Analyzing the Impact of Administrative System Efficiency on the Cohesion and Effectiveness of the Social System: Legal Challenges and Solutions

1. Nahid. Barakzehi [1] : Department of Public Law, Raf.C., Islamic Azad University, Rafsanjan, Iran
2. Khosro. Vafai Sadi [2*]: Department of Political Science, Raf.C., Islamic Azad University, Rafsanjan, Iran
3. Pooneh. Tabibzadeh [3]: Department of Public Law, Raf.C., Islamic Azad University, Rafsanjan, Iran

*corresponding author's email: Kh.vafaei@iau.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

The administrative system, as one of the principal pillars of governance, plays a pivotal role in the cohesion and effectiveness of the social system. The efficiency of this system directly affects public trust, social justice, civic participation, and sustainable development. In Iran, structural challenges such as centralization, administrative corruption, legal complexity, weak judicial oversight, and digital lag have threatened social cohesion. The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of administrative system efficiency on the cohesion and effectiveness of the social system, with a focus on identifying challenges and proposing legal solutions. This study adopts a descriptive–analytical approach from a legal perspective. Data were collected and analyzed from statutory documents, valid domestic reports (such as those of the Parliamentary Research Center), international reports (including those of the World Bank and Transparency International), classical theoretical frameworks (Weber, Parsons, and North), and practical case examples. The key challenges include structural corruption (leading to a decline in social capital), excessive centralization (restricting participation), digital weakness (reducing transparency), and inadequate judicial oversight (undermining sustainable development). These factors have diminished public trust, exacerbated inequality, and threatened social cohesion under current conditions in 2026 amid economic crises and social protests. The principal domains of impact include social order, public service delivery, justice, development, and participation, all of which are dependent on legal frameworks. Legal reforms such as simplifying regulations, strengthening judicial independence, implementing structural anti-corruption measures, developing digital governance frameworks, and advancing decentralization can enhance administrative efficiency and restore social cohesion. The implementation of these solutions requires political will and inter-institutional cooperation to achieve a just and sustainable society.

Keywords: *Administrative system, social cohesion, social efficiency, legal challenges, administrative corruption, digital technology, judicial oversight.*

Introduction

The administrative system, as the beating heart of the governance structure, is not only the executor of public policies but also a determinant of the quality of relations between the state and society, the allocation of resources, and the level of public trust. The efficiency of this system directly affects the cohesion and effectiveness of the entire social system, because a society that benefits from high-quality public services, fairness in the distribution of

opportunities, and transparency in decision-making is more likely to enjoy stability, higher participation, and sustainable development. By contrast, administrative inefficiency can lead to public distrust, increased inequality, erosion of social capital, and even threats to national cohesion (1, 2).

In Iran, the administrative system has faced numerous challenges over recent decades, rooted in historical, political, cultural, and structural factors. Excessive centralization, complex bureaucracy, administrative corruption, and weak utilization of modern technologies are among the most significant barriers to administrative efficiency. These challenges have not only reduced economic productivity but have also negatively affected other social dimensions such as public trust, civic participation, and social justice. From a legal perspective, the administrative system should be founded on the principles of the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and justice. International instruments, such as the United Nations framework for combating corruption, and domestic legal principles emphasize the necessity of establishing accountable and transparent administrative structures. Nevertheless, the gap between these legal principles and the practical performance of the administrative system constitutes one of the core issues examined in this study (3, 4).

This article aims to analyze the impact of administrative system efficiency on the cohesion and effectiveness of the social system by identifying existing challenges and proposing legal and practical solutions. The main research question is: how does the efficiency of the administrative system influence the cohesion and effectiveness of the social system, and what legal solutions can address the existing challenges? To answer this question, the study first examines the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the subject, then analyzes the challenges and key dimensions of impact, and finally presents proposed solutions.

Research Background

Previous studies have examined the relationship between the administrative system and state legitimacy in Iran, highlighting how administrative inefficiency has contributed to declining public trust and weakened governmental legitimacy. Research focusing on the challenges of Iran's administrative system in the context of improving governance has shown that inefficiencies in bureaucratic processes and legal complexities create significant obstacles to effective governance and policy implementation (5, 6).

