Identifying the Components of a Coherence-Oriented Model for Structuring Administrative System Policies

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and categorize the components of a coherence-oriented model for structuring administrative system policies in Iran, with a focus on Chapter Four of the Civil Service Management Law. Employing a qualitative multi-case design, this research focused on legal texts and expert insights related to administrative structural policies. The data corpus included Chapter Four of the Civil Service Management Law, relevant executive regulations, and semi-structured interviews with 20 policy experts, managers, legislators, and academics selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, and a total of 214 open codes were extracted, organized into 43 basic themes, 21 organizing themes, and ultimately 6 global themes. Documentary evidence was triangulated with expert interviews to enhance validity. The thematic analysis yielded six global themes that reflect the sources and nature of policy incoherence: legislative and regulatory development requirements, internal coordination, procedural coherence, external coordination, content coherence, and synergy and integration. Key issues identified include outdated or overly generic legislative clauses, lack of clear authority delegation, inconsistent procedural norms across branches, reluctance to implement privatization policies, contradictions between legacy and current laws, and political resistance to structural reform. These factors were found to systematically undermine alignment, accountability, and effective execution of structural administrative policies. The study concludes that achieving coherence in structural administrative policies requires a multidimensional approach that integrates legal clarity, inter-institutional coordination, procedural consistency, and political alignment. A coherence-oriented model can serve as a diagnostic and prescriptive tool for policymakers aiming to reform Iran's administrative system and align structural regulations with governance goals.

Keywords: Administrative structure, policy coherence, Civil Service Management Law, structural reform, thematic analysis, Iran, public administration, inter-institutional coordination.

1. Introduction

One of the central challenges in public administration systems, particularly in developing countries, lies in the coherence and integration of administrative policies and their structural frameworks. In the context of Iran, policy fragmentation, inconsistency among legal provisions, lack of coordination across executive and legislative institutions, and inadequate policy

evaluation mechanisms have often hindered the successful implementation of public administration reforms. The Iranian administrative system, rooted in legal structures such as the Civil Service Management Law, operates under the influence of numerous, sometimes contradictory, regulatory instruments, which calls for a systematic examination of the coherence of its structural policy components.

Policy coherence, broadly defined as the logical alignment of policy goals, instruments, and implementation practices, is essential for ensuring administrative efficiency, legitimacy, and responsiveness in public systems (Ehsani, 2021; Shadmehr, 2023). In the Iranian context, efforts at administrative reform have frequently focused on reducing corruption, enhancing e-governance, and aligning public management practices with good governance principles. However, a persistent gap exists between policy formulation and execution, especially in the structural realm of public administration (Kamali et al., 2021; Pourkiani et al., 2021). The Civil Service Management Law, as the principal regulatory framework, outlines responsibilities related to organizational design, delegation of authority, structural simplification, and coordination mechanisms. Yet, the operationalization of these provisions is complicated by overlapping mandates, vague definitions, and contradictions across policy layers.

Recent scholarship has emphasized the necessity of systemic policy design and evaluation as a foundation for structural coherence (Abbasabadi et al., 2022; Asadpour Hamzeh et al., 2023). Systemic models, such as the Almond model used in Iran's tax administration, have been applied to capture interdependencies and feedback loops in policymaking, underscoring the limitations of isolated or linear approaches to reform (Asadpour Hamzeh et al., 2023). Moreover, the implementation of structural policies is deeply influenced by administrative culture, political interests, institutional fragmentation, and lack of stakeholder participation (Gorjipour et al., 2019; Ramezanpour et al., 2020). When the structural elements of policy—such as mandates for organizational units, delegation processes, or oversight mechanisms—lack mutual alignment, the result is inefficiency, confusion among implementers, and policy inertia.

The issue of administrative coherence is not only structural but also epistemological, as it relates to the capacity of institutions to perceive and interpret legal norms consistently across various levels of governance (Hoseini et al., 2021). Empirical research in Iran reveals that many of the country's administrative dysfunctions stem from the absence of shared understandings among policymakers, regulators, and implementers (Rahnavard et al., 2019; Ramezanpour et al., 2019). For example, studies on council-based policymaking highlight how ambiguity in legal mandates, combined with politicization of administrative roles, can paralyze the functioning of strategic councils such as the Supreme Administrative Council (Rostamloo et al., 2018). The implications of such disjointed policymaking are significant: they affect resource allocation, institutional legitimacy, and the overall trajectory of administrative modernization.

