



## **The Alavid Governance Model: Based on Content Analysis of the Letter to *Mālik Ashtar***

**Maryam Nazarbeighi\***

Assistant professor, Department of Quranic and Hadith Sciences, Faculty of  
Humanities,  
Ayatollah Boroujerdi University, Boroujerd, Iran.

**Mohsen Faryadres**

Assistant professor, Department of Quranic and Hadith Sciences, Faculty of  
Humanities,  
Ayatollah Boroujerdi University, Boroujerd, Iran .

**Mohammad Mehdi Shokri**

M.A Student ,Qur'anic Sciences and Hadith – Specialization in Qur'anic  
Studies, Faculty of Humanities,  
Ayatollah Boroujerdi University, Boroujerdi (RA), Boroujerd, Iran.

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### **Abstract**

In the contemporary world, governance is a multidimensional concept  
that goes beyond the traditional administration of states and

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\* Corresponding Author: m.nazarbeygi@abru.ac.ir.

encompasses decision-making processes, accountability, social participation, and justice-orientation. The transformation of theoretical approaches in the field of governance and the emergence of new managerial models has intensified the need to revisit authentic religious texts in order to extract the foundations of just governance. Accordingly, the present study aims to explain the fundamental principles and values of governance in Alavid thought through a content analysis of Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha*, the directive of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (AS), to *Mālik Ashtar Nakhaʿī*. The research method is qualitative and quantitative content analysis with an interdisciplinary and text-centered approach, focusing on the extraction of managerial, ethical, and theological concepts from the text of the letter. The findings indicate that the teachings of the Imam Ali (AS) in this letter can be explained in four main axes: "Core principles and values in governance, just and ethical management in dealing with the people, the role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers, attention to the military and defensive dimensions of governance." The content analysis of Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha* reveals that Imam Ali (AS) designed the structure of a governance system founded upon piety and efficiency; a structure in which the selection of officials based on merit, the protection of people's rights, and continuous accountability before God are regarded as central mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Imam Ali (AS), *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Governance, Ruler,

## Introduction

The establishment of government and the effective management of society are undeniable necessities in collective human life. In Islamic thought, the issue of governance is not merely concerned with maintaining order; rather, it provides a framework for the realization of social justice, public welfare, and the organization of a virtuous way of life. From this perspective, the teachings of Imam Ali in *Nahj al-Balāgha*, particularly Letter 53 addressed to *Mālik Ashtar*, constitute one of the richest texts upon which the principles and components of desirable governance can be redefined. The short-lived rule of Imam Ali (AS) was a concrete manifestation of these very principles and foundations; as he himself, at the beginning of his governance, spoke of fundamental transformations in the structure of administering society (Thawāqib, 2011 AD/1391 SH: 2).

Previous studies have often approached this letter in a descriptive or interpretive manner and have made fewer attempts to present a structured model based on systematically extracted concepts from the text, using a method such as qualitative content analysis. The main issue of the present research is that, despite the frequent emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the Letter to *Mālik Ashtar*, a methodological gap in extracting the Alavid model of governance is still observable. On the one hand, many existing studies have limited themselves to mentioning moral virtues or scattered managerial recommendations; on the other hand, the models that have been presented lack a clear classification based on the frequency and

priority of the themes contained in the letter itself.

Accordingly, the following question arises: based on the content analysis of Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha*, ‘What are the main and subsidiary themes that constitute the Alavid model of governance, and with what level of emphasis (frequency of occurrence) does each appear in the text?’ The objective of this research is to systematically identify these themes, classify them, and present a model that, in addition to contributing to the development of the foundations of Islamic management studies, may serve as a basis for evaluating and reforming governance models in contemporary societies. The research method is directed content analysis aligned with interdisciplinary approaches in the field of Islamic humanities. It should be noted that this study focuses solely on the internal textual analysis of the letter, while the verification of its historical or documentary authenticity is left to other studies.

## 1. Literature Review

Nazarzadeh and colleagues, in a study titled "Critical Discourse Analysis of Distributive Justice in the Alavid Tradition with Emphasis on Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha*," analyzed the methods of resource distribution among different social groups by Imam Ali (AS) using the discourse analysis method, and proposed interpretations of the concept of justice and the methods of wealth distribution therein. This article employed discourse analysis, and its dominant perspective was limited to explaining the economic and financial aspects of Letter 53 of *Nahj*

Nazarzadeh et al., in a study titled "Good Governance: Balanced Ecology," examine the main concepts and characteristics of desirable governance by synthesizing various definitions of governance. The article considers good governance to be the result of establishing a balance between the two dimensions of efficiency and effectiveness, arguing that development is the outcome of a balanced and progressive increase in both efficiency and effectiveness. A descriptive method was used in conducting this research, and the dominant perspective is limited to examining governance within economic, political, and social domains.

Qaemi and Zolfaghari, in the article "Lexical Aspect and Its Role in Modality in Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha*," examine lexical aspect as a semantic feature and, based on it, explain the relationship between this multifaceted element and the viewpoint of Imam Ali (AS). The dominant perspective and the conclusions of this article are limited to educational issues. The analysis conducted in this study focuses solely on the qualitative aspects of verbs.

Ahmadi et al., in an article titled "Analysis of Linguistic Codes in Reading Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha* with Emphasis on a Semiotic Approach," conclude that the mentioned linguistic signs are the result of an interaction manifested in three dimensions: social, logical, and aesthetic. The principles governing the relationship between ruler and subjects are expressed through rhetorical forms such as metonymy, metaphor, allusion, and simile. The method of this research is descriptive-analytical, and the dominant perspective represents a branch of semiotics grounded in literary criticism.

Bahadori, in a study titled "Thematic Analysis of the Covenant of Imam Ali (AS) to *Mālik Ashtar*," conducted a thematic analysis with an emphasis on inter-thematic relations, focusing on the decomposition, explanation, and synthesis

## 2. Research Method

One of the important features of the content analysis method is its ability to reduce the volume of extensive information, systematically classify data, and extract main themes. In addition to helping organize data, this method provides an appropriate model for identifying the central theme (Abedi Jafari et al., 2010 AD/1390 SH: 151). Furthermore, content analysis is an effective tool for the systematic observation and interpretation of qualitative data and for transforming them into quantitative data, thereby enabling a more accurate and coherent understanding of the semantic structure of the text (Derakhsheh et al., 2014 AD/1394 SH: 53).

Among the capabilities of this method in Qur'anic studies is the possibility of distinguishing and classifying subjects, categorizing extracted themes, and arranging the categories constructed by the researcher alongside one another in order to depict the final results (Janipour, 2010 AD/1390 SH). To date, no comprehensive study on Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha* has systematically and scientifically extracted the themes contained in this letter across various fields. Therefore, the present study seeks to extract the themes of this letter and present their statistical frequency through charts and systematic

**174** tables based on quantitative indicators and frequency to those

interested in the tradition of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and the Islamic community.