From an institutional perspective, studies on institutional change and economic performance emphasize that institutions play a decisive role in shaping economic and social outcomes, and that institutional inefficiency can hinder development and undermine social cohesion (2). In a similar vein, research in public administration and public governance literature has addressed modern theories of governance and examined the relationship between governance quality and the performance of governmental systems, underscoring the central role of administrative capacity in achieving effective governance (7).

Theoretical Foundations

The administrative system, as a set of institutions, laws, processes, and human resources, is responsible for implementing public policies, delivering services, and managing societal resources. From the perspective of classical administrative theory, an efficient administrative system should be based on meritocracy, clearly defined hierarchies, and rational–legal procedures. These characteristics enable coordination among different sectors of society and prevent institutional disorder and conflict (8).

From a systems theory perspective, the social system is understood as a collection of interrelated subsystems—economic, political, cultural, and legal—whose proper functioning is mutually dependent. Inefficiency in one subsystem, particularly the administrative system as the executive infrastructure, can spill over into other domains and disrupt the overall equilibrium of the social system (8).

Within the framework of new institutionalism, it is emphasized that formal institutions (laws and governmental organizations) and informal institutions (values, traditions, and social networks) must be aligned. Ignoring informal institutions can generate social resistance and reduce the effectiveness of public policies (2). In the context of good governance, international organizations stress indicators such as transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, and efficiency. An efficient administrative system strengthens these indicators and contributes to increased social capital and public trust (9, 10).

From an Islamic perspective, principles such as justice, trustworthiness, and service to the public form the normative foundation of the administrative system. These principles are compatible with modern models of good governance and emphasize managerial accountability and fairness in the distribution of resources (11).

Challenges of the Administrative System in Iran and Their Impact on Social Cohesion

Over recent decades, Iran's administrative system has faced numerous structural and functional challenges rooted in historical, political, cultural, and economic factors. These challenges have not only reduced the internal efficiency of the administrative system but have also directly undermined the cohesion and effectiveness of the social system. One of the most significant challenges is excessive centralization, which concentrates decision-making authority at central levels and limits local accountability and citizen participation at lower levels. This centralization leads to delays in service delivery, increased administrative costs, and a sense of alienation among citizens from governance processes, ultimately weakening social capital (6).

Another major challenge is the complexity and ambiguity of administrative laws, which have produced heavy bureaucracy and lengthy procedures. The multiplicity of conflicting regulations, lack of legal coherence, and frequent procedural changes have reduced productivity and created fertile ground for corruption and rent-seeking. Reports by the Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center indicate that such legal and bureaucratic complexities constitute one of the primary obstacles to improving the business environment and achieving economic growth, thereby exacerbating social inequalities (4).

Administrative corruption, as one of the most serious challenges, has severely damaged public trust. Weak oversight mechanisms, lack of independence among anti-corruption bodies, and the influence of informal networks on administrative decision-making have institutionalized corruption and resulted in the waste of public resources. The Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International reflects Iran's low ranking in this area, which is directly associated with declining social trust and rising public dissatisfaction (12).

In addition, insufficient digital infrastructure and organizational resistance to technological change have hindered the modernization of the administrative system. While successful countries such as Estonia and Singapore have significantly enhanced transparency and efficiency through the digitalization of administrative processes, Iran faces challenges such as frequent system outages, limited digital literacy among public employees, and the absence of comprehensive legal frameworks for data protection. This digital lag has not only reduced the effectiveness of public services but has also constrained civic participation and widened the digital divide among social groups (9).

The shortage of skilled human resources and an inadequate organizational culture also constitute key challenges. Recruitment systems based on personal connections rather than meritocracy, insufficient continuous training programs, and a culture resistant to change have diminished administrative efficiency. These issues have reduced employee motivation and service quality, thereby exerting negative effects on social cohesion (6).

Overall, these challenges have threatened social cohesion by generating public distrust, increasing inequality, reducing civic participation, and slowing development. Administrative inefficiency can lead to social and even political crises, as citizens increasingly perceive the governing system as incapable of responding to their fundamental needs.

Analysis of the Key Axes of the Administrative System's Impact on the Effectiveness of the Social System

Combating corruption represents one of the most critical axes through which the administrative system influences the effectiveness and cohesion of the social system. Administrative corruption not only wastes public resources but also erodes public trust, intensifies inequality, and challenges the legitimacy of the governing system. From a legal perspective, the principles of accountability and transparency emphasized in international anti-corruption frameworks and domestic administrative health regulations impose an obligation on the administrative system to prevent, detect, and punish corruption (3).