Furthermore, effective coherence in policy structures depends on the integration of administrative health indicators, digital governance capabilities, and mechanisms to evaluate the performance and responsiveness of public institutions (Moeinkochaksaraeii et al., 2023; Nouri et al., 2020). Recent meta-synthesis studies show that although Iran has made substantial progress in policy development, there is still a lack of institutionalized frameworks for policy evaluation, which prevents real-time correction of structural inefficiencies (Abbas Abadi et al., 2022; Gharabaghi et al., 2021). It is within this context that identifying the components of a coherence-oriented model becomes not only a theoretical necessity but a practical demand. As public administration becomes more complex and interdependent, models that map the factors contributing to or inhibiting coherence in structural policymaking provide valuable tools for reform-minded institutions.

Institutional coherence also relates to public value, democratic accountability, and administrative justice. Falsafi et al. (2020) argue that coherence must be tied to human dignity and institutional legitimacy, where citizens perceive administrative procedures and structures as fair, logical, and accessible (Falsafi et al., 2020). In the absence of such perception, public trust erodes, and the legitimacy of the administrative system deteriorates. Other studies emphasize the importance of expert participation and deliberative processes in the policy formulation stage to ensure the alignment of structural policies with operational realities (Seyedi et al., 2020; Sheikhbagloo et al., 2022). However, Iran's public policymaking arena has often been criticized for limiting elite and expert involvement in critical stages of policy formulation and revision (Montazer Ataei

et al., 2019; Ramezanpour et al., 2020). As a result, policy incoherence often manifests in the form of ambiguous directives, contradictory instructions, and overlapping roles.

In addition, governance models inspired by good governance paradigms emphasize that coherence is not merely a technical attribute but a normative one. Policies should be transparent, inclusive, participatory, and subject to regular evaluation to be considered coherent in a democratic context (Abbas Abadi et al., 2022; Karouni, 2018). In this light, developing a model that identifies the building blocks of coherence in structural policymaking would offer both normative and instrumental benefits. It would contribute to the realization of accountable and effective governance and offer a roadmap for policymakers seeking to modernize Iran's bureaucratic institutions.

This study, therefore, aims to identify and categorize the components of a coherence-oriented model for administrative structural policies with a focus on Chapter Four of the Civil Service Management Law and its related regulations.

2. Methods and Materials

This study was conducted using a qualitative multi-case research strategy with a focus on exploring coherence within structural administrative system policies, specifically those outlined in Chapter Four of the Civil Service Management Law of Iran. The thematic domain of the research was coherence in policymaking, and the research case consisted of legal and regulatory documents pertaining to the structural dimensions of the administrative system. These included the Civil Service Management Law, development program statutes, Cabinet approvals, executive bylaws, administrative circulars, and resolutions of the Supreme Administrative Council. Chapter Four of the Civil Service Management Law, together with Clause (a) of Article 24, which is directly related to this chapter, served as the central case under examination.

The temporal scope of the study spans from November 2007, when the Civil Service Management Law was ratified, to October 2024, during which the fieldwork and data analysis were actively conducted. Geographically, the study encompasses three main institutional pillars responsible for the law's formulation, implementation, and oversight: the Islamic Consultative Assembly (legislature), the executive branch (specifically entities under Article 5 of the law), and the judiciary (as the monitoring body for legal enforcement).

The research population comprised two groups: first, primary documents, policies, and administrative legal texts relevant to structural policymaking; and second, a panel of experts including policymakers, administrative law enforcers, and scholars in the fields of public policy and administrative management. Participants were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods. Eligible participants met at least one of the following criteria: a minimum of four years of direct experience in structural administrative policymaking within any of the three branches of government; a minimum of four years of implementation experience in executing such policies; or a minimum of four years of academic or research experience in public policy or state management. Snowball sampling was particularly beneficial due to the specialized nature of the population, where access and identification of experts often required referrals from previously interviewed individuals.

Initial estimations proposed a sample of 20 experts, but the final number of participants was determined based on the principle of theoretical saturation. Saturation was established not by the subjective judgment of the researcher but by observing redundancy in the data during coding, wherein new interviews no longer yielded novel insights or codes. In purposive sampling, the richness and relevance of the information were prioritized over sample size. To ensure reliability and relevance, only individuals who clearly fit the inclusion criteria were retained, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing data credibility.