Descriptive analysis constitutes the final stage of the practical research process, in which the researcher analyzes the data. This stage is of great importance because all research findings become clear within it. Conclusion is an abstract and intellectual endeavor, yet one grounded in data analysis, in which the researcher's logic and argumentative strength hold a special position (Ezzati, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 249).

### 3. Content Analysis of Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha*

The qualitative content analysis method is a systematic approach to the study of texts aimed at uncovering the latent meanings within linguistic and written data. In this method, the unit of analysis is considered to be a "Meaningful sentence/clause"; that is, any independent statement containing a ruling, recommendation, prohibition, or ethical-managerial emphasis. Accordingly, phrases such as "The collection of its taxes" are not regarded as independent units by themselves; rather, the entire sentence containing the phrase (for example: "Let the collection of its taxes be carried out without causing harm to the workers") constitutes a single unit of analysis. This choice is made because the meaning of governance is formed within the context of the sentence, not merely at the lexical level.

Tracking Context in Coding: "In order to preserve semantic validity, each code was determined according to the context of the sentence and its argumentative position within the letter. For example, 175

the theme "Attention to the affairs of the people," where Imam Ali (AS) speaks of "Attending to the people's affairs" alongside "Jihad," carries the meaning of social supervision; however, in another passage concerning "Inspection of officials," it appears in the sense of institutionalizing accountability. Therefore, coding was conducted in a context-oriented manner, and identical codes appearing in different contexts were categorized separately whenever their meanings differed."

Process of Analysis (Distinction between Quantitative and Qualitative Sections): "This study employs directed qualitative content analysis, and the counting of frequencies is used solely to demonstrate the priority and emphasis of themes within the text. Accordingly, the qualitative section involved the discovery of the main themes (A, B, C, and D) and subsidiary themes from within the text through an inductive approach and without prior theoretical assumptions. At this stage, relational patterns among the themes, such as the connection between "Economic justice" and "Public oversight," were identified."

The quantitative section is limited only to calculating the absolute frequency of each theme throughout the letter, and no inferential statistics were employed, since the objective was not the testing of a statistical hypothesis but rather the identification of thematic priorities based on their natural recurrence within the text.

Results of the Coding: After multiple readings and examinations, the text of the letter led to the identification of four main themes:

A: Core principles and values in governance;

**176** B: Just and ethical management in dealing with the people;



C: The role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers;

D: Attention to military and defensive matters.

Regarding the article's length limitations, only the initial section of the letter is presented as a coding sample, while the complete frequency table of the subsidiary themes has been included.

| Row | Text of the Letter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Key Phrase                    | Sub-Theme                               | Main Theme                                           | Code |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1   | In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.<br>This is what the servant of God, 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful, enjoined upon <i>Mālik ibn al-Hārith al-Ashtar</i> in his covenant when he appointed him over Egypt, for the collection of its revenues, the struggle against its enemies, the reform of its people, and the cultivation of its lands.<br>He commanded him to fear God, | Collection of taxes           | Attention to taxation                   | Just and ethical management toward the people        | B1   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Reforming its people          | Attention to people's affairs           | Just and ethical management toward the people        | B2   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Development of its lands      | Development and prosperity of the state | Core principles and values in governance             | A1   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Command to fear God           | Command to fear God                     | The role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers | C1   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Prioritizing obedience to God | Giving priority to obedience to God     | The role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers | C2   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Following divine obligations  | Adherence to the commands of the Divine | The role of God in supervising                       | C3   |

| Row | Text of the Letter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Key Phrase                                  | Sub-Theme                                         | Main Theme                                           | Code |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------|
|     | to prefer obedience to Him, and to follow what He has commanded in His Book, His obligations and traditions, adherence to which brings happiness and neglect of which leads to ruin and misery. He urged him to support God, the Exalted, with his heart, his hand, and his tongue; for God, Glorified be His Name, has guaranteed victory to those who support Him and honor to those who honor Him. He ordered him to restrain his soul from desires and curb it in its passions; for indeed the soul incites toward evil except that upon which God | and traditions                              | Book                                              | the conduct of rulers                                |      |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Supporting God with heart, hand, and tongue | Supporting God through belief, action, and speech | The role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers | C4   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Restraining the self from desires           | Self-discipline and control of desires            | The role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers | C5   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Righteous deeds as the best provision       | Encouragement to perform righteous deeds          | The role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers | C6   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Restrain your soul                          | Control over one's desires                        | The role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers | C7   |

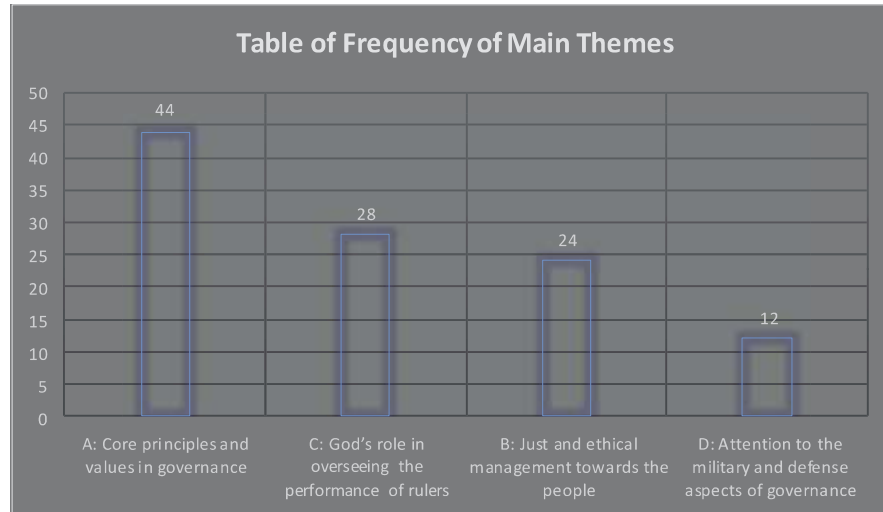
| Row | Text of the Letter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Key Phrase | Sub-Theme | Main Theme | Code |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------|
|     | <p>has mercy.</p> <p>Then know, O! <i>Mālik</i>, which I have sent you to lands over which many states have previously ruled, some with justice and others with tyranny. The people will observe your conduct in the same manner that you observed the conduct of rulers before you, and they will speak of you as you spoke of them.</p> <p>Verily, the righteousness of the virtuous is recognized by what God causes His servants to say about them.</p> <p>Therefore, let the most beloved of treasures to you be the treasure of righteous deeds.</p> <p>Master your desires and deny your soul what is</p> |            |           |            |      |

