



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, Most
Gracious, Most Merciful*





Whoever acts righteously, whether male or female,
and is a believer, We will certainly enable him lead a
PURE LIFE and surely We will bestow on such
their reward according to the best of their deeds .
(an-Nahl: 97)



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International Multidisciplinary Journal of PURE LIFE (IMJPL) is an interdisciplinary quarterly English-language electronic journal. The scope of this journal is Comparative and Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion and Life, Lifestyles, Interreligious Dialogues and Advertising in Cyberspace; however, its focus is on *“The Meaning of Life and Pure Life in the Modern Age”*.

Promoting the level of scientific research related to the Humanities and the Meaning of Life, **IMJPL** seeks to facilitate and develop the relationship among researchers who are doing studies on humanities and divine religions.

Unlike predatory journals whose focus is on making money by the publication of works mainly written by university faculty members and charging authors under the name of APC, this journal welcomes all scientific standard papers in the scope of the journal from scholars, researchers and professors around the world and publishes articles for free regardless of religion, gender, academic rank and any other discrimination only upon the issuance of the letter of acceptance after peer reviews by two editors of the journal.

All required international standards have been considered to prevent any discrimination and create an open scientific space to fulfil the slogan of the Al-Mustafa International University, which is to have the authority on the international science and propagation, and production of science and software movement in the Islamic world. As of now, many of the editorial staff and authors who have published their articles in the journal are priests, Christians and followers of various religions and denominations.

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IMJPL belongs to Al-Mustafa International University. The managing editor of the journal is *Dr. Saeid Arjmandfar* (Assistant Prof. of Al-Mustafa International University and President of Al-Mustafa Open University). The editor in chief of the journal is *Prof. Saeid Nazari Tavakoli* (Prof. at the University of Tehran). It has 44 editorial board members from 15 nationalities, of which 23 members of them are full professors.

The journal is also indexed in 20 domestic and 28 international databases and benefits 135 reviewers from 22 nationalities. The first issue of **IMJPL** came out in 2015, and it has published 287 papers by 516 authors from 41 nationalities in 37 issues so far. Out of this number, 140 authors (equivalent to 27.1% of total authors) are women.

Also, **IMJPL** is the only journal approved by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is published in English in the sub-category of Philosophy and Theology.

1	Period of Publication	Quarterly
2	Type of Publication	Electronic
3	Language of the Journal	English
4	The First Issue Published	May 2015
5	Specialized Field	The Meaning of Life and Pure Life in the Modern Age
6	Review Process	Double Blind Peer Review (Two Evaluators)
7	Standard Method of Citing References	APA
8	The Duration of Evaluation	Three Months
9	Rapid Evaluation of Papers	No
10	Cost of Evaluation	Free

Aims and Scope

Objectives:

1. Theorizing and Production of Science in the Field of Religion, Meaning of Life and Humanities under the Concept of **Pure Life**
2. Deepening and Promoting of Religious and Human Teachings in the Field of Meaning of Life and **Pure Life**
3. Analysis, Critique and Review of Important Ideas and Theories in the Field of Humanities and Life Meaning
4. Presenting Models and Applied Theories of Humanities in the Face of Contemporary Social Challenges and **Pure Life** in the Modern Age
5. Explaining the Basic Religions Ideas and Systematization based on it in Different Areas of Life
6. Explaining the Theoretical Foundations of the Islamic Republic and the Great Islamic Revolution of Iran in Relation to the Concept of **Pure Life**
7. Creating and Expanding the Scientific and Research Opportunities in Al-Mustafa International University with Emphasis on Teaching Education Life and Religion in Cyberspace
8. Scientific Defense of Religious Teachings and Ideas and Response to Contemporary Doubts in the Field of Meaning of Life and **Pure Life**

Policies and Strategies:

1. The Focus of Abrahamic Religions, the Thoughts and Ideals of Imam Khomeini, Imam Khamenei and the Discourse of the Great Islamic Revolution of Iran under the Concept of **Pure Life**
2. Observance of Moral and Legal Standards and Norms among the Abrahamic Religions
3. Attention to the Needs and Priorities of Research in the International Arena with a Focus on the Humanities and **Pure Life**
4. Emphasis on Using the Scientific Capacity of Non-Iranian Professors, Researchers, Scholars and Graduates of Al-Mustafa International University and International Scientific Institutions
5. Emphasis on Preserving the Originalities and Values of the Seminary and Adhering to the General Policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran
6. Respect for Natural People and Legal Entities
7. Observance of the Principle of Approximation of Monotheistic Religions and Denominations and Refraining from Raising Challenging Issues of Contrary to Unity
8. Interaction and Cooperation with International Scientific Centers and National and International Publications

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International Multidisciplinary Journal of PURE LIFE (IMJPL) and its publisher Al-Mustafa International University adhere to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors and the Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers. **IMJPL** also follows recommendations contained in A Guide for Editors-in-Chief, Associate Editors, and Managing Editors.

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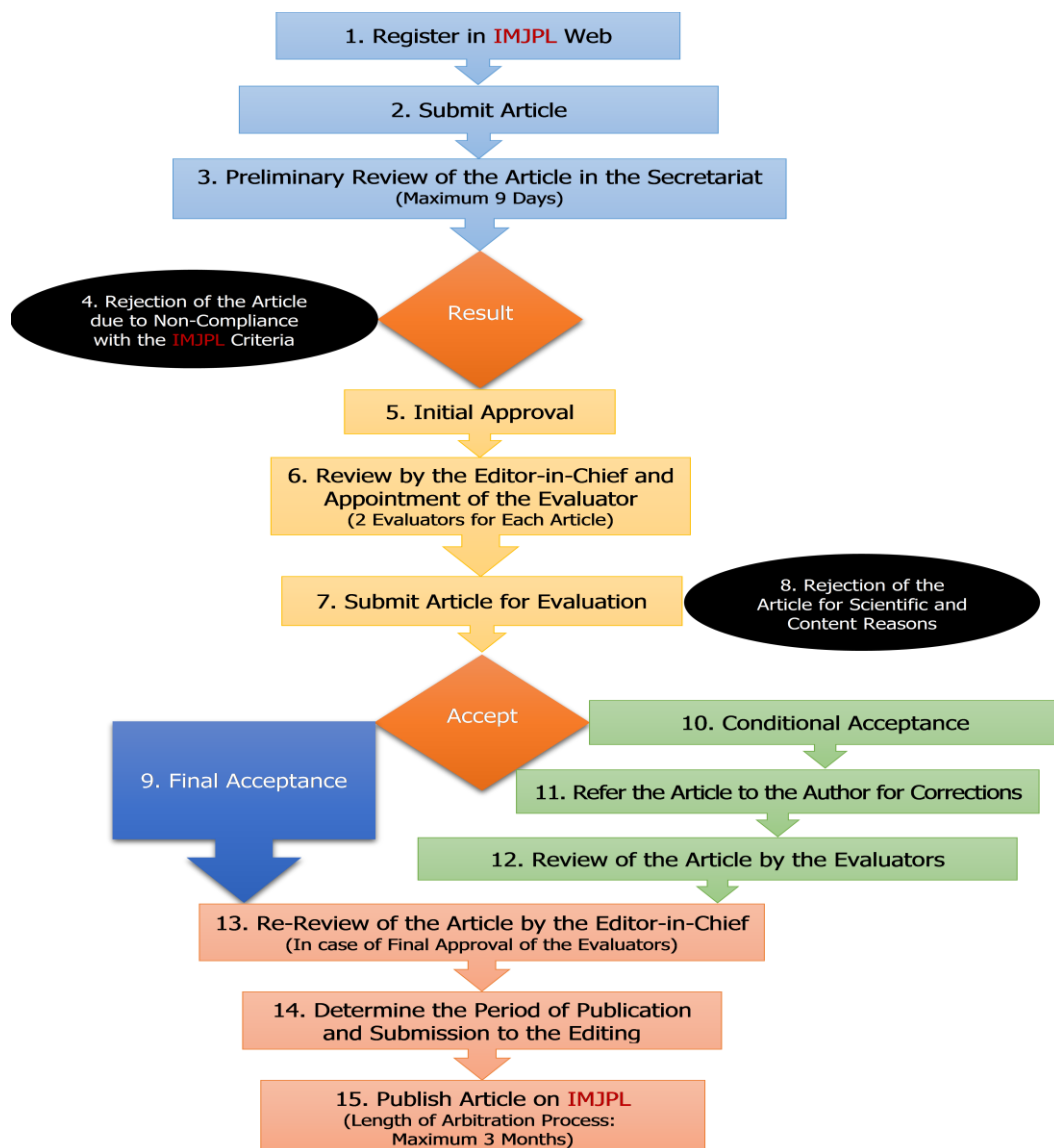
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Flow Diagram Evaluation

The process of evaluation and accepting articles in IMJPL is in accordance with the following 15-step diagram, and all journal processes from submitting an article to announcing the result of evaluation and announcing the Editor-in-Chief final opinion on publishing or rejecting an article are done through the journal system:



Index of Articles

Analysing Abraham's Sacrifice in Genesis 22: Unveiling the Chosen 'Only Son'	1
Anthony Mathew Jacob	
A Functionalist Analysis of Free Will and Its Role in Lifestyle from the Perspective of Imam Ali	21
Aliyu Mustapha, Ali Asgariyazdi, Syed Mohammad Reza Mosavifaraz	
A Study of the Ethical Principles of Political Leadership Presented in 'Nahj al-Balagha': Analyzing Ethical Norms and Their Application in Governance and Leadership	39
Sergey Mikhalev, Ali Ahmadi Amin	
The Truth and Scope of <i>al-ʿIlm al-Ḥuḍūrī</i> (Knowledge by Presence) in the Thought of 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Some Prominent Western Philosophers	55
Ashiq Hussain, Mahdi Karimi	
Islamic Solutions to Gen Z's Cognitive Challenges: A Path to Meaningful Life	69
Morteza Agha Mohammadi	
Enhancing Talent Management through Serious Games: A Key Factor in Improving the Quality of 'Organizational Human' Work Life	89
Mohammad-Javad Zahraeifar, Hassan Zarei Matin, Mohammad-Sheta Badra	

A Word from Director-in-Charge

International Multidisciplinary Journal of PURE LIFE (IMJPL) is an scientific Journal of which will be a window to man's eternal life.

On the other hand, Al-Mustafa International University, considers its mission to introduce the divine teachings to ground dwelled man, so that he could be able to establish a fresh living by using the knowledge bestowed upon him by Almighty God in such a manner that it brings him worldly peace and eternal prosperity.

Accordingly, **IMJPL** is an opportunity for the students and graduates of university and other researchers to spread out their scientific and cognitive knowledge on the vast arena of cyberspace and also, by using scholarly dialect, reflect religious knowledge of monotheistic religions and sects into various aspects of human life.

We hope through efforts of knowledge seekers, this window may become more magnificent outstanding.

A Word from Editor-in-Chief

Research is the vital stream of life in the realm of insight and science. Its dynamism leads to generation and expansion of knowledge borders and neglecting this area, makes knowledge sleeping and lifeless, and the first consequence of this sleeping is ignorance. In these very days, we are witnessing the modern ignorance, which roots in absence of sound and lucid research in different areas.

Today research is considered to be a gate for expanding the borders of knowledge and plays an eminent role in human activities. Exploring humanities areas and Abrahamic religions can enable people to understand the human issues and difficulties to offer solutions for them.

The growing of different fields of knowledge demands discussions in more scientific areas. Today, Explaining a vast range of humanities Science areas and religions in global scope is a necessity.

International Multidisciplinary Journal of PURE LIFE (IMJPL) with the aim of creating a situation for presenting articles by scholars and researchers around the world, is trying to improve the level of scientific researches in humanities and religions for expanding the relationships among researchers in humanities and Abrahamic religions.

This interdisciplinary journal is published electronically and in each issue, approach is to deal with comparative studies in the field of religion and life. In every special issue, we are ready to publish scientific articles by scholars, researchers and professors around the world.

PURE LIFE is published, every season, in a form of an electronic journal. Thanks to Al-Mustafa Journals Commission, **PURE LIFE** as the first international journal in Al-Mustafa International University is ready to publish the scientific articles.




ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Analysing Abraham's Sacrifice in Genesis 22: Unveiling the Chosen 'Only Son'

Anthony Mathew Jacob^{1*}

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
Article History: Received: 17 May 2024 Revised: 10 July 2024 Accepted: 08 August 2024		SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: The paper delves into the event of Patriarch Abraham's intended sacrifice of his 'Only Son' on Mount Moriah. The study aims to determine the true identity of the 'Only Son' based on biblical verses.	
Key Words: Abraham Ishmael Isaac Sacrifice Covenant Only Son Old-Testament		METHOD & FINDING: Using a descriptive-analytical methodology, the research examines relevant Biblical texts and commentaries. It compares the sacrifice event to other significant occurrences, including the birth chronology of Abraham's sons, God's covenant regarding his offspring, the status of firstborns in the Old Testament, and Abraham's love for his son Ishmael. Through this analysis, the study concludes that the 'Only Son' ordered for sacrifice was Abraham's firstborn, Ishmael, rather than Isaac.	
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/IMJPL.2024.9967		CONCLUSION: Through a detailed examination of biblical verses and related events, this study sheds light on the identity of the 'Only Son' in Abraham's sacrifice. Contrary to popular belief, the evidence points to Ishmael, Abraham's firstborn, as the son chosen for sacrifice on Mount Moriah. This conclusion challenges traditional interpretations and invites further exploration into the nuances of this pivotal moment in religious history.	
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NUMBER OF REFERENCES 39		NUMBER OF AUTHORS 1	
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Introduction

Patriarch Abraham is a central figure in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scriptures. Abraham's covenant with God is one of the most important themes in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. Consequently, the 'Abrahamic Sacrifice' i.e., God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his 'Only Son,' has been interpreted by different religions differently. The Jewish scholars interpret Isaac's willingness to be sacrificed as the atonement for the sins of Israel while the Christian scholars interpret the incident as a prelude to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Also, the identity of Patriarch Abraham's son taken up for sacrifice has been debated for centuries among the Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

About the identity of the son to be sacrificed, while the Jews and Christians unanimously agree that it is Isaac, the Islamic tradition by and large holds that it was Ishmael. This research will be beneficial to all the Abrahamic religions. For the Jews and Christians, this will present data and analysis regarding Abraham's sacrifice and the theological discussions related to it. Conversely, for Muslims, the research will provide additional information regarding the mainstream Islamic opinion about the identity of Abraham's son taken up for sacrifice.

This research paper discusses the 'Abrahamic Sacrifice' in the Old

Testament and the identity of Abraham's 'Only Son' who was taken up for sacrifice. The Holy Bible narrates the entire event in Genesis 22:1-19 but in the entire narrative only once has the Lord mentioned the name of 'Isaac' after the term 'Only Son.'

Also, a deeper analysis and scrutiny of the biblical version of the sacrifice along with other related verses - raises some valid doubts and apprehensions about the identity of the 'Only Son' and the 'Beloved One' of Abraham ordered to be sacrificed. The Biblical narrative contains contradictions and inconsistencies about the 'Only Son' being Isaac. Also, the bias against Ishmael, the firstborn of Patriarch Abraham, is clearly evident in the works of Jewish and Christian scholars. Employing a descriptive-analytical approach, the research analyses pertinent Biblical texts and commentaries. It juxtaposes the sacrificial event with other notable occurrences, such as the birth order of Abraham's sons, God's covenant concerning his descendants, the significance of firstborns in the Old Testament, and Abraham's affection for his son Ishmael. The research tries to answer the main question: Who was Abraham's son taken up for sacrifice?

Theoretical Foundations

1. Sacrifice

Sacrifice refers to offering something to God as atonement for one's sins.

2. Abrahamic Sacrifice

The sacrifice of Prophet Abraham of Mount Moriah.

3. Abrahamic Covenant

God's covenant with Abraham.

4. Ishmael and Isaac

They are Abraham's sons.

Literature Review

Some of the books and articles written on this topic are as follows:

- *The Only Son Offered for Sacrifice, Isaac or Ishmael?* (2010) by A.S. Ghauri and I.R. Ghauri: This book explores the identity of the 'Only Son' in Abraham's sacrifice, analyzing whether it was Isaac or Ishmael, and investigates biblical and historical evidence to unravel this theological mystery.

- *Abram To Abraham* (2016) by J. Grossman: This book traces the transformation of the biblical figure Abram into Abraham and examines the significance of this name change and its implications within religious contexts.

- *Journeys in Holy Lands* (1990) by R. Firestone: This book chronicles spiritual and physical journeys to sacred places across different faith traditions and offers insights into the cultural, historical, and religious significance of these pilgrimage sites.

- *A Comparative Study of the Intended Sacrifice of Isaac/Ishmael in the Bible and the Qur'ān* (2002) by A. Afsar: This book compares the narratives of Abraham's intended sacrifice in both the Bible and the

Qur'an. While exploring the theological differences and similarities between the two texts.

Despite many books and articles that discuss Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac's relationship in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic literature, and the comparison of the event itself in Jewish and Muslim Literature, no work dedicates itself to purely studying the identity of Abraham's Only Son' taken up for sacrifice from the Old Testament. Although A.S. Ghauri and I.R. Ghauri, the authors of the book *The Only Son Offered for Sacrifice, Isaac or Ishmael?*, dedicate a major part of their book to analyzing the story of sacrifice from Genesis 22, their research is not exclusive to the event from Jewish sources; they also heavily rely on Islamic literature throughout the book.

The uniqueness of this research lies in the fact that the entire research is undertaken in the light of the event of sacrifice from the Old Testament (Genesis 22) and different events and the chronology of the events are examined to conclude the identity of the son taken up for sacrifice in Jewish and Christian exegeses. The following research paper analyses the central figures involved in the sacrifice, the background, and the chronology of events to reveal the true identity of the 'Only Son' in the light of the Old Testament.

Status of Abraham and The Importance of His Sacrifice

Patriarch Abraham is highly revered in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and his attempted sacrifice is very significant to all these three religions that trace their roots to him and are known as Abrahamic faith.

Historian S. Noegel writes, “Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his son plays an important role in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim exegesis. Jewish exegesis views the willingness of Isaac as atoning for the sins of Israel, and Christian texts see Isaac as foreshowing Christ's sufferings for Christians. For the Muslims, the account of sacrifice is attached to Abraham and Ishmael's building of the Ka'aba at Mecca. A significant note of difference separating the Jewish and Muslim accounts is the description of the sacrifice itself” (*Noegel & Wheeler, 2002, p. 8*).

Jews and Christians believe that God's covenant with Abraham was fulfilled solely through his son Isaac, rather than through Ishmael. They view Isaac as the rightful heir to Abraham's covenant, while Ishmael, being the son of the ‘slave-girl,’ is considered to have no role in that covenant and was even sent away to a distant land for this reason. “Isaac is the son promised by God to Abraham and his wife Sarah and born to them in old age. The story of Annunciation is found in the Bible” (*Ibid, p.152*).

The ‘Abrahamic Covenant’ holds immense significance across Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. In the Jewish tradition, Abraham became the first human to reject false gods in favor of the one true God. Also, the Jews believe that this covenant extends to all Jews, marking the start of their relationship with God and carrying the promise of the land of Canaan. In Christian Tradition the Abrahamic Covenant is foundational to Christianity, revealing God's grace, commitment to redemption, and his plan for humanity.

It shapes the core of Christian identity, emphasizing the concept of being a chosen people with a specific mission. Finally in Islamic Tradition Abraham (Ibrahim) is revered as a prophet in Islam, and the covenant plays a central role. The Holy Qur'an highlights Abraham's unwavering faith, his role in building the ‘Ka'aba’ in Mecca, and his legacy as a model for believers. In summary, while the covenant remains consistent across these traditions, each interprets and emphasizes different aspects based on their unique theological perspectives.

The argument regarding Isaac being the one taken up for sacrifice is thoroughly examined, aiming to conclude the son's identity. This research paper utilizes verses from the Holy Bible, primarily referencing the New International Version (*The Holy Bible*).

The story of Abraham's sacrifice is recounted in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament or the Torah (*Ibid*).

Genesis 22: 1-19 narrates God commanding Abraham to sacrifice his 'only son,' Isaac, whom he loves, at Mount Moriah. Abraham, accompanied by his son and servants, sets out for Moriah. On the journey, Isaac enquires about the sacrifice, but Abraham reassures him that God will provide. Eventually, Abraham builds an altar, binds his son, and prepares to sacrifice him. However, just before the sacrifice, Abraham is informed that his sacrifice has been accepted and is commanded to restrain himself from sacrificing his son but instead sacrifice a ram (*Genesis 22: 13*).

Thus, according to the Holy Bible, one can safely assume that the son who was taken up for sacrifice by Abraham is Isaac because the Holy Bible clearly names the son as Isaac. However, a deeper analysis of the text has a different story to tell.

The Identity of Abraham's 'Only Son' Genesis 22:1-19

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his

son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket, he saw a ram caught by its

horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place “The LORD Will Provide.” And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.” The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba (*The Holy Bible, Genesis 22: 1-19*).

Abraham was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born (*Genesis 16: 16*) and a hundred years old when Isaac was born (*Genesis 21: 5*). Thus, for fourteen years, Ishmael was Abraham’s only son, and throughout his life, Isaac could never have been called the only son of Abraham because Isaac and Ishmael together buried their father, Abraham (*Genesis 25: 9*).

Etymology of the ‘Only’ in the Old Testament

According to Bible dictionaries, the Hebrew word for “only” is “יָחִיד”

pronounced as ‘Yawkheed.’ This term is derived from the primary root “יָחִיד” (yachid), which means “to be (or become) one” (*Strong, 1980, entry 3173, p. 49; Brown & Briggs, 1996, p. 996*).

The word “Isaac” in a specific verse appears out of place when paired with ‘only son.’ Authors A.S. Ghauri and I.R. Ghauri argue that this combination is a deliberate interpolation (*Ghauri & Ghauri, 2010, p. 57*).

Opinions of Bible Scholars about Isaac being the ‘Only Son’

1. Robert Alter writes that since the term ‘your only one’ for Isaac is technically inaccurate some scholars have preferred to use the yadid (meaning ‘favored one’) instead of the word yahid (only one) mentioned in the verse. In other words, instead of translating Genesis 22: 2 as “Take your son, your only son Isaac,” some scholars have translated the verse as ‘Take your son, your favored son Isaac.’ Since Isaac was not Abraham’s only son, referring to him as such is technically inaccurate.

However, R. Alter disagrees with these scholars, asserting that Isaac was the only son Abraham loved because he was his legitimate wife’s child (*Alter, 1997, p. 103*).

