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Education on the Qur'anic Concept of Ulama to Enhance Community Islamic Literacy

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Abstract: This Community Partnership Program (PKM) aims to enhance public understanding and awareness of the concept of *ulama* from the Qur'anic perspective and to strengthen its implementation in the development of Islamic education and character education. The program was carried out using a participatory educational approach that included lectures, interactive discussions, the study of Qur'anic verses concerning *ulama*, and mentoring sessions to help participants identify the values of leadership, integrity, and scholarly responsibility that can be applied in daily life and educational practices. The program materials focused on the concept of *ulama* based on Qur'an Surah Ash-Shu'ara (26):197 and Surah Fatir (35):28, along with relevant hadiths, and their implications for the development of educators, learners, and the wider community. The results of the program indicate an improvement in participants' understanding of the characteristics of *ulama* as described in the Qur'an, namely individuals who possess sound knowledge, piety, integrity, and a strong commitment to conveying the truth responsibly. Furthermore, participants gained greater awareness of the importance of

Abstrak: Program Kemitraan Masyarakat (PKM) ini bertujuan meningkatkan pemahaman dan kesadaran masyarakat mengenai konsep ulama dalam perspektif Al-Qur'an serta menguatkan implementasinya dalam pengembangan pendidikan Islam dan pendidikan karakter. Kegiatan dilaksanakan melalui pendekatan edukatif-partisipatif yang meliputi penyampaian materi, diskusi interaktif, studi ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tentang ulama, serta pendampingan peserta dalam mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai kepemimpinan, integritas, dan tanggung jawab keilmuan yang dapat diterapkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari maupun praktik pendidikan. Materi kegiatan difokuskan pada pemaknaan konsep ulama berdasarkan QS. Asy-Syu'ara' (26):197 dan QS. Fatir (35):28 beserta hadis-hadis yang relevan, serta implikasinya terhadap pembentukan karakter pendidik, peserta didik, dan masyarakat. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pemahaman peserta mengenai karakteristik ulama menurut Al-Qur'an sebagai individu yang berilmu, bertakwa, berintegritas, dan bertanggung jawab dalam menyampaikan kebenaran. Selain itu, peserta memperoleh

integrating Qur'anic values into educational practices through character development, ethical leadership, and lifelong learning. This program contributes to strengthening Islamic literacy within the community while encouraging the implementation of the values exemplified by *ulama* in the development of Islamic education that emphasizes character formation and moral development in both educational institutions and society.

Keywords: Qur'an; Islamic Education; Character Education.

wawasan mengenai pentingnya mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Qur'ani dalam proses pendidikan melalui penguatan karakter, kepemimpinan moral, dan budaya belajar sepanjang hayat. Program ini memberikan kontribusi dalam memperkuat literasi keislaman masyarakat sekaligus mendorong penerapan nilai-nilai kepemimpinan ulama dalam pengembangan pendidikan Islam yang berorientasi pada pembentukan karakter dan penguatan moral di lingkungan pendidikan maupun masyarakat.

Kata kunci: Ulama; Al-Qur'an; Pendidikan Islam; Pendidikan Karakter.

A. Introduction

Education occupies a strategic position in Islamic civilization because it functions as the primary instrument for transmitting knowledge, developing moral character, and preparing individuals to fulfill their responsibilities as servants and vicegerents of Allah. The success of Islamic education depends not only on curriculum design and instructional methods but also on the quality of educators who serve as role models in nurturing learners' intellectual, spiritual, and ethical development. Within the Islamic tradition, the figure who most comprehensively embodies these educational responsibilities is the *ulama*. Consequently, understanding the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* is essential for strengthening the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of contemporary Islamic education.

The Qur'an positions knowledge (*'ilm*) as one of the highest virtues granted to humankind. Numerous verses emphasize the superiority of those who possess knowledge, encourage continuous learning, and distinguish knowledgeable individuals from those who remain ignorant. However, the Qur'an consistently teaches that

knowledge is valuable only when it leads to greater faith, humility, righteous action, and consciousness of Allah. Therefore, Islamic education does not merely aim to produce intellectually competent individuals but also seeks to cultivate morally responsible and spiritually mature personalities whose knowledge benefits society.

