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Human Motivation: A Critical Review within a Prophetic–Humanistic Framework for Guidance and Counseling

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Abstract

Keywords:

Guidance and counseling;
human motivation;
integrative motivation;
prophetic–humanistic framework;
moral psychology

This study critically re-examines dominant Western theories of human motivation and proposes a Prophetic–Humanistic framework for guidance and counseling. Using a critical conceptual review and theory-building approach, the study analyzes motivational psychology, humanistic thought, moral philosophy, spirituality studies, and Islamic intellectual traditions. The findings indicate that contemporary motivation theories predominantly emphasize psychological functioning and self-regulation while insufficiently integrating moral responsibility, spiritual intentionality, and transcendental meaning. In response, the study formulates the Prophetic–Humanistic framework, conceptualizing motivation as a multidimensional orientation encompassing relational, ethical, ecological, and transcendental dimensions. This synthesis is structurally represented through the Universal Harmony Pyramid, grounded in *hablun min Allāh*, *hablun min al-Nās*, and *hablun min al-‘Ālam*. The study concludes that integrating prophetic ethical values and humanistic principles contributes to a more holistic, culturally responsive, and meaning-oriented understanding of human motivation within contemporary guidance and counseling, while offering a broader conceptual foundation for culturally grounded counseling practice and future theoretical development.

Abstrak:

Kata Kunci:

Bimbingan dan konseling;
motivasi integratif;
motivasi manusia;
profetik–humanistik;
psikologi moral

Penelitian ini mengkaji ulang secara kritis teori-teori motivasi manusia Barat yang dominan dan mengusulkan kerangka Profetik–Humanistik bagi bimbingan dan konseling. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan *critical conceptual review* dan *theory-building* melalui analisis psikologi motivasi, pemikiran humanistik, filsafat moral, studi spiritualitas, dan tradisi intelektual Islam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa teori motivasi kontemporer cenderung menekankan fungsi psikologis dan regulasi diri, namun belum memadai dalam mengintegrasikan tanggung jawab moral, intensionalitas spiritual, dan makna transendental. Sebagai respons, penelitian ini merumuskan kerangka Profetik–Humanistik yang memandang motivasi sebagai orientasi multidimensional yang mencakup dimensi relasional, etis, ekologis, dan transendental. Sintesis ini direpresentasikan melalui Piramida Harmoni Universal yang berlandaskan *hablun min Allāh*, *hablun min al-Nās*, dan *hablun min al-‘Ālam*. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi nilai etik profetik dan prinsip humanistik menghasilkan pemahaman motivasi manusia yang lebih holistik, responsif secara kultural, dan berorientasi makna dalam bimbingan dan konseling kontemporer, serta memberikan landasan konseptual bagi pengembangan praktik konseling yang lebih kontekstual dan transformatif.

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Introduction

Motivation has long occupied a central position within psychology, education, and counseling because it fundamentally shapes human behavior, goal orientation, persistence, and personal development. In educational and counseling settings, motivation influences not only engagement and behavioral regulation but also resilience, decision-making, and psychological well-being (Maslow, 1943; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Schunk & Greene, 2017). Consequently, theories of motivation function not merely as explanatory models of behavior, but also as conceptual foundations that inform educational interventions, counseling strategies, and broader approaches to human development across diverse sociocultural settings. The significance of motivation theory, therefore, extends beyond technical psychological explanation, as it implicitly reflects particular assumptions regarding human nature, human purpose, and the meaning of personal growth.

Contemporary scholarship on motivation has been strongly shaped by psychological paradigms that emphasize biological drives, cognitive evaluations, affective processes, and reinforcement mechanisms. Classical and modern frameworks—including Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Self-Determination Theory, expectancy-value theory, goal-setting theory, and reinforcement-based approaches—have contributed substantially to empirical understandings of motivational processes and behavioral regulation (H. Maslow, 1969; Vroom, 1964; Locke and Latham, 2002; Deci and Ryan, 2008). These theories have offered influential explanations regarding autonomy, competence, achievement, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation. Nevertheless, despite their theoretical and empirical contributions, many dominant motivational models remain largely situated within an immanent psychological framework that prioritizes functional adaptation, individual fulfillment, and subjective well-being, while allocating comparatively limited space to ethical orientation, spiritual meaning, and transcendental purpose.

This tendency has generated continuing philosophical and psychological critique, particularly regarding the reductionist orientation embedded within modern motivational discourse. Several scholars have argued that dominant psychological theories often simplify the complexity of human striving into measurable behavioral or cognitive variables detached from broader moral and existential dimensions (Kristjánsson, 2013; Slife & Reber, 2009, 2021). Within such frameworks, motivation is frequently interpreted as a mechanism for satisfying needs, maximizing achievement, or attaining personal goals, while deeper questions concerning moral responsibility, spiritual aspiration, and ultimate meaning remain theoretically peripheral. Although later developments within humanistic psychology attempted to broaden these limitations—most notably through Maslow’s (1969) later discussion of self-transcendence—the transcendental dimension has not been systematically integrated into mainstream motivational theory. Subsequent scholars further revisited Maslow’s later emphasis on self-transcendence, arguing that motivational theory requires broader integration of meaning, spirituality, and transcendent orientation (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). As a result, contemporary motivation research often demonstrates strong explanatory power regarding behavioral functioning, yet remains comparatively limited in explaining why individuals sustain morally demanding commitments, pursue meaning beyond self-interest, or orient their lives toward transcendent values.

From a broader intellectual perspective, this reductionist tendency reflects a wider crisis within modern conceptions of the human person (Lomas et al., 2021). Modern psychological thought has frequently approached human beings primarily as autonomous individuals whose motivations are interpreted through instrumental rationality, preference satisfaction, and

psychological adaptation. Such orientations, while valuable in certain contexts, risk narrowing the moral and spiritual horizons through which human life is understood (Abbey, 2006; Taylor, 2012; Olafson & Taylor, 1994). MacIntyre similarly argues that contemporary moral discourse has become fragmented due to the weakening of teleological understandings of human purpose, resulting in theories of action that struggle to adequately account for virtue, sacrifice, and enduring moral commitment (MacIntyre, 2014). Within this intellectual climate, motivation tends to be conceptualized primarily as an internal psychological process rather than as a multidimensional orientation encompassing ethical responsibility, relational meaning, and transcendental purpose.

