http://jstmt.ut.ac.ir

Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers

ISSN
Print: 2538-5240
Online: 2783-3216

An Analysis of the Concept of Lifestyle and Its Theoretical Foundations Based on Tabataba'i's Theory of Iʿtibārāt (Conventional Constructs)

Amanallah Fasihi[1]

1. PhD in Sociology, Al-Mustafa International University, Kabul, Afghanistan. (Corresponding author) Email: fasihi2219@gmail.com

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received: 20 December 2025
Received in revised form: 01 March 2026
Accepted: 30 May 2026
Published online: 23 September 2026

Keywords:
Existential Development; Iʿtibārāt (Conventional Constructs); Lifestyle; Mohammad Hossein Tabataba'i; Principle of Utilization; Rational Reconstruction; Ultimate Purposelessness.

ABSTRACT

Explaining how inner needs are transformed into behavioral patterns and stable external structures within the phenomenon of lifestyle constitutes one of the fundamental issues in social studies. Accordingly, the present study seeks to explain the nature, logic of transformation, and criteria for evaluating lifestyle, with the aim of providing a philosophical explanation and a sociological formulation of this concept based on Mohammad Hossein Tabataba'i's theory of iʿtibārāt (conventional constructs). The theoretical framework of the study was developed by extracting insights from the views of modern thinkers and organizing them into a four-dimensional model. The research employs a descriptive–analytical method and applies the methodology of rational reconstruction. The findings indicate that lifestyle is a systematic configuration of constructed oughts and the product of the longitudinal interaction among innate needs, emotions, and practical reason. Through the mechanism of iʿtibār-making (the formation of conventional constructs), practical reason establishes a bridge between inner feeling and external action, thereby providing lifestyle with its binding force. Moreover, the formation of social lifestyles is rooted in the desire for existential development and in the dialectic between the principle of utilization and the imperative of justice. Ultimately, the plurality of lifestyles does not result from the relativity of truth; rather, it arises from the diversity of variable iʿtibārāt (conventional constructs), which develop on the basis of fixed iʿtibārāt (conventional constructs) in order to observe the principle of ease, adapt to the environment, and correspond to social position. The capacity of this theory to explain emerging phenomena, particularly digital lifestyle and the redefinition of the principle of utilization by artificial-intelligence algorithms, is also examined. In the domain of pathology, false lifestyles emerge as a result of the subjugation of practical reason by the estimative faculty. Despite their instrumental efficacy, such lifestyles are characterized by ultimate purposelessness. This deviation can be prevented through an interactive combination of the constants of religion and innate disposition, the authority of the wali al-amr, and the dynamism of social thought and collective ijtihād.

Cite this article: Fasihi, A. (2026). An Analysis of the Concept of Lifestyle and Its Theoretical Foundations Based on Tabataba'i's Theory of Iʿtibārāt (Conventional Constructs). *Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers*, 16(3), 43—67.
https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2026.408295.1855

© Author(s) retain the copyright. **Publisher:** University of Tehran Press.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2026.408295.1855

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The concept of "lifestyle," as a modern term, emerged from the literature of psychology and sociology in the works of thinkers such as Alfred Adler, Thorstein Veblen, Georg Simmel, Max Weber, Anthony Giddens, and Pierre Bourdieu. Nevertheless, it refers to an enduring and fundamental issue in human life: how behavioral patterns are formed within the context of social diversity (A Group of Authors, 1394: 26–28). Even before this term became widespread, some sociologists and anthropologists represented the reality of lifestyles under different headings. Thus, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Émile Durkheim, and in *Primitive Mentality*, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, in fact examined this very logic of action. The central concern underlying these theories is the following: How can human behavior be characterized by patterned regularity and stability on the one hand, while being subject to "plurality and change" on the other?

Although modern theories have been successful in explaining the mechanisms of action within the societies under study and in accounting for social distinctions, their reliance on secular and reductionist foundations has often led them to regard human behavior merely as a reflection of structural imperatives or psychological complexes. Consequently, they have failed to explain the transcendent purposiveness and fundamental foundations of human behavior. On the other hand, the human world is a world of concepts, or, in other words, a world of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs), and the nature of human life depends on the nature of the concepts that human beings construct and adopt (*Tabataba'i*, 1388: 56). Since conventional concepts such as lifestyle are not neutral and are grounded in particular presuppositions, employing them without critical reconsideration may result in overlooking the non-material dimensions and transcendent aspects of lifestyle in other cultures. Therefore, achieving a comprehensive analysis capable of encompassing all dimensions of human lifestyle requires the theoretical redefinition and contextualization of these *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs). In the present study, this task is undertaken on the basis of Tabataba'i's theory of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs).

Tabataba'i uses the term "social style" once in his article "Iʿtibārāt in Non-Real Sciences" (*al-Iʿtibārāt fī al-ʿUlūm Ghayr al-Ḥaqīqiyya*)" (Tabataba'i, 1364, vol. 2: 201). In *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, this concept is formulated through a network of other Qur'anic and philosophical key terms that are, to some extent, consistent with the concept of lifestyle. For the form and pattern of individual conduct, Tabataba'i uses the term *al-adab wa al-ādāb* (Tabataba'i, 1417, vol. 6: 255). To refer to the indigenous and social patterns of peoples, he employs the expressions *al-sunan al-ijtimāʿiyya* and *al-sunan al-qawmiyya* (Ibid., vol. 4: 96; vol. 10: 74). In explaining collective dispositions as the basis of human action, he uses the expressions *al-sīra al-ʿamaliyya* and *al-sīra al-ʿuqalāʾiyya* (Ibid., vol. 2: 131). At a more comprehensive level, and in order to explain the practical policies and frameworks of life, he refers to *al-shirʿa* and *al-minhāj* (Ibid., vol. 5: 349). Finally, to explain the role of religion in lifestyle, he uses the expressions *sunnat al-ḥayāt* and *al-ṭarīqa al-maslūka fī al-ḥayāt* (Ibid., vol. 16: 178; vol. 17: 233), as well as *al-milla* and *al-ṭarīqa al-aqwam* (Ibid., vol. 13: 46–47).

In light of these concepts, and by adopting a problem-oriented rather than a terminology-oriented approach, it is now necessary to examine the philosophical foundations underlying these

patterns. The theory of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs) is precisely concerned with explaining the mechanism upon which these forms of conduct, traditions, and patterns of life, that is, lifestyles, are based: the transformation of human inner needs into social behavioral patterns. Tabataba'i refers to these *iʿtibārāt* as belonging to the category of practical thoughts (Tabataba'i, 1364, vol. 2: 156). Accordingly, the central question of the present study is as follows: What account of the nature, logic of transformation, and criteria for evaluating lifestyle does Tabataba'i's theory of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs) provide?

To answer this question and address the existing explanatory gap, the present study examines the theory of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs) and proposes the following hypothesis: From Tabataba'i's perspective, lifestyle is a process of *iʿtibār-making* (the formation of conventional constructs) through practical reason, whereby behavioral patterns are produced and reproduced as purposive *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs) in order to satisfy innate needs and respond to changing environmental and social imperatives. The following discussion offers a detailed examination of the components of this hypothesis across four dimensions.

Research Background

The previous research relevant to the present study lies at the intersection of two areas: studies of lifestyle from Tabataba'i's perspective and studies of the theory of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs). The relevant works, presented according to their publication dates, are as follows:

Torkashvand and Mirsepah, in their article "A New Interpretation of Tabataba'i's *Iʿtibārāt*: A Comparative Reading of the Treatise on *Iʿtibārāt* and *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*" (2019), reject the interpretation of Tabataba'i's theory of *iʿtibārāt* as relativistic, drawing on his discussion of حسن و قبح (moral good and evil) in *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*. Hasani and Mousavi, in "Structure and Agency in Tabataba'i's Theory of *Iʿtibārāt* and Giddens's Structuration Theory" (2012), focus on the problem of "structure and agency" and demonstrate the capacity of this theory in comparison with modern sociological theories. Mosleh, in " Tabataba'i's *Iʿtibārāt* as the Foundation for a Philosophy of Culture" (2013), regards *iʿtibārāt* as the basis of the philosophy of culture. Parsania and colleagues, in "The Theoretical Implications of the Theory of *Iʿtibārāt* for the Transformation of the Human Sciences" (2014), examine the implications of the theory of *iʿtibārāt* for the transformation of the human sciences. Azerbaijani and Feizi, in "Lifestyle from Tabataba'i's Perspective" (2014), address human duties in the good life.

