

## AL-QALB AS THE CORE ELEMENT OF THOUGHT AND ACTION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Muhammad Zickryl Hakim Roslan <sup>1\*</sup>  
Nor Hanani Ismail <sup>2</sup>  
Mohamad Khadafi Hj. Rofie <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> School of Languages, Civilisation & Philosophy, College of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok Kedah

Corresponding Author: norhanani@uum.edu.my

### Article history

**Received date** : 1-3-2023  
**Revised date** : 2-3-2023  
**Accepted date** : 30-5-2023  
**Published date** : 20-6-2023

### To cite this document:

Roslan, M. Z. H., Ismail, N. H., & Rofie, M. K. (2023). Al-Qalb As The Core Element Of Thought And Action: A Literature Review. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 8 (53), 114 - 120.

**Abstract:** *In Islam, al-Qalb (heart) is described as a tool of thinking and storing of knowledge. Terms such as tafaqquh, ta'aqul are connected to the word al-Qalb. In addition, al-Qalb is also associated with a person's intention or determination before taking actions and making decisions. Those who are given wisdom or intelligence also use al-Qalb to think. These descriptions give rise to one question. What do the scholars discuss on the concept of al-Qalb as the core element of thought and action? The paper aims to analyse the highlights of al-Qalb-related works using content analysis. This study showcases the concept of al-Qalb as the core element of thought and action.*

**Keywords:** *Al-Qalb, thought, tafakkur, tadabbur*

**Introduction** - All human beings think. In fact, the process of thinking distinguishes human beings from other beings. The process of thinking is often associated with the use of the senses as a tool to perceive something before thinking. The eye, for example, is one of the tools for detecting things and the observed information is sent to the brain to be processed. The process of thinking is a process that is highly demanded in Islam. Through thinking, man is able to seek and attain truth. In Islam, al-Qalb (heart) is expressed as a tool for thinking and storing knowledge. Even those who are given wisdom or intelligence use al-Qalb to think. Therefore, al-Qalb is a tool for achieving high intelligence from the Islamic point of view. In addition to a place to think, al-Qalb is also associated with action or behaviour, even manners are also associated with al-Qalb. The hadith that describes such a situation is a hadith that has the following:

Meaning; "Verily, in the body, there is "a lump of flesh" which, if sound, the entire body is sound, and if corrupt, the entire body is corrupt. This part of the body is "al-Qalb".

(Sahih al-Bukhari, 52)

This paper examines works that discuss al-Qalb through the Qur'an and hadiths as well as the views of scholars. This paper uses the library method to collect data, which can be accessed and analyzed through computers or from library materials without going through empirical experiments (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). All the works referred to are related to al-Qalb. The keywords used are *al-Qalb*, *al-Fuad*, *al-Sadr*, *al-Nafs*, *al-Lubb* and *al-Nuha*. The next key words are *tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, *ta'aqul*, and intention. Then, content analysis is performed on the works found. The content analysis is performed according to the following discussion; the meaning of al-Qalb, the function of al-Qalb, the relationship of al-Qalb to thought and action.

## Findings

For discussion purposes, the research is summarized into three main themes. The theme of the first discussion is the concept of al-Qalb and its development based on the Qur'an and hadiths. The second theme is the concept of al-Qalb from the perspective of scholars such as al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, Imam al-Ghazali, and Ibn Taymiyyah. Finally, the third theme examines the concept of al-Qalb and education as in Teaching and Learning (TnL) and the development of adolescent's identity.

