

INTERNALIZATION OF TAFAKUR VALUES IN CHARACTER FORMATION (CASE STUDY AT KAHFI MOTIVATOR SCHOOL)

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Abstract

Conventional character education often faces obstacles in bridging the gap between moral knowledge and real behavior. This research focuses on how Tubagus Wahyudi analyzed the values of tafakur in Surah Āli 'Imrān (190–191), Surah al-A'rāf (179), and Surah al-Ra'd (3–4) as the foundation of the curriculum at Kahfi Motivator School, as well as how the mechanism of formation of students' character was formed through the understanding of these tafakur verses in Tubagus Wahyudi's perspective. Using a qualitative approach to field studies that is descriptive-analytical, data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observations. The results of the study show that Tubagus interprets tafakur as a procedural engineering process to activate the human control center (qulūb) through sensory-cognitive integration as the foundation of the curriculum. The mechanism of character formation is operationalized through the "4/4 Theory" and the "7 Levels of Thinking", in which the "Head" element (logic) is systematically trained to subdue the impulse of "Dada" (lust). Through the application of the "3C" (Commitment, Consistent, Consequence) principle, this methodology succeeds in transforming the soul which then manifests into a stable, consistent, and automatic character. This research offers a dynamic model of internalizing Qur'anic values that is able to transform cognition into a sustainable personality integrity.

Keywords: *Tafakur, Character Building, Kahfi Motivator School, 4/4 Theory.*

Abstrak

Abstrak memuat uraian singkat tentang latar belakang masalah, Pendidikan karakter konvensional sering kali menghadapi kendala dalam menjembatani kesenjangan antara pengetahuan moral dan perilaku nyata. Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana Tubagus Wahyudi menganalisis nilai-nilai tafakur dalam Surah Āli 'Imrān (190–191), Surah al-A'rāf (179), dan Surah al-Ra'd (3–4) sebagai landasan kurikulum di Kahfi Motivator School, serta bagaimana mekanisme pembentukan karakter peserta didik terbentuk melalui pemahaman terhadap ayat-ayat tafakur tersebut dalam perspektif Tubagus Wahyudi. Menggunakan

pendekatan kualitatif studi lapangan yang bersifat deskriptif-analitis, data dihimpun melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi partisipatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Tubagus menafsirkan tafakur sebagai proses rekayasa prosedural untuk mengaktifkan pusat kendali manusia (*qulūb*) melalui integrasi sensorik-kognitif sebagai landasan kurikulum. Mekanisme pembentukan karakter dioperasionalkan melalui "Teori 4/4" dan "7 Levels of Thinking", di mana elemen "Kepala" (logika) dilatih secara sistematis untuk menundukkan dorongan "Dada" (hawa nafsu). Melalui penerapan prinsip "3C" (Commitment, Consistent, Consequence), metodologi ini berhasil melakukan transformasi pada jiwa yang kemudian mewujudkan menjadi karakter yang stabil, konsisten, dan otomatis. Penelitian ini menawarkan model dinamis internalisasi nilai Qur'ani yang mampu mengubah kognisi menjadi integritas kepribadian yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Tafakur, Pembentukan Karakter, Kahfi Motivator School, Teori 4/4.

INTRODUCTION

Character education in the contemporary era faces very systemic challenges. Moral crises, ethical degradation, and the phenomenon of "value disorientation" no longer only infect adolescence, but have penetrated into various age strata. This indicates a failure in the internalization of religious values that have tended to be taught cognitively-textually but have poor practical implementation. The Qur'an as a *hudan* (guide) and a guideline for life offers the methodology of *tafakkur* as a fundamental instrument for dissecting human potential. However, in many educational institutions, *tafakkur* often stops at a passive contemplative order that does not produce a transformative impact on individual behavior. In fact, the essence of Islamic teachings is to lead to the perfection of morality (*makārim al-akhlāq*) which is implemented in daily life.¹

One of the informal educational institutions that offers an innovative approach in breaking the character education impasse is Kahfi Motivator School, a campus founded by Dr. Tubagus Wahyudi in 2003. The institute positions itself as a "Human Laboratory" that integrates Qur'anic values with approaches to neuroscience, communication psychology, and mind engineering. The main uniqueness of Kahfi Motivator School lies in the diversity (heterogeneity) of its students' backgrounds which covers a wide age spectrum, ranging from high school graduates to the elderly group. This requires a universal methodology that is able to touch human logic as well as spirituality beyond the barriers of age. Tubagus responds to this challenge through a paradigm that he calls "Motivational Interpretation". Motivational Tafsir is not a new book of tafsir, but a methodological effort to interpret the verses of the Qur'an as motivational materials and a driving

¹ Marsudi and Nina Mariani Noor, "Religious Moderation in Practice: A Framing Analysis of Nonformal Hajj Education and Its Global Relevance," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2025, 318–321, <https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v21i2.28964>

tool to immediately practice Allah's commands and stay away from His prohibitions.

