

## Secondary Databases and their Use in Research in Islamic Economics

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**Abstract.** The use of secondary databases is an efficient and economic means by which to analyze data in empirical research. The speed and relatively low cost of secondary databases in the field of Islamic economics make them ideal for good research outcomes. However, no or little attention has been paid to the use of secondary data in the experimental research in Islamic economics. The aim of this paper is to stimulate the interest of Islamic economics and finance researchers in using secondary data, either as a substitute or complement for primary data, bearing in mind both the benefits and shortcomings of doing so. It is suggested that secondary databases not only offer advantages in terms of cost and effort, but also that in certain cases their use may overcome some of the difficulties that particularly afflict Islamic economics researchers in the gathering of primary data. In order to help Islamic economists respond to this call for greater consideration of the potential offered by secondary databases, the wide variety of forms that such data may take is indicated and a number of themes regarding their use and promising role discussed.

### 1. Introduction

As scholarly activity in the area of Islamic economics and finance has grown in recent years, the “sustained and cumulative” normative contribution of the Islamic economists has been augmented by the introduction of “Islamisation of social sciences”. Bringing with them an orientation towards empirical research, they “open vistas not accessible by other modes of inquiry” (Frederick, 1992, p. 245). As a consequence, empirical research has been gaining foothold, at least by publishing empirical studies in the academic journals such as *KAAU: Islamic economics* published by Islamic Economics Research Centre, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah; *Journal of Cooperation* published by Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC); *Islamic Economics Studies* published by Islamic Research and Training Institute of the IDB, Jeddah; *Review of Islamic Economics* published jointly by International Association of Islamic Economics and The Islamic Foundation, UK and IJUM *Journal of Islamic Economics and Management* published by International Islamic University, Malaysia.

Obviously, one of the main problems in promoting empirical research and its contribution in the field of Islamic economics is lack of data from the primary sources. The majority of empirical studies to date have been in the form of questionnaire surveys, perhaps because they are “typically the quickest and easiest of the tools to use”, if publication is the goal (Bain, 1995, p. 14). Whether the form of questionnaire survey to do empirical study is the most appropriate way of making progress in Islamic economics, banking and finance is a moot point; interviews, for example, may provide greater depth, although access can be formidable. Even questionnaire studies have been criticized on a number of grounds – some of which apply to interviews too – thus casting doubt on the contribution that an empirical perspective has yet made to the development of the field (Liedtka, 1992).

Positive criticisms of existing questionnaire surveys include poor questionnaire design, the use of convenience rather than random samples, low response rates and a failure to address the issue of non-response bias (Randall and Gibson, 1990), and the use of poor scenarios (Weber, 1992). All these are standard issues in survey design, but Islamic economics entail particular difficulties. Suggestions have been made for coping with these difficulties, for example randomized response techniques (Dalton and Metzger, 1992) and the detection of social desirability response bias (Fernandes and Randall, 1992), but little use seems to have been made so far of the available tools.

On the other hand, there is a significant need for empirical research in Islamic economics and finance. Many important issues faced by the Islamic finance industry can only be addressed by experimentation. Experimental work is complex and expensive to perform and cannot be done without data. However, collection of primary data individually by research students, researchers and academicians is a somewhat difficult task. It is time consuming and expensive, therefore many serious researchers do not undertake empirical studies due to these problems. One possible way forward is not to become embroiled in the difficulties relating to the collection of good primary data, but rather to use secondary data; that is, data that already exist.

The aim of this paper is to consider the possibilities afforded by secondary data. It does so by identifying the sources of secondary databases and their use in Islamic economics research. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 indicates the variety of forms that secondary data may take and discusses their promising role. Section 3 focuses on different sources of secondary databases in the area of Islamic economics and finance. Section 4 provides a number of issues relating to the use of secondary databases, including some of the advantages and disadvantages of doing so. Finally section 5 concludes the possibilities afforded by secondary data.

## **2. Secondary Data**

Secondary data can be defined as data collected by others, not specifically for the research question at hand (Stewart, 1984; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). The use of secondary data has increased over the past few years. Firstly because developments in technology and the increase in managerialism mean that more data are becoming available. Secondary data are also helpful in designing subsequent primary research and, as well, can provide a baseline with which to compare primary data

collection results of the researcher. Therefore, it is always wise to begin any research activity with a review of the secondary data (Novak, 1996). Furthermore, the secondary data are already produced for other purposes; they are a cheap source for evaluators, and offer the potential of a large and varied data set which can provide insights into many aspects of the program.

The assembly of secondary databases is not a new enterprise. They were pioneered by the United Nations in the 1950s. Their work was taken further by Kravis (1960, 1962) and Kuznets (1955, 1963), who developed analytical underpinnings. In the 1970s and 1980s, other international agencies added to the supply of secondary data sets: the International Labour Office (ILO) (van Ginneken and Park, 1984). The 1990s saw further construction of such databases, again involving international agencies such as ILO, World Bank, IMF and SESRTCIC etc. The ILO published a compendium (Tabatabai, 1996), as a contribution to the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. The World Bank, which has for years published income distribution data in its annual *World Development Report*, has advanced secondary databases both in scale and in form of dissemination. In 1990 came the development of secondary databases from Statistical Departments as well Central Banks of the Muslim countries. Later the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC) had constructed a widely used panel database for 57 Muslim countries adding information on education, population, political variables, trade policy and income distribution etc.

Most of these secondary databases are essentially organized with collection of computer-readable information in a defined subject area which may be defined in a single subject (for example Islamic economics) or problem oriented (for example environment, pollution) etc. Therefore, secondary databases have come to play an increasing role in empirical research in Islamic economic.

## **2.1 Types of Secondary Databases and their Role**

There has been rapid development in Islamic banking and the financial industry globally over the last three decades. In view of this, there has been an increase in the quality of published information in this field. But there is no specialized indexing service exclusively in the area of Islamic economics and finance, therefore, it is difficult for any researcher or economist to locate or obtain information on this discipline without going through various secondary sources. Some writers of research methods simply list possible sources of data, while others attempt to classify them in some way. The type of secondary databases and their role (in brief) are discussed below.

