MAQÂSIDÎ TAFSIR AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF EDUCATION IN Q.S. AL-'ALAQ: A Quranic Vision for Learning

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Abstract

Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5, *widely regarded as the first revelation of the Quran, presents a foundational and epistemological vision that emphasizes literacy, divine-human connection, and the pursuit of knowledge. More than a mere command to "read," the passage constitutes a profound ethical and spiritual framework that remains highly relevant in the context of modern education— particularly amid the challenges posed by digital fragmentation, superficial information consumption, and declining spiritual orientation. This study critically examines the epistemology of Islamic education embedded in Q.S. al-Alaq* [96]:1-5 *through the lens of maqâsidî tafsîr, a purposive interpretation approach that seeks to uncover the higher objectives (maqâsidî) of the text. Utilizing library research and comparative textual analysis, this study engages classical and contemporary exegeses—such as al-Tabarî tafsîr, al- Qurṭubî tafsîr, al-Misbah tafsîr, and the works of Ibn Âshûr and Jasser Auda. Three core contributions emerge. First, the study proposes a tawhîd-centered literacy paradigm that aligns reading with spiritual awareness. Second, it constructs an integrative epistemological model wherein revelation and reason ('aql) are coequal sources of knowledge. Third, it frames moral responsibility and lifelong learning as essential components of Islamic educational philosophy. By articulating a spiritually grounded, purpose-driven vision of education, this research offers a timely and transformative response to the epistemic crises of the digital age. It contributes to*

contemporary Islamic educational discourse by reasserting the Quranic foundation for ethical, holistic, and forward-looking learning frameworks.

Introduction

Islamic education has historically played a central role in the intellectual and civilizational development of Muslim societies. The first revealed verses of Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5, with their resounding command to *iqra'* (read), signify not only a spiritual awakening but also the genesis of an epistemological revolution in Islam (Fauzi & Chirzin 2023, 75). However, in the 21st century, Islamic education faces multidimensional challenges: global literacy deficits, technological lag in pedagogical methods, and the underutilization of Islamic epistemological frameworks in addressing contemporary issues.

According to UNESCO (2022), the adult literacy rates in major Muslim-majority countries, such as Pakistan (58.9%), Nigeria (62.0%), and Bangladesh (74.7%) fall significantly below the global average of 86.7%. Moreover, Rosi and Fahmi (2022) indicated that the Indonesian Muslim literacy rate also decreases. This suggests that despite the theological emphasis on knowledge in Islam, educational infrastructures and philosophies in these contexts remain underdeveloped. This issue depicts the slow pace of digital transformation in Islamic educational institutions. While some initiatives in countries like Indonesia and the UAE have adopted digital platforms, many others still heavily rely on rote learning and conventional religious instruction, failing to harness technology as a pedagogical tool (Jayana & Mansur 2021, 189).

Amidst these realities, there is a need to revisit the epistemological foundations of Islamic education—especially through frameworks that move beyond literal or thematic interpretations. The *maqāṣidî tafsîr* approach offers a compelling methodology to understand the deeper purposes (*maqāṣidî sharîa*), which are embedded within the verses of Q.S. al-Alaq (Wijaya & Muzammil 2021, 450). Yet, existing studies have fallen short in this regard. Majid (2020), for instance, explores Q.S. al-Alaq from a thematic lens but neglects the broader sociocultural implications of its

message. Rahman (1982) emphasizes the methodological implications of *iqra'* for global literacy but stops short of developing a *maqâṣidî*-based educational framework. Meanwhile, Subakat (2022) and Mohammed (2024) propose a theo-anthropological balance and a scientometric study, but they do not fully elucidate how Q.S. al-Alaq could guide epistemology in the digital age.

Moreover, comparative studies between Islamic and Western epistemologies are rare and underdeveloped, despite their potential to yield integrative educational models. In the most current literature, Western frameworks—based on rationalism and empiricism—are either uncritically adopted or entirely dismissed, instead of being constructively engaged alongside revelation-based knowledge systems rooted in the Quran (Hantoro 2020, 8).

These gaps point out an urgent need for a *maqâṣidî*-sensitive interpretation of Q.S. al-Alaq that can serve as a philosophical foundation for Islamic education in the digital era. Such an interpretation must not only explore the theological and ethical dimensions of *iqra'*, *'ilm*, and *qalam*, but also reframe them in the context of contemporary educational priorities: digital literacy, lifelong learning, and critical thinking.