In its implementation, Tubagus dissects *the values of tafakkur* through precise operational instruments. He introduced the 3C (Commitment, Consistent, and Consequence) principle as the foundation of self-discipline and moral responsibility. In addition, there is the 4/4 Theory which is the pillar of human character synchronization, which divides the self-dimension into four points: Thought (Head), Taste (Chest), Word (Oral), and Deed (Action). Through the 4/4 Theory, Tubagus teaches that superior character is created when the "Head" who has been equipped with *Qur'anic tafakkur* data is able to control the "Dada" which is filled with emotional impulses and lust. This approach is supported by technical materials such as *Psychofundament* to dismantle mental blockages, the VAKGO (*Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Gustatory, Olfactory*) method for sensory activation, and *7 Levels of Thinking* for cognitive capacity building.

Previous literature reviews have made important contributions to mapping this theme. Dewi Ailam (2021) conducted a semantic study on the concept of *tafakkur* in the Qur'an, but the focus is limited to linguistic aspects without touching the applied dimension in non-formal educational institutions.² Syarifah Hidayahna (2020) has conducted an evaluation of the Qur'anic mindset training program at the Kahfi Campus using the CIPP model, but her study focuses more on the administrative management aspect than on an in-depth analysis of the interpretation of verses and the mechanism of character formation.³ Ali bin Munawar (2020) researched the development of *tadabbur* skills and thinking through Qur'anic verses in the context of education, but the research was general and did not focus on the in-depth interpretation of specific verses, did not connect with specific informal educational institutions, and did not show how reflection verses were integrated into a system.⁴ Meanwhile, Abdurrahmān ibn Šāliḥ al-Zahrānī (2021) looks at how *tafakkur* and *tadabbur* play a role in affirming faith, but the study remains in a purely theoretical corridor.⁵

Based on the literature review, this article offers significant *novelty* through three integrative aspects: *First*, an exploration of Tubagus Wahyudi's "Motivational Interpretation" that transforms sacred texts into procedural energy for behavior change; *Second*, an analysis of the application of the 4/4 Theory and the 3C principle in building character integrity in heterogeneous audiences; *Third*, the use of Thomas

² Dewi Ailam, "Konsep Tafakur dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an: Kajian Semantik" (Thesis, Bandung: UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, 2021), 83.

³ Syarifah Hidayahna, "Evaluasi Program Pelatihan Pola Pikir Al-Qur'an di Kampus KAHFI Bagus Bina Cendekia (BBC) Motivator School" (Thesis, Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2020), 120.

⁴ 'Ali ibn Munāwar ibn Raddah al-Juhānī, "*Tanmīyah Mahārāt al-Tadabbur wa al-Taḥkīm min Khilāl Ba'd Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*," *Majallah Abḥāth Kulliyah al-Tarbiyah*, Vol. 16, No. 16, 2020, 600.

⁵ Abdurrahmān ibn Šāliḥ al-Zahrānī, "*Al-Tafakkur wa al-Tadabbur wa Āṭāruhuma fī Taṭbīt al-Iman: Dirāsah Mawḍū'iyah*," *Majlah Mabādi' al-Akādīmiyyah*, 2021, 48.

Lickona's character development theory (especially the *components of Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, and Moral Action*) as an analysis knife to test the effectiveness of the Kahfi Motivator School methodology. This novelty is expected to make a real contribution to a more applicative model of character education in Indonesia, which is in line with the concept of Islamic education which is not just a knowledge transfer activity, but also the formation of a complete personality. The renewal of the goals and curriculum of Islamic education must be integrated with the framework of modernity that does not abandon the essence of moral values as its foundation. This finding strengthens the argument of this study that Kahfi Motivator School, with its "Tafsir Motivation" innovation, is a tangible form of efforts to reform the non-formal Islamic education curriculum that places moral education as ⁶ *the output* of the entire learning process.

This research is a qualitative research with a descriptive-analytical type of *field research*. Primary data sources were collected through in-depth interviews with Dr. Tubagus Wahyudi as the founder of Kahfi Motivator School, as well as participatory observation of the learning process and transformation of students' character. Secondary data sources involve the institution's official curriculum, Tubagus Wahyudi's writings such as "*Getting to Know Humans*", "*Thinking*", "*Motivational Interpretation*", learning transcript documents, and supporting literature in the form of scientific journals and authoritative interpretation books. The data collection technique was carried out by triangulation methods (interviews, observations, and documentation). Data analysis uses interactive analysis techniques that include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions based on a pedagogical-psychological perspective.

This study formulates two main problems: the first question in this study is how Tubagus analyzes the values of tafakkur in the interpretation of Surah Āli 'Imrān verses 190–191, Surah al-A'rāf verses 179, and Surah al-Ra'd verses 3–4 as the foundation of the curriculum at Kahfi Motivator School, as well as how the mechanism of forming students' character is formed through the understanding of the verses of tafakkur from the perspective of Tubagus Wahyudi. Departing from this problem, this study aims to uncover the philosophy of Tubagus Motivational Interpretation and analyze the effectiveness of the 4/4 Theory in bridging the distance between moral knowledge and students' real actions. Through this study, it is hoped that the results of the research can make a theoretical contribution as well as become a practical reference for educators in developing a method of internalizing Qur'anic values that is more dynamic, systematic, and relevant to the challenges of the times.