Countries such as Denmark and Singapore have minimized corruption by establishing independent oversight bodies, adopting stringent anti-corruption laws, and implementing digital reporting systems. For example, Denmark's anti-corruption framework, supported by periodic oversight and online disclosure of public transactions, has placed the country at the top of global corruption perception rankings (12). Similarly, in South Korea, anonymous online corruption reporting systems have significantly increased reporting rates and facilitated the detection of corrupt practices, illustrating the effectiveness of transparent and technology-based legal mechanisms (10).

Social Order and Coordination

Social order and coordination constitute fundamental pillars of social cohesion and are highly dependent on the efficiency of the administrative system. Through the formulation and enforcement of clear, predictable, and accountable laws, the administrative system can prevent institutional conflicts and ensure coordination among different sectors of society. The principle of the rule of law, emphasized in constitutional frameworks and international human rights instruments, requires strong judicial oversight and fair administrative procedures (13).

In successful cases such as Singapore, transparent legal frameworks combined with digital technologies, including advanced registration systems for public transactions, have maximized coordination and minimized corruption. By contrast, in Iran, legal ambiguity, overlapping regulations, and weak judicial oversight have disrupted coordination and contributed to rising social tensions. Legal solutions such as harmonizing legislation, strengthening judicial independence, and utilizing technology to enhance procedural transparency can reinforce social order and stability (7).

Public Service Delivery

The provision of high-quality and equitable public services is a core responsibility of the administrative system and directly affects citizens' quality of life and social cohesion. Public services—including education, healthcare, transportation, and social security—must be delivered on the basis of equal access and efficiency. Experiences

from countries such as Sweden in the digitalization of educational services and India in digital health systems demonstrate that accountable legal frameworks combined with technology can substantially improve access and service quality (10).

In Iran, weak oversight, inadequate digital infrastructure, and inequitable resource allocation have diminished the quality of public services. Legal reforms, such as strengthening civil service regulations and investing in e-government frameworks, can transform this sector and enhance both efficiency and social cohesion.

Justice and Equality

Justice and equality, as core components of social cohesion, are strongly dependent on the performance of the administrative system. An efficient administrative system can reduce social inequalities and strengthen citizens' sense of belonging by enforcing laws impartially, establishing anti-discrimination mechanisms, and ensuring fair distribution of resources and opportunities. The principle of equality before the law, emphasized in international human rights norms and constitutional provisions, requires robust legal frameworks to prevent discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or social status (8).

Countries such as Norway and Canada have significantly reduced social inequalities by adopting comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and establishing independent oversight institutions. For instance, Norway's equality legislation, which obliges public institutions to report annually on equality measures, has enhanced public trust and reinforced social cohesion (10). In Iran, despite constitutional commitments to justice, weak judicial oversight, the absence of independent anti-discrimination bodies, and the influence of informal relationships on administrative decisions have limited the effective realization of equality. Reports by the Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center indicate that unequal access to public services and employment opportunities remains a major source of social dissatisfaction (4).

Legal solutions include enacting comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, strengthening the independence of oversight institutions, and promoting legal education among managers and citizens, all of which can institutionalize equality and improve social cohesion.

Economic and Social Development

An efficient administrative system plays a central role in economic and social development by simplifying regulations, reducing bureaucracy, and creating a transparent environment for investment. Sustainable development requires equitable income distribution, poverty reduction, and facilitated access to economic opportunities, all of which depend on the legal frameworks governing the administrative system. Experiences from countries such as Estonia and the United Arab Emirates demonstrate that digitalizing administrative processes and reducing legal complexity can accelerate economic growth and reduce inequality (9, 14).

In Iran, complex administrative regulations, corruption, and external pressures have constrained investment and contributed to economic stagnation and rising inequality. From a legal perspective, simplifying investment regulations and establishing specialized economic courts can enhance investor confidence and improve economic performance. Proposed reforms include revising laws to eliminate redundant regulations, strengthening legal frameworks for investment protection, and leveraging technology to ensure transactional transparency, thereby fostering sustainable development and reinforcing social cohesion.

