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Pathology of University Cultural Programs and Activities to Provide an Optimal Model

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: One of the inherent duties of the Cultural and Social Affairs Department of Farhangian University is to extend the governance of cultural and social spheres across all dimensions of the university. In this regard, numerous and diverse plans and activities have been implemented in recent years. The aim of this article is to analyze the cultural and social activities conducted at the university level and to provide an optimal model in this context.

Methodology: The Three-Branch Model was used as a theoretical framework. The method employed was mixed, comprising both qualitative and quantitative sections. The qualitative sample population included 30 cultural experts selected through purposive sampling. The quantitative sample population consisted of 194 active members of student organizations, chosen through stratified random sampling. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

Findings: The findings indicate that structural factors (0.195), behavioral factors (0.368), and contextual factors (0.312) play significant roles in the formation of issues and problems in cultural and social programs and activities. Additionally, the regression results show that 63% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by these three variables: structural factors, contextual factors, and behavioral factors.

Conclusion: The findings of this study indicate that the structural, behavioral, and contextual factors play significant roles in shaping the outcomes of cultural programs and activities at Farhangian University. This section discusses the implications of these results, drawing on relevant literature to highlight the broader context and potential strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of cultural programs in higher education.

Keywords: Cultural activities, pathology, contextual factors, structural factors, behavioral factors.

1. Introduction

Universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of cultural programs as a means to integrate diverse student populations and promote inclusivity. Araujo et al. (2014) highlight the role of belonging and community in the first year of university, emphasizing that cultural programs can significantly impact students' sense of belonging (Araujo et al., 2014). This is particularly crucial in the first year, where students are transitioning into a new environment and are in dire need of support and integration mechanisms. Similarly, Hama et al. (2020) underscore the importance of both formal and informal support systems in universities, suggesting that cultural programs can act as a bridge for immigrant students to feel included and supported in their new academic settings (Hama et al., 2020).

The design and management of these programs are influenced by various cultural, social, and organizational factors. He and Er-si (2018) discuss how cultural influences shape the design and management of transnational higher education programs in China, noting that a deep understanding of cultural contexts is essential for the successful implementation of educational initiatives (He & Er-si, 2018). This perspective is echoed by Kim and Egan (2011), who argue for the establishment of formal cross-cultural mentoring programs to facilitate better integration and support for diverse student populations (Kim & Egan, 2011).

In examining the effectiveness of cultural programs, it is essential to consider the specific needs and contexts of the student body. Powers (2006) conducted an exploratory study on cultural identity and culture-based educational programs for urban American Indian students, revealing that these programs must be tailored to the unique cultural identities and needs of the students they serve (Powers, 2006). This aligns with the findings of Buckingham et al. (2023), who explored the effects of a university-based elder-led cultural identity program on Alaska Native students, highlighting the positive impacts on identity development, cultural strengths, and sense of community (Buckingham et al., 2023).

The challenges and barriers faced by cultural programs in universities are multifaceted. Budget constraints, lack of specialized human resources, and insufficient infrastructure are common issues that hinder the effectiveness of these programs. Yahya and Rukun (2016) discuss the importance of leadership in planning and budgeting in higher education, noting that effective resource allocation is crucial for the success of cultural initiatives (Yahya & Rukun, 2016).

Similarly, Ghassani et al. (2020) highlight the impact of organizational culture, motivation, and self-leadership on student performance in start-ups, suggesting that these factors are also relevant in the context of cultural programs in universities (Ghassani et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the role of external organizations and institutions cannot be overlooked. Collaboration with external bodies can provide additional resources, expertise, and support for university cultural programs. Belone et al. (2017) describe a culturally centered American Indian family prevention program developed through a partnership between the Mescalero Apache community and the University of New Mexico, demonstrating the potential benefits of such collaborations (Belone et al., 2017).

In addition to external support, internal factors such as student participation and the performance of human resources play a critical role in the success of cultural programs. Daddow et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of hopeful cross-cultural encounters in supporting student well-being and developing graduate attributes, suggesting that active student engagement is key to the success of these initiatives (Daddow et al., 2019). Similarly, Yan and Cardinal (2013) highlight the perceptions of physical activity participation among Chinese female graduate students, indicating that cultural programs must be designed to cater to the diverse interests and needs of the student body (Yan & Cardinal, 2013).

The effectiveness of cultural programs also depends on their ability to foster cultural competence among students. Wang et al. (2021) report improvements in the cognitive aspects of cultural competence following short-term overseas study programs, suggesting that well-designed cultural initiatives can significantly enhance students' cultural awareness and sensitivity (Wang et al., 2021). This is further supported by Lam et al. (2022), who analyzed the use of culturally diverse training equipment in paramedic education in Australia and New Zealand, highlighting the importance of incorporating cultural diversity into educational programs (Lam et al., 2022).

