

Qur'anic Identity Formation Scale-QIFS Equivalence among Indonesian and Sudanese Muslim Youth: A Prototype Demonstration

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ABSTRACT: *Cross-national research on Muslim youth identity requires evidence that an instrument measures the same construct across linguistic, educational, and cultural settings before national scores are compared. This article presents a methodologically bounded demonstration of the Qur'anic Identity Formation Scale (QIFS), a 24-item framework intended to examine how Qur'anic meanings become textual self-understanding, moral orientation, communal belonging, and lived practice. The supplied dataset of 800 respondents from Indonesia and Sudan is explicitly treated as a prototype, not as field-validated evidence. Prototype multi-group confirmatory factor analysis illustrates configural, metric and scalar steps, with limited deterioration in fit across models; however, item loadings, thresholds, reliability coefficients, confidence intervals, recruitment documentation and response-process data were not available. The article therefore reframes the contribution from empirical proof to a transparent validation protocol. It shows why translation, local partnership, cognitive interviewing, ordinal-data modeling, item diagnostics, and differential item functioning checks are necessary before QIFS can support substantive comparisons. The argument is deliberately cautious: QIFS is a promising, scripturally specific, process-oriented framework, but its incremental validity and cross-national equivalence must be tested through field observations. The scale should be used to understand contextually mediated Qur'anic identity formation, not to rank national populations or evaluate religious worth.*

Penelitian lintas-negara tentang identitas pemuda Muslim memerlukan bukti bahwa instrumen mengukur konstruk yang sama di berbagai konteks bahasa, pendidikan, dan budaya sebelum skor nasional dibandingkan. Artikel ini menyajikan demonstrasi metodologis Qur'anic Identity Formation Scale (QIFS), sebuah kerangka 24 butir yang mengkaji bagaimana makna Al-Qur'an menjadi pemahaman diri tekstual, orientasi moral, rasa memiliki komunal, dan praktik hidup. Dataset yang disediakan, yaitu 800 responden dari Indonesia dan Sudan, diperlakukan secara

eksplisit sebagai data prototipe, bukan bukti validasi lapangan. Analisis faktor konfirmatori multi-kelompok hanya menggambarkan langkah konfigurasi, metrik, dan skalar. Karena informasi tentang loading butir, ambang respons, reliabilitas, interval kepercayaan, rekrutmen, dan bukti proses respons tidak tersedia, artikel ini tidak mengklaim ekuivalensi empiris. Kontribusi utamanya adalah protokol validasi yang menempatkan penerjemahan, kemitraan lokal, wawancara kognitif, pemodelan data ordinal, diagnostik butir, dan pemeriksaan differential item functioning sebagai syarat sebelum QIFS digunakan untuk perbandingan substantif.

Keywords: *Qur'anic Identity Formation; Measurement Invariance; Muslim Youth; Cross-Cultural Validation; Prototype Data*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cross-national research on religious identity becomes scientifically defensible only when the measurement instrument has been shown to operate comparably across groups. Measurement invariance is not a technical accessory to comparison; it is the condition that separates interpretable differences from artefacts of wording, response style, sampling and local meaning. The psychometric literature has long treated factorial invariance as the basis for fair group comparison, and recent reporting conventions emphasise that configural, metric and scalar claims require transparent evidence at the model and item levels (Meredith, 1993; Putnick & Bornstein, 2016; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). This requirement is especially important for Qur'anic identity because the construct includes sacred vocabulary, moral self-description, communal belonging, and lived practice.

The present article revises the Qur'anic Identity Formation Scale (QIFS) manuscript in response to the central concern that the original version overstated what a prototype dataset can establish. QIFS is conceptually distinctive because it is not a generic religiosity score. It proposes that Qur'anic meanings form identity through four linked processes: textual grounding, moral orientation, communal belonging and lived practice. Yet this novelty remains a claim to be tested rather than an empirical conclusion already secured. Existing measures of Muslim or religious identity have examined affirmation, belonging, religious identity achievement, adaptation, well-being and purpose (Abu-Rayya et al., 2009, 2018; Abu-Rayya & Abu-Rayya, 2009; Ayub et al., 2022; Ridder et al., 2024). QIFS must therefore demonstrate, in future field data, whether its scripturally specific and process-oriented structure adds explanatory value beyond established religious-identity and religiosity instruments.

