



The Application of Thematic Analysis in Exegesis: the Structural Analysis of the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61) With an Emphasis on *Al-Mīzān* Commentary

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ABSTRACT

Thematic analysis is one of the common qualitative methods of analysis that is being used by the researchers of various fields of study to analyze various data. This causes suchlike Islamic studies not to be attended at the international level. The use of thematic analysis in the interpretation of the Qur'ān can help researchers understand it and its hidden layers better and deeper. This prevents them from being misled and drowned in the ocean of overt and covert themes of the Qur'ān and stops them from achieving an inaccurate understanding of the Qur'ānic themes and their relationships. This study set out to provide the researchers of Islamic resources with the *what*, *why*, and *how* of thematic analysis of interpretive texts in a concise and practical manner. This was done via a case study of the book *Al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* using the MAXQDA software. Since the correct implementation of the method is of utmost importance, every step of the process of investigating the interpretation of the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61) in *Al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* is reported by giving in the thematic analysis of the verses of this chapter. After analyzing the themes and codes extracted from the interpretation of the verses of Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61), it was figured out that the main intention of the chapter is to express the believers' duties, with the top duties being having faith in God and His Prophet (PBUH) and resolutely and persistently struggling for the sake of God. These have been called the most beneficial businesses. Of course, the other duties of believers can also be assigned to this theme.

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1. Introduction

Since the attainment of certain knowledge always needs instruments and methods, methodology is the most important issue that is taken into account in any study. Pākatchī (2017:29) takes the objective of research method as merely organizing and creating a common language. He suggests that in a study, the research method should be explained so that other researchers can trust and employ the scientific findings of that study. He believes that one of the reasons the Iranian researchers' articles cannot be published in international journals is the non-systematicity of research. However, in the present-day world in which attacks to Islamic sciences are incessantly increasing, we should be able to be in harmony with the common language used at various international scientific levels. By presenting the results of Islamic studies using this very common language, the other researchers can be helped to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic texts. A researcher should employ these methods in a specific framework and through certain stages. This is an important issue and the researcher should mention these stages in his research report so that the reader can feel and understand them (Pākatchī, 2017: 29).

Saldana (2015: 19) deems the role of research method in a study similar to the role of grammar in the ability to make a speech in the scientific conferences. Without knowing and observing this grammar, the outcome of the efforts of a researcher and its process will not be regarded as "science" and "scientific." Thus, the legitimacy of a study lies in the adoption of the correct research method appropriate to the research topic so that the researcher can present a comprehensible study using a common language and appropriate register of that specific field of study in related scientific conferences.

Since understanding a text has a key role in attaining the purpose of the author, the use of a precise method to deeply understand the covert and overt layers of meaning as well as their interrelationships and to identify the existing patterns in the text is necessary for gaining beneficial and significant results in qualitative studies. The importance of the systematic analysis of texts is doubled when the intended text is of the type whose understanding is in need of high precision and specific meticulousness. This complexity of text and understanding is present in the valuable text of the noble Qur'ān and most narrative sources. The qualitative approaches, strategies, and methods used to analyze the archived texts and sources at an international level in various sciences are especially useful and effective for understanding interpretive texts. Thus, we intend in this study to open a window for Islamic studies to enter the international spheres and attain a true understanding of the noble Qur'ān through a common language.

Since thematic analysis is one of the most common qualitative research methods and a tool that serves other qualitative methods, this study set out to apply the *what*, *why*, and *how* questions via this research method to the text of *Al-Mīzān* commentary. The results are presented here to the theology researchers in a brief and applied manner.

2. Research background

2.1. Application of thematic analysis to Islamic texts and articles

In the light of numerous enquiries made in the articles about the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and Nahj al-Balāgha, many articles were found that used qualitative research method to analyze Islamic texts. Some of these qualitative studies used thematic analysis to inspect the Qur'ān and ḥadīths. In the two tables below, these are ordered based on their publication year. In Table 1, the interdisciplinary articles (i.e., the ones connecting theology and other fields of study) that have explored the text of the Qur'ān or ḥadīths using thematic analysis are presented, and in Table 2 the articles by theology researchers are provided. It is noteworthy that some of the articles that used thematic analysis in the theology domain but did not do this for the text of the Qur'ān or ḥadīths – like the article by Mujtabā 'Azīzī et al., in the article "Taḥlīlī sākhār wa maḍmūni tawassul dar ash'āri Nizāmī Ganjawī bā tikiyi bar Qur'ān wa Ḥadīth" – are not listed here.

Table 1. The chronicle of interdisciplinary articles examining the text of Qur'an and ḥadīths using thematic analysis