Among the Qur'anic verses discussing the concept of *ulama*, Qur'an 26:197 and Qur'an 35:28 occupy a central position. The first verse describes the scholars of the Children of Israel as witnesses who recognized the truth of the Qur'an through their authentic knowledge of previous revelations. The second verse presents one of the most fundamental definitions of *ulama* by declaring that those who truly fear Allah (*khashyah*) are the scholars. These two verses collectively illustrate that authentic scholarship is inseparable from spiritual consciousness, moral integrity, and responsibility for conveying divine guidance. Accordingly, the Qur'an portrays *ulama* not merely as individuals possessing extensive knowledge but as educators whose knowledge transforms both themselves and the communities they serve.

Historically, Muslim civilization has always regarded *ulama* as the principal agents of education. Classical scholars established educational institutions, developed curricula, transmitted religious sciences, produced scholarly literature, and mentored generations of learners. Their educational roles extended beyond formal instruction to include character formation, social leadership, conflict resolution, and community empowerment. Institutions such as mosques, madrasahs, pesantren, and centers of learning flourished because of the intellectual and moral leadership provided by the *ulama*. This historical experience demonstrates that educational progress within Muslim societies has consistently been linked to the quality and integrity of religious scholars.

Contemporary educational realities, however, present new challenges regarding the understanding of *ulama*. The rapid expansion of digital media has transformed the way religious knowledge is produced, disseminated, and consumed. Individuals without adequate scholarly qualifications frequently present themselves as religious authorities through social media platforms, creating confusion regarding the criteria of authentic

scholarship. At the same time, educational institutions often emphasize academic achievement and technical competence while paying insufficient attention to the cultivation of spiritual integrity, ethical leadership, and character formation. These conditions raise important questions concerning the Qur'anic characteristics of genuine *ulama* and their relevance for contemporary Islamic education.

From the perspective of Islamic education, the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* provides valuable guidance for developing competent educators. The characteristics repeatedly emphasized by the Qur'an—including knowledge, *hashyah*, sincerity, wisdom, responsibility, honesty, and exemplary conduct—correspond closely with the competencies expected of professional educators. Teachers are expected not only to master subject knowledge but also to inspire learners through ethical behavior, compassion, and lifelong commitment to learning. Consequently, the Qur'anic understanding of *ulama* offers a conceptual framework for strengthening teacher professionalism while preserving the moral and spiritual dimensions of education.

Previous studies concerning *ulama* have generally focused on theological authority, historical development, jurisprudential leadership, or sociopolitical influence. Other studies examine the concept of *ulama* from the perspectives of Islamic thought, sectarian traditions, or religious institutions. Although these contributions are valuable, relatively few studies explicitly investigate how the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* can serve as a pedagogical foundation for Islamic education. Existing research rarely discusses the educational competencies, instructional responsibilities, and character-building roles of *ulama* within contemporary learning environments.

This condition indicates a significant research gap. While numerous studies acknowledge the importance of *ulama* within Islamic civilization, limited attention has been devoted to translating Qur'anic descriptions of *ulama* into educational principles applicable to teacher development, curriculum implementation, and character education. There remains a need for integrative studies connecting thematic Qur'anic interpretation with educational theory so that the concept of *ulama* can contribute directly to

improving the quality of Islamic education.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* through the method of thematic Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr mawdū'ī*) by examining Qur'an 26:197, Qur'an 35:28, related derivative verses, and relevant prophetic traditions. More importantly, the study investigates how these Qur'anic principles can contribute to the development of Islamic education. The novelty of this research lies in integrating Qur'anic interpretation with contemporary educational perspectives by positioning *ulama* not merely as religious authorities but as professional educators, moral leaders, lifelong learners, and agents of character formation. Through this integrative perspective, the study seeks to enrich the theoretical foundations of Islamic education while offering practical guidance for strengthening teacher professionalism, value-based learning, and the holistic development of learners in contemporary educational contexts.

B. Method

This Community Partnership Program (PKM) employed a participatory educational approach designed to enhance participants' understanding of the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* and its relevance to the development of Islamic education and character formation. The target participants included teachers, Islamic education practitioners, university students, mosque administrators, and community members interested in strengthening Qur'anic values in educational and social settings.