### ***2.1-1 Bibliography, Indexes and Abstracts***

The bibliographic information in the area of Islamic economics and finance is scattered. A few bibliographies include published and unpublished materials such as monographs mainly in Arabic, English and Turkish languages. The coverage of the bibliographies is not wide (Ali and Ali, 1994). Among the earlier studies, one of the first works was by Khan (nd) which was produced in the early 1970s as an annotated bibliography along with a glossary of terms used in Islamic economics. This bibliography contains

information of 139 items in English and Urdu in addition to a compiled glossary of economics terminology. Later Khan updated the same work and published as a monograph. This work contains a total of 749 items.

After more than 10 years' work on production of bibliographies, Khan (1983) published another revised version of Volume 1 with a supplement. The publisher was the Islamic Foundation, UK and published in the year 1983. This volume represents items up to the year 1983 and contains a total of 749 items plus 121 items in the supplement. Subsequently, Volume 2 of this bibliography (Khan, 1991) was published in 1991 representing contemporary items up to 1988. These bibliographies are properly annotated with an author index and as such should be a better guide to researchers in finding out what they need.

The serious bibliographic works in the field of Islamic economics has also been contributed to by Siddiqi (1978). This is a survey of contemporary literature and contains 700 items with an index related to the books in Arabic, English and Urdu languages. Another work in this area was a survey of contemporary literature in Turkish language by Zaim (1976). It was published as a chapter in monograph, entitled: *Studies in Islamic Economics*, edited by Ahmad (1976). This book contains a selection of conference papers of the First International Conference on Islamic Economics organized by the King Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia and held in Makkah from 21<sup>st</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> February in 1976.

*Islamic Economics: A Bibliography* was prepared by Khan (1984). It was published by the Islamic Research and Training Institute of the IDB and included items from 1955 to 1984, containing more than 600 items in English. Mannan (1984) also compiled abstracts of all publications including books, monographs as well as articles published in the *Journal of KAAU: Islamic Economics* of the Islamic Economics Research Centre in the English language up to the year 1984. This compilation of abstracts gives researchers an overview of works carried out by the International Centre for Research in Islamic Economics and is still helpful for researchers interested in the field of Islamic economics. Furthermore, information on more than 200 PhD/MPhil dissertations with abstracts in the area of Islamic economics, and banking procured by Islamic Economics Research Centre, KAAU, Jeddah is easily accessible online. (<http://islamiccenter.kau.edu.sa/english/>).

Another serious bibliography compiled by Siddiqui (1985) and published in Karachi was exclusively devoted to Islamic banking. Researchers will find that items in this bibliography are also found in the other bibliographies on Islamic economics mentioned earlier. In the UK, Presley (1988) compiled *The Directory of Islamic Financial Institutions*. It listed 506 institutions with coverage commencing in the 1950s. The London-based Institute of Islamic banking and Insurance (1999) also published the *Directory of Islamic Insurance (Takaful)*. This listed more than 50 Islamic insurance companies including a brief introduction and their global addresses.

Later in 1993, the Islamic Research and Training Institute of IDB, published a serious work in the field of Islamic Economics entitled: *A Bibliography of Islamic Economics*. Its database on Islamic Economics Bibliography up to the year 1992 is a modest

contribution to systematization of bibliographic control of literature on Islamic economics. The bibliography has five parts, providing maximum convenience to the users by including several types of indexes (for example descriptor index, subject index, author index and corporate author index). This facilitates the search for information from any angle and arranges records in all sections according to the classification number, call number and so on.

Khan (1995) compiled a bibliography consisting of 1,621 items in the English language covering the early 1970s until 1993. Entries are drawn from published and unpublished sources, including books, articles, dissertations and conference papers. It includes author and subject indexes, and an appendix listing the most important journals devoted exclusively to the theory and practice of Islamic economics.

Islahi's (2005) book, *Contribution of Muslim Scholars to Economic Thought and Analysis* is a remarkable contribution in the area of history of Muslims' economic thought covering the period 632-1500 AD. One of the recent compilations on the subject of Islamic banking and finance was Tahir's (2007) work entitled "Islamic Banking Theory and Practice: A Survey and Bibliography of the 1995-2005 Literature". Tahir (2007) gave a classified bibliography of the Islamic banking and finance literature produced during 1995 up to 2005. The study provides a useful basis for understanding what direction research and practical activity took in the period 1995-2005 and what direction it may take in the years to come. This bibliography is unique in a number of ways and is destined to be an immense help to all students and researchers in Islamic economics.

There is no doubt that these bibliographies provide researchers at least first hand information of the literature on Islamic economics and finance. Some of the writers of these bibliographies have rendered a pioneering service by developing a classification for Islamic economics. These classifications were based on the classification used in the bibliographies produced by the American Economics Association. Bibliographical, indexing and abstracting services play an important role in repackaging the information reported in the primary sources of the researchers. These databases are very helpful to researchers in a particular area of investigation. Some database services are now in machine readable format and some are now also available through online information retrieval databases. As bibliographies are indispensable aids to research particularly in the field of Islamic economics, it is extremely necessary that their updating process should be continued.

### **2.1-2 Full Text Databases**

A relatively new trend in electronic databases is the creation of full text search and retrieval on systems that traditionally have provided bibliographic databases. A full text database contains abstracts with entire text documents such as wire service stores, Islamic legal cases of the Pakistan Federal Shari'ah Court's legal decision/rulings on *Riba* (Ahmad, 1995), Islamic Banks' encyclopaedia articles (IIBI, 2001), journals (such as the *Journal of KAAU: Islamic Economics*, *IRTI Islamic Economics Studies*) or books (for example IRTI-IDB books on Islamic economics, banking and finance).

Islamic law was the first economically successful application area for full text databases in Muslim countries. This is because lawyers often require the full texts of cases together with applicable statutes, Islamic rulings based on Islamic laws and so on. Legal databases related to contracts in Islamic banking and finance keeping growing as the body of knowledge expands with new cases. Along with the expansion of cases comes new statutes and regulations (Hasan, 1984; Niazi, 1990; Kamali, 2001).

Academic research based on this secondary information forms the backbone of the field of Islamic economics. It provides the theoretical framework in which the discipline functions. There are wide varieties of full text databases available with abstracts in the area of Islamic economics which have reached a vast potential for further theoretical as well as empirical research. They range from newspapers and journals full text to encyclopaedia of Islam and Islamic legal databases. These theoretical resources have led Islamic finance and banking to become one of the most professional and fastest-growing industries in the world.

