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Analyzing Nahjul-Balagha's Strategies for Encouraging Involvement in Organizational Decision-Making through a Grounded Theory Approach

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the phenomenon of academic participation and strategies for its integration into academic decision-making, grounded in the management teachings of Nahjul-Balagha. The research sample consisted of academic experts in educational sciences, educational management, and organizational psychology, with 20 participants selected through purposive sampling guided by a theoretical approach. Data collection and analysis involved a library study, semi-structured interviews, and a three-stage coding process. The reliability and validity agreement coefficient for the findings was approximately 0.7, confirming the credibility of the research outcomes. A paradigmatic model was subsequently identified to enhance participation levels, with strategies for each component of the model derived from Imam Ali's directives in Nahjul-Balagha. Findings revealed that, according to Nahjul-Balagha, an individual engages genuinely in decision-making when they strive for their own growth and that of their colleagues by developing talents and capabilities in educational, cultural, research, and executive domains. This progression requires patience, voluntary effort, sincerity, gratitude, and a commitment to using these abilities with positive intent and benevolence aligned with the broader system's goals. Such participation manifests in the individual's physical, intellectual, and psychological dimensions.

Keywords: Nahj Al-Balagha, Organizational Participation, Decision-Making, Data-Based Approach.

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Introduction

Organizational engagement is a key concept within Organizational Psychology, specifically explored through Positive Psychology, which defines it as the enhancement of positive states and the reduction of negative states among organizational members (Seligman et al., 2007; Wulf et al., 2017). While organizational engagement is widely recognized as a significant factor in management science (Jovari et al., 1399 SH), much of the research in Human Resource Management and positive organizational behavior has predominantly concentrated on related topics such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, well-being, quality of work life, and job motivation.

To delineate the difference between these concepts and organizational engagement: **Job satisfaction** refers to an individual's overall feelings and connection to their job. However, these feelings can fluctuate based on changing job conditions and do not necessarily translate into improved performance; someone satisfied with their job may not always be a highly productive or valuable asset to the organization.

Organizational commitment, on the other hand, is an obligation to the organization that can restrict individual freedom of action.

Organizational well-being reflects a multifaceted issue tied to creating a high-quality environment that fosters member health and welfare. The **quality of work life** pertains to an employee's subjective perception of the physical and psychological desirability of their work environment (Heidari et al., 1396 SH). **Motivation** drives individuals toward specific actions, yet while it closely overlaps with engagement, it is distinct. A motivated individual may lack the positivity, cognitive flexibility, or additional effort that define an engaged individual. Essentially, while all engaged individuals are motivated, not all motivated individuals are necessarily engaged (Jovari et al., 1398 SH).

Moreover, a notable trend in 21st-century management practices, which gained momentum in the mid-1990s, involves emphasizing **spirituality in the workplace**. Spirituality arises from human interaction with what they perceive as sacred, fostering inner growth that humanistic psychologists consider a primary and essential human need (Varess et al., 1388 SH, p. 136). Religion plays a significant role in shaping values and beliefs across societies and profoundly affects behaviors within

organizational settings (Sanobar & Arablou Moghaddam, 1391 SH, p. 35). Religious beliefs encourage responsibility toward a divine duty, which often translates into ethical workplace behaviors and accountability in performing tasks accurately and punctually. In Islamic thought, work is viewed as an integrated aspect of life, oriented toward personal growth and spiritual transcendence.

Organizations aligned with spiritual principles contribute to increased self-esteem, hope, and organizational engagement among employees. This alignment inspires employees to devote their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual resources to the organization, perceiving their work as a meaningful mission rather than a mere job. Such individuals develop stronger emotional and normative ties to their organizations, treat colleagues with respect and equity, and feel valued as thoughtful and rational beings. Consequently, they experience reduced stress and burnout while achieving greater satisfaction and higher performance outcomes (Sanobar & Arablou Moghaddam, 1391 SH, p. 138).

In light of varying cultural perspectives and values influencing perceptions of life and work, management specialists grapple with the challenge of mitigating counterproductive thoughts and behaviors within organizations. Individual behavior stems from how people interpret circumstances based on their beliefs and values. Therefore, measuring organizational engagement depends significantly on **cultural context**. Since religion shapes numerous cultural, social, and ethical norms across all societal levels (Sanobar, 1391 SH, p. 36), religiosity emerges as a potential predictor of organizational engagement and vigor.

