The Ulul Albab Thinking Model for Student Development in Institutions of Higher Education

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore and develop a framework of the UlulAlbab Thinking Model that is suitable for undergraduates in Higher Education Institutions (HEI). The UlulAlbab is a specific concept derived from the Quran. The main source of references for the formation of the UlulAlbab mindset is the Quran, Hadith, and the views of Muslim clerics, in addition to studies and writings of Muslim scholars. However, since thinking is a universal concept, the study also adapts theories or models of thought derived from Western scholars that do not contradict the Islamic worldview. This UlulAlbab Thinking Model includes knowledge and thinking styles from an Islamic perspective combined with the existing UlulAlbab model used at the school level. This model is useful as a guide to the development of learning and training modules to train students in institutions of higher education to become the UlulAlbab Generation.

Keywords: UlulAlbab, Thinking, Model, Student, Higher Education

1. Introduction

The term UlulAlbab, according to Al-Marbawi's dictionary, derived from two words, 'ulu' (own) and 'albab' (clean mind, heart) (Arniyuzi, 2015; Manaf et al., 2015). The word albab is the plural of the word 'lubb' or 'lubban' which means intellect (intellect) which springs from the heart (MohdRadziTaib et al., 2016). The term 'UlulAlbab' is mentioned in the Quran as a special group of people given wisdom and knowledge by God (Arniyuzi, 2015). MohdRadziTaib et al. (2016) state that the terminology of the UlulAlbab is that of people who think and act based on the purity of their inner voice.

Several opinions were expressed on the definition of UlulAlbab based on the characteristics mentioned in the Quran, including "a group with a strong fundamentalknowledge of Quran, a vast and varied knowledge, capable of thinking and observing the events of God through the eyes and sharp intellectual mind and learn lessons from it" (FazlyRahim et al., 2014); those who "practice the concept of zikr (remembrance of Allah) and fiqr (thinking), that is, always remembering and glorifying God through observation and contemplation on God's creation to reveal the secrets of every natural phenomenon" (MohdRadziTaib et al., 2016); "those who have a strong foundation of the Quran, a broad and varied knowledge, capable of thinking and observing the creation of God through their keen eyes and minds and taking lessons from it" (Hisham Abdul Majid, 2017); "a generation built on a combination of scientific rationality (intellect) and spiritual belief and fear of God which subsequently led them to practice their moral conduct to obtain the blessing of God" (Subirin et al., 2017).

The characteristics of the UlulAlbab who are revealed through the 16 verses of the Quran are those who are wise and fearful (Al-Baqarah, 2:179; Al-Baqarah, 2:197), who take wisdom from His word (Al -Bahqarah, 2:269), who earnestly seeks knowledge (Ali-Imran, 3:7), who constantly ponders and contemplates the events of nature (Ali-Imran, 3:190-191; Az-Zumar, 39:21), who always chose good deeds (Al-Maidah, 5:100), who took lessons from the history of the past civilization (Yusuf, 12:111), who recognized and believed the truth of the Quran (Ar-Ra'd, 13:19-22), who takes the Quran as a reminder of the greatness of Allah (Ibrahim, 14:52; Shaad, 28:29), who is blessed with patience (Shaad, 38:43), who performs qiamullail (night worship) to gain His mercy (Az-Zumar, 39:9), those who are critically hearing and chos (Az-Zumar, 39:18), those who are given guidance (Al-Ghafir, 40:54), and those who fear the torment of Allah (At -Thalaq, 65:10) (SabriMohamad Sharif, 2009).

Based on these 16 verses of the Quran, previous scholars divided the characteristics of UlulAlbab into 3 major components called Quranic, Encyclopedic and Ijtihadic. Five verses refer to the Quranic component, two verses refer to the Encyclopedic component, and nine verses refer to the Ijtihadic component. Quranic means a person who memorized all the chapters of the Quran and understands the demands of the Quran that is not only to read and memorized but also to think, understand, practice and spread the teaching of the Quran. They have
high Quranic knowledge such as citing orderly and practice the teachings of the Quran (Fazly Rahim et al., 2014; Rohaizan et al., 2014). According to Manaf and Rahman (2017), the Quranic component focuses on two skills: Arabic and other foreign languages.

