

To Believe or Not to Believe in Absolute Monotheism (Tawhid) is a Personal Choice with Consequences: Binary Messages in Quran's Verses on Iman and Shahadaindika

Saleh Muhammad Harunur Rashid Khan^{1*}

1 Emeritus Professor, Department of Geography and Earth Science, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, WI 54601, USA ; rasid.harun@eagle.uwlax.edu

* Correspondence: rasid.harun@eagle.uwlax.edu

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Abstract: The main objective of this article is to interpret a recurring binary message of divine rewards and retributions in two sets of verses about Iman and Shahada. We employ a stratified sampling procedure for retrieving 139 verses on Iman and 44 verses on Shahada from the Quran SmartSearch database available on the islamicity.org website. The research methodology encompasses: (a) content analysis—primarily frequency counts—of original Arabic terms related to Iman and Shahada, and (b) context analysis of selected themes in samples drawn from passages of three or more verses. This study finds that Iman and Shahada are linked through the doctrine of Absolute Monotheism (Tawhid), but they differ in the frequency and nature of binary messages. Compared to significantly higher frequencies of Iman verses, fewer Shahada verses display greater varieties of semantics, derived from their trilateral root (TRS). Shahada verses emphasise testimony to tawhid over binary themes of reward and punishment, whereas Iman verses use simpler language and display greater emphasis on binary messages. Although there is extensive literature on Iman and Shahada, this article offers a new perspective on understanding the nuanced relationship between them. This research contributes a reproducible framework for Quranic thematic studies by combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative context interpretation. Substantively, it highlights Shahada's semantic richness for tawhid-centered activities and Iman's straightforward binary messaging, providing hermeneutic insights for fiqh, interfaith dialogue, and gender-/disability-inclusive community empowerment.

Keywords: Absolute Monotheism (tawhid); Iman (faith); Shahada (declaration of faith); binary choices and consequences; Creationist and Resurrection doctrines; Allah's Names and Attributes

Abstrak: Tujuan utama artikel ini adalah untuk menafsirkan pesan biner yang berulang tentang ganjaran dan balasan ilahi dalam dua kumpulan ayat tentang Iman dan Shahada. Kami menggunakan prosedur sampling berstrata untuk mengumpulkan 139 ayat tentang Iman dan 44 ayat tentang Shahada dari basis data Quran SmartSearch yang tersedia di situs web islamicity.org. Metodologi penelitian mencakup: (a) analisis konten—utama berupa hitung frekuensi—dari istilah Arab asli yang terkait dengan Iman dan Shahada, dan (b) analisis konteks tema-tema terpilih dalam sampel yang diambil dari ayat-ayat yang terdiri dari tiga ayat atau lebih. Studi ini menemukan bahwa Iman dan Shahada terhubung melalui doktrin Monoteisme Mutlak (Tawhid), tetapi keduanya berbeda dalam frekuensi dan sifat pesan biner. Dibandingkan dengan frekuensi ayat Iman yang jauh lebih tinggi, ayat Shahada yang lebih sedikit menampilkan variasi semantik yang lebih beragam, yang berasal dari akar trilateralnya (TRS). Ayat Shahada menekankan kesaksian tentang Tawhid daripada tema biner tentang ganjaran dan hukuman, sedangkan ayat Iman menggunakan bahasa yang lebih sederhana dan menonjolkan pesan biner dengan lebih kuat. Meskipun terdapat banyak literatur tentang Iman dan Shahada, artikel ini menawarkan perspektif baru dalam memahami hubungan yang kompleks antara keduanya. Penelitian ini menyajikan kerangka kerja yang dapat direproduksi untuk studi tematik Al-Quran dengan menggabungkan analisis frekuensi kuantitatif dengan interpretasi konteks kualitatif. Secara substansial, penelitian ini menyoroti kekayaan semantik Shahada dalam aktivitas

yang berpusat pada tauhid dan pesan biner yang jelas dari Iman, memberikan wawasan hermeneutik untuk fiqh, dialog antaragama, dan pemberdayaan komunitas yang inklusif terhadap gender dan disabilitas.

Kata Kunci: tawhid; Iman; Shahada; oposisi biner; sifat-sifat Allah

1. Introduction

Differentiating the frequency and characteristics of binary messages between *Iman* and *Shahada* is significant because it reveals nuanced layers in the Quran's communication of faith and its consequences. Understanding these distinctions helps clarify how *Iman* verses often emphasize the personal, ongoing choice between belief and disbelief, typically through clear-cut messages of reward and retribution. These binary messages are central to the Quran's presentation of faith as a living, dynamic commitment that demands both intellectual acceptance and ethical action. In contrast, *Shahada* verses, while fewer, tend to focus more on the declarative aspect of faith—public or inner testimony to the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (SAWS). Their language is often broader and more semantically varied, reflecting both the act of bearing witness and the communal identity that emerges from this declaration. By distinguishing between these two, scholars and readers can better appreciate the Quran's layered approach: *Iman* as the inner conviction guiding moral choices, and *Shahada* as the outward affirmation that unites individuals within the *Ummah* (community). Recognizing these differences impacts modern Quranic hermeneutics by encouraging more context-sensitive interpretations that respect both the internal and external dimensions of faith. It also enriches interfaith dialogue, as it enables a clearer explanation of how Islamic belief structures operate, allowing for more meaningful engagement with adherents of other traditions. Ultimately, this nuanced understanding supports a richer, more constructive discourse both within and beyond the Muslim community.

In this article, we interpret both distinctions and connectivity between *Iman* (Faith) and *Shahada* (Declaration of Faith) by using intra-Quranic hermeneutics, which may be defined as "interpretations of Quran's text based on its theoretical frameworks and methods of arguments" (modified from: Schmidt, 2006). According to al-Ghazali, the prominent Medieval philosopher and Quranic scholar, perhaps the most fundamental theoretical framework of the Quran is the Creationist doctrine, which states that Allah has created this Universe, including the Earth and all forms of life on it (Gwynne, 2014). Since death is the inevitable end of life, the Resurrection doctrine is a corollary of the Creationist doctrine. It has been argued that without a belief in resurrection and the Afterlife (*Akhira*) and Allah's promise of rewards of the Paradise for believers and His retributions of the Hellfire for disbelievers, there would not be any need for religion (Yusuf, 2015, p. 1819).

