

The Importance of Islamic Terminology in Building Knowledge and Regulating Sharʿi Understanding

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to highlight the importance of Islamic terminology as a fundamental pillar in building knowledge and regulating Sharʿi understanding. A term is not merely a linguistic expression; rather, it is a cognitive framework that determines meaning, governs reasoning, contributes to the formulation of intellectual visions, and ensures the unity of scholarly reference among researchers. The Islamic heritage has shown special concern for terminology in works of jurisprudence, legal theory, theology, and Qurʿanic exegesis, recognizing its direct effect on deriving rulings and shaping Islamic thought.

The study includes an introduction that addresses the significance of the subject, its objectives, and the methodology adopted. The first section discusses the definition of the Islamic term, its importance, characteristics, and its effect on regulating Sharʿi understanding and unifying scholarly reference. The second section presents an applied study of several central terms, such as faith, disbelief, piety, and Shariʿah. These terms are analyzed through Qurʿanic and Prophetic texts, with clarification of scholars' definitions of them and the effect of their regulation in preventing intellectual deviations and protecting Islamic identity.

The study concludes that Islamic terminology represents cognitive tools that determine methods of reasoning and ijtihad, contribute to building a coherent knowledge system, and strengthen the integration of heritage and modernity. It also recommends giving greater attention to terminology in Sharʿi curricula, establishing specialized bilingual glossaries, enhancing comparative studies between Islamic terminology and modern concepts, and supporting institutional projects aimed at regulating terminology and employing modern technologies to build digital databases available to researchers.

Keywords: Islamic terminology, knowledge, Sharʿi understanding, usul al-fiqh, Islamic sciences.

INTRODUCTION

Scientific and Sharʿi terms are among the most important tools upon which researchers and scholars rely in building knowledge and regulating the proper understanding of religious texts. A term is not merely a linguistic expression used in a particular context; rather, it is a comprehensive cognitive framework that determines meaning, governs reasoning, and contributes to unifying the reference point among scholars and researchers. Through terminology, the major concepts upon which Islamic thought is based are defined, whether in the fields of creed, jurisprudence, Qurʿanic exegesis, or usul al-fiqh. This makes terminology a fundamental pillar in formulating intellectual visions and regulating Sharʿi rulings.

Islamic heritage has attached great importance to terminology. In books of jurisprudence and its principles, theology, and exegesis, we find clear emphasis on defining concepts and regulating them precisely, in recognition of their direct effect on deriving Sharʿi rulings and shaping intellectual visions. Scholars were not content merely to mention rulings or maxims; rather, they were careful to regulate the terms upon which those rulings were built, such as faith, disbelief, piety, and Shariʿah, recognizing that any disorder in concepts necessarily leads to disorder in results and deductions.

With the development of the sciences and the diversity of modern intellectual methodologies, an urgent need has emerged to reconsider Islamic terminology, both in terms of its regulation and in comparison with newly developed concepts, in order to avoid confusion and disorder in Shar‘i understanding. The absence of precision in the use of terminology leads to different interpretations and divergent rulings, which negatively affects the unity of Islamic thought and the ability of the Muslim community to face contemporary intellectual challenges, especially amid openness to other cultures and the multiplicity of intellectual reference systems.

Hence the significance of this study, which seeks to highlight the central role of Islamic terminology in building knowledge and regulating Shar‘i understanding through a theoretical and applied study that examines models of juristic, theological, and usuli terms and clarifies their effect in guiding understanding and ijihad. The study also aims to present practical recommendations for enhancing attention to terminology in Shar‘i curricula and academic studies, thereby ensuring clarity of understanding and continuity of Islamic knowledge construction. In addition, the study seeks to connect the efforts of earlier scholars with contemporary studies in a way that strengthens the integration of heritage and modernity and contributes to building a coherent Islamic epistemic identity capable of confronting current intellectual and cultural challenges.

