

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study focused on the levels of diverse groups of people in this modern society who understand the Qur'an. It analysed the characteristics of diverse groups of people who understand the Qur'an based on their certain levels of understanding. This thesis consists of five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Discussion, as well as Conclusion and Implications.

This introduction chapter began with the background of study in understanding the Qur'an and statement of the problem that highlighted the issue of Muslims who are not able to reflect their life according to the Qur'an. This is followed by two research objectives and three research questions. Following those are the conceptual framework and significance of the study towards the field of knowledge. Finally, the research limitations and the definition of terms applicable to the study.

1.1 Background of Study

As Muslims, it is compulsory to obey all the norms that have been outlined in Islam with the guidance of the Qur'an. Thus, Muslims must understand the Qur'an to become better Muslims. The Qur'an is the book that leads humankind to the light of Iman and provides knowledge from the darkness of ignorance and astray as mentioned in the Qur'an:

﴿الرَّكَتَبُ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ﴾

(Al-Qur'an. Ibrahim 14:1)

(Alif Lam Ra. (This is) a Book which We have revealed to you that you may bring forth men, by their Lord's permission from utter darkness into light-- to the way of the Mighty, the Praised One,)

The Prophet Muhammad PBUH had implemented five principles in learning and teaching the Qur'an to the Companion (companions of the Prophet) and followed until this day. The five principles are *Tilawah* (good and fluency recitation), *Tafahum* and *Tafseer* (knowing and understanding the meaning), *Tatbiq* (appreciate and implantation of the teaching in daily life), *Tahfiz* (memorising verses) and *Taranum* (reciting al-Qur'an with a good tone and proper melody) (Che Noh, Hussein, Ghani, & Suhid, 2013).

In terms of understanding the Qur'an, during the prophetic era, the Companion learned to understand the Qur'an directly from the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Their knowledge on understanding the Qur'an was undeniably comprehensive due to their passion for learning with the guidance from the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. However, there were times when the Companion misunderstood the real meaning of certain verses in the Qur'an. For the Companion to understand the exact and specific meaning of the verse, they sought explanations from the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Zarabozo, 1999). Thus, their lives were influenced by what had been emphasised by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and as well as how they were guided to approach and treat the Qur'an. As resulted in *Mufassirs* who were the expert comprehension of the Qur'an and become the reference for

Tabi'-Tabi'in to write Exegesis that can be used until today. With a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an, the teachings of the scripture could be fully observed.

The importance of the Qur'an in the lives of Muslims is emphasised in many hadiths. According to one of the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH recorded by An-Nasa'i. Sunan An-Nasa'i. The Book of the Commencement of the Prayer. Chapter: The virtue of reciting "Say: He is Allah, (the) One". Hadith No. 994:

(عَنْ عُثْمَانَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: " خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ ") . (صحيح)

Narrated by Uthman bin 'Affan (May Allah be pleased with him): *The Messenger of Allah PBUH said, "The best amongst you is the one who learns the Qur'an and teaches it"*. (Sahih)

This hadith talks about the close relationship between the Qur'an and Muslims. The importance of the Qur'an in a Muslim's life is very much highlighted as it stated the best among Muslims were those who were able to learn and teach the Qur'an.

Based on the importance of understanding the Quran above, this study aims to explore the levels of diverse groups of people in understanding the Qur'an. Then, this study also focusses on the characteristics of the diverse groups of people based on their level of understanding of the Qur'an that covers elements in their diversity such as age, gender, family status, personal habits, education, language, work experience, perceptions, feelings, culture, and belief. In general, this study aimed to answer three research questions and focus on two main research objectives. Specifically, this study used a case study design in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan.

1.2 Statement of The Problem

The Qur'an is, accordingly, guidance, a piece of evidence, a separation between right and wrong, and a guide to help Muslims in all their needs (Bhanji, 2014). Hence, we must understand the words of Allah and reflect as much as we can (Murad, 1985).

