



AL-ITQĀN: Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies
Vol. 10, Issue No. 2, (October 2025) 1-12
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eISSN 2600-8432

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DEFINITIONS IN LIGHT OF *AL-QUR'ĀN*

Muhammad Sirajul Islam and Sofiah Samsudin***

Abstract: This research explores the meanings and definitions of research, with a particular focus on evaluating scholars' definitions within the context of *al-Qur'ān*. The primary objective is to establish a clear and comprehensive understanding of the fundamental concepts of research. The research employs two methodological approaches: the inductive approach for gathering and organizing various meanings and definitions of research, and the analytical approach for systematic analysis of these definitions. While no contradictions were found between the *Qur'ānic* motivation, aim, and objectives of the research and scholars' definitions, it is evident that the ultimate *Qur'ānic* aim of the research has not been fully encompassed in existing definitions. Consequently, this research undertakes a redefinition of the definitions of basic and applied research.

Keywords: *Al-Qur'ān*, Research, Research Definition, Basic Research, Applied Research.

Introduction

Human beings are created with the curiosity to know the meaning of things. Hence, they ask questions related to themselves and their surroundings, including the environment, societies, biodiversity, resources, and the universe. At the same time, people face numerous problems, and hence, they seek solutions to their problems. It is mainly because, naturally or habitually,

* (Dr.) Head of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Al-Azhar International Grammar School (Cambridge School), Dhaka-1230, Bangladesh. E-mail: write2sirajul.islam@gmail.com

** Assistant Professor, Department of Qur'ān & Sunnah Studies, AHAS KIRKHS, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Email: sofiahs@iium.edu.my

Received Date: MAY 8, 2025

Accepted Date: JULY 14, 2025

Published Date: OCTOBER 31, 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31436/alitqan.v10i2.304>

people love development and change of status, and want to identify with reality, hence authenticating the matter under study. Research is a way of thinking that helps find answers to questions that arise. In modern times, research encompasses various types, including basic, applied, empirical, scientific, quantitative, qualitative, individual, collective, specialized, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and others.

Research is a systematic and intellectual effort to lead a nation towards advancement. It is an effort to acquire proper knowledge, identify ignorance and problems, and move forward towards progress. John W. Best has rightly said, “The secret of our cultural development has been research, pushing back the areas of ignorance by discovering new truths, which, in turn, lead to better ways of doing things and better products.”¹ *Al-Qur'ān* defines itself as Divine Guidance; it is *Hudā* (divine guidance – Qs 2:2). It is a *Mi'yārūn* (standard and criterion) to examine and justify humans' thinking styles, philosophies, theories, research and its methodologies, education and its methods, curriculums, humans' knowledge, beliefs, cultures, customs, habits, economics, business, politics, sociologies, ways of livelihood, food species, and so on, which then reform in the light of divine knowledge.

Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the basic objectives, characteristics, and importance of research by examining the meanings and definitions associated with it. A researcher should have an honest and objective approach in their research to make a unique and timely contribution. Additionally, he should adhere to research ethics. The honest objective of research and research ethics will be reinforced if a researcher has a solid understanding of the meanings and definitions of research. Therefore, it is essential to re-examine the meanings and definitions of research in the current research world, and then reform and redefine the definitions of research as necessary. In this article, the researcher has compiled the meanings of research and scholars' definitions of research, then evaluated them in the light of *al-Qur'ān*, and redefined basic and applied research.

Methodology

In this study, two methodological approaches were employed: the inductive approach and the analytical approach. The inductive approach was used to gather and organize the various meanings and definitions of research, while the analytical approach was employed to scrutinize these meanings and definitions systematically. The inductive approach facilitated the exploration of diverse perspectives and interpretations of the research, thereby enabling a comprehensive

¹ Prabhat, P. and Meenu, M. P., *Research Methodology: Tools and Techniques*, (Bridge Center- Romania, 1st ed., 2015), p. 7.

understanding of the topic. It facilitated the identification of common themes and patterns within the various meanings and definitions, contributing to the synthesis of a cohesive framework. On the other hand, the analytical approach provided a structured method for critically evaluating the gathered information. By systematically examining the gathered meanings and definitions, this approach facilitated the identification of underlying assumptions, inconsistencies, and areas of convergence or divergence. Overall, the combination of these two methodological approaches enabled a thorough and rigorous examination of the research concept, laying the foundation for a holistic understanding and insightful analysis within the study.

