



RESEARCH ARTICLE

JUST MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION IN THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW

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Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate relationship between justice, just measurement, and the Islamic worldview. It explores how the concept of justice in Islam extends beyond mere convenience, gaining spiritual significance with the advent of the religion. Precise measurements play a vital role in various acts of devotion, from determining prayer directions to calculating times for obligatory and non-obligatory rituals. The paper also discusses Islamic perspective on life as a series of tests, where evaluation and measurement are pivotal. The accumulation of deeds, intentions, and actions is meticulously recorded, serving as both incentives and deterrents. The consequences of these measures are experienced in the Hereafter, influencing one's eternal fate. Self-evaluation is highlighted as a means of measuring one's own faith and deeds, ultimately promoting self-improvement. Justice is portrayed as a central moral precept, tied to prosperity, faith expression, and moral excellence. The Quran is referred to as the ultimate measure for upholding morality. This discussion emphasizes the significance of just measurement in various contexts, including economics, governance, and educational assessment. The importance of moral measurement and judgment throughout history is discussed, aligning with Islamic principles and promoting excellence in society. In conclusion, this paper underscores the ethical obligation of applying just measurements and evaluations, rooted in the principles of Islam and methods of validity, to promote justice and moral integrity in various aspects of life.

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Introduction:-

Al-Jahiz as cited in Dhikra (1965: 82), defines the word just (*al-ʿadl*) as “the requisite measure for evenness, that is using matters (handling affairs) at their right places, and the right times, with the right ways and the right amount, without excess nor deficiency, without advance nor delay”. In brief, it is essentially about placing things in their rightful place. In the Qur’an, measures were denoted as a means to and a sign of perfection in Allah’s creations:

He set on the (earth). Mountains standing firm, high above it, and bestowed blessings on the earth, and measured therein all things to give them nourishment in due proportion, in four days, in accordance with (the needs of) those who seek (sustenance) (Qur’an, Fussilat: 10).

And we send down water from the sky according to (due) measure, and we cause it to soak in the soil; and we certainly are able to drain it off (with ease)” (Qur’an, al-Mu’minun: 18).

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As such, precise measurement has always been and will always be the human means of achieving convenience and approximating perfection in their technological inventions.

The Spiritual Significance of Measurement

Raison d'etre of Creation

Justice and just measure in the Islamic worldview stretch beyond mere convenience. Rather, when Islam came, measurement became even more important for the believers as it gains spiritual significance. Many acts of devotion could not be performed without having precise measurement in place. These include among others determining the direction of Ka'bah and for that matter, the direction of prayers, the times of obligatory and non-obligatory prayers, the calculation of distances for combining two prayers, the times for *haj* (pilgrimage) and months of the forbidden, the month and time of fasting, and the amount of wealth to be collected or distributed in relation to *zakat* (taxes imposed on Muslims), *jizyah* (taxes imposed on non-Muslims residing in Islamic states), *kharaj* (land tax), *ghanimah* (wealth from wars), *fara'idh* (inheritance), *wasaya* (will), etc. (Al-Hariry, 2002). On top of that, in the Islamic philosophy and worldview of life itself, evaluation and measurement are the *raison d'etre* of the creation of mankind, it is the fundamental means of determining the level of one's devotion to Allah in faith and in deeds, and consequently, it is the means for judging the reward one rightfully deserves.

Furthermore, in the Islamic worldview, life in itself is but tests to assess one's obedience and devotion and upon which he will be rewarded accordingly: *"Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing"* (Qur'an, *al-Insan*: 2)

Evaluation and measurement are ultimately summative, and towards that end, evaluation and measurement are essentially accumulative and continuous, as well as formative and educative. For these reasons, the notions of measurement and evaluation are means to direct and motivate ones' intentions and acts of devotions. Most importantly, a Muslim is taught that every single intention and deed is observed, recorded, weighted and rewarded. Measurement and evaluation are part of the larger mechanisms used as 'incentives' and 'deterrents'. In the Hereafter, they will have a taste of the consequences of their deeds, no matter how small the deed is: *"So, whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it"* (Qur'an, *al-Zalzalah*: 7-8). Ultimately, the weight of their deeds determines their 'final' and 'eternal' destiny, either indulgence in the ecstasies of the Paradise, or the torment of the Hell fire: *"Then as for one whose scales are heavy [with good deeds], he will be in a pleasant life. But as for one whose scales are light- his refuge will be an abyss"* (Qur'an, *al-Qari'ah*: 6-9).