### First Theme: The Concept of al-Qalb and Its Development Based on the Quran and Hadiths

Jabar Ahmad Abu Eishah (2008) has conducted a study of tafsir maudhu'ie on the concept of al-Qalb in the Qur'an. This thematic study focuses on the concept of al-Qalb (heart) with the association of several terms, namely *al-Qalb*, *al-Fuad*, *al-Sadr*, and *al-Nafs*. These terms are the dimensions of al-Qalb as outlined in the Qur'an. There are points of similarities and relationships between each dimension of al-Qalb on certain functions. However, the position of each of these dimensions can be distinguished. This study outlines the five main functions of al-Qalb, namely performing the process of thinking, establishing faith and confidence in knowledge, generating desires, cultivating emotions, and responding in terms of feelings. Thus, human desires and how they behave are based on al-Qalb, which is influenced by the senses as well as the impulses of human nature, beliefs, emotions, and emotional responses. Although the author has outlined the importance of al-Qalb as a tool of thinking, the implementation of al-Qalb-based thinking is still unclear. Meanwhile, *al-Lubb* and *al-Nuha*, which are also dimensions of al-Qalb, are not discussed in this study.

Zainorah Kadri and Mohd Fauzi Hamat (2012) observed that the idea of critical thinking from the Qur'an's perspective is general and can be further specified. The author classified the elements of critical thinking based on the semantic field of meaning for Qur'anic terms that are synonymous with aspects of critical thinking. As a result, critical thinking based on the Qur'an is in the form of synthesis or integration between the three main domains of critical thinking, namely hearing, sight, and contemplation. For the contemplation domain, the senses involved are al-Qalb and *al-Fuad*, which both mean the heart. In summary, this integrated and comprehensive method produces critical thinking, which is achieved through detailed examination, learning, nature, and self-observation. Besides, the thinker can attain the truth and, at its peak, understand the reality of the divinity of Allah as well as believe in Him.

Raji Mubin Olatoye (2013) stated that the Muslims' understanding of al-Qalb is more focused on matters of faith and behavior. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of intention, which received less attention in many studies. According to the author, intention is the act of bringing the mind into the heart. Thus, it is part of the function of al-Qalb, which is described by the author as 'action of the heart'. With intention, a person is aware of his/her actions and

goals. This study shows significance with education process in Islam because the intention by al-Qalb plays a role in placing any intellectual effort on the path of good thoughts and practices.

Daud Lin Abdullah *et al.* (2014) asserted that al-Qalb is a measure of human quality because there is the ability to understand, learn, be emotional, and feel. According to the author, al-Qalb is a place of piety, faith, and thought, and therefore, human decisions and actions are closely related to thinking skills. Meanwhile, studies by scientists proved that neurons, electrical components, and magnetic components of al-Qalb are more numerous and more powerful compared to the brain. Therefore, it can remember, feel and convey information through electromagnetic signals to the limbs, including the brain. According to this study, al-Qalb is the spiritual element that exist in human physical organ namely the heart.

However, Syaraf al-Qudhah (2013) said that al-Qalb's existence can be physical or an anatomy heart, spiritual heart that have relation to that physical heart, or maybe spiritual only. But there is no doubt that al-Qalb is a decision maker, neither the 'aql (mind) nor the brain in human self. This is why Islam focuses more to al-Qalb as a core element that influence human's attitude and behaviour aspect, without disregarding the important of 'aql in seeking information and knowledge.

Agustiar (2015) explained that the discussion of the concept of al-Qalb in the Qur'an includes the name, importance, position, nature, function, and method of al-Qalb development. According to the author, *al-Fuad*, *al-Lubb*, *al-Nafs* and *al-Sadr* are also connected to the concept of al-Qalb, where each of these entities seems to have similar functions. For example, al-Fuad and al-Qalb both represent emotional place and play a role in formulating information. However, al-Qalb has more specific thought functions such as *ta'aqqul* (thinking), *tadabbur* (appreciating), and *tafahhum* (understanding). According to this study, thinking can be developed by always remembering God.

