



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i2/5510>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i2/5510

Received: 07 Jan 2019, **Revised:** 21 Feb 2019, **Accepted:** 25 Feb 2019

Published Online: 03 March 2019

In-Text Citation: (Yusuff, Haji-Othman, & Manaf, 2019)

To Cite this Article: Yusuff, M. S. S., Haji-Othman, Y., & Manaf, M. R. A. (2019). The Source of Sabab Nuzul Ayah (The Contexts and Occasions of The Revelation of the Qur'an) in Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan: An Intertextuality Study. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(2), 487–496.

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Vol. 9, No. 2, 2019, Pg. 487 - 496

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The Source of *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* (The Contexts and Occasions of The Revelation of the Qur'an) in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*: An Intertextuality Study

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Abstract

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan is the second interpretation after *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* written in the Malay language in the 19th century AD by Omar (1970). The main objective of this study is to identify the influence of the external source in the text of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* about *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* (The Contexts and Occasions of The Revelation of The Quran). Intertextual reading method is used in the process of analyzing *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* founded by Bakhtin and descriptions, developed and analyzed by Krestiva (1980). This study employs library research and fieldwork using the subjective approach which is descriptive. The study found seven works which have influenced the essence of *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* (The Contexts and Occasions of The Revelation of The Quran), which are *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*, *Tafsir al-Jamal*, *Tafsir al-Baydawi*, *Tafsir al-Khazin*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, *Tafsir al-Razi*, and *Tafsir al-Nasafi*. The finding analysis also shows that *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is mostly influenced by *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*.

Keyword: *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*; *Sabab Nuzul Ayah*; Intertextuality Study; intertextuality principle

Introduction

The writings of Islamic works and translations into the Malay language have grown tremendously since the coming of Islam to Nusantara regions (Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei, and Indonesia), which have covered various fields and branches of knowledge such as fiqh, aqidah, tafsir, hadith, and Sufism, among others. The writings and translations by previous Islamic scholars remain as important sources of reference and are still used by contemporary scholars for academic purposes. It proves the success of previous scholars who produced writings which have not only attracted the interest of the public but also have benefited them. One of the scholars is Omar, M. S. who produced a book in the field of tafsir in Malay language entitled *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* in 1970.

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan is a well-known work which was written by Omar in 1970. Writing this work was time-consuming for it took two years nine months to complete, and it was successfully completed on the 1st of October 1970 (Omar, 1970). This work is one of the works in the fields of *tafsir al-Qur'an* of the earliest produced in the Malay world after *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* by Sheikh Abdul Rauf al-Singkeli in the 17th century (Nasyrudin, 2008).

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan began to be printed by the first print in 1934 in Mecca by Maktabah wa Matbaah Muhammad al-Nahdi wa Awladih and second print was in the year of 1936 in Penang. The third printing of the work was in the year 1391 Hijrah equivalent to 1970 by al-Muarif Sdn. Bhd, Matba'ah bin Halabi in Fathani and Matbaah Muhammad al-Nahdi wa Awladih in Bangkok, Thailand. Meanwhile, there is also a print published by Dar al-Ihya' al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah, Egypt in the year 1349 Hijrah. Each print of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* must first obtain the consent of the heirs of Omar and signature of the permission can be seen on each page per volume (Othman, 2012).

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan produced by Omar (1970) came in four volumes and each volume is sorted according to the chapters (*surah*) of *al-Quran*. The first volume covers the *Surah al-Fatihah* to *al-Maidah*, the second volume covers *al-An'am* to *Surah Hud*, the third volume includes *Surah al-Kahf* to *al-Zumar*, and the fourth volume covers *al-Mukmin* to *Surah al-Nas*. *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is quite difficult to be obtained on the market and it is only sold in certain bookstores only. Most of the works circulating in the market these days are printed by the company from Bangkok measuring 26.5 cm x 20 cm.