The theoretical rationale is a non-essentialist view of identity. Identity is not a fixed possession but a formation process mediated by representation, memory, authority, practice and social recognition (Hall, 1966). Muslim youth identity studies likewise show that religious self-understanding is shaped by family, school, public discourse, migration,

minority status, digital participation and developmental context rather than by affiliation alone (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007; J. A. Ali, 2022; Chaudhury & Miller, 2008; Deroo & Mohamud, 2022; Phalet et al., 2018; Yilmaz, 2026; Zine, 2001) This makes QIFS potentially useful, but it also makes cross-national equivalence fragile.

The Qur'an is encountered by young Muslims through recitation, memorisation, translation, teaching, family practice, online circulation and everyday moral reasoning. Studies of sacred texts, Qur'anic sharing, family education, ritual prayer and Qur'anic community show that scriptural meaning can become both personal formation and communal practice (Abokhodair et al., 2020; Ådna, 2019; Ahmed, 2012; Al-Hawary et al., 2023; Alsuhaymi & Atallah, 2025; Bengtsson, 2018). At the same time, Qur'anic language is not semantically neutral: translation, Arabic register, rhetorical form and lexemes such as *ṣalāh* can carry layered devotional and identity-forming meanings (Barlas, 2019; Coşkun, 2025; Rozov, 2023). A translated QIFS item may therefore be readable without being conceptually equivalent.

Indonesia and Sudan are treated here as analytically meaningful but not fully interpreted comparison contexts. The supplied manuscript provides Indonesian contextual literature on Islamic studies, Arabic linguistic landscapes, Arabic symbols, popular media and digital religious practice (Abdurrahman et al., 2026; M. Ali, 2025; Arifianto et al., 2025; Jafar et al., 2025; Supriyadi et al., 2026). It also recognises that Arabic familiarity and discourse settings may influence how Qur'anic terms are heard, but it does not supply Sudanese field evidence sufficient for substantive national interpretation. Research on language, translanguaging and religious identity warns against assuming that shared Islamic vocabulary produces identical item functioning (Alhamazany, 2023; Alsahafi, 2022; Cinkara et al., 2026; Nasution et al., 2025; Nawas et al., 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2026). The same caution extends to AI-mediated recitation, TikTok religious performance, and mosque discourse in intercultural settings (Agha, 2025; Aldhaheiri et al., 2026; Hotait & El Sayed, 2025).

The objective is therefore narrower and more defensible than the original objective. This article shows how to evaluate QIFS for cross-national use, using the supplied prototype numbers only to illustrate the workflow. The analytic expectations are: first, the four-factor QIFS structure can be represented in both national groups in the prototype; second, metric comparability would permit comparison of relationships among variables; third, scalar claims require item-level threshold or intercept evidence and should not rest on fit indices alone; and fourth, prototype mean differences should not be interpreted as national differences in Qur'anic identity or religious worth.

II. METHOD

The dataset supplied with the manuscript contains 800 prototype cases, comprising 420 Indonesian and 380 Sudanese Muslim youth aged 18–29. The original manuscript identified these values as prototype data. This revision preserves that description and treats all numerical results as an analytic demonstration rather than as field observations. Consequently, no claim is made about population prevalence, national difference, true cross-national equivalence or QIFS validity in either country. The authors did not provide the recruitment procedure, sampling frame, geographic distribution, educational background, socioeconomic composition, ethics approval, informed consent process, inclusion and exclusion criteria, missing-data handling, or field implementation. We now report these omissions as design limitations rather than silently filling them with assumptions.

QIFS is specified as a 24-item instrument with four correlated six-item factors. Textual grounding refers to Qur'anic meanings as a language of self-understanding; moral orientation refers to Qur'anic values as a guide for judgment under pressure; communal belonging refers to mediation through family, teachers, peers, communities and digital networks; and lived practice refers to enactment in ordinary conduct. Studies of Islamic education, mosque pedagogy, weekend schools, digital mediation and playful religious education support the premise that religious formation can be pedagogical, communal and mediated rather than merely individual (Akdag et al., 2019; Alharbi, 2025; Alrasheedi & Almutawa, 2020; Altinyelken & Sözeri, 2019; Budak, 2025; Muthohar et al., 2026).

