

THE ELEMENT OF TAQWA AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH VALIDITY IN ISLAMIC-BASED RESEARCH

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Abstract

This paper has two main goals. Firstly, to analyse *daleel* (divine proofs) that indicates the concepts of *taqwa* (God-consciousness or piety) and those who are knowledgeable. Secondly, to summarize the elements of *taqwa* that are related to validity in Islamic-based research. There are *daleel* from al-Qur'an and hadith that indicates the relationship between elements of *taqwa* and knowledge. This poses two questions: What do the Islamic scholars think of the *daleel* on *taqwa* and those who are knowledgeable? How do the elements of *taqwa* be mobilized in providing validity in research? This paper attempts to answer these queries by conducting content and textual analyses of several literature. Five *daleel* which were supported by the Islamic scholars' views showed that the elements of *taqwa* are related to knowledge. The paper also concludes that the elements of *taqwa* are able to provide validity in research

Keywords--- Taqwa, Validity, Islamic-based Research

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars such as Eisner and Peshkin (1990), Klenke (2008) and Yin (2011) consider validity as knowledge that is obtained from any research that reflects actual reality. Validity is also regarded as truthful deduction that can be attained from the research conducted. Truth, in this manner, according to McBurney and White (2009), refers to the actual state of reality.

In research context, validity is also viewed as the level or stage where a test or instrument measurement is able to measure elements that it seeks to measure (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2010; Yahaya, 2007). Characteristics or concepts are usually elements that are measured in any research (Sabitha Marican, 2006). In addition, validity is also conceptualized as accuracy, truth, meaningfulness, and usability of instruments that permits inference of data to take place (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011; Ghazali Darusalam, 2008).

Validity in Islam refers to actual reality (Fazlur Rehman Faridi, 1995, pp.106-107; Sayyid Zainul Abedin, 1995, p. 133). In fact, validity denotes truth (Irfan Ahmad Khan, 1995b, p. 143) which can be categorised into verification, workability and usefulness.

Truth is one of the definitions of validity. If truth is to be viewed from the Islamic perspective, then it must include revelations and lessons from both the al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah, as these two texts are the main Islamic references. In order to obtain validity in research, the researchers must focus on the elements that lead to the truth, which includes the element of *taqwa*. The researcher is able to obtain knowledge with the inclusion of *taqwa*. This is evidenced based on one of the *daleel* found in al-Qur'an which states:

"Therefore, you must have taqwa of Allah; and (remember) that Allah teaches you and Allah has full knowledge of everything." (al-Baqarah, verse 282).

By being conscious of Allah, Allah will provide the believers with knowledge. In Islam, knowledge that is derived from Allah is a truthful knowledge. The right or truthful knowledge allows the researchers to obtain validity from the research that they are

undertaking. Besides the above verse, there are several other *daleel* that include the elements of *taqwa* with knowledge. This paper identifies five *taqwa*-related *daleel* and those who have firm knowledge or are knowledgeable and further analyses scholars' views of the *daleel* before drawing upon a conclusion that the element of *taqwa* can provide validity in research. There are two parts in this article. The first part deals with five *daleel* that cover *taqwa* and those who are knowledgeable. The second part concludes how the element of *taqwa* leads to research validity.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed archival research in which available data were assessed and analysed using the computer or extracted from the library sans empirical experiment (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). Some of the documents referred to include religious texts, books, journal articles and research reports. *Turath* texts that are related to the exegesis were used to analyse the scholars' views on the five selected *daleel*. The researcher conducted three steps to ensure that the data obtained were accurate. Firstly, data were extracted from original religious texts either in the form of hardcopy or softcopy. Electronic texts in the form of PDF were accepted as authorized references and considered valid like the original texts. The validity of the electronic texts was supported by the Committee from the Department of al-Qur'an and al-Hadith (AQSA), Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya. Secondly, data were taken from various sources and were similar in nature. The similarity of these data that were extracted from diversified sources ensures validity and accuracy of the collected data. Thirdly, the researcher had personal communication with authoritative figures to acquire accurate understanding of data that were considered complex. Personal communication with these figures was in the forms of e-mail exchanges, personal interviews and telephone conversations (American Psychological Association, 2010).