Encyclopedic means knowledgeable and highly skilled, referred by the community and the ability to master multi-disciplines and multi-languages (Fazly Rahim et al., 2014; Rohaizan et al., 2014). Two skills focused on Encyclopedic components are mastering various disciplines of knowledge and languages (Manaf & Rahman, 2017). Ijtihadic means being able to provide insights in solving Quranic problems, maximizing cognitive capabilities and using technology to master religious and scientific wisdom (Fazly Rahim et al., 2014; Rohaizan et al., 2014). Creative and innovative thinking skills are the focus of the Ijtihadic component (Manaf & Rahman, 2017).

These three components of the Ulul Albab were originally focused on the curriculum at the school level, with the Quranic component as the backbone (Manaf & Rahman, 2017). The Ulul Albab model provides an educational approach using the Quran as a source for understanding natural phenomenon and the effectiveness of the Ulul Albab model can be seen from various perspectives, skills, interests, motivations, personalities and students life (Hisham Abdul Majid, 2017). According to MohdRadziTaib et al. (2016), the UlulAlbab curriculum model can be summarized as diagram 1:

![Diagram 1. Ulul Albab curriculum at school level](image)

Scholars conclude that the UlulAlbabare those who have faith and spiritual depth, are committed to good morals, and have professional maturity (Imtihanah, 2016); as well as a powerful intellectual who combines scientific and worldly knowledge with religious values, remembrance of God, with worldly and the Hereafter goals, reasoning based on Divine revelation, professionalism with piety, and are notinflicted with spiritual illness (Hassan, 2010). These groupsof people are also regarded as encyclopedic clerics, skilled in fardhuain and fardhuifayah as well as Muslim scientists who can see between the lines and can capture the truth behind the Quranic verses (Arniyuzie, 2015).

This study aims to explore and delve deeper into the UlulAlbab thinkers in line with student acceptance at higher education institutions. The proposed model framework will be used to develop training modules for student development of UlulAlbab.

2. Literature Review

Thinking from the Islamic perspective

Islam is a religion that highly encourages its followers to think. Hundreds of verses in the Quran speak of thinking activities (Mohd. Shuhaimi & Wan Mazwati, 2015). Among the Quranic verses that encourage people to think are verse 13 in surah al-Jasiyah, verse 8 in surah Ar-Rum, verse 11 in surah An-Nahl, and verse 3 in surah Ar-Ra’d. Various terms are used in the Quran such as tafakkur (contemplating), tadabbur (pondering), tabassur (understanding), tawassum (reflecting), nazar (considering, abstract thinking), itibar (take a lesson), tadhkakur (remembering, taking advice to heart), tafaqquh (comprehensive understand) and ta’ajjul (correct application of
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The word think in Arabic is al-fikr, meaning the activities of intellect in identifying, understanding and solving problems logically andrationally (Anita Ismail et al., 2016). The concept of thinking from an Islamic and Western perspective does not differ much from the operational point of view, but rather to the ultimate goal of thinking (Christina Andin @ NurQistina Abdullah et al., 2014). Thinking is not just a neural response to a stimulus. The ability of the human brain to think rationally distinguishes humans from other beings. The goal of thinking from an Islamic perspective is to ponder the signs of God's existence (MohdNuri Al-Amin and Wan Suhaimi, 2010). Other beings are not responsible to figure out the intricate creation of nature to find the truth from God.

There are at least 13 verses in the Quran that questions human negatively because they do not use reason to think, and is aimed at provoking people to think about God's existence (Al-Qaradawi, 2001). These provocative questions are not just to get easy answers, but for people to think critically and creatively (Shogar, 2011; MohdShuhaimi & Wan Mazwati, 2015). Islam forbids people to blindly accept any sort of worship practices inherited from their ancestors without thinking critically (MohdNuri Al-Amin and Wan Suhaimi, 2010). According to MohdNuri Al-Amin and Wan Suhaimi (2010), the basis for critical thinking from an Islamic perspective is al-Tafakkur, al-Yakin, and al-'Adl.

