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Presenting an Organizational Culture Model for the Implementation of General Administrative System Policies Using the Grounded Theory Method

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to develop a model of organizational culture that facilitates the implementation of the general policies issued for Iran's administrative system. This research employed a qualitative method based on grounded theory. A semi-structured interview tool and purposive sampling method were used for data collection. The validity of the data was evaluated through formal validation techniques. Interviews were conducted with cultural managers who possess extensive organizational management experience, continuing until theoretical saturation was achieved. Ultimately, 12 individuals participated in the study. To analyze the collected data, the researchers applied open coding, axial coding, and selective coding techniques. Based on the research findings and data analysis, 64 concepts, 14 subcategories, and 4 main themes were identified as the components constituting the organizational culture model for implementing the general administrative system policies. These components are analyzed within five domains: causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences. According to the findings, the proposed model suitable for implementing the general policies of the administrative system must be grounded in four core elements: excellence orientation, rule of law orientation, transformational orientation, and idealism orientation. This model should provide an appropriate foundation for the development of an excellence-oriented organizational culture, and more specifically, it should be shaped based on a rule-of-law organizational culture. Moreover, the model should establish a suitable environment for transformational practices in the structure and function of organizational culture and foster the emergence of an ideal-oriented organizational culture.

Keywords: Organizational culture, Components of organizational culture, Organizational culture model, Administrative system policies, Grounded theory.

Introduction

Organizational culture plays a foundational role in shaping the behavioral and operational landscape of institutions, particularly in public administration systems where coherence between policy and practice is critical. The alignment of organizational culture with overarching administrative policies can serve as a catalyst for institutional excellence, accountability, and reform. As public sectors around the globe confront the challenges of corruption, inefficiency, and citizen disengagement, the demand for deeply rooted cultural models tailored to administrative realities has grown significantly. Numerous studies have highlighted the strategic role of organizational culture in influencing leadership styles, decision-making, employee performance, and overall policy implementation outcomes [1-3].

Organizational culture, as a multidimensional construct, includes shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that guide organizational members' behaviors. These internalized patterns not only shape routine functioning but also affect an organization's ability to respond adaptively to policy directives. In the context of public governance, a strategic cultural model serves as a medium for institutionalizing macro policies, particularly when such policies are derived from constitutional principles or national development agendas [4, 5]. For example, the Iranian administrative system has emphasized the codification of general policies (such as those issued by the Supreme Leader) to address systemic inefficiencies. However, without a corresponding cultural framework within organizations, the implementation of these policies often remains symbolic or fragmented [6, 7].

Empirical investigations have shown that a culture rooted in transformational values, service-oriented practices, and ethical accountability can positively affect employee engagement, organizational learning, and public trust [8-10]. For instance, Asadi and Tootian (2024) developed a resilience-based organizational culture model aligned with general administrative policies, highlighting elements such as adaptability, rule adherence, and value-based leadership [4]. In similar contexts, Marcos et al. (2020) demonstrated that organizational culture significantly affects job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and policy loyalty among civil service employees [2]. These findings imply that beyond strategic planning, the successful operationalization of policies requires a cultural infrastructure tailored to both the content and objectives of those policies.

The necessity for developing context-sensitive cultural models becomes even more pressing when considering the unique bureaucratic characteristics of public administration systems. Rass et al. (2023) employed adaptive dynamic system modeling to demonstrate how changes in organizational culture influence transformational learning and long-term institutional behavior [11]. A dynamic model of cultural integration allows administrators to recognize how elements such as digital transformation, participatory governance, and performance evaluation can be absorbed into the cultural fabric of an organization. As Hadavand et al. (2023) observed, digital innovation and organizational performance are strongly correlated with adaptive and learning-oriented cultures, especially in public sector institutions undergoing reform [12]. Consequently, strategic cultural modeling becomes an essential tool for aligning internal practices with external expectations, particularly in times of structural change.