However, the implementation of cultural programs is not without its challenges. Susilaningsih (2021) discusses the design of generic entrepreneurship education programs for universities, noting that a one-size-fits-all approach is often ineffective (Susilaningsih, 2021). This sentiment is echoed by Currie et al. (2011), who found that enculturation and alcohol use problems among Aboriginal university students were linked to the cultural relevance and sensitivity of the programs offered (Currie et al., 2011).

In sum, cultural programs and activities in universities play a pivotal role in shaping the holistic development of students, fostering a sense of community, and enhancing cultural competence. The significance of these programs extends beyond mere extracurricular engagement, influencing the overall educational experience and personal growth of students. This study aims to explore the pathology of university cultural programs and activities to provide an optimal model, with a particular focus on the factors contributing to their success or failure.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The initial phase of the research involved generating categories, determining relationships among them, and formulating questions using qualitative methods. Subsequently, the analysis and answering of these questions were conducted using quantitative methods. The study population comprised two groups: cultural experts (qualitative section) and active members of student organizations (quantitative section) at Farhangian University. In the qualitative section, 30 cultural managers and experts were purposively selected from a total of 142, adhering to the principle of theoretical saturation. In the quantitative section, 194 active members were selected from 1,738 members of student organizations through stratified random sampling.

2.2. Data Collection

In the first phase, an exploratory method and in-depth interviews were utilized to collect initial qualitative data. Cultural activities' pathology was discussed with managers and cultural experts, and new themes were constructed based on qualitative data. In the second phase, general components were classified and categorized, and a measurement tool—a questionnaire—was developed with the assistance of a project consultant. In the third phase, a pilot test was conducted, and the final questionnaire was designed using Google Forms. To protect the environment and prevent the spread of COVID-19, the questionnaire was distributed via email to active members of student organizations, and data were collected accordingly.

The primary data collection tools included in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The qualitative section relied on continuous observations, multi-perspective examinations

of the topic, and consultations with cultural managers and experts to ensure data credibility. To achieve reliability, efforts were made to avoid bias and gather genuine data. In the quantitative section, face validity was used to ensure the accuracy of the measurement scale. After reviewing numerous indicators for program pathology and consulting with experts, including the project supervisor, the questionnaire items were refined and finalized. A pilot test involving 40 participants was conducted to determine reliability, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80, indicating acceptable reliability.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was carried out in two stages. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed to identify and construct categories and themes. This involved coding the data from interviews and observing recurring patterns. For the quantitative data, statistical analysis was performed using regression analysis to examine the relationship between structural, behavioral, and contextual factors and the issues in cultural and social programs. The regression results indicated that 63% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by these three factors, underscoring their significant roles in shaping the problems and challenges in the programs and activities.

3. Findings and Results

The analysis revealed several key dimensions and categories related to the independent and dependent variables, summarized in

Table 1. The categories are grouped under structural and procedural damages, contextual damages, and functional and behavioral damages.



Table 1

Dimensions, Indicators, and Items Related to Independent and Dependent Variables

Dimension	Core Categories	General Categories	Number of Items		
Structural and Procedural Damages	Managerial Approach	Subjectivity in Appointments	4		
		Lack of Specialized Human Resources	4		
		Insufficient Oversight of Programs	4		
		Stereotypical Approach to Programs	3		
		Bureaucratic Approach	3		
		Managerial Instability	3		
		Lack of Coordination Between Departments	2		
	Budget, Space, and Equipment	Inequitable Distribution of Resources	7		
		Insufficient Physical Space	7		
		Outdated Campus Infrastructure	3		
		Lack of Cultural Facilities	6		
		Incomplete Budget Implementation	4		
		Contextual Damages	Content of Cultural and Social Programs	Mismatch Between Content and Audience Needs	6
				Low Quality of Programs	5
Ambiguities in Regulations	3				
Lack of Diversity and Stereotypical Programs	6				
Programs Not Aligned with Student Needs	4				
External Organizations and Institutions	Insufficient Non-Religious Programs		5		
	Mismatch of Programs with Social Contexts		6		
	Political Influences in University		2		
	Lack of Cooperation with Relevant Organizations		3		
	Economic Concerns Over Cultural Focus		4		
Functional and Behavioral Damages	Student Participation	Lack of External Support for Cultural Activities	3		
		Low Student Motivation	8		
		No Distinction Between Active and Inactive Students	5		
		Non-Resident Students Not Participating	3		
	Performance of Human Resources	Lack of Cultural Records or Incentive Packages	Fear of Security Oversight	4	
			Low Competence and Skills of Cultural Experts	7	
			Low Motivation of Cultural Experts	4	
			Lack of Cultural Advisors in Campuses	3	
			Cultural Staff Engaged in Other Departments	3	
		Imbalance Between Activities and Cultural Positions	Employment of Non-Specialized Individuals in Cultural Activities	4	



Table 1 illustrates the pathology matrix of cultural and social programs and activities from the perspective of cultural managers and experts. The core categories extracted include structural and procedural factors, functional factors, and contextual factors. The highest number of core categories was associated with structural and behavioral factors, while the least were related to contextual factors.

