Thematic Analysis of ‘Aql in the Al-Quran

Siti Noor Mawar Abdul Rahman

To Link this Article: http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i11/6611 DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i11/6611

Received: 11 October 2019, Revised: 28 October 2019, Accepted: 07 November 2019

Published Online: 26 November 2019

In-Text Citation: (Rahman, 2019)

Copyright: © 2019 The Author(s)
Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society (www.hrmars.com)
This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode

Vol. 9, No. 11, 2019, Pg. 921 - 929

http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARBSS JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics
Thematic Analysis of ‘Aql in the Al-Quran

Siti Noor Mawar Abdul Rahman
Center for Islamic Development Management Studies (SDEV), Universiti Sains Malaysia
11800 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Email: snmawarahman@gmail.com, mawarahman_isdev@student.usm.my

Abstract
‘Aql is Arabic word to mean intellect or mind and being mentioned in the a;-Quran 49 times in verb form derived from the root words. There are found in the five forms of verb which are ya’qilun, ta’qilun, ‘aqalu, ya’qiluha and na’qilu referring to the ‘use of intellect’. The systematic study of the forms of verb is the main objectives of this paper using thematic analysis ‘Aql being associated with other terms such as ulul albab, hikmah, qalb and nuha. But these terms show different types and level of thinking which its basis is “aql. Therefore, it is importance to study specifically ‘aql in order to understand its purpose. By using Quranic index to locate all these words, each verb form is discussed and anlaysed using thematic analysis. Therefore, descriptive methodology and content analysis is adopted simultaneously. The finding of this paper is to discover the purpose of aql underlies each of these verb form.

Keywords: Thematic Analysis, ‘Aql, Al-Quran

Introduction
Aql (mind or intellect) is an indispensable attribute of human beings; it is what distinguishes them from other creatures. No creature is blessed with the type of mind human beings have. That is, the mind that ascertains the truth – al-Haqq – from falsehood – al-Batil. Allah endowed human beings with the mind to meditate the signs of nature ayat al-Kawniyyah. Additionally, with the mind (intellect) human beings are able to transform themselves, act morally and to do things that set them apart from other species on earth, such as exploitation of nature in the name of development.

Al-Quran, hadith and historical facts had proven the importance of ‘aql in Islam. Al-Quran generally is the book enjoining to set mind free from narrow minded and always encourage the use of ‘aql in every process of evaluation (Mahmud, n.d). However, study on ‘aql not systematically and properly being done and many researchers tend to generalize it. Some
confusion may arise about the nature of ‘aql, including how it is distinct from other words and terms in the al-Quran.

**Objectives**

This paper has two objectives
1. To identify surah and verses related to the word ‘aql in the Al-Quran.
2. To analyses it using thematic analysis to discover more about the purpose of ‘aql and its significance.

**Methodology**

Thematic analysis as an independent qualitative descriptive approach is mainly described as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). The goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. Patterns in the data that are important or interesting is extracted to form themes. These themes are to be used to address the research or say something about an issue. Therefore, it is not just simply summarizing a data, a good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of it. Data, code and themes are three importance elements in thematic analysis.

The collection of data is derived from secondary data which can be categorized into prime and second. The prime secondary data is Quranic index, al-Quran, tafsir(exegeses) and Quranic translation. While the second secondary data consist of journal, books and articles. Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Tafsir bil Ma’thur) and the meaning of the Holy Qur’an (Ali, 1989) being used -to triangulate the data obtained from the exegeses and Quranic translation ensuring validity of data.

Data analysis using thematic analysis. Open coding is employed before themes being identified. Braun & Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide which is a very useful framework for conducting this kind of analysis. First become familiar with the data, second generates initial codes, third search for themes, fourth review themes and fifth define themes. The final phase is doing write up.

**Literature Review**

Aql is the Arabic word for intellect. This word is related to the word ‘iqāl denoting the cord or rope that is used to tie the feet of camels to prevent them from running away. Many scholars have said that a well-functioning mind prevents people from approaching things that might ruin them in this life and in the next. Intelligence is thus an ability to constrain the human ego and prevent it from following the lower desires. The word ‘aql is an Arabic to mean stop, wise and understanding (Ibn-Manzur, 2003; al Jawhari, 2007: 727).

