

# Convergence Theory in Islamic Perspective (Study of *Fitrah* Education in Qs. Ar-Rūm Verse 30)

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the convergence theory from the Islamic perspective, the study of *fitrah* education in QS. Ar-Rūm verse 30. Convergence theory is a classical theory that has existed for decades, continues to develop, and is used in education. This theory believes that there are two leading factors in human development: nature and nurture. Meanwhile, Islam has its perspective in viewing this belief, namely that humans are born with *fitrah* (nature) from Allah. This *fitrah* is what human beings are equipped with to grow and develop. This research was library research; hence, the data were taken from books, journals, and scientific articles. Data analysis was completed descriptively, comparatively, and associatively. The results showed that the convergence theory views the importance of nature and nurture factors. Islam also believes equivalently; the difference is that the nature in convergence theory is more towards heredity, which is inherited from parents through genes. Meanwhile, for Islam, human nature from birth is *fitrah*, namely being a good, fair, lucky, intelligent, civilized human being, and obedient to Allah. The second difference is the orientation of convergence theory, which leads to personal maturity and the welfare of human life in the world. Islam views its orientation as *ma'rifatullah* and true religiousness.

**Keywords:** *Convergence Theory, Child Development, Fitrah Education, QS. Ar- Rūm verse 30*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education cannot be separated from theories and humans as objects and actors of education. The theory itself has the meaning of a series of interrelated variables, definitions, and propositions and presents a systematic view of phenomena by determining the relationships between variables, intending to explain natural phenomena [1].

Theories that have developed and been used as the basis in education hundreds of years ago include nativism, empiricism, and convergence theories. Nativism considers nature as the main factor in the educational process. A child is considered to have the potential to learn with the nature factor inherited from both parents. Meanwhile, empiricism argues otherwise, where the nurture is a determining factor in human education. This theory does not consider nature as a determinant of children's tendencies, but nurture shapes and plays a significant role in the formation of children's potential in their education. These two

theories were then criticized and examined to emerge the third theory, namely convergence. This theory believes in the importance of both factors: nature and nurture [2].

The three theories were born from the thoughts of western figures. Nativism was pioneered by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), a German philosopher. John Locke (1632-1704) seems to break new ground in empiricism with the tabula theory. Meanwhile, William Stern (1871-1938), who developed the two previous theories, later coined the convergence theory. The three theories that are continuously used and developed are from the west with a rational and scientific basis. It contrasts with the Islamic perspective, which makes the Qur'an and Hadith a source of law and knowledge. Therefore, it is significant to observe how these theories are from an Islamic point of view. Islam, as it is known, has the Qur'an and Hadith as the basis of thought and action. Al-Qur'an is also a way of life and guidance for Muslims, as mentioned in the QS. Al-Baqarah verse 2.

The potential or tendencies discussed in the nativism, empiricism, and convergence theories are also discussed in Islam and are even closely linked to the initial process of human creation with the word *fitrah*. Other nations, cultures, or religions in the world have never used the term *fitrah* before the revelation of the Qur'an [3].

*Fitrah* in Arabic has the meaning of fragment, emergence, occurrence, and creation. In simple terms, *fitrah* is interpreted as sacred or potential. The word *fitrah* itself is mentioned in the Qur'an 28 times. Half of it is mentioned in the context of the description of the heavens and the earth; then the other half is in the context of humans, both related to their creation and religious *fitrah* [3].

However, Muslim scholars mainly refer to the QS. Ar-Rūm verse 30 of the 14 verses that discuss *fitrah* concerning humans. The summary of Ibn Kathir Tafsir explained that Allah had created man from the *fitrah* that was given along with his creation. It is because Allah SWT has created humans in a state of having the potential to recognize Him, unite Him, and acknowledge that there is no God but Allah [3].

Still related to the two verses above, Imam Ibn Kathir, in his tafsir quoted the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which shows that every child is born with *fitrah* (Islam), but it is his parents who make him a Jew, Christian, and Magian<sup>6</sup>. This hadith is a complement to the series of verses in the QS. Ar-Rūm verse 30 and QS. Al-A'raf verse 172 that humans are created by Allah with their *fitrah* as Muslims, but their parents turn them away from their *fitrah*. Parental factors here include nurture factors.

