

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses details of the research methodology undertaken to conduct this study. they include the research approach, research design, method of data collection, data analysis, research participants and findings from the preliminary study. Details regarding research participants, location ethics and trustworthiness are also included in this chapter.

3.2 Research Approach

To explore how diverse groups of people understand the verses and surah from the Quran, the researcher used the qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach is suitable for researchers who seek answers associated with people's experiences.

The qualitative research approach used in this study can allow the researcher to gather data to provide answers to the research questions. As an example, the factors that influence participants to understand and learn the Qur'an may come out with a variety of responses such as influence from the society, culture, education, or experience. Moreover, a qualitative approach is more flexible which can give a better understanding and critical ideas between the researcher and the study. For instance, qualitative research mostly can ask open-ended questions which the participants through the questions in the interviews can answer differently. A participant can respond to the questions using their own words according to their thoughts.

Then, the qualitative method is used to describe one's experiences that include their perception or belief of individuals that needed in this study to answer the third of research questions. The type of instrument that was used in this study was a semi-structured interview. The researcher gained the opportunity in interviewing participants to collect data on how people understand the Qur'an. Specifically, this study allowed the researcher in interpreting what she saw, heard, and understood from the interviews besides noting multiple perspectives and identifying multiple factors that involved understanding the content of the Qur'an. According to Creswell (2009), the fundamental characteristics in the qualitative research method allow the researcher to conduct in the field and allow direct interaction between participants and the researcher. This is emphasised in this study.

3.2.1 Research Design

For this study, the case study method was used for the research design. A case study can be defined as an intensive analysis of an in-depth study of a particular phenomenon of individuals or groups bounded with environment and time (Merriam, 1998). Using case studies, a phenomenon can be explored and understood. Specifically, a descriptive case study describes a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurs (Yin, 2003). Thus, for this research, a case study is a useful design to investigate the issue of diverse groups of people in understanding the Quran in Nilai Negeri Sembilan.

Furthermore, a case study design is consistent with research that focuses on answering the how question (Yin, 2003), in this case, the question of how the diverse groups of people understand the Quran as mentioned in the research question section in 1.4

Research Questions. The case study design is suitable in bringing an understanding of the complex issue about levels of understanding and can provide detailed descriptions

of the characteristic of diverse groups of people according to their levels of understanding of the Quran.

3.3 Research Location

The research location was in Nilai and was chosen due to its convenient place for the researcher to see how diverse groups of people understand the Qur'an. Nilai is an area located in Negeri Sembilan a 3.5% population in Malaysia and is near Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya (Department of Statistics, 2016). This town has primary, secondary schools and four universities, which are Nilai University, INTI International University, Manipal International University, and Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. In addition, Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM), Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), Nilai Tiga Wholesale Centre, one of the largest wholesale markets in Malaysia is also located here.

3.4 Research Participants

Creswell (2007) stated that it is important to choose the most appropriate participants in a study to gain the most credible information for the study. Using the purposive sampling method, 18 Muslim participants were chosen. The selections were also based on different types of educational levels starting from high school to Doctor of Philosophy. The education aspect was focused in this study because qur'anic education is an obligation to every Muslim to help the Muslim generation to become the true Muslim and a better human. It was also an important aspect because education is an element of teaching and learning that expands knowledge, skill, and habits through certain systems or models of implementations to ensure a sustainable and balanced life for humans and the surrounding environments (Noh, Hussein, Ghani, & Suhid, 2013)

As diversity in terms of age was also a factor, the specification age for the research participants was between 16 until 64 years old. These age groups formed the highest ratio of populations according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016). Details of the participants as presented in CHAPTER 1.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data collections are the systematic process of collecting information and measuring the variables in the study about people, objects, or phenomena.