	Article title	Authors	Journal/Issue	Publication year
1	Tarrāhī wa tabyīni ulgūyi mafhūmīyi shāyistigīhāyi manābi'ī insāni dar Nahj al-Balāgha bā istifādi az tiknīki taḥlīli maḍmūn wa ISM	Sayyid 'Alī Akbar Aḥmadī, Ḥasan Darwīsh, Muḥammad Jawādī Subḥānīfar, Ḥāmid Fāḍil Kibrīya'	Muṭālī'āti Rāḥburdīyi Basīj, no. 64	2014
2	Āsībshināsīyi rawānī az manzari Qu'ān: Taḥlīli maḍmūn	Asmā' Ibrāhīmī et al.	Faṣlnāmiyi Islām wa Salāmat, no. 3	2015
3	Ulgūyi khattī mashy guzārīyi insijāmi ijtimā'ī az manzari Qur'āni karīm	Raḥmān Yāsī et al.	Ḍn wa Sīyāsati Farhangī, no. 7	2016
4	Taḥlīli maḍmūni katībīhāyi Qur'āni wurūdīya wa miḥrābhāyi masjidi Iṣfahān	Maryam Qāsimī Sīchānī, Fāṭimi Qanbarī Shaykh Shabānī, Maḥbūbi Qanbarī Shaykh Shabānī	Pazhūhishhāyi Mi'mārīyi Islāmī, no. 16	2017
5	Taḥlīli maḍmūni tarbīyat badanī wa taqwīyati quwāyi jismāni mubtanī bar Qur'āni karīm	Ḥasan Baḥr al-'Ulūm, Jawād Qāsimī Rushnāwand, Ma'ṣumi Imāmī Rushnāwand	Pazhūhish dar Warzishi Tarbīyati, no. 15	2018
6	Mu'allifihāyi nazarīyyī hanjārīyi risānihāyi jam'ī dar Qur'ān	Karīm Khān Muḥammadī, Shamsullāh Marījī, Ruḥullāh 'Abbāsādī	Islām wa 'Ulūmi Ijtimā'ī, no. 19	2018
7	Maḍāmīn wa qaḍāyāyi bunyādīni sīyāyat wa mudīrīyyati jihādīyi Amīr al-Mu'mīnān 'Alayh al-Salām dar Nahj al-Balāgha ba istifādi az rawishi taḥlīli maḍmūn	Sayyid 'Alī Akbar Afjī, Waḥīd Khāshī, Aḥmad Farbīhī, Dāwūd Khazā'ī	Pazhūhishhāyi Sīyāsati Islāmī, no. 15	2019
8	Tarrāhīyi mudīli ghalabi bar ḥiṣāri shīshī'īyi mudīrīyyat az dīdgāhi Imām 'Alī (A) bā istifādi az taḥlīli maḍmūni Nahj al-Balāgha wa kitābi Ghurur al-ḥikam wa durar al-kalim	'Alī Qurbānī, Bahman Ashraf Simnānī, Mīrzā Ḥāsan Ḥusaynī	Pazhūhishnāmiyi Nahj al-Balāgha, no. 27	2019
9	Irā'īyi ulgūyi ta'ālīyi sāzmānī bar pāyīyi Qur'āni karīm	Ḥāmid Ridā Ārāstī et al.	Pazhūhishhāyi Mudīrīyyati Intizāmī, no. 3	2019
10	Irā'īyi ulgūyi raftāri maṣraf dar Islām bā rūykardi taḥlīli maḍmūn (Bā tamarkuz bar āyāti Qur'āni karīm wa riwāyāti Ma'ṣūmīn 'Alayhum al-Salām)	Sayyid 'Alī Akbar Ifjī, Ghulām Ridā Miṣbāhī Muqaddam, Waḥīd Khāshī, Aḥmad Turābī	Mudīrīyyati Islāmī, no. 108	2019
11	Ulgūyi Nazārīyi mudīrīyyati jihādī bā istifādi az sukhānāni Amīr al-Mu'mīnīn (A) dar Nahj al-Balāgha	Dāwūd Khazā'ī et al.	Pazhūhishnāmiyāyi Nahj al-Balāgha, no. 27	2019
12	Maḍāmīn wa qaḍāyāyi bunyādīni sīyāsāt wa mudīrīyyati jihādīyi Amīr al-Mu'mīnān (A) dar Nahj al-Balāgha bā istifādi az rawishi taḥlīli maḍmūn	Dāwūd Khazā'ī et al.	Pazhūhishhāyi Sīyāsati Islāmī, no. 15	2019
13	Irā'īyi ulgūyi farmāndihī wa mudīrīyyat dar sāzmānhāyi difā'ī az manzari Imām 'Alī (A): Pazhūhishī kayfī mubtanī bar taḥlīli maḍmūn	Manṣūr Khayrgū, Nāṣir 'Abbāsādī	Mudīrīyyati Nizāmī, no. 77	2020
14	Wākāwīyi jilwīhāyi akhlāq Islāmī dar sāzmān: Pazhūhishī mubtanī bar taḥlīli maḍmūn dar Nahj al-Balāgha	Zaynab Shāhsawāri, 'Alī Aṣghar Pūr 'Izzat	Muṭālī'āti Mudīrīyyati Dawlatīyi Irān, no. 8	2020
15	Wākāwīyi mafhūmi muthbat andīshī dar āmuzihāyi Ḥaḍrati 'Alī (A) bi manzuri irā'īyi dilālathāyi tarbīyatī wa i'tibārbakhshīyi ān	Ridā Farāshband et al.	Qur'ān wa Tibb, no. 2	2020
16	Shināsā'ī wa taḥlīli mu'allifihāyi mudīri atharbakhshi farhangī az manzari Qur'āni karīm	Muḥammad Karīmzādī, Ridā Ibrāhīmzādī Dastjirdī, 'Alī Najafnīzhād	Mudīrīyyat dar Dānishgāhi Islāmī, no. 1	2020
17	Pīshrānhāyi tawsi'īyi iltizāmī sarmāyīyi insāni dar sāzmānhāyi dawlatīyi bargiriftī az Qu'ān wa 'ītrat bā kārbasti 'aql wa ijma' bar asāsi taḥlīli maḍmūn	Iḥsān Nāmdār Juyamī et al.	Chishmandāzi Mudīrīyyati Dawlatī, no. 48	2021
18	Āsībshināsīyi dūstī bā kuffār dar jāmi'īyi Islāmī wa rāhhāyi burūnraftī ān bar asāsi Sūriyi Mumtaḥīni bā rawishi taḥlīli maḍmūn	Batūl Mullā Shafī, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm Bahjatpūr	Sīyāsati Muta'ālīyi, no. 22	2021

Table 2. The chronicle of articles of theology domain on the thematic analysis of the text of Qur'an and/or ḥadīths

