

Wisdom of the Past, Leadership of the Future: An Examination of Nasihat Al-Muluk from the Perspective of Modern Management

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the guidance presented in Imam Al-Ghazali's *Nasihat al-Muluk* can be interpreted from a modern management perspective and how it continues to retain its relevance for contemporary managers. Designed as a conceptual analysis based on document review within a qualitative research framework, the study explores how these principles can be adapted to modern management approaches and how managers can benefit from Al-Ghazali's teachings in today's complex business environment. The findings indicate that the advice contained in *Nasihat al-Muluk* embodies many principles that remain influential in contemporary management thought. Considering the ethical dilemmas, leadership deficiencies, and managerial challenges faced by today's managers, Al-Ghazali's principles provide a robust framework for addressing such issues. In this regard, the study highlights the unique contribution of classical management thought to modern management literature and serves as a comprehensive guide for both current managers and individuals preparing for leadership roles.

Keywords: Leadership, Managerial Challenges, Ethical Dilemmas, *Nasihat Al-Muluk*, Modern Management.

1. INTRODUCTION

Siyasetnames are advisory texts written for rulers (e.g., sultans, sovereigns), containing key references to their historical context and highlighting aspects of governance requiring improvement (Güzel, 2025:301). In the Islamic world, works addressing state administration and rulership were often compiled and organized as manuscripts and collectively referred to as *Siyasetname*. These texts were intended to guide rulers and statesmen toward just governance, offering practical recommendations grounded in politics, ethics, and religion (Adaloğlu, 2004:1).

The deep-rooted administrative tradition of the Persian Empire provided the primary context in which *Siyasetname* writing developed most extensively. With the spread of Islam in the region, the Persian tradition of *Siyasetname* literature continued to flourish, while Arabic works were incorporated into the genre from an early period. During the Seljuk era, Persian remained dominant, whereas the Ottomans translated existing Persian and Arabic works into Turkish and also produced original Turkish *Siyasetnames* (Bayraktar & Tüzüner, 2021:71–72).

Adaloğlu (2009) demonstrates that *Siyasetnames* systematically address the fundamental principles of state governance, the qualities required of rulers, processes of appointment and supervision, institutional structures such as finance and the military, and the ruler's responsibilities toward the public (Adaloğlu, 2018, p. 315). In the work examined in this study, Al-Ghazali not only constructs an ideal model of leadership but also presents it systematically as a guide applicable to all levels of administration, from the highest authority to the lowest-ranking personnel (Biner, 2016:45).

Prominent examples of the *Siyasetname* tradition in the Turkish-Islamic world include *Kutadgu Bilig* by Yusuf Has Hacib and *Siyasetname* by Nizam al-Mulk. In the Ottoman period, *Asafname* by Lutfi Pasha and the didactic mathnawi of Nabi further illustrate the continuity of this tradition. Although *Siyasetnames* reflect the socio-political conditions of their respective periods, Al-Ghazali likewise produced a work representative of his own era.

Within the context of his time, Al-Ghazali articulated his ideas with an emphasis on religious references, aiming to reconstruct deteriorating social structures and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of political authority and administrative actors. Among his major works—such as *Ihyâ Ulûm al-Dîn*, *Kimiya-yi Saâdat*, *al-Iqtisâd fî al-Itiqâd*, and *Mizân al-Amal*—*Nasihat al-Muluk* is identified as the most widely translated (Yazar, 2011:116). The translation used in this study was completed by Osman Şekerci in 1969 (Gazali, 2020:180), and the 2020 edition is employed here.

The primary aim of this study is to re-evaluate the managerial principles presented in Imam Al-Ghazali's *Nasihat al-Muluk* within the framework of modern management and to demonstrate their practical relevance for contemporary managers. Given the challenges faced by managers today, it is argued that the intellectual legacy of classical Islamic thought can offer a distinctive contribution to modern management literature.

In this context, in order to better understand the influence of his work on managerial thought, it is appropriate to first examine the life and intellectual world of Imam Al-Ghazali. Born in 1058 in the city of Tus, located in the Khorasan region of Iran, Al-Ghazali died in 1111 in the same city. He was born in the village of Gazale near Tus and later became known as "Ghazali" in reference to this origin. Owing to his significant contributions and intellectual legacy, he has been honored with titles such as "Imam," "Zayn al-Din," and "Hujjat al-Islam" (Çapak, 2016:7–8). Abu Hamid Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Ghazali pursued his education in his hometown, as well as in Jurjan and Nishapur, before moving to Baghdad, where he produced numerous scholarly works (Yavuz, 2012:7). He later resided in cities such as Jerusalem and Damascus and served in various madrasa teaching positions (Gazali, 2020:4).

Al-Ghazali is regarded as one of the most prominent intellectuals of the Islamic world (Çapak, 2016:7). The ideas and approaches of scholars are shaped by the conditions of their time, and Al-Ghazali was no exception. He did not remain indifferent to the issues of his era; rather, drawing on both his scholarly expertise and sense of responsibility, he addressed problems related to governance (Yavuz, 2012:9–13).

Al-Ghazali's intellectual legacy extended beyond the Islamic world; approximately a century after his death, his works were translated into Hebrew and Latin, gaining recognition in the West. These translations, particularly those initiated by Jewish scholars, influenced many Western thinkers, including René Descartes, David Hume, and Blaise Pascal. What distinguishes Al-Ghazali is not merely his transmission of earlier intellectual traditions, but his ability to reinterpret and present them in a profound, systematic, and compelling manner for future generations (Güneş, 2015:61).

