

## The Concept of Cause and its Functions According to Al-Amedi

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### ABSTRACT

In this research, the concept of cause was discussed. This concept is central in jurisprudential studies. Attempts were made to throw light on the concept and its common literal and jurisprudential aspects. A special part was dedicated to the approach of the author of the book Precision of Principles of Judgements, which is specialized in developing the principles of jurisprudence. The latter effort was made to explain Al-Amedi's point of view regarding the concept of cause and the relevant Sharia and rational orders and purposes.

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### ARTICLE INFORMATION

#### Keywords:

Cause, Sharia  
Order, Principles of  
Jurisprudence, and  
Al-Amedi.

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### 1. Introduction

Sharia is the primary source by which a Muslim can recognize Halal (lawful) and Haram (taboo). Moreover, Sharia regulates people's lives so they can live in peace and tranquility, because it does not commit outrage upon anyone nor does it invade their rights. Fields of Sharia are multiple, including Islamic sciences such as the science of principles of jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh) which discusses, among other concepts, the concept of "cause".

The priest and jurist employ the science of principles of jurisprudence to reach a judgement, and are guided by it in inferring what is unknown for the public. For this purpose, the jurist makes a comparison between similarities in things, relates causation to the causes, and compares texts and judgements. He does all this to find out the accurate judgement which is in line with Sharia. In doing so, he considers the benefits and, in order to prevent wrong deeds, warns against the causes of those deeds.

Considering the wide domain of the science of principles of jurisprudence, and the scientific terms it comprises, this research has been limited to a scientific term with a lofty position in this science: cause. This term plays an

important role in the organization of judgements and in relating the causes to the determinants.

"Cause" is the means by which many Sharia judgements are made, explained and inferred. This is because "cause" manifests the contexts of expressions, and shows the relations between things, regardless of whether they are legal, ordinary or logical.

"Cause" is so important that it has been specified, described, and likened by every jurist, for it contains secrets in Sharia texts. In this research, however, cause has been dealt with based on the approach of Al-Amedi where, in his interesting book, "Judgements of the Principles of Judgements," he offered his knowledge and reasoning. Al-Amedi has brought together the scientific and logical tools, such that his research has been systematic and clearly explained. He has a unique ideation, and accurate guidance, interpretation and interference.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 The Common Approach to Cause

The literal meaning of the concept of cause has been offered by dictionaries. These dictionaries have mentioned the common definition of the term. In *Mokhtar Al-Sahah*, *cause*

has been mentioned to be “like a rope by which everything is connected to something else.” Therefore, *cause* is mainly known as a rope. However, a central signification has emerged out of *cause* where everyone can find his purpose through it. Al-Mesbah took a similar stance as compared to Al-Razi, with the former being more accurate in eliciting the meaning, because it related *cause* to the concepts of *reality* and *virtuality*. Both of these concepts are used in Arabic expressions and thus cannot be ignored. Moreover, Al-Fayumi purports: “*Cause* is like a rope through which a higher level can be reached. It has also been used to relate everything to something else, such that we may say this is the cause of that, or this caused that.” In relation to cause, Al-Fayumi pointed out two meanings::

- a. Cause is like a rope that leads to transcendence, meaning that it is something adopted by human to satisfy some of his needs, such as irrigation.
- b. It is something linking to something else. It relates something to something else, for example this is the cause of that, and this is caused by that. The second meaning has nothing to do with the first one, for the former concerns spiritual issues.

No definition of this concept has been agreed on by jurists. Although these definitions share similar secondary aspects, they disagree on the core element of it. For this reason, their definitions were various. Yet those differences do not concern the effects resulting from considering the cause in Sharia judgements. In order to show the manifestations of this concept, below I will mention several definitions in order to discover the similarities between them:

1. There is wisdom underlying any order made by Sharia. To exemplify, Zakat requires the possession of a minimum amount of money, death is a cause of the obligatory prayer, stealing is a cause of mandatory amputation, and contracts are a cause of the permission to benefitting from, or transferring, a property.
2. Cause is a way through which to make a proper judgement.
3. Cause is something whose existence mandates existence and whose non-existence, even if not certainly non-existence, mandates non-existence.

