EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED UNDERSTANDING OF QUR’ANIC VERSES AND AKHLAQ ISLAMIYYAH PRACTICES AMONG SELECTED ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE STUDENTS AT INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

BY

NUR NAAIMATU AZKIYAI BINTI ABDULLAH

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International Islamic University Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and akhlaq Islamiyyah practices among IRKHS undergraduate students. It explored the extent to which the respondents perceived they understood the selected Qur’anic verses and whether this perception was associated with their akhlaq from an Islamic perspective. This research was conducted with four main objectives, namely to identify the various levels of perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and also of akhlaq Islamiyyah practices among the respondents, explore the relationship between the two constructs, and establish whether perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses is a significant predictor of akhlaq Islamiyyah practices. The sample consisted of 137 undergraduate students majoring in Qur’an and Sunnah under the Department of Qur’an and Sunnah, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia. The sample was obtained through convenience sampling. After the validation process by experts, the questionnaire comprised 12 items to measure perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses (PUQ) and 25 items to measure akhlaq Islamiyyah practices (AIP). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and linear regression were used for data analysis. The results reveal that the level of PUQ is high with a mean of 4.70. As for akhlaq Islamiyyah practices, the level is also high with a mean of 3.99. On top of that, there is a significant positive relationship between PUQ and AIP ($r = .350, p < .01$). Lastly, PUQ is a weak predictor of AIP with a beta weight of 12.3%, indicating that 87.7% could not be explained by the model. Based on the results, it is recommended that students of Qur’an and Sunnah should do their best to maintain and improve their understanding of Qur’anic verses and uphold akhlaq Islamiyyah practices at all times and not be inclined to follow practices and ideologies that depart from Islam.
ملخص البحث

قامت هذه الدراسة باستنطاق العلاقة بين فهوم الطلاب المرحلة الباكالوريوس بكلية معارف الوحي والدراسات الإنسانية بالجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا للنصوص القرآنية من جهة ومارساتهم الأخلاقية من جهة أخرى. وعلى ذلك فقد سعت الدراسة لاستكشاف فهم الطلاب المستجيبين لآيات القرآن المختارة ومدى ارتباط ذلك الفهم بممارساتهم الأخلاقية من خلال المنظور الإسلامي. لقد أجريت هذه الدراسة من أجل تحقيق أربعة أهداف رئيسية، وتمثل أساسا في التعرف على مختلف المستويات الفهوم الآيات القرآنية والممارسات الأخلاقية الإسلامية لدى الطلاب المستجيبين، واستكشاف العلاقة بين هذه البناءuxyM، بالإضافة إلى إثبات ما إذا كانت الفهوم لآيات القرآن تصلح لأن تكون مبنيتا أو علامة هامة على الممارسات الأخلاقية الإسلامية. تكوّنت عينة هذه الدراسة من 137 طالب من طلاب الباكالوريوس في خصوص القرآن والسنة يزاولون دراساتهم بقسم القرآن والسنة في كلية معارف الوحي والدراسات الإنسانية بالجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا، ولقد تم الحصول على تلك العينة عبر طريقة العينة الملائمة. وقد احتوى الاستبيان على 71 ماركة خاصة بفهوم الطلاب لآيات القرآن و12 ماركة خاصة بالممارسات الأخلاقية الإسلامية، وضعت للفحص والتحقق من صلاحتها من طرف مجموعة من الخبراء. وعبر موار الاستبيان جميعا لقد تم قياس فهوم الطلاب للآيات القرآنية وممارساتهم الأخلاقية الإسلامية كذلك. ولأجل تحليل البيانات المجمعة والمرتبطة بهذه الدراسة الوصفية تم استخدام معايرة بيرسون للترابط والانحدار الخطي. كشفت النتائج أن مستوى الفهوم الآيات القرآنية لدى الطلاب المستجيبين كان عاليا، ومتواضعا حسبما قدره 4.70، أما بالنسبة للممارسات الأخلاقية الإسلامية لدى الطلاب المستجيبين فقد كان عاليا أيضا حيث بلغ المتوسط الخصافي 3.99 فوق كل هذا توصلت الدراسة إلى وجود علاقة إيجابية مهمة بين فهم الآيات القرآنية لدى الطلاب المستجيبين وممارساتهم الأخلاقية الإسلامية تمتثل في (r=.35, p<.01). أخيرا وخصوصاً تنبؤ فهم الطلاب المستجيبين للممارسات الأخلاقية الإسلامية فقد وجدت الدراسة أن التنبؤ كان ضعيفاً بون "نيتا" قدره 12.3% وأن 87.7% لم يمكن تفسيره باستخدام النموذجن. وبناء على النتائج التي توصلت إليها الدراسة يوصى بأن يقوم الطلاب القسم القرآن والسنة نملد ما في وضعهم للفحص وتطبيق فهمهم لآيات القرآن وإبراز الممارسات الأخلاقية الإسلامية في كل الأوقات، وتحقيق أية ممارسات أو أفكار منافية للإسلام.
I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education (The Teaching of Islamic Education).

