

Presenting a Conceptual Model of Pluralistic Ignorance in Governmental Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Pluralistic ignorance is a condition in which an individual expresses behaviors and opinions that contradict their actual beliefs because they mistakenly assume that the majority of surrounding individuals hold views different from their own. The purpose of the present study was to present a conceptual model of pluralistic ignorance in governmental organizations. This study employed a qualitative strategy and thematic analysis method. In terms of purpose, the research was applied, and in terms of data collection method, it was descriptive-survey research. The statistical population consisted of experts and specialists familiar with the fields of behavioral management and human resource management in universities and governmental organizations in Kerman Province. Snowball sampling was used to identify these experts until theoretical saturation was achieved. In this study, theoretical saturation was reached after conducting 15 interviews. Data were collected through both library-based and field methods. The research data collection instruments included document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The obtained data were analyzed using MAXQDA software. The conceptual model of pluralistic ignorance consisted of one overarching theme, three organizing themes, and 15 basic themes. Based on MICMAC analysis, the themes of perceptual reality construction, organizational illusionism, social conformity, and cognitive homogenization demonstrated high levels of dependency and driving power; therefore, they were considered linkage variables. Furthermore, the themes of superficial convergence, norm-oriented hypocrisy, ethical tolerance, mediating rationality, and compromise orientation exhibited high dependency and low driving power and were therefore classified as dependent variables.

Keywords: *pluralistic ignorance, intragroup dynamics, team mental models, groupthink, governmental organizations*

1. Introduction

Pluralistic ignorance is one of the emerging yet underexplored phenomena in organizational behavior and social psychology that has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers in recent decades. This phenomenon refers to a situation in which individuals privately reject a norm, belief, or behavior but publicly conform to it because they mistakenly assume that the majority of others accept it (Duque, 2022; Sargent & Newman, 2021). In such circumstances, individuals become trapped in a cycle of mutual misunderstanding in which silence, conformity, and outward agreement are continuously reproduced, despite the absence of genuine consensus. Pluralistic ignorance thus creates a discrepancy between private beliefs and public behaviors and gradually transforms into a hidden but influential force in shaping organizational interactions and decision-making processes (Jalonen, 2023; Taheri, 2019).

In governmental organizations, where hierarchical structures, formal authority relations, and political sensitivities are more dominant than in many other organizational settings, the emergence of pluralistic ignorance can have more severe and enduring consequences. Employees and managers in such organizations often avoid expressing dissenting opinions because they fear social isolation, organizational sanctions, or exclusion from influential networks. Over time, this silence becomes normalized and is interpreted as collective agreement (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Consequently, organizations may become trapped in a self-reinforcing cycle in which inefficient policies, inaccurate assumptions, and ineffective practices are continuously reproduced simply because individuals assume that others genuinely support them. This process ultimately weakens organizational learning, suppresses innovation, and reduces the capacity for constructive criticism and institutional reform (Jalonen, 2023; Mohammad Mohammadi et al., 2022).

The importance of pluralistic ignorance in organizational contexts is intensified by the fact that modern organizations increasingly depend on collective cognition, teamwork, and shared mental models. Organizational decisions are rarely the product of isolated individuals; rather, they emerge through social interaction, team cognition, and collective interpretation processes. Mohammed et al. (2010) argue that team mental models shape how members interpret information, evaluate alternatives, and coordinate actions (Mohammed et al., 2010). Under conditions of pluralistic

ignorance, however, these shared mental models may become distorted because members refrain from expressing genuine concerns or alternative perspectives. As a result, teams may develop a false sense of agreement and gradually move toward cognitive homogenization, conformity pressure, and reduced intellectual diversity. In such environments, organizational consensus may no longer reflect collective wisdom but rather collective silence.

This phenomenon is closely related to the classical concept of groupthink. Baron (2005) emphasizes that groups frequently produce irrational and polarized decisions because members suppress doubts and prioritize apparent cohesion over critical evaluation (Baron, 2005). Although groupthink traditionally focuses on excessive consensus-seeking, pluralistic ignorance reveals a deeper layer of organizational dysfunction in which members may not even believe in the collective decisions they outwardly support. Thus, pluralistic ignorance differs from ordinary conformity because it is sustained not only through social pressure but also through inaccurate perceptions regarding others' beliefs and attitudes (Gunther & Chia, 2001). This distinction is particularly important in public organizations, where political legitimacy, institutional reputation, and bureaucratic hierarchy may intensify the tendency toward superficial agreement and symbolic compliance.