### **2.1-3. Numeric Economic Databases**

Numeric databases provide mostly numeric data such as statistics, financial data, census information, economic indicators, etc. This section focuses on the types of numeric data which Islamic economists like to use. The section also defines the terminology associated with their use.

#### **(i) Time Series Data**

Economic data measures phenomena such as real gross domestic product (denoted GDP), interest rates and money supply and so on. These data are collected at specific points in time. Financial data, on the other hand, measure phenomena such as changes in price of stocks. These types of data are collected frequently. In some instances they are collected daily or even hourly. In all these examples, the data are ordered by time and are referred to as time series data. The underlying phenomenon which may be measured (for example GDP or wages) is referred to as a variable. Time series data can be observed at many frequencies. Commonly used frequencies are: annual, quarterly, monthly, weekly or daily. Time series data run from period  $t=1$  to  $t=T$ . Here  $T$  is used to indicate the total number of time periods covered in a data set. To give an example:

If we were to use annual real GDP data from 1980 to 2007 (a period of 28 years) then  $t=1$  would indicate 1980,  $t=28$  would indicate 2007 and  $T=28$ . Hence,  $Y_1$  would be real GDP in 1980,  $Y_2$  real GDP for 1986, and so on. We use the notation,  $Y_t$ , to indicate an observation of variable  $Y$  (for example Real GDP) at time  $t$ .

The time series databases are generally presented in chronological order. Work with time series data often requires special tools such as *Microfit*, *Win Rat*, and *PC Gives*.

## **(ii) Cross-sectional Data**

In contrast to the above, in empirical study in the area of Islamic economics, an Islamic economist often works with data characterized by individual units. These might refer to people, companies or countries. An example might be data pertaining to many different people within a group, such as the wage of all workers in a certain company or industry. With such cross-sectional data, the ordering of the data typically does not matter.

Observations in a cross-sectional data set run from individual  $i=1$  to  $N$ . By convention,  $N$  indicates the number of cross-sectional units (for example the number of people surveyed). For instance:

An Islamic economist might wish to use the survey sample  $N=1,000$  workers in the steel industry. The survey might ask each individual various questions such as how much they make or whether they have accounts in an Islamic bank. In this case,  $Y_1$  will be equal to the individual's wage or the holder of the Islamic bank account reported by the first worker,  $Y_2$  the wage reported by the second worker and so on. Here, the notation  $Y_i$ , indicates an observation on variable  $Y$  for individual  $i$ .

Similarly, an Islamic economist may ask  $N=100$  representatives from manufacturing companies about their profit figures in the last month. In this case,  $Y_1$  will be equal to the profit reported by the first company,  $Y_2$  the profit reported by the second company, through  $Y_{100}$ , the profit reported by the 100<sup>th</sup> company.

## **(iii) Panel Data**

Some data sets will have both a time series and a cross-sectional component. These data are referred to as panel data. An Islamic Economist may like to work on issues related to growth. In this case, he or she would use panel data. For example:

GDP for many Muslim countries from 1980 to present is available. A panel data set on  $Y=GDP$  for six Gulf Coordination Council (GCC) countries would contain the GDP value for each country in 1980 ( $N=6$  observations), followed by the GDP for each country in 1980 (another  $N=6$  observations) and so on. Over a period of  $T$  years, there would be  $T \times N$  observation on  $Y$ .

Alternatively Islamic economists might like to work with large panel data sets to be created by asking many individuals questions such as how much they make every year for several years.

Here notation  $Y_{it}$  is to indicate an observation on variable  $Y$  for unit 'i' at time  $t$ . In the economic growth example,  $Y_5$  will be GDP in country 1, year 1,  $Y_6$  GDP for country 1 in year 2 etc. In the economics example,  $Y_5$  will be the wage of the first individual surveyed in the first year,  $Y_6$  the wage of the first individual surveyed in the second year and so on.

Studies have been published using secondary databases. These studies range from history of Islamic economic thought, theorising of Islamic economics, studying sources of income inequality, population growth rate, poverty levels, employment and wages,

livelihood systems, environment, sustainable development and so on to the theory and practices in Islamic banking and finance and many other aspect of Islamic economics and finance. In addition, these databases have been used to determine the impact of Islamic banking in the modern financial market as well as how it will become viable in future in an alternative finance industry in its own merits and right, rather than merely a trade. Therefore, the databases discussed above offer the researcher a wealth of information with regards to individual and group discharge data without the worry of too many variables in the databases. These secondary databases provide the most comprehensive sampling of Islamic economics and finance in respect of economy of the Muslim countries and Islamic banks.

### **3. Sources of Secondary Data**

Databases for secondary analysis in Islamic economics research are available from a variety of sources. Secondary data can be obtained from individual researchers, research institutions or commercial data supply companies. Far more common, however, is the use of secondary databases from public sources in Muslim countries. Typically, these databases are purged of any sensitive information and can allow users to be identified directly.

On the other hand there are a wide variety of secondary databases available in the field of Islamic banking and finance from private sources. It is difficult to list them all here. However, a majority of secondary databases contain bibliographies and abstracts, and also index full text (machine readable format) information along with numerical and reference data. A description of some useful secondary databases for research on Islamic economics and finance is provided below:

#### **3.1 Governmental Bodies of Muslim Countries**

Governments of Islamic countries are important publishers of data because national income and expenditure accounts, census and other systematic social statistics are important. Most Governments in Muslim countries have traditionally derived their data from administrative records. More recently developing countries have used sample surveys in line with the USA which led the world in such practice of data collection (Hakim, 1982). There are also many semi-governmental and other official bodies which produce large amounts of data. Many of these data series stretch back a considerable distance into the past. Examples of public secondary databases from a number of Muslim countries' government archives that hold promise for research in the area of Islamic economics include the following:

##### ***3.1-1 Statistical Databases of the OIC Member Countries***

The Department of Statistics of the Muslim Countries or member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) provide broad statistical information available on databases including national account statistics, energy statistics, consumer expenditure, annual survey of the industries, livestock statistics, agriculture, income and savings. These are example of public databases. These data from public databases are easily downloadable from most Muslim countries' statistical department websites. (A

list of the statistical department of the Muslim countries with their websites addresses is given in **Appendix I.**)

### ***3.1-2 Online Databases of the Central Bank of the Muslim Countries***

Central Banks of most Muslim countries provide free online access and downloadable for a vast amount of data related to financial institutions and banking within their countries. ULRs of central bank websites belonging to the OIC are given in **Appendix II.**

### **3.2 Islamic Economics Research Centre, King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia** (<http://islamiccenter.kaau.edu.sa/english/index.htm>)

In the history of Islamic economics, the first conference on Islamic Economics was held under the auspices of King Abdulaziz University in Makkah in February 1976 (Safar, 1396 AH). The conference provided an opportunity for worldwide Islamic economists and Islamic Shar'iah scholars to meet and discuss contemporary topics on Islamic economics. Recommendations based on the outcomes of the conference were that the University should establish an International Centre for Research on Islamic Economics (since renamed Islamic Economics Research Centre in 1977 (1397 H)).

