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Metaphor in QS. Az-Zumar: 9 as Cognitive Framework of Knowledge and Revelation

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Abstract

Purpose – Contemporary Qur’anic studies and Islamic education have predominantly emphasized linguistic, normative, and cognitive dimensions of the Qur’an, often overlooking its spiritual, symbolic, and transformative aspects. This study investigates the conceptual function of Qur’anic metaphor in QS. Az-Zumar: 9, particularly the distinction between *alladhina ya’lamün* (those who know) and *alladhina lā ya’lamün* (those who do not know), in order to demonstrate that ‘ilm in the Qur’anic worldview represents an integrated form of cognitive, ethical, and spiritual awareness. **Design/methodology/approach** – This study employs a qualitative-conceptual approach based on library research. Data were collected from the Qur’anic text, classical tafsīr literature, and relevant works in Islamic epistemology and cognitive studies. The analysis combines epistemological, semantic, and spiritual approaches within the framework of Qur’anic Cognitive Science (QCS) to examine the conceptual and transformative functions of Qur’anic metaphor. **Findings** – The study reveals that QS. Az-Zumar: 9 constructs a Qur’anic cognitive framework that differentiates two modes of human perception and understanding. The interrogative metaphor *hal yastawī* functions as a cognitive trigger that encourages self-reflection on knowledge, ethical orientation, and spiritual commitment. Within the QCS framework, *alladhina ya’lamün* represents holistic knowledge characterized by intellectual, moral, and spiritual integration, whereas *alladhina lā ya’lamün* signifies epistemic deficiency arising from the absence of awareness, ethical responsibility, and divine orientation. **Research implications/limitations** – The study is limited to the analysis of QS. Az-Zumar: 9 and selected classical exegetical sources. Further research may apply the proposed framework to other Qur’anic metaphors and broader contexts of Islamic education and cognitive studies. **Originality/value** – This article demonstrates that Qur’anic metaphor functions not merely as a rhetorical device but as a transformative conceptual and epistemological mechanism. It contributes to the development of a holistic Islamic epistemology by integrating cognitive, ethical, and spiritual dimensions within the emerging field of Qur’anic Cognitive Science.

Keywords: Metaphor; Qur’anic Cognitive Sciences; Islamic Epistemology, Knowledge and Revelation; Az-Zumar.

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Introduction

Knowledge is regarded as one of the countless blessings bestowed by Allah. Through knowledge, human beings are not only able to transform their environment or build civilizations, but also to distinguish between reality and illusion, truth and falsehood, and other such opposites [1]. Thus, the Islamic perspective regards knowledge as a non-neutral concept which creates standards that impact how people think and act. The modern world demonstrates a conflict between knowledge and moral principles. The occurrence of random violence in schools demonstrates that students who attend contemporary educational institutions fail to develop ethical conduct according to the example of the Turkish high school shooting which Reuters and Associated Press documented [2]; [3]. This phenomenon indicates that knowledge does not necessarily correlate with moral awareness. The Qur'an defines knowledge as more than informational acquisition since it serves as intellectual enlightenment which determines human thought and behavior. In this regard, Islamic education centers on developing students intellectual capabilities together with their spiritual and ethical growth. Meanwhile, modern education emphasizes cognitive and technical skills instead of developing students internal abilities which leads to an epistemological crisis that results in both moral degradation and knowledge misuse [4]. In contrast, Islamic education seeks to create complete human beings who possess three essential qualities: strong faith, deep understanding, and genuine dedication to religious practices [5].

Beginning with the overarching issue delineated above, The article investigates the particular problem of how Qur'anic metaphor functions as a conceptual tool which establishes links between language and human thought and divine revelation according to the contents of QS. Az-Zumar: 9. This aligns with the view that metaphor is not merely linguistic ornament but a fundamental structure of cognition shaping thought and action [6]. Thus far, Qur'anic studies have tended to focus on linguistic-structural aspects or normative legal interpretations, while the cognitive dimension of the language of revelation – namely, how metaphor operates as a conceptual instrument to construct understanding, awareness, and human epistemic orientation – has not received sufficient attention. Nevertheless, a number of studies have shown that Qur'anic terms related to thinking and knowledge carry rich connotative meanings and reflect a holistic epistemological system [7]. However, integrating these perspectives into cognitive analysis remains methodologically and theologically challenging, especially regarding majāz and divine language [8]. Yet, the Qur'an employs symbolic and metaphorical language to guide human ways of thinking about knowledge, faith, and action in an integrated manner, integrating faith and knowledge so as to produce concrete actions that bring benefit, rather than mere

intellectual intelligence devoid of moral and spiritual substance [9]. Similar patterns are observed in other Qur'anic studies, where metaphor and symbolism function to construct theological understanding and spiritual awareness [10]. Accordingly, the main research question of this article is: how does the cognitive function of Qur'anic metaphor in QS. Az-Zumar: 9 construct the dichotomy between knowing and not knowing, and what are its implications for the concept of knowledge and spirituality in Islam? The object of this study is the text of QS. Az-Zumar: 9, along with its semantic and conceptual context, by positioning metaphor as a bridge between the linguistic structure of revelation and the construction of meaning in the human mind. Through this approach, the article seeks to contribute to the strengthening of an integrative Qur'anic epistemology that is relevant to contemporary intellectual challenges.

Previous studies demonstrate strong attention to the theme of knowledgeable people and *ulul albab* in the Qur'an from various perspectives. Lintang, Fauzan, and Rahmad (2025), in their article "*The Priority of the Knowledgeable in Az-Zumar Verse 9 from a Contemporary Tafsir Perspective*," employed a qualitative descriptive-analytical method and found that the integration of faith and knowledge gives rise to noble character and serves as a foundation for civilization [11]. Isri Lailatussa'idah (2023), in "*The Meaning of Knowledgeable People (An Analysis of Qur'an Surah Az-Zumar Verse 9)*," using a qualitative tafsir-based approach, emphasized that knowledgeable individuals are those who are aware of the moral and spiritual consequences of their actions [12]. Amrina Rasyada et al. (2025), in "*The Spiritual Journey of Knowledgeable People in the Qur'an*," using a qualitative thematic tafsir approach, concluded that the spiritual journey of the knowledgeable includes contemplation of nature, deep understanding of knowledge, and its wise application [13]. Eva Neneng Hasanah and Abd. Kholid (2025), in "*The Concept of Islamic Education from HAMKA's Perspective and Its Implementation in Indonesia*," employing qualitative library research, showed that according to Hamka, knowledge combined with faith and moral character elevates human rank and must be integrated into the educational system [14]. Isri Lailatussa'idah and Ibnu Rusydi (2024), in "*The Concept of Ulul Albab in the Qur'an*," using a qualitative library research method, concluded that *ulul albab* are individuals with clear reason who bear social responsibility to disseminate knowledge and improve society [15]. Nabila Nailil Amalia et al. (2024), in "*Reconstructing the Educated Mindset in the Concept of Knowledge*," using qualitative descriptive methods, found that faith and knowledge form the basis for the elevation of human rank and encourage moral transformation [16]. Meanwhile, M. Arsyad (2024), in "*Neuroscientific Tafsir of Qur'anic Verses: A Study of the Concept of Ulul Albab in the Qur'an*," using qualitative literature study, concluded that the concept of *ulul albab* aligns with neuroscientific findings,