Parallel concerns have also emerged within the psychology of religion and spirituality. A growing body of research demonstrates that spiritual beliefs and religious commitments function as powerful motivational resources that shape resilience, coping strategies, moral conduct, and life purpose (Hill & Pargament 2008; Pargament 2023). More recent scholarship further indicates that spirituality contributes significantly to meaning-making processes, emotional regulation, and psychological flourishing, particularly within culturally religious societies (Davis et al., 2010; Captari & Worthington 2024; Narvaez & Lapsley 2009). Nevertheless, within much of mainstream motivational literature, spirituality continues to occupy a marginal position and is frequently treated as an auxiliary variable rather than as a constitutive dimension of human motivation itself. This theoretical marginalization becomes particularly problematic within counseling and educational settings where individuals often interpret personal struggles, aspirations, and moral decisions through spiritual and religious frameworks. Consequently, conventional motivational paradigms may offer limited conceptual tools for understanding forms of motivation rooted in transcendence, ethical responsibility, and existential meaning.

Within Islamic intellectual traditions, human motivation has historically been understood through an integrative moral-spiritual perspective. Classical Muslim scholars did not separate psychological functioning from ethical refinement and transcendental orientation. Al-Ghazali, for instance, emphasized that human behavior is inseparable from the condition of the *qalb* and the process of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, through which individuals cultivate moral discipline and spiritual consciousness (Ghazali, 2023; Ghazzālī, 2011). In modern Islamic thought, Iqbal (2012) conceptualized motivation as a dynamic force grounded in God-consciousness that enables creativity, agency, and moral responsibility within historical life. Nasr further argued that many crises experienced in modern civilization—including alienation, meaninglessness, and spiritual fragmentation—originate from the disconnection between humanity and the sacred order (van Ess & Nasr, 1969; Nasr, 2005).

Contemporary Islamic psychology has attempted to reconstruct these spiritual and ethical dimensions within modern psychological discourse. Scholars such as Badri, Haque, and Rothman argue that dominant Western psychology often neglects metaphysical and spiritual dimensions central to Islamic understandings of the human self (Haque & Keshavarzi 2014; Rothman & Coyle 2018; Badri, 2018). Within these perspectives, the human being is not merely a biopsychosocial organism, but also a moral and spiritual entity whose motivations are inseparable from transcendence, accountability, and existential purpose. This emerging body of scholarship demonstrates increasing efforts to integrate Islamic epistemology with contemporary psychology and counseling, particularly in relation to well-being, moral development, and spiritual mental health.

The philosophical problem underlying contemporary motivational discourse therefore extends beyond methodological disagreement and points toward deeper ontological questions concerning the nature of the human person. Dominant motivational theories often implicitly construct human beings as autonomous psychological entities driven primarily by internal needs, adaptive cognition, or behavioral reinforcement. However, such assumptions may insufficiently capture the multidimensional nature of human existence, particularly the moral and spiritual dimensions that shape meaning, identity, and responsibility. Within the Prophetic-Humanistic perspective, human beings are understood not merely as biological or psychological organisms, but

as integrated beings possessing physical, emotional, intellectual, social, moral, and transcendental dimensions. Human motivation, accordingly, cannot be reduced to instrumental goal attainment alone, because individuals continuously orient themselves toward values, ethical commitments, interpersonal responsibilities, and ultimate existential meaning.

This ontological perspective is closely connected to the epistemological foundations of the Prophetic–Humanistic framework. In many modern motivational paradigms, knowledge concerning human behavior is derived primarily from empirical observation, behavioral analysis, and cognitive measurement. While these approaches contribute important scientific insights, they may remain insufficient for understanding dimensions of motivation related to transcendence, morality, and spiritual intentionality. The Prophetic–Humanistic framework therefore adopts a broader epistemological orientation that recognizes multiple sources of human understanding, including rational inquiry, lived experience, ethical reflection, and revelational consciousness. Within this perspective, human motivation is interpreted not only through observable behavior or psychological mechanisms, but also through moral awareness and the search for ultimate meaning. The term “prophetic” in this study does not merely refer to doctrinal religiosity; rather, it denotes an ethical–transcendental orientation rooted in moral accountability, spiritual consciousness, and responsibility toward humanity, nature, and the Divine. This interpretation is conceptually aligned with broader discussions concerning prophetic social transformation and integrative Islamic epistemology within contemporary Muslim scholarship (Kuntowijoyo, 2006; Al-Attas, 1980; Bakar, 2014).

In addition to its ontological and epistemological dimensions, the Prophetic–Humanistic framework also carries a distinct axiological orientation. Motivation is not viewed merely as an instrument for achievement, adaptation, or personal satisfaction, but as a process directed toward ethical flourishing, relational harmony, and meaningful existence. Within counseling contexts, this orientation is particularly important because many psychological struggles involve not only behavioral dysfunction or cognitive maladjustment, but also crises of meaning, moral conflict, and spiritual disconnection. Contemporary counseling scholarship increasingly recognizes the importance of spirituality, meaning-centered intervention, and culturally responsive therapeutic approaches in supporting holistic well-being (Cashwell & Scott Young 2025; Wong, 2020). A counseling framework that neglects ethical and spiritual dimensions therefore risks reducing human development to technical self-management rather than holistic personal transformation.

Despite the increasing recognition of spirituality and meaning within contemporary psychology, existing studies often remain fragmented and theoretically compartmentalized. Humanistic psychology has advanced important concepts concerning authenticity, growth, empathy, and self-actualization, particularly through the works of Rogers and Csikszentmihalyi (Rogers, 1961; Csikszentmihalyi, 2012, 1991). However, these approaches generally remain situated within non-transcendental frameworks that prioritize subjective fulfillment rather than ethical–spiritual accountability. Conversely, studies addressing spirituality in psychology frequently remain descriptive and lack systematic integration with established motivational theory (King and Boyatzis, 2004). As a consequence, a significant conceptual gap persists between secular motivational paradigms and spiritually grounded understandings of human purpose, particularly within guidance and counseling theory.

This unresolved gap indicates the need for a critical re-examination of motivation from a more integrative philosophical perspective. In response to this challenge, the present study proposes a Prophetic–Humanistic framework that synthesizes prophetic ethical values with humanistic principles of dignity, empathy, growth, and meaning-making. Within this framework, motivation is conceptualized as a multidimensional process encompassing biological needs, relational engagement, moral orientation, personal development, and transcendental intentionality. To systematize this conceptualization, the framework is represented through the Universal Harmony Pyramid, which depicts motivation as an interconnected and progressive structure extending from foundational human needs toward transcendental actualization and universal harmony.

