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Piety and Organizational Responsibility: A Model of Piety-Oriented Management in *Nahj al-Balaghah*

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of organizational piety within the framework of Islamic management, with a specific focus on *Nahj al-Balaghah*, and aims to develop an operational model of responsibility for contemporary organizations. The central research question is: How can the principle of piety (*Taqwá*), as articulated in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, be conceptualized and operationalized as an internal control mechanism? Employing an analytical–interpretive methodology, the research draws on the sermons, letters, and wisdoms attributed to Imam Ali (as). Textual units were selected through purposive sampling based on their explicit relevance to governance, ethics, and responsibility; they were then coded, categorized, and synthesized into core dimensions and finally into a proposed management model. The findings demonstrate that piety in Imam Ali's intellectual system extends beyond a personal moral virtue and functions as an internal control mechanism that elevates organizational responsibility from a contractual obligation to a divinely oriented commitment. Based on this foundation, the article identifies seven core pillars of *taqwá*-based organizational responsibility: justice orientation; transparency and accountability; participation and consultation; prioritization of the public interest; respect for human dignity; long-term thinking and sustainability; and attention to knowledge and wisdom. Building on these elements, the study proposes a *piety-oriented management* model. The article concludes by outlining key implementation challenges and offering practical strategies for institutionalizing this model within today's organizations.

Keywords: Piety (*Taqwá*), Organizational Responsibility, Imam Ali (as), *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Islamic Management, Organizational Ethics

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Introduction

The twenty-first century is characterized by profound managerial paradoxes. While technological acceleration and worldwide connectivity have unlocked extraordinary capacities for growth, they have simultaneously exposed organizations to severe ethical crises. The erosion of public trust, systemic financial corruption, widening social inequality, and intensifying employee alienation all signal a deep moral vacuum within the architecture of modern management (Pfeffer, 1998). This coexistence of technological progress and ethical regression urges organizational theorists to revisit foundational conceptions of rationality, motivation, and responsibility.

Western management approaches—from *Corporate Social Responsibility* (Carroll, 1991) to *Stakeholder Capitalism* (Freeman, 1984)—represent commendable attempts to institutionalize ethical considerations. Yet, they largely remain embedded within a secular, utilitarian framework. As Weber (1978) illustrated with the notion of *instrumental rationality*, modern Western rationalism gradually detached social and economic behavior from ultimate moral and spiritual ends, replacing them with the calculus of material profit. In such contexts, ethical compliance typically stems from external stimuli—legal enforcement, reputational risk, or market pressure—rather than from internal conviction. Consequently, these models have been unable to establish an enduring moral commitment, as they lack roots in a deeper metaphysical understanding of human purpose and accountability.

In contrast, the school of Islamic management—grounded in a monotheistic worldview and anthropology based on *fitrah* (innate nature)—seeks to construct management systems driven by transcendent values and intrinsic motivation. Within this theological-ethical paradigm, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, regarded as the brother of the Qur'an, stands as a profound intellectual source for deriving principles of governance and organizational ethics beyond utilitarian logic. Central to Imam Ali's (as) thought is the concept of *taqwá*, which functions not as a peripheral moral attribute but as the fundamental axis of both individual and collective conduct in a faithful society.

This research explores the transformation of *taqwá* from a personal spiritual disposition into the cornerstone of organizational responsibility. Specifically, it investigates how piety can operate as an internal control mechanism that enhances moral accountability and strategic integrity in complex organizations. In the present article, the words piety and *taqwá* are synonymous and thus interchangeably used throughout the study.

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Despite the growing body of literature on Islamic management and business ethics, a significant gap remains regarding the operationalization of *taqwá* as a comprehensive organizational mechanism. Existing studies have frequently examined piety as an individual moral virtue or spiritual disposition, while comparatively little attention has been devoted to its potential role in shaping organizational structures, managerial processes, accountability systems, and stakeholder relationships. Consequently, the theoretical relationship between *taqwá* and organizational responsibility remains underdeveloped, particularly within the rich governance discourse of *Nahj al-Balaghah*. Addressing this gap is important for both theory and practice. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of indigenous Islamic management models capable of engaging contemporary organizational challenges. Practically, it offers a value-based framework for organizations seeking to strengthen ethical governance, social trust, accountability, and sustainable performance through internally motivated rather than externally imposed mechanisms of control.

To make the purpose and scope of the article immediately clear, this study is guided by one primary research question: How can the principle of piety (*taqwá*), as articulated in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, be conceptualized and operationalized as an internal control mechanism that strengthens organizational responsibility in contemporary organizations?

Two secondary questions support this main question:
1. What core dimensions and pillars of organizational responsibility can be derived from *Nahj al-Balaghah* on the basis of *taqwá*?
2. How can a *taqwá*-oriented management model be adapted to modern organizational forms (e.g., matrix, networked, and virtual organizations), and what are the main implementation challenges and opportunities in contexts such as Iran?

The scope of the article is conceptual and model-building. It focuses on textual interpretation of *Nahj al-Balaghah* and the construction of a proposed management model; it does not present empirical data from organizations that have implemented the full model.

Using an analytical-documentary method, this study draws upon the textual corpus of *Nahj al-Balaghah* alongside contemporary organizational literature to answer these questions. The central hypothesis posits that, in the Alawite discourse, piety constitutes an intrinsic motivating force that cultivates trusteeship, justice-seeking, and compassionate stewardship. When integrated into organizational systems, this inner force gives rise to a transcendent organization—one in which work is perceived as worship, justice defines operational ethos, and trust forms the essential social capital.

1. Methodology

This section clarifies how the concepts and the proposed model were derived from *Nahj al-Balaghah*, and how the study moves from textual interpretation to a structured conceptual framework.

1.1. Design and Approach

The study employs an analytical–interpretive (hermeneutic) design grounded in Islamic textual sources and informed by contemporary organizational theory. The approach is qualitative and conceptual, aiming to extract, systematize, and theorize ethical–managerial principles rather than to test hypotheses empirically.

1.2. Data Source: *Nahj al-Balaghah*

The primary data source is *Nahj al-Balaghah*, the collection of sermons (*khutab*), letters (*kutub*), and short wisdoms (*ḥikam*) attributed to Imam Ali (as). For the Arabic text, the edition compiled by Sharif al-Radi (2008/1428 AH) was used; for English renderings, the translation published by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc. was consulted. All quotations from Imam Ali in this article are drawn from these sources, as indicated in the footnotes.

1.3. Sampling of Textual Units

Textual units (sermons, letters, and wisdoms) were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria:

- Explicit reference to governance, leadership, justice, trusteeship, accountability, or public funds (e.g., Letter 53 to Malik al-Ashtar, Sermon 193, and relevant wisdoms).
- Clear ethical or managerial implications for organizational behavior, decision-making, or stakeholder relations.
- Conceptual richness for deriving dimensions of responsibility and control mechanisms within organizations.

This purposive selection ensured that the analysis focused on passages most relevant to organizational ethics and management, rather than attempting an exhaustive treatment of all moral themes in Nahj al-Balaghah.

1.4. Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in four stages:

1. Close reading and initial coding:
2. Selected passages were read repeatedly to identify key ethical and managerial concepts (e.g., *taqwá*, justice, trusteeship, accountability, consultation, public interest, dignity, knowledge). Each relevant segment was assigned preliminary codes reflecting its core idea.
3. Categorization into dimensions:
4. Codes with conceptual affinity were grouped into broader categories (e.g., “internal control and self-accountability,” “justice and fairness,” “transparency and oversight,” “participation and consultation,” “public

interest and trusteeship," "human dignity," "long-term orientation," "knowledge and wisdom").

