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Exploring the Semantic Meaning and Pragmatic Functions of *Ittaqi* in the Quran

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the meaning and pragmatic functions of the lexeme *ittaqi* in the Quran through semantic and pragmatic approaches. The article employs a qualitative method with a content analysis design. The data consist of Quranic verses containing the lexeme *ittaqi* and were collected through document analysis. Data were analyzed using a semantic approach to identify lexical meanings and semantic relations, as well as a pragmatic approach to explain speech functions within the context of divine communication. The findings reveal that the lexeme *ittaqi* derives from the root *waqā*, which denotes conscious self-protection from spiritual, moral, and eschatological harm. From a pragmatic perspective, the lexeme functions as a directive speech act that conveys commands, warnings, exhortations, and moral guidance. Furthermore, the variation in the objects of piety demonstrates that the concept of *taqwa* encompasses a broad semantic scope and remains highly relevant to both individual and social life. This article concludes that *taqwa* in the Quran represents a form of ethical consciousness that integrates spiritual, rational, and transformative dimensions. The findings contribute to the enrichment of Quranic linguistic studies, particularly by enhancing the understanding of the relationship between lexical meaning and communicative function in the construction of Quranic moral messages.

INTRODUCTION

The Quran is the Word of Allah, serving as a guide for life for all of humanity, unrestricted by time or space. The universality of the Quran's message makes it relevant to a wide range of social, cultural, and civilizational contexts that are constantly evolving (Agustian et al., 2025). As a sacred text revealed in Arabic, the Quran possesses linguistic characteristics that are rich and complex, embodying a high degree of eloquence (*faṣāḥah*) and rhetorical beauty (*balāghah*) (Widodo, 2026). Therefore, understanding the messages of the Quran cannot be achieved through a purely textual reading alone but also requires a contextual and linguistic approach capable of revealing the depth of meaning contained within it.

In the study of ulumul Quran, various forms of expression have been identified that contain ambiguity, polysemy, or multiple interpretations, such as *mubham*, *musytarak*, and *musytabihāt* verses. This situation calls for an analytical

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approach capable of explaining the relationship between language and meaning more comprehensively (Salsabila & Fithriyana, 2025). Consequently, various linguistic approaches in Quranic studies have developed significantly, including the *bayānī* exegesis pioneered by Amin al-Khulli, the linguistic hermeneutics of Muhammad Syahrur, and the semantic analysis of the Quran developed by Toshihiko Izutsu. These approaches demonstrate that linguistic aspects play a central role in understanding the message, values, and worldview of the Quran.

One branch of linguistics that is widely used in the study of the Quran is semantics, which is the study of linguistic meaning at various linguistic levels, both lexical and contextual (Mu'adzah & Misnawati, 2026). Through a semantic approach, the meaning of a word can be traced from its root, the evolution of its usage, to its relationship with other concepts within the linguistic system of the Quran. In this context, one term that is both frequently used and rich in meaning is the concept of takwa. According to Abdullah, (2025), the word takwa and all its derivatives are mentioned 258 times in the Quran, which demonstrates the significance of this concept in the structure of Islamic teachings.

One form of derivation of the word takwa that is interesting to study is the term ittaqi and its variations, such as *ittaqū* and *ittaqīna*. Etymologically, this term derives from the root *waqā-yaqī-wiqāyah*, which means to guard, protect, or shield oneself from something harmful. However, within the discourse of the Quran, the term *ittaqi* does not merely denote physical self-protection but ha evolved into a spiritual, moral, and social concept that represents human awareness of one's relationship with Allah, fellow human beings, and the afterlife (Hurrahmi et al., 2025). Thus, the meaning of *ittaqi* cannot be understood solely through the literal translation "be God-fearing," but must be analyzed based on the context of its usage and its communicative function in each verse.

The uniqueness of the use of the term *ittaqi* becomes even more apparent when we find that the object of piety in the Quran does not always refer to Allah, but also to Hell, the Day of Judgment, punishment, and various other moral consequences. These variations indicate a dynamic of meaning that cannot be fully explained through lexical analysis alone. Furthermore, the Quran is known for its meticulous choice of diction, such that every word is placed within a context that conveys a specific purpose and message (Qarinah et al., 2026; Sugiono et al., 2025). Therefore, semantic analysis must be combined with a pragmatic approach to explain how the meaning of a term is constructed and how its communicative function operates within the process of divine communication.

