

*Bi-quarterly Journal of “Religion, Management & Governance”, Essay, Vol 2, No 2 (Serial 4), Winter & Spring 2024, pp. 43-51*

## **Examining Imam Ali’s Justice and Meritocracy in Human Resource Management with Emphasis on Letter 53 of Nahj al-Balagha**

*Zahra Sadat Mohammadi*<sup>1</sup>

- 1. M.A. Student, Department of Public Administration, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.*

### **Abstract**

Ali's justice, as outlined in Letter 53 of Nahj al-Balagha to Malik al-Ashtar, is considered one of the most comprehensive management principles in the history of Islam. This letter, emphasizing meritocracy, fairness, maintaining human dignity, and closely monitoring the performance of managers and employees, provides a practical and applicable model for human resource management. In this research, the impact of Ali's justice on human resource management is analyzed by studying the teachings of this letter and reviewing related scientific articles. The results indicate that the principles of Ali's justice, such as the selection of capable managers and fair treatment of employees, can enhance organizational trust, increase productivity, and create a just work environment.

The results of this study indicate that Letter 53 of Imam Ali (AS), in addition to being a comprehensive guide for governance in its time, can still serve as a managerial framework for contemporary organizations. Applying these principles in human resource management

---

<sup>1</sup> [Mhmdizahrasadat@gmail.com](mailto:Mhmdizahrasadat@gmail.com)

can not only improve organizational performance but also enhance social justice and lead to the selection and appointment of capable individuals.

## 1 Introduction

Justice, as one of the fundamental human values, is recognized as a cornerstone of governance and management in all societies and intellectual schools. In Islamic teachings, justice is presented not only as an ethical principle but also as the main pillar of governance. Imam Ali (AS), in Letter 53 of Nahj al-Balagha, elaborates on this principle in detail for Malik al-Ashtar, the governor of Egypt. This letter, recognized as an Islamic governance charter, presents principles such as meritocracy, fairness, human dignity, and accountability of managers as the foundations of governance and management.

Research has shown that organizations that pay attention to justice and meritocracy are more successful in attracting and retaining talent, increasing job satisfaction, and improving organizational culture (Shiriti and colleagues, 2015; Abbasi-Pour and colleagues, 2018). In this regard, Ali's teachings can serve as a comprehensive model for modern organizations.

In today's world, organizations face challenges such as attracting and retaining efficient human resources, motivating employees, and increasing productivity. In such an environment, the principles of Ali's justice can be an effective solution to address these challenges. Justice in Ali's thinking goes beyond the fair distribution of resources and emphasizes creating an environment where individuals can develop both personally and organizationally by utilizing their capabilities (Shiriti and colleagues, 2015). In Letter 53, Imam Ali (AS) advises Malik al-Ashtar to select competent and capable managers and emphasizes the importance of matching the personal characteristics of managers with the needs of the organization. This topic, also examined in the research of Mousavizadeh and Adli (2009), shows that meritocracy in selecting managers can lead to increased trust among employees and improved organizational performance. Furthermore, Imam Ali (AS) stresses that managers should treat their subordinates with

kindness, fairness, and respect for their rights, avoiding any form of autocracy or despotic behavior. These principles, also emphasized in the research by Shiriti and colleagues (2015), can reduce internal conflicts and increase employee job satisfaction. Abbasi-Pour and colleagues (2018) also demonstrated that fairness and meritocracy in human resource management have a direct impact on improving productivity and creating a healthy work environment.

Another prominent aspect of Ali's justice in Letter 53 is the emphasis on closely monitoring the performance of managers and employees. This oversight, aimed at preventing corruption, autocracy, and discrimination, is one of the essential principles of just governance. Such supervision not only increases transparency within the organization but also fosters trust between managers and employees (Mousavizadeh and Adli, 2009). This research aims to examine the impact of Ali's justice and meritocracy in human resource management, seeking to offer a practical model for contemporary organizations by analyzing the teachings of Letter 53 and aligning them with modern management concepts.

## **2 Research Background**

Numerous studies have examined the concept of justice in governance and its impact on human resource management. These studies, especially in the context of Ali's teachings, emphasize the importance of justice as a core element of management. The following is an overview of related research in this field.

Letter 53 of Nahj al-Balagha is one of the main sources for explaining the principles of Ali's justice. This letter stresses the importance of selecting competent managers, precise oversight, and fair treatment. Mousavizadeh and Adli (2009) examined the criteria for selecting and appointing managers from the perspective of Nahj al-Balagha. Their findings show that criteria such as commitment, expertise, and ethical ability are emphasized in this letter.

Also, Abbasi-Pour and colleagues (2018) demonstrated that fairness and justice in organizations can lead to increased productivity, reduced conflicts, and improved organizational commitment. These studies, with their focus on concepts such as fair distribution of tasks and respect for human dignity, directly relate to the teachings of Ali's justice.