This study will explain the Islamic point of view on the convergence theory in *fitrah* education. *Fitrah* education based on the previous understanding is education that puts forward the values of human *fitrah* itself (good, fair, lucky, intelligent, civilized, and obedient to God). Therefore, this research is entitled “**Convergence Theory in Islamic Perspective (Study of Fitrah Education in QS. Ar-Rūm verse 30)**”.

## 2. WILLIAM STERN'S CONVERGENCE THEORY

According to Jamaluddin Darwi, convergence is linguistically derived from English 'verge', which means to unite. Then, it is added with the prefix 'con', which means to accompany, and the suffix 'ance' functions as a noun forming. In terms of convergence,

it means a combination of external and internal entities, namely between social nurture and nature.

Convergence theory is the combination of the nature (nativism) and nurture (empiricism) theory in viewing the influencing factors in human development [4]. The emergence of this theory cannot be separated from the existence of two previous theories, namely nativism and empiricism. It can even be said that this theory is the result of further research from the two previous theories.

This theory was pioneered by a German philosopher named William Stern. William argues that the growth of children in the educational process is related to heredity and the surrounding environment. A child has inherited factors that he receives from his parents genetically. Nature is in the form of physical form (face, hair, skin color, and brain cells) and good and evil characters.

The two factors combined in this theory ultimately consider the essential role of education in children's growth and also assume that the nature and character of parents are also influential. It contradicts the previous two theories, which prioritized genetics only (nativism) or only nurture (empiricism) [5].

## 3. GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF FITRAH

*Fitrah* is derived from *al ibtida'*, which means to create something new (without examples) [6]. *Fitrah* is a term that has never been used by other religions before the revelation of the Qur'an and Islam. Hence, to understand the meaning of *fitrah*, scholars agreed to refer to the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The word *fitrah* is mentioned several times in the Qur'an, as previously mentioned. However, in this context, the term *fitrah*, which is mentioned in the form of the exact derivation, is found in the QS. Ar-Rūm verse 30:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَائِمُ  
يَمْوَلِّكُمْ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“So be steadfast in faith in all uprightness ‘O Prophet’—the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in ‘all’ people. Let there be no change in this creation of Allah. That is the Straight Way, but most people do not know.”.

In verse above, the word *fitrah* (nature) is mentioned in the form of *fi'lah*. In Arabic, this form means *mashdar*, which means the state or type of action. Therefore, QS. Ar-Rūm verse 30 can interpret *fitrah* as the state when humans were created. Allah created humans with certain conditions; there are

certain specialties that Allah gave by which humans were created. So, this situation becomes their *fitrah* [6].

Still, to understand the word *fitrah*, some Indonesian words closely related to *fitrah* are character and instinct. The Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) showed that *fitrah* is the nature of origin, purity, and innate talent [7]. Hence, it is essential to know the difference in the terminology of these words.

a. Character (basic nature/ *al tabi'ah*)

In the book entitled *Fitrah* by Murtadha Mutahhari, the character is considered more commonly used to indicate the characteristics of inanimate objects. For example, when you explain water, you will tend to say, "water's character is liquid, while oxygen's character is flammable".

In its development, the different characters in each object become the distinguishing characteristics between one object and another. That difference or specificity then emerges as a potential for that object that is not owned by others [6].

b. Instinct (*al- gharīzah*)

Instinct is a term that is widely used for animals and is rarely used for humans or inanimate objects. In animals, certain specialties have been obtained from birth. An example is how a newborn horse will try to stand and even walk. He will fall for a moment but get up and try again. Another example is the instinct of ants in gathering food. It becomes the difference between one animal to another [6].

Instinct is different from inclination because the instincts in animals are performed in a semi-conscious state. An ant is not completely conscious when collecting food. The meaning of being conscious here is a state where he knows and understands his nature as an ant. As for the tendency, it is done with full consciousness.