From a Human Resource Accounting viewpoint, employee disengagement results in squandering both tangible and intangible organizational capital, leading to considerable losses. The following are examples of related research conducted in this field:

- **Taherian et al. (2014)** examined the managerial and organizational factors affecting organizational engagement and its impact on scientific production, including leadership style, trust, positive thinking, self-disclosure, organizational justice, and work environment conditions.

- **Arjmandinejad et al. (2016)** identified the lack of succession planning, inattention to structural and job development, and a flawed evaluation system as groundwork factors for organizational apathy and disengagement.
- **Mohammadzadeh and Salehi (2016)** defined the dimensions of scientific engagement and dynamism in scientific centers as Scientific-Individual, Scientific-Team, Scientific-Organizational, and Scientific-Social.
- **Ahanchian and Soleimani (2017)** characterized professionally engaged academic members as those having research-teaching commitments alongside positive ethical components (citing Emrollahi et al., 2014, and Luthans, 2007).
- **Jovari et al. (2017)**, through grounded theory research, showed that securing the social well-being of academics is contingent upon ensuring the individual and organizational engagement of university members.
- **Jovari et al. (2019)** investigated organizational barriers to engagement, introducing ineffective regulations and the neglect of university capabilities as factors aggravating organizational disengagement.
- **Sonnenntag and Fritz (2008)** found that trait engagement, specific day workload, and recovery predict end-of-day work engagement, and that recovery in the family environment facilitates work functions.
- **Plechano et al. (2013)** found that negative emotions and emotional instability have a negative relationship with engagement, while extraversion and openness to experience have a positive relationship. Anger was also shown to reduce engagement.
- **Shirom et al. (2013)** demonstrated that an increase in the level of engagement is associated with a reduced risk of hyperlipidemia among employees.
- **Night et al. (2017)** found that the impact coefficient of engagement was higher than the other two components influencing organizational commitment in international studies.

- **Doy (2017)** showed that engagement and vigor (an individual's feeling regarding importance, enthusiasm, inspiration, and challenge at work) have a direct and positive effect on organizational performance.

An extensive review of the available literature on Participation/Engagement reveals five main categories of studies:

1. **Conceptualization Studies:** Focus on defining the concept, often incorrectly equating it with enthusiasm or passion.
2. **Subordinate Organizational Studies:** Treat engagement only indirectly as a component of Job Involvement.
3. **Individual Psychology Focus:** Emphasize outcomes of participation/engagement on individual health, often neglecting organizational relevance.
4. **Sociological Comparative Studies:** Compare participation/engagement and social health across cities, stopping at statistical correlations without comprehensive evaluation.
5. **Obstacles and Consequences:** Explore participation/engagement through the lens of its challenges and resulting impacts.

1. Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative approach using the **Grounded Theory** method to gain insights into participants' internal perspectives through an **Emic Approach**. The objective was to develop a paradigmatic model explaining the foundations of academic engagement. Data were gathered through purposeful observations, library studies, and exploratory interviews, employing purposive and snowball sampling among 34 employees and managers from an educational-research institution. The participants had experience ranging from 7 to 30 years, and data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Triangulation validated the data collection and analysis, while an **Idiographic Explanation**, incorporating religious insights from *Nahj al-Balagha*, was used to propose solutions for enhancing organizational engagement. The final model adhered to the systematic procedures of Grounded Theory, respecting ethical standards and ensuring participant confidentiality.

Open coding refers to the analytical process of assigning names to concepts, classifying them, and identifying their properties and dimensions through constant comparison (Strauss, 2008). This approach enables researchers to analyze concepts from multiple perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of their significance.

In this study, case observations and interviews were analyzed using the content analysis method. Through this process, conceptualization and categorization were carried out, leading to the identification of concepts and categories (a set of related concepts) based on similarities, conceptual relationships, and shared attributes among the open codes.

Causal Conditions

Causal conditions are defined as the factors that serve as the primary drivers of the phenomenon under investigation (Strauss, 2008). The findings from the content analysis regarding perceptions of non-participation in participatory decision-making reveal three primary categories linked to causal conditions.