His works continue to attract scholarly attention and are widely consulted as guiding resources in various domains of life.

This study adopts a document analysis method and analyzes the text within the conceptual framework of management and organizational literature. Both thematic and word-based content analysis techniques are employed. The managerial themes identified in the work are categorized under specific headings and subsequently examined in relation to modern management theories and contemporary literature within an integrated framework.

While the study takes into account the historical and social context of the work, it reinterprets the text through the lens of contemporary management. This approach enables an exploration of both the continuity and transformation of classical *Siyasetname* literature within modern management thought. Accordingly, the content of the work is analyzed from a literature-based perspective, managerial themes are identified, and relevant concepts are classified in relation to modern management approaches.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is based on the 2020 Büyüyenay Publications edition of *Nasihat al-Muluk*, translated by Osman Şekerci. Al-Ghazali's work addresses not only state rulers but also managers of all kinds, appealing broadly to individuals in positions of authority (Gazali, 2020:9). His conception of ideal governance is articulated through verses from the Qur'an, hadiths, and aphorisms, and is further supported by the views of prominent philosophers and religious scholars, alongside examples of just rulers (Biner, 2016:46). Although it is not definitively known whether *Nasihat al-Muluk* was written for

the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar or Malikshah, the work provides guidance tailored to individuals according to their respective positions and ranks (Gazali, 2020:9). Based on other translations and in the absence of the original Persian manuscript, it is generally accepted—drawing on Arabic sources—that the work was addressed to Muhammad b. Malikshah (Gazali, 2020:23; Say, 2015:209; Biner, 2016:48). As a product of Al-Ghazali's mature period, *Nasihat al-Muluk* employs the metaphor of a tree to describe human life: while the tree represents worldly existence, its branches symbolize human actions and deeds. The nourishment of this tree is attributed to two essential sources—knowing the world and attaining self-knowledge (Gazali, 2020:10). Structured as a collection of advice for rulers, the work consists of seven chapters. The first addresses religious matters, while the remaining six focus on governance, presenting insights related to both managerial qualities and the nature of administration. Consequently, the text offers guidance not only for those in leadership positions but also for all stakeholders within organizational structures. As a product of accumulated experience and rational reflection, it holds a significant place within the Siyasetname tradition.

Al-Ghazali's ideas have influenced various fields; however, his emphasis on justice as a cornerstone of both individual and social order has universal significance. His focus on the responsibilities of rulers demonstrates that justice is not merely a legal concept but a fundamental element of social stability. Accordingly, he underscores that administrators must prioritize justice and act as just rulers in their respective positions. The central theme of *Nasihat al-Muluk* is thus justice. Al-Ghazali begins his work under the heading "Justice and Equity," framing his guidance within these core values. He elaborates on the principles of justice and equity through ten fundamental categories, addressing the concept in multiple dimensions. This framework extends beyond those in positions of authority to include subordinates and individuals closely associated with governance, directly shaping their understanding of justice.

In his letter addressed to Sultan Sanjar, Al-Ghazali further reinforces this emphasis by referring to the hadiths of the Prophet, advocating justice and illustrating the critical importance of governing the public with fairness (Gazali, 2020:16).

2.1. The Ideal Manager and Required Virtues

In his work, Al-Ghazali places particular emphasis on the qualities of the ideal manager and elaborates in detail on the virtues that a leader should possess. These virtues can be categorized under several sub-dimensions, as outlined below.

2.1.1. Leadership, Ethics, and Human Management

The text highlights the ethical and human values expected of an ideal manager and offers guidance for being recognized as a legitimate leader. In this regard, the following principles are emphasized:

- Managers should address the needs of employees and society, demonstrating support in times of difficulty (employee and customer satisfaction) (Gazali, 2020:62).
- An open-door policy should be adopted, ensuring accessibility and responsiveness to those in need (transparency and accessibility) (Gazali, 2020:95).
- Employees should be warned regarding their mistakes; those who show remorse should be forgiven, while ill-intentioned individuals should be sanctioned (discipline and employee relations management) (Gazali, 2020:88).
- Managers should evaluate employees and the public with justice, maintaining equal distance from all (equality and justice) (Gazali, 2020:107).
- While managers may engage with individuals for functional purposes, forming overly intimate relationships may undermine trust; thus, professionalism should be maintained (professionalism and business ethics) (Gazali, 2020:113).
- Orders should be communicated with seriousness rather than in a humorous manner (authority and managerial seriousness).
- False promises should be avoided, as they erode trust and alienate people (Gazali, 2020:132).
- Assistants should be selected based on integrity and modesty, avoiding individuals who may be socially disapproved (Gazali, 2020:133).
- Punishments should not be driven by anger but should aim at correction and improvement (Gazali, 2020:133).
- Managers should foster satisfaction among people; the well-being of both employees and stakeholders is essential, particularly in terms of organizational culture (Gazali, 2020:133).