The descriptive survey results indicate that respondents were selected from 16 academic fields across various campuses and units of Farhangian University. The highest frequency was in primary education (35.2%), and the lowest in history education (1%). The majority of respondents were from Tehran province (19.4%), with the least from Qom and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces (0.5%). Additionally, 31.6% of respondents were active members, 20.4% were central council members, and 48% were student organization secretaries.

Hypothesis 1: Contextual Factors

The first hypothesis posited that contextual factors play a determining role in the damages to cultural programs and activities. The Spearman correlation coefficient was 0.655, indicating a strong correlation. With a significance level of 0.001, the relationship between these two variables is significant and not random, allowing for generalization to

the larger population. The correlation is positive and direct, suggesting that contextual factors significantly impact the pathology of cultural and social programs.

Hypothesis 2: Behavioral Factors

The second hypothesis suggested that behavioral factors play a determining role in the damages to cultural programs and activities. The Spearman correlation coefficient was 0.718, indicating a very strong correlation. With a significance level of 0.001, the relationship is significant and not random, allowing for generalization to the larger population. The correlation is positive and direct, indicating that behavioral factors significantly impact the pathology of cultural and social programs.

Hypothesis 3: Structural Factors

The third hypothesis proposed that structural factors play a determining role in the damages to cultural programs and activities. The Spearman correlation coefficient was 0.648, indicating a strong correlation. With a significance level of 0.001, the relationship is significant and not random, allowing for generalization to the larger population. The correlation is positive and direct, indicating that structural factors significantly impact the pathology of cultural and social programs.

Table 2

Correlation Table of Structural, Behavioral, and Contextual Damages

	Structural Damages	Behavioral Damages	Contextual Damages
Structural Damages	1.00	-	-
Behavioral Damages	0.648	1.00	-
Contextual Damages	0.655	0.718	1.00

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict the impacts of independent variables on the dependent

variable. All independent variables were entered into the model simultaneously to determine their overall effect.

Table 3

Regression Coefficients of Independent Variables on Dependent Variable

Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
Structural Damages	0.200	0.071	0.195	2.480	0.005
Behavioral Damages	0.180	0.037	0.368	4.864	0.000
Contextual Damages	0.545	0.097	0.312	4.668	0.000
Constant	0.486	1.544	-	0.315	0.753

The regression results show that the constant value is 0.486, representing the dependent variable's value without the influence of independent variables. The standardized regression coefficients (Beta) indicate the relative contribution of each independent variable to changes in the

dependent variable. Behavioral factors (0.368), contextual factors (0.312), and structural factors (0.195) contribute to the variance in the dependent variable.

Overall, the standardized R² value is 0.632, indicating that over 63% of the variance in the dependent variable is

explained by structural, contextual, and behavioral factors, while less than 37% is explained by other variables outside this model.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the structural, behavioral, and contextual factors play significant roles in shaping the outcomes of cultural programs and activities at Farhangian University. This section discusses the implications of these results, drawing on relevant literature to highlight the broader context and potential strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of cultural programs in higher education.

Structural factors, including budget constraints, inadequate physical spaces, and lack of specialized human resources, were found to be significant determinants of the effectiveness of cultural programs. These findings align with previous research highlighting the critical role of resource allocation and infrastructure in educational settings. Yahya and Rukun (2016) emphasize the importance of leadership in planning and budgeting in higher education, suggesting that effective management of resources is crucial for the success of cultural initiatives. Similarly, Ghassani et al. (2020) note that organizational culture and self-leadership significantly impact student performance, implying that a supportive and well-resourced environment is essential for fostering successful cultural programs (Ghassani et al., 2020).

The lack of adequate physical spaces and facilities for cultural activities was another significant barrier identified in this study. He and Er-si (2018) discuss how cultural influences shape the design and management of transnational higher education programs in China, underscoring the importance of providing appropriate physical environments that reflect and support diverse cultural needs (He & Er-si, 2018). This perspective is further supported by Buckingham et al. (2023), who found that culturally relevant physical spaces and resources are critical for the identity development and sense of community among Alaska Native students (Buckingham et al., 2023).