This study investigates how the verses of *Q.S. al-Alaq* [96]:1-5, when interpreted through the *maqâṣidî tafsîr* approach, can offer a robust epistemological foundation for modern Islamic education that is both spiritually rooted and responsive to the digital age. It seeks to explore the epistemological values embedded in the surah through a purposive (*maqâṣidî*-oriented) lens and to assess how these values may be integrated into contemporary educational frameworks, including digital literacy and lifelong learning. The research further examines the distinctions and potential synergies between the epistemological vision of Q.S. al-Alaq and prevailing Western educational paradigms. Finally, it aims to evaluate how a *maqâṣidî* interpretation of the surah can inform curriculum development that is faithful to Islamic revelation while engaging with the pedagogical and technological challenges of a globalized educational landscape.

By addressing these goals, this research aims to contribute both conceptually and practically to the advancement of Islamic education. It proposes that Q.S. al-Alaq, understood through the *maqâṣidî* lens, is not merely a command for humans to be fond of reading, but a timeless manifesto for ethical, purposeful, and transformative education in a rapidly changing world.

Research Method

The present research employs a qualitative approach with a literature research design, which is most suitable for studying interpretations and epistemological frameworks in Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5. Applying this approach is appropriate to implement because it offers a close analysis of the philosophical and interpretive nature of the verses and their alignment with contemporary epistemological debate (Creswell 2013, 95). By focusing on primary and secondary sources, this research aims to understand the epistemology of Islamic education based on the *maqâṣidî tafsîr* concept, which opens up the higher purpose of education beyond the literal interpretation of the verse. The tafsir sources used in this research are *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* by Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Jâmi' li Aḥkam al-Quran* by al-Qurṭubî, and *Tafsir al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab.

These writings are chosen because they provide elaborate descriptions of Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5 and are greatly esteemed in Islamic scholarship both in classical and contemporary learning. In addition, *maqâṣidî*-inspired *tafsirs* written by Ibn Âshûr and Jasser Auda are included to examine how Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5 guides an education system based on *maqâṣidî sharîa* with a focus on benefits and well-being in the society. The exclusion of other *tafsirs*, although acknowledged, is due to the specific emphasis on *maqâṣidî* and the conceptual framework that these selected *tafsirs* offer for understanding the integration of Islamic values into modern education. Through this qualitative method, the research compares Islamic epistemology derived from Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5 with Western educational theories, such as constructivism, critical thinking, and lifelong learning.

This comparative analysis aids in identifying the similarities and dissimilarities of the knowledge approach and character building in both systems of education. Moreover, the research discusses how the lessons of Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5 can be adapted to modern education models, specifically digital literacy, and can incorporate Islamic principles into contemporary curricula. Using these sources and methods, the research aims to give an overall image of how Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5 offers an epistemological foundation for an Islamic education system that is eternal but flexible based on the needs of the information era.

Results and Discussion
Epistemology of Islamic Education in Q.S. al-Alaq 1-5

The initial injunction, "Recite in the name of your Lord Who created" (Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1), is not a literal invitation to recite. In al-Ṭabarî tafsir and al-Qurṭubî tafsir, conscious reading that begins with divine consciousness (*bismi rabbika*) - is emphasized; that is, real knowledge in Islam must be derived from the awareness of God. Islamic epistemology of education, thus, is ultimately grounded in *tawhid*, the affirmation of divine unity, which underlies the purpose and ethical guidance of knowledge (al-Qurṭubî 2015, 2451; al-Ṭabarî 1992, 11132).

The third line, "Recite, and your Lord is the Most Generous," follows this idea, suggesting that seeking to know is paid back by the generosity of God. Rahman (1982) interprets this verse as highlighting a two-way relationship between human effort in the pursuit of knowledge and the facilitation of God. Confining the epistemological argument to verses 1 and 3 could ignore the inherent contribution of the following verses, especially verse 4.

Verse 4, "Who taught by the pen (*qalam*)," has also been interpreted differently by traditional and contemporary *mufassirs* (the writer of the *tafsir* or interpreter of Quran). While *qalam* traditionally was the writing instrument, contemporary scholars like Auda (2008) and Shihab (2002) broaden the meaning to include all media of knowledge recording and technological intermediation. Nowadays, *qalam* can symbolize digital tools-computers, cell phones, data banks-employed as extension tools for the traditional pen in writing, storage, and communication of knowledge. Hence, in this context, *qalam* testifies to Islamic epistemology's methodological side: not just what is known, but how it is preserved, verified, and transmitted.

