

# Gratitude in the Qur'an, A Thematic Qur'anic Study with a Grounded Theory Approach

Nadia Nurpadilah <sup>1</sup>, Annida Nazirah <sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Alif <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten; Email:  
[231320099.nadia@uinbanten.ac.id](mailto:231320099.nadia@uinbanten.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten; Email:  
[231320077.annida@uinbanten.ac.id](mailto:231320077.annida@uinbanten.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten; Email:  
[Muhhammad.alif@uinbanten.ac.id](mailto:Muhhammad.alif@uinbanten.ac.id)

**Abstract:** This study aims to comprehensively examine the concept of *gratitude* (shukr) from the perspective of the Qur'an by employing a thematic interpretation approach ( *tafsir al-mawḍiʿi* ) combined with the grounded theory method. This dual approach allows for an in-depth exploration of Qur'anic verses related to gratitude while also constructing theoretical frameworks derived directly from the primary data—namely, the Qur'anic text itself. The research adopts a qualitative, library-based methodology, where relevant verses are collected, categorized, and regularly analyzed to understand how gratitude is depicted, what forms it takes, and how it influences human life. The findings reveal that gratitude in the Qur'an goes beyond verbal expressions of gratitude to God. It encompasses inner awareness, acknowledgment of divine favor, wise utilization of blessings, and concrete actions that reflect obedience to God. Gratitude is presented as an active response to divine grace, resulting in positive behavior, spiritual closeness, and the strengthening of ethical and social dimensions in a believer's life. Moreover, the Qur'an affirms that those who are grateful are not only spiritually elevated but also promised an increase in blessings and a noble status in the sight of God. In the current socio-religious context, the value of gratitude holds significant relevance as a foundation for character development and emotional resilience. This study affirms that gratitude is a universal Islamic value that integrates theological, psychological, and ethical aspects. Thus, it is expected that this research contributes both theoretically and practically to the development of thematic Qur'anic studies and a deeper understanding of spiritual consciousness.

**Keywords:** gratefulness, gratitude, grounded theory, Qur'an, thematic interpretation.

## INTRODUCTION

Gratitude is an important value in Islamic teachings, frequently mentioned in the Quran. *Gratitude* extends beyond verbal expressions like "Alhamdulillah" (thank God) to include a receptive heart, actions that reflect gratitude, and an awareness of all the blessings God has bestowed. In everyday life, gratitude can act as a bulwark against stress, envy, and even despair, as grateful individuals focus more on the good things they possess rather than their perceived shortcomings.

The Qur'an mentions the word *gratitude* and its derivations in various contexts. For example, in QS Ibrahim [14]:7, Allah says: Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala says:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

"Indeed, if you are grateful, I will surely increase (favours) to you, but if you are disbelieving, then indeed My punishment will be very painful."

This verse emphasizes that gratitude is not merely a passive attitude, but invites positive consequences in the form of additional blessings. Conversely, denying blessings can lead to punishment. This demonstrates that gratitude is not merely a verbal act of worship, but a form of active obedience to God.

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In modern psychology, the concept of *gratitude* has been extensively researched and proven to have significant benefits for mental health, such as increasing life satisfaction, reducing depression, and improving social relationship. However, in an Islamic context, gratitude extends beyond the psychological or social aspects to the spiritual. Gratitude becomes a form of devotion and recognition that all blessings come from Allah.

Unfortunately, in today's fast-paced and stressful modern life, many people forget to be grateful. Consumerist culture, competitiveness, and the influence of social media often leave people feeling inadequate, envious, or dissatisfied. In these situations, the Quran offers a spiritual solution through the value of gratitude. Therefore, it is important to re-examine the concept of gratitude in the Quran in more depth and context.

This study uses **a thematic interpretation approach** (*tafsir maudhu'i*), which involves collecting and examining verses that discuss a specific theme, in this case, *gratitude*. This method provides a complete picture of how the Quran explains the meaning, forms, impacts, and examples of gratitude. Furthermore, a grounded theory method is used, **which** allows researchers to build theories based on primary data, namely the Quranic text itself.