Al-Tafakkur means reflection and contemplation and is used repeatedly in the Quran (e.g. verse 30 of surah al-Rum) to challenge humans to find meaning in God's creation through deep and critical reasoning (Christina Andin et al., 2014). Al-Ghazali (2005) operationalized Tafakkur as "bringing two data to the heart to produce the third data", which is to study the nature (creation of God) and its relation to the afterlife. The results of this study will lead to the realization that the afterlife is more permanent and worth pursuing. The process of contemplation according to Malik Badri (2000) evolved through three phases. The first phase is where information is acquired through senses and imagination. The second phase is to examine the aesthetic aspects of information gained through rational thinking and to acknowledge the perfection of God's creation, which will inspire awe. In this phase, the data are studied and analyzed scientifically to understand the nature of the incident (MohdShuhaimi & Wan Mazwati, 2015). The third phase in which humans shift from thinking to submission and faith in God as the creator of the universe. In scientific terms, the first phase is the theorybuilding, the second phase is research and analysis, while the third phase is the conclusion (Rahman et al., 2017). Al-Yakin is regarded as the goal of critical thinking, which is to achieve intellectual satisfaction far from any doubt. The confidence gained is based on strong and undeniable evidence. Al-'Adl, free from emotional influence, bias and personal interest.

Mohd.Shuhaimi and Wan Mazwati (2015) proposed a rational and spiritual model of thinking. According to them, data is processed in the first stage (Rational Perceptions) using creative, critical and ethical thinking. The next stage (Spiritual Perception) uses spiritual thinking to move from what is known to the unknown. Spiritual thinking does not occur in the brain, but in the qalb (heart) by increasing the remembrance of Allah and contemplation. IbnQayyim (2010) also emphasized that thinking and meditation are the basis for acquiring knowledge. Diagram 2 is the proposed model of thinking by Mohd. Shuhaimi and Wan Mazwati:

![Diagram 2. The process of rational and spiritual thinking](image)


Structure of UlulAlbab Thinking
According to Wan Adli & Mohamad Kamil (2005), the three main things in Islamic thought are the intellect, the sources, which are the Quran and the Sunnah, and the knowledge that comprises knowledge of divinity, science and nature. We will not elaborate in detail on the concept of the intellect and the sources, but will only focus on the function of the intellect which is thinking and types of thinking to develop the UlulAlbab model of thinking. Since the term UlulAlbab is introduced in the Quran, the main source of the formation of the UlulAlbab thinking is also from the Quran and perfected by the Sunnah. Based on the research of Muslim clerics and scholars, the Quran encourages human to think rationally, believes in evidence, rejects superstition, set aside blind submission to superstition and certain leaders (Al-Qaradawi, 2015) who are known as the UlulAlbab generation.

The word intellect comes from the Arabic word al-aql which means reason, rationality, intellect or intelligence and in the Quran it refers to the human nature given by God to enable it to acquire knowledge and distinguish between right and wrong (Dalhat, 2015). Al-Ghazali (2005) defines it as several meanings. First, aql as a vessel to receive scientific knowledge; second, the ability to distinguish between real and false; third, aql is knowledge from one’s experiences; and fourth, aql as a force that can control one’s behavior and passions. The aql enables people to think and reflect on the signs of God's power (Christina Andin @ NurQistina Abdullah, 2014) through their senses, research and experiences.

According to Al-Qaradawi (2015), the six types of thinking that every Muslim should have based on the Quran are scientific thinking, realistic thinking, Salafī thinking, transformational thinking, contemporary thinking, and futuristic thinking. Scientific thinking is based on highly significant proof. Scientific thinking is not biased toward any source of information, respects the expertise the experts, being able to acknowledge one’s own mistakes, is capable of utilizing the experience of others, accept whatever the results of research, not rushing to conclude before carefully examine all possibilities, and respect difference opinion or interpretation while engaging in a tolerant and loving atmosphere.