5. Synthesis into pillars and mechanisms:

6. Categories were refined and consolidated into seven core pillars of *taqwá*-based organizational responsibility. In parallel, mechanisms through which piety transforms organizational functioning (e.g., substitution of external supervision, social capital formation, intrinsic motivation, ethical knowledge governance) were articulated.

7. Model construction:

8. The pillars and mechanisms were integrated into a coherent *taqwá*-oriented management model. The model links the theological–ethical foundation of *taqwá* to organizational structures, processes, and behaviors, and outlines its potential adaptation to modern organizational forms.

1.5. Concept Derivation and Model Formulation

Key concepts such as "organizational piety" and "organizational responsibility" were derived inductively from the coded textual material and then defined in dialogue with contemporary management literature. The proposed model was formulated by mapping:

- The theological–ethical foundations of *taqwá* (as an internal control and meaning-giving mechanism);
- The seven pillars of organizational responsibility extracted from *Nahj al-Balaghah*;
- The transformative mechanisms through which piety affects organizational dynamics;
- The potential application of these principles to modern organizational structures (matrix, networked, virtual).

This process moved from textual interpretation to conceptual abstraction, and finally to a structured, though still theoretical, management model.

1.6. Distinction Between Interpretation and Evidence

It is important to emphasize that the evidence presented in this article consists of textual quotations and interpretive analysis, not empirical data from organizations. The contemporary organizational examples provided later in the paper are illustrative scenarios intended to clarify how the model might operate in practice; they do not constitute empirical validation of the model. The *taqwá*-oriented management model proposed here is therefore a conceptual framework that requires future empirical testing and refinement.

2. Conceptual Foundations

Prior to everything else, explaining the related fundamental concepts such as piety, organizational piety, responsibility and organizational responsibility is crucial. This section provides precise definitions of these core concepts and clarifies how they are used in the present study.

2.1. The Essence of *Taqwá* in Lexicon and Terminology

The term *taqwá* derives from the Arabic root *w--q--y*, which connotes protection, guarding, and safeguarding from harm. In its lexical usage, *taqwá* refers to *self-restraint* and *self-preservation* from that which leads to damage, corruption, or destruction. Within Qur'anic and Hadīth discourse, however, the concept acquires greater depth and semantic breadth, denoting a stable *inner disposition* or *psychological state* that protects the individual from moral slips and sinful behavior.

A reductionist understanding of *taqwá* equates it merely with "avoiding sin" or a fear-driven abstention motivated primarily by the dread of punishment. Such a view renders *taqwá* a negative, passive, and purely individual phenomenon. By contrast, in the profound discourse of *Nahj al-Balaghah*, *taqwá* appears as a positive, dynamic, and system-forming concept. In this perspective, *taqwá* is not limited to abstinence from wrongdoing; rather, it embodies *active care* and *comprehensive responsibility-awareness*, shaping the entire orientation of individual and collective life.

In this article, *taqwá* (piety) is understood as a stable inner disposition that comibnes God-consciousness, moral vigilance, and responsible care, guiding individuals and groups to act justly and avoid harm even in the absence of external supervision.

2.2. *Taqwá* in the Mirror of Alawite Discourse

Imam Ali (as), in Sermon 193 (often known as the Sermon of Hammam), offers a distinctive characterization of the pious, in which he states: "Taqwá, in this world, is caution and abstinence; and in the Hereafter, it is the cause of nearness and proximity [to God] ... It is the greatest remedy for your illnesses."[1] (Sharif al-Raḍi, 2008/1428 AH, Sermon 193/16) Several key dimensions of *taqwá* relevant to organizational analysis can be extracted from this statement as follows.[2]

1. **A Preventive and Protective System**

The comparison of *taqwá* to medicine highlights its preventive and curative function vis-à-vis moral and social ailments. Just as an effective medicine prevents disease or mitigates its progression, *taqwá* acts as a

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1. فَالتَّقْوَى فِی الْیَوْمِ الْحِذْرُ وَ الْوَرَعُ وَ فِی الْغَدِ الْقُرْبَةُ وَ الزُّلْفَى ... فَهِیَ الدَّوَاءُ الْأَکْبَرُ مِنْ أَسْقَامِکُمْ

2. It should be mentioned that throughout the whole paper, Imam Ali's words in Arabic have been derived from Nahj al-Balagha compiled by Sharif al Radi, 2008/1428 AH, and the whole Imam Ali's words in English have been taken from *Nahj al-Balaghah* compiled by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc. Publishers & Distributors of Holy Qur'an.

moral immune system, precluding the emergence and spread of corruption and deviation---both at the individual and organizational levels. In a managerial context, *taqwá* can therefore be conceptualized as an "ethical immunity system" that shields the organization from internal degeneration.

2. **Continuous Vigilance Rather than Passive Fear**

The term *hadhar* (caution) implies ongoing awareness, alertness, and foresight. A *muttaqi* (pious person) constantly monitors their intentions and behavior, evaluating consequences before acting. Translating this to organizational management, *taqwá*-based vigilance manifests as careful planning, continuous performance monitoring, and proactive identification of potential risks and deviations.

3. **Conscious Abstention from Doubtful and Ambiguous Domains**

Wara' (scrupulous abstinence) represents a higher stage of *taqwá*, whereby the individual not only refrains from what is clearly prohibited (*ḥaram*) but also avoids doubtful or ambiguous matters (*shubuhat*). In organizational terms, *wara'* signals a principled avoidance of ethical "gray areas"---those practices which may be technically legal yet morally questionable. A pious manager therefore refrains not only from overt corruption and discrimination but also from borderline behaviors that might erode trust or justice.

4. **Orientation Towards Nearness to God as the Ultimate Goal**

By presenting *taqwá* as a pathway to *qurb ilāhi* (nearness to God), Imam Ali (AS) grounds ethical conduct in a transcendent telos beyond material gain or social approval. Organizationally, this implies that ethical behavior is not reducible to compliance with regulations or protection of reputation; it is rooted in an innate desire for transcendence, perfection, and accountability before God.

Mutahhari (1998) as cited in Noori Muṭlaq (2011) defines *taqwá* as "a state of guarding and constant inner watchfulness that prevents a person from slips." (p.83) This definition resonates strongly with organizational application wherein *taqwá* functions as an *internal guardian* that continuously supervises conduct, guiding individuals toward fulfilling their duties correctly and refraining from violations---even in the absence of external oversight.

For the purposes of this study, *taqwá* is treated as the foundational ethical–spiritual construct from which the notion of organizational piety is derived.

2.3. Operational Definition of Organizational Piety

Building on the above conceptual foundations, this article proposes the operational definition of *organizational piety* as the conscious, continuous, and responsible care exercised by individuals and organizations in the utilization of all resources (financial, human, informational, natural), based on the principles of trusteeship (*amanatdāri*), justice, and respect for the rights of all stakeholders, motivated by the fulfillment of divine duty and oriented toward the organization's transcendent goals. This definition rests on three core pillars:

1. ***Taqwá* as self-control reducing dependence on external supervision**

A pious individual, even in the absence of external observers, perceives themselves as being in the presence of God and therefore strives to perform duties accurately and conscientiously. In an organizational setting, this internalized self-control can significantly decrease the need for costly external monitoring mechanisms, lowering agency costs and fostering a culture of trust.

2. ***Taqwá* as inseparable from ethics: trusteeship and justice as central axes**

In the framework of Islamic management, *amanatdāri* (trusteeship) and *'adl* (justice) constitute two primary ethical pillars. A pious manager views themselves as a trustee not only of organizational assets, but also of employees, customers, and the wider community. Consequently, they seek to uphold justice in the allocation of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities. Organizational piety thus entails an ethical commitment to fair structures and processes.