Selgi, in "An Ontological Analysis of Tabataba'i's Theory of Perceptions of *Iʿtibārāt*" (2015), argues from an ontological perspective that the confinement of human beings to the outward appearances of worldly life and to *iʿtibārāt* results from becoming ensnared in the deception of the estimative faculty and from neglecting their inner reality. Karami Qahi, in "The Theory of *Iʿtibārāt* as an Anthropological Theory" (2015), examines the distinctive capacity of the theory of *iʿtibārāt* to understand and account for the social in comparison with earlier philosophical approaches. Buzari-Nejad, in "Tabataba'i's Theory of *Iʿtibārāt* and the Legal–Political System of Society" (2015), investigates the relationship between the theory of *iʿtibārāt* and the legal system. Sobhanian and Ghaemi-Nia, in "Money in Islamic Economics from the Perspective of Tabataba'i's *Iʿtibārāt*"

(2016), examine the nature and position of money in Islamic economics on the basis of the theory of *iʿtibārāt*. Hasani-Far, in "The Function of the Theory of Perceptions of *Iʿtibārāt* in Tabataba'i's Political–Social Thought" (2017), demonstrates how this theory, while remaining committed to necessary principles, produces implications and functions that explain the acceptance of plurality and change without falling into the trap of relativism. Hosseinpour Sabbagh and colleagues, in "Reconsidering the Concept of 'Education' in Tabataba'i's Theory of *Iʿtibārāt*" (2020), extend the theory of *iʿtibārāt* to the field of education.

Mousavi-Far and Mofatteh, in "Examining the Position of the Human Being before the World in the Semantic System of a Monotheistic Lifestyle, with Emphasis on the Thought of Imam Khomeini and Tabataba'i" (2022), explain the semantic system governing monotheistic life on the basis of concepts such as innate disposition. However, they do not provide a sociological analysis of how these foundations are transformed into concrete and variable patterns. Rahim Nasirian, in "A Comparative–Analytical Study of Tabataba'i's Theory of Perceptions of *Iʿtibārāt* and Rorty's Pragmatism" (2024), examines the theoretical affinity between Tabataba'i's account of the transformation of *iʿtibārāt* in response to environmental and social imperatives and the concept of relative truths. Alavi-Tabar and Alavi-Tabar, in "A Response to Objections to Tabataba'i's Theory of Perceptions of *Iʿtibārāt*" (2025), respond to four categories of objections, including the absolute relativism of ethical propositions, by emphasizing the threefold classification of *iʿtibārāt*. Abdullah and Abbasian, in "The Foundation of the Concept of Law in Tabataba'i's Theory of Perceptions of *Iʿtibārāt*" (2025), analyze pre-social and post-social *iʿtibārāt* and demonstrate how law, as a limiting conventional construct, regulates the principle of utilization and establishes a balance between individual and collective interests.

Despite the richness of this body of research, an important gap remains. On the one hand, studies concerned with lifestyle have generally remained at the level of prescriptive–normative approaches or theological and anthropological discussions and have not entered the domain of sociological analysis of the mechanism through which needs are transformed into concrete and variable patterns. On the other hand, studies focusing on the application of the theory of *iʿtibārāt* have mostly remained at the level of abstract generalities in the social sciences or have limited themselves to explaining a specific phenomenon, such as money, law, power, or education, comparing theories, or responding to certain objections.

Within this context, there is a clear absence of research that, by moving beyond a one-sided perspective and pursuing the contextualization of ideas and the concretization of the concept of lifestyle, formulates this concept within Tabataba'i's philosophical system. A study is needed that analyzes the phenomenon of lifestyle and integrates all of its dimensions into a comprehensive ontological model. In addition, such a study must carefully explain the epistemological mechanism through which these patterns are produced, multiplied, and distorted, with particular emphasis on the error of the estimative faculty and ultimate purposelessness, within the human system of deliberation and calculation. The present study seeks to extend these fundamental epistemological foundations into the domain of macro-level sociological analysis and to provide a positive criterion

for overcoming the challenge of relativism. In this way, it reconstructs the logic of patterned action precisely at the point where Tabataba'i's realism intersects with the questions of modern sociology.

Accordingly, by extracting the overlooked analytical capacities of the theory of *iʿtibārāt*, this article demonstrates that this philosophical system is not merely an abstract intellectual discussion. Rather, it constitutes a systematic and powerful instrument for evaluating the actual efficacy of patterns of life, diagnosing ineffective lifestyles, and formulating the mechanism underlying the plurality of patterns in the contemporary world. It therefore represents a distinctive step toward the contextualization of ideas and the closing of the gap between the abstract foundations of Islamic philosophy and concrete sociological studies.

Theoretical Framework

A sociological and psychological analysis of the phenomenon of lifestyle requires moving beyond the phenomenological level and penetrating the underlying layers in which action is formed. A critical examination of the theoretical literature in this field indicates that, despite differences in the epistemological and methodological foundations of modern thinkers, it is possible to arrive at a unified ontological model for explaining the nature of behavior. Accordingly, lifestyle is neither a random collection of behaviors nor merely a mechanical response to the environment. Rather, it is a systematic configuration of preferences and patterns of action resulting from the complex interaction among inner motivations, mental structures, and environmental imperatives. In fact, the central signifier underlying all theories of lifestyle is the attempt to explain how behavior moves from plurality and fluidity toward unity and patterned regularity. This process of organizing behavior initially requires a unifying teleological force. Thus, in Alfred Adler's individual psychology, human behavior is explained as goal-directed action. By introducing the concepts of the creative self and fictional finalism, Adler argues that lifestyle is the external expression of an internal strategy for overcoming feelings of inferiority and achieving superiority (Adler, 2000: 44). This principle of purposiveness functions as a central coordinate system, imparting coherence and direction to the dispersion of individual behaviors.

This internal unification, when confronted with the external world, requires a mechanism for formulating and transforming subjectivity into objectivity. The human lifeworld is filled with fluid contents and raw motivations that require cultural molding in order to acquire determinate form. Georg Simmel formulates this process through the dialectic of form and content: lifestyle results from the mind's effort to inscribe the fluid content of life within specific and objective cultural forms (Simmel, 2001: 64). Nevertheless, a relatively precise explanation of how stable patterns are formed is articulated in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of action and in the concept of "habitus." Habitus, understood as a system of perceptual, evaluative, and practical dispositions, is the product of an individual's past experiences. These experiences become sedimented in the body and mind and are transformed into a second nature. This internalized structure functions as a generative principle of behavioral strategies, without requiring continuous rational calculation, and gives individual

actions a rule-governed and non-random order (Bourdieu, 2011: 241). In *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Anthony Giddens links the formulation of the concept of lifestyle to reflexivity as one of the defining characteristics of modern society. In a pluralistic and fluid modern society, individuals are compelled to make continuous choices and remain committed to them in order to preserve ontological security and maintain a coherent narrative of personal identity (Giddens, 2013: 120–122).

Furthermore, within the broader social context, these behavioral patterns acquire a function that extends beyond the satisfaction of individual needs and become a fundamental instrument of distinction and identity formation. By emphasizing the role of habits of thought and social institutions, Thorstein Veblen demonstrates that lifestyle is a function of class position and the pursuit of status display (Veblen, 2004: 211). In a similar vein, Max Weber regards lifestyle as the principal characteristic of status groups, through which social boundaries are drawn and social closure is established (Weber, 2003: 219). The most comprehensive explanation in this domain, however, is again provided by Bourdieu. By combining the mental mechanism of habitus with the objective structure of the "field," he demonstrates that the ultimate function of lifestyle is the production of distinction. In his view, lifestyle is a system of signs that classifies individuals and consolidates their position within hierarchies of power and capital (Bourdieu, 2011: 241).

Accordingly, the outcome of sociological and psychological analyses leads us to a four-dimensional model of lifestyle:

1. **The motivational dimension**, rooted in the fundamental needs and goals of the knowing subject;
2. **The perceptual–cognitive dimension**, responsible for transforming these needs into mental patterns and *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs);
3. **The dynamic and functional dimension**, concerned with the actualization of these patterns for the purpose of distinction within the social context; and
4. **The critical and evaluative dimension (pathology)**, which, although modern sociology is predominantly descriptive, is oriented toward analyzing consequences such as domination, alienation, and false needs.

Adopting this model as the analytical framework enables the present study to move beyond mere description and examine the foundations of Tabataba'i's realism, thereby extracting his response to the following fundamental questions: According to Tabataba'i's theory of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs), what is the driving force behind behavior? How does the mental mechanism of *iʿtibār-making* function as an intermediary link between need and action? How does the theory of *iʿtibārāt* explain plurality and distinction in lifestyle? Finally, what is the criterion for evaluating a lifestyle, and through what mechanism does deviation occur within this intellectual framework?