particularly the function of the prefrontal cortex as the center of rational and reflective thinking [17].

These seven studies have the strength of affirming the virtue of knowledgeable people and *ulul albab* through approaches in tafsir, Islamic education, spirituality, and neuroscience. However, they remain largely focused on normative, ethical, and pedagogical aspects, and have not examined the cognitive function of Qur'anic metaphor as a connector between the language of revelation, human understanding, and the formation of epistemic consciousness. This research gap is addressed in this article through an analysis of the cognitive function of metaphor in QS. Az-Zumar: 9 using the Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences (QCS) approach, thereby offering a new contribution to understanding the relationship between language, mind, and revelation.

This article proposes a novelty in the form of applying Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences (QCS) to analyze the cognitive function of Qur'anic metaphor in QS. Az-Zumar: 9 as a bridge between the language of revelation, human understanding, and human epistemic consciousness. Unlike previous normative studies, metaphor is understood here as a cognitive mechanism that shapes ways of thinking about knowledge, faith, and action. This approach enriches Qur'anic studies by offering an integrative framework that is relevant for strengthening contemporary Qur'anic epistemology.

Method

This This research utilizes a qualitative, conceptual, and library-based methodology grounded in the domains of Qur'anic studies and Islamic epistemology. It is non-empirical and seeks to develop a theoretical framework for comprehending the notion of knowledge in the Qur'an through critical analysis of primary Qur'anic texts and classical exegetical sources. Instead of testing hypotheses, the study aims to elucidate, examine, and integrate the fundamental conceptual components that underpin the Qur'anic understanding of knowledge. It specifically concentrates on the examination of QS Az-Zumar: 9 as the principal unit of study, chosen for its elucidation of an epistemological dichotomy between *alladhīna ya'lamūn* and *alladhīna lā ya'lamūn*.

This research employs a methodological framework that combines semantic-conceptual analysis (*tahlīl lafẓī-maḥmūmī*) with a thematic approach (*mawḍū'ī*), concentrating on pivotal Qur'anic terms such as *al-ʿilm*, *al-maʿrifah*, and their derivative forms in QS. Az-Zumar: 9, while also engaging conceptual and rhetorical dimensions of meaning. This approach aligns with recent hybrid models that integrate cognitive linguistics and classical Arabic rhetoric to address the complexity of Qur'anic metaphor [18]. This methodology facilitates a systematic examination of linguistic subtleties, semantic domains, and contextual

significances via classical Arabic lexicons and exegetical texts, notably the writings of al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī and Ibn Manẓūr. By doing this, the conceptual reconstruction of knowledge stays based on the Qur'an's internal linguistic system.

The research applies two different analytical methods which include *tahlīl ‘ilmī* (epistemological analysis) and *tahlīl rūḥī* (spiritual analysis). The study uses both these methods to investigate the conceptual structure of knowledge and the moral-spiritual aspects of knowledge which exist in the Qur'anic worldview. The study uses an integrative hermeneutical framework to connect classical *tafsīr* and contemporary conceptual reflection by studying Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's concept of knowledge which he defines as a multi-layered process that includes sensory perception and rational cognition and spiritual orientation. This approach aligns with Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology, integrating revelation, reason, and *fiṭrah* in harmony [19].

The analytical procedure consists of four interconnected phases: (1) textual delimitation and selection, concentrating on QS. Az-Zumar: 9 as the principal unit of analysis. (2) Semantic-lexical analysis (*tahlīl lafẓī-maḥmūmī*) entails the scrutiny of essential Qur'anic terms (e.g., *al-‘ilm*, *al-ma‘rifah*) via classical Arabic lexicons to delineate their semantic domains and conceptual differentiations. (3) Classical exegetical analysis, wherein interpretations from prominent *mufasssīrūn* are systematically juxtaposed to elucidate the functional and moral dimensions of knowledge within Qur'anic discourse. (4) Epistemological and integrative synthesis, amalgamating *tahlīl ‘ilmī* and *tahlīl rūḥī* with perspectives from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and modern cognitive reflection to formulate a comprehensive conceptual framework of Qur'anic knowledge (*Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences/QCS*). The operationalization of the QCS framework employed in this study is illustrated in Figure 1, which summarizes the analytical stages from textual examination to epistemological synthesis.

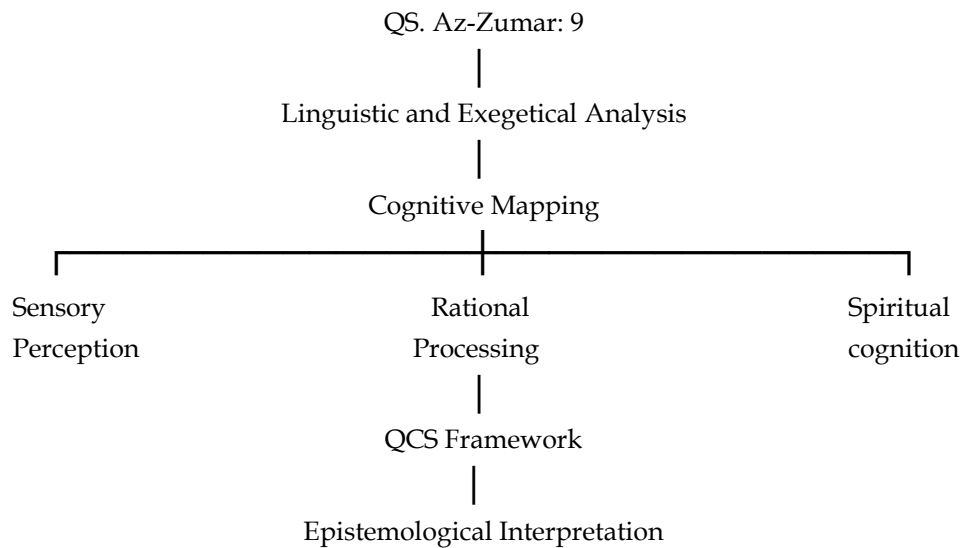


Figure 1.