Verse 5, "Taught man what he did not know," introduces a third angle: the dynamic character of the process of gaining knowledge. To Muhammad Abduh, this is testimony to human capabilities for continuous learning, creativity, and questioning, directed by God's wisdom. This implies that Islamic epistemology is neither static nor reduced to revealed knowledge alone, but open to experimentation, empirical observation, and rational insight, as long as these are anchored on ethical awareness and humility before God.

Together, verses 1-5 build an entire epistemological framework. Verse 1-2 tell us about Tawhid and the divine origin of knowledge. Verse

3 tells us about moral generosity and the desire to seek knowledge. Verse 4 informs humans about the method of transmitting knowledge and instruments (*qalam*). Verse 5, at last, informs us about human continuous learning and God's provision of epistemic growth.

In Tafsir al-Misbah, it is stated that the undefined object of *iqrâ'* suggests an open-ended directive—to read not just scripture but also the "texts" of the universe: nature, society, and history (Shihab 2002, 145). It means that Islamic education must embrace multi-disciplinary approaches, integrating revealed knowledge with social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities.

Contemporary methods, such as the one proposed by Jasser Auda, offer a *maqâṣidî*-focused epistemology—where knowledge is assessed according to its greater objectives (e.g., justice, dignity, welfare). This accommodates the integrative spirit of Q.S. al-Alaq: a synthesis of revelation and reason, scripture and experience, faith and function.

Therefore, this chapter is both a general introduction to Islamic educational epistemology and an introduction to a focused analysis of Q.S. al-Alaq as a foundational epistemological text. Rather than being seen as a call to literacy, it is interpreted as a declaration of an Islamic scientific paradigm that unites spiritual purpose, ethical guidance, rational investigation, and methodological discipline.

Maqâṣidî Tafsir of Q.S. al-Alaq

Maqâṣidî tafsir deals with the wisdom and general goal of Islamic teachings, and not necessarily a literal understanding of the text (Auda 2008, 249). The theory was first formulated by Âshûr, a Tunisian scholar and *mufassir*, in his *tafsir*, *Tafsîr al-Tahrîr wa al-Tanwîr*. For him, the explanation of the Quranic verses is not only achievable by the examination of textual and historical issues, but also by considering the general goals to be pursued in human existence (Âshûr 2006, 321). This concept was subsequently developed by Auda (2008), who investigated *maqâṣidî sharia* as an elastic and time-relevant methodology of Islamic thought related to the advancement of the times.

In the framework of *maqâṣidî tafsir*, Q.S. al-Alaq represents the paramount principle of Islamic education, i.e., the harmony between revelation and reason. Islam views science as the outcome of two main sources: experiments and observations, and the guidance of revelation that provides a moral and ethical foundation in its application (Âshûr 2006,

321). Therefore, the Islamic education system must not use knowledge as a tool to gain worldly things only. Science must be guided towards a balance between intellectualism and spirituality, as commanded in Q.S. al-Alaq.

The approach of *maqâṣidî tafsir* applied by Ibn Âshûr in *Tafsîr al-Taḥrîr wa al-Tanwîr* affirms that Q.S. al-Alaq does not only talk about individual literacy, but it also has vast implications in the formulation of an Islamic education system with an orientation of communal welfare (Âshûr 2006, 322). He understood that this first revelation emphasized not only the importance of knowledge seeking, but how science must function as an instrument for building a righteous and moral civilization.

Âshur (2006) says that Islamic education involves three main dimensions under the concept of *maqâṣidî*: maturing the intellect, developing character, and contributing to society. He clarified in his interpretation that science in Islam is not a tool to achieve a higher social status or economic progress alone, but must be directed to pursue prosperity and harmony in communal life. Hence, science must be a vehicle for humans to learn God's laws and apply them in an equitable and moral social order.