⁶ Malihatul Azizah and Fauzi Fauzi, "Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam (Studi Atas Pemikiran Azyumardi Azra)," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 11, No. 03, 2022, 759.

DISCUSSION

Understanding the methodology of character development at Kahfi Motivator School cannot be separated from the historical context and anxiety of its founder. Tubagus revealed that the establishment of this institution in 2003 was a turning point from the search for personal safety to social benefits. Anxiety about the degradation of human character at that time prompted Tubagus to explore the values of the Qur'an not just as a ritual reading, but as a concrete solution to the crisis of human identity. This foundation is rooted in the hadith *khairun nās anfa'uhum li al-nās* (the best human being is the most beneficial to others)⁷, which later became the main driver of educational philanthropy in Kahfi.

Tubagus emphasized that every individual is essentially a mufasir for himself after he or she learns from scholars and teachers. This is a method of deep reflection that aims to ignite reason as a prerequisite for God to give direct lessons to His servants. This concept strengthens the argument that *tafakkur* is a bridge between servants and their God. Regarding the big vision of the establishment of this school, Tubagus explained it as follows:

"Actually, what has been explained earlier is not only my thought to establish KAHFI. At first, I was the same human as other humans, always wanting to find salvation. Because we are Muslims, what we read is the Qur'an. We ponder. Then I came across verses that tell us that life should not be selfish... I was influenced by Surah Al-Ashr. So this is the importance of the knowledge of interpretation... In my opinion, every human being is a mufassir for himself. Because after he reads the tafsir, he has to interpret. That is where man's relationship with his God lies... Why establish a school? Because I am not an ustaz. If I were an ustaz, I would go up on the pulpit of talking... At first I made this as a discussion material, at the mosque where I worked, finally I studied it regularly. This is the history of learning education at KAHFI. At the mosque where Om Bagus was active. But because many people asked, finally study it regularly. This is the history of learning education at KAHFI. Then why is it free, Om? Because Om Bagus was inspired by Surah Yasin verse 21. "Ittabi'u malla yas'alukum ajran wahum muhtadun." If I'm not mistaken. Follow those who do not demand anything from you, for they are the ones who are guided. But why does Om Bagus run KAHFI really like focusing on religion? Yes, Surah Muhammad verse 7. "Ya ayyuhalladzina amanu in tandhurullaha yansurkum wa yusabbit aqdamakum." We have to be total there. That's the history of why there is KAHFI. It must be beneficial. So why did Om Bagus choose

⁷ Abū Ya'ālā al-Mawṣilī, *Musnad Abī Ya'ālā*, (Damaskus: Dār al-Ma'mūn li al-Turāth, 1984, 65.

Motivator School? Because, "Watawasau Bil Haqqi watawasau bus sabr." The following is because there is a commandment, "There shall be a group of people who call for virtue and dispel evil." Yes, right?"⁸

The motivation that underlies Kahfi Motivator School is totality and non-commercial, inspired by the message of QS. Yāsīn: 21 about following those who do not ask for anything in return. Tubagus believes that by helping the religion of Allah in totality, as mandated in QS. Muhammad: 7, then Allah will give firmness (*yusabbit aqdāmakum*) in building the character of the people. The naming of the "Motivator School" itself is a manifestation of the command to advise each other in truth and patience (*watawāṣaw bi al-ḥ aqq wa watawāṣaw bi al-ṣ abr*) as well as the effort to carry out the trust as a group that calls for virtue.

The integration of these values into the Kahfi curriculum shows that character engineering through the Human Theory 4/4 and 7 Levels of Thinking has a very strong transcendental dimension. Tubagus not only builds a cognitive system, but also builds an educational ecosystem that is based on sincerity and total obedience to *Sunnatullah*. This answers the question of why Kahfi Motivator School is able to reach a heterogeneous audience across ages; Because the approach used touches on the basic nature of human beings to become useful and noble creatures.

Human "Motherboard" Engineering: The Implementation of Al-A'raf 179 in the Construction of Motivational Interpretation

The implementation of character education at Kahfi Motivator School relies on the "Motivational Interpretation" methodology initiated by Tubagus Wahyudi. Epistemologically, Motivational Interpretation views sacred texts as "procedural energy" that must be immediately transformed into action. Tubagus emphasized that each verse of the Qur'an contains an instruction manual for human behavior. The main focus in the Kahfi curriculum is the activation of human potential through a deep understanding of QS. al-A'rāf: 179. Tubagus analyzed that character failure began from the malfunction of the senses and the heart (*qulūb*) which he called the *human motherboard*. Tubagus's analysis of the importance of the functions of the heart, eyes, and ears as the entrance to cognitive data is in line with IbnKatsir's explanation. In his commentary, Ibn Kapoorexplained that those who are threatened with Hell are those who do not use their hearts to understand guidance, do not use their eyes to see the signs of Allah's power, and close their ears from hearing the truth. IbnKatzir asserts that the existence of such tools in negligent humans does not provide the slightest benefit to their guidance.⁹

Qulūb is the *Master of Control* who must be equipped with truth data so as not to be negligent. This integration of interpretation emphasizes that *the kauniyah*

⁸ Tubagus Wahyudi, In-Depth Interview (Transcript), April 15, 2026.