Also, Elmi Bin Baharuddina and Zainab Binti Ismail (2015) identified seven domains of spiritual intelligence according to the Islamic perspective by integrating the elements al-Qalb and tasawwur Islam (faith, worship and morality). The seven domains are *al-Ruh*, *al-Qalb*, *al-Nafs*, *al-'Aql*, faith, worship, and morality. These domains are relevant to the views of Islamic experts who see the important relationship between knowledge, values, ethics, and behavior. This is because Islamic spiritual intelligence is influenced by psychic elements as well as the reflection of this element on faith, worship, and morals. Based on this study, spiritual intelligence according to the Islamic perspective is also known as religious intelligence. Indicators that have the potential to develop this spiritual intelligence are being faithful and pious, praying and reciting zikir consistently, befriending the Qur'an, performing prayers, fasting during Ramadan, giving alms, participating in mosque activities, praying at night, seeking knowledge, doing charity and perambulating to observe the surroundings. However, this study does not explain the process of thinking skills development based on the concept of al-Qalb.

Meanwhile, Nor Hanani Ismail (2016) described that mufasssirun also refer al-Qalb as intellectual element. Mufasssirun such as Ibnu 'Asyur, al-Alusi, Muhammad Ibnu Juzi, al-Samarqandi, al-Tha'alabi and al-Razi said that al-Qalb perform its thinking process in understanding something. Ibnu 'Asyur and Muhammad Ibnu Juzi pointed that this Islamic view is different from the view of philosopher and scientist that thinking is processed by brain. However, al-Alusi and al-Tha'alabi acknowledged the capacity of mind in the brain that has

connection within al-Qalb. But, al-Qalb has a deeper thinking and long-term memories compared to the brain, as discussed by those mufasssirun. Moreover, al-Qalb that always be purified (tazkiyat al-nafs), do the zikir (remembrance of Allah), praying, worshiping and seeking His pleasing can reach the validity in research activities.

Additionally, Abdul Kamil Jamaludin and Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir (2017) described the concept of '*akinnah al-Qalb*' according to the Qur'an. *Akinnah al-Qalb* is a barrier or layer that prevents al-Qalb from understanding the verses of the Qur'an as well as reducing wisdom and inhibiting moral development. Therefore, the liberation of al-Qalb from these obstacles must be resolved from an early stage to produce a balanced, pious, and moral human being before it can contribute to the family, society, and country.

According to Ahmad A'toa 'Mokhtar *et al.* (2016), al-Qalb is the center of all the powers bestowed on human beings, especially in the aspects of faith and spirituality. This is based on the hadith about *mudhghah* (a lump of flesh), which is al-Qalb in human beings, which gives implications to behavior and reflects the nature of muslim(pious), mukmin(religious), and muhsin(righteous). As outlined by the Qur'an, Al-Qalb can be developed in two ways, motivated namely by faith and mujahadah. More specifically, the characteristic of the development of al-Qalb according to the Qur'an and hadiths is to be pious, believe and obey Allah, as well as preserve human values. The results of this study found that al-Qalb, which can understand and be aware of reality and its spiritual conditions, inevitably requires a mujahadah of zikir and thought to be closer to Allah. However, the author pays less attention to the extent of al-Qalb's ability from the intellectual aspect.

Safria Andy (2019) provided an explanation of the concept of al-Qalb according to the Qur'an and hadiths in formulating one's journey on the true path of religion. The author's discussion focused on the nature of al-Qalb's leadership that guides humankind to the pleasure of Allah S.W.T. This study finds that a wrong understanding of al-Qalb will lead to the misunderstanding of religion and not prioritizing Allah. On the other hand, a cleansed al-Qalb will instil confidence and love to Allah and His creatures.