Through literature review, it is found that discussion and research on ‘aql from Quranic verses associate the word ‘aql with other term pertaining to ‘aql. Imarah (2008: 1012) has listed eight terms pertaining to ‘aql in Al-Quran which are qalb (heart) 132 times, lub (minds) times,
nuha (smart) 2 times, fikr (thinks) 18 times, fiqh (comprehension) 20 times, tadabbur (reflection) 4 times, i’tibar (lesson) 7 times and hikmah (wisdom) 17 times.

There were many verses in Al-Quran, at the end of verses encouraging man to thinks in verbal form; afala ta’qilun (why don’t you think?), afala tatafkarun (were you not thinking) dan afala tubsirun (don’t you see?). Tatafkarun or in other words tafakkur from the root word fakkara has very close proximity with the word ta’qilun if some want to argue. It could be defined as act of reflection, pondering and contemplating (Ibn Manzur, 2003). When discussing about tafakkur, it also found that the word occurs 18 times in al-Quran in verb form, in present tense and in plural form to imply the importance of collective thinking in Islam (shuratic way of thinking). Taffakur also related to the concept of creative thinking (Badi, 2017).

The indication giving by al-Quran to the words ‘aql is the tool for thinking that should be used appropriately for achieving positive consequences and ultimate truth. This also explains that Allah S.W.T. has lifted ‘aql as instrument that leads to betterment in life and perfection. Man has the ability to use it to determine good and bad because it is considered as the ability to receive knowledge. It is also used for the knowledge benefitted from that strength (Badi, 2017).

In hadith, based on hadith narrated by Al-Gahazali (2005) showed the importance of ‘aql as in below:

“ Allah created Al-‘Aql (Intellect) first and said to it: “Come forward” and it came forward, then Allah told it:” Go backwards” and it went backwards”

Another hadith has the following wording: “I have not created any creation more loved by Me other than you (Aql)”.

Even some may dispute authencity of the hadith above, the contents of the hadith do not contradict to evidence from Al-Quran. Allah S.W.T has guided man through revelation which give credit to the use of intellect.

Muhammad (2005) described al-Ghazali’s definition of ‘aql into four definitions. First, ‘aql is a platform to accept scientific knowledge (nazariyah). Second, it is a built-in knowledge which can differentiate between the possible and impossible. Third definition, ‘aql is a knowledge gains through various life experiences. Fourth, its being defined as a strength from gharizah until reach a state that able to know the consequence of every actions, therefore it could hinder and control the lust, desire and short-term excitement.

However, the research on the word ‘aql in al-Quran specifically not being carried out systematically to give clear understanding of the word being used. The discussion on the Quranic concept of intellect even similar with this paper, only managed to locate the word and discuss it literally without referring to any exegesis (Kocabas, 1987). Many researchers relate the word ‘aql
directly or indirectly with other words, thus difficult to differentiate the significance of the word ‘aql with other similar word such as tafkarun,, tafsirun and tafqahun.. Even it is true the word ‘aql can and should be related to other word and terms, writer in opinion there must be reason behind the use of the word in al-Quran.

Kocabas (1987) has attempted the study of the concept of ‘aql in the al-Quran and resulted to the finding of 49 verses consist of 5 verbs form which are ya’qilun, ta’qilun,’aqalu, ya’qiluha and na’qilu and being confirmed by Badi (2017). He believes that the wisdom behind the occurrence of ‘aql in the Qur’an in the verb form is because “it has a dynamic application. This means that if ‘aql were to be used in the Qur’an as a noun it would simply mean ‘intellect’ but its occurrence in the verb form gives it the meaning of “using the intellect or activating the intellect.” Therefore, kufr – disbelief and engagement in wrong acts are the consequence of not using the intellect. The information about this issue only little and more study should be done on the issues. Among the gap of study to be filled is to do study on thematic analysis of ‘aql.