Accordingly, this article aims to critically examine the conceptual limitations of influential theories of motivation, articulate the philosophical foundations of the Prophetic–Humanistic perspective, and construct an integrative motivational framework relevant to guidance and counseling. By integrating psychological, moral, relational, and transcendental dimensions within a unified conceptual structure, this study seeks to contribute toward a more holistic, culturally responsive, and value-oriented understanding of human motivation.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a critical conceptual review and theory-building approach to examine influential theories of human motivation and to construct an integrative Prophetic–Humanistic framework for guidance and counseling. Unlike empirical studies that focus on hypothesis testing or statistical generalization, conceptual research aims to critically interrogate theoretical assumptions, identify epistemological limitations, and formulate new interpretative frameworks capable of addressing unresolved conceptual problems within a field (Whetten, 1989; Jaakkola, 2020). The present inquiry specifically emphasizes ontological and epistemological examination concerning the nature of human motivation and the philosophical assumptions underlying dominant motivational paradigms.

This methodological orientation was considered appropriate because the study does not seek to empirically measure motivational variables, but rather to reconstruct the conceptual foundations of motivation through the integration of psychological, moral, relational, and transcendental dimensions. Accordingly, the study was positioned within a philosophical–conceptual tradition that integrates motivational psychology, moral philosophy, humanistic psychology, spirituality studies, Islamic intellectual traditions, and counseling theory. Within this perspective, motivation is interpreted not merely as a psychological mechanism of behavioral activation, but as a multidimensional orientation shaped by meaning, ethical responsibility, relational consciousness, and transcendental purpose.

To clarify the philosophical structure underlying the framework construction, the study conceptualized the relationship between ontology, epistemology, axiology, and motivational reconstruction within the Prophetic–Humanistic perspective as illustrated in *Figure 1*.

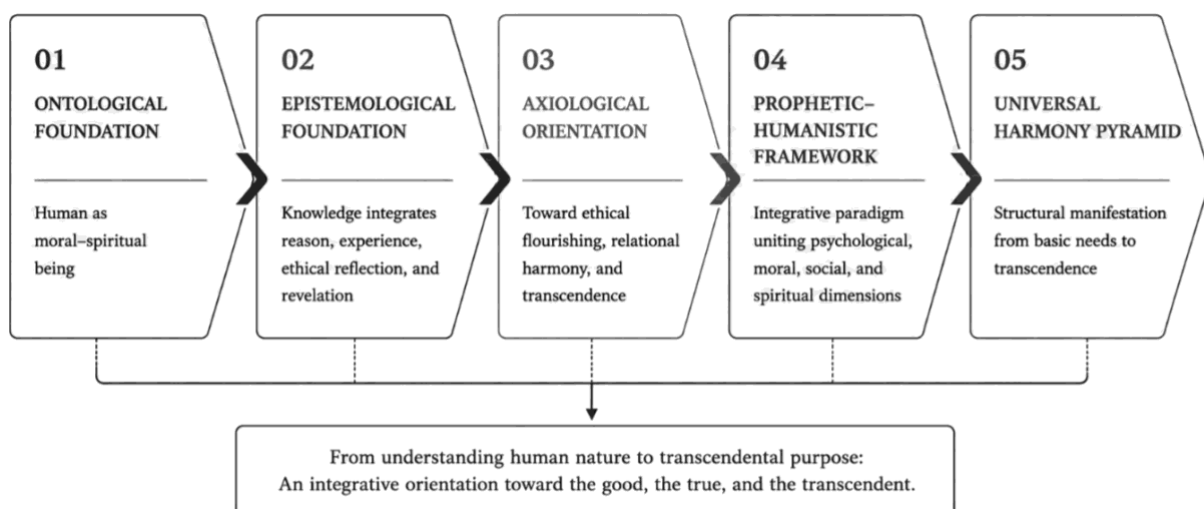


Figure 1 Philosophical Architecture of the Prophetic–Humanistic Framework

Corpus and Theoretical Sources

The study corpus comprised theoretical, philosophical, and conceptual sources addressing motivation, spirituality, morality, and counseling. These sources included classical and

contemporary theories of motivation, foundational works in humanistic psychology, moral and existential philosophy, spirituality and counseling literature, as well as selected contributions from Islamic intellectual traditions addressing human nature, moral development, and transcendental consciousness.

The motivational perspectives examined included Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Self-Determination Theory, expectancy-value theory, reinforcement theory, goal-setting theory, social learning theory, and humanistic approaches to self-actualization and meaning. In addition, contemporary scholarship from psychology of religion, spiritual counseling, Islamic psychology, and moral philosophy was incorporated to broaden the conceptual analysis beyond secular psychological paradigms (Hill & Pargament 2008; Rothman & Coyle 2018; Wong, 2021).

Sources were selected purposively on the basis of conceptual relevance, scholarly influence, and contribution to debates on human motivation, morality, meaning, spirituality, and counseling practice. This purposive theoretical selection enabled the study to critically compare differing assumptions regarding human nature, motivational orientation, ethical responsibility, and transcendental purpose across multiple intellectual traditions.

Analytical Framework

To promote analytical consistency and philosophical coherence, the study employed a conceptual analytical matrix that examined each theoretical perspective through several interconnected dimensions: (1) assumptions concerning human nature, (2) primary sources of motivation, (3) moral and ethical orientation, (4) treatment of spirituality and transcendence, and (5) implications for guidance and counseling. These dimensions were selected because they directly reflected the central philosophical concerns of the study, particularly the tendency of dominant motivational theories to privilege psychological functionality while marginalizing moral and transcendental dimensions.

The analytical framework also functioned as a comparative philosophical lens through which conceptual convergences, divergences, and reductionist tendencies within dominant motivational paradigms could be critically identified. Through this matrix, the study was able to systematically map epistemological gaps concerning morality, spirituality, and existential meaning across various motivational theories. The conceptual dimensions used in the analytical process are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Conceptual Analytical Dimensions of the Study

Analytical Dimension	Focus of Analysis	Philosophical Orientation
Human Nature	Assumptions regarding the nature of the human person	Ontological
Motivational Source	Primary drivers of human action and behavior	Psychological–Epistemological
Moral Orientation	Ethical values and moral responsibility	Ethical–Axiological
Spiritual and Transcendental Dimension	Position of spirituality and transcendence in motivation	Transcendental
Counseling Implications	Relevance for guidance and counseling practice	Applied–Humanistic

Conceptual Analysis Procedure

The conceptual analysis was conducted through several interconnected stages. First, a critical reading process was undertaken to identify foundational assumptions embedded within dominant theories of motivation, particularly regarding human nature, behavioral purpose, and motivational orientation. Second, a comparative philosophical analysis was performed to examine how various motivational paradigms conceptualize autonomy, meaning, morality, selfhood, and transcendence.