Apart from that, Âshûr (2006) also condemns the separation between moral values and science. He emphasizes that knowledge that is not based on the principles of ethics and *maqâṣidî sharia* can be exploited for the benefit of certain individuals or groups of individuals that are detrimental to social cohesion in reality. In this context, he reminded us of the necessity of science, which is not only based on rationality and experiment but also on sound spirituality and morality. This is a powerful application within the field of modern Islamic education. He urges Muslims to not just heed the technically conveying of knowledge, but also to ensure that the conveyed knowledge positively impacts civilization. Q.S. al-Alaq, in its *maqâṣidî tafsir*, is thus not just a call to the pursuit of knowledge, but a call to the building of an educational system founded upon an equilibrium of intellectualism, morality, and social responsibility.

Contemporary thinkers, like Jasser Auda, say that the *maqâṣidî* approach of Q.S. al-Alaq has great applicability in addressing challenges of the contemporary world. He explains that the implication of *iqra'* is not merely the reading of texts, but rather the ability to read social, political, and cultural realities that continue to change (Auda 2022, 32). In this context, Islamic education must be able to keep pace with the times,

technology, and the needs of the international community for the spirit of Q.S. al-Alaq is to give priority to the acquisition of knowledge without limit.

Auda (2022) noted that, since the beginning, Islam has taught a scientific tradition that is dynamic, but in fact, the majority of contemporary Islamic educational systems are static and less responsive to technological progress. He blamed the education model that is still based on memorization, without provoking critical and creative thought. In his opinion, the principle of *iqra'* in the framework of *maqâṣidî* does not always mean reading the book of God, but also reading phenomena, scientific advancements, and global developments to enable Muslims to be more engaged in world civilization.

Moreover, he proposed that Islamic education needs to embark on a systems approach, through which there may be a synthesis between religious science and modern science. He was interested in the use of technology in Islamic education, not just as a tool, but within a larger learning environment. Through this kind of approach, Islamic education not only survives during times of change, but can also be a source of innovation and solutions to human problems.

Thus, the *maqâṣidî* interpretation of Q.S. al-Alaq constructed by Jasser Auda offers a more responsive and dynamic Islamic education model. Islamic education is not solely past-oriented, but it also has to be able to respond to the demands of the times by adhering to the fundamental values taught by the Quran.

From the various interpretations that have been analyzed, it can be concluded that Q.S. al-Alaq teaches that Islamic education must be guided to obtain three main points: intellectuality, morality, and social usefulness. Education that is only intended for the procurement of knowledge without forming character and social awareness will lose the essence of Islamic teachings. Therefore, the system of Islamic education has to be designed not to impart religious science or general science separately but to convey it together in a complementary whole. Table 1 summarizes the main epistemological themes in Q.S. al-Alaq as understood through the *maqâṣidî tafsir*.

Table 1

Epistemological Themes in Q.S. al-Alaq Based on Maqâsidî-Oriented Tafsir

Concept	Meaning and Implications (Based on *Maqâsidî-Oriented Tafsir*)
Iqrâ' (Read)	A call to intellectual awakening, encouraging reflection, transformation, and purpose-driven learning. Emphasizes *hifz al-'aql* (preserving intellect) and moral consciousness (Auda 2008; Âshûr, 1984).
'Ilm (Knowledge)	Knowledge arises from both revelation and reason, serving ethical and social reform. Aligns with public benefit (*maslahah*) and intellectual empowerment (Auda 2008).
Qalam (Documentation)	A symbol of civilizational continuity. Represents the responsibility to preserve, institutionalize, and transmit beneficial knowledge, upholding *hifz al-'aql* and *hifz al-nasl* (Auda 2008; Âshûr, 1984).
Tarbiyah (Holistic Education)	Encompasses intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. Islamic education must aim for societal reform (*islâh al-mujtama'*) and human development in line with all five objectives of the Sharia.

Comparison of Islamic Epistemology in Q.S. al-Alaq with Western Educational Epistemology

There is a foundational difference between Islamic and Western epistemology. Islamic epistemology is revelation-centric, in which knowledge originates from divine sources and is interpreted by reason within an ethical framework. In contrast, Western epistemology evolved primarily through rationalism and empiricism, placing human cognition and sensory data as the core foundations of truth (Rahman 1982, 112). While both systems aim at discovering knowledge, their ontological and axiological assumptions diverge significantly.