2. Results

2.1. Causal Conditions: Perceived Injustice

The first part of the findings explores the concept of **Perceived Injustice** within organizations, particularly in areas such as the enforcement of laws and regulations, changes in status, payments, and appointments. Perceived Injustice was reflected through the following patterns:

- **Emergence of Special Provisos:** Selective application of organizational policies based on timing or individuals.
- **Inappropriate Decision-Making Criteria:** Use of unsuitable ideological, political, or doctrinal factors.
- **Substitution of Power for Regulations:** Relationships and authority supplanting established rules and procedures.
- **Arbitrary Decision-Making:** Frequent changes to instructions with new appointments, biased employee selection, and factionalism-based decision-making.
- **Lack of Stakeholder Participation:** Implementation of regulations without involving experts, coupled with access to filtered information.

- **Ruler-Oriented Management Approach:** Prioritization of personal authority and interests over collective organizational goals.

Value-based solutions proposed to address Perceived Injustice, inspired by principles from *Nahj al-Balagha*, include fostering justice and fairness, adhering to meritocracy, encouraging participatory management, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

2.2. Axial Coding and the Core Phenomenon

At the **axial coding** stage, the model's core elements were identified:

Causal Chain Outcomes: The interplay between feelings of injustice, absence of meritocracy, non-participatory management, insufficient organizational transparency, and hierarchical leadership culminates in widespread distrust, which in turn diminishes overall organizational participation.

Core Phenomenon: The primary concern identified is **Non-Participation in Participatory Decision-Making**. This is characterized by:

- Lack of Individual and Organizational Engagement, stemming from:
 - Significant disparities in job roles, expertise, and salaries between faculty (managers) and other employees.
 - A pervasive sense of uncertainty and distrust regarding the organization's future.
 - The emergence of feelings of inferiority among employees and misplaced superiority among faculty members.
 - Neglect of ethical standards like honesty, respect for humanity, and courage in decision-making based on trust.

To address this core issue, value-based solutions derived from *Nahj al-Balagha* emphasize recognizing the interconnected roles of God, self-awareness, and others in organizational dynamics. They also advocate for cultivating positive thinking while minimizing harmful traits such as envy and stinginess.

2.3. Solutions Based on Piety-Centricity (*Taqwa-Mohvari*)

To address non-participation using a piety-centered approach rooted in **Taqwa** (God-consciousness), the following value-driven solutions are proposed:

- Emphasizing personal positive traits and constructive thought patterns.
- Cultivating humility, patience, and detachment from materialism.
- Encouraging optimistic perspectives and attitudes.
- Reflecting on the interconnected role of God, the self, and society in events to avoid traits like envy, stinginess, and narrow-mindedness.

Piety as Social Capital

Imam Ali (AS) highlights divine faith and piety (*Taqwa*) as both a responsibility and a form of social capital instrumental in achieving happiness. Wisdom 415 of *Nahj al-Balaghah* underscores the requirement for divine piety among employees, characterized by honesty, truthfulness, transparency, and integrity (Etesami et al., p. 118).

Justice-Centricity in Management

Justice is identified as an essential trait in governance. Managers are tasked with safeguarding and enhancing just practices (Forouzandeh et al., p. 85).

- **Managerial Obligation:** One of the central obligations of managers is maintaining justice and equity. In *Letter 53* of *Nahj al-Balaghah* addressed to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (AS) advises: “When faced with decisions involving God and the people versus yourself, your relatives, or others you may favor, uphold justice. Failure to do so equates to oppression.”
- **Preventing Tyranny:** *Hikmat* (Wisdom) 476 states: “Employ justice and avoid coercion, tyranny, and conflict; for coercion and pressure cause people to abandon their homelands, and tyranny and oppression lead people to the sword and revolt.”
- **Equity in Conduct:** In *Letter 27* to Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, His Holiness states: “Do not differentiate even in a sidelong or direct glance, in pointing to them, or in greeting among them, so that the powerful do not covet your deviation, and the

afflicted (weak) do not despair of your justice" (Etesami et al., p. 119).

Adopting justice is considered the root source for preventing counter-productive organizational behaviors. Managerial justice establishes mutual trust and empathy, raising organizational commitment and participation.