Research Problem

Contemporary Shar‘i studies face a clear problem represented by the lack of precision in the use of Islamic terminology, whether in academic writings or public discourse. This deficiency leads to disorder in Shar‘i understanding, divergence in rulings, and differences in interpretation among researchers and students. Moreover, the introduction of modern or translated terms without regulating them according to Shar‘i frameworks further complicates the problem and negatively affects the unity of scholarly reference.

Moreover, many modern studies have neglected terminology or dealt with it only partially, which has led to misunderstanding of Shar‘i texts. For example, some contemporary writings have interpreted faith as mere intellectual knowledge, whereas the Qur’anic and Prophetic contexts show that it is both affirmation and action.¹

Despite the existence of major heritage-based efforts to regulate terminology, modern studies have not given this aspect the comprehensive attention it deserves, especially in light of contemporary intellectual and cultural challenges. From here arises the problem of this research: how can Islamic terminology contribute to building knowledge and regulating Shar‘i understanding, and what is the effect of the absence of such regulation on contemporary Islamic thought?

Research Questions

This study proceeds from a set of main questions that aim to guide the research toward achieving its objectives. They may be formulated as follows:

What role does Islamic terminology play in building knowledge and regulating Shar‘i understanding?

How did scholars in the Islamic heritage contribute to regulating terminology and defining its meanings?

What is the effect of the absence of precision in the use of terminology on disorder in Shar‘i understanding and differences in rulings?

How can Islamic terminology be employed in confronting contemporary intellectual and cultural challenges?

What practical recommendations can the study offer to strengthen attention to Islamic terminology in curricula and academic studies?

¹ See: The Islamic Term between Authenticity and Contemporaneity, pp. 30-40; Ibn Ashur, Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir, vol. 1, pp. 40-45; Al-Shatibi, Al-Muwafaqat, vol. 1, pp. 60-65.

Research Objectives

1. This study seeks to achieve a set of scholarly objectives that highlight the importance of Islamic terminology in building knowledge and regulating Shar‘i understanding. These objectives may be summarized as follows:
2. To highlight the central role of Islamic terminology in forming the knowledge system and regulating Shar‘i reasoning.
3. To clarify the contributions of scholars in the Islamic heritage to defining and regulating terminology, and to show the effect of this on deriving rulings.
4. To analyze the effect of the absence of precision in the use of terminology on disorder in Shar‘i understanding and divergence in rulings.
5. To present applied models of juristic, theological, and usuli terms that clarify the importance of regulating them in Shar‘i understanding.

To propose practical solutions that enhance attention to Islamic terminology in Shar‘i curricula and contemporary academic studies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study relies on the descriptive analytical method, which is based on studying Islamic terminology through the analysis of heritage and contemporary texts and by comparing its uses across the various Shar‘i sciences. This method aims to highlight the cognitive role of terminology and to regulate Shar‘i understanding by tracing its historical development and fields of application.

Previous Studies:

Since the earliest centuries, Muslim scholars have attached great importance to regulating Shar‘i terminology, recognizing that conceptual precision is the foundation of sound Shar‘i reasoning. In his *Al-Risalah*, Imam al-Shafi‘i emphasized the need to define the linguistic and Shar‘i meanings of terms so that understanding of the texts would not become confused. Al-Ghazali also gave attention in *Al-Mustasfa* to defining usuli terms such as “the general,” “the specific,” and “analogy,” clarifying their direct effect on deriving rulings. As for al-Juwayni, in *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam* he addressed the issue of regulating usuli terminology extensively, which reflects scholars’ awareness of the importance of this aspect.

In the field of creed, Ibn Taymiyyah addressed in *Majmu‘ al-Fatawa* the problem of using philosophical terminology in understanding Islamic theology, warning against deviations that may arise from its misuse. Ibn Hazm, in *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam*, likewise gave great attention to defining terminology and regulating it precisely.

