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Thematic Analysis of 'Aql in the Al-Quran

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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 simultaneouly. 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 ('Abd al-Halim Mahmud, T.th). 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 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 jurnal, 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 (Manzur, 2003; 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. Muhammad '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 think 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 (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 (Jamal Ahmad Badi, 2017).

In hadith, based on hadith narrated by Al-Ghazali (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 authenticity 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*, *tubsirun* 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.

S.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 Jamal Ahmed 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'thur) 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 1: Open coding and Themes

Surah	Open Coding	Themes
Al-Baqarah	44, Do you order righteousness.. 73. So, We said, " Strike the slain man with part of it. " 75.And perverted it knowingly 76. " 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. 164, Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth....	Sign of morality Sign of morality Sign of disbeliever Sign of disbeliever Sign of morality Sign of creation Sign of disbeliever Sign of disbeliever

	170. we will follow that which we found our fathers doing." 171. The parable of those who disbeliever (reject faith) is as if	
Ali Imran	65, ... why do you argue about Abraham 118. They wish you would have hardship.	Sign of disbeliever Sign of disbeliever
Al Maidah	58. they take it in ridicule and amusement. 103. But those who disbelieve invent falsehood about Allah,	Sign of disbeliever Sign of disbelievers
Al An'am	32, And the worldly life is not but amusement and diversion; 151. And do not approach immoralities -	Sign of hereafter Sign of morality
Al A'raf	169 taking the commodities of this lower life and saying, "It will be forgiven for us.	Sign of hereafter
Al-Anfal	22 Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah..	Sign of disbelievers
Yunus	16 I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then will 16..... for I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then 42, And among them are those who listen to you. But 100. ..and He will place doubt (or obscurity) on those who will	Sign of the true messenger Sign of messenger Sign of disbeliever Sign of disbeliever
Hud	51 O my people, I do not ask you for it any reward. My reward	Sign of messenger
Yusuf	2, Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you 109. any but men, whom we did inspire-(Men) living in human habitations.	Sign of book Sign of messenger
Al Ra'd	4 And within the land are neighboring plots and gardens of grapevines and crops	Sign of creation of crops
Al Nahl	12. And He has subjected for you the night and day and the sun and moon.. 67. And from the fruits of. the palm trees and grapevines you take intoxicant and good provision.	Sign of creation Sign of creation
Al Anbiya	10, We.... sent down to you a Book in which is your mention.	Sign of book of revelation

	67 Uff to you and to what you worship instead of Allah.	Sign of Allah
Al-Hajj	46..., it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts	Sign of disbelievers
Al-Mu'minu n	80.... He who gives life and causes death, and.....	Sign of of Allah
An-Nur	61. It is no fault in the blind Nor in one born lame, nor in one afflicted with illness..	Sign of righteous
Al furqan	44 Or do you think that most of them hear or reason? They are not except like livestock.	Sign of disbeliever
As Syu'ara	28 [Moses] said, " Lord of the east and the west and that between them,	Sign of Allah
Al Qasas	60 it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment.	Sign of hereafter
Al Ankabut	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	Sign of disbeliever Sign of disbeliever Sign of Allah.
Ar Rum	24. ... He shows you the lightening [causing] fear and aspiration,	Sign of Allah
Yasin	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;	Sign of morality Sign of creation
As Shaffat	138 Verily, ye pass by their (sites) by day And by night...	Sign of morality
Az Zumar	43 Or have they taken other than Allah as intercessors?	Sign of disbeliever
Ghafir	67 He who created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop,	Sign of creation
Al Zukruf	3 Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an\	Sign of the Book
Al Jatsiyah	5 ... alternation of night and day and [in] what Allah sends	Sign of Allah
Al Hujurat	4 Indeed, those who call you, [O Muhammad], from behind t	Sign of righteous
Al Hadid	17 Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its lifelessness.	Sign of Allah
Al Hasyr	14 They will not fight you all except within fortified cities...	Sign of disbeliever

Al- Mulk	10.If we had only heard, and had understood (na'qilu)	Sign of disbeliever
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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 (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.

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