Accordingly, the central question of the study has been designed to encompass these four dimensions or layers. The following table presents the matrix of correspondence between the dimensions of the theoretical model and the components of the central research question.

Table 1. Matrix of Correspondence between the Questions Derived from the Theoretical Framework and the Central Research Question

Dimensions of the Theoretical Model	Fundamental Questions	Treatment within the Central Research Question
Motivational dimension	What is the driving force behind behavior, and what is the source of human needs?	Explaining the nature and rationale of behavior
Perceptual–cognitive dimension	How does the mechanism of *iʿtibār-making (the formation of conventional constructs)* mediate between need and action?	Providing a cognitive explanation and accounting for the internal structure
Dynamic and functional dimension	How does the theory of *iʿtibārāt* explain plurality and identity?	Explaining the logic of transformation, the diversity of patterns, and their function
Criterion of evaluation	What is the criterion for the validity of a lifestyle, and how does its deviation occur?	Explaining efficacy and existential perfection

Research Methodology

In terms of its nature, this study is theoretical and qualitative, and in terms of its purpose, it is fundamental. The research employs a descriptive–analytical method, structured through conceptual analysis and logical inference. Since the aim of the study is to explain lifestyle on the basis of a classical philosophical text, deductive reconstruction has been used to extract the implications of the text. More precisely, deductive inference, or practical syllogism, may be defined as a logical and systematic process through which a practical obligation or conclusion is derived by combining a general normative rule, that is, the major premise of the syllogism, with a particular empirical fact or requirement, that is, the minor premise (Rezaei, 2020: 94–95).

Although the origins of this general model can be traced back to Aristotle's practical syllogism, it is also used today in the social sciences. Rorty argues that, in rational reconstruction, instead of focusing on the historical contexts of authors, researchers treat their ideas as those of contemporary interlocutors, enabling them to address the concrete problems of their own time through the vocabulary of the present (Rorty, 1984: 49). By making a methodological distinction between hermeneutic, or interpretive, sciences and reconstructive sciences, Habermas demonstrates how the semantic structures of an intellectual system can be disclosed through the interpretive explanation of meaning at two levels. At the first level, the interpreter clarifies the semantic content of a symbolic structure by relying on familiar semantic relations. At the second level, by turning away from the surface structure and focusing on the generative structures and their constitutive rules, the interpreter seeks to reconstruct an intuitive awareness of the rule that underlies the production of meaning. In this way, intuitive knowledge grounded in practical ability is transformed into explicit propositional knowledge, thereby creating the conditions for the extraction of systematic models

(Habermas, 1979: 10–12; Habermas, 1990: 21–22). On this basis, and through the application of this model to contemporary normative studies, William Frankena formulated this approach in the form of a coherent deductive framework based on the model of the practical syllogism, deriving practical recommendations and obligations from it (Frankena, 1965: 7–10).

Building on this methodological foundation, the present study seeks to move beyond a merely historical–textual interpretation by extracting the latent capacities and tacit knowledge embedded in the theory of perceptions of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs), and by reconstructing and formulating this theory in order to address the concrete problem of lifestyle. Accordingly, the statistical population and scope of the study consist of propositions and discussions related to perceptions of *iʿtibārāt* that have been developed across a range of Tabataba'i's works. In view of the diversity of these approaches, the research population and sample are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Description of the Research Corpus Based on Tabataba'i's Works

Work	Dominant approach	Main focus of the discussion	Pages
***Risālat al-Iʿtibārāt* in the collection of treatises**	Foundational philosophical	An independent and fundamental presentation of the theory of *iʿtibārāt*	337–339
***Ḥāshiya ʿalā Kifāyat al-Uṣūl*, vol. 1**	Principles of jurisprudence	Examination and analysis of juridical *iʿtibārāt*	111–113
***al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 2**	Exegetical–social	Explanation of the social and ethical origins and the criteria of حسن و قبح (good and evil)	114–116; the issue is also discussed in other volumes
Man from Beginning to End	Theological–ontological	Examination of the dependence of human worldly life on *iʿtibārāt* and social needs	49–54
***Nihāyat al-Ḥikma*, vol. 2**	Purely philosophical	Examination of the epistemological status of *iʿtibārāt*	186–191
***The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, vol. 2**	Philosophical–analytical	A social-philosophical approach	The article on *iʿtibārāt*

Nevertheless, in order to avoid reductionism and prevent the imposition of modern concepts, the study draws on various sources and employs a strategy of cross-textual triangulation. In this process, the sixth article of *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism* serves as the theoretical point of departure for explaining the mental mechanism of the formation of *iʿtibārāt*. It

is combined with various volumes of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, which provide a broader basis for extracting concrete data and social norms. The connection between these two bodies of material provides a comprehensive and robust theoretical foundation for reconstructing and inferring the concept under investigation. Data were collected through library research.

The data were subsequently analyzed on the basis of deductive reasoning and deductive reconstruction. To extract lifestyle-related implications from the theory of *iʿtibārāt*, a four-stage procedure was implemented as follows:

A. Extraction of the philosophical principle: Extracting Tabataba'i's ontological and anthropological propositions, such as the principle of utilization or the formation of *iʿtibārāt*, as the major premise of the syllogism.

B. Formulation of the contemporary question: Presenting key sociological questions concerning lifestyle as the minor premise of the syllogism.

C. Correspondence and comparison: Explaining how Tabataba'i's foundational principles respond to the particular issue under consideration.

D. Extraction of the implication: Translating the result into the language of the social sciences and reconstructing the concept. To clarify this process, an example of the application of this four-stage model is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Example of the Inferential Logic of the Study

Analytical axis	Step 1: Philosophical principle (major premise)	Step 2: Contemporary question (minor premise)	Step 3: Comparative analysis of the mechanism	Step 4: Extraction of the final implication
Plurality and dynamism	The variability of practical *iʿtibārāt* in accordance with adaptation to the environment and the choice of the less difficult and easier course of action	Why do patterns of life and popular tastes, such as fashion, change continuously?	The rational response of human beings to environmental changes in order to preserve survival	Changes in lifestyle do not constitute a deviation from truth; rather, they are a rational response to environmental adaptation

Research Findings

An analysis of the research data based on Tabataba'i's works demonstrates that, within the epistemological framework of Tabataba'i's realism, lifestyle is not an abstract phenomenon but rather the product of a complex process through which needs are transformed into everyday actions and patterns of living. The findings of this study classify the components of lifestyle across four

levels: its nature, the mechanism of its formation, the factors underlying its dynamism, and the criteria for its evaluation.

The Motivational and Ontological Dimension

The findings of the study at the level of ontology indicate that lifestyle belongs to the category of perceptions of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs), or practical knowledge. From a critical comparative perspective, approaches such as Adlerian psychology reduce the driving force behind lifestyle primarily to a psychological striving to overcome feelings of inferiority (Adler, 2000: 55). By contrast, the present study infers a profoundly ontological origin for the motivation underlying human behavior. According to this analytical framework, the performance of everyday actions and the choice of a particular lifestyle are not merely mechanical reflections of instincts. Rather, they require a network of conventional oughts that motivates the human will toward meaningful action. Unlike true knowledge, which lacks motivational force, these *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs) arise directly from the subject's inner feelings and constitutive needs (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 170–173; 1984, vol. 2: 114–115).

An analysis of the mechanism underlying this conscious striving reveals the longitudinal interaction of three existential layers in the formation of lifestyle: the underlying layer, consisting of natural needs such as survival; the intermediate layer, consisting of emotions and feelings such as love and aversion, which function as the driving force; and the higher layer, consisting of practical reason. The implication of this analysis is that emotional arousal alone is insufficient for choosing a lifestyle. Rather, this striving must necessarily pass through the filter of perception in order to be transformed into a cultural norm (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 178–179; Soroush, 1994: 360).

The significance of this analytical reading lies in demonstrating that, contrary to the classical ethical tradition, which regarded reason as the absolute sovereign, within the domain of action and the formation of conventional forms of life, practical reason functions in the service of directing and justifying emotions (Ajdarizadeh et al., 2004: 550). Accordingly, the unifying and teleological force underlying behavior in Tabataba'i's theory is neither a psychological complex nor structural determinism. Rather, it is the human being's constitutive desire for self-perfection and the expansion of existence, which, after passing through the filter of practical reason, becomes crystallized in the formulation of a lifestyle.