Third, the study conducted an integrative synthesis by bringing into dialogue insights from humanistic psychology, moral philosophy, spirituality studies, Islamic intellectual traditions, and counseling scholarship. This stage aimed to construct a broader conceptual understanding of motivation capable of accommodating psychological, ethical, social, and transcendental dimensions simultaneously. Within this study, the prophetic perspective is interpreted as an ethical-transcendental orientation emphasizing moral responsibility, human dignity, relational consciousness, and spiritual accountability rather than doctrinal formalism.

Finally, the conceptual synthesis was systematized into the Prophetic-Humanistic framework and represented structurally through the Universal Harmony Pyramid as an integrative model of human motivation. Rather than treating spirituality and morality as supplementary variables external to motivation, the analysis positioned these dimensions as constitutive elements within the motivational structure itself. This integrative procedure enabled the study to move beyond descriptive comparison toward theoretical reconstruction and conceptual framework development.

Theoretical Rigor and Trustworthiness

To maintain conceptual rigor and scholarly trustworthiness, several strategies were employed throughout the analytical process. *First*, theoretical triangulation was applied by integrating perspectives from multiple intellectual traditions, including psychology, philosophy, spirituality studies, counseling theory, and Islamic scholarship. This interdisciplinary synthesis minimized single-paradigm bias and strengthened the comprehensiveness of the conceptual analysis.

Second, conceptual coherence was maintained by examining consistency among the ontological assumptions, epistemological orientation, and axiological implications of the proposed framework. *Third*, analytical transparency was preserved through explicit articulation of the criteria used in selecting theoretical sources, identifying conceptual limitations, and constructing the integrative framework. Finally, the study emphasized interpretative depth rather than empirical generalization, consistent with the methodological character of conceptual and theory-building research (Jaakkola, 2020; Whetten, 1989).

Accordingly, the findings of this study should be understood as a theoretical and philosophical contribution to motivation and counseling scholarship rather than as empirical claims requiring statistical verification. Future empirical studies may further operationalize and examine the applicability of the Prophetic-Humanistic framework across educational, psychological, and counseling contexts.

Result

This section presents the conceptual findings derived from the critical conceptual review and theory-building analysis. The findings are organized to address the primary objectives of the study: (1) identifying the conceptual limitations of dominant Western motivation theories, (2) reconstructing motivation through a Prophetic-Humanistic perspective, and (3) formulating the Universal Harmony Pyramid as an integrative conceptual model for guidance and counseling. Unlike empirical studies that present statistical outcomes, the results of this inquiry are expressed through conceptual synthesis, philosophical interpretation, and theoretical reconstruction.

Reductionist Tendencies within Dominant Motivation Theories

The first major finding of the study concerns the persistent reductionist orientation embedded within dominant motivational paradigms. Across classical and contemporary theories, motivation is predominantly conceptualized as a psychological mechanism associated with need fulfillment, behavioral regulation, cognitive expectation, achievement orientation, or adaptive functioning. While these theories differ in emphasis—ranging from behavioral reinforcement to

cognitive evaluation and self-determination—they generally share an immanent orientation that interprets motivation primarily within psychological and functional dimensions.

The conceptual analysis revealed that many dominant theories privilege autonomy, competence, self-regulation, productivity, and subjective well-being while providing comparatively limited attention to moral responsibility, existential meaning, and transcendental orientation. In several frameworks, ethical values and spirituality appear only as secondary contextual variables rather than as constitutive dimensions of human motivation itself. As a result, motivational processes are often detached from broader questions concerning moral purpose, spiritual aspiration, and the search for ultimate meaning.

This reductionist tendency becomes particularly visible in frameworks grounded heavily in instrumental rationality and behavioral functionality. Motivation is frequently interpreted as a mechanism for maximizing achievement, reducing tension, achieving satisfaction, or optimizing performance outcomes. Although these perspectives contribute significantly to psychological explanation and educational practice, they may remain insufficient for understanding forms of motivation rooted in ethical commitment, self-sacrifice, spiritual consciousness, and value-oriented perseverance.

From a counseling perspective, these conceptual limitations generate important implications. Counseling practice frequently encounters individuals whose motivational struggles cannot be adequately understood solely through behavioral reinforcement or cognitive expectancy. Clients often experience crises related to meaninglessness, moral conflict, spiritual disorientation, relational fragmentation, and existential uncertainty. The findings therefore suggest that dominant motivational paradigms may possess strong explanatory power regarding behavioral functioning while remaining conceptually limited in addressing holistic dimensions of human development.

Table 2 Comparative Mapping of Dominant Motivation Theories and the Prophetic–Humanistic Perspective

Theory	Developer	Theoretical Propositions	Gap with Prophetic-Humanistic	Advantages	Weaknesses
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Abraham Maslow Maslow, A. H. (1943). <i>A Theory of Human Motivation</i> . Psychological Review.	Humans have basic needs that must be fulfilled in stages, starting from physiological needs to self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).	Does not include spiritual and moral dimensions in depth.	Provides a model for understanding human motivation in general.	Focus on individual achievement, ignoring the social and spiritual dimensions.
Self-Determination Theory	Edward Deci & Richard Ryan Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). <i>Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior</i> . Springer Science & Business Media.	Humans are motivated by basic needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. (Richard M. Ryan and Deci, 2000).	Does not include spiritual goals or a relationship with God.	Focuses on aspects of autonomy and strong intrinsic motivation.	Less emphasis on spiritual or religious values.