Content analysis was selected to analyse the data as this type of analysis permits the researcher to examine and explain systematically the explicit meaning and content of the document understudy (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Textual analysis was conducted to analyse and explain the interpretations

systematically, notably the implied meaning or content of the document studied.

Content analysis was used to fulfil the first research objective by examining the *turath* texts to identify the elements that are related to the selected *daleel*. Textual analysis was carried out later on the *turath* and contemporary texts to answer the second research objective. The second objective that concludes the suitability of the element found in the first objective is explored in the context of research validity.

FINDINGS

Part One

Five *taqwa*-related *daleel* and their relationship with knowledge is examined in this research. The *daleel* were selected based on the exoteric meaning of the *daleel*. Exoteric meaning of the *daleel* comprises attributes that are found in the element of *taqwa*. These attributes were extracted based on the understanding of the concept of *taqwa* itself. The *daleel* were also chosen based on the terms used by the al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah in illustrating those who are knowledgeable.

Islamic scholars defined *taqwa* as obedience to Allah SWT's order and avoiding His prohibitions, be it physically or spiritually. Allah's command which means "fear Allah with complete *taqwa*" refers to the need of the believers to obey, abide, and remember Allah as well as to be thankful of what Allah has provided for (Abdullah Alawi al-Haddad, 2007).

The following section delineates the *daleel* further:

The first *daleel*

Allah has commanded the believers:

"and fear of Allah, O people who have understanding"(al-Baqarah, 2, verse 197).

Allah has commanded those who are wise and have the understanding to abide by Allah's orders (Isma'il Kathir al-Dimasyqiy, 2000). They must possess fear of the torment and consequences of disobeying Allah's commands. Those who are learned and have the understanding is known as the *Ulu al-Albab*. *Ulu al-Albab* refers to those who are wise and able to think accurately and in possession of complete understanding. Allah SWT has given knowledge that is termed as *al-Hikmah* to this group of people (Muhammad al-Tahir 'Asyur, 2000; Muhammad al-Syanqitiy, 1995).

Allah also illustrates those who are wise as:

"Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the change of the night and the day, are signs (power, intelligence, and the bounty of Allah) of those who are wise' (that is) those who remembers Allah while standing, sitting and lying on the sides, and they give thoughts to the creation of the heavens and the earth (and say):"Our Lord! You did not create this in vain, You are the Exalted, protect us from the torment of hell" (ali-'Imran, 3, verses 190-191).

Usamah Elsayed Mahmoud al-Azhari (2014)¹ urged knowledge seekers to take two important steps. Firstly, to recite devotionally in praising Allah (remember Allah) and secondly, to think (conducting research). These two processes will enable the knowledge seekers (the researchers) to attain truth in the research. The truth is attained by glorifying and purifying Allah SWT. Hence, the element of *taqwa* is related to knowledge as this

¹Usamah Elsayed Mahmoud al-Azhari stated this in a television segment called "Cinta Ilmu Istimewa Bersama Ulama" under the topic "Islamic Studies Tradition" aired by the al-Hijrah tv on August 6th, 2014.

element produces *ulu al-Albab* who are able to think accurately and possess complete understanding.

Second *daleel*

Ulu al-Albab also related to the group of *al-Rasikhun fi al-'IlmHal* (those who have deepened their knowledge) based on the following verse:

"and those firm in knowledge say: "We believe in Him, and all of them are from Allah" and none will be taught and reminded, apart from those who possess understanding"(Ali-'Imran, 3, verse 7)

Prophet Muhammad PBUH was once asked, who are those firm in knowledge? He answered those who are firm in knowledge are those who keep their vows, keep to their words, perform rightly (*istiqamah*), are not greedy and decent (Isma'il Kathir al-Dimasyqiy, 2000). This hadith illustrates that those who are knowledgeable are those who do not disobey Allah's order and have pure hearts.