Organizational Vitality (Nashat Sazmani): Imam Ali (AS) emphasizes in his recommendations to Malik al-Ashtar: "Then you must do deeds that earn you the good opinion of the citizens, for that good opinion removes much trouble from you. And verily, the most deserving person to have good opinion of you is the one whom you have tested well, and verily, the most deserving person to have bad opinion of you is the one whom you have tested badly" (*Letter 53*) (Forouzandeh et al., p. 84).

This is a management strategy for creating a positive mental image of the organization through the manager's actions, which in turn fosters individual and organizational participation. This image creation demands self-cultivation, requiring Anthropology (*Insan-shenasi*) and Cosmology (*Jahan-shenasi*), and reinforcing the spirit of faith (*Iman*).

2.4. The Foundations of Engagement in Islamic Thought

In the religion of Islam, **Faith (Iman)** is the most effective and important factor for human salvation, serving as the axis for all good and positive traits and attitudes.

Amir al-Mu'minin (AS), in his famous sermon (*Khutbah 110*), stated in the preamble: "Verily, the best thing with which people can draw nearer to God, the Glorified, is belief in God and His Messenger, and striving in the path of God." In *Khutbah 156*, he further states: "Faith is the clearest of paths and the most luminous of lamps; with faith, one can reach righteous deeds, and with good deeds, one can attain faith; with faith, knowledge and science flourish" (Forouzandeh, p. 89). The master key to individual and organizational success is presented in this sermon.

Participation is an internal and attitudinal process related to the concept of **insight** concerning thought, knowledge, and awareness, based on inclination and action. The identified themes for insight include: **Theology (Khoda-shenasi)**, **Cosmology (Jahan-shenasi)**,

Anthropology (Insan-shenasi), Theology of Religion (Dien-shenasi), and Demonology (Sheitan-shenasi) (Khashaei et al., p. 28).

- **Theology (Khoda-shenasi):** Refers to knowing the attributes of God. In *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Creatorship (*Khaleqiyat*), Ownership (*Malekiyat*), Provider-of-Sustenance (*Razeqiyat*), Generous Provider (*Razzaqiyat*), and Oversight (*Nazaret*) are named as attributes of God. This theology provides the individual, in the lofty role of servitude to God, the insight to perform God's actions with the intention of drawing near to the Divine, without expecting rewards or material recompense, relying solely on spiritual rewards.
- **Cosmology (Jahan-shenasi):** This is the study of existence that pertains to the system of creation, comprised of the *Dunya* (this world) and *Akhirah* (the Hereafter). It also addresses the purposefulness of creation, Divine traditions (*Sunan*), and the relationship between the *Dunya* and *Akhirah*.
- **Anthropology (Insan-shenasi):** This is related to self-knowledge (*Ma'refat al-Nafs*) and encompasses topics such as the internal faculties of humans, intellect (*Aql*), base desires (*Hawa-ye Nafs*), as well as human responsibility and the influence and effect of human actions.

Adherence to the **Rights of People (Haqq al-Nas)** and the **Rights of God (Haqq Allah)** is effective in the mutual relationship between members of an organization. It also influences quality orientation, a greater sense of responsibility toward work, and viewing work as an act of worship.

Responsibility-taking at the personal level lays the groundwork for social responsibility. **Enjoining good (Amr bil Ma'ruf) and forbidding evil (Nahy anil Munkar)** is a perfect mirror of individuals' responsibility-taking, which must be interwoven with their personal and social lives.

The commitment to *Amr bil Ma'ruf* and *Nahy anil Munkar* is such that Imam Ali (AS) considered all the sermons, letters, and wisdoms in *Nahj al-Balaghah* to be a form of commanding good and forbidding evil. In the sermon he delivered after the Battle of Jamal, he considered *Amr bil Ma'ruf* and *Nahy anil Munkar* as two of God's attributes that neither

hasten death nor reduce sustenance (*Khutbah 156*) (Forouzandeh, p. 88).

