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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR: ISLAMIC APPROACH

(Pembangunan Tingkahlaku Manusia: Pendekatan Islam)

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# ABSTRAK

Banyak teori telah dibuat ke atas tingkah laku manusia dan faktor-faktor yang mengawal, dan satu penjelasan popular di belakang tren tingkah laku manusia adalah agama. Agama dipercayai mempunyai kuasa yang besar mempengaruhi tingkah laku manusia kerana link yang dekat dengan diri manusia rohani, dan sebab-sebab yang jelas. Peraturan dan pengetahuan bersama-sama dengan agama dilihat sebagai panduan di mana orang-orang yang beriman kepada agama akan mematuhi agama tanpa mengira keadaan dan tempoh. Dalam Islam, akidah atau teologi Islam adalah teras setiap tindakan dan diterima pakai sebagai satu cara hidup. Pengetahuan mengenai agidah manusia dan keupayaan untuk memahami ajaran akidah yang ikhlas mampu mempengaruhi tingkah laku. Kepentingan pendidikan akidah dalam pembangunan tingkah laku manusia akan dihuraikan secara terperinci dalam kertas ini.

Kata Kunci: tingkah laku manusia, teologi Islam/akidah, akhlak, kuasa besar

## **ABSTRACT**

Many theories have been made on human behaviour and the factors governing it, and one popular explanation behind the trending of human behaviour is religion. Religion is believed to have an immense power in influencing human behaviour due to its close link to human's spiritual self, and the reasons are obvious. Rules and knowledge which comes together with religion is seen as a guide where people who believe in their religion adhere religiously regardless

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of situation and duration. In Islam, aqidah or Islamic theology is the core to every action and is adopted as a way of life. Knowledge on aqidah and human's ability to sincerely understand the teachings of aqidah is able to influence behaviour. The significance of aqidah education in the development of human behaviour will be elaborated in great detail in this research note.

Keywords: human behaviour, Islamic theology/aqidah, akhlaq, immense power

# INTRODUCTION

In every human being, the need to hold on to a religion existed naturally (Said 1996). It was arranged in its own matter which comprises of feelings, sensory and natural intuition. The matter or substance was created by Allah SWT to drive human towards a goal, so human would benefit from it. These substances need to be flourished through continuous education and clear guidance to prevent confusion in choosing the path to life because humans have the tendency to explore all sorts of beliefs, actions and understanding according to what they think is right whenever they are stuck in confusion. Muhammad Nu'aym (1991) states that, this was the main purpose behind the advent of Islam, which is for spiritual fulfillment by building and developing all aspects regarding human needs and behaviour based on aqidah. Negligence in managing these biological factors and other related aspects would lead to moral collapse since religion functions to sustain moral order (Mahmud Shaltut 1966; Muhammad Nu'aym 1991; Sayid 1976).

## ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

Aqidah or Islamic theology stems from the word <sup>c</sup>aqada in Arabic which means a knot or tie, referring to a strong and tough bond, or actions which is based on a strong beliefs, faith, agreement and confidence followed by qasad, which is referring to intention and aim (Ibrahim 1972); or a meaningful bond which is specific in terms of ideology and beliefs (Mohd. Sulaiman 1985); or strong faith towards Allah together with everything associated with the Pillars of Faith (Johari 1998). In other words, or simply, it is a branch of Islamic studies regarding the beliefs associated with the Islamic Faith. Any religious belief system or creed can be considered as an example of aqidah.

In terms of meanings, aqidah signifies a strong faith in the soul. The faith holds dearly to clear values which revolve around limpidness and purity, and

undivided devotion towards Allah (Mahmud Shaltut 1966; Mohd. Sulaiman 1985). According to Ahli Sunnah wa al-Jamaah, the terminology of aqidah consists of three levels of meanings. The first one is al-cazm al-mu'akkad (determination), al-jamcu (compilation), al-niyyah (intention), al-tawthiq li al-cuqud (reinforcement) and ma yadinu bihi al-insan sawa'un kana haqqan aw batilan (a belief whether or not it is right or wrong); and secondly, the terminology brings a more specific meaning which is the work of the heart or a true faith which is free from doubts, mistakes etc. The third is referred to as knowledge about aqidah which has mature, and covers a complete discipline including rules of syariah obtained from yaqiniyyah evidence and does not include shubhah and flawed khilafiyyah evidence. The most important aspect in Ahli Sunnah wa al-Jamaah is acceptance towards the teachings and guidance of the prophet Muhammad PBUH.

