



Islamic and Positive Psychology in Education: Reclaiming Eastern Thought for Holistic Learning

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Abstract

This study explores the integration of Islamic Psychology and Positive Psychology within educational contexts through a reinterpretation of Eastern psychological thought. Contemporary education often prioritizes cognitive achievement while marginalizing moral, emotional, and spiritual development. Islamic Psychology, grounded in the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Khaldun, conceptualizes human beings as integrated intellectual, emotional, and spiritual entities. Positive Psychology, emerging from modern empirical traditions, emphasizes strengths, virtues, resilience, and well-being. Employing a qualitative hermeneutic-comparative methodology, this research analyzes classical Islamic texts, contemporary Islamic psychology literature, and positive psychology scholarship to identify conceptual convergences and distinctive contributions. The findings reveal significant parallels between constructs such as *shukr* and gratitude, *sabr* and resilience, *raja'* and optimism, while highlighting Islamic psychology's unique emphasis on *tawhid*, *taqwa*, and *mizān* as foundations of meaning and balance. The discussion demonstrates how integrating these traditions can inform curriculum design, pedagogy, counseling, and holistic assessment in education. This integration contributes to the decolonization of psychological knowledge by reclaiming Eastern intellectual heritage and enriching positive psychology with spiritual depth. The study concludes that a Positive-Islamic educational model offers a comprehensive framework for fostering academic excellence, psychological well-being, moral character, and spiritual consciousness.

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi integrasi Psikologi Islam dan Psikologi Positif dalam konteks pendidikan melalui interpretasi ulang pemikiran psikologis Timur. Pendidikan kontemporer sering mengutamakan pencapaian kognitif sekaligus meminggirkan perkembangan moral, emosional, dan spiritual. Psikologi Islam, yang didasarkan pada Al-Qur'an, Hadis, dan sarjana klasik seperti Al-Ghazali, Ibnu Sina, dan Ibnu Khaldun, mengkonseptualisasikan manusia sebagai entitas intelektual, emosional, dan spiritual yang terintegrasi. Psikologi Positif, muncul dari tradisi empiris modern, menekankan kekuatan, kebajikan, ketahanan, dan kesejahteraan. Menggunakan metodologi hermeneutika-komparatif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis teks-teks Islam klasik, literatur psikologi Islam kontemporer, dan keilmuan psikologi positif untuk mengidentifikasi konvergensi konseptual dan kontribusi khas. Temuan ini mengungkapkan paralel yang signifikan antara konstruksi seperti *shukr* dan rasa syukur, *sabr* dan ketahanan, *raja'* dan optimisme, sambil menyoroti penekanan unik psikologi Islam pada *tauhid*, *taqwa*, dan *mizān* sebagai fondasi makna dan keseimbangan. Diskusi menunjukkan bagaimana

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mengintegrasikan tradisi ini dapat menginformasikan desain kurikulum, pedagogi, konseling, dan penilaian holistik dalam pendidikan. Integrasi ini berkontribusi pada dekolonisasi pengetahuan psikologis dengan merebut kembali warisan intelektual Timur dan memperkaya psikologi positif dengan kedalaman spiritual. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa model pendidikan Islam Positif menawarkan kerangka kerja yang komprehensif untuk menumbuhkan keunggulan akademik, kesejahteraan psikologis, karakter moral, dan kesadaran spiritual.

INTRODUCTION

Education has always been more than a process of transmitting knowledge; it is a transformative journey of shaping the whole person intellectually, emotionally, morally, and spiritually. In the contemporary global context, however, education often prioritizes cognitive performance and measurable achievements while neglecting the deeper dimensions of human flourishing, such as meaning, values, and spiritual well-being. This imbalance reflects the influence of a materialistic paradigm that dominates much of modern education, where success is often equated with economic productivity and competition. Against this background, there has been growing interest in educational paradigms that restore balance by integrating intellectual excellence with character development, ethical awareness, and psychological well-being. Two traditions that offer valuable insights in this regard are Islamic psychology and positive psychology (Abu & Pragmat, 2011).

