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A Diagnosis on City Councils and Municipalities Interactions: (A Study on the Cities of Lorestan Province)

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Abstract: Dysfunctional interaction between municipality and city council can significantly undermine the performance of both institutions and thus the quality of urban management. This significant effect highlights the necessity of local studies on the pathologies of this relationship. The present research aimed to identify and rank the pathologies of the interactions between municipalities and city councils in one province of Iran. The research was carried out by the use of exploratory mixed methods in the framework of taxonomy development model. In the first phase of research, 51 council members and mayors in the studied province, who were selected by typical sampling, were interviewed. The findings revealed 31 pathologies in 6 major categories. Then, a questionnaire prepared for pairwise comparison of found pathologies was distributed among 64 mayors and councils members in the studied province. The results of the AHP technique showed that among the major pathologies in the municipality-city council interactions, insufficient institutionalization of municipalities and councils and legal gaps are the most prominent. Among the minor pathologies, deficiency of council and municipality laws, deficient expertise and experience of some council members and mayors, and absence of a coherent training program for council members in relation to their duties were found to be the most important factors undermining the interactions of city councils with municipalities in the studied realm.

Keywords: municipality, city council, pathology, municipal-city council interactions, cities of Lorestan Province
JEL Classification: L32, L31, N55, R50

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1- Introduction

Interaction between different government units is among the most important domestic issues of governments. No local public organization can be fully autonomous and the dependence of such an organization on other units of public administration is inevitable. Hence, for local organizations to fulfill their legal obligation, there must be structured, rational, stable and institutionalized interactions among them in different levels. These interactions include intra-organizational interactions, interactions with people, interaction with central government, and interactions between city council and municipality (Rahmati, 2012).

The introduction of the entity called Islamic city council to Iran's administrate structure completely transformed or at least challenged the relationships and equilibriums of the local governance. One of the prominent results of this transformation was the emergence of a tense relationship between municipalities and city councils (Ghorab, 2001). This tension is caused sometimes by councils dictating municipal decisions with unreasonable details that challenge the administrative power of municipality, and other times by municipalities resisting reasonable council decrees. It is clear that persistence of such conflicts ultimately leads to ineffectiveness of both institutions (Hanifi et al., 2012). Constructive interaction between these two institutions is an inescapable necessity for achieving the objectives of local governance, particularly since the majority of legal duties of city councils are in relation to municipalities and at least 24 out of 32 clauses of council duties in article 71 of the council law somehow pertain to this relation (Rahmati, 2012). Poor interaction between municipality and city council can severely undermine their performance and thus the quality and sustainability of urban life. This is because the performance of city council and municipality has a significant effect on the citizens' quality of life (Faghihi & Salarzehi, 2004).

Since different provinces have their particular circumstances, indigenous studies are required to address the damage caused by interactions between municipalities and Islamic councils in the cities of those provinces. The main purpose of this study was to identify and rank the pathologies in the city council-municipality interactions in the context of interorganizational diagnosis framework in an Iranian province used as the case for study. Accordingly, the present study sought to answer the following questions:

A. What are the pathologies in the interactions of studied city councils and municipalities?

B. What pathologies have a higher priority?

2- Literature Review

a) Foreign Researches

Pasquini & Shearing (2014) indicated how the performance of local and urban governments are affected by national-local policies and changes.

Nzuve & Bakari (2012) argued that there was a positive and significant relationship between the empowerment of city council members and their performance. Moreover, mean score of empowerment of Nairobi city council staff was estimated at a maximum of five points (3.54). In other words, powerful and experienced staff is being used at Nairobi City Council.

De Waal & Gerritsen-Medema (2006) used the index of performance management analysis to evaluate one of Netherlands city councils performance.

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b) Iranian Researches

Habibi (2012) investigated the performance of the first Tehran's city council. The results indicated that the most important variable to enter into Tehran's city council is political tendencies and attachments.

Saeidi Rezvani & Saeidi Rezvani (2009) investigated educational system of Mashhad city council members and its impact on promotion of councils performance, and concluded that in terms of implementation time, basic training should be based on the interval between the election of council members and the official start of the council, public education in the first three months of the council's start, specialized training from the fifth to the eighth session of the council and continuing education should be provided from the beginning to the end of the council's activities. In this way, basic education is included in the pre-service training and other training in the category of in-service training.