Results

The research findings reveal that there are no contradictions between the motivation, aim, and objectives of research as described in *al-Qur'ān* and the definitions provided by scholars. It is evident that the definitions succinctly encapsulate the primary aims and objectives of research, which align with the *Qur'ānic* perspective. Notably, *al-Qur'ān* elucidates both the immediate/present and ultimate objectives of research. In *al-Qur'ān*, knowing the Creator is the ultimate goal of research. Research devoid of ultimate goals is unable to make a comprehensive contribution to problem-solving, sustainable development, and the establishment of peace. While scholars have articulated the immediate goals of research in their definitions, these definitions do not encompass the essence of basic and applied research, thereby rendering them incomplete. Consequently, a realization has emerged that there is a need to reform and redefine research definitions. Therefore, based on the *Qur'ānic* perspective, the present research has redefined the definitions of basic and applied research to include both the immediate and ultimate objectives of research.

Meaning and Definitions of Research

Research scholars have defined and explained research based on their understandings, curiosities, subjects, issues, importance, problems, types, and areas. The researcher has studied the etymological description of research, the meaning of research according to dictionaries, the definition of research according to the elaborations of scholars as well as their methodologies.

Etymological Description of Research

The word “research” is derived from the Middle French “*recherche*”, which means “to go about seeking.” The term itself is derived from the Old French term “*recerchier*”, a compound word from “*re*” and “*cerchier*”, or “*sercher*”, meaning ‘search’. The word research consists of

two syllables, “re” and “search”.² It means to search again. Hence, research involves a systematic investigation or activity aimed at gaining new knowledge of existing facts.³ The earliest recorded use of the term dates back to 1577, and the first known use of the word “research” was in 1593.⁴

Meaning of Research According to Dictionaries

Research, in common parlance, refers to a search for knowledge. It can also be defined as a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. Research is the art of scientific investigation.⁵

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1828) describes “careful or diligent search, studious inquiry or examination; especially investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws. Research is collecting information about a particular subject.”⁶

Oxford English Dictionary (1884) defines “the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources to establish facts and reach new conclusions.”⁷

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English (1989) defines research as “careful investigation or inquiry, especially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge.”⁸

Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (1995) states, “A detailed study of a subject, especially to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding.”⁹

² S. M. Bhome, N. Prajapati, D. Deshmukh-Ghate, and A. Ghosh, *Research Methodology: Tools and Analysis*, (Mumbai: Himalaya Publishing House, 1991), p. 1.

³ Prabhat, et.al., *Research Methodology: Tools and Techniques*, p. 7.

⁴ Narayana, P.S., Varalakshmi, D., and Pullaiah, T., *Research Methodology in Plant Science*, (Delhi: Scientific Publishers, 2016), p. 1.

⁵ Kothari, C. R., *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, (New Delhi: New Age International, 2004), p. 1.

⁶ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed February 11, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/research>

⁷ Oxford English Dictionary. See also: Moerdisuroso, I., and Kherid, Z. Y. *Thesis Writing Model of Art Practice*. (Jakarta: International Journal of Creative and Arts Studies, 2020), Vol. 7 (1), p. 63.

⁸ Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary of Current English. See also: Pathak, R.P., *Methodology of Educational Research*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2008), p. 1.

⁹ Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, accessed May 15, 2025. <https://www.cambridge.org/my/cambridgeenglish/catalog/dictionaries/cambridge-advanced-learners-dictionary-4th-edition>

The meanings of research in dictionaries are interrelated as well as complementary. The meanings of research in the Oxford and Cambridge dictionaries are almost the same. Oxford and Cambridge Dictionaries state a research summary, meaning that Merriam-Webster Dictionary states. The Business Dictionary defines research, outlines the main categories of research, including basic and applied research, and their respective objectives.

Definition of Research According to Scholars

Research can be classified in many ways, based on its methodology, the knowledge it generates, the user group it serves, the research problem it investigates, and so on.¹⁰ Some research definitions are defined based on scholars' understanding of the essentials, objectives, and significance of different forms of research in diverse disciplines and branches of knowledge. Several well-known definitions of research from reputable literature sources are as follows:

‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 1413) defines in his *al-Ta’rīfāt*.