Q.S. al-Alaq (1-5) provides a theological scaffold for an integrated epistemology: it affirms revelation (*iqrâ' bi-smi rabbik*), emphasizes the medium of knowledge transmission (*'allama bil-qalam*), and acknowledges the evolving human understanding (*mâ lam ya'lam*). These verses establish knowledge as a divine gift, imbued with moral purpose and spiritual proximity (Âshûr 2006, 321). Unlike the Enlightenment-rooted Western model, which tends to separate scientific inquiry from ethical or metaphysical concerns, the Islamic model seeks their unification.

However, viewing Western epistemology as monolithically secular is also reductive. While figures like Descartes and Hume emphasized deductive logic and empirical verification, contemporary thinkers have pointed to the epistemic crisis caused by hyper-empiricism—such as ethical voids in AI, biotechnology, or capitalism-driven innovation. This critique is echoed by Fata (2018), who argue for a "science based on faith" that repositions science as a servant of morality and not merely material progress.

The Islamic tradition offers a model in which *'aql* (reason) and *naql* (revelation) do not compete but complement each other. Classical scholars such as al-Fârâbî, Ibn Sinâ, and al-Ghazâlî achieved epistemological synthesis by integrating Aristotelian logic with Quranic ontology. Yet, unlike the Western positivist model, their objective was not only factual discovery but the ethical transformation of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and social harmony (Muzakki 2009, 86).

More recently, Amril, et.al. (2023) traced how Islamic philosophy transitioned from metaphysical synthesis in the classical period to more fragmented approaches today. They emphasize the urgency to reintegrate *maqâṣidî*-based epistemology that engages global scientific discourse without abandoning the spiritual telos of knowledge.

Instead of framing Islamic and Western epistemology as dichotomous, it is more productive to explore their constructive engagement. A *maqâṣidî*-oriented reading of Q.S. al-Alaq allows for incorporating modern scientific methods—experimentation, critical thinking, and innovation—while embedding them within ethical limits derived from revelation. For instance, digital literacy and lifelong learning can be pursued not merely for efficiency or profit but as a part of the Islamic imperative to seek knowledge that uplifts humanity (*maṣlaḥah*).

In this light, Islamic education must reject blind imitation (*taqlîd*) of Western systems while avoiding stagnation. A *maqâṣidî tafsîr* perspective, informed by Q.S. al-Alaq, can lead to a curriculum that unites the spiritual, rational, and empirical dimensions of learning. Such synthesis would not only revitalize Islamic education but also offer a valuable critique to global knowledge systems that are increasingly technocratic yet ethically uncertain.

The Relevance of Q.S. al-Alaq to Modern Islamic Education

In the rapidly evolving digital era, the biggest challenge facing education is no longer the issue of offering access to information, but rather how to enable individuals to sift, understand, and critically address information. The speed of data flow that digital technology can handle has revolutionized the way humans learn and apply science. This is where the relevance of Q.S. al-Alaq 1-5, especially the concept of *iqra'*, comes very much into play in constructing digital literacy that not only concerns the quantity of information ingested but also the quality of knowledge derived from it (Hantoro 2020, 8). *Iqra'*, according to the *maqâsidî tafsîr* perspective, is not just a technical reading activity. It reflects the human duty to perceive reality as it is, distinguishes between truth and falsehood, and acquires knowledge that will result in civilization (Auda 2008, 249). This approach is reinforced by the view that Islamic reformist thought emphasizes a critical approach to understanding sacred texts to distinguish truth from subjective interpretations, a process essential for confronting contemporary epistemological transformations (Ibrahim 2014, 40; Inayatullah 1996, 332).

In the present more digitized environment, digital literacy is one of the prerequisite skills for being able to utilize information morally and effectively. In Tafsir Al-Misbah, Shihab emphasizes that *iqra'* is not only about reading written words on paper, but also includes the ability to understand the signs of life and phenomena around human beings (Shihab 2002, 146). If interpreted in the contemporary digital era, *iqra'* can be understood as the ability to comprehend information in various forms, such as text, image, video, and statistical information provided through digital media (Sassi 2023, 92). Islamic responses to emerging scientific, technological, and epistemological transformations necessitate that Muslim scholars not merely react to these changes but proactively shape an Islamic response that integrates contemporary advancements with Islamic principles (Inayatullah 1996, 332). Therefore, a Muslim must not only be an information consumer but also a responsible and credible knowledge generator.