Studies on the concept of taqwa in the Quran have been conducted by various researchers with diverse focuses. The study by Hasninadia et al., (2026) examines the meaning of taqwa in Surah Al-Baqarah. Zaman, (2024) explores the relationship between iman and taqwa and their implementation in daily life. Muhsinin, (2024) analyzed the concepts of taqwa and fear using lexical-semantic and historical approaches. Sumianti et al., (2025) examined the application of the meaning of taqwa within Ary Ginanjar's ESQ concept. Rusidi & Istiqomah, (2025) outlined the semantic relevance of Toshihiko Izutsu's work in Quranic studies. Abdullah, (2025) analyze the word *fasād* in the Quran through a semantic approach. Other studies on Quranic linguistics also indicate a growing focus on the relationship between meaning, linguistic structure, and religious messages in the Quranic text. Nevertheless, most previous research has focused on the concept of *takwa* as a theological, ethical, or lexical-semantic theme, whereas studies that specifically analyze the term *ittaqi* as an imperative form by integrating semantic and pragmatic analysis remain relatively limited.

Based on a review of the existing literature, there is a research gap regarding the analysis of the meaning and communicative function of the term *ittaqi* in the

Quran. Most previous studies have focused on the concept of *taqwa* in general, the characteristics of the pious, the implementation of the value of *taqwa*, or historical-semantic analyses of the word *taqwa*. Meanwhile, studies that integrate semantic and pragmatic approaches to uncover the relationship between lexical meaning, context of use, and speech act function of the term *ittaqi* in the Quranic discourse are still scarce.

The novelty of this article lies in the use of an integrative semantic-pragmatic approach to analyze the term *ittaqi* as an imperative form in the Quran. Unlike previous studies, which tended to focus solely on conceptual or semantic aspects, this article simultaneously examines the lexical meaning, semantic relations, contextual usage, and pragmatic functions of the term *ittaqi* as a directive speech act in divine communication. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of the construction of the meaning of *taqwa* within the discourse of the Quran.

This article is expected to contribute to the development of Quranic linguistic studies, particularly regarding the integration of semantic and pragmatic analysis in understanding the messages of the Quran. Theoretically, the findings of this study can enrich the body of knowledge on Quranic semantics and pragmatic theory in religious texts. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for academics, exegetes, educators, and the Muslim community in understanding the concept of taqwa in a more in-depth, contextual, and practical manner, thereby strengthening character building, ethical awareness, and social responsibility in contemporary life.

METHODS

This article was written to analyze the meaning and pragmatic functions of the term *ittaqi* in the Quran through a linguistic approach that integrates semantic and pragmatic studies. This approach was selected because the analysis of Quranic texts requires not only an understanding of the lexical meaning of a word but also an explanation of its communicative functions within a religious discourse context. Semantic analysis enables the exploration of the meaning of a particular expression based on the semantic system constructed within the Quran, while pragmatic analysis is employed to understand the intentions and functions of utterances according to their contexts of use (Abishev et al., 2025; Anidar et al., 2026; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2026; 2025; Hamimi et al., 2022; Kamisatuddhuha, 2021; Taufiq et al., 2026). Therefore, the integration of these two approaches is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning construction of the term *ittaqi* in the Quran.

Method and Type

This article employs a qualitative research method with a content analysis design. The qualitative method was chosen because the study focuses on interpreting the meanings embedded in the Quranic text rather than measuring data quantitatively. Content analysis was utilized to identify, classify, and interpret the meanings associated with the term *ittaqi* based on the contexts in which it appears throughout the Quranic verses. The application of content analysis in religious text studies enables researchers to systematically and comprehensively uncover both explicit and implicit meanings (Amin & Iman, 2026; Ulwan & Nugroho, 2025).