The Quran's text is replete with countless verses referring to some elements of the Creationist and the Resurrection doctrines. Creationist and Resurrection beliefs are fundamental to Islamic faith and derive from the doctrine of Absolute Monotheism (*Tawhid*). Generally, belief refers to an accepted truth or opinion, especially a tenet held by a group (merriam-webster.com/dictionary/belief). Islam, one of the world's major religions, centres on belief in one God (*Tawhid*) and recognition of Muhammad (SAWS) as his final messenger (modified from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islam/> ... Retrieved July 12, 2025). A believer's faith in the metaphysical [unseen] aspects of Islam is called *Iman* (spelled as *ē-maan* and not *eye-man*). A token faith in Allah is not an adequate criterion for Iman. In addition to believing in Allah, His Sovereignty of the Universe, His Angels, His Books (Quran and other scriptures), His Messengers (Prophets), the Hereafter (*Akhira*), [and other articles of Islamic faith], one must declare or proclaim his/her Iman. A formal declaration of *Iman* is called *Shahada*, which is the first tenet (pillar) of Islam. It has two distinct parts: (a) "There is no God worthy of worship except Allah" (*La Ilaha Illallahu*), and (b) Muhammad (SAWS) is His Messenger (*Muhammadur Rasul Ullah*).

It appears from the sweeping review above that *Iman* and *Shahada* are interrelated since both are corollaries of the doctrine of tawhid, i.e., they are contingent upon believing in tawhid. There is a substantial body of English-language literature on these topics (Abifandi-Cedeño et al., 2025; Al-Jiffry, 2012; El-Najjar, 2007; Ghauri, 2011; Khan, 2016; Laurencelle et al., 2002; Nefeily, 2005; Ozalp, 2016; Philips, 2006; Shafi, 2008). Our goal is to make an original contribution to the literature by focusing specifically on a binary message of rewards and retributions in two comparative samples of verses of the Quran: one on *Iman* and the other on *Shahada*. These sample verses, retrieved from the *Quran SmartSearch* program for the *IslamiCity.org* website, are the primary data for our study. Interpretations of these verses focus on two interrelated questions, as follows: *First*, does the Quran present some of its *Iman* verses with a simultaneous message of a binary choice of belief (*Iman*) or lack of belief in the doctrine of tawhid and their corresponding binary consequences? *Second*, does the Quran employ a similar binary model in *Shahada* verses, asking believers to declare their testimony to tawhid and warning disbelievers of consequences of not doing so?

This research employs a qualitative methodology centred on textual analysis of the Qur'an to examine the conceptual development of *iman* (faith) and *shahada* (testimony of faith). Following hermeneutic principles (Rahman, 1982), key verses were identified through thematic indexing across surahs, with contextual exegesis integrating classical interpretations and contemporary scholarship. This layered approach elucidates semantic nuances, relational dynamics between the concepts, and theological implications, ensuring a rigorous analysis grounded in primary Qur'anic texts. Thus, the research methodology encompasses: (a) content analysis—primarily frequency counts—of original Arabic terms related to *Iman* and *Shahada*, and (b) context analysis of selected themes in samples drawn from passages of three or more verses.

2. Understanding the Meaning of *Iman* and *Shahada* in the Qur'an

In this study, we utilise a purposive, keyword-based sampling strategy focused on specific terms and concepts associated with binary messages in *Iman* and *Shahada* verses. From this initial pool, the sample is further refined by classifying verses according to the presence of binary messages—namely, those that highlight rewards versus retributions. This approach enables a targeted analysis by ensuring that only verses directly relevant to the research questions are included, even though it may limit the generalizability of the results. However, such a method is well-suited for a focused textual study, where the objective is to examine explicit thematic occurrences rather than to estimate their prevalence across the entire Quranic text.

We define *Iman* verses as those containing one or more grammatical variations of the word *Iman*, based on its trilateral root (TRI) (*hamza mīm nūn*). We commenced our search by extracting over 200 verses related to *Iman* from the *Quran SmartSearch* database on the *islamicity.org* website. This was achieved through multiple iterations using both the Arabic term *Iman* (transliteration) and its English equivalent, Faith. Some of the retrieved verses do not necessarily contain any word derived from the trilateral root of *Iman*, although their subject matters may deal with this topic. Excluding these verses, we retrieved a *preliminary sample* of 165 *Iman* verses, each containing at least one word derived from the trilateral root of *Iman*. To address the first objective of this study (above), we have reduced the *final sample* size of *Iman* verses to 139 verses ($n_1=139$), by specifying that each verse also includes certain elements of a binary choice and/or its consequences (Table 1)

The sampling procedure for *Shahada* verses is identical. We commenced our search by extracting over 200 verses related to *Shahada* from the *Quran SmartSearch* database. Next, we obtained a *preliminary sample* of 102 *Shahada* verses, each containing one or more grammatical variations of the word *Shahada*, based on its trilateral root (*shīn hā dāl*). As in the case of *Iman* verses, each of the *final sample* of 44 *Shahada* verses ($n_2=44$) includes aspects of a binary choice and its consequences (Table 2).

This method of reducing sample sizes may be characterised as stratified sampling because we have separated the retrieved verses into different groups (strata) by using certain keywords/concepts. Stratified sampling is a convenient and practical method and is a type of blind or random

sampling(Hassan, 2024). However, we would like to stress here that we have employed this sampling method only for obtaining sample verses blindly, i.e., as objectively as possible. In this study, we have only utilised descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, which were calculated using an Excel spreadsheet. No additional statistical analyses were conducted.