Studies conducted in different fields demonstrate that pluralistic ignorance extends far beyond interpersonal interactions and can profoundly shape institutional behavior. In the domain of organizational ethics, Halbesleben et al. (2005) found that employees often engage in ethically questionable behaviors because they incorrectly assume that others approve of them (Halbesleben et al., 2005). Similarly, Umphress et al. (2010) demonstrated that individuals may justify unethical pro-organizational behaviors when organizational loyalty and collective identification become more important than ethical principles (Umphress et al., 2010). Such findings suggest that pluralistic ignorance can create conditions in which employees tolerate or even support problematic organizational practices despite privately opposing them. In governmental organizations, where accountability structures are often rigid and political consequences are significant, this dynamic may contribute to the normalization of silence, symbolic compliance, and ethical tolerance toward organizational misconduct.

Another important dimension of pluralistic ignorance relates to organizational identity and self-categorization processes. Hogg and Terry (2000) argue that organizational members tend to define themselves through group

prototypes and collective identities (Hogg & Terry, 2000). As these collective identities become stronger, individuals become more motivated to preserve group cohesion and avoid behaviors that might threaten collective unity. Consequently, dissenting voices may gradually disappear, not because disagreement is absent, but because expressing disagreement becomes socially and psychologically costly. This mechanism is especially relevant in governmental organizations characterized by centralized authority structures and formalized chains of command. Under such conditions, team identity isolation may emerge, leading members to perceive external criticism as hostility and internal conformity as loyalty.

Pluralistic ignorance also affects organizational conflict management and decision-making quality. De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) explain that organizational actors frequently sacrifice personal preferences and authentic viewpoints in order to preserve relationships and avoid conflict (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). While conflict avoidance may temporarily create organizational stability, it can simultaneously suppress creativity, constructive criticism, and adaptive learning. Over time, organizations may become increasingly dependent on superficial harmony and symbolic consensus. Such dynamics are particularly problematic in governmental institutions responsible for policy implementation and public service delivery, because flawed decisions may persist unchallenged due to widespread silence and mutual misperceptions.

Recent studies further indicate that pluralistic ignorance is not limited to traditional face-to-face interactions but may also emerge within digital and algorithmic systems. Plesner and Justesen (2023) showed how digital profiling systems can produce forms of “pluralistic collective ignorance” by institutionalizing inaccurate assumptions and reproducing distorted organizational narratives (Plesner & Justesen, 2023). This finding is especially significant in public organizations increasingly dependent on data-driven governance and digital decision systems. When organizational actors collectively accept inaccurate assumptions embedded in bureaucratic technologies, pluralistic ignorance may become structurally embedded within institutional processes. In such cases, organizational illusionism may emerge, whereby formal indicators, symbolic reports, and administrative narratives replace objective organizational realities.

Research also suggests that leadership style plays a decisive role in reinforcing or reducing pluralistic ignorance. Ospina (2024) demonstrated that authoritarian and laissez-

faire leadership styles can significantly contribute to subordinates’ compliance behaviors and misperceptions regarding collective attitudes (Ospina, 2024). Under authoritarian leadership, employees may remain silent because they fear punishment, whereas under laissez-faire leadership, ambiguity and lack of guidance may encourage members to rely excessively on perceived group norms. Both conditions can intensify collective misunderstanding and reinforce organizational silence. In governmental organizations, where leadership legitimacy is often associated with formal authority and institutional hierarchy, these processes may become particularly pronounced.

The persistence of pluralistic ignorance is further supported by social influence mechanisms and norm-based conformity. Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) emphasize that individuals frequently conform to perceived social norms because of the desire for social acceptance and fear of rejection (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Similarly, Swim et al. (2009) argue that social influence strategies strongly shape how individuals respond to discrimination, conflict, and public discourse (Swim et al., 2009). These mechanisms indicate that pluralistic ignorance is not simply an individual cognitive error but rather a socially reproduced phenomenon maintained through organizational communication patterns, symbolic interactions, and collective expectations. Consequently, organizational cultures characterized by excessive conformity pressure may gradually suppress independent thinking and reinforce collective rationalization processes.

The literature also demonstrates that pluralistic ignorance can shape perceptions of work, satisfaction, and professional identity. Glavin and Schieman (2025) describe the “job satisfaction paradox,” in which employees privately experience dissatisfaction while publicly assuming that others are satisfied with their work conditions (Glavin & Schieman, 2025). Similarly, Munsch et al. (2014) and Munsch and O’Connor (2018) found that employees frequently misjudge colleagues’ attitudes regarding work flexibility and ideal worker norms, thereby reproducing outdated workplace expectations (Munsch & O’Connor, 2018; Munsch et al., 2014). These findings suggest that organizational norms may persist even when the majority of members privately disagree with them. In public organizations, such dynamics may contribute to bureaucratic rigidity, resistance to reform, and the continuation of inefficient managerial practices.