2. According to John Gill, Ishmael was the son of Hagar, who was Abraham’s maid and concubine, but not his wife. In contrast, Isaac was Abraham’s only legitimate son, born to his lawful wife,

Sarah. And the seed of Abraham was to flourish only through Isaac, Abraham's beloved son and the promised one, on whom all of Abraham's hopes of numerous offspring rested and Isaac was the one from whose progeny the messiah was to come (*Gill, 1980, p. 392*).

3. Matthew Poole says that Sarah was Abraham's legitimate wife and her son was the only one to inherit his wealth and divine covenant. Whereas, Ishmael was abandoned by Abraham (*Poole, 2018*).

4. Albert Barnes believes that 'the only son' here is the only son of Sarah, the heir of the promise (*Barnes, 1962, p. 324*).

5. Keil and Delitzsch opine that the Lord desired Abraham's heir through his wife Sarah and had directed Abraham to send away his son from the 'maid' [stress added] (*Keil & Delitzsch, 2009, p. 248*).

6. David Guzik believes that Ishmael was banished from Abraham's family and as for the covenant of God Abraham had only one son (*Guzik, 2018, p. 1*).

7. Haydock asserts that the only son in the verse is Isaac, who was Abraham's son from Sarah his most dignified wife (*Haydock, 1859, p. 30*).

8. John Wesley assumes that by Only Son, God meant his only beloved child from Sarah as Ishmael was sent away and only Isaac remained with Abraham (*Wesley, 1987, pp. 8249–8250*).

9. Matthew Henry mentions an imaginary conversation between God and Abraham where he suggests that God desired the only son of Sarah to be

sacrificed. Also, in the conversation, Abraham tells God that he loves Isaac more than Ishmael but God does not oblige and insists that only Isaac must be sacrificed (*Henry, 1706, p. 2*).

10. Thomas Hale Jr. Isaac was the son Abraham had waited for so many years, the son who was miraculously born and it was him on whom all of God's promises were to be fulfilled (*Hale & Thorson, 2007, p. 164*).

Contesting the Opinions of Bible Scholars

1. Those scholars who did accept the technical inaccuracy in calling Isaac the only son, found another way out, and that is by mistranslating and interpolating the word 'only son' and calling Isaac 'the favored son.' Also, Robert Alter insists on the claim that Isaac is indeed the only son despite having proof against his beliefs.

2. In The Rabbinical Literature, recorded by The Jewish Encyclopedia, Hagar is referred to as the daughter of a Pharaoh and a pious saint known for her fidelity and high degree of Godliness even after she stayed in the deserts of Paran away from her husband Abraham (*Singer & Adler, 1901, Vol. 6, p. 138*).

Despite Hagar's noble lineage and marriage to Abraham, she is consistently referred to as a 'slave-woman,' not his legal wife. If she were recognized as his lawful spouse, Ishmael would rightfully be considered Abraham's firstborn. The refusal to acknowledge this suggests bias

among Bible scholars. The argument that only Isaac was intended to carry on the lineage of Abraham lacks biblical support. Numerous verses in the Bible suggest that God's blessings extend to all of Abraham's descendants, including Ishmael. For example, when Abraham and Lot separate, God promises Abraham abundant land and descendants, implying a broad lineage (*Genesis 13:15-16*). Additionally, God establishes a covenant with Abraham and promises a fruitful future for his descendants, not limited to Isaac but encompassing all his offspring (*Genesis 17: 2-7*).

3. The idea that Isaac is the sole 'seed' of Abraham is disputed when examined through biblical verses. Many passages speak of God's blessings for Abraham and his descendants, including Ishmael and Isaac. For example, after Abraham and Lot part ways, God promises Abraham that his descendants will inherit the land he sees, with a bountiful progeny that cannot be numbered (*Genesis 13: 15-16*). The covenant between God and Abraham is also mentioned, along with the promise of a fruitful and prosperous generation from Abraham's children, extending to his seeds after him (*Genesis 17:2-7*).

Before the birth of Isaac and Ishmael, God made promises to Abraham about numerous progeny. It's unfair to suggest that these blessings only apply to Isaac. While Isaac is promised great blessings, this

doesn't deny Ishmael's rightful status. Interestingly, Hagar is also promised a bountiful progeny from Ishmael, too numerous to count (*Genesis 16: 10*).

God's Covenant with Abraham and the Identity of His Beloved Son

In the Bible, God assures Abraham that his son Isaac will be the recipient of an everlasting covenant (*Genesis 19: 17*). Additionally, during a time of famine, God appears to Isaac and instructs him not to go down to Egypt. Instead, Isaac is to dwell in the land designated by God, and he will bless him with a great progeny (*Genesis 26: 2-3*).

Victor P. Hamilton notes that Isaac's name was chosen by God before birth, making him the 'special, promised son' (*Hamilton, 1995, p. 73*). However, the Bible actually shows that both Ishmael and Isaac received their names from God before birth, contradicting Hamilton's conclusion.

Genesis 16: 11 reveals that Ishmael's name was chosen by God before birth, just like Isaac's in Genesis 17: 19. Moreover, we see in numerous verses of the Bible that God promises to make a great nation of Ishmael, but these verses are deliberately ignored out of bias and prejudice for Ishmael and his descendants. For instance, Hagar, Ishmael's mother, is promised of a progeny too numerous to count (*Genesis 16: 10-11*).

Similarly, when Abraham is commanded to leave his wife Hagar and son Ishmael in a barren desert, God

consoles him and tells him that since Ishmael is his seed, God will make a great nation out of him (*Genesis 21: 13*).

A promise similar to that of Abraham is made to Hagar when she is alone in the wilderness searching for water for her thirsty child, the Angel of God allays her fears and assures her that God has heard the boy cry and he will make him into a great nation (*Genesis 21:17-18*). Also, we read that Abraham is commanded to circumcise himself and all the male members of his household after the birth of Ishmael, his firstborn (*Genesis 17: 12*).

After this, he gets the name Abraham (from Abram) meaning the father of nations (*Genesis 17: 5*), and he is promised of a bountiful progeny. Interestingly, this event takes place ten years before the birth of Isaac. Therefore, to make Isaac look better than Ishmael is a great disservice to the Holy Bible.

Moreover, let us analyze the phrase 'Whom you love' to describe Abraham's son taken up for sacrifice. Firstly, the use of the phrase 'Whom you love,' is not a random remark but rather an important distinguishing factor for the son in question. Thus, we cannot overlook this phrase while analyzing Genesis 22.

Abraham's affection for Ishmael is evident throughout the narrative, even when he learns of Isaac's impending birth. Despite his laughter at the news of Isaac (*Genesis 17: 17*), Abraham's immediate

concern is for Ishmael (*Genesis 17: 18*), highlighting his love for his firstborn. Thomas Nelson observes, "Abraham's plea shows his love for his son Ishmael" (*Nelson, 2018, p. 31*).

Abraham's love for Ishmael is evident when Sarah requests Abraham to expel Ishmael and his mother (*Genesis 21:10-11*). Pfeiffer and Harrison note, "This was very painful for he loves his son Ishmael" (*Pfeiffer and Harrison, 1962, p. 56*).

Charles Ward Smith observes, "Casting out of Ishmael was grievous in the sight of Abraham and he was 'torn' and 'really hurt' for he loved Ishmael" (*Jackson, 2006*), Marcus Dods asserts that Ishmael was Abraham's firstborn and the apple of his eyes for many years thereby occupying all his attention, also, he loved his son Ishmael very much and this attachment of Abraham had become a source of insecurity for Sarah (*Dods, 1891, p. 5*).

Daniel Denison Whedon says, "The boy of thirteen has won a deep place in his father's heart, and notwithstanding the promise of a son by Sarah, he yearns to see Ishmael blessed by God" (*Whedon, 1889, Vol.1, p. 199*).

Albert Barnes observes, "This was painful to Abraham" (*Barnes, 1962, p.319*). John Gill observes that Abraham's petition -that Ishmael might live under God's commandments shows

his love and regard for Ishmael's welfare (*Gill, 1980, p. 315*).

Rachel Yudkowsky observes that Abraham's petition for Ishmael is very unique and special because he has never done this for anyone, neither Sarah nor Lot or even Isaac for that matter and she believes that this is an indication of his immense love for Ishmael. She observes, "How great was Abraham's love for Ishmael that he makes such a request to God" (*Yudkowsky, 2007*).

Dr. Cohen, a renowned Jewish Bible commentator notes that separation from Ishmael was extremely painful for Abraham and this pain was for Ishmael and not Hagar (*Cohen, 1947, p.108*).

Evidently, Abraham's 'beloved son' referred to in Genesis 22 is Ishmael, not Isaac. There's ample evidence of Abraham's love for Ishmael, while no verses specifically depict his affection for Isaac. Therefore, Ishmael holds the primary position as Abraham's beloved son in the narrative.

Status of the Firstborn

The firstborn son holds significant rights and privileges, as highlighted in various Bible verses. These verses emphasize the exclusive dedication of firstborn sons and the first fruits of labor to Yahweh. In Exodus 22, there is mention of dedicating both the firstborn and the initial produce solely to God.

Peake's Commentary underscores the importance of sacrificing the firstborn, but it clarifies that human firstborns were to be redeemed with money rather than physically sacrificed (*Peake & Grieve, 1920, p.179*).

Van Seters writes that in ancient Israel, human firstborn sacrifice was practiced early on but later generations replaced it with redemptive theology, where money was offered instead of sacrificing human firstborns (*Van Seters, 1998*). Leading Bible Commentators have made the following observation about the 'Status of the firstborn' mentioned in Deuteronomy 21: 15-17, Donald C. Fleming writes, "The firstborn son was always the heir, whether he was the son of the favorite wife or not. This protected the rights of the firstborn against family jealousies and prejudices" (*Fleming, 1994, Commentary on Deuteronomy 21*).

John Calvin writes, "For if the father substituted another son in the place of his firstborn, it was unquestionably a kind of theft. (*Calvin, 1844, Commentary on Deuteronomy 21*).

The firstborn son's privileged position is unchangeable, even if a father desires to deny him his rightful status. Sacrificing the firstborn was considered the best form of offering, and in Abraham's case, Ishmael held the honor of being the firstborn and thus the ideal sacrifice. Based on these points, it becomes evident

that if God had requested a sacrifice from Abraham, it would have been none other than his firstborn, Ishmael.

The Age of Isaac at the Time of Sacrifice

The age of the 'Only Son' of Abraham taken up for sacrifice is a crucial factor in determining his identity. There are different opinions about Isaac's age among Jewish/Christians at the time of the intended sacrifice according to Jewish/Christian Scholars:

1. According to the Jewish scholar Jose ben Zimra at the time of the 'Akedah' or 'Sacrifice' Isaac was just weaned and he was around 2-3 years old (*Singer & Adler, 1901, Vol. 6, Akedah*).
2. The Rabbis believe that the news of the 'Akedah' or 'Sacrifice' became the cause of Sarah's death, for as soon as she received the news of the sacrifice, she died out of grief. Therefore, the Rabbis conclude that because Sarah was 127 years old when she died and she gave birth to Isaac when she was 90. Thus, Isaac's age at the time of sacrifice was 37. i.e., 127 minus 90 (*Berman, 1997, p. 66*).
3. Josephus asserts in his Antiquities believes that Isaac was 25 years old at the time of sacrifice (*Josephus, 2015, ch. 13.2, p. 20*).
4. Ellen G. White believes that Isaac was 20 years old at the time of Akedah or Sacrifice (*Ghauri and Ghauri, 2010, p. 23*).

We read in the story of the sacrifice that Abraham lays the wood on Isaac to be carried for the burnt offering (*Genesis 22:6*), therefore Isaac couldn't have been a child who was just weaned, who could carry wood. Whether Isaac had been 'just weaned' or thirty-seven years old, or twenty-five or twenty years old he still cannot be called a 'lad' as mentioned in Genesis 22: 5 and 22: 12. Therefore the 'only son' of Abraham who is described as a 'lad' in the story is certainly not Isaac because Isaac did not fit into any of the possibilities mentioned by the Jewish /Christian scholars.

Abraham Returns Alone

The story of sacrifice in Genesis 22: 1-19 ends with Abraham's return from Mount Moriah, this verse too is important in determining the identity of the son taken up for sacrifice. We read at the end of the story of sacrifice that Abraham returned to his servants alone and left with his servants to Beer-sheba (*Gen 22: 19*).

Hamilton asserts, "The apparent absence of Isaac from the end of the narrative parallels the apparent absence of Sarah at the beginning of the narrative. Thus, the reader of Gen. 22 knows that Isaac was spared, and yet v. 19 seems to leave some unanswered questions" (*Hamilton, 1995, p. 119*).

He further observes that Isaac did not return with Abraham after the sacrifice and the 'they set out together' at the end of the narrative refers to

Abraham and his servants and not Isaac. Also, the early part of the narrative (*Genesis 22: 6, 8*) used the expression ‘the two of them together’ (Abraham and his son), but in vol. 19 ‘the two of them’ is missing. All that is present is ‘they set out together’ (i.e., Abraham and his servants) (*Ibid*).

Stephen J. Stern too, acknowledges that Isaac did not return with Abraham after the intended sacrifice at Mount Moriah (*Stern, 2009*). Why did Abraham return alone after the intended sacrifice?

In Genesis 21: 14, we read that Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. Also, Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac lived in Hebron, where Sarah passed away and was buried (*Genesis 23: 2*). Thus, if Isaac was the son who accompanied Abraham, he would have naturally returned with Abraham, but he did not. This proves that the son was none other than Ishmael, who was taken up to Mount Moriah to be sacrificed and after God accepts Abraham’s sacrifice and spares Ishmael’s life, Abraham sends him back to his mother and returns to Hebron with his servants.

Origin and Authorship of the Book of Genesis

An analysis of the origin and the authorship of the book of Genesis endorses the possibility of interpolation or redaction in the story of Abraham’s sacrifice. Regarding the Authorship of the Pentateuch - or the first five books of the Old Testament

which includes Genesis - scholars greatly differ in their opinion. There are three widely accepted opinions among Bible scholars.

1. One group believes that all five books in their entirety or a large part of it were authored by Moses (*Waltke, 2016, p. 22*).
2. While the second group says that ‘a part’ of it was authored by Moses (*Ibid*).
3. The third group says the author of the first five books of the Old Testament including Genesis is unknown (*Ibid, p.28*).

The first view that the first five books of the Bible -namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy- were completely written by Moses can be outrightly refuted by a verse in the book of Deuteronomy which says that Moses died and was buried (*Deuteronomy, 34: 5*).

If Moses was the author of the first five books of the Old Testament, how can he write his own obituary? Thus, it is clear that Moses was not the author of Genesis or the first five books of the Old Testament. When it comes to the second opinion that a part of the first five books of the Old Testament was authored by Moses, then in that case, who is or who are the authors and collectors of the remaining part of the first five books of the Old Testament? Finally, the last opinion is that the author/ authors of the first five books are unknown, this too is problematic because without knowing

the identity of the authors and those who collected them or who edited them, how can we be so sure about the authenticity of these books? Ultimately, whether the author of the book of Genesis was Moses, in entirety or part or its author is completely unknown, it is true that the book of Genesis has undergone many redactions, omissions, and changes at the hands of unknown authors, scribes and Rabbis over centuries. Thus, there is a high probability that Genesis 22:1-19 too has changed and the name of Isaac was deliberately inserted due to the prejudice against Ishmael and his progeny.

Former British MP and author, Charles Bradlaugh asserts that there are many inconsistencies, contradictions, and factual discrepancies in the book of Genesis which renders it unreliable and doubtful (*Bradlaugh, 1882, p. 5*). He further quotes the Jewish scholar Spinoza who – against the widely held belief - outrightly rejects the possibility of Moses playing any role in the authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament and also casts serious doubts about the identity of its authors and the authenticity of its claims (*Ibid, p.2*).

Who Was The Sacrifice According to The Qur'an: Ishmael or Isaac?

The Holy Qur'an does not explicitly mention which of Abraham's (Ibrahim) two sons was to be sacrificed, leading to differing opinions among commentators. Some early commentators, all Shia

commentators, and some Sunni commentators have identified Ishmael as the one to be sacrificed, while other early commentators and most Sunnis, following the Bible, have identified Isaac as the one to be sacrificed.

Both groups have presented evidence from the Qur'an and hadith to support their views. However, the evidence that Ishmael was the one to be sacrificed, is more abundant and stronger. When Abraham, after being saved from the fire of Nimrod, left his people and migrated from Babil, he prayed to God to grant him a righteous child (*Qarai, 2004; The Qur'an, 37: 100*).

This request indicates that at that time, Abraham had no children, because the phrase 'from among – min' indicates a portion, meaning at least one child. After this prayer, he was given the good news of a 'forbearing boy' (*Ibid; The Qur'an, 37: 101*). Therefore, the 'forbearing boy' mentioned by the Holy Qur'an, who was to be sacrificed, was Abraham's firstborn son.

The Bible and all Muslims believe that Ishmael was born before Isaac and was Abraham's first son. The Holy Qur'an also reports the good news of Ishmael's birth before the good news of Isaac's birth. According to the Bible, since Sarah, Isaac's mother, could not bear children, she gave her maid, Hagar, to Abraham in marriage. After the birth of Ishmael, she expelled him and his mother. Also, according to the

Bible, Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his firstborn son, so naturally, the son to be sacrificed was Ishmael.

However, the Bible, inconsistently, identifies Isaac as Abraham's only son and the one to be sacrificed. After reporting the good news of the 'forbearing boy' and the story of his intended sacrifice, the Holy Qur'an also reports the good news of the birth of Isaac (*Qarai, 2004; The Qur'an, 37: 101-107, 112*).

Therefore, Isaac cannot be the 'forbearing boy' because if he were, the good news about him would be redundant. Reflection on the verses shows that the good news about the 'forbearing boy' is different from the good news about Isaac. Some have responded to this reasoning by saying that the good news about Isaac pertains to his prophecy, not his birth and that since he successfully passed the test of being sacrificed, God gave him the good news of prophethood.

However, this interpretation contradicts the apparent meaning of the verse. The characteristics of the 'forbearing boy' and Ishmael are consistent with each other. The Holy Qur'an describes the boy who will be born to him as 'forbearing' (*Qarai, 2004; The Qur'an, 37: 101-102*), and also describes Ishmael as forbearing in Qur'an 21:85. Conversely, Isaac is not described as 'forbearing' anywhere in the Holy Qur'an; instead, he is explicitly described as knowledgeable (*Ibid; The*

Qur'an, 15:53). This indicates that Ishmael and the 'forbearing boy' are the same person, and Ishmael showed patience when he was about to be sacrificed. Additionally, the Holy Qur'an describes Ishmael as 'truthful in his promise' (*Ibid; The Qur'an 19:54*).

This is interpreted to mean that he fulfilled his promise to his father to be patient during his sacrifice. Besides, the good news of Isaac's birth was given to Ibrahim along with the good news of the birth of a son named Jacob (*Ibid; The Qur'an 11:71*). Moreover, if there had been a divine command to sacrifice Isaac, there would have been no possibility of Jacob's birth and the fulfillment of God's promise regarding him.

Hence, Isaac had to remain alive for Jacob to be born. In summary, this suggests that when the Holy Qur'an announces the birth of Isaac, it also promises that Isaac will have a son, Jacob. However, when the glad tidings are given about Ishmael's birth, the promise is limited to the birth of a forbearing lad (*Ibid; The Qur'an 37:101*), without mention of his descendants. Therefore, when Abraham is commanded to sacrifice his son, he is unaware of whether this son will survive the ordeal or not. On the other hand, if Isaac were the son chosen for the sacrifice, Abraham would already know from God's promise that Isaac would have a son, Jacob.

This knowledge would make it clear that Isaac would survive, which would undermine the trial's essence. Likewise, the sacrifice of Ishmael is also mentioned in supplications and Ziyarat texts, and it has been widely recognized by scholars and narrators throughout all periods (*Majlisi, 2000, Vol. 12, p. 135, 137*).

Moreover, this sacrifice shows the peak of submission where Abraham believed that what he saw in a dream did not need an interpretation. That is why he hastened to fulfill what came in his dream, sacrificing his son Ismail. Fulfillment of the dream showed the perfection of faith and submission of both Abraham and his son before Allah. The fulfillment of his vision was a reason for the emergence of a new perfection and knowledge, which is the knowledge of interpretation in which slaughter and closeness to the Almighty is the form of Abraham's true Islam with ecstatic absorption in Allah (*Ali & Mustafa, 2023*).

A Comparison of the Biblical and the Qur'anic Narrative of the Sacrifice

In the Holy Qur'an, we read that when Prophet Abraham's son reached maturity, Abraham said to him, "O my son, I have seen in a dream that I am sacrificing you. What do you think?" His son responded, "O my father, do as you are commanded; you will find me, if God wills, among the patient" (*Qarai, 2004; The Qur'an, 37: 102*).

This interaction shows that Prophet Abraham was testing his son to gauge his response. The son's reply reflected not only his acceptance of the sacrifice but also a reassurance to his father, indicating his lack of fear. After this exchange, both Prophet Abraham and his son obediently prepared to carry out God's command. Abraham laid his son down to sacrifice him, but at that crucial moment, God informed him that he had fulfilled the command.

The Holy Qur'an after recounting the sacrifice of Abraham's patient son, immediately announces the good news of Isaac's birth. Thus, the patient's son is believed to be Ismail. However, some Sunni commentators argue that the son to be sacrificed was Isaac, interpreting the glad tidings as a reference to his prophethood rather than his birth. However, according to the Old Testament, Abraham had kept his son Isaac ignorant of the fact that he was the one Abraham intended to sacrifice (*Genesis 22: 8*).

Additionally, Abraham also bound (tied) his hands before placing him on the altar to sacrifice (*Genesis 22: 10*), this shows that Abraham was doing this without the consent of Isaac. In the Holy Qur'an, when addressing the issue of the son's sacrifice, it clearly states that Prophet Abraham openly discussed the matter of his son's sacrifice with him and sought his opinion. Abraham recognized his son's

independent personality and free will and never intended to deceive him or lead him blindly into this great test. In this story, Prophet Abraham wanted his son to also participate in the struggle against the *Nafs* (carnal self) and experience the joy of submission and acceptance. The son, too, wanted his father to remain resolute in his determination. Thus, he did not say, "Sacrifice me," but rather, "Do whatever you have been commanded, for I am submissive to the command of God." Abraham's address to his son as 'O my little son' and the son's response with 'O my father' show that this matter did not diminish their fatherly and filial affection even a bit, and God's command was dominant and prioritized above all else. Also, it exhibits the highest levels of faith and submission, as the son never relies on his own faith, will, or decision but rather on God's will and says, "If God wills, you will find me among the patient." Thus, father and son successfully pass the first stage of this great test (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2023, Vol. 33*).