⁹ Ismā'il bin 'Umar bin Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998), 512.

(universe) verses are laboratories for the intellect to discover the existence of God through sensory observation.¹⁰ Tubagus argues that humans often have eyes but do not "see" wisdom, and have ears but do not "hear" the signs of God's greatness. To overcome this for heterogeneous audiences, Tubagus applies the VAKGO (*Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Gustatory, Olfactory*) system as a data filtration tool. Through VAKGO, students are trained to consciously capture the data of the universe before it enters the mind. As stated by Tubagus Wahyudi:

The heart must ponder the verses until they understand. The eyes are required to see so that the eyes want to enter the data into the heart. The ear is told to listen to catch all the intellect, put into the qulubun, and it is the qulubun who must process it. So there are three of them. That's why Om Bagus applies at KAHFI to call on KAHFI children to learn to think so that their qulubun runs. Second, KAHFI's children were told to see the universe. The children of KAHFI were told to meditate on the words of the scholars, that was what had to be heard, so that the name of reason appeared. Well, if this reason does not exist, this is what can cause him to enter hell. That's why does Allah say, if you don't wear this, you will be the one who will fill hell... at the end of this verse Allah says, he is like cattle, even worse, because they are negligent. So if these three tools are negligent, they will go to hell. Well, this is the reason why Om Bagus has to repeat using this verse... *The al-an'ām bal hum aḍall, the red hum al-ghāfilūn*.¹¹

This interpretation is in line with the *Moral Knowing* component of Thomas Lickona's theory, where moral *awareness* is an absolute first step before a person can achieve moral action.¹² Wahyudi expanded the concept of Lickona by integrating aspects of neuroscience, where the five senses (VAKGO) are the main gateway for the formation of memory and character in the human brain. Without the intellect resulting from the synchronization of the three tools, man would lose his humanity and be trapped in negligence.

The logic of *Ulūl Albāb* in QS. Āli 'Imrān: 190-191

The discussion of character development in Kahfi Motivator School cannot be separated from the effort to build the profile of *ulūl albāb* through the interpretation of QS. Āli 'Imrān: 190-191. Tubagus interprets the balance between dhikr and thought as a process of trying to give birth to "Understanding". According to him, a person will not achieve moral glory if he does not go through the correct

¹⁰ Mohammad Muslih, "Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Kauniyah dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal At-Tarbiyat*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2020, 15.

¹¹ Tubagus Wahyudi, In-Depth Interview (Transcript), April 15, 2026.

¹² Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 51.

phase of thinking. Tubagus dissected the thought process into an instrument called *7 Levels of Thinking*. This instrument guides students to rise from the level of selfish thinking to the level of contemplative thinking and oriented to the majesty of God.¹³

In the view of M. Quraish Shihab through *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ*, the term *ulūl albāb* refers to people who have pure intellect and are loaded with the essence of truth. Shihab emphasized that dhikr (activity of the heart) and thought (brain activity) are two wings that should not be separated; Thoughts without remembrance will go astray, while remembrance without thought will be static.¹⁴ The most significant point of this *ulūl albāb model*, as Hasan analyzes in his research, is its integrative nature: the *ulūl albāb* derive knowledge from two sources at once: the "Book of Nature" which is open to empirical study, and the "Book of Revelation" which is the ethical and spiritual standard.¹⁵ Tubagus asserts that the integration of remembering Allah when standing, sitting, and lying down with the thought of the creation of the heavens and the earth will result in a logical conclusion: *Rabbanā mā khalaqta hādihā bāṭilā*. The realization that nothing is in vain in this universe becomes the foundation for sacred fear (*subḥānaka faqina 'adhāb al-nār*). This fear is not a paralyzing fear, but rather a fear that motivates us to always be in the corridor of goodness. This is in line with Nuulalamin's research which states that Qur'an-based character education must be able to connect intellectual intelligence with spiritual piety in order to become a sedentary behavior.¹⁶

Systemic Explanation: The 7-Level Architecture of Thinking in the Kahfi Curriculum

To realize the profile of *ulūl albāb* that is able to harmonize dhikr and thought as the message of QS. Āli 'Imrān: 190–191, Tubagus formulated a cognitive ladder called the 7 Levels of Thinking. This instrument acts as a procedural manual for students at Kahfi Motivator School to manage the human mind towards peace of mind. The following are the seven levels of thinking as applied in the Kahfi curriculum: Thinking Level 1: Effort or struggle in processing/controlling thoughts or thoughts to obey parents. Thinking Level 2: Effort or struggle in processing or controlling thoughts or thoughts to ensure the success of entering important data (HAL science), namely the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as other sciences such as knowledge, insight, and experience. Thinking Level 3: An effort or struggle in processing or controlling thoughts or thoughts in order to do a high level of

¹³ Tubagus Wahyudi, *Teori-teori Fikir*, Modul Materi Semester Fikir Kahfi Motivator School (South Tangerang: Kahfi Motivator School, 2023), 12.

¹⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, vol. 2 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 302.

¹⁵ Mohd Kamal Hassan, "A Return to the Qur'anic Paradigm of Development and Integrated Knowledge: The UIĒ al-AlbĒb Model", *Intellectual Discourse*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2010, 183.