……………………………………..  
Muhamad Zahiri Awang Mat  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education (The Teaching of Islamic Education).

……………………………………..  
Tunku Badariah Tunku Ahmad  
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education (The Teaching of Islamic Education).

……………………………………..  
Madihah Khalid  
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

This dissertation was submitted to the Kulliyyah of Education and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education (The Teaching of Islamic Education).

……………………………………..  
Hairuddin Mohd Ali  
Dean, Kulliyyah of Education
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents

Abdullah and Wook @ Zubaidah
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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad S.A.W, the greatest model of mankind.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY
The Qur’an is the only holy book revealed by Allah the Almighty through Jibrail a.s to the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). In general, the Qur’an consists of guidance, principles, and Islamic tenets that are applicable across time and place. The Qur’an is a comprehensive (syumul) set of guidelines that covers all aspects of human life in accordance with human nature (fitrah). The Qur’an can be regarded as the theoretical part of guidance, while the Prophet Muhammad’s (P.B.U.H) life shows the practical example of how Muslims should act on earth.

The first revelation of the Qur’an is found in Surah (chapter) al-‘Alaq verse one. Allah the Almighty says “اقرأ بِإِسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ”, which means, “Proclaim! (Or Read!) In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, who created” (‘Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 2007, p.796). The verse emphasizes reading which is an important step to ensure understanding of the knowledge of Islam will take place. Based on Nouman (2014), the Qur’anic verse which talks about understanding in Surah al-Jumu’ah verse 2, which means “It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom - although they were before in clear error.” Another verse stressing about understanding in Surah Yusuf verse 2, which means “Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur’an that you might understand.” Furthermore, in Surah an-Nisa’ verse 43 which means, “O you who believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying...”
In other words, the first part is about proclaiming. Then the second process of learning, refers to understanding, will follow suit. It is impossible to understand without reading first. Hussien (2007) says that in order to understand the Qur’an, it is essential for the Muslim community to read and understand Qur’anic verses and bring their experiences to the social world critically. By reading, we then understand; and this first step is imperative for all ensuing steps. It is essential to bear in mind the relationship between these two elements. The Holy Qur’an does not merely place stress on reading; reading must be connected with understanding. That is the normal process which every human being needs to go through regardless of how intelligent they are in real life. Hussien (2007) explains:

Read in the name of your Lord here gives two meanings, first is the way Muslims should read Allah’s signs whether in worldly matters or Qur’anic sphere, second is reacting upon experiences by having Qur’an as the basis of reading and understanding (p.98).

Understanding about something takes a special place in teaching and learning, but can have either positive or negative implications. In the same way, reading Qur’anic verses can have a negative impact if the understanding is absent. A Muslim might have bad morals and ethics if he or she does not understand the Holy Qur’an as it is read. It is such a waste since the Holy Book is rich with explanations which can develop the personality, morals and ethics of a good Muslim.