In shaping this qualitative research, the researcher used the interview as the method in collecting the data. The interview was chosen due to the suitability to unfold the participant's viewpoint and provide the participants to answer the question in their own words. In addition, interviews are more personal and easier for participants to share their opinions to answer the research questions in this study. Specifically, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect the data and information from the participants. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher had a list of topics or questions used to cover in the interview for instance personal habits, feelings, education, and others. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to be more flexible on different ways of asking questions to participants based on how they responded to the questions. The interview procedure is illustrated in the figure below:

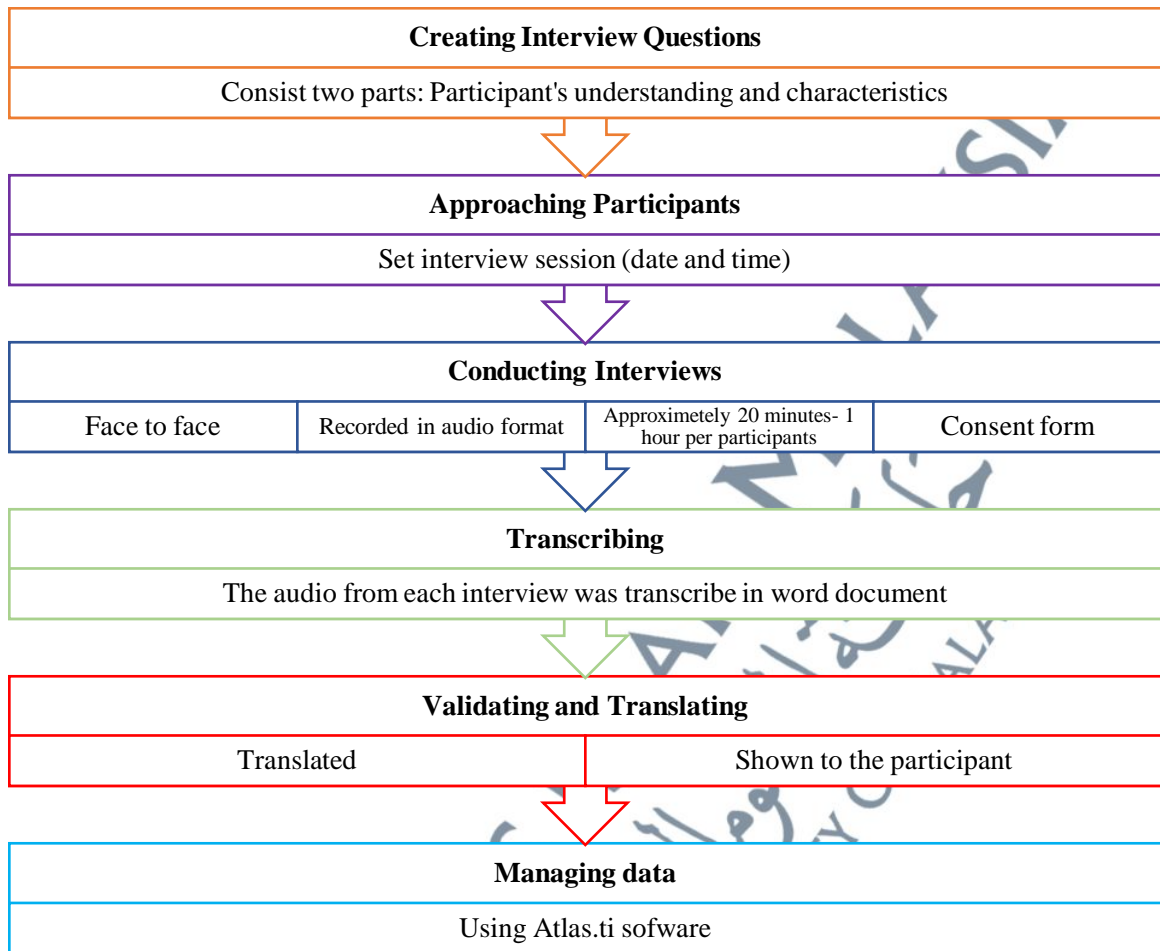


Figure 3.1: Interview Process

The interview process began with creating the interview questions. The questions that were given during the interviews worked in exploring their levels of understanding the Qur'an and the characteristics which influence them to the certain levels of understanding. The contents of the Qur'an that had been chosen to explore how diverse group of people understands the Qur'an consist of one surah and four verses about vision and sight verses which were:

1. Surah Al-Ikhlās (112:1-4)

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝

2. Vision and Sight verses in Surah Ali-Imran verse 18 (3:18)

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٨﴾

3. Vision and Sight verses in Surah Al-Mulk verse 3 (67:3)

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَّا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِن تَفَوتٍ فَأَرْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَل تَرَى مِن فُطُورٍ ﴿٣﴾

4. Vision and Sight verses in Surah At-Tariq verse 5 (86:5)

(فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ ﴿٥﴾)

The questions also consist of the part in asking the characteristics of diverse groups of people in understanding the Qur'an such as age, gender, family status, personal habits, education, language, work experience, perceptions, feelings, culture, and belief. Then, the researcher approaches each participant to set the date and time session for the interview. The interviews were conducted face to face and recorded in audio format. Roughly, each of the interviews took 20 minutes to 1 hour per participant. After the interview, the audio recorded was analysed by the researcher and then transcribed in a word document. Afterwards, the document was translated and was given back to participants for assurance by email or hard copy. Lastly, the document was analysed using ATLAS.ti software to extract the data needed.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

After successfully collecting the reliable data, the next step was extracting the information from the data managed by ATLAS.ti in this study. Data analysis is a process of performing certain calculations and evaluations to extract relevant information from the

data. It may take several steps to reach the conclusions. Data analysis may involve several steps to reach certain conclusions. Simple data can be organised very easily while complex data requires proper processing. The word "processing" means transforming and handling data to prepare it for analysis (Ibrahim, 2015).

The data were analysed using two types of analysis. The first was the framework analysis by Ritchie & Spencer (1994) which was to assist the researcher to identify the levels of understanding of the Quran. The second was the thematic analysis by Clarke & Braun (2013) which was to explore the characteristics of diverse groups of people in understanding the Quran. ATLAS.ti was used as a tool to manage the data for the thematic analysis.

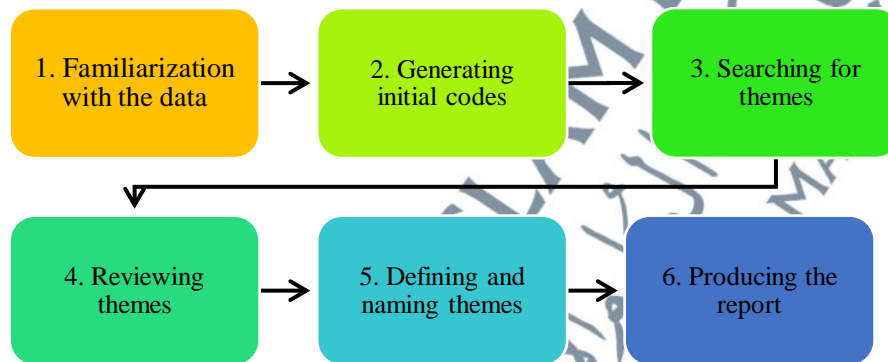
3.6.1 Framework Analysis

The researcher used Framework Analysis to find answers for the second of the research questions. Framework Analysis was a tool that helps in managing the development of research. It worked as presenting the primary key of information because it will help the logical and systematic development. Then, framework analysis helped the researcher to provide flexible and clear explanations in understanding the information through connecting components in a framework. It outlines all significant data for this study in a chart to categorise the level of understanding of the Qur'an and scholar's views towards the features.

The framework used for this framework analysis is presented in Table 2.3: Framework Analysis Levels of Understanding the Qur'an. It contains five levels of understanding the Quran which are Level One, Level Two, Level Three, Level Four, and Level Five.

