

CONVENTIONAL METHODS OF DETERMINING VALIDITY: ANALYSIS FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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This paper aims to identify the conventional methods of determining validity. Then, analyze the methods from the Islamic perspective. The methods of determining validity here refer to methods that can ensure the instrument's validity or measurement and data validity. Instrument's validity or measurement and data validity leads to results and findings which are true. The question is what are the methods of determining validity contained in conventional research? Are these methods appropriate for research related to the affairs of Islam and the Muslims? This paper aims to answer both of these questions through a textual analysis on a few literatures. For the first question, this paper discusses the identified six conventional methods of determining validity. Such methods include methods for determining validity of the instrument or measurement and methods of determining data validity. As for the second question, this paper concludes that the conventional methods of determining validity is inappropriate as the method of determining validity for research related to the affairs of Islam and the Muslims.

Keywords: Validity, Determining Validity, Method, Islam

INTRODUCTION

Basically, the meaning of validity can be divided into two. First it refers to data validity. Second, validity refers to the validity of the measuring device or instrument. Both are inter-related. Data validity is obtained based on the instrument created (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:133; Ghazali bin Darussalam, 2008:61). The higher the validity of the instrument, the higher the data validity acquired (Ghazali bin Darussalam, 2008:61). This

paper aims to examine two things. First, identify the conventional methods of determining validity. Second, analyze the conventional methods of determining validity from an Islamic perspective. To achieve these objectives, this paper discusses the six conventional methods of determining validity and analyzes these six methods from the Islamic perspective.

METHODOLOGY

All these objectives in this paper are met through qualitative research with an exploratory design. This paper uses library research to obtain secondary data pertaining to the conventional methods of determining validity. All data are analysed using content analysis to obtain explicit data regarding these methods. Thereafter data related to conventional methods of determining validity are implicitly analysed within the Islamic perspective by using textual analysis.

DISCUSSION

Western Worldview And Epistemology

The western worldview is primarily a result from Western thought (Mohd. Shukri Hanapi, 2012b:16). Western thought is based on Western epistemology. In the traditions of western philosophy there are two major schools of epistemological thoughts. They are the empiricism and rationalism schools of thoughts (Abdul Rahman Hj. Abdullah, 2010:96). Empiricism or positivism suggests various interrogations and scientific observations and empirical data and facts as a means of proof (Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2008:138).

This school of thought states that knowledge that is objective is knowledge derived from observations, use of senses and data collection. This school of thought does not believe in religion, the metaphysical, speculation, and abstract thinking. Knowledge can only be produced solely by scientific facts, and through observations knowledge could be developed (Reevany Bustami & Elisha Nasruddin, 2008:4).

Moreover, this reasoning is also based on perception. Through perceptions and experiences, thus observations and experiments are carried out. This is formulated by Gideon Sjoberg and Nett Roger (quoted from Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996:6):

"Science assumes that a communication tie between man and the external universe is maintained through his own sense impressions. Knowledge is held to be a product of

one's experiences, as facets of the physical, biological, and social world play upon the senses ".

In addition, Hollis (1994:44) says the same about the concept of perception. According to him perception will be affected by the belief and experience of the researcher when conducting observations.

Then there is rationalism as expounded by Karl Popper. This school of thought stressed that observations cannot be separated by theory or concept. Karl Popper said (quoted from Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996:7):

"The naive empiricist ... thinks that we begin by collecting and arranging our experiences, and so ascend the ladder of science ... But if I am ordered:" Record what you are experiencing, "I shall hardly know how to obey this ambiguous order. Am I to report that I am writing; that I hear a bell ringing; a newsboy shouting; a loudspeaker droning; or am I to report, perhaps, that these noises irritate me? ... A science needs points of view, and theoretical problems. "

On the whole, both school of thoughts start with making presumptions and perceptions. Even though rationalism begins with theory, however the construction of a theory also basically begins with making presumptions and perceptions. Every presumption that is made is still at the stage of wrong or right and not all theories are built correctly. These theories are always in the form of experiments, if there are other theories that could refute the first theory, then the theory is rejected. It is from such thoughts, that Western world view was established

According to this worldview and epistemology, western scholars make this as a basis to discuss all disciplines in knowledge including research methods area. Therefore, the construction of conventional methods of determining validity in research are also based on this worldview and epistemology.

CONVENTIONAL METHODS OF DETERMINING VALIDITY

Generally the identified conventional methods of determining validity can be divided into six methods. Such methods include methods of determining the validity of the instrument and the methods of determining data validity. Both these categories incorporate the types of content validity, criterion validity and validity of ideas.