Nazarpoor (2009) explores the pathology of the government and city councils in providing revenue sources to municipalities. According to the results, revenue sources, budgets and credits play a very fundamental role in the success of urban management and perform optimally and properly the duties of municipalities. An issue that has always been the main concern of city executives is that the organization of financial affairs of the government and municipalities are not precisely defined and the powers and authority of the Islamic councils in this context are also subject to fundamental constraints.

SalehiAmiri & Mohammad (2010) determined and analyzed the pathologies of Islamic city council relations and Tehran Municipality, investigated the causes of these damages and presented management strategies to reduce them in order to improve the efficiency of councils and municipalities and realize the idea of integrated urban management and reduce the volume of government work. In their study, they referred to three categories of damage related to the relationship between Islamic City Council and Municipality of Tehran

3- Theoretical Background

Presence of a set of structured, rational, stable and institutional interactions between different local public organizations is one of the primary requirements for fulfillment of legal obligations of local government. In the case of municipalities and city councils, these interactions can be classified into following categories (Rahmati, 2012):

- **Intra-organizational level**: This refers to the definition of relationships, division of labor, and method of interaction between council members within the council and between different units within the municipality based on legal and rational mechanisms. Since councils and municipalities consist of many different units, establishing constructive and optimal procedures for interactions between different units is of essential importance for their effectiveness and realization of their objectives. The best form of interaction between council members can be established by proper formation of a board of directors and committees with competence and expertise in their respective affairs with optimal utilization of knowledge and experience of all members. A council that lacks internal coherence and effectiveness will not be able to interact with municipality and public and executive organizations or to attract public participation.

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- **Interaction with people**: Beside the legal duties and authority of city councils and municipality, the principal purpose of formation of these entities is to create a platform for participation of citizens in city affairs and utilize public capacities and potentials. In the absence of a persistent and organized interaction between council and citizens, the council will not be to identify the real needs of people, people will not be adequately informed about council decisions and decrees, and there will be no real and meaningful partnership between citizens and urban management. Therefore, councils should adopt certain measures to ensure effective and continuous interaction with citizens in relation to different city affairs based on specific procedures in line with laws and regulations. One of the main merits of this engagement is the ability of local government to utilize public participation in decision-making and identification of priorities and realization of public supervision.

- **Interaction with central government**: Without a properly defined, structured and, sustainable interaction between council and municipality and legislative, executive, and judicial bodies, they will not be able to perform their duties. Therefore, to be able to respond to public demands through development and ratification of local legislation and supervision of functions, council has to establish a comprehensive relationship with the institutions of central government; a relationship based on interests of citizens, laws and regulations, legal duties of council and municipality, with a spirit of cooperation and empathy between different administrative entities, and collective effort to address city problems.

- **Council-municipality interaction**: This refers to the type, extent, and quality of interactions of city council with its corresponding executive branch that is municipality. Since about 24 of the council tasks are directly or indirectly related to municipality, there should be an active, lawful, and institutionalized engagement based on citizens' interests between council and municipality in the areas of planning, policy-making, policy implementation and supervision. It should be noted that city councils have broad power including the ability to adopt and ratify local administrative laws and policies and to monitor and investigate the performance of municipalities.

There are three types of interaction between city councils and municipalities:

- **Legal interactions:** Like national governments, local government entities have specific territory, population, structured organization, and predefined power and authority to carry out their duties. Many local government entities have independent legal personality and can conclude contracts, file lawsuits against individuals or legal entities, or be sued by other parties. The powers of these entities are enforced by local authorities based on by-laws and decrees ratified by local associations and councils (Rahmati, 2012).

- **Financial interactions:** According to Article 54 of the law of municipality and its relevant provisions, the budget, revenue, and workload of the municipality must be reported by the municipal administration to city council and can only be implemented after approval of the ministry of the interior (Hanifi et al., 2012). Typically, municipal activities need to be financed by local resources. In Iran, the laws of value added tax and aggregated duties grant the city council the authority to

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ratify local tax law, but only after approval of the ministry of interior (Nasr Esfahani, 2011). The interactions in this category include the ratification of supplementary budget, adjustment of the budget of municipality and its affiliated companies and organizations, approval of finances to be availed by municipality, approval of municipality service fees, confirmation of municipality's comprehensive income/expense forms, and supervision of municipality performance in management of capital, assets, and movable and immovable properties (Moeini, 2007).