¹⁶ Nurulalamin, et al., "Kontekstualisasi Pendidikan Karakter Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Millennial: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 2, no. 2 (2022): 20.

appreciation or *iqro'* of the data entered into the brain in order to gain understanding to be subsequently placed in the senses to face life. Thinking Level 4: An effort or struggle in processing or controlling thoughts or thoughts in order to utilize the understanding that has been achieved in facing the challenges of life so that they always behave correctly or have good morals.¹⁷ Thinking Level 5: An effort or struggle in processing or controlling thoughts or thoughts in order to introspect or *muhasabah* on the attitude that has been taken or done. Thinking Level 6a: An effort or struggle in processing or controlling thoughts or thoughts in order to force oneself to perform *nasuha* repentance. Thinking Level 6b: Effort or struggle in processing or controlling thoughts or thoughts to always maintain *istiqomah*. Thinking Level 7: An effort or struggle to process or control the mind in order to innovate and explore the creation of heaven and earth to increase faith and piety, righteous deeds, and be useful for the benefit and achieve *husnul khotimah*.

It is within this framework, Tubagus Wahyudi's methodology in the *Kahfi Motivator School* can be understood as a contemporary form of *jedermanship* of the *ulūl albāb* model. *The 7 Levels of Thinking* are a guide to reading and understanding reality gradually, while "Motivational Interpretation" serves as an intermediary between the "Book of Nature" (empirical knowledge) and the "Book of Revelation" which contains the values of the Qur'an. The combination of these two sources is what makes the curriculum of *Kahfi Motivator School* not just a motivational training, but a character building program rooted in authentic Islamic epistemology.

Theory 4/4

The most crucial operational mechanism in character formation at *Kahfi Motivator School* is the 4/4 Theory. Wahyudi divides the structure of the human self into four main dimensions: Thought (Head), Sense (Chest), Word (Oral), and Behavior (Action). The philosophical foundation of this theory is rooted in the effort to know oneself as a way to know God. In Wahyudi's view, character is the result of a "terrible war" that surpasses the Battle of Badr, which is a war against oneself through the control of the four points. The war in question is the conflict between the "Head" who holds the logic of revelation and the "Dada" which is the place where the potential of *nafs ammārah* (lust) and *nafs lawwāmah* (doubt) resides. In an interview, Tubagus Wahyudi explained it as follows:

"Puberty is a signal from Allah that this person has started to carry out his first life. Who is the first self? Think... And think it produces a thought. And the mind is wild. He can lead you to destruction, he can lead you to salvation... Which mind leads to salvation? That is, the mind is the result of thinking where the thoughts that produce good

¹⁷ Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998), 119–142.

thoughts are the thoughts that have good data. That's why the best "iqra" is "iqra" to the Qur'an and Hadith... In the chest is our second self. Who are we second? Feelings... Then think it's on the head, he has to fight the chest... In that feeling, God puts potential... The first is that Allah includes the potential called "nafs ammaratun bis-su". That's the potential to always fight God... Second, there is the potential for chaos, the name is the potential for lawwamah. Well, the potential of this lawwamah makes you confused... Lastly there is the devil... If we succeed in killing it, then in that feeling emerges one potential and this potential is the work of man, namely the absolute potential... Who are our third selves? Mouth. Speech. Well, this mouth will sound who wins between your feelings and your thoughts... And the last self is behavior. Therefore, in the end, why is religion called behavior and behavior must be moral? Because that's who you prove who you really are."¹⁸

The most crucial operational mechanism in character formation at Kahfi Motivator School is the 4/4 Human Theory. Tubagus formulated this theory as a framework to understand human complexity which is composed of four main elements divided into two major dimensions: the internal self (thoughts and feelings) and the external self (speech and behavior). In the architecture of Kahfi's education, the attainment of the degree of "4/4 Man" is seen as a manifestation of *the moral karimah*, in which the four elements function in perfect balance under the control of revelation.

The first element in the 4/4 Theory is the Mind, which is symbolically interpreted by Tubagus as the "Sky" in the individual. As a *Master of Control*, the mind has the ability to elevate the human level to higher spirituality. However, Tubagus emphasized that the mind needs "advice from heaven" in the form of the Qur'an and Hadith to be able to function as a true leader. The process of instilling these divine values into the mind is not just a cognitive-informative activity, but an attempt to form a mindset according to the "sky standard". If the mind is illuminated by the light of revelation, it will be transformed into an intellect capable of carrying out the functions of the caliphate on earth. Instead, an unguided mind will become wild and vulnerable to negative whispers that paralyze humanity's potential.¹⁹

Contrary to the mind, the second element is Feeling, which is symbolized as the "World". Feelings include emotions, desires, and passions that tend to attract individuals to temporary pleasures. In Tubagus's perspective, feelings are the location of *nafs ammārah bi al-sū'* (potential that always leads to badness) and *nafs*

¹⁸ Tubagus Wahyudi, In-Depth Interview (Transcript), April 15, 2026.