2.5. Structural and Value-Based Strategies

The implementation of **meritocracy** (*Shayesteh-salari*), the dominance of organizational discipline, ensuring transparency in the organizational environment, continuous monitoring and control alongside meritocracy, expanding face-to-face communication, building mutual trust, granting appropriate, timely, and deserved rewards to employees, the acceptance and implementation of *Amr bil Ma'ruf* and *Nahy anil Munkar*, the execution of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, and creating a spiritual setting for the growth and transcendence of employees—these structural and value-based solutions, alongside self-knowledge, positive thinking, theology, and knowledge acquisition, by changing the outlook on life and work as an act of worship in line with sublime Divine values, will foster the spirit of faith and individual participation.

Organizational participation is initially contingent upon establishing individual participation in individuals and their self-cultivation. Practical solutions for this include participating in group religious ceremonies, such as congregational prayers (*Namaz-e Jama'at*), processions, *Ziyarat Ashura*, *Yasin*, holding courses familiarizing staff with *Nahj al-Balaghah* and the Quran, and establishing religious think tanks. The level of knowledge and Islamic commitment of individuals is important.

The dominance of the spirit of *Amr bil Ma'ruf* and *Nahy anil Munkar*, with its profound impact on the empathy and alignment of employees and managers, leads to a brotherly view of organizational members.

2.6. Optimism and Positive Thinking

Imam Ali (AS), with the aim of reducing the pressure exerted on humans when facing calamities and incidents, emphasizes optimism, positive thinking, a positive outlook, and hope for a bright future.

Optimism means viewing things based on good assumptions (*Husn-e Zann*). The positively-minded person holds good assumptions toward God, toward people, and toward their religious brethren. They interpret hardships and problems as beneficial and in their best interest, resorting

to logical interpretation of matters with patience and reliance upon God. The faithful person is certain of the Divine wise planning.

Considering Negative and Positive Events as Temporary: Imam Ali (AS) states: "God will make you victorious over your enemies" (*Khutbah 12*). Therefore, if employees, whether at the managerial or staff level, interpret and justify events logically and by considering all causes, they will achieve inner peace and spare no effort in persistence and endurance to realize organizational goals.

A brotherly view in the organization, by removing the top-down perspectives and aligning individuals with the organization's goals, creates a culture of participatory affection and spiritual participation in the work.

Conditional Context (*Sharayet-e Zamineh*): This indicates a set of special characteristics that point to a phenomenon; in other words, it is the location of events or incidents related to a phenomenon along a dimension in which reciprocal action for controlling, managing, and responding to the phenomenon takes place (Strauss, 2008).

Based on the research findings, the lack of practical commitment and adherence to religious beliefs concerning regulations and statutes, leadership style, and the individual and psychological characteristics of members constitute the three main areas contributing to non-participation in scientific-executive decision-making within this higher education center. The research results support previous studies (Chehrazi, 2015; Gholipour et al., 2007) and the statements of Imam Ali (AS), all of which emphasize preserving the value and dignity of every single member of the organization and establishing the necessary platform for their participation.

In this center, leadership and management positions are exclusively reserved for faculty members. Due to the significant gap in their academic and specialized levels, these members suffer from false superiority complexes. Conversely, employees, lacking self-belief and experiencing a large economic class disparity with faculty members, suffer from a false sense of weakness in presenting their specific expertise and skills. Given the stark difference between the nature of faculty work and the nature of executive tasks, the necessity for the scientific-executive cooperation of knowledgeable employees in many

of the center's meetings is evident. To achieve this, focusing on increasing the spiritual, scientific, and executive development of managers and employees, and enhancing communication and social interactions based on human-centricity rather than task-centricity, is essential.

Justice-orientation is the most crucial factor. Through the correct, timely, and universal enforcement of laws and regulations, the trust of the organization's members in the decisions made can be secured, which serves as the guarantor for the operationalization of these decisions. **Transparency** in any organization—achieved by publicly announcing the results of meetings, approvals, charters, and circulars—paves the way for increased member trust and participation. Updating the organization's real and virtual information centers will be instrumental in this regard. If the prevailing "I and you" mentality in this organization shifts to "us," decision-making will move away from personal interests toward collective interests and in alignment with the organization's goals and vision.

Imam Ali (AS) not only understood the people of his time but also, in the fullest sense, was aware of the future of humanity. Through contemplation, this reality becomes apparent: his precious words are not confined by specific language or location, and these sayings remain valuable and value-affirming (Khashaei et al., 2016, p. 113).