Operationalization of the Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences (QCS) Framework in the Analysis of QS. Az-Zumar: 9

In the end, this combination of methods leads to the creation of a conceptual model called *Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences (QCS)*. This model sees knowledge as a process of change that brings together language, mind, and revelation in a way that includes intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects.

Result and Discussion

Analysis of the Phrase *Alladhīna ya 'lamūn wa-alladhīna lā ya 'lamūn*

A. The Difference between *al-'Ilm* and *al-Ma'rifah*

Al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī stated in his book *al-Mufradāt*: “*al-'Ilmu: idrāku al-shay'i bi-ḥaqqiqatihi, wa-dhālika ḍirbān: aḥaduhumā idrāku dhāt al-shay'i. wa-al-thānī aḥukmu 'alā al-shay'i bi-wujūdi shay'in huwa ma'wjudun lahu, aw nafyu shay'in huwa manfiyyun 'anhu.*” He also clarified that “*al-'Ilmu min wajhin ḍirbān: nazarīyyun wa-'amalīyyun [20].*” Then he distinguished it from *al-ma'rifah* by saying: “*wa-ammā al-ma'rifah wa-al-'irfān: idrāku al-shay'i bi-tafakkur wa-tadabbur li-athrihi, wa-huwa akhaṣṣun min al-'ilmi, wa-yuḍāduhu al-inkār [20].*”

In the same context, al-Fayrūzābādī explained in *Basā'ir Dhawī al-Tamayyuz* the levels and methods of *al-'ilmi*, saying: “*an al-'ilmu 'alā thalāth darajāt: aḥaduhā: mā waqa'a min 'ayān wa-huwa al-baṣar. wa-al-thānī: mā istanada ilā al-sam' wa-huwa al-istifāḍah. wa al-thālith: mā istanada ilā al-'ilmi wa-huwa 'ilm al-tajrubah.*” He then emphasized that the methods of *al-'ilmi* are broader than that, saying: “*'alā anna ṭuruqa al-'ilmi lā tanḥaṣiru fīmā dhakarnāh fa-inna sā'ir al-ḥawās tuwǧibu al-'ilma, wa-kadhā mā yudrak bi-al-bāṭin wa-hiyal-wijdāniyyāt, wa-kadhā mā yudrak bi-al-*

mukhbir al-ṣādiq, wa-in kāna wāḥidan, wa-ka-dhālika mā yaḥṣulu bi-al-fikr wa-al-istinbāt wa-in lam yakun tajrubah." Regarding the difference between *al-'ilmi* and *al-ma'rifah*, al-Fayruzabadi mentioned three main aspects: "*Aḥaduhā: anna al-ma'rifah lubb al-'ilmi, wa-nisbat al-'ilmi ilā al-ma'rifah ka-nisbat al-īmān ilā al-iḥsān. Wa-hiya 'ilm khāṣṣ muta'allaqihi akhfā min muta'allaq al-'ilmi wa-adqq. Wa-al-thānī: anna al-ma'rifah hiya al-'ilm alladhī yurā'ihī ṣāhibuhu wa-ya'mal bimuwaffaqihi wa-muqtadāh. Wa-huwa 'ilm yattaṣilu bihi al-ri'āyah. Wa-al-thālith: anna al-ma'rifah shāhidah linafsihā wa-hiya bimanḥalat al-umūr al-wijdāniyyah lā yumkin ṣāhibuha an yashukk fihā, wa-lā yantaqilu 'anhā. Wa-kashfu al-ma'rifah atamm min kashf al-'ilmi, 'alā annama maqām al-'ilmi a'lā wa-ajall, limā dhakarnā fī Basirah ('Arf) [21].*"

From a linguistic and educational perspective, Ibn Manẓūr in *Lisan al-'Arab* linked *al-'ilm* with action and God-consciousness, saying: "*Laysa al-'ilmu bi-kathrat al-ḥadīth wa-lākin al-'ilmu bi-al-khashyah.*" He also said: "*Al-'ālim alladhī ya'mal bima ya'lam.*" He further affirmed that "*al-'ilmu naqīḍ al-jahl,*" and described the firmness of *al-'ilmi* by saying: "*Lammā kāna al-'ilmu qad yakūnu al-waṣfu bihi ba'da al-muzāwalati lahu wa-ṭūli al-mulābasah šāra ka-annahu ghrīzah [22].*" He then explained the root 'arf, saying: "*'Arf: al-'Irfān: al-'Alam; rajul 'arūf wa-ma'rūfah: 'arīf ya'rīf al-umūr wa-lā yunkiru aḥadan ra'āhu marratan; al-'Arīf wa-al-'Arīf bima'nā mithl 'Alīm wa-'Ālim [23].*"

Murtadā al-Zubaydī in *Tāj al-'Arūs* went into more precise detail in distinguishing between the two concepts, saying: "*Anna al-ma'rifah tata'allaq bi-dhāt al-shay'i wa-al-'ilmu yata'allaq bi-aḥwālihi.*" He added: "*Anna al-ma'rifah fī al-ghālib takūnu limā ghāba 'an al-qalb ba'da idrākīhi, fa-idhā idrakahū qīla 'urifah, bikhilāf al-'ilmi.*" He then clarified the opposition between the two concepts, saying: "*Fa-al-ma'rifah nisbat al-dhikr al-nafsī, wa-huwa ḥuḍūr mā kāna ghā'iban 'an al-dhākir, walihādihā kāna ḍidduhā al-inkār, wa-ḍidd al-'ilmi al-jahl.*" He concluded by saying: "*Anna al-ma'rifah 'ilm li-'ayn al-shay'i muḥassalan 'ammā siwāh, bikhilāf al-'ilmi, fa-innahū qad yata'allaq bi-al-shay'i muḥmalan [24].*"