Contemporary studies, for their part, have focused on the challenges facing Islamic terminology in light of openness to modern concepts, especially those related to human rights, democracy, and freedom. A number of researchers have noted that the lack of precision in translating these terms or comparing them with Western concepts leads to disorder in Shar‘i understanding and problems in practical application. Some studies have also called for the establishment of specialized glossaries of Islamic terminology to facilitate understanding and regulate usage.

Through a review of this literature, it becomes clear that there have been significant efforts in the heritage to regulate terminology. However, modern studies have not given this aspect the comprehensive attention it deserves, especially in light of contemporary intellectual and cultural challenges. Hence, the importance of this study lies in filling this gap through a theoretical and applied investigation that highlights the role of Islamic terminology in building knowledge and regulating Shar‘i understanding.

Originality of the Study

This study is characterized by originality and distinction, as previous studies have not addressed the subject of Islamic terminology from the angle of directly connecting it with the construction of knowledge and the regulation of Shar‘i understanding in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Although there are partial heritage and contemporary efforts to define certain terms or discuss their effect in specific fields, this study represents a new attempt to provide a comprehensive vision that combines theoretical analysis with practical application and highlights the cognitive role of Islamic terminology in confronting contemporary intellectual challenges. It thereby fills a clear scholarly gap and contributes to enriching Shar‘i and academic studies with an original approach that has not previously been presented in this form.

Research Plan:

The problem of this study is addressed through an introduction and two main sections:

The first section: Scholars’ efforts to regulate Islamic terminology.

The second section: An applied study of selected Islamic terms.

These are followed by a conclusion containing the most important findings and recommendations.

The First Section: Scholars’ Efforts in Regulating Islamic Terminology

Muslim scholars realized at an early stage that regulating terminology is the foundation of proper understanding of Shar‘i texts. Therefore, they gave this aspect great attention in their writings:

Imam al-Shafi‘i (d. 204 AH): In his *Al-Risalah*, he emphasized the need to define the linguistic and Shar‘i meanings of terms such as “exposition,” “the general,” and “the specific,” so that understanding of the texts would not become confused.²

Imam al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH): In *Al-Mustasfa*, he gave attention to defining usuli terms such as “analogy” and “consensus,” explaining their direct effect on deriving Shar‘i rulings.³

Imam al-Juwayni (d. 478 AH): In *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam*, he addressed the issue of regulating usuli terminology extensively, reflecting his awareness of the importance of precision in concepts.⁴

Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH): In *Majmu‘ al-Fatawa*, he discussed the problem of using philosophical terminology in Islamic creed, warning against deviations that may arise from its misuse.⁵

Ibn Hazm (d. 456 AH): In *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam*, he emphasized the necessity of regulating terminology precisely, considering that any defect in concepts leads to disorder in reasoning.⁶

Al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH): In his usuli and linguistic works, he gave attention to collecting terms and clarifying their meanings, which helped unify the scholarly reference among scholars.⁷

The First Requirement: Definition of the Islamic Term, Its Types, and Its Characteristics:

Linguistically, the term is derived from “agreement” or “convention,” meaning agreement upon a specific meaning for a word. In Islamic studies, a term is a word that has acquired a special signification in Shar‘i texts,

² Al-Shafi‘i, *Al-Risalah*, edited by Ahmad Shakir, vol. 1, pp. 20-25.

³ Al-Ghazali, *Al-Mustasfa fi ‘Ilm al-Usul*, vol. 1, pp. 50-55.

⁴ Al-Juwayni, *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam*, vol. 1, pp. 30-35.

⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu‘ al-Fatawa*, vol. 3, pp. 40-45.

⁶ Ibn Hazm, *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam*, vol. 1, pp. 15-20.

⁷ Reference: Al-Suyuti, *Al-Ashbah wa al-Naza‘ir*, pp. 10-12; and *Al-Itqan fi ‘Ulum al-Qur‘an*, vol. 1, pp. 60-65.

such as faith, disbelief, and piety. These words are not merely words; rather, they are cognitive keys that define the theological and juristic framework.⁸

2. Types of Islamic terminology: Qur'anic terms include words that occur in the Qur'an, such as faith, disbelief, and piety. Hadith terms include words that occur in the Sunnah, such as intention, truthfulness, and excellence. Juristic terms include purification, zakah, and usury. Theological terms include tawhid, shirk, and divine decree.