### **Second Theme: The Concept of Al-Qalb from Scholars' Perspectives**

Ryandi (2014) and Ahmad Tajuddin Arafat (2015) conducted a study on the concept of al-Qalb in support of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (M320H). This concept is known as '*Maqamat al-Qalb*' (levels of the heart), which revolves around the heart (al-Qalb) from a Sufi perspective, with several specialized spiritual levels explained in a structured manner. These levels include *al-Sadr* (chest), *al-Qalb* (heart), *al-Lubb* (pure heart), and *al-Fuad* (conscience). Each level seeks to accept a certain level of knowledge as well as radiate the light of knowledge and reflect on desire. The concept of *Maqamat al-Qalb* sees the role of knowledge in spiritual development from a Sufi perspective. Based on this study, al-Qalb is only a source of knowledge, while the tool of knowledge is *tazkiyah* (a process of self-purification).

Muhammad Hilmi Jalil *et al.* (2016) examined the concept of al-Qalb from Imam al-Ghazali's perspective. According to him, al-Qalb can be divided into two, namely al-Qalb which is sensory (physical) and al-Qalb which is subtle and divine (spiritual) which can comprehend, know and feel. However, both dimension have a connection between each other. Al-Qalb can be strengthened through the watching and listening methods by learning from their sight and sound. Ultimately, the management of al-Qalb aims to preserve al-Qalb from the vile nature

and wrong religious goals in guiding every aspect of life. This study showed that al-Qalb has various functions, namely to think, recite zikir, accept lessons, and keep feelings.

Shodiq *et al.* (2016) developed an instrument to measure the faith of Muslim students in secondary schools. The author reviewed the work of Ibn Taymiyyah, which stated that there are two parts of al-Qalb that drive human faith. The first part is the *tashdiq al-Qalb* (confession of the heart) to the matter of faith, while the second part is the '*amal al-Qalb*' which is the qualities of iman that manifested in human beings, such as love, fear, and gratitude. The compatibility of the elements of faith with al-Qalb connects the cognitive, affective, and intention aspects that aim to build faith in the doctrine of Teaching and Learning (TnL) in Islam. According to the authors, the psychological perspective emphasizes more aspects of beliefs than traits, feelings, and behaviors. This emphasis is similar to the Islamic perspective. In fact, this study found that beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and intentions are closely related. Thus, the good deed of '*amal al-Qalb*' results from true faith.

According to Buya Hamka (in Rokim, 2018), the integration between the mind, al-Qalb, and the body in education are important. This is because the mind is limited to the intellectual environment, while al-Qalb is also a medium for accepting the truth, but in terms of spirituality and metaphysics. Therefore, al-Qalb is instructed to submit to the religious knowledge (Islam) brought by the Prophets (Ahmad Arisatul Cholik, 2015).

### Third Theme: The Concept of al-Qalb with Education

Rokim (2018) stated that, recently, *pondok* (religious cottage) educational institutions had prioritized their education system based on al-Qalb through religious subjects. Nevertheless, the modern education system puts more emphasis on intellect and cognitive-based education, while education in soft-skills or skills focuses more on skills and physical aspects. This results in the current education not having the same view in preserving the purpose of Islam, as well as creating contradictions with each other while the relationship between the mind, al-Qalb, and the body is very significant in shaping a superior human life, which is *al-Insan al-Kamil*.