These definitions concern the real cause not the virtual cause. Al-Fanari explained the virtual cause as follows: “The virtual cause does not manifest itself in the present but in the future.” The difference between the two forms of cause is obvious. In essence, as we pointed out, the real cause concerns something occurring in the present whereas the virtual cause is likely to happen (it happens if an action takes place). That is because this cause is not predetermined but likely. Therefore, should the proposed possibilities come true, the cause will be real. Perhaps there are also other terms for cause. For example, cause has also been referred to by others as determinant, demand, definer, and impactful. No doubt these concepts are related to the concept of cause, both in terms of their literal meaning or in sequence. In other words, each concept implies the relation between two things, with one being the cause and the other the effect, one being the determinant and the other the outcome, etc.

## **2.2 The Concept of Cause as Defined by Al-Amedi**

As a unique jurist imam, Al-Amedi’s effort was beyond repeating phrases from his preceding figures. He instead offered efforts and readings which at times were similar to those of those figures and at other times were different. Thus, he elaborated on jurisprudential terms with high precision, which in turn reflected his sound knowledge about the aspects of scientific definitions that produce conceptual facts. This means he was highly aware of the concept of cause. He first interpreted the literal definition of the term, then turned to the terminological definition. This approach is interconnected, because the literal definition is the key to terminological definition. The literal definition also supports the terminological definition as it makes it more conceivable for the reader. To illustrate the concept of cause as proposed by Al-Amedi, I will discuss it in the following order: cause, language, term.

Al-Amedi’s literal definition of cause is as follows: “Cause is something through which to reach a purpose. Accordingly, a rope is a cause, so is a road because both help reach a destination.” Therefore, cause links something to the purpose of that thing. This point does not contradict what we said before on the literal definition of the concept of cause. The common

definition of cause has been given by Al-Amedi as follows: "Some jurists defined this term based on its literal meaning. Cause is about an explicit, systematic description which, as evidenced by the Quran and Sunnah, implies a Sharia judgement." It is clear for the reader how well Al-Amedi has limited this definition. In his definition, he adopted a descriptive, clear, and precise language. That is, he summarized the primary components of the reality of cause. In order to make the definition more understandable, we will analyze each of these components on its own.

Something explicit does not require an indication, as opposed to something implicit which goes beyond the jurisprudential cause, because it forms a barrier in relation to the viewer. This is because something implicit is subject to contemplation and multiple interpretations. No doubt the cause is beneficial for a Sharia judgement, and assumes a right for the creator such as in observations, or for the creature such as in transactions and contracts, making it necessary for the meaning to be explicit.

What is meant by systematic is something continuous in all circumstances and not limited only to some occasions. "Conversely, wisdom is a motive to making judgements that are to the advantage of the servants, whether it gives them benefits or protects them against damage."

These two sources are adopted to make Sharia judgements. Through them, limits can be set and justice can be spread out among people, for the Quran, as representing the words of Allah, is accurate and Sunnah represents the speech of his prophet who says nothing out of his own desire, but only according to a revelation and inspiration from his Lord. These two sources support and legitimize the concept of cause. Therefore, these two sources are used in making a Sharia judgement, as Al-Amedi also pointed out.

Al-Qarafi adopted this definition and, given the multiplicity of the purposes of cause, added the following: "Cause is an explicit, systematic description which was evidenced by the Quran and Sunnah as representing a Sharia judgement. It is something devotional and has a reasonable purpose, as in the case of drunkenness as a reason for prohibiting liqueur." Therefore, the effects of a cause are devotional

and we have no understanding about the truth behind its causality. For this reason, we resort to the Sharia text and observe its effects in the outside world. As an example, drinking liqueur breeds drunkenness and it was for this reason (breeding great sins) that drinking liqueur has been banned.

### 2.3 Forms of Cause by Al-Amedi

No consensus has been reached by jurists over the forms of cause. Therefore, different forms, various opinions, and multiple categories were proposed by jurists. "The variation of forms is due to the variation of accounts, though all forms have similarity in essence."

Having performed an in-depth, exhaustive investigation of the concept of cause, Al-Amedi explained the related affairs in Sharia such as observation of duties, and bringing about justice between people in their contracts and transactions. Al-Amedi offered two forms of cause with two different accounts.

