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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONCEPT OF AKINNAH
AL-QALB WITH HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

The development of human capital is a plan which requires a priority as a foundation for a sustainable, virtuous and glorious civilization. Until today copious efforts for self-development have revolved around the physical, mental and emotional aspects. Education of the heart is apparently lacking in the human capital development process. The concept of Akinnah al-Qalb refers to the barrier that exists in developing the human heart. Hence, the exploration into this concept is essential to the development of virtuous human capital. Previous research has focused on the factors that contribute to human capital development; nonetheless, no attempt has been made to explore the aspects which hinder human capital development, with specific reference to the Quran. Hence, this paper aims to explore the Quranic verses that are correlated to the notion of Akinnah al-Qalb, their characteristics and the description of its features based on the opinions of various religious scholars. Qualitative method was virtuously engaged in this study by referring to the analyses made on Quranic verses by mufasssirun that are linked to Akinnah al-Qalb concept. The findings of the present study have been able to explain the concept of Akinnah al-Qalb and describe its connection with the human heart and consequently its significance in human capital growth.

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Keywords: *Akinnah al-qalb*, heart education, human capital development.



1. Introduction

Human capital development is an agenda which aims to empower humans as individuals who become the driving force towards excellence for a country that will eventually sustain the integrity of the civilization. Hence, human capital development is the development of the human beings. Nevertheless, the Western perspective of human capital emphasizes on different aspects. For instance, Becker (1993) describes human capital as a measure of economic values of a set of skills of a worker which is related to knowledge, information, ideas, skills and health conditions of an individual worker in carrying out the tasks and responsibilities that come with the job. In this regard, Becker's views clearly concentrate on human being an important capital. Mahbub (1995) asserts that the development of the human beings is a kind of development that is human-centred. Meanwhile, Laroche, Mérette, and Ruggeri, (1999) have presented a detailed elaboration on the understanding of the human capital which entails combined investment in activities aimed towards enhancing the productivity values of workers in the work force for example in education, wellbeing, on-the-job training and labour turnover. It is a combination of internal abilities, knowledge and skills acquired and developed by an individual throughout his or her lifetime. Education is one of the means through which human capital is developed. Through education, individuals are developed from various aspects, that is, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Thus, the National Education Philosophy as the foundation of Malaysia's vision had clearly detailed:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of the family, society and the nation at large (Malaysia Kementerian Pelajaran..., 2004, p. 2).

2. Problem Statement

As discussed earlier, to produce human capital that is well-balanced, harmonious, knowledgeable, competent with good manners, the authorities concerned who are involved in the education sector in Malaysia have stressed on integration and holistic aspects in curriculum development and also co-curricular activities. However, the lack of emphasis on heart education has led to chaotic personality among individuals because they have not been guided by virtues and this eventually contributes to the neglect of shared universal values. Hence, family institutions, the society and the nation have been beleaguered by a multitude of problems and conflicts. The widespread of crimes and social activities such as entertainment that oversteps the boundaries of virtues has eroded the values of good moral conduct. In Malaysia, it has been reported that erosion of values of good moral conduct and humanity has contributed to serious offences and crimes. The rate of cases of degrading moral crisis among teenagers is worrying. Based on the statistics released by the Royal Malaysian Police, a total of 7,816 cases were reported in 2013 compared to only

3,700 cases in 2012, which recorded an increase of 4,116 cases. Furthermore, the number of serious crimes committed by teenaged school leavers recorded a significant increase of up to 137 percent to 2,011 cases in 2013 compared to only 849 cases recorded in 2012. This category of serious crimes has also been associated with teenagers between the age of 12 and 17. Statistics have also shown an increase by 47 percent nationwide, which include homicide and rape cases (Mansor, 2015). These statistics have also indicated that degrading moral conduct would impede efforts to develop human capital as the main capital in the country's development. According to Al-Sya'bān (2006), the fall of ummah begins with the individual from within, that is, the heart. In this regard, the Quran has mentioned that the diseases of the heart would affect the society as a whole and not only the individual. Nevertheless, the Quran as the main source of reference for Muslims has indeed provided all the solutions to such multitude of problems in the human life. Thus, the Quran should always serve as the ultimate guide which should continuously be studied and referred to in all aspects of life and its tribulations including issues related to human development.

3. Research Questions

As such, the main aim of this paper is to examine:

- 3.1.** What is Akinnah al-Qalb concept from the perspective of Quran?
- 3.2.** How Akinnah al-Qalb concept would help to improve the development of competent human capital with good moral conduct?