This work is widely circulated particularly in the State of Kedah, Malaysia and even in Northern Perak, Malaysia, Penang, and Seberang Prai, Malaysia also in southern Thailand (Abdul Rahman, 2010). *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is a work in the fields of *tafsir al-Quran* in the Malay language written using *Jawi* which has given many benefits to the Muslims, especially in Malaysia, while it is also a best-effort made by Omar (1970) that has been passed on to the community until today. The content of this work is complete and comprehensive accounting for the description of the contexts and occasions of the revelation of the Quran, the virtues of *surah* and verse, problems of *Fiqh*, *al-Mutashabihat*, *al-Nasikh* and *al-Mansukh* plus stories of previous generations.

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan has been used as a reference in understanding Qur'anic verses not only by the public but also by contemporary scholars who have used it as teaching material. This invaluable piece of work has given a contribution to the knowledge of the public at large so much so that scholars are attracted to study and examine this work from various aspects such as history, language, the influence, and stature of the author.

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan is also one of the books on *tafsir al-Qur'an* which is still being used as teaching material and reference today especially at *Pondok* institutions, mosques, and *musollas*. *Pondok* institutions such as Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Bakar at Parit Panjang, Baling, Kedah, Malaysia and Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Soleh Musa at Sik, Kedah, Malaysia have been using the book as the teaching

material for their weekly teaching. However, there have been criticisms on the content of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* by certain sections of the public. Some of them opined that this book has its shortcomings because, in the writing of this book, the author does not mention any citation and uses many unjustified opinions in his *tafsir* (Zaim, 2010), so much so that Muhammad Ismi stressed that the public should be careful when reading *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* (Taib, 2003).

The motivation of this study is to make effort to help overcome the shortcoming of this invaluable piece of work by refining sources of reference and interconnections between the original text and other tafsir texts using intertextual reading. Since *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* has been used as teaching material in the tafsir al-Qur'an and a reference by the public at large in understanding verses of al-Qur'an, then efforts to refine this piece of work should be made. This will answer the aforementioned problem statement. The objective of this study is to examine *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* in order to examine whether there exists the influence of other texts on the text of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* using intertextual reading. This study focuses on Sabab Nuzul Ayah (The Contexts and Occasions of The Revelation of The Quran) on the text of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* as an early effort towards the refinement of the text which contributes to improving the invaluable work. Since the author of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* mentioned that he referred to works in the field of tafsir while in the process of writing (Omar, 1970), this study focuses only on tafsir works.

Research Method

This study employs library research and field study using a subjective approach to examine data descriptively and quantitatively. In order to examine whether there exists the influence of other texts on the text of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, this study employs the method of intertextual reading. The intertextual reading method was originally known as dialogic which was introduced by Bakhtin in the year 1926 because there was voluminous Russian art literature which was difficult to comprehend at that time. As a consequence, this theory was introduced by Bakhtin in order to facilitate readers to understand the difficult literature. This theory pictured that all literature which was written were based on dialogues between one text and another. In other words, this theory states that any text is influenced by other texts. This is supported by Harari (1979), who mentioned that "every text, being itself the intertext of another text, belong to the intertextual, which must not be confused with a text's origins".

The basis of this dialogic theory is used to understand Dostoyevsky's literature such as *The Gambler*, *The Idiot*, and *The Brother's Karamazov* which were considered as difficult to be understood by the public using theories of literature such as formalism which were dominant during that time (Dostoyevsky, 1975). The Russian formalism approach which was on the rise during that time did not help the public to understand the approach of Dostoyevsky's literature. Bakhtin's dialogism emphasized external aspect which influenced reading or how an author approached art literature and in turn would flow naturally into his own literature writing. However, Bakhtin did not deny the importance of internal elements such as theme, thinking, plot, characters, and other elements. In the theory of dialogism, an author would have a dialogue with the text itself, himself and readers. This would create dialogues between text and another text and as a consequence, it would trigger

changes, conflicts, and expansion in the literature which was being written by the author in terms of theme and problems, plot or characters and characterization. Therefore, the connection between external and internal structures in literature is important in this approach. According to Schmitz (2007), sentences used by someone in speech or writing interconnects among them and if there is no dependency among them, then any sentence or speech becomes gloomy and inexplicable. Schmitz (2007) mentioned;