2.1.2. Authority, Managerial Discipline, and Decision-Making: For management processes to be carried out more effectively and efficiently, decision-making mechanisms must be grounded on solid foundations. According to Al-Ghazali, in order to ensure the sustainability of these processes, it is essential for those in managerial positions to provide a fair working environment and to demonstrate exemplary leadership. It can thus be argued that many ideas manifested today under the framework of contemporary management principles were, in earlier periods, articulated in terms of maintaining authority and enhancing decision-making capabilities. In this context, the key issues emphasized by Al-Ghazali regarding the establishment of authority and managerial competence can be outlined as follows:

- An independent inspection/audit body should be established to measure satisfaction with management and to obtain feedback (corporate auditing and performance evaluation) (Gazali, 2020:65).
- Managers should not make decisions without sufficient knowledge and should not abandon their duties under fear or pressure (evidence-based decision-making) (Gazali, 2020:110).
- An effective management system should be established to ensure the orderly functioning of operations (corporate governance and organizational structure) (Gazali, 2020:79–99).
- Managers should be prudent and well-informed in their decisions, avoid haste, and utilize consultative mechanisms (strategic planning and risk management) (Gazali, 2020:111–177).
- Lessons should be drawn from past experiences; honest leaders should be taken as role models, and guidance should be sought from wise individuals (historical perspective and knowledge management) (Gazali, 2020:111–177).
- Various policies should be implemented to establish authority over people (Gazali, 2020:133).
- Managers should refrain from actions or influences that may weaken authority or fail to provide benefit (Gazali, 2020:133).
- Managers should remain vigilant and periodically monitor the behavior and attitudes of subordinates (corporate auditing and performance evaluation) (Gazali, 2020:133).
- Managers should not hesitate to dismiss subordinates who abuse their positions (betrayal of duty) (Gazali, 2020:133).

2.1.3. Resource Management and Financial Sustainability

- Imam Al-Ghazali articulated various principles aimed at ensuring the sustainability of management processes. When classified in terms of contemporary concepts, these principles can be summarized as follows (Gazali, 2020:97–105):
- Budgeting should be aligned with strategic priorities: expenditures must be structured in accordance with long-term organizational goals, and resource waste should be prevented.
- Efficiency-oriented financial management should be adopted: performance-based spending policies should be implemented to ensure effective resource utilization and to minimize unnecessary costs.
- The private use of organizational assets should be prevented: both employees and managers should refrain from using company resources for personal purposes, adhering to ethical standards in resource utilization.
- Fairness in wages and benefits should be ensured: equal opportunities should be provided to employees, and a merit-based reward system should be established.
- Financial risk management strategies should be developed: contingency budgets should be prepared against economic fluctuations, with an emphasis on sustainable growth.
- Expenditures should comply with principles of social responsibility and sustainability: organizations should consider not only their financial performance but also their impact on society and the environment.

2.1.4. Personal Attributes and Competencies

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, an ideal manager should possess certain personal attributes. These characteristics not only contribute to the effective and sustainable execution of management processes but also play a decisive role in both the selection of managers and the shaping of their conduct

once in office. In this context, the fundamental personal qualities that managers should possess—both during the selection process and in the performance of their duties—are outlined as follows (Gazali, 2020:111, 136, 177):

- Managers should be intelligent, knowledgeable, perceptive, and endowed with sound judgment.
- They should be courageous, resolute, and just.
- They should value consultation (shura) and act with prudence and deliberation in executing their duties.
- They should possess good moral character and demonstrate benevolence toward others.
- They should seek feedback about themselves, even from those who do not personally know them (self-awareness and leadership development).
- They should refrain from arrogance and pride stemming from the power associated with their position.

2.2. Advice to Managers

Al-Ghazali places significant emphasis on justice and governance in his work, examining in detail the responsibilities of managers. According to him, a manager's success depends not only on the ability to establish authority but also on the adoption of a just and virtuous approach to governance. In this context, he provides in-depth guidance on managerial duties and relations with the public. Under this heading, the fundamental recommendations offered by Al-Ghazali to managers are presented.

2.2.1. Maintaining Continuous Communication with Scholars and Advisors

- Al-Ghazali emphasizes that maintaining continuous consultation with scholars and advisors is a primary condition for ensuring effective authority. In this regard, he outlines the qualities and expectations that should be sought in advisors as follows:
- Islamic scholars and learned figures of the past, upon entering the presence of rulers, would begin with prayers and expressions of praise, followed by advice and statements of needs; they would then offer recommendations regarding various actions and decisions. In turn, rulers were expected to carefully consider and strive to implement such counsel (Gazali, 2020:19, 54, 142).
- Managers should not initiate actions without consultation (Gazali, 2020:130) and should distance themselves from individuals of little significance in order to avoid being influenced by their opinions (Gazali, 2020:95).
- Advisors and scholars should be of advanced age, as it is assumed that they are less driven by worldly desires and express their views with greater prudence and respect (Gazali, 2020:95).
- To ensure justice, managers should associate with honest scholars who practice what they know and heed their guidance. They should avoid scholars who do not act in accordance with their knowledge. Likewise, the advice of those who display excessive interest in the ruler due to ambition for position and status should be treated with caution. A true scholar should maintain fairness and discernment in offering counsel, avoiding actions that may place either the ruler or others in a compromising or undignified position (Gazali, 2020:48–49).

2.2.2. Establishing an Exemplary Leadership Model

Managers should act in a manner that sets an example for those around them, as individuals in subordinate positions tend to emulate those in higher ranks (Gazali, 2020:55). In this respect, those in managerial positions assume a leading role through their actions and conduct.

