



The Function of Language in Understanding Islamic Psychology in Islamic Educational Institutions: A Critical Literature Review

Andi Musthafa Husain¹ , Wantini¹ , & Muhammad Lathief Syaifussalam² 

¹Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam (S2), Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Kota Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²Program Studi Psikologi (S1), Universitas Aisyah Pringsewu, Kab. Pringsewu, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate and elaborate on the key concepts in Islamic psychology, focusing on fithrah (nature), aql (intellect), nafs (self), and qalb (heart). As a primary concern, this research seeks to understand the interconnection between these four concepts and how their influence shapes human behavior and spiritual growth in the context of Islam. The research methodology involved an in-depth literature analysis of Islamic theological and philosophical sources. This approach allows researchers to explore the roots of thought and scholars' interpretations of fithrah, aql, nafs and qalb. Furthermore, this approach provides insights into how these concepts are applied in everyday life, especially in the context of education and personal development. The research findings indicate that fithrah, as inherent to human nature, plays a crucial role in guiding individuals toward spiritual and moral awareness. Aql, as a gift from Allah, grants humans the ability to think and understand, paving the way for the pursuit of knowledge and understanding of God. As the internal dimension of humans, nafs play a central role in self-development, understanding emotions, and maintaining a balance between worldly desires and spiritual aspirations. Qalb, or the heart, is considered the center of spirituality and moral values, requiring care to remain pure and draw closer to Allah. This study explores the implications of Islamic psychological concepts in the context of education and personal development. This research can serve as a foundation for the development of sustainable psychological approaches to holistically explore human potential, creating a balance between physical and spiritual dimensions. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of integrating fithrah, aql, nafs, and qalb to shape a balanced and responsible human personality from an Islamic perspective.

Keywords

aql; education; fithrah; Islamic psychology; language; nafs; qalb

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language and human psychology has long been a subject of scholarly attention, particularly in the context of religion and education. In Islamic thought, language is not merely a tool of communication but also a means of constructing and transmitting fundamental psychological concepts that guide human development. Within Islamic education, concepts such as *fitrah* (innate disposition), *aql* (intellect), *nafs* (self or soul), and *qalb* (heart) serve as foundational categories for understanding moral, spiritual, and intellectual growth. Scholars have highlighted that these concepts are not only revealed in the Qur'an and Hadith but are also continuously interpreted, reformulated, and disseminated through language across generations (Napitupulu, 2019; Zaky & Setiawan, 2023). As such, language plays a central role in shaping how Islamic psychology is understood, taught, and internalized.

Recent scholarship has shown increasing interest in the intersections of language, psychology, and religious education. For instance, Saada (2023) emphasizes the role of Islamic education in fostering global citizenship through dialogical and value-based learning, while Bhat (2016) and Annafiri & Aziz (2022) stress the importance of *fitrah*, *aql*, *qalb*, and *nafs* as the natural resources guiding education and character formation. Linguists and psycholinguists also highlight the deep connection between linguistic structures and cognitive development (Ellis, 2019; Kramsch, 2014; McCauley & Christiansen, 2019; Norcliffe et al., 2015; Yule, 2022). This growing body of literature underscores that language not only reflects human cognition but also actively shapes it, thereby influencing how Islamic psychology is conceptualized and practiced in educational settings. The convergence of these insights positions language as a vital lens for understanding Islamic psychology in modern contexts.

Despite this recognition, studies often limit their examination of language to its instrumental functions, such as its role in counseling or in the implementation of Arabic as a medium of instruction. For example, Jaelani & Ziadah (2024) analyze the use of language in peer counseling at religious institutions, while Amar (2023) examines Arabic language teaching methods in Islamic schools. Similarly, Dilo (2024) investigates the impact of cognitive styles on students' ability to comprehend English texts on Islam. While these studies provide valuable insights into linguistic practices, they do not critically assess how language itself—through semantics, rhetoric, and discourse—shapes the understanding of Islamic psychology concepts. This narrow focus leaves an important gap in the literature that demands closer scrutiny.

The core research problem addressed here is the limited exploration of language as a constitutive factor in shaping Islamic psychological concepts. Much of the scholarship privileges content over form, assuming that concepts like *fitrah* or *aql* retain

fixed meanings regardless of how they are linguistically expressed. Yet evidence from linguistics suggests otherwise: language choices deeply affect cognitive framing and interpretive outcomes (Chomsky, 1953, 1955; Sapir, 1929; Vygotsky, 1981; Whorf, 1956). Consequently, neglecting the role of language risks overlooking how terminological precision, translation practices, and classroom discourse shape learners' grasp of Islamic psychology. Addressing this gap is vital for both theoretical clarity and pedagogical practice, as imprecise language may distort or weaken the intended spiritual and psychological insights of Islamic education.

Some efforts have been made to bridge this divide by linking language more explicitly to psychological constructs in Islam. For example, Purnama et al. (2020) examine *fitrah* in Ibn Kathir's exegesis, highlighting its pedagogical implications for early childhood education. Fitriyanto (2021) relates *fitrah* to theories of knowledge development, while Mudin et al. (2021) compare the concept with the Western notion of *tabula rasa*. Similarly, Rifai (2020) studies *aql* and its Qur'anic expression through terms like *ulu al-albab*, while Nugraha (2022) develops efforts to conceptualize *qalb* as a measurable construct in Islamic psychology. These studies suggest that language mediates not only access to scriptural sources but also the conceptual frameworks through which psychology is theorized in Islam. However, they remain scattered and seldom framed as part of a coherent linguistic-psychological analysis.