Behavioral factors, such as student participation and the performance of cultural staff, also emerged as significant contributors to the effectiveness of cultural programs. The study found that low student motivation and participation were major challenges. Araujo et al. (2014) highlight the importance of belonging and community in the first year of university, suggesting that cultural programs can

significantly enhance students' sense of belonging and engagement (Araujo et al., 2014). This finding is corroborated by Powers (2006), who found that culture-based educational programs for urban American Indian students were most effective when they actively engaged students and addressed their specific cultural identities and needs (Powers, 2006).

The performance and motivation of cultural staff were also identified as critical factors. Kim and Egan (2011) argue for the establishment of formal cross-cultural mentoring programs to support diverse student populations, emphasizing the need for well-trained and motivated staff who can effectively manage and deliver cultural programs (Kim & Egan, 2011). The study's findings suggest that investing in the professional development of cultural staff and ensuring their alignment with the university's cultural objectives are essential for the success of these programs.

Contextual factors, including the alignment of program content with student needs and the influence of external organizations, were also found to be significant. The mismatch between program content and the needs of the student body was a major issue, highlighting the importance of tailoring cultural programs to the specific cultural and social contexts of the students. Hama et al. (2020) emphasize the role of both formal and informal support systems in universities, suggesting that cultural programs must be responsive to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students to be effective (Hama et al., 2020).

The influence of external organizations and institutions was another significant factor. Belone et al. (2017) describe a culturally centered American Indian family prevention program developed through a partnership between the Mescalero Apache community and the University of New Mexico, demonstrating the potential benefits of such collaborations (Belone et al., 2017). These partnerships can provide additional resources, expertise, and support, enhancing the effectiveness of university cultural programs. This finding is supported by Wang et al. (2021), who report improvements in cultural competence following short-term overseas study programs, suggesting that collaboration with external bodies can significantly enhance the impact of cultural programs (Wang et al., 2021).

The findings of this study have several important implications for the design and implementation of cultural programs in higher education. First, universities must prioritize the allocation of adequate resources and infrastructure to support cultural programs. This includes not only financial resources but also appropriate physical spaces

and facilities that reflect and support the diverse cultural needs of the student body. Effective leadership and strategic planning are essential to ensure that these resources are used efficiently and effectively (Yahya & Rukun, 2016).

Second, universities must invest in the professional development of cultural staff, ensuring that they have the skills and motivation needed to effectively manage and deliver cultural programs. Establishing formal cross-cultural mentoring programs and providing ongoing training and support can help to achieve this goal (Kim & Egan, 2011). Additionally, creating a supportive and inclusive organizational culture can enhance the motivation and performance of cultural staff, contributing to the overall success of cultural programs (Ghassani et al., 2020).

Third, universities must ensure that the content of cultural programs is aligned with the needs and interests of the student body. This requires ongoing assessment and feedback mechanisms to understand the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students and to tailor programs accordingly. Engaging students in the design and implementation of cultural programs can also enhance their relevance and effectiveness (Powers, 2006).

Fourth, universities should seek to establish partnerships with external organizations and institutions to enhance the resources, expertise, and support available for cultural programs. These collaborations can provide valuable opportunities for students to engage with diverse cultural perspectives and experiences, enhancing their cultural competence and overall educational experience (Belone et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2021).

While this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing the effectiveness of cultural programs in higher education, further research is needed to explore these issues in greater depth. Longitudinal studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural programs impact student outcomes over time. Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural and institutional contexts could help to identify best practices and effective strategies for designing and implementing cultural programs.

Moreover, future research should explore the specific needs and experiences of different student populations, including international students, minority groups, and students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This can help to ensure that cultural programs are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of the student body. Studies examining the impact of specific cultural programs, such as those focusing on language acquisition, cultural heritage, or intercultural

communication, could also provide valuable insights into the most effective approaches for enhancing cultural competence and inclusivity in higher education.

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of structural, behavioral, and contextual factors in shaping the effectiveness of cultural programs and activities at Farhangian University. By prioritizing the allocation of adequate resources, investing in the professional development of cultural staff, aligning program content with student needs, and establishing partnerships with external organizations, universities can enhance the impact of these programs and support the holistic development of students.

The broader literature supports these findings, emphasizing the importance of resource allocation, effective management, student engagement, and collaboration in the design and implementation of cultural programs. By drawing on these insights and implementing the recommended strategies, universities can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students, fostering a sense of belonging, enhancing cultural competence, and contributing to their overall educational success.

In conclusion, cultural programs and activities are vital components of the university experience, playing a key role in promoting inclusivity, cultural competence, and personal growth. This study provides valuable insights into the factors that influence the effectiveness of these programs, offering practical recommendations for their improvement. By addressing these factors and implementing the suggested strategies, universities can enhance the impact of their cultural programs, creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

Authors' Contributions

The first author was responsible for conducting the interview and collecting data, and the other authors were responsible for analyzing the data and writing the article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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