According to Al-Ghazali, a manager should embody dignity and forbearance (hilm). He should avoid haste and refrain from making impulsive decisions while carrying out his duties (Gazali, 2020:130).

2.2.3. Mercy and Justice as Fundamental Principles

Managers should exercise caution even in minor personal relations and friendships to avoid undermining perceptions of justice (Gazali, 2020:130). While demonstrating compassion and mercy, those in positions of authority who uphold justice within the system effectively take proactive measures against potential future problems (Gazali, 2020:72).

2.2.4. Merit – Based and Solution – Oriented Management

Managers should primarily surround themselves with competent individuals and distance themselves from those lacking the necessary qualifications. Where merit is not prioritized, disorder and conflict are likely to emerge (Gazali, 2020:95). Moreover, managers should address potential adverse situations with composure and prudence, avoiding violence and excessive severity (Gazali, 2020:63).

To assess whether individuals possess a just disposition, various evaluations should be conducted; those with potential should be trained under the guidance of qualified and experienced individuals (Gazali, 2020:55, 95).

2.2.5. Learning from the Past While Planning for the Future

Managers should approach every situation they encounter with seriousness, recognizing that seemingly minor issues may lead to significant consequences in the future (Gazali, 2020:61). They should draw lessons from the lives of their predecessors and engage in careful future planning to avoid repeating past mistakes. Furthermore, they should refrain from arrogance and ensure that feelings of revenge do not override just conduct (Gazali, 2020:56).

2.2.6. Moderation and Contentment

Managers should maintain balance and moderation in all their actions, carefully observing equilibrium among people and avoiding practices that may lead to waste. Wastefulness, in turn, is likely to result in disorder and corruption (Gazali, 2020:74). If managers are expected to act justly, they must first embody contentment; without contentment, justice cannot be sustained. This principle should be reflected in all aspects of daily life, including consumption patterns such as clothing and food (Gazali, 2020:63). This guidance is not limited to managers but also applies to employees, who should be advised neither to take nor to give anything unjustly (Gazali, 2020:95).

2.2.7. Maintaining Balance While Exercising Authority

All events in the world are interconnected within a dynamic system; when balance and authority are disrupted, these interdependent structures tend to deteriorate further. In his depiction of social disorder, Al-Ghazali attributes corruption to the anger of rulers, the worldly ambitions of scholars, and the miserliness of the wealthy (Gazali, 2020:130). Managers should avoid hasty decision-making and maintain dignity while exercising authority. At the same time, it should be recognized that, in order to ensure both the effective execution of their duties and social order, managers may need to instill a degree of deterrence so that individuals can live with a sense of security (Gazali, 2020:130–131).

2.2.8. Time Management and Managerial Activities

Human beings are subject to time, which is portrayed as an ever-present adversary; each breath taken distances individuals from life and brings them closer to death. In this regard, managers should make deliberate efforts to utilize time effectively. When time cannot be controlled as desired, it is more appropriate for managers to adapt to temporal conditions and organize their activities accordingly (Gazali, 2020:162). The aforementioned recommendations demonstrate that an effective manager must not only possess authority but also embody justice, compassion, openness to consultation, and a commitment to merit. Such a manager should be capable of learning from the past, planning for the future, and exhibiting exemplary yet balanced authority. Managers who use time efficiently and adopt a solution-oriented approach without neglecting organizational and social balance are more likely to achieve both institutional success and societal order.

2.3. The Role of Administrative Levels and Their Surroundings in Governance

The administrative structure cannot be regarded solely as a mechanism responsible for decision-making; rather, it is also shaped by the qualities of those surrounding the manager. The success of a manager is closely linked to the competence and sense of responsibility demonstrated by subordinates. For this reason, managers should carefully select their associates and recognize that they also bear responsibility for their actions (Gazali, 2020:54). Since all individuals involved in governance are part of both decisions and their implementation, remaining silent in the face of injustice or mismanagement (Gazali, 2020:55) implies complicity. Accordingly, not only the manager but all members of the administrative structure must fulfill their

responsibilities to ensure a just and effective system of governance. With the expansion of administrative domains, it becomes inevitable for managers to be supported by numerous assistants, each assuming specific roles and responsibilities. Although these roles are not presented in a strictly literal sense, they can be conceptually outlined as follows (Gazali, 2020:114–126; 151–152): *Supporting the Manager and Demonstrating Loyalty*

- Assistants should support the manager's policies and stand firmly behind his decisions.
- An assistant functions as the manager's eyes, voice, and conscience; therefore, they should remain informed about all developments and maintain continuous consultation with the manager.

The Role of Knowledge and Advisory Functions

- Tasks may be distributed among assistants; however, the chief assistant should be intelligent, knowledgeable, and of advanced age. Senior assistants, having gained experience over time and through interaction with many individuals, are considered more advantageous than younger yet capable ones. Assistants should be upright individuals—learned, courageous, loyal, well-mannered, and capable of maintaining confidentiality.
- Knowledgeable and intelligent assistants should actively participate in consultations and contribute to decision-making processes with their insights.
- A trustworthy assistant should inform the manager of matters unknown to them and assist in validating their judgments.
- Assistants should provide information on issues that may escape the manager's attention and intervene when necessary.

