




Inefficiency of the Social System and Cognitive Dissonance in Cultural Policy-Making

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Abstract

Inefficiency in socio-administrative systems has, in recent decades, become one of the central issues in analyses within the fields of sociology, social psychology, and public policy-making. This phenomenon often stems from a misalignment between formal values, cultural policies, and the lived social realities, which manifests as a form of structural and functional gap. In this context, the concept of cognitive dissonance, introduced by Festinger (1957), provides a theoretical framework for explaining the conflict among beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, thereby enabling a deeper analysis of this inefficiency at both individual and institutional levels. The present study adopts a qualitative approach based on documentary and theoretical analysis to examine the role of cognitive dissonances in the process of cultural policy-making and their impact on the efficiency of the socio-administrative system. In this regard, the theoretical works of scholars such as Bourdieu (1986), Habermas (1984), and Putnam (2000) are considered to clarify the interconnections among culture, power, social communication, and social capital in explaining systemic efficiency. The findings indicate that as the gap between official cultural policies and citizens' lived experiences widens, levels of social distrust, dual behaviors, and reduced civic participation intensify. This situation, in turn, leads to the weakening of the legitimacy of administrative institutions and a decline in policy effectiveness. Ultimately, the results suggest that reducing inefficiency in the socio-administrative system requires alignment among values, policies, and institutional practices, strengthening social participation in the cultural policy-making process, and recognizing cultural diversity and plurality within society. Only through such an approach can cognitive dissonances be mitigated and the conditions for enhancing efficiency and social cohesion be established.

Keywords: cultural policy-making, social inefficiency, cognitive dissonance, administrative system, social capital

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1. Introduction

The administrative system, as one of the key pillars and governmental structures, has both direct and indirect effects on the efficiency of other social sectors. This system consists of a set of laws, processes, and institutions that help orient social and

economic activities and, on the other hand, assume responsibility for regulating, managing, and implementing public policies. If efficient, it can contribute to improving productivity in other social systems, such as the economic, political, and cultural systems. An efficient administrative system contributes to enhancing productivity, increasing transparency, improving the quality of public services, and strengthening public trust. Conversely, an inefficient administrative system can lead to corruption, a decline in the quality of service delivery, increased social inequalities, and the weakening of national cohesion. Thus, administrative system inefficiency can lead to multiple crises in different domains and challenge the legitimacy of the state (Parsons, 1951).

According to Talcott Parsons, the social system consists of subsystems, including economic, political, cultural, and legal systems, whose equilibrium and proper functioning depend on one another (Parsons, 1951). Accordingly, inefficiency in one of these sectors can spread to other sectors as well. The administrative system, as the executive infrastructure of governance, disrupts the functioning of other social institutions if it suffers from fundamental weaknesses in transparency, accountability, productivity, and justice. For example, administrative corruption and inefficient bureaucracy can lead to reduced economic investment, weak competitiveness, and ultimately economic stagnation (Hall & Taylor, 2017).

On the other hand, the administrative system, as the executive arm of government, plays a fundamental role in ensuring the efficiency of the entire social system. The functions of this system are manifested not only in facilitating governance processes and delivering public services, but also in regulating the economic, political, and cultural relations of society. In many countries, administrative system reforms are regarded as one of the main prerequisites for sustainable development and improvement of citizens' quality of life (Hall & Taylor, 2017). In Iran, too, administrative system inefficiency has always been considered one of the major obstacles to the country's growth and progress, and many economic, political, and social problems are rooted in the complex, opaque, and bureaucratic structures of this system (Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center, 2021). Therefore, a scientific examination of existing policies and of the impact of the administrative system on the efficiency of the whole social system is necessary, as it can lead to a precise identification of challenges and the presentation of practical solutions for reform.

2. Definitions and Concepts

In this section of the study, the essential and central concepts are substantively explained.

