Rereading Organizational Bureaucracy: From Weberian Efficiency to Organizational Dysfunction: A Critical Review of the Literature

إعادة قراءة البيروقراطية التنظيمية: من الكفاءة في المنظور الفيبري إلى الاختلالات التنظيمية: مراجعة نقدية للأدبيات

Asst. Prof. Dr. Noor Khalil Ibrahim
ا.م.د. نور خليل ابراهيم
noorkhalil@coadec.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Asst. Prof. Dr. Majeed Hameed Taher
أ.م.د. مجيد حميد طاهر
Majeed.h@coade.uobaghdad.edu.iq

College of Administration and Economics /
University of Baghdad
كلية الإدارة والاقتصاد / جامعة بغداد

Abstract

Bureaucracy is one of the most important and controversial terms of organizational and administrative theory. Classical scholarship, especially Weberian theory, emphasized that bureaucracy was a rational system to increase efficiency, coordination and accountability, but more recent research has focused on its relationship to organizational rigidity, cumbersome procedures, decreased innovation and other forms of dysfunctional behavior. This is a source of a scattered literature, with multiple understandings of the role and the impact of bureaucratic institutions in organizations. The research uses critical integrative literature review (CILR) to take a fresh look at organizational bureaucracy from two angles: organizational efficiency and organizational dysfunction. An analysis of classical and contemporary contributions is used to examine the development of bureaucratic thinking, and assess the theoretical value of the difference between enabling and coercive bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is not a fixed, efficient or an ineffective organizational form, as the analysis shows. Instead, its effects are dependent on its design, implementation and organizational context. The study adds to the literature by providing a more holistic perspective of bureaucracy as an organizational phenomenon; and by identifying some theoretical and contextual gaps that can be explored in future studies that are more prominent in Arab and developing country settings.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Organizational Dysfunction, Organizational Silence, Administrative Reform

المستخلص

تُعد البيروقراطية واحدة من أهم المصطلحات وأكثرها إثارة للجدل في النظرية التنظيمية والإدارية. فقد أكدت الدراسات الكلاسيكية -ولا سيما النظرية الفيبرية (نسبة إلى ماكس فيبر)- على أن البيروقراطية نظام عقلاني يهدف إلى تعزيز الكفاءة والتنسيق والمساءلة. في المقابل، ركزت البحوث الأحدث على علاقة البيروقراطية بالجمود التنظيمي، والإجراءات المعقدة، وتراجع الابتكار، وغيرها من أشكال السلوكيات غير الوظيفية. وقد أدى ذلك إلى تشتت الأدبيات البحثية، وتعدد الرؤى حول دور المؤسسات البيروقراطية وتأثيرها داخل المنظمات. تستخدم هذه الدراسة "المراجعة النقدية التكامليّة للأدبيات (CILR) "لإعادة فحص البيروقراطية التنظيمية من منظورين: الكفاءة التنظيمية، والخلل التنظيمي. ومن خلال تحليل المساهمات الكلاسيكية والمعاصرة، تستعرض الدراسة تطور الفكر البيروقراطي، وتُقيّم القيمة النظرية للتمييز بين البيروقراطية "المُمكِّنة (enabling) "والبيروقراطية "القسرية (coercive)".وتُظهر نتائج التحليل أن البيروقراطية ليست نمطاً تنظيمياً ثابتاً، سواء اتسم بالكفاءة أو بعدم الفعالية؛ بل تعتمد آثارها على كيفية تصميمها وتطبيقها، وعلى السياق التنظيمي الذي تعمل في إطاره.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البيروقراطية، الخلل التنظيمي، الصمت التنظيمي، الإصلاح الإداري

Introduction

Bureaucracy is the most discussed concept of thought concerning administration but its expression in the academic world has not been uniform and enduring. Rather, it is a phenomenon that is characterized by its very duality: on the one hand as an efficiency-enhancing, and on the other hand as an efficiency-impairing phenomenon. German sociologist Max Weber developed the concept of the best rational organisation – bureaucracy. These are the four key concepts: formality, hierarchy, functional specialization, and impartiality. The principles of this framework were mechanisms of structure that sought to increase efficiency, control and reduce the element of chance in the form of randomness in the way organizations functioned (Weber, 1978). This was the core concept of most of the old administrative writing and the major components of this concept originated in it.