Merit and Character Attributes

- Assistants should be selected from among individuals possessing merit and competence.
- Through the support of a just, prudent, and honest assistant, a manager's reputation and public esteem are enhanced.
- Assistants should be truthful and endowed with discernment, enabling them to make balanced and sound judgments.
- Assistants should be trustworthy, safeguard entrusted responsibilities, and continuously develop themselves in order to ease the managerial workload.

Authoritativeness

- Assistants should be of mature age, authoritative, and disciplined; their presence and seriousness should command respect so that their words carry influence.
- Assistants should possess dignity, lead a disciplined life, and avoid acting impulsively or being driven by uncontrolled desires.

Confidentiality and Balance

- Assistants should be capable of maintaining confidentiality and avoid behaviors that may undermine the manager's trust.
- They should not be arrogant, should exercise caution in their speech, and adopt a firm stance toward adversaries while representing the manager's achievements. These principles should also be reflected in their personal conduct.
- Assistants should consider public approval and demonstrate resilience in the face of challenges, while supporting the manager in upholding justice. These characteristics summarize the fundamental qualities that an effective managerial assistant should possess. Assistants are expected to contribute actively to the stability and success of governance. Such efforts not only alleviate the manager's workload but also enhance the overall effectiveness of the organization.

Relations Between the Manager and Assistants

Managers should exercise particular care in their relationships with assistants, as these relations are crucial for maintaining continuity in governance and ensuring effective authority. A manager should adopt a fair and balanced attitude toward assistants, refrain from hastily imposing punishment, and attend to their needs, especially during periods of stability. Since injustice is defined as interference in another's property, managers should avoid coveting the possessions of both their assistants and subordinates, and instead act with generosity and equity. Furthermore, they should avoid dismissing assistants of sound character and reinforce public trust through consistent and just decisions. Given the necessity of continuous interaction, managers should cultivate a healthy working relationship, remain accessible to assistants, and not disregard their requests for consultation. They should also avoid being influenced by malicious individuals, value the statements of their assistants, and, most importantly, maintain confidentiality regarding entrusted information (Gazali, 2020:38, 148).

In decision-making processes, managers should engage in consultation with assistants or relevant officials. However, careful selection of consultees is essential. Individuals lacking sufficient expertise, those driven by personal indulgence, or those who frequently present personal demands to the manager should be excluded. Similarly, those who refrain from expressing opinions, fail to respond to inquiries, or are overly pleasure-oriented should not be included in consultative processes, as they hinder the effectiveness of deliberation. Additionally, consultations should preferably be conducted individually rather than collectively, since group settings may inhibit open expression or lead to mutual influence. Individual consultations are therefore likely to yield more productive outcomes. Effective consultation contributes to increased organizational activity and, consequently, to overall development (Gazali, 2020:148–149).

2.4. Key Considerations for the Continuity of Governance

The sustainability of governance depends on the manager's ability to make timely and accurate decisions. Premature or delayed decisions may lead to unforeseen adverse outcomes; therefore, managerial processes must be planned with precision. Drawing on the experiences of predecessors, consulting knowledgeable and competent individuals, and establishing effective organizational and coordination mechanisms constitute fundamental elements of the management process. Additionally, monitoring the practical outcomes of decisions and implementing a comprehensive oversight mechanism are among the manager's key responsibilities. Ensuring justice within the organization is also critical. A fair wage policy should be maintained among employees performing similar roles, as disparities in compensation may disrupt organizational harmony and lead to long-term instability and loss of motivation. Through equitable performance management and balanced compensation practices, managers can sustain institutional stability.

Moreover, forming a managerial cadre based on merit and ethical standards is of paramount importance. Factors that may threaten the continuity of governance include the inclusion of individuals who seek to exploit authority for personal gain, lack professional competence, hold questionable values, or exhibit weak disciplinary orientation. Consequently, individuals who are ill-intentioned, self-serving, prone to gossip, or unqualified should be excluded from managerial positions. To strengthen authority, managers should collaborate with trustworthy, knowledgeable, and capable individuals, adopt a culture of consultation, and prioritize merit in administrative structures (Gazali, 2020:131–142).

An effective management approach is primarily achieved through the proper structuring of internal systems; in this regard, managers should first establish discipline within their administrative cadre before focusing on exercising authority over the public. While striving to ensure the welfare of society, managers must operate within legal and ethical boundaries. The continuity of governance depends not merely on the exercise of authority but on the adoption of a just and reliable administrative approach. Anarchy and disorder represent the greatest threats to the stability of governance; therefore, the primary responsibility of managers is to maintain organizational harmony and uphold justice (Gazali, 2020:131–142).

According to Al-Ghazali, the fundamental principle ensuring the continuity of governance is justice. The primary duty of a manager is to safeguard public welfare and ensure societal satisfaction; however, this must be carried out within legal and ethical boundaries. Considering the socio-political conditions of Al-Ghazali's time, anarchy was perceived as the greatest threat. The disruption of social order was regarded as the most significant danger to governance, and the preservation of stability was prioritized above all else. In this context, Al-Ghazali even considers a tyrannical rule to be a lesser evil compared to the risks posed by disorder and chaos. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that the true basis of legitimacy and continuity in governance lies in justice. Accordingly, managers must not only adhere to theoretical principles but also act in accordance with practical political ethics to ensure justice, which is seen as a fundamental requirement for the *حرام* of governance (San, 2015:209).