In its moral dimension, al-Zajjāj in *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān wa-l-rābuh* linked *al-'ilmi* with *al-'amali*, saying: "*Lā yastawī al-'ālim wa-al-jāhil, wa-ka-dhālika lā yastawī al-muṭī' wa-al-'āṣī [25].*"

As for Ibn Fāris in *Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, he grounded the linguistic meaning, saying: "*Al-'ilmu: naqīḍ al-jahl, wa-qiyāsuh qiyās al-'alam wa-al-'alāmah [26].*" He then connected the root 'arf with tranquility and repose, saying: "*Wa-al-ma'rifah wa-al-'irfān yadullu 'alā mā qul'nāhu min sukūnih ilayh, li'anna man ankara shay'an tawahhasha minh wa-nabā 'anhu [26].*"

In contemporary lexicographical treatment, Muḥammad Ḥasan Jabal in *al-Mu'jam al-Ishtiqāqī al-Mu'assal* explained the meaning of *al-'ilmi* as: "*Al-i'tiqād al-jāzim al-thābit al-muṭābiq lil-wāqī'.*" He then affirmed the distinction between *al-*

'ilmi and al-ma'rifah, quoting Abū Ḥayān: "Wa qad sabaqa al-farq bayna al-'ilmi wa-al-ma'rifah fī ('Arf). Wa qawl Abī Ḥayān: 'Al-ma'rifah al-'ilm al-muta'allaq bi-al-mufradāt wa-yusbiquhu al-jahl bikhilāf aṣl al-'ilmi fa-innahū yata'allaq bi-al-nisab, wa qad lā yusbiquhu al-jahl; wa-li-dhālik lam yuṣaf Allah ta'ālā bi-al-ma'rifah, wa-wuṣifa bi-al-'ilmi [27]."

Al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī in 'Umdat al-Huffāz fī Tafsīr Ashraf al-Alfāz confirmed this distinction in terms of al-ta'addiyah and al-dalālah, saying: "Al-ma'rifah: idrāk al-shay' dūna mā huwa 'alayh, wa-min thumma ta'addat li-wāḥid. Wa-al-'ilmu ma'rifatuhū wa-mā huwa 'alayh, wa-min thumma ta'addi li-ithnayn." He added: "Al-ma'rifah tastad'ī jahlan bi-al-shay' al-ma'rūf bikhilāf al-'ilmi fa-innahū lā tastad'ī dhālik; wa-li-dhālik 'allama Allah dūna 'arafa Allah." He then affirmed: "Wa yuqāl: Allah ya'lam kadha wa-lā yuqāl: ya'rif, li-annahā al-ma'rifah tusta'mal fī al-'ilmi al-qāṣir al-mutasil ilayh bi-tafakkur [28]."

The selection of *yā'lamūn* instead of *ya'rifūn* in the QS. Az-Zumar: 9 verse exists as The choice between these two words hinges on The Islamic academic tradition defines *al-'ilmi* and *al-ma'rifah* through its linguistic and exegetical methods. *al-'ilmi* defines complete knowledge which enables people to understand all aspects of a thing and its fundamental connections without needing to first learn about its basic elements. The highest level of knowledge which includes all knowledge elements exists at this point and at this level people must show respect to God and perform actions which demonstrate their faith. In contrast, *Ma'rifah* is more specific and precise, often preceded by ignorance, related to partial or experiential knowledge attained through reflection, and its opposite is denial. Since the context of the verse is a moral and evaluative comparison between the obedient and those heedless, the use of *yā'lamūn* is appropriate to indicate firm, complete knowledge that yields action and God-consciousness, which is the attribute by which Allah honors His learned servants.

B. The Difference between *al- 'ālimūn* and *al- 'ulamā'*

Fakhr al- Dīn al-Rāzī interpreted the word "*al- 'ulamā'*" in QS. Fāṭir: 28 by stating: "*al- 'ālimu ya 'rifu Allāha fa-yakhāfuhi wa-yarjūhu. Wa-hādhā dalīlun 'alā anna al- 'ālama a lā darajatan mina al- 'ābidi.*" He further added: "*fa-al-karāmatu bi-qadri al- 'ilmi lā bi-qadri al- 'amali. Na'am, al- 'ālimu idhā taraka al- 'amala qadaḥa dhālika fī 'ilmihi, fa-inna man yarāhu yaqūlu: law 'alima la- 'amila* [29]." In addition to this, he interpreted the term "*al- 'ālamūn*" by stating that: "*anna al- 'ilma al-ḥadsiyya ya'lamuhu al- 'āqilu wa-al- 'ilma al-fikriyya al-daḡīqa ya'qiluhu al- 'ālimu* [30]." Likewise, Ibn Kathīr, in explaining the meaning of "*al- 'ālamūn*" in QS. al- 'Ankabūt: 43, stated: "*wa-mā yafhamuhā wa-yatadabbaruhā illā al-rāsikhūna fī al- 'ilmi al-mutada lli 'ūna minhu* [31]."

In the same direction, Ibn ‘Āshūr explained that: “*al-‘ulamā’u bi-llāhi wa-bi-al-sharī‘ati, wa-‘alā ḥasabi miqdāri al-‘ilmi fī dhālika taqwā al-khashyatu. fa-ammā al-‘ulamā’u bi-‘ulūmin lā tata‘allaqu bi-ma‘rifati Allāhi wa-thawābihi wa-‘iqābihi ma‘rifatan ‘alā wajhihā, fa-laysat ‘ulūmuhum bi-muqarribatin lahum min khashyati Allāh. dhālika li-anna al-‘ālim(a) bi-al-sharī‘ati lā taltabisu ‘alayhi ḥaqā’iqu al-asmā’i al-shar‘iyyati, fa-huwa yafhamu mawāqī‘ ahā ḥaqqa al-fahmi, wa-yar‘āhā fī mawāqī‘ ihā, wa-ya‘lamu ‘awāqibahā min khayrin aw sharrin. fa-huwa ya’tī wa-yada‘u mina al-a‘māli mā fīhi murādu Allāhi wa-maqṣadu shar‘ihi* [32].”