From a governance standpoint, designing and institutionalizing an organizational culture model must consider both structural and behavioral dimensions. Structural components include rule-based frameworks, clear procedures, and monitoring systems, while behavioral elements pertain to values such as commitment, trust, creativity, and collaborative behavior. As identified in a study by Nourbakhsh et al. (2015), cultural values have a determining influence on market orientation and customer-centered policy implementation in the banking sector—a finding that can be extrapolated to public service delivery systems [13]. Similarly, Ghaedamini Harouni et al. (2023) emphasized the mediating role of organizational culture between leadership styles and knowledge management among academic staff, pointing to its function as a cognitive and operational bridge in organizations [14].

Moreover, models developed for organizational culture in public governance must take into account the socio-political context. In military and paramilitary organizations, Shahmohammadi et al. (2022) applied grounded theory to construct a cultural framework based on strategic and operational mandates, reinforcing the idea that effective culture design cannot be detached from the regulatory environment [5]. This aligns with the findings of Rahimi et al. (2024), who proposed a synergy-

based model for institutionalizing organizational culture in the tourism sector, which includes harmonizing structural expectations with informal social norms and practices [15].

Developing a cultural model in line with administrative policies also entails integrating innovation management and responsiveness into the system. Pedraza-Rodríguez et al. (2023) found that organizational culture and managerial competencies jointly influence innovation in under-resourced regions, suggesting that a high-performing culture can compensate for contextual constraints by nurturing internal dynamism and learning capacity [16]. This is especially relevant in state-driven environments where formal mandates are not always supported by operational autonomy. Accordingly, Vatan et al. (2024) proposed a model for information system development that integrates organizational culture with decision-making processes, highlighting the need for internal coherence between digital tools and institutional values [17].

Organizational cohesion, as another key pillar, enables the alignment of individual motivations with collective goals, reducing internal conflict and facilitating collaborative policy execution. Estedadi et al. (2023) examined the role of cultural cohesion in shaping organizational learning, justice, and quality of work life, particularly within the public research sector [18]. They concluded that without such cohesion, policy directives lose traction and fall short of operational objectives. Similarly, Rahimi et al. (2023) demonstrated how cultural fragmentation in the educational sector impedes innovation, emphasizing the need for shared values, inclusive decision-making, and continuous learning mechanisms [19].

In addition, strategic cultural modeling must address the challenges of sustainability and accountability in governance. As Assoratgoon and Kantabutra (2023) proposed in their sustainability-focused model, cultural sustainability is contingent upon visionary leadership, stakeholder engagement, and continuous reflection—a triad especially crucial in public institutions subject to democratic accountability and budget constraints [10]. Relatedly, Tabatabaee Hakim et al. (2022) addressed how behavioral biases in financial judgment can undermine institutional credibility, thereby reinforcing the necessity for cultural models that promote rationality, consistency, and ethics in decision-making [20].

Furthermore, studies conducted in different national and institutional contexts have affirmed the translatability of cultural principles across sectors. For example, Pranitasari (2022) developed a work engagement model that links cultural dimensions to motivation and job involvement, a model applicable in both public and private domains [21]. Similarly, Safari et al. (2022) highlighted the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between leadership, culture, and citizenship behaviors—insights that bear directly on public administration systems where performance and ethical standards are intrinsically linked [8].

In recent years, policy scholars and practitioners have paid increased attention to the impact of political culture on managerial integrity and leadership recruitment. Rahpeyma et al. (2024) examined corruption in the selection of sports federation managers and found that the absence of a robust ethical culture undermines long-term strategic planning and public confidence [7]. The findings underscore that without a deeply embedded culture of transparency and fairness, even well-designed policies fail in execution.

In conclusion, the development of a comprehensive organizational culture model that supports the implementation of general administrative policies requires an integrative, context-sensitive, and future-oriented approach. Such a model must be built upon core principles of transformation, legality, idealism, and excellence—each supported by empirical findings and theoretical constructs across a diverse body of literature. It is not enough to prescribe behavior through top-down policies; instead, those policies must be rooted in a culture that enables adaptation, nurtures innovation, reinforces ethical norms,

and ensures organizational alignment with public interest mandates. This study, therefore, aims to construct such a model using grounded theory and a qualitative research approach to bridge the persistent gap between declared policies and lived organizational realities.

