

# Teachers with Ulul Albab Characteristics

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Abstract: Teachers are important components in educational process. The success of the educational process is strongly influenced by the quality of the teachers. One of teacher qualification is to have intellectual values. The intellectual are termed in the Holy Quran as *ulul albab*. The aim of this study is to describe the characteristics of teachers with *ulul albab values* in Bandung. To achieve this aim, this study used a mixed-method approach to analyze 300 teacher samples. The results of the study revealed (1) that the Holy Quran mentioned three aspects of *ulul albab*: *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), *fiqr* (reflection), and *amal salih* (good deeds) and (2) that the majority of the teachers in Bandung were moderately characterized with *ulul albab values*, and only few of them could be said to display a high level of characteristics of *ulul albab*. No teacher was found to display a very high, low, and very low level of characteristics of *ulul albab*.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the perspective of modern psychology, *ulul albab* refers to those who are able to optimally synergize their intelligent (IQ), emotional (EQ), and spiritual (SQ) potentials (H.D Bastaman, 2007). A teacher is valued not only by his academic proficiency, but also his communication skills because communication can optimize the teacher-student relationship (Raufelder et al., 2016; Rusu, Soitu, and Panaite, 2012). A teacher with a high emotional quotient (EQ) can bring about an extraordinary performance (Mohamad and Jais, 2016). The EQ is one of contributing factors to the personal development of an excellent teacher. It plays a role in self-management skills, emphatic skills, interpersonal skills, and all skills to successfully interact with the environments and to boost the performance (Yusof, Ishak, Zahidi, Abidin, and Bakar, 2014). According to Atiyah Al-Abrasyi, an ideal teacher has a spiritual quotient (SQ), characterized by the likes of *zuhd* (living a simple life as opposed to hedonism), respectfulness, sincerity, forgivingness, *sabr* (patience), dedication, and observant towards his students' characters and potentials (Sa'diyah, 2012). The Quran speaks of the perfect human personality typology in the term *ulul albab* (Quran 3:190-192).

*Ulul albab* refers to those of the intellectual with good personality (Yaqin, 2015). They are at least characterized by the following traits: (1) hardworking, (2) creative, innovative, and critical, (3) religious, (4) excellent, and (5) intelligent (Walid, 2011). In the perspective of *mufasssir* (Quranic exegetes), *ulul albab* refers to people of faith who can optimally function their intelligent potentials (Faizah, 2014).

Considering the importance of *ulul albab* characteristics, this study was focused on figuring out to what extent teachers display the aforescribed traits of the *ulul albab*. The teachers being studied was at different educational level in eastern Bandung.

## 2 METHODS

To answer the research problem, this study used a qualitative/quantitative mixed method approach. The qualitative method began with reviewing literature on the characteristics of *ulul albab* as described in the Quran using the *maudhui tafsir* (thematic Quranic exegesis) approach. The results of literature review became a basis for designing the instrument of a quantitative survey. The survey was conducted to see to what extent the research subjects display the characteristics of the *ulul albab* (Creswell, 2008:552;

Oktaviavo, 2008:22).

The survey data were then analyzed descriptively to obtain an overview of the *ulul albab* characteristics displayed by teachers at various levels of education in Indonesia including kindergarten, primary school, junior high school, senior high school and *pondok pesantren* (Islamic boarding school).

The quantitative approach was chosen to enable a statistical data analysis. In addition, the reason for choosing a quantitative approach was that the researchers wished to obtain accurate field data based on empirical and measurable phenomena (Naïla Hayati, 352), which in this case was the *ulul albab* characteristics displayed by the teachers.

In brief, the research was conducted through the following steps: (1) sorting Quranic verses on the *ulul albab* characteristics, (2) carrying out the *maudhui tafsir* of the sorted verses, (3) classifying the verses based on the results of *tafsir*, (4) arranging the research instrument based on the result of *tafsir*, (5) collecting the research data, (6) analyzing the obtained data, and (7) analyzing the result of study.