Beyond individual constructs, integrated studies such as those by Skinner (2019) and Badri (2018) demonstrate that Islamic psychology must be viewed holistically, where *fitrah*, *aql*, *nafs*, and *qalb* interact dynamically to shape moral and spiritual development. In this framework, language functions as the vehicle that articulates the interdependence of these concepts, enabling education to cultivate balanced personalities aligned with Islamic values. Mukhlis (2020) illustrates how sociolinguistic practices influence prophetic character formation, while Putra & Surya (2021) and Purnomo & Novita (2023) show that language practices in Islamic education extend beyond instruction to embody and transmit ethical values. These works point toward a broader recognition of language as formative, though they often lack systematic critical analysis.

Nevertheless, a careful review reveals that much of the literature suffers from methodological fragmentation and conceptual ambiguity. Many studies focus on isolated aspects, either linguistics without theology or psychology without discourse analysis, thereby missing the interplay between language and psychospiritual constructs. Few works systematically compare Arabic with vernacular translations to trace semantic shifts (Elhadary, 2023; Jibreel, 2023), nor do they adequately test the validity and reliability of findings across contexts. Furthermore, while Indonesian scholarship offers valuable insights, it is often not sufficiently connected to international

research, limiting the development of a comparative and global framework. These weaknesses highlight the urgent need for integrative approaches that examine how language constitutes, rather than merely conveys, the psychological concepts central to Islam.

The present study seeks to address this gap by conducting a critical literature analysis of the role of language in shaping the understanding of Islamic psychology, with specific attention to *fitrah*, *aql*, *nafs*, and *qalb*. By synthesizing linguistic theories with Islamic psychological scholarship, this research aims to demonstrate that language is not a neutral medium but a formative agent that molds cognition, spirituality, and pedagogy. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic attempt to trace how terminological choices, semantic fields, and pedagogical discourse influence the comprehension of these core constructs. Its scope includes both Indonesian and international scholarship, thereby situating local findings within a broader global conversation. Ultimately, this inquiry aspires to provide theoretical clarity, identify directions for future empirical research, and contribute to the development of Islamic education that is both linguistically precise and spiritually profound.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language in Islamic Education

Language is widely recognized as the primary instrument for knowledge transmission, cognitive development, and cultural preservation. In Islamic education, language occupies a distinctive position, as it functions not merely as a communication tool but as the gateway for understanding sacred texts and religious doctrines. Classical and modern linguistics emphasize that language shapes thought and frames human perception (Kramsch, 2014; Yule, 2022). Within this framework, the Qur'an and Hadith—revealed in Arabic—represent the foundational sources of Islamic education, and their meanings are inseparably tied to the language in which they were conveyed. Consequently, the accurate comprehension of Islamic teachings depends on both linguistic competence and interpretive precision (Gajah et al., 2023; Mustofa & Hasan, 2023; Setyawan & Anwar, 2020).

The pedagogical role of language extends beyond transmitting doctrinal content to embodying moral and ethical values. Purnomo & Novita (2023) argue that in Islamic education, language serves not only as an instrument of communication but also as a vehicle for internalizing ethical principles and building character. Similarly, Putra & Surya (2021) demonstrate that the revitalization of Islamic values among children in pesantren contexts is largely facilitated through structured linguistic practices such as

storytelling, admonition, and debate. These findings highlight that language enables students not merely to receive religious knowledge but also to participate actively in value formation and identity construction.

Moreover, teacher–student communication remains central to the educational process. Norjanah et al. (2022) emphasize that effective communication fosters trust, engagement, and comprehension, while Ali (2022) underscores that language competence supports professional religious teaching. This perspective aligns with the psycholinguistic tradition that regards language as an external manifestation of cognitive processes, thereby linking intellectual growth directly to linguistic practices (Dardjowidjojo, 2025; Privalova, 2021; Su, 2017; Zutell, 1985). From this vantage point, the effectiveness of Islamic pedagogy depends as much on the clarity and ethics of language as on the content being delivered.

Recent research also illustrates the significance of linguistic strategies in counseling, peer interaction, and classroom dynamics. Jaelani & Ziadah (2024) examine language use in peer counseling at religious higher education institutions, showing that the counselor’s word choice, tone, and rhetorical structure strongly influence psychological outcomes. Similarly, Amar (2023) analyzes the application of Arabic teaching methods and problem-solving techniques, noting how structured linguistic approaches enhance comprehension and reduce anxiety. Although these studies focus on practical applications, they confirm the essential role of language in shaping educational outcomes in Islamic settings.

Despite these advances, existing literature tends to treat language instrumentally, without examining its constitutive power in forming psychological constructs. Most works emphasize methodology, teaching strategies, or interpersonal communication while overlooking how linguistic categories, metaphors, and semantic fields shape conceptual understandings of the self, morality, and spirituality. This research gap indicates a need for deeper critical analysis that situates language not as a neutral tool but as an agent that actively molds the comprehension of Islamic psychology. Addressing this lacuna is crucial for developing a holistic model of Islamic education that integrates linguistics with theological psychology.

Islamic Psychology Concepts

Islamic psychology is structured around several foundational concepts that describe the human constitution and guide spiritual development. Among these, *fitrah*, *aql*, *nafs*, and *qalb* occupy central positions. These concepts are not only theological abstractions but also psychological categories that shape how individuals understand themselves and their relation to God and society. Scholars such as Badri (2018), Skinner (2019), and Annafiri & Aziz (2022) emphasize that these constructs must be studied

holistically, since they interrelate in defining human behavior, cognition, and spirituality. Importantly, the articulation and comprehension of these categories are mediated through language, making linguistic analysis essential to Islamic psychology.