The proposed field validation procedure begins before modelling. Each item should undergo forward translation, back translation, bilingual reconciliation, local expert review and cognitive interviewing in each country. Cognitive interviews should ask respondents to paraphrase items, describe how they chose a response option, identify wording that feels judgemental and distinguish personal experience from social expectation. This response-process stage is necessary because religious self-report can be shaped by modesty, social desirability, audience awareness and moral self-presentation (Agbarya, 2023; Agbarya & John, 2023; Al-Shamaileh et al., 2011; Loewenthal & Solaim, 2016). It is also necessary because religious identity may be renegotiated under migration, study abroad, university life or personal choice (Akova, 2023; Alfurayh & Burns, 2020; Alizadeh & Stewart, 2009).

The statistical workflow is multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MG-CFA). In a field dataset, the ordinal nature of Likert responses should be modelled explicitly, ideally using estimators appropriate for ordered categorical indicators and reporting thresholds rather than treating responses as interval data without justification (Li, 2016; Wu & Estabrook, 2016). Configural invariance tests whether the four-factor pattern can be specified in each group; metric invariance constrains loadings and supports comparison of associations;

scalar invariance constrains item thresholds or intercepts and is required before comparing latent means. Changes in CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR can guide decisions, but interpret them with sample size, model complexity, and item-level diagnostics in mind (Chen, 2007; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

A complete field validation should additionally report item loadings, standard errors, factor correlations, residual variances, reliability coefficients by country, threshold or intercept estimates, confidence intervals for RMSEA, chi-square statistics, degrees of freedom, estimator, missing-data procedure and modification decisions. Use differential item functioning (DIF) analyses to identify items whose response patterns differ across countries after conditioning on the latent construct, because non-invariance may reflect meaningful cultural mediation rather than mere measurement error (Reise et al., 1993). Scale development in Islamic and religious domains similarly demonstrates that multidimensional instruments require evidence beyond conceptual naming, including factor structure, reliability and subgroup functioning (Abdullah et al., 2026; Aliyu et al., 2014; Allolio-Näcke & Demmrich, 2024; Etengoff et al., 2024; Oulali et al., 2019).

Table 1. Prototype Sample Profile and Data Status.

Group	n	Age range	Gender profile	Mean digital Qur'an frequency	Interpretive status
Total	800	18–29	53.6% women	4.18	Prototype summary only
Indonesia	420	18–29	52.6% women	4.14	No field recruitment details supplied
Sudan	380	18–29	54.7% women	4.22	No field recruitment details supplied

Note. The scale anchors for digital Qur'an frequency were not provided in the supplied manuscript; the value is retained only as a prototype descriptor and is not used for inference.

Figure 1. QIFS validation workflow. The diagram reframes measurement invariance as a staged validity argument rather than a single model-fit decision.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Fig. The prototype results are useful only for illustrating the sequence of decisions that a field validation would require. The configural model showed acceptable prototype fit, suggesting that the four-factor pattern can be represented in the supplied numbers. This should be read as conceptual recognition, not as proof that Indonesian and Sudanese youth interpret each item identically. Configural support would justify continued item-level scrutiny; it would not justify mean comparison.

The metric model produced CFI = 0.950, TLI = 0.946, RMSEA = 0.046 and SRMR = 0.044, with $\Delta\text{CFI} = -0.004$ relative to the configural model. In a real dataset, this pattern would support comparison of relationships between QIFS dimensions and external variables, because similar loadings suggest that items relate to their factors in comparable ways. Even then, metric support would not license claims that one country has more Qur'anic identity formation than another. It would only support relational questions, such as whether textual grounding is associated with identity stability or whether moral orientation is associated with moral resilience in comparable ways.