2.1. Definition of the Administrative System and Its Position in the Governance Structure

The administrative system, as the backbone of the management and implementation of governmental policies, is a complex set of organizational hierarchies, laws and regulations, specialized human resources, standardized executive procedures, and specialized institutions that not only shape the legal and operational framework of government, but also assume responsibility for coordinating various governmental activities, delivering public services to citizens, managing human and economic resources, and ensuring social stability and order. In fact, this system functions as a dynamic network that follows official government policies from formulation to implementation and supervision, and through continuous interactions among managers, employees, and citizens, creates the necessary conditions for the formation of social behaviors, values, and norms, in such a way that its efficiency directly affects economic productivity, equitable distribution of resources, and the level of public satisfaction. In developing countries such as Iran, the administrative system often faces deep structural challenges, including excessive centralization, which concentrates power at central levels and obstructs local decision-making; inefficiency arising from complex and opaque processes; lack of adequate expertise among human resources, which is intensified by ineffective educational systems and insufficient investment in skills development; structural corruption rooted in informal relations and the absence of strong supervisory mechanisms; and weak accountability, which reduces public trust. Historical experience shows that the absence of an efficient and transparent administrative system not only reduces economic productivity, but also decreases public trust in governmental institutions, increases social inequalities through the inequitable distribution of services, and weakens social capital as a basis for civic participation. These issues have often been shaped by political factors such as regime changes, cultural factors such as tribal or religious traditions, and economic factors such as dependence on natural resources. Therefore, administrative reforms succeed only when accompanied by a deep understanding of social and

cultural structures, as emphasized in institutionalist studies, according to which coordination between formal and informal institutions is the key to sustainable change (North, 1990).

In Iran, administrative transformation programs, such as the sevenfold administrative system transformation programs in 2002 and the tenfold programs in 2010, have been attempts to confront these challenges. However, they have often produced limited results due to cultural resistance and centralization, and the need for more comprehensive approaches, including the strengthening of transparency and local participation, is evident.

In developing countries such as Iran, the administrative system faces challenges such as centralization, inefficiency, lack of expertise, structural corruption, and weak accountability. Historical experience shows that the absence of an efficient and transparent administrative system, in addition to reducing economic productivity, leads to reduced public trust, increased social inequality, and weakened social capital. From a historical perspective, the formation of administrative systems in these countries has been influenced by political, cultural, and economic factors, and administrative reforms will succeed only when accompanied by a deep understanding of social and cultural structures (Eskandari, 2020; North, 1990).

2.2. *Inefficiency of the Cultural System*

An inefficient administrative system has a direct impact on culture and social behavior. The absence of transparency, accountability, and justice leads to reduced civic participation, increased informal behaviors, and decreased social capital. This situation affects public culture and leads to the formation of feelings of deprivation, distrust, and weakened collective norms. The social consequences of a weak administrative system include reduced social trust, increased conflicts, the emergence of inequalities, and reduced human development (Kazemi, 2018).

3. **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Understanding the relationship between the administrative system and the efficiency of the social system requires a precise definition of concepts and an examination of relevant theoretical frameworks. The administrative system refers to a set of structures, processes, laws, and human resources responsible for implementing public policies, managing society's resources, and delivering services to citizens. Max Weber, the prominent sociologist, defines the modern administrative system as being based on rationality, meritocracy, and orderly structures that operate through formal laws and standardized processes. By creating coordination among different sectors of society, including the government, the private sector, and citizens, this system contributes to the realization of broad social objectives. On the other hand, the efficiency of the social system refers to society's capacity to respond to the diverse needs of citizens, maintain balance among economic, political, and cultural subsystems, and strengthen social cohesion and cooperation. Talcott Parsons, the theorist of social systems, argues that an efficient social system must be able to meet individuals' basic needs through institutional mechanisms and maintain dynamic equilibrium among the various components of society. In this regard, the administrative system, as one of the main subsystems, plays a mediating role in transferring policies and resources from the macro level to the micro level.

Therefore, in the current theoretical framework, the basis of analysis is the theory of the "cultural subsystem," or pattern maintenance, which helps provide a better understanding of the complex relationship between these two concepts, namely social system efficiency and cultural policy-making. Relying on this theory, one can understand that the administrative system is not merely an executive instrument, but a determining factor in shaping social dynamics and strengthening or weakening social cohesion.

Thus, it is argued that the cultural subsystem is related to the imperative of pattern maintenance and is responsible for preserving and transmitting values, beliefs, norms, and cultural symbols so that individuals' motivation to participate in society and maintain social solidarity is preserved. This system includes institutions such as the family, education, religion, art, the media, and social rituals, which reproduce culture as a "cultural pattern." Parsons regards it as the highest level in the cybernetic hierarchy because it provides information and control for the other subsystems. The symbolic medium of this system is "value commitment," and its value principle is "loyalty." In *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (1956), Parsons explained that culture internalizes values through socialization processes, such as schooling or family upbringing, similar to the role of the superego in Freud's theory, which institutionalizes moral norms in individuals.