- **Organizational and administrative interactions:** These interactions include: the approval of proposed bills by the municipality, the requirement for the municipality to implement plans proposed by members of the council and ultimately approved by the council, overseeing the performance of the municipality in various development, service, social, cultural, economic and welfare areas, approval of transactions and supervision thereof, ratification of the statutes of institutions and companies affiliated to the municipality, approval of bills of establishment or cancellation of municipal bills, monitoring of good litigation concerning municipalities and the election of mayor (Moeini, 2007).

It is clear that for these tasks can be accomplished, there should be a lawful comprehensive interaction in line with public interests between city council and municipality with the autonomy of city council and accountability of municipality fully respected (Rahmati, 2012).

4- Research Method

This research was conducted by the use of exploratory mixed methods, with the help of taxonomy development model. In exploratory mixed methods, researcher first collects qualitative data as the basis of the study and then proceeds to collection of quantitative data based on qualitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The taxonomy development model is used when the first phase of research aims to identify important variables, form a taxonomy or classification system, or develop a novel theory, and the second phase aims to investigate the findings more thoroughly.

Qualitative data was collected by the use of typical sampling method. In this method, members of the sample are familiar with phenomenon of interest and may have personal experience in this regard (Creswell, 2002). For this purpose, the authors conducted a series of in-depth interviews with 42 members of city councils and 9 mayors in the studied province in Iran, and continued the process until reaching theoretical saturation. The interview protocol was based on a principal question: "Based on your experience, what are the most important pathologies in the relations between city council and municipality of your city?". In the course of interview, probing questions were asked to further explore the subject and receive more profound and accurate data. When necessary, additional questions were also asked to direct the discussions and arrive at the issues related to phenomenon of interest. Using the software Maxqda, a list of items pertaining to the pathologies of city council-municipality interactions was developed. The list was then narrowed down to 31 final items representing the minor pathologies, which were classified into 6 major categories. The qualitative validity of the research was ensured, firstly, by acquiring continued assistance from the participants during data

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interpretation and analysis, and secondly, by implementation of a member checking phase, in which participants reviewed the items and categories and gave feedback accordingly (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In line with the chosen methodology, in the second phase of research, the authors prepared a questionnaire for pairwise comparison of most important pathologies in the city council-municipality relations in the study area (items identified in the first phase). The questionnaire was distributed among all city councils member and mayors of the studied province (a total of 68 people). The collected pairwise comparison data were analyzed in Excel using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). AHP is one of the most comprehensive decision support techniques developed for Multi Attribute Decision Making (MADM), as it allows the problem to be formulated in a hierarchical manner with different quantitative and qualitative criteria taking into account, and a sensitivity analysis on criteria and sub-criteria to be conducted accordingly. In addition, this technique is based on pairwise comparison, which facilitates judgment and computation (Saaty, 2001). AHP technique consists of following steps (Azar & Memariani, 1995):

A: forming a hierarchical structure: Each decision maker is asked to express the relative importance of each pair of decision factors using a nine-tiered scale. The pairwise comparison scores obtained from each k decision maker are organized into a pairwise comparison matrix.

B: consistency analysis: The priority of factors is determined by computing the corresponding eigenvalues and vectors.

$A \cdot W = \lambda max.w$

In the above equation, w is the weighted vector (eigenvector) of the matrix A, and λmax is the eigenvalue of the matrix A. To ensure the coherence of judgment in pairwise comparisons, a consistency index must be calculated. For this purpose, the Consistency Rate (CR) and Consistency Index (CI) are defined as follows:

$$CI = \frac{\lambda max - n}{n - 1}$$

$$CR = \frac{CI}{RI}$$

where n is the number of items compared in the matrix, and RI is the randomness index, that is, the average consistency index of a pairwise comparison matrix of the same size, which is generated randomly. If the consistency rate is unacceptable, decision maker should correct the initial values put in the comparison matrix.

Table 1. randomness index RI

N	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
RI	0.58	0.9	1.12	1.24	1.32	1.41	1.45	1.49	1.51	1.48	1.56	1.57	1.59

Source: (Saaty, 2001)

5- Results

In the qualitative phase of the research, interviews with the participants and coding process led to identification of 31 items in 6 major categories. Some live experiences of each item are provided in Table 2.