Methods and Materials

This study is situated within the paradigmatic framework of qualitative research and employs the grounded theory methodology. Given its connection to the investigation of organizational culture and the nature of the subject matter, the research can be classified as exploratory-applied in terms of its objective, and descriptive-analytical in terms of its nature.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. For analyzing the data obtained from the interviews, all three coding processes—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding—proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2011) were applied. The validity of the instrument was evaluated through face validity techniques.

The research field consists of managers, informed individuals, and experts in the domain of cultural management, whose expertise and awareness are derived from either their specialized knowledge or executive backgrounds. The sample size and number of participants were not predetermined at the outset; instead, interviews continued until the point of theoretical saturation was reached. In this process, interviews were conducted with 12 individuals, after which no new information regarding organizational culture emerged.

The characteristics of the interviewees are presented in the following table. It should be noted that, in this study, the researcher employed a general guiding question—"What characteristics should an appropriate organizational culture have in order to implement the general policies of the administrative system?"—to comply with the requirements of a semi-structured interview format.

Table 1.

Characteristics of Interviewees in the Study

No.	Education Level	Field of Expertise	Age
A1	M.A.	Public Administration	58
A2	Ph.D.	Political Science	68
A3	Ph.D.	Urban Planning	58
A4	M.A.	Communication Sciences	52
A5	M.A.	Management	51
A6	Ph.D.	Economics	55
A8	Ph.D.	Educational Management	56
A9	Ph.D.	Public Administration	53
A10	Ph.D.	Sociology	50
A11	M.A.	Social Welfare	42
A12	Ph.D.	Road and Urban Development	66

With regard to the sampling method, it should be emphasized that participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the most common method in qualitative research, which involves selecting participants who are rich in information and expertise concerning the research problem and objectives, thereby providing the most valuable data to the researcher.

Findings and Results

The most critical element in the process of analyzing the data obtained from interviews is coding. The coding process was conducted in such a way that open coding was initially performed. Subsequently, by grouping the initial codes, concepts related to organizational culture (as targeted by the study's model) were formed. In the next step, subcategories were derived by linking these concepts.

During the open coding phase, a large number of codes were extracted. Through condensation and abstraction of these codes, conceptual categories were generated. In the axial coding phase, 64 concepts (subcategories) were identified.

In axial coding, the data that had been disaggregated during open coding were reassembled to allow for more precise analysis and coding of the research findings. This process led to the identification of 14 subcategories from the 64 concepts, each possessing a higher level of abstraction. In the next step, efforts were made to conceptualize the 14 subcategories around four core categories at a macro-abstract level. These core categories included: Excellence-Oriented Organizational Culture, Rule-of-Law-Oriented Organizational Culture, Idealism-Oriented Organizational Culture, and Transformation-Oriented Organizational Culture.

The following table presents the full coding process.

Table 2.