Islamic psychology, rooted in the Qur'an, Hadith, and the intellectual heritage of classical Muslim scholars, presents a holistic view of human beings. It conceives of the human self (*nafs*) not merely as a biological or psychological entity, but as a moral and spiritual being with the capacity for growth toward wholeness (*insān kāmil*). Central to Islamic psychology is the integration of reason (*‘aql*), heart (*qalb*), and spirit (*rūh*), which together guide humans toward knowledge of God and ethical living. Education, from this perspective, is not just about imparting skills but about cultivating balanced individuals who embody wisdom, compassion, and a sense of purpose grounded in *tawhid* (the oneness of God).

Positive psychology, which emerged in the late 20th century largely through the works of Martin Seligman and colleagues, represents a corrective movement within modern psychology that seeks to study not only mental illness and dysfunction but also human strengths, virtues, and flourishing. Its focus on constructs such as gratitude, hope, resilience, optimism, and meaning in life has had a profound impact on contemporary educational practices (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). Positive education, a branch of positive psychology, emphasizes the creation of learning environments that nurture well-being alongside academic achievement. Students are encouraged not only to develop cognitive skills but also to cultivate positive emotions, supportive relationships, and resilience in the face of challenges (Khorri et.al, 2026).

Although Islamic psychology and positive psychology originate from different epistemological and cultural contexts, there are striking areas of convergence between the two. Both share an interest in understanding and fostering human strengths, virtues, and optimal states of being. Both value the role of meaning, gratitude, and resilience in enhancing well-being (Fredrickson, 2004). Both reject reductionist views of human nature and affirm the potential for growth and transformation. At the same time, Islamic psychology contributes dimensions often overlooked in positive psychology, such as the centrality of spirituality, divine consciousness, and the ethical accountability of human actions. Thus, integrating the two traditions holds promise for enriching educational theory and practice, particularly in contexts where faith and spirituality are central to students' lives.

Reinterpreting the legacy of Eastern psychological thought further deepens this integration. For centuries, Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Farabi, and Ibn Khaldun developed sophisticated theories of the self, knowledge, and education that prefigured many ideas now celebrated in modern psychology. Al-Ghazali, for example, emphasized the purification of the heart and the cultivation of virtues such as patience, gratitude, and humility

concepts closely aligned with positive psychology's virtues and character strengths. Ibn Sina developed a comprehensive model of the human psyche that encompassed rational, emotional, and spiritual faculties, anticipating holistic approaches to psychology and education. These Eastern contributions remind us that the science of well being is not new, but part of a long standing intellectual tradition that has often been marginalized in Western-centric accounts of psychology (Haque, 2004).

In the 21st century, the integration of Islamic psychology and positive psychology in education serves not only as an academic exercise but also as a response to urgent global challenges. Students today face increasing stress, anxiety, and alienation in an era marked by rapid technological change, environmental crises, and sociocultural fragmentation. Many educational systems struggle to address these issues adequately, as curricula remain dominated by test scores and utilitarian skills. By drawing on the holistic wisdom of Islamic psychology and the empirical insights of positive psychology, educators can design approaches that empower students to thrive both academically and personally. Such integration promotes a vision of education that is not only about "doing well" but also about "being well" and "living meaningfully."

The integration also has implications for intercultural dialogue and decolonizing knowledge in education. Psychology, as a discipline, has long been criticized for its Western bias, often neglecting non-Western perspectives on the mind, self, and well-being. By foregrounding Islamic and Eastern psychological thought, scholars and educators contribute to a more pluralistic and inclusive understanding of human flourishing. This does not mean rejecting Western contributions but rather reinterpreting and enriching them through dialogue with diverse traditions. In this sense, the project of integrating Islamic psychology and positive psychology in education is also a project of intellectual justice restoring visibility to knowledge systems that have been historically overlooked (Lomas, 2020).