Referring to al-Bagarah (2: 8), al-Ma'idah (5: 142), al-Naml (27: 14), and al-Hujurat (49: 15), Zakaria Stapa (1998) states that agidah requires action as a whole, not only verbal declaration of faith or mental note. According to him, aqidah is work or reinforcement at the deepest spiritual level, to the extent that it could control every wills, wants, needs, and feelings of an individual. Muhammad (1991) added that agidah or iman is when one believes that Allah SWT is the God of everything, The Most Powerful, The Creator. Additionally, iman is when one declares that Allah SWT is the only power that deserved to be worshipped and referred. Muhammad Abduh (1994) explained that agidah is when one is confident about the existence of Allah SWT, and its characteristics as well as all actions associated with it. Aqidah is also when one believes in the existence of the God concept, prophecy and the unseen (sam'iyyat) (Said 1996). The belief in aqidah is also equivalent to the kind of belief human had in jawhar and carad of the universe, or the belief human had for the ability they have in themselves (al-Maydani 1992). Abdul Ghani and Umar Yusuf (1956) added that, the term aqidah according to Ahli al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah is referring to the people who follow the footsteps of the prophet and the people in common, also the people who truly believed that human's action, whether it is good or bad will not affect anything owned by Allah SWT, even slightly.

# DEBATES ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF AQIDAH

Debates on the knowledge of *aqidah* usually revolve around faith or *iman*. The purpose is to strengthen faith in the heart of a person, of the existence of Allah, and that there is only one God, no other God except Allah (Said 1996). In language terms, *iman* means *al-tasdiq*, which is to place in the

heart, and to say by verbal means. In terms of *sharaq* terminology, the true meaning of *iman* was argued; either it simply meant believing in the heart; or believing in the heart together with verbal declaration; or believing in the heart together with verbal declaration as well as showing it through actions. In this sense *Asha'irah* and *al-Maturidiyah* agreed that iman is allowing (*tasdiq*) every single detail which comes from the prophet Muhammad PBUH, which consists of things associated with religion followed by oral avowal of the things not forbidden.

Imam Abu Hanifah and the followers of al-Asha'irah affirmed that iman is allowing the heart to believe, and declaring the faith by speech (Said 1996). According to Imam Abu Hanifah, oral declaration is one of the basic rules of faith, while action completes the faith. Al-Muktazilah added, a true faith is the one which covers all three aspects which is *al-tasdiq* (believing in the heart), al-igrar (declaring by speech), and al-camal (proving by actions). He explained that the Ahli Sunnah wa al-Jamaah stated clearly that faith is closer in relation with *al-tasdiq*, while *al-ikrar* and *al-camal* completed it. *Al-ikrar* is a part of the rule to legalize faith especially in dealing with daily things, while al-camal gets us to perfect our faith because people who worship what they believe are the people who owned true faith (Said 1996). Muhammad Nu'aym (1991) believed that faith is declaring that Allah is the God of all, and that He is the Creator who controls everything on Earth and beyond. There are six rules under the Pillars of Faith mentioned in the Quran and Hadith; believing in God, believing in Angels, believing in the Messengers of Allah, believing in the Holy Scriptures; believing in the Hereafter, and believing in Fate (Haron Din 1985; Muhammad Nu'aim 1991; Said 1996; Sayid 1976). Evidence from the Quran regarding Pillars of Faith can be found in Surah al-Nisa' (4: 136), and Surah al-Baqarah (2: 285) meaning:

O you who believe! Believe in Allah, and His Messenger (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and the Book (the Quran) which He has sent down to His Messenger, and the Scriptures (Books) which He sent down to those before (him); and whosoever disbelieves in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messenger, and the Last Day, then indeed he has strayed far away.