Public Participation

Public participation is one of the key components of the effectiveness of the social system, as it contributes to the creation of a sense of shared responsibility and strengthens the legitimacy of the governing system. By providing legal frameworks for access to information, conducting public consultations, and establishing participatory channels, the administrative system can involve citizens in decision-making processes. From a theoretical perspective, participatory engagement in the public sphere enhances the legitimacy of social systems and reinforces democratic governance structures (8).

In Switzerland, civic participation laws supported by online platforms have facilitated direct citizen involvement in local decision-making and significantly increased public trust. By contrast, in Iran, the Law on the Publication and Free Access to Information has represented a positive step, yet weak oversight, structural resistance, and insufficient digital infrastructure have constrained its effective implementation. Only a limited number of governmental bodies respond adequately to information requests, which undermines participatory governance (4, 9).

Proposed solutions include the development of civic participation applications, public education initiatives, and the strengthening of local councils, all of which can expand participation and improve social cohesion.

Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability constitute the foundations of public trust and the reduction of corruption. By mandating the disclosure of budgetary information, contracts, and performance data, the administrative system can enhance public oversight and institutional credibility. Comparative experiences in advanced governance systems demonstrate that freedom of information regimes play a crucial role in institutionalizing transparency and reinforcing accountability (15).

In Iran, budget transparency platforms have been introduced as steps toward this objective; however, the absence of comprehensive data protection laws and unstable digital infrastructures has reduced their effectiveness. Strengthening judicial oversight and developing reliable online transparency dashboards can help address these challenges and reinforce public trust.

Utilization of Legal and Digital Technologies

The utilization of legal and digital technologies represents the final key axis in transforming the administrative system and enhancing the effectiveness of the social system. Technologies such as e-government platforms, blockchain, artificial intelligence, and public service applications significantly improve efficiency by simplifying procedures, increasing transparency, reducing costs, and expanding access. Nevertheless, the effective use of these technologies requires comprehensive legal frameworks to protect personal data, safeguard privacy, and prevent misuse (16).

Comparative experiences indicate that robust data protection regimes increase public trust in digital governance systems and facilitate administrative modernization. In countries with integrated digital identity and service platforms, access to government services has become more efficient and transparent, contributing to higher levels of participation and reduced corruption (9).

In Iran, laws such as the Electronic Commerce Act and e-government initiatives have constituted initial steps; however, the absence of comprehensive data protection legislation, unstable infrastructure, organizational resistance, and limited digital literacy have slowed progress. International assessments emphasize that countries lacking strong digital legal frameworks lag behind in administrative efficiency and transparency (9).

Legal solutions include the enactment of a comprehensive data protection law, the regulation of emerging technologies such as blockchain, investment in digital infrastructure, and user training programs. These measures can modernize the administrative system and strengthen social cohesion through equitable access.

Structural Corruption in the Administrative System and Its Impact on Social Capital

Structural corruption in Iran's administrative system constitutes one of the most complex and deeply rooted legal and organizational challenges. It extends beyond individual misconduct and has become systemically institutionalized through informal networks, rent-seeking practices, and weak oversight institutions. This phenomenon not only severely reduces administrative productivity but also generates a cycle of injustice that erodes public trust in governmental institutions and fundamentally weakens social capital. Social capital—comprising networks of trust-based relationships, civic cooperation, and shared norms—forms the foundation of social cohesion. When corruption becomes pervasive, citizens exhibit lower levels of civic participation, non-compliance with the law becomes normalized, and social and ethnic divides deepen.

From a legal perspective, this challenge is largely attributable to the inadequate enforcement of anti-corruption legislation and insufficient judicial oversight, which have transformed corruption into a structural problem. Recent international reports confirm that Iran's low score in the Corruption Perceptions Index in 2025 reflects a downward trend in social capital and public trust (12).

The impact of this challenge on social cohesion is profound: corruption intensifies unequal resource distribution, increases the vulnerability of marginalized groups, and weakens the shared sense of belonging within society. In the long term, this can lead to declining national solidarity, rising social protests, and even threats to political stability.

To address this challenge, several legal reforms are proposed, including the adoption of comprehensive whistleblower protection legislation with guaranteed legal security and incentives, the establishment of specialized anti-corruption courts with independent judges and expedited procedures, and mandatory annual digital disclosure of officials' assets and transactions under independent judicial supervision. These measures can enhance transparency and accountability, rebuild public trust, and strengthen social capital as the foundation of social cohesion (1, 7).

