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Nor Hanani binti Ismail

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Establishing Validity in Halal-Based Research: A Rabbani Approach Analysis

Dr. Nor Hanani binti Ismail

School of Languages, Civilisation and Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM Sintok,
Kedah

E-mail: drhananiuum@gmail.com, norhanani@uum.edu.my

Abstract

This article comprises two main objectives. The first is to analyse Muslim scholars' opinions on the *daleel* pertaining to halal matters, specifically verse 116 of surah *al-Nahl*. The second objective is to summarize the elements of validity pertaining to halal-based research. Validity is the most important element in any research in which a research is considered as being true or on the contrary. One of the principles that ensures that acceptability of validity is evaluation from the same source. Since the concept of halal is an instrument originated from Islam, the validity of element required in halal-based research has to be extracted from al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah. This principle is known as the Rabbani approach. This approach ensures truth in establishing validity in the research. The central question is, what do the scholars think of the halal *daleel* found in verse 116 of surah *al-Nahl*? How do we construct elements of validity on halal-based research from the scholars' opinions? This article seeks to answer these questions by analysing textually scholarly literature as well as personal communication that the researcher had with experts in this field. This article discusses the scholars' views of verse 116 of surah *al-Nahl* to answer the first question. The article summarizes validity elements in halal-based research to answer the second question.

Keywords: Validity, Halal-based Research.

Introduction

Halal-based research is an emerging research discipline that has begun to appeal to many academics recently, including researchers in the industrial sector. These days, the concept of *halalan toyyiban* is perceived to be part of Islamic way of life that has to be complied by the Muslims. In fact, this concept has also attracted the non-Muslims who also practice *halalan toyyiban* in almost every aspect of their lives, notably in the food industry. Based on the researcher's observation, halal-based studies can be categorized into two themes. The first

theme pertains to halal industry in the economic growth aspect. The second theme deals with scientific approaches in determining the halal or non-halal status of a product¹.

Since halal is a concept derived from Islam, its validity must be determined by the main sources of Islam, which is the al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah. There are more than ten Qur'anic verses that talk about the halal and haram concept in Islam. It cannot be disputed that researchers that examine the halal and haram issues usually employ Qur'anic verses as a guide. Among those Qur'anic verses, there is one verse in which Allah swt reminds the believers on research that is related to halal and haram issues. Islamic scholars elaborate this verse in their attempt to argue and provide ruling (fatwa) on the matters of halal and haram. Taking into consideration that this verse is closely related to research, this article scrutinizes the elements of validity often found in halal and haram-based research. This article contains two sections. The first section analyses the scholars' views on verse 116 of surah *al-Nahl*. Drawing upon the verse, the second section of this article summarizes the elements of validity found in halal-based research.

First Part

The verse selected to be analysed in this article is verse 116 of surah *al-Nahl*. Allah SWT states:

“And do not express what is uttered by your tongue untruthfully, “This is halal and this is haram” to fabricate falsehood against Allah. Verily, those who invent falsehood against Allah will gain nothing.”

(Surah *al-Nahl* (16), 116)

This verse is selected based on three reasons. The first is that the verse reflects the concept of halal through the use of the words halal and haram that are found in this verse. The second reason is that there is an element of research in this verse in the context of establishing truth in a ruling. This reasoning is produced based on the interpretation made by scholars such as Kathir (1999), al-Qurtubiy (2006), al-Syawkaniy (1994) and Shihab (2002). The scholars posit that expressing the halal and haram of a matter based on one's personal view, description, opinion as well as assumption is unacceptable. All these are related to research protocols and procedures². The third reason is that in this verse the halal and haram concept is more general and can be associated in the context of research, specifically in determining whether something is true or vice-versa, unlike other halal and haram verses that are more focused on the nature of halal and haram of particular matters.

This article, therefore, focuses on analysing the interpretations of venerable scholars on this particular verse. The halal and haram nature of a matter is decided by Allah SWT. Humans have no rights to decide or determine whether something is halal or haram through observation and research. However, it is possible deliberate arguments on the halal and haram nature of

¹ Personal communication with Prof. Muhammad Syukri Salleh on 29 November 2017 at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). He specializes in Islamic Development Management and is a Professor with the Centre for Islamic Development Management Studies, USM.

² Personal communication with Dr. Mohd Khadafi Haji Rofie on 9 November 2017 at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). He specializes in al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah as well work ethics management. He is a senior lecturer at UUM.

something when one is equipped with sufficient knowledge bestowed by Allah SWT. In this situation, one will undergo a process called *ijtihad* (making independent reasoning). Those who go through this process is referred as those who have *taqwa* (conscious of Allah SWT) (al-Qurtubiy, 2006).