Data collection was based on two main sources: documentary review and semi-structured expert interviews. The documentary review involved systematic content analysis of relevant legal texts, administrative laws, regulatory frameworks, and policy directives related to the structure of the administrative system. These documents were critically assessed to identify inconsistencies, overlaps, and points of contradiction across different policy instruments, particularly focusing on the provisions within Articles 29 and 30 and four specific clauses that exhibit incoherence, as identified in a pre-analysis phase.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected experts to elicit deep, contextually grounded insights into the causes, manifestations, and consequences of incoherence in structural policy implementation. Interview protocols were developed to probe the participants' perspectives on regulatory harmonization, the interaction of policy documents across institutional levels, and the practical implications of structural dissonance. Interview sessions were audio-recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and subjected to thorough review to ensure accuracy.

To maximize the depth and authenticity of the data, the interviews were conducted iteratively, allowing new questions to emerge based on earlier responses. This recursive approach enabled the researcher to explore emergent themes while maintaining alignment with the original research questions. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and transcripts were reviewed alongside related legal documents to facilitate triangulation.

Thematic analysis was employed using the six-phase method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which was deemed suitable for identifying patterns, themes, and inconsistencies in qualitative textual data. This method allowed for a rigorous yet flexible approach to analyzing the conceptual underpinnings and operational outcomes of administrative policy incoherence.

The first step in this process involved immersing the researcher in the data by repeated reading of transcripts and documents to develop a deep familiarity with the content. This immersion laid the foundation for identifying initial patterns and preliminary codes. In the second phase, initial codes were manually generated, either by annotating texts directly or highlighting them using color-coded schemes. These codes represented meaningful data units that captured elements of interest, such as contradictions between policy clauses or vague legal definitions.

The third phase involved collating similar codes into broader themes, each representing a significant concept related to policy coherence. For example, codes related to delegation of authority, parallel institutions, or inconsistent mandates were grouped under potential themes such as "structural redundancy" or "fragmented authority."

In the fourth phase, the initial themes underwent a process of refinement. Codes were reassigned where necessary, and themes were assessed for internal consistency and coherence across the data set. In cases where thematic patterns failed to present a unified narrative, themes were either split, merged, or eliminated. This review included both semantic and latent levels of thematic development.

The fifth phase entailed the definition and naming of each theme. Here, the researcher provided operational definitions that clearly articulated what each theme encompassed and what aspect of the data it represented. This step also involved writing thematic memos that explained the rationale for each theme and its relationship to the study's conceptual framework.

The sixth and final phase involved synthesizing the findings into a comprehensive narrative. Themes were situated within the broader policy and governance context, with rich descriptive and analytical commentary supported by excerpts from the interviews and documentary sources. The final report presented a logically structured and concise representation of the thematic insights, ensuring both analytic rigor and relevance to the research problem.

3.   Findings and Results

The findings of this qualitative study were derived from a detailed thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with experts, alongside a thorough review of Chapter Four of the Civil Service Management Law and its associated regulations. Using the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step thematic analysis framework, a total of 214 open codes were extracted and meticulously reviewed and refined across multiple cycles. These codes were grouped into 43 basic themes, which were then organized into 21 organizing themes. Ultimately, six overarching global themes were identified, providing a comprehensive structure to describe the factors influencing policy coherence in the administrative system structure. These six themes represent key dimensions of coherence challenges and requirements and are summarized in the following analytical narrative based on the contents of Table 1.

Table 1. Global Themes, Organizing Themes, and Basic Themes

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme
Legislative and Regulatory Development Requirements	Validity Periods and Avoidance of Over-Specification	Necessity of setting validity periods in laws and regulations
		Avoidance of over-specification in legislative texts
	Holistic Legal Drafting and Review During Implementation	Evaluating the Civil Service Management Law alongside other regulations
		Identifying legislative shortcomings during implementation
Internal Coordination	Annulment or Revision of Article 29	Need to annul directives lacking legal legitimacy
		Necessity of revising the introduction of Article 29
	Comprehensiveness of Directives	Addressing structural needs of all organizations in regulations
		Clarifying the relationship between job positions and HR components

