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## The Influence of Self-Regard on Response of Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching

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### Abstract

Personality and religion relationship has long been studied by Western and Muslim researchers in order to find any association between religious factors and a person's behavior and thought. The present study sought to expand research by investigating the differences in the latent factors, namely *Tawhid* (Belief in God), *Nubuwwa* (Awareness of Prophetic Teaching), Self-striving, and Self-regard, in a newly developed scale of Integrative Islamic Personality Inventory (IIPI). The sample of this study was a group of undergraduate students ( $n= 1235$ ) in ten universities in Turkey. Data were analyzed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling. The main goal of this study was to investigate the statistical properties of this scale and examine if it could be applied across university students. It is apparent that Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, Self-regard and Self-striving represent psychological and social implications for individuals. Thus, the model of this research makes an important contribution to understanding and predicting how Muslims think, act, and experience Islam.

**Keywords:** *Islamic personality, testification, spiritual striving, belief in god, awareness of prophetic teaching*

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## Introduction

Relationship between personality and religion has long been studied by some prominent researchers (e.g., James, Jung, Allport) in order to find whether religious factors influence a person's behavior and thought. In the religious traditions, personality studies are frequently addressed to illuminate the personality changes (Emmons & Crumpler, 1999) and growth (Piedmont & Friedman, 2012). More specifically, personality in Islam has been widely studied and reported (e.g., Abdel-Khalek, 2010; Abu Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney, & Stein, 2008; Aghababaei, Blachnio, Arji, Chiniforushan, Tekke, & Mehrabadi, in press; Haque, 2004; Joshanloo, 2011). Muslim researchers attempt to study personality in the larger picture of psycho-religion (Cummings, 1978), psycho-Islam (Haque, 2004) and psycho-spiritual (Langgulgung, 1991; Wilber, 2000) aspects of modern psychology (Johnson, 2007) respectively.

In understanding the notion of personality broadly, Western psychologists study it by attempting to differentiate between people in relation to characteristic ways of behaving and feeling, thinking, social effects and relations to others (Larsen & Buss, 2008; Mischel et al., 2008; Rhodewalt, 2008). On the other hand, Muslim psychologists attempt to study human personality based on the concepts of human *fitrah* (nature) related to the purpose of life, *qalb* (heart), *roh* (spirit), *nafs* (psyche), and *'aql* (intellect), free will and accountability (Aisha, 2011; Al-Ghazali, 1997; Amber, 2004; Khosravi, 2006). With this clear difference in perspective to personality, it necessitates a need of extensive and comprehensive view to evaluate both perspectives into an unique personality framework, that is called integrative Islamic personality (Ismail & Tekke, 2015), which has been recently developed to measure the personality- namely Integrative Islamic Personality Inventory (IIPI). It is essentially the manifestation of *Tawhidic* (Belief in God) paradigm in particular way of Prophet Muhammad expresses individual traits or adapts to diverse situations in the environment – manifested aspects of a personal self, life definition and view – guided by teachings of the Quran and motivated by *iman* (faith). Consistently, Islamic personality is a personality measurement based on *shahadah* (testification) and spiritual striving assessment approach (Ismail & Tekke, 2015), as seen in Figure 1.

