

Spiritual Education as a Mechanism for Reconciling Innate Needs and Social Pressures among Adolescents

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the role of spiritual education in reconciling adolescents' innate needs with the social pressures they encounter during this sensitive developmental stage. The research begins by clarifying the fundamental concepts related to adolescence, human innate disposition (fiṭrah), and psychological and social pressures, while also reviewing selected previous studies that have addressed the topic. The findings reveal that spiritual education constitutes an effective preventive and therapeutic mechanism, as it redirects the fiṭrah toward a sound path, strengthens psychological resilience, and assists adolescents in constructing a balanced identity capable of adapting to life's challenges.

Keywords: adolescence, fiṭrah, social pressures, spiritual education, psychological resilience.

Introduction:

Adolescence is considered one of the most delicate stages in human development, as it is characterized by the intersection of innate needs deeply rooted in human nature with the social pressures imposed by familial, cultural, and societal environments. During this period, the adolescent's personality takes shape, and an internal conflict intensifies between the tendency toward independence on the one hand and the need for guidance and regulation on the other. At the same time, challenges become more pronounced due to profound physical, psychological, and social changes, placing the adolescent in a constant search for self and identity.

At this stage, numerous challenges emerge related to the fulfillment of innate needs such as belonging, social acceptance, and self-actualization, in contrast with increasing familial and societal pressures tied to behavioral expectations, moral standards, and the dynamics of contemporary life.

In light of this reality, the question arises as to which educational mechanisms can effectively establish a balance between the demands of human nature and the obligations and pressures imposed by society.

From this perspective, the present study seeks to explore spiritual education as a mechanism for reconciling adolescents' innate needs with social pressures. This is achieved by highlighting the specificities of this developmental stage, analyzing the nature of the pressures adolescents face, and elucidating the role of spiritual education in fostering psychological and social balance, thereby enabling adolescents to confront their reality and determine their future paths in a rational and balanced manner.

Research Problem:

Adolescence represents a fundamental turning point in an individual's life, where innate needs intertwine with social environmental pressures, reflecting on behavior and mental health. Despite the

diversity of educational and psychological approaches aimed at addressing these challenges, the spiritual dimension remains present as an effective means of strengthening the adolescent's personality and guiding them toward upright conduct. However, the following question remains:

How can spiritual education contribute to reconciling adolescents' innate needs with the social pressures they face?

Research Questions:

What are the innate characteristics of adolescence and the most significant social pressures affecting it?

What is meant by spiritual education, and what are its dimensions and status in Islam?

How can spiritual education function as a practical mechanism for reconciling fitrah with societal pressures?

Research Objectives:

To clarify the innate characteristics of adolescence and the social pressures it encounters.

To define the concept of spiritual education and its Islamic and pedagogical foundations.

To highlight the role of spiritual education in helping adolescents achieve psychological and social balance.

To provide practical recommendations for families and educational institutions in this field.

Scope of the Study:

Thematic Scope: The study examines spiritual education as a mechanism for reconciling fitrah and social pressures during adolescence.

Spatial Scope: It focuses on Arab-Islamic societies as a field of application.

Temporal Scope: It relies on contemporary studies and theories from the past two decades, while also drawing on well-established classical foundations.

Methodology:

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach by collecting theoretical data and analyzing relevant previous studies, with the aim of developing a scientific framework that clarifies the role of spiritual education in addressing adolescent pressures.

Research Concepts:

1. Adolescence:

Adolescence is a transitional stage approximately spanning the ages of 12 to 18 years. It is characterized by rapid development in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains. Jamil Hamdaoui (2004) defines it as a developmental stage marked by internal disturbances and tensions resulting from the adolescent's attempt to assert their identity and cope with the pressures of their social environment.

2. Innate Needs :

These refer to the fundamental needs with which a human being is born, including biological and instinctual needs (such as food, rest, and security), as well as psychological needs (such as belonging, esteem, and autonomy). Psychologists, notably Abraham Maslow, conceptualize these needs within a hierarchical framework, beginning with basic needs and culminating in self-actualization.

3. Social Pressures:

Social pressures are the set of demands and constraints imposed by society on adolescents. These may include academic pressures, familial expectations, media influence, and peer pressure. Sharfi (2018) defines them as negative changes or situations that exceed an individual's capacity to adapt, leading to feelings of anxiety and stress.

