

## Integration of Innate Human Nature (fitrah) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in Counseling Practice to Support Adolescents in Managing Identity Conflict

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**Abstract:** *particularly in the context of psychosocial challenges, social media influence, and value discrepancies between modern culture and religious beliefs. Inadequate management of identity conflict may result in emotional distress, role confusion, and maladaptive behaviors. Despite extensive discussions on adolescent development, existing literature has not sufficiently emphasized Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) as a structured intervention for identity conflict, especially within religious contexts. This study aims to analyze the integration of the Islamic concept of fitrah and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in counseling practice as a holistic intervention for managing adolescent identity conflict. A qualitative literature review was conducted by examining contemporary Islamic psychology literature and empirical studies on CBT in adolescent counseling. The findings indicate that CBT is effective in addressing irrational thoughts and maladaptive behaviors, while fitrah reflects the innate human nature toward goodness, truth, and psychological balance. The integration of these approaches forms a holistic counseling framework encompassing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions. This study concludes that the integrative fitrah-CBT approach has strong potential as a comprehensive counseling intervention for addressing adolescent identity conflict.*

**Keywords:** *Fitrah, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Adolescent Counseling, Identity Conflict, Integrative Counseling*

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### INTRODUCTION

Adolescence represents a critical developmental phase in the human life cycle, as it involves the formation of personal identity, the structuring of values, and the establishment of life direction. According to Erikson (1968), adolescents are situated within the developmental stage of *identity versus role confusion*, a phase in which individuals strive to understand who they are and the roles they wish to assume within society. Failure to resolve this developmental task in a positive manner may result in prolonged identity conflict.

In the context of contemporary society, adolescent identity conflict has become increasingly complex due to rapid social change, cultural globalization, and the pervasive influence of social media. Social media not only shapes the way adolescents interact but also significantly influences their self-perception, value systems, and life aspirations (Santrock, 2019). Exposure to diverse

norms and lifestyles that may conflict with religious and local cultural values often contributes to identity confusion, internal conflict, and heightened psychosocial stress.

Previous studies have indicated that unresolved identity conflict can contribute to various psychological difficulties, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and engagement in risky behaviors (Marcia, 1980; Santrock, 2019). Consequently, there is a pressing need for counseling interventions that are effective, holistic, and sensitive to cultural and religious contexts in order to assist adolescents in managing identity-related challenges.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has long been recognized as an evidence-based counseling approach that is effective in addressing adolescents' emotional and behavioral problems (Beck, 2011). However, this approach has been critiqued for its predominant focus on cognitive and behavioral dimensions, with comparatively limited attention given to spiritual aspects and value-based meaning in life. Within Muslim communities, this limitation may be addressed through the integration of the concept of *innate human nature (fitrah)*, which constitutes a foundational principle in Islamic psychology.

Despite the recognition of adolescent identity conflict as a critical issue, the existing literature has not sufficiently highlighted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) as a structured and practical alternative intervention for addressing identity-related challenges among adolescents. Most discussions remain descriptive, focusing on developmental theories without proposing concrete counseling approaches. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by explicitly positioning CBT as a viable intervention framework and integrating it with the Islamic concept of *fitrah*. This integration is expected to offer a more comprehensive and contextually relevant solution, particularly within Muslim adolescent populations.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative research design using a systematic literature review approach to critically analyze and synthesize both theoretical and empirical studies related to adolescent identity conflict, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and the concept of *fitrah* in Islamic psychology. The study adopts a conceptual and analytical orientation, aiming to integrate multidisciplinary perspectives from modern psychology and Islamic thought in developing a holistic counseling framework.

The data sources consisted of selected academic literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, empirical studies (both quantitative and qualitative), and meta-analyses related to CBT effectiveness. The inclusion of diverse types of literature was intended to ensure a comprehensive understanding of both theoretical foundations and evidence-based practices in adolescent counseling. The reviewed studies primarily focused on adolescent populations aged

between 12 to 18 years, as this developmental stage is closely associated with identity formation and identity conflict.