“Language always works within certain situations, and utterances produce their significance within this context. The linguistic material alone is not enough to determine whether a word or a sound is enthusiastic, gloomy, ironical, threatening, or deferential; rather, this depends on a number of factors such as intonation, volume, the interlocutor, and prior utterances in the dialogue” (Schmitz 2007, 66-67).

This theory was later discussed by Kristeva (1980) who did not name this theory as dialogic, instead, she termed it as intertextuality. Hawthorn (2000) mentioned that every text written is influenced by other texts and this influence is discussed in intertextual theory. Therefore, readers should not be confused with the original text which is the hipogram of a given text. Jeremy Hawthorn (2000) stated that “*Kristeva defines the text as a permutation of texts, an intertext in the space of a given text...*”.

The development of this theory not only have taken place in Europe but also in the whole worldwide. In Southeast Asia, it has been discussed as one of modern literary theory in which one scholar in the field of literature named Partini Sardjono has developed this theory. He has not only stood on the principles of Kristeva but has also introduced another principle termed as an excerpt. This principle applies when a text incarnated in another text in an abstract form. Subsequently, there was the birth of new names in Indonesia such as Teeuw and Omar. Meanwhile, in Malaysia and Singapore, it became known after Napiah (1989) discussed in several books, particularly in his Ph.D. thesis entitled “*Tuah Jebat in Malay Drama: A Study of intertextuality*”. In this thesis, he not only discussed this theory at length but also applied it to the book entitled *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Wan Nasyrudin, 2008).

Based on Kristeva (1980) and Sardjono (1986), there are 10 intertextual principles which have often appeared in literature and manifestation reflected in a person’s style of writing, namely:

i. Transformation.

Transformation refers to either a formal or abstract transfer, transformation or conversion of a text to another text (Kristeva 1980, 80).

ii. Modification principle.

Modification principle occurs when the author makes adjustments, changes or amendments on certain text in a given text. This principle occurs due to the desire of the author to retrieve or replicate a text into another text and adjusts it according to the wants of society, culture, politics and readers’ minds (Kristeva 1980, 90).

iii. Expansion.

Expansion occurs when an author expands or develops a text. For example, a short story is developed by an author until it becomes a complete novel (Kristeva 1980, 90).

iv. Demitefication.

Demitefication is a contradiction to the meaning of a text which appeared in earlier work. The author questioned the text before making a contradiction (Kristeva 1980, 103).

v. Haplology.

Haplology occurs when there are omissions upon the presence of texts into other texts. This process occurs during the selection and editing process for the purpose of making text adjustments in order to harmonize the work (Kristeva 1980, 25).

vi. Excerpt.

Excerpt happens when the text is the same as or perhaps similar to some essence, a quote, an episode or aspect of hipogram or the original text (Sardjono 1986, 63).

vii. Parallel.

A parallel occurs when there similarities or parallels between a text and other text(s) in terms of theme, idea or form of the text itself. Parallel Principles shows elements of parallelism and alignment of text within a text. However, the author should cite the source of the text so that it is not considered as plagiarism (Kristeva 1980, 91).

viii. Conversion.

Conversion happens when there is a distortion of the original text or hipogram or contradiction to the taken text. This resistance element is not the same as those in the demitefication principle. In fact, it is not so radical and does not undergo aggressive or drastic changes (Kristeva 1980, 107).

ix. Existence.

Existence occurs when elements created or organized in a work is distinctly different from its hypogram text. This process occurs when the author conducts a renewal of major works that form the basis of his/her writing (Kristeva 1980, 106-107).

x. Defamiliarization.