4.Spiritual Education:

Spiritual education is a structured process aimed at strengthening the faith-based and moral dimensions of the individual's personality, and at nurturing their relationship with God Almighty, in ways that are reflected in their behavior and lifestyle. Sa'id Hawwa (1999) defines it as education that cultivates the emotional and faith-oriented aspects of the human being, guiding them toward self-purification and behavioral regulation in accordance with Islamic values.

5.Psychological Resilience:

Psychological resilience is defined as a set of personality traits that enable an individual to effectively cope with stress and challenges. It is characterized by three core dimensions: commitment, control, and challenge. It functions as a protective mechanism that enhances an individual's capacity to adapt to difficult situations rather than succumb to them (Yousfi, 2019, p. 45).

Previous Studies:

1.Study by Maha Arkan Hassan & Ismail Ibrahim Ali (2017):

This study aimed to identify the sources of psychological stress among university students and examine differences based on gender and specialization. The findings indicated that academic and social pressures were the most influential, with observable differences according to gender.

2.Study by Mohamed Sghir Sharfi (2018):

This study sought to clarify the concept of psychological stress and identify the most common coping strategies. The results showed that religiosity, the spiritual dimension, and social support are among the most effective coping mechanisms.

3.Study by Belkacem Aouin (2018):

This study aimed to explore the nature of pressures faced by adolescents and the preventive methods used to address them. The findings concluded that familial and peer pressures are the most prevalent, and that adolescents resort to various preventive strategies, most notably family support and educational guidance.

4.Study by Hadda Yousfi (2019):

This study aimed to highlight the relationship between psychological resilience and the ability to cope with stress. The findings demonstrated that individuals with high psychological resilience are less affected by stress, and that spiritual education contributes to strengthening this resilience.

Chapter One: Adolescence Between Fiṭrah and Social Pressures

Introduction:

Adolescence is a pivotal stage in human life, serving as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. It is accompanied by numerous biological, psychological, and social transformations that render it one of the most complex developmental stages. During this phase, a conflict emerges between the innate needs with which the adolescent is naturally endowed and the social pressures imposed by family, school, peers, and society. This conflict may lead to balance and harmony if properly guided, or to disorder and deviation in the absence of sound educational foundations.

Section One: The Concept of Adolescence and Its Characteristics

1.Concept of Adolescence:

Linguistically:

The term is derived from the Arabic verb *rāhaqa*, meaning "to approach." Thus, it is said *rāhaqa al-ghulām al-ḥulm*, meaning "the boy approached puberty".

Terminologically:

It is a developmental period extending from childhood to maturity, approximately between the ages of 12 and 18. It is marked by rapid transformations in physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and social aspects, prompting the adolescent to search for identity and construct an independent self (Hamdaoui, 2004, p. 15).

Psychologists consider adolescence a critical stage because it combines innate needs such as belonging and self-actualization with social pressures such as familial control and societal norms (Jamil Hamdaoui, 2004).

2.Characteristics of Adolescence:

Physical Characteristics: Rapid growth in height and weight, hormonal changes, and the onset of puberty.

Emotional Characteristics: Mood swings, heightened sensitivity, and a desire for independence.

Cognitive Characteristics: Development of abstract thinking and a tendency toward criticism and analysis.

Social Characteristics: The need to form new peer relationships and the search for an independent identity.

3.Innate Needs of the Adolescent:

Fiṭrah refers to the natural disposition and inherent characteristics with which human beings are created. In adolescents, it includes:

The need for security and reassurance.

The need for belonging and social acceptance.

The need for autonomy and self-assertion.

The need to satisfy instincts.

The Qur'an affirms that man is created upon fiṭrah:

(۳۰) ﴿فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا﴾

Section Two: Social Pressures Affecting Adolescents

1.Concept of Social Pressures:

Social pressure refers to a set of external influences and factors exerted on the individual, compelling them either to adapt or to experience tension.

Sharfi (2018) defines it as a set of expectations, roles, and external pressures imposed on the adolescent, which affect their psychological and social adjustment (Sharfi, 2018, p. 32).

Adolescents are exposed to multiple forms of pressure, including:

Media and Technological Pressures: The influence of social media and the spread of new values, which may lead, when accumulated, to anxiety, psychological alienation, or behavioral deviation.

Familial Pressures: Excessive parental expectations and intra-family conflicts.

Academic Pressures: The burden of assignments, examinations, and academic competition.

Peer Pressure: The need for group integration and the fear of rejection.

2.Effects of Social Pressures on Adolescents:

Psychological Effects: Anxiety, stress, and depression.

Social Effects: Withdrawal, isolation, and aggressive behavior.