¹⁹ Tubagus, *Teori-teori Fikir*, Modul Materi Semester Fikir Kahfi Motivator School (South Tangerang: Kahfi Motivator School, 2023), 15.

lawwāmah (potential doubt/turmoil). Character conflict occurs when feelings dominate the mind, resulting in the appearance of destructive traits such as laziness, arrogance, and lying. Tubagus explained that this is where the "great war" of mankind lies:

"The thought is in the head, he has to fight the chest... The feeling is placed in the chest because it is related to the heart and lungs. That's where the anger that always wants to fight against Allah is... If the chest fights that thought, that's what it's called back and forth. The solution is *sami'nā wa aṭa'nā*; listen, work, not be opposed by feelings."²⁰

The external self starts from the third element, which is Speech. In the 4/4 Theory, speech is positioned as an "indicator voice" that sounds out who is the winner in the internal conflict between thoughts and feelings. Good, sincere, and hopeful words are signs that an enlightened mind is taking the lead. On the other hand, speech full of complaints or falsehoods reflects the dominance of uncontrolled feelings. Tubagus emphasized that every negative word such as "can't" or "despair" is a form of "world" selection (feeling), while positive words are a form of "Allah" selection (guided mind).²¹

The fourth and final element is Behavior, which is the final reflection of the qualities of the self and a tangible proof of a person's character. Productive and beneficial behavior is the result of a focused mind and regular emotions. An individual's spiritual success is measured by the extent to which he or she is able to demonstrate consistent good behavior despite life's challenges. In the 4/4 Theory, behavior is the estuary of the entire cognitive engineering process taught at Kahfi Motivator School. The attainment of the degree of "4/4 Man" occurs when the mind filled with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith succeeds in subduing lust, which is then followed by clear speech and harmonious behavior. This synchronization explicitly answers the *Moral Action* component in Thomas Lickona's theory, where moral action is born from a strong *moral will* to conquer negative internal impulses.²² This integration creates what Tubagus calls "Soul as Energy":

"That soul is the energy created from what you often do. If you continue to improve your mindset, feelings, mouth, and behavior, then a blob of goodness will form in you. This clump is what releases the energy that motivates and hypnotizes you to always do good automatically (*automatic pilot*)."²³

²⁰ Tubagus, In-Depth Interview (Transcript), April 15, 2026.

²¹ Tubagus, *Teori-teori Fikir*, 17.

²² Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 63.

²³ Tubagus, In-Depth Interview (Transcript), April 15, 2026.

Thus, the 4/4 Theory at Kahfi Motivator School is not just a theory of behavioral psychology, but a systematic method of purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*). Individual success in reaching stage 4/4 is characterized by consistency in goodness, noble morals, and positive contribution to the social environment. This model proves that the internalization of the value of tafakur is able to change the fundamental structure of human beings from the level of the mind to a stable and transformative character energy.

A resilient character is created when an individual is able to apply *the principle of sami'nā wa aṭa'nā* (We hear and we obey) to subdue the impulse of the "Dada". Wahyudi taught that when the mind (the Head) has accepted the truth of the verse, then the Dada should not be allowed to negotiate or doubt. The victory of the Head over the Chest repeatedly will form *the nafs of mutma'innah*. This process is a practical interpretation of *Moral Feeling* and *Moral Action* Lickona.²⁴ Moral actions are born from a straight Head that succeeds in subduing the turmoil of the Dada, so that words and deeds become in harmony with divine values. The mechanism of the 4/4 theory that places the triumph of the "head" (the logic of revelation) over the "chest" (lust) as the key to character formation has a very strong relationship with the tradition of *tazkiyatun nafs* in classical Islamic literature. This is evidenced by research that shows that the process of purification of the soul is not enough to be done passively through ritual worship alone, but requires a structured and systematic educational program that is able to actively transform the soul. Furthermore, the hadiths about mental health in the thought of Imam al-Ghazali identify eight indicators of mental health which include: Gratitude, feeling safe, good morals, good social interaction, strong faith,²⁵ *self-control*, optimism, and trust. Interestingly, these indicators are in line with Tubagus's 4/4 theory: "the firmness of faith" and "self-control" correspond to the function of the "head"; "Gratitude", "feeling safe", and "optimism" are the characteristics of ²⁶*nafs mutma'innah* which is formed in the "chest"; while "good morals", "good social interaction", and "trust" are manifestations of the dimensions of "oral" and "action". So that indirectly the 4/4 Theory has integrated al-Ghazali's scientific heritage into a more modern and structured operational framework.

Considering this, one of the most significant dimensions of the entire Kahfi Motivator School methodology is the emphasis on the dimension of dialogue (*ḥiwār*) as a vehicle for character formation of the younger generation. In line with Suhail's

²⁴ Lickona, *Educating for Character*, 63.

²⁵ Subaidi Subaidi and Jaja Jahari, Subaidi Subaidi and Jaja Jahari, "Pendidikan Agama Islam Tazkiyatun Nafs Sebagai Upaya Penguatan Kepribadian Guru Di Madrasah Aliyah," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 12, No. 02, 2023, 124-125.