Although this study did not involve direct participants, a purposive sampling technique was applied in selecting relevant literature. The inclusion criteria included studies focusing on adolescent identity conflict, research involving CBT interventions, literature discussing Islamic psychology or the concept of *fitrah*, and publications from credible and peer-reviewed sources. This approach ensured that the selected materials were both relevant and of high academic quality.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic search of academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, and other relevant databases in the fields of psychology and counseling. The primary keywords used in the search process included “fitrah,” “identity conflict,” “adolescent counseling,” and “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.” The identified literature was subsequently screened and evaluated based on relevance, credibility, and alignment with the objectives of the study.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, which involved several stages, including the identification of key concepts, categorization of recurring themes, and comparative analysis between psychological and Islamic perspectives. The themes identified were related to adolescent identity conflict, CBT principles, and the role of the *fitrah* concept in identity formation. These themes were then synthesized to identify points of integration between CBT and Islamic psychology, ultimately leading to the development of an integrative counseling framework encompassing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual-value dimensions.

## RESULTS

Based on the thematic analysis of the reviewed literature, the findings of this study are organized into four main themes: (1) the nature and causes of adolescent identity conflict, (2) the effectiveness and limitations of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in adolescent counseling, (3) the role of the concept of *innate human nature (fitrah)* in identity formation, and (4) the rationale and forms of *fitrah*–CBT integration in counseling practice.

The analysis demonstrates that adolescent identity conflict is multidimensional, requiring an integrative approach that goes beyond purely cognitive or behavioral interventions.

### Adolescent Identity Conflict

The findings indicate that adolescent identity conflict is not merely an internal developmental issue but a psychosocial phenomenon influenced by the interaction of multiple personal and environmental factors. In line with Erikson’s theory (1968), adolescents are in a phase

of identity exploration that involves the examination of values, roles, and life direction. Failure to integrate these aspects coherently may result in role confusion.

However, contemporary literature suggests that adolescent identity conflict has become increasingly complex due to rapid social change and the pervasive influence of social media. Santrock (2019) emphasizes that social media not only shapes adolescents' social interactions but also influences the formation of self-concept through social comparison, the pursuit of validation, and the construction of virtual identities. This dynamic often encourages adolescents to develop external identities that are misaligned with their internal values, thereby intensifying intrapersonal conflict.

Marcia's (1980) studies further indicate that adolescents classified within the *identity diffusion* and *identity foreclosure* statuses are more likely to experience emotional distress and value confusion compared to those who have achieved *identity achievement*. These findings support the view that identity conflict, when not addressed systematically, can have long-term implications for adolescents' psychological well-being.

### **Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**

The findings indicate that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an effective approach in addressing the cognitive and behavioral aspects of adolescent identity conflict. CBT is grounded in the assumption that emotional distress arises from irrational thoughts and maladaptive core beliefs (Beck, 2011). In the context of identity conflict, cognitions such as "*I am worthless,*" "*I must be accepted to be valued,*" or "*I have failed to meet others' expectations*" frequently contribute to emotional distress and problematic behaviors.

Empirical studies demonstrate that CBT techniques, including cognitive restructuring, Socratic dialogue, and behavioral experiments, are effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem among adolescents (Dobson & Dobson, 2018). CBT also assists adolescents in developing emotional regulation skills and making more rational decisions in challenging social situations.

Nevertheless, the literature also highlights certain limitations of CBT when applied to identity conflict involving deeper questions of values, meaning in life, and existential purpose. Beck (2011) himself acknowledged that CBT primarily emphasizes pragmatic changes in cognition and behavior, with relatively limited focus on spiritual or moral dimensions. These limitations become more pronounced within Muslim communities, where religion constitutes a central foundation of identity formation.

### **The Concept of Fitrah as the Foundation of Identity Formation**

The findings reveal that the concept of *innate human nature (fitrah)* plays a crucial role in understanding adolescent identity conflict from the perspective of Islamic psychology. Fitrah refers to the original state in which human beings are created, characterized by an inherent inclination toward faith, goodness, and psychological balance (Al-Qur'an, Surah al-Rum: 30). Within this framework, identity conflict is understood as a consequence of deviation from fitrah due to environmental influences, social pressures, and distorted patterns of thinking.