Furthermore, if Qur’anic verses are not properly understood by Muslims, the individual and the family institutions of the Muslim community will be slowly weakened. Issues such as divorce, apostasy (murtad), poverty and other social problems such as adultery (zina) and abortion will adversely affect the Muslim ummah. Abdul Kabir (2013) explains that the basic tenets in Islam include belief in Allah, but if conduct (action) contradicts the belief, the belief can be considered as
incomplete. Even though the focus of the study is on personality, it is undeniably true that conduct is related to Islamic personality. In addition, it will affect the development of Islamic civilization because the Muslim community will not have sufficient people to spread the message of the Qur’an. Since the Qur’an is a Holy Book of Islam, when a Muslim creates a problem, the first thing that must be asked is whether he or she is really following what the Qur’an says.

It is therefore unfair to blame Islam because of individual Muslims’ shortcomings as the Qur’anic verses comprise a book of wisdom and guidance. It is important to bear in mind that the disintegration of personal morality is no small issue, and one that needs to be addressed. Unquestionably, it requires a concerted effort and cooperation between individual Muslims regardless of their background and profession. Hence, this study is an attempt to understand the situation even though it does not ensure any change in Muslim people’s perceptions.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM
Throughout the years, there have been studies which focus on or are concerned about understanding Qur’anic verses. Among them, was a study by Esmaeil et al. (2014) which rejected, modified and affirmed the cultures in the era of ignorance, whether the culture was in line with the Qur’an or not, by using various kinds of antecedent sources such as Tafsir al-Tabari, Al-Tabarsi and Tafseer Al Qartabi. In addition, Esam Eltigani and Ibrahim (2014) mentioned that Al-Tafsîr al-Tawhîdî enables Muslims to understand the Qur’an through the principles of the Tawhîd (Oneness of God).

Additionally, they determine that At-Turabi’s approach in understanding the Qur’an tries to identify the traditional patterns of thought so that we can look differently at the meanings of the verses (Esam Eltigani & Ibrahim, 2014). These three
studies show that Muslims face problems in understanding the Qur’an. This may be the reason why they propose using the approaches found in the Tafsir at-Tabari, Al-Tabarsi, Tafseer Al Qartabi, Al-Tafsir al-Tawhīdī and At-Turabi’s. In order to help Muslims and non-Muslims understand the messages and content of Quranic verses, the ulama proposed and introduced the tafsir. The role of tafsir is undeniably important as it helps Muslims to find the actual meaning in the context of Qur’anic verses in their attempts to understand them. It is generally beyond the scope of normal people to comprehend Qur’anic verses without any proper guidelines.

In addition, the ability, or approach used, to understand the Qur’an is important for teachers because they must fully understand the message they want to convey. Abdul Kabir (2013) stresses that a different approach to understanding the Qur’an is important and therefore must be integrated in teacher education. In addition, there are studies concerning behaviour and personality, among them is one by Abdolbaghy and Mohd Nor. Abdolbaghy (2012), which focuses more on behaviour rather than personality. The author says that a Muslim must look at the principles in the Qur’an as a guideline for proper and decent conduct. Moreover, within Islamic philosophy, Qur’anic and Prophetic teaching were the main sources of teaching good behaviour and attitudes (Mohd Nor et al., 2012). Abdolbaghy (2012) and Mohd Noret al. (2012) share a similar opinion in terms of the Qur’an having a positive connection to behaviour, but not directly to personality. The essence of these studies is important for youth especially in terms of their practices so that good personal habits could be developed.

The Almighty said, “...Are they equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition” (Al-Zumar: 9). Based on the above Qur’anic verse, Aswati (2010) elucidates on acquired
religious knowledge necessary to enable Muslims to differentiate between right and wrong. She refers directly to the Qur’anic message as the focus of her study, entitled “the emergence of blindly following elements to the development of akhlaq reasoning among Malay secondary school and university students”. Differentiating between what is right and wrong and the tradition of not blindly following is especially important for Muslim youth to ensure they live good life.

Despite that, a study conducted by Azarudin et al. (2011) concluded that the attitude of students in Terengganu was one of the six factors which made them poor in reading the Qur’an. Thus, if the intention of reading the Qur’an is not present, it will be hard to understand the meaning. This is particularly important, knowing the correlation between understanding the Qur’an and akhlaq Islamiyyah practices, especially among Muslim youth who will determine the rise and fall of a civilization.