Thematic Analysis
Rigorous searching the words that indicate to the word aql resulted in the finding of 49 words in the form of a verb ta’qilun, ya’qilun, ‘aqalu, ya’qiluha and na’qilu referring to the ‘use of intellect’. In order to locate those words, Al-Mu’jam al-Mufharas Li Alfaz al-Quran by Muhammad Fuad “abd Al Baqi is refered. It is an indexed dictionary of words. It is found the verb ta’qilun consists in 29 verses, ya’qilun consist in 18 verses, ‘aqalu, ya’qiluha and na’qilu in one verse each.

The word ‘aql in the Al-Quran not being addressed in verbal noun (masdar) rather it comes in verb form which total up to 49 verses. The interpretation of the verses showed ‘aql indicates knowledge, knowing and understanding (‘Abd-al-Karim, 2000). But using thematic analysis of the word ‘aql using Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Tafsir bil Ma’tthur) and the meaning of the Holy Qur’an (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1989), aql is considered as a tool to knowledge, knowing and understanding. The analysis of the verses using open coding and from this coding themes being identified. Table 1 show the open coding of 49 verses and the themes identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surah</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-Baqarah</td>
<td>44, Do you order righteousness.. 73. So, We said, &quot;Strike the slain man with part of it.&quot; 75. ....And perverted it knowingly 76. &quot;Do you talk to them about what Allah has revealed to you so they can argue 241-242 For divorced women maintenance.This is righteous.</td>
<td>Sign of morality  Sign of morality  Sign of disbeliever  Sign of disbeliever  Sign of morality  Sign of creation  Sign of disbeliever</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
164. Indeed, in the *creation* of the heavens and earth....

170. **we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.**

171. The parable of those who **disbeliever** (reject faith) is as if

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ali Imran</th>
<th>65, ... why do you <strong>argue about Abraham</strong> 118. <strong>They wish you would have hardship.</strong></th>
<th>Sign of disbeliever</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Maidah</td>
<td>58. <strong>... they take it in ridicule and amusement.</strong> 103. But those who <strong>disbelieve invent falsehood about Allah,</strong></td>
<td>Sign of disbeliever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al An'ám</td>
<td>32, And the <strong>worldly life is not but amusement and diversion;</strong> 151. And <strong>do not approach immoralities</strong> -</td>
<td>Sign of hereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al A'raf</td>
<td>169 taking the <strong>commodities of this lower life</strong> and saying, &quot;It will be forgiven for us.**</td>
<td>Sign of hereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Anfal</td>
<td>22 Indeed, the <strong>worst of living creatures</strong> in the sight of Allah..</td>
<td>Sign of disbelievers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yunus</td>
<td>16 <strong>I had remained among you a lifetime before it.</strong> Then will 16..... <strong>for I had remained among you a lifetime before it.</strong> Then 42, And among them are <strong>those who listen to you.</strong> But .... 100. ...and He will <strong>place doubt (or obscurity)</strong> on those who will</td>
<td>Sign of the true messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hud</td>
<td>51 <strong>O my people, I do not ask you for it any reward.</strong> My reward</td>
<td>Sign of messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf</td>
<td>2, Indeed, We have sent it down as an <strong>Arabic Qur'an</strong> that you 109. any but men, whom we did <strong>inspire-(Men) living in human habitations.</strong></td>
<td>Sign of book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Ra’d</td>
<td>4 And within the land are <strong>neighboring plots and gardens of grapevines and crops</strong></td>
<td>Sign of creation of crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Nahl</td>
<td>12. And He has <strong>subjected for you the night and day and the sun and moon..</strong></td>
<td>Sign of creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Sign of…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>And from the fruits of, the palm trees and grapevines you take intoxicant and good provision.</td>
<td>creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Anbiya</td>
<td>10, We…. sent down to you a Book in which is your mention. 67 Uff to you and to what you worship instead of Allah.</td>
<td>book of revelation, Allah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Hajj</td>
<td>46..., it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts</td>
<td>disbelievers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Mu’mi nun</td>
<td>80…. He who gives life and causes death, and……</td>
<td>Allah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An-Nur</td>
<td>61. It is no fault in the blind Nor in one born lame, nor in one afflicted with illness..</td>
<td>righteous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al furqan</td>
<td>44 Or do you think that most of them hear or reason? They are not except like livestock.</td>
<td>disbeliever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Qasas</td>
<td>60 it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment.</td>
<td>hereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Ankabut</td>
<td>35, And We have certainly left of it a sign as clear evidence for 43. And such are parables we set fort for mankind, 63….. sends down rain from the sky, and gives life therewith</td>
<td>disbeliever, Allah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ar Rum</td>
<td>24. … He shows you the lightening [causing] fear and aspiration,</td>
<td>Allah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasin</td>
<td>62 And he had already led astray from among you much of... 68 And he to whom We grant long life We reverse in creation;</td>
<td>morality, creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Shaffat</td>
<td>138 Verily, ye pass by their (sites) by day And by night...</td>
<td>morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Az Zumar</td>
<td>43 Or have they taken other than Allah as intercessors?</td>
<td>disbeliever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghafir</td>
<td>67 He who created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop,</td>
<td>creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Zukruf</td>
<td>3 Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur’an .....</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Jatsiyah</td>
<td>5 ... alternation of night and day and [in] what Allah sends</td>
<td>Allah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Result
From open coding of 49 verses, pattern and trend could be identified about words pertaining to ‘aql. It is interesting to find out that ‘aql is intended to look for the signs using heart, eyes and ears and use the knowledge and information from that sign to achieve something higher than worldly life. This is parallel to the Al-Gahzali (2005) definition of ‘aql as platform to accept scientific knowledge and it is a built in knowledge. Therefore, the finding of this paper concluded ‘aql is designed to look for the signs through observing righteous, wrong doing and sin, characteristic of disbeliever, in creation and transformation of creatures and in the great sign of Allah, Books and Messenger.