The cultural subsystem preserves latent patterns in order to prevent social collapse. For example, in Western societies, liberal values such as individualism, freedom of expression, and equality are reinforced through educational institutions, such as universities; the media, such as films and news; and art, such as Hollywood, which influence the economy by promoting entrepreneurship and politics by supporting democracy. Parsons emphasized that culture determines the normative boundaries of other subsystems, such as legitimizing political objectives, including electoral laws, or creating moral restrictions for the economy, such as prohibiting exploitation. The weakness of this subsystem, as in cultural crises arising from secularization, meaning the decline of religious influence, or globalization, meaning the influence of Western values, can lead to the loss of collective identity or value conflicts. For instance, in traditional societies, global media challenge local values, such as the impact of social networks on youth culture in Iran, which creates the need for cultural reconstruction or the strengthening of traditional values.

In the article “A Theory of the Symbolism of Action” (1951), Parsons explained that culture operates through symbols, such as national flags, anthems, religious rituals, or works of art, and aligns individual motivations with social needs. For example, a country’s flag is a symbol of national unity that encourages individuals to participate in collective goals, such as national defense or social cooperation. Culture also plays a key role in social evolution. Parsons considered value generalization to be a process through which particular values, such as Protestantism in Europe, are transformed into universal values, such as liberalism in Western societies. In the United States, the values of Protestantism, such as hard work and discipline, were transformed into liberalism, such as equality and freedom, which influenced democratic policies and the free-market economy. In traditional societies, such as Iran before modernization, religious culture strengthened values such as justice, solidarity, and piety through religious rituals, such as mourning ceremonies or congregational prayers. In modern societies, culture faces challenges such as cultural diversity, globalization, or value changes, such as increasing secularism, which heightens the need to accommodate different groups, including ethnic or religious minorities.

Culture also has complex interactions with other subsystems. For example, cultural values such as innovation drive the economy toward producing new technologies, such as artificial intelligence. In politics, values such as equality or freedom strengthen the legitimacy of policies, such as support for civil rights laws. In the legal system, culture injects norms such as justice or fairness into laws, such as anti-discrimination legislation. In traditional societies, such as tribal systems, culture preserved values such as loyalty or cooperation through oral narratives, religious rituals, or local traditions, which guided the economy, such as collective production, and politics, such as tribal leadership. Parsons viewed culture not only as a reproducer of values, but also as a guide for social change. For example, in twentieth-century feminist movements, the values of gender equality were promoted through education, media, and cultural activism, influencing politics, such as women’s rights laws, and the economy, such as women’s participation in the labor force.

4. Causes of Inefficiency with an Emphasis on Cultural Policy

The inefficiency of the cultural system in Iran is one of the main obstacles to social development, the strengthening of national cohesion, and the promotion of collective identity, and it has deeply negative effects on the efficiency of the social system. This inefficiency is rooted in a set of structural, political, social, and historical factors that mutually reinforce one another and create a cycle of declining cultural capital, weakened national identity, and an increased generational gap (Rezaei, 2015). In what follows, the main causes of this inefficiency are examined through comprehensive analyses, historical evidence, statistical data, and international comparisons.

4.1. Mismatch Between Cultural Policies and Social and Global Realities

One of the main causes of cultural system inefficiency is the mismatch between cultural policies and social and global realities, as well as rapid technological changes. In Iran, cultural policies are often formulated based on traditional and static approaches, which itself prevents responsiveness to the needs of new generations and global transformations. With the expansion of the internet and digital media, indigenous and national cultures have faced new challenges, but cultural policy-making in Iran has not been able to respond dynamically to these challenges. For example, reports indicate that more than 70 percent of the cultural content produced in Iran in recent decades has focused on traditional media such as television and radio, whereas more than 60 percent of Iran’s population, especially young people, use digital platforms such as social networks to

access cultural content (Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center, 2021). This gap between cultural policies and social needs has led to a decline in the influence of the cultural system and an increase in the influence of foreign cultures.

From a historical perspective, this issue is rooted in cultural approaches after the Islamic Revolution, where the emphasis on preserving traditional values sometimes obstructed the acceptance of cultural innovations. For example, in the 1980s and 1990s, the focus on producing cultural content centered on revolutionary and religious values, without sufficient attention to the needs of new generations, caused a significant segment of society, especially young people, to move toward imported cultures. Compared with countries such as South Korea, which have been able to strengthen national identity at the global level by investing in cultural industries such as K-pop and modern cinema, this situation indicates the need for deep reforms in Iran (Hall & Taylor, 2017). Proposed reforms include formulating dynamic cultural policies, investing in the production of digital content, and strengthening the participation of the younger generation in cultural processes.