3. Characteristics of Islamic terminology:

1. Stability: Their signification does not change over time because they are connected to the Shar'i text.
2. Precision: They carry a defined meaning that does not permit uncontrolled expansion.
3. Comprehensiveness: They combine theological, juristic, and linguistic dimensions.
4. Cognitive function: They reconstruct signification and guide correct understanding.⁹

The Second Requirement: The Importance of Islamic Terminology:

1. Regulating Shar'i understanding: Islamic terminology is considered a key to understanding Shar'i texts, as it determines meaning and prevents deviation in interpretation and exegesis. For example, Imam al-Shafi'i in *Al-Risalah* affirms that regulating words is fundamental to deriving rulings, and that any disorder in concepts leads to disorder in juristic results. Ibn Taymiyyah also explains in *Majmu' al-Fatawa* that many theological deviations arose from misunderstanding Shar'i terminology.^{10 11}
2. Building the intellectual identity of the Muslim community: Islamic terminology forms the cognitive framework upon which the intellectual identity of the Muslim community is based. It is not merely a set of words, but an integrated knowledge system. Ibn 'Ashur explains in *Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir* that Qur'anic terms such as "faith," "disbelief," and "piety" carry civilizational and intellectual connotations and contribute to shaping the collective mind of the community. Similarly, al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* explains that Shar'i terms preserve the intellectual unity of the community and prevent its dissolution into other cultures.^{12 13}
3. Preventing erroneous interpretation: Neglecting terminology or using it without regulation leads to incorrect results in Shar'i understanding. Ibn Kathir, in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, mentions that many sects deviated because they misunderstood terms such as "faith" and "action." Ibn al-Qayyim also affirms in *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in* that regulating terminology protects texts from false interpretations and prevents their use outside their proper contexts.^{14 15}
4. Protecting scholarly reference: Islamic terminology contributes to unifying the reference point among scholars and researchers, as it is a shared language that regulates reasoning and *ijtihad*. Al-Suyuti explains that regulating Qur'anic and hadith terminology preserves unity of understanding and prevents contradiction among scholars.¹⁶
5. Enhancing comprehensiveness and flexibility: Islamic terminology shows that Shari'ah is not merely a set of partial rulings but a comprehensive way of life. Ibn Taymiyyah explains that Shari'ah includes

⁸ See: Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, pp. 150-155; and Al-Qattan, *Mabahith fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, pp. 210-220.

⁹ Al-Dhahabi, *Manahij al-Mufasssin*, pp. 300-310.

¹⁰ Al-Shafi'i, *Al-Risalah*, vol. 1, p. 19.

¹¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu' al-Fatawa*, vol. 7, p. 37.

¹² Ibn Ashur, *Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, vol. 1, p. 45.

¹³ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 22.

¹⁴ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, vol. 2, p. 112.

¹⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim, *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in*, vol. 1, p. 50.

¹⁶ Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, p. 60.

creed, worship, ethics, and transactions, and that regulating terminology reveals this comprehensiveness and prevents Shari'ah from being reduced to mere positive laws.¹⁷

The Second Section: An Applied Study of Selected Islamic Terms

1. The Term Faith

Faith in the Qur'an appears in the saying of Allah, Exalted be He: "Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds will have the Gardens of Paradise as lodging" (Al-Kahf: 107). This shows that faith is not separate from righteous action.¹⁸

And in His saying: "Those who believe and do not mix their faith with wrongdoing - those will have security, and they are rightly guided" (Al-An'am: 82). This connects faith with freedom from injustice.¹⁹

As for faith in the Sunnah, it appears in the hadith of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: "Faith has more than seventy branches; the highest of them is the statement that there is no god but Allah, and the lowest is removing harm from the road." This indicates that faith ranges across creed, action, and conduct.²⁰

