



## Research Paper

# Research cultures of humanities researchers in policy study institutes affiliated with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology

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### ABSTRACT

Structures at the macro level and researchers' habits hinder the effectiveness of research in Iran. But this is not the end of the story since researchers struggle with these structural and contextual limitations leading to the establishment of a diverse research cultures. This article takes into account a specific and contextual theory with the aim of understanding the twisted pieces of humanities research in Iran. As such, the author has referred to the shared experience of 32 faculty members from various disciplines in order to achieve a relatively deeper understanding of the subject and explain it systematically as a grounded theory. More than 600 key propositions have been analyzed with the "CCDA" (Constant Comparative Data Analysis) model that with the help of the researcher's technical notes could lead to a model to explain the matter. Based on this model, we are facing with a dual border situation in researches. Varied research cultures have been explored by taking into account 12 categories of causal conditions, 11 contextual conditions and 12 genealogical groups of strategies that researchers undertake in such situations. The outcome of this process has been identified and categorized. Accordingly, it was found that the knowledge absorption and productivity is problematic in Iran. Instead of effective knowledge, we are faced with states of wandering knowledge, suspended knowledge, prestige knowledge and artificial knowledge. Still, the arena is not empty of all kinds of innovations in diverse research cultures of Iranian researchers.

*Keywords:* research effectiveness, humanities, research cultures, Grounded Theory

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## INTRODUCTION

In Iran, to what extent humanities are capable of criticizing, clarifying and problematizing different domains of our life while raising questions and opening up horizons. Can political research open the closed knots of public policy and reduce bitterness with effective responses to the problems? This issue can also be looked at from the perspective of research cultures, which are formed in scientific communities through memories, meanings, lived experiences, attitudes, values, norms, practices, and levels of expectations, and are reflected in the style of research work, relationships, and the ecosystem of scholars (Sherab & Matthew, 2019; Pratt, Margaritis & Coy, 1999).

The hypothesis in this study is that objective structures, from outside and inside, limit the agents, but there are ways to get out of this structural determinism, and one of them is the dialectic of inside and outside. Habitus or the same mental structure (character and property of scholars) is struggling with the external and rigid constructions of politics. In other words constructions have surrounded us; but the scholars' mental fluid can penetrate the external constructions and change the conditions (Bourdieu, 2013). External constructions do not have a "forever" characteristic, rather their nature is developmental and more or less transformed through human actions and turned into another form (Vandenberg, 1999; Speller, 2011). The lived experiences of researchers and the accumulation of embodied cultural capital in them can help in the formation of mental properties in human agents (here: research cultures) so that agents know what to do in any special circumstances (Bourdieu, 2010; Ritzer, 2013 and Eisenberg, 2015).

The effectiveness of a researcher is defined as how well he fulfills the research goals and accomplishes the expectations from it (Sox, 2010; Vlăsceanu, et al., 2004; Erlendsson, 2004; Banzi et al., 2011; Wasan, 2014). Effectiveness is not only a technical and single-factor structure rather it is a social structure and is constructed socially. A set of cultural, social and institutional variables can be effective in meeting the expectations of research effectiveness. In addition, the criteria and measures of effectiveness also differ according to different approaches. For example, researchers' effectiveness is defined based on official regulations in a way that is far from many alternative scales at the global knowledge level. An example is the global movement of alt-metrics. Supplements and alternatives have been developed for H-Index, Impact-Factor and Q-One (Goncharuk, 2018; Garfield, 2006; Purvis, 2006; and Hnatiienko et al., 2020). According to the context of this article, the meaning of effectiveness has been asked not from the texts and sources, but from the lived experiences of the researchers participating in the study, and changes to the research cultures.

## PURPOSE

The aim of the current research is to understand the context of the study cultures of humanities researchers in mission-oriented research institutions in the scientific and academic system of Iran, which work in different groups affiliated to the government - specifically the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. Assuming that the lack of political research in these institutions can more or less affect the activity of the decision-making and policy-making apparatuses, it is necessary to study the study cultures of humanities researchers in these institutions.

## METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research based on the "Grounded Theory" and has been conducted with a targeted sample of researchers to the extent of saturation. It includes graduates of humanities and social sciences - mainly assistant and associate professors associated with mission-oriented institutions in the field of higher education and university policy research. In-depth interviews were conducted with 32 people. 11 women and 21 men interviewees were faculty members from different institutes, including Higher Education Research and Planning Institute, Research Institute of Cultural and Social and Civil Studies, Scientific Policy Research Center and others. Empirical evidence from the interviews led to more than 600 propositions. The extracted data were analyzed continuously and non-linearly with the "CCDA" model. Through open, central and selective coding of the evidence, data reduction and analysis was done based on the researcher's technical notes, and progressed to a causal model. Accordingly, the strategies researchers take into account with respect to Iranian situations lead to the formation of diverse research cultures.

## FINDINGS

Research cultures in political research institutes are diverse that researchers undertake in different ways in accordance with the arising circumstances; from the cultures of formalistic duty and conservatism (knowledge users) to the culture of writing serious texts and working models to the consulting culture to the promotion of science and finally to the culture of grief and social accountability at the level of the neighborhood, city, society, civil organizations and institutions and their empowerment. Some researchers adopt the culture of staying inside the organization and some travel between organizations with public domain. The critical cultures to celebrity to research interruption, the culture of scientific work in isolation to team culture as well as the culture of the desktop to the field have also been observed.

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on the ground in low or middle levels of management, and some being slowly and continuously hidden and implicit in the system. But at a long-term, it has enough layers and therefore its absorption and productivity are low. One of the problems of the scientific system and scientific policy making in Iran is that the follow-up and fruition of knowledge is systematically weak. This research has been based on different research cultures which are listed in detail.

## CONCLUSION

Although artificial knowledge instead of serious and effective knowledge is dominant, we can still look at the culture of political research in Iran. Unintended and implicit research in the long run increases national sensitivities in a variety of hazards. The results of the study, while converging with global horizons and specifically with the discussions of developmental structuralism in sociology (Bourdieu, 2013 and 2015; Ritzer, 2015; Eisenberg, 2015; Vandenberghe, 1999; and Speller, 2011), a situational theory emerging from Iranian research with Kant's reflection on human freedom (Kant, 2008; Wood, 2008; Gayer, 2007) and without being a willful from the objective world of structures, restrictions and changes in Iran (Ismail Nia et al., 2001; Moayed Hikmat, 1400) faces negligence. It shows the contribution of the agency and behavior and study cultures of researchers (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Le May et al., 1998). Certainly, these agencies can make it possible to diversify and enrich the initiatives of research cultures in these institutions so that studies can have more social effects and do more public good.

## NOVELTY

This study is an additional light that can shed on Iran's typically depressing conditions. This research is agentive not volitional. As we saw in the findings, some intermediate variables (adjusters) can enter the social arena and play their role through scientific actors and their mental and professional acclaim. Nevertheless, research cultures are important and have a self-referential feature and can handle struggling with hard structures.

From a practical point of view, we can still implement gradients and simplifications to expand diverse and creative study cultures; among these is the facilitation to increase the five capabilities, especially communicative and interactive, technical, media and executive that increase the expectation of the effectiveness and executive quality of research and the mobility of researchers in the administrative, professional, scientific, public and social fields. Membership in teams, social interactions, research identities and trade and professional bodies, increase interdisciplinary capabilities and management initiatives in research organizations, for example through young researchers, expert and experienced ones, are among the measures that can still be taken despite frustration to improve the situation. The border activism culture (Kalani et al., 2022) is another novel aspect of the present study.

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## FINDINGS

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