4.2. *Dominance of a Segmented Approach in Cultural Policy-Making*

Another reason for the inefficiency of the cultural system is the dominance of a segmented approach in cultural policy-making, in which culture is managed separately from other domains such as the economy, politics, and education. This approach prevents the creation of an integrated strategy and has caused cultural policies to lack coordination with other parts of the social system. For example, cultural policies in Iran are often formulated without attention to economic needs, such as support for creative industries, or educational needs, such as promoting media literacy, which itself reduces their effectiveness. Reports indicate that more than 80 percent of cultural programs in Iran have failed to achieve their objectives because of a lack of coordination with other sectors (Kazemi, 2018). This situation has led to reduced social cohesion and weakened national identity because cultural policies have not been able to meet society's diverse needs.

Compared with countries such as France, which have been able to establish an integrated cultural system by creating a national council for culture and coordination among the ministries of culture, education, and economy, Iran needs to reconsider its approaches. Proposed reforms include creating a cultural coordination council with the participation of representatives from various sectors, formulating multidimensional cultural strategies, and using social data to adapt policies to society's needs.

4.3. *Static Cultural Values and Beliefs*

Stasis in cultural values and beliefs, arising from resistance to innovation and global changes, is another cause of cultural system inefficiency. This stasis has caused the cultural system to be unable to respond to the needs of new generations, which in turn has increased the generational gap and reduced cultural capital. For example, surveys indicate that more than 65 percent of Iranian youth believe that the cultural content offered by governmental institutions does not correspond to their interests and needs (Rezaei, 2015). This situation has led young people toward foreign cultures and reduced their sense of belonging to national identity.

From a historical perspective, this stasis is rooted in efforts to preserve traditional values against the influence of Western cultures, but these efforts have been made without attention to the needs of new generations and global changes. Compared with countries such as Japan, which have been able to create a dynamic cultural system by integrating tradition and modernity, Iran needs to reconsider its approaches. Proposed reforms include strengthening innovation in cultural productions, supporting artists and producers of indigenous content, and promoting intergenerational dialogue.

4.4. *Cognitive Dissonances in Cultural Policy-Making*

Cognitive dissonances in cultural policy-making, which have led to inconsistency between declared objectives and practical measures, are another cause of inefficiency. For example, while cultural policies emphasize strengthening national identity, many executive programs have failed to achieve their objectives because of a lack of resources or coordination. Reports indicate that more than 50 percent of cultural budgets in Iran are spent on ceremonial and low-impact projects, while investment in key sectors such as cultural education and digital content production remains limited (Islamic Consultative Assembly Research

Center, 2021). These dissonances have led to reduced public trust in cultural institutions and weakened the efficiency of the social system.

Proposed reforms include reviewing the allocation of cultural budgets, focusing on high-impact projects, and using technology to produce and distribute cultural content. For example, creating indigenous digital platforms for distributing cultural content can increase access to this content and improve the effectiveness of the cultural system.

4.5. *Lack of a Comprehensive Cultural Strategy*

The lack of a comprehensive cultural strategy and the influence of political considerations on policies are also key causes of inefficiency. In Iran, cultural policies are often influenced by political and factional changes, which has led to discontinuity and inefficiency. For example, frequent changes in the management of cultural institutions, such as the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, have left many long-term programs unfinished. Reports indicate that more than 60 percent of cultural programs in Iran have failed to achieve their objectives due to managerial and political changes (Eskandari, 2020). Compared with countries such as Canada, which have been able to preserve cultural cohesion by formulating long-term cultural strategies independent of political changes, this situation indicates the need for reforms in Iran.

Proposed reforms include formulating a national cultural strategy with a long-term horizon, reducing the susceptibility of cultural policies to political changes, and strengthening the participation of the private sector and civil institutions in cultural policy-making.