4. Purpose of the Study

This paper aims to:

- 4.1.** Discuss the concept of Akinnah al-Qalb based on the related Quranic verses.
- 4.2.** Analyse the concept of Akinnah al-Qalb that would help to improve the development of competent human capital with good moral conduct.

5. Research Methods

The accuracy of the results obtained depends on the suitability of data collection methods; therefore, it is important to explain the methods employed in the analysis of Akinnah al-Qalb concept and human growth, as viewed by Mufassirun. The present research had employed the qualitative method because researchers were interested in the exploration of a certain concept and its interpretation as to obtain a thorough understanding of the concept and not to test a certain hypothesis. All data and information in the present study were collected from sources related to the thoughts of the Mufassirun. Analysis was made based on the following methods as suggested by Bakker (2011): (1) Interpretation; and, (2) Inductive and deductive reasoning. Researchers in the present study interpreted the Quranic verses related to Akinnah al-Qalb concept. Mufassirun views were then analysed according to their distinctive features with emphasis on certain aspects. Inductive and deductive methods were used to interpret the results as to elucidate the vital concept of human development from the aspect of Akinnah al-Qalb which would be fundamental to the formulation of human capital development approach from Islamic perspective.

Researchers in the present study also employed the al-mawḍu'ī thematic analysis in studying and analysing the Quranic verses by thematically compiling verses from the same or different chapters related to Akinnah al-Qalb concept or coverings of the human heart. The al-mawḍu'ī thematic analysis was employed in this study according to the following steps as recommended by Muslim (2007):

1. Selecting the themes of the study after limitation of the study had been identified;
2. Compiling the Quranic verses on the themes to be analysed;
3. Arranging the Quranic verses on the order of revelation periods;
4. Analysing the compiled Quranic verses on the tahliliy reference books in order to clearly explain the causes of or reasons for (i.e., contexts and circumstances or occasions) the revelation of the selected verses, scrutinise the use of words, and establish links between words in a verse or words between the verses.
5. Deducing or deriving main ideas based on the selected themes using the Quranic approach.
6. Treading a path led by the selected themes, guided by all-encompassing ijmalīy interpretation and holistic views not limited by literal meaning.
7. Following the scientific methodology of the research as planned.

6. Findings

This part presents and discusses the findings of the present study that were related to the Akinnah al-Qalb concept as the most important foundation for the development of human capital. Additionally, this section will also stresses on the prominence of discovering Akinnah al-Qalb concept in human capital development.

6.1. Definition of the Concept of Akinnah Al-Qalb

Akinnah Al-Qalb a term in Arabic, that is, *أكنة القلب* which is derived from the *Quran*. Hence, a detailed literal analysis of the term Akinnah al-Qalb crucial in order to make way for the understanding of the actual concept discussed in the present study. The word Akinnah in Arabic is derived from the verb (كَنَّ) from which the following words are formed: (الْكِنَّةُ) , (الْكِنُّ) and (الْكِنَانُ) that carry the meaning of protecting and taking care of something. The word (الْكِنُّ) refers to a building or shelter such as the home, which protects from the hot and cold weather conditions. Its plural forms are (أَكْنَان) and (أَكْنَةٌ). Meanwhile, the word (الْكِنَان) which (أَكْنَةٌ) is also its plural form, refers to (الأَعْطِيَّةُ) that is, the coverings which the human heart possesses (Manzūr, 2009)

The concept of Akinnah al-Qalb in the present study refers to the veils or coverings of the heart according to what the Quran says. The word Al-Qalb in Arabic carries the meaning of the heart. Nevertheless, the translated Malay version for this word can be found in two forms, which are the physical heart (the existing organ in a person's chest where their heartbeat can be felt and can be seen if the chest is operated), and also the non-physical or abstract form of the heart. The physical heart is translated into Malay as jantung whereas the non-physical or abstract form of the heart is translated as hati. The question of this non-physical or abstract is an important part of the human life because it is like the king who controls the

self. It makes decisions whether they are as the person wishes or otherwise. The same thing applies in making decisions whether to do good deeds or otherwise. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said:

Translation:

Narrated by ‘Amir who was quoted saying that he heard from An-Nu’man bin Bashir who had been quoted saying that: ‘I heard the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) saying that: “There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed), the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt, the whole body gets spoils and that is the heart” (al-Bukhārī, 2018).

In addition, one’s worship and deeds will be judged based on intent and intent comes from this non-physical or abstract heart, that is, hati. Thus, the abstract Qalibun is often translated into Malay within this context as hati.