The implementation of the program consisted of four interconnected stages. The first stage was preparation, which involved identifying the needs of the partner institution, coordinating with stakeholders, developing educational materials, preparing learning media, and designing evaluation instruments in the form of pre-tests and post-tests. The instructional materials were developed based on the thematic interpretation (*tafsīr mawdū'ī*) of Qur'anic verses concerning *ulama*, particularly Qur'an 26:197 and Qur'an 35:28, supported by relevant authentic prophetic traditions and contemporary literature on Islamic education and character development.

The second stage was program implementation, which consisted of interactive lectures, Qur'anic study sessions, group discussions, case studies, and question-and-answer activities. Participants were introduced to the Qur'anic characteristics of *ulama* as individuals who possess authentic knowledge, piety, moral integrity, and responsibility in conveying the truth. The sessions also emphasized the educational values of lifelong learning, ethical leadership, professional responsibility, and character development as fundamental principles for educators and members of the community.

The third stage involved mentoring, during which participants received guidance in identifying and applying the educational values of the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* within their respective educational and community environments. Mentoring activities included collaborative discussions, practical reflections, and the preparation of simple action plans aimed at integrating Qur'anic values into teaching practices, community education, and character-building activities.

The final stage was evaluation and reflection. Evaluation was conducted using pre-tests and post-tests to assess participants' improvement in knowledge and understanding, observations of participant engagement throughout the activities, and satisfaction questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The evaluation results were analyzed descriptively to measure the achievement of program objectives and to formulate recommendations for future community empowerment initiatives.

Through this implementation method, the Community Partnership Program is expected to strengthen participants' understanding of the Qur'anic concept of *ulama*, enhance Islamic literacy and character education, and encourage the application of Qur'anic values in educational practices. Ultimately, the program contributes to the development of value-based Islamic education that promotes intellectual competence, ethical leadership, spiritual maturity, and lifelong learning within educational institutions and the wider community.

C. Results and Discussion

The Qur'anic Concept of Ulama as the Foundation of Islamic Educational Leadership

The thematic interpretation of the Qur'anic concept of ulama reveals that the Qur'an presents scholars not merely as individuals possessing extensive religious knowledge but as servants of Allah whose knowledge transforms their faith, character, and social responsibility. This comprehensive understanding differs significantly from contemporary perceptions that frequently identify ulama solely through academic qualifications, institutional authority, or social recognition. According to the Qur'an, authentic scholarship is measured primarily by the integration of knowledge, spirituality, and righteous action. Such an understanding provides a strong philosophical foundation for Islamic education because educators are expected to embody knowledge that inspires moral transformation rather than merely transmitting information.

One of the principal Qur'anic foundations for understanding ulama appears in Qur'an 26:197, which describes the scholars among the Children of Israel as individuals who recognized the truth of Prophet Muhammad because of their deep knowledge of previous revelations. The verse demonstrates that genuine scholarship enables individuals to identify truth objectively despite cultural, ethnic, or historical differences. The Qur'an therefore portrays authentic scholars as people whose commitment to truth transcends personal interests and sectarian affiliations. Their knowledge functions as evidence (shahādah) supporting divine revelation rather than serving ideological or political purposes.

The educational significance of this verse extends beyond its historical context. The scholars of the Children of Israel became credible witnesses because their intellectual integrity allowed them to evaluate evidence objectively. This characteristic reflects one of the most essential competencies expected from educators: the commitment to truth, critical inquiry, and intellectual honesty. Within Islamic

educational philosophy, teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of guiding learners toward knowledge grounded in evidence, ethical reflection, and spiritual awareness. Consequently, the Qur'anic description of these scholars establishes an educational model in which knowledge is inseparable from honesty and responsibility.

The thematic analysis further indicates that ulama possess not only epistemological authority but also moral accountability. Knowledge in the Qur'an always carries ethical consequences. Individuals who recognize truth are expected to communicate it, defend it, and practice it consistently. Remaining silent despite possessing authentic knowledge represents a neglect of scholarly responsibility. This educational principle emphasizes that educators should not merely accumulate information but also demonstrate integrity through responsible teaching, ethical leadership, and service to society. Such responsibilities distinguish authentic scholarship from superficial intellectualism.