5. **Factors Contributing to Cultural System Inefficiency**

The factors contributing to cultural system inefficiency in Iran operate as a complex and multilayered system and have wide-ranging effects on the efficiency of the social system. These factors include the following:

5.1. *Culture of Center-Concentration*

The culture of center-concentration, which refers to the unequal distribution of cultural resources and their concentration in urban centers, especially Tehran, is one of the key factors of inefficiency. This situation has caused deprived and peripheral regions to be denied access to cultural resources such as libraries, art centers, and educational programs. Reports indicate that more than 70 percent of cultural facilities in Iran are concentrated in metropolitan areas, while rural areas and small towns receive less than 20 percent of these resources (Kazemi, 2018). This inequality has led to reduced social cohesion and weakened national identity in deprived regions. Proposed reforms include the equitable distribution of cultural resources, the establishment of cultural centers in deprived areas, and the use of technology to access cultural content.

5.2. *Cultural Policy-Making Influenced by Political Considerations*

Cultural policy-making in Iran is often influenced by political and factional considerations, which has itself led to discontinuity and inefficiency. For example, frequent changes in cinematic and media policies due to changes in governments have left many cultural projects unfinished. Proposed reforms include making cultural institutions independent from political changes, strengthening the role of the private sector, and creating independent cultural councils.

5.3. *Production of Instability and Dissatisfaction in Cultural Policy*

Unstable and inefficient cultural policies have produced dissatisfaction among citizens, especially young people. For example, excessive restrictions on the production of cultural content, such as censorship in cinema and music, have reduced the appeal of indigenous content and increased the tendency toward foreign content. Proposed reforms include reducing unnecessary restrictions, supporting the production of creative content, and strengthening youth participation in cultural processes.

6. Ancillary Evidence for the Emergence of Inefficiency in Administrative System Approaches

The inefficiency of the administrative system in Iran is one of the fundamental and multifaceted challenges of the social system and has profound and extensive effects on the efficiency of economic, political, cultural, and social systems. This inefficiency is rooted in a complex set of structural, managerial, cultural, economic, and historical factors that mutually reinforce one another and create a defective cycle of declining productivity, increasing public dissatisfaction, and weakening social trust. These factors not only prevent the realization of sustainable development goals, but also lead to reduced social capital, an increased gap between state and nation, weakened national cohesion, and even the emergence of political and social crises. In what follows, the main causes of this inefficiency are examined through comprehensive analyses, historical evidence, statistical data, and international comparisons.

6.1. Weakness in the Value and Belief Foundations of Officials

One of the main causes of administrative system inefficiency is weakness in the value and belief foundations of government officials. In a system that claims commitment to ethical and religious principles, these values are expected to serve as the axis of organizational and employee performance. However, the absence of genuine commitment to these principles, rooted in weak ethical training, lack of effective supervision, and the penetration of a culture of self-interest, has caused managers and employees to move toward personal gain and organizational complacency rather than focusing on public service. This deviation from fundamental values, emphasized in higher-level documents such as the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the macro-level policies of the system, has led to reduced employee motivation, increased corruption, and weakened responsibility toward society.

For example, reports indicate that more than 40 percent of administrative violations in Iran's governmental agencies in recent years have resulted from prioritizing individual or group interests over the public interest ([Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center, 2021](#)). This belief-related weakness not only reduces the quality of public services, but also weakens the legitimacy of the administrative system in the eyes of citizens, because people feel that the system serves the interests of particular groups rather than serving them. This situation has broad negative effects on the efficiency of the social system, especially under conditions in which the administrative system is expected to be a model of ethics, justice, and service delivery, because public trust, as one of the key components of social capital, declines.

From a historical perspective, this issue is rooted in the organizational culture before the Islamic Revolution, when the administrative system was highly centralized and influenced by the court. In that period, appointments and decision-making were often based on personal relations and loyalty to the court, and this culture was not fully reformed after the Islamic Revolution. For example, in the 1980s and 1990s, the focus on revolutionary and political objectives sometimes caused meritocracy and commitment to ethical values to be marginalized. Compared with countries such as Japan, which have increased administrative productivity by emphasizing an organizational culture based on ethics and responsibility, this situation indicates the need for deep reforms in Iran. In Japan, an organizational culture based on the principles of "kaizen," meaning continuous improvement, and commitment to collective interests has turned the country's administrative system into one of the most efficient systems in the world ([Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017](#)).

