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Decentralized Bureaucracy In Governance And Its Impact On The Organizational Culture Of Governmental Institutions In Iran

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Abstract

Decentralized bureaucracy in governance is recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing organizational culture and strengthening public trust in governmental institutions. By reducing the concentration of power, fostering accountability, and increasing structural flexibility, decentralization paves the way for the development of ethical values and organizational civilization within public institutions. The present study aims to explain the impact of decentralized bureaucracy on the organizational culture of Iranian governmental institutions and to identify the dimensions of organizational civilization. This research is fundamental-applied in purpose, employs a descriptive-correlational and regression-based design, and collected data quantitatively through questionnaires. The statistical population consisted of managers and employees of provincial and district governorates in central provinces of Iran (Isfahan, Yazd, Kerman). Using G*Power software and a multistage sampling method, a sample size of 199 was determined. To evaluate and validate the conceptual model, structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied using SmartPLS software. Findings revealed that decentralized bureaucracy, through strengthening four dimensions of organizational civilization—knowledge-orientation, human-orientation, community-orientation, and justice-orientation—exerts a positive influence on organizational transparency, stakeholder participation, and the acceleration of decision-making processes. Ultimately, this leads to an increase in organizational trust among managers and employees. These results confirm the direct reflection of decentralization policies on the organizational culture of governmental institutions in Iran and demonstrate their effectiveness in improving institutional efficiency and legitimacy.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

In recent decades, rapid social, economic, and technological transformations have intensified the necessity for effective, accountable, and efficient governance within public organizations. Achieving citizen satisfaction and enhancing organizational productivity requires the adoption of modern management and governance models. Among these, strengthening organizational culture and organizational civilization—together with the active participation of employees in managerial processes—emerges as one of the core objectives of public institutions. Organizational civilization, as a set of values and structures, not only regulates individual and collective behaviors but also provides the capacity for redesigning organizational strategies, structures, and processes. This, in turn, facilitates creativity, cohesion, commitment, innovation, and the preservation of organizational identity. Realizing such a vision, however, is not feasible without considering the approach of decentralized governance, which seeks to distribute decision-making authority and reduce managerial monopoly. Furthermore, decentralized governance—as a key component of “good governance”—plays a pivotal role in reinforcing local governance, enhancing transparency, accelerating decision-making processes, and broadening stakeholder participation. Comparative experiences from various countries indicate that this approach can provide a fertile ground for sustainable development, social trust, and improved quality of public sector management. Nevertheless, the localization of the organizational civilization model in Iran remains indispensable due to cultural, social, and political specificities. Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the impact of decentralized bureaucracy on the development of organizational civilization and culture in governmental organizations of Iran, addressing the central question of whether decentralization can effectively enhance transparency, foster trust, expand participation, and accelerate decision-making processes in public institutions.

Methodology

This research was conducted to assess the organizational civilization model with an emphasis on the decentralized governance approach in Iranian governmental institutions. The study is classified as fundamental–applied in purpose and employs a descriptive–correlational and regression-based methodology with a quantitative design. The statistical population comprised managers and employees of provincial and district governorates in central provinces of Iran (Isfahan, Yazd, and Kerman). The sample size was determined as 199 using G*Power software and selected through multistage sampling. Data were collected via a researcher-designed questionnaire containing 40 items measured on a five-point Likert scale. Content, face validity, and confirmatory factor analysis were employed to establish validity, while reliability was confirmed through Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability. Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling based on partial least squares (PLS–SEM) with path analysis algorithms, applied in SPSS (version 24) and SmartPLS (version 3).

Results and Discussion

The structural equation modeling results indicated that all measurement indicators demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity. Factor loadings, composite reliability, Cronbach’s alpha, and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion) confirmed the adequacy of the constructs. Moreover, the structural model analysis using PLS–SEM showed that all research hypotheses were supported. Organizational civilization—as a multidimensional construct comprising knowledge-orientation, human-orientation, community-orientation, and justice-orientation—was found to significantly influence various aspects of organizational performance, including transparency, accelerated decision-making, stakeholder participation, and the development of organizational trust. Coefficient of determination (R^2) values confirmed the explanatory power of the model, and the overall model fit was evaluated as strong across all dimensions. The findings highlight that decentralized bureaucracy has a profound impact on the development of organizational civilization and culture in Iranian governmental organizations. By reducing centralized authority and delegating decision-making power to local levels, decentralization enables broader participation of employees and stakeholders, fosters transparency, expedites decision-making processes, improves resource management, and enhances organizational trust. Beyond managerial outcomes, decentralization also carries cultural reflections, fostering solidarity, reinforcing human values, strengthening organizational ethics, and stimulating innovation. Accordingly, decentralization should not be regarded merely as an administrative tool but rather as a strategic approach for realizing good governance, enhancing the legitimacy of governmental institutions, and improving the overall efficiency of public sector organizations in Iran.