The antipathy for bureaucracy was far more pronounced and complex, however, in more recent writing. The concept of bureaucracy was no longer regarded as a method of organizing things. They considered it a system that was active and was changing the power dynamics and behaviour of those working in the system.

One such contribution comes from Adler and Borys (1996) who analytically distinguish two types of bureaucracy, namely, enabling and coercive bureaucracy, the latter of which is an impediment to employees and a disorganizing force of their autonomy. This was a large theoretical argument and that the problem with bureaucracy is its form in which it is built, in which it is lived and felt by those it is built for. Paul du Gay put forward a defence of the bureaucracy as a necessity within an organisation and institution very differently, but still in a positive spirit. He critically reviewed the expanding body of argument that the bureaucracy needs to be abolished in its entirety, and

suggested that there are some types of bureaucracy that are required in order to preserve accountability and institutional justice (du Gay, 2000).

Nevertheless, notwithstanding all the fullness of this mass of accrued scholarship, a careful analysis of this mass shows us some condition of theoretical disintegration which has been an extremely long-lived state. Studies tend to be distributed in two intellectual extremes; a celebration of the use of bureaucracy as a sure method of efficiency and organizational discipline, and a complaint that bureaucracy itself is responsible for institutional inertia and functional dysfunction.

What is especially revealing, however, is that the two orientations have one thing in common, namely, a limitation that is equally fundamental and has proven to be crucial, namely, the failure of each of the two approaches to create a sufficiently integrative framework that can explain the fundamental duality of bureaucracy. The discipline has lacked, and continues to lack, an analytical approach that can engage this duality seriously as a duality of its own: that is a way of dealing with the behavioral variables on which it is always interdependent, a way of giving it sustained attention in the contexts where it is played, a way of replacing bureaucracy in a more truly dynamic context.

It is based on this point of departure that the research problem is developed. The current research is concerned with the following question:

What is meant by organization bureaucracy in the sense of the conflict between the Weberian efficiency and later emphasized organizational dysfunctions?

This question is designed to extend the discussion, which is often the only type of discussion that people have, that's whether or not bureaucracy can be victorious or it can't be victorious as a form of organization.

It emphasizes rather the investigation through a conceptualization of bureaucracy as an essentially dual-fold phenomenon in that the consequences of bureaucracy are not preordained, but rather are constructed, in any specific case, by the specific nature of bureaucratic practice and the organizational environment in which it is practiced.

The importance of the research lies in its aspiration to transcend mostly descriptive orientation of most literature on bureaucracy. It achieves this by providing a long-term critical analysis of the discipline - one that exposes the underlying contradictions within the literature to light, and helps in building a more integrative and coherent explanatory system that ties bureaucratic structure with organizational dysfunction. The research has direct practical implications particularly in settings and institutions that are suffocating due to inflation in their processes and intrinsic inefficiency of administration. The analysis below can, hopefully, be useful in that context as a substantive input to re-thinking how administrative systems should be designed - toward an architecture that balances organizational control and institutional flexibility in an efficient and principled fashion, not to the extent that the two are mutually exclusive demands.

In this light, it is hoped that this paper will perform a critical rereading of organizational bureaucracy - tracing the trajectory of the development of the concept of organizational bureaucracy, as it has been developed since Weberian model of organizational rational efficiency, to the multiple and consequential ways in which organizational dysfunction manifests itself in modern organizational life working towards a better and more analytically informed understanding of the role that bureaucracy plays in shaping organizational efficiency and dysfunction in contemporary organizations. It is only a matter of time. The writing isn't finished yet.