3. Strategies and Consequences

The intended **strategies** within the Grounded Theory approach present solutions for confronting, addressing, and showing sensitivity toward the studied phenomenon. **Consequences** are the result of the action (implementation) and reaction to the conditions surrounding the phenomenon (Strauss, 2008). This study proposes three fundamental strategies to reach the desired state regarding the prevention and resolution of non-participation in participatory decision-making, which will be addressed in the discussion and conclusion section.

3.1. Grounded Theory Coding Stages

3.1.1. **Axial Coding** refers to the series of procedures that link data together by connecting a category with its sub-categories. Thus, axial coding points to the process of shaping categories (main

and sub) using a paradigm (model, archetype, or template) to show the relationships between the causal conditions, the core phenomenon, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences.

3.1.2. Selective Coding (Theory Generation Stage): In this stage, the Grounded Theorist systematically selects the core category (around which all other categories revolve and which forms an overall structure) and writes the theory by connecting it to the other categories. This represents an abstract description of the process studied in the research (Mahboubzadeh et al., 2013).

At a superficial and holistic level, a reluctance among the members of these centers toward participation in organizational decision-making is apparent. However, by contemplating the following statements, it becomes clear that this reluctance is not entirely absolute and exists in a **potential state**. A more precise analysis reveals that even opponents of this mode of decision-making point to layers of a sense of responsibility and internal mental concern regarding organizational issues in their statements and phrases.

For example, this indicates the existence of an internal and potential sense of participation within them that requires effort to reach actuality. To realize this actuality, it is necessary to positivize the mutual negative mental image currently present in the organizational atmosphere. The solution for actualizing this feeling of participation lies within the phrases used by proponents of staff participation in organizational decisions.

3.2. Solutions: The Final Model

The impact of adherence to ethical and religious foundations in the lives of these individuals, along with valuing human and ethical dignity, is evident. Based on this, the final schematic model presented for the non-participation in participatory decision-making in this higher education center in Tehran is as follows:

3.3. Validation of the Grounded Theory

Various methods exist for validation within the Grounded Theory approach. In the present study, two methods were employed: **Participant Review (Member Checking)** and **Review by Experts**

who did not participate in the research. After receiving corrective feedback and necessary consultation with the guiding and advising professors, the required revisions were made, and the final model was presented.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

An organization is a collective entity composed of human beings, and ensuring the physical, psychological, and perceptual well-being of each individual within it guarantees the health of the organization itself. If, for any reason, the human agents within the organization lack sufficient motivation and willingness to work, be active, and cooperate in achieving organizational goals, the organization will inevitably deviate from the path of productivity by losing its primary and essential dynamism sooner or later (Danaeebard et al., 2010). The crucial and sensitive segment of organizational participation by employees is related to their mental and psychological perceptions and understandings of the work environment.

The mind is the place that turns Hell into Heaven and Heaven into Hell (Gholipour, 2012). Solutions offered for the reform of societies must be based on the beliefs and values accepted within that society. Similarly, in an Islamic society, reformative solutions must be presented in alignment with Islamic patterns and teachings. In various and diverse cultures, the mental conceptions, understanding, and perception of life and work differ across various societies and nations. Consequently, the indicators for measuring organizational participation will also vary.

An individual's behavior in different circumstances stems from their attitudes, which are shaped by their beliefs and values. Therefore, given that religion is a phenomenon that shapes many of the cultural, social, and ethical beliefs and values of people across all sectors of society (Sonobar, 2012, p. 36), religiosity can be considered a predictor of individuals' organizational zeal and participation.

It is self-evident that in Islamic countries, a firm belief in Divine justice, attention to human dignity, and respect for spiritual rewards play a more effective role in the organizational participation of employees. This crucial aspect creates a highly valuable foundation for organizational managers to enhance the quantitative and qualitative level of employee participation in organizational decision-making. The interactive

relationship based on ethical, human, and Islamic values between managers and employees plays a significant role in this process. These valuable interactions increase employees' self-belief and foster mutual interpersonal and organizational trust and credibility in their perception. Imam Ali (AS), being aware of the realities of the world during his lifetime, served as the ruler and leader of the Islamic society. With a profound sense of responsibility concerning ethics, asceticism (*zuhd*), and leadership in the political, social, and mystical systems, he left behind the solution and key to resolving all individual, social, and governmental problems. The research findings corroborate the statements of Imam Ali (AS) in *Nahj al-Balagha*, which emphasize practical commitment to religious obligations while simultaneously preserving the value and dignity of every single member of the organization and establishing the necessary platform for participation by the appointed administrators.