| Row | Text of the Letter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Key Phrase                             | Sub-Theme                                  | Main Theme                                    | Code |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------|
|     | unlawful for you, for self-denial is true justice toward oneself, whether the soul likes it or not.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                        |                                            |                                               |      |
| 2   | Instill in your heart mercy for the people, affection toward them, and kindness to them. Do not stand over them like a ravenous beast seeking to devour them, for they are of two kinds: either your brothers in religion or your equals in creation. They may slip into error, encounter weaknesses, or commit wrongs intentionally or unintentionally through their own hands. Therefore, grant them your pardon and | Have mercy toward the people           | Compassion toward the people               | Just and ethical management toward the people | B3   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Grant them your pardon and forgiveness | Forgiveness and leniency toward the people | Just and ethical management toward the people | B4   |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | God is above the one who appointed you | Recognition of God's ultimate authority    | Core principles and values in governance      | A2   |

| Row | Text of the Letter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Key Phrase | Sub-Theme | Main Theme | Code |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------|
|     | <p>forgiveness in the same measure that you would hope and desire God to grant you His pardon and forgiveness.</p> <p>For you are above them, and the one who has authority over you is above you, and God is above the one who appointed you. He has entrusted you with their affairs and tested you through them.</p> |            |           |            |      |

Following the content analysis of the letter, the theme "Core Principles and Values in Governance" (indexed as A) attained the highest frequency with 44 occurrences. "The Role of God in Supervising the Conduct of Rulers" (indexed as C) followed with 28 occurrences, while "Just and Ethical Management toward the People" (indexed as B) appeared 25 times, and "Attention to Military and Defensive Affairs in Governance" (indexed as D) was identified with 12 occurrences. The table and chart illustrating the overall frequencies of the main themes are presented below.

### 3-1. Table of Main Theme Frequencies

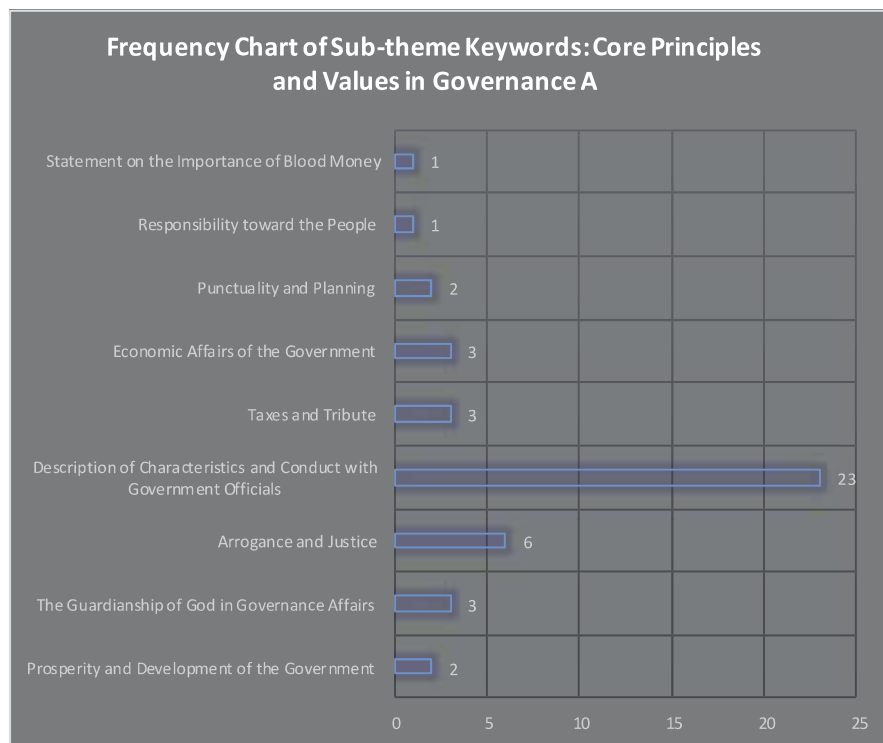


After extracting and evaluating the principal themes, the next step in the analytical process is the detailed examination of the subsidiary themes. These themes constitute the focal points of meaning and the contextual foundations for the formation of concepts within the text. A detailed analysis of the subsidiary themes enables deeper access to layers of meaning and facilitates the development of more qualitative interpretations. At this stage, keywords are of particular importance, as they carry the primary messages of the sentences and reflect the conceptual content of the text. Therefore, the first step in the analysis involves measuring and calculating the frequency of keywords in order to identify the semantic axes and the internal relationships among the principal and subsidiary themes.

### 3-2. Frequency Chart of Keywords Related to the Subsidiary Themes of Core Principles and Values in Governance (A)

**182** Given the diverse range of keywords present in the text, the first step

in the analytical process involved the conceptual classification of the vocabulary. At this stage, similar or synonymous words were organized into coherent groups. Based on this classification, several principal categories of vocabulary were extracted and defined. In the subsequent stage, after the standardization and integration of related concepts, the frequency of each lexical group was calculated. The results of this analysis, which demonstrate the concentration and distribution of themes within the text, are presented in the chart below.



#### Discussion and Analysis:

As the keywords related to the characteristics and conduct toward government officials appear with the highest frequency, 23 occurrences, **183**

within the theme of "Core Principles and Values in Governance," the associated themes and focal points connected to this subject likewise constitute the most frequent category in this section. The characteristics and treatment of government officials are expressed through statements such as warnings against consulting unsuitable individuals in government affairs, as well as recommendations concerning the selection of ministers, officials, and administrators, together with the qualities they should possess and the manner in which they should be treated. Careful and continuous attention to these characteristics can be highly effective in managerial affairs.

The issue of proper selection and appointment has been examined and emphasized at various levels within religious sources. More importantly, in sources addressing selection and appointment, comparative forms and, at times, intensive grammatical forms are frequently employed, indicating the superiority of the intended individual with respect to the prescribed qualities and criteria. In this letter as well, Imam Ali (AS) employs such comparative and emphatic linguistic forms in relation to the intended characteristics.

The study of managerial competencies reflects diverse classifications and approaches. Competencies may be categorized according to their nature, significance, interrelationships, and performance criteria. Within the existing literature on competency studies, various methods of classification relevant to proper selection and appointment can be identified. One such classification divides competencies into "Basic Competencies" and "Distinguishing Competencies." Basic competencies refer to the relevant knowledge



and skills and function as essential prerequisites necessary for carrying out activities. Distinguishing competencies, by contrast, are those capabilities that differentiate high performance from average performance. Accordingly, attitudes, values, self-concepts, and orientations grounded in successful selection may be regarded as distinguishing competencies (Kandula, 2013).