For analysing data in Tables 1 and 2, we have used two well-known social science methods: *content analysis* and *context analysis*. *Content analysis* is a research method used to identify the presence of various words and concepts in different texts (dovetail.com/research/content-analysis

Number of verses	Types of Sample Verses
165 verses in twenty-four suras	Preliminary sample: Each verse contains at least one word derived from the trilateral root of <i>Iman</i> (<i>hamza mīm nūn</i>).
N₁ = 139 (139 verses in twenty-four suras)	Final sample: Each verse contains a binary message + a word derived from the trilateral root of <i>Iman</i> (data row 1)
Nature of messages	Sura numbers are in bold text: verse numbers in plain text
Binary message + a word derived from the trilateral root of Iman	One hundred thirty-nine verses in twenty-four suras: 2:14, 25, 26, 41, 62, 82, 93, 104, 109, 121, 126, 136,137, 143, 165, 177, 186, 208, 212, 214, 218, 221, 253, 254, 257, 264, 277, 285 3:57, 68, 72, 73, 86, 90, 100, 106, 110, 114, 118, 119, 139, 140, 141, 149, 156, 167, 173,175,177, 179, 193, 199, 200 4:38, 39, 46, 47, 51, 55, 59, 60, 65, 76, 94, 122, 135-137, 144, 146, 147, 150, 155, 162, 170, 171, 173, 175 5: 8, 9, 11, 12, 35, 41, 51, 53-57, 59, 61, 65, 69, 81, 87, 90, 93-95, 101, 105, 106, 111 8:2, 9:23, 24, 10:9, 98-100, 16:97, 102, 106, 29:10, 33:22, 34:21, 48:4, 49:7, 14, 15,17, 52:21, 57:7, 8, 19, 58:22, 59:10, 74:31
Additional theme: Creationist doctrine (Some verses overlap with those in rows 3 and 4)	Eight verses in seven suras (6% of the sample, i.e., 139 verses): 2:26, 3:156, 4:170, 171, 10:4, 21:30, 45:3, 48:4
Additional theme: Resurrection doctrine (Some verses overlap with those in rows 2 and 4)	Twenty-seven verses in eight suras (19%): 2: 25, 62, 82, 104, 126, 165, 178, 212, 214, 221, 254, 257, 264, 3:106, 114, 4:38, 59, 122, 136, 173, 5:41, 69, 94, 16:106, 34:21, 58:22, 74:31
Additional theme: Allah's names and attributes (Some verses overlap with those in rows 2 and 3)	Thirty-five verses in eight suras (25%): <i>Allah's names</i> (some of them are parts of His attributes below): 2:109, 118, 137, 143, 3:68, 73, 156, 173, 4:39, 94, 135, 170, 171, 5:8, 54, 95, 101, 49:4, 59:10 <i>Allah's attributes</i> (may include Allah's names): 2:26, 109, 137, 143, 165, 212, 214, 218, 253, 3:68, 73, 119, 140, 156, 167, 173, 199, 4:39, 47, 94, 135, 170, 171, 5:8, 51, 54, 61, 87, 93, 95, 101, 34:21, 48:4, 49:14, 59:10

Table 1. Content analysis of *Iman* verses Source: Original table prepared by the author.

...Retrieved July 11, 2025). We conducted content analysis in two steps. First, we examined semantics of each verse using multiple English translations from the *Quran SmartSearch* program. Then, we compared and verified each word's meaning with the *Quranic Arabic Corpus*, a respected word-by-word translation. Second, we also searched for verses containing themes such as the Creationist doctrine, the Resurrection doctrine, and Allah's attributes.

Whereas, in content analysis we focus on semantics of single verses, in context analysis we interpret broader meanings in passages of three or more verses. *Context analysis* refers to the examination of language and meaning within the surrounding context, considering how different situations or uses of language can shift its interpretation (<https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/fundamentals-of-the-grammar-of-standard-english/contextual-analysis/> Retrieved July 11, 2025). For analyzing specific contexts of each sample passage, we have employed the technique of intra-Quranic *hermeneutic context analysis*, i.e., relying more on published tafsirs of the Quran than using other external literature, such as hadith and other scholarly literature.

3. Symbolic formulation of binary choices and consequences

Data in Tables 1 and 2 are organised based on frequency counts of certain keywords. Because of the nature of our sampling design, each sample verse conveys a binary message, either directly or indirectly. Verse 2:256 from *Surat al-Baqara* contains a binary message.

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So, whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unyielding handhold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (trans. Khattab, n.d.).

Clearly, this verse distinguishes *deen* as the correct religion (Islam) from beliefs in false gods. The verse also describes the consequence of such belief in the Absolute Oneness of Allah as the believer's "firmest, unyielding handhold" of Iman. This verse serves as an example of divine rewards in this world (*Duniya*). Utilizing the analogy of holding something heavy by its handhold, it illustrates the concept of such rewards. Other verses describe the nature of consequences more explicitly, focusing largely on post-resurrection rewards and retributions. Allah promises believers the ultimate reward of Paradise (*Jannah*) for adhering to tawhid. Conversely, many verses condemn disbelievers, particularly for associating Allah with others in worship. In the following symbolic formulation, (1) represents a positive choice or outcome, while (0) signifies a lack of belief or its consequences:

- To believe or not to believe in Tawhid and Shahada → (1) = Believe or (0) = Disbelieve
- Outcome of the above choice → (1) = Reward for believers or (0) = Punishment for disbelievers

Interpretation of Iman verses

Trilateral root of Iman (TRI)

We studied words from the trilateral root of Iman (*hamza mīm nūn*) using Quranic Arabic grammar by the *Quranic Arabic Corpus* (QAC, n.d.). The most common Iman-related word is *amanu*, found in 60 of 139 sampled verses (43%). Two most familiar examples of verses using the word *amanu* are as follows:

2:264: *Ya-ayyuhā ladhīna amanu*: O you who believe[d]: 3rd person plural perfect verb.

2:277: *Innal ladhīna amanu*: Indeed, those who believe[d]: 3rd person plural perfect verb.

Depending on the noun or pronoun associated with it, the word *amanu* may change slightly:

2:285: *amanar rasulu*: The Prophet (SAWS) believed: 3rd person singular perfect verb. *Rasulu* is a nominative noun.