This research aims to address the challenges of our times, where humans are increasingly losing spiritual values such as gratitude. By understanding Quranic verses about gratitude in a thematic and in-depth manner, it is hoped that a new awareness will emerge that can strengthen faith, shape character, and improve the quality of human relationships with God.

Besides being a form of worship, gratitude also demonstrates a high level of spiritual awareness. A grateful person not only acknowledges that all blessings come from Allah, but also recognizes that these blessings must be safeguarded and used wisely. In QS An-Nahl [16]:114, Allah says:

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاشْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

*"So eat from the sustenance that Allah has given you, which is lawful and good, and be grateful for Allah's blessings, if it is truly Him that you worship."*

This verse shows that gratitude is part of monotheism, namely, sincere worship of Allah. Therefore, when someone is grateful, they are actually strengthening their bond of faith in God.

Moreover, the Qur'an also describes gratitude as a characteristic of the prophets. Prophet Nuh 'alaihihsalam was said to be a grateful servant (QS Al-Isra' [17]:3), and Prophet Sulaiman 'alaihihsalam prayed that he would be given the ability to be grateful for the blessings that Allah had given him and his parents (QS An-Naml [27]:19). This proves that gratitude is part of the superior character of God's chosen servants.

In the context of modern society, gratitude is not only a spiritual teaching but also a social solution. When someone is able to appreciate the small things in life, they tend to be happier, less prone to envy, and less caught up in the exhausting worldly struggle. Therefore, if the value of gratitude is instilled early in the lives of individuals and communities, it will produce people who are calmer, more productive, and have healthy social relationships.

However, in reality, gratitude is often understood narrowly. Many people assume that simply saying "Alhamdulillah" is enough to express gratitude, without realizing that how we use our blessings is also part of gratitude. However, in Islam, gratitude means using blessings for good things and pleasing to Allah. Therefore, understanding gratitude needs to be broadened and deepened, particularly through a study of the Quranic verses that discuss it thematically.

Using a thematic interpretation approach, this study seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of gratitude in the Quran, encompassing its meaning, form, and impact. Meanwhile, a grounded theory method is used to capture patterns and themes that emerge naturally from these verses, without being constrained by established theories. The combination of these two approaches is expected to provide a fresher, more scientific, and more relevant understanding of the value of gratitude in Islam.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a **qualitative approach** with library research methods, **combined with thematic interpretation analysis strategies** ( *tafsir al-maw d u'i* ) and **grounded theory**. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for exploring the meaning of spiritual concepts such as *gratitude* in the Qur'an in depth, contextually, and theoretically.

### 1. Research Approach

A qualitative approach was used because the object of study is non-numerical and requires meaningful interpretation. The focus of the research is not on statistical measurements, but rather on a deeper understanding of the meaning of Quranic verses that discuss gratitude. According to Lexy J. Moleong, a qualitative approach is most appropriate when researchers want to understand the meaning of human actions and social events holistically and deeply.

### 2. Library Research Method

This type of research is a library study, where the primary data is obtained from written sources, particularly the Qur'an as a primary source, as well as tafsir books, Islamic books, scientific journals, and other relevant scientific works as secondary sources. Library studies are an important foundation in Islamic studies, especially when discussing abstract concepts that require references from various classical and contemporary literatur.

### 3. Thematic Interpretation Method (Tafsir al-Maw d u'i)

The thematic interpretation method was used to identify, collect, and examine all verses in the Quran that discuss *gratitude*. In this method, researchers:

- Determine the main topic (theme of gratitude),
- Inventorying relevant verses,
- Tracing the context of asbāb al-nuzūl (the reason for the revelation of the verse),
- Comparing the interpretations of various tafsir books such as *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Marāghī*, *Tafsir Ibn Katsir*, and others.

These steps aim to explore a thematic understanding that is complete, not partial, and relevant to the current socio-religious context.