Motivation-Hygiene Theory	Frederick Herzberg Herzberg, F. (1959). <i>The Motivation to Work</i> . Wiley.	Job satisfaction is influenced by different motivator factors and hygiene factors (Giroux, 2017).	Does not recognize the spiritual or ethical dimensions in motivation.	Introduces relevant motivational concepts in a work context.	Lack of attention to social and emotional elements in motivation.
Vroom's Expectancy Theory	Victor Vroom Vroom, V. H. (1964). <i>Work and Motivation</i> . Wiley.	Motivation depends on an individual's expectations of the outcome of an effort and how important those outcomes are (Vroom, 1964).	Not including spiritual dimensions or religious values in expectations.	Has high relevance in the context of motivation in the workplace.	Not considering the spiritual aspects that influence expectations.
Reinforcement Theory	B.F. Skinner Skinner, B. F. (1953). <i>Science and Human Behavior</i> . Free Press.	Human behavior is influenced by positive or negative reinforcement in the form of rewards or punishments (Skinner, 1965).	Does not involve the influence of spiritual values in providing reinforcement.	Provides an understanding of how behavior is learned and reinforced.	Too much focus on observable behavior, not enough attention to emotions and spirituality.
Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory	Frederick Herzberg Herzberg, F. (1966). <i>Work and the Nature of Man</i> . World Publishing Company.	Motivation consists of motivator factors (which stimulate growth) and hygiene factors (which prevent dissatisfaction) (Herzberg, 1966).	Not considering spiritual factors or relationship with God.	Provides a way to identify factors that influence satisfaction.	Limited focus on motivation in the work context, less on spiritual.
Social Learning Theory	Albert Bandura Bandura, A. (1976). <i>Social Learning Theory</i> . Prentice-Hall.	Learning occurs through observation and imitation of models that exist around the individual. (Bandura, 1977).	There is no spiritual element involved in the learning process.	Provides a very powerful theory of how individuals learn from their social environment.	Too focused on social models, not paying enough attention to moral or spiritual aspects.
Goal Setting Theory	Edwin Locke Locke, E. A. (1968). <i>Toward a Theory of Task Motivation and</i>	Clear and challenging goals can improve individual performance if	Does not discuss spiritual or moral goals in achievement.	Appreciate the importance of specific goals and measurement	Not considering the larger purpose of life, such as spirituality.

	<i>Incentives. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance.</i>	there is a commitment to achieving them (Locke, 1968).		t in improving performance.	
Flow Theory	Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). <i>Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience.</i> Harper & Row.	Individuals achieve intrinsic motivation when they are fully engaged in challenging activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008).	There is no spiritual consideration in achieving balance.	Provides very useful insights into the conditions for optimal intrinsic motivation.	Too much focus on individual experiences, not enough on the social and spiritual dimensions.
Cognitive Dissonance Theory	Leon Festinger Festinger, L. (1957). <i>A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.</i> Stanford University Press.	When individuals encounter a discrepancy between beliefs and actions, they seek to reduce the tension (Festinger, 1957).	Not connecting with the spiritual or moral dimension in dealing with dissonance.	Provides insight into how individuals cope with psychological stress.	Does not include an understanding of how dissonance is influenced by religious values.
Self-Efficacy Theory	Albert Bandura Bandura, A. (1976). <i>Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change.</i> Psychological Review.	An individual's belief in their ability to overcome challenges can influence their achievement (Bandura, 2010a).	Lack of integration of spiritual elements into self-belief.	Provides an understanding of the importance of self-confidence in achieving goals.	Not recognizing the important role of spiritual beliefs in achievement.
Operant Conditioning Theory	B.F. Skinner Skinner, B. F. (1953). <i>Science and Human Behavior.</i> Free Press.	Human behavior is controlled by the consequences that follow actions, whether in the form of reinforcement or punishment (Skinner, 1965).	Do not include religious principles or spiritual values in this process.	Provides a clear explanation of how reinforcement can change behavior.	Too much focus on observable behavior, not enough attention to internal conditions.
Attachment Theory	John Bowlby Bowlby, J. (1969). <i>Attachment and</i>	The emotional bond that forms between a child and primary caregiver forms	Not linking to the spiritual role in the	Provides important insights into social and emotional	Lack of consideration for spiritual connections

	<i>Loss: Volume 1. Attachment.</i> Hogarth Press.	the basis for social development (Bowlby, 1982).	formation of this bond.	development in children.	that strengthen bonds.
Cognitive Behavioral Theory	Aaron Beck Beck, A. T. (1976). <i>Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders</i> . New American Library.	Negative thoughts lead to negative emotions and behaviors, and can be changed with cognitive therapy (Beck, 1976).	Not including spiritual or religious dimensions in the cognitive process.	Introducing effective techniques for dealing with psychological disorders.	Too much focus on rational thinking, not enough on the emotional or spiritual side.
Psychoanalytic Theory	Sigmund Freud Freud, S. (1923). <i>The Ego and the Id</i> . Hogarth Press.	Unconsciousness and internal conflicts of the past influence human behavior in the future (Figlio, 2017; Bowman, Freud, and Riviere, 1928; Freud, 2019)	Lack of emphasis on spiritual or moral aspects in internal dynamics.	Provides deep insight into the influence of the past and unconscious on behavior.	Too focused on the past and the unconscious, lacking spiritual relevance.
Person-Centered Theory	Carl Rogers Rogers, C. (1961). <i>On Becoming a Person</i> . Houghton Mifflin.	Individuals develop towards self-actualization supported by unconditional acceptance from others (Rogers, 1961).	Does not emphasize spiritual dimensions or higher life purposes.	Provides a basis for understanding the importance of social support in individual growth.	Lack of inclusion of religious values in personal development.
Social Exchange Theory	George Homans Homans, G. C. (1958). <i>Social Behavior as Exchange</i> . American Journal of Sociology.	Social relationships are based on the exchange of benefits and sacrifices between individuals (Homans, 1958).	Not considering the influence of spiritual values in social exchange.	Provides useful insights in understanding social and economic interactions.	Not considering the moral or spiritual dimensions in social relationships.
Cognitive Appraisal Theory	Richard Lazarus Lazarus, R. S. (1991). <i>Emotion and Adaptation</i> . Oxford University Press.	Human emotions are influenced by cognitive assessments of situations or events (Ma & Hample, 2018).	Not linking cognitive assessments with spiritual or religious values.	Provides a useful explanation of how emotions develop based on cognitive appraisal.	Less inclusion of spiritual or moral influences in the formation of emotions.

Marginalization of Moral and Transcendental Dimensions

A second major finding concerns the conceptual marginalization of morality and transcendence within mainstream motivational discourse. Although several contemporary approaches acknowledge meaning, values, or psychological well-being as important motivational factors, these dimensions are rarely integrated structurally into the motivational framework itself. Spirituality is often positioned as an auxiliary coping mechanism, cultural influence, or personal preference rather than as an essential orientation shaping human purpose and action.