The Qur'an also implies that authentic scholarship requires lifelong learning. The scholars mentioned in Qur'an 26:197 attained their understanding through continuous engagement with previous scriptures, reflection upon divine guidance, and openness to new revelation. This process illustrates that learning is dynamic rather than static. Contemporary educators similarly require continuous professional development to respond effectively to changing educational, technological, and social conditions. Lifelong learning therefore represents one of the enduring educational values derived from the Qur'anic concept of ulama.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between scholarship and educational leadership. Historically, Muslim scholars functioned not only as teachers but also as curriculum developers, community leaders, judges, counselors, and social reformers. Their educational influence extended beyond classrooms into broader processes of moral and intellectual transformation. This historical experience reflects the Qur'anic expectation that knowledge should contribute positively to society. Consequently, the educational mission of ulama includes developing learners who

combine intellectual competence with ethical commitment and social responsibility.

From the perspective of Islamic education, these findings provide an important conceptual framework for strengthening teacher professionalism. Professional educators should possess comprehensive competencies integrating mastery of subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise, moral integrity, emotional maturity, and spiritual commitment. Such competencies correspond closely with the Qur'anic characteristics of ulama, who combine authentic knowledge with exemplary conduct. Therefore, teacher education programs should not limit professional preparation to technical instructional skills but also cultivate ethical leadership, reflective practice, and continuous spiritual development.

The findings also highlight the importance of integrating Qur'anic values into character education. Students frequently evaluate educational messages through the behavior of their teachers rather than through verbal instruction alone. Educators who demonstrate honesty, humility, responsibility, compassion, and commitment to truth provide authentic examples of Qur'anic scholarship. Such modeling strengthens value internalization because learners observe the practical application of religious principles within everyday educational interactions.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic concept of ulama supports the implementation of learner-centered education. Genuine scholars encourage inquiry, reflection, dialogue, and evidence-based reasoning rather than blind imitation. The willingness of the scholars of the Children of Israel to recognize truth despite historical and social pressures illustrates intellectual openness and critical thinking. These qualities remain highly relevant for contemporary Islamic education, which seeks to develop learners capable of independent reasoning while remaining firmly grounded in Islamic ethical principles.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Qur'anic concept of ulama provides a comprehensive educational model integrating knowledge, integrity, lifelong learning, and leadership. Rather than functioning solely as religious authorities, ulama represent

educational figures whose scholarship contributes to intellectual growth, moral excellence, and social transformation. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions should utilize this Qur'anic model in preparing educators who are academically competent, ethically responsible, spiritually grounded, and capable of guiding learners toward holistic personal development.

The Characteristics of *Ulama* in the Qur'an and Their Contribution to Teacher Professionalism in Islamic Education

The thematic interpretation of Qur'an 35:28 reveals one of the most comprehensive definitions of *ulama* presented in the Qur'an. The verse states that "only those of His servants who possess knowledge truly fear Allah" (*innamā yakhshā Allāha min 'ibādihi al-'ulamā'*), indicating a direct relationship between authentic knowledge and *khashyah* (reverential fear of Allah). The linguistic structure of the verse employs the restrictive particle *innamā*, emphasizing that genuine *khashyah* is inseparable from true knowledge. Consequently, the Qur'an defines *ulama* not merely by the quantity of information they possess but by the transformative effect of knowledge upon their character, spirituality, and behavior.

Classical Qur'anic commentators consistently interpret this verse as emphasizing the moral consequences of knowledge. Ibn Kathir explains that those who possess the deepest understanding of Allah's greatness inevitably develop profound reverence and obedience toward Him. Al-Razi similarly argues that *khashyah* represents the natural outcome of authentic knowledge because individuals who truly understand Allah's attributes become increasingly aware of His majesty and justice. Al-Zamakhshari further emphasizes that greater knowledge produces greater humility rather than intellectual arrogance. These interpretations collectively demonstrate that Islamic scholarship is evaluated primarily through its ethical and spiritual impact rather than through academic recognition alone.

An important finding emerging from the thematic analysis is that the Qur'an

differentiates between knowledge as information and knowledge as transformation. Contemporary educational systems frequently measure educational success through examination results, academic degrees, publication records, or professional certifications. While these achievements remain important, the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* introduces an additional criterion: authentic knowledge should transform attitudes, strengthen faith, cultivate humility, and inspire righteous action. Therefore, educational success cannot be evaluated exclusively through cognitive achievement but should also consider moral integrity, emotional maturity, and spiritual development.

