

THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE AND ITS CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the fundamental nature of human beings, the role of environment and education in developing individual potential, and its implications for societal development. Using a literature review method, this research analyzes various sources from philosophical, scientific, social, and cultural perspectives. The findings indicate that humans, as rational, social, and ethical beings, possess unique potentials that can be nurtured through education, a supportive environment, and moral and spiritual values. Education serves as a key instrument in shaping character, fostering moral intelligence, and preparing individuals to face global dynamics. In the digital era, challenges and opportunities emerge alongside rapid technological advancement and social change. Therefore, a holistic approach is required—one that fosters synergy among education, social environment, and human-centered public policies. A deeper understanding of human nature can help build a more just, inclusive, and sustainable society. The study recommends strengthening character education, reinforcing social and cultural values, adapting to technological change, and promoting policies focused on human well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Human nature refers to the fundamental traits that distinguish humans from other creatures and have far-reaching implications in the educational, social, and cultural fields. This understanding is important to form a humanistic learning system that respects the diversity and potential of individuals (Ahmadi, 2014; García et al., 2024; Immordino-Yang et al., 2023; Upadhyay, 2022). Marx emphasized that human beings are products of history and society, so education and social policy need to consider the historical and structural dimensions of human beings

(Pham, 2023; Restian & Widodo, 2019). Education that focuses on self-development has been proven to improve social well-being (Zuhdi et al., 2021) and shape students' character and social abilities (Ciuchi, 2021; Vazquez-Marín et al., 2023).

Humans are understood as multidimensional beings—biological, psychological, social, and spiritual—with instinctive, intellectual, sensory, and spiritual potentials that need to be developed for both individual and social benefit (Maky & Iskandar, 2021; Sohilit, 2021). Self-actualization becomes an important part of this process (Smykowski, 2023), especially since human beings are part of complex social structures, subject to norms, and have social responsibilities (Carmel, 2023; Pardosi, 2024).

The basic character of humans is formed through the interaction between innate (genetic) factors and the environment. Biopsychosocial factors collectively affect individual development, including through relationships within family, education, and society (Melchert, 2020; Osher et al., 2020). Brain development and cognitive function are also greatly influenced by early life experiences, socioeconomic conditions, and parenting patterns (Luby et al., 2020). The ecobiodevelopmental approach suggests that childhood experiences have a long-term impact on genetic expression and psychosocial well-being (Shonkoff et al., 2012), which needs to be considered in the design of educational programs and social policies.

Therefore, understanding the essence of human beings in its entirety is crucial in designing strategies for developing individual potential, especially in the midst of digital disruption that changes patterns of social interaction, learning methods, and the construction of self-identity. The challenges of the digital era are not only about technology, but also about how humans are able to maintain their essence as conscious, reflective, and moral beings. This is what makes the study of human nature and its challenges in the context of developing individual potential in the digital era increasingly relevant and urgent to be studied in depth.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach using the literature review method. The qualitative approach is appropriate as the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the fundamental nature of human beings and the challenges in developing individual potential in the digital era through the analysis of various literatures from philosophical, scientific, social, and cultural perspectives. This approach allows the researcher to explore and synthesize diverse concepts, theories, and previous research findings relevant to the topic.

The data utilized in this study are secondary data derived from a comprehensive review of literature, including books, scholarly articles, academic journals, policy documents, and other credible academic sources related to human nature, education, individual potential development, and digital era challenges. Selection of data sources prioritized relevance, credibility, and recency, with preference given to peer-reviewed publications and recent studies where available.

Data were collected through a systematic literature review, following these procedures:

1. Literature searches were conducted using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and institutional repositories.
2. Literature was screened based on inclusion criteria, focusing on topical relevance, source validity, and multidisciplinary perspectives including philosophy, social sciences, culture, and science.
3. Selected literature was organized thematically to facilitate comprehensive analysis aligned with the research objectives.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis with a descriptive approach. The analysis process included:

1. Coding and categorizing key themes and concepts related to human nature, the role of education, development of individual potential, and challenges in the digital era.
2. Grouping and synthesizing information across disciplines to develop a coherent and integrative understanding.
3. Interpreting findings to formulate comprehensive conclusions and discuss implications for human potential development in contemporary society.
4. Triangulating findings by comparing multiple sources to ensure consistency, reliability, and accuracy.