Hamzah (2015) explains that failure to recognize and preserve one's fitrah leads to a loss of personal direction, rendering individuals more susceptible to external values that are incongruent with their innate potential. In the adolescent context, this failure often manifests as value confusion, emotional instability, and prolonged internal conflict.

The findings further indicate that fitrah-based counseling approaches emphasize self-awareness, value restoration, and the construction of meaningful life purpose. Such approaches assist adolescents in understanding identity not merely as a social construct, but as a trust and potential that must be developed in a balanced manner. Consequently, the concept of fitrah offers ontological and axiological dimensions that complement modern psychological approaches.

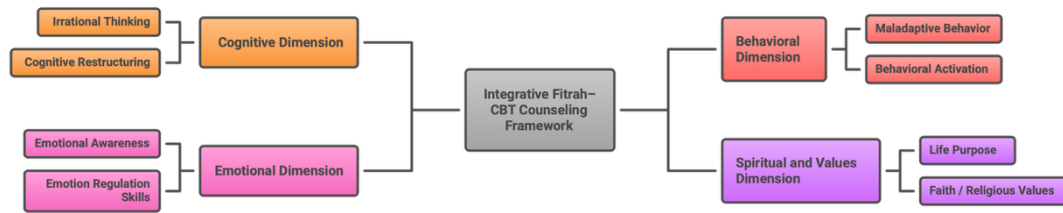
### **Integration of Fitrah and CBT as a Holistic Counseling Framework**

The synthesis of the reviewed literature suggests that integrating the concept of fitrah with CBT results in a holistic counseling framework that combines the strengths of both approaches. CBT provides a systematic and evidence-based intervention structure for addressing maladaptive thoughts and behaviors, while fitrah offers a profound foundation of values, meaning, and life purpose.

This integration allows the process of cognitive restructuring within CBT to be aligned with fitrah-based values. For example, negative self-beliefs related to self-worth can be challenged rationally through CBT techniques and subsequently reinforced through the understanding that human beings are created with intrinsic value and inherent potential for goodness. Such an approach enhances the meaningfulness of counseling interventions and increases their long-term effectiveness.

### **The Integrative Fitrah-CBT Counseling Framework**

Based on the literature analysis, this study develops an integrative Fitrah-CBT counseling framework encompassing four main dimensions: cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual-value dimensions.



**Figure 1. Integrative Fitrah–CBT Counseling Framework**

Based on the synthesis of the reviewed literature, this study proposes an integrative Fitrah–CBT counseling framework encompassing four primary dimensions: cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual–value dimensions. This framework is developed through the integration of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach and the concept of *innate human nature (fitrah)* in Islamic psychology, with the aim of addressing adolescent identity conflict in a holistic manner.

At the cognitive dimension, the framework focuses on the identification and restructuring of irrational thoughts related to self-identity, such as negative beliefs about self-worth and excessive dependence on social acceptance. Through CBT techniques, maladaptive cognitions are challenged and replaced with more realistic thoughts that align with the understanding that human beings possess intrinsic value grounded in their *fitrah*.

The emotional dimension emphasizes emotional awareness and the development of emotional regulation skills. Adolescents are supported in identifying negative emotions arising from identity conflict and in cultivating the ability to regulate and express emotions in more adaptive ways. This process promotes emotional balance as a prerequisite for the formation of a stable sense of identity.

The behavioral dimension focuses on reducing maladaptive behaviors that emerge as a consequence of identity conflict, such as social withdrawal or engagement in risky behaviors. Through behavioral activation strategies, adolescents are encouraged to develop more positive behavioral patterns that are consistent with personal goals and endorsed life values.

Finally, the spiritual–value dimension constitutes the core element that distinguishes this framework from conventional CBT approaches. This dimension emphasizes the restoration of awareness of life purpose and faith-based values as foundational elements of identity formation. The integration of spiritual values serves to strengthen cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes by providing deeper meaning and direction within the counseling process.

Overall, the integrative Fitrah–CBT counseling framework proposed in this study represents a comprehensive intervention model that combines the strengths of modern psychological

approaches and Islamic psychology in supporting adolescents to manage identity conflict effectively.