Overall Data Coding Process

Dimension	Subcategories	Concepts
Causal Conditions	Transformation Orientation	Knowledge management, modernization and innovation, creativity cultivation, agility and flexibility, optimization of the administrative system (e-government), free flow of information, transparency
	Creation of Ideological Values	Promotion of ethical values, preservation of human dignity, spiritual enhancement, creation of Islamic values, enhancement of administrative health, fostering aversion to corruption, self-regulation
	Service Optimization Orientation	Accountability and social responsibility, public engagement, establishment of innovative service delivery methods, pluralism, decentralization of service provision
Contextual Conditions	Rule-of-Law Performance System	Rule-based behavior, avoidance of discretionary actions, system and method improvement, codification of systems (systematization and adaptation), process and method effectiveness, discipline in organizational relations, process orientation, internalization of organizational discipline, justice-based legislation
	Ritualism	Specialization and knowledge orientation, efficiency, justice promotion, responsibility, vision orientation, strategy orientation
	Connectivity	Group trust, mutual commitment, group adaptability, tolerance of differing views, organizational attachment and commitment, legitimacy creation (social acceptance of the organization), inter-organizational interaction
Intervening Conditions	Cohesion	Organizational-group cohesion, ambiguity avoidance (reduction of uncertainty), conflict resolution, management support, administrative system convergence, structured supervision, optimization of supervision methods
	Opportunities for Individual Growth	Creation of personal development opportunities, independence and autonomy, risk-taking, value creation, merit-based career advancement system
	Human Development	Strengthening of human capital, empowerment (knowledge-based and skill-based), protection and retention of human resources, meritocracy and merit-based selection, work-life balance, institutionalization of work ethics
Strategies	Systematic Structural Management System	Meritocracy and merit-based selection, system and method improvement (performance), codification of performance systems, structured supervision
	Future-Oriented Managerial Performance	Structured supervision, vision orientation, strategy orientation, creation of process-oriented environment
	Strategic Performance System	Public engagement, knowledge management, establishment of innovative service delivery methods, optimization of the administrative system
Consequences	Behavioral–Organizational Effects	Institutionalization of rule-based organizational behavior, creation of cooperative spirit, increased ethical conduct and efficiency, creation of a healthy administrative competition environment
	Social Effects	Reduction of public dissatisfaction with institutional performance, increase in social capital, prevention of resource wastage, enhancement of oversight capacity

The primary objective of analyzing the data collected through interviews in this study is to identify the concepts and categories that reveal the conditions and processes through which a model of organizational culture can be designed to implement the general policies of the administrative system.

Accordingly, based on the initial output from the conceptual and categorical extraction process, it can be stated that the four main macro-level categories that form the foundation for designing and formulating a cultural model are:

1. Excellence-Oriented Organizational Culture

2. Rule-of-Law-Oriented Organizational Culture

3. Idealism-Oriented Organizational Culture

4. Transformation-Oriented Organizational Culture

These core categories are elaborated and analyzed in the subsequent sections.

Excellence-Oriented Organizational Culture

The first core category identified is the excellence-oriented organizational culture, which encompasses the subcategories of "creation of ideological values," "human capital development," and "opportunities for individual growth and advancement." In line with the idea that organizational culture comprises shared concepts, values, and behavioral norms among a group, it is essential that any model of organizational culture prioritizes value creation. In the interviews, participants consistently highlighted ethical elevation, Islamic value creation, spiritual enhancement, administrative health promotion, preservation of human dignity, and the internalization of anti-corruption sentiments and self-discipline as fundamental elements of an effective cultural model. As one participant noted, "What must be emphasized in our current organizational culture is ethical value creation." Another interviewee stressed, "What needs to be strengthened in our organizational culture is the pursuit of spirituality and dignity." One participant stated, "Undoubtedly, efforts to align organizational culture with the Supreme Leader's policies must be grounded in Islamic-ethical values." Another emphasized, "The health of our administrative system depends on cultivating a societal disdain for corruption; the cultural model must include strengthening religious beliefs among staff and managers." Another concluded, "In my view, the key to an ideal organizational culture lies in reinforcing spirituality and moral values."

The second subcategory under this domain is human capital development. It was reiterated that while organizational culture is related to the people working within it, a strong culture can endure despite personnel turnover. Therefore, fostering an environment conducive to human capital development is crucial. As one respondent put it, "Human resources are the top priority in any organization because they shape its culture, so various forms of attention and investment in human capital must be ensured." Another commented, "An evolving organizational culture only emerges when human resources are supported; in my opinion, a truly effective culture depends on holistic human development." A third added, "Empowering personnel intellectually and professionally is of greater importance, as organizational culture theories emphasize skill-building." One manager with 15 years of experience shared, "A culture of meritocracy fosters progress, and an organizational culture aligned with the declared policies must infuse a merit-based spirit, which depends on merit-based selection."

The third subcategory, opportunity for personal growth, was also underscored. A well-structured organizational culture should enable individual development, which is seen as a driver of institutional progress. As one participant observed, "An effective organizational culture in our administrative system must enable personal growth; making such opportunities available is the foundation of progressive culture." Another highlighted, "An excellent culture is one that allows risk-taking and proactive leadership; without an environment conducive to personal advancement, cultural transformation is unlikely." A further voice added, "The Supreme Leader has stated in the policies that the administrative environment must foster personal growth and competitiveness."