	Article title	Authors	Journal/Issue	Publication year
1	Bāyistihāyi hidāyati siyāsī dar Qur'āni karīm	Muḥammad Ḥasan Āshūrī	Farhangi Pazhūhish, no. 24	2015
2	Taḥlīli kayfīy jāygāh wa akhlāqi mādarī dar Tafīri nimūna	Ḥawrīyya Rabbānī, Amīr Ḥusayn Bānkī pūr fard	Aklāq, no. 21	2016
3	Zanjīriyi munazzami ma'nāyī darūn māyihā dar ṣaḥnīhāyi dāstāni Yūsuf dar Qur'āni karīm	Farāmarz Mīrzā'ī, Šiddīqi Zūdranj, Ilhām Raḥmatī	Muḥālī'āti Adabī Mutūn Islāmī, no. 1	2019
4	Taḥlīli maḍmūniyi wīzhigīhāyi jihād dar āyāti Qur'āni karīm	Riḍā Aḥmadzādi	Farhangi Pazhūhish, no. 40	2019
5	Taḥlīli maḍmūn zuhd da Āmūzihāyi Nahj al-Balāgha	Ma'šūmi Imāmī Rushnāwand, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā'ī	Pazhūhishhāyi Nahj al-Balāgha, no. 60	2019
6	Tarrāhiyi mudil ghalabi bar ḥiṣāri shīshī'ī yi mudīrīyyat az dīdgāhi Imām 'Alī (A) bā istifādi az taḥlīli maḍmūni Nahj al-Balāgha wa kitābi Ghurar al-ḥikam wa durar al-kalim	'Alī Qurbānī, Bahman Ashraf Simnānī, Mīrza Ḥasan Ḥusaynī	Pazhūhishnāmiyi Nahj al-Balāgha, no. 27	2019
7	Taḥlīli maḍmūni 'ahdnāmiyi Amīr al-Mu'mīnīn 'Alī (A) bā Mālik Ashtar	Ātinā Baḥdurī	Pazhūhishnāmiyi Nahj al-Balāgha, no. 28	2019
8	Kashfi dilālathāyi ijtīmā'īyī Suriyi Naml bā rawishi taḥlīli muḥṭawāyi kayfi	Ghulām Riḍā bihrūzī Lak, Ḥusayn Mīr Chirāq Khānī	Pzahūhishhāyi Qur'ānī, no. 1	2019
9	Wākāwīyī 'awāmili īmānnāpadhīrīyī aqwām az dīdgāhi Qur'āni karīm bā rawishi "taḥlīli muḥṭawāyi maḍmūni"	Tāyyārī nīzhād et al.	Taḥqīqāti 'Ulūmi Qur'ān wa Ḥadīth, no. 4	2020
10	Taḥlīli maḍmūni shīwiyi barkhurd bā laghzishi kārguzār dar Nahj al-Balāgha	Zahra Šarfi, Zaynab Pūr Kāwīyānī	Ḥadīth wa Andīsha, no. 4	2020
11	'Awāmili jaryāni istidrāj dar Qur'ān bā istifādi az rawishi taḥlīli maḍmūn	Muḥammad Ḥusayn Kāḍīmī, Muḥammad Zāri' Būshihīrī, Nīmat Kāzīmī	Muḥālī'āti 'Ulūmi Qur'ān, no. 3	2021
12	Taḥlīli maḍmūni "tarbiyati jahādī wa irādī" bar asāsi āyāti Qur'āni Karīm: Muḥālī'iyi Kayfi	Ḥaydar Ismā'īl Pūr	Du Faṣlnāmiyi Muḥālī'āti Farhangī wa Ijtīmā'īyī Qur'ān, no. 2	2021
13	Kārbasti rawishi taḥlīli maḍmūn dar barrīsī wa muqāyisi jaygāhi "fīkr" dar rawānshināsīyī Qur'ān bunyān	Muḥammad Kāwīyānī, Muṣṭafā Nazarī	Rawish shināsīyī 'Ulūmi Insānī, no. 110	2022
14	Shabakiyi maḍāmīni murṭabī bā wilāyati Imām 'Alī (A) mubtanī bar taḥlīli maḍmūni aḥādīthi kitābi Kifāya al-athar	Muḥammad 'Itrat Dūst, Sayyid Muṣṭafā Qahhārī	Ḥadīth Pazhūhī, no. 28	2022

As Tables 1 and 2 show, most of the studies that have carried out thematic analysis of Islamic texts are done by researchers of domains other than Islamic studies in comparative studies of Islamic studies with other sciences such as psychology, management, political sciences, social sciences, physiology, and architecture. Only 14 studies are done by theology researchers, which shows that the researchers of Islamic theology are not so familiar with the thematic analysis method. In most of these articles, a very limited report of the research method implementation is given, followed by the results of thematic analysis. Nonetheless, in suchlike studies, only researchers that have complete familiarity with thematic analysis method can attain a precise understanding of the study, and the research procedure has many ambiguities for other researchers. Thus, it is tried in this study to fill this gap and report the stages of thematic analysis in a practical manner. Moreover, no study has been done so far on the thematic analysis of *Tafsīr al-mīzān* text, while this worthwhile work is a highly complex text and in some cases the attainment of 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī's view is not easy: it needs precise knowledge of the relations and positions of main and essential themes in 'Allāma's viewpoint. This is possible through the thematic analysis of *Tafsīr al-mīzān* text.

3. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a method to identify, analyze, and report the patterns that exist in qualitative data.

A pattern here is one that is attained through the thematic order of the extracted data. This method is a procedure for analyzing textual data and turns the scattered and diverse data into rich and detailed ones. Thematic analysis is not merely a specific qualitative research method, but rather it is a procedure than can be used in many qualitative research methods.

In general, thematic analysis is a method to see the text; attain a correct understanding of the seemingly unrelated information; analyze the qualitative information; systematically observe the person, interaction, group, situation, organization, or culture; and change the qualitative data into quantitative data (Boyatzis, 1998; Mihrī et al., 2014).

Boyatzis (1998: 4) suggests the thematic analysis is a procedure for analyzing qualitative data. Thus, thematic analysis is not merely a qualitative research method, but rather it is a procedure that can be employed in many qualitative research methods (if not all of them). Moreover, this method makes it possible to change the qualitative data into quantitative ones.

In thematic analysis as a type of content analysis, the researcher relies primarily on the themes and content of the message and text. In this method, the researcher tries to measure the themes of the text rather than using predesigned scales and questionnaires (Mullā Shafi'ī et al., 2020: 21). Moreover, the use of qualitative studies – especially thematic analysis – becomes a necessity when little information exists about the phenomenon under study or when the previously made studies related to the intended topic do not have a theoretical framework that can comprehensively explain the issue (Abū'ī Ardakānī et al., 2014: 23).

Braun and Clarke (2006: 37) enumerate some advantages of thematic analysis that show the importance of its application in some qualitative studies:

Flexible;

1. Relatively easy and quick learning and application;
2. Useable by researchers with little experience in qualitative research;
3. The results can be understood and used by the educated in general;
4. An appropriate method to be used in collaborative research paradigm, in which participants are the co-researchers;
5. Can summarize the key points in a large corpus of data and give in a thick description of a data set;
6. Can show similarity and difference points among data sets;
7. Can bring about unexpected perceptions;
8. Allows the appearance of psychological and social interpretations; and
9. Can be useful for creating appropriate qualitative analyses or informing policy development.