The analysis indicates that modern motivational theories largely emerged within epistemological traditions emphasizing empirical observability, measurable cognition, and behavioral predictability. Consequently, dimensions that transcend empirical measurement—such as sacred meaning, spiritual intentionality, ethical accountability, and transcendental consciousness—tend to occupy peripheral positions within theoretical constructions of motivation. This epistemological orientation contributes to a fragmented understanding of the human person by separating psychological functioning from moral and spiritual existence.

At the same time, the findings reveal that moral and transcendental dimensions remain deeply influential within lived human experience. Human beings do not merely pursue satisfaction or achievement; they also pursue meaning, moral integrity, relational harmony, and existential coherence. Within many cultural and religious contexts, motivation is inseparable from spiritual consciousness and ethical orientation. This indicates that motivational theory requires broader philosophical foundations capable of accommodating dimensions of human existence that extend beyond psychological functionality alone.

The study therefore identifies a significant conceptual gap between secular motivational paradigms and holistic understandings of human motivation grounded in ethical and transcendental orientation. This gap becomes especially important within counseling and educational contexts where meaning-making, moral development, and spiritual identity frequently shape motivational dynamics.

Reconstruction of Motivation through the Prophetic–Humanistic Perspective

In response to these conceptual limitations, the study formulated the Prophetic–Humanistic perspective as an integrative reconstruction of human motivation. Within this framework, motivation is understood as a multidimensional orientation integrating psychological, moral, relational, and transcendental dimensions simultaneously. Rather than viewing human beings merely as autonomous psychological entities driven by internal needs or external reinforcement, the framework conceptualizes individuals as moral–spiritual beings whose motivations are inherently connected to ethical responsibility, relational consciousness, and transcendental purpose.

The reconstruction process generated three interconnected philosophical foundations underlying the framework. *First*, the ontological foundation positions human beings as integrated entities possessing biological, emotional, intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Human motivation therefore cannot be reduced solely to material satisfaction or psychological adaptation because human existence itself extends toward meaning, responsibility, and transcendence.

Second, the epistemological foundation recognizes that understanding human motivation requires broader sources of knowledge than empirical observation alone. Within the Prophetic–Humanistic perspective, motivational understanding emerges through the integration of rational inquiry, lived experience, ethical reflection, and revelational consciousness. This epistemological orientation enables motivation to be interpreted not only behaviorally or cognitively, but also morally and spiritually.

Third, the axiological foundation directs motivation toward ethical flourishing, relational harmony, and transcendental meaning. Motivation is therefore not viewed merely as a mechanism

for achievement or self-regulation, but as an orientation toward the good, the meaningful, and the morally responsible.

These ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions collectively informed the structural reconstruction of motivation within the Prophetic–Humanistic perspective. The integrative synthesis of these dimensions was subsequently represented through the Universal Harmony Pyramid as the conceptual architecture of holistic human motivation.

Emergence of the Universal Harmony Pyramid

A central outcome of the conceptual synthesis is the formulation of the Universal Harmony Pyramid as the structural representation of the Prophetic–Humanistic motivational framework. The pyramid conceptualizes motivation as a progressive yet interconnected structure extending from foundational human needs toward transcendental actualization and universal harmony.

At the foundational level, motivation involves biological and psychological sustainability, reflecting the necessity of physical security, emotional stability, and personal continuity. The intermediate levels emphasize relational engagement, ethical consciousness, social responsibility, and personal growth. At the highest level, motivation becomes oriented toward transcendence, moral accountability, spiritual consciousness, and meaningful integration between self, others, nature, and the Divine.

Importantly, the pyramid is not interpreted as a rigid linear hierarchy. Rather, each level remains dynamically interconnected with the others. Higher motivational orientations continuously influence lower motivational processes, while foundational needs remain important for holistic human flourishing. In this sense, transcendence does not negate psychological or social needs; instead, it integrates and orients them toward broader ethical and existential meaning.

The Universal Harmony Pyramid therefore represents more than a motivational model in the conventional psychological sense. It functions as a conceptual synthesis that reconstructs motivation within a broader philosophical framework integrating ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Through this reconstruction, motivation is repositioned as an integrative orientation encompassing psychological functioning, ethical responsibility, relational harmony, and transcendental intentionality.



Figure 2 Universal Harmony Pyramid of Prophetic–Humanistic Motivation

Counseling Implications of the Prophetic–Humanistic Framework

The final finding concerns the relevance of the Prophetic–Humanistic framework for guidance and counseling. The analysis indicates that counseling practices grounded exclusively in value-neutral motivational paradigms may encounter limitations when addressing clients' existential, moral, and spiritual concerns. Human motivation frequently involves struggles related to identity, purpose, guilt, relational fragmentation, spiritual disconnection, and meaninglessness, dimensions that cannot always be adequately understood through purely behavioral or cognitive approaches.

The Prophetic–Humanistic framework contributes an alternative conceptual orientation by positioning motivation within a holistic structure of human flourishing. Within this perspective, counseling is not limited to behavioral adjustment or performance optimization, but also involves facilitating ethical awareness, relational integration, spiritual reflection, and meaningful self-understanding. The framework therefore, supports counseling practices that are culturally responsive, value-oriented, and attentive to the multidimensional nature of human existence.

At the same time, the findings suggest that the framework remains conceptual and requires further empirical development. Future studies may operationalize the dimensions of the framework, develop measurement instruments, and examine its applicability across diverse educational and counseling settings. Nevertheless, the present study demonstrates that integrating moral and transcendental dimensions into motivational theory offers important possibilities for expanding the conceptual foundations of guidance and counseling beyond reductionist paradigms.

Discussion

Reconsidering Human Motivation beyond Psychological Reductionism

The findings of this study indicate that dominant motivation theories, although empirically influential and conceptually sophisticated, still tend to position motivation primarily within psychological and functional domains. Human motivation is generally interpreted through constructs such as need satisfaction, cognitive expectancy, behavioral reinforcement, self-efficacy, autonomy, or performance achievement. These frameworks have significantly contributed to understanding how individuals regulate behavior, pursue goals, and maintain persistence in educational, occupational, and therapeutic contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Locke & Latham, 2002). Nevertheless, the present study suggests that many contemporary motivational models remain limited in explaining motivational orientations rooted in ethical commitment, spiritual intentionality, existential responsibility, and transcendental meaning (Kristjánsson, 2013; Slife & Reber, 2021).