Third *daleel*

Allah's decree reads as follows:

"And we sent not Prophets before you (O Muhammad), except those to whom we sent revelations (not angels); therefore, ask the people of knowledge, if you do not know" (al-Anbiya', 21 verse 7).

The *ahl al-Dhikr* (people of remembrance) refers to those who are experts of the al-Qur'an. Some of the scholars consider *ahl al-Dhikras* those who have knowledge of the sacred texts and previous prophets, while some others view *ahl al-Dhikras* those with knowledge (Muhammad Syamsuddin al-Qurtubiy, 2003, p. 108).

'Amar 'Abdullah al-Muqbil (2010) in discussing that the verse refers to the method of "*al-'Ibraṭ bi 'umum al-Lafaz la bi Khusus al-Sabab*" (lesson learned from the generality of the verse and not based on specific conditions), which is method of *Usul Tafsiir*, elucidate that the *ahl al-Dhikris* not limited only to those who have deep knowledge of the sacred texts and al-Qur'an, but include those who possess any form of knowledge in general.

'Amar 'Abdullah al-Muqbil (2010) asserts that *ahl al-Dhikr* are knowledgeable people who do not sin, and are pious, firm in knowledge and earnestly religious. In general, *ahl al-Dhikr* are experts in their fields of knowledge, devout and pious. Knowledge that is produced by this group of people is the right knowledge.

Based on the above verse, Allah SWT has commanded the people to ask the *ahl al-Dhikr* to convey knowledge. This shows that Allah recognizes that the knowledge disseminated by the *ahl al-Dhikr* is true knowledge. In fact, scholars also throw light on the attributes possessed by the *ahl al-Dhikr* and suggest that the *ahl al-Dhikr* are able to establish the truth of knowledge or information.

Fourth *daleel*

Allah has decreed that:

"Eat and pasture your cattle; Most surely, in that are signs that show Allah's bounty, for those endowed with intelligence" (Taha, verse 54)

In the above verse, Allah SWT has stated that there are those who have been given knowledge or information, and this group of people is known as *uli al-Nuha*. *Uli al-Nuha* refers to those who have been blessed with perfect and good intellect. This group of people are those who acknowledge that there is not God except Allah SWT and that Allah SWT is the owner of the world (Isma'il Kathir al-Dimasyqiy, 2000).

Fifth daleel

Allah has ordained that:

"O you who believe! If you fear Allah, He will give the signs that differentiate between right and wrong, and will remove your misdeeds, and forgive your (for your wrongdoings), and Allah is the possessor of infinite bounty" (al-Anfal, 29)

According to al-Dhahaq, Allah's decree "differentiate between right and wrong" refers to one's ability to testify. Ibn Ishaq notes that those who are pious can differentiate between truth and falsehood. Allah SWT has revealed the truth and removed falsehood. This is due to the *taqwa* possessed by the believers (Ibn Mas'ud al-Baghawi, 1997).

In his explanation of this *daleel*, Abdullah Rahman Nasir al-Sa'diy (2000) notes that there are four benefits for those who fear Allah. Firstly, Allah will impart knowledge to those who possess *taqwato* enable them to distinguish between the truth and falsehood. Secondly, the element of *taqwa* can eliminate evil. Thirdly, those who are endowed with *taqwa* will earn forgiveness from Allah. Fourthly, those who possess *taqwa* will be rewarded generously by Allah SWT.

From the five *daleel* discussed above, it can be concluded that the element of *taqwacan* affect one's possibility of obtaining knowledge from Allah. The knowledge bestowed by Allah is true knowledge and the truth will provide validity in the research conducted.

Part Two

In the second part, the researcher examines the ability of *taqwa* in securing validity in research. Truth is one of the characteristics of validity. Two aspects will be explored to answer the second question. The first aspect unfolds the ability of the element of *taqwa* in providing validity in research which is validated through scientific studies. The second aspect looks into approaches that the researcher can use to obtain validity in research. Both aspects will be detailed out in the following discussion.