The scalar model retained acceptable prototype fit: CFI = 0.946, TLI = 0.941, RMSEA = 0.048 and SRMR = 0.047. The original manuscript accepted scalar invariance too readily by relying on small changes in global fit. This revision makes the decision conditional. Because item-level thresholds or intercepts were not supplied, scalar equivalence cannot be independently evaluated. In future field research, scalar claims should be supported by threshold/intercept tables, non-invariance diagnostics, sensitivity analyses and partial-scalar decisions that preserve theoretical coverage rather than merely improve fit.

Table 2. Prototype Measurement-Invariance Sequence Across Indonesia and Sudan.

Model	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	ΔCFI	ΔRMSEA	ΔSRMR	interpretation
Configural	0.954	0.947	0.045	0.042	—	—	—	Same broad factor pattern in the prototype
Metric	0.950	0.946	0.046	0.044	-0.004	+0.001	+0.002	Comparable loadings are illustrated, not field-validated
Scalar	0.946	0.941	0.048	0.047	-0.004	+0.002	+0.003	Global fit is illustrative; item thresholds/intercepts are required

The construct means are now reported as descriptive prototype values only. Table 3 includes the mean difference to prevent the figure from implying a substantive ranking. No standard deviations, standard errors, confidence intervals, effect sizes or statistical tests

were supplied, so none are invented. The small numerical differences should therefore be understood as examples of how mean reporting would appear after valid scalar evidence, not as findings about Indonesian or Sudanese Muslim youth.

Fig. 2 consolidates the original fit-index and mean-profile visualisations into a single, more cautious display. Panel A shows that prototype fit changes little across invariance constraints. Panel B shows small differences in descriptive means. The note below the figure states the key limitation: without dispersion estimates, item diagnostics and field evidence, the means do not support substantive national interpretation.

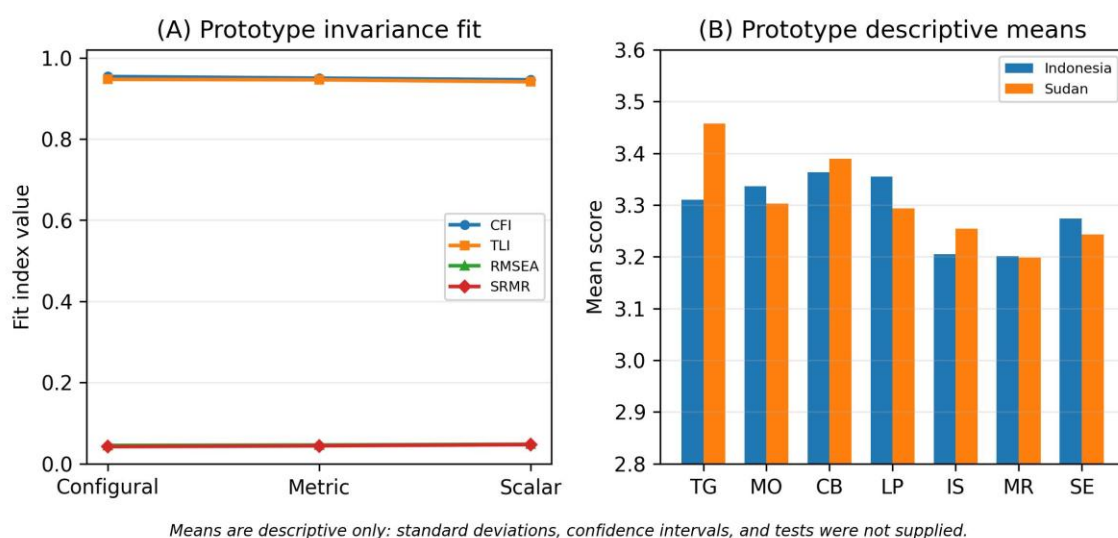


Figure 2. *Prototype invariance fit and descriptive construct means. This figure is for reporting-format illustration; it does not provide evidence of national differences.*

Table 3. Construct Means by Country in the Prototype Dataset.