The Role of Administrative Centralization in Reducing Citizen Participation and Social Cohesion

Administrative centralization refers to the concentration of decision-making authority at central governmental levels, which often leads to the neglect of local needs, reduced accountability, and limited citizen participation. This challenge weakens social cohesion by fostering a sense of alienation from governance processes and diminishing social capital, including local networks and civic cooperation. Theoretical and comparative governance studies emphasize that decentralization enhances accountability and participation, whereas centralized systems face structural resistance to such reforms (2).

In Iran, excessive centralization has concentrated power at central levels and constrained local decision-making. Although city and village councils have been introduced as decentralization mechanisms, legal limitations and

insufficient resources have reduced their effectiveness. This situation has contributed to declining public trust and widening regional disparities, reflecting a lack of coordination between formal administrative institutions and informal local networks (4).

Recent developments indicate that persistent economic challenges and the absence of effective decentralization have intensified social tensions and public protests during 2025–2026, underscoring the urgent need for structural reforms to enhance participation and social cohesion. Comparative evidence suggests that decentralized governance models can strengthen participation and improve responsiveness in similar contexts (10).

Challenges of Implementing Digital Technology in the Administrative System and Their Impact on Transparency

Despite the high potential of digital technologies to transform governance, their implementation in Iran's administrative system faces serious legal and practical challenges that significantly constrain transparency and threaten social cohesion. Key challenges include the lack of stable and secure infrastructure, organizational and cultural resistance to change, the absence of comprehensive personal data protection laws, and weak coordination among governmental institutions. These factors result in frequent system disruptions, unequal access to services—particularly in rural and marginalized areas—and an expanding digital divide.

From a legal perspective, the absence of regulatory frameworks governing privacy and cybersecurity reduces citizens' trust in governmental digital platforms and undermines transparency. Although e-government projects have been initiated, weak infrastructure and inadequate data protection laws have limited their effectiveness and increased transaction costs (16). Furthermore, assessments of digital freedom indicate that internet restrictions and shutdowns have posed additional political and legal challenges to digital governance and transparency (15).

In terms of social cohesion, limited digital transparency weakens public oversight of administrative performance and intensifies perceptions of injustice. Marginalized groups are disproportionately excluded from services, digital civic participation remains constrained, and social solidarity is weakened. Over time, these challenges can exacerbate digital inequality and erode trust in the administrative system, leaving national cohesion increasingly vulnerable to social and cyber-related threats.

Integrating Islamic Teachings into the Organizational Culture of the Administrative System and Ethical Challenges

Integrating Islamic teachings into the organizational culture of Iran's administrative system, as a strategic opportunity to strengthen professional ethics and accountability, faces profound ethical challenges such as the disconnect between religious principles and practical performance, the influence of political factors on appointments, and the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms to ensure adherence to values. Islamic principles such as justice, trustworthiness, and public service (grounded in the Qur'an and Nahj al-Balaghah) can cultivate a dynamic and ethics-centered organizational culture; however, when managers fail to act consistently with these teachings, ethical corruption increases and public trust is undermined. Qur'anic principles (such as Qur'an, Surah An-Nisa, Verse 58) obligate administrators to uphold justice and avoid corruption, yet challenges such as limited managerial sensitivity to performance and the absence of tools for shaping a strong work conscience make this integration difficult (17). Recent reporting also suggests that the Islamic Republic no longer exercises full control over its symbolic moral order and that ethical challenges in public administration have intensified due to social pressures (18).

Impact on Social Cohesion: This challenge weakens the sense of religious–social belonging and deepens the gap between the system's proclaimed values and its actual practices, resulting in reduced national solidarity, increased law evasion, and weakened religious–social legitimacy. In Islamic societies such as Iran, this dynamic can contribute to identity-related and social crises.

Weak Judicial Oversight in Combating Administrative Inefficiency and Its Impact on Sustainable Development

Weak judicial oversight in Iran's administrative system constitutes a fundamental legal challenge, encompassing incomplete institutional independence, ambiguity in supervisory laws, and a shortage of effective enforcement mechanisms. This weakness institutionalizes administrative inefficiency and seriously obstructs progress toward sustainable development. It allows corruption, complex bureaucracy, and resource waste to persist, reduces social justice, and makes sustainable development objectives (such as poverty reduction and environmental protection) difficult to achieve. Legal ambiguity and weak judicial supervision, as primary drivers of inefficiency, slow economic and social growth and threaten sustainable development (2). Recent assessments indicate that Iran's progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals in 2025 has been slow and that weak judicial oversight is among the principal barriers (14).