An individual who is endowed with *taqwa* is someone who fulfils his responsibility and obligations and does goodness consistently. Individuals who have performed their responsibilities and obligations as well as abstain from sin will become peaceful and calmer. This is supported by scientific studies. Fatimah Ibrahim, Wan Abu Bakar Wan Abas, and Cheok (2009), for instance, found that human brain produces clear alpha wave when he/she is prostrating while performing his/her prayers. The alpha wave is a wave that produces a deep feeling of peace. Undoubtedly, our brain becomes peaceful and more focused when this wave is produced. This state of condition is called super learning state. In this condition, our brain is in the best condition to accept new information or knowledge (Alex Iskandar & Endi Novianto, 2008, p. 31).

An emotion that is stabilized also affects the right brain hemisphere to produce excellent response. Scientifically, human brain is divided into two hemispheres; the right and left. Both sides have their own tasks and ability, respectively. The left brain is tasked with rational thought processing while the right brain deals with feelings and emotions. The brain performs at optimum level when both hemispheres work together (Mohd. Azhar Abdul Hamid, 2007, pp. 23-24). Similar observation is made by Danial Zainal Abidin (2010, p. 224) who argued that human brain is more dynamic and active with better focus when we prostrate. During prostration, our heart will be placed above our head. This allows easier flow of the blood to the brain as gravity pull takes place.

Danial Zainal Abidin (2010, p. 224) also cited a study carried out by Peter Russell and Win Wender. Russel and Wender conceded that human brain operates seven percent quicker and fourteen time more accurate when their head is in the lower position. Oxygen level will be higher when the human body is upside down and this has indirectly enhanced the brain's ability.

Two conditions can be deduced from the above discussion. The brain becomes more active when higher level of oxygen is found in the brain. The brain will become more peaceful with the presence of alpha wave in the brain. Both conditions are attainable through prayers (*solat*) and this has been proven scientifically. The question is, from an Islamic point of view, do active and peaceful brain causes a person to produce accurate and true information, knowledge or view?

Al-Qur'an has clearly stated that the method to secure truth is through *tafakkur*² (thinking), *ta'aqul*³ (reasoning), *tadabbur*⁴ (deep exploring) dan *tadhakkur*⁵ (remembering) (Mohd Kamal Hassan, 2011, p. 3). In fact, *tafakkur* can lead to future problem solving⁶ (Jamal Badi & Mustapha Tajdin, 2005:8-11). Yusuf al-Qardawi asserts that the al-Qur'an has mentioned that all the above, four processes (faculty of intellection), take place at the heart, as well as listening and seeing. Al-Qur'an does not highlight the mind or brain, despite the fact that the main function of the brain is to think and understand (Mohd Kamal Hassan, 2011, p. 4).

Abu Hamid al-Ghazaliy (tt:411-412) expresses that *tafakkuris* produced from the heart. *Ibadahis* produced by physical organs. Since the heart is the greatest organ, the act that comes from the heart is more powerful than physical acts. Abu Hamid also notes that one of the benefits of *tadhakkur* is to return the knowledge to the heart.

Ibn Qayyim also agrees that thinking takes place in the heart and that the knowledge produced through such thinking will lead to action. Useful thoughts that are produced from good heart will lead to good, desirable actions, while bad thoughts that are led by evil thoughts in one's heart will beget undesirable actions (Yusuf al-Qardawi, 1996:51).

Furthermore, thinking through heart has been proven scientifically impacts human actions or behaviours. The heart contains memory cells that are related to the brain's memory cells. Ganglion cells, which are cells that lie in the heart, has greater memory capacity than the brain cells. These cells store lasting memory than the brain. The networks of ganglion cells produce electrical waves that are sent to other parts of the body through the blood flow. Hence, the ganglion cells that are produced by pure, clean heart will generate good actions and attitudes. On the contrary, ganglion cells that come from impure heart will lead to negative behaviours (Mat Rofa Ismail, 2014, pp. 130-133). This scientific finding proves that a person's *taqwa* can be measured scientifically. *Tazkiyat al-Nafsis* is a method that allows humans to obtain pure heart. Various *daleel* from the al-Qur'an, which mainly focused on wisdom, have demonstrated how humans can seek for *tazkiyat al-Nafs* from Allah SWT. Allah SWT has also provided a method for *tazkiyat al-Nafs*; that is by

²*Tafakkuris* is a thinking process that produces new knowledge.