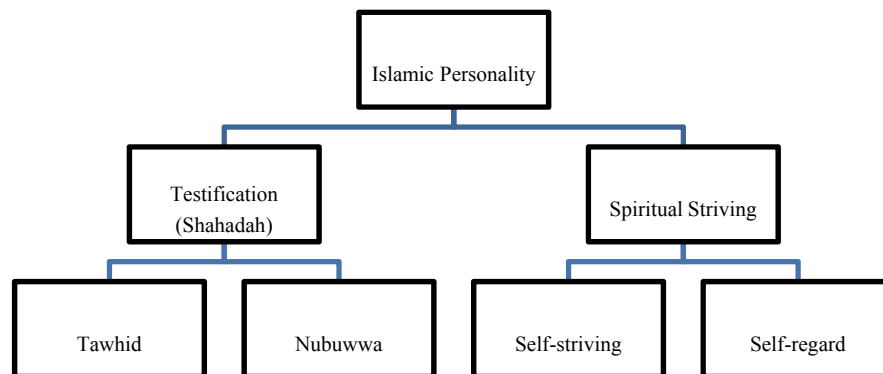


Figure 1. Integrative Islamic Personality Model

“Integrative Islamic personality” was operationalized through item statements relating to two main category of personality manifestation (four-factor dimension) and also conceptualized as very recently published by Tekke and Ismail (2016). The first category is called “*the testification*” which is mainly stressed in Hadith: “*I bear witness that there is no god except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah (God)*”. As a foundation of Islamic personality, from this understanding, the Islamic personality can be included with Islamic belief that reaches the level of awareness of Belief in God and *Nubuwwa* (Awareness of Prophetic Teaching). This represents completely the testification of the oneness of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) as the Messenger of Allah. In other words, human's purpose in life, as stated in the Holy Qur'an, is to worship God and follow the Prophet's Sunnah (sayings and actions), “*If you should love Allah, then follow me (Prophet Muhammad) [so] Allah will love you and forgive your sins.*” Therefore, the Islamic personality comprised strivings motivated by ultimate concerns reflecting the desire to obtain God's love in accordance with the Prophet's teachings. Therefore, Islamic personality is viewed as a strong predictor of feeling closeness to God and following the Prophet's Sunnah. In this way,

psycho-spiritual well-being can be enhanced by a strong sense of Islamic personality (Tekke, Ismail, Adnan, & Othman, 2015).

The second category called “spiritual striving” refers to the self and consists of two categories; “self-striving and self-regard” (see review by Tekke & Ismail, in press). Self-striving represents the intrinsic nature of one’s being and refers to the typical goals that a person characteristically tries to accomplish, according to Emmons (2005). Self-regard refers to the ability of self-worth and strength (Somers, 1989), and is initiated by actualizing tendency, according to Rogers (1954). In Islam, both domains are essential to capture spiritual, personal, and moral progress. According to Turkish Muslim scholar Said Nursi (1930/2003), *“this world is a field of trial and examination, and a place of striving.....and the door of spiritual and moral progress through striving”* (p.186). Survey instrument items on the IPI include statements about participants’ behaviors, attitudes, motivations and emotions that accord with Islamic teachings.

Concepts of Belief in God, Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, Self-striving, and Self-regard form the basis of the integrative Islamic personality model. The figure further illustrated how this model and concepts translated into measurement indicators for the IPI. From this figure, again Islamic personality is shown as the peak, and it consisted of four dimensions; Belief in God, Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, Self-striving and Self-regard. Furthermore, the present study sought to expand the research by investigating the statistical properties of this scale and examine if this scale could be applied across university students. Thus, this study has come up with new findings about the relationships among the variables in the IPI constructs. Towards this end, we evaluated the applicability of the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model testing structural equation modeling (SEM). The relationships among the variables were also measured to satisfy the research hypothesis. What follows is the presentation of hypotheses and their respective results.

1. The effect of Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching on Self-striving is mediated by sense of Self-regard.
2. Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching determine Self-regard.
3. Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching exert direct effect on Self-striving.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Data were collected from a stratified sample of 1235 students from ten different universities. The composition of the sample was all Muslims. The sample consisted of 406 female (32.9%) and 829 male (67.1%) students from different fields of study. The mean age was 21 years (SD = 2.92). Participants responded in their native language (Turkish) to the 16 Islamic personality items. Approval by university institutional authority was given and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Selected sample for this study was considered adequate to justify statistical significance according to the general rule of thumb (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010).