Another hadith states: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." This shows that faith is manifested in ethics and social dealings.²¹

Scholars have defined faith. Al-Bukhari said: "Faith is statement and action; it increases and decreases." Ibn Taymiyyah said that faith is composed of the statement of the heart and tongue and the action of the heart and limbs. The Ash'aris focused on the theological aspect, namely inward affirmation, whereas the majority of Ahl al-Sunnah affirmed the inclusion of both statement and action.^{22 23 24}

Among the characteristics of faith is comprehensiveness, as it combines creed, worship, and conduct. It also increases and decreases, being affected by obedience and disobedience. Its cognitive function is that it defines the Shar'i position and regulates the correct understanding of texts.

As for the effect of regulating the term faith, it prevents intellectual deviations that reduce faith to mere affirmation or inner feeling. It clarifies that faith is not separate from action, thereby protecting the Muslim community from incomplete or deviant understanding. It also strengthens Islamic intellectual identity and makes it coherent in the face of contemporary intellectual challenges.

2. The Term Disbelief

Disbelief in the Qur'an appears in the saying of Allah, Exalted be He: "Indeed, those who disbelieve - it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them - they will not believe" (Al-Baqarah: 6). This shows that disbelief is not merely rational denial; rather, it is a condition of the heart and behavior. Likewise, His saying: "Whoever denies the faith - his work has become worthless, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers" (Al-Ma'idah: 5) connects disbelief with the nullification of righteous action.^{25 26}

As for disbelief in the Sunnah, it appears in the hadith of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: "Reviling a Muslim is wickedness, and fighting him is disbelief." This shows that disbelief may be practical

¹⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Aqidah al-Wasitiyyah*, p. 12.

¹⁸ Al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an*, vol. 18, p. 107.

¹⁹ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, vol. 2, p. 243.

²⁰ Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Faith, chapter on the number of the branches of faith, hadith no. 35, vol. 1, p. 63.

²¹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Faith, chapter on loving the Messenger as part of faith, hadith no. 13, vol. 1, p. 14.

²² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Faith, chapter on matters of faith, vol. 1, p. 12.

²³ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Aqidah al-Wasitiyyah*, p. 45.

²⁴ Al-Juwayni, *Al-Irshad ila Qawati' al-Adillah fi Usul al-I'tiqad*, p. 120.

²⁵ Al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, p. 310.

²⁶ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, vol. 2, p. 12.

rather than creedal. Another hadith states: “Between a man and disbelief is abandoning prayer.” This indicates that abandoning prayer is one manifestation of practical disbelief.^{27 28}

Scholars have defined disbelief. Ibn Taymiyyah stated: “Disbelief may occur through speech, action, or belief, and it is the opposite of faith.” Al-Ghazali said: “Disbelief is denying the Messenger in what he brought, whether by statement, action, or belief.” The Ash‘aris focused on disbelief as inward denial, whereas the majority of Ahl al-Sunnah affirmed that it includes statement and action.^{29 30 31}

Types of Disbelief

Creedal disbelief: denying the existence of Allah or rejecting the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him; practical disbelief: such as abandoning prayer or reviling a Muslim; and ingratitude for blessings: denying Allah’s favor and failing to thank Him.

The effect of regulating the term disbelief is that it prevents confusion between creedal and practical disbelief, clarifies that disbelief has degrees and is not of a single level, and protects Shar‘i understanding from intellectual deviations that may lead to declaring Muslims unbelievers without right.