In thematic analysis, as in most qualitative studies, it is necessary to code both at the beginning and end of data collection. A code is a word or phrase that entails the significant content of the coded data. In fact, coding is organizing the data into a systematic structure and classifying or categorizing these data.

Coding has various types, each being used in relation to the type of data and research method used in the study. In the book *“The coding manual for qualitative researchers,”* Saldana (2015) elaborately explains coding and its methods. Quoting Charmaz (2001), Saldana (ibid: 14) calls coding the “critical link” between data collection and meaning-making by the data. Moreover, quoting Lincoln and Guba (1985), he asserts that coding is a method that enables the researcher to categorize and organize the data that have been coded through similar methods and to turn them into categories or families according to their common features. This is the initial stage for the identification of the existence of a pattern in the information. Using arguments based on the classification of data along with his own intuitive and implicit perceptions, the researcher determines which findings “look similar” or “feel similar” and so can be put together in one group.

To begin the next stage, the researcher needs a precise understanding of the concept of them. Theme represents important information about research data and questions and shows to some extent the meaning of the pattern that exists in the data. In general, theme is the repetitive and distinctive quality of the text that – from the viewpoint of the researcher – shows a certain understanding of and experience with the research questions (Dirakhshi et al., 2015: 56).

Quoting Braun and Clarke (2006) and King and Horrocks (2010), Khazā'ī (2019) asserts that there are some important points about knowing theme that can be summarized as follows.

- Knowing the theme does not mean merely finding an interesting point; rather, themes should be in line with the response to research questions and goals.
- The scope of the themes should be distinctive so that the relationships and patterns can be easily identified.
- As it was mentioned, a theme is a repetitious and distinctive quality in the text, and the sheer use of a meaning in a text cannot turn it into a theme, unless it is in line with the response to the research questions and goals (Khazā'ī, 2016: 263).

Thinkers have given in different titles and classifications of themes in terms of nature, status, or hierarchy, from among which the appropriate case can be selected based on the intended type of research, text, and research method. For instances, one might classify themes into overt or covert in terms of the visibility of the theme in the text; primary and secondary themes in terms of hierarchy; and global, organizing, and basic in terms of status ('Ābidī Ja'farī, 2011: 60).

Quoting Rossman and Rallis (2003), Saldana (2015: 59) sets out to describe the difference between category and theme. He maintains that category is a word or phrase that explains parts of your findings that are evident, while a theme is an interpretation or sentence that explains the more implied and covert processes.

3.1. The application of thematic analysis in various sciences

Thematic analysis is one of the common qualitative research methods that have been used by the researchers of various sciences and fields of study. For this reason, Boyatzis introduces it not as a specific method but as a suitable tool for different methods (1998: 4). Thematic analysis is used to analyze the themes of various data types. It can be used to analyze data such as images, videos, interviews, as well as various text types such as scientific texts, historical texts, literary texts such as poems, and religious texts such as divine Scriptures – especially the noble Qur'ān. Moreover, this method can also be employed to analyze and compare various sources. These resources can be in different forms, including texts, speeches, videos, or images. This way, it can be applied to various interpretative resources about the verses of the noble Qur'ān and can be very helpful in the comparative and thematic exegesis of the verses.

4. Thematic analysis methods

After finishing coding the text and classifying the themes, the researcher should embark upon analyzing the themes, reporting the findings, and concluding the work. Thematic analysis can be carried out and used in various ways. In the following table, these methods are summarized (Qāḍī Mīr Sa'īd & Tājābādī, 2016: 157).

Table 3. Thematic Analysis Methods

Method	Description	Source
Theme forms	It is used in studies with a great number of texts and data (10 to 30 sources)	King and Horrocks (2010)
Theme matrix	It is used to compare themes to each other and to databases.	Miles & Huberman (1994)
Theme network	The theme network presents a web-like map about the organization and presentations principles.	Attride-Stirling, (2001)

5. The step-by-step process of implementing the thematic analysis method

Researchers have provided various methods to carry out the thematic analysis. The stages and implementation method of the thematic analysis are reported below according to the table presented by Braun and Clarke as quoted by Khazā'ī (2019: 49). In this part, in order to better understand each of the stages, the research method applied in “*The structural analysis of the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān 61) with an emphasis on Al-Mizān commentary*” is given in as an example.

Table 4. Stages of implementing the thematic analysis method

Stage	Description of process	Implementation method
1	Familiarity with research data Data transcription (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, penning down the initial ideas	Since the valid text of <i>Al-Mizān</i> commentary was available, the data did not need transcription. The text of <i>Al-Mizān</i> commentary was reread multiple times. The initial general ideas about self-knowledge were extracted from the text.
2	Generating the initial codes Coding all interesting cases in the data systematically throughout the data Comparing and contrasting the data related to each code	All sentences of the text were analyzed one by one, and the themes related to them were extracted and recorded as the initial codes
3	Searching for the themes Matching codes with the potential themes Collecting all data related to each potential theme	Each of the initial codes was assigned to its potential theme All codes that had related and congruent codes were classified as one group
4	Reviewing the themes This review is done to see if the themes match the coded excerpts and all data sets or not. If yes, then a theme-based analytic map is generated.	The repeated review of the initial codes and potential themes was done. In this stage, the position of some codes changed and they were assigned to new themes. In this stage, the codes were examined multiple times so that ultimately each code could be assigned to a theme that evidently represented 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī's views.
5	Defining and naming the themes Constant analysis in order to screen specific features of each theme, and come to a general story-like analysis, create clear definitions, and name each theme	In this stage, we tried to selected each of the words of the themes in a way that they precisely express their related codes and best represent 'Allāma's viewpoints.
6	Developing the report This stage is the last round of analysis. It entails clear selection, interesting excerpts, final analysis of the selected excerpts, explanation of the relationship between the presented analysis and the research questions and literature, and presentation of a scholarly and analytical report.	In this part of the study, first a structure was selected for the presentation of the thematic analysis report. Then, each of the themes was examined and analyzed. Then, the final reporting of 'Allāma's viewpoints and responding to the research questions were made.