Research and publishing are the main pillars of the centre's activities. In this regard, the centre issued about 100 titles of books, research papers and monographs in Arabic and English. They also published an Arabic and English journal, the *Journal of Research in Islamic Economics*. The first volume of this journal was issued in 1983 (1403 H) and continued until 1985 (1405 H). In 1989 (1409 H), the journal was re-launched as the *Journal of the King Abdulaziz University: Islamic Economics*. The journal has two issues a year and 2007 saw the publication of volume 20. Some articles published in the journal were the outcome of empirical research based on the secondary data which are cited by many researchers in their research and publications as resource materials in the Islamic economics research.

The centre has been conducting and supporting theoretical and applied research in the various fields of Islamic economic and allied areas since 1979. From the year 1979 (1399 H), the centre announces research proposals every year suggesting a large number of research topics in Islamic economics. Many contributions from the Arab and Islamic world as well as Europe and America conducted their research under the supervision and sponsorship of the Islamic Economics Research Centre.  
(<http://islamiccenter.kaau.edu.sa/>).

A number of these research works were translations from English to Arabic and vice versa. Some completed research projects were based on secondary databases with bibliographies, abstracts and indexes (e.g. Siddiqi, 1978; Zaim, 1976; Siddiqui, 1985; Mannan, 1984; Islahi, 2005). Furthermore, many papers published in different issues of the *Journal of the KAAU: Islamic Economics* were empirical studies based on secondary databases (e.g. Al-Osaimy and Bamakharamah, 2004; Shahimi, Ismail and Ahmad, 2006; Yusof and Majid, 2007) which the researchers can use as secondary source. The

centre provides worldwide information support facilities for research and academic communities in the area of Islamic economics.

### **3.3 Islamic Research and Training Institute of IDB (<http://irti-srv2/irtipms>)**

The Islamic Research and Training Institute Information Centre (IRTIC) became operational in 1985. IRTIC was established based on a decision in the fifth Islamic Summit conference held in Kuwait, with the objective of collecting, processing, storing and disseminating information on priority areas of development to OIC member countries using the latest information technologies and tools. These include: Islamic Banks' Information System (IBIS), IDB Database on Experts (IDBDE), Trade Information and Promotion System (TIPSys), Awqaf Databank and IRTI Newsletter. In addition to these facilities, IRTIC has launched Online IRTIC Publication Management System. This system contains bibliographies, abstracts and full texts of books, monographs, seminars proceedings, visiting scholars' research series and occasional papers published by IRTIC in Arabic, English and French since its beginning with free online access facility. The system can be accessed through the internet at this website: <http://irti-srv2/irtipms>. Furthermore, the annual reports of both IDB and IRTI, statistics of IDB member countries including member countries facts figures-2007, key socio-economic statistics on IDB member countries -2007 and information on pocket data card -2007 are available online.<<http://www.isdb.org/irj/portal/anonymous>>

The IRTIC journal, *Islamic Economic Studies* has been published biannually since its first issue in Rajab 1414 H. Currently, all articles published in *Islamic Economic Studies* are available online as full text articles with abstracts. Many academic papers published in different issues of the *Islamic Economics Studies* were empirical studies (for example Ahmed; 2002; Hassan, 2003; Bashir 2003; Donsyah, 2004; Hussain, 2004) based on secondary databases. The results of these studies may be used by researchers as references of secondary sources for further research. *Islamic Economic Studies* is included in the Abstracting Service CD-ROM indexing of the *Journal of Economic Literature* published by the American Economic Association. (<http://www.irti.org/irj/portal/anonymous/IRTIJJournal?guest user=irti en>).

In order to give priority in facilitating empirical research, a Task Force was established in 2006 by the IDB to study IRTIC's role as a knowledge bank. On the basis of the recommendations of the Task Force, the IRTIC will now be able to play a leading role in the acquisition, codification, collection, storage, creation, development, enhancement, sharing and transfer of knowledge and data both for the Bank Group and IDB member countries (<http://www.irtipms.org>).

### **3.4 SESRTCIC Databases ([http://www.sesrtcic.org/stat\\_database.php](http://www.sesrtcic.org/stat_database.php))**

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC) has developed a new Statistical Data Collection and Dissemination Software System in collaboration with the National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Turkey. These databases may be accessed at the centre's website: [http://www.sesrtcic.org/stat\\_database.php](http://www.sesrtcic.org/stat_database.php). The data dissemination side of the system

allows users of the centre's database to download data in a more efficient and convenient way. The centre's Basic Social and Economic Indicators (BASEIND) database provides data on 169 socio-economic variables under 15 categories for the 57 member countries of the OIC dating back to 1970. The content of this database is regularly updated and enriched essentially on the basis of information collected from the national statistical sources. Special reports prepared by SESRTCIC on environmental, science and technology, poverty and agricultural indicators which are also available at the SESRTCIC website.

#### ***3.4-1 Statistical Yearbook of the OIC Countries***

Every year, SESRTCIC publish a statistical year book for OIC countries. The centre also publishes yearly "Information Report Series" on OIC countries in the English language. SESRTCIC is launching the first electronic reference library within the OIC system. This project is being carried out with the financial support of the IDB. It is expected to be instrumental in laying down the base of a more technologically-advanced tool for the library services and enables an enhanced and detailed research and browsing facility to all users.