3. The Term Piety

Piety in the Qur’an appears in the saying of Allah, Exalted be He: “And take provisions, but indeed the best provision is piety” (Al-Baqarah: 197). This shows that piety is the basis of salvation in this world and the Hereafter. His saying, “Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you” (Al-Hujurat: 13), links honor before Allah to piety, not lineage or wealth.^{32 33}

As for piety in the Sunnah, there is the hadith of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: “Piety is here,” and he pointed to his chest three times. This shows that piety is located in the heart and is the basis of outward conduct. Another hadith states: “Whoever avoids doubtful matters has protected his religion and honor.” This shows that piety includes avoiding doubtful matters in order to protect one’s religion. Scholars have also defined piety. Ibn Rajab said: “Piety is that a servant places between himself and the punishment of Allah a protection through obedience to Him, compliance with His commands, and avoidance of His prohibitions.” Al-Ghazali said: “Piety is avoiding prohibited and doubtful matters and being careful to perform obligations.” Ibn al-Qayyim said: “Piety is to do what Allah has commanded and to leave what He has forbidden, upon light from Allah, hoping for Allah’s reward and fearing His punishment.”^{34 35 36 37 38}

Characteristics of piety: the inward dimension, whose foundation is sincerity and fear of Allah; the practical dimension, which appears in conduct and adherence to the law; and the social dimension, as it forms the criterion of distinction among people.

The effect of regulating the term piety is that it prevents reducing piety to a mere inner feeling without action. It also clarifies that piety is the true criterion of distinction among human beings, strengthens Islamic intellectual identity, and establishes it upon a clear Shar‘i foundation.

²⁷ Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, chapter on the believer’s fear that his deeds may be nullified, hadith no. 48, vol. 1, p. 22.

²⁸ Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, chapter on applying the name of disbelief to one who abandons prayer, hadith no. 82, vol. 1, p. 88.

²⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmu‘ al-Fatawa, vol. 7, p. 171.

³⁰ Al-Ghazali, Al-Iqtisad fi al-I‘tiqad, p. 95.

³¹ Al-Juwayni, Al-Irshad ila Qawati‘ al-Adillah fi Usul al-I‘tiqad, p. 130.

³² Al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’an, vol. 2, p. 470.

³³ Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim, vol. 4, p. 350.

³⁴ Sahih Muslim, Book of Righteousness and Maintaining Family Ties, chapter on the prohibition of wronging a Muslim, hadith no. 2564, vol. 4, p. 198.

³⁵ Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, chapter on the virtue of one who safeguards his religion, hadith no. 52, vol. 1, p. 23.

³⁶ Ibn Rajab, Jami‘ al-‘Ulum wa al-Hikam, p. 70.

³⁷ Al-Ghazali, Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din, vol. 4, p. 245.

³⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim, Madarij al-Salikin, vol. 2, p. 35.

4. The Term Shari‘ah

Shari‘ah in the Qur‘an appears in the saying of Allah, Exalted be He: “Then We put you on a clear way concerning the matter; so follow it and do not follow the desires of those who do not know” (Al-Jathiyah: 18). This shows that Shari‘ah is the divine method that must be followed. His saying, “For each of you We made a law and a method” (Al-Ma‘idah: 48), shows that Shari‘ah is the path and method that distinguishes each community.^{39 40}

Shari‘ah in the Sunnah appears in the hadith of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: “I have left among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray after me: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah.” This shows that Shari‘ah is based on the Qur‘an and the Sunnah. Another hadith states: “The lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between them are doubtful matters.” This shows that Shari‘ah determines what is lawful and unlawful and clarifies doubtful matters.^{41 42}

Scholars have defined Shari‘ah. Ibn al-Qayyim said: “Shari‘ah is what Allah has prescribed for His servants of rulings that guide them to the straight path.” Al-Shafi‘i said: “Shari‘ah is the Book, the Sunnah, consensus, and analogy.” Al-Ghazali said: “Shari‘ah includes acts of worship, transactions, and ethics, and it is the comprehensive framework of a Muslim’s life.”^{43 44 45}

Characteristics of Shari‘ah: comprehensiveness, as it includes creed, worship, transactions, and ethics; permanence, as it is valid for every time and place; justice, as it achieves balance between individual and communal rights; and guidance, as it directs the human being to the straight path.