Conclusion

In the light of the above information, one can conclude that Ishmael was Abraham's 'firstborn' from his legally married wife - Hagar, and both Ishmael and Isaac had a high status in the eyes of God and Abraham was promised of bountiful progeny not just from one, but both his sons. Regarding God's covenant

with Abraham, it was sealed after all the male members of his household were circumcised along with his son Ishmael even before the birth of Isaac.

According to the Holy Bible, Abram is named Abraham, the father of nations after the birth of Ishmael, his firstborn. Moreover, Ishmael was Abraham's 'Beloved' and 'Only Son' for a good fourteen years until Isaac's birth, and Isaac could never be called Abraham's 'Only Son' because Ishmael and Isaac together buried their father. Also, God's command to Abraham was very clear that he offers his 'Only Son' 'Whom You (Abraham) Love' for sacrifice, and therefore, calling 'Isaac' Abraham's 'Only Son' and 'Whom You (Abraham) Love' is an interpolation. Besides, the use of the word 'lad' in the narrative makes it clear that the son who was taken up for sacrifice was none other than Ishmael.

Finally, the fact that Abraham returns alone after the intended sacrifice proves beyond doubt that the son taken up to Mount Moriah was Ishmael and not Isaac. If it was Isaac, he would have returned home to his mother Sarah along with his father Abraham. Finally, the unknown origin and authorship of the book of Genesis and the prospect of changes to later editions, leave open the possibility that the story and the narrative of the event of Abrahamic sacrifice could have

undergone changes and the name of Abraham's son could have been interpolated at a later stage.

Consequently, we can draw several conclusions regarding the narrative of Abraham and his sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Here are the key considerations:

- Textual Nuances: The conclusion should recognize the significance of specific language and terminology used in the biblical account. The term 'only son' is not merely a factual descriptor; it carries theological and literary weight. While some scholars debate its accuracy, the phrase emphasizes Ishmael's unique role in God's plan.
- Historical and Cultural Context: To fully understand the events, we must delve into the historical and cultural context. Abraham's household, including Ishmael, was circumcised as part of God's covenant even before Isaac's birth. This context informs our interpretation of the 'only son' reference as being that of Ishmael.
- Theological Interpretations: Traditionally, Isaac is considered Abraham's 'only son' in certain theological contexts, especially within Christianity. The narrative serves as a foreshadowing of God's ultimate sacrifice through Jesus. However, when examined in the light of textual evidence this can have a significant effect on

theological interpretations in Judaism and Christianity.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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A Functionalist Analysis of Free Will and Its Role in Lifestyle from the Perspective of Imam Ali

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
<div>Article History:</div> <div>Received: 25 April 2024</div> <div>Revised: 20 June 2024</div> <div>Accepted: 15 July 2024</div> <div>Key Words:</div> <div>Determinism</div> <div>Free Will</div> <div>Delegation</div> <div>Intermediate Position</div> <div>Imam Ali</div> <div>Lifestyle</div> <div>Effort and Endeavor</div> <div>DOI:</div> <div>https://doi.org/10.22034/IMJPL.2024.9969</div> <div>This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</div> <div></div>		<div>SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: The paper provides a functionalist analysis of human free will and its impact on lifestyle from the perspective of Imam Ali . The discussion of free will and human influence over one’s actions is a significant issue in the fields of anthropology and theology, and it is interconnected with many topics in Islamic sciences and disciplines. Human beings possess various dimensions and characteristics, among which free will is a key feature. Imam Ali , in opposition to the prevalent deterministic interpretation, emphasized human free will and its impact on one’s actions. The belief in free will manifests in individuals’ lifestyles.</div> <div>METHOD & FINDING: In an analytical-descriptive method, this paper aims to examine the statements of Imam Ali regarding human free will and its role in human lifestyle and progress. An active lifestyle or a passive lifestyle is considered a result of the belief in or denial of this free will. Progress and advancement in life, as well as divine happiness and reward, are achieved through free will, effort, and endeavor.</div> <div>CONCLUSION: Reward and punishment would be meaningless without free will. Effort and endeavor are fundamental aspects of lifestyle that arise from the belief in human free will. “An attempt to change undesirable conditions” and “Governance of belief” are among the manifestations of free will in individuals’ lifestyles. Man must strive to preserve freedom and not allow beliefs and values to be controlled by emotions.</div>
<div>* Corresponding Author:</div> <div>Email: aliyu4k@gmail.com</div> <div>ORCID: 0009-0002-1146-9165</div>		<div>Article Address Published on the Journal Site:</div> <div>http://p-l.journals.miu.ac.ir/article_9969.html</div>
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Introduction

The discussion of human free will is one of the significant issues in the field of anthropology, which is also related to theological debates and interconnected with many topics in Islamic sciences and disciplines. Human existence has various dimensions, some of which pertain to knowledge and others to abilities and inclinations; human intellect and free will fall within the domain of abilities.

The analysis of the issues of divine power, free will, and divine will, and consequently human power and free will, has been among the first theological disputes among different Islamic sects. Determinists emphasized that God's power and will are intrinsic, eternal, and not motivated by any purpose and that the actions performed by humans originate from God and are brought about by His power and will. In contrast, the *Mu'tazilites* considered divine will to be contingent and explained God's actions as purposeful, defending and explaining divine justice by attributing human actions to human will and power.

This paper aims to provide a functionalist analysis of free will in lifestyle from the perspective of Imam Ali and addresses two subsidiary questions:

- How does Imam Ali depict and explain the relationship between determinism and free will?
- What impact does Imam Ali's explanation of free will have on human lifestyle?

Therefore, the innovation of this research lies in presenting a functionalist analysis of Imam Ali's theory of free will in human lifestyle and progress.

Theoretical Foundations

The first step in explaining and analyzing human free will is to clarify its concept and other related terms. Therefore, we explain the main and related concepts as follows:

Jabr (Determinism)

In linguistic terms, '*Jabr*' refers to compelling a person to act as a force and threat (*Fayūmī, 1993, Vol. 1, p. 89*).

In technical terms, various approaches to the meaning of '*Jabr*' have been presented, but the common and general definition can be considered the same as the linguistic meaning. This means that a compelled person is someone who is forced to act by another agent. Sheikh Mufid defines '*Jabr*' as, "*Jabr* is the compulsion to act and the necessity to do so through coercion and dominance, and its reality is the creation of the act in the creature without them having the ability to prevent it or avoid its existence in them" (*Mufīd, 1992, p. 46*).

This agent can be an external factor, such as compelling a weak person to act by a dominant person through threats and coercion, or it can be related to internal factors. Jurjani also defines '*Jabr*' as the negation of action from humans and attributing it to God (*Jurjānī, 1991, p. 33*).

***Ikhtiyyar* (Free Will)**

The term *Ikhtiyyar* (free will) is used in several meanings, which are as follows:

1. The influence of the agent's will on his own action.
2. Choice in the presence of conflicting inclinations (*Tabāṭabā'ī, 1995, p. 174*).
3. The influence of the agent's will on his own action without external pressure (*Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2014, p. 490*).

Among these meanings, only the first one stands in opposition to philosophical determinism. Thus, determinism means the lack of influence of the agent on his own actions. Therefore, free will is the power of choice and freedom in action, contrary to determinism, where there is no choice.

***Tafwīd* (Delegation)**

The term *Tafwīd* (delegation), derived from the root 'fa-wa-da,' meaning 'to entrust,' is a verbal noun in the form of 'Tafīl.' This term has various meanings and is sometimes used to denote legislative or existential delegation. However, in this context, *Tafwīd* is used in opposition to *Jabr* (compulsion), signifying that humans are independent in their actions and that God has no direct involvement in their deeds (*Zanūzī, 1992, p. 111*).

The Concept of 'Intermediate Position'

This expressive term is derived from the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt. It is sometimes referred to as a position between two positions. The concept of 'intermediate position' implies that humans act with their own will and

choice, but their actions are still within God's will and decree. Humans perform actions using a power granted by God, which persists only through God's continuous support.

According to Shiite beliefs, humans have free will and influential power, but they are not independent in their influence. The power to act is at human discretion, but its foundation is divine. Thus, human actions stem from both divine and human power and will, not in a participatory or composite manner, nor a parallel manner, but sequentially (*Ruknī Lamūkī, 2008, p. 46; Moṭaharī, 1989, Vol. 6, pp. 629-633*). Thus, based on this explanation, there is neither compulsion nor delegation, because although humans are free in their actions, it is not in such a way that God cannot prevent them from these actions (*Jazā'irī, 1996, Vol. 2, p. 300*).

Literature Review

In reviewing the topic, no specific work was found except for a few articles titled 'Foundations of Anthropological Ethics in Nahj al-Balagha', (*Nazari & Bayani, 2018*), 'An Examination of Theoretical Philosophy of History in Nahj al-Balagha', (*Shirvani et al, 2017*), 'Determinism, Free Will, and Divine Justice', (*Biabani, 2001*) and 'An Analysis of the Impacts of Religious Ethics Principles on the Individual Lifestyle in the Contemporary Era', (*Askarinejad et al, 2024*). These articles differ from our paper in the following ways:

- These articles did not analyze the functionalist aspect of free will in lifestyle and focused on other dimensions of the issue.
- Considering the breadth of research, they need to be supplemented as the statements of Imam Ali in *Nahj al-Balagha* are not exhaustive, and it is necessary to refer to other books as well.
- In the analysis of the content, they also need to be supplemented as it is necessary to examine conflicting narrations in the analysis of the narrations.

Given the above points and the observed deficiencies in these articles, as well as the importance of a functionalist perspective on this topic, the necessity of addressing this discussion becomes clearer.

Proof of Human Free Will

As previously mentioned, the principle of free will is a reality that is intuitively understood and does not require proof. Ayatollah Miṣbāḥ Yazdi writes on this subject, emphasizing that human beings naturally recognize their own free will and ability to choose, as it is an intrinsic part of their experience. In dangerous situations, no one doubts their capacity to act to save themselves. Confusion arises when individuals cannot reconcile free will with certain truths, such as God's omnipotence. Some mistakenly believe that divine power negates human free will, rendering humans as mere instruments of God's will.

However, this belief is flawed because divine justice holds humans accountable

for their actions, indicating they do possess free will. Theologians, supported by rational thought and teachings of the infallible Imams, assert that humans are neither compelled without will nor entirely independent, as God has not forsaken them (*Ref: Rūdgār, 2016, p. 24; Miṣbāḥ Yazdi, 2010, Vol. 1, p. 44*).

Therefore, it can be said that the existence of free will is intuitively perceived. However, human free will does not mean independence, which will be discussed further.

Human Free Will from the Perspective of Imam Ali and Other Imams

Various narrations from the Imams have been reported regarding determinism and free will. Some of these narrations support human free will, while others, at first glance, might be interpreted as supporting determinism. There are also numerous narrations from Imam Ali on this subject, some of which are mentioned as follows:

- It is narrated that He was asked about fate and destiny, and He said, “Do not say that God has left people to themselves and has entrusted matters to them, for this would weaken Him. And do not say that He has compelled them to sin, for this would be an injustice to Him. Rather, say that good is by God’s guidance and evil is by God’s abandonment, and all is foreknown by God” (*Ṭabarsī, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 209; Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 5, p. 95*).

- Imam Ali was asked about the meaning of ‘There is no power nor strength except with God,’ and then He replied, “We are not master of anything alone with Allah, and we are not master of anything save what He makes us master of. So, when He makes us master of anything of which He is a superior Master over us, He also assigns some duties to us; and when He takes it away He will take away those duties as well” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 404*).
- Imam Ali responded to a man from Sham who asked about the Battle of Şifḥīn and its relation to divine decree and destiny, “Woe to you! You take it as a final and unavoidable destiny (according to which we are bound to act). If it were so, there would have been no question of reward or chastisement and there would have been no sense in Allah's promises or warnings. On the other hand) Allah, the Glorified, has ordered His people to act by free will and has cautioned them and refrained them (from evil). He has placed easy obligations on them and has not put heavy obligations. He gives them much (reward) in return for little (action). He is disobeyed, not because He is overpowered. He is obeyed but not under force. He did not send prophets just for fun. He did not send down the Book for the people without purpose. He did not create the skies, the earth,

and all that is in between them in vain. That is the imagination of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve because of the fire” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 78; Kulaynī, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 155*).

Analysis and Interpretation of Narrations

Attention to various components is necessary to analyze and interpret the above narrations. Considering the collection of the above narrations, we explain some of the components as follows:

Denial of Determinism and Delegation

In the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt, the two views of determinism and delegation are initially invalidated. According to narration ‘A’, in addition to the denial of determinism, delegation is also negated from God because each of these views entails implications that do not befit the dignity and status of God. These implications include ‘inability’ and ‘injustice’ towards the Almighty God.

The explanation is that attributing sins to the Almighty God is one of the instances of determinism, because determinism, according to one term, means denying the act from humans and attributing it to God. In this statement by Imam Ali, ‘determinism’ refers to this meaning. According to this explanation, it becomes clear that such an attribution would result in considering God as unjust. Similarly, believing that God has delegated matters to His servants and has no role

in their actions implies weakness and inability attributed to God, which is incompatible with His majesty.

The above-mentioned narrations all indicate human free will and the right to choose, but this choice is not such that God's hands are tied. Rather, the Almighty God can intervene in the preliminaries of this choice and even in the realization of its effects. This is a reality that we experience in our daily lives. Someone asked Imam Ali how he recognized God and by what means. He replied, "I came to know Allah, the Glorified, through the breaking of determinations, change of intentions and losing of courage" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 250*)

Given the aforementioned points, it is appropriate to clarify the relationship between human free will and certain matters. In this regard, we will explain and interpret the relationship between human free will and divine decree and also its relationship with God's prior knowledge.

Fate, Destiny, and Human Free Will

The discussion of divine decree and predestination holds a very important place in understanding the system of divine actions. However, a misunderstanding of this concept can lead to significant doctrinal deviations. Some scholars have considered it in analyzing the factors behind the decline and degeneration of Muslim nations. One such doctrinal deviation is the belief that divine decree and predestination are incompatible with human free will. They perceive predestination as something

beyond the system of causes and effects, thereby associating divine decree and predestination with the negation of the world's laws and human free will.

Attention to the divisions between divine decree and predestination can be effective in explaining the relationship between divine decree and predestination with the lawfulness of the world and human free will. One of the well-known divisions of divine decree and predestination is its division into scientific and existential, which is based on God's knowledge and will.

Sheikh Moḥammad 'Abduh, in his commentary on one of the sayings of Imam Ali, interprets divine decree and predestination based on divine knowledge and defines them as follows: "Qadā (divine decree) is God's prior knowledge of the occurrence of things according to their conditions and circumstances. Qadar (predestination) is the creation of things at the time of the realization of their causes and reasons; 'His creation of them at the time of the realization of their causes'" (*'Abdoh, 1995, Vol. 3, p. 167*).

According to this interpretation, the role of humans in the creation of things can be sought in the very term 'causes,' since one of the causes of creation is the servant's own will and choice. Therefore, one who believes in human free will provides a free-will-based definition of divine decree and predestination, making 'free will' itself one of the manifestations of divine decree and predestination.

This truth is observable in the practical conduct of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali . He was sitting with a group of his companions in the shade of a wall. He noticed the wall was crooked and unstable. To prevent the wall from collapsing on them, He stood up and sat under the shade of another wall. One of His companions told him, “O Commander of the Faithful, are you fleeing from divine decree?” The Imam replied, “I seek refuge in divine predestination from divine decree.” (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2019*)

The misguided interpretation of that individual was that if the divine decree has destined a person’s death, whether they sit under a crooked and unstable wall or a sturdy one, the wall will collapse, and death will come. Thus, moving and making decisions based on rational judgment is futile. However, Imam Ali through His actions and words, demonstrated the correct understanding of divine decree and predestination, teaching that belief in divine decree not only does not hinder human movement and action but also facilitates and grounds it.

The collapse of a crooked wall is a divine law and decree, corresponding to the specific condition and predestination of that wall, namely its crookedness. However, if the wall has a different characteristic, i.e., if it is sturdy, it will follow a different law and decree. A person who understands these two

predestinations and decrees will make decisions and choose more appropriately.

Imam Ali , fled from divine decree i.e., the death or injury of a person by the wall, towards divine predestination which depends on not fleeing and taking precautions. Therefore, we should not remain indifferent regarding our health or other matters, as fleeing and taking precautions are also among divine predestination. Hence, we must strive for all good deeds and exercise caution in dangerous situations.

Other infallible Imams have also narrated traditions that indicate the close relationship between divine predestination and human free will, describing this relationship as that of the soul and the body. In this respect, Ibn Bābawayh said, “Predestination and action are like the soul and the body. The soul without the body does not move and is not seen, and the body without the soul is a lifeless image. When they come together, they become strong, sound, beautiful, and pleasant. Similarly, if predestination does not align with action, the Creator would not be distinguished from the creation, and if an action does not conform to predestination, it would not proceed and be completed. But through union, they become strong and sound, and God aids His righteous servants in this.” Then he recited the following verse, “... *but Allah has endeared the faith to you and has made it seemly in your hearts...*” (*The Qur’an, 49: 7*).

Then he said, “I found the son of Adam between God and Satan. If God loves him, He purifies and selects him, otherwise, He leaves him to his enemy” (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2019, p. 366*).

This tradition emphasizes that divine decree and predestination in no way cause laziness; rather, action is the executor of predestination, similar to the relationship between the soul and the body. The soul without the body has no movement or perfection, and the body without the soul is dry and perishes. Another point is that just as in the relationship between the soul and the body, the soul is primary, here too, it seems that action is primary, and predestination revolves around action.

In explaining the phrase ‘and God aids His righteous servants in this,’ we can refer to the words of Lady Fatimah al-Zahra , who said, “Whoever sends up to God the purest of his worship, God will send down to him the best of his benefit” (*Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 67, p. 249*).

It is worth mentioning that the Umayyads, including Muawiyah and his son, imposed the ideology of determinism on the people of Sham to expand their power and rule. According to this ideology, they instilled in the people the belief that whatever happens to you is the inevitable will and decree of God, which cannot be contested, and that it is God’s will for us to rule over you!

However, the Commander of the Faithful , in the previously mentioned narration (the fourth narration), provides a clear response to the ideology of determinism and explicitly rejects the deterministic interpretation of divine decree and predestination. In part of this same narration, the Commander of the Faithful, Ali , refers to the Qadariyyah as the Magians of the Ummah and describes the belief in the absolute and necessary divine decree regarding human actions as the words of the brothers of idolaters, the army of Satan, and the enemies of God (*Ṭabarsī, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 209; Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 5, p. 95*).

Thus, divine decree and predestination, and human action are like the soul and the body; without accepting divine decree and predestination, no order is established, and no ground for voluntary action is created.

Resolving the Conflict

In studying these narrations, it is necessary to consider some verses of the Holy Quran. The Quran states, “... *and cast not yourselves to perdition with your own hands...*” (*The Qur’an, 2: 195*).

Here, some questions arise as follows:

- Are the mentioned cases, such as fighting without proper attire, examples of ‘throwing oneself into destruction?’
- Does the infallible Imam use knowledge of the unseen in ordinary circumstances, or only in specific cases?
- Are the instances mentioned in the above narrations examples of ordinary situations?

Some scholars have provided answers to resolve this conflict. The late Majlisī has an interesting explanation. In summary, he suggests that these actions and behaviors might be specific to Ahl al-Bayt since they had prior knowledge that they would not be harmed in such incidents. Eventually, Imam Ali fled from one wall but not from another because He knew the first would collapse and the second would not. Another explanation is that the message of these narrations might negate excessive avoidance of calamities and abandoning obligations due to imaginary or potential harm.

This explanation seems good, but the first possibility is debatable. As previously mentioned, it might be argued that in this ordinary situation, what need is there to use knowledge of the unseen? Does fleeing from a collapsing wall not require the use of knowledge of the unseen? In explaining Imam Hussain's movement towards Kufa, it is usually mentioned that He did not use knowledge of the unseen in this matter but acted according to his duty to fight corruption and oppression.

Hence, if the use of knowledge of the unseen is not mentioned here, it would not apply to the case of the collapsing wall either, and thus not fleeing from such a wall would be an example of 'throwing oneself into destruction,' which is against God's command and not befitting the status of an infallible Imam. However, the second possibility is valid because one

of the teachings of Islam is Jihad and sacrifice, and to create and strengthen such a motive, steps need to be taken, one of which seems to be positive thinking and reducing excessive worry.

Another point that can be included is that perhaps the characteristics of the addressee were also influential in these narrations, as the addressees of these narrations might have been people who had such a trait i.e., being overly fearful to an extreme degree, and the Imam wanted to correct them with this statement and behavior. In summary, a person can escape and find solutions from divine decree, but one cannot escape from divine judgment.

Analysis of the Functions of Human Free Will in Lifestyle

In previous discussions, several of the following questions were raised:

- What is the view of the Ahl al-Bayt on free will?
- How does this theory relate to the concept of free will proposed by some scholars?
- What are the criteria and components of the theory of the 'Middle Path'?
- What role does this theory play in human lifestyle?

In this section, we seek to answer this last question.

Anthropological issues, in addition to their direct impact on Islamic knowledge, also reflect on other matters, highlighting the importance

and necessity of the topic under discussion. Thus, the theory of 'The Middle Path' and the discussion of human free will are no exceptions; they also have significant implications, which have been partially addressed in this writing. However, due to their importance, it is appropriate to reiterate them to clarify their role in lifestyle.

Human Free Will and the Meaning of Life

If humans do not possess free will, the discussion about the meaning of life would be futile and meaningless. A being without free will might have non-volitional perfection and value, but volitional perfection, ethics, and worldly and otherworldly rewards and punishments only make sense for a being that possesses free will.

Through voluntary actions, traits, and dispositions, a person can achieve perfections that make their life valuable. Conversely, an individual who lacks free will whether concerning internal or external actions cannot lead a meaningful life; thus, discussing the meaning of life in such a context would be pointless and absurd. With the futility of life's purpose and meaning, lifestyle also becomes futile because purpose is a fundamental element of lifestyle.

One of the theorists of lifestyle, Adler, writes in this regard, "Human life is guided by specific goals. These goals are not necessarily indicative of reality. They may be imaginary.

Nevertheless, they exert an irresistible force on human actions" (*Mahdavi Kanī, 2008, p. 115*). Therefore, a person with free will can choose a path that makes their life meaningful or meaningless. Thus, the meaning of life and lifestyle find their significance in the light of free will.