2:136: *amanna*: We believe: 1st person plural perfect verb. "We" is a subject pronoun.

Here are some examples of grammatical forms derived from the trilateral root, *hamza mīm nūn*:

3:73: *Wala tuminuna illa*: And do not believe except ... 2nd person plural imperfect verb

3:110: *Muminun*: Believers: Nominative plural active participle

4:171: *Faaminu billahi*: So, believe in Allah ...2nd person plural imperative verb

74:31: *Imanan*: faith [believers will increase in faith]: Accusative indefinite verbal noun

Attributes of a believer (Muslim): Sample verses: 2:136, 2:285

Our sampling design shows that binary messages are in all Iman verses, making data recursive. To avoid repetition, we cite only a few verses. Sample verses 2:136 and 2:185 lay the foundation of Islamic beliefs by describing key attributes of a Muslim. True believers uphold faith in Allah and all his scriptures, without any distinction between any of His Messengers, as in 2:136:

قُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ
النَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

So [you believers], say, 'We believe in God and in what was sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we devote ourselves to Him.' (trans. Abdel Haleem, n.d.)

Besides making no distinction between Allah's Messengers, true believers also believe in other articles of faith derived from the doctrine of tawhid, as in 2:285:

ءَامَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِن رَّبِّهِ ۖ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّن رُّسُلِهِ ۚ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا
غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, as do the faithful. They all believe in God, His angels, His scriptures, and His messengers. 'We make no distinction between any of His messengers,' they say, 'We hear and obey. Grant us Your forgiveness, our Lord. To You we all return!' (trans. Abdel Haleem, n.d.)

Allah's rewards of the Paradise: Sample verses: 2:82, 4:122, 10:9

Consequences of belief in Allah and tawhid appear in sample verses in two forms: (a) rewards of the Paradise (*Jannah*) in the Afterlife, and (b) rewards in this world (*Duniya*). Consisting of ten words, 2:82 is a sharp and short sentence confirming Allah's promise of the Jannah for believers (positive consequence of belief) in an elegant discourse (2:82):

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And those who believe and do good will be the residents of Paradise. They will be there forever. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

Discourse is similarly sharp and short in 4:122 and 10:9. They convey almost identical messages as in 2:82. In contrast, in 4:146, 4:147, 4:162 Allah's rewards for believers are promised in general terms without specifying the Jannah.

Allah's rewards in this world

Compared to Allah's rewards in the Afterlife (*Akhira*), Quran's discourse on Allah's rewards in this world (*Duniya*) is much more subtle, as in 16:97:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

Most eschatological verses promise rewards in Jannah for righteous deeds, but 16:97 and similar verses in the Quran do not make direct promises. The spiritual benefits of righteous acts, like faith and Islamic rituals, are often reflected in a Muslim's lifestyle. This verse uses various expressions to convey that when believers combine faith with good deeds, Allah promises them a “good life,” though its nature isn't specified. Some commentators have interpreted “good life” as a life free from worries and filled with contentment (16:97, tafsir #2137, Ali, n.d.). Clearly, this is a spiritual reward in this world.

Retributions of the Hellfire

A classic example of a binary verse is 2:126:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا بَلَدًا ءَامِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ مَن ءَامَنَ مِنْهُم بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

And remember when Abraham said, “My Lord, make this city of Mecca secure and provide fruits to its people—those among them who believe in Allah and the Last Day.” He answered, “As for those who disbelieve, I will let them enjoy themselves for a little while, then I will condemn them to the torment of the Fire. What an evil destination!” (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

Since Makkah is situated in a desert environment, Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim AS) is praying to Allah for fruits (or produce) for believers. This is a prayer for the well-being of believers, i.e., Allah's rewards in this world (*Duniya*). Allah seems to respond positively, adding that He would let disbelievers enjoy for a while in this Duniya but on the Day of Judgment He will condemn them to the torment of the Hellfire.

Creationist doctrine

As indicated in the introduction, the Creationist doctrine is perhaps the most fundamental theoretical framework of the Quran. This doctrine is stated in large numbers of verses throughout the Quran asserting that Allah is the Creator of all things, including the heavens and the earth and all forms of life on earth. Our sampling method excludes many relevant verses on the Creationist doctrine by specifying that all sample verses should include binary messages with Iman-related words. Despite this limitation, our sample of only eight verses (on the Creationist doctrine, in Table 1) include at least four major concepts.

First, belief in Allah's creation connects to tawhid (45:3):

إِنَّ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيٰتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

There are signs in the heavens and the earth for those who believe (trans. Abdel Haleem, n.d.)

Second, the first part of 21:30 probably refers to the Big Bang theory (21:30, tafsir #5, Khattab, n.d.):

أَوَّلَ يَرِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا أَنَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنٰهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَآءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

Do the disbelievers not realise that the heavens and earth were once one mass then We split them apart? And We created from water every living thing. Will they not then believe? (trans. Khattab, n.d.).

According to the modern Big Bang theory, the solar system with its planets and satellites separated from a central mass following “a Big Bang.” Verse 21:30 alludes to this separation in its word *fafataqnāhumā* (“then We separated them”) (trans. QAC, n.d.). How did He accomplish this separation? Modern scientific theories cannot compare to Allah’s awesome power of Creation, as He can create anything from nothing. This is described succinctly in *Surat Yasin*, in 36:82:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

Whenever He wills a thing, He just commands it Be and it is! (trans. Maududi, n.d.)

Third, the second part of 21:30 also refers to a significant scientific observation that Allah created all living things (starting) from water.