Within the framework of Islamic education, this understanding has profound implications for teacher professionalism. Professional educators are expected to demonstrate four interconnected competencies: intellectual competence, pedagogical competence, personal integrity, and social responsibility. The Qur'anic description of *ulama* naturally encompasses these dimensions. Intellectual competence enables educators to master subject knowledge; pedagogical competence allows them to facilitate meaningful learning; personal integrity ensures consistency between knowledge and behavior; and social responsibility encourages educators to contribute positively to society. Consequently, the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* offers a comprehensive model for developing professional teachers capable of integrating academic excellence with ethical leadership.

The concept of *khashyah* itself possesses important educational significance. Unlike ordinary fear (*khawf*), *khashyah* refers to reverence arising from deep understanding and conscious awareness of Allah's greatness. Such reverence encourages responsibility rather than anxiety, humility rather than insecurity, and ethical commitment rather than passive submission. Educationally, this distinction suggests that learners should develop moral responsibility through understanding rather than coercion. Teachers therefore need to cultivate learning environments where students internalize Islamic values because they appreciate their meaning, not merely because they fear punishment.

The Qur'an also associates *hashyah* with contemplation of Allah's creation. The preceding verses describe mountains, plants, animals, and the diversity of creation before concluding that those who truly understand these signs are the *ulama*. This thematic relationship indicates that scientific observation, critical inquiry, and reflection upon nature constitute legitimate pathways toward deeper faith. Therefore, Islamic education should avoid separating religious knowledge from scientific learning. Instead, both domains should be integrated to help students recognize the harmony between revelation and the natural world. Such integration encourages interdisciplinary learning while strengthening spiritual awareness through scientific exploration.

Another educational implication concerns the cultivation of humility among educators. Contemporary educational environments sometimes encourage excessive competition for academic prestige, institutional recognition, or professional status. The Qur'anic concept of *ulama* challenges this tendency by emphasizing humility as the inevitable consequence of genuine knowledge. Teachers who recognize the limitless nature of knowledge become lifelong learners who remain open to continuous improvement, constructive criticism, and collaborative learning. Such humility strengthens professional development while preventing intellectual arrogance that may hinder educational effectiveness.

The findings further demonstrate that *ulama* function as moral role models whose influence extends beyond classroom instruction. Students frequently imitate the attitudes, communication styles, and ethical behavior demonstrated by their teachers. Consequently, educators who embody sincerity, patience, honesty, compassion, and justice provide authentic educational experiences through daily interaction. This process of value transmission through exemplary conduct represents one of the most effective strategies for Islamic character education because moral values become visible through consistent practice rather than abstract explanation.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic characteristics of *ulama* support the implementation of value-based education in contemporary Islamic schools. Curriculum development

should integrate intellectual excellence with ethical formation, reflective learning, and spiritual growth. Classroom activities encouraging reflection, dialogue, inquiry, community service, and collaborative problem-solving provide opportunities for students to experience knowledge as a means of personal transformation. Such educational practices align closely with the Qur'anic understanding that authentic knowledge produces humility, responsibility, and devotion to Allah.

Overall, the thematic interpretation of Qur'an 35:28 demonstrates that the Qur'an defines *ulama* through the inseparable relationship between knowledge and *khashyah*. This relationship offers a comprehensive pedagogical framework for strengthening teacher professionalism within Islamic education. Educators who combine intellectual mastery with spiritual maturity, ethical integrity, lifelong learning, and compassionate leadership become living examples of Qur'anic scholarship. Accordingly, the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* should serve as one of the fundamental references for developing professional educators capable of nurturing intellectually competent, morally responsible, and spiritually grounded learners in contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

The Integration of Knowledge, Morality, and Educational Leadership in the Qur'anic Concept of *Ulama*

The thematic interpretation of the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* demonstrates that Islamic scholarship is built upon the inseparable relationship between knowledge (*'ilm*), morality (*akhlāq*), and educational leadership. Unlike contemporary educational paradigms that often separate intellectual achievement from ethical development, the Qur'an consistently presents knowledge as a transformative force that should cultivate humility, responsibility, justice, and service to humanity. Therefore, the identity of *ulama* cannot be understood solely through academic expertise but must also include exemplary moral conduct and commitment to educating society. This integrative understanding provides an important philosophical foundation for contemporary Islamic

education, where educators are expected to become agents of intellectual and moral transformation.