Al-Ghazali identifies seven principal causes that lead to the weakening of governance and the removal of a manager from office. These include arrogance stemming from power, the abandonment of consultation, the appointment of unqualified individuals to critical positions, the lack of alternative

perspectives in times of need, the neglect of urgent matters, the failure to capitalize on opportunities, and indifference toward public needs. Such negative behaviors undermine the manager's credibility in the eyes of the people, leading to disorder, as well as instability and inefficiency within the administrative system (Gazali, 2020:145).

2.5. Factors Threatening the Continuity of Governance and Difficult to Remedy

The sustainability of governance depends not only on effective leadership and a strong sense of justice but also on the prevention of factors that may disrupt administrative processes. From a historical perspective, certain conditions, once they emerge, make it exceedingly difficult to restore stability and harmony within governance. In this regard, Al-Ghazali identifies four fundamental factors that are particularly difficult to remedy.

The first is the presence of a manager who acts imprudently in state affairs and neglects the conditions of the people; such leadership undermines public trust and weakens governance. The second factor is the emergence of hostility and conflict among individuals, which disrupts administrative cohesion. Third, jealousy and rivalry among individuals within the same professional group may weaken cooperation and solidarity in governance. Finally, the presence of an official responsible for public service who lacks sound judgment can lead to serious deficiencies in decision-making processes.

These conditions significantly hinder the re-establishment of harmony within governance and pose substantial risks to its continuity. Therefore, it is of vital importance for managers to take preventive measures against such adverse factors in order to ensure the sustainability of the administrative system (Gazali, 2020:137).

2.6. The Impact of Governance on People

According to Al-Ghazali, the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by a manager directly influence public perception and the overall success of governance. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that managerial actions generate diverse responses among people and to act with careful consideration of these potential effects. Managers should bear in mind that positive conduct fosters obedience, respect, and trust among the public, whereas negative attitudes may lead to a loss of authority, disorder, and the development of adverse perceptions toward governance. In this context, the managerial attitudes that shape governance and the corresponding behavioral outcomes can be classified as follows (Gazali, 2020:135–136):

Positive Attitudes and Their Outcomes:

According to Imam Al-Ghazali in *Nasihah al-Muluk*, the fundamental virtues expected of an ideal manager include honesty, trustworthiness, justice, generosity, diligence, prudence, measured and appropriate speech, adherence to high moral standards, kindness and empathy toward others, a strong sense of responsibility, patience, the ability to learn from past experiences, and maturity. In response to such attitudes, the following outcomes are observed:

- A manager who demonstrates honesty earns the obedience of people.
- A manager who upholds trustworthiness gains public confidence.
- A just manager secures the affection and loyalty of people.
- A generous manager is remembered with praise.
- A diligent manager ensures the orderly progression of affairs.
- A prudent manager preserves the resources and opportunities entrusted to them.
- A manager who speaks appropriately and with moderation strengthens their authority.
- A manager of sound moral character embodies virtuous governance.
- A manager who upholds knowledge against those driven by indulgence establishes discipline and rationality within governance.
- A manager who treats people with kindness earns their respect.
- A manager who fulfills required duties gains the appreciation of people.
- A patient manager achieves long-term success.
- A manager who learns from past experiences makes more discerning decisions.
- A mature manager enhances both knowledge and managerial competence.

Negative Attitudes and Their Outcomes:

In contrast to the aforementioned positive attributes, negative attitudes such as oppression, miserliness, negligence, impulsiveness, association with the ignorant, and avoidance of responsibility undermine a manager's credibility in the eyes of the public, leading to distrust, injustice, and disorder within governance. Such attitudes give rise to various adverse outcomes, including:

- A tyrannical manager is met with resentment and alienation by the public.
- A miserly manager is subject to social criticism.
- A negligent manager causes disruptions in organizational processes.
- An impulsive manager risks making decisions that lead to regret.
- A manager who associates with ignorant individuals creates additional challenges and problems for themselves. A manager who fails to fulfill essential responsibilities loses authority and diminishes in the eyes of the public.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative research methods, specifically document analysis and textual analysis. The primary data source is Imam Al-Ghazali's *Nasihah al-Muluk*. During the document analysis, an analytical framework was developed based on themes relevant to management and organizational studies. In examining the text, both thematic and word-based content analysis techniques were utilized. Given Al-Ghazali's close engagement with rulers, the work—containing his observations and recommendations—was systematically categorized under specific thematic headings and subsequently integrated with modern management theories and contemporary literature.

In addition, the study adopts a hermeneutic perspective, interpreting the text within its historical context while re-evaluating it through the lens of contemporary management understanding. Although *Nasihah al-Muluk* is primarily presented as advisory literature for rulers, it also provides insights into the governance practices of its time. Accordingly, the study seeks to reveal both the continuity and transformation of classical *Siyasetname* literature within the framework of modern management thought.

3.1. Limitations of the Study

The present study is conducted within the framework of *Nasihah al-Muluk*. Other works of Imam Al-Ghazali, as well as *Siyasetname* texts written by different authors during the same period, are excluded from the scope of this research.