First: Presence versus absence of wisdom

In this form, Al-Amedi views cause as either having wisdom, as a prerequisite for cause, or lacking thereof. Al-Amedi offers two descriptions here:

- a. A form that does not require the understanding of wisdom: "This form needs not have an understandable wisdom as a prerequisite." In other words, the motive behind this form is not clear for us, nor do we have to discover it, because a judgement is an order that has to be performed. To explicate this form and illustrate its essence, Al-Amedi offered several examples. One example concerns sundown, which indicates the obligation of prayer. All powerful Allah says: "Observe the prayer from the decline of the sun" (Surah Al-Isra 17:78). Another statement by the prophet is the following: "Observe the prayer if the sun declines." Thus, the decline of the sun from the center of the sky is an indicator of the midday, at which time the Muslim is to observe the prayer imposed on him. This temporal cause is devotional. We do not ratiocinate this cause but only conform to what has been mentioned in the texts. Another example is the appearance of the Crescent of Ramadan which indicates the obligation to fast. Allah says: "So whoever is present this month, let them fast" (Al-

Baqarah: 185). Another saying by the prophet is as follows: "Fast and break your fast upon your observation of it" (Al-Bukhari, 4/ 106; Muslim, 3 / 124). Therefore, observation of the Crescent obliges the capable Muslim, who is not in a trip, to fast. If he ignores this obligation, he shall invade the order of Allah. We are not to understand the relation between the appearance of Crescent and the obligation to fast. The only thing to consider is that Allah ordered us and this order has to be adhered.

- b. 2. A form that requires the understanding of wisdom: "This form requires a wisdom behind the judgement, as in the case of prohibiting the drinking of wine should one drink a minimum amount of it. Yet the amount of alcohol drunken is not important, since it has been already prohibited in texts and by all experts."

Second: Presence versus absence of repetition.

There are two cases in relation to the presence versus absence of the repetition of judgment:

- a. Literally, repetition is about reference. Al-Laith argued: "Repetition means referring to something." In common language, repetition is about redoing something whenever the motive is present. Regarding the repeating cause upon which the order repeats, Al-Amedi argued: "The cause repeats with the repetition of judgement. Examples include the decline of sun, appearance of Crescent, and other forms of guarantees, punishments, and transactions."
- b. In regard to non-repetition, Al-Amedi argues: "Or non-repeating as in the case of Haj." Haj must be performed by the capable person only once. Thus, the cause here does not require the repetition of an act.

Cause can also be categorized based on other accounts which were touched upon by Al-Amedi. "These categories concern either the existence or non-existence of something, and can be legitimate or illegitimate."

#### **2.4 The benefit of cause for the Sharia judgement**

Cause is an important element in a text, making the reader mindful. In other words,

through the literal contexts of the text, cause allows for the connection of meanings to their purposes. The themes of the purposes may be legal, social, or verbal, because the relation of causes to their determinants goes beyond the text.

If the interconnection of things be evident as a result of cause, should we through it determine a Sharia order concerning a certain problem? Al-Amedi mentioned the sources of cause which we can adopt in explaining a Sharia judgement. He discussed the problem and analyzed its aspects diligently, which proved he is knowledgeable about the reasons of the principles of jurisprudence and the purposes of Islamic law.

In response to the above question, Al-Amedi shows why it is possible for the Sharia order to adopt cause, which is not evidenced by the Quran or Sunnah. "Accordingly, for any event there is a made based on a cause not a reason derived from the Quran or Sunnah. Such an order has two manifestations for Allah: "1. An order made based on a cause; and 2. An order based on the description of that judgement." Therefore, judgements were inferred from causes, in order to maintain the purposes of Sharia that require considering the benefits of the servants, and preventing them from misconducts. The ignorance of causes will perhaps lead to evil, in which case one's nature retrogrades and oppression rises. As a result, religion will lose its power. For this reason, it is important for experts to consider causes in Sharia judgements.

Should the cause be evident in a judgement, would not that mean the cause is something different from the Sharia evidence? Al-Amedi offered a description on the fact that cause is mandatory for a judgement: "The fact that cause is mandatory for an order does not mean it is the cause alone that makes an order mandatory. Otherwise, a cause would make an order mandatory even if Sharia is absent. Instead, a cause only serves to define an order and nothing else."