3. ***Taqwá* as a meta-material meaning-giver to managerial conduct**

Under *taqwá*, managerial work is not pursued solely for salary, personal advancement, or worldly success; it is undertaken as a form of worship and as a means of serving God's creatures. This transcendental orientation generates a deep, intrinsic motivation that is both more stable and more resistant to short-term incentives and pressures than purely material motives.

Imam Ali (as), in Letter 53 to Malik al-Ashtar, crystallizes this managerial manifestation of *taqwá* in the following directive, "Let the most beloved of your affairs be those that are most moderate in relation to the truth."[1] (Letter 53) This command ibnds managerial decision-making concerning resources to justice (*qist*) and moderation (knowledge-based balance). The pious manager avoids both excess (extravagance) and negligence (shortcoming), instead choosing a path of informed, just moderation. Such moderation presupposes a deep understanding of the issues at stake, careful evaluation of alternatives, and the moral courage to select and implement what is right---even when it is costly or unpopular.

1. وَلْيَكُنْ أَحَبَّ الْأُمُورِ إِلَيْکَ أَوْسَطُهَا فِی الْحَقِّ

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To avoid ambiguity, this article defines organizational piety precisely as follows:

Organizational piety is the collective manifestation of *taqwá* within an organization, expressed through shared norms, practices, and systems that promote responsible stewardship of resources, justice-oriented decision-making, transparency, accountability, and respect for stakeholders, all motivated by a sense of divine duty and ultimate accountability.

This definition distinguishes organizational piety from individual piety by emphasizing its systemic, shared, and institutional dimensions, while still grounding it in the inner disposition of individual members.

2.4. Organizational Responsibility in Conventional Literature

In mainstream management literature, organizational or corporate responsibility is commonly defined as a voluntary commitment, beyond legal requirements, to respect and protect the rights and interests of stakeholders (Carroll, 1991). Among the various models proposed, Carroll's pyramid of corporate social responsibility is particularly influential. In this model, economic responsibility (profit generation and efficiency) constitutes the foundation; legal responsibility forms the second tier; ethical responsibility occupies the third level; and philanthropic responsibility (voluntary contributions to society) appears at the apex.

Although such models represent important advances in integrating ethical concerns into business practice, they remain anchored in a secular, contractarian framework. Responsibility is primarily derived from social contracts, public expectations, and the pressures of public opinion or market legitimacy, rather than from an explicit sense of divine duty and accountability before God. As a result, organizational responsibility tends to be contingent and context-dependent, and may fluctuate with changes in stakeholder pressure, regulatory regimes, or reputational risk.

For conceptual clarity, this article adopts the following working definition of organizational responsibility: Organizational responsibility refers to the obligations of an organization and its managers to act in ways that protect and promote the legitimate rights and interests of all stakeholders—including employees, customers, owners, society, and the environment—through fair, transparent, and accountable practices.

Within the Alawite framework, this definition is extended by grounding responsibility in divine duty (*taklīf*) and ultimate accountability before God, rather than only in social contracts or stakeholder pressures.

In contrast, as it will be argued in subsequent sections, *Nahj al-Balaghah* articulates an understanding of responsibility that is theologically grounded and intrinsically motivated, thereby providing a qualitatively different foundation for organizational responsibility and governance.

3. Organizational Responsibility in the Alawite View: Divine Duty, Not Social Contract

In the Alawite perspective, organizational responsibility transcends the notion of a social contract, being firmly rooted in the concept of divine mandate (*taklif*). Imam Ali (as), in Sermon 193 (Sermon of the Gout), articulates this profoundly, "Fear God concerning His servants and His lands... for you shall be questioned even concerning [the condition of] the lands and the beasts."[1] (Sermon 193/16) This powerful declaration introduces three fundamental shifts in the conceptualization of organizational responsibility as follows.

1. **Holistic Inclusivity of Stakeholders and Environment**

The responsibility encompasses not only immediate stakeholders such as employees and customers but extends to the broader environment—including lands and animals. This perspective posits that no element within or around the organization lies outside the manager's sphere of accountability. Such a comprehensive view intrinsically incorporates social and environmental responsibilities, offering a more expansive framework than many contemporary management theories. For example, a manufacturing firm guided by this view would treat environmental compliance not merely as a legal requirement but as a religious–ethical duty, investing in cleaner technologies and waste reduction even when short-term profits might be affected.

2. **Stability of Divine Command versus Volatility of Social Contract**

Responsibility derived from divine decree is inherently stable, constant, and universal. Unlike social contracts, which can shift with public opinion or political climates, the divine mandate remains immutable. A religiously committed manager, therefore, cannot abdicate their responsibilities by referencing changes in governance or popular sentiment.

3. **Ultimate Accountability Before God: The Strongest Enforcement Mechanism**

While managers are accountable to the organization, shareholders, employees, and oversight bodies, the ultimate locus of accountability is before God. This belief serves as the most potent guarantee for ethical conduct, providing an intrinsic enforcement mechanism that transcends secular sanctions.

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1. اَللهَ اَللهَ فِی عِبَادِهِ وَ بِلاَدِهِ... فَإِنَّكُمْ مَسْؤُولُونَ حَتَّی عَنْ الْبِقَاعِ وَ الْبَهَائِمِ

4. The Interplay of Rights and Duties in the Qur'anic Cosmology

Izutsu (2008) argues that the Qur'anic worldview is fundamentally centered on divine reality and moral responsibility. From this perspective, respecting the rights of others may be understood as part of fulfilling one's responsibility before God. Within the Qur'anic worldview, *right* (*ḥaqq*) is a divine principle permeating the cosmos. Humanity, as God's *vicegerent* (*khalīfah*), is thus obligated to uphold these rights. Consequently, respecting *the rights of people* (*ḥaqq al-nās*) within an organization is tantamount to fulfilling *the right of God* (*ḥaqq Allah*). This imbues organizational responsibility with the character of organized worship.

This perspective establishes a profound linkage between rights and duties: every right vested in another party generates a corresponding duty for the manager. The right of employees to fair treatment necessitates the manager's duty to ensure justice. The right of customers to quality products mandates the manager's duty to uphold stringent quality control. Similarly, society's right to a healthy environment imposes upon the manager a duty to adhere to ecological standards.

This theological framing transforms management from a mere occupation into a divine *duty*. It thereby provides the deepest and most enduring source of motivation for the accurate fulfillment of responsibilities, moving beyond transactional exchanges to a commitment grounded in existential purpose.

In this article, "responsibility" in the Alawite sense is therefore defined as a divinely grounded obligation to uphold the rights of all stakeholders and the environment, motivated by ultimate accountability before God rather than only by contractual or reputational considerations.

4. The Seven Pillars of Organizational Responsibility Rooted in Piety

Drawing from the foundational principles discussed, seven key pillars of organizational responsibility, derived from the Alawite model, can be systematized. These pillars represent the practical manifestations of organizational piety and can serve as a robust basis for designing evaluation and reward systems within an organization.

These pillars were derived through the analytical procedure described in the Methodology section: textual units from *Nahj al-Balaghah* were coded for ethical–managerial concepts, grouped into categories, and then synthesized into seven core dimensions that collectively express *taqwá*-based organizational responsibility.