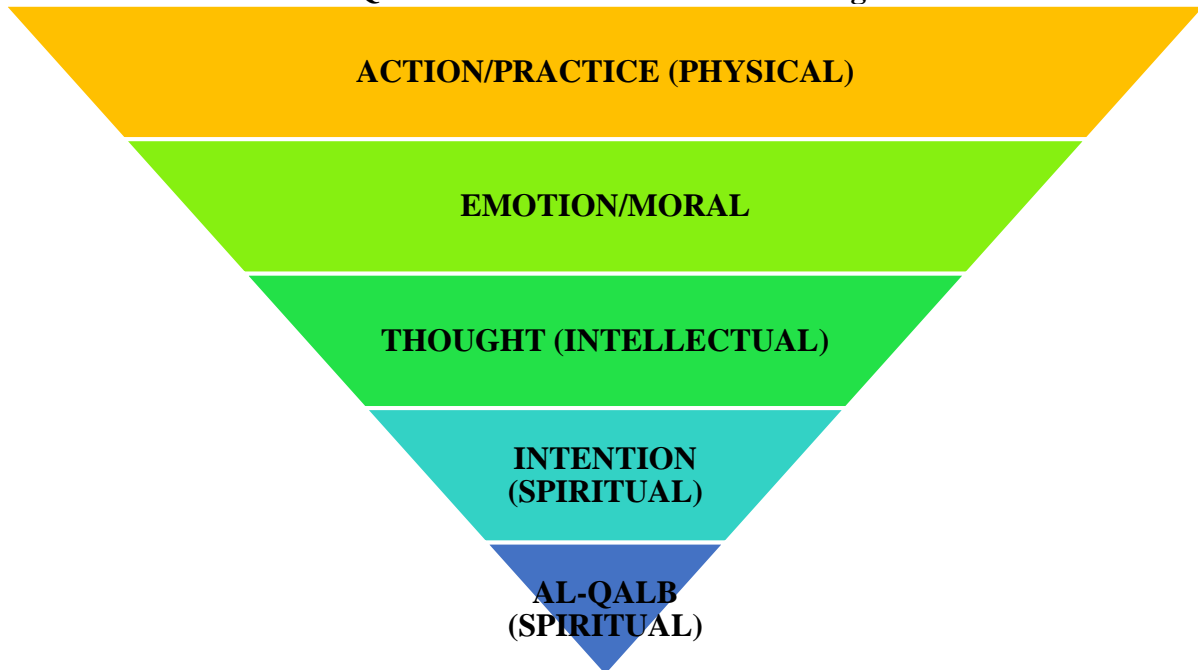
Amri Mohd. Nason (2019) has conducted a study on the approach of Teaching and Learning (TnL) based on the heart based on the sirahs of Islamic scholars, namely the four imams of the sect. This qualitative study examined the four imams' classical works and analyzed them using the content analysis method. The authors found that the selected sirahs of these four imams contain a form of al-Qalb-based TnL approach, which is appropriate in the TnL process. This form of al-Qalb produces five elements of the TnL approach, namely love, immersing the will of the student, the practice of sunnah, purity of soul, and the *barakah* (blessing) of knowledge. These elements can be applied in the phases before, during, and even after TnL. According to the authors, this approach has its strengths especially in terms of epistemology, philosophy, and implementation as a whole.

Also, Nurzatil Ismah binti Azizan and Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff (2017) analyzed the elements of al-Qalb that shape the personality of adolescents. This is because al-Qalb is important as the fundamental element of human spirituality. It also controls other spiritual elements such as *al-Ruh*, *al-Fuad*, *al-Nafs*, *al-'Aql* as well as the entire body. Meanwhile, the superior identity is recorded in the Qur'an through stories of the youths, namely the courage to uphold the truth, stay away from immorality and be patient. Superior teenagers are not easily influenced by negative social situations. They even dare to preach without hesitation. The results of this study found that the personality of adolescents is influenced by the element of al-Qalb, which is linked to true beliefs.



Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the literature related to al-Qalb discusses the relationship of al-Qalb with intention, thought, action, and behavior or morals. This can be explained through the following figure 1:

**Schedule 1: Al-Qalb As The Core Element Of Thought And Action**



### Conclusion

Based on the discussion on the works of al-Qalb, four conclusions can be drawn. First, all the works place al-Qalb as the starting point in every thought or action. Second, the thoughts associated with al-Qalb seek to attain the truth. Third, the concept of al-Qalb affects one's actions. Fourth, al-Qalb celebrates the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical elements that are present in human beings.