In the initial stages of coding the data of interpretive texts, the researchers of Islamic studies need to pay attention to some points.

- a) In the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth studies, the first challenge faced by the researcher is that if coding should be applied to the original Arabic text or the translated text? This concern has been addressed by Strauss and Corbin (2016) in the book "*Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*". They believe that since "meanings are lost in translation" and the transmission of meaning in translation might not happen appropriately, one can translate the important pieces and codes and observe the original as much as possible (Khazā'ī, 2019: 159).
- b) Therefore, in order to increase the validity of resources in the studies on Islamic resources, it is better to apply coding to the original text so as to achieve a more precise understanding of the text. Thus, in this study, the original Arabic text of the book "*Al-Mizān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*" was coded rather than its translated texts. Nonetheless, when reporting the findings, the statements related to basic, organizing, and global themes are translated based on the meaning of the statements of the original text.
- c) The researcher should determine the types of themes and the classifications appropriate for them according to the research questions, goals, and data. In this study, the themes were classified into three general groups based on the text of *Al-Mizān*, the initially extracted codes, and the hierarchy suggested by Attride-Stirling (2001) – including basic, organizing, and global themes.
- d) At the beginning of the coding operation and based on the research type, the researcher should select either inductive or theoretical methods for initial coding. In this study, coding was done inductively, and it targeted all statements of *Al-Mizān* commentary related to the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān61). The inductive method is a kind of data-driven coding that is not related to any predetermined format in the mind of the researcher (Khazā'ī, 2016: 246). However, in the

reporting stage, one can take into account and report a detailed account of the themes that are more related to research questions and objectives alongside a succinct account of the themes that are not so related to the research topic.

- e) In the studies on Islamic resources, it is appropriate to first apply the overt coding. Then, in the summarization and analysis stage, the covert meanings of the verses and narrations might be taken into account.
- f) Saldana (2015) has provided various methods for coding, but due to space considerations, we cannot present and discuss all of them here. Thus, only the open/initial coding is explained, as it has been used in this study for coding purposes. Although knowing the coding methods in all research methods that are based on data coding is one of the most important aspects of research conduction and should always be taken into account by researchers, none of the Islamic studies that employ data coding make any reference to the coding procedure.

6. Reporting

In this study, open/initial coding has been used. Quoting Strauss and Corbin, Saldana (2015: 192) suggests that open/initial coding means breaking down the qualitative data into separate parts, carefully examining them, and comparing them to find similarities and differences. Moreover, Saldana (2015: 192) believes that initial coding makes it possible for the researchers to deeply reflect upon the content and subtleties of the data and own them.

In this study, in the initial coding stage, the whole text of *Al-Mizān* commentary about the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61) was reread multiple times, and each sentence was analyzed and evaluated as a separate phrase. Then, each of the initial codes was assigned to a specific category, and each category was assigned to a basic theme. The basic themes are in fact the themes that quickly suggest the meaning when they are read by the reader. In the next stage, these themes were combined to achieve the more abstract “organizing themes.” After that, by examining and analyzing the organizing themes, the global themes – as more general ones – were extracted. In this study, 97 codes were indexed within the text of *Al-Mizān* commentary about the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61). All of these codes were assigned to 11 basic, five organizing, and two global themes.

The distribution of code frequencies in the two global themes is given in Table 5.

Since the frequency of the codes related to Prophet Muḥammad’s (PBUH) mission was higher, it is more probable that the focus of the chapter and the related text of *Al-Mizān* commentary be on Prophet Muḥammad’s (PBUH) mission. Thus, the distribution of the codes related to the global theme “Prophet Muḥammad’s (PBUH) mission” is shown in the following table.

Table 5. The Frequency of Codes Related to the Global Themes

Theme	Code frequency	Percentage
Prophet Muḥammad’s (PBUH) mission	74	75.5
Prophet Jesus’ (AS) mission	24.4	24

Table 6. The Frequency of the Organizing Themes Related to the Global Theme of Prophet Muḥammad’s (PBUH) Mission

Theme	Code frequency	Percentage
Believers and prophetic mission	41	56.16
Disbelievers and prophetic mission	17	23.29
Features of prophetic mission	15	20.55

As Table 6 shows, more than half of the codes are related to the organizing theme “believers and Prophet Muḥammad’s (PBUH) mission,” which indicates that the main focus of the chapter has been on this issue. The facts that this chapter is Medinan and Medinan chapters mostly focus on the issues related to the believers support our finding.

In Table 7 below, the status of the global, organizing, and basic themes along with example codes related to the basic themes in *Al-Mizān* text related to the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61) are given.

Table 7. Themes and Example Codes

Verse number of Surah as-Saff	Verse	Verse	Example code	Basic theme	Organizing theme	Global theme
1	سَخَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ	Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah: for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise	تقدم تفسيره، وافتتاح الكلام بالتسبيح لما فيها من توبيخ المؤمنين بقولهم ما لا يفعلون وإنذارهم بمقت الله وإزاعته قلوب الفاسقي (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 20)	Praising God before expressing reprimand		
2	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ	O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not?	الكلام مسوق للتوبيخ ففيه توبيخ المؤمنين على قولهم ما لا يفعلون ولا يصغي إلى قول بعض المفسرين: أن المراد بالذين آمنوا هم المنافقون والتوبيخ لهم دون المؤمنين لجلالة قدرهم (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19:20)	Agreement between believers' words and actions		
3	كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ	Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not.	الآية في مقام التعليل لمضمون الآية السابقة فهو تعالى يبغض من الإنسان أن يقول ما لا يفعله لأنه من النفاق، وأن يقول الإنسان ما لا يفعله غير أن لا يفعل ما يقوله فالأول من النفاق والثاني من ضعف الإرادة ووهن العزم (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 20)	God's wrath about lack of agreement between words and actions; the origin of the lack of agreement between words and actions	Believers' duties	Prophet Muḥammad's (PBUH) mission (believers and prophetic mission)
4	إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَرْصُورٌ	Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure.	الآية تعلل خصوص المورد . وهو أن يعدوا الثبات في القتال ثم يهزموا . بالالتزام كما أن الآية السابقة تعلل التوبيخ على مطلق أن يقولوا ما لا يفعلون، وذلك أن الله سبحانه إذا أحب الذين يقاتلون فيلزمون مكانهم ولا يزولون كان لازمه أن يبغض الذين يعدون أن يثبتوا ثم يهزمون إذا حضروا معركة القتال (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 21)	Holy struggle for the sake of God		
5	وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُونَنِي وَقَدْ تَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ	And remember, Moses said to his people: "O my people! why do ye vex and insult me, though ye know that I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you?"	الآية إشارة إلى إيذاء بني إسرائيل رسولهم موسى عليه السلام ولجاجهم حتى آل إلى إزاعة الله قلوبهم . وفي ذلك نهي التزامي للمؤمنين عن أن يؤذوا رسول الله (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 22)	Refraining from bothering the Prophet		
5	فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاعَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ	Then when they went wrong, Allah let their hearts go wrong. For Allah guides not those who are rebellious transgressors.	إزاعته تعالى إمساك رحمته وقطع هدايته عنهم كما يفيد التعليل بقوله: « وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ » حيث علل الإزاعة بعدم الهداية، وهي إزاعة على سبيل المجازاة وتثبيت للزغ الذي تلبسوا به أولاً بسبب فسقهم المستدعي للمجازاة (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 22)	The fate of the disbelievers (hearts going wrong)	Disbelievers and prophetic mission	Prophet Muḥammad's (PBUH) mission