## **DISCUSSION**

This discussion aims to critically evaluate the findings related to adolescent identity conflict and the potential integration of the fitrah–CBT framework in counseling practice. The analysis is conducted by linking the study’s findings to developmental theories, modern psychological frameworks, and Islamic psychological perspectives, while also examining the implications and limitations of the proposed integrative approach.

### **Adolescent Identity Conflict: Between Development Demands and Contemporary Social Pressures**

The findings confirm that adolescent identity conflict is a developmental issue consistent with Erikson’s (1968) theory, which positions *identity versus role confusion* as the central developmental task during adolescence. However, a critical analysis of the literature suggests that Erikson’s framework, developed within a 20th-century Western context, requires reinterpretation in light of contemporary societies that are significantly more complex and pluralistic.

In the era of globalization and digitalization, adolescent identity conflict is no longer confined to issues of social role or career choice, but increasingly involves conflicts related to values, morality, and life meaning. Social media, for example, has created new spaces for identity construction that are performative and oriented toward social recognition (Santrock, 2019). This dynamic encourages adolescents to construct external identities that frequently conflict with internal values and religious commitments, thereby intensifying intrapersonal conflict.

This analysis indicates that adolescent identity conflict is multidimensional and cannot be narrowly understood as a purely psychological developmental issue. Rather, it must be addressed as a psychosocial and value-laden phenomenon that necessitates more holistic and contextually sensitive counseling interventions.

### **CBT: Empirical Effectiveness and Conceptual Limitations**

The findings support existing literature that highlights the effectiveness of CBT in addressing adolescents’ emotional and behavioral difficulties through the modification of irrational thoughts (Beck, 2011; Dobson & Dobson, 2018). From a practical standpoint, CBT offers a structured, measurable, and adaptable intervention framework that can be applied across diverse counseling settings.

Nevertheless, a critical examination of CBT reveals several conceptual limitations when applied to identity conflict among Muslim adolescents. CBT operates within a cognitive-empirical paradigm that emphasizes individual rationality and adaptive behavioral functioning. Psychological well-being is often conceptualized as the outcome of cognitive balance and effective behavior, with limited attention to deeper questions of life meaning, existential purpose, and moral values.

While CBT demonstrates strong empirical support, its limitation lies in its insufficient engagement with existential and value-based dimensions of identity, which are central in adolescent development within religious contexts.

In adolescent identity conflict, the issues that arise frequently extend beyond irrational thinking to encompass existential questions such as “*Who am I?*”, “*What values should I uphold?*”, and “*What is the purpose of my life?*” These questions cannot be fully addressed through cognitive restructuring techniques alone. Consequently, the effectiveness of CBT in this context remains limited if it is not complemented by a deeper value-based framework.

### **Fitrah as an Alternative and Complementary Framework to CBT**

The concept of *innate human nature (fitrah)* offers a significant alternative perspective for understanding adolescent identity conflict. Unlike Western psychological approaches that often view identity as a flexible social construct, Islamic psychology conceptualizes identity as rooted in fitrah—human beings’ original potential inclined toward goodness, truth, and balance (Al-Qur’an, Surah al-Rum: 30).

The literature analysis indicates that identity conflict from a fitrah perspective is not merely a failure of social adaptation, but rather a manifestation of imbalance between innate human potential and environmental influences. Hamzah (2015) asserts that a loss of awareness of fitrah results in disconnection from one’s authentic self, leading to value confusion and identity crisis.

Critically, the primary strength of the fitrah concept lies in its capacity to provide ontological and axiological foundations for identity formation. Fitrah emphasizes that human worth is not contingent solely upon social acceptance or external achievement, but is rooted in the inherent value of human existence. This perspective is particularly relevant in addressing adolescent identity conflict driven by social comparison and the pursuit of external validation.

However, the fitrah concept also presents limitations if applied exclusively without systematic psychological intervention strategies. Without clearly defined therapeutic techniques, fitrah risks remaining at a normative or philosophical level rather than being translated into practical counseling processes.

### **Fitrah-CBT Integration: A Critical Synthesis Approach**

A critical analysis of the findings suggests that integrating fitrah and CBT is not merely a technical combination of two approaches, but rather a process of synthesis that requires a deep understanding of the epistemological foundations of both frameworks. CBT contributes structure, techniques, and empirical evidence, while fitrah contributes values, meaning, and life purpose.