Behavioral Effects: Deviance, low academic achievement, and addiction.

Chapter Two: Spiritual Education and Its Significance

The discussion of spiritual education during adolescence is among the most significant contemporary educational and psychological concerns. The soul constitutes the source of inner balance for the human being and a fundamental pillar for the integrity of personality. As adolescents

undergo rapid physical, psychological, and social transformations, they find themselves in urgent need of what provides them with tranquility and equilibrium, and equips them with the ability to cope the pressures of reality.

Here, spiritual education emerges as a framework that connects the adolescent with their Creator, guiding them toward authentic values that protect them from deviation and offer a broader horizon for fulfilling their innate needs in harmony with social norms.

Section One: Concept of Spiritual Education and Its Dimensions

1. Concept of Spiritual Education:

Linguistically:

The term “spiritual education” derives from tarbiyah (to nurture, develop, and guide), while rūh (spirit) refers to the essence that gives life to the human being.

Terminologically:

Sa‘id Hawwa (1979) defines it as a process of developing the faith-based and emotional aspects of the individual, enabling them to attain psychological tranquility and inner balance through acts of worship, remembrance (dhikr), righteous example, and faith-based companionship.

Similarly, Muhammad Sa‘id Mursi (2001) defines it as an organized process aimed at developing the individual’s faith-based and emotional dimensions, achieving psychological serenity and moral and behavioral balance through worship, contemplation, role modeling, and righteous companionship (Mursi, 2001, p. 45).

Spiritual education in Islam is founded upon firm principles, most notably: the Qur’an, the Prophetic Sunnah, and the pedagogical guidance of scholars and educators.

2. Core Dimensions of Spiritual Education:

Faith Dimension: Connecting the adolescent with their Creator through worship, remembrance, and contemplation of the universe.

Moral Dimension: Instilling values such as honesty, trustworthiness, benevolence, and responsibility.

Behavioral Dimension: Translating beliefs into daily practices that reflect harmony between word and action.

Emotional Dimension: Cultivating feelings of love, compassion, and emotional regulation.

3. Importance of Spiritual Education in Adolescence:

Muhammad Kamal Al-Sharif (2001) emphasizes that spiritual education is a fundamental element in achieving psychological and social balance, and that its absence leads to behavioral and emotional disturbances. It plays a crucial role in that it:

Provides adolescents with tranquility and reduces anxiety and stress.

Enhances psychological resilience in the face of crises.

Contributes to the formation of an independent personal identity.

Instills a sense of God’s presence in the adolescent’s mind, fostering self-monitoring of behavior and consequently achieving social adjustment.

Section Two: Foundations of Spiritual Education in Islam

1. The Qur’an:

The Qur’an represents the primary source of spiritual education, as it connects the human soul to its Creator and nurtures within it a sense of divine oversight both in private and in public. Allah Almighty says:

(أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ) (٢٨)

2. The Prophetic Sunnah:

The Sunnah provides spiritual education with a practical model to emulate. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) embodied the ideal example of spiritual conduct, harmoniously combining devotion (‘ibādah) and action.

3. Contributions of Scholars and Educators:

Ibn Kathir (Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm): He emphasized that contemplation (tadabbur) of the Qur’an is a path to guidance and spiritual tranquility.

Sa‘id Hawwa (1979): He demonstrated that faith-based education constitutes the foundation for the reform of both the individual and society.

Muhammad Sa‘id Mursi (2001): He presented a practical framework for raising children spiritually and morally within an Islamic perspective.

Chapter Three: Spiritual Education as a Mechanism for Reconciling Fiṭrah and Social Pressures

During adolescence, individuals experience conflicting currents between their innate inclinations and the pressures and norms imposed by the social environment. This creates a need for a framework that balances this duality one that neither neglects natural tendencies nor allows external pressures to suppress the individual’s personality or lead them toward deviation.

In this context, spiritual education emerges as an effective tool for achieving such balance. It guides the fiṭrah toward legitimate channels of fulfillment while equipping the adolescent with inner strength to confront life’s challenges and pressures.

Section One: Human Fiṭrah and the Requirements of Adolescence

1. Concept of Fiṭrah:

Linguistically:

Fiṭrah refers to the original state or natural disposition upon which human is created.

Terminologically:

It denotes the innate human predisposition to recognize one’s Creator and to distinguish between good and evil (Ibn Kathir, Tafsir of Surah Al-Rum: 30).

2. Characteristics of Fiṭrah in Adolescence:

Curiosity: A tendency to explore the self and the surrounding world.