*Fitrah* is only used for humans. The similarity between character and instinct is that *fitrah* is an innate nature and something that is not acquired by effort (*muktasabah*). Humans are fully conscious that in them, there is a collection of natural things. Another thing that distinguishes *fitrah* from instinct and character is that *fitrah* is human, while character and instinct are physical [6].

The explanation of the *fitrah* meaning and its synonyms forms a complete understanding that *fitrah* is consciousness in the soul that is prepared to accept the truth (religion).

#### 4. THE MEANING OF FITRAH IN ISLAM

*Fitrah* literally means; part (*syiqqah*), emergence (*thulū*), occurrence (*al ibtidā*), and creation (*khalq*) [8]. *Fitrah* is also mentioned as an innate nature from birth [9]. According to Hasan Langgulung, *fitrah* is personality, character, occurrence, originality, religion, and creation. The term *fitrah* is interpreted as sacred and potential [10]. Muhammad Quraish Shihab tends to interpret *fitrah* as 'piece' by referring to the root word '*al fithr*'; from this word, other meanings can be constructed, including creator or event [11].

Harry Santosa further explained that viewing Arabic grammar, the source of the word *fitrah* uses the word form (*wazan*) of *fi'lah*, which means *al ibtida*, namely creating something without an example.

*Fitrah* and *fi'lah* are forms of *masdar* (infinitive) that indicate the meaning of conditions. Likewise, according to Ibn Qayyim and Ibn Kathir, since *fithr* means to create, *fitrah* means the state resulting from that creation. According to the hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas r.a, *fitrah* is the beginning of human creation because *fitrah* is never stated by the Qur'an in contexts other than humans"[3].

From the linguistic meaning of *fitrah*, several words are equivalent to it, including character or character and instinct (*gharīzah*). However, each of these words has a different meaning. Character is a fundamental characteristic or personality consisting of formation and matter (*maddah*). An example is 'the character of oxygen is flammable'; according to this sentence, it can be understood if oxygen has the essential characteristics or properties of being flammable. As for instinct or *gharīzah*, it is also a fundamental trait that cannot be obtained with effort (*muktasabah*); for example, when a foal is born, it can stand up immediately, or an ant which, although small in size, it can gather food. In instinct, there is no full consciousness of doing it; it just happens. So, in conclusion, the word character is commonly used for objects, the instinct for animals, while *fitrah* is for humans [3].

As previously mentioned, the selection of the Surah Ar- Rūm verse 30 is based on the opinions of scholars regarding the meaning of *fitrah*. The below verse is the most appropriate in the context of the 14 verses of the Qur'an that discuss *fitrah* concerning humans.

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَ تَالِهَاتِ النَّاسِ عَلَيْهَا أَتُنذِرَ لِقَوْلِ الْهِدَالِ الدِّينِ الْفَاقِ  
يُمُولِكُنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Translate: So be steadfast in faith in all uprightness ‘O Prophet’—the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in ‘all’ people. Let there be no change in this creation of Allah. That is the Straight Way, but most people do not know [12].

In this verse, “set your face and persevere in the religion which Allah has prescribed for you, the worship of Allah Alone, the religion of Ibrahim, to which Allah has guided you and which He has perfected for you with the utmost perfection. In this manner, you will also adhere to the sound *Fitrah* with which He created His creation.”[13] The summary of Tafsir Ibn Kathir explained that Allah had created the human from the *fitrah* that was given along with his creation. It is because Allah SWT certainly has created humans in a state of having the **potential** to recognize Him, unite Him, and acknowledge that there is no God but Allah [13]. The editorial system of Surah Ar-Rūm verse 30 clarifies the understanding of nature that humans were created with *fitrah*

(potential). For this reason, scholars refer to this verse more in their discussion of human *fitrah*.

### 5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONVERGENCE THEORY AND THE FITRAH CONCEPT

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that both convergence theory and *fitrah* education recognize the importance of nature and nurture factors. The difference lies in the orientation. Convergence theory is oriented toward individual maturity and well-being of living in the world. Meanwhile, in Islam, *ma’rifatullah* and religiousness are the estuaries of human *fitrah*. The following is a table of similarities and differences between convergence theory and *fitrah* education.