The research population were all teachers in eastern Bandung. Based on population data of Bandung in 2015, the total number of teachers from kindergarten to high school level was 16,045 (Kota Bandung dalam angka, BPS 2015), and those in eastern Bandung was 3,697. Referring to Slovin's formula, the researchers needed at least 98 samples. However, to obtain a greater picture, the researchers distributed the instruments to approximately 300 teachers and obtained 299 analyzable respondent data.

The research instrument was designed with the basis of the results of *tafsir* Quranic verses on *ulul albab* characteristics. It consisted of 28 items whose validity coefficients were quite high, ranging from 0.716 to 0.754, and its reliability coefficient was 0.739.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Quran does not explicitly define the term *ulul albab*; however, their characteristics can be found in 16 verses as follows: (1) to sincerely seek, explore, understand and discover the secrets of science and knowledge taught by Allah the Most Holy (Quran 3:190), (2) to be willing to transfer his knowledge to others in order to improve social condition and willing to give warning (Quran 14:52), (3) to stand up for the right after telling them apart from the wrong (Quran 5:100), (4) to be critical about incoming information and make sure if it is true (Quran 39:18),

(5) to act mindfully and always take lesson from the history of the past ummahs, (6) to not fear other than Allah (Jalaluddin Rahmat, 1994, p. 213-215).

The characteristics numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5 speak of *fiqr* and *dhikr*. It goes to show that the *ulul albab* always try to feel the existence of Allah in their souls. Number 4; meanwhile, speaks about being productive and the importance of values in the context of their benefits for human beings. Thus, those with the *ulul albab* characteristics have a profound effect on social transformation. Their excellent personality is reflected in spiritual depth (*dhikr*), sharpness of analysis (*fiqr*), and profound effect on social life (*amal salih*).

Dawam Rahardjo (2002:557) mentioned some definitions of *ulul albab* as described in the Quran: (1) open- and deep-minded people, (2) people with an emphatic heart, (3) sharp- and strong- minded people, (4) knowledgeable people, (5) people with accurate and wide understandings, and (6) wise and just people.

It has been agreed upon among mufassirs that the term *ulul albab* refer to *ashhâbu al-uqûl* (people of reason). This indicates that *ulul albab* are individuals with great intellectual potentials (Thabari, n.d., 240). Therefore, they (1) are able to think critically (Quran 2:269; 39:18), (2) are knowledgeable (Quran 12:11), (3) hunger for knowledge (Quran 3:7), (4) always do a deep reflection of Allah's creations (Quran 3:191), (5) are hardworking (Quran 5:100; 39:9), (6) have good communication skills (Quran 14:52), (7) always keep promises (Quran 13:19-20), (8) are generous (Quran 35:29), and (9) fear Allah (Quran 2:197) (Faizah St Rusydanti Khaerani, 2014).

The *ulul albab* characteristics were studied in three aspects: *fiqr*, *dhikr*, and *amal salih*. In the research instrument, *fiqr* is represented by 22 items and *dhikr* by 6 items.

The indicators for *fiqr* were visionary, analytical, thinking, researching, understanding, tolerant, confident, *tazkiah al-nafs* (self-purification), honest, disciplined, responsible, and creative. Analyzing is very important to strengthen *fiqr*. Teachers are expected to always be creative and innovative in delivering the lesson (Soobik, 2012) but with reference to the Islamic values (Al-Karasneh and Saleh, 2010).

The indicators for *dhikr* were praying, *salah*, hardworking, generous, and obedient to Allah the Most Holy.

*Dhikr* is one of intensive devotional practices by remembering God in order for an individual's to find rest (Quran 13:28). This practice combines praying, meditation, and various ritual activities with the main

purpose of remembering and acquiring the spirit of God represented in His 99 beautiful Names (*asm u l- usn*). Through *dhikr*, one is expected to go through an intense spiritual experience and to rely upon God (Newberg, Wintering, Yaden, Waldman, and Reddin, 2015)

The result of Newberg's study that investigated the correlation of *dhikr* and neurophysiological activities revealed that there was an substantial increase in the frontal lobe activity and at the same time a decline parietal lobe activity. In short, this result showed that some cognitive processes became coordinated during *dhikr* (Newberg, et al., 2015). Praying and salah were also found to have positive effect on cancer (Rezaei, Adib-Hajbaghery, Seyedfatemi, and Hoseini, 2008).