4.1. Justice-Orientation (*Al-'Adl*)

In the Alawite worldview, justice is not an optional ethical consideration but an existential necessity. The Holy Qur'an makes a meaningful reference to the concept of justice and its superiority over benevolence or charitable giving:

"Indeed, Allah enjoins justice and kindness, and generosity towards relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrongdoing, and aggression. He advises you, so that you may take admonition."[1] (16:90) (Qarai, 2005)

In this verse, God first emphasizes justice as a universal and comprehensive principle. The concept of *iḥsān* (benevolence or excellence) is mentioned subsequently, indicating its secondary position relative to justice. Furthermore, the expression *"giving to relatives"* (*ītāʾ dhī al-qurbā*) suggests that such benevolence is not universal in scope but is directed toward particular individuals or groups. This distinction highlights the broader and more inclusive nature of justice, whose benefits extend to society as a whole, in contrast to acts of generosity that are typically more limited in their reach.

Thus, the verse presents justice as the fundamental organizing principle of social order, while benevolence represents a complementary virtue whose application is necessarily more selective and particularized. Correspondingly, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was asked whether justice or generosity was the greater virtue. He replied:

"Justice puts everything in its rightful place, whereas generosity diverts things from their proper position. Justice serves and safeguards the community as a whole, while generosity benefits only those who are its recipients. Therefore, justice is more comprehensive and more excellent than generosity."[2] (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 437)

As Makarim Shirazi (1996) interprets, in reality, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) points to two fundamental considerations. First, the outcome of justice is that every individual in society receives his or her rightful due and that everything is placed in its proper position. Indeed, some scholars have defined justice as *"putting things in their proper place"* (*waḍʿ al-shayʾ fī mawḍiʿihi*). It is evident that under such conditions, all members of society are encouraged to strive and work in order to obtain their legitimate rights. As a result, society flourishes, becomes dynamic, and advances under the protection of justice. Generosity and benevolence, however, do not function in the same way, because they involve giving people more than what they are entitled to receive. Although generosity is undoubtedly a commendable and virtuous quality in its proper context, it may sometimes have the

1. إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

2. «وَ سُئِلَ (عليه السلام) أَيُّهُمَا أَفْضَلُ، الْعَدْلُ أَوِ الْجُودُ؟ فَقَالَ (عليه السلام): الْعَدْلُ يَضَعُ الْأُمُورَ مَوَاضِعَهَا، وَ الْجُودُ يُخْرِجُهَا مِنْ جِهَتِهَا؛ وَ الْعَدْلُ سَائِسٌ عَامٌّ، وَ الْجُودُ عَارِضٌ خَاصٌّ؛ فَالْعَدْلُ أَشْرَفُهُمَا وَ أَفْضَلُهُمَا.»

unintended effect of encouraging certain individuals to become complacent, reduce their efforts, and wait for the charity and benevolence of others rather than relying on their own work and initiative.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) then draws attention to another important point. Justice is a universal principle whose benefits extend to the whole of society, enabling all people to enjoy a dignified and honorable life under its protection. Generosity and benevolence, by contrast, are not universal in scope; they are typically limited and selective in their application. It is therefore clear that a principle whose positive effects encompass all members of society is superior, nobler, and more excellent than one whose benefits are confined to particular individuals or specific situations.

This profound saying signifies that justice is not merely a virtue but a fundamental condition for the survival, vitality, and efficacy of organizations and societies. An organization that systematically violates justice is destined to falter, losing its efficiency and becoming susceptible to pervasive crises.

Reflecting this imperative, Imam Ali (as) declares that "People must have a ruler, whether virtuous or vicious... so that the [divine] right may be administered through him."[1] (Sermon 40) This statement implies that even if a ruler is imperfect, societal structures must be designed to ensure justice prevails. Analogously, within an organization, managers must establish systems that uphold justice, even when individual inclinations might veer towards unfairness. Consequently, a pious manager actively designs and implements systems that embed justice across all dimensions:

- **Distributive Justice:** Fair allocation of resources, rewards, and opportunities.
- **Procedural Justice:** Equity and impartiality in organizational processes and decision-making.
- **Interactional Justice:** Respectful and dignified treatment of all individuals.
- **Informational Justice:** Transparency and clarity in communication and decision rationale.

In contemporary terms, a justice-oriented organization would ensure transparent pay scales, clear promotion criteria, and fair grievance procedures. For instance, a hospital applying this pillar would allocate shifts, bonuses, and training opportunities based on clear, merit-based rules rather than personal connections.

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1. لا بُدَّ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ أَمِيرٍ بَرٍّ أَوْ فَاجِرٍ... لِيَقُمْ بِالْحَقِّ

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4.2. Transparency and Accountability (*Al-Shāfāfiyyah wa al-Musā'alah*)

A pious individual inherently shuns concealment and betrayal, viewing accountability as an integral aspect of their duty. Administrative piety, therefore, necessitates oversight and transparency. In Letter 53 to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (as) issues a clear directive: "...Then scrutinize their deeds."[1] (Letter 53) This command for continuous oversight underscores the paramount importance of transparency and accountability within the Alawite framework. In the same letter, the Imam advises: "...And for judgment among the people, choose the best of your subjects..."[2] (Letter 53)

The selection of the most capable individuals for positions of authority highlights the emphasis on meritocracy and accountability. Transparency in this context means making organizational processes, decisions, and criteria openly accessible to all relevant stakeholders, unless there is a compelling, justifiable reason for confidentiality. Accountability, in turn, signifies a readiness to explain and justify decisions and actions to those stakeholders.

Operationally, transparency and accountability may be expressed through open budgeting, published performance indicators, and clear channels for reporting misconduct. As an illustration, a university department might publicly share its criteria for research grants and promotion, and maintain a confidential but trusted mechanism for reporting ethical violations.

4.3. Participation and Consultation (*Shura*)

Piety serves as a bulwark against arbitrary decision-making (*istibdād*) and arrogance, fostering a deep appreciation for collective wisdom. A pious manager recognizes the limitations of individual intellect and understands that true insight is often illuminated through consultation. Imam Ali (AS) articulates this in his sermon: "Whoever consults with the wise is illuminated by the lights of their intellects."[3] (Sermon 216)

Within the Alawite framework, consultation (*shurá*) is not merely a strategic management tool but a fundamental ethical and spiritual principle. It embodies respect for the inherent dignity of others and leverages shared intellect for more effective decision-making. A pious manager acknowledges that complex organizational challenges require diverse

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1. ثُمَّ تَفَقَّدْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ
2. وَ اخْتَرْ لِلْحُكْمِ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَفْضَلَ رَعِيَّتِکَ
3. مَنْ شَاوَرَ ذَوِی الْعُقُولِ اسْتَضَاءَ بِأَنْوَارِ الْعُقُولِ

perspectives to navigate successfully. Participation, therefore, extends across multiple organizational dimensions:

- **Decision-Making:** Involving stakeholders in the formulation of strategies and policies.
- **Implementation:** Engaging those affected by decisions in their execution.
- **Oversight:** Allowing for shared monitoring and evaluation of processes and outcomes.
- **Benefit Sharing:** Ensuring that the fruits of collective effort are distributed equitably.

A truly pious organization cultivates an environment where all stakeholders are encouraged to participate, fostering a profound sense of belonging and shared ownership.

In modern organizations, this pillar can be reflected in participatory budgeting, cross-functional project teams, and employee representation on key committees. For example, a technology firm might use agile teams in which developers, designers, and customer-support staff jointly decide on feature priorities and implementation plans.

4.4. Prioritizing Public Interest

Financial piety represents one of the most apparent manifestations of organizational piety. A pious manager fundamentally distinguishes between personal assets and public or organizational funds (*Bayt al-Māl*), viewing the latter as a sacred trust. Imam Ali (as) powerfully expresses this principle in one of his sermons: "By God, I have not taken a single dirham from your wealth [from the public treasury] ..."[1] (Sermon 215) This assertion underscores a commitment to non-appropriation and the prioritization of collective welfare over personal gain. Further, elaborating on the basis of ownership, Imam Ali (as) states: "No one has a greater right to property than another, except by right."[2] (Wisdom 239)

This principle establishes that ownership rights within an Islamic framework are not inherent but are contingent upon religious and legal criteria. Consequently, prioritizing public interest above individual or group interests is a paramount indicator of organizational piety. A pious manager consistently places the welfare of the organization and society above their own or their group's immediate interests, ensuring that public funds are utilized solely for their intended purposes and that resource allocation is guided by the overarching interests of the community.