**Table 1** *The Differences between convergence theory and fitrah education*

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Convergence Theory</b>	<b>Fitrah Theory Education</b>
Factors influencing human development	Nature factors and nurture factors	Nature factor/ <i>fitrah</i> and nurture factors
The innate that humans have from birth	Physical tendencies inherited from parents are skin color, hair type, face shape, the intelligence of brain cells, interests, and talents of children.	<i>Fitrah</i> is the potential to believe in God, which has been instilled since the womb. This <i>fitrah</i> consists of general <i>fitrah</i> and special <i>fitrah</i> . General <i>fitrah</i> : religious <i>fitrah</i> (Islam), holy <i>fitrah</i> , moral <i>fitrah</i> , <i>fitrah</i> of truth, aesthetic <i>fitrah</i> , creative <i>fitrah</i> . Personal special <i>fitrah</i> : <i>fitrah</i> of faith, <i>fitrah</i> of learning and reasoning, <i>fitrah</i> of talent, <i>fitrah</i> of development, <i>fitrah</i> of sexuality and love, <i>fitrah</i> of aesthetics and language, <i>fitrah</i> of individuality and sociality, physical nature. Communal special <i>fitrah</i> : <i>fitrah</i> of life, <i>fitrah</i> of nature, <i>fitrah</i> of munzalah.
The role of nurture in child development	Nurture is an inseparable component of children's development.	The nurture is an inseparable component of children's development.
The role of parents in child development	Becoming a supporting factor that can direct the growth and development of children's potential.	Becoming a supporting factor that can direct the growth and development of children's potential.

The potential of children	It is in line with the potential of parents, but it can also be formed by nurture.	Every child has the same potential/ <i>fitrah</i> . However, in its development, there will be aspects that hinder or even bury the potential of the child.
Theoretical basis	Experiments and research	Minutes of revelation (Al-Qur'an Hadith) and research

From the table above, it can be concluded that if humans realize and apply the special *fitrah* (personal and communal about the truth of Islam) that they have, humans will automatically succeed in performing their general *fitrah* well. It is because the special and general *fitrah* are interrelated and influence each other.

**6. CONCLUSION**

Based on the elaboration and explanation related to the theory of convergence in the Islamic perspective (the study of *fitrah* education in QS: Ar-Rūm verse 30), several conclusions can be drawn. First, convergence theory assumes that the child's nature and nurture have an essential role in child development. What is meant by nature according to this theory is the tendency of good and evil that exists in each individual. The nurture here includes the situations surrounding the individual, their biological conditions, and the social or community environment around them. Thus, there are two factors in the theory of convergence (nature and nurture).

Second, humans are born in a state of *fitrah* (Surah Ar-Rūm verse 30). *Fitrah* is the potential in the personality that is prepared to accept the truth (religion). This potential is influenced by the surrounding environment (HR. Ahmad).

Third, the nature factor in convergence theory has a different interpretation from an Islamic point of view. The convergence theory believes in 'nature' more as the physical aspect inherited through the parents' genes. Meanwhile, Islam considers these factors with the *fitrah* given by Allah SWT, which is explained in ontology and epistemology above.

Fourth, according to the convergence theory in the Islamic perspective, nurture factors have similarities and differences. In common, both agree on the importance of nurture factors in the development of human potential/*fitrah*. The difference, there are three types of environment in the convergence theory, including the external, internal, and community/social environments. In Islam, the *fitrah* theory, which is divided into six *fitrahs* and eight specific *fitrah*, is all

related to one another, in which understanding, consciousness, and the Islamic way of life lead to consciousness of general *fitrah*. The next difference lies in the orientation of each theory. The theory of convergence in the discussion and background of the theory development is more grounded on the maturity and welfare of human life in the world. However, the intended orientation in Islam is *ma'rifatullāh* and true religiousness.

**AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

The recommendation from the results of this study is that educational institutions and educators can recognize the *fitrah* of each student so that learning materials and methods can be well received, which will yield a variety of achievements from students according to their fields.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The authors would like to thank Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta and the supervisors who have supported this research.

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