#### ***3.4-2 Journal of Economic Cooperation***

The *Journal of Economic Cooperation Among Islamic Countries* is a journal of applied research in development economics published by SESRTCIC. It gives special attention to those papers which deal with the potentials for and possibilities of promoting and expanding economic and technical cooperation among the OIC Member States at regional, communal and/or international levels. The journal appears quarterly in English in January, April, July and October. An Arabic version of selected articles appears once a year. The journal is indexed and abstracted in *Journal of Economic Literature/Econlit*. The journal's abstracts were available online from 1987, but all articles published in the journal since 1990 are available full text online.

#### ***3.4-3 Roster of Statistics Experts***

SESRTCIC also publish rosters for environment experts and statisticians. The rosters facilitate communication between statisticians as well as environment experts in the OIC member countries. Rosters are significantly useful for exchanging information and experiences within the Islamic world and promoting technical co-operation activities among member countries. They also play an important role in facilitating the flow of information between the centre and the National Statistical Organizations of OIC countries and other statistical institutions around the world.

(Source: [http://www.sesrtcic.org/stat\\_database.php](http://www.sesrtcic.org/stat_database.php))

### **3.5 The United Nations, World Bank and ILO**

The assembly of cross-country data sets namely United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East on income distribution was pioneered in 1967. In the 1970s and 1980s, other international agencies added to the supply of secondary data sets: International Labour Organization (Lecaillon et al, 1984; van Ginneken and Park, 1984)

and the World Bank (Jain, 1975). The 1990s saw further construction of such data sets. The ILO published a compendium (Tabatabai, 1996), as a contribution to the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. The World Bank, which has for years published income distribution data in its annual World Development Report, has advanced secondary data sets both in scale and in form of dissemination. The Deininger and Squire (DS) data set has been made freely available at the World Bank's Website<sup>2</sup>.

### **3.6 Financial Databases**

Financial data of companies or stock related information are now easily available in the form of secondary databases. A number of items of quite detailed information, admittedly for the whole company, are available, as are some data on the company divided into geographical or business segments. Other sources of data can be used in tandem.

While significant progress has been made in the collection of financial data and security prices as exemplified in the development of DataStream International<sup>3</sup>, Bloomberg.com<sup>4</sup> and the Centre for Research in Security Prices (CRSP)<sup>5</sup> of Chicago University databases have had a tremendous impact on the field of Islamic finance. The DataStream, Bloomberg and CRSP databases include data from companies listed in the Dow Jones Islamic Indexes, FTSE Islamic Indexes. They also include data from Shari'ah indexes from different Stock Exchanges around the world, data from the Islamic mutual funds' return index as well as data from dividend and price earning ratios. The savings and investment related information of many Islamic banks is also available in the databases.

### **3.7 Islamic Banks and Companies**

In order to conduct performance and business related study of the Islamic banks or business corporations, most important sources of secondary data will be Islamic banks and corporations themselves. Much material is publicly available, particularly in the annual report and accounts. Some of these are "texts", such as the Chairman's statement and other information on operating activities, which again can be analysed at more than one level (Gowler and Legge, 1986), perhaps using the tools of content analysis.

### **3.8 Exclusive Databases on Islamic Banking and Finance Information**

A number of research centres and commercial organizations are working in the areas of Islamic banking and finance information and research. These institutions have been providing databases and information on Islamic banking and finance. Some of the important databases in the field of Islamic banking and finance studies are given below:

#### **3.8-1 IPF Databank (<http://ifptest.law.harvard.edu/ifphtml/>)**

The Islamic Finance Project DataBank (IFP DataBank) is a comprehensive collection of research information pertaining to the increasingly important field of Islamic finance. It aims to assist academics, researchers and professionals who require relevant academic information related to Islamic economics and finance, and pertinent Shari'ah rulings and

sources. Information from these databases is collected from publicly available sources, private firms and other important sources. The largest section of the IFP DataBank is devoted to bibliographic data from publications, including articles, books, book chapters, conference papers and theses. A number of records contain originally prepared abstracts.

### **3.8-2 *IBF Net: The Islamic Business and Finance Network* (<http://www.iiibf.org>)**

The Islamic Business and Finance Network offers its members an excellent opportunity to keep abreast of new events through a network of industry professionals. They can access a rich e-library and discuss matters of importance on its Online Forum containing over 5,000 members. This network has an e-journal and scholar database. Its e-library provides research assistance in the area of Islamic laws, economics, business and finance.

### **3.8-3 *General Council of Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions (CIBAFI) Database* (<http://www.cibafi.org/>)**

The General Council of Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions (CIBAFI) has prepared a directory of Islamic financial institutions and important personalities in Islamic finance. This information is available as an online secondary database.

### **3.8-4 *Islamic Finance Information Service (IFIS) Databases* (<http://ifis.securities.com>)**

Islamic Finance Information Service (IFIS) of Internet Securities International (ISI) provides Islamic finance industry information. This database is designed to meet the requirements of Shari'ah compliant finance industry participants and researchers. The IFIS includes following information in their databases.

- § Islamic financial guidelines and legal content from regulatory bodies
- § League tables for Islamic bonds, deals and transactions detailing structure of issues, issuers, term sheets and conditions
- § Rankings of the top industry players
- § A database on top global law firms involved in Islamic finance
- § Shari'ah rulings, financial market information, current news, events, academic and research papers.

Access to the IFIS website is at <http://ifis.securities.com>

## **3.9 Collection of Shari'ah Rulings**

Databases on collection and compilation of Shari'ah rulings are made available from some organizations or Islamic banks. For example Dallah al-Baraka Research Centre<sup>6</sup> has been involved in research relevant to the collection of fatwa rulings of its Shari'ah board. The International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) has undertaken efforts to pass major rulings in Arabic language on Islamic banking<sup>7</sup>. These efforts are compiled in book volumes accessible through the libraries of many Universities and Institutions. Al Rajhi Research Centre in Riyadh and the Kuwait Finance House in Kuwait have

completed research projects on collection and compilation of fatwa rulings passed by their Shari‘ah board members.

### 3.10 The Press

Newspapers are the most robust online information sources. There are over 200 online newspapers published by 57 OIC members’ countries. These newspapers cover exclusive economic news and share price index data from national, provincial, local and sectoral perspectives. Their usefulness depends on inter alia and the extent and perspective from which they are viewed.

Many magazines and newsletters exclusively devoted to Islamic banking and finance news are being published in different parts of the world. Table 1 provides a selected list of Islamic finance magazines and newsletters that have appeared in the last two to three years.