As a qualitative study based on document analysis, the findings are inherently dependent on the interpretation of the text. In this context, the evaluation process may have been influenced by the researcher's conceptual framework and perspective grounded in modern management literature. Therefore, the results should be regarded as conceptual inferences rather than definitive generalizations.

The comparisons made with modern management concepts and approaches are limited to selected themes. Since it is not feasible to encompass all theoretical perspectives within management literature, the analysis is confined to specific dimensions such as merit, authority, leadership, justice, and decision-making. Furthermore, as the work represents a *Siyasetname* composed within a particular historical and cultural context, certain aspects may not directly correspond to contemporary organizational structures. Accordingly, the evaluations offered in this study are intended as conceptual and theoretical interpretations rather than direct prescriptions for practical implementation.

In light of these considerations, the convergence between Al-Ghazali's ideas and contemporary conceptual frameworks is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Management Principles in Nasihat al-Muluk with Modern Management Approaches

Al-Ghazali's Advice	Modern Management Concept	Theme	Modern Theorist / Approach
The manager should be just, honest, and treat people equally	Ethical Leadership	Leadership	Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005:117)
The manager should prioritize the needs of the public	Servant Leadership	Leadership	Greenleaf (1977:20–60); Canaves & Minelli (2022:267)
No action should be initiated without consultation	Participative Management / Board Decision-Making	Decision-Making	Cotton et al. (1988:12); Bass (1996); Xu (2024:1)
Decisions should not be made without sufficient knowledge	Data-Driven Decision-Making	Decision-Making	Deno (2016); Hannabuss (1987); McAfee & Brynjolfsson (2012)
Competent individuals should be selected; merit should be prioritized	Merit-Based Recruitment	Human Resources	Taylor (1911); Drucker (1954; 2016)
Employees should be regularly monitored and evaluated	Performance Management	Resource Management	McGregor (1957); Kaplan & Norton (1992); Armstrong (2006)
Waste should be avoided; expenditures should align with strategic goals	Strategic Budgeting	Resource Management	Anthony & Govindarajan (2007); Freeman (1984); Porter (1985)
Fair wages and equal opportunities should be ensured	Organizational Justice	Resource Management	Adams (1963); Rawls (1971); Greenberg (1987)
Future planning should be based on lessons from past experiences	Organizational Learning / Institutional Memory	Sustainability of Management	Senge (1990); Argyris & Schön (1978); Walsh & Ungson (1991)
The manager should be patient, mature, and self-aware	Emotional Intelligence	Personal Competence	Goleman (1995); Mayer & Salovey (1990); Boyatzis (1982)
An open-door policy should be adopted; accessibility should be ensured	Transparency / Accountability	Transparency	Hood (1991); Yukl (2002); Burns (1978)

Source: Prepared by the author based on Gazali (2020).

4. Conclusion and Evaluation

Imam Al-Ghazali's *Nasihat al-Muluk* occupies a significant place within Islamic political thought as an advisory text that offers both theoretical and practical guidance. Beyond addressing the political structure of its own era, it presents universal principles capable of guiding contemporary managers, providing a profound ethical framework and valuable contributions to modern managerial challenges and the understanding of ethical leadership. The work holds considerable potential to inspire future research in the fields of management, political science, leadership studies, and ethical governance. Particularly in an era where modern governance is increasingly shaped by individual-centered, transparent, and accountable structures, Al-Ghazali's model of the virtuous leader offers both a moral and historical foundation for these values. In this respect, *Nasihat al-Muluk* stands as a unique work that combines elements of moral philosophy and political theory. Its primary objective is to equip managers with a sense of responsibility and to encourage them to govern not for worldly gain, but with a commitment to public welfare and divine accountability. Accordingly, Al-Ghazali's approach represents not merely a collection of advice, but the construction of a justice-centered model of governance. *Nasihat al-Muluk* proposes a model of governance that elevates justice over power, prioritizes public welfare, and continually reminds rulers of their responsibilities. In this sense, it functions as a universal ethical manifesto that addresses not only managers but all individuals engaged in discourse on governance. The key concepts addressed in this study and their relationship with modern management approaches are summarized in a holistic manner in the conceptual framework presented below.

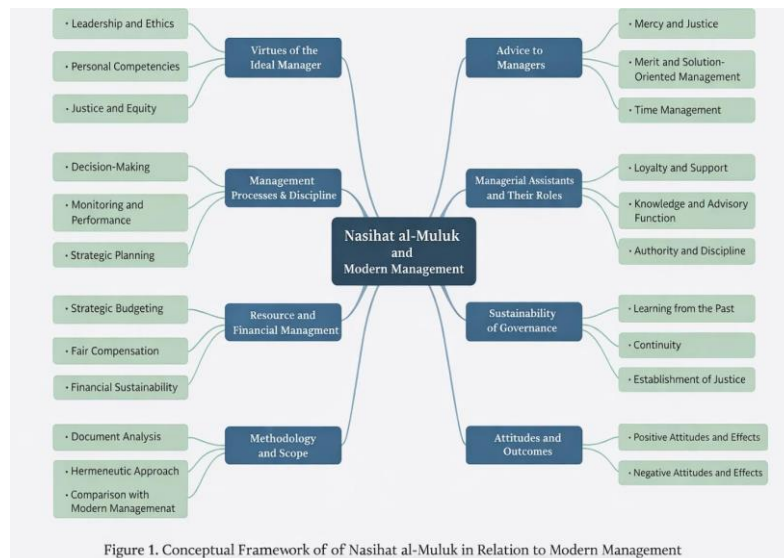


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of of Nasihat al-Muluk in Relation to Modern Management

Source: Prepared by the author based on Ghazali (2020).