Some people only focus on reciting the Qur'an without having a real understanding of its meaning. They constantly recite the Qur'an multiple times, but they do not understand the meaning of what they have recited. Often, their main intention is to reap rewards from their recitation. However, to recite the Qur'an, it is equally important to understand the meaning and not simply to reap rewards. This is in line with the view of Al-Shaykh Abu 'Abd Allah al-Qarashī who mentioned that all words of the Qur'an are addressed to those who carefully observe their duty. Anyone who recites the Qur'an should believe, accept wholeheartedly, rely on, and turn to it with endurance, pleasure, thanks, hope, fear, and love (Badr al-Dīn Muhammad, 1980). Although we are not able to understand the meaning of verses in the Qur'an as written in the Exegesis in detail, we are encouraged to grab its lesson and teachings from it.

According to Imam al-Ghazali, he pointed the need on understanding the Qur'an in reciting the Qur'an which is:

1. Understanding the glorification of the literal words of Allah
2. Understanding the meaning of the verses recited
3. Avoiding the obstacle such as
 - Too much concentration on the pronunciation of letters to the effect on the understanding of the ayat,

- Rigid confinement of the exegesis based on the authentic transmission (*Tafsir bil al-ma'thur*),
4. Considering every part of the Qur'an is meant to the reciter
 5. Developing the feeling with the message of the Qur'an by creating grief, fear and hope. 'Recitation of the Qur'an in its real sense, says Iman al Ghazali is an activity in which the tongue the intellect and the mind all take part... the tongue is the exhorter the intellect is the translator (of what the understanding of the exhortation) and the mind is that which accept the exhortation). (Hafiz Ismail, 2005)

Thus, the Qur'an must be read to learn from and understand it. The Qur'an itself makes this clear:

﴿أَيْنَكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيَكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ﴾ ﴿٢٩﴾

(Al-Qur'an. Surah Al-Qasas 29:29)

("And when Moses had completed the term and was travelling with his family, he perceived from the direction of the mount a fire. He said to his family, "Stay here; indeed, I have perceived a fire. Perhaps I will bring you from there [some] information or burning wood from the fire that you may warm yourselves")

Despite all the reminders regarding the Qur'an and understanding it, there are many Muslims who do not reflect the blessings and guidance of its teachings. A possible cause for this is perhaps on how Muslims treat the Qur'an or how they approach it. As a result, it

leads to the problem where the guidance exists in the Qur'an, but it does not have the effects on Muslims as to how it is supposed to be (Zarabozo, 1999). Without understanding the real meaning of the Qur'an, it is very difficult to Muslim received its teachings and implemented them in their lives (Zakaria, Fuad, & Rasdi, 2014). Thus it can lead to concerning matters such as social problems among teenagers and youth Muslims. It was stated that the cause of this matter was due to their lack in the aspect of faith and spiritual fulfilment (Wan Kamarudin, 2015) which relates to their understanding of the Qur'an.

It is sad despite living and reflecting the Qur'an's teachings, in today's situation many of Muslims in this country do not understand the Qur'an (Mat Saad, 2015). Despite the importance of understanding the teachings of the Qur'an, Qur'anic lessons in Malaysia are not been concentrate and more focusing on memorisation. As a result, even *Huffaz* who can memorise the whole Qur'an is not able to fully understand what they have memorised (Ikhwanuddin & Che Noraini, 2014). Even though memorization of Qur'an's education has been developing tremendously, the students achievement in memorising the Qur'an is still not very encouraging. Weakness in understanding the meaning of Qur'anic phrases is believed to be one of the reasons for this limitation. Despite numerous studies, a knowledge gap still exists regarding the factors underpinning the problem of understanding the Qur'an (Hussin, Mustapha, Toklubok@Hajimaming, Alias, & Ismail, 2021). Without understanding the contents, the teaching may be lost. This was highlighted by the Former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Majlis Pelancaran Kempen 'Let's Read the Qur'an' (Hasli, 2016) saying that Muslims should aware that understanding the Qur'an is also essential to understand Islam.