There are several principles involved in the process of *ijtihad* (Nasir, Rahim, Ali, & Hasnan, t.t). The principles are

- 1- Referring to and understanding of al-Qur'an
- 2- Developing Islamic *tasawur* which comprises *aqeedah*, *syariah*, and *akhlaq* (practice of virtue) based on Islamic epistemology which is the divine revelation. From the Islamic *tasawur*, other knowledge disciplines are formed in tandem with present day-to-day context.
- 3- Scrutinizing outside knowledge and screening the knowledge to ensure that it does not conflict with Islamic *tasawur*, epistemology, mechanism and methodology; and
- 4- Providing methodology and key principles to assist Muslims in appreciating and resolving issues according to Islamic *tasawur* and epistemology.

Al-Baidhawiy (1998), al-Tantawiy (t.t) and al-Samarqandiy (1993), on the other hand, set forth that it is possible to decide whether a matter is halal or haram with the use of *daleel naqli* (proof that is derived from textual source), clear arguments, and detailed explanations to support the ruling. Apart from that, the falsehood concept found in the verse refers to reasoning that is made either from *daleel naqli* or venerable opinions sought during the analysis process (Qutb, 2012). The contradictory concept of falsehood is truth. Truth in Islam refers to Allah SWT (al-Husniy, 2002).

Falsehood in this context also covers *bidaah* matters that are not syariah-based with reasoning made using one's intellect and sensual indulgence (Haumad, 2009). Any views or reasoning in deciding the halal and haram ruling that are not made from divine revelations is considered falsehood, which are not recognized by Allah SWT. Those who put forward such views or reasoning will not be granted success at all. Outwardly, they may be blessed with some wealth, such as properties, children, and power but they will be punished severely during the hereafter. These kinds of people are among those who will be of great loss (al-Jazairiy, 1990).

Based on the scholars' opinions of the verse, several deductions can be made on the elements that are related to the verse, notably in the halal-based research context. The deductions are as demonstrated in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Halal-Based Research Elements Contained in Verse 116 of Surah *al-Nahl*

RESEARCH ELEMENTS FROM THE INTERPRETATION OF VERSE 116 SURAH AL-NAHL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refers to divine revelation• Someone who has <i>taqwa</i>• An in-depth examination that is free from sensual indulgence• Divine revelation-based argument• Success in this world and hereafter• Focuses more on the success in the hereafter• <i>Tawasur</i> and Islamic epistemology• Knowledge comes from Allah SWT• Does not rely solely on intellectual views• Well-being of the Muslims• Is not sensual indulgence-driven• Truth comes from Allah SWT

Second Part

In this section, this article views the suitability of the research elements summarized in the first section in the context of research validity. Basically, validity refers to the knowledge obtained from a research that is accurate to real events (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Klenke, 2008:37; Yin, 2011:78). Validity is a true deduction made and can be obtained from the research conducted. Truth here refers to actual reality (McBurney & White, 2009:173). Validity in Islam refers to actual reality (Faridi, 1995:106-107; Abedin, 1995:133). Khan (1995b:143) considers validity as indicator of truth. Truth is described in terms of verification, workability, and usefulness.

One of the definitions of validity is the truth. If truth is viewed from an Islamic perspective, then truth has to derive from the main references of Islam which are the al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah. To obtain research validity, elements that lead to the truth has to be considered by any researcher. Based on the summary presented in table 1, a concept of validity relationship can be constructed, specifically on halal-based research. The following diagram shows the relationship among elements of validity in halal-based research.

