

Bridging the Gap in Value-Based Education: A Needs Analysis for the Ulul Albab Junior Module

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0193>

Received: 24 March 2025; Accepted: 31 March 2025; Published: 03 May 2025

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the need for the development of the Ulul Albab Junior Module, focusing on primary school pupils. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews involving 30 Islamic Education teachers in the Muallim district. Findings revealed a consensus among participants on the significance and necessity of developing this module. Key justifications identified include the need to strengthen the appreciation of Quranic values among pupils, support the implementation of co-curricular activities emphasizing character development, and provide systematic teaching materials suitable for pupils' developmental stages. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the module be developed based on the principles of QEI (Quranic, Encyclopedic, Ijtihadic), practical in nature, learner-centered, and applicable in various teaching and learning contexts.

Keywords: Ulul Albab, Value-Based Education, Quranic, Encyclopedic, Ijtihadic

INTRODUCTION

Ulul Albab education is an integrative approach that combines knowledge, ethics, and values rooted in the teachings of the Quran. This approach has been implemented in several secondary and higher education institutions across Malaysia with the aim of producing holistic, intellectually balanced, and morally upright individuals (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2016). Empirical studies have demonstrated that the Ulul Albab approach, particularly through the integration of Quranic memorization, character education, and academic excellence, contributes significantly to students' cognitive development and moral reasoning (Othman & Suhid, 2010). However, despite these documented successes at higher levels of education, the development of a structured and age-appropriate Ulul Albab module for primary education remains underexplored and inadequately addressed in current educational practice.

Early childhood and primary education are universally recognized as critical periods for character formation and the development of religious understanding (Saracho, 2023). Research also indicates that value-based education introduced at an early age has a lasting impact on pupils' behavior, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making (Johnstone et al., 2022). In light of this, the present study was conducted to identify the specific needs for developing an Ulul Albab Junior Module that corresponds with the cognitive, emotional, and social development of primary school pupils. The proposed module is anticipated to serve as a practical guide for teachers in delivering structured, systematic, and engaging value-based learning experiences. Moreover, it aims to foster the early internalization of noble values and critical thinking skills through activities aligned with the principles of Quranic, Encyclopedic, and Ijtihadic (QEI) learning.

Research Problem

Although the Ulul Albab approach has been widely adopted at the secondary and higher education levels, its implementation at the primary level remains limited. The QEI elements (Quranic, Encyclopedic, Ijtihadic), which are central to Ulul Albab education, have yet to be systematically adapted to the needs of primary school pupils. Furthermore, structured teaching materials appropriate to the cognitive development of young learners are not yet available in the form of a dedicated module.

The current education system also emphasizes co-curricular activities as part of pupils' learning experiences. Teachers often face constraints in generating ideas and resources for club or association activities, such as Islamic Education Clubs, Peer Guidance Programs, and others. Therefore, the need for a module that supports co-curricular enrichment based on values and Ulul Albab principles is increasingly urgent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Ulul Albab refers to individuals who possess intellectual depth, uphold moral virtues, and are deeply reflective—traits emphasized repeatedly in the Quran. The term itself symbolizes the ideal integration of rational intellect ('aql) and divine revelation (wahyu), forming the foundation of a balanced and holistic human development model. This concept has been gradually embedded into the Malaysian education system, particularly through religious boarding schools and higher education institutions that aim to produce graduates who are not only academically excellent but also spiritually grounded and ethically responsible (Hashim, R., & Embong, A. M. (2017).

The early implementation of the Ulul Albab approach at the secondary school level, such as in MRSM Ulul Albab and Sekolah Menengah Imtiaz, has shown promising outcomes. These institutions integrate three main pillars—Quran memorization (tahfiz), academic excellence, and co-curricular character development—into a comprehensive educational model. Empirical studies suggest that students from these schools demonstrate stronger ethical judgment, higher motivation, and enhanced academic achievement compared to their peers in conventional schools (Samsudin, A. R., & Mohd Noor, N. (2020). Moreover, this integrative approach aligns closely with contemporary frameworks of holistic education that emphasize the development of intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social domains simultaneously (Othman & Suhid, 2010).

At the higher education level, the Ulul Albab Center at Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI) has played a pivotal role in institutionalizing this concept within university programs and research. The center has been instrumental in producing training modules, conducting value-based pedagogical workshops, and generating empirical research that supports the integration of Quranic principles in higher education curricula. Findings from various academic projects have shown that students exposed to Ulul Albab-based learning experiences demonstrate improved reflective thinking skills, enhanced critical reasoning, and deeper internalization of moral values (Ulul Albab Center, 2023). The center continues to serve as a national reference point for educators and policymakers interested in implementing integrative knowledge systems.