Data Sources

The primary data sources of this study consist of Quranic verses containing the term *ittaqi* and its derivative forms relevant to the focus of the research. Secondary data sources were obtained from Quranic exegeses (*tafsir*), Arabic dictionaries, literature on semantics and pragmatics, and scholarly articles addressing the concept of *taqwa* and linguistic analyses of the Quran. These secondary sources were used to

strengthen the interpretation of meanings and to provide a solid theoretical foundation for the analytical process. The literature consulted includes Quranic semantic studies by (Jamshaid & Maryam, 2025), analyses of the concept of *taqwa* by (Abdul et al., 2021), and lexical and historical semantic studies of *taqwa* by (Ihsan, 2022; Kamisatuddhuha, 2021; Martiansa et al., 2022).

Instrument

The primary instrument of this research is the researcher as a human instrument, who is responsible for determining the research focus, collecting data, classifying and interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions. To support this process, several supplementary instruments were employed, including the Quran, various tafsir works, Al-Munawwir Arabic Dictionary by Munawwir, (1997), and relevant scholarly references in semantics and pragmatics. The use of these sources was intended to enhance the validity of interpretations regarding the meaning and functions of the term *ittaqi* in the Quran.

Data Analysis Tools

The data analysis framework employed in this study consists of semantic and pragmatic theories. Semantic analysis was used to identify the basic meaning, relational meaning, and semantic relationships of the term *ittaqi* within the conceptual system of the Quran, as developed in Toshihiko Izutsu's approach to Quranic semantics (Fahimah, 2020). Pragmatic analysis, on the other hand, was applied to reveal the communicative functions of *ittaqi* based on its contextual usage, particularly in identifying directive speech acts that convey commands, warnings, invitations, and moral guidance. To strengthen the findings, interpretations of the verses were compared with the explanations of classical and contemporary Quranic exegetes as well as previous studies concerning the concept of *taqwa* (Kamisatuddhuha, 2021).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis was conducted through several stages. First, all Quranic verses containing the term *ittaqi* were identified and compiled as the primary corpus of the study. Second, the data were classified according to their linguistic forms, objects of piety (*taqwa*), and contextual usage within the verses. Third, the lexical meanings and semantic relations of *ittaqi* were analyzed to identify its basic meaning and semantic development throughout the Quran. Fourth, a pragmatic analysis was conducted to determine the speech-act functions and communicative purposes embedded in the use of the term. Fifth, all findings were interpreted and synthesized by referring to Quranic exegesis literature, Quranic semantic studies, and relevant previous research (Engkizar et al., 2022; Fahimah, 2020; Knapp, 2025; Ramdhanisa et al., 2023). The results of the analysis are presented descriptively and analytically to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the meaning and pragmatic functions of the term *ittaqi* within Quranic discourse.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Semantic Analysis of the Term *Ittaqi*

The first, Etymology and Derivational Patterns. The term *ittaqi* is the imperative form of the verb *ittaqā*, which originates from the root word *waqā*, meaning "to protect" or "to safeguard." Other derivative forms include the imperfect verb (*fi'l muḍāri'*) *yattaqī*, the active participle (*ism fā'il*) *muttaqī*, and its plural form *muttaqīn*. All of these derivatives retain the core semantic notion of protection or self-preservation from something harmful (Faris & Ahmad, 1979).

According to Ibn Manẓūr in Lisān al-'Arab*, waqā* means "to restrain" or "to prevent" something undesirable. He further explains that *ittaqā* signifies avoiding danger or protecting oneself from something due to fear of its harmful consequences. Thus, the concept of *taqwā* is not merely fear; rather, it refers to an

active effort to safeguard oneself from spiritual and moral harm.

Morphologically, *ittaqā* is derived through a reflexive and intensive verbal pattern that conveys active participation and deliberate effort. Consequently, in the Quranic context, *ittaqā* frequently denotes a conscious and intentional choice to obey Allah's commands and avoid His prohibitions as a means of protecting oneself from divine punishment and moral corruption. The imperative form *ittaqi* appears in numerous Quranic verses, such as Q.S. al-Aḥzāb (33): 1 and Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 24. In these contexts, the command to practice *taqwā* conveys an exhortation to act consciously and proactively in avoiding sinful behavior.