From a lexical perspective, the term "Manager" derives from the root meaning "Administration" and literally refers to one who directs or governs affairs. Terminologically, a manager is defined as an individual capable of coordinating and properly organizing the efforts and activities of people in order to achieve specific objectives (Ebrahimi, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 32).

Each dimension of a manager's personality and behavior should be derived from Islamic concepts and teachings. Islamic management has long been a concern for scholars seeking to present Islamic management theory in contrast to Western managerial theories and to demonstrate Islamic thought as the most comprehensive and precise form of scientific management in practice. In Islam, management is based upon a plan and program compatible with Islamic principles and directed toward objectives approved by Islam, foremost among them attaining nearness to God. Likewise, the methods and manner of dealing with individuals must conform to these same standards (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 15).

In the interpretation of the verse "On the Day We shall call every people with their Imam; whoever is given his record in his right hand, such people will read their record, and they will not be wronged even

to the extent of a thread," (al-Isrā': 71) reference is also made to the importance, necessity, and significant responsibility of leadership. This noble verse, on the one hand, points to a special divine blessing bestowed upon human beings and, on the other hand, reminds them of the heavy responsibility that accompanies this gift. At the beginning of the verse, the issue of leadership and its fundamental role in determining the destiny of human beings is proposed; meaning that on the "Day of Resurrection," every group of people will be called according to their Imam and leader. This Qur'anic expression reflects the profound connection between leadership and followership in worldly life, in such a way that the consequences of a person's conscious or misguided adherence to leaders will be fully manifested in the Hereafter. In fact, while explaining one of the essential factors in the path of human perfection and spiritual growth, this verse also serves as a clear warning to humanity to exercise the utmost care, insight, and moral responsibility in choosing their model and leader (Makarem Shirazi: 12, 201).

In *Tafsir al-Mīzān*, it is also stated that the word Imam originally derives from the root "*amm*," meaning "To lead" or "To be followed as a guide." According to Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, God has designated a group of human beings with this title so that, by divine command, they may guide people along the path of guidance. Accordingly, every society or community has an Imam or leader whom its members follow on either the path of truth or the path of falsehood. In other words, in the Qur'anic perspective, the Imam is not merely a formal or

**186** outward position; rather, he represents the central axis shaping the

intellectual, moral, and behavioral orientation of the community. Thus, on the Day of Resurrection, any group that in worldly life was deprived of recognizing the true Imam will likewise be deprived of insight and guidance in the Hereafter (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 13, 227).

Describing the qualities required of individuals entrusted with responsibility is therefore a necessity, as it ensures proper selection and prevents the emergence of corruption and inefficiency. It also highlights the consequences of improper selection and the responsibility of individuals before God and society. Justice is the most important criterion emphasized by the Qur'an in determining the eligibility of individuals for governance and social responsibilities:

"And when you speak, be just, even if it concerns a close relative." (al-Anfāl: 152)

In *Tafsir al-Mizān*, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains that the mention of relatives and kin in the statement of Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) is intended to show that emotional and familial attachments, more than any other motive, tend to lead a person toward unjust partiality and unfair judgment. Therefore, one must exercise caution in speech and judgment, restraining the tongue from any statement that might bring undue harm or benefit to others. Affection, kinship, and other emotional motivations should not lead a person to distort the words of others, bear false witness, or issue unjust judgments, since such actions undermine justice in speech and harm the integrity of social order (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 7, 518).

In *Tafsir Nemooneh*, it is stated that one must uphold truth with

justice. Since, regardless of the precision exercised in weights and measures, slight deficiencies or excesses may still occur, matters that ordinary scales and instruments are incapable of detecting, the verse subsequently adds: "We do not burden any soul beyond its capacity." Furthermore, whenever one speaks in judgment, testimony, or any other matter, justice must be observed, and one must not deviate from the path of truth, even if the matter concerns one's own relatives (Makarem Shirazi, 6, 30).

Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) also states in a tradition:

"Every person who assumes authority over the affairs of the people will be held accountable for it on the Day of Resurrection." (Kulaynī: 2, 186)

This luminous statement outlines the ethical and religious foundations of governance and demonstrates that responsibility and power should not be regarded as instruments of domination and rule; rather, they must always be accompanied by the principles of justice and accountability. The hadith clearly indicates that officials are accountable not only in the material world but also in the Hereafter for their conduct, and this itself constitutes an important ethical criterion in the selection and supervision of public officials.

Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (AS) states:

"The most deserving person for governance and leadership over the Muslim community is the one who possesses the greatest capability and administrative competence for it, and who are the most knowledgeable concerning God's commands regarding it." (*Nahj al-*

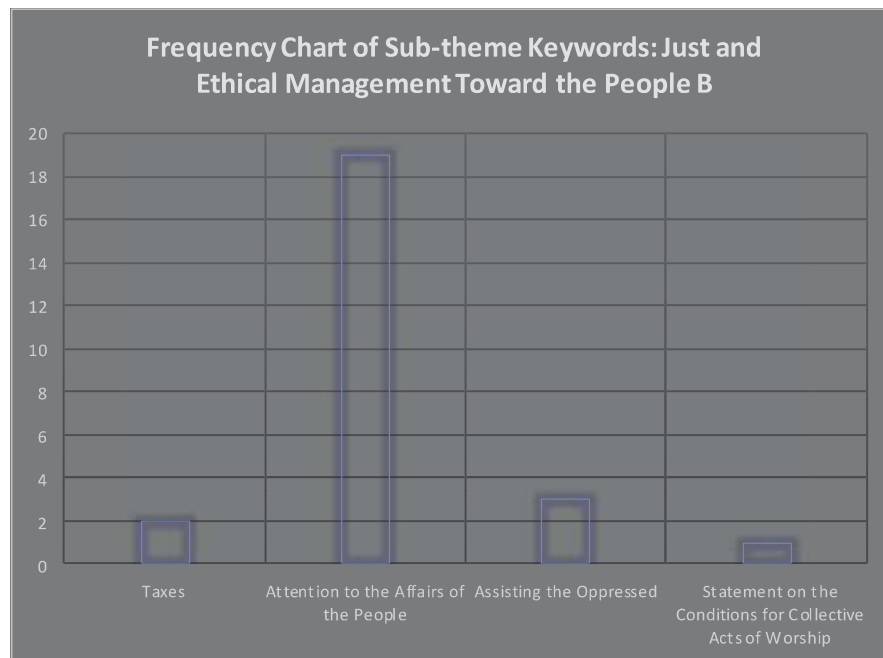
This statement concerning the qualifications required for assuming governance and responsibility presents a fundamental and essential criterion for selection, one based not merely on wealth or popularity, but on competence and sound administration in managing affairs. The foundation of a successful and justice-oriented government lies in practical qualifications and managerial capability. Capability refers to skill and competence, while prudence signifies wisdom and sound judgment in administration. The improper appointment of individuals to positions of responsibility can lead to corruption, oppression, and the stagnation of society.