The Messenger (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم believes in what has been down to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. (They say), "We make no distinction between any of His Messengers." - and they say, "We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the return (of all).

He explained, *aqidah* is the basis to the building of Islam as a whole, specifically in the development of Muslim behaviour. Human behaviour in Islam is also known in Arabic as *Akhlaq*, referring to the practice of virtue, morality and manners in Islamic theology and philosophy. The Quran has stated clearly in great details about how humans are to behave to one another, about the immense reward waiting the virtuous and about the eternal sanctions to befall those who fail to conform. The connection between *aqidah*, *iman* and *akhlaq* can be seen clearly through investigating the link between believing in Allah and believing in the Hereafter (Haron Din 1985). Another source states that, a person is not considered a believer if he does not think, and he is not considered a thinker if his thought is not based on the basis of faith, and he can never be considered a believer if *ma'rifah* is not included in his rituals, for *ma'rifah* can only be obtained through the embracement of the Quran. Because it is said that, whoever understands the Quran will definitely knows Allah, and whoever knows Allah will definitely be close to Him.

The whole meaning and purpose of *aqidah* in Islam proves that Islam is a religion which is in line with the nature of every human being. Confidence and faith in Islam covers all sorts of different lifestyles, distinct from the rituals of other religion which focuses entirely on life and is not suitable for all. The concept and teachings of Islamic *aqidah* is wholesome in nature, covering trends and lifestyles of human ever since they were born to the end of their journey. After all, everything we owned will have to be returned, and success is a matter of life and after life.

The significance of *aqidah* education as a core to human development can be seen during the first 13 years since the Muhammad received the first message from Allah SWT. Knowledge about Islam was then spread in secrecy throughout the whole of Mecca. 13 years is a long duration, and the focus then was to guide, teach, and inculcate the elements of Islamic *aqidah* to the people of Mecca. This shows that *aqidah* is vital, and it is somewhat powerful in its own way in shaping the soul and identity of people. A fundamental aim of education in Islam is to provide children with positive guidance which will help them to grow into good adults who will lead happy and fruitful lives in this world and aspire to achieve the reward of the faithful in the world to come (Halstead 2004). Here, it is clear that positive guidance is best acquired by knowledge.

The second level of human development can be seen from the Quranic verses sent down to Medina regarding Islamic *syariah* or laws set up by Allah SWT so that human hold dearly to Him in fulfilling duties as a servant of

God, as a person, and duties to the nature, environment, surrounding, and life as a whole (Haron Din 1985; Mahmud Shaltut 1966). Abdul Muneim (1987) state that *jumhur ulama* has agreed in saying that *aqidah* and *iman* is an acknowledgment made by the heart, tongue and every other parts of a human's body; and according to Sayid (1976). *Iman* is a representative of *aqidah*. It reflects the inside of a person and act as the basis to Islamic *syariah* which reveals the divisions present under Islam. Actions or doings (*al-emal*) is also a reflection of Islamic *syariah*, or a subject which is related to *iman* and aqidah. Therefore it is safe to say that *iman*, and *amal*, or *aqidah* and *syariah* both are interrelated.

Mahmud Shaltut (1966) argued that *syariah* is referring to rules set up by Allah SWT so that human holds dearly to Him in dealing with several duties and responsibilities, therefore those who declared that he is a believer yet he neglected *syariah* is not considered Muslim. The relationship between *aqidah* and *syariah* is mentioned in the Quran in Surah Maryam (19: 96) and Surah al-Nahl (16: 97);

Those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah and in His Messenger (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and work deeds of righteousness, the Most (Allah) will bestow love for them (in the hearts of the believers).

Whoever works righteousness - whether male or female — while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter).