Research Limitations

This study is limited to secondary data analysis and does not involve primary data collection through surveys, interviews, or fieldwork. The focus is on conceptual and theoretical exploration of human nature and individual potential development within social and digital contexts. Consequently, the findings are primarily descriptive and exploratory, serving as a foundation for future empirical research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The philosophical nature of man

The understanding of man has become a major focus in philosophy, where various theories attempt to dig into the core and fundamental character of man. The ability to think logically and rationally is often considered to be the main trait that distinguishes humans from other creatures (Chikileva et al., 2021). However, humans are also seen as complex entities full of contradictions, so a holistic approach is needed in understanding their essence (Manukyan, 2022).

In the context of intellectual development, human growth is associated with the ability to adapt to social, economic, and spiritual changes (Vashkevych et al., 2021). Human nature includes elements of openness and connectedness, affirming that humans shape their identity through social relationships (Chikileva et al., 2021). This perspective has direct implications for education, which should not only focus on the cognitive aspect, but also include the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions in order to form a whole and moral individual (Alya et al., 2024).

Unique Characteristics of Humans Compared to Other Creatures

Humans have unique characteristics that set them apart from other creatures. Cognitively, humans show extraordinary flexibility in reflecting on the past, planning for the future, as well as solving complex problems and communicating with advanced language systems (Laland & Seed, 2021). Human consciousness is more developed than other creatures, including artificial intelligence, which is driven by the flexibility of the brain and various emotional concepts (Koumparoudi, 2023).

Human beings are considered to have ethical and moral responsibilities. In the Christian tradition, humans consist of body, soul, and spirit that complement each other in living life (Banamtuan et al., 2024). The Islamic perspective emphasizes that humans have a mandate to maintain harmony with nature and live in accordance with moral values that come from revelation (Amrona et al., 2023). The ability of humans to manage emotions and build social relationships, including restraining or expressing aggression contextually, demonstrates the complexity of social behaviors influenced by self-awareness and affective dynamics (Breski & Dor, 2021; Koumparoudi, 2023).

Views of Various Disciplines on Human Nature

Humans are seen as rational beings with freedom of action and moral responsibility (Pd, 2023; Triwiyanto, 2021), while the classical school of realism highlights the dark side of human beings that need to be controlled in order to prevent threats to the social order (Raschi & Zambernardi, 2024). The humanistic approach in science

emphasizes science as a tool for self-reflection and society, as well as encouraging critical thinking (Kasavin, 2022). The concept of biophilia also reveals the human instinct to connect with nature, leading to an awareness of environmental conservation (Flannery et al., 2024). The social sciences, including psychology, sociology, and anthropology, highlight how historical and social perspectives shape the behavior of individuals and groups (Grossmann, 2021). In the socio-economic context, Islam teaches that human identity is related to the principles of social justice and welfare as the foundation of a good quality of life (Rasyid et al., 2023).

The Role of the Social and Cultural Environment

The social and cultural environment has a significant influence on various aspects of human life, including education, mental health, economics, and value formation. In the context of education, the socio-cultural atmosphere of the school plays an important role in the socialization and character development of students (Safaryan, 2021), while in college, the socio-cultural climate encourages student independence and creativity (Mikheieva & Myshchak, 2023). From psychological aspects, social and cultural experiences also affect mental health and cognitive growth (Fonagy et al., 2021). In the economic field, socio-cultural dynamics influence economic growth and institutional structures that support entrepreneurship and teamwork (Boniar et al., 2022). In addition, cultural interaction through heritage-based tourism and social entrepreneurship creates social values that are relevant to the sustainability agenda (Popov et al., 2021).