### **Measure**

#### **Integrative Islamic Personality Inventory (IPI)**

The IPI was adapted from an instrument developed by Ismail and Tekke (2015). The IPI has two sections. The first section is on demographic information of the respondents, including age, gender, field of study, guardian, hometown and siblings. The second section consists of 16 items representing four constructs namely, Belief in God, Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, Self-regard, and Self-striving. The instrument indicated that the overall reliability value of Cronbach’s alpha was .795.

## **Results**

The tests of the measurement and structural models were accomplished using AMOS (version 21) with maximum likelihood estimation method. In analysis, common method variance was controlled using a latent variable with paths to the indicators of other latent constructs in the model. The test of the indirect effects of the model was evaluated using significance tests provided by the AMOS program. Moreover, a nested models strategy was used to assure relative contributions of the direct effects on model fit.

### **Test of the Measurement Model**

The measurement model was defined using original factors of the constructs: As for obtaining divergent validity, the values for composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE)

needed to be examined respectively. Hair et al. (2010) suggested that the threshold of CR should exceed .7. All composite reliabilities measures of constructs, thus, should exceed the recommended threshold of .7. Discriminant validity can be tested by comparing the square roots of the AVE with correlations among the factors. A preliminary exploratory analysis of the data found that the AVE for the one factor ranged from .37 to .50 (Table 1); indicating that the results of convergent and discriminant validity showed that all the AVE estimates except Self-striving (.50), were lower than 0.5 recommended by Hair et al. (2010). As for factors of Belief in God, Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, and Self-regard the results indicate the latent factor may not be well explained by its observed variables. However, AVE is a strict measure of convergent validity. Malhotra and Dash (2011) noted that "AVE is a more conservative measure than CR. On the basis of CR alone, the researcher may conclude that the convergent validity of the construct is adequate, even though more than 50% of the variance is due to error." (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). Therefore, in this research the factors of Belief in God, Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, Self-regard were maintained since the model fit and construct reliability were adequate and reasonable. To examine the internal consistency reliability of the observed item questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was assessed. The resulting alpha values ranged from .74 to .82, being above the acceptable threshold, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Estimates of the Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	Belief in God	Awareness of Prophetic Teaching	Self-striving	Self-regard
Belief in God	I believe in the Oneness of Allah and there is no resemblance to Him.	.73							
	I believe that Allah (SWT) is eternal.	.77							
	I believe that Allah (SWT) is Almighty.	.69	.82	.80	.49	.70*			
	I strongly believe Allah's presence at all times.	.68							
	I know that Allah (SWT) loves all of us and his creations regardless of race, ethnicity and color.	.63							
Awareness of Prophetic Teaching	I am aware that all Prophets follow the path of humanity.	.72							
	I am very sure that all Prophets used the most pleasant ways to tell people about God.	.71							
	I am certain that all Prophets are both bringers of good news and a warners.	.61	.82	.90	.48	.69*	.69*		
	I strongly believe that the moral of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is in total harmony with the Qur'an.	.76							
	I love all Prophets sent by Allah (SWT).	.66							
Self-striving	I work meticulously to live all my life according to Islamic teachings.	.85							
	My whole approach to life is based on Islam.	.70	.74	.80	.50	.10	.20*	.71*	
	I follow the Prophet Muhammad's teachings and traditions all the time.	.56							
Self-regard	I feel that I have positive feeling towards myself.	.62							
	On the whole, I am happy with myself.	.73	.76	.60	.41	.41*	.40*	.39*	.61*
	I feel that I possess good personal characteristics.	.46							

In determining the adequacy of the hypothesized 4-factor measurement model, the adopted cutoff values for fit statistics were taken into consideration. Based on the criteria, especially, the ( $\chi^2/df(98) = 3.444$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .962; RMSEA = .045) values falling within the threshold range considered very adequate in the literature, the tested measurement model was judged adequately fit to the sample data. Besides, the parameter loadings for each construct were reasonably adequate and appropriate (mostly .7 and above). As a result, the proposed model provided a suitable fit and the model lacked any form of cross-loading(s) and error covariance(s) among constructs indicated evidence of discriminant validity (meaning each construct was distinctly dissimilar from one another in terms of what they are measured). It was also evident that despite the uniqueness of each latent construct, they still have some shared elements. This was indicated by the inter-correlation values among constructs which were moderately adequate (mostly .2 and above). The direction and magnitude of the factor loadings were substantial and statistically significant (Byrne, 2010).