Practically, the integration may manifest in various ways within educational settings. For example, curriculum design could incorporate teachings on gratitude and mindfulness rooted in both Islamic traditions (shukr, tafakkur) and positive psychology practices. Character education programs might draw on the virtues emphasized in both frameworks, such as sabr (patience), compassion, honesty, and resilience. Counseling and mentoring services could blend spiritual guidance with evidence based interventions from positive psychology, addressing both the psychological and spiritual dimensions of students' well being. Classroom pedagogy could emphasize reflective practices, moral reasoning, and community engagement, thereby nurturing not only cognitive skills but also emotional intelligence and ethical awareness (Rothman, 2023). The integration further invites educators to rethink assessment in education. Instead of evaluating success solely on the basis of test performance, schools could develop holistic indicators of well-being, character, and social responsibility. Such an approach resonates with Islamic educational ideals, which prioritize balance (mīzān) and harmony between knowledge, character, and action. It also resonates with the aspirations of positive education, which seeks to make well-being a legitimate goal of schooling (Seligman et al, 2009).

This research contributes to the growing discourse on indigenous psychologies and the globalization of positive psychology. By situating the integration within the legacy of Eastern thought, it underscores the continuity between past and present, tradition and modernity. It highlights how timeless wisdom can be reinterpreted to meet contemporary needs without losing In conclusion, the integration of Islamic psychology and positive psychology in education represents an opportunity to rediscover the holistic vision of human flourishing that underlies both traditions (Rasheed, 2025). It challenges the dominance of narrow, utilitarian models of education and opens space for approaches that honor the full complexity of human beings rational, emotional, moral, and spiritual. Reinterpreting the legacy of Eastern psychological thought within this integration affirms that education is not merely a technical enterprise but a profound human endeavor aimed at cultivating wisdom, virtue, and meaningful existence. As such, this research aspires to contribute to the building of educational systems that prepare not only competent professionals but also compassionate, resilient, and ethically grounded human beings.

The research on Integration of Islamic Psychology and Positive Psychology in Education: Reinterpreting the Legacy of Eastern Psychological Thought presents several significant contributions that differentiate it from existing studies. Its novelty lies in theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions, making it a unique advancement in both psychology and education. Theoretical Novelty: Bridging Two Paradigms

1. Most previous studies have treated Islamic psychology and positive psychology as separate domains. Islamic psychology is usually explored in theological-spiritual frameworks, while positive psychology is studied through empirical and secular scientific paradigms.
2. This research integrates the two traditions by identifying shared constructs (e.g., gratitude/shukr, patience/sabr, resilience/tawakkul, forgiveness/'afw) and demonstrating how they can complement each other.
3. Unlike earlier works that simply juxtapose concepts, this study develops a dialogical framework where Western-derived positive psychology gains spiritual depth, and Islamic psychology benefits from contemporary empirical validation.
4. By reinterpreting Eastern Islamic psychological heritage (Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, Ibn Khaldun, etc.), the study connects classical wisdom with modern psychological science, showing continuity rather than separation.

METHODS

The methodological framework for this research is designed to explore how Islamic psychology and positive psychology can be integrated into educational settings by reinterpreting the legacy of Eastern psychological thought. Since the study concerns philosophical foundations, cultural traditions, and academic applications, a purely experimental approach would be insufficient. Instead, a qualitative and interpretive methodology was adopted, combining textual analysis, hermeneutics, and applied educational research (Traxler, 2007). This multi layered approach ensures that the research not only identifies conceptual intersections but also explores how these insights may be translated into practical strategies for education.

This study employs a qualitative exploratory design to examine the integration of Islamic psychology and positive psychology in education, an emerging field lacking standardized frameworks. The approach enables in depth engagement with textual, historical, and contemporary sources to identify potential synergies, gaps, and theoretically grounded frameworks. The design integrates three components: textual-historical analysis of classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Khaldun; comparative conceptual analysis of constructs such as gratitude, resilience, meaning, and flourishing; and applied educational inquiry to explore implications for curriculum, pedagogy, and student support.