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Table2. Final coding of interviews about damage to interactions between Islamic city councils and municipalities

Major pathology categories	Minor pathology categories
Insufficient institutionalization of municipalities and councils	Limited public awareness about the purpose and duties of council and municipality: "People are not aware of the duties and purpose of the council ..."
	Limited media coverage of the functions of council and municipality: "there is hardly any media coverage about the work and status of councils, so people are not aware of function of this institution ..."
	Limited awareness of some council members and mayors about the functions and duties of city council: "because of lack of sufficient knowledge about council authority and duties, sometimes council members make irrational demands from the mayor..."
	Limited awareness of officials of public organizations about the status and duties of council and municipality: "Many members of urban management body are unaware of the status of city council as a decision-making body. They are unaware the council laws and functions and unawareness obstructs their ability to establish a formal legal relation with the council"
	Absence of coherent training program for council members in relation to their duties: "... In-service trainings are essential, but are neglected"
	Public confusion of city council with a subsidiary of municipality: "... Everyone thinks city council is the council of municipality"
Legal gaps	Deficiency of council and municipality laws: "The council has no independence and many of its decrees has to be approved by the compliance committee in the governorate, which rejects many of these decrees since members of that committee do not take the city council seriously; this law should be corrected..."
	Limited binding power of council decrees: "it seems like council is a subsidiary of municipality, instead of a council for the city; of course, sometimes there is no clear law about the issue." "Council decrees can be enforced only on the municipality; for other organizations, the law states that the council should only oversight"
	Absence of any legal means to discipline the mayor, except interpellation: "There is no way for the council to discipline the mayor, except interpellation"
Oversight deficiencies	Lack of proper assessment of council performance in different tenures: "there is no means for appraising the performance of council members"
	Inadequate supervision of government agencies over council decrees: "There is no one to review and comment on council decrees..."
Structural deficiencies-hardware	Centralized administrative structure: "...council introduces itself as a decision-making body, but in reality, with this centralized system, only government decisions are enforced ..."
	Council and municipality's lack of financial resources: "In small cities, one of the problems that strain the council-municipality relationship is the municipality's lack of financial resources, which undermines any plan put forward by the council"
	Financial dependence of the council: "... excluding the large cities, many councils can even hardly pay the salaries"
Structural deficiencies-software	Competition of council and municipality instead of interaction: "... to prevent interpellation, mayors often try to divide the council members into two groups... and prioritize the interests of one group over the other so that council remain divided and fail to exercise its power and authority"
	Lack of transparency between council members and municipality: "In many cases, opaque relations between council members and municipality create some challenges ..."
	Favoritism based on personal relations instead of rule of law: "sometimes, council members resort to questionable means to fulfill the promises given during candidacy..."
	Absence of expert advisers: "... there should be easy access to expert advisers for consultation about different issues ..."
	Lack of coordination among council members: "...unfortunately, council coordination and group work is often underwhelming"
	Absence of a strategic plan in council and municipality: "Members ... are not interested in long-term plans ..."
	Absence of coordination among some senior municipality officials: "This issue stems from the mayor's choice of staff; sometimes mayor and his deputies are not on the same page..."
	Absence of integrated urban management: "... the future of councils depends on the efforts to establish an integrated urban management system; there should be no parallel management..."
Individual level organizational behavior deficiencies	Deficient expertise and experience of some council members and mayors: "Education and experience are complementary; the teams should be thoroughly vetted; for construction committee for example, people with civil engineering education and background are better in arguments and are likely to produce outputs with stronger professional basis"
	Council's lack of self-efficacy: "... unlike before, in the third term, we proved that the city council has indeed some authority. We demanded administrative entities to provide performance reports and explanations, and this could not be achieved without self-efficacy"
	Absence of internal motivation in some council members: "... some council members pursue agendas unrelated to the city, and are not aware of the council status and duties"
	Deficiency of innovation and creativity in some council members and mayors: "In the absence of a suitable incentive system, many council members do not make any innovative effort..."

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According to the interviews and findings of Table (2), each of the damages is described in detail below:

Insufficient Institutionalization of Municipalities and City Councils

Because of this issue, people and sometimes even the members and officials of these two urban management entities remain unaware of the status, duties, responsibilities and authority boundaries of these institutions. In the absence of any media coverage about city council and municipality, people will be hardly aware of the functions and interactions of these institutions. Consequently, it is typical for people to confuse city council with a subsidiary of municipality and make requests unfitting to council authority, thus forcing the council to demand from the municipality something on which it has no authority. From other perspective, inadequate understanding of some senior urban management official about the duties and authority of city council and their own office can cause confusion in duties, misunderstandings between the two institutions, and sometimes complete neglect of a responsibility. Deficient awareness of some council members, mayors and officials in public organizations about the status and duties of council and municipality and the absence of a coherent training program to address this deficiency exacerbate the issue.