Azizah, Nor ‘Adha and Nurul Huda (2014) state that the current Malaysian akhlaq are openly contaminated by immoral acts, adultery and other more serious social problems, and have proposed Shari’ah law enforcement as a solution. Azyyati, Fariza and Salasiah (2013) conducted a content analysis research on the various social problems of youth such as smoking, theft, gangsterism and bullying. They found that, religion is one of the determining factors amongst youth in avoiding harm and having a good mind and conduct, however, the focus is not on perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and akhlaq.

Currently, there are so many issues related to bad personality of youth worldwide, the Muslim community, and especially the youth who are the focus of this study, are not excluded from this situation,. For example, Muslim youth are involved in crimes (Bernama, 2013; Razali, 2014; Bernama, 2015), stealing (Mohamad Hafizi, 2016; Syajaratulhuda, 2016; Nur Farhana, 2016), cheating (wartawan Sinar Harian,
bullying (Bernama, 2016) even killing (Bernama, 2013; Rosdalilah, 2015) and a variety of other social problems (Roshlawaty, 2014; Wan Amalia, 2016). Since the Qur’an is the highest source of outstanding personality, there is a significant need to explore how the Qur’an influences akhlaq Islamiyyah practices of the Muslim youth. The problem of bad personality amongst Muslim youth is increasing rapidly and at the same time the environmental and living conditions exacerbate the situation, which calls for a solution to this problem.

With that, this study will probe the phenomenon, with particular regard to the relationship between perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and akhlaq Islamiyyah practices among Qur’an and Sunnah undergraduates. Specifically among youth, since the power of gen-Y is proven to be significantly important throughout history as well as in building the nation (Kusnadi, 2013). Based on Abdullah (2014), Muhammad al-Fatih were among the successful Muslim youth who conquered Constantinople, the capital city of Byzantine. So, the success that he brought surely came from his faith on Allah the Almighty, the combination of how he perceived the Qur’an and practice it in akhlaq. That is the essential part that must be brought back into today’s Muslim youth.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

There are four main objectives for this study, which are:

1. To identify the level of perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses among undergraduates studying Qur’an and Sunnah.

2. To identify the level of akhlaq Islamiyyah practices among undergraduates studying Qur’an and Sunnah.
3. To explore the significant relationship between perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and akhlaq Islamiyyah practices.

4. To ascertain whether perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses is a significant predictor of akhlaq Islamiyyah practices.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With regard to the above objectives, the study was designed to answer the following:

1. What is the level of perceived understanding of the Qur’anic verses among undergraduate students of Qur’an and Sunnah in IRK, IIUM?

2. What is the level of akhlaq Islamiyyah practices among undergraduate students of Qur’an and Sunnah in IRK, IIUM?

3. Is there any significant relationship between perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and akhlaq Islamiyyah practices among undergraduate students of Qur’an and Sunnah in IRK, IIUM?

4. Is perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses a significant predictor of akhlaq Islamiyyah among undergraduate students of Qur’an and Sunnah in IRK, IIUM?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will help Muslim youths, specifically undergraduates majoring in Qur’an and Sunnah, within the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, to obtain a better understanding of their akhlaq Islamiyyah practices, such as their relationships with God, their friends, lecturers and others, since these practices may influence those around them.
Having a good perception of the Qur’an with regard to akhlaq is crucial so that people will deal with others according to the Qur’an and not from their own preferences.

Apart from that, this study sets out to motivate undergraduate students of Qur’an and Sunnah to properly understand Qur’anic verses so they can be better Muslims in the future. Incidentally, student reactions to the questionnaire were encouraging. Some commented that it was a good topic and were eager to know more, while others indicated interest in obtaining a copy of the questionnaire for their own use, for example, in usrah (study circle). Directly, it will assist them in contemplating what level of understanding they have, and to what extent they need to improve their understanding of Qur’anic verses. Moreover, this study will provide a better understanding of the relationship between perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and akhlaq Islamiyyah practices among the students.

Another significant outcome of this study is that it will help lecturers, especially lecturers in the Qur’an and Sunnah Department, to enhance their teaching strategies to suit the nature of their students. Furthermore, the researcher strongly feels that this study will benefit the Qur’an and Sunnah Department in improving the courses offered to students, and by designing additional applied (hands-on) courses so that the essence of religion can be practised both in the classroom and in daily life. In addition, it will benefit and support the university’s philosophy regarding perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses as well as akhlaq Islamiyyah among IIUM communities as a whole.

