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Reconstructing the Concept of *Ulul Albab* as an Ideal Human Profile in the Digital Era

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Abstract -The digital era has transformed how individuals acquire information, reason, make decisions, and interact, while generating epistemological, cognitive, and moral-psychological challenges. This study reconstructs *Ulul Albab* as the Quranic ideal human profile for navigating digital life. Using a qualitative literature-based methodology, it integrates semantic analysis, thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍūʿī*), content analysis, and conceptual analysis. The findings identify seven characteristics: knowledge (*ʿilm*), mindful recollection (*tadhakkur*), remembrance (*dhikr*), deep reflection (*tadabbur*), contemplation (*tafakkur*), discernment and choice (*tamyīz-ikhtiyār*), and God-consciousness (*taqwā*). In the digital context, these are reconstructed as responsible knowledge construction, meaningful learning, divine consciousness, deep reflection, cognitive autonomy, critical information selection, and ethical-spiritual technology use. Thus, *Ulul Albab* offers an integrative Quranic framework for maintaining epistemic, cognitive, and moral-spiritual agency amid digital transformation.

Key words - *Ulul Albab*, ideal human, digital era, artificial intelligence, epistemic agency, cognitive autonomy, God-consciousness (*taqwā*)

I. PRELIMINARY

The rapid development of digital technologies through the internet, social media platforms, digital services, and artificial intelligence (AI) has driven a digital transformation that fundamentally alters various dimensions of human life. This transformation reshapes how individuals acquire knowledge, learn, work, make decisions, communicate, and establish social relationships [1]. However, behind these conveniences lie emerging challenges that touch upon epistemological, psychological, and ethical domains. Epistemologically, the influx of information creates fertile ground for fake news and misinformation, complicating the distinction between truth and falsehood. Psychologically, this evolution contributes to social media addiction, cognitive distraction, reduced attention span, a heightened demand for social validation, and other mental health issues. Morally, digital environments can be exploited for information manipulation, fraud, plagiarism, the dissemination of uneducational content, and other harmful practices.

The OECD emphasizes that excessive or inappropriate engagement with digital technologies is associated with information overload, psychological stress, social isolation, and impaired cognitive development, well-being, and individual agency [2]. Furthermore, UNESCO highlights that digital technological advancements carry risks of dependency, ethical dilemmas, and the erosion of human capacity to maintain autonomous decision-making and agency [3]. This stems from the ability of digital systems to curate, organize, recommend, and generate responses that heavily influence how humans interpret reality and make choices. Consequently, in the context of AI, UNESCO underscores the critical necessity of adopting a human-centered approach [4]. Moreover, empirical research by Lee demonstrates that higher levels of trust in AI systems correlate with lower engagement in critical thinking.

These phenomena indicate that the contemporary digital crisis extends beyond the risks of technology usage, fundamentally touching upon human nature within an increasingly digitally mediated environment. As the processes of acquiring knowledge, shaping preferences, and making decisions become progressively driven by algorithms and intelligent systems, humans face the challenge of preserving their reflective capacity, cognitive freedom, and value

orientation. Therefore, the digital era demands more than mere technological competence; it necessitates the capacity to guide technology based on rational, ethical, and spiritual considerations.

In this context, the ideal human model cannot be formulated solely on technological adaptability. Instead, it requires a robust epistemological, moral, and spiritual foundation capable of directing technological engagement. The Islamic perspective offers several concepts of the ideal human, among which *Ulul Albab* holds distinct relevance by positioning the integration of intellect, spiritual reflection, and moral orientation as central human characteristics.

II. RELATED RESEARCH

Scholarly literature on *Ulul Albab* in recent years reflects expanding interest, albeit moving along distinct analytical orientations. Initial studies predominantly focused on normative and educational dimensions, specifically exploring how the *Ulul Albab* character is cultivated through the integration of intellectual capabilities, spiritual consciousness, and moral action. Siswanto and Suparno demonstrated that the Quranic construction of *Ulul Albab* is intrinsically tied to the synergy between *dhikr* (remembrance), *fikr* (reflection), and righteous deeds (*amal saleh*) [5]. Similarly, Hulawa conceptualized the formation of *Ulul Albab* as a pedagogical process involving the optimization of human sensory and spiritual faculties, namely hearing, vision, and the heart [6]. Extending this discourse, Kamila and Wantini positioned *Ulul Albab* as the Quranic ideal human model realizable through Islamic educational frameworks [7].

Subsequent developments reflect efforts to understand *Ulul Albab* not merely as an educational objective, but as a structural typology of the ideal human character. Utilizing a psychological approach, Furqan et al. developed a typology of *Ulul Albab* based on Quranic cognitive activities, demonstrating its intrinsic link to intellectual quality and reflective awareness [8]. Semantic and thematic exegesis conducted by Yanti further reinforced this understanding by delineating the characteristics of *Ulul Albab* through Quranic verses that display the synthesis of critical thinking, remembrance, and the discernment of divine signs [9]. Thus, a scholarly consensus has emerged that *Ulul Albab* represents more than rational intelligence, embodying an integrative synthesis of intellect, spirituality, and moral imperative.

In addition, contemporary scholarship has expanded the concept of *Ulul Albab* across various human competencies. Arzaqi and Soleh linked *Ulul Albab* to character education, emphasizing a balance among intellectual, spiritual, and emotional intelligence [10]. Arsyad offered an interdisciplinary approach connecting *Ulul Albab* with neuroscience perspectives [11], while Huda as well as Nurfadilah highlighted the critical thinking dimension embedded within the concept [12], [13]. These studies collectively demonstrate that *Ulul Albab* aligns with information evaluation skills, argumentative scrutiny, and the rejection of passive knowledge acquisition.