The Cognitive Dimension and the Mechanism of Formation

An analysis of the cognitive mechanism demonstrates that the transition from individual behavior to a social lifestyle takes place through a two-stage process: a pre-social stage and a post-social stage. An ontological analysis of human action shows that lifestyle belongs neither to the category of purely objective facts nor to that of false illusions; rather, it is an *iʿtibārī* construct, that is, a construct formed through *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs) (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 1: 1; Motahhari, 2002: 201). In order to bridge the profound gap between the inner world of needs and the external world of nature, practical reason engages in a creative act of invention. By intervening

in reality, it produces concepts such as "necessity," "goodness," and "badness," thereby transforming these conventional formulas into guides for everyday life and the patterned organization of behavior (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 198–200).

It is at this analytical level that the distinction between this theoretical framework and structuralism and social constructionism in Western sociology, from Simmel to postmodern approaches, becomes apparent. Whereas modern approaches regard cultural forms and lifestyles as entirely fluid, relative, and detached from ontological ends, the present study argues that the mechanism of *iʿtibārāt* formation reconnects cultural patterns to realities as they are in themselves. Accordingly, although lifestyle is "constructed" in Tabataba'i's theory, it is never free-floating or disconnected from reality. By extending the properties of real entities to conventional entities, it remains continually grounded in the pillars of a realist worldview. The general mechanism through which these constructs are formed operates as follows: in order to devise any behavioral pattern, the human mind first needs to apprehend a real relation in the external world; drawing inspiration from its constitutive structure and intervening in it, the mind then forms the primary pattern as an *iʿtibārī* construct (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 165–170). The structure of the patterns emerging from this mechanism can be analyzed in two fundamental categories:

A. Pre-social *iʿtibārāt* (stable and general patterns): This category includes those *iʿtibārāt* that are grounded in the individual and that human beings need to create even under the assumption of isolation and before entering any form of collective structure, in order to preserve themselves and regulate their relationship with nature. The fundamental and universal core of individual lifestyle is formed on the basis of these primary *iʿtibārāt*. The most important among them are the conventional constructs of "necessity," "goodness and badness," the rule of "choosing the less difficult and easier course of action," the fundamental principle of utilization and sociality, and the principle of following knowledge (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 202–209).

B. Post-social *iʿtibārāt* (variable and particular patterns): This category includes those practical patterns whose subject is the social human being and which the mind establishes exclusively within the context of society, in order to regulate collective life, resolve conflicts, and respond to needs that, in a state of isolation, would essentially lack an object and be inconceivable (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 216). An examination of these variable patterns shows that the fundamental bases of lifestyle emerge precisely at the intersection of the instinct of utilization and the necessity of justice. Since every individual tends to utilize everything and everyone, the unrestricted application of this instinct within a collective context inevitably leads to conflict, social disintegration, and competing interests. Human beings therefore establish justice and sociality as secondary necessities by relinquishing part of their absolute interests in order to preserve themselves (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 205–208).

Once this collective structure has been formed, the subject needs to create a network of post-social *iʿtibārāt* in order to organize relations with others. These include "property and ownership," "speech," "the division of labor and occupations," "rulership and subordination," "law," and "the equality of the parties" (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 217–221). Lifestyle is therefore nothing other than the concrete embodiment and practical form of these post-social *iʿtibārāt*. In other words,

patterns of consumption, the diversity of tastes, and forms of dress and social interaction are all variable conventional responses that human beings devise in order to regulate their instinct of utilization within the just framework of society.

Moreover, the fundamental opposition between the instinct of utilization and the necessity of justice in Tabataba'i's thought provides a robust theoretical framework for explaining symbolic violence in lifestyle. A critical examination of these concepts makes it clear that if the instinct of utilization is not restrained by the rational construct of justice, it departs from its interactive course, and the lifestyle of the dominant class is transformed from a simple pattern of living into an instrument for the concealed subjugation of others. Under such circumstances, the dominant class succeeds in imposing its arbitrary *iʿtibārāt*, or its class-based tastes and preferences, on the subordinate class as natural and unavoidable facts. This bears a meaningful correspondence to Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, with the added implication that, within Tabataba'i's realism, the way out of this hegemony does not lie in submitting to the endless play of power in the field. Rather, it lies in returning to the necessary and universal *iʿtibārāt* that arise from human nature, such as justice.

Further analysis of these patterns, particularly the dissection of the conventional construct of "rulership and possession," yields innovative resources for criticizing modern patterns of consumption. When the expansion of one's existential domain and the incorporation of objects into the self become the basis of possession (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 220), modern excessive consumerism is not merely a set of ostentatious behaviors, a display of class status, a means of distinction through taste, or a series of identity projects (see: A Group of Authors, 2015: 154–178). At the deepest analytical level, it constitutes an ontological attempt to expand the "self" through the utilization of luxury objects and sign-based consumption. The implication of this analysis is that, through accumulation and consumption, the subject engages in a compensatory process of *iʿtibārāt* formation in order to conceal its existential limitations. Within this framework, consumerism is not a cognitive miscalculation but a form of conventional inflation of the self and a clear instance of ultimate futility. Since it is not rooted in genuine perfection, it can never lead to a lasting sense of satisfaction.

From another perspective, this theory offers considerable potential for analyzing the communicative and economic dimensions of lifestyle. On this basis, *iʿtibārāt* such as speech, or language, interactional norms, and ownership are variable phenomena that depend on the conditions of time and place. Consequently, a social pattern may be effective and valid in one period but lose its validity under different circumstances (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 200). The analytical contribution of this framework lies in interpreting economic lifestyle, namely systems of exchange, and communicative lifestyle, namely linguistic patterns, not on the basis of a struggle for survival or the exercise of domination, but on the basis of the conventional construct of "the equality of the parties." This principle guarantees reciprocal rights and sustains collective life (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 223).

In contrast to approaches that regard behavioral do's and don'ts, or commands and prohibitions, merely as a network for the exercise of discipline and power, this study argues that, within the

theory of *iʿtibārāt*, commands and prohibitions concerning an appropriate lifestyle are generally not coercive in nature. Rather, they belong to the category of "guiding commands." These patterns are not instruments for controlling or subjugating the subject; instead, they provide a roadmap for directing the subject toward genuine interests and improving the quality of life. Accordingly, within this epistemological framework, lifestyle is not a blind mechanism of survival. It is a teleological system in which *iʿtibārāt* play a strategic role in attaining felicity (see: Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 223).

Extending this logic to the political dimension of lifestyle also creates an innovative basis for criticizing authoritarianism. An analysis of the conventional construct of "property" demonstrates that political power is a reality rooted in the collectivity of the people and belonging to collective identity, rather than an asset owned by the individual ruler. The implication of this analysis is that if the principle of utilization departs from its reciprocal and interactive form and is exercised unilaterally, it inevitably leads to the reproduction of relations of domination and the absolute subjugation of the subject. Consequently, within the political lifestyle derived from this perspective, public participation and the people's ownership of power are not merely ethical slogans. They constitute a realist principle and an *iʿtibārī* necessity for dismantling relations of domination and preserving the survival of society (see: Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 222).

The Dynamic and Functional Dimension

Within Tabataba'i's realism, lifestyle is a dynamic and historical phenomenon that undergoes transformation and diversification under the influence of four principal drivers:

A. Creative agency and the principle of choosing the easier course: One of the fundamental drivers of lifestyle's dynamism is the transcendence of structural passivity and the emphasis on the generative nature of practical cognition. From this perspective, the evolution of patterns of living is not merely an emergency response to the environment; rather, it is a teleological process grounded in innovation and the desire to improve the quality of life. In this context, the "principle of choosing the easier course" represents the purest expression of the subject's freedom of will and creative agency. Relying on the ingenuity of practical reason, human beings do not remain passive in the face of the impasses imposed by nature. Instead, by inventing new *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs) and employing more efficient tools, they overcome material constraints and appropriate them in the service of their own perfection.

Unlike thinkers such as Alfred Adler, who, through the concept of the "creative self," formulate human agency primarily as a psychological mechanism for adaptation and overcoming environmental limitations (Schultz, 2005: 144), the theory of *iʿtibārāt* regards this generative agency as an ontological and epistemological necessity. The formulation of this dynamism under the rule of choosing the less difficult and easier course demonstrates that the conscious subject continually seeks to maximize efficiency and minimize the costs of living. Accordingly, while the basic needs themselves, such as the need for mobility, remain constant, the forms and styles through which they are addressed continually change as a result of this calculating agency. Once an old

instrument loses its efficiency, its conventional necessity is also invalidated (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 214).