### 4. Application of Grounded Theory

*grounded theory* method is used to develop new theories or understandings derived directly from data, rather than from existing theories. In this context, the primary data are verses from the Quran, collected and categorized thematically. After analyzing the data, researchers identified key concepts such as forms of gratitude, its impact on life, characteristics of grateful people, and its relationship to faith and worship.

*grounded theory* analysis techniques used include:

- **Open Coding** : identifying keywords or meaning of each verse,
- **Axial Coding** : grouping data based on the relationship of meaning,
- **Selective Coding** : compiling a conceptual narrative about gratitude based on the interconnectedness of the findings of these verses.

This model allows for the formation of a theory or complete understanding of the concept of *gratitude* in the Qur'an that is not only normative, but also applicable.

### 5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is carried out through the following stages:

1. **Verse identification** : Using the thematic index and digital Quran software to search for all verses containing the words *gratitude*, *hamd*, and their derivatives.
2. **Classification** : Grouping the verses based on their themes and contexts, such as individual gratitude, social gratitude, threats to those who renounce blessings, and Allah's promises to those who are grateful.
3. **Interpretation** : Referring to various books of interpretation and the context of the verses, both linguistically, historically and sociologically.
4. **Theoretical Abstraction** : Connecting the meaning of these verses with spiritual, psychological and ethical values, thus producing a new, integrative framework of understanding.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Implementation of Grounded Theory:

When linked to the findings of grounded theory-based research, this verse strengthens the thematic categories :

- **Gratitude = recognition → charity → increase in favors**
- **Kufr = neglect → deviation → threat of doom**

This model emphasizes that **humans play an active role in preserving or destroying God's blessings**, depending on their attitude of gratitude. This aligns with the principle of behavioral learning theory—that reinforcement will increase positive behavior (namely, gratitude).

Classification of Themes and Subthemes of Gratitude in the Qur'an

No.	Theme/Subtheme	Verse Reference
A.	<b>Understanding Gratitude or Feeling of Gratitude</b>	
a.	Etymologically	QS. Ibrahim [14]:7
b.	Terminologically	QS. Ibrahim [14]:7
B.	<b>The Dimension of Gratitude from the Perspective of the Qur'an: A Thematic Study</b>	
1.	Gratitude as a Commandment and Characteristic of Faith	QS. an-Naḥl [16]:114
2.	The Character of a Grateful Person in the Qur'an	QS. al-Isrā' [17]:3; QS. an-Naml [27]:19
3.	Forms of Gratitude in the Qur'an	-
4.	The Impact of Gratitude in Human Life	QS. Ibrāhīm [14]:7; QS. al-Baqarah [2]:152
5.	The Consequences of Kufr in Pleasure	QS. Ibrahim [14]:28
6.	Gratitude as a Spiritual and Social Pillar	QS. al-Insān [76]:8-9
7.	Gratitude as a Source of Mental and Psychological Strength	QS. Saba' [34]:13
8.	The Challenge of Gratitude in the Modern Era	QS. al-'Ādiyāt [100]:6-8
9.	Integration of the Value of Gratitude in Education and Life	QS. Ibrahim [14]:7

### A. Understanding Gratitude or Feeling of Gratitude

#### a. Etymologically

say *Gratitude* in Arabic comes from the root word *syakara*, which means "to show" or "to display" blessings. Its opposite is *kufr*, which means "to conceal" blessings. In this context, gratitude is the act of showing blessings through acknowledgment, words, and actions consistent with the purpose for which the blessings were given.

#### b. Terminologically

**Gratitude** can be defined as an inner attitude and outward behavior that reflects acknowledgment of Allah SWT's blessings, manifested through a submissive heart, a tongue full of praise, and the use of bodily parts in obedience to Him. Thus, gratitude is not merely a verbal expression such as "Alhamdulillah," but encompasses all aspects of human life in responding to God's grace in a positive and constructive manner.

In Imam al-Ghazālī's view, gratitude has three main elements:

1. **Knowledge of pleasure** (knowledge),
2. **The state of mind that accepts and loves the giver of favors** ( ḥ ā l ),
3. **actions to utilize blessings according to their purpose** ( ' charity).