The literature on bureaucracy has grown significantly in the last few decades, but it has been polarized over the past few decades between two intellectual points of view. The first is still convinced that bureaucracy is an essential tool for ensuring coordination, predictability, and accountability, while the second sees it as a source of rigidity, procedural costs and dysfunctional behaviors. Polarization has restricted the progress of integrative explanations that can explain the co-occurrence of both outcomes. The problem is no longer whether bureaucracy is good or bad, but how, in what organizational context and under what conditions, can bureaucratic systems be efficient or dysfunctional?

Methodological Approach

A critical integrative literature review method is used to review the literature on the development of the classical Weberian conception of organizational bureaucracy and its current view on the dysfunction of modern organizations and administrative reform. The critical review method is more different from traditional narrative reviews, which mainly summarize previous studies, and more advanced in terms of comparing, evaluating, and synthesizing various theoretical views so as to uncover conceptual inconsistencies, unaddressed controversies, and new ways to proceed.

It includes both classical and current works on bureaucracy, organizational malfunction, administrative reform, organizational action and behaviour, and on digital governance. The sources were chosen on the basis of being theoretically relevant, being a scholarly influence, and contributing to understanding the nature of bureaucracy as a tool of efficiency and as an organizational rigidity and dysfunction. The study intends to contribute to the more cohesive conceptualization of bureaucracy by going beyond

the simple opposition between support and criticism to a contextual interpretation of the outcomes of bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy in Classical Thought the Weberian Model of Efficiency.

Bureaucracy is not seen any more in the literature as a standard and immutable organizational norm but rather as a way of organizing, a process that takes shape in different and varying application contexts. While used as an analytical approach of how efficient performance can be achieved, recent reviews have demonstrated that in practice it is highly variable with each using different processes of implementation and results varying depending on the nature of the organizational context (Walton, 2005; Adler, 2012).

This change has created a sharp disjuncture between theory and practice - one where the rules and procedures cease to be reliably converted into efficiency, but they can instead become a burden to the organization in themselves. The effectiveness of rules is not just a function of the presence of the rules in and of themselves, but also three conditions are mutually reinforcing: (1) the organizational purpose to which the rules are to be applied must be clear, (2) the rules must be relevant to the situation in which they are to be applied, and (3) the people to whom the rules are to be applied must know the purpose of these rules (DeHart-Davis, 2009).

The modern structure of organizations is also quite helpful in redefining the concept of bureaucracy.The modern structure of organizations is also an important factor of redefining the concept of bureaucracy. The frantic pace of change, the increasing dependency on technology and institutional complexity have all undermined the ability of the rigid hierarchical shapes and created forms of a higher level of flexibility (Alvesson and Thompson, 2006; Harris, 2008). But the

literature cautions against taking the digitalization as an excuse to consider bureaucracy irrelevant. Rather, it has replaced them with algorithmic systems and digital infrastructures in other registers, where they play the functions of formal rules and formal procedures that would otherwise have been performed by them (Peeters and Schuilenburg, 2018; Widlak and Peeters, 2025).

Bureaucracy has not been eliminated on this account. It has rather taken the shape of a hybrid - the form that integrates the repressive tendencies of the traditional bureaucratic arrangement with the semblance of flexibility on its surface. It is this change that has led scholars to revise their understanding of bureaucracy as a pure form of ideal type to one that regards it as a multidimensional phenomenon, and one that depends on the context and circumstances of its enactment to define both its nature and impact (Alvesson and Thompson, 2005; Rainey and Bozeman, 2000).

A critical consideration of the Weberian perspective

The Weberian model has had a lasting impact, but it does have its drawbacks. Weber saw bureaucracy as primarily being a rational system to achieve greater efficiency, predictability, and administrative control. Later research, however, has shown that the same structural properties that help to coordinate behavior in stable situations can also create rigidity and decreased adaptability in uncertain and fast-changing environments. This indicates that the Weberian model has a positive contribution to the theory of bureaucratic order but fails to give as complete a description of the behavioural and organisational outcomes that result when formal structures are separated from organisational purpose. Recent scholarship thus has begun to regard bureaucracy as less than a perfect arrangement and more as an organizational phenomenon with design, implementation and

institutional characteristics that have important effects on its outcomes.