This limitation does not necessarily imply that Western motivation theories are invalid or irrelevant. Rather, the problem lies in the partial explanatory scope embedded within many modern psychological paradigms. In several dominant approaches, human motivation is conceptualized as a relatively immanent process centered on internal satisfaction, adaptive functioning, or self-regulatory optimization. Consequently, dimensions such as moral sacrifice, spiritual accountability, ecological responsibility, and meaning-oriented perseverance often appear as peripheral variables rather than constitutive aspects of motivation itself (MacIntyre, 2014; Taylor, 2012).

The findings resonate with broader critiques in moral philosophy and philosophical psychology regarding the reduction of human action into instrumental rationality and measurable behavioral outcomes. Modern psychological discourse has frequently privileged explanatory efficiency and empirical operationalization while underemphasizing ethical and transcendental dimensions of human existence (Slife & Reber, 2021; Kristjánsson, 2012). As a result, motivation is often interpreted primarily as a mechanism for achieving satisfaction, competence, or psychological well-being, rather than as a morally and spiritually directed orientation toward meaningful existence.

Within counseling contexts, this limitation becomes particularly important. Counselors frequently encounter individuals whose motivational struggles cannot be adequately understood merely through behavioral reinforcement or cognitive expectancy. Clients often wrestle with existential emptiness, moral conflict, spiritual disorientation, relational alienation, and crises of meaning. Such conditions require a motivational framework capable of engaging not only psychological functioning but also ethical consciousness and transcendental orientation (Worthington & Aten, 2009). The present findings therefore, support the argument that human motivation cannot be fully understood within purely value-neutral or psychologically reductionist paradigms.

At the same time, the study does not advocate a rejection of contemporary motivational psychology. Constructs such as autonomy, competence, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy remain valuable for understanding important dimensions of human behavior (& Deci, 2000a; Bandura, 2010b). However, the findings suggest that these constructs require broader ontological grounding so that motivation can be understood not merely as self-directed striving, but also as relational, moral, ecological, and transcendental engagement.

Prophetic-Humanistic Motivation as an Ontological Reconstruction

One of the central theoretical implications emerging from this study is that the Prophetic-Humanistic framework should not be interpreted merely as an “Islamic supplement” to existing motivational theories. Rather, the framework represents an ontological reconstruction of human motivation itself. The issue addressed by the framework is therefore not simply the absence of spirituality within psychology, but the broader question of how human beings are fundamentally understood as motivational subjects.

Within many modern motivational models, humans are primarily conceptualized as autonomous individuals seeking adaptation, achievement, competence, or self-fulfillment (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1961). Although such assumptions provide useful explanatory insights, they tend to position human beings within an individualistic and psychologically bounded horizon. By contrast, the Prophetic-Humanistic perspective conceptualizes humans as multidimensional beings whose motivation emerges through the dynamic integration of biological needs, ethical consciousness, relational responsibility, ecological awareness, and transcendental orientation.

In this framework, motivation is inseparable from the human capacity for meaning, moral accountability, and spiritual intentionality. Human beings are not merely reactive organisms responding to drives or incentives, but morally responsible subjects capable of orienting themselves toward higher purposes. Motivation therefore becomes closely related to questions of value, responsibility, integrity, and existential direction. This perspective resonates with prophetic-spiritual traditions emphasizing *tazkiyah al-nafs*, moral refinement, and the cultivation of meaningful human existence (Ghazzālī, 2011; Ghazali, 2023).

This ontological orientation is reflected in the integrative structure of the Universal Harmony Pyramid. Unlike linear motivational hierarchies that emphasize progressive need fulfillment, the Prophetic-Humanistic model conceptualizes motivation as a relationally interconnected process. Biological sustainability, social harmony, ethical integrity, self-development, ecological awareness, and transcendental commitment continuously interact within the formation of human motivation. Higher dimensions do not eliminate lower needs; rather, they orient and harmonize them within a broader structure of meaningful existence.

The inclusion of *hablun min Allāh*, *hablun min al-Nās*, and *hablun min al-Ālam* further distinguishes the framework from purely anthropocentric models of motivation. Human motivation is understood not only through self-interest or interpersonal relations, but also through spiritual connectedness and ecological responsibility. In this sense, the framework expands motivational theory beyond psychological individualism toward a multidimensional architecture of universal harmony (Nasr, 2005).

Importantly, the prophetic dimension within the framework should not be reduced to doctrinal formalism or symbolic religiosity. Instead, prophetic orientation refers to ethical exemplarity, transcendental consciousness, compassion, justice, responsibility, and value-oriented human flourishing. Meanwhile, the humanistic dimension preserves the importance of dignity, growth, empathy, authenticity, and personal development (Rogers, 1961; Csikszentmihalyi, 2012). The integration of these dimensions enables the framework to maintain universal conceptual relevance while remaining rooted in moral-spiritual epistemology.

Repositioning Humanistic Psychology within a Transcendental Horizon

The findings also suggest the need to reconsider the contribution and limitations of humanistic psychology within contemporary motivation theory. Humanistic thinkers such as Rogers and Maslow made important contributions by shifting psychology away from mechanistic and deterministic models toward a more person-centered understanding of human growth, authenticity, creativity, and self-actualization (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1943). Their emphasis on dignity, meaning, subjective experience, and personal development significantly humanized psychological discourse.

Nevertheless, the present study indicates that classical humanistic psychology still tends to remain within a predominantly anthropocentric framework. Self-actualization is often interpreted primarily as the realization of personal potential, subjective fulfillment, or authentic self-expression. Although these dimensions are important, they may insufficiently address transcendental accountability and ethical responsibility beyond the self (Taylor, 2012; MacIntyre, 2014).

Maslow's later discussion of self-transcendence partially acknowledged this limitation by recognizing that human fulfillment may involve orientation toward values beyond personal satisfaction (Maslow, 1969). Subsequent reinterpretations of Maslow's later work further emphasized that self-transcendence represents an important extension of motivational theory beyond self-actualization and individual fulfillment (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). This development suggests that transcendence is not merely an optional psychological experience, but may constitute a central dimension of human motivational orientation. However, transcendence remained relatively peripheral within mainstream humanistic psychology and was not systematically integrated into broader motivational theory. As a result, contemporary motivational discourse frequently retains strong individualistic assumptions even when discussing meaning and personal growth.