Realistic thinking is a way of thinking in line with current reality. The meaning of realistic in Al-Qaradawi’s view is the appropriateness between the ability of an individual or organization and the goal to achieve. The Quran also emphasizes this in the 66th verse of Al-Anfal. Realistic thinking can also prevent one from making mistakes when executing a plan, which is by analyzing in detail the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities. The third type of thinking suggested by Al-Qaradawi (2015) is Salafī thinking, which is the way of thinking based on the example set by the companions of the Prophet s.a.w. (Salaf).

Among these features of the thinking are the Quran and the Sunnah as the main sources of reference when making decisions, promoting reform (ijtihad) and avoiding blind acceptance (taqīd), facilitating (tasīr) and not complicating (taṣīr) affairs. Rejecting reform is the cause of the decline of Muslim society compared to Western society (Anita Ismail et al., 2016). In contrast, blind acceptance is the behavior of those oppositethelUlulAlbab, which think and evaluate based on facts. MohdAsri (2012) reminded those who openly accept whatever comes out of the mouth of a religious without daring to question the truth of the facts and arguments, which ultimately lead to misunderstandings in society. This thinking is in line with the logical mind of questioning existing facts, seeking evidence to support a premise, and using systematic methods to solve problems (Muhammad Akhmal Judge, 2014).

Salafī thinking is also the basis of the fourth type of thinking, transformational thinking. Transformational thinking emphasized the importance of ijtihād (reform). Ijtihād can be associated with the concept of innovation. The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. showcase many creativity and innovativeness throughout his life by providing solutions to issues accordingly (Sulaiman et al., 2015). Reform does not mean eliminating or replacing, but rather preserving the original form, and even refining it. According to Al-Qaradawi (2015), reform is something that is practiced in Islam based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. as narrated by Abu Daud and Al-Hakīm: “Indeed, Allah sent for this ummah at the peak of each one hundred years, one who renewed the religion for (their) good.” Taqīd is prohibited in the Quran based on the 104th verse of surah Al-Maidah (following without strong arguments), the 6th verse of surah Al-Hujurat (believing news without investigating its validity) and the 64th verse of An-Naml (bring evidence to support arguments) (NursaframohdZafrar et al., 2016).

The fifth thinking suggested by Al-Qaradawi (2015) is a wasathiah or moderate way of thinking. The Islamic law is to facilitate, relieve the burden and to love one another. This principle makes Islam a religion of rahmah (kindness, mercy) and does not burden its followers with an unnecessary burdens. Al-Qaradawi posits that humans should not be restricted to black-or-white choices only (black-or-white fallacy), while there are many other alternatives between them. The futuristic thinking is to prepare Muslims for the future. The futuristic way
of thinking stress heavy on the long term and strategic planning. This is stated by the word of Allah in verse 60 of surah Al-Anfal which urges Muslims to make preparations to face their enemies.

In his book, *Thaqafah Al-Da’iyyah*, Al-Qaradawi proposed six branches of knowledge that must be mastered by Muslims today. They are religious knowledge, history, linguistics, humanities, science and contemporary knowledge (Hasrizal, 2020). Religious knowledge includes knowledge of the Quran, Sunnah, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *aqidah* (creed), *tasawwuf* (spiritual) and the Islamic systems. History-related knowledge is especially needed to counter an argument with those who do not believe in the Quran and the Sunnah. History should be taught to keep Muslims from repeating mistakes made in history, both in Muslims and non-Muslims civilizations. Linguistics knowledge must be mastered, especially Arabic because language is the key to the wealth of knowledge. Humanities include knowledge in psychology, sociology, economics, philosophy, and morals (ethics and ethics). It is necessary to understand human behavior and to promote Islam effectively based on human nature. Science is important for coping with the fast pace of science and technology, while contemporary knowledge is used to understand the reality of Muslims today.