Organisation Disturbance due to Bureaucracy.

One of the key focuses of critical scholarship is the organizational malfunctions of bureaucracy. Many studies indicate that the use of too many rules and procedures is not only counterproductive for the reasons it was introduced, but also has a negative impact; organizational performance and individual behavior both play a role in this relationship, which is embedded in the bureaucratic organization (Bozeman, 1996; Van Dijck et al., 2023).

Organizational rigidity is one of these common dysfunctions that is very noticeable. Rigid hierarchies will tend to limit the adaptive response capability of an organization (Alvesson and Thompson, 2006) and reinforcement of routine behavioural patterns will come at the cost of learning and innovation. This is closely related to the problem of slow response to decision making – which is caused by build-up of approvals and increased complexity of administrative actions that eventually make it impossible to respond appropriately to changes in the external environment (Rainey and Bozeman, 2000).

Red Tape (procedural inflation) is one of the most investigated phenomena in the recent literature. It is described as a set of rules that generate an administrative cost that does not offer an obvious functional benefit, and has been associated with poor performance in organizations and low employee morale numerous times (Bozeman and Feeney, 2011; Van Dijck et al., 2023).

Too much bureaucracy also leads to a lack of innovation, with the ability to experiment and take initiative becoming even more limited, especially in the organizational cultures that embrace compliance over innovation (Yang, 2024). The

organizational silence phenomenon also plays a role, in which case employees are more likely to withhold their opinion in an organization where there is a strict hierarchy and the repercussions of their opinion are not yet known to them (Morrison 2014; Knoll and van Dick 2013).

These dysfunctions can be analysed in various models in theory. The organizational silence theory throws light on how bureaucracy undermines the informational communication in the organization, stifles the communication processes on which making informed decisions relies (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). The normalization of the deviant in turn is the theory that describes how ineffective practices are accepted as routine in the bureaucracy – and eventually become routine by the very bureaucracy that should not have them at all (Ashforth and Anand 2003). The creation of bureaucracy may be seen as a mechanism of control and discipline, constantly re-producing the behaviour of the individual, and producing unrelenting processes of control and restriction (Foucault, 1977).

Given the above, it is not only the bureaucracy that generates order and discipline, but it is also in a position to generate patterns of organizational dysfunction, which are deep rooted, worst of all is when the rules lose their connection to the purposes they are intended to serve and become an end in themselves.

Critical Synthesis of Bureaucratic Dysfunction

A careful examination of the dysfunction literature shows that these results are not a direct result of bureaucracy per se. On the contrary, they arise when the bureaucratic organisation becomes too rule-centred and becomes too far removed from the goals of the organisation. These are all signs of organizational rigidity, red tape, silence and the normalization of ineffectiveness, which seem to be interrelated aspects of the same phenomenon – the

increasingly institutionalization of administration as a way of life. That observation contradicts the widely held notion that bureaucratic implementation and dysfunction go hand in hand; instead it implies that dysfunction is caused by certain types of bureaucratic implementation but not by bureaucracy as it is per se.

Reviewing the literature on bureaucracy between efficiency and dysfunction.

But there are tougher strands of the literature which do not support the reductive verdict that bureaucracy is inefficient in nature. Rather, they suggest, its organizational effects are quite unpredictable as a result of its design, how it is implemented, and the context in which it operates. Bureaucracy can be a source of realization of stability, coordination and accountability; however, many studies suggest that it can also become a dysfunctional source when the rules lose their connection to their end purposes, or when the process to comply with them becomes an end in itself instead of a means to an end (walton, 2005; Adler, 2012; Goodsell, 2015).