The concept of *fitrah* refers to the innate disposition bestowed by God, inclining humans toward monotheism and moral goodness. Bhat (2016) and Abidin (2018) argue that *fitrah* is a divine mechanism embedded in human beings from birth, serving as the foundation for education and character formation. Ibn Kathir's exegesis stresses that education's role is to preserve and actualize this disposition (Afifuddin, 2021; Purnama et al., 2020; Sundari & Muslih, 2023). Comparisons with Western psychology, such as Locke's *tabula rasa*, reveal both parallels and divergences; unlike the blank slate, *fitrah* implies an inherent orientation toward the divine (Mudin et al., 2021). Language becomes central in expressing and safeguarding *fitrah*, as terminological precision ensures the transmission of its theological and psychological significance (Fitriyanto, 2021).

The role of *aql* (intellect) is equally critical. In the Qur'an, *aql* appears in various forms forty-nine times, often in exhortations to reflection and discernment (Rifai, 2020). Quraish Shihab interprets it as a tether that restrains humans from error, while Dalhat (2015) describes it as a divine light enabling knowledge. From a psycholinguistic perspective, *aql* is expressed in linguistic competence and performance, with inner cognitive structures manifested in speech and writing (Suharti, 2021). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis further suggests that linguistic categories condition thought processes (Cibelli et al., 2016; Latkowska, 2015; Rachmawati, 2022; Regier & Xu, 2017), meaning that the articulation of *aql* in Qur'anic Arabic provides specific cognitive and moral frames. Thus, language not only conveys intellectual concepts but also shapes how intellect itself is conceived.

The concept of *nafs* (self or soul) captures the inner dimensions of human impulses, desires, and emotions. Classical and modern scholars note that the Qur'an mentions *nafs* nearly three hundred times, reflecting its centrality in Islamic psychology (Napitupulu, 2019). Some Scholars highlight practices such as *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) as crucial for self-regulation and spiritual growth (Angraini & Asmita, 2022; Hamdani et al., 2023; Rizal, 2022), while others emphasizes its role in cultivating virtues such as patience and empathy (Ghorbani et al., 2019; Gürbüz, 2022; Schnitker et al., 2017). Linguistically, language provides the means to articulate and reflect on these impulses, enabling self-awareness and control (Fahy, 2014; Lupyan, 2016; Verhaeghen & Mirabito, 2021). Words and metaphors used in teaching and counseling shape how individuals perceive and manage their *nafs* (Apriyanti et al., 2023; Hanne, 2015; Jagieła, 2020; Rassool & Keskin, 2025), underscoring the inseparability of psychological practice from linguistic expression.

Finally, qalb (heart) is viewed as the spiritual and moral center of human beings. Nugraha (2022) conceptualizes it as the locus of tafakkur (deep reflection), while Haque (2004) describes it as the essence of human awareness and moral responsibility. Kamaruzaman et al. (2023) further elaborate on the correlation of qalb with shadr and fuad in Qur'anic hermeneutics. Language plays a central role in expressing the states of the heart, with supplications, dhikr, and reflective discourse serving as vehicles for purification. Mukhlis (2020) notes that sociolinguistic practices influence moral character, suggesting that ethical language use reflects and shapes the condition of the qalb. Through language, the abstract dimensions of the heart are rendered communicable, guiding personal and collective spiritual development.

Taken together, these concepts demonstrate that Islamic psychology is inseparable from language. Fitrah is safeguarded through linguistic framing, aql is exercised through reflective discourse, nafs is regulated via verbalized practices of self-control, and qalb is purified through ethical communication. Yet, despite the evident link, existing research rarely foregrounds language as a constitutive element in Islamic psychology. Most studies approach these constructs theologically or philosophically without systematically integrating linguistic analysis. This oversight leaves a research gap that the present study seeks to fill by critically analyzing the literature on how language shapes the understanding of fitrah, aql, nafs, and qalb in Islamic education and psychology.

Research Gap and the Significance of the Study

Although substantial progress has been made in exploring the role of language and the constructs of Islamic psychology, much of the existing literature remains fragmented. Studies on language in Islamic education frequently focus on its instrumental use in teaching Arabic, managing classroom interaction, or facilitating counseling. Similarly, research on Islamic psychology often concentrates on defining and contextualizing concepts such as fitrah, aql, nafs, and qalb without examining how their meanings are mediated through language. This separation limits our understanding of the dynamic interplay between linguistic expression and psychological interpretation in Islamic thought and education.

Furthermore, methodological weaknesses remain a challenge. Many studies adopt descriptive or theological approaches without systematically analyzing how linguistic structures, translation practices, or rhetorical choices affect the reception of psychological concepts. Comparative analyses between Arabic originals and vernacular translations are still rare, even though semantic drift may alter or dilute theological precision. Similarly, few studies integrate psycholinguistic frameworks, such as Sapir-Whorf or Vygotskian theories, to explain how language shapes cognition and

moral reasoning. This lack of methodological rigor limits the potential of the field to advance both theoretical clarity and practical application.