**The UlulAlbab Thinking Model**

The implementation of the UlulAlbab model at the school level aims to expose students to a more holistic curriculum. The UlulAlbab Program was introduced in several schools in Malaysia to produce Muslim scientists who specialize in science and religious knowledge (Subirin et al., 2018) as well as technocrats who practice their knowledge and behave based on the teachings of Quran and Sunnah (Muhammad Hasbi & Wan Ahmad Zakry, 2019). Not like the students at the school level, students in higher education institutions need to be at a higher level in equipping themselves with the characteristics of UlulAlbab. Students in higher education institutions should not only have the basics knowledge of religion and science but must master various skills and knowledge to enable them to become Murabbi or knowledgeable mentor (SabriMohamad Sharif (2009)) when they return to the society. UlulAlbab needs to have a higher level of thinking skills, not just a right way of thinking. High-level thinking can be done through systematic planning and training. The development of the UlulAlbab model that will be implemented in institutions of higher education can also adapt to modern paradigms that can contribute to critical thinking as long as it is parallel with the Islamic values (Azhar, 2017). The proposed model of higher thinking should be practical, not merely theoretical or idealistic. Based on previous literature, we synthesized a model of thinking that encompasses aspects of thinking methods and knowledge that need to be mastered while in the higher education institutions. Diagram 3 below is a proposed UlulAlbab Thinking model for students at higher education institutions:

![Diagram 3. UlulAlbab Thinking Model for Higher Education Institution](image)

Based on the diagram above, the two domains of UlulAlbab Thinking are distributed into the Quranic, Encyclopedic and Ijtihadic components. This move is to make it easy for the implementation stage where modules of training or learning can be structured accordingly. We need to note here that although the Quranic component only comprised of religious knowledge and the Salafi or Salafiyyah way of thinking, unlike the other two UlulAlbab components, religious knowledge and Salafi thinking are the pillars of the entire modules, meaning it is used throughout all the other teaching or training modules. Islamic worldview does not separate
religion from other parts of human life, as it is an integrated way of life. All six types of knowledge and six types of thinking in the model incorporate aspects of Islamic teaching written in the Quran.

The Encyclopedic component of UlulAlbab encompasses four knowledges and one way of thinking. This is because the Encyclopedic component is about the ability to master multi-disciplines of knowledge and languages (Fazly Rahim et al., 2014; Rohaizan et al., 2014; Manaf & Rahman, 2017). Wasatiyah or moderate thinking is suitable to accompany the ‘qualitative’ nature of the four types of knowledge in the component. The four types of knowledge have a connection with one another. Learning a variety of language enable a student to learn various history from its authentic sources, not just by reading history that was translated into one’s language. History, on the other hand, can illuminate why humans behave in certain ways. The observations of human behaviors throughout history than are translated into ideas, concepts and theories in the discipline of psychology, sociology, economics, philosophy and morals (ethics and ethics).

The Ijtihadic component of UlulAlbab, in contrast to Encyclopedic, encompasses just one type of knowledge, but four types of thinking. Relevant with the focus of this component, which is on maximizing cognitive capabilities (creative and innovative thinking skills), using technology to master religious and scientific wisdom to solve problems (Fazly Rahim et al., 2014; Rohaizan et al., 2014; Manaf & Rahman, 2017). Pure science such as biology, physics, chemistry, mathematic and engineering are the highlight of this component. To utilize the full potential of these disciplines, four types of thinking are needed to better bring forth new ideas and findings.

3. Conclusion

This study focuses on the development of the UlulAlbab Thinking model in institutions of higher education through literature review. The development of this model is essential to tailor student intellectuals at the institution of higher education to the existing UlulAlbab model implemented in schools. The ultimate goal of implementing the UlulAlbab model would not have been achieved if graduates of higher education did not master the thinking and knowledge required to fulfill their responsibilities as caliphs. 

References