Rule-of-Law-Oriented Organizational Culture

The second major category is the rule-of-law-oriented organizational culture, comprising the subcategories of "rule-based performance system" and "organizational cohesion." The rule-based system includes concepts such as regulation, avoidance of arbitrariness, system and method improvement, codification, process and method effectiveness, organizational discipline, process orientation, internal discipline, and justice-based legislation. Interviewees expressed concern that legal ambiguity leads to subjective interpretation and weakens systemic integrity. As one stated, "The ambiguity and interpretability of regulations enable individual interpretations at the implementation stage; we must inject lawfulness into our organizational culture." Another elaborated, "If we want a foundation for cultural creation, we must increase legal commitment and transparency; unchecked power and inadequate oversight have caused fragmentation." One participant added, "The operational literature of our offices must be clear, free of arbitrary interpretation, and grounded in lawfulness." Another noted, "Fixing shortcomings in policy and enforcement can lead to a lawful cultural model that serves as a reference point." A final observation declared, "Creating effective processes is essential for a culture model aligned with the Supreme Leader's directives—lawfulness must be internalized."

The second subcategory, cohesion, relates to the integration of individual strategies with collective strategies, transforming personal goals into organizational goals, and aligning entrepreneurial efforts. Interviewees strongly emphasized its importance. "The most vital organizational principle for cultural development is fostering cohesion and unity," one said. Another suggested, "Cohesion can be a core variable in shaping our cultural model." A third participant asserted, "Eliminating internal conflicts is critical to creating organizational values and designing a cultural model." One added, "Efforts to build consensus and resolve divisive conflicts—also emphasized in the Supreme Leader's policies—are crucial to a dynamic culture." Yet another emphasized, "Reducing conflicts between managers and staff is key to building an active organizational culture." Finally, one concluded, "Support for leadership fosters unity and eliminates destructive rivalries."

Idealism-Oriented Organizational Culture

The third core category is the idealism-oriented organizational culture, consisting of the subcategories of "connectivity" and "ritualism." Connectivity includes group trust, mutual commitment, group adaptability, tolerance of differing opinions, organizational attachment and commitment, legitimacy creation, and inter-organizational interaction. Interviewees consistently highlighted the role of communication in institutional development. One respondent explained, "A lack of structured communication with administrative, executive, and judicial bodies has led to stagnation; the remedy lies in internal and inter-institutional connectivity." Another shared, "The failure to foster communication between organizational levels has hindered structural problem-solving and weakened our cultural fabric." A further comment stated, "Our weak internal and external communication has hampered efforts to revive our administrative culture; we must prioritize mutual trust, shared commitments, and conflict resolution to elevate the system." One interviewee noted, "The absence of interaction between citizens and officials has undermined administrative legitimacy, which must be addressed in cultural model design." Another added, "Weak communication between mid-level staff and managers limits proactive engagement; strengthening it will boost motivation and organizational commitment."

The second subcategory, ritualism, was described as encompassing standardized, rule-bound, repeatable behaviors that promote clarity in performance expectations. In designing a culture model, institutionalizing foundational principles such as specialization, knowledge orientation, efficiency, justice, responsibility, vision, and strategic thinking is essential. As one

participant lamented, "Ignoring the experience of thousands of competent managers due to political considerations has damaged meritocracy; we must restore it, especially in culture model design." Another pointed out, "Nepotism, favoritism, and political appointments have eroded justice and meritocracy; these must be addressed and valued in our culture model." A third added, "Job insecurity has negatively impacted productivity, and this issue must be rectified." A final insight noted, "The dominance of personal networks over merit has weakened justice-oriented values, diminishing cultural effectiveness."