Inclination toward Independence: A desire to make one’s own decisions.

Need for Recognition: A search for social acceptance and appreciation from others.

Emotional Tendencies: Fluctuating feelings that require guidance and regulation.

3. Challenges Arising from Fiṭrah in Adolescence:

Attraction to new and unfamiliar experiences.

Internal conflicts between desires and constraints.

Fragility of identity if not properly guided.

Section Two: Social and Psychological Pressures in Adolescence

1. Familial Pressures:

Discrepancy between parental expectations and the adolescent’s desires.

Lack of dialogue within the family, which may push the adolescent toward negative alternatives.

2. Academic and School Pressures:

Examinations and the burden of assignments.

Comparisons with peers, leading to anxiety and stress.

3. Social and Media Pressures:

The influence of social media and mass media in promoting consumerist patterns or foreign values.

Peer pressure to engage in behaviors that may be risky or socially unacceptable.

4. Internal Psychological Pressures:

Feelings of loneliness or alienation.

Anxiety about the future and lack of clear goals.

Section Three: The Role of Spiritual Education in Reconciling Fitrah and Social Pressures

1. Faith-Based Guidance:

Spiritual education connects the adolescent to their Creator and nurtures their innate need for faith, making them more capable of resisting pressures.

2. Regulation of Innate Desires:

Spiritual education does not suppress the adolescent's natural desires; rather, it directs them. Love, for instance, is transformed into compassion and affection, while the pursuit of independence evolves into a sense of responsibility.

3. Psychological Resilience:

The spiritually grounded adolescent possesses a greater ability to manage anxiety and stress, as they find meaning in life and maintain hope for the future.

4. Building a Balanced Identity:

Spiritual education helps adolescents construct a harmonious identity that integrates their innate needs with societal expectations.

Spiritual education thus represents a safety valve for adolescents, mediating between innate inclinations and the pressures of reality. It reorganizes priorities, channels energies, and provides inner immunity that enables them to face challenges without losing their sense of self or identity. In this way, it fulfills its mission of nurturing a generation that is psychologically, spiritually, and socially balanced.

Findings:

Through this study, which examined spiritual education as a mechanism for reconciling innate needs and social pressures among adolescents, several key findings have been reached:

Adolescence represents a critical turning point in an individual's life, where the demands of human fitrah interact with social pressures, making the adolescent vulnerable to internal conflicts.

Human fitrah is inherently pure and predisposed toward goodness; however, it requires continuous guidance and nurturing to prevent deviation under external pressures.

Social pressures are diverse familial, academic, and psychological and pose a real challenge to the adolescent's adaptive capacity, especially in light of modern media influence and peer pressure.

Spiritual education constitutes an effective mechanism for reconciling these contradictions; it does not suppress fitrah but rather directs it toward achieving psychological and social balance.

Investing in the spiritual dimension of adolescents enhances psychological resilience, enabling them to better manage pressures and build a coherent identity capable of confronting present and future challenges.

Conclusion:

The emphasis on spiritual education is not a secondary option but a pedagogical and psychological necessity in light of the contemporary changes surrounding adolescents. It enables them to achieve inner balance, preserving the harmony of their innate disposition while facing life's pressures with flexibility and patience.

The responsibility thus falls upon families, schools, and educational and religious institutions to establish practical programs of spiritual education aimed at nurturing a generation endowed with inner resilience one capable of harmonizing its innate authenticity with the demands of an ever-changing social reality.

Recommendations:

Integrating spiritual education into school curricula through dedicated sessions or extracurricular activities aimed at developing adolescents' spiritual dimension and balancing their innate needs with societal pressures.

Training educators and parents in methods of spiritual education and in dealing with the psychological and social pressures experienced by adolescents.

Establishing guidance and counseling programs within educational institutions to instill values of psychological resilience and adaptability in facing difficulties.

Encouraging scientific research on the relationship between spiritual education and other psychological and social dimensions (such as resilience, mental health, and social integration).

Activating the role of the family in spiritual education through awareness programs for parents and strengthening positive communication with their children.

Utilizing both traditional and digital media to disseminate educational and spiritual content tailored to adolescents' needs and supportive of their balance.

Building partnerships between schools, mosques, and youth centers to provide joint spiritual and educational activities that equip adolescents with healthy coping mechanisms.

Emphasizing prevention over treatment by introducing spiritual education early in the lives of children and adolescents to reduce the likelihood of psychological or behavioral crises.

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