Shiriti and colleagues (2015) stated that attention to human dignity in management is one of the key strategies for creating a positive and ethical work environment. This research, by analyzing the teachings of Nahj al-Balagha, showed that fair and humane treatment of employees not only increases motivation but also improves organizational culture.

Furthermore, one of the principles of Ali's justice, as expressed in Letter 53, is the emphasis on the careful monitoring of managers' and employees' performance to prevent corruption and autocracy. Mousavizadeh and Adli (2009) emphasized that this oversight not only contributes to transparency in management processes but also fosters trust between managers and employees. This principle is explicitly mentioned in Imam Ali's letter, where he stresses that managers must be accountable for their actions and avoid unjust behavior.

### **3 Findings**

#### **Meritocracy and Human Resource Management**

One of the most prominent teachings of Ali's justice is the emphasis on meritocracy. In Letter 53, Imam Ali (AS) advises Malik al-Ashtar to select managers who possess not only expertise and skill but also commitment and professional ethics. This principle, which was also supported by Mousavizadeh and Adli (2009), can serve as a criterion for improving the process of selecting and appointing managers in modern organizations.

#### **Fairness and Enhancing Productivity**

Fairness in organizations is another key principle of Ali's justice. Findings from Shiriti and colleagues (2015) indicated that fair treatment of employees can lead to increased organizational commitment and reduced internal conflicts. These findings align with Imam Ali's emphasis on fair treatment of subordinates in Letter 53.

### **Maintaining Human Dignity in Organizations**

Imam Ali (AS) emphasizes maintaining human dignity throughout Letter 53, advising managers to act respectfully and avoid despotic behavior. Abbasi-Pour and colleagues (2018) also emphasized that employees who feel valued and respected are more likely to actively engage in the organization. This not only helps improve individual and group performance but also creates a healthier work environment in which employees continuously feel safe and respected.

### **Monitoring and Accountability**

One of the most critical elements of Ali's justice is the careful monitoring of managers' and employees' performance. Imam Ali (AS) emphasizes that managers must be accountable for their decisions and avoid autocratic and unjust behavior. This principle, also highlighted by Abbasi-Pour and colleagues (2018), enhances transparency and trust within organizations.

### **Strengthening Motivation and Organizational Commitment**

In Letter 53, Imam Ali (AS) emphasizes creating an environment where employees feel secure and valued. Shiriti and colleagues (2015) found that the implementation of Ali's justice in work environments leads to increased organizational commitment and reduces stress and conflicts. Employees who perceive fairness in an organization are more likely to actively participate in decision-making and collaborate to achieve organizational goals. These findings suggest that justice is not only an ethical principle but also an effective tool for managing human resources (Shiriti and colleagues, 2015).

## **Creating an Organizational Culture Based on Justice**

Organizational culture is one of the most important determinants of an organization's success. Imam Ali (AS) urges Malik al-Ashtar to create a culture based on justice and fairness, emphasizing that managers' behavior with employees should serve as a model for other members of the organization. Abbasi-Pour and colleagues (2018) demonstrated that organizations that build their culture on justice are more successful in attracting and retaining talent, and they also create a more desirable working environment. This working environment leads to lower employee turnover and increased productivity. In such a culture, employees have greater motivation to collaborate and improve their performance.

### **4 Conclusion**

This research showed that the principles of Ali's justice, including meritocracy, fairness, maintaining human dignity, and monitoring, can serve as practical models for human resource management in modern organizations. The findings indicated that implementing Ali's justice, in addition to improving productivity and reducing conflicts, can lead to the creation of an ethical and healthy work environment.

The teachings of Imam Ali (AS) in Letter 53 of Nahj al-Balagha can still serve as a comprehensive and inspiring guide to addressing management challenges in the contemporary world. These principles, emphasizing justice, meritocracy, and human dignity, have high applicability in modern organizations and can be used as the foundation for designing just human resource management systems.

### **5 References**

1. Ali (A.S). (Letter 53). Nahj al-Balagha.

2. Abbasi-Pour, A., Rahimian, H., & Ghiyasi-Nadoushan, S. (2018). Presenting a model for selecting talented employees in government organizations. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 10(4), 605-628.
3. Shariati, M., Sohrabi, M., & Abolhasan Shirazi, H. (2015). The system of meritocracy from the perspective of Imam Ali (A.S). *Journal of Administrative Management Studies*, 10(2), 191-218.
4. Tohmasbi, R., Qalipour, A., & Javaheri-Zadeh, E. (2012). Identifying and ranking factors influencing the attraction and retention of scientific talents. *Public Management Research*, 17(5), 5-26.
5. Mousavi-Zadeh, Z., & Adli, M. (2009). Criteria for selecting and appointing managers with a meritocratic approach in Nahj al-Balagha. *Management Thought*, 3(1), 103-132.