Meritocracy is one of the fundamental principles of effective leadership. Contrary to the perception that leadership is merely confined to formal position or political power, managerial capability, planning skills, and decision-making abilities are determining factors in the effectiveness of leaders. This type of leadership goes beyond mere administration and leads to positive transformation and the advancement of both organizations and society. In this approach, a leader, in addition to possessing technical competence, must also be ethical, responsible, and accountable (Northouse, 2018).

The selection of government officials and officeholders based on the principles of meritocracy, accountability, justice, prudence, and commitment to service constitutes the most important asset of a healthy and successful government. Awareness of and adherence to these principles should always remain central in the selection of managers and officials so that just, transparent, and effective governance may be realized.

### 3-3. Frequency Chart of Keywords Related to the Subsidiary Themes of Just and Ethical Management toward the People (Theme B)

Words associated with attention to the affairs of the people, with 19 occurrences, have the highest frequency within the theme of just and ethical management toward the people. Likewise, the themes and focal points related to this subject also account for the highest frequency in this section. Following the theme of attention to people's affairs, taxation, assistance to the oppressed and disadvantaged, and the explanation of the conditions of collective acts of worship are among the other topics observable in the frequency table under the main theme of just and ethical management toward the people.



The term management is derived from the root "Manager,"  
**190** meaning leadership and guidance, which in Persian refers to

organizing, coordinating, and directing affairs (Dehkhoda, 2006 AD/1385 SH). Justice is also one of the fundamental philosophical, ethical, and social concepts, meaning fairness, adherence to rights, and equality in behavior and decision-making (Rawls, 1971). Justice in management refers to the fair allocation of resources and opportunities and equal treatment of all members of society. Ethics, meanwhile, refers to a set of principles and values that guide human behavior in relation to others and to society (Rest, 1986). In management, ethics implies adherence to principles such as integrity, transparency, responsibility, and respect for people's rights.

From this perspective, just and ethical management means exercising power and responsibility within a framework of fairness, respect for people's rights, and adherence to moral values in order to realize the public good (Ciulla, 2004). Responsibility and accountability lie at the core of management, rooted in the very concept of responsibility (Novicevic et al., 2013: 474).

Attention to the affairs of the people is considered one of the most fundamental principles of good governance and public administration. This principle is grounded not only in human and religious ethics but is also highly significant from the standpoint of managerial effectiveness. Managers and officials who pay attention to the needs, concerns, and welfare of the people create the conditions for public trust, increased civic participation, and the achievement of sustainable development within society (Denhardt, 2007). Moreover, attention to people's affairs and the accountability of officials contribute to the realization of democracy and good governance (Kaufmann et al., 2010).

Just management ensures that all members of society, especially vulnerable groups, benefit from equal opportunities and participate in decision-making processes. One of the most important steps in addressing people's affairs is gaining an accurate understanding of their needs and demands. Managers must gather sufficient and comprehensive information about people's problems and expectations through various tools such as surveys, public meetings, and complaint systems (Bryson, 2011).

Service to others, within the epistemological framework of Islam, is regarded as a prominent manifestation of righteous action, the realization of which gains meaning only through true faith and monotheistic understanding. This characteristic is not merely a social act, but rather an elevating spiritual and moral quality that plays a guiding role in the inner structure of the human being and directs the course of life toward purity, goodness, and divine satisfaction. Through this perspective, serving others leads to the purification of intention, spiritual growth, and liberation from self-interested motives, replacing selfishness with a spirit of cooperation and altruism. Thus, righteous action and service to humanity are considered the outward manifestation of faith within the social and ethical sphere. In other words, genuine faith is always revealed through sincere service to others.

Attention to the affairs of the people is one of the most fundamental duties of managers, government officials, and leaders of societies. This principle has been emphasized at various religious, ethical, and managerial levels. From the Islamic and Qur'anic perspective, caring  
**192** for the people is presented not only as a human and social



responsibility, but also as a valuable act of worship and a means of attaining divine pleasure. In the field of public administration as well, such attention is regarded as a necessary condition for the legitimacy, effectiveness, and stability of systems of governance.

In reality, the impeccable Imams (AS), as the true interpreters of divine revelation, have demonstrated through practical examples the connection between Qur'anic knowledge, social administration, and divine ethics. They have shown that the true interpretation of the Qur'an acquires meaning only through the practical realization of its values in the conduct of rulers and administrators of society.

For the growth and perfection of human beings, one of the most important objectives of an Islamic government is to provide the necessary conditions for people to benefit from the right path of guidance. The first step on the path of servitude to God is finding the way toward correct guidance (Shabannia, 2010 AD/1389 SH).

In the Qur'anic perspective, a ruler or official is not merely a possessor of power; rather, he is a trustee of the people and a servant of society, someone who is obligated to organize the material and spiritual lives of the people in accordance with divine principles and to strive to resolve their problems. The first verse expressing this principle is:

"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people, to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing." (al-Nisā': 58)

In this verse, the term "Trusts" does not refer merely to material

objects; rather, it encompasses all social and political responsibilities, including governance and the administration of public affairs. Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in *Tafsir al-Mīzān*, emphasizes that the position of governance itself is one of the divine trusts that must be entrusted to those qualified for it, that is, to individuals who are genuinely concerned for the people, possess a correct understanding of issues, and have the ability and prudence to resolve their problems (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 4, 356). From the Qur'anic perspective, those who use positions of authority for personal or factional interests are betrayers of divine trusts.

In the verse:

"O! David, indeed We have made you a vicegerent upon the earth; so judge between the people in truth and do not follow desire, lest it lead you astray from the path of Allah. Indeed, those who stray from the path of Allah will have a severe punishment because they forgot the Day of Reckoning." (Ṣād: 26)

God introduces Prophet David as His vicegerent on earth; more importantly, however, He defines the principal duty of this vicegerent as judging among the people according to truth and justice. The emphasis on the phrase "Between the people" points to the direct relationship between ruler and society and demonstrates that the foundation of governance in Islam, from the perspective of a responsible official, lies in attention to the people and their affairs (Makarem Shirazi: 19, 256).

God also identifies consultation in public affairs as one of the  
**194** characteristics of a faithful society:

"And their affairs are conducted through consultation among themselves." (al-Shūrā: 38)

This verse establishes the principle of people-centeredness within the decision-making structure of governance. *Tafsir Nemooneh* interprets this part of the verse as a sign of responsibility, respect for the opinions and views of the people, and public participation in the administration of society (ibid: 18, 56).