Transformation-Oriented Organizational Culture

The fourth major category is the transformation-oriented organizational culture, which includes the subcategories of "service optimization" and "modernization and transformation." The former involves accountability, social responsibility, public engagement, innovative service delivery, pluralism, and decentralization. The latter includes knowledge management, innovation, creativity, agility, administrative optimization (e-government), and transparent information flow. Quality service provision has been central to recent discourse, with widespread recognition that organizational culture influences service quality and, in turn, social satisfaction and organizational performance. Interviewees echoed these views. One declared, "The missing link in our system is accountability." Another added, "Responsibility and accountability are key elements that must be prioritized." A third noted, "Accountability to the public is the cornerstone of a sound administrative system." Other participants emphasized, "In light of our social and cultural context, our culture must emphasize public engagement," and "Involving the public in administrative affairs must become embedded in our organizational culture." Others remarked, "Our culture remains stagnant due to reliance on outdated practices," and "We must create environments that meet the emerging needs of younger generations."

Organizational transformation aims to adapt systems to evolving challenges. A culture that embraces change can enhance outcomes in performance, innovation, and resilience. As noted in the interviews, "Reducing systemic complexity and shielding citizens from bureaucratic exhaustion must be central to our culture model." Another warned, "Bloated bureaucracy hinders growth, and we must streamline operations as stressed in national policies." One participant explained, "Unnecessary complexity fosters corruption; many of our organizations display this pattern." A further reflection stated, "Outdated automation systems disconnect us from societal needs, reducing administrative efficiency—our culture model must reflect societal realities." Another shared, "Endless paperwork and procedural hurdles have crippled our administrative system." One stressed, "Cutting red tape is vital to designing an effective organizational culture." Finally, one interviewee concluded, "The lack of up-to-date data for performance evaluation is a serious flaw; modernization must be pursued with full force, and our culture must evolve accordingly."

In sum, based on the interview data and analysis, a cultural model aligned with general administrative policies must rest on four foundational elements: excellence orientation, rule-of-law orientation, transformation orientation, and idealism orientation. This model should establish a fertile ground for cultivating an excellence-based culture, particularly through a rule-of-law framework. Simultaneously, it must enable transformation within organizational structures and foster idealism as a strategic cultural orientation. Following the coding and fieldwork analysis, a paradigmatic model was developed using Strauss and Corbin's (2011) framework, classifying components into causal conditions, strategies (actions and interactions), contextual conditions, intervening conditions, core phenomena, and outcomes.

Figure 1.

Final Model of the Study
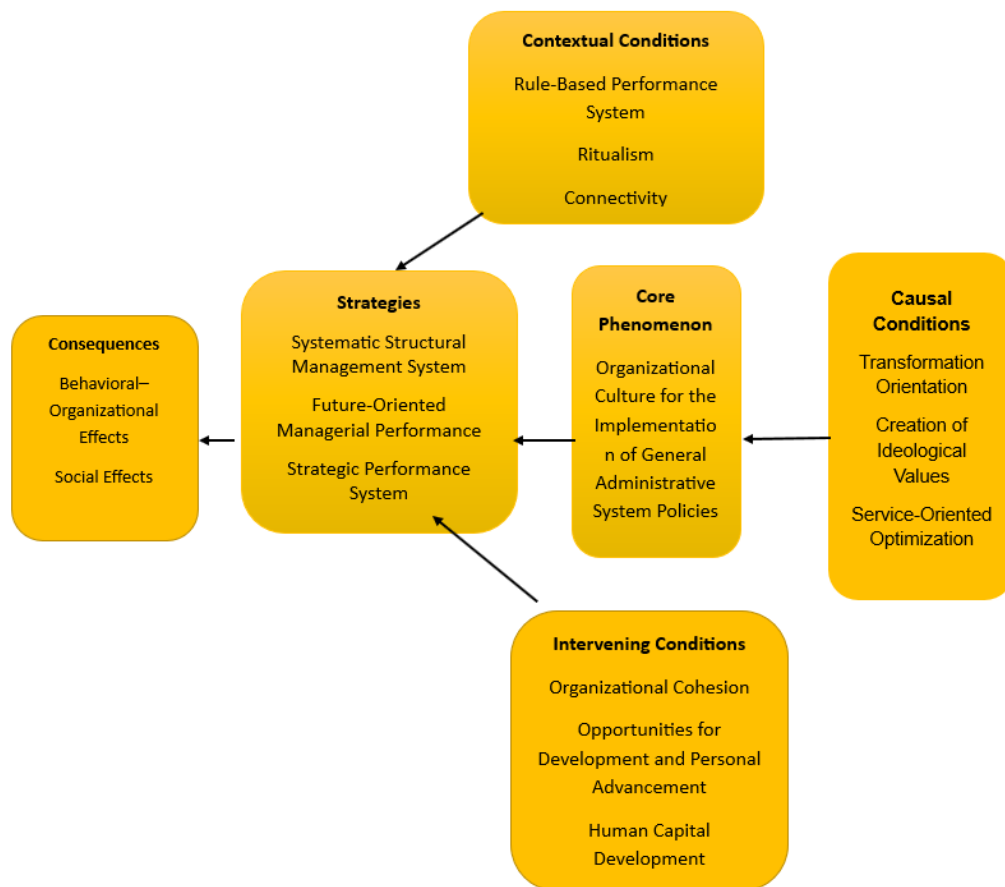
Discussion and Conclusion