The Prophetic-Humanistic framework attempts to reposition humanistic psychology within a broader transcendental horizon. In this perspective, self-development is not understood solely as self-enhancement, but as meaningful contribution grounded in moral responsibility and relational harmony. Personal growth becomes inseparable from ethical consciousness, compassion, stewardship, and transcendental intentionality.

This repositioning does not reject humanistic psychology; rather, it extends and reconstructs it. The humanistic concern for dignity, empathy, and self-development remains essential, but these dimensions are integrated within a broader moral-spiritual orientation. Consequently, human flourishing is understood not merely as psychological fulfillment, but as harmonious integration between self, others, nature, and transcendence.

Universal Harmony Pyramid as Integrative Motivational Architecture

A major conceptual contribution of this study lies in the formulation of the Universal Harmony Pyramid as an integrative motivational architecture. The pyramid should not be interpreted as a revised version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, nor as a rigidly stratified motivational ladder. Instead, the model represents a dynamic and relational structure in which motivational dimensions interact continuously and reciprocally.

The lower levels of the pyramid emphasize human sustainability and relational harmony, recognizing that biological stability and social connectedness remain fundamental aspects of human functioning. However, unlike reductionist models that terminate motivation within psychological adaptation or social functioning, the Prophetic–Humanistic framework extends motivation toward ethical integrity, meaningful contribution, ecological awareness, and transcendental harmony.

The inclusion of ecological orientation constitutes an important, distinctive contribution of the framework. Many dominant motivational theories focus primarily on individual achievement and interpersonal functioning while paying limited attention to the human relationship with nature and the broader ecological order. By integrating *hablun min al-‘Ālam*, the framework recognizes ecological responsibility as part of motivational consciousness itself. This orientation becomes increasingly relevant in contemporary contexts characterized by environmental crises, social fragmentation, and existential disconnection (Nasr, 2005).

Furthermore, the pyramid emphasizes integration rather than fragmentation. Human motivation is conceptualized as a harmonizing process in which biological needs, emotional experiences, ethical values, relational commitments, and spiritual aspirations continuously shape one another. Such an approach offers a more holistic understanding of motivational dynamics, particularly within counseling and educational settings that seek to address the whole person rather than isolated behavioral symptoms.

The integrative nature of the pyramid also contributes to culturally responsive counseling theory. In many non-Western contexts, individuals do not separate psychological life from moral, communal, and spiritual realities. Consequently, motivational interventions grounded solely in secular-individualistic assumptions may fail to resonate with clients’ lived experiences. The Universal Harmony Pyramid, therefore, provides a conceptual structure capable of accommodating culturally embedded understandings of human flourishing and meaning (Worthington & Aten, 2009).

Implications for Guidance and Counseling Practice

The findings of this study carry important implications for guidance and counseling practice. Conventional counseling interventions often emphasize behavioral regulation, cognitive restructuring, self-management, and achievement motivation. While these approaches remain useful, they may become insufficient when clients’ struggles involve existential uncertainty, moral conflict, relational alienation, or spiritual disorientation.

The Prophetic–Humanistic framework offers counselors a broader conceptual lens for understanding motivation as a multidimensional process. Counselors are encouraged to recognize that motivational difficulties may originate not only from deficits in self-regulation or competence, but also from disruptions in meaning, ethical coherence, relational harmony, or transcendental orientation. Within this perspective, counseling is not limited to symptom reduction or behavioral adjustment, but also involves facilitating ethical self-development, relational restoration, and transcendental meaning-making.

The framework also supports culturally responsive counseling practices by acknowledging the role of moral and spiritual worldviews within human development. In many communities, individuals interpret life purpose, suffering, responsibility, and personal growth through spiritual and ethical narratives. Integrating these dimensions into counseling does not necessarily compromise professional objectivity; rather, it may enhance contextual sensitivity and therapeutic relevance (Worthington & Aten, 2009).

Additionally, the Universal Harmony Pyramid may function as a heuristic model for assessing motivational balance across multiple dimensions of human life. Counselors may identify situations in which achievement motivation develops without ethical grounding, or where spiritual aspiration becomes disconnected from social responsibility and psychological well-being. Through this perspective, counseling interventions can move toward more integrative and holistic forms of human development.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its theoretical contributions, this study has several limitations. First, because the study is conceptual and theory-building in nature, it does not provide empirical validation of the proposed framework. The findings should therefore be interpreted as theoretical propositions rather than as empirically verified causal claims.

Second, the framework draws primarily on selected traditions within psychology, philosophy, and prophetic-spiritual thought. Although theoretical triangulation was employed, alternative philosophical and cultural perspectives may yield different interpretations of motivation and human flourishing. Future research should therefore undertake comparative and cross-cultural examinations of integrative motivational models.

Further empirical research is also necessary to operationalize the constructs of the Prophetic–Humanistic framework and to develop valid measurement instruments aligned with its dimensions. Subsequent qualitative and longitudinal studies may help clarify how transcendental orientation, ethical integrity, ecological awareness, and relational harmony relate to motivational resilience and counseling outcomes across diverse contexts.

Ultimately, the development of the Prophetic–Humanistic framework should be understood as an ongoing theoretical project rather than as a finalized theory of motivation. Its principal contribution lies primarily in opening broader philosophical and counseling conversations regarding the place of morality, spirituality, relationality, and transcendence within contemporary understandings of human motivation.

Conclusion

This study critically re-examined dominant theories of human motivation and identified persistent limitations in their ability to integrate moral, relational, and transcendental dimensions within motivational discourse. In response to these limitations, the study proposed the Prophetic–Humanistic framework as an integrative reconstruction of motivation grounded in ontological, epistemological, and axiological synthesis.

The study conceptualized human motivation not merely as a psychological mechanism of need fulfillment or self-regulation, but as a multidimensional orientation encompassing ethical responsibility, relational harmony, personal development, ecological awareness, and transcendental intentionality. This conceptual synthesis was structurally represented through the Universal Harmony Pyramid, which positions *hablun min Allāh*, *hablun min al-Nās*, and *hablun min al-‘Ālam* within an interconnected architecture of universal harmony.

The findings further suggest that guidance and counseling require broader motivational perspectives that address meaning-making, moral development, spiritual consciousness, and holistic human flourishing, beyond reductionist psychological paradigms. Although the framework remains conceptual, it offers a potential philosophical foundation for developing more integrative, culturally responsive, and spiritually grounded approaches in contemporary counseling scholarship and practice.

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