One of the most important difference made to this debate is that between enabling bureaucracy and coercive bureaucracy by Adler and Borys (1996). The design of enabling bureaucracy is meant to help employees to comprehend what they should do and do it better giving them some autonomy in dealing with issues that emerge. Coercive bureaucracy, on the contrary, is based on close monitoring, formal obedience and the methodical limitation of professional discretion. The issue then is not whether the organization is efficient or inefficient, but which type of bureaucracy dominates in the organization (Adler & Borys, 1996; van Veen-Dirks, 2021).

The modern literature is giving credence to such a distinction, with an increase in perceived procedural justice and a decrease in perceived administrative burden being associated with enabling

administrative systems, and a decrease in organizational trust with an increase in perceived constraint and routine being associated with coercive administrative systems (Tessier and Otley, 2012; van der Kolk and Kaufmann, 2018). That means that the problem lies not in the presence of rules, but in how they are applied to the people to whom they apply; whether they are rules of direction and incentive—like a guide to better performance—or rules of discipline of the high and mighty?

It is also observed that there is a primary tension between order and flexibility in the literature. The need for order is essential for quality control, duty distribution and achieving accountability, while learning, adaptability, and the ability to respond to changing environments demand flexibility. As pointed out in the last few reviews, organizations that value order above flexibility are more susceptible to organizational rigidity, while those that seek flexibility without structure are in danger of becoming confused and losing the sense of coordination (Kallinikos, 2006; Clegg et al., 2006; Junker et al., 2023).

This is paralleled by another battle between control and empowerment. Classical bureaucracy is based on the premise that control ensures compliance and decreases deviance, recent literature, however, shows that high control can result in defensive compliance, inhibition of initiative, and undermining of creativity, whereas empowerment can contribute to higher occupational engagement and problem-solving in the presence of effective coordination and accountability mechanisms (Moll et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2023)

Critical review of the literature does not equal the end of bureaucracy per se but reformulation of it as a bureaucracy that can facilitate efficiency or create dysfunction based on design and implementation (Adler, 2012; Goodsell, 2015).

The content of the above discussion of enabling and coercive/disabling bureaucracy is summarized in the table below:

Table 1: A Comparative Analysis of Enabling and Coercive Bureaucracy: Organizational Dimensions, Outcomes, and Theoretical Foundations

Comparative Dimension	Enabling Bureaucracy	Coercive / Disabling Bureaucracy	Expected Organizational Outcomes	References
Core Concept	Rules and procedures are designed to help employees understand and improve their work	Rules are imposed as instruments of strict control and formal compliance	The effect of bureaucracy is determined not by its mere existence, but by its type and design	Adler & Borys (1996); Adler (2012); Goodsell (2015)
Nature of Rules	Rules serve as a means of supporting performance, coordination, and problem-solving	Rules become ends in themselves and may become detached from the actual goals of work	In the first case efficiency improves; in the second, organizational dysfunction emerges	Walton (2005); Adler (2012); Goodsell (2015)
Relationship between the System and Employees	A supportive and guiding relationship that assists employees in performing their work more effectively	A top-down disciplinary relationship that prioritizes control and compliance over learning	Greater support for trust and engagement, as opposed to a growing sense of constraint and routine	Adler & Borys (1996); Tessier & Otley (2012); van der Kolk & Kaufmann (2018)
Autonomy and Professional Judgment	Affords employees a degree of autonomy to	Restricts professional judgment and limits	Enhanced capacity for problem-solving, as	Adler & Borys (1996); Moll et al.

	address problems and exercise professional judgment	individual initiative	opposed to defensive compliance and diminished initiative	(2019); Zhao et al. (2023)
Procedural Justice and Administrative Burden	Associated with higher perceptions of procedural justice and a lower sense of administrative burden	Associated with heightened feelings of constraint, routine, and administrative burden	Improved organizational experience in the first case; erosion of trust and satisfaction in the second	Tessier & Otley (2012); van der Kolk & Kaufmann (2018)
Coordination and Accountability	Supports stability, coordination, and accountability when effectively designed	May become a source of dysfunction when focus shifts to procedure rather than outcome	Productive organizational discipline or obstructive bureaucratic rigidity, depending on application	Walton (2005); Goodsell (2015)
Order versus Flexibility	Maintains a balance between clear rules and sufficient margin for adaptation and learning	Prioritizes order at the expense of flexibility	Balance enhances learning and responsiveness, while excess order leads to organizational rigidity	Kallinikos (2006); Clegg et al. (2006); Junker et al. (2023)
Control versus Empowerment	Tends toward empowerment accompanied by effective mechanisms of	Tends toward excessive control and top-down discipline	Empowerment enhances engagement and creativity, while excessive control reduces	Moll et al. (2019); Zhao et al. (2023)