Meanwhile, *yattaqī*, the imperfect (present and future) form of *ittaqā*, indicates that *taqwā* is a continuous and ongoing process. Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 2 states that the Quran serves as guidance for the *muttaqīn* (the God-conscious), suggesting that divine guidance is intended for those who are striving toward *taqwā*, not exclusively for those who have already attained spiritual perfection. This interpretation is consistent with al-Ṭabarī's explanation that the *muttaqīn* are those who continually strive to avoid disobedience to Allah and fulfill His commands. The notion of striving itself implies an ongoing process of spiritual development.

Furthermore, *muttaqīn* is an active participial form (*ism fā'il*) that signifies *taqwā* as an enduring identity rather than a temporary action. In numerous verses, including Q.S. Āl 'Imrān (3): 133, the *muttaqīn* are portrayed as the primary recipients of Allah's mercy through Paradise, which has been prepared as a reward for those who possess *taqwā* (Thabari & Jarir, 2009).

A distinction should also be made between *ittaqā* and *khāfa* ("to fear"). *Khawf* refers primarily to an emotional state, whereas taqwā refers to actions arising from awareness of the consequences of one's deeds. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī explains that *khawf* (fear) is sometimes referred to as *taqwā*, and vice versa, following the linguistic convention of naming an effect by its cause and a cause by its effect. Accordingly, *ittaqā* represents a more rational and strategic ethical orientation rather than a purely emotional response.

Consistent with its root meaning, all derivatives of *waqā* carry the notion of protection. In the Quranic context, what is protected is the human heart and one's deeds from incurring Allah's displeasure. *Taqwā* functions as a moral safeguard that keeps individuals on the path approved by Allah. It is also described as one of the greatest injunctions prescribed by Allah for both past and future generations. According to al-Aṣfahānī, in Islamic law (*sharī'ah*), *taqwā* refers to protecting oneself from anything that leads to sin. This is achieved by refraining from prohibited acts and perfected by avoiding certain permissible acts when necessary for spiritual discipline.

The term *ittaqā* and its derivatives occur more tshan 250 times in the Quran. This frequency demonstrates that *taqwā* is not merely a normative teaching but rather a foundational principle of Quranic ethics. Q.S. al-Ṭalāq (65): 2-3 emphasizes that Allah will provide a way out for those who possess *taqwā*. Based on the meanings discussed above, *ittaqā* may be understood as an expression of human awareness of its limitations as a created being. It embodies an existential dimension in the relationship between God and His servants (Saputra, 2025; Tambunan, 2016).

Within society, the *muttaqīn* are also portrayed as a socially recognized group whose status is legitimized by the Quran. They represent an ideal community that serves as a model of religious devotion and social justice. This is evident in Q.S. al-Ḥujurāt (49): 13:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَّاُنْثٰى وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ شُعُوْبًا وَّقَبَاۤىِٕلَ لِتَعَارَفُوْا ۚ اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰىكُمْ ۗاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ

Meaning: *O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples*

and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted (QS. Al-Hujurat: 13)

The statement, "Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-conscious among you," indicates that taqwā surpasses all other worldly distinctions. Allah does not favor those who boast of their social rank, lineage, or wealth. Notably, in the Quran, the command ittaqū is not always followed directly by the object "Allah." In some verses, it is associated with *al-nār* (the Fire), *al-yawm al-ākhir* (the Last Day), and other objects. This demonstrates that *taqwā* may be oriented toward protection from spiritual consequences and future accountability.

The term *muttaqīn* has also functioned as an honorific designation in both classical and contemporary Arabic culture. Consequently, within public discourse, taqwā often symbolizes moral authority as well as spiritual excellence. Indonesian translations of *ittaqā* vary considerably, including "to be pious," "to fear Allah," "to be cautious," and "to safeguard oneself." These variations illustrate the broad semantic range of the Arabic term and highlight the importance of context in determining its most appropriate translation.