In other words, gratitude is a form of deep spiritual awareness, accompanied by concrete actions that illustrate obedience and devotion.

The Qur'an explicitly encourages humanity to be grateful, as Allah says:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

"And (remember), when your Lord announced: 'Indeed, if you are grateful, I will certainly increase (favours) to you. But if you disbelieve, then truly My punishment will be very painful.'"

(QS. Ibrāhīm [14]: 7)

This verse emphasizes that **gratitude has a transcendental dimension and spiritual consequences**, where gratitude serves as a key to increasing blessings, while kufr can invite punishment.

## B. The Dimension of Gratitude from the Perspective of the Qur'an: A Thematic Study

### 1. Gratitude as a Commandment and Characteristic of Faith

Gratitude in the Quran often appears as a command, not simply a recommendation. This demonstrates that gratitude is a moral and spiritual obligation for every Muslim. Allah says:

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاشْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُفْرَكُمْ إِيَّاهُ تُعَذِّبُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

"So eat from the sustenance that Allah has given you, which is lawful and good, and be grateful for Allah's blessings, if truly it is only Him that you worship."

(QS an-Naḥl [16]:114)

In this verse, gratitude is connected with a form of devotion to God. This means that someone is not yet called a true servant if they have not expressed their gratitude in a real way.

### 2. Character of a Grateful Person in the Qur'an

The Quran also describes the character of grateful people. They are servants who possess good morals, a high level of divine awareness, and submission to the Shari'a. For example:

شَكَرًا God willing

"Indeed, Noah was a servant (of Allah) who was very grateful."

(QS al-Isrā' [17]:3)

Likewise, Prophet Sulaiman 'alayhi as-salām, when he witnessed the great gift of the ability to understand the language of ants, he prayed:

فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونَ لِي شُكْرًا

"O my Lord, give me inspiration to remain grateful for Your blessings that You have bestowed on me and my parents..."

(QS an-Naml [27]:19)

From this verse, it appears that even the prophets felt the need to pray for the strength to always be grateful. This demonstrates that gratitude is a high moral quality that must be continually cultivated.

### 3. Forms of Gratitude in the Qur'an

Gratitude in the Quran is not limited to the spoken word. It takes three main forms:

- **Gratitude with the heart:** realizing that all blessings come from Allah.
- **Verbal gratitude:** saying praise and thanksgiving (such as "thank God").
- **Gratitude with deeds/deeds:** using blessings for things that are pleasing to Allah.

Quraish Shihab explains that the essence of gratitude is "putting blessings in their proper place." So, if someone is given wealth, their gratitude should not simply be expressed as "thank you to Allah," but also as a way to donate some of their wealth for good.

### 4. The Impact of Gratitude in Human Life

The verses of the Qur'an show that people who are grateful will receive many virtues:

- **Addition of favors** : (QS Ibrahim [14]:7)
- **Safety from punishment** : (QS al-Baqarah [2]: 152)  
"Remember Me, I will surely remember you. Give thanks to Me and do not deny it."
- **Peace of mind** : People who are grateful are calmer, are not in a hurry to make demands on the world, and do not complain easily.

This impact is not only spiritual, but also psychological. Research by Emmons & McCullough (2003) shows that people who practice gratitude tend to be happier and more satisfied in their lives.

#### 5. Consequences of Disbelieving in Blessings

The opposite of gratitude is *kufṛ an-ni'mah* (denial of blessings). The Quran explicitly states that ungratefulness toward blessings is not only an injustice to oneself but also a grave spiritual transgression. Kufr means not only verbally failing to express gratitude, but also using blessings for sin, boasting, or attributing success to one's own efforts without acknowledging God's role.

Allah SWT said:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ ۖ﴾

***"Have you not noticed those who have exchanged Allah's favors for disbelief and plunged their people into the valley of destruction? "***

(QS Ibrahim [14]:28)

This verse shows that disbelief in blessings is not only harmful to individuals but can also damage communities collectively. In his commentary on al-Misbah, Quraish Shihab explains that disbelief in blessings can lead to moral shifts and the breakdown of social order.