²⁶ Hafilah Najwati Rahimah, et al., "Integrasi Hadis tentang Kesehatan Mental dalam Pemikiran Imam al-Ghazali: Analisis Tematik terhadap Karya-Karyanya," *DIRASAT: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2025, 78-79.

statement in his research, the Qur'an places dialogue (*ḥiwār*) not only as a mere communication technique, but as a "humanitarian need" (*ḍarūrah insāniyyah*), "shari'i obligation" (*farīdah syar'iyyah*), and "the needs of the times" (*ḥājah 'aṣriyyah*).²⁷ In this perspective, the "Oral" dimension in Tubagus Wahyudi's 4/4 theory cannot be understood as "speech control" in a negative sense (guarding against bad words), but rather represents one's ability and ability to contribute to transformative dialogue and exert a positive influence using "wisdom, good advice, and debate in the most beautiful way" (*bil-ḥ ikmah wa al-maw'izah al-ḥasanah wa jādilhum bi-al-latī hiya aḥsan*). So when a person manages to balance between the "Head" and the "Chest" in this 4/4 theory, he is not only able to control his actions, but is able to change the quality of his speech to be better, more empathetic, and more constructive. This represents a transformation that is in line with the concept of *ḥusn al-kalām* in Islam.

The 3C Principle and the Soul as Motivational Energy in QS. al-Ra'd: 3-4

The practical implementation of the Tafsir of Tubagus Wahyudi's Motivation reached its peak in the application of the 3C (Commitment, Consistent, and Consequence) principle. Through the analysis of QS. al-Ra'd: 3-4 which describes the diversity of fruits that grow from the same soil and water, Tubagus teaches that every human being has a unique potential that is bound to the provisions of Allah (*sunnatullah*). The 3C principle is used to ensure that each student takes full responsibility for the cultivation of his or her potential. Wahbah al-Zuhailī in *Tafsir al-Munīr* explains that the diversity of natural phenomena (mountains, rivers, and fruits) is evidence of the existence of a very careful rule from the Creator (*nizām al-itqān*). Al-Zuhailī emphasizes that the difference in taste in fruits even when they are watered with the same water is a logical signal for those who think (*li qaumin yatafakkarūn*) about the existence of definite provisions (*sunnatullāh*).²⁸

Tubagus emphasized that a character who is *istiqamah* will produce "Soul as Energy". The good deeds that accumulate will create a spiritual magnet in a person, so that he will feel disturbed if he has to do evil. Obedience to this rule also includes obedience to experts (*ulīl amri*) in various areas of life. This gives a social dimension to the character of Kahfi students, where achievements and benefits for others (*khair al-nās anfa'uhum li al-nās*) are tangible evidence of the success of the tafakur process. As noted in the study by Syarifah Hidayahna, attachment to systemic rules in Kahfi

²⁷ Ahmad Kusjairi Suhail, "Dialogue: Unveiling the Pivotal Role and Its Qur'anic Principles," *Al-Zahra: Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2021, 412-413, <https://doi.org/10.15408/zr.v18i2.36374>.

²⁸ Wahbah al-Zuhailī, *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdah wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Vol. 13 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1991), 108.

is actually able to change the orientation of students' lives towards independence and moral integrity.²⁹

The study of the values of Sufism in the works of previous scholars provides a rich perspective to understand the depth of the methodology used by the Kahfi Motivator School. The research on *qaṣīdah "Idhā Shi'ta An Taḥyā Sa'īand"* by Imam Abdullah Al-Haddad identified several Sufism values that are relevant to the discourse of character formation, including: *Mulāzamat al-Fikr* (consistency in reflection) which is implemented with consistency in thinking is operationalized through *the 7 Levels of Thinking* and the principle of *istiqāmah* in *Thinking Level 6b*, *al-Ṣabr* (patience) which is the peak of faith, *al-Tawakkul* (tawakal), *al-Riḍā* (willingness), *al-Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), and *al-Tawbah* (repentance). And this shows that Tubagus Wahyudi's methodology, although packaged in the language of modern communication psychology and neuroscience, is actually rooted in the classical scientific tradition of Sufism that has been epistemological for centuries.³⁰

The application of the 3C principle and obedience to *sunnatullāh* in Kahfi Motivator School has a very broad practical dimension, including respect for scientific authority or expertise. Tubagus emphasized that one of the keys to character change is the ability of students to subdue their egos in the face of rules and experts. Tubagus's interpretation of QS. an-Nisā': 59 regarding the command to obey Allah, the Messenger, and *Uḥlil Amri* is not limited to mere political authority, but is extended to functional authorities or experts in their respective fields. According to Tubagus, obedience to the "leader" includes teachers in education, doctors in health, and technicians in even the smallest technical problems. This is in line with the warning of the Prophet PBUH that handing over affairs to those who are not experts will invite destruction. By instilling a "don't fuss" attitude towards systemic rules and the direction of experts, Kahfi trains his students to have mental discipline which is the main foundation of *morality*.

The peculiarity of Tubagus's methodology lies in the definition of Motivational Interpretation as a driving instrument. Tubagus explained that Motivational Tafsir is not just an intellectual study of sacred texts that becomes the energy of behavior change, but an effort to interpret the Qur'an so that it becomes a motivational material that moves people to immediately practice Allah's commands and stay away from His prohibitions. This is in line with the need for the democratization of Islamic education that reaches all levels of society, as well as a curriculum reform that places character education as the core, not the fringes of the learning process. Tubagus's "Motivational Interpretation" can be seen as one of the

²⁹ Syarifah Hidayahna, "Evaluasi Program Pelatihan Pola Pikir Al-Qur'an di Kampus KAHFI Bagus Bina Cendekia (BBC) Motivator School" (Thesis, Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2020), 122.