The methods are as follows; first, is expert judgment. According to Meyer and Booker (1991:20), expert judgment is also called an expert opinion, subjective data, subjective judgments, qualitative data, expert estimates, best estimates, expert forecast, expert knowledge and expert judgment data.

Expert judgment means an assessment made by a group of experts which include answers and assumptions on a research. In fact expert judgment is considered as data (Meyer & Booker, 1991:21). In addition, according to Hammond, Hamm, Grassia, and Pearson (1997:144) expert judgement has three main features which are intuitive, rational and analytical. However, the selection and evaluation of the experts must be made in advance to increase the data validity of the research.

Among the criteria that an expert should have, as discussed by Wright and Bolger (1992:68), are as follows. First, the expert has the experience in the research field studied by the researchers. Second, he has enough knowledge in the field of study. Third, he is a probabilistic thinker and fourth he can cooperate.

The second method is predictive validity method and concurrent validity method. These predictive and concurrent methods are the norm to obtain validity criteria. (Carmines & Zeller, 1979:17; Ghazali bin Darussalam, 2008:62). Predictive validity refers to future forecasts of criteria based on the measurement of existing behaviour. The predictive validity is proven when it can prove that the future forecast criteria really took place (Carmines & Zeller, 1979:18-19; Sabitha Marican, 2006:184). Validity is done twice as well as comparison is carried out (Ghazali bin Darussalam, 2008:62). Concurrent validity refers to whether a measurement is able to accurately predict an individual's situation or status. The result of such measurement is in line with the size of the current external criteria (Gasser, 2005:15; Hilsenroth, Segal, & Cherry, 2003:8).

The third method is a method based on theory. This method is specific to determine the validity of idea. In fact, theory is considered important in determining the validity of idea that is built (Franzen, 2000:37). Theory here can be regarded as a description and explanation of a measurement that is constructed (Cohen et al., 2007: 135). The method is carried out by comparing measurements with other measurements that have developed a theory on the same concept (Sabitha Marican, 2006: 184).

The fourth method is a method of triangulation. This method refers to the use of various methods aimed at preventing the occurrence of bias in a similar study and to strengthen the

level of data validity (Greene, 2007: 42; Patton, 2002: 247). According to Greene (2007: 43), there are two reasons why triangulation methods must be implemented. First, all methods have biasness. This method is intended to balance the bias that exists. Second, the data obtained is limited when using only one method.

In addition, Yin (2011: 81) states that there are also studies that do not have a lot of resources. To implement the method of triangulation, according to him information which can only be obtained through interviews, must be obtained through at least three respondents. The information that can only obtained through documents must be obtained through three different types of documents.

The fifth is the rival explanation method. As discussed by Onwuegbuzie, Jiao, and Bostick (2004: 229) and Yin (2011: 80) this method is to ensure that the results obtained are not in conflict with other results. If the results obtained are in conflict with other results, then the results are rejected. This rival explanation method is continued until there is no longer any conflict or contradiction.

The sixth method is the empirical measurement method. This empirical measurement method refers to tests or measurements that have been tested with a measuring instrument. The measuring instrument can determine the validity of the tests or measurements that have been built. Measurements are carried out empirically to obtain findings. The results are proof of the validity of the tests or measurements that are built. In addition, the findings of these measurements are in the form of numbers or numerical description. An example of a measuring instrument is the Rasch Measurement Model.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

Analysis on The Conventional Methods Of Determining Validity

In general, the conventional methods of determining validity include the methods of determining the instrument's validity, the validity of the method and data validity. Although there are many determinants of validity, in the end data validity is the desired results. However, when the suitability of these methods for research related to the affairs of Islam and the Muslims are analyzed a few things need to be taken into account. First the appropriateness of conventional worldview and epistemology in the construction of the

method of determining validity to that of *tasawwur* (Islamic worldview)¹ and Islamic epistemology. Second, the ability of the conventional methods of determining validity in determining data validity according to the Islamic perspective. Third, the similarities in conventional methods of determining validity with those advocated by al-Quran and al-Sunnah. Detailed discussions are as follows.