Table 1 shows that *ulul albab* are highly intellectual people who always stay devoted to the Creator. This intellectual quality brings about EQ, IQ, and SQ. A hard worker (Quran 5:100; 39:9) are demanded to display good EQ and IQ in order for him to stay motivated to complete his works, be creative, work collaboratively, and have good interpersonal skills (Mohamad and Jais, 2016). And with SQ, can one reduce depression and anxiety (Koenig, Zaben, and Khalifa, 2012). This can bring about social intelligence that determines flexibility, wisdom, and empathy (Yermentaeyeva, Aurenova, Uaidullakzy, Ayapbergenova, and Muldabekova, 2014).

Table 1: Verse, meaning and aspects of *ulul albab*.

No.	Verse	Content of verse	Meaning (Value)	Aspect
1.	Quran 2: 179	One who takes lesson from the implementation of <i>qisas</i> (Islamic restorative justice practices)	One who remembers, accepts, and takes lesson from the implementation of <i>qisas</i> , careful and wise	<i>Fiqr</i> and <i>Amal Salih</i>
2.	Quran 2:197	One who is equipped with <i>taqwa</i> (piety) during hajj	Hardworking and pious	<i>Amal Salih</i>
3.	Quran 2: 269	One who receives wisdom from Allah	One who is able to really understand God's wisdom	<i>Fiqr</i>
4.	Quran 3:7	One who is fully aware that knowledge of <i>muhkam</i> (decisive) and <i>mutashabih</i> (allegorical) verses is from Allah	Knowledgeable person	<i>Fiqr</i>
5.	Quran 3:14	One who remembers Allah and does a reflection of His creations	One who does a deep reflection	<i>Fiqr</i>
6.	Quran 39:18	One who can tell right from wrong	Critical thinking	<i>Fiqr</i>
7.	Quran 39:9	To love to offer <i>qiyamul lail</i> (night prayers)	<i>Dhikr</i> and drawing close to Allah	<i>Dhikr</i>
8.	Quran 12:11	To take lesson from past history	To be able to take lesson from past history	<i>Fiqr</i>
9.	Quran 3:191	To remember Allah, do a reflection of His creations, and believe that all of His creations are good	<i>Dhikr</i> , reflection, and positive thinking	<i>Fiqr</i>
10.	Quran 38:29	To accept Quranic teachings as a way of life	To accept the Quran as a blessing and have faith in it	<i>Fiqr</i> , <i>Dhikr</i> and <i>Amal Salih</i>
11.	Quran 5: 100	To stand up for what is believed in although no one agrees	To have adversity quotient	<i>Amal Salih</i>
12.	Quran 14:52	To be brave to spread Allah's warnings	To have good communication skills and adversity quotient	<i>Fiqr</i> and <i>Amal Salih</i>
13.	Quran 13:19-20	To keep promise	To have adversity quotient	<i>Amal Salih</i>
14.	Quran 13:22	One who is attentive to the Quranic teachings, patient, generous, and avoids evils by doing good	To have good EQ and humanistic	<i>Amal Salih</i>
15.	Quran 3:14 Quran 39:21	To remember the signs of Allah's power in sky, rains, and plants To be observant of natural phenomena and signs and all creations of Allah	To do <i>dhikr</i> and to do a deep reflection and study all creations of Allah	<i>Fiqr</i> , <i>Dhikr</i> and <i>Amal Salih</i>
16.	Quran 65:10	Allah's warnings for the people of reason	Acceptance to the truth of Allah's revelations	<i>Amal Salih</i>

The indicators for *fiqr* were visionary, analytical, thinking, researching, understanding, tolerant, confident, *tazkiah al-nafs* (self-purification), honest, disciplined, and responsible. The indicators for *dhikr* were pray, worship, resilience, generosity, and devotion to Allah the Most Holy.

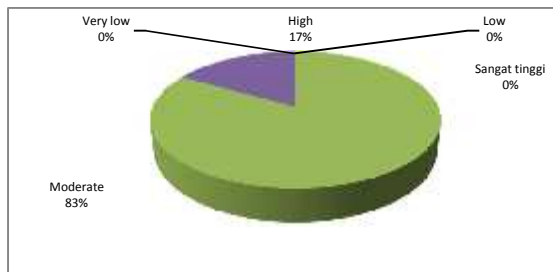


Figure 1: Aspect of *Fiqr*.