	Clear Approval Authority in Law	Cabinet as the authority for approving organizational position ceilings
	Legal Delegation and Authority Assignment	Legitimacy of using vacant positions by the organization
		Legal basis for post bank control by the organization
		Delegating authority to approve organizational position ceilings to the organization
Procedural Coherence	Revision of Resolutions and Directives	Need to revise the 2009 Cabinet resolution
		Utilizing both organizational directives and Cabinet resolutions to prepare new legislation
	Diagnostic Analysis and Shared Understanding Across Branches	Need to assess the current administrative system for regulation development
		Lack of shared understanding between branches and implementers
External Coordination	Non-Implementation of Delegation by the Government	Delegation failure due to lack of conditions
		Government unwillingness to delegate to the private sector
	Legal Deficiency for Delegation	Lack of clear standards and criteria for delegable functions
		Necessity of reviewing and revising laws on privatization and delegation
	Organizational Resistance to Delegation	Resistance of executive bodies to delegation to preserve interests
		Lack of involvement by oversight institutions
Content Coherence	Legal Revision Requirements	Amendment of Clause (e) and stipulating consultant positions where relevant
		Lack of transition planning from the previous Civil Service Law to the current one
	Need for Legal Expertise and Accountability	Mandatory use of legal experts
		Mandating top-level accountability if directives are annulled
	Legal Enforcement Necessity	Validity of Administrative Court verdict
		Organizational deviation from Clause (e)
	Legitimacy of Consultant Appointments	No contradiction between the notified decree and Clause (e) of Article 29
		Consultant appointment aligned with institutional functions
	Execution Requirements	Mandating establishment of service complexes in newly formed counties
		Complex establishment required for agencies with interrelated functions
	Execution Constraints	Lack of financial and administrative resources
		Clause (t) misaligned with current administrative conditions
		Lack of political and security will
Synergy and Integration	Holistic Planning for Deputy Roles	Need to establish a framework for determining number of deputies
		Changes in deputy positions should be legally codified
	Legal Execution Prerequisites	Implementation of Chapters 1 and 2 essential for executing Chapter 4
		Clause (d) of Article 29 ineffective during the Fifth Development Plan
	Rejection at Implementation Stage	Rejection by parliamentarians and provincial managers
		Some institutions prefer non-implementation due to personal interests
	Lack of Implementation Conditions	Execution would disrupt duties and relationships of provincial units
		Absence of reliable and standardized administrative criteria

The first global theme, "Legislative and Regulatory Development Requirements," captures foundational issues related to the formulation and revision of laws. It includes organizing themes such as the necessity of setting validity periods in legislation and the recommendation for avoiding excessive specificity during drafting. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of a holistic perspective during both the creation and revision of laws. This includes evaluating the Civil Service Management Law in tandem with other applicable laws and identifying regulatory flaws during implementation. The findings reflect a shared expert opinion that laws lacking specific expiration timelines can become outdated or conflict with newly introduced provisions, creating incoherence across administrative mandates.

The second global theme, "Internal Coordination," reflects inconsistencies within the legislative and executive arms of government regarding structural policy formulation. Subthemes under this category include the need to repeal certain directives or revise the introductory paragraph of Article 29 due to legal invalidity or outdated provisions. Other organizing themes emphasize the necessity for comprehensive circulars that meet the structural needs of all public institutions and clarify the relationships between organizational posts and other human resources elements. Additionally, this theme highlights the importance of determining a clear legal authority for approving organizational charts—mainly the Cabinet—and addresses the legal requirement for delegating authority, including assigning a formal organizational post bank and defining limits on positions. The findings show that without internal policy coordination, conflicting circulars and ambiguous mandates obstruct efficient implementation.

The third global theme, "Procedural Coherence," highlights problems related to the consistency of policy application and understanding among government bodies. Experts noted that certain Cabinet resolutions from 2009 remain unreviewed despite contextual and operational changes. Subthemes included the need for mutual understanding among the three branches of government and the necessity of re-examining older regulations to align with current governance realities. The lack of a shared perception between the legislative, executive, and regulatory bodies often led to fragmented enforcement and inconsistent policy outcomes.

The fourth global theme, "External Coordination," points to challenges in policy coherence beyond the central government, particularly in areas concerning privatization and outsourcing. Experts cited instances where the government failed to transfer responsibilities to the private sector, either due to a lack of readiness or reluctance to relinquish control. Legal gaps regarding standards for transferable duties were identified, alongside regulatory ambiguities concerning the scope and limits of delegation. A notable subtheme was the unwillingness of public agencies to participate in delegation initiatives for fear of losing institutional power or resources. These issues collectively suggest that inter-organizational coordination mechanisms remain underdeveloped and hinder the realization of coherent policy execution in structural matters.