Within the realm of digital transformation, research on *Ulul Albab* has also begun to broaden. Wahyudi conducted an early study connecting *Ulul Albab* to the digital literacy of Muslim youth through three main pillars: *dhikr*, *fikr*, and *amal saleh*, establishing *Ulul Albab* as a normative framework for productive, ethical, and public-good-oriented digital behavior [14]. Subsequent scholarly developments are evident in Fathurohman's work, which explicitly contextualized *Ulul Albab* as the goal of Islamic education in the era of digital transformation, alongside contemporary studies offering the integration of religious education and science as a holistic model for cultivating *Ulul Albab* in the digital age [15].

Nevertheless, current literature indicates that discussions on *Ulul Albab* remain largely fragmented into specific thematic focuses. While some studies emphasize character formation and educational dimensions, others explore critical thinking, neuroscience, or digital literacy. Although these studies contribute significantly to explaining the relevance of *Ulul Albab*, they have not yet comprehensively developed a conceptual reconstruction of *Ulul Albab* as a Quranic ideal human profile capable of navigating the complexities of digital life. In other words, prior research has predominantly positioned *Ulul Albab* as an educational objective, a value framework, or a specific competency,

leaving the re-articulation of its epistemological, moral, and spiritual characteristics as an integrative human model for digital challenges largely unexplored.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative methodology based on library research aimed at reconstructing the concept of *Ulul Albab* as an ideal human profile for navigating the digital era. Rather than relying on empirical field data collection, the study focuses on a critical analysis of relevant scholarly literature to establish a conceptual framework rooted in the Quranic perspective.

The data sources for this research comprise primary and secondary materials. Primary data sources encompass all Quranic verses containing the term *Ulul Albab*, alongside classical and contemporary exegetical works (*tafsīr*) that elucidate these passages. Classical exegetical references include *Jāmi' al-Bayān* by al-Ṭabarī [16], *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm* by Ibn Kathīr [17], *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* by Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī [18], and *Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī [19]. Contemporary exegetical sources comprise *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr* by Wahbah al-Zuhailī [20], *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid Quṭb [21], *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* by Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr [22], and *Aysar al-Taḥsīn* by Abū Bakr al-Jazā'irī [23]. Furthermore, classical Arabic lexicographical authorities, such as *Lisān al-'Arab* by Ibn Manẓūr [24], *Tāj al-'Arūs* by al-Zabīdī [25], and *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān* by al-Rāghib al-Aṣṣafhānī [26] were consulted to trace the lexical, etymological, and semantic evolution of the term *Ulul Albab*.

Secondary data sources consist of academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and previous research focusing on the concept of *Ulul Albab* across various disciplines, including exegesis, Islamic education, ideal human character models, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary studies. Additionally, the study examines literature on digital transformation, digital technology developments, artificial intelligence (AI), digital literacy, algorithms, and the associated epistemological, psychological, moral, and spiritual impacts within digital environments to establish the analytical context.

Data collection was conducted through document analysis by searching, identifying, classifying, and organizing relevant literature according to the research focus. Sources were systematically selected based on topical relevance, academic authority, and their substantive contribution toward explaining the concept of *Ulul Albab* and the characteristics of the digital era, thereby providing a comprehensive theoretical foundation.

Data analysis followed a four-stage process:

1. Semantic Analysis: Conducted on the term *Ulul Albab* by examining its root word, lexical meanings, and semantic evolution across classical Arabic literature.
2. Thematic Exegesis (*Tafsīr Mawḍū'ī*): Applied across all Quranic verses containing the term *Ulul Albab*, comparing classical and contemporary exegetical interpretations to identify the core characteristics, competencies, and Quranic construct of the ideal human.
3. Content Analysis: Undertaken on previous research to map scholarly trends, trace conceptual developments, and identify existing research gaps.
4. Conceptual Analysis: Executed by synthesizing the core characteristics of *Ulul Albab* derived from semantic, exegetical, and literature analyses with contemporary research regarding digital era challenges. This synthesis yields a conceptual reconstruction of the *Ulul Albab* human profile tailored to contemporary digital life.

To ensure conceptual validity, the study employed source triangulation by cross-referencing interpretations across classical Arabic dictionaries, classical and contemporary exegetical texts, and contemporary scholarly literature on digital transformation. Through this integrative synthesis, the study establishes a conceptual formulation that not only reflects the textual meaning of *Ulul Albab*, but also demonstrates its relevance as a Quranic ideal human model capable of addressing the epistemological, moral, and spiritual challenges of the digital age.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Etymologically, the word *lubb* derives from the root letters *l-b-b* (*lām-bā'-bā'*). Ibn Fāris in *Maqāyīs al-Lughah* explains that this root encompasses core semantic aspects, namely persistence and permanence (*luzūm wa thabāt*),

alongside purity and high quality (*khulūṣ wa jawdah*) [27]. Consequently, *lubb* is broadly understood as the pure part, the core, or the select essence of an entity. A similar characterization is offered by Ibn Manẓūr in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, defining *lubb* as the core of a thing [28]. The term shares a close semantic proximity with *lubāb*, derived from the same root, which signifies the quintessence, pure essence, prime, and choice portion (*khālīṣ wa khiyār*) of an object. By way of analogy, in nuts or seeds, the kernel represents the *lubb*, whereas the outer shell or covering is discarded [28]. Furthermore, *lubb* can denote essence (*nafs*) and intrinsic reality, analogous to venom (*samm*) being the essential potency of a creature. This analogy is reinforced by al-Zabīdī in *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, noting that *lubb* linguistically denotes venom (*samm*) [29]. Such analogies demonstrate that the application of *lubb* across various objects consistently designates the essential, pure, or refined core following the removal of non-essential elements.