One of the central characteristics of Qur'anic scholarship is the harmony between knowledge and action. Throughout the Qur'an, individuals possessing knowledge are repeatedly encouraged to implement what they know in their personal and social lives. Knowledge that is not translated into righteous action loses its educational function because it fails to transform character and behavior. Classical Muslim scholars frequently emphasized that authentic knowledge (*al-'ilm al-nāfi'*) is beneficial knowledge that produces obedience to Allah, compassion toward others, and continuous self-improvement. Consequently, the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* rejects the separation between intellectual excellence and moral integrity.

This relationship has significant implications for Islamic educational leadership. Teachers, lecturers, school principals, and educational leaders are entrusted with responsibilities extending beyond instructional activities. They are expected to become role models whose attitudes, communication styles, and daily behavior demonstrate the values they teach. Educational leadership in Islam therefore emphasizes influence through exemplary conduct rather than institutional authority alone. Learners are more likely to internalize ethical values when they consistently observe educators practicing honesty, humility, fairness, patience, sincerity, and responsibility within educational environments.

Another important finding concerns the concept of *amanah* (trustworthiness) embedded within the educational responsibilities of *ulama*. The Qur'an consistently associates knowledge with accountability before Allah. Every piece of knowledge acquired by scholars carries the obligation to preserve its authenticity, communicate it responsibly, and apply it for the benefit of society. This educational principle remains highly relevant in contemporary contexts where misinformation, plagiarism, academic dishonesty, and the misuse of religious authority have become increasingly common. Islamic education therefore requires educators who recognize teaching as a moral trust

rather than merely a professional occupation.

The thematic analysis further reveals that *ulama* function as lifelong learners. Qur'anic scholarship does not represent the completion of learning but rather the beginning of deeper intellectual and spiritual exploration. Classical Muslim civilization illustrates this principle through scholars who continuously travelled, discussed, researched, and produced knowledge throughout their lives. Such commitment to lifelong learning remains essential in modern education, particularly in response to rapid scientific, technological, and social developments. Professional educators must continuously update their pedagogical knowledge, research competencies, digital literacy, and instructional strategies while preserving the ethical principles established by the Qur'an.

The Qur'an also portrays *ulama* as individuals capable of integrating reason ('aql) and revelation (wahy). Rather than positioning scientific inquiry in opposition to religious belief, Qur'anic scholarship encourages critical observation of nature, reflection upon divine signs, and rational investigation guided by revelation. This integration forms the basis of Islamic epistemology, in which empirical knowledge and spiritual wisdom complement one another. Educationally, this perspective supports interdisciplinary learning that combines religious sciences with natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Such an approach prepares students to address contemporary problems through both intellectual competence and ethical responsibility.

From the perspective of teacher education, these findings provide a comprehensive model for developing future educators. Professional teachers should not only master curriculum content and instructional methodology but also demonstrate integrity, empathy, humility, reflective thinking, and commitment to lifelong learning. These competencies correspond closely with the Qur'anic characteristics of *ulama*. Consequently, teacher education institutions should integrate Qur'anic values into professional preparation programs by emphasizing reflective practice, ethical leadership, collaborative learning, and continuous personal development.

Another significant implication concerns Islamic character education. The Qur'anic model of *ulama* encourages students to understand that educational success is measured not solely through grades or academic certificates but through the development of noble character and beneficial contributions to society. Classroom activities involving ethical reflection, community service, collaborative projects, mentoring, and Qur'anic discussion enable learners to experience knowledge as a means of serving others rather than pursuing personal prestige. Such experiences strengthen students' moral identity while cultivating social responsibility and civic engagement.

The findings also support the implementation of transformative learning within Islamic educational institutions. Transformative learning emphasizes changes in learners' perspectives, values, and behaviors rather than simple acquisition of information. The Qur'anic concept of *ulama* reflects this educational philosophy because authentic knowledge transforms the learner's worldview, ethical commitments, and relationship with Allah and society. Teachers can facilitate this transformation through reflective dialogue, inquiry-based learning, problem-solving activities, and contextual interpretation of Qur'anic teachings that connect religious values with contemporary realities.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* provides a holistic educational framework integrating intellectual excellence, moral integrity, spiritual consciousness, and educational leadership. Such integration offers valuable guidance for strengthening teacher professionalism, curriculum development, and Islamic character education. By adopting the Qur'anic model of scholarship, Islamic educational institutions can prepare educators and learners who are intellectually capable, ethically responsible, spiritually mature, and committed to lifelong service for the benefit of humanity. This holistic vision reinforces the role of education as a transformative process that develops not only knowledgeable individuals but also morally upright leaders capable of responding wisely to the challenges of the modern world.