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1. فَوَ اللهِ مَا أُعطيتُ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ مِنْ دِرْهَمٍ
2. مَا أَحَدٌ أَحَقُّ بِمَالٍ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِحَقٍّ

In practice, this pillar discourages conflicts of interest, nepotism, and the use of organizational resources for private benefit. A contemporary example would be a public-sector manager refusing to award contracts to companies owned by relatives, even when no legal prohibition exists, because doing so would violate the spirit of trusteeship and public interest.

4.5. Respecting Human Dignity (*Karāmah*)

Piety cultivates a profound respect for the intrinsic worth of the human self, encompassing both oneself and others. Actions such as insult and humiliation are seen as direct contradictions of piety. Imam Ali (as) warns this by stipulating that "One whose own self is contemptible in his eyes, do not trust his [potential] evil."[1] (Wisdom 328) This highlights that an individual who devalues themselves may lack the moral compass to respect others or may resort to harmful actions.

Conspicuously, in Letter 53 to Malik al-Ashtar, the Imam eloquently defines the basis of human dignity: "People are of two types: either your brother in faith or your equal in creation."[2] (Letter 53) This foundational statement posits that all human beings, irrespective of their religious affiliation or background, share a common creation and thus possess inherent dignity. In an organizational context, this translates to treating all employees, customers, and stakeholders with respect, regardless of their position, gender, ethnicity, or belief. A pious manager actively fosters an environment where everyone is treated with dignity, their opinions are heard, and their contributions are valued.

Contemporary expressions of this pillar include anti-discrimination policies, respectful communication norms, and mechanisms to prevent harassment and abuse of power. For instance, a multinational corporation might enforce a zero-tolerance policy for verbal abuse by supervisors, coupled with training on respectful leadership and confidential reporting channels.

4.6. Long-Term Perspective and Sustainability

Piety opens the manager's vision to the enduring consequences of actions, both in this world and the next, encouraging a move away from transient gains toward sustainable benefits. Imam Ali (as) offers profound guidance: "Work for your world as if you will live forever, and work for your Hereafter as if you will die tomorrow."[3] (Wisdom 31) This illuminates a crucial balance: diligently planning for worldly endeavors with foresight,

1. مَنْ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلَا تَأْمَنْ شَرَّهُ
2. النَّاسُ صِنْفَانِ: إِمَّا أَخٌ لَکَ فِی الدِّینِ أَوْ نَظِیرٌ لَکَ فِی الْخَلْقِ
3. اِعْمَلْ لِدُنْیَاکَ کَأَنَّکَ تَعِیشُ أَبَداً، وَ اعْمَلْ لِآخِرَتِکَ کَأَنَّکَ تَمُوتُ غَداً

while simultaneously remaining prepared for the ultimate accountability of the Hereafter. In organizational management, this translates to harmonizing long-term strategic planning with short-term operational needs, and integrating immediate profitability with long-term sustainability. A long-term perspective in management involves a commitment to:

- **Environmental Sustainability:** Minimizing ecological impact and promoting responsible resource management.
- **Intergenerational Equity:** Considering the needs and interests of future generations.
- **Investment in Innovation:** Allocating resources to research, development, and continuous improvement.
- **Ethical Practices:** Upholding principles that ensure the organization's longevity and positive societal impact.

A pious manager views the organization not merely as a current enterprise but as a legacy to be preserved and enhanced for future generations, thus intrinsically focusing on its enduring sustainability.

In modern terms, this pillar supports strategies such as long-term R&D investment, responsible supply-chain management, and avoidance of short-term profit maximization that harms the environment or community. An energy company, for example, might invest in renewable technologies and gradual transition plans even when fossil-fuel operations remain more profitable in the short run.

4.7. Attention to Knowledge and Wisdom (*'Ilm* and *Ḥikmah*)

Piety actively repels ignorance and bigotry, guiding individuals toward knowledge and wisdom. Consequently, a pious organization is inherently a learning organization, oriented towards wisdom. Imam Ali (as) states: "No poverty is more severe than ignorance."[1] (Wisdom 44). As a matter of fact, ignorance is characterized as the true poverty that impedes understanding reality and making sound decisions.

Highlighting the role of intellect, the Imam stipulates that "Intellect is a concealing cover, and meddling [or excessive curiosity] is an exposing display of faults."[2] (Wisdom 56) Intellect acts as a protective shield, preserving one's dignity and reputation, while unbridled curiosity or gossip can expose flaws. In the contemporary knowledge economy, embracing continuous learning and wisdom is an imperative for organizational success. A pious organization champions knowledge sharing, encourages intellectual critique, and values ethical innovation as core virtues.

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1. لاَ فَقْرَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْجَهْلِ
2. الْعَقْلُ غِطَاءٌ سَتِيرٌ وَ الْفُضُولُ عِيَابٌ ظَهِيرٌ.

The all mentioned pillars—justice orientation, transparency and accountability, participation and consultation, prioritizing public interest, respecting human dignity, long-term perspective and sustainability, and attention to knowledge and wisdom—collectively form a coherent framework for understanding and implementing organizational responsibility within the Alawite model. Each pillar offers concrete indicators for evaluating and enhancing organizational piety.

These seven pillars are not merely abstract virtues; they are proposed as actionable dimensions that can guide the design of codes of conduct, performance appraisal criteria, leadership development programs, and governance structures in organizations that wish to operationalize *taqwá*-based responsibility.

5. Transformative Mechanisms of Piety in the Organization

Piety transcends a mere ethical checklist; it acts as a dynamic force that fundamentally transforms organizational functions through several key mechanisms. This section explores four primary ways piety drives organizational change:

5.1. Piety as a Substitute for External Supervision

A significant challenge in organization theory is the "agency" problem, as detailed by Jensen and Meckling (1976). They argue that because principals and agents often possess divergent interests, there is no assurance that agents will consistently act in ways that maximize the principal's welfare. Consequently, organizations incur monitoring and bonding costs to align interests and reduce agency losses (Jensen & Meckling, 1976, pp. 308–310). The primary drawback of conventional agency theory lies in the substantial costs associated with this monitoring. These include expenses for designing surveillance systems, employing inspectors and auditors, generating extensive reports, and accounting for violations that escape detection.

Piety, however, introduces a powerful and cost-effective control mechanism: *internal self-accountability*. By fostering an ingrained sense of responsibility, it supplants the need for constant external oversight. Imam Ali (as) powerfully advises: "Call yourselves to account before you are called to account."[1] (Wisdom 431) This principle of internal self-accounting serves as the most robust guarantee for ethical conduct. A pious employee, feeling a constant awareness of divine presence, performs duties diligently even when unobserved. Such individuals are less inclined toward misconduct, even if the opportunity for undetected transgression exists. This internal locus of control naturally leads to a reduction in violations,

1. حَاسِبُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُحَاسَبُوا

more honest reporting, and a diminished reliance on expensive monitoring systems. In economic terms, this translates to lower transaction costs (North, 1990) and reduced agency costs. Consequently, organizations that institutionalize piety operate with greater efficiency and lower oversight expenses.