The use of *lubb* to denote the human intellect

When applied to human beings, classical lexicographers frequently highlight expressions linking *lubb* to human intellect (*Nāql al-insĒn*). Ibn Manẓūr explicitly defines *lubb* as intellect (*‘aql*), with its plural forms being *albāb*, *alubub*, and *alubb* [28]. He cites, for instance, a statement attributed to ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib: “My heart is fully devoted to it with the entirety of my intellect (*alubb*)” [28]. Another example provided by Ibn Manẓūr recounts when Ṣafīyyah bint ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib was striking her son, al-Zubayr. Upon being asked why she struck him, she replied, “So that he may become a person of *lubb* (a mature intellect) capable of leading a roaring army” [28].

Intellect (*‘aql*), as noted by Ibn Fāris and al-Zabīdī, is termed *lubb* because it constitutes the ultimate essence and purest core of human nature (*khulāṣat al-insān*) [27], [29]. Al-Zabīdī clarifies that *lubb* does not denote raw intellect alone, but specifically an intellect purified from passions, spiritual impurities, ambiguities, and fallacious conjectures (*wahm*) or, in the terminology of al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, “an intellect stripped of all impurities” (*al-‘aql al-khālīṣ min al-shawā’ib*) [30]. Consequently, al-Zabīdī formulates the maxim: “Every *lubb* is an intellect, but not every intellect is a *lubb*” (*fa-kullu lubbin ‘aqlun wa-laysa kullu ‘aqlin lubban*) [29].

Linguistically, *lubb* does not merely designate a structural core, but an essence marked by purity, excellence, and selectivity; hence, *lubb* is not a simple synonym for *‘aql*. When applied to humans, *lubb* specifies the intellect as the most essential and untainted faculty of humanity. Building upon this, Ibn Manẓūr and al-Zabīdī identify the locus of *lubb* as being embedded within the human heart (*mā ju ‘ila fī qalbihi min al-‘aql*) [28], [29].

From the Linguistic Meaning of *Lubb* to the Quranic Concept of *Ulul Albab*

The Quran never employs the singular form *lubb*, consistently opting for its plural form, *al-albāb*, which exclusively appears within the construct phrases *ulū al-albāb* or *ulī al-albāb*. Furthermore, no occurrence of *al-albāb* in the Quran refers to inanimate objects or non-human creatures; every instance refers to human beings actively exercising intellectual and spiritual faculties. These include engaging in profound reflection (*tadabbur*) upon the Quran (Q.S. Ṣād [38]: 29), contemplating (*tafakkur*) the creation of the heavens and the earth (Q.S. Āl ‘Imrān [3]: 190), drawing lessons from historical narratives (Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 111), selecting the best discourse (Q.S. al-Zumar [39]: 18), comprehending wisdom (Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 269), and discerning truth from falsehood (Q.S. al-Ra’d [13]: 19). These contextual uses demonstrate that *al-albāb* signifies more than mere cognitive capacity; it denotes a reflective capacity guided by divine direction. From a Quranic semantic perspective, this reflects a semantic specialization (*takhsīṣ al-dalālah*). The foundational meaning of *lubb* as core or essence is preserved but narrowed into an anthropological concept pointing to the innermost human core, an intellect that has achieved moral, spiritual, and epistemological purity. Thus, the Quran elevates a common Arabic lexical term into a conceptual term imbued with distinct theological and ethical import.

While classical exegesis broadly interprets *lubb* as *ahl al-‘uqūl* (people of intellect), exegetes frequently expand this definition beyond basic cognitive capacity. They characterize *ulū al-albāb* as *ahl al-afhām* (possessors of deep understanding) and *ahl al-nuhā* (possessors of discerning intellect capable of restraining one from sin and evil), as highlighted by Ibn Kathīr [31]. Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī characterizes them as *dhawū al-‘uqūl wa al-baṣā’ir*, individuals endowed with intellect and spiritual insight who grasp welfare (*maṣlahah*) underlying divine laws, obey divine commands, avoid prohibitions, and comprehend the consequences (*‘awāqib*) of divine decree, fostering God-consciousness [32]. In contemporary scholarship, al-Sa’dī defines *Ulul Albab* as *ahl al-‘uqūl al-wāfiyah* (possessors of complete intellect) and *ahl al-kāmilah* (mature thinkers) who recognize beneficial knowledge to act upon it and identify harmful matters to avoid them [33]. Ibn ‘Ashūr designates *al-albāb* as *al-‘uqūl al-kāmilah* (perfected intellects) and *ahl al-naẓar al-ṣaḥīḥ* (possessors of sound reasoning) [34]. Similarly, Wahbah al-Zuhailī defines *Ulul*

Albab as individuals possessing mature intellects (*ahl al-‘uqūl al-rājiḥah*) who derive admonition through the Quran and its explanations [35]. These varied scholarly descriptions collectively emphasize that *Ulul Albab* does not merely designate ordinary reasoning, but rather a depth of intellect that culminates in God-consciousness (*taqwā*) [36].