An analysis of this intrinsic dynamism shows that the process of *iʿtibārāt* formation is neither a reductionist nor a mechanical mechanism. Rather, it is a continuous rethinking of patterns of life that, with the advancement of social life and the emergence of new needs, displaces old patterns and creates new forms. On this basis, human beings never cease the process of norm formation; instead, they continually redefine the instances of good and bad (Ajdarizadeh, 2004: 543). The culmination of this agency becomes apparent when "transformability" itself turns into a stable principle within the structure of *iʿtibārāt*, and human society changes the scene of yesterday's life every day (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 214).

An examination of this multilayered, meaning-producing process, in which Tabataba'i conceptualizes the production of new patterns as "metaphor within metaphor" (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 169–170), reveals the fundamental difference between this theory and Anthony Giddens's concept of "reflexivity." Although Giddens likewise regards the dynamism of lifestyle as the product of the subject's reflexive choices for narrating identity and maintaining ontological security in the modern age, in his sociology this reflexivity occurs within a context of arbitrary fluidity and disconnection from fixed foundations (Giddens, 2005: 44–48; 2013: 40–41, 60). In the theory of *iʿtibārāt*, however, the metaphorical and generative creativity of the human mind, although it constitutes the basis for the endless plurality of subcultures, never culminates in absolute indeterminacy or relativism. Every newly formed *iʿtibār*, however extensively it may develop within the network of "metaphor within metaphor," ultimately remains rooted in constitutive necessities and basic *iʿtibārāt*, such as the rational choice of the easier course for the sake of perfection.

B. Ecological and geographical conditions (the principle of adaptation): Another driver of plurality within this analytical framework is the ecological interpretation of patterns of living and the explanation of the spatial diversity of cultural forms on the basis of adaptation to the environment. At this fundamental level, lifestyle is formulated as a rational strategy for human survival and for managing benefits and harms (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 146). Since climatic structures are asymmetrical, this geographical heterogeneity inevitably produces differentiated material needs and, consequently, gives rise to different tools and practices of living (Motahhari, 2010, vol. 6: 374).

This transformation of the material context also organically alters psychic dispositions and rational processes of meaning-making (Motahhari, 2010, vol. 6: 375). A concrete analysis of this issue in relation to basic components of lifestyle, such as housing and clothing, demonstrates that the evolution of forms, including building materials and methods of tailoring clothing, is not a deviation from an absolute truth. Rather, it is a conscious response aimed at realizing a primary end under new conditions. Thus, a particular clothing pattern may be regarded as normative and necessary in one climate, while being rejected as inappropriate or inefficient in another (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 214–215).

From this perspective, geographical variations in culture cannot be reduced to blind environmental determinism. They should instead be regarded as an expression of the agency of practical reason, which continually engages in adaptive *iʿtibārāt* formation in order to align the subject's way of life with ecological conditions. Through a more precise analysis of the dialectical tension between freedom of will and environmental determinism, this study argues that material and climatic conditions within this intellectual system function merely as contexts and constraints of action, not as the complete causes of behavior. Accordingly, the evolution of forms of life in response to environmental change does not indicate the subject's submission to the determinism of nature. Rather, it is a conscious action actively chosen by the knowing subject in order to manage the limitations imposed by the constitutive order.

C. Structural distinctions and social position: Social structures and class position play a significant role in shaping diversity in perceptions of *iʿtibārāt* and practical patterns. According to Martyr Motahhari, human perceptions are shaped by education and processes of socialization and therefore vary in accordance with the diversity of societies (Motahhari, 2010, vol. 6: 372). Although he rejects the influence of society on truths, he accepts its influence on *iʿtibārāt* and practical patterns (Motahhari, 2010, vol. 6: 375).

Tabataba'i explains the mechanism of this influence through the concept of "repeated exposure." The repetition of a thought or behavior within a social environment causes it to settle in the human psyche and become a mental disposition, leading the individual to regard that particular pattern as logical and correct (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 215). This accumulation of thoughts produces a form of unified social thinking (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 213). Beyond this, Tabataba'i points to the determining role of occupational and status positions in the formation of lifestyle. He explicitly states that the environment of action contributes to differences in thought. The lifeworld of a gardener, for example, differs from that of a merchant, just as that of a worker differs from that of an employer. Engagement with nature generates feelings different from those produced by commercial exchange, and this difference in emotional origin leads to differences in perceptions of *iʿtibārāt* and, consequently, in lifestyle (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 215).

Tabataba'i's explanation of how these patterns become internalized stands in contrast to perspectives that regard the function of lifestyle as creating distinction, stabilizing power hierarchies, and exercising symbolic violence. Although the mechanism of "repeated exposure" has a subtle functional overlap with structuralist theories, what Bourdieu calls "habitus" corresponds, within Tabataba'i's philosophical psychology, to dispositions sedimented in the psyche. The difference, however, is that, for Tabataba'i, these dispositions do not obstruct the creative agency of practical reason.

In Tabataba'i's thought, the dynamism of patterns is governed by the dialectic of utilization and justice. The knowing subject in Tabataba'i's system is neither a passive being caught within the field of capital and processes of class reproduction nor an entirely unbounded subject. Rather, through the formation of *iʿtibārāt*, the subject actively responds to its genuine needs. Accordingly, although Tabataba'i accepts the influence of social position on lifestyle, the ultimate function of lifestyle in his view is not merely the display of conspicuous consumption, the production of social

status, distinction, or symbolic violence. Rather, it is an effort to establish harmony between the system of *iʿtibārāt* and the constitutive order.

D. Technological conditions and the digital lifeworld: Within Tabataba'i's intellectual system, the development of "tools and instruments" is a fundamental driver of changes in lifestyle (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 4: 121). By explaining the connection between cognition and action, he maintains that, as a result of an intrinsic necessity for perfection and survival, human beings continually intervene in matter and, through the invention of an infinite variety of "tools, crafts, and techniques," bring everything into the service of their purposes (Tabataba'i, 1997, vol. 2: 116). On the basis of Tabataba'i's distinction between "constant constitutive needs" and "variable instruments of utilization" (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 4: 121), it becomes clear that cyberspace is simply a continuation of the rule governing the evolution of tools. The strategic difference is that this technology has now become a lifeworld and a large-scale technological embodiment of the faculty of estimation.

Within this space, concepts such as likes and virtual avatars shape the subject's identity and taste even though they lack a material counterpart (Han, 2017: 24–28). Reading this phenomenon through the rule of possession points to a form of false existential expansion. By accumulating symbolic capital, the user experiences a sense of existential enlargement. Yet because the architecture of contemporary platforms is based on capturing the faculty of estimation and stimulating lower-level needs, the organic connection between *iʿtibār* and the constitutive order is severed, and these processes of *iʿtibārāt* formation deviate from the path of genuine perfection.

Furthermore, extending the rule of the "instinct of utilization" to this domain (Tabataba'i, 1997, vol. 2: 116) reveals a concealed and asymmetrical form of utilization. Within the original logic of the constitutive order, the knowing subject employs technology in order to develop its purposes and attain perfection. However, through the mediation of algorithms, the designers of surveillance capitalism reverse the positions of subject and instrument, reducing the user to an object of data extraction (Zuboff, 2019: 375–378). Ultimately, because of this epistemic rupture from genuine interests, the dominant form of digital lifestyle exposes the subject to a doubled form of alienation. The emergence of these deviations and risks in newly developing forms of life makes the need for a normative criterion for evaluating, criticizing, and validating behavioral patterns increasingly evident.

The Criterion for Evaluating Lifestyle

Within Tabataba'i's intellectual system, behavioral patterns and lifestyles are evaluated on the basis of a teleological and normative framework. By explaining the utilitarian nature of *iʿtibārāt* (conventional constructs), he emphasizes that the criterion for assessing the validity of a pattern of living is not "logical truth and falsity." Since *iʿtibārāt* belong to the category of actions and oughts, and since they do not correspond completely to objective external reality, they cannot be characterized as true or false. Rather, the ultimate criterion for validating them within this framework is the assessment of their practical consequences and their "efficacy" in relation to human vital ends (see: Motahhari, 1985, vol. 2: 174, footnote). Accordingly, if a way of life or a

pattern of leisure fails to secure the existential interest of the human being, it is intrinsically "futile" and lacks validity (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 166–167).

The emphasis on two features, namely, deriving inspiration from reality and maintaining oversight of human vital ends, clearly distinguishes the theory of *iʿtibārāt* from other approaches. Adler, for example, by introducing the concept of "fictional finalism," formulates the direction of lifestyle on the basis of self-generated goals that individuals choose through their creative power (Adler, 2000: 44). Within the Adlerian framework, a lifestyle may be entirely effective for achieving these "fictional and personal goals." Yet because this teleological orientation lacks objective and constitutive foundations, it leaves no room for the normative evaluation or critique of the goals themselves (Schultz, 2005: 149). Within Tabataba'i's system, by contrast, such evaluation remains possible.