Likewise, al-Zamakhsharī, in his *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, interpreted the verse by stating: “*al-‘ulamā’u bihi alladhīna ‘alimūhu bi-ṣifātihi wa-‘adlihi wa-tawḥīdihi, wa-mā yajūzu ‘alayhi wa-mā lā yajūzu. Fa-‘a’zzamūhu wa-qaddarūhu ḥaqqa qadrihi, wa-khashūhu ḥaqqa khashyatīhi. wa-man izdāda bihi ‘ilman izdāda minhu khawfan, wa-man kāna ‘ilmuhu bihi aqalla kāna āmana* [33].” In addition to this [33]; [34], and [35] interpreted the meaning of “*al-‘ālamūn*” as: “*al-‘ālamu man ‘aqala ‘ani Allāhi fa-‘amila bi-ṭā‘atihi wa-ijtannaba sakhatahu*.”

Furthermore, [36] and [37] interpreted the term “*al-‘ālamūn*” as meaning: “*al-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi al-mutadabbirūna fī al-ashyā’i ‘alā mā yanbaghī*.” Meanwhile, al-Sa’dī explained in his work that: “*illā al-‘ālamūna, ay: ahla al-‘ilmi al-ḥaqīqī, alladhīna waṣala al-‘ilmu ilā qulūbihim* [38].” In addition, al-Shawkānī explained in his work that he said: “*al-‘ālimūna bi-Allāhi al-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi al-mutadabbirūna al-mutafakkirūna limā yutlā ‘alayhim wa-mā yushāhidūnahu* [39].”

Based on the preceding exegetical data, a clear conclusion can be drawn that the distinction between “*al-‘ulamā’*” (the scholars) and “*al-‘ālamūn*” (the learned) lies in rank, function, and impact. The ‘*ulamā’*’ are those who possess knowledge of God and of the *Sharī‘ah*—knowledge that gives rise to reverent fear, hope, and action in accordance with God’s will and the objectives of His Law. For this reason, their mention in the Qur’an is associated with fear of God and elevated rank, as established by al-Rāzī, Ibn ‘Āshūr, and al-Zamakhsharī, whereby knowledge becomes the criterion of honor when it is coupled with action. As for the ‘*ālamūn*’, the term—according to the usage of the exegetes—refers to people of understanding, cognition, and firm intellectual grounding, who are capable of reflection and contemplation. This applies whether in distinguishing between intuitive and discursive knowledge, or in comprehending parables and verses, as explained by al-Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr, and others. Such knowledge may serve as a path toward reverent fear and action, or it may remain confined to the level of intellectual apprehension.

C. The Opinions of the Exegetes on *al-ladhīna ya‘lamūn* and *al-ladhīna lā ya‘lamūn*

Al-Ṭabarī, in *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, explained the difference between *alladhīna ya‘lamūna* and *alladhīna lā ya‘lamūna* by saying: “*alladhīna ya‘lamūna mā lahum fī ṭā‘atihim li-rabbihim min al-thawāb, wa-mā ‘alayhim fī ma‘ṣiyatihim iyyāhu min al-taba‘āt, wa-alladhīna lā ya‘lamūna dhālika fa-hum yakhbiṭūna fī ‘ashwā’, lā yarjūna bi-ḥusni a‘mālihim khayran, wa-lā yakhāfūna bi-sayyi‘ihā sharran* [40].” What is meant is that *al-‘ilma* gives direction to action: whoever knows what brings reward and what entails punishment acts with hope of attaining good and fear of falling into evil, so his actions are conscious and disciplined. As for one who lacks knowledge, he acts without guidance and without a clear purpose, neither truly hoping for reward nor fearing punishment. Therefore, action without knowledge is like walking without a guide: movement exists, but without clarity of direction.

In al-Zamakhsharī’s interpretation in his book, it is stated that: “*alladhīna ya‘lamūna: al-‘āmilīn min ‘ulamā’ al-diyānah, ka-annahū ja‘ala man lā ya‘mal ghayra ‘ālim. Wa-fīhi izdira’ ‘aẓīm bi-alladhīna yaqtnūna al-‘ulūm, thumma lā yaqtnūna wa-yaftinūna, thumma yuftanūna bi-al-dunyā, fa-hum ‘inda Allāh juhhalā’, ḥaythu ja‘ala al-qānitīn hum al-‘ulamā’* [41].” That is, *alladhīna ya‘lamūna* are the knowledgeable people who act upon their knowledge, whereas those who merely possess knowledge without applying it – such as those who sink into sins or become absorbed in worldly life – are regarded as ignorant in the sight of God. Thus, the virtue of knowledge is measured by acting upon it, not by merely possessing it.

Al-Rāzī added a complementary interpretation, stating: “*alladhīna ya‘lamūna wa-hum alladhīna ṣifatuḥum annaḥum yaqnutūna ānā’a al-layl sujjadan wa-qiyāman, wa-alladhīna lā ya‘lamūna wa-hum alladhīna waṣfuhum ‘inda al-balā’ wa-al-khawf yuzwaḥḥidūna wa-‘inda al-rāḥah wa-al-farāghah yushrikūna.*” And “*tanbihun ‘aẓīmun ‘alā faḍīlat al-‘ilm* [42].”

Al-Qurṭubī transmitted al-Zajjāj’s statement in the same context: “*alladhīna ya‘lamūna wa-alladhīna lā ya‘lamūna kadhālika lā yastawī al-muṭī’ wa-al-‘aṣī. wa-qāla ghayruhu: alladhīna ya‘lamūna hum alladhīna yantafi’ūna bi-‘ilmihim wa-ya‘malūna bihi, fa-ammā man lam yantafi’ bi-‘ilmihī wa-lam ya‘mal bihi fa-huwa bi-manzilat man lam ya‘lam* [43].”

Al-Biqā‘ī continues in *Naẓm al-Durar* with a precise explanation: “*(alladhīna ya‘lamūna) ay fa-ya‘malūna ‘alā muqtaḍā al-‘ilm, fa-addāhum ‘ilmuhum ilā al-tawḥīd wa-al-ikhlāṣ fī al-dīn. (wa-alladhīna lā ya‘lamūna) fa-laysat a‘māluḥum ‘alā muqtaḍā al-‘ilm immā li-jahl aw immā li-i‘rāḍ ‘an muqtaḍā al-‘ilm fa-ṣārū lā ‘ilma lahum li-annahū lā intifā’a lahum bihi li-annahum law ta’ammalū adnā ta’ammul ma’a tajrīd al-anfus min al-hawā la-raja’ ū ilayhi.*” Al-Biqā‘ī concludes by emphasizing the

role of the heart in the soundness of action: “*wa-lammā kāna madār al-sadād al-tadhakkur, wa-kāna madār al-tadhakkur alladhī bihi al-ṣalāḥ wa-al-fasād huwa al-qalb li-annahu markaz al-‘aql alladhī huwa ālat al-‘ilm, wa-kāna al-qalb alladhī lā yaḥmilu ‘alā al-ṣalāḥ ‘adaman, bal al-‘adam khayrun minhu* [44].”