The significance of addressing these gaps lies in the need for an integrative perspective that treats language not merely as a pedagogical medium but as a constitutive element of Islamic psychology. Recognizing the role of language in shaping *fitrah*, *aql*, *nafs*, and *qalb* will enrich both the theory and practice of Islamic education. A critical literature analysis that synthesizes theological, linguistic, and psychological perspectives offers a more comprehensive framework. Such an approach can clarify conceptual ambiguities, highlight the implications of linguistic precision, and propose directions for empirical studies that test how discourse and translation shape learners' understanding of Islamic psychological constructs.

Finally, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse by situating Indonesian scholarship within international debates on language, psychology, and education. By systematically analyzing literature from local and global sources, the study highlights the shared challenges and unique perspectives that emerge in different contexts. This not only enhances scholarly dialogue across cultural boundaries but also strengthens the foundations for developing pedagogical models that are both contextually grounded and globally relevant. In this way, the study underscores the significance of linguistic analysis in advancing Islamic psychology as a discipline that is intellectually rigorous, spiritually authentic, and pedagogically transformative.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a critical literature analysis approach to examine how language shapes the understanding of Islamic psychology concepts, particularly *fitrah*, *aql*, *nafs*, and *qalb*. The choice of this design is motivated by the recognition that previous research has largely remained descriptive or fragmented, focusing either on pedagogical practices or on isolated theological discussions. A critical literature analysis allows for a systematic examination of how different bodies of scholarship—linguistics, psycholinguistics, theology, and Islamic psychology—converge and diverge in their treatment of language and psychological constructs. Rather than collecting new empirical data, this method evaluates, compares, and synthesizes existing findings to construct a more integrated framework.

By employing this design, the study is able to identify both conceptual strengths and methodological weaknesses in the literature. The analysis emphasizes how terminological precision, rhetorical structures, and translation practices affect the interpretation of Islamic psychology. Furthermore, the critical stance ensures that the

research does not merely summarize prior works but interrogates their assumptions, consistency, and implications. Such an approach is particularly important in contexts where religious concepts are linguistically mediated, as subtle shifts in meaning can influence educational practices and psychological understanding.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The data for this study consist of scholarly works drawn from three main categories: (1) Indonesian academic literature, reflecting the dominant Muslim-majority context in which Islamic education and psychology are practiced; (2) Scopus-indexed and international journals, which provide comparative perspectives and global academic standards; and (3) classical and modern theological texts, particularly Qur'anic exegesis and philosophical writings that define the conceptual foundations of Islamic psychology. This combination ensures both contextual depth and international relevance.

The inclusion criteria were developed to ensure methodological rigor. Sources were selected if they (a) directly addressed the role of language in Islamic education or psychology, (b) analyzed key psychological concepts such as *fitrah*, *aql*, *nafs*, or *qalb*, and (c) were published in peer-reviewed venues or recognized scholarly outlets. Works that discussed language only in peripheral terms or focused exclusively on technical linguistic issues without psychological relevance were excluded. Similarly, materials lacking sufficient methodological transparency or academic credibility were set aside, ensuring that the analysis relied on trustworthy and representative sources.

Analytical Framework

The study employs a multi-layered analytical framework combining perspectives from linguistics, psycholinguistics, and Islamic psychology. This framework is designed to capture the constitutive role of language in shaping human cognition, moral reasoning, and spiritual development. Three dimensions are central to the analysis:

1. **Semantic and terminological analysis:** This involves examining how terms such as *fitrah*, *aql*, *nafs*, and *qalb* are defined across sources, with attention to their Qur'anic frequency, exegetical interpretations, and translation into vernacular languages.
2. **Discourse and rhetorical analysis:** This dimension investigates how metaphors, analogies, and narrative structures are employed in pedagogical and scholarly texts to convey psychological concepts. It assesses whether language choices reinforce or obscure intended meanings.
3. **Comparative analysis:** The framework compares findings from Indonesian literature with those from international contexts to identify convergences, divergences, and potential cultural or linguistic biases. This dimension helps situate local scholarship within the global academic discourse.

By integrating these dimensions, the framework enables a critical synthesis that not only highlights thematic consistencies but also uncovers conceptual ambiguities and methodological shortcomings.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis proceeded in four systematic stages. First, a literature identification process was conducted using academic databases and institutional repositories to locate relevant works. Keywords such as “language,” “Islamic education,” “fitrah,” “aql,” “nafs,” and “qalb” were used, ensuring coverage across linguistic, psychological, and theological fields.

Second, an evaluation of methodological rigor was carried out. Each selected study was assessed based on its research design, validity, reliability, and conceptual clarity. Works with insufficient methodological grounding were critically noted as limitations of the existing field ([Sudarwati et al., 2017](#)).

Third, a thematic coding process was applied. Key concepts were categorized under themes such as “language and cognition,” “language and spirituality,” and “language and pedagogy.” This coding allowed the researcher to trace how similar concepts were discussed differently across contexts, highlighting the influence of language on conceptual framing.

Finally, a comparative synthesis was undertaken. The findings from Indonesian and international sources were systematically contrasted, allowing for the identification of unique contributions and global patterns. This synthesis highlighted areas where linguistic choices significantly shaped psychological interpretation, as well as gaps where further empirical work is needed.