"البحث لغة هو التفحص والتفتيش واصطلاحاً هو إثبات النسبة الإيجابية أو السلبية بين الشيئين بطريق الاستدلال".¹¹

"The literary meaning of research is scrutiny and inspection, and the technical meaning is to prove the ratio of positive or negative between the two things by inference (guess, hypothesis)."¹²

Olin Levi Warner (d. 1896) defines "Research holding the torch of knowledge."¹³

D. Slesinger and M. Stephenson, in 1930, in the *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, define research as "the manipulation of things, concepts or symbols for the purpose of generalising to extend, correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in the construction of theory or the practice of an art."¹⁴

J. Francis Rummel (d. 1964) defines "Research as an endeavour/attempt to discover, develop, and verify knowledge. It is an intellectual process that has developed over hundreds of years, ever-changing in purpose and form and always researching the truth."¹⁵

¹⁰ Sanders, N. R., & Wagner, S. M. "Multidisciplinary and Multimethod Research for Addressing Contemporary Supply Chain Challenges," *Journal of Business Logistics*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (2011), pp. 317–323.

¹¹ Al-Jurjānī, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad, *Al-Ta’rīfāt*, Vol. 1, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1st ed.), p. 61.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Devarajan, G., *Prolegomena to Research Methodology*, 1st ed., (New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 2011), p. 5.

¹⁴ Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, p. 1.

¹⁵ Prabhat, *et.al.*, *Research Methodology: Tools and Techniques*, p. 7.

Clifford Woody (d. 1948) defines “Research is a careful enquiry or examination in seeking facts or principles, a diligent investigation to ascertain something.”¹⁶ According to Clifford Woody, “research comprises defining and redefining problems, formulating hypotheses or suggested solutions; collecting, organising, and evaluating data; making deductions and reaching conclusions; and at last carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulating hypothesis.”¹⁷

Shera (d. 1982) defines “research is an intellectual process, carefully ordered, reflective, and systematic attempt to discover new facts or sets of facts, or new relationships among facts.”¹⁸

Clarke and Clarke (d. 2008) define “research is a careful, systematic and objective investigation conducted to obtain valid facts, draw a conclusion and establish principles regarding an identifiable problem in some field of knowledge.”¹⁹

Devarajan (1924-) defines “research is a voyage in the sea of knowledge. It is a movement from known to the unknown frontiers of knowledge.”²⁰

Martin Shuttleworth (d. 1999) proposed a broad definition of research. He states that “In the broadest sense of the word, the definition of research includes any gathering of data, information, and facts for the advancement of knowledge.”²¹

John W. Creswell (1948-) defines “Research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue.”²² It consists of three steps: pose a question, collect data to answer the question, and present an answer to the question.

John W. Best defines “Research is a systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles, theories and concepts, resulting in prediction for seeing and possibly ultimate control of events.”²³

¹⁶ Sahu, S.K., and Singh, T.J., *Research Methodology: Latest Edition*, (Delhi: SBPD Publications, 2016), p. 1. See also: “Meaning of Research According to Different Authors,” *Study Moose*, accessed May 6, 2025, <https://studymoose.com/meaning-of-research-according-to-different-authors-essay>.

¹⁷ Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, p. 1.

¹⁸ Devarajan, *Prolegomena to Research Methodology*, p. 3.

¹⁹ Safitri, F.L.N., “A Study on Politeness Strategies of Characters in The Big Wedding Movie Directed by Justin Zackham,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa dan Sastra*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2015), pp. 93–107.

²⁰ Devarajan, *Prolegomena to Research Methodology*, p. 3.

²¹ Singh, A., and Singh, B., “Procedure of Research Methodology in Research Studies”. *European International Journal of Science and Technology*, Vol. 3, No. 9, (2014), pp. 79-85.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Safitri, “A Study on Politeness Strategies of Characters....” pp. 93-107.

Waltz and Bausell define “Research is a systematic, formal, rigorous, and precise process employed to gain solutions to problems and/or to discover and interpret new facts and relationships.”²⁴

Payton defines “Research is the process of looking for a specific answer to a specific question in an organized, objective, and reliable way.”²⁵

Redman & Mori define “Research is a systematic effort to gain new knowledge.”²⁶

The abovementioned research definitions do not contradict each other. These research works, methods, characteristics, and objectives are stated. Nevertheless, the researcher thinks these definitions should be evaluated from the *Qur’ānic* viewpoint.

Evaluation of the Research Definitions in the Light of *al-Qur’ān*

Evaluating the research definitions from a divine knowledge perspective is an academic approach. Additionally, a systematic approach is needed to examine research definitions in accordance with justice and research ethics, and to acknowledge scholarly contributions in a manner that identifies research gaps and defines the scope of acceptable contributions. This research examines definitions of research based on the following perspectives.

