



OPERATIONALIZING DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC ECONOMICS

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ABSTRACT

The idea of distributive justice is an important subject matter immensely debated in studies of philosophy, political, behavioral and social sciences; it has yet to be thoroughly analyzed in economics. Despite its relevance, works in the formulation of models of distributive justice in Islamic Economics are lacking relative to those available in Western scholarship. The existing scholarly products deal mainly with limited applied aspects of distributive justice. Alternatively, the current conceptual paper is an inaugural analysis of the notion of distributive justice from the sources of Islamic heritage (*Turath*). The effort is aimed at guiding practitioners and policymakers to find solutions to economic distributional problems in the Muslim world in particular. This research attempts to critically review accessible Islamic Economic literature written on distributive justice and propose a model of distributive justice using the operationalization method introduced by Sekaran & Bougie (2010). It begins with a brief survey of related works by exploring justice and distribution separately. Next the concept of distributive justice is translated into principles and observable dimensions found in the sources of revealed knowledge. Lastly the findings are presented in the form of the proposed model of distributive justice based solely on evidence in the Holy *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. Recommendations are made for expanding the model to fit the special needs of different Islamic economies battling severe distributive injustices stemming from the reliance on conventional theories. Empirical analysis to further defend the viability of the proposed model of distributive justice is highly valued.

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JEL Classification: D31, Z28

Key words: Distribution, Equity, Islamic heritage, Justice, Model

1. INTRODUCTION

Distributive justice concerns what some consider to be ‘socially just’ with respect to the allocation of goods in a society. Thus, a community in which incidental inequalities in outcome do not arise would be considered a society guided by the principles of distributive justice. Allocation of goods takes into account the total *amount* of goods to be handed out, the *process* used by people of that civilization in *dispensing*, and their preferred *pattern of division*.

It remains an important topic in economics and political economy literature that addresses normative issues in social and economic justice. A variety of economic theories and approaches provide many insights into these matters, including the theory of inequality and poverty measurement, welfare economics, the theory of social choice, the theory of bargaining and of cooperative games, and the theory of fair allocation (Fleurbaey, 2012).

Nevertheless, the reality in the Muslim world is otherwise due to, among others, the prevalence of distortions in the distributional processes. Understandably the concept of distributive justice per se has come about as a fundamental economic issue due to the increased socioeconomic problems in this region.

To classical Muslim theologians and philosophers, justice is an abstract and idealistic concept. They made no serious attempt to view it from a positive concept and analyze it from the existing social conditions. Al-Ghazali (505/1111) discussed the concept of justice from several dimensions, focusing mainly on distributive justice. He emphasized that for justice to prevail, the state must remove poverty and distress in society. Abu Bakr al-Turtushi (520/1127), Najm al-Din al-Tawfi (716/1316) and Ibn Taymiya (728/1325) while remaining faithful to Revelation, employed a form of inductive method which reached its full development in the writings of Ibn Khaldun (806/1408). Turtushi considered justice as the very foundation of polity, the ‘foundation of foundations.’

Baqir al-Sadr in his celebrated work *Iqtisaduna* (originally written in 1960, later translated to English in 1981) had discussed distribution and distributive justice extensively. Contemporary Muslim scholars Umar Chapra (1981, 1995, 2001) and Nejatullah Siddiqui (1982) initiated creative ways to incorporate the relevance of

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