	coordination and accountability		initiative and produces defensive compliance	
Overall Effect on Performance	May support organizational efficiency and effectiveness	May generate dysfunction, routine, weakened trust, and rigidity	The decisive question is not: is bureaucracy effective? but rather: which type of bureaucracy prevails?	Adler & Borys (1996); van Veen-Dirks (2021); Adler (2012); Goodsell (2015)

Analytical Interpretation of the Comparative Framework

The above comparison of the bureaucracies shows that a single norm can hardly be used to assess them. The literature has repeatedly shown that organizational outcomes are more a function of how structures are designed and experienced by organizational members than whether they are formal. Facilitating forms of bureaucracy help to foster learning, trust and adaptive performance, while coercive forms tend to create rigidity, administrative burdens and behavioural withdrawal. The question of whether or not organizations should be bureaucratic is not the central concern of contemporary bureaucracy research, but rather the question of how bureaucratic systems can be designed to achieve a balance between accountability, flexibility and employee empowerment.

Bureaucracy in Modern Organisations: A Reconsideration

Bureaucracy scholars haven't yet been able to solve a problem that has plagued them down the years: whether such a system is worth saving—or whether it's just past its prime? This is because the majority of the serious scholarship is placed in between. Reaching there, it happens to be, is more of a chore than merely proclaiming, reform needed. And it's very rare that it happens at night.

Breaking up of rules is not usually the answer. Nor does it break down hierarchies by itself. The evidence suggests otherwise: the need to return to the structure itself and to transform its internal structure; the need to make the structure teachable; the need to make the structure flexible enough to be bent sideways across an organisation and not only from the top down; the need to make the structure malleable enough to be bent, to be flexible enough to learn, to be teachable (El-Taliawi, 2019; Tomaževič et al., 2023).

There is more to lean and agile than mere fashion. Lean is achieved by eliminating what nobody needs and by bringing a decision-making process back to the person closest to the problem being solved. Another approach is agile, not so much about eliminating, but how work is organized over time, in smaller teams, smaller commitments, frequent testing and enough flexibility to pivot on the evidence when things start to go against the plan (Bhamu & Singh Sangwan, 2012; Junker et al., 2023). To take either as a clean sweep of bureaucracy, would be a misreading. They can both better be called efforts to repair: to retain that which provides organizations with a sense of coherence and to disown that which renders them sluggish (Zhao et al., 2023).

This picture becomes even more complicated when taking digitalisation of the problem into account. The technology has a

very real potential for bureaucracies, as it can process information more quickly, generate less unnecessary friction, and provide a more realistic view of what's going on at the bottom. If that is true, then the outcomes will likely be the same. It's no wonder that the same issues reappear, now with a digital mask (Tomaževič et al., 2023), when technology primarily helps to meet control and compliance requirements by three times.

What is made abundantly clear from studies about innovative organizations is that structure does not inhibit creativity. Damage is a form of building that is destructive rather than productive and that abides by rules that are destructive, that are about process rather than results, and that do not permit new ideas to be tested.

Review the institutions that have solved this problem, and a pattern emerges: Policies are only developed to make it easier rather than to provide evidence (Aanestad & Blegind Jensen, 2021; Moll et al., 2019).