Fourth, according to 36:82 (above), Allah’s limitless creative power is explained by the *Kun Fayakun* theory: He simply commands “Be!” and creation or action follows. The theory could also apply to Prophet Easa’s (Jesus) conception by Marriam (AS) (Virgin Mary), as stated in 4:171:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْفَسَهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَآمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

People of the Book! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, and attribute to Allah nothing except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of Allah, and His command that He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him (which led to Mary’s conception). So, believe in Allah and in His Messengers, and do not say: (Allah is a) trinity. Give up this assertion; it would be better for you. Allah is indeed just one God. Far be it from His glory that He should have a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. Allah is sufficient for a guardian. (trans. Maududi)

Similarly, Allah formed Adam (AS) from clay and gave life by blowing a soul into him (15:29). Thus, the *Kun Fayakun* theory explains all forms of creation by Allah.

Resurrection doctrine

The Holy Quran illustrates Allah’s power through creation, death, and resurrection for judgment of individual actions on the Day of Judgment. In Islamic faith, the Afterlife (*Akhira*) begins for each soul in either Paradise (*Jannah*) or Hell (*Jahannam*), based on their actions in this life (*Duniya*). Belief in the Afterlife, central to the Resurrection doctrine, is a fundamental aspect of *Tawhid* (Absolute Monotheism) and distinguishes believers from non-believers. The doctrine of resurrection is mentioned in 27 out of 139 Iman verses (19%). Binary messages appear in at least three different forms. First, some refers only to Allah’s rewards of the Paradise (*Jannah*) for believers, as in 2:25:

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَنُؤُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَهُمْ فِيهَا مُطَهَّرُونَ

Give good news ‘O Prophet’ to those who believe and do good that they will have Gardens under which rivers flow. Whenever provided with fruit, they will say, “This is what we were given before,” for they will be served fruit that looks similar ‘but tastes different’. They will have pure spouses, and they will be there forever. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

Second, some rewards and retributions are implied without specifying Paradise or Hellfire, as in 5:69:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِقُونَ وَالصَّابِقُونَ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Indeed, the believers, Jews, Sabians and Christians—whoever 'truly' believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

Third, Allah's retributions for disbelievers are specified in some binary verses, contrasting true believers with polytheists, as in 2:165:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّوهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرُونَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ
الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ

Still there are some who take others as Allah's equal—they love them as they should love Allah—but the true believers love Allah even more. If only the wrongdoers could see the horrible punishment awaiting them, they would certainly realise that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is indeed severe in punishment. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

Allah's names and attributes

Muslims are required to observe rituals tied to Islam's five tenets. Voluntary worship, like *dhikr*—remembering Allah's names and attributes—helps individuals strengthen their connection to Allah. Said Nursi notes that recognising God's names and attributes is a path to nearness to Allah, while Al-Ghazali states that meditating on these names is central to Prophetic tradition and believed to lead to Paradise (Ozalp, 2016). About 25% of Iman verses mention Allah's names and attributes to reinforce their messages. Allah's names and attributes constitute one of the three types of tawhid in the Quran: (a) *Tawhid al-Rububiyya* (TAR) - Unity of Lordship, encompassing Islamic faith articles; (b) *Tawhid al-Uluhiya* - Unity of Worship, asserting God as the sole creator and worthy deity, also known as *Tawhid al-Ibadah* (TAI); and (c) *Tawhid al-Asmaa was-Siffat* (TAS)- Unity of Allah's names and attributes (Philips, 2006).

There is a clear distinction between Allah's names and His attributes (Table 1, last row). Allah's names are unique single-word titles describing Him, while His attributes are distinct qualities expressed in longer Quranic statements. Allah's attributes are more numerous than His ninety-nine names, as the names are also part of His attributes. Most often, Allah's names and attributes (TAS) are situated towards the end of a verse, seemingly to affirm the messages conveyed in the verse. The following names of Allah are mentioned in our sample of Iman verses (in order of suras, QAC, n.d.):

Al-Qadir (2:109): The All Powerful

Al-Alim (2:137, 4:39, 5:54): The All-Knowing

As-Sami' (2:137): The All-Hearing

Ar-Rahim (2:143, 59:10): Most Merciful

Ar-Rauf (2:143, 59:10): Full of Kindness

Al-Ghaffar (2:218, 49:4): The Oft-Forgiving

Al-Waali (3:68): The Guardian

Al-Waasi (3:73, 5:54): The All-Encompassing

Al-Baseer (3:156): The All-Seeing

Al-Wakeel (3: 173, 4:171): The Trustee, the Disposer of Affairs

Al-Khabeer (4:94, 4:135, 5:8): All-Aware

Al-Hakim (4:170): All-Wise

Al-Azeem (5:95): All-Mighty

Al-Haleem (5:101): All-Forbearing

Many of these names are paired, for example: *Sami'ul Alim* (2:137), *Raufur Rahim* (2:143), *Ghafurur Rahim* (2:218), *Wasiun Alim* (3:73), and *Ghafurun Halim* (5:101). Unlike Allah's concise names, His attributes describe qualities in longer phrases. For example:

2:165: وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ

and that Allah is indeed severe in punishment. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

2:212: وَاللَّهُ يَزُودُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

And Allah provides for whoever He wills without limit. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

4:47: وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا

And Allah's command is always executed! (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

5:61: وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْتُمُونَ

Allah knows best what they are hiding. (trans. Haleem, n.d.)

5:93: وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Allah loves those who do good deeds. (trans, Abdel Haleem, n.d.)

Ayat al-Kursi: an epitome of Allah's names and attributes: Context analysis of passage 2:255-257

Ayat al-Kursi (2:255), frequently referred to as "the heart of the Quran," centres exclusively on the concept of tawhid and outlines several names and attributes of Allah. Containing 50 words, composition of *Ayat al-Kursi* is a marvel of the Quran. It starts with two of Allah's conjoint (paired) attributes, which are: *al-Hayu* (the Ever-Living) and *al-Qayum* (the Sustainer of all that exists). The entire text of the verse contains several other names and attributes of Allah. One such attribute appears exclusively in *Ayat al-Kursi*: "Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him." In two other semiotic (symbolic) expressions, *Ayat al-Kursi* also includes one of Allah's awesome attributes related to the Creationist doctrine: "To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth" and "His Seat (*Kursi*) extends over the heavens and the earth." Further, the verse alludes to the Resurrection doctrine: "He knows what happens to them (humans) in this world, and what will happen to them in the Hereafter." As the verse starts with two of Allah's conjoint attributes, it also concludes with two other paired attributes: *wahuwal-aliyul azim* ("And He is the Most High, the Most Great)."