The Impact of Human Will and Free Will on Human Happiness

One of the main concerns of humans is to escape from an undesirable current state and reach a desirable yet non-existent state. Based on this inner desire, we realize that Islam, as a natural religion, considers one of the philosophies of human creation to be achieving perfection so that one may attain happiness in both this world and the hereafter.

With the introduction of the issue of free will, one of the questions that arises is whether happiness is voluntary or compulsory. If it is voluntary, why are there narrations from the Infallibles that seem incompatible with the voluntary nature of happiness?

Replying to this question, it should be said that at first glance, some narrations may appear contradictory, but it is necessary to determine whether this contradiction is apparent or established. In some narrations, such an apparent contradiction is observed. For instance, it is narrated by The Prophet, "The wretched is wretched in his mother's womb, and the happy is happy in his mother's womb" (*Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 5, p. 9*).

The meaning of the above narration is not that God creates humans as happy or wretched without free will, but rather the interpretation is that God knows in advance who will become happy through their own free will and who will become wretched.

To interpret it, we refer to the words of Imam Ali , in which He said, “God Almighty knows what is in the wombs - whether male or female, ugly or beautiful, generous or stingy, wretched or happy. This is the knowledge of the unseen that no one knows except God” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 128*).

Additionally, it is narrated by Imam Kazim, “The wretched is one whom God, while still in his mother’s womb, knows will commit the deeds of the wretched. Similarly, the happy is one whom God, while still in his mother’s womb, knows will commit the deeds of the happy and prosperous” (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2019, p. 356*).

Thus, God Almighty is aware of what is in the wombs, whether it is a boy or a girl, ugly or beautiful, generous or stingy, happy or wretched, and this is the knowledge of the unseen that no one knows but God.

Therefore, God’s eternal knowledge cannot be used as evidence for determinism; knowledge follows the known. Additionally, if we pay attention, we see that the expression in the narration is ‘one who becomes happy,’ indicating human agency in this

matter. This is further explained by Muhammad ‘Abdoh in his commentary on Imam Ali’s statement, “The servant and what he finds within himself as an impetus towards good or evil, and no person finds anything except that his choice drives him to what he does, and God knows him as an agent by his choice: either wretched by it or happy” (*Abdoh, 1995, Vol. 3, p.167*).

Freedom and Self-Respect in Lifestyle

One of the functions of human free will in lifestyle is freedom. In other words, one of the necessities of human free will is ‘freedom’ and ‘liberty.’

The Almighty God created humans free and independent. Based on the conformity of creation and legislation, humans must maintain this freedom and independence in their behavior. In other words, considering the relationship between ‘is’ and ‘ought,’ a free-willed human must act freely. This is one of the truths observed in the words of Imam Ali . He addressed all humans, saying, “Do not be the slave of others for Allah had made you free” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 31*).

This independence and freedom concern other creatures, not God. Therefore, if someone considers themselves free and independent, they should not become a servant to other creatures in their behavior and decision-making.

Of course, this freedom must be observed throughout one’s lifestyle, not just in relation to other humans but

also in matters concerning oneself. For example, in a lifestyle that consists of a system of behavioral preferences, a person must be able to maintain their freedom and independence in decision-making against emotions and not allow religious beliefs and values to be managed by desires and emotions. In ‘decision-making,’ we calculate benefits and harms. But the question that arises here is whether this calculation is always done correctly. In other words, is it possible that in such a calculation, the place of benefits and harms is swapped?

Given that human behavior is based on thoughts and emotions, the answer to this question seems to be positive because it is possible that due to incorrect thoughts, a person may not correctly identify benefits and harms, or the calculation of benefits and harms may be based on emotions and feelings, not on real and rational benefits and harms. Therefore, the issue of realistic choice arises here. Lifestyle is a type of choice that each person makes based on internal and external conditions or accepts under social pressure. Thus, as it can be created, it can also be changed, and the possibility of creativity always exists (*Kāwiyānī et al, 2019, p. 19*).

By ‘realistic choice,’ we mean a choice and free will based on truths, not on subjective or arbitrary considerations. In other words, it is

based on real benefits and harms or true perfection and deficiency, not on instinctual pleasure or blind social approval. In decision-making, if a person’s criterion is personal taste and desire, such a person acts emotionally, and their choice is not realistic. This person does what they want, and nothing other than this personal desire influences their decision. In contrast, another person bases their decision-making on reason and truths, not on personal taste and desires, which are valid only by their own standards.

Imam Ali said in this regard, “Indeed, God Almighty has endowed angels with intellect without desire, animals with desire without intellect, and humans with both intellect and desire. Therefore, whoever’s intellect prevails over their desire is better than the angels, and whoever’s desire prevails over their intellect is worse than the animals” (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 4*).

In another saying, He stated, “Is there no freeman who can leave this chewed morsel (of the world) to those who like it? Certainly, the only price for yourselves is Paradise. Therefore, do not sell yourself except for Paradise” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 456*).

Thus, based on the principle of freedom, our choice must be realistic. Therefore, one of the outcomes of believing in human free will is freedom and self-respect. In contrast, determinism

leads to a weakened personality. One of the commentators on Nahj al-Balagha writes that the belief in ‘determinism’ leads believers to feel deeply powerless in the presence of God, as they see their fate and actions as entirely predestined. This perception also influences their interactions with others, as determinism essentially denies individual agency and selfhood (*Ref. Bahī, 1991: 119*).

Reform Movement in Society

One of the reflections that can be presented for the theory of human free will and the concept of ‘*al-Amr Bayn al-Amrayn*’ (lit; a theory between the two theories: intermediate position) is the creation of an Islamic society movement to integrate it into the global civilization after centuries of decline. One of the factors of the decline and fall of Islamic society was the incorrect interpretation of *Qadha* and *Qadar* (divine decree) and human free will.

To clarify the matter, it is appropriate to refer to some of the activities of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali . In this regard, His role in reforming society and reviving human freedom and free will can serve as a model for us. One of the activities of Imam Ali in this field was combating the superstitions and excesses of Mu‘āwiyah and his followers. Imam Ali fought against superstitions and the simplistic interpretation of divine decree and believed that it should not be accepted

that humans are subject to a predetermined fate without the possibility of choice (*Riḍā, 1917, Vol. 2, p.p 75, 432, & 509*).

As previously mentioned, Imam Ali opposed these ideas and introduced the *Qadariyyah* as Magians and the army of Satan (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2019, p. 380; Kulaynī, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 155*).

After attaining the caliphate, Mu‘āwiyah also used this deterministic belief and the religious perspective of these Muslims for political purposes, using it to justify his actions and respond to the objections and criticisms of the people. He instilled and emphasized that they should be content with his rule, which he claimed was the divine decree, and not complain. In other words, Mu‘āwiyah attributed his rule to the inevitable divine decree and called his actions the will of God (*Ibn Qutaybah, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 171*).

Therefore, the belief in human free will is very influential in reforming lifestyle and society.

Principle of Effort and Endeavor

The theory of free will is so intertwined with the principle of effort and endeavor that it is sometimes referred to as the theory of seriousness and action. ‘*Amr Bayn al-Amrayn*’ is a doctrine of work and seriousness, in which laziness and wasting time are rejected. Imam Ali , and His descendants emphasized this important principle and considered a person’s

value to be dependent on their effort and endeavor. In one of His sayings, He said, “The worth of a man is according to his courage” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 47*).

The Imams not only invited people to strive and work hard but also practiced it themselves, and this is observable in their practical conduct. For example, one day, Imam Ali was extremely hungry in Medina. He went to the upper parts of the city in search of work and encountered a woman who had gathered some clods of earth. He thought she wanted to soak them in water, so He approached her and agreed to pull water out of a well for her in exchange for one date per bucket. He pulled out sixteen buckets, and His hands blistered. Then He drank some water and went to her, saying His hands were blistered and could no longer pull water out of the well. She counted sixteen dates and gave them to Ali (*Arbalī, 2002, Vol. 1, p. 170; Ḥakīmī, 2007, Vol. 2, p. 400; Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 41, p. 33*). Therefore, He is considered a model and exemplar in work and effort for the Islamic community.

Human Free Will and Intellectual Independence

One of the ways to achieve a pure life and attain happiness in this world and the hereafter is for a person to have freedom of thought and intellect. Blindly following fathers and those around us is not acceptable and may

distance a person from truth and God. Therefore, anyone who seeks happiness in this world and the hereafter must use their free will to save themselves from falling into the pit of imitation and make truth their criterion.

Conclusion

Based on the previously discussed points, we can conclude that:

- Imam Ali explicitly rejects both determinism and delegation, emphasizing the role of human will in actions.
- After rejecting determinism and delegation, a moderate view called ‘*Amr Bayn al-Amrayn*’ is proposed. This theory is a doctrine of work and seriousness, in which laziness and wasting time are rejected. In this view, humans are free but not independent. One of the manifestations of this view is the effort and endeavor to change undesirable conditions and move towards desirable ones. Of course, it is obvious that a believer should not become arrogant about their free will and freedom but should always maintain themselves between the states of fear and hope for divine assistance.
- Another manifestation of free will is the governance of beliefs. A person must strive to preserve their freedom and not allow beliefs and values to be controlled by emotions; rather, emotions and feelings should be controlled by religious beliefs.

- Worthy choices have criteria. One of these criteria is realism, meaning choices should be based on truths, not subjective or arbitrary considerations.
- Imam Ali interprets divine decree in a way that is compatible with human free will. Divine foreknowledge includes the realization of actions along with human free will, and for an action to be voluntary, the will of the agent must be part of the set of causes involved in the thing. Therefore, human free will is also one of the manifestations of divine decree and destiny.
- The relationship between destiny and action is like the relationship between the soul and the body, and without accepting divine decree and destiny, no order is established, and no context for voluntary action is created.

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The idea of research and collecting data was carried out by the corresponding author. The analysis and compilation of the content on a wide level as well as modifying the paper based on the standard formats of article preparation was carried out by the second author. The third author aimed to enrich the paper by adding new scientific suggestions and sources. Therefore the authors contributed to the paper revision and approved the final version.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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PAPER DERIVED FROM THESIS

A Study of the Ethical Principles of Political Leadership Presented in 'Nahj al-Balagha': Analyzing Ethical Norms and Their Application in Governance and Leadership
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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
<div>Article History:</div> <div>Received: 08 February 2024</div> <div>Revised: 15 April 2024</div> <div>Accepted: 05 May 2024</div> <div>Key Words:</div> <div>Islam</div> <div>Political Leadership</div> <div>Ethics principles</div> <div>Governance</div> <div>Nahj al-Balagha</div> <div>DOI:</div> <div>https://doi.org/10.22034/IMJPL.2024.9968</div> <div>This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</div> <div></div>		<div>SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: This article explores the ethics of political leaders in “<i>Nahj al-Balagha</i>,” a collection of sayings, letters, and sermons attributed to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib , the first imam of the Shiites and the fourth caliph in Sunni Islam, as well as a prominent leader of the historical period of Islam. Over the centuries, “<i>Nahj al-Balagha</i>” has become an integral source of Muslim literature, and its content is actively studied for ethical and political lessons. This research aims to analyze the ethical principles and norms embedded in “<i>Nahj al-Balagha</i>,” with a focus on the role of political leaders.</div> <div>METHOD & FINDING: The research is conducted through qualitative analysis of the texts in “<i>Nahj al-Balagha</i>” using methods such as thematic analysis, content analysis, and comparative analysis. The texts are systematically examined to identify explicit and implicit ethical principles, as well as examples and scenarios related to political ethics. Contextual data is utilized for a more comprehensive understanding of the philosophy and ethics embedded in “<i>Nahj al-Balagha</i>.”</div> <div>CONCLUSION: It is expected that the results of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the ethical values that political leaders should adhere to according to “<i>Nahj al-Balagha</i>.” The study encompasses several key aspects, such as justice, honesty, compassion, conscience, governance, and leadership. The ethical expectations of leaders are presented in three contexts: subordinates, the general population, and their adversaries. By analyzing the texts of “<i>Nahj al-Balagha</i>” related to political matters and leadership, this work seeks to determine which ethical principles are deemed important for political leaders and how these principles may influence their behavior and decision-making.</div>
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Introduction

In today's world, society is grappling with a range of crises, including economic instability, social upheaval, and environmental degradation, which are compounded by ongoing conflicts that claim countless lives and displace millions each year (Kruchinin, 2015). The 2020 pandemic further highlighted vulnerabilities in resilience frameworks, revealing gaps in the ability of communities and nations to adapt to unprecedented challenges (Babkin, 2020). These global issues emphasize the critical need for effective and ethical leadership, as existing systems often struggle to provide consistent and equitable solutions (Roth & Lee, 2006; Ibragimov, 2009).

Islamic ethics, rooted in divine guidance, offer a cohesive framework that transcends the limitations of secular governance models. Based on the Quran, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and the principles articulated by Imam Ali in *Nahj al-Balagha*, Islamic ethics provide actionable guidance for leaders in navigating complex societal challenges (Tariq, 2018; Platonova, 2018).

Nahj al-Balagha stands out as a seminal text, offering a unique synthesis of practical wisdom and ethical principles. This collection of sermons, letters, and sayings by Imam Ali is renowned for its emphasis on justice, compassion, and accountability,

making it a timeless guide for ethical leadership (Tariq, 1999; Mohseni-Cheraghloo, 2015).

Despite being over a millennium old, *Nahj al-Balagha* continues to provide relevant insights for addressing modern leadership dilemmas. Its principles extend beyond individual relationships to encompass societal responsibilities, offering a universal perspective on governance and ethical norms (Ghazvini, 1992). This study focuses on the ethical frameworks outlined in *Nahj al-Balagha*, examining the role of leaders in their relationships with agents, ordinary citizens, and opposition (Alem, 2000). By analyzing the ethical ideals articulated in the text, this research aims to highlight its enduring significance as a model for ethical governance and societal progress.

Theoretical Foundations

The study of ethical principles in political leadership within the Islamic tradition is grounded in centuries of philosophical and theological inquiry (Nasr, 2010). Unlike secular approaches, Islamic ethics regards leadership as a divine trust, interweaving administrative duties with moral and spiritual responsibilities. Leaders are expected to adhere to ethical norms that serve the well-being of society and align with the principles outlined in the Quran and other foundational texts (Kamali, 2008). Leadership, in this context, transcends mere governance, becoming a moral obligation characterized by respect, mercy, and justice.

Among the central texts that elaborate on these principles, *Nahj al-Balagha* occupies a prominent position. Authored by Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, this compilation of sermons, letters, and sayings provides clear ethical guidelines for leaders, emphasizing justice, accountability, and compassion as indispensable traits of effective governance (Amir-Moezzi, 2014). Its teachings balance practical advice with profound spiritual insights, making it a cornerstone for understanding Islamic leadership ethics.

Islamic scholarship has extensively explored *Nahj al-Balagha*'s significance. Ansari Qomi (2010) highlights its relevance in shaping governance models that align with Quranic prescriptions. Mavani (2013) underscores its enduring applicability, noting that its ethical principles remain pertinent in addressing modern leadership challenges. These studies emphasize *Nahj al-Balagha* as both a historical artifact and a contemporary guide for ethical leadership.

Literature Review

Internationally, the ethical dimensions of leadership have garnered significant attention in broader contexts. Beekun and Badawi (2005) examine the role of justice, mercy, accountability, and humility in leadership, comparing these Islamic principles with secular leadership models. Sachedina (2022) provides an analysis of *‘Adl* (justice) as a universal value that transcends cultural boundaries, resonating with both Islamic and modern governance frameworks.

Roth & Lee. (2006) discuss challenges in contemporary leadership, highlighting the need for ethical accountability in addressing global crises.

Within the Islamic tradition, the foundational ethical principles of leadership justice, accountability, mercy, and humility are deeply rooted in early Islamic thought. Esposito (2011) traces their origins to the early Islamic era when governance was inseparable from moral and spiritual values. Leadership was regarded as the highest form of service, with rulers expected to guide their communities with integrity, compassion, and fairness. These principles, articulated in texts like *Nahj al-Balagha*, continue to inspire modern scholarship and practice.

In addition to Islamic scholarship, international studies have contributed to understanding the relevance of these principles in a globalized world. Works such as those by Chong and Eggleton (2003) and Keeley (2007) examine the ethical dimensions of leadership in contemporary organizations, emphasizing the importance of transparency and inclusivity. These studies provide valuable insights into how Islamic ethical frameworks can address modern challenges, offering a unique perspective on governance.

By bridging traditional and modern approaches, this study contributes to the growing body of research on ethical leadership. It situates *Nahj al-Balagha* within both its historical and

contemporary contexts, highlighting its relevance as a guide for addressing complex societal and organizational challenges. The integration of internal and international scholarship enriches the understanding of leadership ethics, providing a comprehensive framework for fostering trust, inclusivity, and justice in governance.

1. Imam Ali's Ideas and Concepts on Leadership and Governance

Leadership, according to Imam Ali, is fundamentally an ethical responsibility. In *Nahj al-Balagha*, leadership is presented not as mere management but as a moral duty, deeply intertwined with principles such as justice, accountability, and compassion. These principles align closely with Quranic ethics and provide leaders with a framework for addressing governance challenges through ethical prescriptions (*Rutter, 2012*).

Imam Ali's teachings emphasize the ethical obligation of leaders to protect the underprivileged, uphold public accountability, and maintain justice as the cornerstone of governance (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, 11th century*). By offering practical guidance for moral decision-making, *Nahj al-Balagha* remains a key source of inspiration for contemporary political leadership (*Bosk & Vries, 2004*). The ethical framework it presents reflects the Quran's teachings, offering detailed prescriptions for practical application in governance (*Rutter, 2012; Fitzpatrick & Walker, 2014*).

2. Practical Dimensions of Ethical Leadership

According to Imam Ali, leadership has two key components: tactical and strategic. Tactical leadership focuses on immediate tasks, requiring timely and effective decision-making, organizing actions, and evaluating performance. Whether in Islamic or non-Islamic contexts, leaders are judged by their results (*Baradaran, 2008*). Strategic leadership addresses global issues, setting priorities and guiding society in response to broader challenges.

From the texts of *Nahj al-Balagha*, eleven components of governance emerge:

- Supremacy of law.
- Public order guarantees.
- Equality before the law.
- Participation.
- Self-restraint.
- Guiding people in their quest for God.
- Awareness of public opinion.
- Building a progressive economic system.
- Protecting the underprivileged.
- Creating a social security system.
- Accountability.

These components provide practical benchmarks for implementing ethical governance and ensuring societal well-being (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, 11th century*).

Practical examples provided in *Nahj al-Balagha* clarify how these principles can be applied, ensuring a thorough understanding of governance practices (*Mavani, 2013*).

3. Ethical Requirements of a Political Leader Regarding Ordinary Citizens

Imam Ali, in his collection of sermons, letters, and sayings known as *Nahj al-Balagha*, laid out a comprehensive ethical framework for political leaders. His teachings emphasize the responsibilities of rulers towards ordinary citizens, focusing on the principles of justice, fairness, compassion, and humility. In *Nahj al-Balagha*, Imam Ali repeatedly stresses the importance of governance that benefits all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, while ensuring that leaders maintain ethical integrity and humility in their rule.

A key theme in Imam Ali's teachings is the importance of ethical behavior at all levels of governance. He emphasizes that leaders should treat all individuals with dignity and respect, regardless of their social or economic status (*Ansari Qomi, 2010*). The greatness of a leader lies not in their power or position but in their ability to assume responsibility for both major and minor affairs, to act justly in both public and private actions, and to uphold the rights of all citizens, especially the marginalized (*Schmitter, 2012*).

3.1. Execution of Justice in Leadership

Justice is the cornerstone of Islamic leadership as outlined by Imam Ali. His understanding of justice extends beyond mere adherence to the law, encompassing fairness, compassion, and

the moral duty to uphold the rights of all citizens, particularly the vulnerable. Imam Ali defines justice as "placing things in their proper order" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Aphorism 437*), which implies not only legal fairness but also the appropriate allocation of resources and responsibilities. True justice, he argues, is achieved when each individual is given their due, based on their unique circumstances and needs (*Husserl, 1970*).

Imam Ali's teachings reflect his belief that justice must guide leadership, especially in times of conflict when fairness must underpin decisions and actions (*Radelet, 1989*). (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 27*).

This illustrates his commitment to balancing the treatment of the powerful and the weak, ensuring that no one can exploit their position for personal gain while safeguarding the marginalized from injustice.

Justice, as envisioned by Imam Ali, is not simply about equality in treatment but involves recognizing and addressing the specific needs of different societal groups. Leaders must actively pursue justice as a social objective to create a just and equitable society. Imam Ali views justice as the foundation of a stable state and the ultimate goal of governance (*Aristotle, 2009*). To achieve this, rulers are tasked with ensuring that all individuals have equal access to their rights and opportunities, free from discrimination or favoritism. His teachings continue to offer

timeless guidance on the execution of justice as the bedrock of ethical leadership and governance.

3.2. Keen Awareness of Individuals' Social-Economic Status

One of the distinguishing features of Imam Ali's leadership was his keen awareness of the social conditions in his community. He was deeply attuned to the rights of the people and the dangers posed by oppressive rulers who sought to exploit the weak. He emphasized that leaders must remain vigilant against any actions that threaten the rights of ordinary citizens. In cases where injustice occurred, Imam Ali was known to confront oppressors directly, ensuring that the rights of the vulnerable were protected (*Gearing, 2004*).

Imam Ali's leadership also highlighted the importance of a ruler's awareness of the people's needs and conditions. He was a strong advocate for social justice, ensuring that rulers were in touch with the needs of their citizens and addressed any grievances that arose. He encouraged rulers to develop a critical attitude toward their policies, urging them to reflect on their decisions and seek counsel from those who were not afraid to speak the truth (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 53*).

3.3. Fostering Ethical Leadership in Complex Social Structures

Imam Ali offers profound insights into the challenges of leadership in diverse and complex social structures. He emphasizes

that a leader's primary responsibility is to harmonize competing interests within society while ensuring that justice and equity remain central. This requires not only adherence to ethical principles but also a nuanced understanding of societal dynamics and human behavior.

According to Imam Ali, leaders must be proactive in addressing systemic injustices that disproportionately affect marginalized groups. He warns against complacency, stating, "Beware of injustice, for it will lead to destruction and discord among the people" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Aphorism 431*). This guidance reflects the necessity of ethical vigilance in governance, where leaders are tasked with identifying and rectifying inequalities before they escalate into societal unrest.

A critical aspect of ethical leadership is the capacity to mediate conflicts and foster reconciliation. Imam Ali underscores the importance of patience and dialogue, advising leaders to "extend a hand of peace even to those who oppose you, for reconciliation strengthens the bonds of society" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 53*). This perspective highlights the leader's role as a unifier, capable of navigating discord through fairness and empathy.