Legal Gaps

The law emphasizes the significant decision-making role of city council, but sometimes requires the decrees of this local administration institution to be approved by the central government. According to Article 12 of the first council law ratified by the Iranian parliament on Nov 22 1982, city councils, within the domain of their authority and duties, have to be supervised by their superior councils (not the government), and the following paragraph explicitly states that the superior body of provincial high councils is the parliament. Article 13 of this law also states that if no council is in place, the superior council must perform its legal duties. But in practice, for example, many of the council decrees are referred to a compliance committee in the governorate for approval, despite the fact that governors are required to comply with council decisions within the limits of council authority. It should be noted that according to Article 59 of aforementioned law, the compliance of council decisions cannot be decided by the representatives of the government; and this is exactly what happens when council decrees are referred to a committee appointed by the governorate to be checked for compliance with the law. How can a council that depends on the central government for its decision-making protect its independence? This shortcoming provides an opportunity for the mayor office to bypass the council and appeal to the central government and its representative in the city (governorate) to nullify the council decrees.

In another example, according to one of the participants “Article 19 of this law (the first council law) lists 18 tasks for the city councils. Paragraph 6 of Article 21 of that law, which is about termination of council members, states that this can be done by the proposal of three fourths council majority followed by the approval of competent court on the basis of violation of legal duties. This is while in the laws ratified by the parliament in 1986, 1996, 1999, 2003 and 2007, violations of council members must be reported by government representatives in cities and villages and be addressed by dispute resolution boards.

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Thus, in practice, it is government officials who propose the termination of members, not the council. According to aforementioned laws, it is the dispute resolution board that decides whether a council member has violated its duties, and this power has turned these boards into a primary court. And this is despite the fact that, like in the parliament, proposals of resignation, termination and the like should be handled by the council itself". In addition, the fact that council decrees are binding for municipality but not for other government organization and agencies also damages the municipality-council interactions. Directors of public organizations are bound to the orders of their superiors in the provincial capitals and ultimately the central government, so they often disregard the demands of city councils. This state of affairs encourages municipalities to prefer to work with public representatives instead of the council. Ultimately, when the council wishes to discipline the mayor for disregarding its demands, it has access to no legal solution except interpellation.

Oversight Deficiencies

The performance of the council in different tenures is not adequately evaluated, and supervisory bodies do not exercise much oversight over council decrees. Some dysfunctional relations or conflicts between councils and municipalities are the products of these oversight deficiencies.

Structural Deficiencies– Hardware

The centralized structure of the administrative system undermines the independence of the council, saps its power and challenges its essence and relevance. Simply put, council is introduced as an urban decision-making body, but with the centralized system in place, it is only government decisions that are enforced. As a result, municipalities tend to focus more on central government institutions and decisions rather than city councils. The pathology becomes clearer when one realizes that city councils are financially dependent on municipalities, and both institutions often suffer from financial difficulties.

Structural Deficiencies– Software

In the absence of a strategic plan in councils and municipalities, absence of integrated urban management system, and with failure to get effective assistance from expert advisers, there seem to be no joint action agenda between councils and municipalities and their decisions are often one-sided and subjective. It should be noted that a strategic plan can outline the future of organization based on existing facts and organizational objectives, and enables the administrators to avoid ineffective and subjective choices by delineating a framework and boundary for decision-making. Nevertheless, in the absence of such plan, city councils and municipalities become vulnerable to shortsighted decisions that not only fail to yield long-term positive result but also waste the resources of the city. Moreover, the majority of decisions that must be made by the council and often involve the municipality require expert knowledge and proficiency, and can be severely undermined by the limited knowledge of council members on the issue. This is where the necessity of access to expert consultants becomes more apparent, but sometimes the council practically disregards this issue or chooses incompetent or strictly likeminded consultants. Also, the state of administrative structure and the laws pertaining to the councils have led to council members viewing the city council as an institution without clear power and authority. Although the constitution introduces the city council as a pillar of