Table (1). Recent List of Islamic Finance Magazines and Newsletters

	Magazine title	Frequency	Website
1.	<i>Business Islamica</i>	Monthly	<a href="http://www.islamica-me.com">http://www.islamica-me.com</a>
2.	<i>Islamic Business &amp; Finance</i>	Monthly	<a href="http://www.cpifinancial.net/">http://www.cpifinancial.net/</a>
3.	<i>Capital</i>	Monthly	<a href="Http://www.capital-me.com">Http://www.capital-me.com</a>
4.	<i>Islamic Finance News</i>	Weekly	<a href="http://www.islamicfinancenews.com">www.islamicfinancenews.com</a>
5.	<i>Journal of Muamalat and Islamic finance research</i>	Yearly	<a href="http://fem.kuim.edu.my/jmifr/">http://fem.kuim.edu.my/jmifr/</a>
6.	<i>Investors Magazine</i>	Monthly	<a href="http://mosgcc.com/english/">http://mosgcc.com/english/</a>
7.	<i>Islamic Finance Today</i>	Quarterly	<a href="http://www.pioneer-publications.com/">http://www.pioneer-publications.com/</a>
8.	<i>Islamic Finance.de - Executive News</i>	Monthly	<a href="http://www.islamicfinance.de/">http://www.islamicfinance.de/</a>
9.	<i>Middle East Insurance Review</i>	Monthly	<a href="http://www.meinsurancereview.com/index.asp">http://www.meinsurancereview.com/index.asp</a>
10.	<i>Islamic Finance Digest</i>	Occasionally	<a href="http://www.klbs.com.my/subpage8.htm">http://www.klbs.com.my/subpage8.htm</a>
11.	<i>Halal Journal</i>	Monthly	<a href="http://www.halaljournal.com/">http://www.halaljournal.com/</a>
12.	<i>New Horizon</i>	Monthly	<a href="http://www.newhorizon-islamicbanking.com/">http://www.newhorizon-islamicbanking.com/</a>
13.	<i>Al Huda</i> (from Jan. 2007)	Fortnightly	<a href="http://www.alhudacibe.com/">http://www.alhudacibe.com/</a>
14.	<i>Islamic Banker</i>	Monthly	London, UK
15.	<i>American Journal of Islamic Finance</i>	Monthly	<a href="http://ajif.org/index.asp">http://ajif.org/index.asp</a>

### 3.11 E-journals Management Groups

Information on accessibility of web-based databases became very popular from 2001. The *EBSCOhost*, *Emerald*, *EconLit*, *ProQuest*, *Ingenta*, *JSTOR*, *Standard and Poors* (S&P), *Swets* and other groups launched e-journals which help researchers make better informed procurement of abstracts and full text databases. These databases provide economic and law related articles in primarily PDF formats. Among the vendors that provided image-based documents in the area of economics and finance, *EconLit*, *JOSTOR* and *Swets* deserve special mention. These e-journal management groups function as electronic archives with indexes for journal back issues. These are issues that, for the most part, have never existed in digital form. In the respect of online availability of abstracts of the PhD thesis, the University Microfilms Inc (UMI) launched its services long before e-journals. Faced with the task of digitizing masses of documents, they chose to compromise creating a solution that was economically feasible, contractually permissible and true to the authentic look and feel of the original print articles.

There are vast numbers of secondary databases. Researchers in the area of Islamic economics, banking and finance are likely to find the information they are looking for in one of the above mentioned sources of existing databases. However, once a researcher decides to use a specific secondary database, they are subjected to the methods and limitations chosen by the original researchers. For instance, variables are predetermined and the method of data collection and data entry are fixed. Therefore, it is crucial that a researcher considers using a secondary database to the best of its potential uses.

## 4. Using Secondary Data

Usually the research design in the area of Islamic economics, banking and finance will be such that the researchers will not be required to collect their own data but can test their research hypotheses using databases mentioned above. They can also use databases already existing among the wealth of data available in the public realm. These data might be small, simple, micro-level data such as a public opinion poll, or a survey of social attitude or preference attitudes towards investment in the different type of products or Islamic funds. Or they may be more extensive and complex data, such as Current Population Surveys or the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Alternatively, many macro-level data sets (geographically aggregated data such as the County Business Patterns or the Islamic Financial Statistics) are also available. Regardless, the challenge with secondary data is to assure the researchers themselves that the data appropriately addresses their research questions in such a way that the researchers do not have the dilemma of altering their hypothesis to fit the data.

### 4.1 Advantages of Secondary Data

There are a number of advantages of using secondary data in research:

- Secondary data analysis can be carried out rather quickly when compared to formal primary data gathering and analysis exercises.

- When good secondary data is available, researchers save time and money by making good use of available data rather than collecting primary data, thus avoiding duplication of effort.
- Using secondary data provides a relatively low-cost means of comparing the level of well-being of different political units (for example states, departments, provinces and counties). However, it should be kept in mind that data collection methods vary (between researchers, countries and departments) which may impair the comparability of the data.
- Depending on the level of data desegregation, secondary data analysis lends itself to trend analysis as it offers a relatively easy way to monitor change over time.
- It informs and complements primary data collection, saving time and resources often associated with over-collecting primary data.
- Persons with limited research training or technical expertise can be trained to conduct a secondary data review (Beaulieu, 1992).

#### **4.2 Disadvantages of Secondary Data**

The disadvantages of using secondary data in research are as follows:

- Secondary data helps to understand the condition or status of a group, but compared to primary data they are imperfect reflections of reality. Without proper interpretation and analysis it does not help to understand why something is happening.
- The researcher reviewing the secondary data can easily become overwhelmed by the volume of secondary data available, if selectivity is not exercised.
- It is often difficult to determine the quality of some data.
- Sources may conflict with each other.
- Because secondary data are usually not collected for the same purpose as in the original research, the goals and purposes of the original researcher can potentially bias the study.
- Because the data were collected by other researchers, and they decide what to collect and what to omit, all information desired may not be available (Israel, 1993).
- Much of the data available are only indirect measures of problems that exist in countries and regions.
- Secondary data can not reveal individual or group values, beliefs or reasons that may be underlying current trends (Beaulieu, 1992).