3.6.2 Thematic Analysis

To answer research questions 1 and 3, the data were thematically analysed. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the data set in detail. In analysing the data gathered for this study, thematic analysis was used, where the researcher followed the six steps by Clarke & Braun (2013) . The phases are shown in the figure below:



Source: Clarke & Braun (2013)

Figure 3.2: Six Steps of Thematic Analysis

- 1) **Familiarisation with the data:** Getting familiar with data, listen to the audio records, reading the transcription data multiple times. Then, noting any initial idea from the data.
- 2) **Generating initial codes:** Codes every interesting data that was found. This phase ends by collating all the codes and extracting the relevant data. The figure below shows some code that had been created.

Unit	RI	Text
004	R	Ok.Amm. Sebenarnya begini Sini ada surah Al-Ikhlis. Lepas tu kak cuma mahu tahu apa yang tadi paham mengenai surah Al-Ikhlis. Apa-apala yang tadi faham
005		
006	I	Hmm...eeerrrr... Surah Al-Ikhlis first skali selalunya surah al ikhlis ni dijadikan sebagai hujah untuk membuktikan bahawa allah itu satu. Sebab macam dalam ayat ke tiga ni dia tidak diberanak dan dia tidak pula diperanakan.
007		
008	R	Hiram eh...
009	I	Jadi selalunya ayat ni jadi hujah untuk membuktikan Allah itu satu.
010		
011	R	Ok lagi...Aumm...Ayat ke-empat macam tu jugak jadi hujah untuk am yang allah tu tidak menyerupai dengan makhluk satu apapun. Pastu rasa ayat ni untuk surah ni jak macam pembuktian yang allah itu satu
012		
013	I	Hiram... ok allah itu satu. Lagi? ada lagi? Kak betul betul mahu tahu. Sebab kakak yang perlu belajar kan. Jadi kamu ni macam yang ajar kakak ni sebenarnya. Kalau kamu tidak bogotau kakak sekarang kakak x tahu ni
014		
015	R	Hmmmmmm....(senyap seketika) Allah yang menjadikan... (sura perlahan dan senyap seketika)
016		
017	I	

Figure 3.3: Example coding data in ATLAS.ti

- 3) **Searching for themes:** Search and choose what is the suitable themes in the codes. The researcher had to think of the relationship between various codes and combined them on the suitable and potential themes. The figure below illustrated the categorising and searching themes in Levels and Characteristics in understanding the Qur'an.

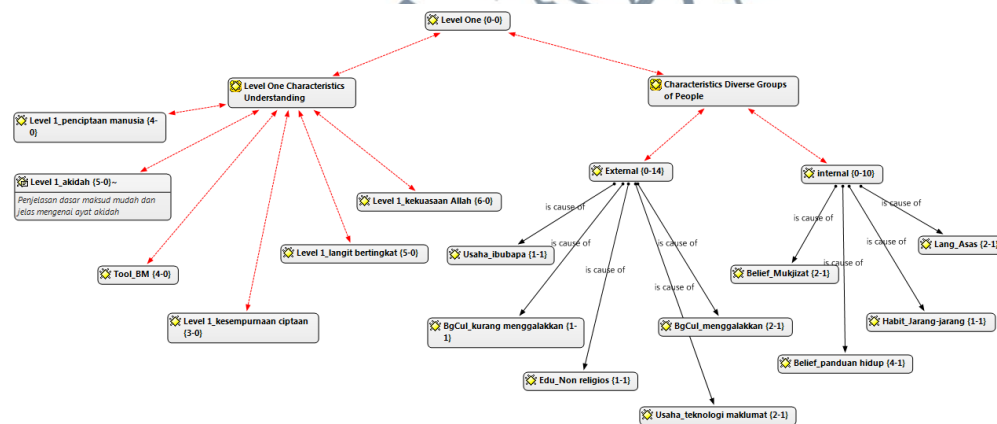


Figure 3.4: Example Themes in Levels and Characteristics

- 4) **Reviewing themes:** Themes were analysed to see the relationships between the codes. However, if the themes are collapsed or discarded, the development of the themes needs to start again.
- 5) **Defining and naming themes:** Refine and write the definition of the themes. The researcher also has to identify how each of the themes can relate to each other. The

figure below illustrates the Naïve define based on its relationships to Level Zero, Level One and Level Two.