Research Ethics and Integrity

Although this study does not involve human participants, ethical considerations remain essential in ensuring academic integrity. Copyright compliance was maintained by accurately citing all referenced works and avoiding unauthorized reproduction. Respect for intellectual property guided the handling of both local and international sources. Plagiarism prevention was prioritized through careful paraphrasing and attribution, while methodological transparency ensures replicability of the analysis. These measures align with established academic standards and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

In addition, sensitivity to religious texts and traditions was observed throughout the research process. Concepts drawn from the Qur’an, Hadith, and classical scholars were treated with due respect and contextual accuracy. This approach reflects the dual responsibility of Islamic psychology research: to meet scholarly standards while remaining faithful to the spiritual and ethical values it studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Language in the Term *Fitrah*

Linguistically, the term *fitrah* originates from the Arabic root *fa-tha-ra*, meaning “creation.” As a derivative of a verb, the term implies an ongoing process of making or bringing into existence. The Qur’an, in Surah al-Rum [30]:30, presents *fitrah* as the natural state established by God. Quraish Shihab explains that *fitrah* represents a system or mechanism endowed by Allah from the beginning of creation ([Napitupulu, 2019](#); [Sahbana, 2022](#)). Accordingly, *fitrah* is understood as the innate disposition embedded in every human being. This linguistic and theological grounding underscores how the very articulation of the word frames human existence as a divinely established orientation.

Language functions as the primary means through which the abstract essence of *fitrah* is articulated and comprehended. As a communicative tool, language translates psychological and spiritual concepts into forms that can be understood and shared within society. Ibn Manzhur ([1988](#)) observes that human beings, through *fitrah*, are predisposed toward inner awareness and derive satisfaction from such consciousness. Bhat ([2016](#)) further associates *fitrah* with behaviors oriented toward peace, gratitude, emotional stability, social health, cognitive clarity, and spiritual elevation. These associations illustrate how linguistic framing allows the concept of *fitrah* to encompass not only theological doctrine but also psychological and behavioral tendencies.

Islamic education treats *fitrah* as an essential resource and initial capital for learning and personal growth. Ibn Kathir highlights that human *fitrah* is naturally oriented toward monotheism, and education’s role is to safeguard this orientation through revelation and the Prophetic model. Pedagogical practices such as *hikmah* (wisdom through modeling), *mau’izhah* (admonition), and *jidal* (constructive debate) embody the implications of language in preserving *fitrah* ([Purnama et al., 2020](#)). Thus, educational discourse becomes both the medium and the safeguard of *fitrah*, reinforcing its spiritual trajectory through linguistic and pedagogical engagement. The centrality of language demonstrates that educational methods are inseparable from the theological mission of preserving innate human nature.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, language acquisition itself reflects the operation of *fitrah*. Language is not innate but must be learned and acquired, though humans are endowed with capacities that facilitate this process. Sudarwati et al. ([2017](#)) explain that *fitrah* includes mechanisms akin to a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), enabling humans to differentiate between linguistic and non-linguistic sounds. The learning and acquisition of language can therefore be seen as efforts to actualize human *fitrah*. This view links the natural predisposition toward knowledge and

communication with the developmental process of mastering language, showing that fitrah underlies both spiritual orientation and linguistic competence.

Philosophical perspectives add further depth to this understanding. Abidin (2018) describes fitrah as a divine gift inherent at birth, while Western psychology's John Locke proposed the *tabula rasa* or "blank slate" theory of human nature (Androne, 2014; Juhansar, 2021; Rekret, 2018). Mudin et al. (2021) compare these perspectives, noting that while Locke emphasized neutrality, Islam insists that humans are born with an inherent inclination toward goodness and religiosity. This comparison highlights the significance of language in articulating conceptual distinctions: whereas *tabula rasa* emphasizes emptiness, fitrah emphasizes predisposition toward faith. Thus, linguistic choices carry profound implications in framing human nature within different intellectual traditions.

Understanding fitrah is central to effective communication between individuals, communities, and God. Language becomes the medium through which the innate tendency toward goodness and divine awareness is explained. Fitriyanto (2021) emphasizes that word choice in articulating fitrah must be deliberate to ensure profound comprehension. Linguistic precision safeguards the theological meaning of fitrah while allowing individuals to internalize its psychological dimensions. By framing fitrah through careful expression, language provides not only clarity but also depth, enabling individuals to grasp their innate orientation toward ethical and spiritual development. In this sense, language is integral to the pedagogy of self-realization and spiritual growth.

At the individual level, language plays a crucial role in helping people reflect on and articulate the moral values contained within their fitrah. Through verbal expression, individuals can confront internal conflicts, understand innate tendencies, and consciously strengthen positive aspects of their character. This reflective process illustrates how language functions as a bridge between inner psychological states and outward moral actions. By facilitating self-understanding and self-expression, language enables individuals to navigate the complexities of moral decision-making while remaining rooted in their innate nature. Thus, language provides the interpretive lens through which fitrah shapes personal identity and behavior.

Beyond the personal dimension, language also facilitates dialogue across different religions and cultures. By framing fitrah as a universal orientation toward goodness, effective communication can foster interfaith understanding and social harmony. This perspective highlights the role of language in translating the principles of fitrah into terms accessible to diverse audiences. Such communication helps reveal shared values, creating opportunities for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies. In academic contexts, Islamic psychologists also rely on

language to define, elaborate, and debate theories of *fitrah* (Faisal et al., 2023; Maskhuroh, 2019). Thus, language becomes both the foundation for scholarly discourse and the means to translate theological concepts into universal ethical dialogue.