And the question alters. While it is still considered part of the job, it's no longer all of the job to keep it in order. The real question is how to design structures which require people to be accountable, but don't make accountability the end goal? What is your policy on making clear expectations but not being too strict as to leave room to reason when things do not work out? None of that is towards less rules, per se. It suggests rules that were developed with job type in mind, which people can follow without compromising on their judgment, and that work when things change in a way that nobody thought of (van Veen-Dirks, 2021; El-Taliawi, 2019).

Derivation of the Research Gaps

The above-mentioned review shows the importance of bureaucracy as one of the most studied and discussed concepts in organization studies. But the study also uncovers some unanswered questions that have yet to be addressed in theory. These problems are not due to a lack of studies in bureaucracy per se, but rather to the disjointed way in which bureaucracy has been studied in various literature streams. Based on the critical synthesis of previous studies, the following research gaps are identified, which are the focus for further conceptual integration and theory development.

Research Gap

An overview of the literature shows that there is an apparent gap in literature that provides an integrative critical perspective on bureaucracy as opposed to defensively or critically focusing on it. Bureaucracy is normally discussed as an administrative structure in the literature, while the other issues, such as organizational agility, innovation, digital transformation, and empowerment are discussed in other literature sources without establishing a framework that links all these issues together (Walton, 2005; Adler, 2012; El-Taliawi, 2019).

Another weakness can also be seen in the fact that little focus is paid to the Arab and Iraqi context. Most literature on bureaucracy and administrative reform begins with the western context or with an administrative context of stability in general, and the Iraqi context in particular, still needs to be read in terms of organisations to better understand how the implementation of bureaucracy can go in institutions of overlapping political, administrative and technological complexity (Jreisat, 1999; Almashat, 2019; Ameen and Jreisat, 2019).

It is only the third gap that has been less effectively connected with organizational behavior, bureaucratic behavior. Although there is a wide literature on organizational silence, deviance, creativity, as well as occupational engagement, there is little evidence on the direct relationship between these factors and the form of bureaucracy that exists within an organization, especially in the context of Arab government. There is a need to rethink the concept of bureaucracy as a structure, but also as a form of organizational voice, innovative behavior, deviant behavior, and conformist behavior (van Veen-Dirks, 2021; Ehrich et al., 2024).

Considering this, the research gap of the present study could be described in threefold aspects as follows: (Adler and Borys, 1996; Jreisat, 1999; Ameen and Willis, 2016).

First: The absence of integrative critical reviews that drive classical bureaucracy into the modern organization trends.

Second: the lack of research that investigates bureaucracy through organization behavior approach in the context of Arabs and Iraqis.

Thirdly, the lack of distinction between the enabling and coercive bureaucracy in explaining the variables such as organizational silence, deviance and creativity in contemporary institutions.

Academic table below is an articulate articulation of the three research gaps, in a systematic formulation, including the gap, description of the gap, theoretical implications of the gap and reference list.

Table 2: Research Gaps in the Literature on Organizational Bureaucracy: Description, Theoretical Significance, and Supporting References

Research Gap	Description of the Gap	Theoretical Significance	References Cited
Integrative Critical Gap	A review of the literature reveals a discernible shortage of studies that offer an integrative critical analysis of bureaucracy. The literature tends toward one of two orientations: either defending bureaucracy as an instrument of stability, coordination, and accountability, or criticizing it as a source of rigidity and dysfunction. Topics such as organizational agility, innovation, digital transformation, and empowerment are likewise discussed in separate bodies	This gap points to the need to reframe bureaucracy within a contemporary organizational perspective that connects it to current administrative and behavioral transformations, rather than treating it as an isolated traditional administrative structure. It also highlights the necessity of developing a framework that explains when bureaucracy supports efficiency and when it becomes an obstacle to flexibility and innovation.	Walton (2005); Adler (2012); El-Taliawi (2019)