Despite the documented successes of the Ulul Albab model at the secondary and tertiary levels, there remains a significant gap in its application at the primary school level. Most existing modules and pedagogical practices are designed for adolescent or adult learners, with minimal consideration of the cognitive and emotional developmental needs of younger pupils. Current literature lacks sufficient empirical studies that focus on designing and evaluating Ulul Albab modules tailored specifically for primary education. This gap calls for further research and systematic module development that adapts QEI (Quranic, Encyclopedic, Ijtihadic) principles to suit early childhood pedagogy and foster value-based education from an early age. Developing such modules is not only timely but also crucial in laying a strong moral and intellectual foundation for children's future growth.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a semi-structured interview research design. A total of 30 Islamic Education teachers in the Muallim district were purposefully selected as study participants. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed thematically to identify participants' views and expectations regarding the development of the Ulul Albab Junior Module.

FINDINGS

The interview findings indicate that all participants agreed on the need to develop the Ulul Albab Junior Module. The main reasons include: (1) the need for a module appropriate to the developmental stage of young learners, (2) lack of value-based Quranic teaching materials, (3) high demand for co-curricular enrichment

content, (4) the importance of early integration of knowledge and values, and (5) the need for engaging and impactful pedagogical approaches.

In addition, participants expressed their expectations for the module to be: (1) practical for primary school pupils, (2) activity-based, (3) teacher-friendly, (4) aligned with the current curriculum, and (5) capable of enhancing motivation and Islamic value appreciation among pupils. The following Table 1 illustrates the conceptual model proposed for the development of the Ulul Albab Junior Module. It is organized into three concentric layers representing core philosophy, pedagogical features, and implementation contexts. This framework aims to provide an integrative and structured approach to designing the module, aligning Islamic values with modern educational practices.

Table I Framework for Ulul Albab Junior Module Developement

Framework Layer	Component	Description
Core Philosophy	Quranic	Value-based learning grounded in the teachings of the Quran.
	Encyclopedic	Broad-based knowledge integration across disciplines.
	Ijtihadic	Encouragement of reasoning, creativity, and independent thinking.
Pedagogical Features	Practical	Activities and content easily applicable by teachers in real classroom settings.
	Activity-Based	Learner-centered methods involving interaction and experiential learning.
	Value-Integrated	Embedded moral, spiritual, and ethical values in content and activities.
Implementation Context	Classroom Learning	Formal subject integration during instructional time.
	Club and Association Activities	Structured Islamic and character-building co-curricular programs.
	Broader Co-Curricular Integration	School-wide activities and thematic projects aligned with Ulul Albab values.

This concentric framework emphasizes the importance of harmonizing content philosophy with delivery strategies and practical school applications. It serves as a holistic model to guide module developers, educators, and curriculum planners in designing impactful and value-centric teaching resources for primary education.

Implications

This study contributes significantly to value-based education development at the primary level through the Ulul Albab approach. The primary implication is the need to introduce integrative education from the early schooling years to build pupils' character and thinking abilities more effectively. The Ulul Albab Junior Module has the potential to become an effective teaching aid that can be widely used in the education system. It not only supports curriculum implementation but also enriches co-curricular activities with meaningful and value-based content.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for a structured and developmentally appropriate Ulul Albab Junior Module that integrates Quranic values, holistic pedagogy, and learner-centered practices for primary education. By addressing gaps in existing teaching resources and supporting character development

through co-curricular integration, this module has the potential to enhance Islamic value internalization and critical thinking skills among young learners. The study reinforces the importance of early intervention in value-based education and calls for collaborative efforts among educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to ensure that the principles of QEI—Quranic, Encyclopedic, and Ijtihadic—are effectively embedded in the foundational stages of schooling. This initiative not only aligns with national education aspirations but also contributes meaningfully to the development of a morally grounded and intellectually empowered generation.

Based on the study findings, several recommendations are proposed: (1) module development should involve relevant experts; (2) employ activity-based and contextual approaches; (3) provide teacher training for effective implementation; (4) conduct pilot studies; and (5) undertake further research to evaluate the module's impact on pupils' development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was conducted with the support of the Komuniti@UniMADANI Research Grant (2024-0078-PP-01), Malaysia Ministry of Finance. Sincere appreciation is extended to the Ulul Albab Center, study participants, and all parties involved for their cooperation and support.

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