The cumulative evidence demonstrates that language is indispensable in shaping the understanding of *fitrah* within Islamic psychology. It provides the framework for articulating innate human tendencies, preserving theological meaning, guiding educational practice, and fostering interreligious dialogue. Arifin (2016) affirms that *fitrah* signifies basic human capacities or innate qualities, with monotheism as its core. Quraish Shihab likewise insists that all reflections should remain grounded in the Qur'an as the ultimate source of knowledge (Maskhuroh, 2019). Together, these perspectives illustrate that language is not merely a conduit but the foundation for theorizing, communicating, and embodying *fitrah*. The role of language, therefore, is central to both personal transformation and collective understanding in Islamic psychology.

The Role of Language in the Term *Aql*

The Qur'an refers to *aql* forty-nine times, while the related expression *ulu al-albab* occurs sixteen times, emphasizing the centrality of intellect in Islamic thought (Rifai, 2020). Quraish Shihab interprets *aql* as a tether and safeguard that prevents individuals from straying into error or sin. Harun Nasution expands this view by identifying multiple verb forms—such as *aqalahu*, *ta'kilun*, *na'qilun*, *ya'qiluha*, and *ya'qilun*—all of which express the processes of comprehension and reasoning. These linguistic forms highlight the dynamic nature of intellect as expressed in Qur'anic discourse, showing that *aql* is not a static faculty but an active engagement with knowledge, reflection, and moral discernment.

Psycholinguistic studies further illuminate the interplay between intellect and language. Gardner's mid-20th century work placed the analysis of language and intellect at the center of psycholinguistics (Dardjowidjojo, 2025). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis reinforced this relationship by proposing that language does not merely communicate ideas but also shapes thought patterns, serving as a psychological activity that structures cognition and behavior. Rachmawati (2022) builds on this, affirming that language reflects individual mental processes and is itself a representation of thought. Thus, the semantic and structural choices made in language directly influence how intellect is expressed, developed, and understood within Islamic psychology.

Vygotsky's theories add a further dimension by emphasizing the importance of meaning in language. He posits that the mind plays a decisive role in selecting and shaping words stored in the human brain, enabling individuals to find precise diction in communication (Jones et al., 2018; Newman, 2018; Veraksa & Sheridan, 2018). This

process does not merely involve identifying expressions but also extracting and organizing meaning, underscoring that thought and language are mutually constitutive. In this light, *aql* can be seen not only as a cognitive faculty but also as a function that materializes through linguistic articulation. The intellect thus becomes inseparable from the communicative frameworks that give it form and expression.

Noam Chomsky's competence-performance theory further clarifies the interrelation between language and thought. Chomsky distinguishes between the inner structure, representing the capacity to think and generate meaning, and the outer structure, expressed in speech or writing (Mingo & Aler, 2016; Murphy, 2020; Suharti, 2021; Trültzsch-Wijnen, 2020). Competence refers to the ability to analyze and organize language, while performance reflects the transformation of cognitive processes into communicative acts. This framework highlights that intellectual ability is not fully observable without linguistic expression. In Islamic psychology, *aql* therefore functions as both a divine faculty and a linguistic manifestation, where inner contemplation is externalized through discourse that guides moral and spiritual life.

From an Islamic perspective, *aql* is considered a divine gift granted by Allah, encompassing the abilities to think, reflect, and understand. This role goes beyond cognitive function to include moral responsibility and spiritual discernment. The intellect is tasked not only with organizing knowledge but also with directing it toward ethical decision-making and balanced personality development (Napitupulu, 2019). By integrating spiritual awareness with rational inquiry, *aql* provides a holistic framework for human behavior. This understanding situates *aql* as central to both individual self-regulation and collective wisdom, highlighting its indispensable role in shaping Islamic psychological concepts and practices.

Essentially, the intellect is viewed as the foundation for acquiring knowledge, understanding divine reality, and making wise choices in life. Harun Nasution and other scholars underscore that humans, as creatures endowed with intellect, bear responsibility for its optimal use (Rifai, 2020). Through *aql*, believers are expected to comprehend God's signs, cultivate wisdom, and contribute constructively to society. The Qur'anic emphasis on reflection (*tafakkur*) and remembrance (*tadhakkur*) further illustrates that the intellect is not merely rational but spiritual, guiding individuals toward a deeper appreciation of creation. In this regard, *aql* functions as both a cognitive compass and a moral-spiritual light in Islamic psychology.

The influence of language on intellect is evident in its ability to articulate abstract concepts, convey moral values, and generate collective knowledge. Through language, individuals express the outcomes of reflection, communicate discoveries, and transmit wisdom across generations (Rachmawati, 2022). Language also shapes interpersonal relationships, enabling communities to deliberate, reason, and form shared

understanding. Within Islamic psychology, this communicative dimension ensures that *aql* is not confined to solitary reasoning but becomes a resource for collective intellectual and spiritual growth. The articulation of thought through language thus reinforces the moral and educational functions of *aql* within Islamic education and society.

The integration of intellect and language is equally vital in education. Islamic pedagogy positions the development of intellect (*aql*) as a primary goal, achieved through language as the medium of transmitting religious teachings, moral principles, and scientific knowledge. Skinner (2019) highlights Al-Ghazali's view that *aql* is closely related to *qalb*, emphasizing that reasoning must be anchored in the heart to ensure wisdom and sincerity. Educational practices such as *tadhakkur* (understanding) and *tafakkur* (contemplation) reinforce this dual role. While *tadhakkur* guides humans toward human perfection, *tafakkur* functions as a control mechanism that ensures reflection remains aligned with divine principles. Together, they illustrate how intellect, when expressed through language, cultivates intelligent, ethical, and spiritually conscious generations.