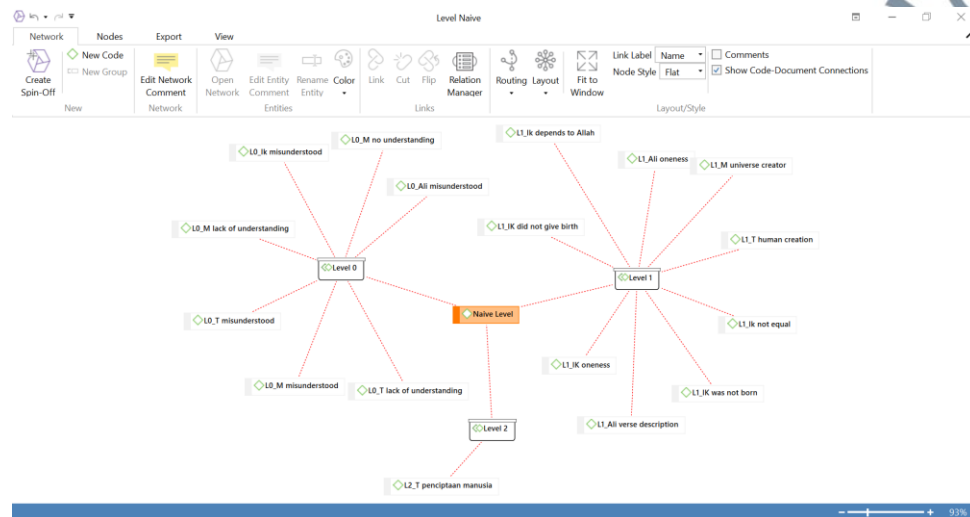


Figure 3.5: Example in Naming themes

- 6) **Writing up:** After finalizing the themes, the writing process for the final report must be done. The researcher gives descriptions of how the result of the data process helps to convey the data.

3.7 Preliminary Study

The preliminary study aims to explore and ensure the overview of the research direction to cover the significant area to be concentrated. It is also essential to guide the research in many ways for example the suitable analysis used to discover the finding and practice in executing the data collection procedure. Then, finding and defining attributes that contribute to that level of understanding. In this preliminary study, the researcher managed to find three people involved in the interview.

In March and April, three participants, all were females and interviewed on Surah Al-Ikhlâs. Two of them were undergraduate students of Bachelor of Al-Qur'an and Bachelor of Languages while the other one is a lecturer and an expert in Qur'anic field study from a local university. These three participants were interviewed separately at the Faculty of

Qur'anic and Sunnah Studies, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM). In the first round, the researcher interviewed the participants in terms of how they understand the meaning of Surah Al-Ikhlās.

Participant A managed to give clear simple meaning towards the surah without further explanation “This surah is an argument to prove the oneness of Allah SWT. Allah was never born and Allah is no equal to any other creations.”

Participant B was able to elaborate literally that Allah SWT is the only platform to ask everything in our life. Then, she further elaborated contextually that the faith to Allah SWT is not equal to any other creations since only Allah SWT is the highest authority. Then, she further emphasized the blessing elements gained if this Surah is read; those who read this Surah will be given reward as if they recite one-third of the Qur'an.