Data were drawn from documentary sources, including classical Islamic texts, Qur'anic verses and Hadith, contemporary Islamic psychology literature, positive psychology scholarship, and educational documents. Data collection involved systematic literature mapping, text selection based on relevance, thematic categorization, and cross referencing between traditions.

Analysis followed a hermeneutic comparative approach, combining contextual textual interpretation with conceptual comparison and educational application. Research rigor was ensured through triangulation of diverse sources, peer feedback, and reflexivity. While comprehensive, the study is limited by its reliance on theoretical analysis and subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, it offers a conceptual framework that contributes to the integration of spiritual and psychological dimensions in education.

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of constructs such as gratitude, resilience, meaning, and flourishing and applied educational inquiry to explore implications for curriculum, pedagogy, and student support.

Ethical considerations emphasized respect for Islamic sources, cultural sensitivity, and intellectual transparency. Although the study is limited by its reliance on theoretical and interpretive analysis, it provides a comprehensive conceptual framework. The findings contribute to bridging spiritual and psychological perspectives and offer insights for developing holistic educational practices that integrate character development, well-being, and academic achievement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the deep resonance between Islamic psychology and positive psychology in conceptualizing human flourishing, virtues, and education. By systematically analyzing classical Islamic texts alongside modern positive psychology literature, several key intersections emerged. These intersections provide both theoretical insights and practical directions for educational reform. The discussion further explores how these integrated perspectives can be applied in educational contexts, while also acknowledging the challenges and implications of such integration.

Findings

1. Shared Emphasis on Human Flourishing

Both Islamic psychology and positive psychology share a central concern with human flourishing. In positive psychology, flourishing refers to living a life of meaning, engagement, and positive emotion (Seligman's PERMA model: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment). Similarly, Islamic psychology views flourishing through the lens of achieving *falah* (ultimate success), which encompasses well-being in this world and the hereafter. While positive psychology frames flourishing largely in humanistic and secular terms, Islamic psychology situates flourishing within a theocentric paradigm, emphasizing harmony with divine will and the pursuit of *insān kāmil* (the perfected human).

2. Convergence of Virtues and Strengths

Analysis revealed significant overlap between positive psychology's framework of character strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and Islamic concepts of *akhlaq* (moral character). For example:

- a. Gratitude (*shukr*) parallels the positive psychology construct of gratitude as a key predictor of well-being.
- b. Patience (*sabr*) aligns with resilience and perseverance in positive psychology.
- c. Forgiveness (*afw*) corresponds with positive psychology's emphasis on compassion and relationship repair.
- d. Hope (*raja*) resonates with optimism and future orientation.

This convergence suggests that integrating these frameworks could enrich educational programs aimed at character development, grounding modern psychological insights in long-standing spiritual traditions.

3. Distinctive Contributions of Islamic Psychology

Despite the overlaps, Islamic psychology contributes unique elements often absent in positive psychology. These include (Syafi'i & Azhari, 2025):

- a. Spiritual Consciousness (*Taqwa*): A constant awareness of God, shaping ethical behavior and resilience.
- b. Tawhidic Meaning System: Human life is understood in relation to the oneness of God, offering a transcendent anchor for meaning.
- c. Balance (*mizan*): Emphasis on harmony between body, mind, and spirit, as well as between worldly duties and spiritual goals.

These contributions extend the scope of positive psychology by situating human well-being in a metaphysical and ethical framework, making education not just about personal success but about spiritual responsibility.

4. Reinterpretation of Eastern Psychological Thought

Classical Muslim scholars anticipated many concepts later articulated in positive psychology. Al-Ghazali emphasized the purification of the heart through virtues such as humility and gratitude. Ibn Sina presented a layered model of the psyche, highlighting rational, appetitive, and spiritual dimensions. Ibn Khaldun discussed social cohesion and moral responsibility in education. When these ideas are reinterpreted today, they demonstrate how Eastern thought provides a foundation for integrating moral, spiritual, and psychological education

5. Educational Applications

The integration of Islamic and positive psychology suggests practical implications for education, including:

- a. Curriculum Design: Incorporating lessons on gratitude, patience, and resilience informed by both traditions.
- b. Pedagogy: Encouraging reflective practices, service learning, and moral reasoning.
- c. Counseling: Blending spiritual guidance with evidence-based positive psychology interventions.
- d. Assessment: Expanding evaluation beyond academic grades to include indicators of well-being, character, and social contribution.