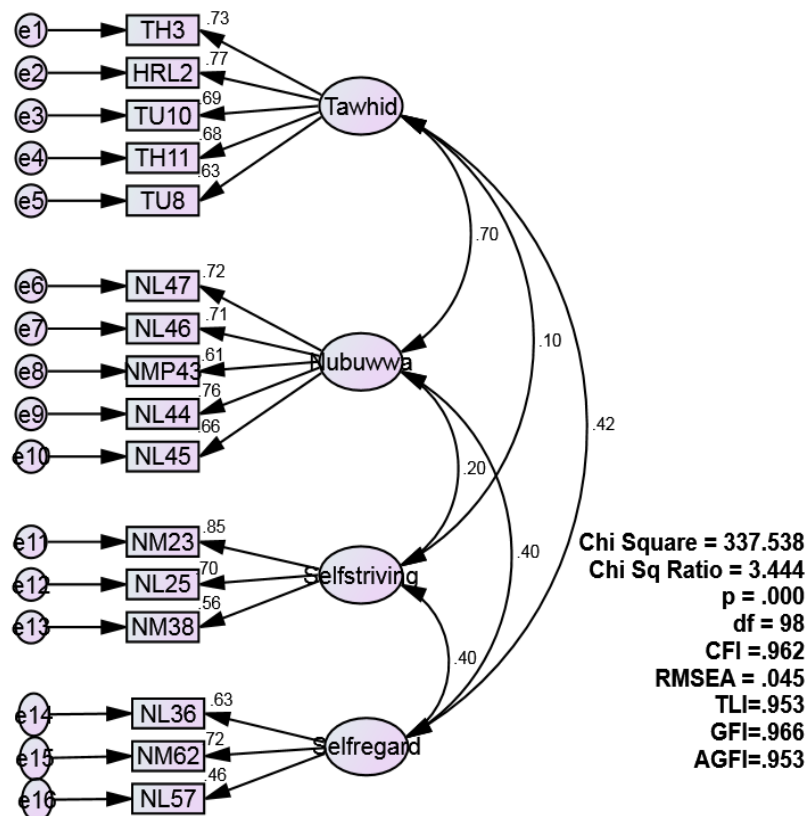


Figure 2. The Measurement model of Integrative Islamic Personality

### Test of the Structural Model

Based on the good fit of the measurement model, the structural equation modelling was then estimated. Figure 3 shows the results of structural modelling. Theoretical reasonableness and practical importance concern of model structural paths, parameter estimates, and tests of statistical significance were considered in generating the model estimate output (Kline, 2011). As suggested by Kline, path coefficient should be equal to or greater than 2.

In line with the underlying hypotheses, the full-fledged structural model of integrative Islamic personality was analyzed. Thereafter, the assessment of model fit on the basis of which judgment was made about the structural model was carried out. As indicated in Figure 2, the model fitted the data with respect to GoF (goodness of fit) statistics. Furthermore, the assessment of structural path estimates showed clearly that the model achieved a better fit. This was evident in the weak path effects of the Belief in God to Self-striving;  $\chi = 19$ , and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching to Self-striving;  $\chi = 16$ . Apart from these, the other part estimates and causal relationships were adequate and reasonable.