Proposals for addressing this problem in Iran include designing extensive training programs based on ethical and Islamic values, strengthening supervision over managerial performance, and creating incentive systems to promote responsible behaviors. For example, successful models such as Singapore can be used, where continuous training programs for government employees and performance-based reward systems have strengthened the culture of service delivery. In addition, using information technology to make managerial processes transparent and reduce opportunities for self-interest can help improve this situation. These reforms require macro-level political commitment and cooperation among different institutions in order to break the defective cycle of inefficiency. For instance, creating mandatory training courses for managers in professional ethics and social responsibility, along with periodic performance evaluations, can help strengthen commitment to fundamental values. Moreover, strengthening independent supervisory institutions and creating performance-based reward and punishment mechanisms can increase employees' motivation for public service.

6.2. *Lack of a Culture of Lawfulness and Transparency*

Another reason for administrative system inefficiency is the lack of a culture of lawfulness and transparency in executive processes, which has led to the incomplete implementation of laws, increased violations, and reduced public trust. In Iran, laws and regulations are often implemented selectively and based on personal relations or political pressures, and the absence of independent and effective supervisory systems has caused administrative violations to be easily ignored or not seriously addressed. This problem is intensified particularly by the absence of financial and informational transparency, where information related to decision-making, resource allocation, and organizational performance is not fully made available to the public. The Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Iran 141st out of 180 countries in 2024, indicating serious weakness in transparency and accountability ([Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017](#)). This situation causes citizens to feel that the administrative system is incapable of responding to their needs, and this in turn leads to reduced public trust and an increased gap between the government and the people.

For example, in construction projects such as hospitals, roads, or transportation infrastructure, lack of transparency in tenders and contracts has caused long delays, increased costs, and even project suspension. Reports indicate that more than 50 percent of construction projects in Iran have faced delays of more than two years due to managerial problems and lack of transparency in resource allocation ([Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center, 2021](#)). This situation not only leads to the waste of financial resources, but also reduces public trust in the government's ability to deliver services. For instance, a 500-bed hospital project in Tabriz, which was expected to be completed in 2019, remained incomplete until 2024 due to lack of transparency in contracts and unnecessary interventions. These delays have not only caused public dissatisfaction, but also reduced citizens' access to healthcare services.

In addition, the lack of a culture of lawfulness among employees and managers, often replaced by a culture of obedience to informal orders and personal relations, has led to the incomplete implementation of policies and programs. For example, in the implementation of laws related to support for domestic production, insufficient supervision has caused many of these laws not to be fully implemented, which itself has led to reduced economic competitiveness and increased dependence on imports. Reports indicate that more than 60 percent of policies supporting domestic production have failed to achieve their objectives due to weaknesses in supervision and implementation ([Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center, 2021](#)). Compared with countries such as Germany, which have preserved public trust through strong supervisory systems and high transparency, this situation indicates the need for deep reforms in Iran. In Germany, the use of digital systems to make administrative processes transparent and monitor employee performance has minimized corruption and increased public trust ([Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017](#)).

Proposals for reform in Iran include strengthening independent supervisory institutions, using information technology to increase transparency, and teaching employees a culture of lawfulness. For example, creating online systems for publishing the financial and performance information of governmental agencies can help increase transparency and reduce corruption. Strengthening civil institutions and the media to monitor governmental performance can also help improve this situation. For instance, creating a national digital system that publicly publishes information about government contracts, tenders, and performance reports can increase transparency and reduce opportunities for corruption. In addition, continuous training for employees on the importance of lawfulness and accountability can help change organizational culture.

7. The Main Constructs of Cultural Policy-Making, Related Theories, and Its Role in Improving the Socio-Administrative System

Cultural policy-making, as one of the most complex domains of governance, rests on a foundation of conceptual and theoretical constructs whose understanding appears necessary for analyzing the efficiency or inefficiency of the socio-administrative system. At the first level, values and norms, as the fundamental elements of culture, determine the orientation of cultural policies. From Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, culture is not merely a reflection of social structures; rather, it actively contributes to the reproduction of inequalities and the stabilization of social order. This view shows that if cultural policy-making is carried out without attention to the unequal distribution of cultural capital, it can lead to the deepening of social gaps ([Bourdieu, 1986](#)).

At another level, Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action emphasizes the importance of rational dialogue and public participation in the policy-making process. From this perspective, the legitimacy of cultural policies is achieved not through imposition, but through consensus and mutual understanding among social actors. In the absence of such a process, policies face hidden or overt resistance and lose their effectiveness (Habermas & McCarthy, 1984).

