalīfah* (vicegerents) on earth, responsible for sustaining and cultivating life.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical importance of holistic and humanistic education in Islam, which aims to develop human potential comprehensively — intellectually, physically, spiritually, and morally — while upholding human dignity and divine values.

Holistic education in Islam is understood as a comprehensive approach that views the human being as an integrated whole — body, mind, and soul. Its ultimate goal is to produce a generation that is physically healthy, intellectually capable, spiritually conscious, and morally upright. This aligns with the Qur'anic affirmation that humankind was created "in the best of stature" (Q. 95:4) and possesses the potential to achieve *al-insān al-kāmil* (the perfected human) through education and moral cultivation.

Humanistic education in Islam complements this vision by emphasising humanity, equality, justice, and balance. It recognises that learners have the freedom to develop their potential but also bear responsibility toward their Creator, their society, and their environment. Through this approach, education fosters individuals who are empathetic, compassionate, community-oriented, and capable of internalising and practising religious values in daily life.

The findings of this article highlight the strong relevance of holistic and humanistic education in addressing the shortcomings of modern educational systems, which often overemphasise cognitive achievement while neglecting character formation and spiritual growth. By integrating these approaches, Islamic education can create balanced individuals who contribute positively to society, promote peace, and uphold ethical and spiritual values in an era of rapid change.

Ultimately, holistic and humanistic education in Islam seeks to form a generation that not only excels academically but also embodies the qualities of faith, morality, and social responsibility — fulfilling the higher objectives of Islamic education and contributing to the flourishing of civilisation.

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