From a practical standpoint, this mechanism suggests that organizations seeking to reduce excessive bureaucracy and monitoring can invest in cultivating a culture of piety and ethical self-regulation. For example, a remote-work team might rely less on screen-monitoring software and more on shared ethical norms, clear responsibilities, and mutual trust, knowing that each member feels accountable before God as well as before the manager.

5.2. Piety as a Source of Social Capital and Organizational Resilience

Social capital—defined by scholars like Putnam (1993) as encompassing trust, norms of cooperation, and communication networks—is a cornerstone of contemporary social sciences and management. It forms the essential foundation for constructive cooperation and interaction within both society and organizations.

An organization that embeds piety and justice into its operations inherently cultivates high levels of social capital. When employees observe managers acting with fairness, making ethical decisions, fulfilling promises, and prioritizing organizational welfare over personal gain, trust flourishes. This trust is the bedrock upon which social capital is built. This accumulated social capital acts as a crucial buffer, enhancing organizational resilience during times of crisis. Organizations rich in social capital are better equipped to withstand shocks and recover more swiftly. Imam Ali (as) cautions against superficial strategies, "Whoever relies on cunning will be humbled by circumstances."[1] (Wisdom 82)

Conversely, an organization driven by deceit and superficial stratagems is prone to collapse under pressure, having eroded its social capital. A pious organization, grounded in a history of honesty and trust, is better positioned to navigate crises, mitigate damage, and even rebuild trust effectively.

In contemporary settings, this mechanism can be observed when organizations with strong ethical reputations recover more quickly from scandals or market downturns because stakeholders are willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. For instance, a bank known for transparent dealings and fair treatment of customers may retain more depositors during a financial crisis than a competitor with a history of hidden fees and aggressive sales practices.

1. مَنْ تَوَكَّلَ عَلَى الْحِيلَةِ دَانَتْ بِهِ الْحَالَةُ.

5.3. Piety as an Engine of Transcendent Intrinsic Motivation

Motivation theories in management, from Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1943) to Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) and Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), primarily focus on material and psychological factors to foster deep and sustainable employee commitment. The Alawite model offers a compelling alternative through the *transcendent meaning-making of work*. When labor is undertaken with pure intention (*niyyah*) and framed as a duty or service, it is elevated beyond a mere job to an act of worship and a profound source of meaning. It has been famously reported that the Holy Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh) has stated that one's actions are judged by his/her intentions.[1] Imam Ali (as), emphasizes the value derived from diligent effort: "The worth of every person is in what they do well."[2] (Sermon 34) This perspective fosters the deepest levels of job satisfaction and commitment. A pious employee is motivated not solely by remuneration but by a desire to serve fellow human beings and to seek divine pleasure. This pursuit of *ihsan* (excellence) in work transcends mere task completion. This transcendent motivation provides a sustainable drive that remains resilient even in the face of adversity. Pious employees are more likely to persevere through difficult conditions and financial challenges, steadfastly fulfilling their responsibilities without shirking.

In practice, this mechanism implies that organizations can strengthen commitment not only through pay and benefits but also by articulating a higher purpose for work. A healthcare organization, for example, might frame clinical work not only as a profession but as a form of service to humanity and a means of spiritual growth, thereby reinforcing staff motivation during periods of high workload or resource constraints.

5.4. Piety and Ethical Knowledge Governance

In the contemporary knowledge economy, effective knowledge management is paramount. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) highlighted the concept of the knowledge-creating company, emphasizing that organizational success depends on the continuous creation, sharing, and utilization of knowledge. Through their SECI model (Socialization, Externalization, Comibnation, and Internalization), they demonstrated that sustainable organizational learning and innovation emerge from ongoing processes of knowledge exchange and collective learning.

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1. إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّات "Verily, deeds are judged by intentions."
2. قَدْرُ كُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا يُحْسِنُهُ

The Holy Qur’an eloquently illustrates the intrinsic relationship between piety and knowledge: *"Be wary of Allah and Allah will teach you, and Allah has knowledge of all things."*[1] (1: 282) (Qarai, 2005) This sacred verse highlights that piety serves as a precursor to true knowledge and insight. It posits that for those who practice piety towards God, a divine promise of teaching and enlightenment follows. This promise offers profound hope and encouragement for the challenging yet immensely fruitful path of *taqwá*-oriented transformation in organizations. The journey toward building organizations that are not only efficient but also ethically grounded and spiritually fulfilling is a noble endeavor, illuminated by divine guidance and sustained by a commitment to the principles derived from Nahj al-Balaghah.

From an Islamic perspective, knowledge is regarded as a form of trust (*amānah*) that carries ethical responsibilities toward both individuals and society. Possessing knowledge therefore entails an obligation to employ and share it for the common good rather than withholding it for personal advantage. The concealment of beneficial knowledge may constitute a violation of this trust because it deprives others of opportunities for learning, development, and collective advancement (Qur'an 4:58[2]; Tabataba'i, 1997). Many Muslim scholars interpret *amānah* broadly to include not only material responsibilities but also knowledge and expertise entrusted to individuals for the benefit of society (Tabataba'i, 1997).

Islamic teachings strongly discourage the concealment of beneficial knowledge. The Prophet Moḥammad (peace be upon him) warned against withholding knowledge when it is needed by others, emphasizing the moral responsibility of scholars and professionals to disseminate what they know. Such teachings encourage openness, learning, and the circulation of knowledge within organizations and communities (Abu Dawud, 2008). Similarly, Imam Ali viewed knowledge as a resource that grows through dissemination rather than possession. Unlike material wealth, which may diminish when distributed, knowledge expands through teaching, dialogue, and collective learning. This perspective encourages organizational cultures based on cooperation, mentorship, and the sharing of expertise rather than competition and knowledge hoarding (Sharif al-Radi, 1986).

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1. وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۖ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيم»

2. إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيراً»

Translation: *“Indeed, Allah commands you to deliver the trusts to their [rightful] owners, and to judge with fairness when you judge between people. Excellent indeed is what Allah advises you. Indeed, Allah is all-hearing, all-seeing.”* (Qarai, 2005)

Contemporary Muslim scholars have reinforced this understanding. Mutahhari (2010) argues that knowledge is not merely a personal asset but a social responsibility whose value is realized when it contributes to human development and public welfare. Consequently, the deliberate withholding of expertise for personal gain conflicts with the ethical purpose of knowledge and undermines collective progress. Likewise, Al-Sadr (1982) emphasizes that individual capabilities and resources should contribute to the advancement of society as a whole. Applied to organizational contexts, this principle implies that knowledge should be shared and utilized for collective benefit rather than monopolized for individual advantage.

These principles find practical expression through piety (*taqwā*) in organizational life. Piety mandates a sense of trusteeship in knowledge and regards knowledge hoarding as a betrayal of that trust. An employee who conceals expertise to maintain personal indispensability or gain advantage over colleagues acts contrary to the ethical demands of piety. By contrast, piety fosters a culture of knowledge sharing, honest dialogue, and mutual learning. A pious employee readily shares insights with others and remains open to learning from them, recognizing that knowledge expands when shared and diminishes when hoarded. This approach directly addresses the problem of individual appropriation of knowledge. In a pious organization, negative competition is minimized, while collaboration and interaction are encouraged, facilitating the collective creation and dissemination of knowledge. As a result, the organization evolves into a genuine learning organization characterized by continuous growth, innovation, and improvement.

In modern knowledge-intensive firms, this mechanism can support practices such as open internal wikis, mentorship programs, and communities of practice where senior experts are recognized and rewarded for developing others rather than for guarding their knowledge. A software company, for instance, might evaluate senior engineers partly on their contribution to team learning and documentation, not only on individual code output.