Table 7.

Verse number of Surah as-Saff	Verse	Verse	Example code	Basic theme	Organizing theme	Global theme
6	وَأُذِّقُوا آلَ مَرْيَمَ بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً وَأَنْجِنِي مِنْ هَذَا الظَّالِمِينَ	And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad." But when he came to them with Clear Signs, they said, "this is evident sorcery!"	«يا بني إسرائيل إني رسول الله إليكم مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ» مخلص دعوته وقد أذن بأصل دعوته بقوله: «إني رسول الله إليكم» فأشار إلى أنه لا شأن له إلا أنه حامل رسالة من الله إليهم، ثم بين متى ما أرسل إليهم لأجل تبليغه في رسالته بقوله: «مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ» إلخ (<i>Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 22</i>)	Gist of prophetic mission, essence of prophetic mission, text of prophetic mission	Features of Prophet Jesus' (AS) mission	Prophet Jesus' (AS) mission
7	وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعَى إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ	Who doth greater wrong than one who invents falsehood against Allah, even as he is being invited to Islam? And Allah guides not those who do wrong.	الاستفهام للإنكار وهو رد لقولهم: «هذا سحرٌ مُبينٌ» فإن معناه أن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله ليس برسول وأن ما بلغه من دين الله ليس منه تعالى (<i>Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 29</i>)	Disbelievers' efforts against prophetic mission (calling miracles as magic)	Disbelievers and prophetic mission	
8	يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ	Their intention is to extinguish Allah's Light (by blowing) with their mouths: But Allah will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).	أي بالنفخ بالأفواه كما يطفأ الشمعة بالنفخة كناية عن أنهم زعموا أن نور الله وهو دينه نور ضعيف كنور الشمعة يطفأ بأدنى نفخة فرموه بالسحر وانقطاع نسبته إلى الله (<i>Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 31</i>)	Disbelievers' efforts against prophetic mission (trying to put off God's light)		
9	هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ	It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, that he may proclaim it over all religion, even though the Pagans may detest (it).	الإضافة في «دين الحق» بيانية كما قيل، والظاهر أنها في الأصل إضافة لامية بعناية لطيفة هي أن لكل من الحق والباطل ديناً يقتضيه ويختص به، وقد ارتضى الله تعالى الدين الذي للحق وهو الحق تعالى. فأرسل رسوله. وإظهار شيء على غيره نصرته وتغليبه عليه، والمراد بالدين كله كل سبيل مسلك غير سبيل الله الذي هو الإسلام (<i>Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 31</i>)	The right religion	Features of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) mission	Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) mission
10	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ	O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty?	وقد فخم تعالى أمر هذه التجارة حيث قال: «على تجارة» أي تجارة جليلة القدر عظيمة الشأن، وجعل الربح الحاصل منها النجاة من عذاب أليم لا يقدر قدره (<i>Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 36</i>)	Putting into practice the most beneficial business		
11	تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ	That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if ye but knew!	دعوة للمؤمنين إلى الإيمان بالله ورسوله والجهاد في سبيل الله ووعده جميل بالمغفرة والجنة في الآخرة وبالنصر والفتح في الدنيا، ودعوة لهم إلى أن يثبتوا على نصرهم لله ووعده جميل بالتأييد والمعانين هما الغرض الأقصى في السورة والآيات السابقة كالتوسطنة والتمهيد بالنسبة إليهما (<i>Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 36</i>)	Putting into practice the most beneficial business (the main intention)	Believers' duties towards Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) mission	

Table 7.

Verse number of Surah as-Saff	Verse	Verse	Example code	Basic theme	Organizing theme	Global theme
12	يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسْكِنٍ طَيِّبَةٍ فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ	He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is indeed the Supreme Achievement.	وقد أطلقت الذنوب المتعلقة بها المغفرة فالمغفور جميع الذنوب والاعتبار يساعده إذ هذه المغفرة مقدمة الدخول في جنة الخلد ولا معنى لدخولها مع بقاء بعض الذنوب على حاله (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 38)	The outcome of business (forgiveness and Paradise)		
13	وَأُخْرَى تُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ	And another (favour will He bestow,) which ye do love,- help from Allah and a speedy victory. So give the Glad Tidings to the Believers.	التقدير ولكم نعمة أو خصلة أخرى تحبونها وهي نصر من الله وفتح قريب عاجل. وقوله: «وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ» معطوف على الثمر المفهوم من سابق الكلام كأنه قيل: «قل يا أيها الذين آمنوا هل أدلكم» إلخ. وبشر المؤمنين (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 38)	The outcome of business (help and victory)		
14	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ	O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of Allah:	أي اتسموا بهذه السمة ودوموا واثبتوا عليها فالآية في معنى الترقى بالنسبة إلى قوله السابق: «هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ» ومأل المعنى: اتجروا بأنفسكم وأموالكم فانصروا الله بالإيمان والجهاد في سبيله ودوموا واثبتوا على نصره (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 39)	Resolution and Persistence in putting into practice the business		
14	كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ	As said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples, "Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?" Said the disciples, "We are Allah's helpers!"	أنصاراً لله معناه كونهم أنصاراً للنبي صلى الله عليه وآله في نشر الدعوة وإعلاء كلمة الحق بالجهاد، وهو الإيمان بالنبي صلى الله عليه وآله وطاعته فيما يأمر وينهى عن قول جازم وعمل صادق. كما هو مؤدى سياق آيات السورة (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 39)	Helping God is the same as helping the Prophet of Allāh		
14	فَأَمَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَكَفَرَتْ طَائِفَةٌ فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ	then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved: But We gave power to those who believed, against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed.	إشارة إلى ما جرى عليه وانتهى إليه أمر استنصار عيسى وتلبية الحواريين حيث تفرق الناس إلى طائفة مؤمنة وأخرى كافرة فأيد الله المؤمنين على عدوهم وهم الكفار فأصبحوا ظاهرين بعد ما كانوا مستخفين مضطهدين (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 40)	The fate of the people of Prophet Jesus (AS)	Features of Prophet Jesus' (AS) mission	Prophet Jesus' (AS) mission