	of literature, without the construction of a theoretical framework that accounts for their relationship to bureaucracy.		
Arab/Iraqi Contextual Gap	The literature indicates that most studies on bureaucracy and administrative reform have proceeded from Western contexts or from relatively stable administrative systems, while attention to Arab environments, and the Iraqi context in particular, remains limited, despite the overlapping political, administrative, and technological complexity that characterizes them.	This gap points to a deficiency in the contextual relevance of prevailing administrative theories, and highlights the need for deeper organizational studies that explain how bureaucracy functions within institutions operating in transitional or complex environments. It also underscores the importance of testing the applicability of Western theoretical frameworks in the Arab and Iraqi context, rather than	Jreisat (1999); Almashat (2019); Ameen & Willis (2016)

		assuming their generalizability.	
Organizational-Behavioral Gap	Despite the existence of an extensive body of literature on organizational silence, deviance, creativity, and occupational engagement, the direct link between these variables and the type of bureaucracy prevailing within an organization remains relatively limited, particularly in Arab governmental environments. The application of the distinction between enabling and coercive bureaucracy in explaining these variables likewise remains underdeveloped.	The theoretical significance of this gap lies in the necessity of moving beyond an understanding of bureaucracy as a formal structure alone, toward understanding it as an explanatory variable for organizational behavior: that is, as a factor that shapes organizational voice, creative behavior, deviance, and compliance. This opens the way for explanatory models that connect the design of the administrative system to behavioral outcomes within the organization.	van Veen-Dirks (2021); Ehrich et al. (2024); Adler & Borys (1996); Jreisat (1999); Ameen & Willis (2016)

Theoretical implications of the identified gaps

The identified gaps taken together indicate that future studies on bureaucracy would be more beneficial in explaining the bureaucracy behaviorally and in a more context-sensitive way. In turn, the difference between enabling and coercive bureaucracy offers a potentially useful theoretical platform for examining the effect of administrative systems on organizational outcomes including silence, creativity, engagement and deviant behavior. Filling these gaps can help form a more coherent theory of bureaucracy that is more applicable to the realities of organizations in the modern world.

Conclusion

This paper shows that bureaucracy does not accommodate a mere dichotomous judgment. It's not a formula of successful organisation or an easy explanation of institutional failures. It's actually a complicated phenomenon in the organization and has really contradictory potentials within itself. Classical scholarship focused on its ability to provide efficiency, discipline and stability. From that came the critical scholarship, which shows that under certain conditions, the same properties are the very ones that help to cement organizational dysfunction: rigidity becomes entrenched, procedural inflation becomes a commonplace, and the forces that facilitate innovation are quietly eroded (Walton, 2005; Adler, 2012).

The next step after this is a re-thinking of the bureaucracy as a two-sided effect variable. Does not make assumptions about outcomes. They vary depending on the formality of the system, its level of flexibility, the system's design, and the institutional context where the system is enclosed. This argument has been most helpful for its analysis in recent scholarship and is expressed in the contrast between enabling and coercive bureaucracy. The enabling variant is linked to the high performance and organizational learning; the coercive variant, on the contrary, is more likely to suppress initiative and destroy the efficiency that it is designed to generate (Adler and Borys, 1996; van Veen-Dirks, 2021).

It is NOT, however, the problem of bureaucracy. This is what bureaucracy becomes, and whether it can become anything that meets the demands of contemporary organizational life. There is no evidence that it actually contributes to making accountability possible or ensuring procedural justice, which is why suggestions that it be wholesale abolished do not hold true. Traditional manifestation, on the other hand, blindly applies it, and fails to acknowledge that the demands of flexibility and organizational

ability are increasing, and that it has to become innovative. However, the evidence is suggesting redesign rather than elimination, that is, reconstructing the bureaucratic structures on the enabling foundations of controlling elements and openness to learning that exist in a productive tension (Goodsell, 2015; El-Taliawi, 2019).

The dilemma of modern organisations is not the one you would encounter between Bureaucracy and what might come after. The more difficult question is the redesign of bureaucracy itself: its openness to the world, its responsiveness to the constraints that tend to grow over time, its capacity to be supportive of the kinds of organizational behavior that can sustain performance over time. The key to what distinguishes a bureaucracy that serves its organization from one that's outdated is the balance of stability and change, efficiency and innovation.

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