Based on the exegetical opinions mentioned above, it becomes clear that the difference between “*alladhīna ya‘lamūna*” and “*lladhīna lā ya‘lamūna*” is not merely a difference in possessing information, but rather a difference in conscious action, its fruits, and its direction.

“*alladhīna ya‘lamūna*” are the ones who understand the consequences of obedience in terms of reward and of disobedience in terms of punishment; thus, their knowledge directs them toward action grounded in hope and fear, leading them to devout submission, sincerity, and pure monotheism. As a result, Their actions demonstrate self-control because they execute their tasks through active awareness which stems from their compassionate, mindful nature according to the explanations of al-Ṭabarī and al-Rāzī and al-Biqā‘ī. The phrase “*lladhīna lā ya‘lamūna*” describes people who either fail to gain advantages from their knowledge or who lack the knowledge completely. They operate without any direction which results in their behavior switching between following rules and breaking them. People reach a state of ignorance which leads them to either reject knowledge or become obsessed with life on earth until they lose all understanding of their spiritual path. Indeed, they are regarded as ignorant in the sight of God, as clarified by al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurṭubī, and al-Zajjāj. Thus, it is affirmed that true knowledge is that which guides the heart and yields righteous action, and that action without knowledge is like movement without insight – it neither remains upright nor reaches its intended goal.

Distinction Between Knowledge and Superficial Understanding

From the Qur’anic perspective, knowledge (‘*ilm*) is not understood merely as the accumulation of data or cognitive information, but as a profound and stable form of understanding (*thubūt*) that generates ethical and spiritual consequences. This aligns with the view that meaning is grounded in embodied cognition, where abstract concepts are shaped through lived human experience [45]. The research about Qur’anic studies shows that ‘*ilm* connects to human awareness and the ability to act responsibly and to change their behavior. The Qur’an establishes knowledge as a requirement which extends beyond mental capacity to include *khashyah* and righteous deeds and moral awareness [46].

The distinction between ‘*ilm* and *jahl* shows a fundamental difference between *alladhīna ya‘lamūn* and *alladhīna lā ya‘lamūn*. The first group not only understands facts but also develops self-awareness which determines their

behavior. ‘ilm acts as educational material which provides people with directional guidance and cognitive brightness [47]. [48] defines ‘ilm according to *Ma‘ānī al-Qur‘ān wa I‘rābuh* as an everlasting understanding which stays fixed inside a person's mind. He distinguishes it from superficial knowledge, which is temporary in nature and lacks ethical implications. ‘ilm requires more than just memorization skills because it involves a particular type of knowledge which helps people direct their life path.

The cognitive aspect of superficial knowledge exists as temporary information which people develop without any ethical obligations. The Qur'an honors people with deep understanding more than those who only know many facts because deep understanding leads to heart-based knowledge which results in righteous behavior [49]. Thus, the distinction between knowledge and superficial understanding is both epistemological and moral in nature, as Qur'anic knowledge invariably culminates in the formation of ethical character. This is because metaphor functions as an epistemic tool shaping theological imagination and moral awareness through embodied and affective meaning [50].

A. Knowledge in the Thought of *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*

In the treasury of Qur'anic exegesis, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī has a distinctive approach: he systematically integrates reason and spirituality in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. His concept of the intellect is multidimensional – capable of comprehending the oneness of God, truth, and goodness, yet remains limited. Al-Rāzī divides the intellect into *iktisābī* (acquired) and *ṭab‘ī* (instinctive), which further branch into *mathbū‘* (innate/natural) and *masmū‘* (based on revelation/sound) [51]. Methodologically, he employs imaginary dialogue, Ash‘arī theology, Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence, the theory of *munāsabah* (coherence), *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), and selectively uses Arabic poetry [52]. This framework makes al-Rāzī highly relevant for analysing the cognitive function of metaphor in QS. Az-Zumar: 9, particularly in constructing Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences (QCS), which unites the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī conceives of knowledge (‘ilm) not merely as an intellectual activity, but as an integrative function of *idrāk* that encompasses the entirety of human potential – reason, the soul, and spiritual orientation. Al-Rāzī demonstrates through his *tafsīr Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* that authentic knowledge must function as a system which controls human existence because it requires more than cognitive intellectual development.

He states that *idrāk* describes the soul's ability to understand everything which exists beyond both sensory and rational boundaries. The process requires people to identify existing conditions while making judgments about worth and determining their ultimate objectives. People gain true knowledge through the

combined power of their intellectual reasoning their spiritual evaluation and their emotional guidance system [53]. And he rejects the reduction of knowledge to mere formal-logical activity because he believes this method fails to show why some educated individuals become more distant from the actual truth. He argues that knowledge which lacks moral and spiritual components will lose its ability to provide guidance to others [54].

Within this integrative framework, knowledge encompasses three principal dimensions:

1. Cognitive Dimension (*al-Idrāk al-‘Aqlī*)

Knowledge involves the activity of the intellect in comprehending the signs (*āyāt*) of God, both textual (the Qur’an) and cosmic (the universe). The intellect functions as an instrument of rational analysis and reflection; however, it is not the sole source of meaning [55].

2. Moral Cognition (*al-Idrāk al-Akhlāqī*)

Al-Rāzī emphasizes that authentic knowledge requires value awareness to exist. The genuine comprehension of truth leads to the ability to determine what constitutes good and evil and what is right and wrong. The absence of this aspect causes knowledge to become nothing more than technical skills which do not have moral value [56].

3. Spiritual Orientation (*at-Tawajjuh al-Rūhī*)

The peak of knowledge according to al-Rāzī exists in the ability to direct oneself toward God through spiritual practices. The purpose of knowledge exists to assist people in reaching Him instead of serving as their final destination. The one who possesses this orientation will experience *hashyah*, which means reverent awe, together with existential submission to God [57].

Al-Rāzī believed that knowledge functions the same way as ethical character (*akhlāq*). People who possess true knowledge will develop their character because this knowledge shows them how to view themselves and God and the world. People need knowledge because it brings them to a new level of human development according to the existing knowledge system. The human knowledge crisis exists because people need information, but they must connect their knowledge to its moral and spiritual elements. Integrated knowledge, as understood by al-Rāzī, is knowledge that enlivens the intellect, illuminates the heart, and guides action.