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urban government, at present, the power and resources of many cities are in the hands of various government organizations and agencies, each receiving instructions from their respective ministries. This has led to defragmentation of urban management and distortion of interactions between councils and municipalities. In addition, in the absence of adequate coordination between council members and municipality officials, there is a greater likelihood of unilateral and detached behaviors and thus further straining of already fragile relationship between the two institutions. One should add to this, the damage caused by the lack of transparency in both city council and municipality, and the competition between these two institutions, which result in an atmosphere of mutual distrust. City council is a place for exchange and interaction of ideas and opinions. The multiplicity of thought is essential for the exchange of ideas and knowledge, but sometime it evolves into unbridgeable conflict in opinions, prevents any consensus or even partial agreement on issues, and occasionally leads to personal grievances and subjective demands and behaviors. This atmosphere prevents the council from exercising collective wisdom and leads to pathologies that also damage the council-municipality interactions. Another potential challenge in the council-municipality interactions is the favoritism based on personal relations instead of rule of law, and the framework of municipality-council interactions becoming reliant on these relationships.

Individual Level Organizational Behavior Deficiencies

Municipality-council relationship can be severely undermined by council members or mayors who lack necessary expertise in regard to their duties. This is because unprofessional views and suggestions from one party provoke strong response from the informed members of the other party, which evolves into confrontation and sometimes personal conflict. Another issue in this regard is the council's lack of self-confidence, which leads to its marginalization by government organizations as well as municipality. Although some of the city councils in the studied province have managed to successfully pass this transitional period (the period in which council is ignored by other administrative organizations because of its relative youth) and gradually become self-confident enough to play a role in macro management of their city, some still struggle to achieve this quality.

In the second phase of research, a questionnaire devised based on principles of pairwise comparison was distributed among all 64 city council member and mayors of the studied province. Profile of participants is provided in Table 3.

Table3. Profile of research participants

Number of tenures			Education					Position	
3 terms	2 terms	1 term	PhD degree	Master degree	Bachelor degree	Associate degree	Diploma	municipality	council
7.35%	11.19%	73.52%	2.94%	10.29%	60.29%	16.17%	10.29%	14.7%	85.3%

In addition, the independent weights of minor items in each category were calculated to the values presented in Table 4. To adjust the independent weight of items according the importance of their category, they were multiplied by the importance weight of respective category to determine a final weight provided in

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the last column of Table 4. As shown in the table, the most crucial pathology subcategories, in the order of importance are: deficiency of council and municipality laws, deficient expertise and experience of some council members and mayors, the absence of coherent training programs for council members in relation to their duties, limited awareness of some directors of public organizations about the status and duties of council and municipality, centralized administrative structure, limited media coverage of the function of council and municipality, lack of proper assessment of council performance in different tenures, absence of any legal means to discipline the mayor except interpellation, public confusion of city council with a subsidiary of municipality, limited public awareness about the purpose and duties of council and municipality, limited knowledge of some council members and mayors about the functions and duties of city council, favoritism based on personal relations instead of rule of law. These pathologies can be categorized into four general groups: legal inconsistency between the city council responsibilities and its authority, deficiency of expert and efficient council members and municipality officials, limited awareness of people and officials about the duties and status of city councils and municipalities, favoritism based on personal interests in both council and municipality in the absence of effective oversight.

Table4. weights of pathologies in the city councils-municipality interactions

Major pathologies	Minor pathologies	Independent weight	Final weight
Insufficient institutionalization of municipalities and councils (0.269)	Limited public awareness about the purpose and duties of council and municipality	0.134	0.036
	Limited media coverage of the function of council and municipality	0.145	0.039
	Limited awareness of some council members and mayors about the functions and duties of city council	0.127	0.034
	Limited awareness of some directors of public organizations about the status and duties of council and municipality	0.160	0.043
	Absence of coherent training program for council members in relation to their duties	0.175	0.047
	Public confusion of city council with a subsidiary of municipality	0.138	0.037
Legal gaps (0.246)	Deficiency of council and municipality laws	0.391	0.096
	Limited binding power of council decrees	0.167	0.041
	Absence of any legal means to discipline the mayor, except the motion of no confidence	0.151	0.037
Oversight deficiencies (0.097)	Lack of proper assessment of council performance in different tenures	0.392	0.038
	Inadequate supervision of government agencies over council decrees	0.176	0.017
Structural deficiencies – hardware (0.097)	centralized administrative structure	0.431	0.040
	Council and municipality's lack of financial resources	0.258	0.024
	Financial dependence of the council	0.269	0.025
Structural deficiencies – software (0.18)	Competition of council and municipality instead of interaction	0.062	0.011
	Lack of transparency between council members and municipality	0.112	0.020
	Favoritism based on personal relations instead of rule of law	0.178	0.032
	Absence of expert advisers	0.084	0.015
	Lack of coordination among council members	0.156	0.028
	Absence of a strategic plan in council and municipality	0.117	0.021
	Absence of coordination among senior municipality officials	0.089	0.016
	Absence of integrated urban management	0.084	0.015
Individual level organizational behavior deficiencies (0.116)	deficient expertise and experience of some council members and mayors	0.414	0.048
	Council's lack of self-efficacy	0.199	0.023
	Absence of internal motivation in some council members	0.156	0.018
	Deficiency of innovation and creativity in some council members and mayors	0.190	0.022