The present study sought to design a grounded model of organizational culture aligned with the general administrative policies of the Iranian governance system. Based on qualitative analysis, four core dimensions of organizational culture were identified: excellence-oriented culture, rule-of-law-oriented culture, idealism-oriented culture, and transformation-oriented culture. Each of these dimensions was constructed from specific subcategories that emerged from the coding of expert interviews, reflecting the centrality of value-based governance, legal compliance, participatory ethics, and organizational adaptability in the effective implementation of public sector policies.

The first core dimension, the excellence-oriented organizational culture, highlights the significance of embedding ethical, religious, and humanistic values within institutional systems. This finding resonates with the work of Asadi and Tootian (2024), who emphasized that institutional resilience depends heavily on moral and value-laden leadership and the integration of human capital strategies with ethical imperatives [4]. Likewise, Marcos et al. (2020) illustrated how moral commitment and job satisfaction are strongly influenced by an organizational culture that prioritizes value creation and integrity [2]. The emphasis on human capital development, particularly the merit-based advancement of personnel, is supported by findings from Hafid (2024), who demonstrated that servant leadership and employee engagement are most effective when mediated by an empowering culture [9]. Furthermore, the creation of opportunities for individual growth parallels Pranitasari's (2022) model, which linked engagement and motivation directly to cultural reinforcement [21].

The second core dimension, rule-of-law-oriented organizational culture, underscores the importance of institutionalizing legalism, system discipline, and procedural clarity. The emphasis on eliminating discretionary behavior and codifying administrative actions reflects the need for stability and predictability in public governance. This aligns with findings by Shahmohammadi et al. (2022), who argued that adherence to legal frameworks enhances institutional cohesion and legitimacy, particularly in military or rigid hierarchical institutions [5]. The subcategory of organizational cohesion—identified through indicators such as conflict resolution, structured oversight, and group integrity—supports the model presented by Estedadi et al. (2023), who found that cohesive cultures lead to better organizational justice, higher performance, and collective morale [18]. Similarly, Rahimi et al. (2023) noted that fragmented cultures weaken innovation and strategic alignment in public education, highlighting the critical function of legal structure in cultural coherence [19].

The third identified dimension, idealism-oriented organizational culture, integrates elements of ritualism and inter-organizational connectedness. The emphasis on shared identity, social trust, responsibility, and strategic vision is consistent with the cultural model proposed by Mohanty and Rath (2012), who found that organizational citizenship behavior thrives in institutions where ethical rituals and social capital are reinforced [1]. The importance of strategic rituals and institutional memory is also reflected in the study by Assoratgoon and Kantabutra (2023), which argued that sustainability in governance requires the institutionalization of rituals that reflect visionary values and civic ethics [10]. In line with this, Pedraza-Rodríguez et al. (2023) underscored that shared cultural understandings—especially in peripheral regions—are critical to innovation and adaptive governance [16].