In contemporary Islamic education, *taqwā* is frequently treated as an indicator of spiritual success. However, *taqwā* should be understood as a continuous process rather than a final state. Therefore, Islamic education should emphasize *yattaqī* (the process of becoming God-conscious) rather than merely producing muttaqīn. This semantic understanding of ittaqā and its derivatives also has implications for Islamic preaching (*da'wah*). Preachers should invite people to taqwā not solely through fear but through rational awareness and love of Allah as a means of spiritual self-protection.

The Second, Grammatical Meaning in Context. The term *ittaqi* and its derivative forms occur frequently throughout the Quran. Understanding the meaning of *ittaqi* cannot be separated from its syntactic (grammatical) context and local semantic environment within a verse. In other words, although the term etymologically derives from the root *waqā*, meaning "to protect" or "to safeguard oneself," its actual meaning is highly dependent upon sentence structure and the object of *taqwā* specified in a particular verse. Consequently, the semantic and pragmatic interpretation of *ittaqi* varies according to its grammatical construction and contextual usage, resulting in different nuances of meaning across Quranic discourse.

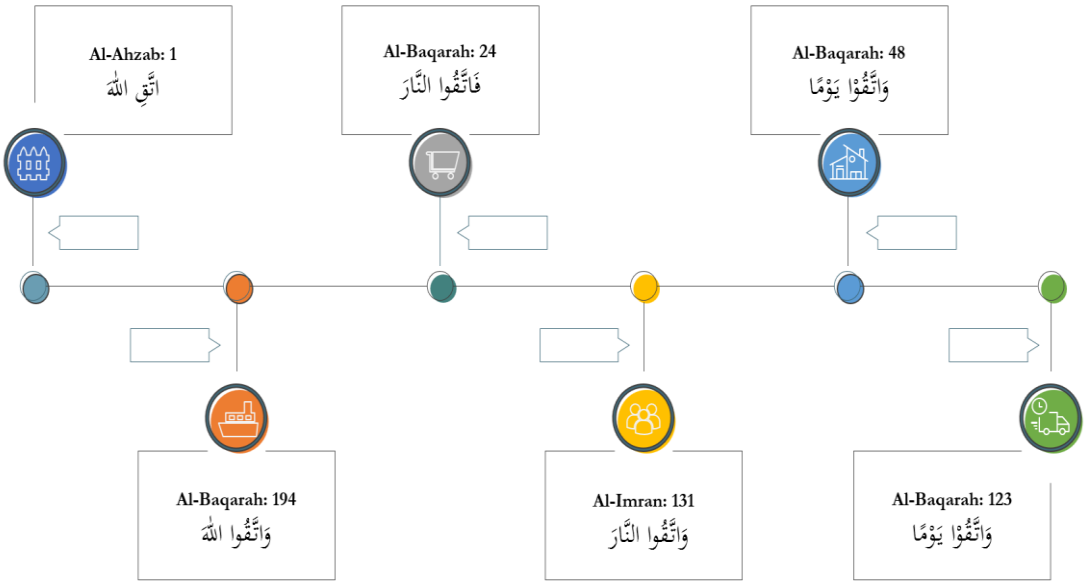


Fig 1. The Classification of the Word *Ittaqi* in the Quran

First: Surah Al-Aḥzāb (33): 1 – "*Ittaqi Allāh*"

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ

This verse constitutes a direct command from Allah to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The phrase *yā ayyuhā al-nabiyyu ittaqi Allāh* means, "O Prophet, remain steadfast in your devotion to Allah and continue to maintain consciousness of Him." The word ittaqi is an imperative verb (*fiʿl amr*) derived from ittaqā. Grammatically, it is a *fiʿl amr mabnī ʿalā ḥadhf ḥarf al-ʿillah*, formed through the omission of the weak letter (*yā'*). The subject of the verb is a hidden pronoun (*ḍamīr mustatir*), namely "you," referring directly to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), while Allah is the object of the command. Semantically, the verse serves as a moral reminder to the Prophet to remain firm in faith and not be influenced by the pressures of disbelievers and hypocrites. In this context, *taqwā* conveys the notion of istimrāriyyah (continuity), emphasizing the consistent maintenance of one's relationship with Allah amid social and political challenges.