The Implementation of the Qur'anic Concept of *Ulama* in Contemporary Islamic Education

The thematic interpretation of the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* demonstrates that scholars occupy a strategic position in the development of Islamic civilization because they function simultaneously as educators, moral guides, intellectual leaders, and agents of social transformation. The Qur'an consistently portrays *ulama* as individuals whose knowledge produces *hashyah*, strengthens ethical commitment, and inspires continuous service to humanity. Consequently, the educational role of *ulama* extends far beyond the transmission of religious information; it encompasses the holistic formation of individuals who possess intellectual competence, spiritual awareness, moral integrity, and social responsibility. This understanding remains highly relevant for contemporary Islamic education, which seeks to prepare learners capable of responding to increasingly complex social, technological, and cultural challenges.

One of the principal implications of this study concerns the development of teacher professionalism. The Qur'anic characteristics of *ulama* correspond closely with the competencies expected of professional educators in modern educational systems. Teachers are expected to master disciplinary knowledge, demonstrate effective pedagogical skills, communicate ethically, inspire learners, and continuously improve their professional capabilities. However, the Qur'an introduces an additional dimension by emphasizing that professional competence should always be accompanied by *hashyah*, sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), humility (*tawāḍu'*), and accountability before Allah. These spiritual qualities distinguish Islamic educational professionalism from purely technical conceptions of teaching by integrating moral responsibility with academic excellence.

Another important implication relates to the implementation of Islamic character education. Contemporary educational institutions increasingly recognize that academic success alone cannot guarantee responsible citizenship or ethical leadership. Problems such as dishonesty, intolerance, corruption, academic misconduct, and declining social

responsibility indicate the necessity of strengthening value-based education. The Qur'anic concept of *ulama* provides an educational model in which knowledge becomes the foundation for honesty, justice, compassion, humility, and service to society. Integrating these values into classroom instruction enables Islamic education to cultivate learners whose intellectual development is balanced by moral and spiritual maturity.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of integrating the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* into teacher education programs. Institutions preparing future teachers should not focus exclusively on instructional techniques, curriculum implementation, or educational technology. Equal attention should be devoted to developing ethical leadership, reflective practice, spiritual intelligence, and lifelong commitment to learning. Prospective educators should be encouraged to understand teaching as an act of worship (*'ibādah*) and social responsibility rather than merely as a professional occupation. Such an educational orientation strengthens teachers' intrinsic motivation while promoting continuous personal and professional growth.

From the perspective of curriculum development, the findings suggest that Qur'anic values concerning *ulama* should be integrated throughout various learning experiences rather than being confined solely to Islamic Religious Education subjects. Themes such as intellectual honesty, critical inquiry, humility, responsibility, lifelong learning, and community service can be incorporated into language education, science, social studies, leadership education, and extracurricular activities. This interdisciplinary approach reflects the holistic philosophy of Islamic education, in which all branches of knowledge contribute to the formation of morally responsible and intellectually competent individuals.

The thematic analysis further supports the implementation of learner-centered and inquiry-based learning. The Qur'an consistently encourages reflection (*tafakkur*), observation (*nazar*), reasoning (*ta'aqqul*), and the pursuit of knowledge through evidence. These educational principles align closely with contemporary pedagogical approaches emphasizing active learning, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-

solving. Teachers inspired by the Qur'anic model of *ulama* should therefore facilitate learning environments where students actively construct knowledge through investigation, discussion, reflection, and meaningful interaction rather than relying exclusively on memorization or passive instruction.

Another important educational implication concerns the cultivation of lifelong learning. The Qur'anic model of *ulama* illustrates that scholarship is an ongoing process requiring humility, curiosity, and continuous intellectual development. Rapid advances in science, technology, and digital communication require educators and learners to update their knowledge continuously while preserving ethical and spiritual principles. Accordingly, Islamic educational institutions should promote professional development, academic research, reflective practice, and collaborative learning communities that encourage educators to remain intellectually active throughout their careers.