6.2. Views from Scholars of the Study of Tafsir regarding verses of Quran Related to Akinnah al-Qalb concept

The selection of the following verses was made based on the term(s) or word(s) related to the the veils or coverings of the heart in the human heart (الكنة) as shown in Table 1:

Table 01. Quranic Verses related to Akinnah al-Qalb concept

No	Chapter	Verse	Term	Translation
1	Al-An‘ām	25	Akinnah	We have thrown veils on their hearts (so they understand it not)
2	Al-Isrā’	46	Akinnah	And We put coverings over their hearts (and minds)
3	Al-Kahfi	57	Akinnah	We have set veils over their hearts
4	Fuṣṣilat	5	Akinnah	They say: „Our hearts are under veils (concealed)

In the Quran, there are four verses which have explicitly mentioned the concept of Akinnah al-Qalb. The first verse, Al-An’am, Verse 25, is as follows:

“Of them there are some who (pretend to) listen to thee; but We have thrown veils on their hearts (so they understand it not) and deafness in their ears; if they saw every one of the Signs, they will not believe in them; in so much that when they come to thee, they (but) dispute with thee; the Unbelievers say: ‘These are nothing but tales of the ancients.’

Al-Maraghi (2015) commented that the Unbelievers (i.e., the Quraysh people) who had pretended to listen the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) recite *Quranic* verses in his evening prayers had done so with two motives: (1) They wanted to dispute him; and, (2) They were seeking for the location of the Prophet to hurt him. Nevertheless, Allah threw veils to shut their hearing and caused them to sleep; hence, their hearts became covered and they were unable to understand (Al-Māwardī, 2012). Akinnah referred to in this verse is the state of the heart being covered or veiled from understanding the meaning of the *Quranic* verses.

The second verse is Verse 46, Al-Isra’:

And We put coverings over their hearts (and minds) lest they should understand the Qurān and deafness, into their ears: when thou dost commemorate thy Lord and Him alone in the Qurān, they turn on their backs, fleeing (from the Truth).

According to al-Syaukāni (2014) Akinnah or layers of coverings or veils over the hearts of the Unbelievers in this verse refer to the failure of the Unbelievers to understand any command, prohibition, wisdom and meaning of the *Quranic* verses. The natural motivation to listen to the *Quranic* verses and be influenced by the verses was not effective on the hearts of the Unbelievers because they were hindered by arrogance that refused to surrender and admit the truth (of the Quran). In this regard, Qutb (2011) added that the Unbelievers had made slanderous allegations about the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) because of their arrogance and stubbornness. In similar vein, al-Qurṭubi (2013) had interpreted this as follows:

We have set veils over their hearts in return for their unwillingness to believe. It is not that they did not hear nor understand but they could not gain benefit from what they had heard nor could they be rewarded with guidance to the Truth. Such condition which they had been in was the same as those who were deaf and ignorant.

The third related verse is Verse 57, Al-Kahfi:

And who doth more wrong than one who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord but turns away from them, forgetting the (deeds) which his hands have sent forth? Verily, We have set veils over their hearts lest they should understand this, and over their ears, deafness. If thou callest them to guidance, even then will they never accept guidance.

With regard to Akinnah al-Qalb mentioned in this verse, Qutb (2011) further elaborated that those who had ridiculed Allah’s Words and His warnings could not understand and remained ignorant of the Quran thus preventing them from gaining any benefit from the *Quranic* verses. Therefore, Allah placed veils or coverings over their hearts, which hindered them from understanding the Quran. This has been mentioned in the fourth and final verse examined in the present study, that is, Verse 5, Fussilat:

They say: ‘Our hearts are under veils (concealed) from that to which thou dost invite us, and in ours ears in a deafness and between us and thee is a screen: so do thou (what thou wilt); for us, we shall do (what we will!’.

Al-Maraghi (2015) had explained that Akinnah al-Qalb in this verse referred to thick coverings over the hearts of the Unbelievers that prevented them from answering to the call to believe in and worship Allah the Almighty by for asking the traditions of their ancestors. Al-Zuhailiy (2014) further interpreted these coverings as the non-physical heart, which was unable to gain deep understanding of the meaning of Quranic verses, the principles of jurisprudence, the hidden treasures and the information contained in the Quran.

6.3. The Relationship between Akinnah al-Qalb Concept and Human Development

Humans are indeed a unique creation. Islam views mankind as the best creation as mentioned in the Quran by Allah:

“We have indeed created man in the best of moulds”. (al-Tin 95: 4).

In another verse, the status of mankind is further explained:

“We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation”. (Al-Isra 17: 70)

Furthermore, Al-Mu'minun, Verses 12-14 have described the physical elements of the creation of the human being:

“Man we did create from a quintessence (of clay). Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed. Then we made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature so blessed be God, the Best to create.”