#### **4.3 Understanding the Nature of Data**

The fact that the researcher has not been involved in gathering data means that effort needs to be expended in understanding the nature of the data and how they have been assembled. This is as much to appreciate what the data do not reveal as what they do reveal. This might appear to be an obvious point for something technical such as accounting numbers, but it applies just as much to other data. Without a proper appreciation of the underlying method, there is a danger that the researcher will misuse the data, perhaps drawing unwarranted conclusions. A particular problem is the risk of bias – deliberate or unintentional – in the data, which means that they should be evaluated carefully (Stewart, 1984).

To understand the nature of the data being used, the researcher may need to expend effort in processing them into a form suitable for his or her own purposes. This can sometimes be quite simple. For example, in the case of a study conducted by Hassan and Latiff (2006) which was concerned with the relationship between the Islamic charities and corporate sectors, investigating Islamic charitable (voluntary) organizations' choice of banker. The study meant simply working through a directory of charities and making entries on an analysis sheet, from which they derived an aggregate summary. Sometimes in some cases the process may be in the opposite direction, with the researcher disaggregating, and then reanalysing, the published material.

#### **4.4 Theory and Data**

One consequence of the loss of control over the generation of secondary data is that, notwithstanding the researcher's attempts to manipulate the data into a suitable form, having been generated for another purpose they are likely to address less adequately than desired the theoretical concerns of the researcher. This raises the issue of the relationship between research and theory development, which has worried a number of reviewers of empirical research using primary data too (Randall and Gibson, 1990; Robertson, 1993).

For example, the research of Hassan and Latiff (2006) on Islamic ethical investors, referred to earlier, was unable to address a number of topics, such as equal opportunities (it is a matter of corporate social responsibility), that had been mentioned in the literature simply because they were not included in the information intermediary's service at that time. The information service did not offer relevant criteria of ethical screening which could be used to exclude companies from investment portfolios. Thus secondary data are likely to map only approximately onto the researcher's ideal research questions, hypotheses or concepts, and the researcher needs both to bear in mind the extent of that approximation and to make readers aware of it when the results are written up for publication.

Hakim (1982), has an interesting alternative perspective on this issue, suggesting that relying on secondary data rather than gathering primary data can actually benefit the development of theory. "One advantage of secondary analysis is that it forces the researcher to think more closely about the theoretical aims and substantive issues of the study rather than the practical and methodological problems of collecting new data. The time and effort involved in obtaining funds for and organizing a new survey can be devoted instead to the analysis and interpretation of results" (Hakim, 1982, p. 16). This point is particularly likely to have some validity if there is a fixed time budget.

In fact that secondary data exist prior to the conduct of the research means that they can additionally play a serendipitous role in the initiation of research in Islamic economics and finance. This is particularly important given the relatively small amount of empirical research that has been conducted in Islamic economics and finance to date. An over-reliance on published research for providing ideas for new studies might lead to an undesirably narrow and somewhat incestuous development of the Islamic economics literature. Other sources of inspiration are needed, and secondary data are particularly useful because by their very nature they contain the seeds of the solution to

the question that they stimulate in the mind of the researcher in the area of Islamic economics and finance.

An example of work prompted by data is previously mentioned research conducted by Hassan and Latiff (2006) on the relationship between bank and Islamic charitable (voluntary) organizations. While consulting a UK publication entitled *Charities Digest*, Hassan and Latiff (2006) noticed that the entries for many charities contained information on their bankers. This led to their wondering which bank, if any, had an unusually large number of the larger charities as customers. This was not a profound thought perhaps, but one which, prompted by secondary data, led to a successful small project exploring one aspect of the relationship between the corporate and voluntary sectors. The data in *Charities Digest* were used to form estimates of the market shares of the banks including an Islamic bank. The estimates were then subjected to statistical analysis.

If secondary data do not prompt a particular research endeavour, consulting secondary sources may be particularly useful in the early stages of research in Islamic economics and finance for generating sensible hypotheses. The knowledge and understanding of this particular area of Islamic economics can both constrain and stimulate research questions in a better way than if reliance is placed upon existing academic literature in Islamic economics alone, even if those data are not subsequently fundamental to the prosecution of the research. Furthermore, if the secondary data are the outcome of some non-academic process there is less likelihood that analysis of them will be deemed irrelevant by practitioners; some non-academic party has already deemed them worth collecting. Against this positive view of secondary data, though, should be set the risk that the availability of good data can come to dominate the research agenda of Islamic economics and finance.

Stock market studies in accounting and finance might be a case in point, where the availability of large data sets over a long time frame holds a strong attraction for researchers, particularly those (for example Dow Jones Islamic Indexes, FTSE Islamic global indices and so on) wishing to prove themselves capable of using Islamic ethical screening research tools. The danger is that the nature of the database – what it includes and omits – comes to exert too strong a hold over the development of the academic agenda of Shari‘ah rules application in financial market. In particular, there is a risk that theory development is stunted or misdirected. However, data-driven research might be deemed preferable to methodology-driven research – which should be the case in some areas of Islamic banking and finance.

#### **4.5 Databases and Islamic Economist – An Alliance**

There has been much progress over the years as a result of enormous increase in the secondary databases available in the area of Islamic economics and finance, the ability of a researcher to process them and in his or her understanding of their limitations. Especially noteworthy have been the development of various longitudinal micro data sets (such as SESRTCIC Databases, income distribution data in the annual World Development Reports, national sample surveys from the government of Muslim

countries and others), the computerization of more standard databases and their move towards easy accessibility at the micro, individual responses level.

While significant progress has been made in the collection of Islamic financial data and security prices, researchers are still in infancy as far as their ability to interrogate and get reasonable answers about other aspects of firm behaviour. Most of the available micro data at the firm level are based on legally required responses to questions from various regulatory agencies that do not have research interests exactly in the same mind as the researcher.

There have been a number of extensive longitudinal micro data sets of secondary sources that have opened a host of new possibilities for analysis and also raised a whole range of new issues and concerns. After a decade or so of studies that try to use such data, the results have been somewhat disappointing. The encounters between Islamic economists and their data are frustrating and ultimately unsatisfactory because the data are incomplete and imperfect. There are at least three interrelated and overlapping causes of difficulty:

- (i) the theory is incomplete or incorrect;
- (ii) the units are wrong, either too high a level of aggregation or with no way of allowing for heterogeneity of responses; and
- (iii) the data are inaccurate on their own terms, incorrect relatives to what they purport to measure.