The Qur'an is not only for reading, but more importantly, is to be understood to enable Muslims to observe its teachings. An understanding of how Muslims understand the Qur'an is imperative as comprehension took an important role to develop Muslims. Therefore, this study explored how Muslims among diverse groups of people understand the content of the Qur'an and their approach towards it. Hereby, we can understand how diverse groups of people among Muslims understand the content of the Qur'an and what exactly their characteristics in understanding it based on their levels of understanding.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study has two main research objectives (RO). The objectives are:

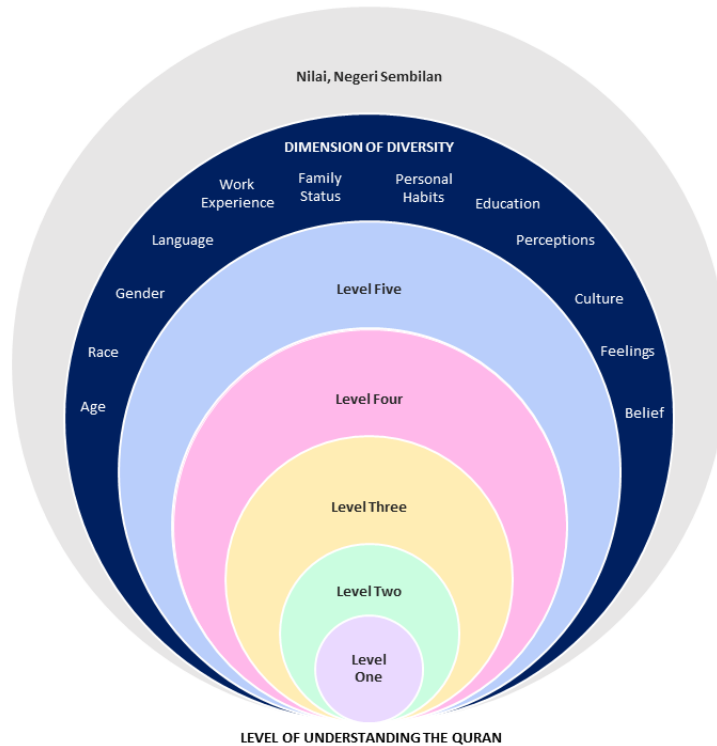
1. To explore the levels of understanding of the Qur'an among diverse groups of people.
2. To analyse the characteristics of diverse groups of people based on their level of understanding of the Qur'an.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to provide answers to three research questions (RQ). The questions are as follows:

1. How do diverse groups of people understand the Qur'an?
2. What are the levels of understanding of the Qur'an among diverse groups of people?
3. What are the characteristics of diverse groups of people based on their level of understanding of the Qur'an?

1.5 Conceptual Framework



Source: Ibn Qayyim (1996), Ksār (2003), Ibn Kathir, (1984) and Al-Mahalli & Al-Suyuti (2007)) and Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005)

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework Exploring the Levels and Characteristics Diverse Groups of People in Understanding the Qur'an: A Case Study in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan.

This figure shows the conceptual framework of the study. It illustrates the levels of understanding of the Qur'an and the characteristics of diverse groups of people. The levels of understanding of the contents of the Qur'an among diverse groups of people are divided into five levels, which are Level One, Level Two, Level Three, Level Four, and Level Five. The five levels in this conceptual framework are underpinned by categorisations developed by four scholars: Ibn Qayyim (1996), Ksār (2003), Ibn Kathir, (2003) and Al-Mahalli & Al-Suyuti (2007). Figure 1 shows that Level One can understand the content of literal and

minimum layer of understanding that is simple and clear explanations. All of the level's specifications require translation tools to understand the content of the Qur'an except Level Five.