³*Ta'aqul* is a thinking process that allows understanding of knowledge in a rational manner.

⁴*Tadabbur* is a deep, whole and complete understanding.

⁵*Tadhakkur* is a process that conveys current knowledge to the heart (recalling process)

⁶ Similar to the incident in which Prophet Yusuf interpreted the king's dreams.

remembering Him, the heart will become peaceful (Mohd Kamal Hassan, 2013)⁷.

Feeling peaceful helps to control oneself when one is in a critical condition. Peacefulness affects one's emotions. In other words, stabilized emotions can be attained when one is calm and peaceful (Ab. Aziz Yusof, 2007, p. 172). Emotions will affect a person's thoughts and actions. This observation is made by Sidek Baba (2006) who states that:

If a person's emotion is not stable, his reactions will lead to unstable conditions. If a person is restless or confused, his thinking will become scattered. He will produce incomplete facts. His analysis is inaccurate. The conclusion he draws does not reflect that a deep thinking of an issue has taken place.

Therefore, active and peaceful brain together with good heart will produce truth or right thoughts. *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, in short, will make a person's heart clean and calm.

The findings discussed above have shown that a person's obedience to Allah SWT and performance of *tazkiyat al-Nafs* can lead to accurate and truthful information, knowledge and views. In other words, a person's obedience to Allah SWT together with his pure heart will affect his heart in his thinking process. In Islam, thinking with a pure, obedient heart will produce true thinking. Besides that, obedience to Allah SWT also helps to activate a person's emotions and brain. This enables the person to think accurately on any matter. True and accurate information, knowledge and view will produce data validity. Hence, a researcher must think with his heart to obtain valid findings and high-quality research⁸.

A researcher must also fulfil his responsibility and perform his compulsory religious obligations. He must keep a strong bond with Allah SWT and other human beings. Apart from that, he must also abstain from defying God's laws when he is conducting his research. He will collect and analyse data. Therefore, he must possess the element of *taqwa* to ensure that the data produced are right and accurate from the Islamic perspective. Truth cannot be determined by the researcher as truth is established and provided by Allah SWT. Bearing this in mind, the researcher must strengthen his relationship with Allah SWT. Allah SWT has decreed that:

"We have indeed sent down revelations that explain (truth with various daleel and evidence) and Allah provides guidance to whom He wills to a straight path" (al-Nur, 24: 46).

The researcher must often pray and perform *tazkiyat al-Nafs* to obtain the truth. By performing *tazkiyat al-Nafs*, the researcher is able to undertake the processes of *tafakkur*, *ta'addul*, *tadabbur* and *tadhakkur* well and ensure that he obtains true research findings. He must also act with good intention while conducting his research to obtain Allah SWT's blessings and glorify Islam. The element of *taqwa* possessed by the researcher will ensure that his views and thoughts are precise, reliable, and true.

⁷ Mohd Kamal Hassan reviewed this issue in his Public Lecture which he presented at the University Conference Hall, Universiti Sains Malaysia on October 21st, 2013. The title of his Public Lecture was *The Heart of The Problems Vis-à-vis the Problems of the Heart*. Mohd Kamal Hassan is a Professor at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, International Islamic University Malaysia.

⁸ Personal communication with Mohd Kamal Hassan. The researcher contacted him through e-mail on November 4, 2014 and December 4, 2014 to get his view on this issue. He also agreed that the *naqd* Hadith method is used to obtain valid data, particularly in Islamic-related research.

CONCLUSION

Three points can be deduced from the above discussion. Firstly, the concept of validity needs to be elaborated from an Islamic perspective if a research is related to Islam or Muslim affairs. Secondly, the element of *taqwa* is able to produce research validity. This is found not only in *naqli daleel*, but also proven through *aqli daleel*, i.e. scientific approaches. Thirdly, humans do not have the ability to ascertain the truth and falsehood without the guidance from Allah's revelation. It is this divine revelation that directs human in all manner of things, including determining truth and falsehood in research.

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