Construct	Indonesia mean	Sudan mean	Sudan - Indonesia	Inferential status
Textual grounding (TG)	3.310	3.457	+0.147	Descriptive only; SD/SE/CI/tests not supplied
Moral orientation (MO)	3.336	3.303	-0.033	Descriptive only; SD/SE/CI/tests not supplied
Communal belonging (CB)	3.363	3.389	+0.026	Descriptive only; SD/SE/CI/tests not supplied
Lived practice (LP)	3.355	3.293	-0.062	Descriptive only; SD/SE/CI/tests not supplied

Identity stability (IS)	3.205	3.254	+0.049	Descriptive only; SD/SE/CI/tests not supplied
Moral resilience (MR)	3.201	3.198	-0.003	Descriptive only; SD/SE/CI/tests not supplied
Social ethics (SE)	3.274	3.243	-0.031	Descriptive only; SD/SE/CI/tests not supplied

The discussion is anchored to what the prototype can and cannot show. QIFS remains promising because it frames the Qur'an as a scriptural horizon for identity formation rather than as a measure of religious affiliation or general religious intensity. Its four domains map onto recognisable processes in the literature: sacred-text engagement, moral cultivation, communal mediation and embodied practice. Yet the reviewer's concern is correct: conceptual distinctiveness is not the same as demonstrated incremental validity. A field version should test whether QIFS explains identity stability, moral resilience or social ethics after controlling for established religiosity and religious-identity measures. Without such tests, novelty should be described as theoretical and methodological rather than as empirically proven.

The most important revision is removing the internal inconsistency between claiming empirical support and acknowledging prototype status. The manuscript no longer states that QIFS has been validated across Indonesia and Sudan. It states that the supplied numbers illustrate how validation should proceed. This distinction matters ethically. A scale about Qur'anic identity can easily be misused to rank piety, compare national religious worth, or convert linguistic familiarity into apparent moral difference. The appropriate purpose is to understand how social, linguistic, educational, and digital ecologies mediate Qur'anic meanings.

Local partnership is therefore part of validity. Researchers in each context should help design recruitment, assess whether survey settings create authority pressure, evaluate gender and institutional sensitivities, check whether online recruitment excludes certain youth, and interpret item non-invariance. The national label should not be treated as a complete explanation, because within-country differences by schooling, language, region, gender, class, urbanicity and digital access may be as important as between-country averages.

Table 4 summarises the minimum evidence required before QIFS can support substantive cross-national claims. The table directly addresses the methodological gaps identified in the review. It also prevents a common psychometric error: treating a visually acceptable invariance sequence as a complete validation argument.

Table 4. Minimum Evidence Required for Field Validation of QIFS.

Validation component	Required evidence	Purpose
Sampling and ethics	Recruitment frame, inclusion/exclusion, geography, education, socioeconomic profile, consent, ethics approval, missing-data handling	Allows readers to judge generalisability and procedural integrity
Response process	Cognitive interviews, paraphrase checks, response-scale interpretation, social-desirability probes	Tests whether items are understood as identity formation rather than piety judgement
Measurement model	Estimator, ordinal/continuous treatment, loadings, thresholds/intercepts, residuals, factor correlations, reliability by country	Allows independent assessment of factor structure and reliability
Invariance and DIF	Configural, metric, scalar/partial scalar tests; Δ fit; item-level non-invariance; DIF diagnostics	Determines which comparisons are permissible
Substantive models	Latent means only after scalar evidence; relational models after metric evidence; control variables and sensitivity analyses	Prevents premature national ranking and supports contextual interpretation

IV. CONCLUSION

This manuscript presents QIFS as a scripturally specific framework for studying Qur'anic identity formation and as a prototype demonstration of a cross-national validation workflow. The supplied numerical results illustrate configural, metric and scalar steps, but they do not establish field-validated measurement equivalence between Indonesia and Sudan. The strongest conclusion that can be drawn is methodological: QIFS can be

prepared for cross-national use only through transparent sampling, local adaptation, cognitive interviewing, ordinal CFA, item diagnostics, reliability reporting and DIF analysis.

The scientific contribution is therefore reframed. QIFS offers a promising way to examine how Qur'anic meanings become self-understanding, moral judgment, belonging and practice, but its empirical novelty must be tested against existing religious-identity and religiosity instruments. Mean comparisons should occur only after item-level evidence supports the scale; relational comparisons should occur only after metric evidence is supported. Until then, the scale should be used cautiously as a tool for validation research, not as a basis for national ranking, piety scoring or cultural judgment.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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