A. The Qur’ānic Motivation for Thinking and Research

Al-Qur’ān motivates human beings to apply their reason and intellectual power granted to them several times in an interrogative manner—do you not then use your reason? (*afalā ta’qilūn*—*al-Qur’ān*, 3:65; 6:32; 7:169; 10:16; 11:51; 12:109; 21:10; 21:67; 23:80; 28:60; 37:138), do they not then apply their reason? (*afalā ya’qilūn*—*al-Qur’ān* 30:28; 36:38). Since human beings have been granted intellectual power, they are required to use it in their lives.

B. The Qur’ānic Goals of Research

Al-Qur’ān frequently discusses knowledge and wisdom together (*Al-Qur’ān*, 2:269, 3:104, 12:108, 16:125, 62:2), for example, to comprehend the truth, facts, and reality. There are verses (16:78, 17:36, 12:17-18, 49:6, 5:48) in *al-Qur’ān* from where principles of research and its

²⁴ Julliard, *et.al.*, “Art-Based Evaluation in Research Education,” *Art Therapy*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (2000), pp. 118–124.

²⁵ Saha, R., and Grover, S., “Quality and Benchmarking for Research in Universities,” paper presented at the *Twelfth AIMS International Conference on Management*, p. 1816.

²⁶ Prabhat, *et.al.*, *Research Methodology: Tools and Techniques*, p. 7.

methodology could be derived. These verses encourage the proper use of the ear, eye, and mind to expand knowledge, comprehend the meaning of things, uncover what is yet to be discovered, and know the Creator. Understanding the Creator through research into Allah (ﷻ)'s beautiful names is the ultimate goals of *Qur'ānic* research. In addition, *al-Qur'ān* encourages researchers to do research for many purposes, such as to know the truth, to increase human knowledge, to discover new information, to solve problems as well and to know the Mastery of the Creator in the creation of the universe and what is in the heavens (sky, atmosphere, astronomy) and earth and between them. Therefore, meanings, definitions, and types of research have been developed based on research areas, disciplines, subjects, curiosities, problems, importance, objectives, and characteristics of research. This shows a significant harmony between the *Qur'ānic* encouragement for research and the meanings, definitions, and objectives of research as defined by scholars.

C. Acknowledgement of Contributions of Scholars

The researcher has acknowledged that distinguished research scholars often state multiple research objectives in their definitions; however, none of them mention that research is also intended to understand the Creator. J. Francis Rummel (d. 1964) states: "Research is an endeavour/attempt to discover, develop, and verify knowledge. It is an intellectual process that has developed over hundreds of years, ever-changing in purpose and form, and always researching the truth."²⁷ This definition has articulated the main characteristics and purpose of research. Especially, the saying "ever-changing in purpose and form and always researching the truth." This statement highlights that the research area, purpose, and type of research are subject to change over time; yet, they remain committed to the pursuit of truth. However, Rummel does not explicitly mention that "research for knowing the Creator" is his intention. His statement, "changing in purpose and form and always researching the truth," suggests that the purpose of research is also to gain knowledge of the Creator. Indeed, among all truths, the Creator is the All-Truth. The Almighty Allah says in *al-Qur'ān*: "Allah-He is the Truth (the only true Creator of all that exists, who has no partners or rivals with Him), and what they (polytheists) invoke besides Him is falsehood. And verily, Allah is the Highest, the Greatest" (Al- Qur'ān: 22:62).

It is understood from the definitions of research that the primary purpose of research is to discover the truth. Hence, to examine the authenticity of information in this verse also requires research. Of course, researchers will understand the reality of this verse and be able to

²⁷ Prabhat, *et.al.*, *Research Methodology: Tools and Techniques*, p. 7.

distinguish between what is true and what is false through research. Consequently, researchers' belief in the Creator might be fortified. This research has been attributed to 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, a Muslim scholar credited with defining research. In addition, among these scholars, he is the earliest to have defined research, almost five hundred years ago, preceding non-Muslim scholars. The research has mentioned fifteen prominent scholars who defined research; among them, only 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, a Muslim scholar, defined research almost five hundred years ago, preceding non-Muslim scholars. The research has mentioned both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. All are distinguished scholars. The aim is to compile definitions of research and then examine whether these definitions are relevant to the *Qur'ānic* motivation, aim, and objectives of the research. There is no contradiction between the *Qur'ānic* motivation, aim, and objectives of research and scholars' definitions. All the main aims and objectives of research have been stated concisely in their definitions. From the *Qur'ānic* viewpoint, all the abovementioned definitions of research are correct and applicable.