Disinformation and misinformation are two of the most threatening issues in the digital era, with the potential to spread quickly across social media and algorithmic platforms. Tafsir al-Ṭabarî illustrated that authentic knowledge must stem from good sources and through intensive comprehension (al-Ṭabarî 1992, 11123). The importance of this

policy is keenly felt in today's modernization, where humans need the capabilities to discern whether information received is acceptable or fabricated or false. Digital literacy, as underscored in the *maqâṣidî tafsîr* tradition of Q.S. al-Alaq, transcends mere technological competence to use information. Instead, it is a critical understanding of choosing, examining, and disseminating information of high moral integrity. Islamic epistemology highlights that God has endowed humanity with creative and conceptual knowledge to fulfill their responsibilities as His vicegerents, making it incumbent to mold knowledge within the Islamic framework, aiming to establish an Islamic system (Azram 2012, 180).

Q.S. al-Alaq has a direct relation to lifelong learning. This verse demands that the pursuit of knowledge is not to be limited to a phase of life but must be a part of human life until the last moment (Majid 2020, 85). In Tafsir al-Quṛṭubî, it is claimed that knowledge in Islam is not confined to a specific time, but is a continuous process evolving with increasing experience and changing times (al-Quṛṭubî 1964). With the advent of technology, the definition of *iqrâ'* can be considered as continuously learning and staying abreast of the times, developing competence professionally, and understanding new developments technologically, spiritually, and Islamically through various digital media. The Islamization of knowledge project actively seeks to integrate Islamic values and principles into various fields of knowledge, moving beyond a purely secular framework to foster a holistic understanding, which also involves critical self-reflection to ensure Muslim education complements public education while maintaining its unique identity (Niyozov & Memon 2011, 6).

In the context of digital literacy, the words *'allama bil-qalam* found in Q.S. al-Alaq also tell the importance of documentation and preservation of knowledge in various forms of media (Jayana & Mansur 2021, 189). Whereas, in the past, knowledge was transmitted only through manuscripts and printed books. Now, knowledge is recorded and circulated through digital media in the form of electronic journals, social media, and cloud computing. The *maqâṣidî tafsîr* exemplifies that the general aim of Islamic education is to provide knowledge to a population as broad as possible in a systematic and accountable manner (Auda 2008, 250). Thus, Islam teaches that technological progress ought to be utilized to expand science and not to be used as a mere tool for entertainment or economic benefit.

The threat to lifelong learning during the information era is not merely the knowledge material itself, but also people's eagerness to acquire knowledge. As cited in the *Tafsir* of Ibn Âshûr, knowledge under Islam is never intended to remain static but is destined to become greater because Allah empowers humankind to continually extend their knowledge concerning the world and themselves (Âshûr 2006, 321). Al-Ṭâhir Ibn Âshûr's reformist thought emphasizes the importance of *maqâṣidî sharîa* in understanding and applying Islamic law, advocating for renewal (*tajdîd*) based on the comprehensive objectives of Islamic legislation rather than rigid adherence to past interpretations (Suleimân et al. 2024, 273). Here, digital literacy is not just about technical proficiency in handling digital machinery, but it is an intellectual awareness that science should be updated frequently according to changing times. Therefore, lifelong learning must be a part of a Muslim's life, as informed in Q.S. al-Alaq.

In addition to the dimensions of lifelong learning and digital literacy, Q.S. al-Alaq also emphasizes that knowledge must be applied for the right reason and the society's benefit. Science in Islamic epistemology is not merely a tool for acquiring social status and worldly benefits, but it possesses an ethical dimension and moral responsibility (Subakat & Harahap 2022, 68). This is what sets the concept of Islamic education apart from most modern education systems that typically aim at acquiring technical skills without regard for moral and spiritual values. Naquib al-Attas's theory of *ta'dîb* underscores this by defining Islamic education as instilling *adab* (right conduct) through the recognition and acknowledgment of God as the ultimate reality, fostering individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also ethically grounded and socially responsible (Ahmed 2016, 786; Ahmed & Chowdhury 2025, 153). Therefore, in the digitalization of education, Muslims ought to use technology guided by the principle of responsibility and the awareness that knowledge must be utilized for the good of humankind. Islamic pedagogy, deeply rooted in the Quran and Sunnah, emphasizes holistic development, character building, and the integration of knowledge with practice (Memon et al. 2021, 635).