Key Insights from *Nahj al-Balagha* on Participation

A) Participation in Guidance and Remembrance of God (*Sermon 193*) Among the signs of the pious is that you see them as follows: Strong in their faith, gentle in nature, far-sighted, possessing faith full of certainty, eager in acquiring knowledge, patient with their learning, moderate in wealth, humble in worship, adorned in poverty, patient in hardship, seeking lawful earnings, joyous and energetic in the path of guidance, and abstaining from greed.

They perform good deeds while remaining fearful. They turn the day into night with gratitude, and the night into day with the remembrance of God. They sleep at night in a state of fear and wake up joyful and highly participatory—the fear is so they do not become heedless, and the joy is for the grace and mercy bestowed upon them.

B) Abstaining from Worldly Joy (*Sermon 113*) Regarding the prohibition of worldliness, Imam Ali (AS) states in *Sermon 113*: “Indeed, you are religious brethren to one another, yet nothing separates you except your corrupt inner selves and ugly intentions. You neither support each other, nor wish each other well, nor give to one another, nor show affection for one another. What is wrong with you that you become joyful upon acquiring a small portion of this world, yet you do not grieve over the much of the Hereafter that you lose?”

C) This final section completes the discussion and provides practical recommendations based on the religious-value model developed. I have edited the text for professional academic tone, clarity, and strict adherence to **APA 7th edition** citation style.

C) The True Status of Joys in the Discourse of the Speaking Quran, Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS)

Imam Ali (AS) wrote in a letter to Ibn Abbas, the governor of Egypt (*Letter 22*):

“Indeed, a person sometimes becomes pleased over something that he will never lose, and grieves over something that he will never attain. O Ibn Abbas, let your joy be for that which will benefit you in the Hereafter, and let your sorrow be for what you lose from it. Do not let the possessions you gain from this world make you rejoice, and do not lament over what of the world escapes you. Direct your efforts toward the world that comes after death.”

In another letter (*Letter 66*), he states:

“Man rejoices over something he will never lose and grieves over what he will never gain. Therefore, let not the best of things to you in this world be the attainment of pleasures or vengeance. Instead, let your goal be the extinguishing of falsehood and the revival of truth. Rejoice only in the provision you send forth for the Hereafter, and do not grieve for what you leave behind.”

In institutions of higher education, the complementary roles of employees and managers in decision-making should not be overlooked. Considering the dominant scientific and academic culture within such environments, staff members expect space for intellectual and professional maneuvering—yet this expectation often goes unmet. It is therefore appropriate for university managers to pay particular attention to the specialized, scholarly, and cultural nature of employees’ tasks and the university work environment. They must strive to adopt a **relationship-centered and transformational leadership style**—one that functions within academic regulations while focusing resolutely on improving employee satisfaction.

From the analysis of observations and interviews, it can be concluded that the simultaneous adherence of both employees and managers to the operationalization of religious and divine values and beliefs in

interpersonal and organizational relations constitutes the most significant factor in improving organizational participation and collaborative decision-making within higher education institutions.

The perspective and language of Imam Ali (AS) in describing leadership are Qur'anic in nature. He views management through attributes such as divine trust, sacred responsibility rather than privilege, and service rather than status. In fact, the leadership model of Imam Ali (AS) is based on the social capital of affection and knowledge.

From Imam Ali's standpoint, work that respects the boundaries of human and divine values is not only permissible but necessary—a form of worship. In such cases, the worker becomes beloved by God, as it is said: "Indeed, God loves the faithful and trustworthy craftsman" (Mashayekhi-Pour, 2011, p. 43).

Having organizational participation in work represents the highest level of positive and constructive occupational behavior. The emergence of such behavior requires a strong spiritual environment within the organization. In such an environment, employees work with love and devotion for their tasks and, without seeking any additional material reward, perform their duties diligently with divine intention.