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6- Conclusion and Discussion

This research attempts to determine the pathologies in the relationships of city councils with municipalities in the studied area and the priority of these pathologies in the order of importance. Our investigation showed that from the view of research participants, the most important minor pathologies in this relationship are, legal inconsistency between the city council responsibilities and its authority, deficiency of expert and efficient council members and municipality officials, limited awareness of people and officials about the duties and status of city councils and municipalities, favoritism based on personal interests in both council and municipality in the absence of effective oversight.

About legal inconsistency between the city council responsibilities and its authority, it should be said that city council is an important local public institution and one of the primary decision-making organs for urban management. Nevertheless, despite such status, city council does not have enough legal power and authority to perform its duty. This limited authority allows municipalities to bypass or ignore council decisions with the assistance of local public officials (governors or heads of public organizations). In addition, at present, municipality is the only organization over which council has oversight authority and for which council decisions are theoretically binding; but municipality is just one of many government organizations operating within each city. Further, municipalities have extremely lower human resources and income than other organizations operating in the city, such as those handling water, electricity and telecommunication services. The nonexistent power and supervisory authority of city council outside the domain of municipality makes the council members feel deprived of their legal right to influence city affairs. This stems from the fact that the constitution introduces councils as important and effective institutions but in reality, the related laws give councils little power to fulfill their duties and ultimate objectives. The ambiguity of legal texts allows varying interpretation to be made, and confuses people as well as official responsible for their implementation (Salehi Amiri & Mohammed, 2008). As long as the council decrees are not sufficiently binding, and many government organizations operating in the city can simply ignore these decrees by simply following the instruction and circulars of their superior organization or the respective ministry, independence of the council is practically null. Therefore, in cases where the topic of council decree specifically addresses municipality but also involves other organizations, municipality becomes subject to two different and sometimes contradictory laws, and thus has an opportunity to ignore the council decree on the basis of provisions of the concerned public organization.

Also, the only legal means available for the council to discipline the mayor is the vote of no confidence; a reality that is not consistent with the reward and punishment principles of organizational behavior management. Since many interactions of council with municipality are through the mayor, strain in this relation will undermine the interactions between the two institutions. In the cases where council detects a shortcoming in the performance of mayor office, which deserve punishment because of inattention to warnings, there is no particular way for the city council to discipline the mayor except interpellation,

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which severely undermines the relationship of two institutions.

Moreover, a study by Nazpour (2009) has shown that the structure of financial affairs between government and municipalities are not precisely defined, and consequently, the powers and authority of council in this regard are severely limited. This can be the reason why research participants have named the deficiency of council and municipality laws, limited binding power of council decrees, centralized administrative structure, and absence of any legal means to discipline the mayor except the motion of no confidence as the most significant pathologies in the council-municipality relations in the studied area. It should be noted that the study of Salehi Amiri and Mohammad (2010) on Tehran council and municipality also found the dependence of council and municipality on the government and the presence of major legal deficiencies in the form of legal gaps and vagueness of legal boundaries as the most important pathologies in the relations of these two institutions.