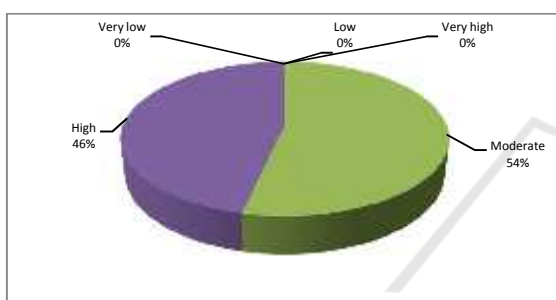


Figure 2: Aspect of *Dhikr*.

The obtained data showed that all samples did not display a very high, low, or very low level of *ulul albab* characteristics in the *fiqr* and *dhikr* aspect. A moderate level of *ulul albab* characteristics was displayed by 83% of the samples in the *fiqr* aspect and by 54% in the *dhikr* aspect, or by 78% in both aspects combined.

Teachers who have ultimate *ulul albab* characteristics are those who have the *dhikr* aspect that reflects a spiritual depth and established intellectual ability (*fiqr*) so as to enable teachers to have positive creativity and activities (*amal salih*) as a combination of both *fiqr* and *dhikr* (Abdul Basid, 2012).

The obtained data showed that no teacher was found to display a very high, low, or very low level of *ulul albab* characteristics. About 22% of samples displayed the a high level of *ulul albab* characteristics, the other 78% showed a moderate level.

Based on the level of education they teach at, the obtained data showed a similar display.

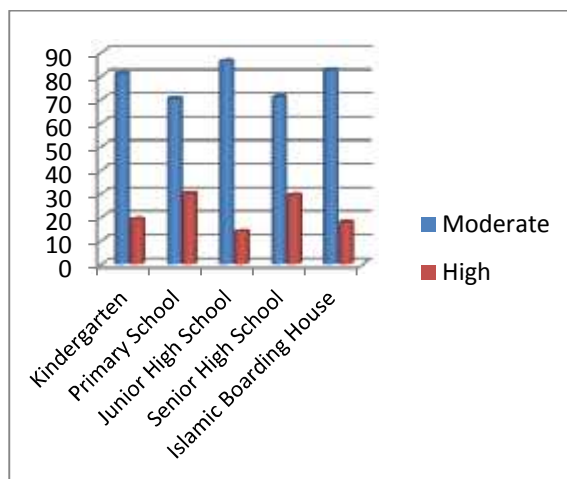


Figure 3: Data based on the level of education.

Based on the level of education, junior high school teachers were the most number to display a moderate level of *ulul albab* characteristics; i.e., as many as 86.15%, and the least number to display moderate level of *ulul albab* characteristics were primary school teachers by 70.15%. In reverse, the most number to display the high level of *ulul albab* characteristics were primary school teachers by 29.85%, and the least number were junior high school teachers by 13.85%. It can be concluded that only a few of teachers have displayed the *ulul albab* characteristics despite the fact that the objective of education in the perspective of Islam is to develop a balanced personality between cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspect (M.Ulum, 2011). *Ulul albab* are also known as wise and knowledgeable people who have two powers in *fiqr* and *dhikr* (Danial, 2015), where *fiqr* reflects intellectual and physical intelligence (Arniyuzie, 2015) and *dhikr* reflects faith, worship, emotion and spirituality.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Teachers with *ulul albab* characteristics are those who able to synergize the power of revelation through their *dhikr* with the power of reason through their *fiqr* so as to establish a monotheistic, creative, dynamic, and innovative as a representation of *amal salih*. In a modern terminology, the term *ulul albab* refers to those who are able to synergize their IQ, EQ, and SQ. The obtained data showed that no teacher was found to display a very high, low, or very low level of *ulul*

*albab* characteristics. 78% samples displayed a moderate level of *ulul albab* characteristics, the other 21% displayed a high level of them.

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