Because we are discussing the relation between cause and judgement, it is necessary to throw light on the source of cause, for many have the false belief that a cause can only be legitimate. On the contrary, the source of cause can be illegitimate also: "The cause of an order is

not necessarily legitimate, where the causes of punishments are not only illegitimate but also taboo. Yet these causes are still mandatory for their judgments. Take, for example, adultery which is taboo and yet mandates whipping or stoning; murdering which is taboo and yet mandates retribution; ejaculation is taboo and still mandates whipping; stealing is taboo and still mandates cutting off and payment of fine; and highway robbery is taboo and still mandates murdering, crucifixion, or cutting off. Although these acts are basically banned, this does not mean there should be no severe preventive punishments. For this reason, hideousness does not exist in the punishment, since the effect is not seen like the cause, even if both have commonality. Take murdering for example, where the first murdering is an invasion to something banned while the second one (i.e. the punishment) is a response to a misconduct. It also prevents others from cravings to perform such misconduct.

### 3 Methodology

This study uses qualitative methods. In qualitative research, the use of theory is only a guide so that the research focus is in accordance with the facts in the field (Nurdin & Pettalongi, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2016). The object of this research is the Issues of the concept of cause and its functions according to al-amedī.

This study employs a qualitative research method using a library research approach. In qualitative library research, theory serves not as a variable to be tested but as a guiding framework to ensure that the research focus remains aligned with the scholarly facts obtained from textual sources. All data in this study were gathered through extensive examination of classical and contemporary literature related to the concept of cause (‘illah) in the science of Islamic jurisprudential principles (uṣūl al-fiqh), with special emphasis on the writings of al-Āmidī, particularly his seminal work *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*. Data collection was carried out through intensive reading, note-taking, and systematic extraction of relevant discussions found in al-Āmidī’s works as well as those of other jurists whose ideas provide context to his thought. The primary sources of this research consist of al-Āmidī’s original texts that explain the definitions, classifications, functions, and components of

cause. Meanwhile, the secondary sources include classical dictionaries, works of uṣūl al-fiqh, academic articles, and previous studies that analyze the concept of cause and al-Āmidī’s methodological contributions.

The data obtained were analyzed using a thematic analysis technique. The analysis began with data reduction, which involved identifying and selecting material directly relevant to al-Āmidī’s conceptualization of cause, such as its linguistic and terminological meanings, its categories, its relationship with wisdom (ḥikmah), its conditions, counter-causes, and other related concepts. The next stage was data presentation, in which the reduced data were organized into major thematic sections consistent with the structure of the study. The final stage was verification, where conclusions were drawn through continuous interpretation of al-Āmidī’s texts, supplemented by comparisons with the views of other jurists to highlight the consistency, distinctiveness, and significance of al-Āmidī’s contributions to the discourse of uṣūl al-fiqh. The analytical approach used is deductive, beginning with the general theoretical framework of cause within the broader tradition of Islamic legal theory and narrowing down to al-Āmidī’s specific elaboration of the concept within his epistemological system.

## 4 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Al-Amedi’s Conceptualization and Forms of Cause

The findings of this study indicate that the concept of cause (‘illah) holds a fundamental position in uṣūl al-fiqh as a central basis for legal determination. Through an extensive examination of al-Āmidī’s work *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, it is evident that he develops a comprehensive formulation of cause integrating linguistic, terminological, and epistemological dimensions.

Linguistically, al-Āmidī defines cause as “something through which a purpose is reached,” akin to a rope or a pathway that leads to an intended objective. Terminologically, he formulates cause as “an explicit and systematic description established by the Qur’an and Sunnah as an indicator of a Sharī’ah ruling.” This definition emphasizes that cause must be:

- a. Explicit (zāhir): free from ambiguity and speculative interpretation.

- b. Systematic (muḍṭarid): consistently applicable in all cases.
- c. Textually grounded: legitimized by the Qur'an or Sunnah.