The fifth global theme, "Content Coherence," focuses on the alignment and legal soundness of specific legislative content. This includes the necessity to revise particular legal clauses such as Clause (e) and the structural provisions surrounding the appointment of consultants. A key organizing theme concerns the transition challenges between the former Civil Service Employment Law and the current Civil Service Management Law, where legacy systems continue to affect current operations. Another subtheme pertains to the vital role of legal specialists in interpreting and implementing structural laws. The data revealed multiple cases where circulars had been annulled without holding senior officials accountable, highlighting a lack of institutional responsibility and weakening the rule of law. Additionally, this theme examined the practicality of certain regulations—such as requiring complex facilities in newly established counties—which experts argued were often unrealistic due to financial and administrative limitations.

The sixth and final global theme, "Synergy and Integration," synthesizes findings related to the system-wide alignment of structural policies with broader governance mechanisms. One organizing theme in this category addresses the need to clearly define the criteria for increasing or reducing the number of deputy positions, proposing that such changes be codified within permanent legislation. The implementation of earlier chapters of the Civil Service Management Law was also emphasized as a prerequisite for effectively applying Chapter Four. Several subthemes highlighted political resistance from parliamentarians and provincial managers, who in some cases actively opposed implementation due to personal or organizational interests. The findings also indicate that the absence of standardized criteria and the perceived disruption of inter-unit relationships have contributed to implementation failures.

In summary, the analysis revealed six major domains of incoherence—legislative drafting, internal coordination, procedural alignment, external consistency, content soundness, and systemic synergy—each with its own cluster of challenges and required interventions. These themes illuminate the multifaceted nature of policy fragmentation within the administrative system's structural framework and form the basis for designing a coherence-oriented model that can guide future policymaking in this area.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to identify and organize the key components of a coherence-oriented model for structural policymaking in the Iranian administrative system, focusing on Chapter Four of the Civil Service Management Law. Through a qualitative multi-case approach and thematic analysis, six overarching themes emerged: legislative and regulatory development requirements, internal coordination, procedural coherence, external coordination, content coherence, and synergy and integration. These findings offer a multidimensional understanding of the sources of policy incoherence and illuminate the operational, legal, and organizational misalignments that obstruct the effective implementation of structural reforms.

The first major finding pertains to legislative and regulatory development requirements, which highlights challenges in the drafting and structuring of laws and policies. Interviewees emphasized the need for including validity dates in legislation and avoiding excessive detailing that may lead to rigidity. This aligns with prior studies that have critiqued Iran's policymaking environment for its lack of agility and legislative foresight, particularly in addressing long-term administrative evolution (Abbasabadi et al., 2022; Kamali et al., 2021). The research underscores the importance of simultaneous policy drafting and review, as suggested by studies emphasizing dynamic feedback loops in policy implementation (Asadpour Hamzeh et al., 2023). Indeed, fragmented regulations with outdated clauses (such as Articles 29 and 30) reinforce administrative ambiguities, which in turn increase the burden on implementing agencies.

The theme of internal coordination captures the systemic weakness in horizontal and vertical collaboration within government institutions. The necessity of revising executive directives and clarifying the authority responsible for approving organizational charts were identified as major gaps. Similar observations have been made in other Iranian studies highlighting the lack of consistency between sectoral and intergovernmental policies (Gharabaghi et al., 2021; Pourkiani et al., 2021). Interviewees emphasized the importance of clarifying the role of the Cabinet and delegating authority regarding post distribution, echoing concerns in the literature about the centralized nature of Iran's administrative hierarchy (Nouri et al., 2020; Seyedi et al., 2020). This dimension reflects a broader pattern of bureaucratic bottlenecks caused by insufficient delegation of authority and legal ambiguity surrounding jurisdictional boundaries.

In terms of procedural coherence, the study identified inconsistencies in the operationalization of structural policies, particularly due to outdated Cabinet decisions and a lack of shared understanding among the three branches of government. This corresponds with findings by Ramezanpour et al. (2020), who demonstrated that divergent interpretations of policy across branches result in fragmented implementation and regulatory backtracking (Ramezanpour et al., 2020). The lack of procedural alignment has also been attributed to political interference and the absence of comprehensive monitoring mechanisms, as confirmed in earlier meta-synthesis studies (Gharabaghi et al., 2021; Kamali et al., 2019). Moreover, institutional memory loss—often caused by leadership turnover—further aggravates the procedural fragmentation observed in this study.

The fourth theme, external coordination, points to failures in intersectoral linkages, especially in matters of delegation and privatization. The research identified resistance from executive agencies, lack of standardized criteria for outsourcing, and the passive stance of oversight bodies. These findings resonate with the work of Ehsani (2021), who argued that Iran's social security sector has similarly suffered from incoherent transfer of responsibilities and overlapping mandates (Ehsani, 2021). The limited political will to enforce outsourcing policies and the reluctance of public agencies to forgo control suggest that coherence cannot be achieved without cultural transformation within the administrative apparatus (Gorjipour et al., 2019; Sheikhbagloo et al., 2022). Additionally, institutional incoherence in structural delegation often stems from the lack of regulatory clarity, as emphasized in studies examining administrative corruption and rent-seeking behaviors (Kamali et al., 2019; Karouni, 2018).