Self-Evaluation

Such a high degree of accountability benefits from the practice of self-evaluation (*muhاسبah al-nafs*). The Caliph 'Umar is reported to have said: Account yourself [i.e., your words and actions] before you are being accounted [i.e., by God]. Self-evaluation is a form of measurement and assessment which involves "the scrutiny of quantity and quality of *'amal* (deed or act) in order to identify increments and decrements" (al-Ghazali, n.d.: 396). The essence of this self-evaluation is about auditing, reflecting on and monitoring one's own faith, intentions and deeds, and directing self-regulation, self-correction, and self-improvement. The goal is to self-strengthen oneself. In other words, Muslims are to judge themselves from time to time before they are finally judged on the Day of Judgment so that they can rectify mistakes, seek pardon, and improve their well-being in addition to their relationship with God as well as with other creations. Thus, self-assessment is another means that should help one to fare through the worldly tests. The components and steps of this self-evaluation practice is elaborated in al-Ghazali's magnum corpus *Ihya' 'ulum al-Din*.

Given that the magnitude of the consequence of passing worldly tests is of the highest stake, the Muslims are assured of the fairness and justice of the Ultimate Evaluator and Judge. Allah had ascribed to Himself the attributes of 'The Judge' (*al-Hakam*) and 'The Just' (*al-'adl*). The Islamic jurisdiction (*Syari'ah*) is the way of life that guides the Muslims in going through their worldly tests.

Morality

Apart from absolute submission and obedience to Allah, another underlying precept of this jurisdiction is morality and the goal is to realize this morality as prescribed in the Qur'an and demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). One of the most crucial precepts of morality is justice. The Quran is regarded as 'The Measure' (*al-mizan*) to which a human being benchmarks his deeds in upholding morality:

"We sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Measure in order to establish justice among the people..." (Qur'an, al-Hadid: 25).

Thus in the process of passing the worldly tests, the Muslims are commanded to adorn their worldly affairs and transactions with the moral quality of justice. For one, justice ensures prosperity of mankind and his livelihood and prevents corruption and destruction. Secondly, justice is an expression of faith and devotion to Allah. Third, it is a standard for moral excellence.

"And give full measure when you measure and weigh with an even [i.e. honest] balance. That is the best [way] and best in result" (Qur'an, al-Isra':35).

And to Madyan We sent their brother Shu'ayb who said, "My people, worship Allah! You have no other God than Him. A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. Give full measure and full weight. Do not diminish people's goods. Do not cause corruption in the land after it has been put right. That is better for you if you are believers (Qur'an, al-A'raf: 85).

Be just for it is closest to God-consciousness (Qur'an, al-Ma'idah: 8).

Any act that upholds justice is commended, but any act that violates it is strictly prohibited and condemned: *"That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance". (Qur'an, al-Rahman: 8-9).* In fact, the Quranic chapter *al-Mutaffifin* (the Detractors in Giving Weights) warns the wrath that awaits perpetrators of such despicable injustice in handling weights and measures:

Woe to those who give less [than due]. Who, when they take a measure from people, take in full. But if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss. Do they not think that they will be resurrected. For a tremendous Day- The Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds? No! Indeed, the record of the wicked is in sijjeen. And what can make you know what is sijjeen? It is [their destination recorded in i.e., the lowest depths of Hell] a register inscribed (Qur'an, al-Mutaffifin :1-10).

The chapter goes on to narrate that the righteous, i.e., those who do not transgress, will enjoy the pleasures of Eden.

Such just measurement was a matter of public policy in the Islamic history. Sears as cited in Stenner & Wright (2004) mentioned Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz's concern over the less righteous practices of leaders during his reign and his implementation of a fair and uniform standard: "The people of al-Kufa have been struck with trial, hardship, oppressive governments and wicked practices. The righteous law is justice and good conduct. I order you to take in taxes only the weight of seven." Damascus 723

Beyond such economic transactions, justice is also called for in various other contexts which essentially involve giving a matter its rightful place, or granting a person his rights, and putting matters where they belong. These contexts include settlement of disputes among two or more persons or parties, the treatment of orphans, the treatment of wives in a polygamous marriage, the treatment of children, etc.

Just in Educational and psychological Assessment

The context of educational and psychological assessment and measurement is no less important than that of business transactions. A fair and just measurement is needed so that matters are put in their correct perspectives and people are given what they rightfully deserve: children's aptitudes and attitudes are measured and evaluated so that appropriate reinforcements or interventions can be made to equip them with the vocational, cognitive and psychological skills that they need to prosper in life (Ibnu Sina as cited in Hasan Langgulung, 1988); students are passed or failed or appraised and treated differently according to some measures that purportedly allow some inferences to be made about their achievement or capability; individuals are given or denied jobs according to some measures as reflected in their credentials; decisions and policies are made according to some measures that supposedly infer the actual *status quo* of a phenomenon, etc.. A sound measurement and good judgment in such matters will bring felicity to those involved. In contrast, a wrong judgment that derives from a poor measurement in such matters can be destructive to those involved, thus leading to injustice. Linacre echoed the need for a just and moral measurement in psychological and educational contexts:

For measures to be meaningful, they need contexts. As soon as numbers have a context, they have implications. Do these numbers provide a fair and honest basis for those implications? The utility of additive measures for commerce, carpentry and cooking are familiar to us all, but the implications of honestly additive measures reach far beyond mere convenience. Measures are a product of the practical application of scientific advancement. They can be used for the benefit or detriment of society (Linacre, 2005: 7).

So critical is justice and just measurement such that throughout the history of mankind, numerous mechanisms and means have been established and invented as a means to exercise moral measurement and judgment in various domains of life, be they in the form of policies, laws or measuring devices. Despite the diversity of these mechanisms and their cultural or contextual origins, the aim remains to promote and exercise justice and to bring about excellence in the society. And for as long as they serve this purpose and adhere to the precepts of Islam, these means find support in the *Syari'ah*. This was emphasized by the grand scholar Ibnu Qayyim, as quoted by Qardawy(1990:177):

“Any path that leads to justice is deemed to be in harmony with Islamic law. God has demanded justice and although He has not prescribed a specific route, has provided general guidelines on how to achieve it. He has neither prescribed a fixed means by which it can be obtained, nor has He declared invalid any particular means and methods that can lead to justice. Therefore, all means, procedures, and methods that facilitate, refine, and advance the cause of justice, and do not violate the Islamic Law are valid.”

Characteristics of A Good Measurement

As regards the characteristic of a good measurement, much can be learned from al-Ghazali (1993)'s treatise '*Al-Qistas al-Mustaqim*' that laterally means 'The Just Balance'. Al-Ghazali attributes the origin of the knowledge of balance and weight to God: "Do you know who instituted the balance in the first place? He is the first [The First], from whom you learn this method of weighing" (Al-Ghazali, 1993: 17). 'The Just Balance' refers to the standards set by the Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions against which the truth of knowledge should be measured. In al-Ghazali's words, the functions of this Just Balance are "to show myself its truth and its error, its correctness and its deviations" (Al-Ghazali, 1993:14). In another part of the treatise, he compared the different types of balances for material matters and added: "All these 'balances', even though their forms may differ, share one common thing, the property of showing where there is excess or deficiency" (Al-Ghazali, 1993: 20). In his discussion of balances for intangible matters, Al-Ghazali talked about the ultimate balance: "The most spiritual of the balances is that of the Day of Judgment. It measures actions, beliefs, and the knowledge of the believers" (Al-Ghazali, 1993: 20). In the rest of the treatise, al-Ghazali elaborated on the five rules of the measurement of knowledge as revealed in the Qur'an: the Great Rule of Equivalence, the Middle Rule of Equivalence, the Small Rule of Equivalence, the Rule of Concomitance, and the Rule of Opposition.

In sum, the impact of measurements and the subsequent evaluation that derives from these measurements on individuals, societies and mankind can be either beneficial or harmful, constructive or destructive. In other words, measurement and evaluation has consequential validity. Consequential validity refers to the impact of a test's results or consequences of its use on individuals and society. In the context of educational and psychological assessment, a test's validity is not solely determined by its ability to measure what it intends to measure (content validity or construct validity) but also by the consequences that result from its use. Messick introduced the concept of consequential validity to highlight that the consequences of testing can have ethical, social, and practical implications. These consequences may include how tests are used to influence classroom instructional and learning practices. More critical consequences include how the test results influence individuals' lives, decisions about their education, employment and well-being. They also include broader societal implications such as bias, discrimination, or stigmatization. In summary, Messick's definition of consequential validity emphasizes that the validity of a test should consider not only its measurement properties but also the potential positive or negative consequences that arise from its application in real-world settings (Messick, 1998).

Hence, the application of a just measurement, evaluation, and judgment in worldly transactions, including in educational and psychological contexts, is a moral obligation. A just measurement ought to be able to demonstrate reality, errors, correctness, deviations, excess and deficiencies in reference to a certain benchmark or standard. It is

measurement that puts things in their right places. It is also governed by certain rules in order to ensure sound measurement. The practice of just measurement is commendable in the Islamic Worldview as a means of upholding and observing justice, which is a fundamental moral tenet of Islam. The modern day emphasis of methods for determining the validity of a test in order to ensure justice in the consequences of a particular test on individuals and society serves this moral tenet.

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