This integrative approach enables counselors to address adolescent identity conflict at two complementary levels. First, at the cognitive-behavioral level, maladaptive thoughts and behaviors are identified and modified. Second, at the value-spiritual level, awareness of identity and life purpose grounded in fitrah is restored.

For instance, negative self-beliefs such as “*I am worthless*” are not only challenged rationally through CBT techniques, but are also addressed at the value level through the understanding that human worth is intrinsic and unconditional. This dual-level intervention has the potential to produce deeper and more sustainable change compared to symptom-focused interventions alone.

### **Implication for Counseling Theory and Practice**

The critical analysis indicates that the integration of fitrah and CBT represents a meaningful theoretical and practical contribution to counseling practice. Contemporary CBT emphasizes the interplay of cognition, emotion, and behavior and is supported by robust empirical evidence in adolescent interventions (Hofmann & Hayes, 2019; Hofmann et al., 2021). However, recent developments in counseling increasingly recognize that effective psychological interventions must extend beyond symptom reduction to include meaning, values, and life purpose (Worthington et al., 2021).

Within this context, the concept of fitrah in Islamic psychology provides a valuable value-based framework that emphasizes humans’ innate inclination toward goodness, truth, and psychological balance. Contemporary Islamic psychology research suggests that identity conflict among Muslim adolescents is often associated with tensions between modern social demands and internal religious values, highlighting the need for spiritually and value-oriented counseling approaches (Rassool, 2021; Hedayati & Khazaei, 2020).

The fitrah–CBT integrative approach allows counselors to intervene at two interconnected levels. At the first level, cognitive-behavioral interventions target irrational thoughts and maladaptive behaviors that impair adolescents’ psychosocial functioning. CBT has been shown to be effective in enhancing emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive behavior in the face of social pressures and social media–driven self-comparison (Hofmann et al., 2021).

At the second level, the integration of fitrah expands the intervention by focusing on restoring identity awareness and life purpose grounded in faith-based values. This approach aligns with recent findings demonstrating that value- and spiritually integrated psychological interventions enhance therapeutic outcomes by providing deeper meaning to cognitive and behavioral change (Captari et al., 2022). In the context of identity conflict, adolescents are supported not only in functioning more adaptively, but also in understanding identity as a trust and intrinsic potential.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

This study has several limitations. First, it is literature-based and does not involve primary data collection. Second, no experimental or field validation was conducted to assess the practical effectiveness of the proposed framework. Third, the study does not include measurable outcomes or statistical testing. Additionally, the integrative fitrah–CBT model remains conceptual in nature. Although methodological clarity has been strengthened, the absence of direct adolescent samples limits the generalizability of the findings.

Future research is recommended to conduct experimental or quasi-experimental studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the fitrah–CBT approach. In addition, case studies in school or counseling settings should be implemented to explore its practical application. Further studies are also encouraged to utilize standardized psychological measurement tools to assess outcomes related to identity development, emotional regulation, and behavioral change

### **CONCLUSION**

This study emphasizes that identity conflict constitutes a complex developmental challenge among adolescents, particularly within contemporary societies characterized by rapid social change, pervasive social media influence, and value conflicts between modern culture and religious beliefs. Adolescent identity conflict must be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual aspects.

The findings indicate that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is effective in addressing maladaptive thoughts and behaviors, yet it demonstrates limitations in dealing with deeper issues related to meaning, values, and identity. The concept of fitrah in Islamic psychology provides a complementary framework by emphasizing innate human potential, moral values, and life purpose.

Accordingly, the integration of fitrah and CBT offers a balanced, holistic, and culturally relevant counseling approach. This integrative model enables interventions that not only address psychological symptoms but also strengthen identity formation grounded in spiritual and value-based dimensions. Such an approach bridges the gap between modern psychological practices and Islamic perspectives.

However, as this study is conceptual in nature, further empirical validation is necessary to ensure the practical effectiveness and applicability of the fitrah–CBT framework in real-world counseling settings.

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