Second: Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 194 – "*Wa-ttaqū Allāh*"

وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ

This verse discusses the law of *qiṣāṣ* (equitable retaliation). However, Allah reminds believers that even while seeking justice, they must maintain consciousness of Him. The word ittaqū is the plural imperative form (*fiʿl amr jamʿ*) derived from *ittaqā*, indicating that the command is directed to the Muslim community as a whole. It takes the plural subject pronoun antum ("you all"). In this context, *taqwā* signifies more than fear of Allah; it denotes self-restraint from exceeding the limits of justice and maintaining ethical conduct even in situations of conflict and retaliation. Thus, taqwā represents moral self-control and ethical discipline in the pursuit of justice.

Third: Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 24 – "Fa-ttaqū al-Nār"

فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْ وَقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

This verse follows Allah's challenge to humanity to produce a chapter comparable to the Quran. Since they are incapable of doing so, they are instructed to accept the truth of the Quran and the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), while also being warned to protect themselves from Hellfire (Az-Zuhaili, 2016). The word *ittaqū* is again a plural imperative (*fiʿl amr jamʿ*), and its subject encompasses all human beings. The object of the command is *al-nār* (the Fire). Thus, the phrase may be understood as: "Protect yourselves from the Fire." In this context, taqwā signifies an active effort to save oneself from punishment in the Hereafter. It reflects an eschatological orientation, where faith, righteous deeds, and rational commitment serve as practical expressions of *taqwā*.

Fourth: Surah Āl ʿImrān (3): 131 – "*Wa-ttaqū al-Nār*"

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْٓ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ

This verse appears alongside the command to hasten toward Allah's forgiveness and Paradise. The term ittaqū is a plural imperative directed to the believers through the pronoun *antum* ("you all"). Its object is *al-nār* (the Fire), which has been prepared for the disbelievers. Here, taqwā functions as a motivational warning that encourages believers to avoid attitudes and behaviors associated with disbelief that may lead to punishment in Hell. Consequently, *taqwā* represents preventive action aimed at attaining salvation. Although both this verse and Al-Baqarah (2):24 command believers to "fear" or "guard themselves against" the Fire, there is a subtle distinction between them. Verse 2:24 presents a general warning, whereas verse 3:131 explicitly connects the Fire with the fate of disbelievers, thereby emphasizing taqwā as an expression of existential awareness regarding Allah's system of reward and punishment.

Fifth: Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 48 – "*Wa-ttaqū Yawman*"

وَاتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا لَّا تَجْزِيْ نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَّفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ

This verse calls upon people to be mindful of a momentous Day, namely the Day of Judgment. The word *ittaqū* once again appears as a plural imperative. Interestingly, the object of the command is neither Allah nor Hellfire, but *yawm* ("a day"), referring specifically to the Day of Resurrection. In this context, *taqwā* denotes awareness of the coming Day of Reckoning, a day on which no soul will be able to benefit another and where no intercession, ransom, or assistance will avail. Therefore, *taqwā* means preparing oneself in the present life for that inevitable future reality. According to Al-Shawkani, (2017), the imperative in this verse carries a strong sense of warning and admonition.

Sixth: Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 123 – "*Wa-ttaqū Yawman*"

وَاتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا لَّا تَجْزِيْ نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَّفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَّلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ

This verse is nearly identical in wording to verse 48. The grammatical structure remains the same, consisting of the plural imperative ittaqū with yawm as its object. The command is specifically addressed to the Children of Israel. The repetition of this warning serves to encourage them to follow the unlettered Messenger and reaffirm their commitment to divine guidance.

All six verses examined above employ the imperative form (*fiʿl amr*) derived from ittaqā, whether in the singular form (*ittaqi*) or the plural form (*ittaqū*). This distinction indicates whether the command is directed toward an individual or a community. Notably, the object of *taqwā* in these verses is not always Allah; in some cases, it is *al-nār* (the Fire) or yawm (the Day of Judgment). This demonstrates that taqwā extends beyond a purely vertical relationship between human beings and God, encompassing an awareness of eschatological realities as well.