The third participant, Participant C started by highlighting that the Surah is a *Makiah* Surah. She then provided a detailed explanation regarding Akidah in Islam, which starts with “قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ” from the Surah. The word “هُوَ” refers to the oneness of Allah SWT. She added the literal meaning that there is no other rope to depend on rather than Allah SWT and He stands by himself. For the last verse, she explained that there is no other creation like Him. She also quoted from one of the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH related to the Surah. The hadith mentions a huge reward waiting for those that recite the Surah. They will be rewarded as if they recite one-third of the Qur'an. She was also able to add a historical account between The Prophet Muhammad PBUH and his companions, which is related to the recitation of the Surah and the rewards gained from it.

Further observation indicates based on her thorough and meticulous elaborations, she carefully highlighted that this surah indicates that Allah SWT has no mass such as other creations and Allah SWT is not equal to a human who has a face and hands. By giving that elaboration, she was reflecting on the verses as globally. She further emphasized the significance of the surah as the reference to understand *Mustashabihat Ayah* (not entirely clear verses for many, or some people) from other verses in the Qur'an. The Surah plays a role as a *Muhkamat Aayah* (clear verses) that explains the fact there is no other creation equal to Him and explains other *Mustashabihat Ayah* regarding features of Allah SWT. Participant C has a thorough and intellectual understanding of the Surah in bringing this theme into her understanding.

Then the second-round interview session was about their diversity characteristics in three dimensions. First, Primary Dimensions; age and gender, Secondary Dimensions; family status, personal habit, education, work experience, language culture, Tertiary Dimensions; belief and perception to seek how they manage to have that level of understanding towards Surah Al-Ikhlās from the Qur'an.

Participant A is a female, Dusun, 22 years old from a non-religious educated family. She is studying as a student in Bachelor of the Arabic language. Most of her family members are employed as government officers. She had experience as a *Qariah* (reciter) representative for her primary school. She explained that when she read the Qur'an, she had a thought in mind that she can only recite but cannot understand the meanings in the Qur'an. Therefore, it snaps her to encourage her to truly understand the Qur'an. In terms of personal habit, she recites the Qur'an two times a day after *Subuh* and after *Magrib*.

However, she rarely sees the translation to know the meanings and assumes that her Arabic language is between a novice and an intermediate.

Participant B is female, Malay, 23 years from a non-religious educated family and currently studying as a student in Bachelor of Al-Qur'an. She is capable to recite the Qur'an one time in three days. She also added that the main factor for her in learning to understand the Qur'an was since she was a child. She always goes to study the Qur'an every evening after school and there where it all started. When she decided to enter the high school, she suggested to her parents to enrol her into the religious Islamic school near her former school. Then, there were also factors of society at that time that persuades her to enter the school due to the rumours about the special abilities of the school for students who excel in UPSR.

In conclusion, based on the preliminary study researcher can see that diverse groups of people can have a different understanding of the Qur'an. Some can understand such as literal meaning, contextual meaning and many more. Their understanding was affected by the characteristics of diversity differences. As mentioned, one might be influenced by their self-experience and another by cultural insistence. The researcher assumes that she will get other patterns or features on how diverse groups of people understanding the Qur'an and their characteristics based on the levels of understanding the Qur'an in the findings. The table below.