Sign of morality is a knowledge of the true meaning of morality. It can be observed in one’s integrity in enjoining to do right things (al-Baqarah:4). It is also can be observed in complex situation such in dissolution of marriage (al-Baqarah: 242). In normal condition it should be observed in not associating Allah with others, good treatments to parent, not killing fear of poverty and avoid immoralities (al-An’am: 1511). Entertaining disability people and treating them as the same with normal people (an-Nur:61) provides another sphere to the concept of morality. Besides that, ‘aql should active in identifying the wrong doing and sin. Among the sin is following devil (satan) (Yassin: 62) and own lust (as-Shaffat: 138).

Sign of disbeliever is a knowledge to recognize the nature and characteristic of kafir, musyrik and munafiq. It is important sign to be grasped by ‘aql in order for it to function effectively as a tool for man to be representative of God in this world. Signs of disbeliever have been shown in various form. They did not use eyes, ears and heart significantly, hence their ‘aql could not grasp the knowledge of the sign. Other than that they follow blindly and argue on something they have no knowledge. Their motivating factor is for their own self-interest.

Sign of creation is a knowledge that can be studied through nature. Observing and understanding how nature being created, functioned and transformed is gained through ‘aql. The creation of heaven and earth, day and night, wind, sea and land are the sign to serve mankind. ‘Aql is designed to identify its purpose of creation and manipulate it in many form from a keen observation on the transformation of creatures.
Sign of the Allah, Book, Messenger and hereafter cannot be comprehended by ‘aql alone and only by the will of Allah as in surah Yunus:100. However, man must exercise his intelligence in order to understand these signs, but in order to understand these signs the intellect must be already illuminated by the light of faith and touched by the grace issuing from revelation (Seyyed Hossein Nasr,1979).

Conclusion
The Qur’an does not simply aim at convincing people of truth. Theoretically, it also stimulates them to act according to the truth (Ahmad Jamal Bedi, 2017). A thoughtful action is very important in Islam and this could be achieved through signs learned by ‘aql.

References