The appropriateness of conventional worldview and epistemology in the construction of the method of determining validity to that of *tasawwur* and Islamic epistemology

Tasawwur and Islamic epistemology are integral to every area of knowledge (Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2008:135). *Tasawwur* refers to the description of life that becomes the faith, belief and practice of man (El-Sayed el-Aswad, 2012; Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2008:135). *Tasawwur* provides a true and the real picture of Islamic life. *Tasawwur* also describes the overall principles of Islam truthfully, completely and thoroughly until it fuses with those who understand it (Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2003:21). According to Mohd. Shukri Hanapi (2012:55) the definition of *tasawwur* provided by Muhammad Syukri Salleh (2003:135) is the same as other authors like Haron Din, Mohd Kamal Hassan and Ramli Awang.

In addition, Sidek Baba (2006:186), Muhammad Syukri Salleh (2003:21), and Mohd. Shukri Hanapi (2012b:16) state that the basis of *tasawwur* is Islamic epistemology itself. This point is further reinforced by reference to the four main sources that is al-Qur'an, al-Hadith, *Ijma`* (collective consensus) and *Qiyas* (analogy). Subsequently Sidek Baba (2006:194) puts *wahy* (revelation)² as well as the practice of interacting with *wahy* to produce *tasawwur*. Therefore, *tasawwur* is the result of Islamic epistemology.

Epistemology or the theory of knowledge is called the science of debating in depth two major issues in knowledge, namely, the source of knowledge and truth and the validity of a knowledge (Abdul Rahman Hj. Abdullah, 2010:96). Islamic epistemology refers to *naqliyah* sources, that is, *wahy* and *a`qliyyah* which enrich the intellect and develop the mind (Sidek Baba, 2006:187). These sources are further detailed by Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud (1994:108) who said that the source of all knowledge is Allah SWT because it Allah SWT who teaches man everything known to him. Allah SWT states which bears the following interpretation:-

¹ The term *tasawwur* will be used throughout this paper instead of the translated term in English "Islamic worldview" as the Arabic term is more precise and comprehensive.

² The term *wahy* will be used throughout this paper instead of the translated term in English "revelation" as the Arabic term is more precise and comprehensive.

“He has taught man that which he knew not.”

(al-‘Alaq, 96:5)

“He taught him eloquent speech.”

(al-Rahman, 55:4)

In addition, through *wahy al-Haqq* (absolute truth) can be known and it can also accentuate the problems of *al-Batil* (evil). This proves that *al-Haqq* is obtained through Allah SWT. This is as stated by Allah SWT which bears the following interpretation:-

But they have no knowledge thereof. They follow but a guess, and verily, guess is no substitute for the truth.

(al-Najm,53:28)

As such from Islamic epistemology three of the most important fundamental aspects in *tasawwur* are *aqidah* (faith), *ibadat* (worship) and *akhlak* (morality) (Mohd. Shukri Hanapi, 2012:56). However, there are authors like Muhammad Syukri Salleh (2003:21) who puts the three main issues in *tasawwur* as Allah SWT as the Creator, man as a servant of Allah SWT and universe as creatures of Allah SWT.

Although there are apparent differences on the three main issues in *tasawwur*, nonetheless Mohd. Shukri Hanapi (2012:56) concludes that there is no difference between the two. According to him, believing Allah SWT as the Creator and human beings and the universe are creatures of Allah SWT is part of *aqidah*. While humans enslaved themselves to Allah SWT is included in the category of *ibadat*. Besides that, *akhlak* is a thing that must be adhered to in human’s relationship with Allah SWT, fellow human beings as well as when human beings manage the natural resources within this universe.

As stated before, *tasawwur* and Islamic epistemology is the cornerstone of all disciplines. Therefore, knowledge on the conventional methods of determining validity is based on the worldview and epistemology of the West. Worldview refers to the description of the belief of the people living in the West. The basic principles of life are described in detail. These principles are entwined within the western people that understand it (Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2008:135).

The principles contained in Western worldview are such as competitiveness, value free,

dominance of the sub-structure (economy), anti-dogmatic and anti-theology (Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2008:138-139). From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that the Western worldview and epistemology are not in line with *tasawwur* and Islamic epistemology. Therefore, if Western worldview and epistemology are used as a basis to the construction of the method to determine validity, this is certainly not true according to the Islamic view. As such, the construction of determining validity must be in accordance to *tasawwur* and Islamic epistemology inherent in Islam so that the findings obtained are correct.

Ability of conventional methods of determining validity in determining data validity according to the Islamic perspective.

The conventional methods of determining validity discussed earlier have the basis characteristics of being scientific, assumptive or predictive, sensory perceptiveness, perceptive, experiential and based on common sense. The method of referring to experts for example, the selection criteria of the experts are specialisation, experience, accomplishments, skills and open-mindedness. These criteria are described by authors such as Wright and Bolger (1992:56-58), Ericsson and Smith (1991:2-11). Therefore, the findings are characteristically perceptive, assumptive, predictive and expert experiential in nature.