Moreover, ethical leadership requires balancing individual needs with collective goals. Imam Ali advocates for policies that promote social welfare without sacrificing personal freedoms. He writes: "Governance is a trust; fulfill it with the utmost care, so that the rights of the people

are upheld and the integrity of society is preserved” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 216*). This teaching underscores the dual obligation of leaders to serve both the individual and the community.

Finally, Imam Ali stresses that ethical leadership is not static; it demands continuous self-reflection and adaptation to changing circumstances. Leaders must remain humble, acknowledging their own fallibility while striving for improvement. “A leader who does not question their own actions risks straying from justice,” He warned (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Aphorism 247*). This principle of self-accountability ensures that leadership remains aligned with ethical standards, even amidst evolving societal challenges.

By integrating these teachings, leaders can navigate the complexities of modern governance while maintaining ethical integrity. Imam Ali’s insights provide a timeless framework for fostering social harmony, addressing systemic injustices, and achieving equitable progress.

4. Ethical Requirements for Political Leaders Regarding Their Agents

Imam Ali outlines the ethical responsibilities of political leaders toward their agents in *Nahj al-Balagha*. Agents, representing the ruler’s authority, must embody competence, loyalty, and ethical integrity. Imam Ali emphasized that agents should be well-versed in Islamic teachings, possess practical experience, and demonstrate ethical

judgment. Their primary functions include protecting the people, ensuring justice, and preventing governmental overreach. Effective agents are vital to the functioning of a just and ethical state.

4.1. Imam Ali's Framework for Governance and Social Protection

Imam Ali categorized the functions of an agent into three main areas:

- protecting people from aggression, theft, and violence;
- ensuring economic freedom by preventing arbitrary government actions;
- supporting a predictable and fair judicial system.

These responsibilities ensure that agents protect individuals' rights and maintain social harmony, which aligns with the leader’s overarching goal of promoting justice.

4.2. Ethical Requirements for Agents

Imam Ali sets forth distinct ethical standards for agents, recognizing their influential roles and the responsibilities they bear. Unlike ordinary citizens, agents wield authority that can significantly impact society, making it imperative for them to embody the highest moral principles. In *Nahj al-Balagha*, Imam Ali emphasizes three essential qualities that agents must possess: competence, moral integrity, and loyalty.

Competence is a foundational requirement for agents, as their decisions directly influence the welfare of society. Imam Ali states, “The most

deserving of this work is the one most capable of conducting affairs and well-versed in God's commandments” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 172*).

This statement underscores the necessity of appointing individuals with both practical experience and a deep understanding of ethical principles. In his letter to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali advises selecting agents who possess sound judgment and the ability to navigate complex challenges, ensuring that justice prevails.

Moral integrity is another critical quality that protects agents from corruption and bias. Imam Ali insists that agents must act with honesty and fairness, upholding their duties without succumbing to personal ambition or external pressures. These principles safeguard the trust placed in agents and ensure that their actions align with the broader goals of justice and governance.

Loyalty, as described by Imam Ali, reflects the agent’s dedication to their responsibilities and to the ethical principles that govern their role. This loyalty ensures that agents remain steadfast in their commitment to serve the interests of the people, particularly the vulnerable while maintaining harmony within society.

By adhering to these ethical standards, agents fulfill their roles with integrity and competence, contributing to a just and equitable governance system. Imam Ali’s teachings serve as a

timeless guide, emphasizing the moral strength required to uphold justice and protect societal harmony.

4.2.1. Integrity, Competence, and Loyalty

Imam Ali stressed the importance of an agent’s loyalty and commitment to the ruler's vision. Agents must align with the leader’s goals and decisions while also maintaining their ethical integrity. He advised Malik al-Ashtar to select honest and reliable agents, warning that agents who seek personal gain or engage in corruption would undermine the state’s stability (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 53*).

Agents must also possess foresight and pragmatic thinking. Imam Ali emphasized the need for patience and endurance, arguing that these traits are essential for effective leadership. In Sermon 154, he said, “A wise person sees the end of their work and understands the challenges of what they wish to accomplish” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 154*).

4.2.2. Decision-Making and Responsibility

One critical ethical requirement for agents is their willingness to take responsibility for their decisions. Imam Ali stressed the importance of decisiveness in leadership, advising agents to act with confidence and avoid hesitation. In Saying 274, He states, “Do not turn your knowledge into ignorance and uncertainty when you know how to act and are confident that you will act” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Aphorism 274*).

4.2.3. Education and Perseverance in Leadership

Imam Ali highlights education and perseverance as essential for ethical and effective leadership. Leadership, in his view, demands continuous growth and adaptation. Education extends beyond formal learning, emphasizing intellectual curiosity, self-awareness, and moral refinement. Leaders committed to learning are better equipped to make ethical decisions, adapt to societal changes, and guide their teams effectively (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Saying 80*).

Perseverance complements education by fostering resilience and steadfastness in pursuing justice and overcoming challenges. Imam Ali advises, “Do not let difficulties deter you from pursuing what is right, for perseverance is the key to success” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Aphorism 183*). It ensures leaders remain focused and principled despite adversity. Together, education and perseverance create a virtuous cycle, enabling leaders to adapt, inspire trust, and maintain integrity. These principles remain highly relevant for navigating modern leadership challenges and fostering long-term success.

Therefore, Imam Ali’s teachings in *Nahj al-Balagha* provide a detailed framework for the ethical responsibilities of political leaders and their agents. These teachings emphasize three key ethical principles: personal accountability, unwavering commitment to justice, and ethical strength. Agents must

embody specific qualities, including competence, integrity, loyalty, and foresight, to fulfill their duties effectively.

In *Nahj al-Balagha*, Imam Ali outlines three primary responsibilities for agents: Protecting people from aggression, theft, and violence, as emphasized in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 53*).

Ensuring economic freedom by preventing arbitrary government actions and safeguarding fair resource distribution (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 27*). Supporting a predictable and fair judicial system that ensures justice for all segments of society (*Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 216*).

These responsibilities illustrate that justice is not merely a theoretical ideal but a practical obligation that underpins effective governance. By adhering to these principles, agents contribute to maintaining social harmony and upholding the moral vision of leadership presented by Imam Ali.

Incorporating these ethical teachings into contemporary leadership practices ensures that governance not only meets the immediate needs of society but also fosters long-term stability and equity. Imam Ali’s timeless wisdom provides a guiding light for political leaders and their agents, enabling them to navigate the complexities of governance with fairness and integrity.

5. Ethical Requirements for Political Leaders Regarding Opponents

Imam Ali emphasized the ethical responsibilities of Islamic leaders when dealing with political opposition, as presented in *Nahj al-Balagha*. His teachings advocate for justice, tolerance, and dialogue with opposition groups, promoting peaceful conflict resolution and the maintenance of integrity. Leaders should avoid deceit and honor agreements, even with adversaries. This approach ensures long-term peace and prevents unnecessary bloodshed.

5.1. Understanding Political Opposition

Imam Ali viewed opposition as a natural part of governance. Political opposition often represents alternative ideologies or dissenting views. Rather than suppress opposition, leaders should foster an environment of fairness and open dialogue. He cautioned against harboring ill will and emphasized cooperation: "Refrain from harboring ill will... and refusing to offer help to each other" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 192*).

5.2. Loyalty and Honoring Agreements

Loyalty and adherence to agreements were central to Imam Ali's ethical framework. He stressed that agreements should be honored, stating: "I do not know of any better shield... than faithfulness in agreements" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 41*). Even in conflict, a leader should remain truthful and avoid

betrayal, ensuring that peace and dialogue are prioritized over violence.

5.3. Justice in Punishment

In *Nahj al-Balagha*, Imam Ali emphasizes the necessity of justice in punishment, stating: "Beware of shedding blood unjustly, for nothing invites divine retribution, greater consequences, or quicker removal of divine blessings and shortening of life spans, than shedding innocent blood" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 53*).

This quote underscores the severe consequences of unjust punishment, particularly the shedding of innocent blood, which incurs divine wrath and disrupts societal harmony. Justice in punishment, therefore, is a core principle to ensure the preservation of divine mercy and societal stability.

5.4. Treatment of Captured Enemies

Imam Ali emphasized patience, forgiveness, and dignity in dealing with adversaries, avoiding torture or humiliation even for captured enemies. This is evident in Sermon 43 of *Nahj al-Balagha*, where He advises patience and careful consideration before resorting to conflict and says, "My opinion is in favor of patience, so wait a while. (In the meantime) I do not dislike your getting ready" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 43*). This guidance reflects his prioritization of peaceful resolution and moral decision-making.

Imam Ali's approach highlights his commitment to justice and ethical

leadership. He ensures that actions are not driven by anger or haste. He advocates for fairness and humanity even in challenging situations, focusing on rehabilitation and upholding moral principles rather than punitive measures.

Conclusion

This study delves into the leadership principles articulated in *Nahj al-Balagha* by Imam Ali, offering a rich tapestry of ethical and ethical norms that can guide contemporary leaders across various fields. The research demonstrates that the ethical framework provided by Imam Ali remains highly relevant, addressing key dimensions of leadership such as justice, humility, compassion, and perseverance. These principles are not only foundational to Islamic governance but are universally applicable, offering insights that can be adopted by leaders in the modern world.

Throughout *Nahj al-Balagha*, Imam Ali emphasizes the central role of justice. It is not simply about enforcing laws; it is about ensuring fairness, equality, and the protection of rights, regardless of a person's social standing, background, or faith. Justice, as described by Imam Ali, is the bedrock of ethical leadership, enabling leaders to create environments where fairness prevails and trust is built among all members of society. Leaders must act impartially, ensuring that their decisions are not swayed by personal biases or social pressures, but rather guided by the pursuit of justice.

The second crucial principle in *Nahj al-Balagha* is humility. Imam Ali repeatedly reminds leaders that power and authority are not ends in themselves but are responsibilities that require service to others. A leader must not be arrogant or driven by personal gain; instead, they should act with modesty, focusing on the collective good rather than self-promotion. Humility allows leaders to remain grounded, fostering an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. When leaders exhibit humility, they earn the trust of their followers and can more effectively lead teams toward achieving common goals.

Compassion is another core element of leadership emphasized by Imam Ali. Compassion is the ability to empathize with others, particularly those who are vulnerable or in need. A compassionate leader takes the time to understand the concerns of their subordinates, offering support and guidance when necessary. This creates a sense of security and loyalty within a team, allowing individuals to thrive both personally and professionally. In *Nahj al-Balagha*, Imam Ali underscores the importance of treating others with kindness and dignity, particularly in times of hardship. Compassion is a key quality that distinguishes great leaders from merely competent ones.

One another principle that emerges from the study is the emphasis on education and perseverance. Leaders,

according to Imam Ali, must be continuously committed to learning and self-improvement. A leader who remains intellectually curious and open to new ideas is better equipped to adapt to changing circumstances and to guide their team through challenges. Perseverance, in this context, refers to the leader's resilience in the face of difficulties. Imam Ali encourages leaders to remain steadfast in their pursuit of justice and to persevere through trials and tribulations. This quality is essential for long-term success, as it allows leaders to remain focused on their objectives even when faced with obstacles.

The study also highlights Imam Ali's guidance on the relationship between leaders and their subordinates. Effective leaders, as outlined in *Nahj al-Balagha*, should not only lead but also mentor. They should listen to the opinions of their subordinates, fostering an environment where everyone's voice is heard. By showing genuine care for the well-being of their team members, leaders can cultivate loyalty and trust. This two-way relationship is critical for maintaining a healthy dynamic within the organization, where leaders are seen not as distant figures of authority but as approachable mentors who are invested in the growth and success of their subordinates.

Dealing with opponents, Imam Ali sets high ethical standards that demand

honesty, fairness, and a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution. Leaders are urged to engage with their adversaries tactfully, avoiding deceit or manipulation. Imam Ali promotes diplomacy and the preservation of peace, reminding leaders that true strength lies in their ability to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. This principle is particularly relevant in today's world, where political and social tensions are often resolved through force rather than dialogue. By adhering to these ethical standards, leaders can foster environments of mutual respect, where conflicts are resolved peacefully and inclusively.

A key takeaway from this study is the enduring relevance of the leadership principles in *Nahj al-Balagha*. Justice, humility, compassion, education, and perseverance are not just abstract ideals but practical qualities that can make leaders more effective, empathetic, and fair. By embodying these principles, leaders can build teams that work cohesively and harmoniously toward common goals. The ethical foundation outlined by Imam Ali provides a roadmap for leaders to navigate the complexities of modern leadership, helping them to inspire trust, foster collaboration, and achieve lasting success.

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Author Contributions

Sergey Mikhalev conducted the research, collected, and systematized data from *Nahj al-Balagha*, as well as materials from similar studies containing facts regarding the ethical requirements imposed on leaders in Islam. Dr. Ali Ahmadi Amin supervised the writing of the article from the initial formulation of the main idea and actively participated in the writing process.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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The Truth and Scope of *al-ʿIlm al-Ḥuḍūrī* (Knowledge by Presence) in the Thought of ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī and Some Prominent Western Philosophers

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
Article History: Received: 20 December 2023 Revised: 10 February 2024 Accepted: 15 March 2024		SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: The truth and significance of knowledge are indisputable, as they represent one of the most critical metaphysical questions. This is why numerous philosophers globally have engaged in discussions on the topic. A prominent contemporary philosopher, ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī, has extensively examined knowledge, its classifications, truth, scope, and the associated issues. This paper concentrates on one specific category of knowledge, namely al-‘Ilm al-Ḥuḍūrī (knowledge by presence), as articulated by ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī and various Western philosophers. METHOD & FINDING: This article presents a comparative analysis of the concept of knowledge by presence, focusing on the perspectives of ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī and various European philosophers. The research methodology employed in this study is a descriptive-analytical approach. CONCLUSION: The issue of knowledge by presence and its significance for ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī and René Descartes is a definite and obvious matter. Baruch Spinoza is a philosopher who adeptly employed mathematical and geometric methods to articulate philosophical concepts with remarkable clarity and precision. The eminent German philosopher Immanuel Kant regarded the issue of knowledge as the central theme of his philosophical inquiry. From Heidegger's perspective, the inquiry into the provability of an external world is devoid of meaning.	
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Introduction

Epistemology focuses on how human knowledge aligns with the external world and why that matters. Throughout history, philosophers have explored these ideas. European and Islamic thinkers have offered various views on humanity, the soul, and the nature of truth.

‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī, a contemporary Islamic philosopher, explored new philosophical ideas and, using insights from illumination philosophy, the peripatetic school of philosophy, and transcendental philosophy, proposed a new interpretation of their compatibility. He argues that all acquired sciences return to *al-‘Ilm al-Ḥuḍūrī* (knowledge by presence) (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 2002, p. 237*).

Theoretical Foundations

In essence, knowledge can be classified into two distinct categories.

- *Al-‘Ilm al-Ḥuḍūrī* (Knowledge by Presence)
- *Al-‘Ilm al-Ḥuṣūlī* (Knowledge by Acquisition)

Knowledge by presence contrasts sharply with knowledge by acquisition. The former refers to an intuitive and immediate understanding that is grasped directly, devoid of any mediation, arbitration, or interference from external human senses. In simple terms, the knower understands the known directly, without needing a mental image. This direct connection is evident in how we experience emotions like anger, hatred, love, and desire.

In the work, *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī articulates that knowledge by presence refers to a form of understanding in which the object of knowledge, along with its external reality, is directly accessible to the knower. This form of knowledge does not rely on mere representations or images; instead, it allows the knower to grasp the essence of the known. Entities that exist independently of us cannot be identical to us nor can they be intrinsic to our nature. The essence of all that we encounter, whether it aligns with our own being or pertains to the various dimensions of our existence, necessitates a critical examination and evaluation of our understanding (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1993, p. 60*).

This definition of knowledge by presence encompasses the following two significant aspects:

- Present knowledge of humans on their own existence.
- Present knowledge of humans on the levels and attachments of their existence.

By analyzing these two points, four types of knowledge by presence can be proposed for humans:

- Human’s Knowledge of His Own Existence (I/ Me/Myself)

According to *Idrākāt al-I’tibāriyah* (conventional perceptions), theorized by ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī, true knowledge is the mental unveiling of reality and the fact, and since there is a sacred purpose behind the great creation and

the heavens and the earth were not created in vain, he introduces the ultimate goal of creation to reach the state of servitude, which is God's closeness. Therefore, while searching for the truth, the Quran warns man to step on the path of self-knowledge. ‘Allāma believes that self-knowledge has an impressive role in the education and morals of souls (*Amini et al., 2023*).

- Human Knowledge By Presence of His Soul’s Actions (Psychological States, Feelings, and Emotions)
- Human Knowledge By Presence Regarding The Powers and Tools of His Soul (Perceptive Powers and Stimulating Forces)
- Human’s Knowledge By Presence About His Mental Images and Concepts.

Literature Review

For the first time in history, Neo-Platonists, particularly Plotinus, introduced the concept of ‘knowledge by presence,’ alongside other key ideas such as ‘illumination,’ which were subsequently elaborated upon by Proclus. The phrase ‘knowledge by presence’ is missing from the works of many philosophers, including those from the Milesian School, Pythagoreans, Eleatics, Atomists, Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Hellenistic thinkers.

In the New Era, John Locke explores a type of inner knowledge similar to knowledge by presence. The 18th century, known as the Enlightenment, emphasized rationalism and scientific inquiry.

Influential philosophers like Hume and Kant did not explore the idea of knowledge by presence during this period. Critiques of revealed theology and support for rational theology intensified discussions in the context of liberal theologians like Schleiermacher. Their emphasis on religious experience and mystical revelations attracted Western intellectuals to the idea of knowledge by presence.

In Islamic philosophy, Avicenna was the pioneer in addressing the concepts of knowledge by presence and knowledge by acquisition, particularly concerning an object's self-awareness (*Avicenna, 1981, pp. 117-119*).

Such discussions are notably absent in the writings of Al-Kindy and Al-Farabi. Furthermore, Shihāb ad-Dīn Yahya ibn Habash Suhrawardī, known as *Shaikh al-Ishraq* (Master of Illumination) provided an extensive examination of the nature of knowledge by presence, introducing additional levels of understanding related to this concept (*Motahari, 1998, p. 307*).

He stands out as the first Muslim philosopher to significantly contribute to the development and elaboration of knowledge by presence.

The Muslim mystics, particularly Ibn ‘Arabi, dedicated an entire chapter to the concept of intuition and its various levels, employing the notion of knowledge by presence (*Qaysari, 1996, pp. 85-94*).

Ṣadr al-Mutī‘allihīn al-Shīrāzī

recognized as the founder of *al-Hikma al-Muta'aliya* (transcendental philosophy), engaged extensively in discussions regarding the concept of knowledge by presence, distinguishing himself from other philosophers and theologians. Throughout his various writings and philosophical inquiries, he frequently invoked the notion of knowledge by presence, particularly emphasizing topics such as Divine Knowledge and self-knowledge as key illustrations of this concept (*Shīrāzī, 1989, p. 180; 2001, p. 181; 1998, p. 185-186*).

Scholars, including the students of Mullā Ṣadrā, have also explored the implications of ontological, epistemological, and anthropological dimensions of knowledge by presence (*Kashani, 1996, pp. 18-20*).

In the contemporary landscape of New Transcendental Philosophy, philosophers have addressed the emerging challenges within epistemology and philosophy by employing the concept of *al-'Ilm al-Huḍūrī* and elucidating its various functions. A key figure in this intellectual movement is 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, who significantly contributed to the resurgence of new philosophical thought and the advancement of knowledge by presence (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2001: 175-188; 2002: 232-240; 1998: 271-275*).

His disciples have made substantial contributions to the expansion of Ṭabāṭabā'ī's ideas across philosophical, theological, and Quranic discussions

(*Sobḥānī, 1996, pp. 107-110; Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1992, p. 50; Miṣbāh Yazdī, 2018, p. 175*).

The Return of Acquired Knowledge To Knowledge By Presence

In the book *Nihāyat al-Hikmah*, 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains the role of direct knowledge by discussing how conceptual knowledge can return to it. At the beginning of the eleventh section of the mentioned book, emphasizes that knowledge is something we feel directly and proves that the knowledge of the self is direct.

He then divides knowledge into two types, namely *al-'Ilm al-Huḍūrī* (Knowledge by Presence) and *al-'Ilm al-Huṣūlī* (Knowledge by Acquisition). In this respect, he wrote, "This is what the primitive perspective leads to regarding the division of knowledge into acquired and present, and what deep contemplation guides us to is that the acquired knowledge also ultimately leads to present knowledge" (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2002, p. 237*).

In other words, humans initially divide knowledge into acquired and present, but with deeper contemplation, we realize that acquired knowledge ultimately leads to present knowledge.

1. Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Descartes

1.1. Knowledge By Presence and Intuitive Knowledge

The issue of knowledge by presence and its significance for 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī and René Descartes (1596-1650) is a

definite and obvious matter. ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī has paid attention to human knowledge by presence in several discussions and chapters of his philosophical reflections and has proposed some theories in this regard. A part of the late Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s reflections can be rephrased as follows:

- He has divided knowledge into two categories:
 - a. Knowledge by presence
 - b. Knowledge by acquisition (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1993, p. 150*).
- The late Ṭabāṭabā’ī enumerates various types of knowledge by presence. For example, self-knowledge of every single essence of itself, knowledge of the actions of an abstract essence, the knowledge of the soul about its powers and tools through which it performs its actions, knowledge by presence about emotions and feelings, knowledge of cause about its effect, knowledge of effect about its cause and the knowledge of two effects about each other that have a common cause (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1993, p. 239*).
- According to the late Allama, knowledge by presence is infallible knowledge (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī: 1993, p. 234*).
- In the opinion of Ṭabāṭabā’ī, the basic source of knowledge by acquisition is knowledge by presence. In other words, knowledge by acquisition returns to knowledge by presence. He presents two theories regarding

the process of knowledge by acquisition and the mechanisms through which it occurs.

First Theory: The initial theory posits that sensations first interact with the body, and the soul is intrinsically linked to the body. It becomes connected with these sensations, gaining knowledge through their presence. Subsequently, the imaginative power converts this awareness of sensations into a learned and visual form of knowledge, which is then stored in memory. Following this phase, which involves the development of sensory and imaginative representations in the mind through processes such as comparison and abstraction, the mind also generates general and intellectual concepts (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1993, p. 236*).

Second Theory: It posits that the interaction of the body with sensations and objects serves as the essential groundwork for the soul, enabling a limited engagement with the realms of ideas and rational thought. Subsequently, the soul converts this immediate discovery, driven by urgency and necessity for both theoretical and practical endeavors into knowledge through acquisition, ultimately shaping it into sensory, imaginative, and intellectual awareness (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1993, pp. 239, 249, 313, 314*).