Learning in the age of information also introduces new challenges to data and information management, which in most cases is vulnerable to abuse for political, economic, or ideological purposes. Q.S. al-Alaq teaches that knowledge should always be directed towards goodness and justice and not towards manipulation or exploitation. Within *maqâṣidî*

tafsîr, the study and dissemination of knowledge, in turn, need to rely on the grounds of honesty and truth, both in accordance with al-*Quṛtubî sharîa* concerning education (Auda 2008, 252). Thus, in an increasingly digitized world, the Islamic education system should ensure that technology is not just utilized as a means to acquire knowledge but also as a way of upholding the ethos of truth and justice.

In conclusion, Q.S. al-Alaq has a strong influence on Islamic education in today's digital era, specifically on digital literacy, lifelong learning, and the ethics of using technology to attain them. It is not only that Islam instructs human beings to seek knowledge, but also how to use knowledge responsibly and constructively. The concept of *iqra'* in the present can be viewed as the duty of Muslims to learn more, keep pace with technology, and develop knowledge while respecting the values of Islamic ethics and revelation. The challenges of emerging scientific, technological, and epistemological transformations necessitate a proactive Islamic response that integrates contemporary advancements with Islamic principles (Inayatullah 1996, 349). Thus, Islamic education, as reflected in Q.S. al-Alaq, is not only relevant in the past but also highly relevant in solving the problems of the 21st century.

Development of the Concept of Education in Q.S. al-Alaq

Q.S. al-Alaq [96]: 1-5 have a profound significance in shaping the epistemological structure of Islamic education. These verses do not merely command the practice of reading (*iqrâ'*), but they have a deeper structure of knowledge that blends revelation, reason, and morality. Subakat, Sirait, Faiz, and Nasution (2022) mentioned that the semiotic composition inserted into these verses shows a panoramic education paradigm, which foregrounds spiritual awareness, logic, ethics, and social renewal integration in Islamic education. That concurs with *maqâṣidî tafsir* or exegesis methodology since Islamic education comes from a synecdoche mentality that captures its intellectual, spiritual, and ethical aspects as a part of addressing the entire humans as the holistic creatures of God.

The concept of *iqra'* mentioned in Q.S. al-Alaq transcends reading books. It is an activity of interiorizing knowledge that produces scientific consciousness. Semiotically, *iqra'* is an act of interpretation involving signs, sense, and contextual intelligence based on revelation from the divine. The above perspective suggests that reading in Islam is a multidimensional

cognitive activity, involving contemplation and profound understanding of religious and empirical truths.

Besides, Q.S. al-Alaq accentuates the syncretism of revelation and reason in the learning process. It reflects that the gaining of knowledge is not only an empirical phenomenon, but is also derived from the divine guidance. This concept is parallel with the *maqâsidî* approach that regards Islamic education as an equally balanced system that provides intellectual, spiritual, and ethical growth (Auda 2022, 32). By bringing together these components, Q.S. al-Alaq establishes the foundation for an educational model that is both intellectually challenging and spiritually enriching.

Morality and ethics are the central panel in Islamic education, based on Q.S. al-Alaq. Thus, the learning, as these verses teach, must be accompanied by ethical conduct and moral responsibility. This gives the Islamic educational system the twin objective of intellectual enlightenment and inculcation of good character. Learning, therefore, is not only an intellectual endeavor but also a moral one, aiming to produce virtuous persons.

Moreover, Q.S. al-Alaq has a social dimension, in which education is involved in social consciousness and transformation. Knowledge is not a goal but a means to improve the conditions of society and to bring about positive change. This perspective emphasizes the importance of education as a social improvement instrument, encouraging learners to contribute to community development (Subakat & Harahap 2022, 68).

Moreover, these principles align with the Ulul Albab paradigm constructed at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. The paradigm integrates scientific knowledge and spiritual principles and is preoccupied with holistic character building. Sarkowi (2024) discovered that the Ulul Albab model can develop individuals who are intellectually capable yet spiritually grounded and socially active. Such a model reflects education ideals in Q.S. al-Alaq, integrating intellectual endeavors with moral and social responsibilities.

In summary, Q.S. al-Alaq [96]:1-5 provide an integrative epistemological model of Islamic education. They emphasize the consonance of revelation, intellect, ethics, and social awareness, making education a holistic system that transcends the transmission of knowledge. By encouraging intellectual inquiry, moral shaping, and social change, these verses lay the groundwork for an educational model that is both time-transcendent and responsive to contemporary issues.