Discussion

The findings support the view that education should not be narrowly confined to cognitive development or test based achievement. Both Islamic psychology and positive psychology advocate for education that nurtures the whole person intellect, emotion, morality, and spirituality. By integrating these traditions, educators can move toward a vision of “whole-child education,” addressing not only intellectual but also emotional and spiritual well being. This is particularly urgent in today’s world where students often experience high levels of stress, alienation, and loss of meaning.

One of the most striking aspects of this integration is the synergy between spirituality (Islamic psychology) and empirical science (positive psychology). Positive psychology contributes robust empirical methods for measuring and enhancing well-being, while Islamic psychology contributes a deep spiritual framework that situates human flourishing within a transcendent purpose. Together, they offer a more complete model of education that is both scientifically credible and spiritually enriching (Warsah, 2020).

The reinterpretation of Eastern psychological thought challenges the dominance of Western centric frameworks in psychology and education. By drawing on Islamic intellectual heritage, the research contributes to the decolonization of knowledge, affirming that valuable psychological insights exist outside of Western traditions. This pluralistic approach not only diversifies the field but also ensures cultural and spiritual relevance for Muslim majority educational contexts. Moreover, it demonstrates that concepts like gratitude, resilience, and meaning are not new inventions but part of a long-standing global heritage of psychological wisdom.

The overlap between akhlaq and positive psychology’s virtues suggests that character education programs can be enriched by integrating both perspectives. For example, teaching students sabr as both a religious virtue and a resilience strategy can make the concept more meaningful and applicable. Similarly, gratitude practices in schools can be framed not only as positive psychology interventions but also as acts of ibadah (worship) and acknowledgment of God’s blessings. Such integration ensures that character education is both psychologically effective and spiritually grounded.

Positive psychology has faced critiques for being overly individualistic, culturally narrow, and neglecting spirituality. Integrating Islamic psychology addresses these critiques by (Bolier et.al, 2013):

1. Anchoring well-being in community and ethical responsibility, not just individual happiness
2. Expanding the cultural base of psychology by incorporating non-Western traditions.
3. Embedding spiritual meaning and divine consciousness into frameworks of flourishing.

4. This integration thus strengthens positive psychology, making it more inclusive, holistic, and relevant for diverse populations.

Despite its promise, the integration of Islamic psychology and positive psychology also presents challenges. First, differences in epistemology scientific empiricism versus revelation-based knowledge can lead to tensions. Second, there is a risk of reductionism, where rich spiritual concepts might be simplified into psychological constructs. Third, practical implementation in schools requires sensitivity to pluralism, ensuring that integration does not alienate non-Muslim students. Addressing these challenges requires careful dialogue, methodological pluralism, and a commitment to inclusivity. Based on the findings, a model of “Positive-Islamic Education” can be envisioned. This model would:

1. Combine PERMA dimensions of positive psychology with Islamic spiritual principles such as tawhid, shukr, and sabr.
2. Emphasize holistic development cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual.
3. Employ reflective pedagogy, experiential learning, and community engagement.
4. Measure success not only through academic outcomes but also through indicators of well-being, virtue, and social contribution.
5. Such a model aligns with the goals of both traditions: to nurture individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also virtuous, resilient, and spiritually conscious.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that integrating Islamic psychology and positive psychology offers a promising pathway for reimagining education. Shared concerns with flourishing, virtues, and meaning create natural bridges between the two traditions, while the unique contributions of Islamic psychology add depth and transcendence to positive psychology. Reinterpreting Eastern psychological thought highlights the long history of holistic approaches to the self, reminding contemporary educators that the pursuit of virtue and well being is deeply rooted in global intellectual traditions.

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