The average applied study in Islamic economics has to struggle with all these possibilities.

At the macro level and even in the usual industry level study, it is common to assume away the underlying heterogeneity of the individual actors and analyse data with the framework of the representative firm or average individual. This process ignores the aggregation difficulties associated with such concepts. In analysing micro data, it is much more difficult to evade this issue and hence much attention is paid to various individual effects and heterogeneity issues. This is where longitudinal data can be of help in their ability to control and allow additive individual effects. On the other hand (as is the case in most other aspects of economics) there is no such thing as a free lunch in the area of research Islamic economics: going down to the individual level exacerbates both the problems with the left-out variables and the importance of errors in measurement. Variables such as age, land quality or the occupational structure of an enterprise are much less variable in aggregate. However, ignoring the secondary data at the micro level can be quite costly.

The use of secondary data allows for the possibility of conducting longitudinal research in Islamic economics and finance. It is not just a question of cost and effort, although those are important considerations; if Islamic economists are only just starting genuinely longitudinal studies based on primary research it will be some time before useful results are forthcoming if secondary data are not used too.

## 5. Conclusion

Secondary data are already available and have been collected for some purpose other than the problem at hand. Secondary databases in the field of Islamic economics come from sources internal to the universities, Islamic economics research institutes and Islamic banks or companies such as accounting and sales records, and from external sources such as government of the Muslim countries, industries, and Islamic finance industry research sources.

This paper has indicated that there are a number of advantages (such as cost and availability) and disadvantages in the use of secondary data. The precise balance of which will tend to be contingent upon certain features of the situation being considered, not least the particular type of secondary data and the feasibility and cost of gathering primary data. But as a general rule it seems to be the case that researchers are not as aware as they might be of the potential of secondary data for providing valuable insights into a whole range of questions in a cost-effective manner.

The most of the empirical studies in Islamic economics and finance to date have drawn upon primary data, particularly in the form of responses to questionnaire surveys, although there are some examples of the use of secondary data. The secondary databases discussed in the study can potentially offer the researchers an opportunity to analyse different variables in Islamic economics and finance research.

The aim of this paper has been to stimulate and guide further use of secondary data by Islamic economic researchers. Perhaps a heightened awareness of the value of secondary data will encourage some researchers to conduct empirical research who have been holding back because they do not have the necessary resources to do good primary research or are intimidated by the problems of primary data collection in a sensitive field such as Islamic economics. There is certainly plenty of material out there. For this reason this paper has paid more attention than most on research methods to indicate the various types of secondary data that exist. It also reflects on areas which may serendipitously stimulate potential researchers to initiate new avenues of research in Islamic economics and finance which might not be obvious from the studies published to date.

While it has to be admitted that for some research questions secondary data will be but poor proxies for, or at best complements of, primary data, there are also situations in which secondary data may have attributes which render them highly attractive when compared with interview or questionnaire results. There are two particularly valuable features of secondary data that seem worthy of reiteration:

- (i) the possibility of eavesdropping, providing unobtrusive access to sensitive situations or to the past, perhaps for the conduct longitudinal studies;
- (ii) the way in which secondary data not only facilitate the pursuit of the empirical research agenda but also expand it as researchers perceive in databases interesting research issues or novel avenues of enquiry.

Even in a new academy shaped by the forces of globalization, it is believed that the effective research in the field of Islamic economics and finance will be that which is acknowledged by those in a field (Siddiqi, 2006). What qualities of research lead to such approval? Four important aspects of research findings which influence that external judgment come quickly to mind: (i) the quality of research design, (ii) use of information or data sets in the empirical evidence, (iii) dissemination and publication of the findings and (iv) the potential for having a beneficial impact on others. The databases discussed in this study are excellent examples of secondary data and therefore recommended to be used by the Islamic economists to further their studies in the field of Islamic economics and finance.

### Notes

1. The webpage sources/URLs cited in the paper were accessed by the author during October to November 2007.
2. <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/0,,contentMDK:20701077,pagePK:64214825,piPK:64214943,theSitePK:469382,00.html>
3. <http://www.datastream.com/>
4. [http://www.bloomberg.com/markets/index.html?Intro=intro\\_markets](http://www.bloomberg.com/markets/index.html?Intro=intro_markets)
5. <http://www.crsp.com/>
6. Website for free down loading: <http://www.abg.bh/English/downloads2.htm>
7. Website <http://www.oic-oci.org/>

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## استخدام قواعد البيانات الثانوية في البحث في الاقتصاد الإسلامي

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معهد ماركفيليد للتعليم العالي - ليستر - المملكة المتحدة

**المستخلص:** يمثل استخدام قواعد البيانات الثانوية لتحليل المعطيات في البحث التجريبي أداة فعالة واقتصادية وذلك للميزات والخصائص التي تتصف بها. فالسرعة والكلفة البسيطة في استخدام هذه القواعد في حقل الاقتصاد الإسلامي تجعلان منها أداة مثلى في تحقيق نتائج بحثية جيدة. على الرغم من هذا فإن استخدام البيانات الثانوية في البحوث الميدانية لم تعر له العناية اللازمة، هذا إن وجدت، في مجال أبحاث الاقتصاد الإسلامي.

هذه الورقة تهدف إلى تحفيز ولفت أنظار الباحثين في الاقتصاد الإسلامي لأهمية استخدام المعطيات الثانوية كمكمل أو كبديل للمعطيات الأولية، آخذين في عين الاعتبار المزايا والسلبيات التي ترافق عملية الاستخدام هذه. فمن المؤمل أن مزايا استخدام قواعد البيانات الثانوية سوف لن يكون مقصوراً على مسألتي الكلفة والجهد، بل في بعض الحالات يؤدي استخدامها إلى التغلب على الصعوبات التي تعترض سبيل الباحثين في الاقتصاد الإسلامي في عملية جمع البيانات الأولية. من أجل مساعدة الاقتصاديين المسلمين للوقوف على الإمكانيات الهائلة التي تتيحها هذه القواعد فسيتم التعرض للأشكال المتنوعة لهذه القواعد، وطرائق استخدامها في مجالات متنوعة مع مناقشة دورها الواعد.