Defamiliarization is an extraordinary element in a certain piece of work. It means the effort of an author to bring extraordinary elements by making changes to the text such as changes in terms of meaning or role played by a particular character in the piece of work (Kristeva 1980, 131).

Each of these principles does not have to appear separately in a certain work, which means that some of them could appear simultaneously. For example, when a particular text goes through a transformation process, it could also pass through the modification process, expansion or any other intertextual principles at the same time.

The use of the intertextual reading method is appropriate because this method has been used throughout the world since 1926 to facilitate readers to understand the difficult literature, and *Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan* qualifies as difficult literature.

Findings of the Study

Sabab Nuzul Ayah (The Contexts and Occasions of The Revelation of The Quran) is one of many parts in *Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan*. In debating it, the author uses 33 expressions that indicate that after the expression is the *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* ie; then down, down two verses in.., down, down the revelation,

down this *surah*, down this verses, down this in..., down when..., down this *surah* and another *surah*, down this verses is because..., down Gabriel with..., Allah sends down... and down this *burdah* (Omar, 1970).

The author discusses the *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* in the first volume of 75 times and the most commonly used phrase is "down this sentence" which is 41 times. Twice in the first volume, eight times in the second volume, 11 times in the third volume and 20 times in the fourth volume. For example, when explaining the *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* of the 11th verse of Surah al-Hajj;

"down this sentence to the Arabian Badwi, after they claimed to be Muslims, they migrated with the Prophet. When they are healthy and have a lot of wealth, they remain in Islam. However, when they are ill or become poor, they do not believe in Allah SWT" (Omar, 1970).

In the second volume of *Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan*, *sabab nuzul ayah* are discussed for 59 times, the third volume is 37 times and the fourth volume is 48 times making the third volume the least amount of *sabab nuzul ayah* is discussed. The expression that is rarely used by the author is "when down...", "and has gone down", "down by" and "down this verses is because..." in the first volume, "down Gabriel with...", "Allah sends down...", "down this *burdah*" in the second volume, "down the verse when..." in the third volume and "down the two verses on...", "down the revelation", "down this *surah* and another *surah*" in the fourth volume (Omar, 1970).

Table 1 indicates the list of reference works of *sabab nuzul ayah* in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* and intertextual principles using review content of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* as a whole pertaining of *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* (The Contexts and Occasions of The Revelation of The Quran).

Table 1: The List of Reference Works of *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* and Intertextual Principles

No.	Works	Parallel	Excerpt	Haplogy	Expansion	Existence	Total
1	<i>Tafsir al-Jalalyn</i>	89	11	3	27	2	132
2	<i>Tafsir al-Jamal</i>	19	30	36	8	1	94
3	<i>Tafsir al-Baydawi</i>	5	8	5	2	0	20
4	<i>Tafsir al-Khazin</i>	9	16	19	4	1	49
5	<i>Tafsir al-Qurtubi</i>	2	4	7	1	0	14
6	<i>Tafsir al-Razi</i>	0	5	3	3	0	11
7	<i>Tafsir al-Nasafi</i>	0	1	1	1	0	03
		124	75	74	46	04	323

Table 1 reveals that the works which have been referred to by the author when discussing *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* are: *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*, *Tafsir al-Jamal*, *Tafsir al-Baydawi*, *Tafsir al-Khazin*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, *Tafsir al-Razi*, and *Tafsir al-Nasafi*. In addition, the principle of the intertextual principles used comprised of parallel, excerpt, haplogy, expansion and existence principles.

Table 2 shows the data that has been analyzed and the finding indicates that text from *Tafsir al-Jalalyn* has influenced *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* of 100 times (50%), *Tafsir al-Jamal* 49 times (25%), *Tafsir al-Baydawi* 13 times (6.5%), *Tafsir al-Khazin* 25 times (12.5%), *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* 07 times (3.5%), *Tafsir al-Razi* 05 times (2.5%) and *Tafsir al-Nasafi* 01 time (0.5%). Therefore, this article proves that the work most widely referred to by Sheikh Muhammad Said relevant of *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* while writing *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*.