There are two main parts in human body, the physical and the spiritual state. The former refers to skin, hair, bones, flesh, blood and others that have forms and are visible. Unlike the former, the latter has no form and is not visible but does exist such as soul, lust and appetite, emotion and intellect (aqal). In his discussion on human development, Abd Wahab (2007) has emphasised that these two parts must be developed because they are both equally important. In the development of the physical aspects, human beings require a sturdy and fit body, conducive and well surrounding, good infrastructure and a decent governance system.

This is also similar to the development of spiritual aspects. Abd Wahab (2007) suggested that in spiritual aspects development, the importance should be placed on the following five elements: (1) intellect; (2) emotion; (3) lust and appetite; (4) soul; and, (5) heart.

Intellect is what makes humans different from animals. Hence, it has a key role in the human life. Historically, it has been evident that intellect has led to great achievements of humans and their

civilizations. It is also the defining factor that separates the civilized people from the uncivilized. Because of its importance, intellect must be nurtured appropriately. Nevertheless, apart from intellect, there are other factors that are intertwined and therefore the success of developing spiritual aspect does not depend only on intellect.

The second element is emotion. Emotion relates to one's capability of maintaining control over one's inner feelings. These feelings can be related to sadness, happiness, stress, anger, anxiety, and satisfaction. If a person learns how to maintain control over his or her feelings, this would eventually help the person to develop good personal qualities.

Lust and appetite are the third type of elements that are connected to spiritual development, both of which must be contained. Humans must learn how to be in control of lust and appetite as they can be tempted to perpetrate actions for the sake of satisfying their physical desires. Nonetheless, lust and appetite are important and necessary. Without these elements, it would be difficult for humans to survive. Therefore, humans must learn to take charge by nurturing their lust and appetite.

The fourth element is the soul. This is the driving force behind the physical parts of the human body. This unseen element is what gives life to the visible (seen) in human.

The fifth and final element is the heart. There are the physical heart and also the spiritual heart. The physical heart refers to the organ in the left chest of the human body. This organ ensures the circulation of blood. Unlike the physical heart which is visible if the chest is operated, the spiritual heart is an element that is not visible seen but it does exist. Expressions of love and affection are reflections of the existence of this spiritual heart. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) in his sayings as narrated by 'Amir from An-Nu'man bin Bashir (No. 49, Vol. 1, Book 2 of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*), it is the one part of the human body that will determine the wellbeing of the whole if it is good and vice versa. Clearly, it is the decision-making element in the human body.

This section has discussed the integration of several elements into the creation of the human being. These integrated but varied elements of the human body also accentuate the human needs towards integrated knowledge, which can be developed in an education system that is holistic. Therefore, the need to develop such holistic education system which places an emphasis on both the hard skills and the soft skills becomes crucial. An education system that relies heavily on hard skills alone would eventually lead to developing humans without the much needed soft skills. This would result in producing members of the society who are materialistic, selfish and insensitive towards the needs of others because their ultimate goal would only be concerned with satisfying the physical needs.

6.4. Exploration of Akinnah al-Qalb Concept in Human Development

The review of related literatures and critical thematic analysis of the views of scholarly discussions regarding the selected Quranic verses and Akinnah al-Qalb concept can be conceptualised by three key words, namely, cover, thick, and layered (Jamaludin, 2016):

a. Cover – denotes an illusionary cover in the human heart that holds their understanding, absorb the meaning, the purpose and the secrets of a good cause. Changes towards betterment are very difficult for those with cover besides an exertion in developing a competent and excellent personality.

b. Thick – denotes difficulties in accepting changes though advises of righteousness or warnings have been given or maybe a result of ill feeling.

c. Layered – denotes samples of depraved attitude such as arrogant or other negative ones. This causes difficulty for good values and morals to be instilled in an individual.

The exploration of Akinnah al-Qalb characteristics in the present study has resulted in a considerable important discovery of the endeavour to produce good people with excellent personal qualities. If negative traits which are presumed to be deep-seated are not dealt with, this would eventually contribute to the deterioration of the quality of the people in an organization, a society and a nation. Thus, Akinnah al-Qalb concept in the present study concentrated on the impeding aspects of the human development according to the selected Quranic verses. Such hindrance to human development had been carefully analysed thematically to unravel these important aspects which fulfilled the present study objective. More importantly, the present study findings have contributed to offering solutions that endeavour the development of virtuous human capital.

7. Conclusion

The Quran is indeed the complete way of life manual for individuals and the society. Hence, the present study explored the concept of Akinnah al-Qalb from Quranic perspective as a foundation for virtuous human capital development. Thus, a detailed analysis of Akinnah al-Qalb concept based on the relevant verses of Quran has shed some light on the efforts towards developing eminent human capital.

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