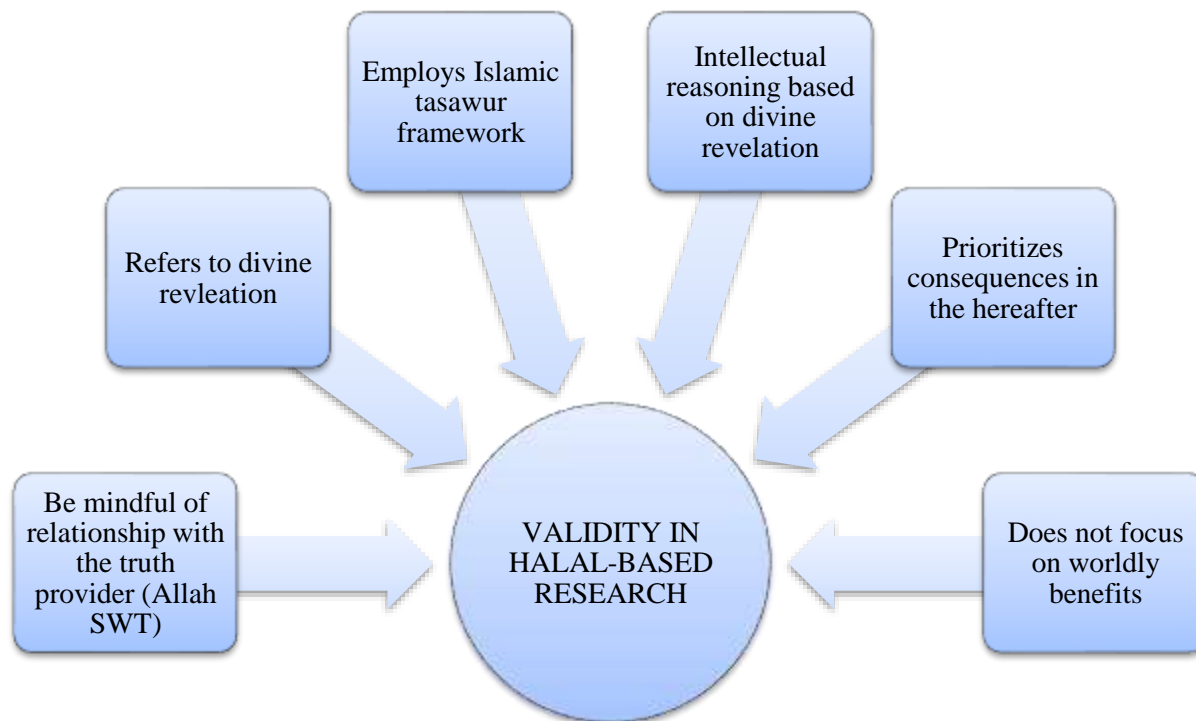


Diagram 1: Elements of Validity Relationship in Halal-Based Research based on Verse 116 of Surah *al-Nahl*

If the Rabbani elements became the central elements in establishing validity in halal-based research, possible matters can be questioned in terms of its validity. Among them are³:

³ Personal communication with Dr. Fadzila Azni Ahmad on 29 November 2017 at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). He specializes in Islamic institutional management and is a senior lecture at USM. His view is shared by Prof. Muhammad Syukri Salleh

Table 2: Comparison of Issues between Current Approach with Rabbani Approach in Halal-Based Research

ISSUE	CURRENT APPROACH	RABBANI APPROACH
Halal is labelled on halal certificates	Accepted	Halal concerns with every aspect of human lives, including halal from Islamic <i>aqeedah</i> perspective.
<i>Halalan Toyyiban</i> begins from farm to fork	Acceptable	<i>Halalan toyyiban</i> does not take place solely from farm to fork, but beyond. There should not be any wastage as wastage is forbidden in Islam.
Halal industry is an aspect that drives the economy	Acceptable	Halal concerns with every aspect of our lives and holding onto halal principle will increase a Muslim's <i>taqwa</i> .
Halal industry is managed and founded by non-Muslims	Acceptable	Muslims are supposed to found the halal industry as it is <i>fardhu kifayah</i> for the Muslims. Non-Muslims become the consumers of halal industry.

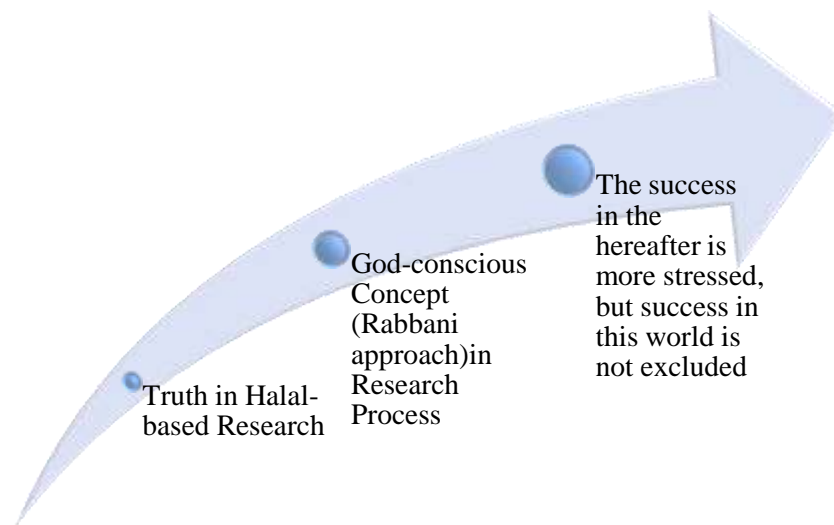


Diagram 2: Central Concept in Halal-based Research from Verse 116 of Surah *al-Nahl*

Based on this discussion, three main points can be extracted. Knowledge is a blessing that leads humans to the truth. In view of this, the objective of a research is to enable humans to get to the truth. Secondly, truth can be defined together with validity in research. Therefore, the validity principle often reiterated in research should take into consideration the Rabbani approach to obtain truth. Truth in Islamic-centred research is getting to know the Creator of this world, which is Allah SWT. Every research should observe this fact when carrying out his/her research. Thirdly, every researcher must ensure that the research outcome will give him success in the present world and hereafter.

Corresponding Author

Dr. Nor Hanani Binti Ismail

School of Languages, Civilisation and Philosophy

Universiti Utara Malaysia

06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah

E-mail: drhananiuum@gmail.com, norhanani@uum.edu.my

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