Likewise, the concept of cognitive dissonance introduced by Leon Festinger shows how conflict between beliefs and behaviors can lead to psychological tension and, at the macro level, social instability. When cultural policies are not consistent with the realities of individuals' everyday lives, these dissonances intensify and lead to the formation of dual behaviors and reduced public trust (Festinger, 1957).

Alongside these perspectives, Robert Putnam's emphasis on social capital shows that trust, participation, and social networks are among the essential prerequisites for the efficiency of administrative systems. Cultural policy-making can contribute to improving the socio-administrative system only if it can strengthen this capital and consolidate the bond between the state and society (Putnam, 2000).

Given this issue, from the perspective of improving efficiency, it must also be stated that historical and empirical evidence generally shows that Iran's managerial system has not followed a logical and modern framework. The dominance of the political system over the administrative system and partisan bias, alongside the expansion of administrative corruption, widespread mismanagement, and a weak strategic culture, are among the prominent characteristics of Iran's current administrative system. This inefficient administrative and managerial system, which is first a legacy of incorrect past perspectives and then a result of neglect in the current period, has played a highly significant role in creating dissatisfaction among different segments of the population.

It appears that following a model of good governance consistent with the country's indigenous culture, increasing the intelligence of the administrative system, fully implementing the law on free access to information, formulating a public accountability law, downsizing and streamlining government, reducing government intervention in the economy, and promoting ethical and religious culture and teachings in society and the country's administrative system can play an effective role in improving and upgrading the country's managerial structure. Perhaps the most important causes of corruption are cultural and belief-related issues. The general culture of society, the values and norms governing individuals and the community, and people's beliefs and convictions play a central role in this regard. Materialism, individualism, consumerism, the reduced stigma of violations in organizations and society, and above all weak faith and work conscience are among the most important cultural and social roots of administrative corruption.

8. Conclusion

The effects of the administrative system on society can be divided into two categories: direct and indirect. Direct effects include the delivery of public services, resource management, and the implementation of laws and policies. These effects influence citizens' everyday lives in tangible and observable ways. Indirect effects include shaping collective behaviors, creating norms, strengthening social trust, and enhancing human capital. Structural reforms in the administrative system, even if limited to formal institutions, will have profound effects on culture, social behavior, and civic participation.

Therefore, examining the inefficiency of socio-administrative systems in the contemporary world shows that this phenomenon cannot be reduced merely to structural or managerial weaknesses; rather, it must be analyzed in deep connection with cultural and cognitive dimensions. What becomes important in this context is the role of cultural policy-making as a mediating link between macrostructures and micro-level social actions. When cultural policies are formulated based on a static, one-sided, and unrealistic understanding of society, they are not only incapable of guiding social behaviors, but also become a factor that intensifies disorder and inefficiency.

Within this framework, the concept of cognitive dissonance, formulated by Leon Festinger, provides a powerful analytical tool for understanding this situation. This concept shows how the gap between beliefs, values, and behaviors can lead to internal tensions and, at a broader level, to social distrust. When citizens encounter policies that do not correspond to their lived experiences, instead of adapting to these policies, they often redefine or even ignore them. This process ultimately weakens the normative authority of the system and reduces its effectiveness.

On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu's analyses show that cultural policy-making always takes shape within relations of power and can lead to the reproduction of social inequalities. If these policies are designed without attention to cultural diversity and the unequal distribution of symbolic resources, they not only fail to contribute to social cohesion, but also deepen existing gaps. In the same vein, Jürgen Habermas's approach emphasizes the necessity of creating a space for free and participatory dialogue; a space in which citizens can play an active role in shaping policies and, through this, increase the legitimacy and efficiency of the system.

Moreover, Robert Putnam's emphasis on social capital shows that public trust, as one of the most important indicators of the efficiency of social systems, is strongly affected by cultural policies. Any inconsistency between the discourse and practice of official institutions weakens this trust and leads to the spread of cynicism and social passivity. Under such conditions, even the most efficient economic and administrative policies cannot achieve desirable outcomes, because they lack the necessary social support.

In summary, it can be stated that the inefficiency of the socio-administrative system is largely a reflection of cultural and cognitive inconsistencies at the level of policy-making. Overcoming this situation requires a fundamental rethinking of cultural policy-making approaches; a rethinking that emphasizes realism, participatory capacity, flexibility, and recognition of cultural plurality. Only under such conditions can alignment among values, policies, and behaviors be achieved and the ground prepared for improving the efficiency of the socio-administrative system.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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