Whereas *Ayat al-Kursi* highlights aspects of tawhid, 2:256-257 address the outcomes of accepting or rejecting tawhid. As noted earlier (under symbolic formulation), verse 2:256 illustrates binary choice by contrasting belief in Allah with rejection of false gods. While both 2:256 and 2:257 reference tawhid, their focus is primarily on the implications of such choices for believers and disbelievers.

Interpretations of Shahada verses

Triliteral root of Shahada (TRS)

As in the case of *Iman* verses, we studied relevant words derived from the triliteral root of *Shahada* (*shān hā dāl*), using Quranic Arabic grammar (*Quranic Arabic Corpus* [QAC, n.d.]). Our study shows that words derived from the triliteral root of *Shahada* differ significantly in grammar and frequency from those of *Iman* (TRI). Although *Shahada* terms appear in only 43 binary verses, they have more varied grammatical forms than in 139 *Iman*-related verses. The following are examples of TRS-derived words (grammar by QAC, n.d.):

Ashhad (5:111): قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَأَشْهَدُ

They said, “We have faith, and do thou bear witness [that we bow to Allah as Muslims]?” Here, *ashhad* is a command verb, asking believers: “do thou bear witness?” An example of the 2nd person imperative verb.

Ashhadu (6:19): قُلْ لَّا أَشْهَدُ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ

Then say, “I will never testify to this!” And say, “There is only One God. Here, *Ashhadu* means “testify.” An example of the 1st person singular imperfect verb.

Shahidun (6:19): قُلْ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ

Say, “Allah is! He is a Witness between me and you. Here, *Shahidun* means “a Witness,” a nominative singular indefinite noun.”

Number of verses	Types of Sample Verses
102 verses in 39 suras	Preliminary sample: Each verse contains at least one word based on the trilateral root of <i>Shahada</i> (<i>shān hā dāl</i>)
N ₂ = 44 (44 verses in 24 suras)	Final sample: Each verse contains a binary message + a word derived from the trilateral root of <i>Shahada</i> (data row 1 below)
Nature of messages <i>Binary message + a word derived from the trilateral root of Shahada</i>	Sura numbers are in bold text: verse numbers in plain text Forty-four verses in twenty-four suras (43 verses if 48:29 is excluded: see explanation in the text): 3:52, 53, 70, 86, 98, 99, 4:41, 69, 5:44, 111, 6:19, 130, 150, 7:37, 172, 9:17, 107, 11:17, 18, 54, 103, 13:43, 16:84, 89, 18:51, 22:17, 78, 24:24, 28:75, 29:52, 36:65, 40:51, 41:20,21,22, 47, 43:86, 46:10, 48:29, 50:21, 57:19, 58:6, 63:1, 85:7
Additional theme: <i>Creationist doctrine</i> (Some verses overlap with those in rows 3 and 4)	Eleven verses in nine suras: 7:172, 18:51, 21:56, 29:52, 40:51, 41:21, 47, 53, 43:19, 48:29, 85:9
Additional theme: <i>Resurrection doctrine</i> (some verses overlap with those in rows 2 and 4)	Twenty-five verses in sixteen suras: 4:159, 6:130, 150, 7:37, 172, 9:17, 10:46, 11:17, 18, 103, 16:84, 89, 22:17, 21:24, 40:51, 41:20, 21, 22, 47, 43:19, 86, 50:21, 57:19, 58:6, 85:3
Additional theme: <i>Allah’s names and attributes</i> (some verses overlap with those in rows 2 and 3)	Twenty-three verses in seventeen suras: 2:140, 143, 3:18, 86, 99, 4:135, 166, 5:8, 117, 9:107, 10:46, 11:18, 17:96, 22:17, 78, 34:47, 41:53, 46:10, 48:28, 58:6, 59:22, 63:1, 85:9

Table 2. Content Analysis of *Shahada* Verses Source: Original table prepared by the author.

In the same verse, another TRS-derived word:

Shahidun (6:19): قُلْ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ

Say, “Allah is! He is a Witness between me and you. Here, *Shahidun* means “a Witness,” a nominative singular indefinite noun”

Another TRS-derived word appears in 6:19:

Shahadatan (6:19): قُلْ أُنشِئْ شَهَادَةً

Ask them, O Prophet, "Who is the best witness?" An example of the accusative indefinite noun.

Shahidna (7:172): قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا

They replied, "Yes, You are! We testify." An example of the 1st person plural perfect verb.

Ashhada (7:172): وَأَشْهَدُهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ

and had them testify regarding themselves. An example of the 3rd person singular perfect verb.

Ush'hadu (11:54): وَأَشْهَدُوا أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

and you too bear witness, that I totally reject whatever you associate. Here, Ush-hidu is an example of the 1st person singular imperfect verb.

Nashhadu (63:1): إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُتَنَفِّحُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ

When the hypocrites come to you [Prophet], they say, "We bear witness." Here, *Nashhadu* means "We bear witness," an example of the 1st person plural imperfect verb.

Yashhadu (63:1): وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُتَنَفِّحِينَ لَكَذِبُونَ

and He bears witness that the hypocrites are liars. Here, *Yashhadu* means "and Allah testifies," an example of the third person singular imperfect verb.