- The root and origin of the abstraction of some of the most fundamental

philosophical concepts such as 'Essence' and 'Cause and Effect' are some examples of knowledge by presence of a human being concerning his soul and its effects.

In this regard, the late Ṭabāṭabā'ī said, "The connection between powers and actions, along with their association with the soul, is understood through both knowledge by presence and knowledge by acquisition" (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2018, p. 67*).

Based on the aforementioned points, it is evident that both knowledge by presence and intuitive knowledge hold significant and crucial importance in the epistemological and ontological framework of 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

Descartes has placed significant emphasis on the concept of knowledge by presence, as well as on intuitive knowledge. He considers knowledge by presence to be the foundational element of his philosophical framework. To circumvent doubt and solidify his philosophical ideas, he requires a robust and unassailable basis, which he finds in knowledge by presence. In this context, Descartes articulates, "I will now close my eyes, I will stop my ears, I will turn away my senses from their objects, I will even efface from my consciousness all the images of corporeal things; or at least, because this can hardly be accomplished, I will consider them as empty and false; and thus, holding converse only with

myself, and closely examining my nature, I will endeavor to obtain by degrees a more intimate and familiar knowledge of myself. I am a thinking (conscious) thing, that is, a being who doubts, affirms, denies, knows a few objects, and is ignorant of many—who loves, hates, wills, refuses, who imagines likewise, and perceives; for, as I before remarked, although the things which I perceive or imagine are perhaps nothing at all apart from me and in themselves, I am nevertheless assured that those modes of consciousness which I call perceptions and imaginations, in as far only as they are modes of consciousness, exist in me. And in the little I have said I think I have summed up all that I really know, or at least all that up to this time I was aware I knew" (*Descartes, 1982, pp. 61-62*).

Also, in Descartes' view, 'intuition' as a foundation and basis for philosophical and true thinking is a rational insight that, just like sensory perception, is directly perceived and causes inner certainty. This intuition is unquestionable and certain (*Sanaei, 1997, p. 28*).

1.2. Truth and Error in Judgment

'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī addresses the concepts of truth and error in judgment as they pertain to a specific level of perception. He has delineated four distinct stages of perception, asserting that the matters of truth and error are associated with the fourth stage. According to the

esteemed Ṭabāṭabā’ī, the stages of perception are categorized as follows:

- The stage of the normal operation of the sensory organs and the influence of the sensory organs
- Performing the sensory perception and understanding the physical and geometric properties of an object
- Judgment in sensory perception and its conformity with the outside
- The stage of compliance with the ratio and judgment and comparison with the outside (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1998, p. 54*).

Descartes has also addressed the issue of truth and error in one of his meditations in his book *Reflections on First Philosophy*. In this regard, he wrote, “Regarding the concepts themselves, if we examine them in isolation without referencing any external factors, they should not be deemed errors. This is because the validity of either imagination, whether it be of a goat or a giant, holds equal weight in truth. It is important to recognize that the potential for errors in actions or desires should not be a source of fear. I may wish for things that are either undesirable or entirely non-existent. Nevertheless, the reality remains that I do have these desires. Therefore, the primary concern lies in the acknowledgments I must make, which require careful consideration to avoid any missteps. A prevalent and significant mistake that can arise in the context of affirmations is the assumption

that my mental constructs are analogous to or aligned with external entities. If I regard these constructs merely as manifestations or dimensions of my cognition, without ascribing them to any external reality, it becomes exceedingly unlikely that they would serve as a foundation for my misconceptions” (*Descartes, 1982, pp. 65-66, 74*).

Descartes believes that truth and error lie only in affirmations, especially when we make judgments about the outside world.

Descartes posits that error arises from the notion that individuals believe in the existence of certain entities in the external world while simultaneously assuming that their mental representations of these entities perfectly align with reality.

2. Ṭabāṭabā’ī and Spinoza

A notable similarity between the late Ṭabāṭabā’ī and Spinoza lies in their dedicated focus on the mathematical method within their philosophical texts. In works such as *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, as well as *The Beginning of Wisdom and The End of Wisdom*, the late Ṭabāṭabā’ī systematically defines concepts, articulates principles, and elucidates the logical connections among various topics.

He has addressed this matter in one of his publications. He states, “The late Bādkūbei, concerned with the education of the writer, instructed me to study

mathematics to enhance my capacity for argumentative reasoning and to refine my philosophical sensibilities. In compliance with his highness's directive, I enrolled in the class of the late Agha Seyyed Abu al-Qasim Khānsāri, a distinguished mathematician, where I undertook a curriculum that included argumentative calculus, as well as courses in both plane and spatial geometry, and argumentative algebra” (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 2008, p. 9).

Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) was a philosopher who adeptly employed mathematical and geometric methods to articulate philosophical concepts with remarkable clarity and precision. He utilized this method in the composition of the first and second parts of Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*, while also applying it in his seminal work, *ethics*, which is structured around definitions, principles, theorems, and proofs (*Spinoza*, 2005).

3. Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Immanuel Kant

The eminent German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) regarded knowledge as the central theme of his philosophical inquiry. He posited that philosophy's primary and fundamental objective is to engage with epistemology.

The advent of Kant marked a significant transformation in Western philosophical thought, steering it

towards the domain of epistemology. From Kant's time to the present, the question of knowledge has been regarded as the central and most critical concern within philosophy. Kant posited that epistemology holds precedence over other philosophical inquiries.

‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī is recognized as a pioneer in the field of epistemology, introducing innovative approaches and contexts. He articulated and systematized epistemological knowledge by presenting various epistemological perspectives and engaging in comparative discussions, thereby revitalizing the discipline. According to him, a comprehensive understanding of the mind and knowledge is essential for the development of any philosophical framework. He asserted that epistemological inquiries must precede other philosophical considerations. The essence of his philosophical endeavors lies in the assertion that before engaging in metaphysical contemplation, one must first navigate the domain of knowledge and refine their positions and viewpoints.

Kant posits that the human mind is not merely a passive recipient of perceptions and factual knowledge; rather, the perceptual apparatus itself plays an active and independent role in the processes of awareness and understanding. This engagement of the human perceptive system is uniquely characteristic of humans, manifesting in the dual capacities of feeling and understanding. The senses, informed by the constructs of

time and space, and the understanding, guided by its twelve distinct categories, collaborate in this cognitive activity (*Ref: Mojtabedi, 1981*).

Ṭabāṭabā'ī posited that the perceptive system encompasses both an active and a passive dimension. He argued that the concept of multiplicity is intrinsically linked to perceptions and is independent of the actual objects, which are merely the outcomes of various factors interacting with the mind. These interactions generate perceptions through a specific engagement with perceptive faculties, thereby compelling the emergence of numerous perceptions. In essence, this multiplicity does not stem from the passive dimension of the mind; rather, it is associated with the active dimension, with the primary driver being the mind's own capacity for multiplication (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1993, p. 10*).

4. Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Martin Heidegger

In the preface of his philosophical works i.e., *Nihāyat-al Ḥikmah* and *Bidāyat-al Ḥikmah*, Ṭabāṭabā'ī asserts that the fundamental reality, as well as the reality that transcends human existence, does not require argumentative validation. He posits a profound interrelation between humanity and the reality that exists beyond it. In the introduction of the book *Nihāyat-al Ḥikmah*, he articulates that it is indisputable that humans are entities that genuinely exist, and there are also external entities that coexist with us,

influencing and being influenced by our actions. He notes the presence of various elements in our external environment, such as the air we breathe, the food we consume, the structures we inhabit, the land we traverse, as well as animals, plants, and other entities.

Beyond our individual experiences, there exist various phenomena that we observe visually, alongside others that we detect audibly. Additionally, there are sensations that we experience through our sense of touch, as well as those that we identify through our olfactory and gustatory senses, among other perceptual modalities.

In the external world, individuals encounter various entities that they either pursue or shun, experience affection for or aversion to, and harbor aspirations or apprehensions regarding. There exist elements that resonate with our intrinsic inclinations or provoke our distaste, as well as tools that we employ to fulfill our diverse objectives and ambitions, which may include arriving at a destination, departing from one, or attaining a specific location. Our desires are often driven by the pursuit of pleasure, the avoidance of pain, or the resolution of undesirable situations.

The phenomena we observe are not devoid of substance. They possess genuine existence and are substantiated by evidence. Individuals seek out objects or concepts only because they

represent an external truth or a tangible entity. Even if something does not exist in a concrete form, it still points towards a verifiable reality. Consequently, it is impossible to entirely question the nature of existence and reality without contradicting the fundamental truths or expressing skepticism towards them. Any assertion of denial or doubt regarding reality is ultimately articulated through language (*Shirvani, 2008, pp. 27-29*).

In *Bidāyat-al Hikmah*, it is articulated that through introspection, individuals recognize their own grasp of truth and reality, as well as the existence of truths beyond their personal experience. This awareness enables them to perceive and engage with these external realities. For instance, when an individual seeks knowledge or understanding, they regard it as an objective reality. Similarly, the instinct to flee from danger is predicated on the acknowledgment of an external threat; a child desiring their mother's milk is, in essence, yearning for a tangible entity known as milk, rather than a mere figment of imagination. Likewise, a person escaping from a predator is responding to a real entity in the external world, rather than an illusion or a mythical being (*Ibid: 910*).

From Heidegger's perspective, the inquiry into the provability of an external world is devoid of meaning. Existential analysis reveals that the only

reality is that of 'being in the world.' Consequently, Heidegger deems the question of whether the world exists externally or can be substantiated as fundamentally misguided. He asserts, "The belief in the reality of the external world, whether deemed true or false and the endeavor to validate this reality whether adequate or inadequate, overtly or covertly—along with any such attempts lacking sufficient clarity, presupposes a knowing agent (transcendental self) that is either nearly devoid of a world or uncertain about its own existence, ultimately necessitating reassurance regarding the existence of that world" (*Heidegger, 2008*).

Human beings are inherently connected to the world, and the notion of a human devoid of worldly context is a misguided interpretation. This philosopher posits that human existence is intrinsically linked to the world, with the phrase 'being in the world' serving as a descriptor of human presence. The essence of having a world encompasses a comprehensive understanding of presence, which entails both self-awareness and the awareness of other beings. To illustrate this concept, Heidegger employs the example of tactile perception to elucidate the interrelation between humans and other entities.

The phrase 'we are in contact with a wall' indicates our conscious awareness of the interaction with the wall. Conversely, when we state 'the

chair is in contact with the wall,' it implies that the chair lacks any awareness of this interaction. In the former instance, our contact is characterized by sensory perception, whereas in the latter, the relationship between the chair and the wall is purely a physical phenomenon.

Heidegger posits that the underlying rationale for this distinction lies in the fact that, in the initial scenario, human beings possess an awareness of their own existence, whereas the chair lacks any such self-awareness. To put it differently, the existence of the individual necessitates the presence of a boundary for their experience (*Khatami, 2000, pp. 44-57*).

Heidegger posits that Dasein does not conceive of itself as a mere subjectivity or an isolated 'I,' devoid of any connection to objects. This perspective underpins the essence of human existence as fundamentally intertwined with the world. The formation and essence of Dasein are rooted in its situatedness within the world. The world cannot be regarded as an external entity; rather, our existence is inherently reliant upon it. Dasein's being is inextricably linked to the external reality that constitutes the world.

This philosopher posits that the initial inquiry regarding the phenomenon of existence pertains to the location from which we can attain absolute certainty about it. The response indicates that this

phenomenon is essentially a broad perspective encompassing the myriad small beings that inhabit our surroundings (*Corvez, 1990*).

Conclusion

The phrase 'knowledge by presence' does not appear in the works of numerous philosophers, including those associated with the Milesian School, the Pythagoreans, the Eleatics, the Atomists, the Sophists, as well as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and thinkers from the Hellenistic period. Within Islamic philosophy, Avicenna emerged as the first to explore the distinctions between knowledge by presence and knowledge by acquisition, particularly in relation to an object's self-awareness.

Ṣadr al-Mutī'allihīn al-Shīrāzī, who is acknowledged as the founder of transcendental philosophy, engaged in extensive discourse on knowledge by presence, setting himself apart from his philosophical and theological contemporaries. In the modern context of New Transcendental Philosophy, scholars have tackled emerging epistemological challenges by utilizing the concept of knowledge by presence and clarifying its various roles. A prominent figure in this movement is 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, who played a crucial role in revitalizing philosophical thought and advancing the understanding of knowledge by presence. The relevance of knowledge by presence is a clear and significant

concern for both ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī and René Descartes. Baruch Spinoza is notable for his effective use of mathematical and geometric methods to express philosophical ideas with exceptional clarity and precision. The distinguished German philosopher Immanuel Kant considered the question of knowledge to be the focal point of his philosophical exploration. From Heidegger's viewpoint, the investigation into the provability of an external world lacks significance.

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Author Contributions

The corresponding author, has the main role in all stages, from study conception and design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results to manuscript preparation. The second author, as a supervisor, has reviewed the manuscript critically and helped enrich the content of this article with his useful and fruitful advice.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Islamic Solutions to Gen Z's Cognitive Challenges: A Path to Meaningful Life

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
Article History: Received: 20 March 2024 Revised: 15 May 2024 Accepted: 10 June 2024		SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: This paper examines the cognitive challenges "Generation Z" faces and offers guidance based on Islamic teachings to address these issues.	
Key Words: <i>Generation Z</i> <i>Cognitive Challenges</i> <i>Information Overload</i> <i>Gaslighting</i> <i>Virtual Life</i> <i>Instant Gratification</i> <i>Reduced Attention Span</i>		METHOD & FINDING: Utilizing a descriptive and analytical approach, the article identifies key challenges as the virtual-real-life imbalance, susceptibility to gaslighting, information overload, the pursuit of instant gratification, and a diminished attention span. Islamic teachings offer practical solutions to these challenges. The paper is based on Cognitive-Behavioural Theory (CBT) as its theoretical framework.	
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/IMJPL.2024.9965		CONCLUSION: From an Islamic perspective, practical strategies for enhancing the cognitive well-being of this generation include appreciating the value of time, fostering self-awareness, promoting <i>Wasatīyyah</i> (moderation), cultivating <i>Ṣilah ar-Raḥim</i> (genuine relationships) especially with family, regulating desires, verifying information before acceptance, seeking beneficial knowledge, managing time effectively, practicing self-reflection, encouraging critical thinking, developing patience, expressing gratitude, practicing <i>Khushū'</i> (mindfulness in worship), reciting and contemplating the Qur'an, avoiding excessive entertainment, engaging in social interaction, and seeking guidance from scholars. The mentioned factors are crucial in overcoming the challenges encountered by Generation Z.	
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Introduction

Generation Z faces unique cognitive challenges in the modern era due to the rapid advancement of new technologies. Growing up in an environment saturated with digital devices, social media, and instant access to information has profoundly impacted their cognitive development. These technological changes have introduced several cognitive challenges for Generation Z.

Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing strategies to support Generation Z's cognitive and psychological health in an increasingly digital world. Using a descriptive-analytic approach, this paper deals with some major cognitive challenges this generation faces and some advice according to the Islamic teachings will be suggested.

These cognitive challenges are particularly pertinent today due to the rapidly evolving global landscape. Recent global events and trends have exacerbated these issues, each contributing to the unique experiences of this generation. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered how Generation Z interacts with both their peers and the world. With social distancing measures in place, many young individuals became heavily reliant on virtual platforms for communication and socialization. This shift has led to an increasing struggle to balance online interactions with offline relationships. The constant engagement with digital

devices can blur the lines between virtual and real-life experiences, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection when not interacting online. As a result, fostering a healthy balance has become critical for their mental well-being.

Theoretical Foundations

1. Generation Gap

A generation gap refers to the chasm that separates the beliefs and behaviors belonging to members of two different generations. More specifically, a generation gap can describe the differences in thoughts, actions, and tastes exhibited by members of younger generations vs. older ones. The differences may be in politics, values, pop culture, and other areas. While generation gaps have been prevalent throughout all periods of history, the breadth of differences of these gaps has widened in the 20th and 21st centuries (*Hayes, 2022*). The internet and social media have widened the generational gap (*ZeinaliPoor, 2017, p. 79*).

In the context of Generation Z there are notable distinctions compared to previous generations. These differences arise from the unique social, economic, and technological environments each generation has experienced. One of the most defining characteristics of Generation Z is their identity as digital natives.

According to a GlobalWebIndex poll, 77% of Gen Z spend at least three hours a day using their smartphones, a significant increase compared to the previous

generation, many of whom experienced their formative years without such ubiquitous digital technology (*Amberblog, 2023*). Over 90% of Gen Z members own a smartphone, with 94% indicating that smartphones are their preferred device for accessing social media and content, reflecting a deeper integration of technology into their daily lives than previous cohorts (*CTA, 2024*).

2. Generation X, Y, and Z

The generation born between 1965 and 1980 is called 'Generation X. *"Anyone born between 1981 and 1996 is considered a Millennial, also known as Generation Y, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation who came to be called Generation Z, the iGeneration, and Home landers"* (*Dimock, 2019*). The term Generation Z colloquially known as Zoomers is used to refer to people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The term is modeled on boomer, a common shortening of baby boomer, and earlier use of zoomer referred to physically active baby boomer (*Merriam-Webster, 2021*). It is commonly called Gen Z, and Gen Zers for short. This generation is considered to last till 2012 and after that comes Generation Alpha (*Warren, 2024*). Gen Zers are the first generation never to know the world without the internet (*Katz et al., 2021, p. 1*).

3. Second life

Second Life is a life-simulation network on the Internet created in 2003 by the

American company Linden Research, Inc. Second Life allows users to create and manage the lives of avatars they create in an advanced social setting with other online "Residents." Although it parallels a video game in some ways, Second Life lacks typical gaming objectives. Instead, it presents a world where users can create a persona and build a virtual life (*Ray, 2012*).

Method of Research

Using a descriptive and analytical approach, the paper is based on Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT) as its theoretical framework. CBT is a well-established psychological framework that focuses on identifying and changing unhelpful cognitive distortions and behaviors. It can be particularly useful for addressing the cognitive challenges faced by Gen Z, such as identity crises, susceptibility to gaslighting, and information overload. This framework allows for a structured analysis of how thoughts influence emotions and behaviors while integrating spiritual and ethical guidance from Islamic teachings.

The first step in practicing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is to clearly define the specific issue or problem that the individuals are facing. Data regarding these challenges is collected from observations and research conducted by others. Following this, Islamic solutions are proposed, incorporating behavioral activation techniques that encourage individuals to engage in enriching activities to effectively address these challenges.

One of the core tenets of CBT is the identification and modification of negative thought patterns that contribute to emotional distress and behavioral problems. Given that Generation Z grapples with issues such as misinformation, self-doubt influenced by social media, and an overwhelming flow of information, CBT's focus on cognitive restructuring allows individuals to develop healthier thought patterns and coping strategies. CBT is inherently pragmatic, emphasizing skills and tools that individuals can apply in their daily lives. The application of CBT in this study will focus on addressing key cognitive challenges faced by Generation Z. For example, CBT techniques such as behavioral activation will be employed to encourage Generation Z to engage in real-world activities that foster meaningful social interactions and experiences outside the digital realm. This can help mitigate feelings of isolation and improve their overall mental health.

Literature Review

The cognitive challenges faced by Generation Z have emerged as a significant concern, driven by rapid technological advancements that alter perceptions and interactions with the world. Scholars have begun to explore these challenges in depth through various publications. Notable works include the book *"The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains"* written by Nicholas Carr, in which the author

examines how the Internet affects cognitive processes and attention spans.

The next one is the book *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (2012) by Sherry Turkle. He addressed the detriments of communication and social interactions.

Additionally, the book *The Distracted Mind: Ancient Brains in a High-Tech World* (2016) written by Adam Gazzaley and Larry D. Rosen elaborates on cognitive overload.

iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—And Completely Unprepared for Adulthood (2017) written by Jean M. Twenge examines the mental health implications of digital connectivity for today's youth.

While these works provide valuable insights into the cognitive difficulties of Generation Z, they primarily adopt secular viewpoints that overlook spiritual or ethical dimensions that could help mitigate these issues. This study aims to provide a more comprehensive analysis that includes often-neglected moral and spiritual aspects, presenting a unique approach to navigating the complexities of the digital age while supporting cognitive and psychological well-being.

Cognitive Challenges Before Generation Z

Understanding the cognitive challenges of this generation is crucial for educators, employers, and policymakers to support them in developing the skills

needed to thrive in a complex and rapidly evolving digital landscape. By addressing these issues proactively, it is possible to help this generation harness the benefits of technology while mitigating its potential drawbacks. Below, five cognitive challenges confronting this generation will be analyzed. These challenges are derived through inductive reasoning and there may be additional cognitive challenges that have yet to be identified.

1. Falling Into the Trap of Virtual Life

The breakthroughs in IT such as the virtual life or “second life”, made the modern man more confused in defining himself, his values, goals, and purpose of life; going that much further sometimes to prefer to live as their avatars in the second life or spending long hours a day in the virtual life by being connected to social media, trying to run away from the realities, hardships, and challenges of the real life. This preference can be attributed to the nature of online communication, the psychological comfort it provides, as well as the opportunities it presents. Individuals with introverted tendencies often find it challenging to vocalize their thoughts in face-to-face settings due to social anxieties or public speaking fears (*Mehta, 2017*).

It also enables individuals to connect with like-minded people beyond geographical boundaries and to broaden their social networks (*Thomas, 2016*).

Lastly, virtual interactions allow users to create and engage with idealized versions of themselves or their experiences, often termed “avatars.” This ability can foster a sense of control over how one is perceived, providing a buffer against the inherent vulnerabilities of real-life interactions (*Tourjée, 2016*). Getting accustomed to virtual life causes the boundaries between the virtual and reality to blur in a person's mind. Consequently, individuals may fail to recognize their real priorities in life and may make mistakes in prioritizing their goals and values. To avoid such cognitive harm, Islam has some practical recommendations from many, some can be mentioned such as:

- **Appreciating The Value of Time**

Valuing time and recognizing that worldly life is a farm for the Hereafter can help individuals avoid becoming overwhelmed by virtual life and daily distractions. This perspective leads to a change in one's understanding of life and how to utilize time effectively as Imam Ali said, “The opportunities pass like the clouds, so seize them for doing good deeds” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, 11th century CE, p. 471*).