Table 3.1: Summary of Finding in Preliminary Study

Participants	Features of Understanding Surah Al-Ikhlās	Levels of Understanding the Qur'an	Characteristics
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As an argument to prove oneness Allah SWT - Allah was never born and giving birth - Allah is no equals to any other creations 	Level One: Literal meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female - 22 years old - Dusun - Student in Bachelor of Arabic Language - Non-religious educated family - Recite two times a day - Arabic proficiency as beginner
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allah is the only place to asks everything in our life - Short Surah with depth meanings 	Level One: Literal meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female - 23 years old - Malay - Student in Bachelor of Al-Qur'an - Non-religious educated family - Recite once in three days - Her curiosity and will leads her to learn to understand the Qur'an - Society factors help her to enter religious school
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving message about Tauhid that shows the oneness of Allah SWT - <i>Akidah</i> about Allah is no equal to any creations - All Authorities is to Allah SWT 	Level Two: Contextual meaning	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading Surah Al-Ikhlās is equal to reading 1/3 of Al-Qur'an 	Level Three: Quoting blessings	
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No other rope to depend on rather than Allah SWT - Allah stands by himself and there is no other creation like Him 	Level One: Literal meaning	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main elements of <i>Akidah</i> which start with “قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ” 	Level Two: Contextual meaning	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The words “هُوَ” refers to the oneness of Allah SWT 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One of Makiah’s Surah even though is a short surah but has a huge reward. Example: reading it Surah Al-Ikhlās is equal to reading 1/3 of Al-Qur’an - One of Companion asks Rasullullah PBUH about another Companion that always reads Surah Al-Ikhlās in his solah. Rasullullah PBUH replies that the Companion is very lucky. 	<p>Level Three: Quoting blessings</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allah SWT had no mass such as other creations and what kind of features of Allah SWT that we must believe. 	<p>Level Four: Conveying the meaning globally</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roots Surah in understanding <i>Mutashabihat Ayah</i> in the Qur’an. It is a <i>Muhkamat ayah</i>. 	<p>Level Five: Discussed certain theme</p>	

3.8 Ethics

In this section, the researcher highlighted two elements, which are confidentiality and anonymity of the participants who took part in this study. Confidentiality helps to protect participants from potential harms including psychological harm such as embarrassment or distress. The researcher maintained the confidentiality of information collected from the participants. Only the researcher could identify the responses from every individual. The researcher made every effort to prevent anyone outside of the study from gaining the data from participants’ responses unless authorized by the participants. All the participants’

information was considered privileged to keep their dignity and give them the right to privacy. They were required to sign the consent form in Appendix D: CONCENT FORM.

The anonymity of information refers to preventing any trace of data or information back to the research participants specifically from whom it was obtained. Thus, the researcher made sure that the data could not be linked to any research participants. Additionally, the participants were addressed using pseudonyms to conceal their real names.

3.9 Trustworthiness

This study established the trustworthiness of a qualitative approach in terms of credibility for the method of data collection and expert evaluation. Trustworthiness in this qualitative study works to seek and control potential biases that might occur during the study.

The credibility criteria were shown in the results were credible or believable using a member's check to see the perspective of the participants in the research. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participants' eyes, as the participants judged the credibility of the results. The researcher gives the participants freedom to check the interview transcriptions. The transcription of the data was sent back to the participants to evaluate, and they had the authority to ask in changing or rejecting the transcription if they are not happy with it (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007).

Expert evaluation is where the result of the study was evaluated by two experts. Firstly, a qur'anic expert who verify the results of expected right meanings and deviate meanings in the levels of understanding the Qur'an. Secondly, a socio expert, who verify

the characteristics of diverse groups of people based on their understanding of the Qur'an. Cohen's Kappa intercoder calculation was used to assess the agreement between these two experts. In order to understand the Cohen Kapa intercoder calculation to get the Kappa's value. The calculation is shown as below:

$\frac{(P_{\text{rated}} - P_{\text{expected}})}{N - P_{\text{expected}}}$	= K (Kappa value)
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Key: P_{rated}= number of agreed coded data;

P_{expected}= 50% of the number of codes expected to be agreed upon

N= Total number of coded data measured of agreement



Figure 3.6: Interpretation of Kappa

According to the Kappa value, the total result given by two experts was **0.9375** which was categorized as **substantial** and close to almost perfect interpretation in Cohen Kappa. Both seemly almost agree with all coded and themed coded in levels of understanding and characteristic of the participants in this study.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter refers to how the methodology of the research study was addressed. This study used the qualitative approach and descriptive case study as the research design. In collecting the data, the researcher used the semi-structured interview for the study. Then this chapter explained the preliminary study that had been done. The data collected were analysed using the framework analysis and thematic analysis. This is followed by a discussion on ethics and trustworthiness.