CHARACTERISTICS OF *ULUL ALBAB*

The Quran delineates *Ulul Albab* through a range of distinct characteristics that reflect a synthesis of intellectual capability, spiritual consciousness, and moral orientation. These traits transcend the mere cognitive ability to know and comprehend; they encompass the ongoing remembrance of Allah, profound contemplation of His verses, extraction of moral lessons, critical discernment between truth and falsehood, and the alignment of all knowledge and consciousness toward God-consciousness (*taqwā*). The primary characteristics defining *Ulul Albab* are articulated as follows:

Scholarship / Knowledgeability (*‘Ilm*)

The profile of *Ulul Albab* in Q.S. al-Zumar [39]: 9 is intrinsically linked to an acute awareness of the value and status of knowledge. Allah emphasizes that those who possess knowledge, specifically those who recognize the truth, are not equal to those who do not, establishing knowledge as a fundamental criterion of human distinction. In this context, *Ulul Albab* represents individuals endowed with intellectual consciousness: they recognize the imperative of knowledge, grasp the ontological difference between knowing and remaining ignorant, and ground their worldviews and actions in sound knowledge. Consequently, the excellence of *Ulul Albab* lies not merely in the volume of information acquired, but in the qualitative realization that knowledge elevates humanity above ignorance.

Mindful Recollection and Application (*Tadhakkur*)

The Quran repeatedly associates *Ulul Albab* with the capacity for *tadhakkur*, that is denoting remembrance, drawing admonition, and putting knowledge into practice [37]. In al-Ṭabarī’s exegesis of Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 269, *tadhakkur* is defined as the capacity to take heed (*itti ‘āz*) from divine exhortations, keep His promises and warnings in mind, exercise self-restraint regarding prohibitions, and execute divine commands [38]. Al-Ṭabarī adds that divine admonitions benefit only those possessing intellect, wisdom, and cognitive maturity, while warnings deter only those equipped with self-restraint and active reasoning [38]. Similarly, al-Sa’dī notes that *Ulul Albab* are those who reflect upon what is beneficial to implement it, while identifying what is harmful to abandon it [39]. Thus, *tadhakkur* extends beyond passive memory; it represents an active consciousness that translates into behavioral transformation.

Across its Quranic occurrences, *tadhakkur* within *Ulul Albab* manifests in three primary dimensions. Firstly, grasping wisdom as highlighted in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 269, where wisdom is directly paired with the capacity to take lesson. Secondly, recognizing truth’s consequences as portrayed in Q.S. al-Ra’d [13]: 19, which contrasts those who recognize that revelation is truth with those who lack such awareness. Lastly, extracting lessons from divine signs as illustrated in Q.S. Ṣād [38]: 29, designating the Quran as a blessed book revealed so that humans may reflect upon its verses and *Ulul Albab* may derive admonition.

Therefore, *tadhakkur* signifies the capability to bring the core message of truth into active consciousness, extract its underlying wisdom, and manifest it through congruent action.

Spiritual Remembrance (*Dhikr*)

The Quran depicts *Ulul Albab* as people who maintain constant remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah in all conditions. Q.S. Āl ‘Imrān [3]: 191 describes them as those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, or lying on their sides, illustrating an unbroken spiritual connection in every domain of life. Furthermore, *Ulul Albab* possess the cognitive capacity to recall past experiences, including trials and adversity, to uncover deeper meaning and lessons. This is exemplified in Q.S. Ṣād [38]: 43, where Allah references the restoration of Prophet Ayyūb’s family as a reminder and lesson for possessors of understanding (*Ulul Albab*). Thus, *dhikr* encompasses both ongoing God-centered awareness and the reflective recall of lived experiences as sources of wisdom.

Deep Reflection (*Tadabbur*)

Ulul Albab are further identified by their capacity for deep reflection (*tadabbur*) upon divine signs and revelation. *Tadabbur* transcends literal reading or surface comprehension; it is an interpretive process of internalizing the message, interconnections, and ethical implications embedded within divine discourse. This faculty demonstrates that *Ulul Albab* do not consume information passively, but systematically probe deeper meanings to derive actionable guidance, as affirmed in Q.S. Ṣād [38]: 29.

Critical Contemplation (*Tafakkur*)

Ulul Albab actively engage in critical contemplation (*tafakkur*), optimizing their intellect to observe, analyze, and reflect upon the cosmos to comprehend the purpose and wisdom underlying creation. Q.S. Āl 'Imrān [3]: 191 depicts *Ulul Albab* contemplating the creation of the heavens and the earth, ensuring their intellectual pursuits are purpose-driven rather than aimless. Through *tafakkur*, *Ulul Albab* reflects the optimal exercise of the human intellect in interpreting reality and natural phenomena, integrating observed facts, and discovering the underlying meaning and purpose.

Discernment and Selective Choice (*Tamyīz–Ikhtiyār*)

Ulul Albab are characterized by the capacity for qualitative discernment (*tamyīz*) and selective choice (*ikhtiyār*). They possess the ability to distinguish the wholesome (*tayyib*) from the unwholesome (*khabīth*), opting for truth regardless of popularity or numerical dominance. Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]: 100 asserts that the bad and the good are not equal, even if the abundance of the bad appears attractive or dominant. Furthermore, Q.S. al-Zumar [39]: 18 describes them as those who listen to speech and follow the best of it, which al-Sa'dī interprets as an indicator of critical selectivity [39]. Consequently, *Ulul Albab* possess both intellectual rigor and selective agency: evaluating incoming information, filtering it against truth and welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), and adhering to what is best, even when it runs counter to prevailing social trends.