Accordingly, in addressing the question of how two conflicting lifestyles can be effective at the same time, it is necessary to distinguish between mechanical, or instrumental, and fictional efficacy, on the one hand, and ontological, or teleological, efficacy within Tabataba'i's framework, on the other. Mechanically, one consumerist pattern may be entirely effective for achieving the goal of capital accumulation, while another may be effective for promoting spiritual development. What prevents ethical relativism within Tabataba'i's system is the reference of these intermediate goals to the constitutive order. At this level, *iʿtibārāt* express a "necessity by relation" between an agent's action and its outcome. As a "philosophical secondary intelligible," they are rooted in reality and disclose it (Torkashvand and Mirsepah, 2010). This means that Tabataba'i does not reduce behavioral patterns merely to conformity with the changing inclinations of human beings. Rather, he evaluates them according to their "correspondence with the desired end and genuine felicity" (Tabataba'i, 1997, vol. 5: 10–13). Therefore, the diversity of patterns of living is legitimate only insofar as this necessity by relation remains consistent with the fixed principles of the constitutive order.

Nevertheless, explaining the emergence of destructive patterns such as excessive consumerism requires epistemological precision. Since *iʿtibārāt* do not correspond exactly to the constitutive order, the intrusion of error into the cultural network of "metaphor within metaphor" does not occur at the level of the basic need for a lifestyle. Rather, it occurs in the domain of application and the determination of its concrete instances (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 165–170). This cognitive error emerges when, in the absence of appropriate education, emotions arising from the lower faculties of the soul, particularly the appetitive and irascible faculties, seize control of the premises and foundations of practical reason's judgment (Tabataba'i, 1997, vol. 2: 148).

The result of this epistemic disorder is that practical reason mistakenly applies the genuine limit of "existential expansion" to false instances such as the accumulation of material possessions (Tabataba'i, 1985, vol. 2: 220). Under such circumstances, although a consumerist lifestyle may be instrumentally effective for attaining this illusory goal, and may therefore possess instrumental validity, the goal itself distances the subject from the genuine end of existence. Consequently, from the broader philosophical perspective of Tabataba'i, the entire system of *iʿtibārāt* is judged to be false and invalid and is afflicted with ultimate futility.

Given this vulnerability of practical reason and the possibility that the faculty of estimation may err in identifying concrete instances (Tabataba'i, 1997, vol. 2: 148), explaining the criterion of evaluation and the authority responsible for judging whether lifestyle forms conform to or deviate from fixed principles becomes an essential epistemological necessity. Entrusting this position to fallible and isolated reason would inevitably lead to petitio principii and relativism. For this reason, the position of religion as a guide to the more appropriate lifestyle (Tabataba'i, 1997, vol. 13: 46–47) is clarified within Tabataba'i's intellectual framework as a means of overcoming this challenge.

In organizing lifestyle, religion offers, on the one hand, fixed principles grounded in the call of human nature, monotheism, and the general principles of religious law. These principles function as overarching criteria and are regarded as transhistorical rules protected from cognitive errors and the arbitrary interventions of the faculty of estimation. On the other hand, in order to prevent rigidity in the face of changing circumstances and to orient the question of interpretive authority, the management of variable social *iʿtibārāt* is entrusted to the Islamic ruler, or the authority vested with governance, in consultation with the people (Tabataba'i, 1997, vol. 4: 121–122). It is also referred to collective ijtihād, mutual assistance, and social reasoning (Tabataba'i, 1997, vol. 4: 130–131, 105). This approach constitutes a concrete manifestation of collective practical reason and results from the necessity of preserving the authenticity of lifestyle within the changing conditions of the age.

Within this framework, governmental decisions based on the rational consultation of Muslims do not constitute an external imposition. Rather, they represent a reflexive process through which the rational members of the community identify the necessity by relation underlying new forms of lifestyle in relation to the fixed existential principles of the human being. In this way, by shifting the authority of evaluation from the subject's fluid preferences to the interactive dialectic among the protected text of religion and human nature, the authority vested with governance, social reasoning, and collective ijtihād, the path toward epistemological relativism is closed.

The conceptual structure of the issues discussed above can be represented in the following model:

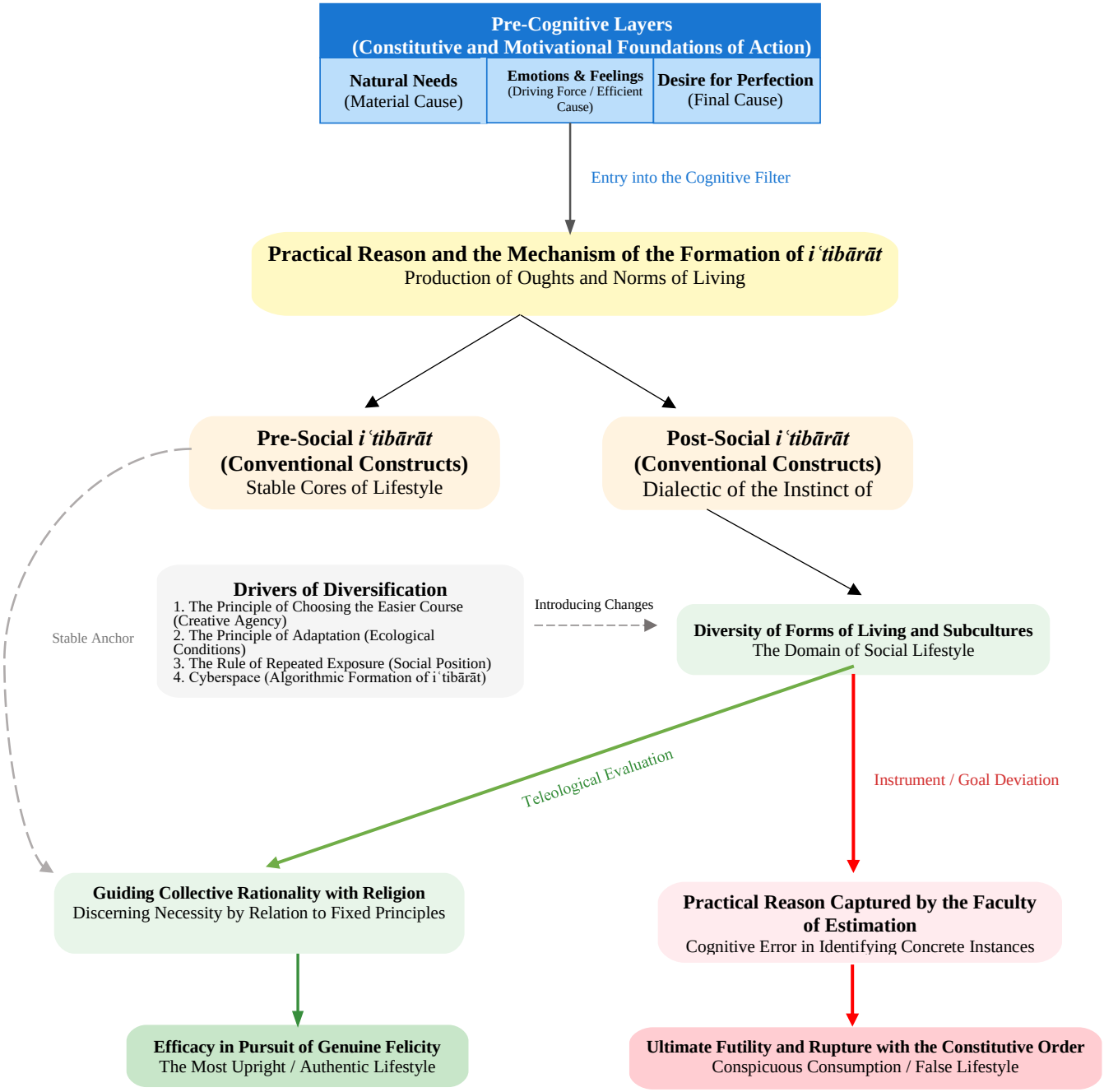


Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of the Formation, Diversification, and Evaluation of Lifestyle Based on Tabataba'i's Theory of iʿtibārāt (Conventional Constructs)

Discussion and Conclusion

By transcending mere phenomenological description and concentrating on the logic of action, the present study demonstrates that the theory of *iʿtibārāt (conventional constructs)* possesses high explanatory power for the ontological elucidation of modern lifestyle. The synthesis and core inferences drawn from this inquiry, structured across the four-dimensional analytical framework, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Inferred Lifestyle Implications Based on the Deductive Reconstruction Model