D. Constructive Criticism and Acknowledgement of the Research Gap

The researcher has found in *al-Qur'ān* both the present and ultimate goal of research. Research without ultimate goals cannot completely contribute to solving problems, managing sustainable development, and establishing peace in the world. Scholars mentioned the present goals of research only in their definitions. From a further perspective, these definitions neither mention basic and applied research nor present a sufficient meaning of basic and applied research, which means each definition is incomplete. The researcher believes that research definitions could be reformed and redefined.

E. Researchers must be grateful to the Creator and extend knowledge about the Creator

Today's researchers, doctors, professors, scientists, and philosophers are made by researching the resources of God's creation. These are the status, rank, and position of researchers based on the quality of their research and contributions. For instance, all scientists are researchers, but not all researchers are scientists. Additionally, they have expanded their knowledge through basic research. We are witnessing technological advancement through basic and applied research. They are enjoying an elite and luxurious life because they have access to resources.

F. A Few Research Questions Related to Research Resources

Researchers must generate research questions, such as "Where are these resources from?" Who is the Creator of these resources? How do we show gratitude to the Creator for His endless

blessings upon us? How do we know the Creator? Is it possible, through basic research into resources, to understand the Creator and His Mastery in creating resources? If possible, what theory and methodology should we use in research to understand the Creator? Is it not our moral responsibility to reform the research meanings, definitions, and objectives of research? The researcher believes that the word ‘Creator’ must be included in research definitions. It is not an emotional issue. This matter cannot be further delayed. We must acknowledge that the core subject of research is to know the Creator.

G. Main Types of Research

Academic research is the foundation of all types of research. It has been broadly dichotomised into two main types: (1) basic research, and (2) applied research.²⁸ Other types of research, such as empirical, qualitative, quantitative, experimental, and scientific research, are variations of academic or basic and applied research.

H. Rethinking Regarding Reformation of the Definition of Research

Research scholars must rethink, reform, and redefine definitions of research. The ultimate objective of research must be included in definitions of research, which is to know the Creator and His Mastery in creating resources. Development depends on research; also, sustainable development depends on the objective, type, and methodology of research. To attain sustainable development, a synthesis between sciences and spirituality is necessary, along with harmony between research and religion. Furthermore, environmentally friendly social change must be acceptable. Research definitions must be reformed and redefined to encompass the complete objectives of research.

The Redefined Definitions of Research

Research has been broadly divided into two main types: (1) basic research and (2) applied research. Therefore, the researcher has formulated two definitions of basic research, as well as a definition of applied research, to highlight the main characteristics, objectives, and importance of both basic and applied research.

Basic Research 1: Basic research is a systematic procedure to address three key questions about a research subject: what it is, why it matters, and how we can better utilize it through understanding the creator’s mystery in creating resources.

²⁸ Kaweesi, M., “Scholarly Conceptions of the Nature of Academic Research in Universities: A Literature Review,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education (IJE)*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (2018), pp. 208-229.

Basic Research 2: Basic research is an intellectual exercise of a thorough investigation into a subject with a clear and honest objective of developing acceptable new ideas, theories, and interpretations to contribute to the body of knowledge by achieving present and ultimate goals of the research. In this definition, ‘new idea’ refers to a novel understanding, philosophy, and laws of resources and nature created by the Creator.

Applied Research: Applied research systematically identifies problems, investigates their causes and factual consequences, and uncovers the truth to understand the role of resources and the nature created by the Creator, ultimately developing an acceptable, effective solution.

Conclusion

The culmination of this study highlights the importance of a pure conceptualization of research, underscoring its essential nature. To establish a foundational comprehension of research and its defining features, researchers must delve into the significance and interpretations of research. This process helps clarify the purpose and objectives of research, while also motivating researchers to conduct their work. Furthermore, a comprehensive grasp of research equips a researcher to adhere to ethical standards and relevant methodologies in their research endeavors. Through this inquiry, the researcher has arrived at the profound realization that research definitions should incorporate the term “Creator.” Acknowledging this fundamental tenet, it becomes evident that the ultimate aim of research is to pursue an understanding of the Creator.

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