However, there are issues that are raised. Among them are Meyer and Booker (1991:21) who questioned whether data from experts can be accepted as valid? There are a number of points raised by Meyer and Booker (1991) first; data from the expert is perceptive and experiential in nature, as such the element of bias exists. Second; data from the expert is not proved by observation and is not scientifically tested. Third; the data obtained is in the form of the expert's assumptions. Fourth; whether expert's data is a science?

In addition, Mieg (2001:26) states that data from expert are mainly doubtable. According to him, data from expert differs from time to time. In addition, there are also discrepancies between the assumptions made by the experts with the experiment being performed.

Furthermore there are methods of predictive validity and validity agreement. These methods are based on forecasts, assumptions and logic. The validity of forecasts, assumptions and logic are proven by observation, as discussed previously. However, there are also scholars who questioned the validity which was obtained from observations. According to Babbie (2002:325) the data obtained is limited to data that are visible and accessible to the senses. In addition, the visible data sometimes are unable to understand the truth as well as not having the ability to answer the questions raised.

Then, there is the method based on a theory. This method is based on deduction. This is based on the data obtained which will then be compared with existing theory. As discussed before, the theory begins with speculations and verified empirically. In addition, theory is typically not permanent. If there are other theories that deny the first theory, then the first theory will be rejected. This matter was referred to by Popper (quoted from Reevany Bustami & Ellisha Nasruddin, 2008:9):

“kita tidak seharusnya mengaitkan konsep ‘kebenaran’ dengan ‘sains’ seperti mana kita mungkin fikirkan teori Newton dan Einstein tergolong dalam sains. Tetapi kedua-duanya tidak mungkin benar secara serentak (kerana teori relativiti Einstein telah menyalkal teori Newton). Tambahan pula kedua-duanya mungkin juga salah”.

("We should not associate the concept of 'truth' and 'science' such as when we may think of Newton and Einstein's theory belonging to science. However both cannot be true simultaneously (as the theory of Einstein's theory regarding relativity negates Newton's theory). Furthermore both may also be wrong.")

Furthermore, Babbie (2002:225-227) states, decisions that are made based on empirical experiments are also not capable of reaching the right decisions even though the empirical experiments were made repeatedly.

In a nutshell, the conventional methods of determining validity are based on assumption or prediction, sensory perception, perception, experience and common sense as well as empirical experimentation. Therefore, the conventional methods of determining validity are viewed as being unable to determine data validity according to the Islamic perspective. This inability is due to several factors. First, conventional methods of determining validity use proofs by way of logic (*`aqli*) to validate data. In Islam data validity should be based on the proofs based on *wahy (naqli)* coupled with proofs based on logic (*`aqli*). Proofs based on *wahy (naqli)* are the core and the source of truth in Islam. Second, conventional methods of determining validity are not able to achieve a high level of certainty. As discussed by Muhammad Syukri Salleh (2008:137), the data obtained is only at the stage of *ainul-yaqeen* (sensorial level), that is an assurance that is based on evidence through the senses alone. A little higher level is *ilmu-yaqeen* (scientific level), an assurance based on empirical evidence obtained through experimentation and common sense. It is unable to achieve the highest level of certainty *haqqul-yaqeen* (absolute certainty). The certainty at the level of *haqqul-*

yaqeen requires *naqli* proof.

Third, man is weak. Therefore, the ability of man is also weak in determining truth and falsehood. Humans need *wahy* for guidance in all matters, including the determination of truth and validity of the research. These are discussed by Muslim scholars such as Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi (1995), Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi (1995), Mohammed Mumtaz Ali (2008:9) and (Irfan Ahmad Khan, 1995a).

Western thinkers also admit that humans require another type of knowledge other than knowledge that is scientifically proven. These are discussed by Mumtaz Muhammed Ali (2008:9-10). He quoted the words of Russell:

"... A scientific civilization is to be a good civilization it is necessary that increase in knowledge should be accompanied by increase in wisdom. I mean by wisdom a right conception of the ends of life. This is something which science in itself does not provide. Increase of science by itself, therefore, is not enough to guarantee any genuine progress though it provides one of the ingredients which requires progress "

These words show that Western thinkers also admit that in getting the correct decision requires a knowledge which is called wisdom. Wisdom has the ability to provide exact meaning of this life. Wisdom is none other than the revelations that have guided the people, even the Holy Quran has also spoken about this before Russell.