The key concepts addressed in this study and their relationship with modern management approaches are summarized holistically in the conceptual framework presented above.

This study aims to evaluate the work from a contemporary perspective, thereby contributing to the academic literature on classical *Siyasetname* texts while also providing an ethical perspective for modern leadership approaches.

The themes presented in the book have been systematically organized under specific headings. The virtues that a manager should possess are concretized through values encompassing both individual and public domains, such as wisdom, justice, compassion, patience, contentment, time management, and consultation. In addition, the importance of learning from past experiences and planning for the future is frequently emphasized, suggesting that the continuity of governance can be ensured through such an approach. Particular importance is given to the principle of merit, highlighting that managers should consider not only loyalty but also competence and integrity when selecting their administrative cadres. Furthermore, the work provides various recommendations to managers, offering guidance on how to address potential challenges. Since the continuity of governance is taken as a fundamental concern, the role of authority is examined both in relation to society and within administrative structures. As a result of these evaluations, comprehensive insights are offered regarding both managerial guidance and the roles of individuals operating within the administrative hierarchy. Overall, *Nasihat al-Muluk* can be regarded as a text that delineates the boundaries of governance while reminding managers and all actors involved in administration of their responsibilities. *Nasihat al-Muluk* should be examined not merely as a historical source but also as a system of values that can be associated with contemporary management concepts. Al-Ghazali's portrayal of the "ideal manager" aligns closely with modern notions of ethical leadership and servant leadership. In this respect, it becomes possible to observe how concepts, originally grounded in earlier intellectual traditions, have evolved and been transformed across different managerial contexts and periods. From the perspective of contemporary leadership studies and governance literature, such classical works constitute significant reference sources. For researchers seeking to establish a meaningful connection between the intellectual legacy of the past and present-day management principles, the core concepts addressed in Al-Ghazali's *Nasihat al-Muluk* offer a robust foundation. His detailed emphasis on issues such as justice, consultation, merit, division of labor, role definition, the limits of authority, and the design of administrative structures demonstrates that he provided not only religious and ethical guidance but also structural insights into organizational functioning. The fact that many of these concepts—now considered fundamental principles in modern management science—were systematically articulated centuries ago and presented to rulers as advisory guidance highlights the advanced and comprehensive nature of classical Islamic political thought. In this context, *Nasihat al-Muluk* should be regarded not only as a historical document but also as a valuable source embodying universal principles of management.

A comparative examination of such classical works alongside contemporary theories can contribute to the development of locally grounded knowledge in management and foster a culturally enriched understanding of governance. Moreover, this approach enables a shift beyond Western-centric

management paradigms, making it possible to construct governance models rooted in historical traditions and aligned with societal contexts. It is evident that the sustainability of modern organizations depends not only on individuals possessing technical expertise and cognitive skills but also on leaders with a high level of ethical awareness. The long-term viability of organizations requires both managers and employees to operate in alignment with shared goals and values. Accordingly, organizational structures should be designed as integrated systems comprising well-defined tasks, human resources aligned with these tasks, and an effective management layer capable of directing activities toward established objectives. The integration of appropriately qualified human resources with a goal-oriented management approach ensures not only operational efficiency but also the long-term sustainability of organizations.

In light of this study, several recommendations can be offered to both researchers and practitioners in managerial positions. First, developing future-oriented management models based on the ideas of scholars such as Al-Ghazali—who had direct engagement with governance—would not only constitute a historical reading but also yield more functional and value-oriented outcomes when integrated with contemporary management approaches. Indeed, Al-Ghazali's recommendations can be comparatively examined alongside the ideas of modern management theorists. In this respect, the managerial principles found in his works remain open to reinterpretation within the fields of public administration, leadership, and governance. Although the present study focuses solely on *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, future research could compile and analyze managerial insights from Al-Ghazali's other works within a comprehensive framework, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of his management philosophy. Such studies would enable a multidimensional analysis of the conceptual foundations he developed concerning the relationship between politics, society, and governance. Moreover, works such as *Nasihāt al-Muluk* should be approached not only from the perspectives of politics, management, or theology but also through a multidisciplinary lens, incorporating fields such as public administration, sociology, history, organizational behavior, and ethics. This broader approach would allow for more comprehensive interpretations at both theoretical and practical levels. Revisiting such classical texts can offer new perspectives and solutions to the ethical and managerial challenges faced by modern organizations. Additionally, the widely accepted view that modern management principles emerged primarily after the Industrial Revolution should be reconsidered in light of the ideas developed centuries earlier by thinkers such as Al-Ghazali. Concepts such as justice, merit, consultation, role definition, and leadership virtues are not exclusive to the modern era but are rooted in a deep historical tradition. Supporting this perspective through academic research would also contribute to the development of indigenous management theories.

Finally, it is recommended that educational programs for individuals in managerial roles incorporate not only modern management techniques but also classical, ethics-based management perspectives into their curricula. Future research may further enrich the field by examining the historical foundations of contemporary management issues through classical works, thereby enhancing theoretical diversity and establishing a meaningful intellectual continuity between past and present.

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