God-Consciousness (*Taqwā*)

Finally, *Ulul Albab* are defined by God-consciousness (*taqwā*), which serves as the ultimate teleological orientation of all their attributes. This explicit connection is established when Allah commands: “*So fear Me, O possessors of intellect!*” (*wa-ittaqūni yā ulī al-albāb*) [40]. This direct command underscores that intellectual capability, critical discernment, and reflective thought are not self-serving ends; rather, they are directed toward conscious submission to divine ordinances. Thus, *taqwā* governs and directs the full potential of *Ulul Albab*, ensuring that scholarship, reason, and cognitive autonomy culminate in moral responsibility, restraint from prohibitions, and the active fulfillment of divine commands.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF THE DIGITAL ERA

Digital transformation alters not only technologies but also the broader environment of human existence, reshaping how individuals acquire knowledge, engage in reasoning, and exercise self-regulation. The abundance of information, artificial intelligence, algorithms, and social media platforms offer unprecedented convenience while simultaneously posing profound challenges to human capacities for evaluation, critical thought, decision-making, and self-control. These challenges can be mapped into three primary dimensions: epistemological problems, cognitive problems, and moral-psychological problems.

Epistemological Problems

The near-limitless availability of information enables individuals to acquire diverse knowledge rapidly and effortlessly. However, it simultaneously introduces severe epistemological dilemmas regarding the validity and truth-value of information. This condition gives rise to what can be conceptualized as epistemic hypercomplexity - a state in which individuals are confronted with vast volumes of information from heterogeneous sources, rendering the process of discerning relevant, credible, and foundational knowledge increasingly complex [41]. This issue is further compounded by the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, which facilitates the widespread dissemination of false or misleading content across digital platforms. Wardle and Derakhshan demonstrate that advancements in communication technologies have created a pervasive state of information disorder, encompassing misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information; consequently, the information crisis in the digital age concerns not merely the availability of data, but its quality, intent, and contextual dissemination [42].

Ultimately, these epistemological challenges impact the human capacity to determine what constitutes legitimate knowledge and on what grounds an information claim ought to be accepted as true. Within digital environments, information sources do not always operate through clear epistemic authorities, as algorithmic curation and content personalization actively govern the information presented to users. This dynamic fundamentally shifts how individuals construct trust toward sources of knowledge. Schmidt-Boddy et al. emphasize that online environments alter the conditions under which epistemic trust is formed, particularly because users must navigate complex information flows, algorithmic filtering, and sources whose authenticity and credibility are difficult to verify [41].

Accordingly, the primary epistemological problem facing the digital human is not a scarcity of information, but rather the capacity to evaluate information amidst its sheer abundance. Individuals are required not merely to consume available data passively, but to systematically scrutinize sources, differentiate truth from error, evaluate evidence, and determine which information merits serving as the foundation for comprehension and action. In this precise context emerges the critical imperative for individuals possessing intellectual discernment and critical consciousness to filter and evaluate knowledge responsibly.

Cognitive Problems

Digital environments alter not only how individuals acquire information, but also potentially how they process information and engage in higher-order thinking activities. The ease with which technology provides answers, synthesizes information, constructs arguments, and executes cognitive tasks can induce cognitive offloading, that is, the practice of offloading mental processing to external devices or systems. In the context of generative artificial intelligence (AI), this offloading becomes increasingly pronounced; users are assisted not only in information retrieval, but also in activities that traditionally required direct cognitive engagement, such as formulating concepts, analyzing complex problems, generating alternative solutions, and framing responses.

Lee et al., in a study of 319 knowledge workers across 936 instances of generative AI usage, demonstrated that higher user confidence in AI capability correlates with lower engagement in critical thinking activities [43]. Their empirical findings further revealed that generative AI usage reduces perceived cognitive effort across various levels of cognitive processing, including knowledge acquisition, comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation [43]. These findings indicate that the primary cognitive issue in digital environments is not merely a reduction in cognitive capability, but a structural shift from active reasoning toward overseeing, verifying, and integrating outputs generated by digital systems.

This issue becomes particularly acute when technological convenience leads users to accept system outputs without adequate cognitive engagement. When utilizing generative AI, for instance, users can obtain seemingly convincing answers without personally undertaking the full cognitive cycle of searching, organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing information. Lee et al. observed that generative AI shifts cognitive effort from information retrieval to verification, from problem-solving to answer integration, and from task execution to management and oversight [43]. While this shift enhances operational efficiency, it poses a significant challenge when over-reliance on AI capabilities diminishes individual involvement in critical thinking and independent problem-solving.

Consequently, the core cognitive challenge facing the digital human lies in the potential erosion of active cognitive engagement due to the increasing ease of offloading mental functions to technology. The primary imperative is not to reject digital tools, but to preserve human capacity for independent reasoning, questioning information, analyzing problems, evaluating outputs, and making reflective decisions when interacting with digital technologies.