Without strong oversight, inequality in resource distribution increases, vulnerable groups are excluded from development outcomes, and public dissatisfaction intensifies, threatening social cohesion and potentially contributing to social and environmental tensions.

Challenges of Implementing Digital Technology and Their Impact on Transparency

Despite the high potential of digital technologies to transform governance, their implementation in Iran's administrative system faces serious legal and practical challenges that fundamentally limit transparency and threaten social cohesion. Key challenges include the lack of stable and secure infrastructure, organizational and cultural resistance to change, weak comprehensive legislation on personal data protection, and insufficient coordination among governmental institutions. These issues lead to frequent system disruptions, reduced equal access for citizens (especially in rural and deprived areas), and an expanding digital divide. From a legal standpoint, the absence of technology-regulatory frameworks (including privacy protection and cybersecurity governance) reduces citizens' trust in government platforms and disrupts transparency. E-government projects, despite early efforts, have achieved limited progress due to weak infrastructure and the lack of comprehensive data protection laws, thereby increasing transaction costs (16). Recent internet restrictions have further intensified this challenge (15).

To overcome these barriers, the following legal reforms are proposed: adopting a comprehensive personal data protection law with mandatory high-security standards, establishing an independent digital oversight authority to evaluate and supervise e-government, and creating binding legal commitments for infrastructure investment through annual budgeting requirements and compensation mechanisms. These measures can enhance transparency, reduce the digital divide, and strengthen social cohesion through inclusive participation.

Weak Judicial Oversight and Its Impact on Sustainable Development

Weak judicial oversight in Iran's administrative system, as a foundational legal challenge, includes incomplete institutional independence, ambiguity in supervisory laws, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms. This

weakness entrenches administrative inefficiency and seriously undermines sustainable development. It enables corruption, complex bureaucracy, and the waste of public resources to continue, reduces social justice, and renders sustainable development objectives (such as poverty reduction and environmental protection) increasingly unattainable. Legal ambiguity and weak judicial oversight, as major causes of inefficiency, slow economic and social growth and threaten sustainable development (2). Iran's progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals in 2025 has been slow, and weak judicial oversight has been identified as one of the main obstacles (14).

Accordingly, the following legal reforms are proposed: revising laws to ensure full judicial independence in administrative supervision, establishing independent oversight institutions with direct reporting obligations to the legislature and citizens, and mandating annual performance evaluations of administrative bodies based on sustainable development indicators under judicial review. These measures can reduce inefficiency, promote more equitable sustainable development, and strengthen social cohesion (4).

A Macro-Level View of Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of the Social System

The effectiveness of the social system is defined as a society's capacity to respond to citizens' needs, maintain balance among the economic, political, cultural, and legal subsystems, and achieve sustainable development.

1. Managerial and Structural Factors (Administrative System and the Rule of Law)

• **Expertise-based and realistic planning:** Effectiveness requires a scientific and accurate understanding of societal conditions (such as the analysis of economic and social data) and carefully designed strategies that are evaluable. Weakness in this area—such as insufficient expertise in policymaking—leads to administrative inefficiency and reduced social cohesion.

• **Maintaining order and security:** A key foundation of effectiveness is ensuring social order and addressing threats. An efficient administrative system, through the enforcement of transparent laws and strong judicial oversight, prevents disorder and increases public trust. Challenges such as structural corruption weaken this factor.

• **Institutional organization and coordination:** Balance among subsystems (economic, political, cultural, and legal) is essential. Weak coordination—such as overlapping institutional mandates—reduces effectiveness and indicates the need for legal solutions such as independent oversight institutions.

2. Cultural and Social Factors (Social Capital and Participation)

• **The role of the public and social capital:** Effectiveness depends on public participation and mutual trust. Societies with high social capital (including civic cooperation) operate more effectively. Neglecting the public can reduce the legitimacy of the social system (1).

• **Cultural and ethical values:** Informal factors such as traditions and cultural norms influence effectiveness. In Iran, Islamic values can strengthen cohesion, but the challenge of separation between proclaimed principles and actual practice—such as corruption—undermines this capacity (2, 17).