In order to clarify the status of themes and the relationship between each pairs of themes, the global theme "Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) mission" as well as its related organizing and basic themes are shown in the figure below. This way, the overall perspective of the study is shown.

7. Validating the study findings

To validate the findings of the studies that have adopted thematic analysis research method, Braun and Clarke (2006: 96) have put forth 15 questions. By answering these questions, a researcher can assess the findings of his study and announce the validity of the findings to the readers. In Table 8 below, the answer to each of these 15 questions is given based on what has been done during this study.

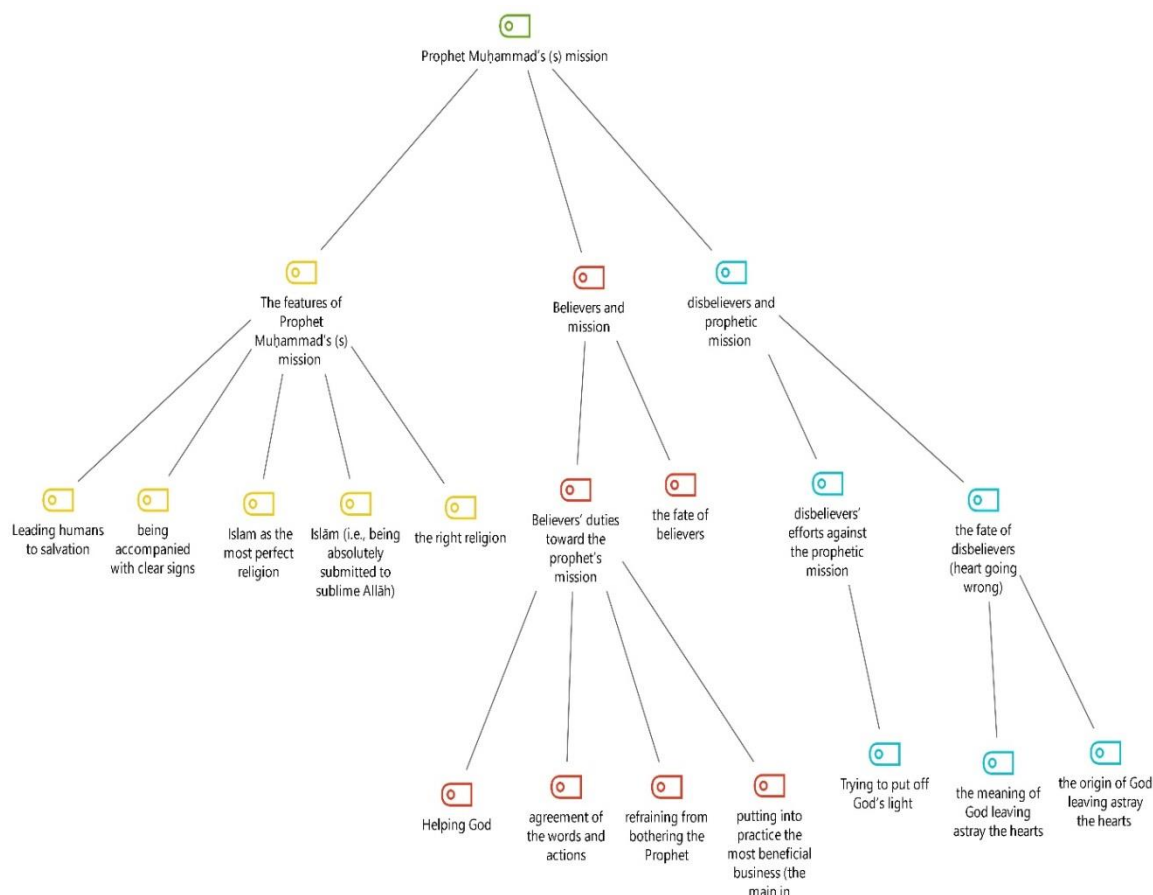


Fig. 1.

Table 8. Validation of the Study

No.	Process	Criterion	The present study
1	Transcription	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy.'	Since the text under study was the text of the book " <i>Al-Mizān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān</i> " about the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61) and this text is written by 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, it is a precise reflection of 'Allāma's viewpoint in the interpretation of this noble chapter.
2	Coding	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.	In the coding process, all statements of the text are precisely coded. The researcher tried to avoid their own opinions in determining the importance level of the phrases. They tried to code the text without any presupposition.
3	Coding	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead, the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.	In the coding process, it was tried to examine the statements of <i>Al-Mizān</i> precisely and the themes be true reflections of 'Allāma's viewpoints. Moreover, we tried to take into account both overt and covert themes that have been noted by 'Allāma.
4	Coding	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.	All statements that were in semantic relation to each of global, organizing, and basic have been assigned to their respective themes. This process was reviewed multiple times.
5	Coding	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.	The relationship or lack of relationship – and even sometimes the contradiction – of the global, organizing, and basic themes in 'Allāma's view were reviewed multiple times.
6	Coding	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.	Themes are generally coherent. It was tried to keep separate the themes that were not subparts of each other, and at the same time, to prevent any conflicts among themes.

Table 8.