Analytical Axes	Step 1: Extraction of the Philosophical Principle (Major Premise)	Step 2: Formulation of the Contemporary Question (Minor Premise)	Step 3: Analytical Mapping	Step 4: Final Implication
Motivational Dimension	Teleological guidance of emotions and affects by practical reason.	Confrontation between conscious human agency and structural determinisms.	Filtering and processing of structural constraints through practical reason's calculus.	Lifestyle: A conscious, teleological quest toward existential perfection (*istikmāl*) rather than a passive structural reflection.
Cognitive-Epistemological Dimension	Creation of *iʿtibārāt* (practical knowledge) grounded in the instinct of mutual utilization (*istikhdām*) and justice (*ʿadl*).	Mechanism of transforming raw preferences into institutionalized social structures.	Linking internal needs to collective reality through the principle of multiplicity of entry (*qāʿidat kathrat al-wurūd*).	Lifestyle: A patterned, structured matrix of practical cognitions devised to negotiate and manage objective reality.
Dynamic and Functional Dimension	Dialectic between immutable and mutable *iʿtibārāt* (the principle of ease-seeking / *suhūlat-guzīnī*).	The conundrum of lifestyle pluralism versus the boundary of cultural relativism.	Explaining the emergence of cultural variations upon the bedrock of invariant ontological needs.	Plurality of Styles: Rational adaptation to temporal and spatial exigencies without descending into normative relativism.
Evaluative Dimension	The criterion of "ultimate efficacy" (*kār-āmadī-yi ghāyī*) and the negation of "futility" (*laghwiyyat*).	Identifying a universal benchmark for critiquing destructive lifestyle patterns.	Analyzing cognitive distortion (the hijacking of practical reason by the estimative faculty / *wāhima*).	Invalidation of false lifestyles (teleological futility); imperative recourse to religious constants, governance (*wilāyah*), social reflexivity, and collective *ijtihād* for ongoing interpretation.

As articulated in Table 4, the fundamental significance of this reconstruction lies in overcoming the persistent antinomies of modern sociology, such as structure versus agency or subjectivity

versus objectivity. Tabataba'i's critical realism opens an integrative third path through the operational mechanism of *the formation of iʿtibārāt*. Building upon the inferences synthesized above, the analytical achievements of this theoretical model can be elaborated across four pivotal axes:

First, regarding the driving engine of human behavior, the findings indicate that Tabataba'i offers a layered, synthetic framework, transcending both purely individualistic psychological accounts, such as Alfred Adler's attribution of lifestyle to inferiority complexes, and deterministic sociological reductions that view lifestyle merely as an epiphenomenon of class habitus. In Tabataba'i's philosophical anthropology, lifestyle emerges through the vertical, hierarchical interaction of three constitutive strata: natural/biological needs as the *material cause*, affects and emotions as the driving engine and *proximate efficient cause*, and practical reason (*al-ʿaql al-ʿamalī*) as the ultimate directional architect. Lifestyle, in this rendering, is neither a blind instinctive reflex nor merely a symbolic vehicle for vanity and status distinction; rather, it constitutes an existential strategy through which human beings remediate ontological deficiencies and strive toward perfection (*istikmāl*). This teleological orientation elevates lifestyle from a superficial consumer commodity to an ontological imperative.

Second, in explaining the formation mechanism and the translation of subjectivity into objective institutional reality, Tabataba'i's framework presents a compelling alternative to contemporary concepts such as Bourdieu's *habitus* or Giddens's *reflexive project of the self*. The missing link connecting inner existential need to exterior social action is precisely the cognitive mechanism of *the formation of iʿtibārāt*. Practical reason bridges the chasm between the internal lifeworld and external nature by instituting conventional constructs. By grasping authentic causal relations within the constitutive cosmic order (*takwīn*) and extending them metaphorically, the intellect generates normative categories such as duty, obligation, moral goodness (*ḥusn*), and reprehensibility (*qubḥ*). Crucially, this mental enactment is not an arbitrary nominalism detached from reality; rather, every lifestyle pattern is epistemically rooted in the real world at its point of origin and, in its normative evaluation, must maintain an ontological anchor in real states of affairs (*nafs al-amr*) via "necessity by relation" (*al-ḍarūrah bi-al-qiyās*) to avoid teleological futility. Furthermore, the transition to collective lifestyle is mediated through the dialectic between the instinct of mutual utilization (*istikhdām*) and the construct of justice (*ʿadl*), which harnesses the natural drive for appropriation and forestalls the degeneration of lifestyle distinctions into symbolic violence and structural domination.

Third, concerning the challenge of cultural pluralism, Tabataba'i's realism treats the diversity of lifestyles and subcultures as an intrinsically rational outcome of the interplay between *immutable* (*thābit*) and *mutable* (*mutaghayyir*) *iʿtibārāt*, harmonizing normative stability with experiential fluidity. This pluralism stems from three dynamic drivers: creative human agency expressed through the principle of ease-seeking (*suhūlat-guzīnī*), ecological adaptation to environmental constraints, and structural differentiation anchored in social positionality (*qāʿidat kathrat al-wurūd*). Lifestyle variations are thus the product of practical reason's optimization calculus to attain existential goals under diverging temporal, spatial, and technological conditions. Consequently,

transformation and diversification occur in the instrumental forms and contingent pathways of human praxis, rather than in humanity's foundational existential teleology.

Fourth, in distinguishing authentic from inauthentic lifestyles, the correspondence between conventional constructs and objective reality is safeguarded through anchoring mutable practices in immutable principles via necessity by relation. Normative deviations and pathological patterns arise when practical reason is hijacked by the estimative faculty (*al-quwwah al-wāhima*), inducing a cognitive error in identifying authentic instantiations of perfection, such as conflating existential flourishing with hyper-consumerism and the inflation of symbolic status. Despite their instrumental efficacy, such destructive lifestyles suffer from teleological futility (*laghwiyyat ghāyī*) due to their decoupling from the constitutive ontological order. Through this evaluative criterion, Tabataba'i bars the door to unchecked relativism, establishing authentic human flourishing as the sole universal touchstone. Within this vulnerable domain, religion intervenes as a cognitive compass, supplying meta-historical normative anchors, while institutional mechanisms, such as legitimate socio-political authority (*wilāyah*), social reflexivity, and collective *ijtihād*, safeguard practical rationality against ideological and estimative distortions.

Interrogated against the established theoretical terrain, the architecture of *iʿtibārāt* systematically transcends the reductionisms pervasive across Western social theories:

- In the **motivational dimension**, whereas Adlerian individual psychology reduces the core motor of lifestyle to compensatory reactions against inferiority complexes, Tabataba'i's realism anchors it in an intentional teleological quest for existential perfection.
- In the **functional dimension**, while Max Weber reduces lifestyle to status-group closure, Thorstein Veblen confines it to conspicuous consumption, and Pierre Bourdieu decodes it as an instrument for reproducing class hierarchies and symbolic violence, Tabataba'i's dialectic of *istikhdām* and justice recuperates the authentic social function of life patterns as rational systems of equitable reciprocal need fulfillment, treating status-driven consumption as a compensatory, cognitively distorted construct marred by teleological futility.
- Finally, whereas Anthony Giddens and Georg Simmel anchor lifestyle dynamics in reflexive fluidity and modern subjectivity that drift toward normative indeterminacy, the theory of *iʿtibārāt* offers an integrated path: pluralism and change do not signal normative deregulation, but rather represent practical reason's ongoing adaptive reflexivity grounded in invariant existential constants.

This integrated inquiry yields a comprehensive definition of lifestyle grounded in communicative realism:

Lifestyle is a structured matrix of conventional behavioral patterns (*al-idrākāt al-iʿtibāriyyah*) forged by practical reason under the impetus of emotional-affective drivers, oriented toward actively realizing immutable primordial needs within contingent, evolving ecological, structural, and technological environments.

Accordingly, the normative health of a lifestyle cannot be adjudicated through majoritarian consensus, public popularity, conspicuous consumption, or fluid identity signaling; its validity rests exclusively on its immunity from futility and its functional efficacy in realizing human existential and transcendental flourishing.

Governance and Policy Implications

This theoretical framework carries transformative strategic implications for cultural governance and public policy. Prevailing paradigms routinely construe lifestyle as an unregulated, hyper-fluid domain governed by subjective consumer choices stripped of normative ends. Tabataba'i's realism demonstrates that entirely surrendering this domain to unrestrained market dynamics and the estimative faculty inevitably plunges human societies into the abyss of false needs, alienation, and teleological futility.