Level Two is capable of understanding the content of the Qur'an along with the features from Level One but with a higher level of understanding the content of the Qur'an. People in this level would possess and understand the contextual meaning of the content of the Qur'an. Then, in Level Three will know quoting blessing elements from the verses. Blessing elements indicate virtues and benefits for example those who read Surah Al-Mulk will be protected from the torments after they die in the grave later.

Furthermore, the next level has the advantages of explaining a deeper understanding by conveying the meaning globally of the verses or surah from the Qur'an. The highest level, able to merge their opinion from another field of knowledge as an open-minded and intellectual people that are experts in the Qur'anic field of knowledge. Conversely, people in this level didn't need additional translation tools to help them understand the content of the Qur'an.

The different levels of understanding are governed by the dimension of diversity (Rijamampianina & Carmichael, 2005). The dimension of diversity includes age, race, gender, language, work experience, family status, personal habit, education, perceptions, culture, feelings and beliefs. The combination between levels of understanding and dimension of diversity is used to analyse the possible link between background characteristics and its relationship with levels of the contents of the Qur'an. A more detailed explanation of the characterisation of the levels, as well as the background characteristics are presented in 2.4 Characteristics Diverse Groups of People.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study will not only enrich and enhance the literature in the area of understanding the Qur'an. Specifically, this study explored diverse groups of people in this modern society who understand the Qur'an due to the lack of studies towards it. In addition, it enhanced the effort to develop the diverse groups of people understands the Qur'an in terms of different levels of understanding to this first source of Muslim's references. Their differences in terms of understanding the Qur'an can be categorised to see how every Muslim is capable to understand the message brought from the Qur'an. It also issuing characteristics of diverse groups of people on how they live and understand the Qur'an through their whole life.

Besides that, the findings in this study served as the guideline to academicians such as teachers to know their student's level of understanding of the Qur'an. It is beneficial to use in the process of learning the Qur'an. Therefore, teachers will know on which level their students can understand the Qur'an and help in using the suitable approaches based on the student's levels of understanding. Furthermore, it is capable to provide some suggestions to help understand the Qur'an better such as probability in creating a new interpretation that is more easily understood by all types of diverse groups of people. Meanwhile, it also can help Muslim programmers to measure levels of understanding the Qur'an using information and technology instruments to help in the future.

Lastly, this study will help in issuing the approach to any party especially the Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) to enhance the understanding of the Qur'an through the findings from this study. They can generate enhancement in factors that encourage a diverse group of people today to understand the Qur'an at every level such as

from the aspect of personal habits, family background, beliefs and others. For instance, a person might be able to understand in Level Two because of his awareness of the importance of understanding the Qur'an or academic religious education or personal habits or others. Thus, it can improve the understanding of the Qur'an and help to solve problems in Muslim society when they return to the guidance teachings from the Qur'an.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Diversity is classified into many types such as race, age, gender, and others. Due to the broad scopes of diverse groups of people, researchers focus on diversity in terms of age. The specification age for the research participants was around 16 until 64 years old, which is the highest ratio of the population according to the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2016).

The population limitation focused on area Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. In terms of the contents of the Qur'an, the study did not use the whole Qur'an. Instead, vision and sight verses and Surah Al-Ikhlās were selected from the Qur'an to be questioned by the participants to gain data on their understanding of the Qur'an. The frequency of vision and sight verses from the Qur'an is 765 times, which deserves to be discussed. Vision and sight verses also can capture different meanings such as how the heart sees, opinion, though, witnesses, or evidence. Vision and sight sense work using the eyes, which is a vital organ of the human body. Surah Al-Ikhlās was also chosen because it is one of the common surahs that are always being recited by Muslims of all ages. It is one of the short Surah categorised in *Al-Mufasssol* from the Qur'an but can give broad meaning on understanding it.

1.8 Definition of the Terms

Below are terms definitions according to how they were operationalised in this study.