The theme of content coherence underscores the critical need for revising certain legal clauses, enhancing interpretive consistency, and ensuring that legislative intent is faithfully translated into operational guidelines. The lack of integration between legacy laws, such as the former Civil Service Employment Law, and newer frameworks like the Civil Service Management Law, results in legal contradictions that obstruct implementation. This concern is consistent with prior findings suggesting that transitional legal frameworks in Iran often lack continuity and holistic integration (Montazer Ataei et al.,

2019; Rahnavard et al., 2019). The interviews also pointed to the need for legal expertise during both drafting and review phases, which has been repeatedly emphasized in studies calling for evidence-based policymaking and technocratic engagement (Falsafi et al., 2020; Moeinkochaksaraeii et al., 2023). Furthermore, experts noted that without institutional mechanisms for enforcing compliance—such as holding senior officials accountable for invalidated circulars—coherence remains unattainable.

The final theme, synergy and integration, encapsulates the macro-level challenges in aligning structural policies with broader governance goals. It became evident that several legislative clauses had lost effectiveness due to incompatibility with development plans or were intentionally ignored by subnational actors. For instance, inconsistencies in the interpretation of the role and number of deputy positions, or the non-recognition of specific mandates during implementation, reveal the politicized nature of administrative design. These issues reflect previous research demonstrating that political interests often override legal mandates, resulting in selective implementation and policy discontinuity (Fadaei & Kiani, 2018; Rostamloo et al., 2018). The findings here reaffirm that coherence cannot be achieved in isolation but requires a strategic governance framework that integrates structural design with operational capacity, political alignment, and legal predictability.

In synthesizing these themes, it becomes apparent that structural policy coherence in Iran's administrative system is challenged by both internal and external factors—ranging from legislative ambiguities and jurisdictional overlaps to procedural inconsistencies and political resistance. While the Civil Service Management Law was intended to streamline administrative functions and promote efficiency, its structural components have failed to achieve full coherence due to fragmented policy instruments, lack of stakeholder engagement, and weak evaluative feedback mechanisms. These findings mirror national-level studies that argue for the institutionalization of comprehensive policy evaluation models as a prerequisite for effective reform (Abbas Abadi et al., 2022; Ramezanpour et al., 2020).

This study, while providing a detailed qualitative examination of structural policy coherence in Iran's administrative system, is not without limitations. First, the research is inherently case-bound, focusing on Chapter Four of the Civil Service Management Law and its related clauses. As such, findings may not be generalizable to all sectors or laws within the Iranian administrative landscape. Second, the reliance on expert interviews introduces a degree of subjectivity, especially given the political and institutional affiliations of some participants. Despite rigorous thematic coding and theoretical saturation, certain insights may reflect individual interpretations rather than institutional consensus. Lastly, while documentary analysis was employed, legal texts themselves are dynamic and subject to reinterpretation, which may evolve over time and affect the enduring relevance of the study's findings.

Future studies should consider a broader, comparative analysis across other chapters of the Civil Service Management Law and include additional regulatory frameworks that impact structural policy design. A longitudinal design would be beneficial in capturing how coherence or fragmentation evolves over time in response to political shifts or administrative reforms. Furthermore, mixed-methods research incorporating quantitative policy evaluation tools could enrich the findings by measuring the actual implementation outcomes of structural policies. It would also be worthwhile to investigate the role of digital governance and administrative automation in fostering coherence, especially given the increasing reliance on e-government platforms in Iran's public sector.

For policymakers, the results highlight the urgent need to institutionalize coherence as a core principle of administrative reform. Legal drafting units should adopt integrated policy formulation methods that involve stakeholders from multiple branches of government. Training programs for middle and senior managers should focus on developing interpretive alignment and procedural literacy. Moreover, executive agencies should be empowered—legally and operationally—to modify obsolete regulations through delegated mechanisms. Establishing an inter-branch policy coherence council could facilitate alignment among legislative, executive, and oversight bodies. Ultimately, coherence should be pursued not only as a structural ideal but as an operational necessity in achieving effective, responsive, and accountable governance.

Ethical Considerations

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

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