6. The *Taqwá*-Oriented Management Model and Its Adaptation to Modern Organizational Structures

The *taqwá*-oriented management model is not confined to traditional, hierarchical structures; its principles become even more vital and necessary in complex, modern organizational settings. This section examines the application of this model within three prevalent modern organizational structures: Before detailing these applications, it is important to clarify that the following discussions present a conceptual adaptation of the model to contemporary organizational forms. The examples provided are illustrative scenarios intended to show how the model might function in practice; they do not constitute empirical evidence that the complete *taqwá*-oriented management model has already been implemented in any organization.

6.1. Matrix Organizations

Matrix organizations, characterized by employees reporting to multiple managers simultaneously, are designed for intricate, multi-dimensional projects. They inherently present challenges such as role conflict and ambiguity regarding priorities, as employees may receive conflicting directives (Galbraith, 1971; Davis & Lawrence, 1977). In such an environment, *communicative piety* and *transparency* become paramount. A pious employee, when faced with competing demands, will honestly and transparently communicate their limitations, capabilities, and current workload to all relevant managers. This open dialogue allows managers to understand the employee's situation and coordinate their directives accordingly, thereby mitigating conflict and clarifying priorities.

In practice, a project-based engineering firm operating with a matrix structure might encourage employees to maintain shared workload dashboards and hold regular tripartite meetings (employee, functional manager, project manager) to negotiate priorities. A culture of piety would support truthful reporting of capacity and constraints, reducing the temptation to overpromise or shift blame.

6.2. Network Organizations and Ecosystems

Network organizations thrive on collaboration between independent units to deliver a product or service, often involving extensive outsourcing and inter-organizational relationships. This structure is heavily reliant on *high levels of trust* (Powell, 1990).

In this context, *piety of commitment*, exemplified by loyalty to agreements even in the absence of direct supervision, is crucial for building social capital and fostering inter-organizational trust. The selection of ethical partners is a fundamental condition for survival and success within such networks. An organization that demonstrates disloyalty to its commitments will rapidly lose its standing and its place within the network ecosystem.

Contemporary supply-chain networks illustrate this mechanism: a manufacturer that consistently honors delivery schedules, quality standards, and fair pricing—even when short-term opportunities for opportunistic behavior arise—becomes a preferred partner in the network. Over time, this reputation reduces transaction costs, facilitates smoother negotiations, and increases resilience during disruptions.

6.3. Virtual and Remote Work Organizations

The rise of remote work and virtual organizations, accelerated by advancements in communication technologies and events like the COVID-19 pandemic, has made these structures increasingly common. In this model, in-person supervision is minimized, making direct oversight of employees difficult for managers. Here, the *self-control stemming from piety* emerges as the primary supervisory mechanism. This emphasis on internalized accountability is consistent with the Islamic conception of *taqwá* as a continuous awareness of divine oversight and moral responsibility (Qur'an 49:13[1]; Al-Isfahani, 2009). A culture of trust replaces the need for micromanagement. A pious employee, whether working from home or elsewhere, is expected to perform their duties diligently and avoid wasting time, knowing they are accountable for their actions regardless of direct supervision.

In a fully remote software-development startup, for example, team members might coordinate through asynchronous tools and shared task boards, with minimal real-time monitoring. A *taqwá*-oriented culture would encourage each developer to manage their time responsibly, meet deadlines, and communicate proactively, not because of surveillance but because of an internalized sense of duty and trust.

Collectively, these examples demonstrate how the seven pillars and transformative mechanisms of piety can be mapped onto modern organizational forms. They also underscore that the *taqwá*-oriented management model is proposed here as a conceptual framework whose full implementation and effects remain to be empirically investigated.

7. Implementation Challenges and Operational Solutions

Implementing the *taqwá*-oriented management model in contemporary organizations presents several significant challenges. This section addresses the most critical of these and proposes operational solutions.

7.1. Main Challenges

- **Superficial Understanding of Piety:** Many managers and employees hold a narrow view of piety, seeing it solely as an individual, devotional matter disconnected from the organizational sphere. This misconception is a primary barrier to its application in management.

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1. يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Translation: *"O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you. Indeed, Allah is all-knowing, all-aware."* (Qarai, 2005)

Overcoming this requires a redefinition of piety, emphasizing its organizational and managerial dimensions.

- **Incompatibility with Existing Structures:** Many organizations operate with quantitative reward systems and power-oriented bureaucratic structures that are fundamentally at odds with the values of piety. In such systems, individual gain often overshadows public interest and ethical considerations. Reforming these structures to align with piety requires a redesign based on its core values.
- **Difficulty in Measurement:** Quantifying *piety* and *ethical performance* is inherently difficult. Unlike easily measurable metrics such as sales or profit, ethical indicators lack straightforward quantification. This measurement challenge hinders the development of reward systems directly tied to piety. Therefore, developing operational indicators for measuring organizational piety is essential.
- **Cultural and Contextual Constraints:** In some organizational and national contexts, prevailing norms may prioritize short-term performance, aggressive competition, or personal connections over justice, transparency, and trusteeship. Introducing a *taqwá*-based model in such environments may encounter resistance or be superficially adopted without genuine transformation.
- **Risk of Instrumentalization:** There is a danger that piety may be reduced to a public-relations tool or a symbolic label, rather than being internalized as a guiding principle. This risk is particularly acute when ethical language is used to enhance reputation without corresponding changes in structures, incentives, and behaviors.

7.2. Solutions at the Micro Level (Organization)

- **Leadership by Example:** The transformation must commence with senior leadership. Managers must embody piety in their actions and practically implement Alawite principles. The importance of ethical role modeling by leaders has been widely recognized in organizational ethics literature (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Retraining senior managers on concepts derived from Nahj al-Balaghah is a crucial first step. A good example, as mentioned earlier, is Imam Ali's instructions to Malik al-Ashtar (Letter 53).
- **Redesigning Systems:** Selection, evaluation, and reward systems should be reconfigured around ethical indicators and piety. During selection, ethical characteristics should be prioritized alongside technical skills. Ethical performance must be a key criterion in evaluations. Reward systems should encourage and recognize virtue-oriented behaviors. Establishing a secure ethical reporting system can also aid in identifying and rectifying ethical issues.

- **Establishing Ethical Governance Bodies:** The formation of a professional ethics council and an ethical transformation task force within the organization can institutionalize pious values. These bodies can draft an ethical charter, manage ethical complaints, and provide ethical guidance to all personnel, playing a vital role in shaping a morally grounded organizational culture.
- **Employee Training and Cultural Transformation:** Research in organizational ethics suggests that ethical culture is strengthened through systematic training, value reinforcement, and leadership commitment (Schein, 2010). Comprehensive training on piety and organizational responsibility, alongside modeling by pious managers and employees, storytelling about virtuous conduct, and explicit appreciation of such behaviors, can gradually foster a culture of organizational piety.
- **Developing Operational Indicators:** To address the measurement challenge, organizations can develop qualitative and semi-quantitative indicators of organizational piety, such as:
    - Frequency and quality of ethical discussions in meetings.
    - Employee perceptions of fairness, transparency, and respect (via anonymous surveys).
    - Incidence and handling of ethical violations.
    - Extent of knowledge-sharing practices (e.g., mentorship activities, documentation contributions).

These indicators do not reduce piety to a simple score but provide feedback for continuous improvement and reflection.

7.3. Solutions at the Macro Level (Policy and Education)

Curriculum Integration in Higher Education: Universities and higher education institutions play a critical role in shaping future managers. Incorporating courses such as *Foundations of Islamic Management* and *Business Ethics Based on Religious Texts* into management curricula will train managers conversant with the principles of piety.