The Role of Language in the Term *Qalb*

In classical sources such as *Mu'jam al-Munfakhras*, the term *qalb* carries dual meanings: it refers both to the physical heart and to a subtle dimension connected with spirituality and divine awareness. The spiritual *qalb* is described as the innermost faculty that perceives emotions, knowledge, and truth beyond sensory experience (Kamaruzaman et al., 2023). This duality underscores that the heart in Islamic psychology is not confined to its biological function. Instead, it occupies a central position in human consciousness, mediating between the physical and metaphysical, and thus shaping how believers experience, interpret, and respond to moral and spiritual realities.

Within Islamic psychology, the *qalb* is considered the locus of spirituality and sensitivity to moral values. It guides individuals toward ethical awareness and spiritual refinement by mediating between thought, emotion, and divine inspiration. Cholik (2015) emphasizes that the heart is not merely a bodily organ but an internal faculty essential for shaping character. This conception highlights the *qalb* as a moral compass that determines the sincerity of intentions, the purity of actions, and the stability of one's faith (Haeri, 2017; Malik, 2023; Munsoor, 2015). Thus, maintaining the heart's integrity becomes indispensable to cultivating both personal virtue and religious devotion.

Practically, the heart demands continuous efforts to preserve its purity and alignment with higher moral values. Ali & Sharifi (2020) note that this involves self-

reflection, monitoring intentions, and guarding against corrupting influences that compromise moral integrity. The cleansing of the heart (*tazkiyat al-qalb*) is achieved through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, repentance, and remembrance of God. Such practices prevent moral decline and strengthen the heart's capacity to remain oriented toward goodness. In this sense, the *qalb* is dynamic, requiring ongoing vigilance to ensure its alignment with Islamic ethical principles.

The significance of the heart in daily life is reflected in its role in shaping attitudes, emotions, and actions. A sound heart directs individuals toward virtuous conduct and aligns feelings with Islamic moral teachings. Acts of kindness, sincerity in intention, and commitment to justice all exemplify the externalization of a purified heart. These practices are not merely personal but social, as they contribute to harmony and trust within communities. By maintaining the *qalb* through virtuous deeds, individuals move closer to spiritual perfection, embodying the integration of inner sincerity and outward behavior in Islamic psychology.

Language plays an indispensable role in externalizing the condition of the heart. Prayers, supplications, and expressions of gratitude all serve as linguistic manifestations of the *qalb*'s state. Through language, individuals articulate moral values, convey sincerity, and express spiritual longing to God (Lubis, 2023; Zafer, 2019). Similarly, reflective discourse and spiritual conversations reveal the heart's orientation, allowing individuals to share insights and cultivate communal spirituality. Language thus provides a tangible means for expressing and reinforcing the heart's sensitivity to moral and religious values, bridging the inner world of spirituality with outward communication.

In teaching, writing, and communal life, language becomes the primary medium through which lessons about the *qalb* are transmitted. Religious texts, sermons, and spiritual advice rely on language to stimulate reflection and motivate the purification of the heart. Language serves both cognitive and affective functions: it conveys knowledge while also stirring emotional and spiritual responses. This mutual influence demonstrates that the *qalb* is not hidden but expressed outwardly through words and discourse. In Islamic psychology, the heart and language work together to shape character, guide individuals closer to God, and strengthen the spiritual bonds that sustain moral and communal life.

The Role of Language in the Term *Nafs*

The Qur'an mentions *nafs* nearly 295 times in various forms, reflecting its importance in Islamic psychology. It is generally interpreted as the human capacity for both good and evil actions, depending on how it is cultivated. In Islamic education, *nafs* is closely linked to human deeds, character, and ethical orientation. Effective pedagogy seeks to

channel intellect in guiding the *nafs* toward righteousness, emphasizing moral transformation as a systematic process. Practices such as *takhalli* (removing vices), *tahalli* (adopting virtues), and *tajalli* (achieving spiritual illumination) are employed to reshape negative tendencies into virtuous behavior (Andopa, 2018; Hidayatullah & Fuad, 2024; Wiwanti, 2012). Thus, education highlights the responsibility of refining the *nafs* through structured moral and spiritual training.

In Islamic psychology, *nafs* plays a central role in mental health and spiritual interventions. Two important methods—*tazkiyah al-nafs* (self-purification) and *ta'leem al-nafs* (self-education)—are employed to promote well-being by fostering a positive relationship with one's inner self. *Tazkiyah* involves sustained self-reflection and self-correction, guiding individuals toward the state of *Nafs al-Mutma'inna* (the contented soul) characterized by peace and closeness to Allah. This requires practices of self-control, discipline, and monitoring of impulses, especially to regulate the negative inclinations of *Nafs al-Ammarah* (the commanding soul). These processes illustrate the dynamic interaction between spiritual disciplines and psychological well-being (Kamitsis & Francis, 2013; Khai & Medina, 2024; Pratama et al., 2024; Syafii & Azhari, 2025).

From a broader psychological perspective, *nafs* represents the internal dimension encompassing emotions, impulses, and desires. This complexity illustrates the dual nature of the soul as both a driver of human weakness and a potential force for growth. Yudiani (2013) emphasizes that *nafs* fundamentally shapes personality and behavior, making it central to spiritual development. Its regulation influences not only emotional balance but also the integration of moral consciousness into everyday life. Therefore, understanding the *nafs* is indispensable in shaping human identity, as it acts as the inner arena where conflicts between base desires and higher moral aspirations are continuously negotiated.