In the context of retaliation and justice (Quran 2:194), taqwā teaches ethical restraint in situations of conflict. In the context of prophethood (33:1), it reinforces the moral integrity of the Prophet. In verses referring to Hellfire and the Day of Judgment, *taqwā* signifies future-oriented consciousness and active efforts in worldly life aimed at attaining salvation in the Hereafter.

Returning to the root word *waqā* ("to protect"), all of these contexts indicate that ittaqi fundamentally means "to consciously and actively protect oneself" from something greater than mere fear. The use of *ittaqū* as an imperative within legal, historical, and theological narratives creates a powerful rhetorical effect: it functions not merely as information but as a direct call to action. Consequently, the meaning of ittaqi cannot be generalized across all verses. Each context produces its own specific nuance, shaped by the object of *taqwā* and the circumstances surrounding the verse.

Al-Qurṭubī describes *taqwā* as *jawāmiʿ al-khayr* ("the source and embodiment of all goodness"), noting that it is among the greatest injunctions prescribed by Allah. Nevertheless, Quranic exegetes consistently emphasize the importance of contextual interpretation when explaining the imperative forms *ittaqi* and *ittaqū* (Al-Qurṭubī, 2006). This analysis highlights the necessity of linking linguistic meaning with the immediate context of each verse. *Taqwā* is therefore a dynamic rather than static concept, encompassing moral, spiritual, social, and eschatological dimensions.

Pragmatic Analysis of the Term *Ittaqi*

Pragmatics is the study of language in its communicative context and serves as an important foundation for determining objective interpretations of a text (Rosyid, 2017). In the Quran, a deeper understanding of a verse can be achieved by identifying the speaker, the addressee, the context in which the utterance is delivered, and the intended meaning or illocutionary force of the speech act (Awaludin & Susiani, 2020).

In Q.S. Al-Aḥzāb (33):1,

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ ۗاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا

The speaker is Allah Almighty, while the addressee is Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The verse takes the form of direct communication, reflecting the vertical relationship between God and His Messenger. The term ittaqi functions as an imperative command. However, because it is directed to the Prophet, it also conveys moral reinforcement and reassurance. According to Ibn Kathīr, this command represents an admonition from the Highest Authority, Allah, to a human being (Katsir, 2005). Pragmatically, the command not only instructs obedience but also strengthens the Prophet's moral resilience and steadfastness amidst opposition from disbelievers and hypocrites.

In Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):194,

اَلشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمٰتُ قِصَاصٌۗ فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوْا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدٰى عَلَيْكُمْۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ

The speaker is Allah, while the addressees are the Muslim community collectively, particularly in the context of warfare and retaliation against aggression. The expression *wa-ttaqū Allāh* functions both as a command and a warning. It not only prohibits excessive retaliation but also calls believers to uphold moral values even during conflict. According to al-Ṭabarī, this verse was revealed in connection with violations of the sacred months. While Islam permits retaliation against aggression, it simultaneously requires that such retaliation remain within the limits prescribed by Islamic law and be carried out as justice rather than oppression. Thus, the command *ittaqū Allāh* serves as a balance between rights and responsibilities, ensuring that justice is administered within an ethical framework.

In Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):24,

فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوْا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْ وَقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُۖ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ

The speaker remains Allah, while the addressees are humanity in general, particularly those who doubt the truth of the Quran. The term *ittaqū* functions as a stern warning and serves as a warning speech act. It directs people to avoid Hellfire as the logical consequence of rejecting divine revelation. According to al-Zamakhsharī, this verse continues the challenge for skeptics to produce a chapter comparable to the Quran. Their inability to meet this challenge becomes evidence of the Quran's divine origin and, consequently, proof that punishment awaits those who persist in disbelief. Therefore, taqwā in this context assumes a defensive and existential dimension, urging individuals to protect themselves from the consequences of rejecting the truth.