No.	Process	Criterion	The present study
7	Analysis	Data have been analyzed / interpreted, made sense of / rather than just paraphrased or described.	In analyzing and reporting the data, it was tried to completely clarify 'Allāma's view. It was sometimes needed to clarify his views using the opinions of other scholars.
8	Analysis	Analysis and data match each other / the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.	The analysis given about the viewpoints of 'Allāma completely agree with the text and statements of 'Allāma in <i>Al-Mizān</i> commentary. The claims made by the researcher also completely agree with 'Allāma's viewpoint.
9	Analysis	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.	The analyses and reports presented in the study have completely described what the chapter tries to explain as well as what forms the cornerstone of the chapter.
10	Analysis	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided	What is presented in the schematic output – including figure, graphs, and tables – completely agree with is given in the detailed report of this study.
11	Overall	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.	The researcher spent a lot of time on coding the text statements, extracting the themes, and determining the amount and quality of their relationship with self-knowledge.
12	Written report	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.	At the beginning of this study on the thematic analysis of the text of <i>Al-Mizān</i> commentary on the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61), a report is given about stages of the thematic analysis and the steps taken by the researcher. Moreover, in the research report, the figures on the relationships of themes and the table of example codes are given to clarify the research procedure.
13	Written report	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done / i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.	It has been tried to have the research report as inclusive as possible of the research procedure.
14	Written report	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.	It has been tried to write the report through a simple and comprehensible language while it is congruent with the language and expression manner of 'Allāma in <i>Al-Mizān</i> .
15	Written report	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge.'	During the research process, in the coding stage, some themes appeared by themselves, and at the same time the covert themes that existed in the words of 'Allāma were also taken into account through reflection. In the later stages of organizing the themes and writing the detailed report, the researcher tried to find the quality of relationships, the mutual interrelationships, and the status of each of the themes in the interpretation of the Surah as-Saff according to the viewpoints of 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

8. Conclusion

In the light of the thematic analysis of the codes extracted from *Al-Mizān* commentary text about the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61), the sublime God first talks about the mission of Prophet Jesus (AS) and expresses its features, gist, text, and essence. Then, He explicates Prophet Muḥammad's (PBUH) mission and its features and calls it the religion that completes the previous ones. Since the mission of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) is accompanied with clear signs, He takes its heavenliness as a definitive and assured issue for the People of the Book and Muslims. God in this chapter describes Islam as the right religion, and introduces absolute submission to the His order as the most important principle of this divine religion. After that, the verses set out to clarify the atmosphere of the time of revelation. That is, they talk about the believers who forget their covenants at the battlefields and refrain from helping the Prophet of Allāh (PBUH), and also comment on the disbelievers who always try to put off the light of faith by accusing the expressions of the prophet to be magic, while they are ignorant of the fact that the Lord of all beings keeps alight the light of faith throughout the world despite the disbelievers' desire. In this chapter, by mentioning the fate of the people of Prophet Jesus (AS), God informs the believers and

disbelievers of the revelation era about the outcome of their deeds, talks about the disbelievers' hearts going astray as a result of their own deeds, and points out the victory of the believers on the disbelievers. There is a narration in Qumī commentary that emphasizes this and gives the glad tidings of a victory for the Support of Muḥammad's Family (AS) (Qumī, 1984, vol. 2: 366).

In the light of the frequency of the codes related to the organizing theme "believers and prophetic mission" and the thematic analysis of codes and categories assigned to this organizing theme, it can be concluded that this theme is the cornerstone of the chapter content. The most frequent basic theme assigned to the organizing theme "believers and prophetic mission" is "believers' duty." As it is illustrated in Figure 1, "putting into practice the most beneficial business," "refraining from bothering the prophet," "agreement between words and actions," and "helping God" (Ṭabrisī, 2000, vol. 1: 368) are mentioned as the believers' duties. In other verses and narrations, helping the Prophet of Allāh (PBUH) is taken as the same as helping God (Suyūṭī & Ibn 'Abbās, 1984, vol. 8: 150). Explicating the business mentioned in the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61), the sublime Allāh states that this business is verily having faith in God and the Prophet of Allāh (PBUH) and struggling for the sake of Allāh with one's life and properties. A narration in Qumī's commentary also emphasizes this meaning (Qumī, 1984, vol. 2: 365). In other words, it can be said that the main intention of the chapter is to express the believers' duties, with the top duties being having faith in God and His Prophet (PBUH) and resolutely and persistently struggling for the sake of God. These have been called the most beneficial businesses. Of course, the other duties of believers can also be assigned under this theme. 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī's assertion at the end of his interpretation of the final part of this chapter (verses 10 to 14) verifies our thematic analysis findings. He asserts,

These verses invite believers to have faith in God and His Prophet and to struggle for the sake of God, and give them glad tidings on forgiveness and Paradise in the otherworld and assistance and victory in this world. It invites them to trust God's promise of assistance and His confirmation. The two meanings that we mentioned are the ultimate intentions of the chapter, and the content of the preceding verses are just to set the ground for these two meanings. (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1992, vol. 19: 435)

In Figure 2 below, the main intention of the Surah as-Saff (Qur'ān, 61) and the cornerstone of the thematic analysis – i.e., the beneficial business – are depicted.

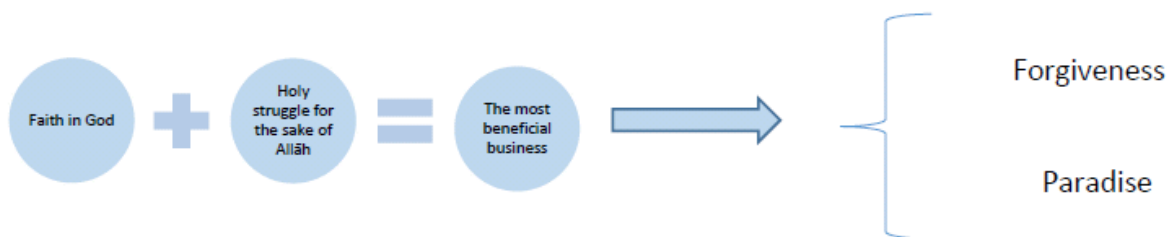


Fig. 2. The Pattern of the Beneficial Business

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