Since serving the people is regarded as one of the highest manifestations of social worship and the embodiment of servitude in human relations, the Noble Prophet (PBUH) and the impeccable Imams (AS), as the most complete exemplars of human life, manifested these divine teachings in their conduct and way of life. By acting as devoted and benevolent servants toward the community, they demonstrated that sincere service to God's servants plays a fundamental role on the path of true devotion within the Islamic tradition. From this perspective, the Prophetic and Alavid model may be viewed as a roadmap for divine governance founded upon love, justice, and social responsibility.

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) also states:

"Whoever relieves a believer of one of the hardships of this world, Allah will relieve him of one of the hardships of the Day of Resurrection." (Kulaynī: 2, 346)

Rulers and officials, as representatives of the Islamic government and trustees of the people, are obligated to exert their utmost efforts to resolve the problems of society. This hadith reminds them of a divine and human responsibility: "That every effort made to alleviate the

hardships of the people is valuable in the sight of God and will be rewarded in the Hereafter. This statement represents one of the most ethical principles of empathy and service to others."

This narration also demonstrates the importance of addressing people's needs and paying attention to their difficulties. Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) states:

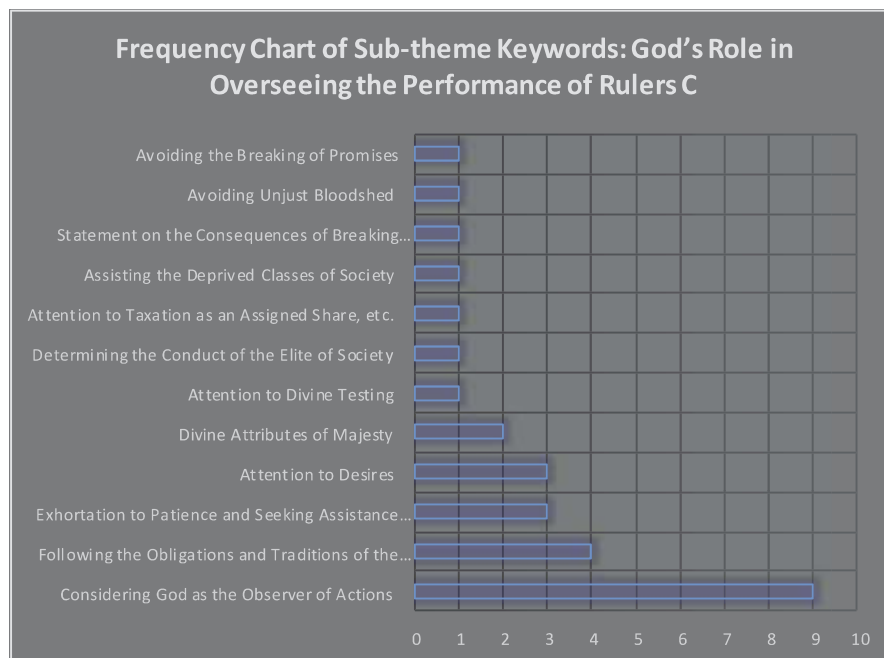
"There is no servant upon whom God increases His blessings except that the needs and demands of the people toward him also increase and intensify. Therefore, whoever does not strive to fulfill the needs of the people has undoubtedly exposed those blessings to decline and loss." (Kulaynī: 4, 37)

If an official who has been granted blessings remains indifferent to the needs of the people, or makes no effort to solve their problems and fulfill their needs, he has deviated from the proper use of those blessings. Such neglect is not only harmful to society, but also causes the divine blessings granted to that individual to diminish. This concept reflects, in a sense, the divine law of justice and accountability: "Blessings are trusts that must be used in the proper way."

Attention by officials to the affairs of the people is considered one of the most important factors in the progress and stability of any society. Officials who are attentive to the needs, problems, and demands of the people can gain public trust and create the conditions necessary for social, economic, and cultural development. Therefore, attention to public affairs must be institutionalized as a managerial strategy so that it can effectively fulfill its role in achieving social

### 3-4. Frequency Chart of Keywords Related to the Subsidiary Themes of The Role of God in Supervising the Conduct of Rulers (Theme C)

The vocabulary associated with "Regarding God as the observer of actions," with 9 occurrences, has the highest frequency within the theme of "The role of God in supervising the conduct of rulers." Likewise, the subsidiary themes and focal points related to this concept account for the highest frequencies in this section. Other subsidiary themes and their frequencies are presented in the chart.



The word "Supervision" in Arabic conveys the meanings of insightfulness and discernment, while in the "Moein Dictionary" it is defined as inspection and examination. The terms "Supervision" and "Inspection" are repeated 143 times in *Nahj al-Balāgha*. Amir **197**

al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (AS) referred to inspectors and supervisors as the "Eyes" of the Islamic system.

In today's managerial environment, with the increasing complexity of structures, insufficient oversight, and the spread of corruption, the need for a form of internal control is felt more strongly than ever. Divine supervision, if properly institutionalized, can serve as a powerful alternative to many costly and ineffective external control mechanisms. This form of supervision corresponds to what management psychology refers to as "Internal ethical control." (Kidder, 2009: 67)

In Islamic thought, the legitimacy of all forms of supervision derives from the fundamental principle of divine authority and sovereignty. Therefore, any supervision that is not based on divine permission and will lacks religious legitimacy. Within this framework, human supervision is considered legitimate only when it operates in continuity with and under the authority of God's will (Ra'i and Mortazaei, 2013 AD/1393 SH).

From the perspective of Islamic ontology, the human being is a creature who inherently possesses free will and freedom of choice. However, within the legislative and moral sphere, human beings are obligated to follow divine laws and commands. This connection between ontological freedom and religious obligation makes the necessity of supervision over human behavior evident.

According to revelatory teachings, the system of divine supervision  
**198** is comprehensive and continuous, in which all human actions are

recorded, preserved, and accounted for, and no act falls outside the scope of divine knowledge. As religious sources explain, the structure of existence is arranged in such a way that every individual, at every moment, is under the supervision of God based on his or her inner beliefs and intentions (Mirza Aghaei; Hoveyda: 2018 AD/1397 SH).

In light of this perspective, the form of supervision derived from religious texts constitutes a comprehensive, just, and unified system that possesses both an internal, faith-based dimension and a social and managerial function. A believing individual is aware of the continuous divine presence and perceives it as the highest system of supervision within the self (Sarmadi, 2014 AD/1393 SH).

From another perspective, guidance and supervision of human beings play a crucial role in leading them toward perfection. Reaching such perfection becomes possible through guidance. In Islam, guidance, unlike in Western perspectives, is not based solely on the pursuit of profit; rather, it must address not only the material needs of human beings but also their spiritual needs. The Holy Qur'an is regarded as the primary source of guidance for humanity (Sayyid Javadein et al., 2019 AD/1398 SH).