Moral-Psychological Problems

Digital environments, particularly social media platforms, influence not only how information is acquired and processed, but also shape human attention, emotions, moral orientations, and behavioral patterns [44]. Social media platforms operate primarily within an attention economy, incentivizing user engagement through content designed to capture attention and provoke interaction. Within this structural framework, content with high emotional and moral valence tends to achieve wider dissemination. Van Bavel et al. demonstrate that social media functions as an accelerator of existing moral dynamics, amplifying outrage, status-seeking, and intergroup conflict, even while occasionally facilitating prosocial behavior and collective action [44]. Similarly, research by Brady et al. reveals that expressions of moral outrage are amplified through social learning mechanisms, where positive social feedback reinforces and increases the likelihood of future outrage expressions [45]. Consequently, digital environments shape distinct psychological patterns through attentional mechanisms, social reinforcement, and group norms, causing heightened emotional reactions to override calm and reflective considerations.

These challenges are further compounded when excessive digital engagement compromises self-regulation over attention, emotion, and behavior. Problematic social media use has been consistently linked to various adverse psychological outcomes. A meta-analysis by Shannon et al. identified a significant association between problematic social media use and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among adolescents and young adults [46]. Likewise, a systematic review and meta-analysis by Du et al. confirmed a positive correlation between problematic social networking use and anxiety symptoms [47].

In a moral context, this impact extends beyond individual psychological well-being to influence how individuals respond to and interact with others. When attention and affect are continuously triggered by content designed to maximize engagement, individuals become increasingly susceptible to impulsive reactions, social pressure, and

evaluating issues based on emotional intensity or popular consensus rather than deliberative moral reflection. Therefore, the central moral-psychological problem facing the digital human is the potential weakening of attentional control, emotional regulation, and reflective moral agency amidst digital environments that continuously condition human psychological and social responses.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CONCEPT OF *ULUL ALBAB* AS AN IDEAL HUMAN PROFILE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Digital transformation has fundamentally altered how human beings acquire knowledge, process information, construct preferences, make decisions, and interact socially. Consequently, individuals require an internal capacity that enables them to remain autonomous thinking, evaluating, and choosing subjects, rather than passive technological consumers. In this context, the Quranic archetype of *Ulul Albab* becomes profoundly relevant as a human profile that integrates intellectual capability with spiritual consciousness, reflective deep thinking, moral orientation, and God-consciousness (*taqwā*). Linguistically, *lubb* denotes the core, pure, and finest essence of something; in a human context, it refers to an intellect refined and cleansed from impurities, base desires, dubious matters (*shubuhāt*), and cognitive errors. Grounded in this linguistic root, *Ulul Albab* is conceptualized as individuals who deploy their intellect with clarity, maturity, and purpose.

This reconstruction does not alter the normative, established meaning of *Ulul Albab*; rather, it re-articulates these Quranic characteristics as essential functional capacities for navigating digital existence. These capacities encompass evaluating knowledge claims, reflecting upon divine revelation and empirical reality, discerning and selecting based on truth and welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), and regulating moral and psychological responses. This framework directly addresses the challenges posed by information overload, the offloading of cognitive processing to digital systems, and the conditioning of human attention, emotion, and behavior by digital environments. Thus, *Ulul Albab* can be re-articulated as a human profile capable of leveraging technology without sacrificing intellectual autonomy, clarity of judgment, or a *taqwā*-centered orientation.

Ulul Albab as Knowledgeable Humans: From Information Consumption to Legitimate Knowledge

In Q.S. al-Zumar [39]: 9, *Ulul Albab* are situated within the context of the fundamental distinction between those who possess knowledge and those who do not. Here, knowledge (*ilm*) is not merely an accumulation of raw data, but an epistemic awareness regarding the value of truth and the capacity to ground one's understanding and life choices in verified knowledge. In digital environments, this knowledgeable character must be extended from the mere ability to access information to the capacity for constructing epistemically defensible knowledge. This distinction is crucial because digital humans exist amid information abundance, where accurate, erroneous, misleading, and irrelevant data coexist simultaneously. The central epistemological challenge facing the digital human lies in discerning which information is credible and worthy of serving as a foundation for knowledge.

Accordingly, the digital *Ulul Albab* is defined not by the volume of information consumed, but by the ability to transform raw information into verified knowledge. Such individuals do not automatically treat search engines, social media algorithms, or AI models as absolute epistemic authorities. Instead, they systematically evaluate sources, cross-examine data, weigh evidence, analyze contextual nuance, and remain conscious of the boundaries of their own knowledge. Reconstructing the knowledgeable character yields an epistemically responsible human, that is, an individual possessing both information literacy and the consciousness that knowledge must be justified rationally, morally, and spiritually. In the digital age, this capacity serves as a critical defense against information overload, inaccuracies, intentional disinformation campaigns, and algorithmic curation.

Ulul Albab as *Tadhakkur* Humans: From Information Retrieval to Meaningful Learning

The Quranic character of *tadhakkur* demonstrates that *Ulul Albab* transcend mere cognitive understanding; they actively extract moral lessons from knowledge and translate them into action. Numerous Quranic passages associate *Ulul Albab* directly with the capacity for taking lesson [48]. In the classical exegesis adopted in this study, *tadhakkur* encompasses heeding divine warnings, recalling God's promises and admonitions, eschewing prohibitions, and fulfilling divine commands. Thus, *tadhakkur* operates as a transformative cognitive mechanism that converts knowledge into active consciousness and ethical conduct.