The fourth dimension, transformation-oriented organizational culture, emphasizes the necessity of flexibility, innovation, and digital alignment in the face of bureaucratic rigidity. The subcategories of service optimization and modernization echo the findings of Hadavand et al. (2023), who found that organizational culture is a key enabler of digital innovation when embedded in strategic decision-making systems [12]. Likewise, Rass et al. (2023) highlighted that adaptive system modeling of culture enables dynamic responses to policy shifts, promoting agility and long-term resilience [11]. Moreover, the role of transparency, agility, and participatory reform in service-oriented organizations is echoed in Osman et al. (2023), who demonstrated that marketing and innovation capabilities in construction firms are mediated by cultural flexibility [3]. Vatan et al. (2024) further supported the idea that culture must be considered when implementing new information systems, noting that such integration ensures better performance and policy coherence [17].

Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on public sector governance and organizational culture by proposing a comprehensive, context-sensitive model tailored to the strategic policies of the Iranian administrative system. It builds upon and extends previous studies by offering a grounded framework that encapsulates the complex interplay between cultural values and structural imperatives in bureaucratic institutions. The model's emphasis on the four pillars—excellence, legality, idealism, and transformation—not only reflects conceptual completeness but also operational relevance in the current governance landscape.

Moreover, the study affirms the findings of earlier works that have stressed the mediating and moderating roles of culture in administrative behavior. For instance, Nourbakhsh et al. (2015) demonstrated how cultural alignment enhances market orientation and strategic effectiveness in banking institutions—a finding that is directly applicable to governmental service delivery frameworks [13]. Similarly, Ghaedamini Harouni et al. (2023) showed that cultural synergy boosts knowledge management and leadership outcomes in academic settings, reinforcing the importance of culture in aligning individual

efforts with institutional objectives [14]. Khalili et al. (2023) also underscored that culture, when aligned with economic and reporting systems, facilitates sustainability and institutional transparency [22].

Importantly, this model also responds to the governance concerns raised by Rahpeyma et al. (2024), who argued that institutional corruption and managerial inefficiencies are symptomatic of deeper cultural issues rather than policy gaps [7]. In this light, the proposed model offers a preventative approach by building a culture that values law, transformation, ethics, and unity, thus addressing root causes of dysfunction rather than treating surface-level symptoms.

While the study offers a novel and integrative model grounded in qualitative inquiry, it is not without limitations. First, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a limited number of high-level administrators, which may not fully capture the diversity of cultural perceptions across different public organizations. Second, the grounded theory approach—although suitable for exploratory modeling—relies heavily on the interpretive capacity of the researcher, which introduces a degree of subjectivity. Third, the findings are contextually bound to the Iranian administrative system and may not be generalizable to other socio-political settings without adaptation. Lastly, the absence of a quantitative phase limits the statistical validation of the identified categories and relationships.

Future research could benefit from a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative modeling with quantitative validation to test the reliability and predictive strength of the proposed cultural model. Longitudinal studies may also be useful in examining how cultural elements evolve over time in response to policy reforms or leadership transitions. Comparative studies between different countries or sectors (e.g., military vs. civilian administration, health vs. education sectors) could illuminate cultural patterns and structural drivers unique to each domain. Additionally, future investigations might focus on the role of digital transformation and artificial intelligence in reshaping organizational culture in public institutions.

To operationalize the proposed model, public institutions should incorporate culture-building objectives into strategic planning, performance appraisal, and capacity-building programs. Training workshops and leadership development programs should emphasize the four core pillars: excellence, legality, idealism, and transformation. Public organizations must also foster participatory mechanisms that enable employee voice, innovation sharing, and cultural feedback loops. Importantly, structural reforms—such as codifying standard procedures and reducing discretionary power—must be accompanied by cultural initiatives to ensure holistic and sustainable change. Finally, monitoring frameworks should be developed to regularly assess cultural alignment with administrative goals, ensuring that culture remains a living, adaptive force in public governance.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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