B. Perception as an Integrated Function of Consciousness

In Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s view, *idrāk* cannot be reduced to a purely cognitive process. Rather, it is an integrative function of consciousness that unites the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the human being into a

coherent whole. The Qur'an defines knowledge as more than just knowing, because it describes how humans relate to truth and to God. Rather, it encompasses a broader epistemological and spiritual orientation that guides human understanding and conduct.

1. Cognition (the Function of Reason)

The first dimension of *idrāk* is the cognitive function of reason (*al-idrāk al-‘aqlī*). Reason enables people to understand meaning through its function of analyzing signs (*āyāt*) and its ability to differentiate between what is true and what is false. Al-Rāzī demonstrates that human reason exists as a divine gift which enables people to understand both religious revelations and the fundamental nature of the universe [55]. Nevertheless, he rejects any view that elevates reason as the sole center of truth. Reason, in his account, is limited and requires the guidance of revelation in order to avoid falling into value-empty speculation. In other words, reason is an essential instrument, but not the ultimate end in the clarification of truth [54].

2. Moral Cognition (Ethical Awareness)

The second dimension is moral cognition which describes ethical awareness that emerges when people understand values together with the moral outcomes which result from possessing knowledge. The framework demonstrates that knowledge exists with inherent values because it presents both positive and negative value assessments. The act of knowing truth requires people to accept the ethical obligations which come with their discovery. Al-Rāzī states that people who possess knowledge without developing moral duties will obtain both arrogance and moral decay. People who possess true knowledge will experience *khashyah* (reverent awe) because they understand God's greatness and their role as His servant through their ethical perception [56]. The process of knowledge development begins when people start to evaluate information based on what they believe to be valuable.

3. Spiritual Orientation (Theocentric Orientation)

The highest level of *idrāk* is spiritual orientation (*at-tawajjuh al-rūhī*), which means that consciousness is directed toward God. Al-Rāzī posits that knowledge attains its ultimate form when it serves as a conduit for *taqarrub ilā Allāh*. Without this orientation, knowledge loses its essence and its higher purpose [57]. Theocentric orientation guarantees that knowledge transcends mere worldly comprehension, guiding individuals towards existential awareness regarding their identity, origins, and ultimate destination. At this point, knowledge becomes light (*nūr*) that guides the human journey of life.

On the basis of the integration of these three dimensions, al-Rāzī arrives at the functional conclusion that true knowledge is identical with ethical character (*akhlāq*). Knowledge is not merely what is known, but how that

knowledge shapes character and one's orientation in life. Authentic knowledge is necessarily reflected in humility, moral responsibility, and ethical commitment within social life.

C. The Qur'anic Vision and Human Cognition: A Conceptual Perspective

Within this integrative framework, the process of human consciousness can be understood through three principal layers:

1. *al-Idrāk al-Hissī* (Neural Input)

The first layer of consciousness is *idrāk ḥissī*, namely the reception of stimuli through the sensory faculties. The Qur'an repeatedly mentions hearing (*sam'*), sight (*baṣar*), and the heart (*fu'ād*) as the primary instruments of human knowledge (QS. an-Naḥl: 78). At this level, human beings merely receive raw data from external reality. From a conceptual perspective, this stage may be understood as analogous to what contemporary accounts of human cognition describe as sensory input processing. However, the Qur'an emphasizes that the mere functioning of the senses does not guarantee the emergence of knowledge, as many people see yet fail to understand [58].

2. *al-Mu'ālajah al-'Aqliyyah* (Prefrontal Cortex)

The second stage is *al-mu'ālajah al-'aqliyyah*, which translates to the rational processing of sensory data. The process of analytical reasoning includes three elements which are analysis, inference, and the development of conceptual knowledge. The process of rational reasoning includes analysis, inference, and the formation of conceptual knowledge. The Qur'an requires people to use their logic because it contains commands that direct people to *tafakkur* and *ta'aqqul* and *tadabbur*. The Qur'anic perspective holds that reason has limited ability to understand meaning but it cannot determine the values which guide human existence [59]. The power of rational thinking becomes dangerous when it exists without spiritual principles because this leads to a intellectual capacity which lacks moral value.

3. *at-Taujīh al-Qalbī wa al-Rūḥī* (an-Nūr)

The highest layer of consciousness is *at-taujīh al-qalbī wa al-rūḥī*, namely the inner orientation illuminated by *nūr* (Divine light). In the Qur'an, the *qalb* is not merely an emotional organ, but the center of human existential and spiritual consciousness. It is this dimension of *nūr* that provides direction, meaning, and value to the entire cognitive process. Without Divine light, rational knowledge loses its orientation and may become misleading. This is stated explicitly in the divine declaration:

"And whoever Allah does not grant light – then he has no light at all [60]."

This verse indicates that *nūr* is not merely an aesthetic metaphor, but an epistemological and spiritual principle. *Nūr* functions as the determinant of the validity and direction of knowledge; without it, human cognitive processes remain in a state of existential darkness, even when they appear intellectually sophisticated [61].

D. Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences

Based on the preceding *tahlil lafzi*, *tahlil 'ilmī* and *tahlil rūhī* analyses, it can be affirmed that knowledge in the Qur'anic perspective is not merely the product of rational cognition, but an integrated form of consciousness that simultaneously involves intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. This integrative view aligns with cognitive linguistics, where embodied schemas structure abstract meaning, as reflected in Arabic proverbs [62]. This framework may be formulated as Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences (QCS) – a Qur'anic epistemological paradigm that conceives knowledge as a process of holistic human transformation.

Within QCS, Qur'anic knowledge rests upon four principal pillars:

1. *at-Tafakkur (Intellectual Reflection)*

Tafakkur is an intellectual activity that transcends the processing of empirical data and moves toward reflection upon meaning and purpose. The Qur'an does not praise an intellect that merely operates in a technical or instrumental manner, but rather one that is reflective and contemplative. Accordingly, *tafakkur* in the Qur'an is consistently directed toward the signs (*āyāt*) of God manifested in nature, history, and the human self. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī emphasizes that *tafakkur* constitutes the initial gateway to knowledge, but not its final goal; it must ultimately lead human beings to the recognition of divine wisdom and majesty [53]. Without *tafakkur*, knowledge loses depth; without divine orientation, it loses meaning.