### Acknowledgment

Thanks to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) for funding the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme for Research Acculturation of Early Career Researchers (FRGS-RACER) under reference code RACER/1/2019/SSI09/UUM // 2 Title of study: *Pembinaan Modul Al-Qalb Bagi Mencapai Kemahiran Berfikir Aras Tinggi (KBAT) Dalam Kalangan Murid Ulul Albab.*

### References

- Abdul Kamil Jamaludin & Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir. (2017). The relationship between the concept of akinnah al-qalb with human capital development. *INCoH 2017 The Second International Conference on Humanities, The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 493-502. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.09.55>
- Agustiar. (2015). The meaning of al-qalb and disclosure in al-Qur'an. *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, 23(2). 118-126.
- Ahmad A'toa' Mokhtar, Zikmal Fuad, Che Zarrina Sa'ari, & Zulkefli Aini. (2016). Konsep al-qalb dan pembangunannya menurut al-Quran dan hadis. <http://conference.kuis.edu.my/imam2016/eproceeding/1014-imam-2016.pdf>

- Ahmad Arisatul Cholik. (2015). Relasi akal dan hati menurut al-Ghazali. *Jurnal Kalimah* 13(2). 287-310.
- Ahmad Tajuddin Arafat. (2015). Hakikat hati menurut al-Hakim al-Tirmizi. *Jurnal Smart*, 1(1), 83-95.
- Amri Mohd. Nason. (2019). Pendekatan pengajaran dan pembelajaran berasaskan *qalbu*: tumpuan khusus terhadap sirah-sirah terpilih empat imam mazhab. Tesis Phd.
- Daud Lin Abdullah *et al.* (2014). Kepentingan *qalbu* dalam membuat keputusan. *Jurnal penyelidikan dan inovasi* 1(2014), 69-83.
- Elmi Baharuddin & Zainab Ismail. (2015). 7 domains of spiritual intelligence from Islamic perspective. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 211. 568-577.
- Jabar Ahmad Abu Eishah. (2008). *Al-qulub wa nazhairuha fi al-Qur'an al-Karim - dirasah maudhu'iyah*. Tesis Master.
- Muhammad Hilmi Jalil, Zakaria Stapa, & Raudhah Abu Samah. (2016). Konsep hati menurut al-Ghazali. *Jurnal Reflektika*, 11(11). 59-71.
- Nor Hanani Ismail. (2016). Kaedah berfikir dengan hati dan kaitannya dengan kesahan dalam penyelidikan. *6<sup>th</sup> International conference on local knowledge ICLK 2016*. 18-22.
- Nurzatil Ismah Azizan & Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff. (2017). Kepentingan unsur al-qalb dalam membentuk jati diri remaja: analisis terhadap ikon remaja di dalam al-Quran. *Jurnal Pengajian Islam*, 10(1), 1-16.
- Raji Mubin Olatoye. (2013). Towards understanding the islamic concept of the heart and its relationship with man's intention/actions. *1st Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference, AIIC 2013, 24-26 April, Azores, Portugal*. 183-189.
- Rokim. (2018). Sinergi hubungan pendidikan akal, hati dan jasmani dalam perspektif Hamka. *PANCAWAHANA: Jurnal Studi Islam* 13(2), 57-65
- Ryandi. (2014). Konsep hati menurut al-Hakim al-Tirmidzi. *Jurnal Kalimah*, 12(1). 109-122.
- Safria Andy. (2019). Konsep hati dalam wacana al-Quran dan al-Hadis.
- Sapsford, R., & Jupp, V. (2006). *Data Collection and Analysis* (2 ed.) London: SAGE Publications.
- Shodiq, Zamroni, & Kumaidi. (2016). Developing an instrument for measuring the faith of the students of islamic senior high school. *Research and Evaluation in Education*, 2(2), 181-193.
- Syaraf Mahmud al-Qudhah. (2015). *Al-Hadyu al-Nabawi fi al-raqaiq*. Hal. 12. Amman: Dar al-Furqan.
- Zainorah Kadri & Mohd Fauzi Hamat. (2012). Aspek pendengaran, penglihatan dan perenungan. *Afkar* 13(2012): 51-96.