Fourth, the meaning of validity in Islamic research is different from conventional. Validity in Islam refers to reality (Fazlur Rehman Faridi, 1995:106-107; Sayyid Zainul Abedin, 1995:133). For Irfan Ahmad Khan (1995b:143) validity refers to the truth. In fact truth is further detailed with the concept of verification, workability and usefulness. Validity in conventional research also focus on reality, accuracy, truth, meaning, usability of instrument that allows inference of the data (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011:153; Ghazali bin Darussalam, 2008:61-62). However a clear distinction between the two is that validity in Islam is based on *wahy* that is Quran and al-Sunnah. In fact, *wahy* is also a basis and source prior to conducting the research to obtain validity. This contrasts with the prevailing concept of validity in conventional research that is based solely on perceptions, assumptions, logic and experimentation that are purely empirical. In fact Islam does not rule out such bases, and in fact recognizes such bases as one of the ways to prove the truth of *wahy*. As Allah SWT says which bears the following interpretation:

Say: "Travel in the land and see how (Allah) originated the creation, and then Allah will bring forth the creation of the Hereafter (i.e. resurrection after death). Verily, Allah is Able to do all things."

(al-Ankabut, 29:20)

Look then at the effects (results) of Allah's Mercy, how He revives the earth after its death. Verily, that (Allah) (Who revived the earth after its death) shall indeed raise the dead (on the Day of Resurrection), and He is Able to do all things. (50)

(al-Rum, 30:50)

In these verses, there are two things that can be surmised. First, Allah SWT asks man to travel and see all of Allah SWT creations. Empirical experiments must be carried out to get the knowledge. Second, recognizing and believing that Allah SWT has power over all things. This recognition and belief are the results and bases to the gaining of valid knowledge.

Fifth, there are no enlightened approaches to conflicting data. Enlightenment here refers to the determination of the extent of validity between two data. For example, data regarding the history of Z. Historical data of Z cannot be obtained except by means of in-depth interviews only. There were no documents pertaining to the history of Z. The data on the history of Z obtained from respondent A conflicts with those obtained from respondent B. Respondents A and B are the most authoritative on the history of Z. How to determine the validity of the data between the two? Currently there appears to be no precise method available that can harmonize both these data in the conventional methods of determining validity. Therefore, based on these five factors, it can be concluded that the conventional methods of determining validity is unable to determine data validity according to the Islamic perspective.

Similarities of conventional methods of determining validity with the methods advocated by al-Quran and al-Sunnah.

In al-Qur'an there are verses that could be used as a basis and guideline in getting valid information. First; examine the personality of the person who conveys the information. As mentioned by Allah SWT which bears the following interpretation:

O you who believe! If a Fasiq (liar — evil person) comes to you with any news, verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you

become regretful for what you have done.

(al-Hujurat, 49:6)

From this verse, personality is also a determinant to the validity of the information received. This aspect is not available in conventional methods of determining validity.

Second, refers to *wahy* in the event of a conflict. Allah SWT states which bears the following interpretation:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad SAW), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (SAW), if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.

(al-Nisa, 4:59)

This method refers to *wahy* that is al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah for matters that are conflicting. A good outcome is a result that can be obtained from these methods. The two examples of the method are the methods ordain by Allah SWT to determine the truth of information. Such methods should be used in determining data validity in particular for research on Islam. However, these methods are not found in the conventional methods of determining validity. Therefore, it is construed that the conventional methods of determining validity are not the same as the method that is postulated by al-Quran and al-Sunnah.

Based on this discussion, the conventional methods of determining validity are not suitable in determining the validity in research related to Islam . If these methods are used as the methods of determining the validity in research, the result from the research is not able to achieve the level of validity which can lead to *haq al - Yaqin* (definite confidence). Thus, the methods of determining the validity in research which are in line with Islamic epistemology and *tasawur* are needed. At the same time, these methods must be based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. In addition, these methods are able to determine the validity through the lens of Islam and thus must be able to distinguish between valid and invalid research according to Islamic glasses.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussions at least four things can be inferred. First, the conventional methods of determining validity cannot reach the level of authenticity according to the

Islamic perspective. Second, the conventional methods of determining validity can produce incorrect findings from the Islamic perspective. Third, the conventional methods of determining data validity are not suitable as the method of determining data validity for research related to the affairs of Islam and the Muslims. Fourth, the construction of the Islamic-based research methods should be considered, particularly methods of determining data validity whose basis is based on Islamic knowledge.

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