Lifelong Learning and Learning Motivation in Islam

In the context of lifelong learning, Q.S. al-Alaq gives a message about the importance of constantly seeking knowledge. Yafi (2023) in her study on learning motivation in the Quran shows that this verse provides a solid foundation for the concept of education that is not limited to formal age or level, but is a lifelong process. These findings support the idea that Islamic education should be designed to be more flexible and adaptive to the times.

This finding is in line with the previous research that highlights how Islamic education must include the integration of religious and secular sciences, and must be able to adapt to the challenges of the times (Majid 2020, 85). In many studies, the concept of literacy in Islam is often associated with religious literacy, without considering the broader cognitive and intellectual aspects. However, this research confirms that Islamic education, in the perspective of Q.S. al-Alaq, not only emphasizes the transfer of knowledge in normative aspects, but also encourages lifelong learning that allows individuals to continue to develop with the changing times.

The Philosophy of Science and Interpretation of Q.S. al-Alaq in the Digital Era

Beyond its primacy as the first revelation, Q.S. al-Alaq holds profound epistemological significance within Islamic interpretive studies. The Quran provides a comprehensive concept of knowledge that transcends mere empirical ratios and experiences, encompassing spiritual revelation and deep reflection. This perspective is foundational to Islamic epistemology, which discusses sources, types (revealed and derived), and principles of knowledge in Islam (Azram 2012, 180). This multi-faceted approach further strengthens the argument that Islamic education should not only be based on a formal curriculum but also include a contemplative dimension that fosters an awareness of God and the inherent purpose of science. Indeed, the epistemology of Islamic philosophy is characterized by its dynamic and varied forms, evolving across different historical periods to address diverse challenges, thus demonstrating its inherent adaptability and richness (Amril et al. 2023, 65).

In the context of the digitalization of education, this research finds that the concept of *iqrâ'* in Q.S. al-Alaq can be profoundly associated with digital literacy and lifelong learning. The digital era has fundamentally

changed the way humans acquire knowledge, offering wider and faster access to information through the internet and social media. However, the speed of access to this information also poses new challenges, such as misinformation, data manipulation, and irresponsible information consumption. Q.S. al-Alaq, with its emphasis on *iqra'* (to read, to inquire) and *qalam* (the pen, writing), provides crucial guidelines that literacy in Islam is not merely limited to the technical aspects of reading and writing, but also emphatically includes the ability to think critically and discern valid information from the invalid ones.

Thus, Muslims are not only consumers of information but also producers of knowledge who are responsible for the truth and benefits of the knowledge disseminated. This responsibility is underpinned by the comprehensive nature of Islamic principles, which through frameworks like *maqâsidî sharî*a, ensure their enduring relevance. Indeed, the reformist interpretations of *maqâsidî sharîa*, particularly carried out by figures like Ibn Âshûr, emphasize its applicability to contemporary problems, making Islamic law and by extension, Islamic education, *sâlihun li kulli zamân wa al makân* (suitable for all times and places) (Toriquddin 2013, 185). If Islamic education can develop a learning system based on the values of Q.S. al-Alaq and integrate these adaptable interpretive frameworks, then Islamic education will remain profoundly relevant in facing the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century without losing its essence as a revelation and reason-based education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research affirms that Q.S. al-'Alaq [96]:1–5 offers a foundational epistemological vision for Islamic education that is both spiritually grounded and future-oriented. Through the lens of *maqâsidî tafsîr*, the verse reveals an integrated model of knowledge where *wahy* (revelation), *'aql* (reason), and empirical observation are not isolated domains but mutually reinforce sources of truth. This triadic epistemology underscores that true education in Islam transcends rote learning. It fosters moral consciousness, lifelong learning, and spiritual insight. As such, the findings urge a reimagining of Islamic educational curricula—beyond mere content addition—toward a *maqâsidî*-based framework that holistically aligns pedagogy with the higher objectives of Sharia. By embedding the values of Q.S. al-'Alaq into educational practice, Islamic education can become a transformative force that cultivates ethical

discernment, intellectual integrity, and digital responsibility. Ultimately, this approach equips learners to engage with contemporary challenges not only as competent thinkers but as morally responsible and spiritually aware individuals. They should embody the Quranic vision of education as a means to fulfill God's purpose in both personal development and social contribution.

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