Besides, the hypothesized path effects and parameter estimates were all adequate and reasonable (all path effects  $> 2$ ; and almost all the parameter estimates were 7 and above). All these proved that the

earlier stated hypothesis (i.e., the four-construct integrative Islamic personality model adequately explains the observed causal relationships) was correct. The decision became imperative in view of the valuable caution by Kline (2011) that the assessment of a model adequacy needs to be based on the researcher criteria such as statistical significance, theoretical reasonableness and practical importance of the model estimates.

The data further indicated that the Awareness of Prophetic Teaching was relatively more influential than Belief in God in determining Self-striving. The standardized direct effect of Awareness of Prophetic Teaching -Self-striving was .16; and Belief in God -Self-striving was -.19. Moreover, the data also showed that Belief in God was a more influential predictor than Awareness of Prophetic Teaching in determining Self-regard. The standardized direct effect of Belief in God -Self-regard was .27; and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching -Self-regard was .22. Together, the two exogenous variables (Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching) collectively explained 20% variance of the variability in Self-regard.

Lastly, it was equally evident in the model that hypothesized Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching exerted a substantial statistically significant effect on Self-regard as well as indirect effect on Self-striving through the mediating variable. In terms of the relationship Belief in God, and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching and Self-striving, the mediator role of Self-regard, however, was not as large, which indicates a partial mediation. As can be seen in Table 2, despite this, the indirect effect in the model was moderate. Self-striving on its own explained 18% variance in the variability of Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching.

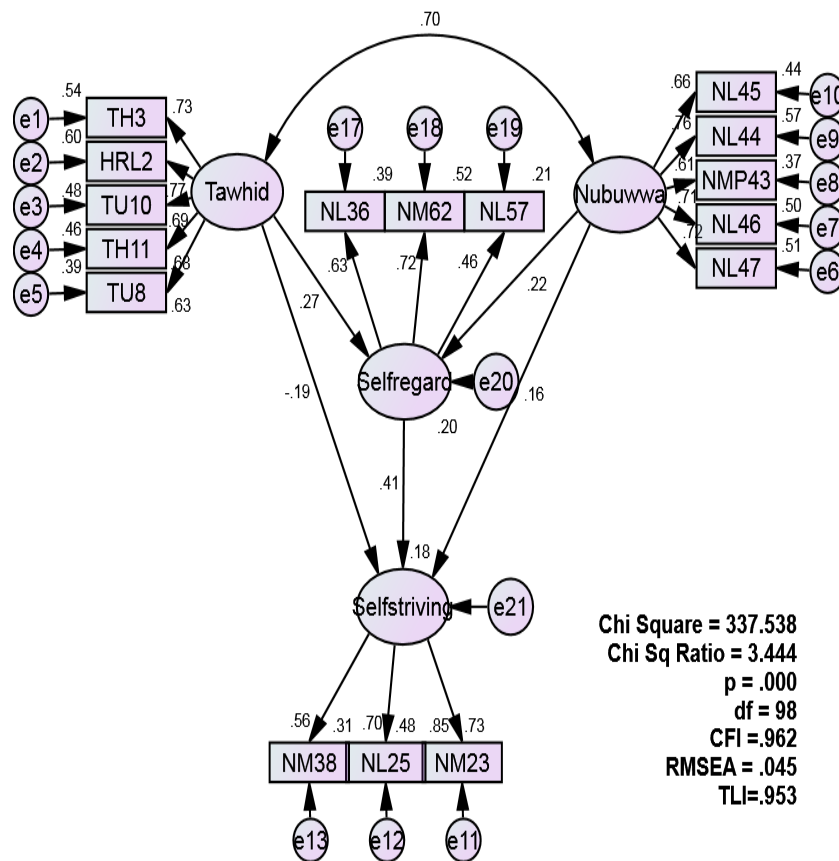


Figure 3. Structural Model of Integrative Islamic Personality

## Discussion

It is evident that this scale can be used to empirically study the outcomes of Islamic personality in Turkish Muslim culture. One fundamental reason for the importance of this line of inquiry is to fill the need to measure the personality based on the knowledge of Islamic and Western values through scientific methods of inquiry. This initiative began with the conceptualization of a definition for

personality from the Islamic and Western perspective. According to the operational definition, Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching focuses on belief and practice of Islam as a religion for all times, which is represented through item statements that pertain to psychological and social implication for individuals. Accordingly, the other relevant dimension of spiritual striving, namely Self-regard and Self-striving represents the integration of Western perspective.