Yusuf al-Qardhawi (2001) mentioned that the correlation between *aqidah* and *syariah* can be translated into the act of worshipping God, because worshipping or *ibadah* is a manifestation of *aqidah* and *syariah*. *Ibadah* is performing all the words and deeds which Allah is pleased, where humans show obedience and humility towards God. The truth about *ibadah* is vast, beyond the ability of human imagination and expectation. It is not limited to praying, fasting, almsgiving and going for pilgrimage only. *Ibadah* covers the entire universe and become the sole purpose of life, including every word and every action. It is also a form of *syariah* manifestation of a servant to prove his faith to Allah. According to Yusuf al-Qardhawi (2001), *ibadah* should consist of two elements, which are:

- 1. To hold strongly to syariah, as well as what has been taught by the Messengers of Allah, whether it is an order or prevention, with obedience and humility; and
- 2. To perform the duties as a Muslim (as stated in the first part) out of great love to Allah.

Tajul Ariffin and Nor'Aini (2002) added, in general, the function of *ibadah* is to shape *akhlaq* and to soften manners. According to him, a strong *aqidah* is able to drive a person to fulfill his responsibility as a Muslim, by performing *ibadah* to Allah. Ibadah in any form will bring positive effects to *akhlaq*, because people who performed *ibadah* will train themselves to obey to the principles of *syariah* as outlined by the Quran and Hadith. The link between *aqidah*, *syariat*, *ibadah* and *akhlaq* is mentioned clearly in the Quran (al-Hijr 15: 99; al-Kahfi 18: 107-108; al-Ankabut 29: 45):

And worship you Lord until there comes to you the certainty (i.e. death).

Verily, those who believe (in Oneness of Allah–Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous deeds, shall have the Gardens of *Al-Firdaus* (Paradise) for their entertainment. Wherein they shall dwell (forever). No desire will they have for removal there from.

Recite (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), what has been revealed to you of the Book (the Quran), and perform al-Salat (*Iqamat-at-salat*) verily, al-Salat (the Prayer) prevents from al-Fahsha' (i.e. great sins of every kind, unlawful sexual intercourse) and al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism, and every kind of evil wicked deed) and the remembering (praising) of (you by Allah (in front of the angels) is greater indeed [than you remembering (praising) of Allah in prayers] without doubt. And Allah knows what you do.

# THE INFLUENCE OF *AQIDAH* IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Al-Zuhayli (1991) said that knowledgeable people are the people who practice what he learned and the people who benefit from his knowledge, because the real meaning of knowledge is the one which will lead people to true path. Al-Zuhayli (1991) also emphasized that only by obtaining sound knowledge

on Islam and the greatness of God the Creator will human be able to obey. Obedience is the key to prevent human from doing evil things. Ibn Mas<sup>c</sup>ud (in al-Zuhayli 1991) added that knowledgeable people are not judged by the ability to memorize thousands of *hadith*, but by the way they obey to Allah. The importance of finding and obtaining knowledge is also mentioned in a few *hadith*. One of them is assembled by Ibn Majah<sup>1</sup>, saying "seeking for knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman", and the reward obtained by educated people who practice the knowledge they have is huge, because the incentives not only benefit them on earth, but also in the life after. The prophet Muhammad PBUH said in one of his *hadith* collected by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq;

The One Who Acquires Knowledge, Puts It Into Practice, And Teaches It To Others For The Sake Of God, He Shall Be Summoned To A High Heavenly Station And Told: Thou Learnt For The Sake Of Allah, Acted For The Sake Of Allah And Taught People For His Sake<sup>2</sup>.

In this case, knowledge regarding the principles of Islam became the basic factors to understand the teachings of Islam, and the basic of Islamic knowledge is *aqidah* for it is the force which can prevent a person from doing the forbidden things which are against the values of Islam. A true *aqidah* can only be obtained through sound knowledge combining the *naqli* evidence and logical facts (al-Ghazali 1939). Al-Ghazali (1939) also explained that *aqidah* and *akhlaq* are interrelated and considered as one. The strength of *akhlaq* illustrates the strength of *aqidah*, and vice versa. The development process of Muslim behaviour relies strongly on the development process of true *aqidah*. A strong *aqidah* will protect human from any form of *musibah* or hardship in life and the hereafter. His opinion is based on the verses from Surah al-Taubah (9: 119) which gives the meaning:

O you who believe! Be afraid of Allah, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds).