In Q.S. Āl ʿImrān (3):131,

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْٓ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ

The speaker is Allah, while the addressees are the believers, as indicated in the preceding verse (3:130). The command *ittaqū* functions as a preventive warning. Its purpose is motivational, encouraging believers to avoid behaviors associated with disbelief that could lead them to Hellfire. According to Sayyid Quṭb, this verse was revealed as a warning against engaging in usury (*riba*). Accordingly, the verse serves as both a source of spiritual motivation and a moral reminder that guides believers toward righteous conduct. Pragmatically, the command seeks to influence behavior by steering believers away from actions that threaten their spiritual well-being.

In Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):48,

وَاتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا لَّا تَجْزِيْ نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَّفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ

The speaker is Allah, while the addressees are the Children of Israel, as indicated in the preceding verses that recount the blessings bestowed upon them and

their subsequent transgressions. Here, taqwā functions as an eschatological warning. Its pragmatic purpose is to emphasize the consequences of faith and deeds on the Day of Judgment. The command calls for *taqwā* as a response to the threat of complete helplessness on that Day, when no soul will be able to assist another through intercession, ransom, or support. According to al-Qurṭubī, the verse rebukes the arrogance of those among the Children of Israel who believed that their prophetic lineage guaranteed salvation. Instead, the verse asserts that noble ancestry cannot substitute for righteous deeds.

Similarly, in Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):123,

وَاتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا لَّا تَجْزِيْ نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَّفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَّلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ

The speaker remains Allah and the addressees continue to be the Children of Israel. This verse largely repeats the warning given in verse 48, serving as a rhetorical reinforcement. Although the message is essentially the same, the repetition intensifies its communicative force. The term ittaqū functions as an illocutionary act of warning and emphasis. Through this repetition, the Quran underscores the need to correct misconceptions within the belief system of the Children of Israel. The verse emphasizes that taqwā is not a symbol of status or inherited privilege but rather evidence of righteous conduct and sincere avoidance of Allah's displeasure.

All of the verses discussed above employ directive illocutionary acts, although their communicative contexts vary considerably: direct commands (Q.S. Al-Aḥzāb 33:1), moral warnings (Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:194), warnings concerning Hellfire (Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:24 and Q.S. Āl ʿImrān 3:131), and warnings regarding the Day of Judgment (Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:48 and 2:123). Pragmatically, every command containing *ittaqū* seeks to produce behavioral effects on the audience, including strengthening faith, restraining sinful inclinations, and cultivating awareness of the Hereafter. The Quranic command to practice taqwā is neither dry nor merely literal; rather, it is embedded within rich emotional, spiritual, and, at times, historical contexts. This demonstrates the depth and sophistication of the pragmatic dimensions of Quranic discourse.

CONCLUSION

This article has analyzed the semantic meanings and pragmatic functions of the lexeme *ittaqi* in the Quran through an integrated semantic-pragmatic approach. The findings demonstrate that *ittaqi*, derived from the root *waqā*, fundamentally conveys the notion of protection, preservation, and conscious self-guarding against spiritual, moral, and eschatological harm. Within the Quranic discourse, the concept of *taqwa* extends beyond the conventional understanding of fear of God and represents a comprehensive ethical consciousness that guides human behavior and moral responsibility. Furthermore, the semantic analysis reveals that the meaning of *ittaqi* develops contextually according to its object and communicative setting, thereby reflecting the richness and complexity of Quranic language.

From a pragmatic perspective, *ittaqi* functions predominantly as a directive speech act that conveys commands, warnings, exhortations, moral guidance, and eschatological reminders. The novelty of this article lies in its integration of semantic and pragmatic analyses to examine *ittaqi* not merely as a theological concept but also as a linguistic expression operating within a specific communicative framework. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how the Quran constructs the concept of *taqwa* through both meaning and function. The findings contribute to the development of Quranic linguistic studies by demonstrating the interrelationship between lexical meaning and communicative intention, while also offering practical insights for scholars, educators, and Muslim communities seeking a deeper and more contextual understanding of *taqwa* as a foundation for ethical character formation and responsible social conduct.

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Author contribution
Mahbubah Hasanah: data curation, writing-original draft preparation, analysis, conceptualization, **Bashori**; methodology, visualization, and editing.

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The data and the grammatical structure in this article have been validated and verified by English language experts and no AI-generated sentences are included in this article.

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