The Effect of Regulating the Term Shari‘ah:

Regulating the term Shari‘ah is one of the central issues in Islamic thought because of its direct effect on guiding Shar‘i understanding and shaping the intellectual identity of the Muslim community. Its effect may be highlighted at several levels:

1. Preventing confusion between Shari‘ah and positive laws:

The precise definition of the concept of Shari‘ah clarifies that it is not merely a human legal system, but rather an integrated divine method. This prevents confusion between it and positive laws, which are based on limited human reasoning. Such regulation protects Islamic thought from attempts to reduce Shari‘ah to mere legal legislation and affirms its distinction as divine revelation that aims to realize justice, mercy, and guidance.

2. Highlighting the comprehensiveness of Shari‘ah as a way of life:

Regulating the term clarifies that Shari‘ah is not restricted to juristic rulings related only to acts of worship and transactions; rather, it includes creed, ethics, and social and political legislation. It is a comprehensive framework that regulates the life of the Muslim in all its aspects. This comprehensive understanding prevents intellectual deviations that attempt to confine Shari‘ah to a narrow scope and affirms that it is an integrated civilizational project suitable for every time and place.

3. Strengthening Islamic intellectual identity upon a divine foundation:

Regulating the term establishes that Shari‘ah is not a human product, but revelation from Allah, the Exalted. This strengthens Islamic intellectual identity and grounds it upon a firm divine foundation. Such regulation gives the Muslim community confidence in its reference system, makes it more capable of confronting

³⁹ Al-Tabari, *Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta‘wil Ay al-Qur‘an*, vol. 22, p. 18.

⁴⁰ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur‘an al-‘Azim*, vol. 2, p. 70.

⁴¹ Malik, *Al-Muwatta’*, Book of Divine Decree, hadith no. 1590, vol. 2, p. 899.

⁴² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Faith, chapter on the virtue of one who safeguards his religion, hadith no. 52, vol. 1, p. 23.

⁴³ Ibn al-Qayyim, *I‘lam al-Muwaqqi‘in ‘an Rabb al-‘Alamin*, vol. 1, p. 50.

⁴⁴ Al-Shafi‘i, *Al-Risalah*, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 25.

contemporary intellectual challenges, and confirms that Shari'ah is the true guarantee for protecting values, ethics, and Islamic identity.

4. Protecting Shar'i understanding from interpretive deviations:

When the term Shari'ah is regulated precisely, it is prevented from being used outside its proper place or burdened with meanings that do not accord with its original objectives. This protects Shar'i texts from false interpretations that may create disorder in understanding or be used to justify non-Shar'i practices.

5. Highlighting the essential characteristics of Shari'ah:

Regulation clarifies that Shari'ah is characterized by comprehensiveness, permanence, justice, and guidance. It is not a rigid system, but a flexible system that achieves balance between the interests of the individual and the community and responds to changes in time and place without losing its authenticity.

6. Strengthening integration between heritage and contemporary reality:

Regulating the term opens the way for comparative studies between Shari'ah and modern concepts. This helps highlight the distinctiveness of Shari'ah and its ability to keep pace with the age, while preventing attempts to dissolve it into Western concepts or reduce it so that it conforms to non-Islamic frameworks.

Findings

1. The importance of Islamic terminology: Islamic terminology is not merely a set of linguistic words; rather, it is a set of cognitive keys that determine meaning and regulate Shar'i understanding.
2. Regulating terminology contributes to protecting the intellectual identity of the Muslim community and prevents interpretive deviations. Faith in Shar'i texts combines statement, belief, and action. Regulating the concept of faith prevents its reduction to mere inward affirmation and emphasizes its connection with conduct. Disbelief is not of a single level; rather, it includes creedal disbelief, practical disbelief, and ingratitude for blessings. Regulating the concept of disbelief prevents confusion between creedal disbelief, which expels one from the religion, and practical disbelief, which does not necessarily do so. Piety is the criterion of distinction among people and the basis of salvation in this world and the Hereafter. Regulating the concept of piety prevents its reduction to mere inner feeling and emphasizes its connection with outward action. Shari'ah is not merely a set of juristic rulings; rather, it is a comprehensive way of life that includes creed, worship, transactions, and ethics. Regulating the concept of Shari'ah prevents confusion between it and positive laws and affirms its permanence and suitability for every time and place.
3. The scholarly value of the study: The study highlights that Islamic terminology is the foundation of building Shar'i knowledge and regulating the correct understanding of texts.
4. It shows that regulating terminology is a methodological necessity for protecting the intellectual identity of the Muslim community.
5. It connects the efforts of earlier scholars with contemporary studies, thereby strengthening the integration of heritage and modernity.