³⁰ Deden Ahmad Shobari, Daud Lintang, and Ghazi Abdul Aziz, "Values Of Sufism In Qosidah Idzā Syi'ta An Taḥyā Sa'īdan By Imam Abdullah Al-Haddad" *DIRASAT: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2025, 60-61.

concrete solutions to respond to today's needs: he not only teaches values cognitively, but also creates a procedural mechanism so that the values that have been learned can be truly internalized and transformed into a real behavior. In this view, motivation is defined as a conscious effort to move oneself and others towards attitude change. Therefore, every course taught at Kahfi – including ³¹*public speaking* and *tazkiyatun nafs* – has the same estuary, namely worship and obedience. Tubagus emphasized:

"Kahfi is a learning institution to practice the Qur'an in daily life. The interpretation of the Qur'an here is called Motivational Interpretation, which is how we try to interpret the Qur'an so that we immediately practice what Allah commands and stay away from His prohibitions. Why learn public speaking? Because the Apostle has said, does not anyone go to hell unless it is the fruit of his word? So before you speak, think carefully."³²

In building the character of resilient students, Tubagus positions the character of Patience as a large umbrella that overshadows various other noble qualities. Based on the promise of Allah in QS. al-Baqarah: 153 that "Allah is with those who are patient," Tubagus analyzes that in patience lies a cluster of values of faith which include *ridha*, *tawadhu*, *sincerity*, *tawakal*, diligent worship, and generosity. The nature of patience is considered to be the end result of the correct thought process; Without the ability to think maturely, one will not be able to achieve a degree of patience. This causal relationship is very crucial in the Kahfi curriculum: the listener will be able to think, the person who thinks will be able to be patient, and the patient person is ultimately able to achieve and provide wide benefits.

As a conclusion to the mechanism of cognitive engineering, Tubagus emphasized the importance of sensory integration between the ear and the eye as the entrance to revelation. In line with the discussion of QS. al-A'rāf: 179, Tubagus explains that *the activity of Iqra'* includes two activities at once: seeing and hearing. Listening is positioned as the most decisive initial stage; People who don't want to hear will not be able to carry out the thought process. In Tubagus's perspective, reading is essentially "listening with the eyes." The recording of the Qur'an through visual (seeing the text) and auditory (listening to sounds/advice) is an inseparable unit to achieve total obedience. This emphasis on sensory functions proves that the methodology of Kahfi Motivator School works very fundamentally, namely improving the way humans capture universal information so that it can be processed into stable and religious character energy.

³¹ Azizah and Fauzi, "Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam (Studi Atas Pemikiran Azyumardi Azra)." 759-778.

³² Tubagus Wahyudi, In-Depth Interview (Transcript), April 15, 2026.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Kahfi Motivator School through the "Tafsir Motivation" methodology initiated by Tubagus Wahyudi succeeded in transforming *the values of tafakkur* in QS. Āli 'Imrān: 190–191, al-A'rāf: 179, and al-Ra'd: 3–4 became a cognitive engineering system that is applicable to heterogeneous audiences. Tubagus's analysis of these verses places *tafakkur* not as passive contemplation, but as a process of activating the five senses through the VAKGO method to supply truth data into *the qulūb* which acts as the main motherboard of humans. The value of *tafakkur* is systemically integrated in the *7 Levels of Thinking* curriculum to build *a profile of ulūl albāb* that is able to balance the dimensions of dhikr and thought in order to produce a logical understanding of the nature of creation and obedience to Allah's systemic rules (*sunnatullāh*).

The mechanism of character formation in Wahyudi's perspective is carried out operationally through the 4/4 Theory which harmonizes the dimensions of Thought (Head), Taste (Chest), Word (Oral), and Behavior (Action). Superior character is formed through the dominance of Thought over Feeling, where the Head who has been equipped with the logic of revelation is tasked with subduing the turmoil of emotions and *passions (nafs ammārah)* in the Chest through the principle of *sami'nā wa aṭa'nā*. The consistent repetition of the triumph of Mind over Taste under the umbrella of the 3C principle (*Commitment, Consistent, Consequence*) ultimately creates the "Soul as Energy" or *automatic pilot* of goodness. This indicates that the character has been perfectly internalized in the form of *nafs mutma'innah* which is reflected in verbal integrity and spontaneous actions.

The relevance of the findings of this study shows that the "Motivational Interpretation" model at Kahfi Motivator School has succeeded in bridging the gap between moral knowledge (*moral knowing*) and real action (*moral action*) which is often an obstacle in conventional character education. The development of the new idea of "Soul as Energy" makes an important contribution to the discourse of Islamic educational psychology, where the motivation to do good no longer depends on external stimuli but on the impulse of soul energy that has been automated through a continuous *process of tafakkur*. This model has the potential to be adopted more widely in various levels of education to produce human beings who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally resilient and beneficial to the wider community.

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