A *hadith* by Rasullulah PBUH collected by al-Turmizi from Abu Hurayrah r.a; "*Iman* comprises of more than seventy branches, and bashfulness is one of them".<sup>3</sup> Al-Ghazali (1997) then divides human into two elements; spiritual and physical. Both elements are the tabii arrangements which can potentially drive human towards to sides; good and evil. However, it depends on how far the spiritual and physical elements of a person could be balanced. Balance can only be achieved through learning *aqidah*, because the knowledge can train human's mind to relate every object he sees and own to Allah SWT. Apart from that, it

can also increase awareness, making human realize the purpose of life, hence preventing moral collapse. According to al-Ghazali, moral collapse is a sign of *iman* collapse where human loses faith. People who own a strong *iman* definitely have strong manners too (al-Ghazali 1997). Other than that, al-Ghazali believed that human's actions and deeds reflect from the way he thinks. The way human think depends on the knowledge he has, and his acceptance towards knowledge depends on his ability to balance the surrounding temptations by utilizing *aqidah* and *iman*; after all everything is interrelated. He then divides human's natural appetite or desire into four which are:

- 1. *Ammarah*, which means lust towards evil. It also destroys the ability to regret;
- 2. *Lawwamah*, meaning the inclination to evaluate wrongdoings in the past, learns from mistakes and moves on towards positive lifestyles;
- 3. *Mulhamah*, meaning the ability to accept the truth and to recruit other people to leave behind previous lifestyles which are against the teachings of Islam; and
- 4. *Mutma'innah*, which means the desire to acquire peace through improving oneself.

He explained, according to Imam al-Ghazali (1997), people who aspire to become a better person has to put effort to gain knowledge. In Islam, knowledge is life. Religious values would not appear out of nothing, because humans need to strive for it with maturity, knowledge and virtue as stated in Surah al-Baqarah (2: 171) and Surah al-Mulk (67: 10) which means:

And the example of those who disbelieve is as that of him who shouts to those (flock of sheep) that hears nothing but call and cries. (They are) deaf, dumb and blind. So they do not understand.

And they will say: "Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we would not have been among the blazing Fire!

He then added that, *aqidah* is more than just verbal declaration; it has to come together with good deeds. Believing in Allah and His Messengers means doing all the things commanded and leaving all the things forbidden. Believing in the Hereafter means acknowledging the presence of heaven and hell, as well as the immense reward waiting the virtuous and the eternal sanctions to befall those who fail to conform. In this case, human should strive to be good to receive the reward of paradise, and to avoid chances of having to go against

Allah. Muhammad Nu'aym (1991) states that, believing in the existence of angels affects our actions greater than we thought. Such faith makes us more careful in our every action for we believe that everything we do will be witnessed and counted, and we then have to be responsible for it. Muhammad Nu'avm (1991) also added that human who believes in fate; the people who are confidence that life, death and sustenance are from Allah, will free themselves from being slaves to humans. People who believe in fate will have patience, peace and serenity because they have faith in Allah and they are confident that everything bestowed upon them have silver lining for Allah is fair and powerful. Iman and good deeds function as soleh and muslih, which are good beneficial things. Soleh raises achievement while muslih destroys the key to evil. Mohd. Sulaiman (1985) affirms that, aqidah and iman are capable of building a person to obey to the nature of human being as outlined by God. A stable aqidah based on flawless religious background can benefit not only self and family, but also to religion, community and the nation. Specifically, the influence of *aqidah* in developing human behaviour is explained in further detail by Muslim philosophers like Ibn Khaldun, al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawayh, Ibn Jazm and Tajul Ariffin Nordin.

Iqbal mentioned that, flawless *akhlaq* stems from the strength of facing challenges from every dimension. In developing positive *akhlaq*, human have to actively gather the strength to focus on balancing internal and external pressure in dealing with challenges and temptations (Muhammad Asyraf 1954). Za'ba (2005) added that, the stabilization of *aqidah* is not something which can easily be inherited. It has to come out of one's own effort and will, through knowledge and practices based on honest observation of Al-Quran and al-Hadith. Humans will have to be responsible for the things we said we believe, and we would not get anything other than the things we work for; meaning we must strive to get faith. The effort we spent on finding religion will yield a good flawless *akhlaq*. This opinion is in line with Allah's saying in Surah Yasin (36: 54) and in Surah al-Baqarah (2: 8-9):

This Day (Day of Resurrection), none will be wronged in anything, nor will you be required anything except that which you used to do.