Summary: The study has shown that Islamic terminology is the fundamental pillar for building knowledge and regulating Shar'i understanding, and that attention to it is a scholarly and intellectual necessity for protecting the Muslim community from intellectual deviations and false interpretations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that Islamic terminology represents the fundamental pillar for building Shar'i knowledge and regulating the correct understanding of texts. It is not merely a set of passing linguistic expressions; rather,

it consists of cognitive keys that determine meaning, direct understanding, and regulate the intellectual identity of the Muslim community. A Shar‘i term contains within it a long history of scholarly and intellectual effort exerted by scholars across the centuries. They realized that any disorder in concepts necessarily leads to disorder in Shar‘i deductions and, consequently, to a defect in the construction of Islamic thought. The study has shown that regulating these terms prevents intellectual deviations, contributes to protecting the Muslim community from false interpretations, strengthens the unity of scholarly reference among researchers and scholars, and makes Shar‘i understanding more firmly established and stable.

The study also shows that earlier scholars gave great attention to terminology. They were careful to define and regulate it precisely in books of jurisprudence, usul, creed, and exegesis, recognizing its direct effect on Shar‘i deduction and the formulation of intellectual visions. Imam al-Shafi‘i, al-Ghazali, al-Juwayni, Ibn Taymiyyah, and other major scholars were fully aware that regulating terminology is the foundation of correct understanding of texts. Therefore, they often began their books by defining concepts and clarifying their limits and meanings before entering into practical details. This reflects their deep awareness that terminology is not merely a linguistic tool, but a key to understanding religion and regulating reasoning.

Nevertheless, the need today is greater for contemporary projects that re-document and regulate these terms in a manner suited to modern intellectual challenges, especially in light of openness to other cultures, the multiplicity of intellectual reference systems, and the spread of foreign terms that may cause disorder in Shar‘i understanding if they are not precisely regulated. The contemporary world is witnessing significant interaction between Islamic and Western concepts in fields such as freedom, democracy, and human rights. This makes it necessary to reformulate Islamic terminology and clarify it in precise scholarly language so that no confusion or incorrect projection onto Shar‘i texts occurs.

Thus, the study affirms that attention to Islamic terminology is not merely a linguistic or terminological exercise, but a scholarly and intellectual necessity for protecting Islamic identity and ensuring the continuity of Shar‘i knowledge construction in a way that balances the authenticity of heritage with the requirements of the modern age. Regulating terminology contributes to unifying the scholarly reference among scholars, prevents intellectual deviations, strengthens the intellectual identity of the Muslim community, and makes it more capable of confronting current intellectual and cultural challenges. Attention to terminology also opens the door to comparative studies between heritage and modernity and contributes to building cognitive bridges between the past and the present, thereby strengthening the integration of authenticity and contemporaneity.

Recommendations

1. Include a course on Islamic terminology in the curricula of universities and Shar‘i institutes in order to train students to regulate concepts.
2. Prepare bilingual Arabic-English glossaries of Shar‘i terminology to facilitate communication with the international academic community.
3. Strengthen cooperation between linguistic academies and universities in projects aimed at documenting Islamic terminology.
4. Support institutional projects that aim to regulate terminology, such as specialized encyclopedias and glossaries.
5. Encourage researchers to conduct applied studies that connect Islamic terminology with Shar‘i texts and clarify its effect in jurisprudence, creed, and exegesis.
6. Benefit from modern technologies in building digital databases of Islamic terminology so that they are available to researchers and students.

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