#### 6. Gratitude as a Spiritual and Social Pillar

Gratitude in the Quran is not only individual but also social. When someone is grateful, they are compelled to share their blessings with others. This concept is clearly illustrated in the commandments to pay zakat and infaq, where using wealth for social good is one of the highest forms of gratitude.

For example, in QS al-Insān [76]:8-9:

﴿وَيُطْعَمُونَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِمْ مَسْكِينًا message الله لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا﴾

***"And they give the food they like to the poor, orphans and captives. In fact, we give food to you only hoping for Allah's approval, we do not want any reply or thanks from you."***

This verse shows that a grateful person will feel content and motivated to give. They do not depend on human praise, as their motivation is purely for God. This is an important foundation for building a caring, generous, and non-materialistic society.

#### 7. Gratitude as a Source of Mental and Psychological Strength

The Qur'an implies that grateful people have emotional stability and mental strength. In Surah Saba' [34]:13, after mentioning the various blessings given to Prophet Solomon, Allah says:

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحَارِبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ

God willing

***"Work, O family of Dawud, to be grateful! And very few of My servants are grateful."***

The phrase *'i'malū* (do good deeds) emphasizes that gratitude is not a passive attitude, but rather an active act that should be seen in work, worship, and social contributions. Ibn 'Ashūr's commentary explains that this verse demonstrates the close relationship between productivity and gratitude.

In psychology, gratitude has been shown to increase mental resilience, reduce stress levels, and strengthen interpersonal relationships. This aligns with the function of gratitude in Islam, namely, as a protector of the soul from anxiety and inner turmoil.

#### 8. The Challenge of Gratitude in the Modern Era

In the current context, the primary challenge for Muslims is not a lack of blessings, but a *neglect of them*. The digital age makes it easy for people to compare their lives to others, leading them to forget to be grateful for what they have. A consumer culture, an instant lifestyle, and a reliance on social validation diminish gratitude.

QS al-'Ādiyāt [100]:6-8 describes the condition of humans who are often unaware of blessings:

🕌 God willing وَاللَّهُ عَلَى 🕌 لَكُنُودٌ God bless you

**"Indeed, man is very ignorant of the favors of his Lord. And indeed he witnesses (himself) his denial. And indeed he is very arrogant because of his love for wealth."**

This verse reminds us that the potential for ungratefulness of blessings is inherent in humans if not guided by faith. Therefore, the education of gratitude must be instilled from an early age through family education, the Islamic curriculum, and social culture.

#### 9. Integration of the Value of Gratitude in Education and Life

Gratitude needs to be an integral part of Islamic character education. In an educational context, gratitude is not merely a verbal lesson, but a habit of positive attitudes, appreciation for the process, and reflection on God's blessings.

Teachers and parents play a crucial role in instilling the value of gratitude by leading by example and fostering spiritual awareness in daily activities. For example, by encouraging children to say "alhamdulillah," appreciating small gifts, and explaining that every success comes from God's help.

Quraish Shihab emphasized that ungrateful people tend to lack direction in their lives, as they feel everything happens to them on their own. Therefore, the value of gratitude must be a primary foundation in developing a generation of humble, productive, and responsible Muslims.

### CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the concept of gratitude in the Qur'an has profound and multidimensional meaning. Gratitude is not limited to verbal expression but encompasses inner awareness, acknowledgment of God's blessings, wise use of blessings, and concrete actions in the form of obedience. A thematic interpretation approach combined with grounded theory has enabled a systematic exploration of verses on gratitude and produced a theoretical framework derived directly from the Qur'anic text. The research findings confirm that gratitude, from an Islamic perspective, is an active response that carries spiritual, ethical, and social implications. In addition to being a foundation for strengthening character and emotional resilience, gratitude is also promised to bring increased blessings and a noble position in the sight of God. Thus, the value of gratitude has high relevance in contemporary life and makes an important contribution to the development of thematic studies of the Qur'an and a deeper understanding of spiritual awareness.

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