Abrahamic tradition of Islamic monotheism

One of the purposes of this manuscript is to explore connectivity between Iman and Shahada, both derived from the doctrine of Absolute Monotheism (implied in the second objective of this article). The Abrahamic tradition of Islamic monotheism, stated in a short passage (3:50-53), seems to provide such a link:

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلَا جِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي خَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحِثُّكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

3:50: I have come to confirm the truth of the Torah which preceded me, and to make some things lawful to you which used to be forbidden. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. Be mindful of God, obey me: (trans. Abdel Haleem, n.d.)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

3:51: Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So, worship Him alone. This is the Straight Path." (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْخَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّآ مُسْلِمُونَ

3:52: When Jesus sensed disbelief from his people, he asked, "Who will stand up with me for Allah?" The disciples replied, "We will stand up for Allah. We believe in Allah, so bear witness that we have submitted." (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

رَبَّنَا ءَامَنَّا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

3:53: They prayed to Allah, "Our Lord! We believe in Your revelations and follow the messenger, so count us among those who bear witness." (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

This passage references all three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, through the mention of the Torah (3:50); Christianity, via Prophet Jesus (Easa AS) in verses 3:50-51; and Islam, as the passage

is addressed to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). Islam, regarded as the religion of Allah and shared by Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, calls for unity and acceptance of its teachings. Followers of faith are encouraged to submit to Allah's will and become Muslims, avoiding division and rejection of guidance (3:52, tafsir #392, Ali, n.d.). The phrases "bear witness" in 3:52 and 3:53 refer to Shahada, signifying affirmation of tawhid.

Connection between Iman and Shahada

Context analysis of passage 6:18-20. This passage serves as evidence supporting the view that the *Shahada*, or declaration of *Iman*, is divinely ordained. A key article of Islamic faith holds that Allah is the "Supreme Master over His creatures" (6:18). The next verse links this creationist belief to a reaffirmation through the *Shahada* (6:19):

قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً قُلْ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ أَنتُمْ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً
أُخْرَى قُلْ لَا أَشْهَدُ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

Say, 'What counts most as a witness?' Say, 'God is witness between you and me. This Quran was revealed for me to warn you [people] and everyone it reaches. Do you really bear witness that there are other gods beside God?' Say, 'I myself do not bear witness [to any such thing].' Say, 'He is only one God, and I disown whatever you join with Him.' (trans. Abdel Haleem, n.d.)

This verse (6:19) highlights the significance of *Shahada* through repeated use of four related terms (derived from the TRS) and stresses tawhid by instructing believers in One Allah not to testify to any other deity. The passage ends by stating that true believers recognise the Prophet (Muhammad SWAS) as clearly as they know their own children (6:20).

On Judgment Day, sinners' own limbs may testify against them: Context analysis of passage 41:20-22

This passage discusses the consequences of denying Allah's Oneness, noting that sinners' own limbs will testify against them.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 41:20:

At length, when they reach the (Fire), their hearing, their sight, and their skins will bear witness against them, as to (all) their deeds. (trans. Ali, n.d.)

وَقَالُوا جُلُودُهُمْ لِمَ شَهِدَتْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ 41:21:

They will ask their skins: Why did you bear witness against us? The skins will reply: Allah gave us speech, as He gave speech to all others. He it is Who created you for the first time and it is to Him that you will be sent back. (trans. Maududi, n.d.)

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُونَ أَنْ يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ 41:22:

You did not bother to hide yourselves from your ears, eyes, and skin to prevent them from testifying against you. Rather, you assumed that Allah did not know much of what you used to do. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

While *Shahada*-related terms often affirm *Iman*, this passage shows they can also refer to Allah's punishment of disbelievers. The Quran also uses similar TRS-derived words in various non-*Shahada* contexts, such as witnessing the persecution of believers (85:7), serving as witnesses for (a) property trusts (4:6), (b) adultery (24:3), and (c) written loan contracts (2:282).

Implications of Prophet's name in a verse: Context analysis of passage 48:26-29

An exception was made in selecting Shahada verses by including verse 48:29, which does not contain a TRS-derived word. This verse is part of our Shahada sample because it begins with the name of the Prophet (SAWS) as *Muhammadur Rasulallah*, which represents the second component of the *Shahada*. Tawhid is summed up in the first part of the *Shahada*: “There is no god but Allah.” Its impact lies in both its brevity and its use of affirmation (“except Allah”) and negation (“there is no god”) (Chitwick, 2012). The second part, *Muhammadur Rasulallah* (“Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger”), appears in various forms throughout the Quran. Sometimes the Prophet is addressed directly, indirectly as “O Prophet!”, or implied through context even when his name or title is not mentioned. Our research shows that the phrase *La ilāha illal-lahu Muhammadur Rasoolullah* does not appear together in the Quran but is found in authentic hadiths like Sahih al-Bukhari 8, where the Prophet (SAWS) affirms Islam’s foundation on Allah’s oneness and Muhammad’s prophethood.

This passage implies the concept of Shahada in the early period of Islam, referencing verse 48:26, which states that Allah provided calmness to His Messenger (SWAS) and the believers, encouraging adherence to “the declaration of faith” (48:26):

إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ الْحَمِيَّةَ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَى وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Remember when the disbelievers had filled their hearts with pride—the pride of pre-Islamic ignorance—then Allah sent down His serenity upon His Messenger and the believers, inspiring them to uphold the declaration of faith, for they were better entitled and more worthy of it. And Allah has perfect knowledge of all things. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

This verse refers to the period before the end of the Hudaibiyah expedition, when pagans barred the Prophet (SAWS) and his followers from entering Makkah for Umrah. The Prophet had a dream that he and his companions would eventually enter the city as pilgrims (48:26, tafsir #12, Khattab, n.d.; tafsir # 4909, Ali, n.d.). The Treaty allowed Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and his followers to perform the Hajj in the subsequent year with minimal hindrances (48:27). The role of Muhammad (SAWS) as a prophet is referenced in 48:28. The section concludes with verse 48:29:

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْطَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other. You see them kneeling and prostrating, seeking God’s bounty and His good pleasure: on their faces they bear the marks of their prostrations. This is how they are pictured in the Torah and the Gospel: like a seed that puts forth its shoot, becomes strong, grows thick, and rises on its stem to the delight of its Sowers. So, God infuriates the disbelievers through them; God promises forgiveness and a great reward to those who believe and do righteous deeds. (trans. Abdel Haleem, n.d.)