The Importance of Education in Character Building

Education plays an important role in shaping a person's personality, not only through the imparting of knowledge but also the development of ethical and moral values (Hafizi, 2023; Ramadhani et al., 2024). The educational environment, both schools, teachers, parents, and social interactions, greatly influences character formation (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Synergy between formal and informal education in the family is essential for well-rounded outcomes (Herman et al., 2022). From a theological point of view, character education also prepares individuals to serve, with an emphasis on religious learning for leaders and students of theology (Magezi & Madimutsa, 2023). However, this process faces challenges, including a gap between expectations and tangible outcomes (Magezi & Madimutsa, 2023).

The Relationship between Human Development and Moral and Ethical Values

Human development is strongly influenced by moral and ethical values, where the ability to reason morally shapes behavior and social norms. As they age, individuals develop increasingly complex moral judgments, from distinguishing right and wrong to understanding justice and courage against injustice (Killen & Dahl, 2021). In adulthood, moral development is more intensive, requiring an interdisciplinary perspective (Eustice-Corwin et al., 2023). Virtue ethics, as articulated by Erich Fromm, emphasizes authentic self-development and healthy social relationships for higher moral standards. Moral education and moral intelligence are important for fostering social sensitivity, a sense of responsibility, and empathy (Dacka, 2024). Families and educational institutions play an important role in instilling moral values from an early age, while technological advances require ethical-based management to support sustainable development (Jan, 2024).

Implications of Understanding Human Nature on Community Development

The concept of the ideal human being is a multidimensional construct influenced by philosophical and cultural views (Riccardi, 2021), while Nietzsche introduced the *Übermensch*, a figure with the power of will in the face of nihilism. Aristotle emphasized the importance of moral education and virtue to form ideal character according

to societal values (Makarevičs & Iliško, 2021). In Sufism, Abdurrauf Singkel proposed the concept of *Insan Kamil*, a perfect human being who lives according to nature and inner harmony. Modern thought describes the ideal human being as an ever-evolving individual in a just society (Dewey, 2021) and as a rational agent who transforms reality through collective consciousness (Ilyenkov, 2021).

Individual Contribution to Social Progress and Its Challenges in the Modern Era

The role of the individual in the progress of society involves self-development, social solidarity, and motivation influenced by socio-economic contexts. Socialization and the fulfillment of individual basic needs supports economic growth (Heyets, 2021), while social solidarity drives collective progress (Casla & Sandner, 2024). The motivation to contribute is related to the perception of the social benefits of his work, influenced by social class (Bryant et al., 2023; Reinhart et al., 2024). The development of human potential in the modern era requires skills such as creativity and collaboration, related to technological advances (Kumar, 2023). Adaptation in the post-pandemic work environment is also important to meet the emotional needs of employees (Orlova, 2022), while socio-economic changes require reforms in the education, health, and employment sectors (Istomin et al., 2023).

Targeting physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual needs will help create balanced human development (Sarychev & Plavkova, 2024). In addition, education and training need to be adapted to the needs of the times, such as introducing vocational education in accordance with the demands of the global market, as well as encouraging the internationalization of education to expand human insights and skills in this digital era (Molchanov, 2022). With this approach, human potential can develop optimally to face challenges and take advantage of opportunities that exist in the modern era.

CONCLUSION

Human nature is a complex issue and covers various dimensions, including philosophical, scientific, social, and cultural aspects. As rational, social, and ethical beings, humans have unique potentials that can develop through education, social interaction, and moral and spiritual values. Education has a very important role in character building, the enhancement of moral intelligence, and the preparation of individuals to face global challenges. In the modern context, technological advances and social changes open up new opportunities as well as challenges. Therefore, a holistic approach involving education, the social environment, and responsive leadership is indispensable to optimize the development of human potential. By understanding the nature of human beings in depth, we can make a positive contribution to creating a more just, inclusive, and sustainable society.

Suggestion

To encourage the optimal development of human potential, integrated strategic measures are needed. First, character education must be the main focus at every level of education by integrating morals and ethics in the curriculum. Second, strengthening social and cultural values is important to strengthen social solidarity and intercultural cooperation. Third, adaptation to technology and social change requires cooperation between education, government, and the private sector to update the education and training system to be relevant to the digital age. Finally, policies focused on human well-being, including access to quality education, protection of workers' rights, and promotion of mental health, should be a priority for governments to support individual development.

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