In this type of setting, individuals see God as present and observing their actions in every moment of life and work. These people are likely to possess a high level of work conscience and act dynamically and collaboratively. For example, even when no one is supervising them, they adhere to regulations and devote their time and energy toward achieving maximum organizational effectiveness, solely to gain the pleasure of Almighty God.

When employees perceive their relationship with God as agency-based, they see themselves as agents and servants of God, of the organization, and of the people. Such employees strive harder to perform their tasks better and continually update their knowledge, information, and skills (Vares, p. 152). Employees who fulfill their duties in direct interaction with God focus more on spiritual rewards than on material incentives; therefore, they engage in self-driven and participatory behaviors beyond formal role expectations, viewing their true role as serving God's creation for divine satisfaction.

Organizational participation is the fruit of spirituality, and consequently, spirituality in the workplace should be elevated. Based on adherence to spiritual and religious values, the participative employee views work as a religious and devotional virtue intertwined with material and spiritual life. Such individuals, with faith and trust in God, are the most capable of resisting social, commercial, and occupational disruptions, uncertainties, and ambiguities.

The most critical factor in religious adherence lies in promoting the culture of **human dignity**—acknowledging humankind as the noblest of God's creations. Through such cultural cultivation and transformation in organizational members' attitudes, focusing actions on divine proximity, service to people for God's satisfaction, the sacred nature of work, and piety-centered activity, false comparisons and negative mutual perceptions between managers and employees gradually fade away.

Employees and managers begin to see themselves as servants in the path of serving God's creation, and by shifting their view of work toward worship, they no longer expect their rewards solely from the organization. Strengthened interpersonal closeness and informational transparency, together with accurate mutual understanding, eliminate suspicion and mistrust, leading to voluntary and wholehearted employee participation in organizational decision-making and policymaking.

When the organizational culture moves from "I" and "You" toward "We," decision-making becomes oriented away from personal interests and toward collective interests and shared organizational visions.

This research therefore investigated the reasons and underlying contexts of employees' non-participation in organizational decision-making processes and proposed a model grounded in pure religious values to guide managers of higher education institutions in preventing and remedying this counterproductive behavior.

5. Practical Recommendations

Finally, the following practical recommendations are offered as potential solutions for fostering participatory decision-making and enhancing managerial and employee productivity:

1. **Increase Cultural and Religious Programs, Sessions, and Ceremonies.** Holding regular spiritual and cultural gatherings strengthens moral values and deepens employees' sense of belonging to the organizational environment.
2. **Greater Emphasis on Qur'anic and *Nahj al-Balāghah* Teachings.** These teachings should be integrated into the center's cultural programming and serve as guiding frameworks in developing ethics-based managerial and human-resource practices.
3. **Strengthen Managerial Attention to Employees' Livelihood and Economic Conditions.** Addressing welfare concerns enhances morale, loyalty, and alignment with organizational goals.
4. **Enhance Social Interaction and Communication between Employees and Managers.** Since feelings of inferiority may exist among staff, such relationships should intentionally be initiated by managers through trust-building and open dialogue.
5. **Form Human Resource Policy Councils with Employee Participation.** These councils should include senior and trusted employee representatives to ensure employees' voices are genuinely reflected in HR planning and implementation processes.
6. **Establish a Council for Evaluating Criticism and Suggestions.** This subcommittee within the Human Resources Council should collaborate with employees as liaisons in research, cultural, educational, and international affairs to implement adopted decisions effectively.
7. **Revise Payment and Reward Systems.** Incentives should be motivational, appropriate, and transparent. Public recognition of responsible employees with high organizational commitment can significantly boost self-esteem and, thereby, their comprehensive participation in decision-making processes.
8. **Create Platforms to Enhance Employees' Scientific and Operational Potential.** Offering opportunities for professional growth and engagement fosters greater managerial trust and a positive perception of employees' skills and capabilities.

9. **Hold Regular Question-and-Answer Sessions and Joint Brainstorming Meetings.** Such interactions between staff and management deepen mutual understanding and strengthen participatory culture.

Improve the Quantity and Quality of Website News, Circulars, and Regulations. Ensuring transparency eliminates negative perceptions and misinformation, thereby building trust.

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