Parents can implement a structured afternoon routine for their Gen Z children that prioritizes time management and reduces excessive virtual life engagement. For example, the routine can be designed around the concept of “Unplugged Hours,” where children are

encouraged to engage in offline activities that promote personal growth and well-being. Also, parents can incorporate family activities into their routines. It can include family activities that encourage bonding and collaboration, such as cooking together, outdoor games, or engaging in artistic projects. By promoting family engagement, parents not only manage their child's screen time but also create shared memories and strengthen familial bonds.

- ***Wasafīyyah (Moderation)***

Islam advocates moderation in all aspects of life. Prophet Muhammad said, “The best of affairs are those that are moderate” (*Bayhaqi, 2003, Vol. 8, p. 518*).

Encouraging balanced use of technology can help Generation Z maintain a healthier relationship with the digital world, preventing it from overshadowing real-life interactions and personal growth. Here, engaging the youth with sports and other physical activities fosters a lot. To promote moderation among Generation Z, schools can introduce a balanced lifestyle program that integrates moderation. This program would combine educational activities, physical health, and mindfulness practices, all aimed at cultivating a balanced approach to technology use and lifestyle choices. They can also organize workshops focused on the concept of moderation in daily life, particularly about technology use. Policymakers can support

community action campaigns that highlight the importance of moderation in technology use. These campaigns can include public service announcements, social media challenges prompting balanced technology usage, or events that promote offline gatherings. By framing these efforts within an Islamic context of moderation, they provide community backing to educate families on establishing healthy habits in technology consumption.

- ***Ṣilah ar-Raḥīm (Genuine Social Connections)***

Islam places a strong emphasis on maintaining family ties and fostering genuine relationships. Compassion and communication with friends and relatives can fill the gaps in human life and help people face the realities of life instead of escaping them. Prophet Muhammad said, “He who severs the ties of kinship will not enter Paradise” (*Bukhari, 2001, Vol. 8, p. 5*).

By prioritizing real-life relationships and community engagement, Generation Z can build a solid support system that reinforces their identity and values. To foster strong family ties and enhance social connections through organized community engagement, parents and children can enjoy board games and team-building activities that encourage interaction and collaboration. Also, scheduled picnics at local parks, where families can enjoy meals together, can promote outdoor activities, reducing screen

time. Organizing monthly gatherings for parents to discuss challenges, share experiences, and provide mutual support can help strengthen family ties and healthy communications.

2. Susceptibility to Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which one person tries to make another person doubt their perceptions, memory, or sanity. The term comes from the 1938 play "Gas Light" and its subsequent film adaptations, in which a husband manipulates his wife into believing she is losing her sanity by making subtle changes to their environment and insisting she is mistaken or imagining things when she notices them (*Psychology Today*, 2023). When gaslighters take to the big stage of politics, traditional media, or social media. The potential to destabilize, skew reality, abuse, and control behavior and choices soar (*Sarkis*, 2018: 100).

Media can also engage in gaslighting. This can occur in several ways like misinformation, disinformation, bias, framing, downplaying or dismissing issues, and diverging narratives. Social media platforms serve as major arenas where gaslighting can occur. In these spaces, misinformation can spread rapidly, leading youth to question their understanding of events or realities. For example, influencers may distort facts for entertainment, and followers might internalize this misinformation, leading

them to doubt their perceptions. Cases where influencers accuse others of gaslighting in conflicts without providing valid evidence can also create confusion among their audiences (*Dodgson & Colomb*, 2021).

The first step to take towards being free from gaslighting is to recognize exactly what gaslighting is. It is often very hard to recognize the signs of gaslighting because they affect the mind so much that, after a long period, the victim does not trust their thoughts (*Mind*, 2020, p. 14). According to *Mind*, when we glorify the deceiver—when we need to consider him to be the love of our life, a commendable boss, or a brilliant parent—then, we make it more difficult to adhere to our sense of reality (*Ibid*, p. 17). Thus, one of the effective elements making people likely to be gaslighted is their wishes, likes, ambitions and loves that make them blind and not capable of seeing the truth. Imam Ali said, "Control your desires and passions, and your wisdom will reach its full potential" (*Āmidī*, 1989, p. 132).

The power to control one's self against temptations will free man from the servitude of desires. Imam al-Kāzīm said, "Distant dreams darken the intellect" (*Kulaynī*, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 17).

Thus, it is essential to first regulate one's system of likes and desires based on rationality. More so, developing skills to analyze the data one receives can be very useful.

- **Investigation Before Acceptance**

It is significant to consider the sources one receives the information. Even though, one should not be biased in learning and man can seek knowledge from anyone, this is not what all people can manage and ordinary people are prone to be fooled by crooked media and news sources. Thus, many people need to get their knowledge from reliable sources. Allah advises Muslims to double-check the news brought about by non-reliable sources and says,

“O you who believe! If an evil-doer comes to you with a report, look carefully into it, lest you harm a people in ignorance, then be sorry for what you have done” (The Qur'an, 49: 6).

Trusting one source without investigation may gaslight people in a long term. To equip the youth with such capability, a series of digital literacy workshops can be organized in community centers or schools, focusing on the importance of investigating information before accepting it as true. These workshops would be designed to involve both parents and their teens, fostering open communication about the digital landscape. They can also engage in group activities that involve analyzing real-life examples of misinformation and applying investigation techniques to discern the truth.

- **Critical Thinking**

The Holy Qur'an encourages us to employ critical thinking in analyzing and evaluating

information to formulate effective responses. For instance, Prophet Abraham urged His tribe to engage their critical faculties to recognize their error in worshipping idols. He challenged them, asking,

“He said: What! do you then serve besides Allah what brings you not any benefit at all, nor does it harm you?” (The Qur'an, 21: 66).

On another occasion, He accompanied star worshipers. In this respect, Allah said,

“So when the night overshadowed him, he saw a star; said he: Is this my Lord? So when it set, he said: I do not love the setting ones.” (The Qur'an, 6: 76).

The star disappeared so it could not be God. God is always present. Abraham demonstrated how critical thinking can illuminate the truth and encourage introspection without resorting to personal attacks. Similarly, in a dialogue between Pharaoh, and a faithful man, despite Pharaoh's overwhelming power, the Man posed a pivotal question,

“...What! will you slay a man because he says: My Lord is Allah, and indeed he has brought to you clear arguments from your Lord?...” (The Qur'an, 40: 28).

Aware of his vulnerable position and Pharaoh's dominance, the Muslim neither attacked Pharaoh nor defended Prophet Moses. This exchange underscores the value of critical debate for all who seek wisdom. Reflecting on these dialogues, the Qur'an teaches us to

harness our critical thinking abilities when evaluating information. Muslims are encouraged to verify sources, consider different perspectives, and reflect on the relevance and implications of the information they encounter. In today's world, where social networks are widespread and information is rapidly produced and shared in cyberspace, it is essential to teach critical thinking skills in schools and integrate them into the curriculum. Students can participate in activities where they evaluate real news stories and social media posts to discern fact from fiction. This interactive approach encourages the practical application of critical thinking skills.

3. Information Overload

Information overload is a problem that is being exacerbated by the ongoing digitalization of the world and the growing use of information and communication technologies (Arnold, 2023). Information overload refers to the overwhelming abundance of information available to individuals, often resulting in difficulty in processing and making sense of it all (Appinio Research, 2023). Social media, news websites, blogs, and online forums constantly bombard users with new content. Constant exposure to vast amounts of information can lead to difficulty in filtering out relevant information from noise, affecting their ability to focus and make decisions like a person looking for a specific type of screw in a box containing hundreds of different

types and sizes. Having too many choices can sometimes lead to analysis paralysis and decision paralysis, where individuals find it difficult to decide due to fear of making the wrong choice or because they're constantly seeking more information to make a perfect decision. Psychologist Barry Schwartz identified the paradox of choice. He found that too many choices make decision-making difficult (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). For example, a study reveals that COVID-19 information overload through social media harmed Gen Z social media users' psychological and cognitive well-being (Liu et al, 2021).

From an Islamic perspective, managing information overload can be approached through several principles:

- **Seeking Beneficial Knowledge**

Muslims are encouraged to seek beneficial knowledge that enhances their understanding of faith, improves their character, and benefits society. One day, the Prophet found a group of people gathered around a man who was a master of Arab genealogies, pre-Islamic history, and Arabic poetry. The Prophet then remarked,

"If this knowledge is unknown to others, it brings no harm. If known, it offers no benefit"
(Kulaynī, 1986. Vol. 1: 32).

It is important to note that during that era in Hijaz, people had limited exposure to information so they probably had enough time to spend on

unnecessary subjects as well. On the other hand, learning subjects like genealogy was significant in their culture. However, the Prophet urged prioritizing knowledge that truly matters. This emphasizes the importance of purposeful learning, avoiding trivial information, and focusing on valuable insights. Just as the Qur'an advises Muslims to be mindful of their dietary intake (*Ref: The Qur'an, 80: 24*), ensuring it is Halal and beneficial, similarly, as Imam al-Baqir said, "One should guard against filling their hearts and minds with useless conceptual and spiritual food that does not serve a meaningful purpose" (*Kulaynī, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 50*).

Purposeful reading and intake help filter out unnecessary or harmful information. To apply this in society, a "Knowledge Enhancement Program" can be initiated within local communities, schools, or mosques. This program would include a series of workshops, lectures, and interactive sessions specifically designed to teach young individuals how to identify, filter, and engage with beneficial knowledge in a way that counters information overload.

• Time Management

Besides the emphasis Islam places on prioritizing activities based on their benefits, as was already stated, Islam also encourages effective time management. In the Qur'an, time holds such reverence that Allah swears by it in chapter 103. He

emphasizes that all people are at a loss except those who utilize their time wisely, believe rightly, and perform good deeds to make the most of this valuable life. Islamic religious texts stress the importance of paying attention to time, using it wisely, and giving it due consideration. The Prophet advised Abu Dharr, His companion, to prioritize safeguarding his life and managing his time with greater sensitivity than accumulating wealth (*Tusi, 1993, p. 527*). This guidance allows individuals to allocate sufficient time for seeking knowledge while balancing other responsibilities and activities.

• Self-reckoning

Due to the importance of self-reckoning, many Hadiths emphasize its significance. Imam Ali said, "Anyone who examines himself will find his faults, be well-informed about his sins, and will erase and compensate for his shortcomings" (*Laithī al-Wāsiṭī, 1997, p. 435*).

In this respect, Imam al-Kāzīm said, "He is not one of us who does not account himself every day, so that if he did good deeds, he may request Allah to give him the chance to do more, and if he did something wrong, he may repent to Allah and ask for forgiveness" (*Kulaynī, 1986, Vol. 2, p. 453*).

Muslim scholars have frequently emphasized the decisive impact of self-reckoning in one's life. Furthermore, when it comes to self-reckoning, mystics put it into four stages:

- I. ***Al-Mush'āritah* (Preconditioning):** Setting some preconditions for oneself early in the morning to practice God-pleasing acts and avoid sins
- II. ***Al-Murāqibah* (Self-watchfulness):** Observing vigilance and controlling one's deeds daily to fulfill duties and avoid committing sins.
- III. ***Al-Muhāsibah* (Self-examination):** At night one should study and examine what he has done during the day.
- IV. ***Al-Mu'ātibah* (Self-rebuke) and *Al-Mu'āqibah* (Self-punishment):**

It is worth mentioning that the punishment does not mean physically hurting one's self, as it can be found in some non-Islamic traditions. In Islamic mysticism it is recommended to punish one's self by some permissible mortifications like fasting, paying charity, dedicating time to serve others, praying and reciting the Qur'an, etc (*Agha Mohammadi, 2021, pp. 63-64*).

Two important phases in the process of self-reckoning can help in better decision-making and information analysis. The first is filtering information one receives so he is careful not to surf unnecessarily. The second is the practice of making at least small decisions every day. Making small decisions quickly can train the brain to make larger ones

more efficiently (*Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023*). Thus, self-reckoning can help manage the information one receives and avoid analysis paralysis due to information overload. To practice this as a family, it is beneficial to incorporate a short session at the end of the day dedicated to reflection on how the day was spent. During this time, family members can discuss what they accomplished, what they enjoyed, and what could be improved upon. This practice helps children appreciate the value of their time and reinforces accountability for how they utilize their hours (*Gururaj, 2024*). Also, a series of self-reckoning sessions can be organized in schools, community centers, or youth clubs, specifically tailored to engage students in reflective practices.

• Seeking Guidance through Scholars and Experts

Consulting knowledgeable scholars and experts in various fields helps individuals navigate complex issues and validate information according to wisdom. The Qur'an advises people to be in connection to learned scholars and consult them in the issues they face in their life,

“And We did not send before you any but men to whom We sent revelation-- so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know”
(*The Qur'an, 16: 43 & 21: 7*).

It is of vital importance to refer different issues to experts in their

specific fields to make better choices and decisions. To attain this, local communities, mosques, and educational institutions can come together to establish “Knowledge Hubs” dedicated to facilitating access to expert guidance. These hubs can be set up in places of worship or community centers, providing a welcoming environment for young people to gather, learn, and seek guidance on various informational topics. In addition to physical hubs, online platforms or forums can be created to allow broader access. The Knowledge Hubs can organize regular lectures and Q&A sessions led by qualified scholars and experts on topics relevant to navigating information overload.

4. The Instant Gratification Culture

The digital age often emphasizes instant gratification and quick fixes, which can undermine long-term decision-making skills that require patience and deeper consideration of consequences. Instant Gratification is the desire to experience pleasure or fulfillment without delay. It refers to the preference for a quick reward over a delayed but potentially more substantial one. For example, opting to eat a dessert immediately instead of waiting for a healthier meal, or choosing to spend money now rather than saving it for future needs, are instances of instant gratification. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat offer instantaneous validation through likes, comments, and shares. This immediate

feedback loop encourages users to seek constant engagement and approval, creating a dependency on these platforms for emotional satisfaction. The pursuit of likes and social recognition can lead to increased anxiety and pressure to curate one's online persona, as users often feel compelled to achieve higher engagement metrics (*Flex & Assoc, 2023*).

The allure of instant gratification is rooted in human psychology, where the brain's reward system seeks pleasure and releases dopamine, the "feel-good" neurotransmitter when we receive quick rewards like social media “likes” or one-tap orders. This creates a loop of seeking more instant rewards (*Mahbub, 2023*). The digital age, with its emphasis on instant gratification and quick fixes, can have several cognitive harms that affect our ability to make thoughtful, long-term decisions. Frequent exposure to immediate rewards e.g., likes, comments, or quick answers, can diminish the brain's ability to delay gratification. This can impact self-control and increase impulsive behaviors, making it harder to wait for long-term benefits (*Alsop, 2014*). If individuals become accustomed to quick results, they may lose the capacity to persevere through challenges or delays. This can affect their ability to engage in tasks that require sustained effort, such as studying, working on long-term projects, or saving money.

Adhering to the guidelines and solutions previously mentioned

regarding earlier issues also helps in effectively and successfully addressing this matter. Besides, Islam offers several teachings and practices to help overcome the culture of instant gratification. Here are some key Islamic principles and practices that address this issue:

- **Patience**

The Qur'an frequently emphasizes the virtue of patience. Allah says,

"And be patient, for surely Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers." (The Qur'an, 11:115).

Muslims are encouraged to practice patience in their daily lives, whether it's in their worship, interactions with others, or facing life's challenges. Patience helps to delay gratification and focus on long-term rewards. To promote the value of patience and delayed gratification among children through a family savings challenge that emphasizes the benefits of saving for a larger, more meaningful goal rather than seeking immediate rewards.

- **Delayed Gratification in Worship**

Regular prayers, five times a day, are a discipline that requires setting aside time, focusing, and delaying other activities. This ritual teaches the importance of prioritizing spiritual over material gratification. The Qur'an commands believers to take recourse in patience and prayer (*Ref: The Qur'an, 2: 45*). Schools can engage students in activities that illustrate the principles of delayed

gratification. For instance, students can set personal goals—like improving their study habits or preparing for a competition—requiring them to forego certain leisure activities in favor of focused practice.

5. Reduced Attention Span

Constant exposure to digital stimuli, such as notifications, social media, and rapid content consumption, can lead to a state where people are frequently shifting their focus from one task to another (*Alsop, 2014*).

This overwhelming amount of rapidly consumable content fosters shallow engagement, making it difficult for users to focus for more extended periods. A study indicates that the average attention span for consuming content on platforms like TikTok is around 8 seconds, leading to a preference for bite-sized information (*FE News Editor, 2022*). This can result in a reduced ability to concentrate on a single task for an extended period. The habit of rapidly switching tasks can undermine the brain's ability to engage in deep, sustained focus, which is crucial for complex problem-solving and critical thinking. Previously mentioned strategies, such as self-reckoning, time management, and purposeful use, can also be beneficial in addressing this issue.

Islamic teachings offer several strategies to help the youth cultivate focus and avoid a reduced attention span, a

common issue in today's fast-paced, distraction-filled world. Here are some key pieces of advice to add to what has already been mentioned above:

- ***Khushū*' (Mindfulness in Worship)**

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of humbled mindfulness during prayers. Muslims are encouraged to perform their prayers with full concentration (*Ref: The Qur'an, 20: 3*), focusing on the words they recite and their connection with Allah. This practice trains the mind to be present and attentive. Praying five times a day is an opportunity to break away from distractions and center the mind. This regular practice of mindfulness can enhance overall focus in other areas of life. Community centers can schedule regular Mindful Prayer Events where families gather for group prayers followed by mindfulness activities focused on the principles of *Khushū*'. Parents can encourage children to share their thoughts on how mindfulness during Salah helps them concentrate better in school or other activities.

- **Recitation and Contemplation of the Qur'an**

The Qur'an encourages believers to recite its verses slowly and thoughtfully. Allah says,

"Or add to it, and recite the Quran as it ought to be recited."
(*The Qur'an, 73:4*).

This practice requires attention and contemplation, helping to strengthen concentration. Reflecting on the meanings of the Qur'anic verses encourages deep thinking. This habit of reflection can improve one's ability to focus and engage in other activities more attentively. Local mosques and community centers can host workshops dedicated to Qur'an recitation and contemplation. Each workshop can begin with a group recitation of selected verses from the Qur'an, followed by guided reflection sessions. This helps participants practice mindfulness by focusing on the words and their meanings, encouraging deeper comprehension and connection.

- **Avoiding Excessive Entertainment**

Islam emphasizes balance and moderation and teaches the importance of moderation in all aspects of life (*Ref: The Qur'an, 28: 76*). Engaging in purposeful and meaningful activities, rather than mindless entertainment, can help train the mind to focus. Activities like reading beneficial books, engaging in constructive hobbies, and participating in community service are encouraged. Families can plan a series of engaging, screen-free activities throughout the day that promote mindfulness and active participation. These can include workshops, outdoor games, group discussions, and skill-building sessions that encourage interaction without digital distractions.

- **Community and Social Interaction**

Islam encourages participation in beneficial gatherings and keeping the company of those who remind one of Allah (*Ref: The Qur'an, 9: 119*). Positive social interactions can inspire youth to engage in activities that require focus and mindfulness. Local mosques, community centers, and families can host various events to encourage youth to come together for enjoyable and educational activities. These gatherings can feature a diverse range of engaging and healthy activities as part of their programs.

By implementing these Islamic teachings, the youth can develop habits that enhance focus, nurture mindfulness, and foster a lifestyle that combats the distractions of the modern world.

Conclusion

The cognitive challenges confronting Generation Z are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with the complexities of modern technological advancements and social dynamics. This paper has elucidated key issues such as the allure of virtual life, susceptibility to gaslighting, information overload, a culture of instant gratification, and reduced attention spans. Each of these challenges presents significant obstacles to cognitive well-being, necessitating comprehensive strategies for intervention.

From an Islamic perspective, the recommended strategies provide

valuable insights for enhancing cognitive resilience among Generation Z. Emphasizing the appreciation of time, moderation, and the cultivation of genuine social connections can mitigate the distractions posed by virtual environments. Furthermore, developing critical thinking and a commitment to thorough investigation can empower individuals to navigate the complexities of gaslighting effectively.

Addressing information overload requires a proactive approach involving the pursuit of beneficial knowledge, effective time management, self-reflection, and seeking wisdom from scholars. The cultivation of patience and the acceptance of delayed gratification serve as powerful antidotes to the pervasive culture of instant gratification, fostering a sense of fulfillment and contentment. Finally, promoting mindfulness in worship, engaging in Qur'anic recitation, and prioritizing meaningful community interactions can significantly improve attention spans.

Therefore, by integrating Islamic teachings with practical cognitive strategies, there exists a profound potential to equip Generation Z with the tools necessary to navigate the cognitive challenges of the modern era. This holistic approach not only addresses the immediate cognitive concerns but also fosters a deeper understanding of the ethical and spiritual dimensions essential for

sustained cognitive well-being in a rapidly evolving world. Continued research in this area is essential to further explore these intersections and to develop frameworks that support the mental health and cognitive resilience of future generations.

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Conflict of Interest

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PAPER DRIVEN FROM THESIS


Enhancing Talent Management through Serious Games: A Key Factor in Improving the Quality of 'Organizational Human' Work Life

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
<div>Article History:</div> <div>Received: 15 November 2023</div> <div>Revised: 05 January 2024</div> <div>Accepted: 10 February 2024</div> <div>Key Words:</div> <div>Serious Games</div> <div>Human Resources</div> <div>Talent Management</div> <div>Organizational Human</div> <div>Quality of Work Life</div> <div>DOI:</div> <div>https://doi.org/10.22034/IMJPL.2024.9970</div> <div>This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</div> <div></div>		<div>SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: In their quest for survival, organizations must comprehend and adapt to the evolving conditions of the modern environment. This necessity fosters organizational dynamism and enhances productivity. In the meantime, human resources, as the vital force of the organization, play a crucial role in fulfilling its mission and vision. Therefore, the recruitment and development of human resources emerge as fundamental components of effective human resource management. This study aims to investigate serious games in organizational talent management, with a focus on serious games.</div> <div>METHOD & FINDING: This research employed a mixed-method approach, and thematic analysis was utilized to explore the typology of serious games and examine their impact on two dimensions: talent attraction and development and their influence on enhancing the quality of organizational human work life. Also, an expert panel of seven human resources professionals, experienced in assessment centers and serious games, facilitated the thematic search process.</div> <div>CONCLUSION: In terms of categorizing serious games in talent management and their role in enhancing the QWL for organizational humans, 188 codes were extracted, of which sixteen core themes were related to talent attraction and development. Of the sixteen themes identified, three themes were focused on talent attraction: role-playing, oral presentation, and gamified psychological testing. Six themes were dedicated to talent development: educational energizers, educational icebreakers, educational nudges, escape rooms, storytelling, and virtual simulations. Additionally, seven themes were effective for both talent attraction and development: boot camps, group discussions, board games, case studies, handicraft creation, information search, and gamification.</div>
<div>* Corresponding Author:</div> <div>Email: mj.zahraee@gmail.com</div> <div>ORCID: 0009-0004-3061-0448</div>		<div>Article Address Published on the Journal Site:</div> <div>http://p-l.journals.miu.ac.ir/article_9970.html</div>
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Introduction

Organizations continually strive for dynamism and sustainability, which are essential for maintaining their position by adapting to temporal conditions. To ensure this, a deep understanding of the environment and the necessary methodologies for achieving organizational dynamism and sustainability is required. Moreover, the responsibility for realizing the vision, goals, and mission of an organization lies directly with its human resources (HR), acknowledged as the most valuable asset of any organization.