The analysis further demonstrates that al-Āmidī categorizes cause into two major forms:

- a. Based on the Presence or Absence of Wisdom (*Hikmah*)
  - 1) Causes that do not require understanding of wisdom: Examples include sunset as the cause for the obligatory Maghrib prayer and the sighting of the crescent as the cause for the obligation to fast in Ramadan. The wisdom behind these causes is not required to be inferred; their validity rests solely on textual evidence.
  - 2) Causes that require understanding of wisdom: An example is the prohibition of wine, where the underlying wisdom intoxication is directly associated with the preservation of intellect.
- b. Based on Repetition or Non-Repetition of the Ruling
  - 1) Repeating causes: Such as the rising and setting of the sun which repeatedly initiate prayer obligations.
  - 2) Non-repeating causes: Such as the condition of capability (*istiṭā'ah*) that obligates the pilgrimage (*Hajj*), which is mandatory only once in a lifetime.

Furthermore, al-Āmidī acknowledges that the source of a cause is not always legitimate. In criminal law, the cause of punishment often originates from prohibited acts such as adultery, theft, and murder, which nonetheless serve as valid causes for legal sanctions. This highlights the functional role of cause in maintaining social order, irrespective of the moral status of the act itself.

#### 4.2 Significance and Implications of Al-Āmidī's Approach

The results reveal that al-Āmidī's approach offers substantial contributions to the methodology of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, particularly in clarifying the logical structure and epistemic foundation of Islamic legal rulings. Several significant implications emerge from this analysis.

4.2.1 Strengthening the Relationship Between Textual Evidence and Rationality: By distinguishing between causes that require wisdom and those that do not, al-Āmidī creates a balance between textual (*naṣṣī*) and rational (*'aqlī*) reasoning. This demonstrates that certain legal rulings are grounded purely in divine command, while others can be rationally inferred through the identification of underlying wisdom. This contributes to the understanding that Shari'ah encompasses both devotional obedience and rational consideration of public welfare.

4.2.2 Affirming the Role of Cause as a Mechanism for Realizing *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*. Al-Āmidī clearly shows that cause serves as a bridge linking textual expressions with their intended purposes. Through this mechanism, Shari'ah aims to secure: benefit (*maṣlahah*), protection of fundamental human interests, and prevention of harm (*mafsadah*).

Examples such as the prohibition of intoxicants or the enforcement of punishments in criminal cases reflect the instrumental role of cause in achieving the higher objectives of Islamic law.

4.2.3 Clarifying the Function of Illegitimate Acts as Causes. Al-Āmidī's assertion that causes may originate from illegitimate acts offers a significant methodological insight. In criminal jurisprudence, sinful acts—such as murder or theft—constitute valid causes for legal punishment. This reveals that cause functions as a legal determinant rather than a moral validation of the act itself. This distinction helps dispel the misconception that causes must always stem from permissible matters and highlights the protective role of Shari'ah in preventing social disorder.

4.2.4 Enhancing Consistency in Legal Determination. By insisting that causes must be explicit and systematic, al-Āmidī emphasizes the necessity of objectivity and consistency in legal interpretation. This minimizes subjective reasoning and ensures that legal rulings remain stable

and coherent across different contexts. His classification of repeating and non-repeating causes also clarifies the rationale behind differing obligations in Islamic law, such as the daily repetition of prayer versus the once-in-a-lifetime obligation of pilgrimage.

- 4.2.5 Contemporary Relevance of Al-Amedi's Theory of Cause. The study demonstrates that al-Āmidī's theory remains highly relevant for contemporary Islamic legal reasoning, particularly in: analogy (*qiyās*), resolving unprecedented legal issues (*nawāzil*), formulating modern legal rulings in finance, medicine, technology, and personal law, and maintaining alignment between textual sources and societal needs.

Thus, al-Āmidī's conceptualization of cause provides an epistemological framework that supports both continuity and adaptability within Islamic law.

## 5 Conclusion

The study of jurisprudential concepts is of much importance, and becomes even more interesting when studied through the terminology study in which the concept is specified and its main dimensions are manifest. As a result, it can be understood and its peripheral issues can be learned. In this research, the concept of cause, as discussed by Al-Amedi, and the related scientific issues were investigated. Al-Amedi has a unique character in the principles of jurisprudence, where he, thanks to his knowledge about texts, stroked a balance between the theoretical and practical aspects of the study of concepts. He was also knowledgeable about inferring the topics, and applying the cause to the order theoretically and practically. For this reason, his thoughts and summaries were sequential, and accurate in terms of reasoning and inferring.

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