Consequently, rather than endorsing laissez-faire cultural abandonment, the epistemology of *iʿtibārāt* underscores the necessity of proactive direction and systemic stewardship, not through rigid bureaucratic coercion or mechanical engineering, but through the foundational governance of structural needs and the cultivation of collective social reflexivity. To protect society from alienating patterns, such as hyper-consumerism and disembodied algorithmic identities, cultural policymaking institutions bear an active mandate: deploying religious constants as an epistemic compass to harmonize rational arguments with public affective sensibilities, thereby fostering an ecosystem wherein authentic, flourishing-oriented lifestyles can organically emerge.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The primary limitation of this study resides in its purely theoretical and conceptual orientation and its lack of empirical verification. Consequently, the operationalization of this conceptual model for analyzing concrete sociological datasets and conducting empirical measurements across diverse cultural contexts constitutes an essential agenda for future field-based and survey research.

Author Contributions: The author is the sole contributor to the writing and development of this manuscript.
Funding: This research received no external funding.
Ethical Considerations: The author avoided data fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and any form of misconduct.
Data Availability Statement: Data available on request from the author.
Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.
Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest in this study.
Declaration of AI Use: The author has used no AI tools.
Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions in manuscript revision.

References

Abdollahi, Mohammad Ali, & Abbasian, Fatemeh. (2025). The foundation of the concept of law in Allameh Tabataba'i's theory of credit perceptions. *Journal of Jurisprudential Research*, 21(2), 93-102. https://doi.org/10.22059/jorr.2025.369039.1009466 [in Persian]

Adler, Alfred. (2000). *Individual Psychology* (H. Zamani Sharafshahi, Trans.). Tehran: Pishgam. [in Persian]

Ajdarizadeh, Hossein, Kafi, Majid, & Alizadeh, Abdolreza. (2004). *Sociology of Knowledge*. Qom: Research Institute of Hawzah and University. [in Persian]

Alavitabar, Sina, & Alavitabar, Sobhan. (2025). Responses to the objections on Allameh Tabataba'i's theory of credit perceptions. *Nasim-e Kherad*, 11(1), 183-202. [in Persian]

Azarbaijani, Masoud, & Feizi, Mojtaba. (2014). Lifestyle from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i. *Marefat*, 23(202), 15-26. [in Persian]

Bourdieu, Pierre. (2011). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (H. Chavoshian, Trans.). Tehran: Saless Publication. [in Persian]

Bouzarinejad, Yahya, & Marandi, Elaheh. (2015). Allameh Tabataba'i's theory of I'tibariat and the socio-legal-political system of society. *Public Law Studies Quarterly*, 45(1), 107-122. https://doi.org/10.22059/jplsq.2015.53724 [in Persian]

Frankena, William K. (1965). *Philosophy of Education*. New York: Macmillan.

Giddens, Anthony. (2005). *The Consequences of Modernity* (M. Salasi, Trans.). Tehran: Markaz Publishing. [in Persian]

Giddens, Anthony. (2013). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (N. Movafaghian, Trans.). Tehran: Ney Publishing. [in Persian]

Group of Authors. (2015). *Indicators of Islamic Lifestyle*. Qom: Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute. [in Persian]

Habermas, Jürgen. (1979). What is universal pragmatics? (T. McCarthy, Trans.). In *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (pp. 1-68). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. (1990). *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (C. Lenhardt & S. W. Nicholsen, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Han, Byung-Chul. (2017). *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*. London: Verso.

Hassanifar, Abdolrasoul. (2017). The function of the theory of credit perceptions in the socio-political thought of Allameh Tabataba'i. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, 19(1), 219-237. https://doi.org/10.22091/pfk.2017.816 [in Persian]

Hassani, Seyed Hamidreza, & Mousavi, Hadi. (2012). Structure and agency in Allameh Tabataba'i's theory of I'tibariat and Giddens' structuration theory. *Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers*, 2(2), 129-159. https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2012.54306 [in Persian]

Hosseinpour Sabbagh, Davood, Alamolhoda, Jamileh, & Soozanchi, Hossein. (2020). Re-recognition of the concept of "education" in Allameh Tabataba'i's theory of I'tibariat. *Foundations of Education*, 10(2), 118-139. https://doi.org/10.22067/fedu.2021.31395.0 [in Persian]

Karami Ghahi, Mohammad Taghi. (2015). The theory of I'tibariat as an anthropological theory. *Naqd Va Nazar*, 20(80), 132-156. [in Persian]

Mirnasiri, Seyed Rouhollah, & Sajedi, Abolfazl. (2017). I'tibariat and humanities from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i. *Qabasat*, 22(84), 5-28. [in Persian]

Mosleh, Ali Asghar. (2013). Allameh Tabataba'i's I'tibariat as the basis of a philosophical plan for culture. *Wisdom and Philosophy*, 9(36), 7-26. [in Persian]

Motahari, Morteza. (2002). *The Issue of Epistemology in the Quran* [Masalaye Shenakht dar Quran]. Tehran: Sadra Publications. [in Persian]

Motahari, Morteza. (2010). *Collected Works* (Vol. 6). Tehran: Sadra Publications. [in Persian]

Mousavifar, Seyed Mohammad Taghi, & Mofatteh, Mohammad Hadi. (2022). Investigating the position of human before the world in the semantic system of monotheistic lifestyle emphasizing the thoughts of Imam Khomeini and Allameh Tabataba'i. *Quranic Studies*, 13(50), 77-94. [in Persian]

Parsania, Hamid, Danaeefard, Hassan, & Hosseini, Seyed Abolhasan. (2014). The implications of the theory of I'tibariat for transformation in humanities. *Islam and Social Studies*, 2(5), 23-48. [in Persian]

Rahim Nasirian, Iman. (2024). A comparative - analytical research on Allameh Tabataba'i's theory of "Credit Perceptions" and Rorty's pragmatism. *Ayeneh Marefat*, 24(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.48308/jipt.2024.234208.1496 [in Persian]

Rezaei, Mehdi. (2020). Explaining the methodology of deductive research of rational necessity in the philosophy of Islamic education. *Research in Issues of Islamic Education*, 28(49), 85-119. https://doi.org/20.1001.1.22516972.1399.28.49.4.5 [in Persian]

Rorty, Richard. (1984). The historiography of philosophy: Four genres. In R. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, & Q. Skinner (Eds.), *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy* (pp. 49-76). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schultz, Duane P., et al. (2005). *Theories of Personality* (Y. Seyed Mohammadi, Trans.). Tehran: Virayesh Publishing House. [in Persian]

Simmel, Georg. (1993). The metropolis and mental life (Y. Abazari, Trans.). *Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(6), 53-65. [in Persian]

Sobhani, Hassan, & Qaeminia, Aliasghar. (2016). Money in Islamic economics from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i's I'tibariat. *Islamic Economics*, 16(63), 5-32. [in Persian]

Solgi, Fatemeh. (2015). Ontological analysis of Allameh Tabataba'i's theory of credit perceptions. *Sadraei Wisdom*, 4(1), 55-68. DOR: 20.1001.1.23221992.1394.4.1.4.7 [in Persian]

Soroush, Abdolkarim. (1994). *Tafarroj-e Son'* [Amusement of Creation]. Tehran: Serat Publications. [in Persian]

Tabataba'i, Seyed Mohammad Hossein. (1985). *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism* (Vols. 1 & 2) (With footnotes by M. Motahari). Tehran: Sadra Publications. [in Persian]

Tabataba'i, Seyed Mohammad Hossein. (1997). *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Quran* [Al-Mizan in the Exegesis of the Quran]. Beirut: Al-A'lami Foundation. [in Arabic]

Tabataba'i, Seyed Mohammad Hossein. (2007). *Majmu'ah Rasail* [Collection of Treatises]. Qom: Baqiyat. [in Arabic]

Tabataba'i, Seyed Mohammad Hossein. (2009). *Human from the Beginning to the End* [Insan az Aghaz ta Farjam]. Qom: Bustan-e Ketab. [in Persian]

Torkashvand, Ehsan, & Mirsepah, Akbar. (2010). A new interpretation of Allameh Tabataba'i's I'tibariat with a comparative look at the treatise of I'tibariat and Al-Mizan exegesis. *Philosophical Knowledge*, 8(1), 25-54. [in Persian]

Veblen, Thorstein. (2004). *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (F. Ershad, Trans.). Tehran: Ney Publishing. [in Persian]

Weber, Max. (2003). *Religion, Power, Society* (A. Tadayyon, Trans.). Tehran: Hermes. [in Persian]

Zuboff, Shoshana. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs.