



Examining Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi's Theory of Affection-Justice and Its Role in Social Control

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi's affection-justice theory and its application in social control. Through qualitative content analysis of Tusi's works and related sources, the findings reveal that he developed a comprehensive framework for regulating social relations by intelligently integrating affection as an internal mechanism of control with justice as an external one. Tusi's affection-justice model not only ensures order and stability but also fosters a balanced and harmonious society by reducing reliance on coercion and emphasizing human bonds. Affection, as an intrinsic and spontaneous force, promotes social solidarity through emotional relationships in an organic manner, while justice guarantees the structural order of society. With its dual emphasis on emotional and structural dimensions, alongside cultural adaptability, this theory offers a native framework for analyzing and designing social control systems in Islamic societies. The study demonstrates that Tusi's theory has strong potential to address contemporary challenges of social control and may be applied to issues such as reducing deviance, strengthening social capital, and managing conflicts.

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1. Introduction

Social control, a fundamental mechanism for sustaining societal order, faces pressing challenges in contemporary contexts. Increasing deviance, declining public trust in institutions, and growing social fragmentation characterize modern urban environments, particularly in rapidly transforming Islamic societies. Mainstream sociological theories, such as Durkheim's (2014) concept of organic solidarity or Foucault's (1995) disciplinary mechanisms, often prioritize external instruments of control—surveillance, legal systems, or institutional enforcement. While these approaches remain effective in certain circumstances, they often overlook the significance of emotional and cultural forces in cultivating voluntary compliance and social cohesion.

Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi's affection-justice theory, rooted in Islamic philosophy, provides a distinctive framework that integrates affection—an innate emotional force fostering unity through mutual care—with justice, a rational and structural mechanism ensuring fairness and stability through institutions. Unlike Western models that emphasize coercion and bureaucracy, Tusi's dual approach aligns more closely with societies where cultural and religious values remain central. Nevertheless, the applicability of his framework to pluralistic and individualized modern societies remains underexplored, necessitating a systematic analysis of both its theoretical foundations and practical implications.

The objective of this research is to critically analyze Tusi's affection-justice theory, highlighting its dual mechanisms of affection and justice, and to assess its potential for informing social control systems in contemporary Islamic societies. By bridging classical Islamic thought with modern sociological concerns, this study contributes to the discourse on culturally grounded approaches to social cohesion.

2. Methodology

This research employs qualitative content analysis to examine Tusi's affection-justice theory, focusing primarily on his seminal works *Akhlaq-e Naseri* and *Awsaf al-Ashraf*. These texts were chosen for their comprehensive articulation of Tusi's ethical and social philosophy, particularly regarding affection and justice as mechanisms of social organization. To situate his ideas within the broader framework of Islamic intellectual tradition, comparative analyses were conducted with the works of Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Miskawayh.

Additionally, contemporary sociological theories of social control—including those of Durkheim (2014), Hirschi (1969), Parsons (1951), and Foucault (1995)—were incorporated to contextualize Tusi's contributions within modern theoretical discourse. A systematic thematic coding process was applied, identifying recurring themes such as affection as a natural inclination toward unity, justice as an institutional necessity, and the interplay of internal and external mechanisms of control. Cross-referencing with modern theories ensured conceptual alignment and analytical depth.

3. Findings

Tusi conceptualizes affection as a natural, intrinsic force fostering social unity through emotional bonds that encourage voluntary adherence to collective norms (Nasir al-Din Tusi, 1994a: 222). Unlike justice—which he views as a constructed system designed to ensure order through institutions such as religion, governance, and the economy (Nasir al-Din Tusi, 1994a: 210)—affection operates organically, aligning individual behavior with communal expectations without the need for coercion. By integrating these mechanisms, Tusi's framework reduces reliance on force, promoting a society motivated by both emotional commitment and institutional fairness (Nasir al-Din Tusi, 1994a: 259).

Empirical examples from Shiite culture in Iran illustrate the theory's practical relevance. During Muharram and Arbaeen, salawati stations and mawakib function as communal spaces where affection-driven practices—such as hospitality and selfless service—temporarily suspend social hierarchies, fostering inclusivity and solidarity (Saboorian & Shahbazi, 2024: 24). These acts exemplify how affection, rooted in shared religious values, regulates behavior by encouraging participation across diverse social strata. For instance, salawati stations transform commercial urban spaces into centers of communal care, where service is perceived as an honor rather than an obligation, mirroring Tusi's vision of affection as a natural regulator. Similarly, mawakib during Arbaeen create temporary egalitarian communities, demonstrating the unifying capacity of affection-based practices (Saboorian & Shahbazi, 2024: 22).

4. Conclusion

Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi's affection-justice theory provides a comprehensive model of social control by synthesizing two complementary mechanisms: affection as an informal, internal force that fosters solidarity through emotional bonds, and justice as a formal, external necessity that secures order through institutions such as governance, religion, and economic structures. While Tusi regards justice as essential for structural balance, he elevates affection as the superior mechanism of natural unity that ensures voluntary social cohesion.

In comparison with modern sociological theories, Tusi's emphasis on affection parallels Hirschi's social bond theory, while his focus on justice resonates with the perspectives of Parsons and Durkheim. Yet, unlike Foucault—who interprets social control as a vehicle of power reproduction—Tusi situates it within the pursuit of societal happiness and perfection. This teleological orientation reflects his utopian vision of politics, where social control serves the flourishing of individuals and communities rather than mere stability.

Rooted in Islamic culture and values, Tusi's indigenous framework offers significant potential for strengthening social cohesion in contemporary contexts, particularly within Islamic societies. Its application extends to addressing social challenges such as reducing deviance, reinforcing social capital, and managing conflicts, thereby contributing both to theoretical scholarship and to practical strategies for social governance.

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