In the digital era, *tadhakkur* must be reconstructed as the capacity to convert digital information and online experiences into meaningful learning. The rapid velocity of information flows often causes individuals to know many things superficially without deriving deeper meaning. *Ulul Albab* refuse to let information remain passive, transient mental consumption. Instead, they engage in deliberate reflection: examining what can be learned, anticipating

consequences, discerning embedded values, and determining how such knowledge ought to direct human behavior. Consequently, *tadhakkur* serves as a critical buffer preventing digital humans from becoming mere information consumers, transforming data into actionable wisdom, moral awareness, and beneficial action.

***Ulul Albab* as *Dhikr* Humans: From Digital Connectivity to Divine Consciousness**

The character of *dhikr* highlights the spiritual dimension of *Ulul Albab*. Q.S. Āl ‘Imrān [3]: 191 portrays them as those who remember Allah continuously, while standing, sitting, or lying on their sides. *Dhikr* denotes an unbroken continuity of God-consciousness across all states of human existence. Thus, the spirituality of *Ulul Albab* is not confined to specific times or physical spaces, but operates as a constant orienting framework in daily life.

In digital life, this trait can be reconstructed as the capacity to maintain divine consciousness amid continuous digital hyper-connectivity. While modern individuals can connect instantly with thousands of peers and vast streams of data, this connectivity does not inherently foster closeness to God; rather, it often breeds psychological dependence on social validation, peer attention, online popularity, and external feedback loops. Digital *Ulul Albab* resist allowing algorithms to dictate their life orientation, maintaining Allah as the supreme focal point of value and meaning. *Dhikr* functions as a spiritual anchor, ensuring that technology remains a functional tool rather than the ultimate source of human purpose.

***Ulul Albab* as *Tadabbur* Humans: From Superficial Reading to Deep Reflection**

The attribute of *tadabbur* signifies the capacity of *Ulul Albab* for profound reflection upon divine signs and revelation. Q.S. Šād [38]: 29 explicitly links the blessings of the Quran to the activity of *tadabbur* and the extraction of lessons by *Ulul Albab*. *Tadabbur* moves beyond surface-level reading or literal comprehension; it entails investigating core meanings, interconnections, contextual messages, and ethical implications for real-world application.

This characteristic is vital within a digital culture that promotes rapid, superficial, and fragmented information consumption. The digital *Ulul Albab* must cultivate deep reflection, that is, the cognitive ability to process information reflectively, contextualize isolated facts within broader frameworks, extract underlying meaning, and evaluate long-term consequences. In a Quranic context, *tadabbur* ensures that divine revelation is not treated as mere religious data, but as actionable guidance to be internalized. Applied to technology, this principle compels individuals to ask not merely *what* information a technology provides, but what it means, what impacts it generates, and how it should be responsibly utilized.

***Ulul Albab* as *Tafakkur* Humans: From Cognitive Dependence to Intellectual Autonomy**

The trait of *tafakkur* reflects the systematic deployment of human intellect to observe, analyze, and contemplate creation. Q.S. Āl ‘Imrān [3]: 191 depicts *Ulul Albab* as those who contemplate the creation of the heavens and the earth. This intellectual activity is not aimless speculation; it is purposefully directed toward comprehending divine design and the cosmic order.

In the era of artificial intelligence, *tafakkur* must be reconstructed as the preservation of human intellectual autonomy amidst the growing capability of technology to perform complex cognitive functions. AI systems can rapidly retrieve data, synthesize ideas, summarize literature, generate alternatives, and draft solutions. However, empirical research demonstrates that higher trust in AI capabilities often leads to reduced user engagement in critical thinking [49].

Therefore, the digital *Ulul Albab* need not outright reject AI, but must engage it without relinquishing their core cognitive functions. Technology should be utilized as an augmentative tool to extend human capability, while problem definition, questioning assumptions, evaluating arguments, auditing outputs, and making final decisions remain strictly human responsibilities. Thus, *tafakkur* asserts the principle of human cognitive agency: technology may assist human thought, but it can never replace the human obligation to think.

***Ulul Albab* as *Tamyīz* and *Ikhtiyār* Humans: From Algorithmic Exposure to Critical Selection**

The characteristics of qualitative discernment (*tamyīz*) and intentional choice (*ikhtiyār*) are exceptionally relevant to digital existence. Q.S. al-Mā‘idah [5]: 100 establishes that the wholesome and the unwholesome are not equal, even if the abundance of the unwholesome appears overwhelming or attractive. Furthermore, Q.S. al-Zumar [39]: 18 describes *Ulul Albab* as those who listen to diverse perspectives and follow the best among them. These passages highlight two interconnected capacities: the ability to discern quality and the agency to select truth.

In digital environments, individuals are continuously exposed to content curated, recommended, and personalized by automated algorithms. Metrics such as popularity, views, likes, shares, or follower counts often generate a

cognitive illusion that popular content is inherently true or beneficial. The Quran explicitly rejects popularity or volume as metrics of truth or moral goodness. Consequently, digital *Ulul Albab* must exercise critical selection, that is, the ability to inspect, filter, cross-check, and select information based on objective truth, welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), and moral-religious values, rather than popularity. *Tamyīz* functions as a critical filter, while *ikhtiyār* executes purposeful decision-making, ensuring that individuals are governed neither by automated algorithms nor by digital crowd behavior.

***Ulul Albab* as *Taqwā*-Centered Humans: From Technological Capability to Ethical and Spiritual Governance**

The final characteristic and ultimate teleological orientation of *Ulul Albab* is God-consciousness (*taqwā*). Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 197 explicitly commands: “*So fear Me, O possessors of intellect!*” This indicates that intellectual capabilities, deep reflection, critical selection, and analytical reasoning are not self-serving end points; all cognitive faculties must culminate in conscious obedience to God. *Taqwā* serves as the overarching orientation that directs human knowledge, intellect, and agency toward executing divine commands and avoiding prohibitions.