This study has evaluated the IPI factors consisting of Belief in God, Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, Self-striving, and Self-regard. The domain of Belief in God is so much associated with Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, as supported by the Hadith: “I bear witness that there is no god except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah”, that implies the purpose of human creation to worship God and follow the Prophet’s Sunnah. Nursi (1934/2002) introduced the construct of Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, followed by Belief in God, in Islamic personality measurement. This result provided support of this relationship that Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching are inseparable based on Islamic shahadah, and that they follow each other relatively. In other words, a person who believes in Allah also should believe in Prophet Muhammad and follow his Sunnah in Islam. Therefore, the construct of Awareness of Prophetic Teaching is inevitably the main construct of Islamic personality measurement and this study highlights the need for empirical studies addressing the Awareness of Prophetic Teaching accordingly.

From the Islamic notion of personality, Islamic personality clearly highlights the Belief in God paradigm and awareness of Awareness of Prophetic Teaching. As a foundation of Islamic personality, from this understanding, the construct of Belief in God is positively associated with Awareness of Prophetic Teaching. In this regard, Islamic personality means testifying to the oneness of Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. For a Muslim, this meaningful testification simply provides the answer to the greatest of human questions, namely, ‘what is our purpose in life?, or ‘ why are we in this world?’. In entirety Islam is predicated on this testification and its implication that human’s purpose in life is to worship God and follow the Prophet’s Sunnah.

Moreover, existence of Allah is necessary to fill the Muslim’s consciousness at all times. Earning a sense of divine presence in the heart helps enhance the capital of his life all the time for good deeds (Kuspinar, 2008). Nursi principally described that doing good deeds is followed by realization and revealing the unity of God. Thus, worshipping the Divine is easiness accordingly that increases the sense of doing good deeds for Allah and society (Ismail, Tekke, Othman & Al-Hafiz, 2016). In other words, this is oath of faithfulness and submission to the commands of Allah (Nooraini, 2008). After all, prophets play an important role in inviting humans to follow the path chosen by their Creator and encouraging human beings to have good behaviors which result in God’s acceptance and satisfaction. The findings regarding the correlation between Belief in God, Awareness of Prophetic Teaching and Self-regard were highly impressive. That is, the strength of Islamic belief develops the self-concept which the individual attempts to satisfy. For factor of Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, since prophets stand for a model of attaining perfection, such effect is attributable to self experiences whereas the shortage of practicing of Islamic belief generates the sense of conceit, self-centeredness, and pessimism. This result affirmed that the inclusion of Self-regard in the integrative Islamic personality is very important. Rogers (1954) identified self-regard follows organismic valuing and needs, initiated by the actualizing tendency. He believed that we all own self-regard. It is the self that feels most true to what and who we really are. It may not be perfect, but it is the part of us that feels most real (Grice, 2007). The finding shows that the believer’s submission and adherence to the practice of prophet as a way of life in Islam had significant effect on self-regard of Muslims.

Another interesting finding is that self-striving is weakly influenced by Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching. There are numerous possible explanations for this finding. However, Self-regard as a partially mediated effect on Self-striving is moderately affected by Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching. The fact that the findings relate to Self-striving could mean that positive regard and actualizing tendency that play a part in shaping the Self-striving of Muslims are more focused on one’s typical goals within the testification. This has been alluded to by Nursi (1930/2003) who stated that “his/her belief gives him/her complete confidence” (The Words, p.30). The focus of confidence and positive regard in Islam are prominent in one’s direction and goals, due to feeling strength through belief. Congruently, Nursi highlighted that belief and trust in God gives a person such as a position to cope with challenges and difficulties. For instance, Prophet Muhammad displayed steadfastness, firmness and courage although his own people, tribe, and uncle opposed him with hostility. He successfully challenged the whole world. Such positive regard as central to self-striving is greatly influential in Islamic testification.