1.8.1 Exploring the Levels and Characteristics

This study utilised five levels of understanding the Qur'an to explore diverse groups of people who understand the Qur'an. The specifications of levels are build according to the contemporary and classic scholar categorisation by Ibn Qayyim (1996), Ksār (2003), Ibn Kathir, (2003) and Al-Mahalli & Al-Suyuti (2007). Meanwhile, the characteristics of diverse groups of based on the categorisation in Dimension of Diversity by Rijamampianina & Carmichael (2005) as the link to analyse the characteristics of diverse groups based on their levels of understanding the Qur'an. Further explanations for these two main points will be discussed in Chapter 2.

1.8.2 Diverse Groups of People

The characteristics of the dimension of diversity in this study are age, gender, family status, personal habits, education, language, work experience, perceptions, feelings, culture, and beliefs. Meanwhile, the term of diverse groups of people refers to those in the education sector which includes those in high schools and university.

1.8.3 Understanding the Qur'an

Specifically, the term of understanding Qur'an refers to *Tafseer*, which also carried out the surface and direct explanation, interpretation, commentary and uncover the Will of Allah SWT in the Qur'an. It needs to be understood through the medium of Arabic language and knowledge (Doi, 1997) and the aspect in *Tafseer* is 'interpret'. The meaning of the term 'understand' in this is not holistically and spiritually understand and capture the real meaning of the Qur'an, but it is based on the aspect of the capability of diverse groups of people to understand the Qur'an and grab lessons from it. Thus, in this study researcher

used vision and sight verses and Surah Al-Ikhlās from the Qur'an to explore on how diverse groups of people nowadays understand the contents of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an contains the words of Allah SWT almighty God as guidance and discusses many topics such as previous peoples, laws, ethics, faith, afterlife, science and so on. Due to its broad contents, the researcher used two types of contents from the Qur'an, which include verses and surah. The researcher chooses Surah Al-Ikhlās and four verses about vision and sight as the vehicle to find out on how diverse groups of people were able to understand the Qur'an.

Vision and sight in the Arabic language which is also the language of the Qur'an called 'بَصَرَ' 'basara' but this word is not the only word that points out the meaning of vision and sight. Other words lead to the synonym's words of 'basara' which are شَهِدَ "syahada', نَظَرَ "nazara', رَأَى "raā", رَمَقَ "romaqa', رَاقَبَ "rāqaba', مَعْرِفَةً "ma'rifah', هَدَى "hada' and many others (Almaany, 2016).

Vision and sight in the Arabic language definitions refer to, a thing or idea perceived vividly in imagination, ability to see a subject, cleverness, keenness, perception, smartness, perceptiveness, state of having insight, good judgment or insight, regard or provision for the future or wisdom, having common sense, noticing, or understanding things. In this study, the researcher plans to explore the understanding of the Qur'an to a diverse group of people using Vision and sight-related to 'بَصَرَ' verses from the Qur'an.

Surah Al- Ikhlas is located in Chapter 30 as the 112th Surah, which includes four verses. The term *Ikhlas* carries out the meaning of *sincere*. This Surah proclaims the oneness of Allah SWT and this concept indicates in the first verse in the Surah. Then, the second verse declares about the perfections of Allah SWT and As-Samad as one of the names of Him in the *Asmaul-Husna*. He is the only one that everybody depends on but He does not depend on anyone and Allah SWT is no equal to any of His creations. In the third verse, it describes that Allah SWT was never be born or He gives birth to anyone.

Lastly, in the last verse, it declares that He is the God that is beyond any comparison of creatures. Surah Al-Ikhlas is also one of the surahs that directly support the one and the first pillar of Islam, the *Shahadah* which is “*There is no God except Allah.*”

1.9 Chapter Summary

To summarise, the research goal was to answer three research questions to seek diverse groups of people understanding the Qur'an in the specification of levels and characteristics using two samples which are vision and sight verses and Surah Al-Ikhlas. The study suggested becoming enhancement in exploring the understanding of the Qur'an and how concern diverse groups of Muslims are these days towards the Qur'an. To ease the study's understanding, the researcher clarifies all the terms from the title.