One of the most important ethical and divine principles in Islamic management is the belief in God's constant supervision over human actions and intentions, especially those of officials and managers. In the religious worldview, no person in any position or status is hidden from divine observation. This belief not only forms a foundation for piety and responsible management but also serves as a guarantee for

the soundness of decisions and the protection of the rights of the community.

God the Exalted, before and above all others, supervises the actions and conduct of His servants. In the Holy Qur'an it is stated:

"And you are not engaged in any matter, nor do you recite any portion of the Qur'an, nor do you perform any deed, except that We are witnesses over you when you are engaged in it. And not even the weight of an atom on earth or in the heavens escapes your Lord, nor anything smaller or greater than that, but it is recorded in a clear Book." (Yūnus: 61)

In *Tafsir al-Mizān*, it is explained that in the phrase "Nor do you recite from it any Qur'an," the pronoun "From it" apparently refers to God the Exalted. The meaning of the verse, therefore, is that O Prophet, you do not recite anything that bears the name of the Qur'an, that is, something revealed from God, except that God is a witness and observer over it. Although there are many witnesses and observers over human actions, God, beyond all of them, encompasses you completely. The divine dominion and complete encompassing of human actions represent a perfect and comprehensive knowledge that includes all deeds of all creatures (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 10, 126).

This divine supervision over the actions of all human beings, especially officials and rulers, provides the foundation for the implementation of justice and serves as a reminder that no oppression

**200** or wrongdoing, whether committed in private or in public, remains



hidden from God.

God has also appointed agents for human beings who record all their deeds and actions; this is referred to as the supervision of the angels. The Qur'an states:

"Not a word does a person utter except that with him is an observer, ready [to record]." (Qāf: 18)

According to *Tafsir Majma' al-Bayān*, a human being does not utter any word unless, at the very moment of speaking, a divine guardian is present alongside him to record and preserve his speech and actions. Therefore, no human act or statement remains hidden from the supervision of the Lord, and all human actions are continuously monitored and accurately recorded within the divine order (Ṭabrisī: 23, 256).

A person does not speak any word except that, at that same instant, the angels appointed as vigilant recorders are prepared to carry out their duty of recording it.

Another form of divine supervision is expressed through the supervision of one's bodily organs and limbs:

"On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will testify against them concerning what they used to do." (al-Nūr: 24)

In the Qur'anic explanation of the concept of testimony, the intended meaning is that the bodily organs of human beings will bear witness on the Day of Resurrection regarding the deeds they committed. Each organ, according to its specific function and role, will testify to the sin committed through it, in such a way that there

exists an intrinsic correspondence between the nature of the act and the instrument through which it was carried out. In reality, any action performed by a bodily organ renders that very organ responsible and a witness concerning the deed (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 15, 134).

Just as the bodily organs testify to evil and wrongful acts, human actions and decisions will not only be exposed in this world but will also be made fully manifest and judged before God, who is the ultimate upholder of truth and justice.

This verse serves as a serious warning and reminder, affirming the necessity of responsibility and careful vigilance in the conduct and performance of rulers. It draws their attention to the reality that divine supervision transcends every worldly form of oversight, and that no oppression or injustice can remain concealed from God.

Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (AS) states:

"Indeed, commandment belongs only to God, and the offices entrusted to you are but a trust, for which you shall be held accountable." (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 183)

Government belongs only to God, and your rule over the people is a trust placed upon your shoulders for which you are responsible and must give an account. With this statement, Imam Ali emphasizes that the ultimate and primary source of authority and sovereignty belongs solely to God the Exalted, and no one inherently possesses power. By referring to the concept of trust, he clarifies that social responsibilities and political authority are trusts that must be preserved

**202** with piety and carefulness, and that those entrusted with them will

ultimately be held accountable.

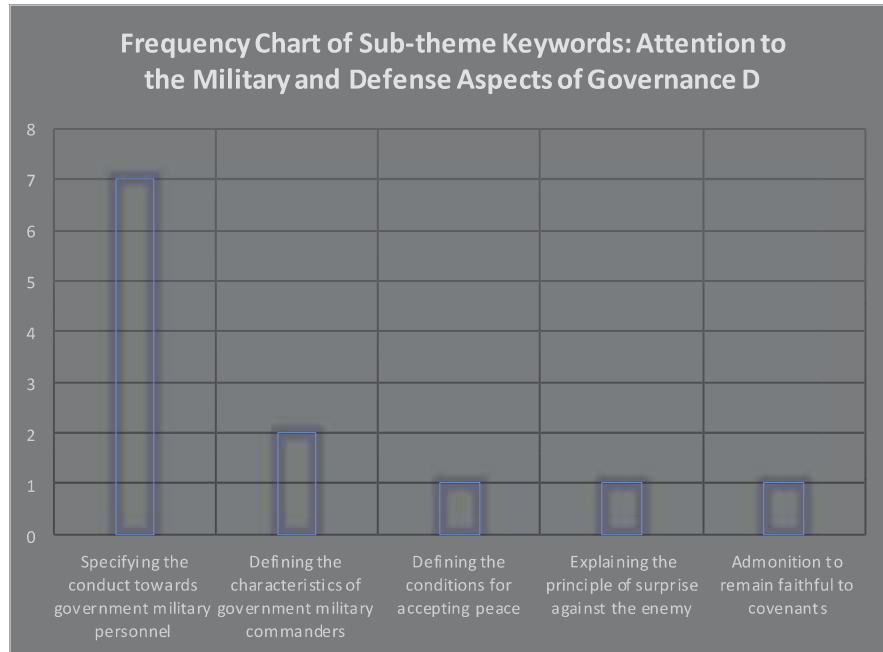
On the other hand, power, being a means for influence and control, can lead to corruption and oppression if it is not accompanied by divine supervision and a living moral conscience. Therefore, Alavid teachings, by emphasizing God's constant vigilance, create a strong barrier against the misuse of power. God's omniscience regarding all affairs is another manifestation of recognizing Him as the ultimate observer of human actions. The Alavid School strongly emphasizes supervision over those who serve as rulers and officials within the government.

In the ethics of Islamic management, belief in divine supervision plays a central role as an internal mechanism of control. Unlike systems that rely only on external supervision such as laws, media, or public scrutiny, in the Alavid tradition divine supervision is considered the most fundamental regulator of a manager's behavior. Such a belief compels a manager to act before the people in the same way he behaves in private.

### **3-5. Frequency Chart of Keywords Related to the Subsidiary Themes of Attention to Military and Defensive Matters in Governance (D)**

Vocabulary related to the description of the proper conduct toward the government's military forces, with 7 occurrences, has the highest frequency within the theme of attention to military and defensive matters of governance. Likewise, the subsidiary themes and focal points associated with this subject also hold the highest frequency in this section. Other themes and their number of occurrences can be

observed in the frequency chart.