In the digital age, *taqwā* can be reconstructed as the framework governing all technological engagement through an acute awareness of moral accountability before God. Consequently, the ideal human profile is defined not merely by digital competence, but by the capacity to navigate critical ethical questions: *Does a given technology generate public benefit or harm? Is shared information accurate or misleading? Does AI utilization foster genuine productivity or academic/professional dishonesty? Does digital communication build human dignity or degrade it?* *Taqwā* operates as the supreme governor, ensuring that intelligence does not degrade into manipulation, knowledge does not turn into arrogance, and technology does not become an instrument of societal corruption.

Synthesis of the Reconstruction

Based on these integrated characteristics, the conceptual reconstruction of *Ulul Albab* as an ideal human profile for the digital era can be formulated within an integrative framework. Scholarship (*ilm*) provides the epistemic foundation; mindful recollection (*tadhakkur*) converts knowledge into practical insight and action; spiritual remembrance (*dhikr*) maintains continuous God-consciousness; deep reflection (*tadabbur*) yields interpretive depth; critical contemplation (*tafakkur*) preserves intellectual autonomy and cognitive engagement; discernment and choice (*tamyīz-ikhtiyār*) empower individuals to filter and select truth from noise; and God-consciousness (*taqwā*) serves as the ultimate orientation, aligning all capabilities toward obedience and societal benefit (*maṣlaḥah*). Consequently, *Ulul Albab* cannot be reduced to individuals who merely possess technological competence; rather, they are individuals who seamlessly integrate human reason, technology, and knowledge under the guidance of divine revelation and *taqwā*. This profile is formulated as follows:

The *Ulul Albab* in the digital era is a knowledgeable individual capable of verifying truth claims; an actor driven by *tadhakkur* who transforms information into meaningful action; a being centered upon *dhikr* who maintains divine awareness amidst digital hyper-connectivity; a thinker inclined toward *tadabbur* who cultivates deep comprehension; an active mind engaged in *tafakkur* who preserves intellectual autonomy amidst AI assistance; a discerning agent possessing *tamyīz* and *ikhtiyār* to filter and choose information based on truth and public interest; and a human guided by *taqwā* who subjects all capabilities to divine values.

Through this formulation, the reconstructed model of *Ulul Albab* yields a human profile that is neither anti-technological nor technologically dependent. Such an individual acts as an autonomous subject governing technology, rather than a passive object manipulated by automated algorithms, information floods, social validation, or artificial intelligence. If the central epistemological challenge of the digital era is the difficulty of discerning truth amidst data abundance, *Ulul Albab* resolves it through *ilm*, *tamyīz*, and *ikhtiyār*. If the core cognitive problem is the erosion of active mental engagement due to cognitive offloading, *Ulul Albab* addresses it through *tafakkur* and *tadabbur*. If the primary moral-psychological crisis is the capture of attention, emotional dysregulation, dependency on social validation, and impulsive reactivity, *Ulul Albab* counters it through *dhikr*, *tadhakkur*, and *taqwā*.

Therefore, the reconstruction of *Ulul Albab* represents an integrative model of the Quranic digital human, unifying three core capacities: epistemic agency, cognitive agency, and moral-spiritual agency. Epistemic agency enables individuals to judge what is worthy of being known and believed; cognitive agency ensures that humans remain the primary actors in reasoning and decision-making; and moral-spiritual agency directs knowledge and technology toward human flourishing, ethical governance, and devotion to God. This synthetic framework distinguishes *Ulul Albab* from mere technological literacy or secular intelligence: their intelligence possesses direction, their knowledge carries ethical responsibility, their reasoning maintains depth, their choices are anchored in moral principles, and their entire existence remains oriented toward the Divine.

V. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *Ulul Albab* represents an ideal human profile synthesizing intellectual capacity, spiritual consciousness, reflective depth, qualitative agency, and God-consciousness. This framework does not position human reason as an autonomous faculty operating in isolation; rather, it conceptualizes intellect as a faculty guided by divine revelation and moral values to generate responsible knowledge, prudent judgment, and ethical action.

Reconstructing the concept of *Ulul Albab* within the digital context does not alter the normative, established meaning of the Quranic text. Instead, it re-articulates Quranic characteristics to directly address the complex challenges of digital existence. The seven core attributes examined, comprising scholarship (*ilm*), mindful application (*tadhakkur*), spiritual remembrance (*dhikr*), deep reflection (*tadabbur*), critical contemplation (*tafakkur*), qualitative discernment and choice (*tamyīz-ikhtiyār*), and God-consciousness (*taqwā*), form an integrative theoretical framework capable of mitigating the epistemological, cognitive, and moral-psychological crises brought about by information overload, AI dependency, algorithmic conditioning, and impulsive digital behaviors.

In summary, the digital-era *Ulul Albab* is conceptualized as a human subject characterized by epistemic responsibility, cognitive autonomy, and moral-spiritual maturity. Such individuals utilize technology as a functional instrument without allowing it to become the central orientation of human life. Ultimately, this framework offers a foundational conceptual baseline for the development of Islamic educational paradigms and digital ethics, providing a theoretical springboard for future empirical investigations within educational and digital contexts.

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