3. Economic and Developmental Factors

• **Sustainable development and equitable resource distribution:** Effectiveness requires balanced economic growth, poverty reduction, and decreased inequality. Economic pressures can threaten cohesion, particularly when inflation and inequality intensify.

• **Innovation and technology:** Adapting to global changes, such as administrative digitalization, increases effectiveness; however, infrastructural weaknesses can hinder progress (9).

From a macro-level perspective, the main challenges include corruption, weak judicial oversight, institutional coordination failures, and declining social capital, all of which threaten cohesion. Proposed solutions include strengthening the rule of law through independent courts, increasing transparency through digitalization, and integrating public participation into policymaking. These approaches can improve effectiveness by promoting structural and cultural balance (1, 8). Ultimately, social system effectiveness results from the dynamic interaction of managerial, cultural, and economic factors. A strong focus on legal reforms—such as anti-corruption legislation and effective oversight—can transform challenges into opportunities for sustainable cohesion.
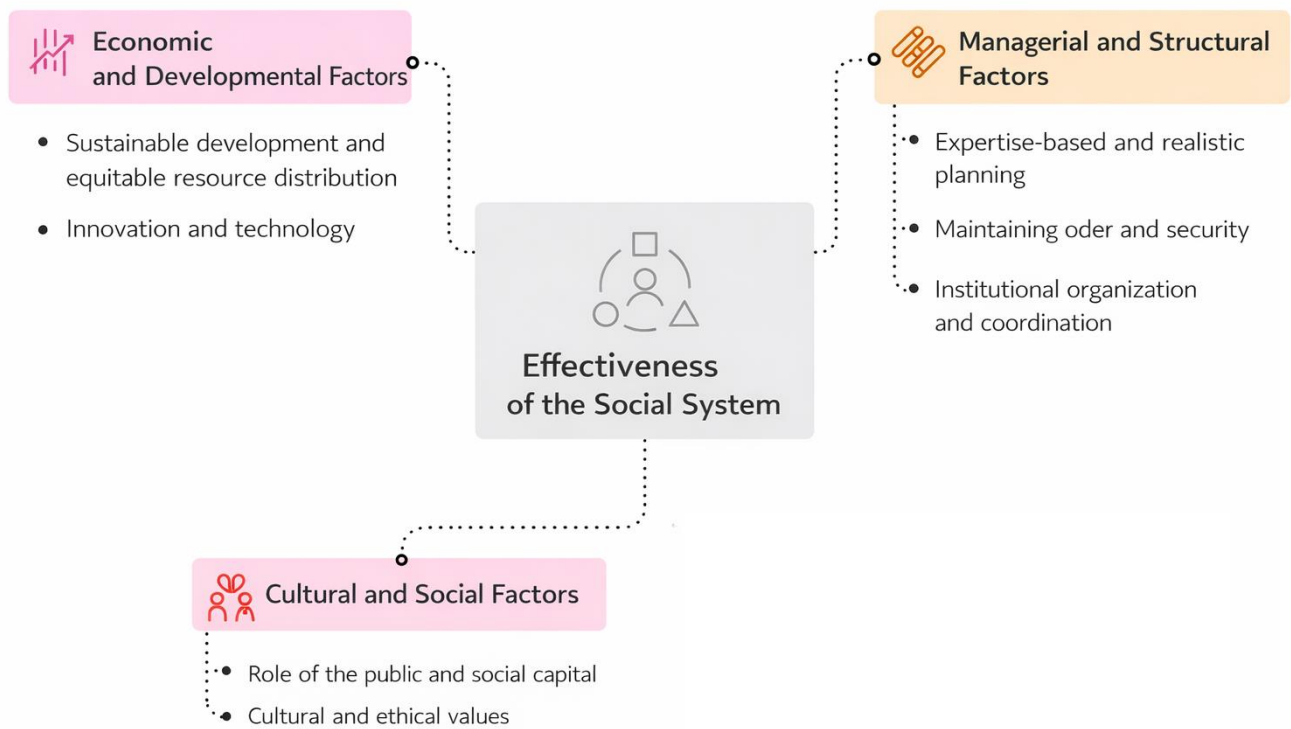

Figure 1. Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of the Social System

Proposed Solutions for Reforming the Administrative System

To overcome the identified challenges and strengthen the positive impact of the administrative system on social cohesion, the following legal and practical solutions are proposed:

1. **Drafting comprehensive and integrated legislation:** Reviewing and simplifying laws to eliminate ambiguities, conflicting regulations, and unnecessary complexities, accompanied by the creation of a unified digital legal database.
2. **Strengthening judicial independence and oversight:** Establishing independent oversight bodies, enhancing the judiciary's authority to supervise administrative performance, and creating fast-track mechanisms for addressing citizens' complaints.
3. **Structural anti-corruption measures:** Enacting whistleblower protection laws, mandating online disclosure of officials' assets and public transactions, and establishing an independent anti-corruption agency.
4. **Developing digital legal frameworks:** Adopting a comprehensive personal data protection law, regulating emerging technologies, and mandating the digitalization of administrative processes.

5. **Education and capacity building:** Implementing continuous training programs for managers and staff in administrative law, professional ethics, and digital technologies, alongside public education initiatives to enhance legal awareness and civic participation.

6. **Investment in digital infrastructure:** Expanding stable e-government systems, user-friendly applications, and transparency dashboards, with a focus on equitable access across different regions.

7. **Decentralization and strengthening local participation:** Transferring greater authority to local councils, reinforcing civil society institutions, and creating digital platforms for public consultation.

8. **Organizational culture development:** Promoting meritocracy, citizen-oriented service delivery, and Islamic values such as trustworthiness within administrative organizational culture.

The implementation of these solutions requires strong political will, inter-institutional cooperation, and continuous oversight, and can transform the administrative system into a driving force for development and social cohesion.

Conclusion

The analysis of the impact of administrative system efficiency on the cohesion and effectiveness of the social system demonstrates that the administrative system is not merely a policy-implementing apparatus, but a key determinant in shaping state–society relations, ensuring fair distribution of justice, and strengthening public trust. Structural challenges in Iran—such as corruption, centralization, digital weaknesses, and inadequate judicial oversight—have reduced trust, intensified inequality, and rendered social cohesion vulnerable to economic and social crises. The findings emphasize that without deep legal reforms, achieving sustainable development and a cohesive society is not feasible.

The proposed solutions, including legal integration, strengthening judicial independence, structural anti-corruption measures, development of digital frameworks, and decentralization, can address these challenges and transform the administrative system into a catalyst for social cohesion. The success of these reforms depends on long-term political commitment, inter-institutional cooperation, citizen participation, and continuous oversight. Ultimately, the realization of these measures will not only enhance the effectiveness of the social system but also pave the way for a just, dynamic, and resilient society capable of confronting future challenges. It is recommended that future research focus on the practical evaluation of these reforms and their impact on sustainable development indicators.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who helped us carrying out this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Barakzehi et al.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

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.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

References

1.   Fukuyama F. Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity: Free Press; 1995.
2.   North DC. Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance: Cambridge University Press; 1990.
3.   United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report: Iran. 2025.
4.   Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center. Evaluation Report of the Administrative System in Iran. Tehran: Majles Research Center, 2023.
5.   Askandari A. Analysis of Challenges of Iran's Administrative System Toward Improving Governance. Public Policy Journal. 2020(45).
6.   Danaeifard H. Challenges of Public Management in Iran. Tehran: SAMT Publishers; 2010.
7.   Quah JST. Public Administration Singapore-Style: Emerald Group Publishing; 2010.
8.   Giddens A. The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration: University of California Press; 1984.
9.   World Bank. Digital Government Readiness Assessment: Iran. 2025.
10.   Oecd. Digital Government Index 2025. 2025.
11.   Tabatabaei M. Al-Mizan: An Exegesis of the Qur'an: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah; 2011.
12.   Transparency International. Corruption Perceptions Index 2025. 2025.
13.   Jafari Langarudi MJ. Legal Terminology. Tehran: Mizan Publishing; 2009.
14.   Sustainable Development Report. Iran, Islamic Rep. - Sustainable Development Report 2025. 2025.
15.   Freedom House. Iran: Freedom on the Net 2025 Country Report. 2025.
16.   Heeks R. Implementing and Managing eGovernment: An International Text: Sage Publications; 2006.
17.   Hosseini SM. Islamic Management and Challenges of the Administrative System. Tehran: University of Tehran Press; 2016.
18.   Foreign Policy. Iran Has a New Moral Order. 2025.

Page 13