## Conclusion

For relevant measurements of IIPi, the constructs of beliefs, practices, attitudes, worldview, and coping (Abu-Raiya & Hill, 2014), seem to have received a relatively greater attention, as more than one instrument has been developed to measure each one of these constructs. Given that newly developed constructs of Awareness of Prophetic Teaching, Self-regard, and Self-striving are different from existing Islamic personality measurements, the model of this study is notable and useful. Although the other Islamic instruments remain useful in studies of Islamic practices, they might be inappropriate for application in measuring other constructs, such as Self-striving and Self-regard. More recently, a number of personality instruments have emerged to measure religious behavior. Some of these instruments have been found not to reliably integrate self-concept from Islamic personality and the validity of others has been measured by factor analysis and found not having convergent or divergent validity compared to personality. Although the state-trait distinction can be inferred from many items in these instruments, a specific instrument to measure this conceptualization of Islamic personality integration with western perspective does not exist. Therefore, the model of this research is important because it makes important contributions to understanding and predicting how Muslims think, act, and experience Islam.

The notion of personality is, as understood by Islamic authors (Krauss, Hamzah, Juhari, & Hamid, 2005; Umariddin, 1991), is integrated with moral character, to the extent that Islamic personality, as the manifestation or 'face' of high moral character, encompasses beliefs, external traits, attributes, and behaviors. However, in other studies (Haque, 2004; Smither & Khorsandi, 2009), Islamic personality does not directly represent good morality. Rather it refers to what degree self/inner sense direct to God, that is relationship between man and God. With respect to morality, it refers to interpersonal life including relations between man and man, man and God, man and family, man and society, as well as man and the natural world. From the findings of this study, Islamic personality can be viewed as complete devotion to God, in other words, the belief of the oneness and Lordship of God and a way of life to follow Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah must play the primary role in such a life of Muslim. This type of personality is called a healthy personality (Umariddin, 1991; Yaaqob, 2000).

Additionally, the IIPi is one of such efforts that tried to study the subject matter theoretically and empirically. The empirical analysis proved that the instrument is reliable and valid. As for the limitation of this study, generalizability of this study may not extend beyond the public universities (where the samples were chosen). In addition, this study focus only sub-dimensions of IIPi. If this scale correlates strongly with other scales of a similar nature it could provide further validation of the IIPi as well as validating other existing measures. Concerning the implications, the aims and objectives of Islam in general are the creation of good Muslim and the construction of a good society based on Islamic teaching. Although the definition of a good Muslim can be interpreted in many ways, in general, a good Muslim is one who is pious and worships Allah and follows the Prophet's Sunnah and therefore always aims at perfection in his or her deeds and is balanced in personality. Some of the responsibilities that should be carried by the person are:

- a) To fill the Muslim's consciousness with existence of Allah at all times.
- b) To attain perfection by Awareness of Prophetic Teaching's or Sunnah.
- c) To be aware of intrinsic and typical goals in life of Islam.
- d) To strengthen the organismic valuing, initiated by shahadah.
- e) To work meticulously to practice the Islamic teaching and tradition.

Thus, the existence of the Integrative IIPi, which covers the basic components of a good human first and good society later, would certainly help those who really want to achieve these aims and objectives. Improving an individual self would contribute to improving society. In Islamic teaching and tradition Belief in God and Awareness of Prophetic Teaching paradigm is the very essence of self-improvement. In future, a deeper analysis of this nature could be made on the relationship between the IIPi and similar measures. If this scale correlates strongly with other scales of a similar nature it could provide further validation of the IIPi as well as validating other existing measures.

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