The study can also open the door to Research and Development (R&D) for the design of suitable training for, and skills development of, IIUM teaching staff. It also can be used as a good criterion for career promotion and student admission to the
university, so that a progressive and excellent mu’min can be developed. Furthermore, it will hopefully also benefit all other Islamic communities.

On top of that, Muslims, regardless of their age and geographical regions, institutional parties, affiliations with government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and societies can benefit from this study. Since it is related to their belief system (‘aqidah), the researcher hopes it can also benefit the Muslim community around the globe. Since knowing the Truth is part of ni’mah in Islam, there are many Qur’anic verses continuously reminding Muslims to remember knowing the Truth so it will prevent them from forgetfulness. One of these verses is in Surah Al-Rahman verse 13, which means, “Then, which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?” The same verse is repeated 31 times in the same surah.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY
The first delimitation of this research relates to the sample. The respondents of this study were 19 to 26 year old undergraduate students from the Department Qur’an and Sunnah, Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia. The study chose to examine undergraduate students within that age range because they fall into the youth category. At this age, they are mature and energetic in gaining knowledge. Also, selecting students who are studying Qur’an and Sunnah suited the nature of this study. The second delimitation data was collected from only one department of IIUM, and therefore, the study’s findings could not be used to make generalisations to other Islamic universities.
1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are three terms which need to be defined here. They are:

1. **Perceived Understanding of Qur’anic Verses**
   Perceived refers to: (i) to notice and realize something and (ii) to understand or think of something in a particular way (Steel, 2000). Understanding, based on Steel (2000), would mean knowledge that somebody has of a particular subject or situation. Understanding refers to “constructing meaning about an idea or phenomena reflected in concrete abilities like interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing and explaining” (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

   In this study, it refers to undergraduate student’s ability to comprehend the Qur’an and construct meaning from its verses in a particular way, which means from their own perspective. Perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses was measured by using a self-developed questionnaire. Examples of the questionnaire items are: “Qur’anic verses make me understand about helping the needy” and “Qur’anic verses make me understand about preventing arrogant.”

2. **Perception**
   Perception is (i) the ability to notice and understand something, and (ii) a particular way of looking at or understanding something (Steel, 2000). In this study, the researcher would like to examine the way undergraduate students understand Qur’anic verses and how much they practice this understanding in their lives.

3. **Akhlaq Islamiyyah Practices**
   “Practices” within Bloom's Revised Taxonomy refers to the actual application or use of an idea or a belief (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Practice is about action, rather
than ideas or thought and it also refers to habits or customs (Steel, 2000). Akhlaq, based on Rohi and Mounir (2010), means “morals, ethics, morality and good manners” being derived from “khuluq or khulq which refer to character, nature and moral institution” (p.152). Moreover, Abd Rauf et al. (2011) describes a similar meaning to akhlaq, namely “behaviour and demeanour” (p.250).

In this study, this construct refers to undergraduate students’ internalization of the manners and good behaviours taught in Islam, and their habitual or daily performance of those behaviours resulting from their application of the Islamic principles. A self-developed questionnaire has been used to measure Akhlaq Islamiyyah practices. Some examples of the items are “I use my time efficiently” and “I avoid negative assumptions about people.”

1.8 CONCLUSION

To conclude, there are previous studies that had been done focussing on the level of perceived understanding but they were conducted in different areas of discussion. At the same time, there are not many studies which focus on the level of perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and akhlaq Islamiyyah practices, and none that have Qur’an and Sunnah undergraduates of IIUM, Gombak campus, as their target population. Hence, this is an important area of research which can contribute to the academic world. The study also focuses on two more aspects which are firstly, the correlation between perceived understanding of Qur’anic verses and akhlaq Islamiyyah practices, and secondly the influence of the former on the latter. The researcher used a self-developed questionnaire in order to answer all four research questions in this study. Finally, the discussion of the previous studies is continued in the next chapter.