Regarding the deficiency of expert and efficient council members and municipality officials, it can be said that with some council members and mayors lacking sufficient expertise and experience in regard to their work or sufficient awareness about council status and duties and in the absence of any coherent in-service training program, major urban management underperformance will not be unexpected. A study by Habibi (2002) on the first tenure of Tehran city councils also mentioned the significant role of this deficiency. Such deficiencies have a negative effect on all three areas of interaction between municipality and city council; in the domain of legal interactions, they manifest in ratification of ineffective regulations and decrees. The likely consequences of this pathology in the financial interactions of city council and municipality include the ratification of unreasonable local customs and taxes, unreasonable supplementary budget, improper adjustment of the budget of municipality and its affiliated companies and organizations, failure in approving (or rejecting) the finances to be availed by municipality, approval of unreasonable municipality service fees, inaccurate oversight over comprehensive income/expense forms of municipality, and failure to properly oversight the municipality performance in management of its capital, assets, and movable and immovable properties. In the domain of organizational and administrative interactions, there is a chance that the mentioned deficiencies lead to incorrect approval or rejection of the bills proposed by municipality, ineffective binding of municipality to implement the plans proposed and eventually approved by the council, ineffective oversight over municipal performance in construction, service, social, cultural, economic and welfare domains, approval of unreasonable transactions and ineffective supervision over them, inappropriate ratification or rejection of statute of the institutions and companies affiliated with the municipality, approval of bills for unreasonable adjustment of municipal fees, ineffective oversight over the status of litigations involving municipality, and selection of incompetent mayor.

On the other hand, limited awareness of people and officials about the duties and status of city councils and municipalities, this pathology leads to unreasonable and unrealistic expectations of people and officials from council and municipality. On one hand, some people fail to distinguish

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the responsibilities of various institutions involved in urban management and services, and view city council and municipality as the entities responsible for all affairs of the city. On the other hand, some people reduce the status of city council to a subsidiary of municipality and even state that council is ceremonial. Aggregation of the two extreme views sometimes causes some less informed council members and senior municipality officials to cross the boundaries of their power and authority. This is where effective critical media coverage aimed at improving public awareness about the status and duties of city council and municipality is all more necessary. The absence of such media coverage can therefore be considered a pathology.

Hence, according to the research participants, limited awareness of some officials in public organizations about the position and duties of council and municipality, limited media coverage of the function of council and municipality, public confusion of city council with a subsidiary of municipality, and limited public awareness about the purpose and duties of council and municipality are the most important pathologies in the relations of municipalities and city councils in the studied realm.

The absence of a fitting mechanism for assessing the council performance in different tenures can result in emergence of favoritism based on personal relations instead of rule of law. Although some interviewees stated that sometimes nepotism affect council affairs, the results showed this minor pathology to be of low significance. Therefore, nepotism alone cannot be considered as a determinant factor in the preference of personal interests over public interests and rule of law and alternative factors should also be investigated.

According to above discussions and conclusions, the authors suggest the following measures to control the explored pathologies:

- To control the effect of legal inconsistency between the city council responsibilities and its authority, the laws of councils and municipalities should be reviewed by the relevant legal authorities and revised in accordance with the laws of higher order in order to explicitly delineate the extent of council responsibilities and authority without room for more than one interpretation by any party, including council members, mayors and other officials involved in urban affairs.
- Considering the deficiency of expert and efficient council members and municipality officials, mandatory pre- and in-service training programs in the form of general and specialized courses should be held for both parties to improve their performance. In this regard, in a study by Saeedi Rezvani and Saeedi Rezvani (2009) on a training program for Mashhad city council and its impact on the council performance, it is suggested that training should be scheduled such that members receive a basic pre-service training between election and council inauguration, an in-service general training in the first three months of the council term, a specialized training from the fifth to eighth months of the council term, and a continuous training for the entire duration of the council tenure. In this regard, one of the participants of our research stated that "If the Ministry of the Interior could hold a training session for every council member on the very first days of their tenure,.., many of the members who have higher education could be easily trained....".
- Given the limited awareness of people and even some officials about the

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duties and status of city councils and municipalities, media, both local and national, need to cover and explain the functions of councils and municipalities more effectively. Also, county and provincial administrative councils need to outline the responsibilities and duties of council and municipality in clear instructions so that public officials can understand how to interact with these two urban management institutions within the boundaries of law and without overstepping or falling short of their duties.

- To prevent favoritism based on personal interests in these two institutions in the absence of effective oversight, it is essential to design and implement an independent legal mechanism for periodic or random performance evaluation in these two entities.

In view of these results, future works to be carried out in the same avenue of research are recommended to consider the following suggestions:

- Considering the limited scope of our research in terms of spatial domain, future researches are recommended to include a larger number of provinces.
- An independent research on the study realm of the present work may be able to investigate the causal relationships between the pathologies identified in this study.
- Future researches are recommended to test multiple alternative decision making techniques, such as Fuzzy AHP or ANP and make a comparison between the results.

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