2. *Tazkiyat al-Nafs (Purification of the Soul)*

Qur'anic knowledge presupposes *tazkiyat al-nafs* as its ethical-spiritual foundation. The Qur'an affirms that human success is not determined by intelligence alone, but by the purity of the soul:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا﴾

Al-Ghazālī explains that knowledge devoid of *tazkiyah* may become an instrument of arrogance and corruption. Conversely, purification of the soul transforms knowledge into light that guides behavior and shapes moral character. Thus, *tazkiyah* is not a mere complement to knowledge, but a prerequisite for its meaningfulness.

3. *al-Wa'y al-Wujūdī (Existential Awareness)*

Qur'anic knowledge cultivates *al-wa'y al-wujūdī*, namely awareness of the human being's position as both servant (*'abd*) and vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth. This awareness prevents knowledge from being confined to utilitarian functions and instead connects it to fundamental existential questions: who human beings are, why they exist, and to where they will ultimately return.

Ibn 'Āshūr emphasizes that the primary objective of knowledge in the Qur'an is to awaken human awareness of responsibility toward God, fellow human beings, and the natural world [63]. Without existential awareness, knowledge is reduced to an instrument of power or pragmatic interests.

4. *al-Irādah wa al-Ikhtiyār (Will and Moral Responsibility)*

The last part of QCS is will and moral choice (*irādah wa ikhtiyār*). The Qur'an always links knowledge to *taklīf* (moral obligation) and responsibility. To know means being ready to make a choice and deal with the moral consequences of that choice.

The Qur'an says that people are not given more than they can handle, but as they learn more, their capacity grows. Consequently, the greater one's level of knowledge, the more moral and social responsibility one bears [64].

This principle is the foundation of Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences. Knowledge is not an indicator of status or intellectual validity, but a trust (*amānah*) that necessitates coherence among comprehension, awareness, and behavior. Within the Qur'anic paradigm, true knowledge is light that illuminates the intellect, purifies the heart, and propels human beings toward responsible and virtuous action.

Within the Qur'anic paradigm, true knowledge is light that illuminates the intellect, purifies the heart, and propels human beings toward responsible and virtuous action.

The findings of this study have several important theoretical implications. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the analysis demonstrates that Qur'anic metaphor functions not merely as a rhetorical or stylistic device, but as a cognitive mechanism that structures human understanding and shapes epistemic awareness. The distinction between *alladhīna ya'lamūn* and *alladhīna lā ya'lamūn* illustrates how metaphor operates as an epistemic framework linking cognition, moral consciousness, and spiritual orientation. In the field of Islamic epistemology, the study reinforces the Qur'anic conception of knowledge (*'ilm*) as an integrated process involving rational reflection, ethical responsibility, and divine guidance, thereby challenging modern tendencies to separate knowledge from moral and spiritual values. Furthermore, for Qur'anic studies, the proposed Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences (QCS) framework offers a novel

approach by integrating classical tafsir traditions with contemporary cognitive theories, enabling Qur'anic metaphors to be understood not only as literary expressions but also as conceptual structures that mediate the relationship between language, cognition, and revelation.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the scope of this research is limited to the analysis of QS. Az-Zumar: 9. Consequently, the conclusions drawn from this study cannot be broadly applied to the entirety of Qur'anic metaphors or the diverse epistemological constructs present within the Qur'anic text. Second, this study adopts a conceptual and literature-based approach that relies primarily on linguistic analysis, classical exegesis, and contemporary theoretical literature. Consequently, the proposed interpretations remain theoretical and have not been empirically tested in educational, psychological, or cognitive contexts. Third, although the Quranic Cognitive Science (QCS) framework provides an integrative model for understanding the relationship between cognition, language, and revelation, its application in this study is limited to a single Quranic passage and has not been tested across a broader corpus of Quranic metaphors with diverse thematic and rhetorical characteristics.

Future studies could expand the application of the QCS framework to other Quranic verses and metaphorical structures to evaluate its broader explanatory potential. Furthermore, empirical investigations involving readers, students, educators, or interdisciplinary cognitive approaches could provide further validation of the relationship between Qur'anic metaphors, knowledge formation, and spiritual cognition. Such studies would contribute to the refinement of the QCS framework and strengthen its relevance in contemporary Islamic epistemology and Qur'anic studies.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that QS. Az-Zumar :9 constructs the dichotomy between *alladhīna ya'lamūn* and *alladhīna lā ya'lamūn* not merely as a contrast between possessing and lacking information, but as a fundamental distinction in epistemic consciousness, moral orientation, and lived practice. Knowledge (*'ilm*) in the Qur'anic sense emerges as a stable, comprehensive, and action-guiding form of understanding that integrates cognition, ethical awareness, and spiritual orientation. Through linguistic, exegetical, and conceptual analysis, focusing on the distinctions between *'ilm* and *ma'rifah*, and *ālimūn* and *'ulamā*, this research affirms that authentic knowledge is inherently linked to *khashyah*, righteous action, and the purification of the heart. The integrative framework referred to as Qur'anic Cognitive Sciences (QCS) proposes that knowledge may be understood as a cohesive aspect of human consciousness within the Qur'anic worldview, incorporating sensory perception, rational analysis, and spiritual enlightenment

(*nūr*). The QCS approach provides a new theoretical contribution by offering a fresh understanding of Qur'anic metaphor as a mental bridge between language, cognition, and divine revelation, thereby enabling Islamic epistemology to address modern knowledge challenges characterized by spiritual emptiness.

Based on the findings of this research, it is suggested that future researchers utilize the QCS framework to analyze other Qur'anic texts containing extensive metaphorical expressions regarding guidance, light, or the heart. Future studies would be highly beneficial if conducted interdisciplinarily, combining Qur'anic studies with cognitive psychology and empirical educational research to test the effectiveness of this theoretical framework in the field. Additionally, Islamic education practitioners are encouraged to begin integrating this integrative knowledge model into curricula and intellectual training programs to refocus educational content on ethical obligations and character transformation in line with the Qur'anic vision of *insān kāmil*.

Author Contributions

Rochmad: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Muhammad Hadana Sabila:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Faiz Muzakky:** Conceptualization, Investigation. **Belkis Öznur Köylü:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing. **Ali Mahfuz Munawar:** Writing – review & editing.

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