Research reveals that organizations often struggle with recruiting, developing, and retaining flexible and adaptable employees within their talent management frameworks. This indicates that organizations face challenges in identifying and utilizing employee competencies to meet their goals (*Vural et al, 2012, p.341*).

It is also noteworthy that traditional approaches to training and development may no longer serve organizational needs effectively. Creating competitive advantages and addressing challenges requires innovative approaches to training and development (*Noe, 2020*).

In such a situation, and by researching the historical studies of the world, it is observed that some countries develop relations due to the connections or interests that have been created at the level of their leaders and

elites, or according to their positions and relations, and even in at a higher level, due to border and geographical commonalities and military necessities in the defense of each other's rights, they form union and consortium, such as The United Nations (UN), The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), The Arab League (AL), The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), The Commonwealth of Nations (CN), The European Union (EU), Member States of NATO, Australia and New Zealand and America Security Treaty (ANZUS), etc (*Badra, 2022a, p.176*).

Consequently, serious games have attracted the attention of HR managers in advanced organizations as a means to enhance the identification and development of future leaders, thereby improving the Quality of Work Life (QWL) in the contemporary era.

The hadith of Imam Ali, which represents the two-way relationship between individual and organizational reform, can indicate the synergy between human resource development and organizational goals. He said, “If a man sets right matters between himself and Allah, then Allah sets right matters between him and other people; and if a man sets right the affairs of his next life then Allah sets right for him the affairs of this world. Whoever is a preacher for himself is protected by Allah” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, 11th century CE, Wisdom. 89*).

On the other hand, understanding organizations in terms of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the degree of understanding of the future and the ability to adapt to the requirements of the new era, and the quantitative and qualitative improvement of human resources in the talent management process indicate the need to take serious and managerial games seriously in the organizational system, and the research findings can lead the application of the research problem to the attraction and development of organizational resource with the approach of improving the QWL towards achieving organizational goals.

Considering this problem design, considering human resources as a factor in the organization's movement toward achieving organizational goals requires, first of all, understanding the requirements of organizational human resources. Therefore, the main question of the research is: what is the typology of serious games in talent management and its effect on giving meaning to the QWL of organizational humans in the contemporary era?

Theoretical Foundations

Serious games play a significant role in talent management by enhancing the quality and meaning of organizational human work life. These interactive and engaging tools are designed not only for entertainment but to address various aspects of professional development, learning, and employee engagement. By

integrating serious games into talent management strategies, organizations can foster skill development, improve communication, and promote problem-solving abilities among employees.

Moreover, these games help create a dynamic and stimulating work environment, encouraging employees to connect with their roles on a deeper level. This approach contributes to a more meaningful work experience by aligning employees' personal growth with organizational objectives. As a result, serious games serve as a valuable tool in enhancing productivity, motivation, and the overall well-being of the workforce, making them an integral part of modern talent management practices.

Different perspectives exist regarding the definition of serious games. One perspective holds that a serious game should include a genuine entertainment element that appears to merge with a practical purpose (*Silzer & Dowell, 2009*).

A serious game has the potential to enrich the user's experience through multifaceted interaction, which can be useful in various fields such as education, health training, or interpersonal communication (*Ma et al, 2011*). While serious games can indeed be entertaining, their primary purpose is to educate and impart skills and experiences to their audience (*Khani Kordabadi, 2014*).

One notable advantage of using serious games is their ability to create

motivational factors that significantly enhance learning. Researchers argue that serious games help develop critical thinking, foster creativity, and enhance skills related to problem-solving and decision-making. Furthermore, serious

games provide a unique platform for learning by situating knowledge attraction within meaningful and practical scenarios (*Lameras et al, 2017, p. 972*).

The criteria for game evaluation tools are listed in the table below:

Table 1. Classification Criteria of the Evaluation and Development Center's Auxiliary Tools from Taylor's Perspective

Criteria	Examples
Audience	Senior Managers Operational Managers Basic Managers Talented Employees in both Public and Private Organizations
Goal	Recruitment and Identification Learning and Development Research and Investigation
Applicable Tools	Educational Games Simulations Role-Playing Group Physical Activities Group Discussions Analytical Exercises Information Search Psychological Assessments

(Taylor, 2007)

While entertainment games focus on enjoyment and emphasize valuable experiences, serious games focus on learning elements and emphasize problem-solving.

On the other hand, talent management is a process that begins with identifying talent and progresses toward development, advancement, and flourishing, with advancements in information and communication technologies providing innovative solutions in this field (*Triantafillidou & Lappas, 2022*).

The process of talent management involves assessing organizational needs for talent to execute business strategies, discovering and identifying the capacity

of existing talents within the organization, and evaluating talent readiness for higher job positions (*Wright et al, 2017*).

In summary, scholars in this field emphasize the importance of talent attraction, development, retention, and preservation, viewing human resources as organizational talent.

Another key concept discussed in this research is the organizational human and enhancing their QWL. Organizational human refers to the presence and performance of individuals within organizational roles. Organizational humans are those who contribute to the organization in response to various stimuli (*Scott, 2002*).

While definitions in organizational theory may indicate a universal truth about organizations, multiple, diverse theories exist that are not necessarily consistent with each other (*Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013*). Also, from the perspective of Mulla Sadra, the organizational human exercises will and deliberation (*Gaeeni, 2018, p. 105*).

Finally, QWL directly refers to conceptualizing a human-centered lifestyle within an organization. QWL reflects the real conditions of work in the organization, displaying employees' unique attitudes and feelings toward their jobs (*Beaudin & Edgar, 2003*). It is a method that strengthens employee satisfaction and performance (*Rose et al, 2006, p. 61*). Accordingly, QWL encompasses methods and approaches aimed at preserving motivated HR to achieve optimal performance, productivity, and organizational goals.

Literature Review

- ☐ Fatehi Jefroodi (2023) examined effective criteria within the theory of organizational games, which assesses the interactions and interdependent relationships among multiple decision-makers.
- ☐ Mohammadian et al (2022) studied the effectiveness of gamification in recruitment processes, focusing on a tourism company. Their findings indicated that gamified recruitment processes were well-received by stakeholders, including customers, managers, and attendants. The research suggests that other companies in tourism, hospitality, and related fields might also benefit from redesigning their human resource management processes through gamification.
- ☐ Pacheco-Velazquez et al (2023) proposed a collaborative method for creating serious games, aiming to achieve goals beyond entertainment, such as learning, behavior change, or skill development. This structured approach increases the likelihood of producing engaging, effective, and learning-friendly games. Overall, collaborative approaches and active learning have emerged as priorities, integrating technological tools. Consequently, simulations and serious games are seen as effective strategies in education, offering advantages like enhanced critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, and better retention of practical knowledge.
- ☐ Allal-Chérif et al (2022) investigated the role of virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and augmented reality games in educational sciences, such as physics. Reviewing studies from 2011 to 2021, they analyzed common evaluation methods and assessed their strengths and weaknesses. The results show that serious games have improved the

educational experience in both sciences and other fields.

Despite the volume of previous studies, direct research focused on the categorization of serious games in talent management and their role in enhancing the QWL in the contemporary era was not found. This highlights the unique contribution of the present study in addressing a gap in the existing literature.

Research Theoretical Framework

Human resource issues, including recruitment, selection, training, and retention under the concept of QWL, have directed the focus of organizational leaders and managers toward solving issues related to these areas. The success and leadership of organizations in promoting the QWL for organizational HR in the modern era largely depend on these factors.

More importantly, The Holy Qur'an emphasizes the dignity of human beings and describes them as custodians on Earth, as indicated in the following verse:

"And surely We have honored the children of Adam, and We carry them in the land and the sea, and We have given them of the good things, and We have made them to excel by an appropriate excellence over most of those whom We have created" (The Qur'an, 17: 70).

In this context, preparing employees both mentally and physically as

organizational talents requires organizational leaders to address various issues. One of these essential approaches is the use of organizational games, which is the main focus of this study. Specifically, the study explores serious games in talent management and their role in enhancing the QWL for organizational humans in the modern era.

The concept of serious games in talent management can be related to the butterfly effect, a management metaphor. According to this theory, predicting a complex system is impossible without considering all minor factors that might have even a minimal impact on the system. Every system has points where slight changes can lead to significant transformations (*Entezari & Azizi Bandarabadi, 2017*).

In this way, organizational talents can achieve inner peace and organizational productivity through various serious games. This selection process is akin to an artist leaving a mark on the creation canvas, a unique work in the realm of relationships and connections, displayed in the classroom and teaching logic. Therefore, serious games become an integral part of talent management, where concepts emerge from a philosophical approach, transforming employees into decision-makers who help the organization achieve its goals (*Badra, 2022b, pp. 298-299*).

On the other hand, many studies have shown that serious games can

improve engagement, motivation, learning strategies, and cognition. The prominent benefits of serious games may be enjoyment, followed by increased happiness, satisfaction, and positive attitudes. Serious games make the audience enjoy themselves while playing, increasing their levels of happiness and satisfaction, and improving their attitudes toward

learning. Keeping the challenges at an appropriate level is the key to maintaining players' interest in the game; also, a collaborative environment can be used to increase the level of audience enthusiasm for the game (*Laamarti et al, 2014*).

The following diagram depicts the conceptual framework of the research according to the explanations given:

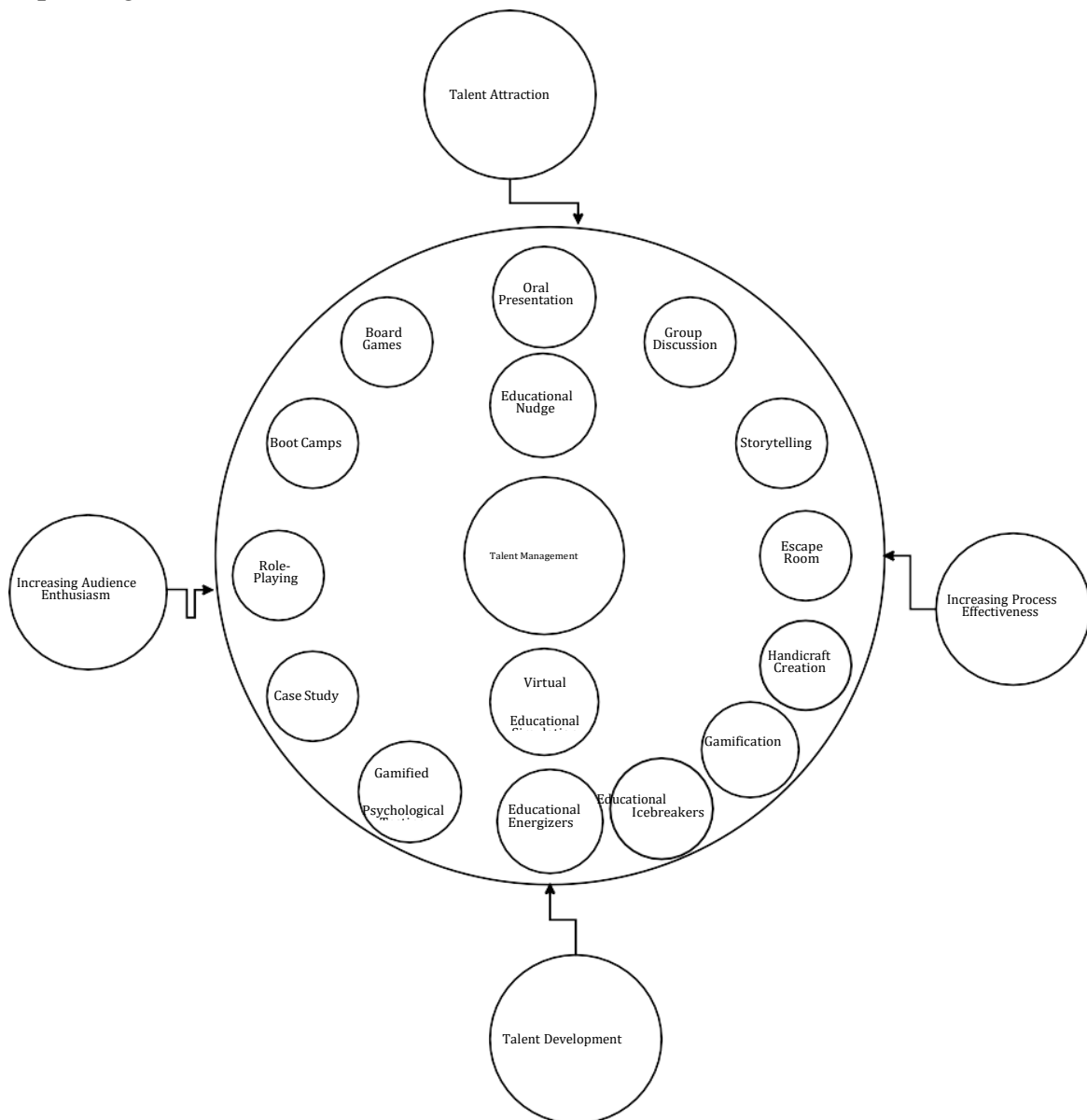


Diagram 1. Research Theoretical Framework

Thematic Analysis and Research Findings

Following the initial open coding, 188 codes were extracted. To avoid lengthening the article, only the results of this process are reported here. Next, secondary coding was

conducted based on the frequency and thematic relevance of the codes, grouping them into primary themes. This step involved categorizing serious games according to their frequency, as detailed in the table below:

Table 2. Condensation and Classification of Serious Games in Talent Management

Basic Theme (Secondary Code)	Frequency	Organizer Theme	Inclusive Theme
Storytelling	16	Talent Attraction and Development	Serious Games
Board Games	24		
Information Search	10		
Handicraft Creation	27		
Group Discussion	19		
Role-Playing	12		
Educational Icebreakers	5		
Educational Energizers	5		
Virtual Educational Simulation	21		
Educational Nudge	17		
Gamification (Points, Badges, List of Elected)	6		
Case Study	10		
Escape Room	3		
Boot Camps	4		
Oral Presentation	3		
Gamified Psychological Testing	6		

In this stage, thematic analysis categorized serious games into primary and secondary codes, identifying which types of games were more effective for talent attraction, talent development, or

both. A panel of experts was asked which games were most suitable for enhancing the QWL for organizational humans. The results are shown in the table below:

Table 3. A Validated Positioning of Serious Games in Talent Management

Games	Talent Attraction	Talent Development	Application in Talent Attraction and Development	
			Increasing Audience Enthusiasm	Increasing Process Effectiveness
Storytelling	2	6	5	4
Board Games	4	6	4	4
Information Search	5	5	2	6
Handicraft Creation	6	4	6	2
Group Discussion	5	7	3	6
Role-Playing	7	4	2	6
Educational Icebreakers	1	6	7	4
Educational Energizers	0	7	7	5
Virtual Educational Simulation	4	5	2	6
Educational Nudge	1	6	4	5
Gamification (Points, Badges, List of Elected)	6	4	4	4
Case Study	4	5	1	6
Escape Room	3	5	7	2
Boot Camps	4	5	2	6
Oral Presentation	7	3	4	3
Gamified Psychological Testing	6	3	4	4

The thematic categorization of serious games in talent management, as outlined above, was based on feedback from a panel of seven HR experts. From the 188 initial and secondary codes identified in the exploratory coding phase, 2 Organizer Themes and 16 Basic themes

were identified, which were thematized under the overarching theme of serious games in talent management. Accordingly, the network of themes of this type of game is drawn in Table 3 as shown in the following diagram:

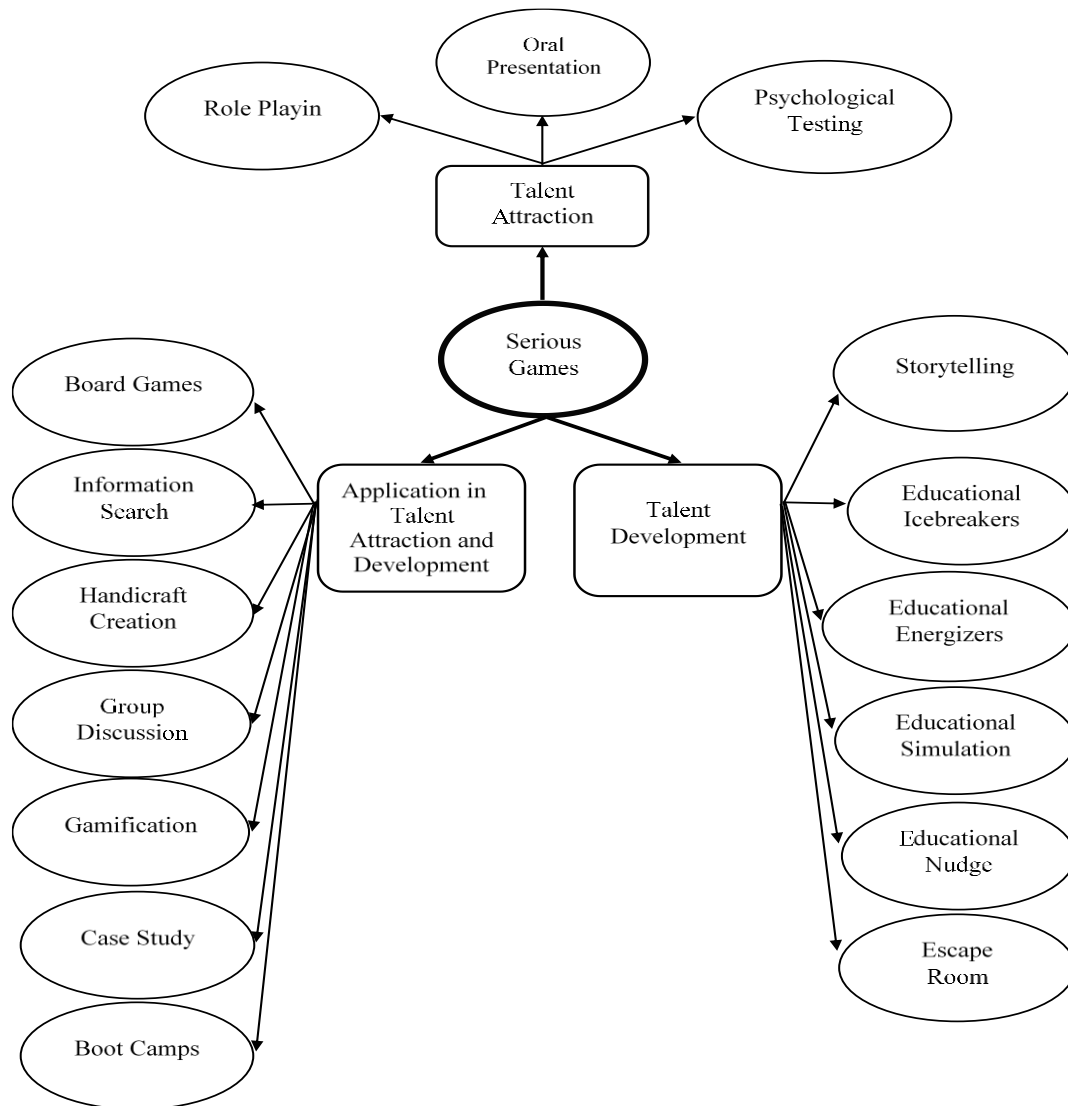


Diagram 2. Themes Analysis Network of Serious Games in Talent Management

It is important to note that serious games identified through thematic analysis, such as board games, information search, and group discussion, can enhance talent attraction and development. Also, certain games are more suited for either attraction or development alone, while others serve both purposes effectively.

Conclusion

To address the primary research question regarding the categorization of serious games in talent management and their role in enhancing the QWL for organizational humans, a total of 195 codes were initially extracted. Following a review and scientific consensus, some codes were omitted, resulting in a final analysis of 188 codes. Sixteen basic

themes related to talent attraction and development were identified.

In the subsequent phase, a questionnaire was developed and distributed among a panel of seven HR experts, with data analyzed through thematic analysis. Out of the 16 identified themes, three were found to be exclusively beneficial for talent attraction, six were specifically beneficial for talent development, and seven were effective for both attraction and development. Additionally, the panel's feedback highlighted the importance of both process effectiveness and audience engagement in these serious games.

The basic themes identified as serious game criteria for talent attraction and development include board games, information search, handicraft creation, group discussions, role-playing, boot camps, gamification, case studies, oral presentations, gamified psychological tests, storytelling, escape rooms, educational icebreakers, educational energizers, virtual simulations, and educational nudges. Of these, three are suited solely for attraction (role-playing, oral presentation, gamified psychological testing), six are designated for development alone (educational energizers, educational icebreakers, educational nudges, escape rooms, storytelling, virtual simulations), and seven serve both purposes (boot camps, group discussions, board

games, case studies, handicraft creation, information search, and gamification).

From the final 188 themes identified, 21 codes were specific to talent attraction, 67 codes focused on talent development, and 100 codes applied to both attraction and development. These codes served as primary themes, emphasizing the importance of serious games in talent management and their role in enhancing the QWL for organizational humans in the modern era. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ☐ Utilizing Group and Collaborative Games in Talent Attraction and Development: To increase engagement and efficiency in talent attraction and development processes, it is recommended to use games that encourage audience participation, such as energizers, icebreakers, board games, and handicraft creation.
- ☐ Improving Traditional Methods with Purposeful Games for Talent Attraction and Development: Since tools like role-playing and boot camps were among the most commonly used in this study, it is suggested to enhance traditional methods by integrating purposeful games for talent attraction and development in organizations.

- ❑ Replacing Single-Purpose Games with Multipurpose Games like Boot Camps: To improve both talent attraction and retention rates, consider using multipurpose games like Boot Camps, which are effective for both attraction and development.
- ❑ Localizing Serious Games According to Cultural Structure for Public and Private Sector Organizations: Instead of using games that may not align with cultural norms, it is advised to consider culturally adapted games for organizational environments in Iran. For example, simulation and board games designed by Iranian researchers in academic institutions like Imam Hossein University can be more effective in local contexts.

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The content of the article was written by the corresponding author. At the same time, the second author was

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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