And of mankind, there are some (hypocrites) who say: "We believe in Allah and the Last Day" while in fact they believe not. They (think to) deceive Allah and those who believe, while they only deceive themselves, and perceive (it) not!. Ibn Khaldun (2002) said that, a positive development of human behaviour depends on how far human is willing to exploit their thoughts to obtain knowledge. According to him, the thinking process comes from the core of the brain. This strength will be supported by human's ability to interact with nature through the five senses which is hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell. These combined, will form three stages of thinking ability:

- 1. *Al-cAql al-Tarmizi*, which is human intellectual understanding towards nature to allow people to obtain benefits to fulfill or reject his biological needs;
- 2. *Al-'Aql al-Tajribi*, which is human understanding of ideas and relationship deeds in leadership; and
- 3. Al-'Aql al-Nazari, which is the final stage of thinking ability which will be completing human with knowledge. All three thinking stages are capable of theorizing about the multiple kinds of life existence such as minerals, plants and animals. The difference of reasons and sources which all relates to Allah's power (qudrat) eventually. By giving a thought on such things, human will find true perfection and became intellectuals as mentioned by Ibn Khaldun as the ideal human being (al-Haqiqah al-Insaniyyah). In contrast, according to Ibn Khaldun, usually humans who does not possess these characteristics (thinking ability), part of his actions are shaped to fulfill certain purposes which became the object of desires. However, the good and bad or people's actions goes back to human nature and human social reflects.

Nature (Fitrah) ® Five senses ® IQ ® Think ® Knowledge ® Aqidah ® Al-Haqiqah al-Insaniyyah

Figure 1 The Idrak theory by Ibn Khaldun

Tajul Ariffin and Nor'Aini (2002) in explaining integrative education theory (combination of the knowledge of wahyu and 'aql) said that, the core of interagtive education is religion, aqidah and akhlaq. According to him, the formal definition of interagtive education was formed in a forum held by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1984. The meaning of collective education in accordance of the forum is "...education based on al-Quran and al-Sunnah, at the same time integrating knowledge towards building a united community based on aqidah..." Tajul Ariffin and Nor'Aini (2002) also explained that collective education is education which integrates religious

knowledge and 'aql knowledge so that it would become wholesome consisting of knowledge, faith and deeds. The concept prioritizes the strength of aqidah and emotional stability to form inner strength in the effort of shaping and producing successful people which are highly intelligent and pious. Education goals must start from the strength of aqidah, for it is able to create well-mannered individuals. This stream will then be applied in cognitive, affective psychomotor and rounded areas. The implementation of this concept will then produce intellectual students who are also well-mannered and a big believer. The concept is illustrated in figure below:

Aqidah ® Akhlaq ® Moral Values

® Cognitive And Psychomotor ® Affective

Figure 2 Collective education theory by Tajul Ariffin and Nor'Aini

## CONCLUSION

All in all, aqidah is the basis of all factors in Islam. Everything goes back to the purpose of education. The goals of education are laid down by revealed religion and therefore have an objective quality; they do not vary according to individual opinion or expertise. The curriculum should be designed in accordance with the Islamic understanding of the nature of knowledge and the nature of human beings, especially their spiritual nature. The strength of aqidah, obedience to syariat law, sincerity, and good deeds are all it takes to develop positive human behaviour and akhlaq of a person towards benefiting self, family, nation, community and the country. Continuous efforts in stabilizing aqidah inside every person in the Islamic community have to be implemented in order to prevent confusion. In short, a community who aspire with aqidah will be able to achieve goodness, hence giving impact to others. Clearly, knowledge on aqidah and the ability to understand it well will produce well-mannered individuals, at the same time realizing the goals of every human as commanded by Islam.

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