This passage reflects a historical context in which Muslims were instructed to be firm with warring Arab pagans and their allies, while Islam generally advocates kindness and fairness toward peaceful non-Muslims (48:29, tafsir #14, Khattab, n.d.). This parable describes how good seed grows gradually, often beyond the Sower’s understanding or expectations. Similarly, Islam began quietly but steadily gained strength until even its opponents acknowledged it. The Quran expands on this idea, describing how the growth of faith amazes and delights those who witness it (48:29, tafsir #4917, Ali, n.d.).

4. Quranic Textual Analysis: *Iman-Shahada* Interrelations in *Tawhid*

This study finds that *Iman* and *Shahada* are interrelated concepts rooted in Absolute Monotheism (*tawhid*), both highlighting belief in Allah's Oneness and Muhammad (SAWS) as His Messenger. While both share thematic similarities—such as references to Creationist and Resurrection doctrines—*Iman* verses present more frequently clear binary messages about belief and its consequences. In contrast, fewer *Shahada* verses address these binary themes; yet TRS-derived words appear more often than TRI-related words and cover various topics, including witnessing legal and moral matters, besides common themes with *Iman* verses. The central argument is that Islam prohibits compulsion in religion; but the Quran clearly outlines rewards for believers in Paradise and punishments for disbelievers in Hell, most often using *Iman* verses. Finally, another significant finding of this study is that the full declaration of *Shahada* does not occur in a single verse; instead, some hadiths suggest that the Prophet (SAWS) articulated it in his sayings and practices, indicating a need for further research.

Shortcomings of sampling method

Stratified sampling enabled us to collect 183 verses from over a third of the Quran's chapters, focusing on specified topics. However, by requiring each sampled verse to include a binary message, we excluded *Surat al-Fatiha* (Chapter 1) and *Surat al-Ikhlās* (Chapter 112), which together have only eleven verses but are central to Islamic monotheism. Their omission is a significant limitation given their importance to *Iman* and *Shahada*. Therefore, a brief overview of these chapters follows.

Surat al-Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Quran, holds a central place in Islam as it is recited in every unit (*rakat*) of daily prayers (*Salat*). Known as *Fatihatul Kitab* (The Opening of the Scripture) and *Ummul Quran* (Mother of the Quran), it is considered the essence of the Quran (Pickthall, 1977). The sura highlights several divine names and attributes, such as *Rahman* (Most Gracious), *Rahim* (Most Merciful), *Rabbil alamin* (Lord of the Universe), and *Maliki yawmiddin* (Master of the Day of Judgment), reaffirming faith through their frequent recitation.

Surat al-Ikhlās consists of four concise verses emphasizing the Oneness of Allah. Its opening asserts divine unity, while the final verse clearly rejects any notion of Allah having descendants or ancestors: “Neither has He an offspring, nor He is the offspring of anyone” (trans. Maududi, n.d.).

5. Understanding the Choice and Consequences: Why do some people believe, while others don't?

The main findings of this study indicate that the Quran delivers a binary message: believers in *tawhid* receive divine rewards, while those who reject it face retribution. Its teachings are largely pedagogical, guiding followers on the right path, and frequently warn against associating other deities with Allah. Human responses to these messages can be grouped into four types: true believers who follow *tawhid* and its rituals; Muslims who accept *tawhid* but may not practice its rituals; disbelievers who reject *tawhid*; and agnostics, who neither accept nor reject it and are described in the Quran as doubters or disbelievers.

This review highlights a central question: why do some people believe while others do not? Psychologists suggest faith is intrinsic to the human mind but cannot explain individual differences (Lawrencelle et al., 2002; Ghauri, 2011). The Quran addresses this, such as in 96:1, where Angel Gabriel instructs Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) to “Read in the name of your Lord who created...”. Over 23 years, the Prophet (SAWS) received and interpreted over 6,200 verses. This implies faith must be learned, as seen when Muslim children acquire beliefs from parents or schooling. However, early religious education does not always persist into adulthood due to secular influences, while some adults proselytise (i.e., start practicing) later in life through social or religious environments.

Another interpretation is divine ordainment of faith, which the Quran mentions alongside free will. For instance, 42:8 addresses this concept:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ وَدِيِّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

Had Allah willed, He could have easily made all humanity into a single community of believers. But He admits into His mercy whoever He wills. And the wrongdoers will have no protector or helper. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

This verse (42:8) implies that faith is ordained by divine will, superseding human choice. Another verse supports this assumption (10:40):

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ

Some of them will eventually believe in it; others will not. And your Lord knows best the corruptors. (trans. Khattab, n.d.)

6. Conclusion

This article examines the relationship between *Iman* (belief in tawhid) and *Shahada* (declaration of *tawhid*) in Islam, showing that the Quran presents both concepts as binary choices with consequences in this life (*Duniya*) and the Afterlife (*Akhira*). The article also notes that the *Shahada*'s common form—*La Ilaha Illallahu Muhammadur Rasulullah* ("There is no deity but Allah, Muhammad is His Messenger")—does not appear verbatim in the Quran, as this question has been raised in a blog (<https://quranaloneislam.org/the-shahadah-in-the-quran>, retrieved March 31, 2025). Based on our in-depth research, we consider this question as insignificant, as most of the rituals associated with five tenets of Islam are based on the Prophet's sayings and Practices (*Hadiths* and *Sunnah*) rather than on precise Quranic descriptions. Declaration faith (*Shahada*) is one of the five tenets of Islam. Therefore, there is no compelling reason that its composition should appear verbatim in the Quran. In this context, one of our findings is that while many verses refer to the Prophet (SAWS) as Allah's Messenger without naming him directly, verse 48:29 mentions his name explicitly at its beginning.

As indicated in the introduction, literature on *Iman* and *Shahada* is extensive. What are then our original contributions? First, this article contributes to understanding the nuanced relationship between *Iman* and *Shahada*. Besides reconfirming existing knowledge, our second contribution is methodological. By employing a stratified sampling method, we have demonstrated how this method could be employed for sampling large numbers of verses of the Quran for different types of interpretations.

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