The manner of dealing with a government's military forces refers to the set of interactions, policies, managerial approaches, and decision-making processes that the government applies toward its armed forces.

The letters of Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (AS) to military commanders reflect a profound perspective regarding the position, responsibilities, and proper treatment of the military within a government, one that both seeks internal structural reform within governance and emphasizes social justice.

One of the most fundamental principles of Islamic military management is meritocracy, which is manifested in the selection and  
**204** promotion of commanders and managers. In management science, this

principle is also known as competency-based management.

The authentic Alavid perspective emphasizes continuous training and openness to reform. Despite their high level of specialization, military personnel require careful supervision, ongoing training, and professional feedback.

In the contemporary era, the term "Leadership" in the military sphere is often used in place of "Command." A military commander, in addition to providing overall direction for the organization, is also responsible for managing battlefield operations. At these two levels, strategy and tactics, the commander plays a crucial role.

In the areas of human resource management and public policy as well, fair and responsible interaction, along with the careful selection of subordinates, plays an important role in the effectiveness of performance. In reality, leadership and command are two elements that are inseparable and mutually dependent (Aghamohammadi, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 17).

A command style refers to the behavioral pattern displayed by a person when attempting to influence the activities of others. Sometimes leadership style is interpreted as the perception or interpretation that others have of a leader's relatively stable patterns of behavior (Rezaeian, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 188).

Military forces, as the executive arms of security and authority within governments, play a fundamental role in stability, order, defense of borders, and the provision of internal security. The manner in which military personnel are treated not only directly affects their morale, efficiency, and organizational integrity, but also has broad

repercussions throughout society and the prevailing political structure. Therefore, the treatment of military forces must be regulated on the basis of religious, ethical, and managerial principles, along with accurate and fair evaluation.

The Holy Qur'an presents jihad as a comprehensive, genuine, and complete striving in the path of God:

"...And strive for the sake of God as is His due striving..." (al-Ḥajj: 78)

In *Tafsir al-Mizān*, it is explained that the term *jihad* means exerting effort and striving to repel the enemy, and it is primarily used in the context of defense. However, the application of this term has, in some instances, been extended metaphorically. The true meaning of jihad is that one's struggle should be sincere in its essence and purely for the sake of God, such that human motivation becomes infused with a divine character (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 14, 582).

This jihad is not confined merely to the battlefield; rather, it includes any continuous effort to establish the religion and to realize divine values in individual and social life.

Within the military structures of governments, commanders play a key role in shaping and guiding the forces under their authority. Commanders are not only responsible for carrying out orders and achieving military objectives, but are also regarded as behavioral and motivational role models for their subordinates. Through their conduct and values, commanders shape the organizational culture. This culture influences the behavior of the forces and fosters cohesion and shared goals.

**206** The importance of honesty and competence in the military and

governmental decisions of commanders is emphasized in this context.

The Holy Qur'an states:

"So by mercy from Allah, you were gentle with them; and had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you..." (Āli 'Imrān: 159)

In *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in his leadership, demonstrated mercy, kindness, and gentleness toward his companions. This gentleness not only preserved group cohesion but also caused the subordinates to remain loyally and affectionately by the side of their commander (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 3, 150).

From the perspective of Islamic management, any form of discrimination or personal favoritism in dealing with military personnel leads to weakened motivation, the emergence of organizational corruption, and a decline in defensive cohesion. Military management should not be limited merely to combat capability; rather, it must cultivate a spiritual and God-centered spirit among the forces.

Studies in military psychology have likewise shown that fair and humane treatment of military personnel increases their motivation, loyalty, and morale (Smith, 2015). Division within the military body not only weakens morale but also results in defeat on the battlefield. For this reason, commanders must encourage their forces toward proper obedience and discipline through the creation of coordination, unity, and order.

The military forces of a government are regarded as protectors of

religion, security, and social order. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated:

"The Imam is a shield behind whom people fight." (Kulaynī, *ibid*: 7, 132)

This means that the Imam or leader functions like a shield that protects the people and the nation against threats. The commanders and military forces of the government fulfill this defensive role and serve as the physical defenders against enemies.

Therefore, the selection of commanders is of great importance, because a commander exerts significant influence over the military community under his authority and, through the recognition of environmental opportunities and the choice of strategy, acts as a model of decision-making for subordinates. Effective strategies are considered competitive tools, whereas inappropriate strategies become major organizational weaknesses.

Security is the most fundamental need of society, and without it, social, cultural, and economic activities cannot properly develop. Ultimately, coordination and cooperation among the various military sectors and their subordinate units play a key role in strengthening defensive capability and supporting the social and political stability of the government.

## Conclusion

The present study, through a qualitative content analysis of *Mālik Ashtar*'s covenant, identified and categorized four principal themes of Alavid governance. However, the fundamental point that goes beyond



mere frequency counts is the manner in which these four pillars interact with one another to form an integrated system of governance.

Interactive Conceptual Map of Alavid Governance (Based on Letter 53):

According to the findings, the Alavid model of governance is not a collection of scattered recommendations, but rather a system composed of four interconnected layers:

1. Foundational Layer (C: Divine Supervision):

Belief in God's supervision and accountability before Him functions as the internal driving force. This layer elevates the other pillars from the level of "Secular Management" to the level of "Divine trust."

2. Normative Layer (A: Core Principles and Values):

This layer includes justice, meritocracy, consultation, and order. It establishes the value framework governing decision-making and the selection of officials.

3. Relational Layer (B: Just Management Toward the People):

This layer forms the link between the ruler and society. The people are not merely the subjects of administration; rather, they are the purpose and foundation of governance. This layer operates under the direct influence of Layer A (values) and Layer C (divine supervision).

4. Protective Layer (D: Military and Defensive Matters):

Although it has the lowest frequency, it constitutes the condition for the survival and authority of the governing system. This layer acts as the outer protective shell, safeguarding the entire system against

external threats.

#### Interactive System:

The Alavid model demonstrates that ideal governance is realized when:

- Divine supervision (C) serves as the ethical foundation of all actions;
- Core values (A) guide the relationship between the ruler and the people (B); and
- Military management (D) operates in service of the other layers rather than dominating them.

The covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* presents a model in which meaning (C), value (A), relationship (B), and power (D) are interconnected within a systemic chain. Neglecting any one of these elements disrupts the system; for example, reliance solely on military power (D) without divine supervision (C) leads to despotism.

#### Suggestion for Future Research:

Designing an Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) framework to analyze the interaction among these four layers and empirically testing it within Islamic organizations.

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