The findings additionally emphasize the importance of educational leadership grounded in Qur'anic values. Educational leaders inspired by the characteristics of *ulama* should demonstrate fairness, wisdom, consultation (*shūrā*), compassion, transparency, and accountability in managing educational institutions. Such leadership creates positive school cultures characterized by mutual respect, collaborative learning, academic integrity, and shared responsibility. Through exemplary leadership, educational institutions become environments where Islamic values are experienced in daily practice rather than merely discussed in theoretical lessons.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* contributes significantly to the development of twenty-first-century competencies within an Islamic educational framework. Competencies such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, adaptability, and digital literacy become more meaningful when guided by ethical principles rooted in the Qur'an. Students are encouraged not only to become innovative and academically successful but also to use their knowledge responsibly for the welfare of society. In this way, Islamic education successfully integrates global educational competencies with enduring spiritual and moral values.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* provides a comprehensive pedagogical framework for strengthening contemporary Islamic education. Through thematic interpretation, *ulama* emerge as educational figures who integrate knowledge, faith, morality, leadership, and lifelong learning into a unified educational vision. Their characteristics offer valuable guidance for teacher professionalism, curriculum development, character education, and educational leadership. Therefore, the Qur'anic understanding of *ulama* should be systematically incorporated into Islamic educational policies and practices to prepare educators and learners who are intellectually excellent, ethically responsible, spiritually mature, and committed to contributing positively to the advancement of society and Islamic civilization.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Qur'anic concept of *ulama*, as understood through the thematic interpretation (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) of Qur'an 26:197, Qur'an 35:28, and related verses, represents a comprehensive educational framework that integrates intellectual excellence, spiritual consciousness, moral integrity, and educational leadership. The findings demonstrate that the Qur'an does not define *ulama* solely as individuals possessing extensive religious knowledge, but rather as those whose knowledge gives rise to *khashyah* (reverential fear of Allah), ethical responsibility, sincerity, humility, and commitment to guiding society toward righteousness. Therefore, authentic scholarship in the Qur'anic perspective is measured by the transformative impact of knowledge on personal character and social contribution rather than by academic achievement alone.

The thematic analysis further reveals that the characteristics of *ulama* possess significant educational relevance for contemporary Islamic education. Values such as lifelong learning, intellectual honesty, responsibility, compassion, justice, wisdom, and exemplary conduct constitute essential competencies required of professional educators.

These Qur'anic characteristics support the development of teachers who not only master pedagogical knowledge but also demonstrate moral leadership and spiritual maturity in their educational practice. Consequently, the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* provides a philosophical and pedagogical foundation for strengthening teacher professionalism while maintaining the ethical and spiritual dimensions of Islamic education.

From the perspective of Islamic education, this study highlights that the Qur'anic values embodied by *ulama* can be systematically integrated into curriculum development, teacher education, classroom instruction, and character education programs. Learning strategies emphasizing reflective inquiry, collaborative learning, project-based learning, contextual interpretation of Qur'anic values, and value-based education provide meaningful opportunities for students to internalize the characteristics of *ulama* through authentic educational experiences. Such approaches enable Islamic education to move beyond the transmission of religious information toward the holistic development of intellectually competent, morally responsible, emotionally mature, and spiritually grounded learners.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative perspective, which combines thematic Qur'anic interpretation with contemporary theories of Islamic education and teacher professionalism. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine *ulama* from theological, historical, or sociological perspectives, this study positions the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* as a pedagogical framework for strengthening educational leadership, character education, curriculum development, and professional teacher competence. By connecting Qur'anic interpretation with educational practice, this research contributes to the theoretical development of Islamic education while offering practical guidance for improving the quality of teaching and learning in contemporary educational institutions.

Finally, this study recommends that Islamic educational institutions integrate the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* into teacher preparation programs, curriculum design, school leadership, and student character development. Educators should be encouraged to become lifelong learners who combine academic competence with moral integrity,

spiritual awareness, and commitment to serving society. Future studies are recommended to examine the implementation of these Qur'anic educational values through empirical research, classroom action research, case studies, or experimental approaches in schools, madrasahs, pesantren, and higher education institutions. Such research is expected to provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of integrating the Qur'anic concept of *ulama* into educational practice for improving teacher professionalism, student character formation, learning quality, and the overall advancement of Islamic education in the contemporary era.

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