- **Government Incentives:** Governments can foster organizational piety through robust incentives. This could include granting a national ethical certificate to organizations demonstrating high transparency and accountability, and offering tax benefits or preferential treatment in tenders to such organizations.
- **Content Production and Role Modeling:** Showcasing successful organizations and managers who have effectively integrated ethics with efficiency can provide valuable models for others. Producing relevant content—books, films, articles—and organizing conferences and workshops can help disseminate the culture of organizational piety.

- **Support for Empirical Research:** Academic and research institutions can support studies that operationalize the *taqwá*-oriented management model, develop measurement instruments, and test its effects on organizational outcomes such as trust, performance, employee well-being, and sustainability. Such research is essential to move from conceptual proposal to evidence-based practice.

8. Discussion

This article has demonstrated that piety, as articulated in the discourse of *Nahj al-Balaghah*, transcends its interpretation as a mere individual and devotional virtue. Instead, it functions as a dynamic and transformative system capable of establishing profound and sustainable organizational responsibility on a divine foundation. By fostering internal control, mitigating agency costs, augmenting social capital, strengthening intrinsic motivation, and institutionalizing ethical knowledge governance, piety possesses the capacity to revolutionize contemporary organizations.

The *taqwá-oriented management* model, as presented herein, offers a comprehensive framework that addresses both the internal transformation of individuals—cultivating an ethical conscience—and the design of facilitating organizational structures and systems. Through the extraction of seven foundational pillars of organizational responsibility—namely, justice-orientation, transparency and accountability, participation and consultation, prioritization of public interest, respect for human dignity, long-term perspective and sustainability, and attention to knowledge and wisdom—this model provides a clear roadmap for operationalizing piety within an organizational context.

The aspirational outcome of this model is the creation of a *transcendent organization*. Such an entity is one where work is imbued with the character of worship, justice is a prevailing force, trust serves as the primary capital, and profit is viewed not as an end in itself, but as a means for service and a context for divine blessing. Consequently, this organization not only generates wealth but also cultivates meaning and justice for all its stakeholders and for society at large.

The transcendent organization is envisioned to possess the following key characteristics:

- **Committed Employees:** Individuals with strong intrinsic motivation who approach their work with dedication, viewing it as a form of worship.
- **Trustworthy Managers:** Leaders who perceive themselves as stewards or trustees responsible for the organization, its employees, and society, thereby safeguarding public funds and resources.

- **Just Systems:** Organizational systems and processes are designed with justice as their cornerstone, leaving no room for discrimination or inequity.
- **Mutual Trust:** A climate of deep, reciprocal trust pervades interactions between managers and employees, as well as between the organization and its external stakeholders.
- **Long-Term Sustainability:** The organization demonstrates a commitment to environmental sustainability and upholds its responsibilities towards future generations.
- **Continuous Learning:** The organization engages in ongoing learning and improvement, fostering a dynamic environment for the flow of knowledge.

The proposed model has several practical implications for managers, policymakers, and educators:

- **For managers:** The model offers a value-based framework for designing ethical cultures, governance mechanisms, and leadership practices. Managers can use the seven pillars as criteria for evaluating decisions, policies, and behaviors, and as a basis for developing codes of conduct and performance appraisal systems.
- **For policymakers:** The model suggests that public policies and incentives can encourage organizations to adopt ethical practices grounded in justice, transparency, and trusteeship. National ethical certification schemes, procurement preferences, and support for ethics education can create an enabling environment for *taqwá*-oriented management.
- **For educators:** The model provides content for courses on Islamic management, business ethics, and leadership. Case discussions, reflective exercises, and textual analysis of *Nahj al-Balaghah* can help students connect theological–ethical principles with contemporary organizational challenges.

Like all conceptual studies, this research has limitations that should be acknowledged:

- **Conceptual and Textual Nature:** The model has been developed primarily through textual and interpretive analysis of Nahj al-Balaghah and related Islamic sources. It has not yet been empirically tested in organizational settings.
- **Contextual Specificity:** While the principles are intended to be broadly applicable, their interpretation and implementation may vary across cultural, religious, and institutional contexts. The discussion of Iran in the research questions highlights one possible context, but further work is needed to explore other settings.

- **Measurement Challenges:** As noted earlier, operationalizing and measuring organizational piety and its effects pose methodological challenges. Developing valid and reliable instruments remains an important task for future research.

Future studies may therefore seek to:

- Operationalize the model through measurable indicators of organizational piety and develop assessment instruments.
- Examine the model's effectiveness across different organizational and cultural contexts using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.
- Conduct comparative studies between *taqwá*-oriented management and contemporary ethical leadership models to identify strengths, overlaps, and unique contributions.
- Explore how specific pillars (e.g., transparency, justice, knowledge sharing) relate to outcomes such as employee trust, commitment, performance, and well-being.

Realizing this vision necessitates a collective commitment. Researchers are called upon to scientifically expand and rigorously test this model. Courageous managers must take the initiative to implement it experimentally within their organizations. Policymakers, in turn, are tasked with creating the conducive macro-level environments required for its widespread adoption. By adhering to the illuminating wisdom of Ali (peace be upon him) and drawing guidance from *Nahj al-Balaghah*, a significant stride can be made toward constructing more humane and just organizations and, by extension, more equitable societies.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between piety and organizational responsibility through an analysis of Nahj al-Balaghah and to develop an operational model of *taqwá*-oriented management applicable to contemporary organizations. The central research question was how piety, as articulated in Nahj al-Balaghah, can be conceptualized and operationalized as an internal control mechanism that strengthens organizational responsibility. The findings demonstrate that, within the Alawite intellectual framework, *taqwá* is far more than an individual spiritual virtue. Rather, it functions as a comprehensive ethical and managerial principle capable of shaping organizational behavior, decision-making processes, governance systems, and stakeholder relations. By transforming responsibility from a merely contractual obligation into a divinely grounded commitment, *taqwá* provides a distinctive foundation for organizational accountability and ethical performance.

The study identified seven interrelated pillars of organizational responsibility rooted in piety: justice orientation, transparency and accountability, participation and consultation, prioritization of public interest, respect for human dignity, long-term sustainability, and commitment to knowledge and wisdom. Collectively, these pillars constitute an integrated framework for the construction of ethically resilient and socially responsible organizations. The analysis further indicated that piety can serve as an internal control mechanism that reduces agency costs, strengthens social capital, enhances intrinsic motivation, and promotes ethical knowledge governance. These capacities suggest that the proposed model is not limited to traditional organizational settings but can also be adapted to contemporary organizational forms, including matrix, networked, and virtual organizations.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing field of Islamic management by offering a systematic and operational model derived directly from Nahj al-Balaghah rather than from generalized ethical principles. It also expands contemporary discussions of organizational responsibility by introducing a transcendent and internally motivated perspective that complements existing secular approaches. Practically, the model provides managers, policymakers, and educational institutions with a framework for cultivating ethical organizational cultures grounded in trust, justice, and accountability.

Like all conceptual studies, this research has limitations. The proposed model has been developed primarily through textual and interpretive analysis and has not yet been empirically tested in organizational settings. The contemporary examples provided are illustrative scenarios, not evidence of full implementation. Future studies may therefore seek to operationalize the model through measurable indicators of organizational piety, develop assessment instruments, and examine its effectiveness across different organizational and cultural contexts. Comparative studies between *taqwá*-oriented management and contemporary ethical leadership models may also provide valuable insights into their respective strengths and areas of convergence.

Ultimately, the article argues that piety, when understood as a comprehensive organizational principle, possesses the potential to transform organizations into communities of responsibility, trust, justice, and meaningful service. Such organizations contribute not only to economic performance but also to the moral and social flourishing of the societies they serve.

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