Applying this understanding requires deliberate efforts to manage and control the *nafs*. Islamic teachings stress that spiritual growth is inseparable from cultivating self-awareness and regulating desires. By recognizing emotional impulses, individuals can engage in disciplined practices that align worldly needs with spiritual goals. Such practices foster balanced personalities who are self-aware, morally conscious, and spiritually attuned. This balance reflects the integration of psychological resilience and ethical maturity, offering a holistic framework for personal growth. In this regard, Islamic psychology highlights the *nafs* as both a challenge to be overcome and a resource to be refined for higher moral purpose.

Language is crucial in articulating the inner complexities of the *nafs*. Through spoken and written expression, individuals can name, describe, and reflect upon their emotions, impulses, and desires. Language thus becomes a vital tool for developing self-awareness and communicating the often intangible dimensions of the inner self. It

enables people to externalize struggles that are otherwise difficult to articulate, thereby facilitating self-reflection and guidance. In religious contexts, language is used to express prayers, spiritual aspirations, and ethical commitments, serving as a bridge between inner experiences and outward communication. By doing so, language transforms private emotions into meaningful steps toward self-regulation and spiritual refinement.

In educational and textual contexts, language serves as the primary medium for transmitting teachings about the *nafs*. Religious texts, sermons, and moral instructions employ carefully chosen words to inspire reflection, self-control, and spiritual progress. By engaging with these texts, individuals internalize values and learn strategies to discipline their *nafs*. Thus, language not only conveys doctrine but also cultivates the self by shaping thought and guiding behavior. In Islamic psychology, the interplay of *nafs* and language reflects their mutual role in personal transformation: language provides the structure through which the *nafs* is understood, disciplined, and directed toward goodness and closeness to God.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the indispensable role of language in shaping the understanding of Islamic psychology, particularly regarding *fitrah*, *aql*, *qalb*, and *nafs*. Findings indicate that language does not function merely as a neutral tool of communication but as a constitutive force that mediates human cognition, spirituality, and moral awareness. Through linguistic articulation, these core psychological constructs become accessible for teaching, reflection, and practical application. The study demonstrates that without linguistic precision, the meanings of these terms risk distortion, potentially undermining their educational and psychological significance. Hence, language is foundational to sustaining the integrity of Islamic psychological thought.

The discussion also shows how classical Islamic perspectives align with modern linguistic and psycholinguistic theories. Concepts such as Chomsky's competence-performance, Vygotsky's emphasis on meaning, and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis provide theoretical tools to explain how language structures cognition and moral reasoning. When applied to Islamic constructs, these theories underscore how the articulation of *fitrah*, *aql*, *qalb*, and *nafs* shapes not only individual identity but also collective ethical consciousness. The integration of linguistic theory with Islamic psychology offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the interdependence between language and spirituality.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing field of Islamic psychology by reframing language as a decisive factor in conceptual formation, moral education, and

spiritual development. Its findings encourage Islamic educators and scholars to pay closer attention to linguistic choices in teaching, counseling, and textual interpretation. By emphasizing the constitutive role of language, this study advances theoretical clarity and enriches pedagogical practice. The broader implication is that Islamic education can be more effective and transformative when it consciously integrates linguistic analysis into its understanding and application of psychological concepts.

Limitations of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between language and Islamic psychology, it is constrained by certain limitations. The analysis relies heavily on secondary sources, which means the findings are shaped by the availability and quality of existing literature. Some of the works reviewed exhibit methodological weaknesses, such as descriptive rather than empirical approaches, limited validation of claims, or insufficient comparative analysis across different cultural and linguistic contexts. Additionally, the study is primarily interpretive and theoretical, which restricts its ability to measure the practical effects of language use on learners' understanding and internalization of Islamic psychological concepts.

Another limitation lies in the scope of materials examined. While the research included Indonesian and international scholarship, it could not exhaustively cover the vast body of literature on language, psychology, and Islamic education. The emphasis on four central constructs—*fitrah*, *aql*, *qalb*, and *nafs*—provides depth but limits exploration of other relevant psychological and spiritual terms in Islamic thought. Moreover, the study does not incorporate fieldwork or empirical testing, leaving open questions about how linguistic framing concretely influences classroom dynamics, counseling effectiveness, or learners' psychological development. These limitations suggest the need for complementary empirical research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should move beyond literature analysis to include empirical studies that test the impact of linguistic framing on learners' understanding of Islamic psychological concepts. Classroom-based research could investigate how specific pedagogical strategies, word choices, and rhetorical devices influence students' moral reasoning and spiritual awareness. Similarly, counseling research might explore how the articulation of *nafs* or *qalb* in therapeutic settings shapes clients' emotional resilience and self-regulation. Such empirical work would complement the theoretical foundation laid here and provide concrete evidence for the transformative role of language in Islamic psychology and education.

Further studies should also broaden the scope of inquiry to include comparative analyses across cultures and languages. Investigating how translations of Qur'anic

terms into different vernaculars affect their interpretation would help clarify potential semantic drift and its educational consequences. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches integrating psychology, linguistics, theology, and education could yield a more holistic understanding of how language mediates spiritual and psychological growth. By expanding methodological approaches and cultural contexts, future research can enrich the theoretical and practical contributions of Islamic psychology, ensuring it remains relevant and robust in addressing the complexities of contemporary life.

Author Contributions

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Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to institution's policy.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT, Grammarly, and PaperPal in order to translate from Bahasa Indonesia into English, and to improve clarity of the language and readability of the article. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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