Table 2: List of Works Referred to on the *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*

No.	Title of Works	Frequency	Percentage
1	<i>Tafsir al-Jalalyn</i>	100	50%
2	<i>Tafsir al-Jamal</i>	49	25%
3	<i>Tafsir al-Baydawi</i>	13	6.5%
4	<i>Tafsir al-Khazin</i>	25	12.5%
5	<i>Tafsir al-Qurtubi</i>	07	3.5%
6	<i>Tafsir al-Razi</i>	05	2.5%
7	<i>Tafsir al-Nasafi</i>	01	0.5%
		200	100%

The finding of the study related to principles in intertextual used in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Principles in Intertextual Used

No.	Analysis	Parallel	Excerpt	Haplology	Expansion	Existence	Total
1	<i>Sabab Nuzul Ayah</i>	124	75	74	46	04	323
Percentage		38.3%	23.2%	22.9%	14.2%	1.2%	100%

Table 3 reveals that there are five principles of intertextual approach used when the author narrates the *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, which indicate 124 times of parallel (38.3%), 75 times of excerpt (23.2%), 74 times of Haplology (22.9%), 46 times of Expansion (14.2%), and four times of existence (1.2%), which makes the principles most frequently used the author is parallel principle.

Conclusion

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan is a work in the field of *tafsir al-Quran* written by Omar (1970). This work received widespread recognition not only in Malaysia but also in Indonesia, Egypt, and Thailand on par with another contemporary exegesis. What is interesting about this work is its simple style which is easily understood by society and also provides a variety of knowledge. In language style that's easy to the needs of all levels of society and appropriate use by modern civil society such as Malaysia.

In writing *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, Omar (1970) referred to seven of famed works i.e. *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*, *Tafsir al-Jamal*, *Tafsir al-Baydawi*, *Tafsir al-Khazin*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, *Tafsir al-Razi* and *Tafsir al-Nasafi* when discussing two hundred *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* (The Contexts and Occasions of The Revelation of The Quran) which are very interesting for society to learn. This study is able to reveal and identify sources of references for all the *Sabab Nuzul Ayah*. Therefore, this study finds that Omar (1970) not

only used the unsupported statements but also his own opinions in the writing of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*. The major finding of this study is that this study provides evidence that the main reference work of the author concerning the *Sabab Nuzul Ayah* in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* was *Tafsir al-Jalalyn* based on the percentage of frequency used by Omar (1970) which indicates that *Tafsir al-Jalalyn* was the work which he referred to the most. While the *Tafsir al-Jamal*, *Tafsir al-Baydawi*, *Tafsir al-Khazin*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, *Tafsir al-Razi*, and *Tafsir al-Nasafi* were its ancillary reference works. In addition, the principle of intertextual which was the most widely used was the parallel principle. Therefore, if there is any confusion and misunderstanding when using *Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan* as a reference to understand the Qur'an, Muslim religious teachers, students and the public at large could refer to the references suggested by this study. It is significantly important to refer to the original sources referred to by *Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan* in order to have a proper and true understanding of the holy Qur'an.

The text *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* does not include any citation and references. Therefore, the theoretical contribution of this study is that this study reveals the sources of references used in text and refine the text which contributes to improving the invaluable work. Thus, the contribution of this study is that this study is able to shed some lights on the shortcomings of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* so that teachers and students using this book as a reference are made aware of it and able to find the truth by referring to the original sources.

In doing so, this study also makes a contextual contribution by revealing unfounded statements written in the text, thus able to shed some lights on any confusion and misunderstanding to the readers. This is a significant contribution because *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* has been used widely as a major textbook in Islamic religious institutions in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. It is hoped that the Muslim religious teachers and students who used this book to understand the Holy Qur'an would understand the true teachings of the Qur'an.

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