From a broader theoretical perspective, pluralistic ignorance is increasingly recognized as a central mechanism

underlying organizational ignorance. Jalonen (2023), in a systematic review of ignorance in organizations, argues that ignorance should not merely be interpreted as a lack of information, but rather as a socially constructed condition shaped by organizational structures, communication systems, and power relations (Jalonen, 2023). This interpretation aligns with the argument of Seeme (2020), who modeled pluralistic ignorance in social systems and demonstrated how local interaction patterns can generate large-scale collective misperceptions (Seeme, 2020). Such perspectives indicate that pluralistic ignorance is a dynamic and self-reinforcing organizational phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained through individual psychology alone.

Despite the growing international literature on pluralistic ignorance, studies focusing on governmental organizations remain limited, particularly in developing administrative systems. Existing research has often concentrated on educational settings, environmental behavior, political attitudes, or interpersonal relations (Reiber & Garcia, 2010; Swim et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2011). Comparatively fewer studies have explored how pluralistic ignorance manifests within public-sector organizations characterized by formal hierarchy, institutional rigidity, and bureaucratic culture. Moreover, previous organizational studies have generally focused on isolated variables such as organizational silence, ethical behavior, or conformity, while less attention has been paid to the integrated conceptual structure connecting these dimensions.

In the Iranian context, the limited available studies indicate that pluralistic ignorance significantly influences organizational knowledge management, behavioral conformity, and institutional communication patterns (Mohammad Mohammadi et al., 2022; Taheri, 2019). However, there remains a lack of comprehensive conceptual models capable of explaining the underlying dimensions, mechanisms, and interrelationships of this phenomenon within governmental organizations. The absence of such a model limits both theoretical understanding and practical intervention, particularly in contexts where collective silence, symbolic consensus, and organizational inertia may undermine effective governance and institutional development.

Furthermore, many contemporary organizational challenges, including resistance to change, symbolic

management, suppression of criticism, and the reproduction of dysfunctional routines, may be partially rooted in pluralistic ignorance. Cha and Edmondson (2006) argue that discrepancies between organizational values and actual practices can generate cynicism and symbolic compliance among employees (Cha & Edmondson, 2006). Likewise, Locke and Latham (2002) emphasize that when organizational goals become unrealistic or unattainable, individuals may gradually lower standards or disengage from authentic commitment (Locke & Latham, 2002). These processes may collectively contribute to superficial convergence, goal compromise orientation, and mediating rationality within organizations. Therefore, examining pluralistic ignorance as a multidimensional organizational phenomenon may provide valuable insights into the hidden mechanisms sustaining organizational dysfunction and collective inaction.

Given the theoretical importance of pluralistic ignorance, its increasing relevance in organizational contexts, and the limited conceptual research conducted within governmental organizations, the present study seeks to develop a conceptual model of pluralistic ignorance in governmental organizations.

2. Methods and Materials

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach and thematic analysis method with the aid of MAXQDA software. The statistical population included published articles, previous studies, and experts in the field.

The expert panel consisted of 15 faculty members in the field of management from public universities, as well as managers and specialists from governmental organizations selected from Kerman Province. Snowball sampling was employed to select the experts. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which researchers rely on current participants to identify additional potential participants. In this method, an eligible individual is first identified and subsequently asked to introduce another individual with similar characteristics. In specialized interview studies, this method can be used to achieve theoretical saturation. Furthermore, this approach is highly similar to purposive sampling in discussions related to population and sampling.

Table 1
Characteristics of the Experts

Expert	Organizational Position	Education	Governmental Organization	Years of Service
Expert 1	Deputy	PhD	Governorate	5
Expert 2	Faculty Member	PhD (Assistant Professor)	University	15
Expert 3	Deputy	Master's Degree	General Directorate of Prisons	25
Expert 4	Supervisor	Master's Degree	General Directorate of Sports and Youth	15
Expert 5	Faculty Member	PhD (Professor)	University	38
Expert 6	Director	PhD	General Directorate of Education	27
Expert 7	Deputy	Master's Degree	General Directorate of Sports and Youth	20
Expert 8	Faculty Member	PhD (Assistant Professor)	University	17
Expert 9	Deputy Assistant	PhD	Governorate	10
Expert 10	Faculty Member	PhD (Associate Professor)	University	18
Expert 11	Head of Department	Master's Degree	Governorate	20
Expert 12	Consultant	Master's Degree	General Directorate of Education	30
Expert 13	Research Director	Master's Degree	University	27
Expert 14	Head of Department	Master's Degree	General Directorate of Prisons	21
Expert 15	Deputy	Master's Degree	General Directorate of Education	35

3. Findings and Results

In order to identify the components of pluralistic ignorance in governmental organizations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 university professors and senior managers from governmental organizations in Kerman Province. The interviews were conducted in a deep

and purposeful manner, focusing on obtaining participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the core concept, antecedents, and consequences of pluralistic ignorance. The results related to the core category of the model are presented in the following table. To preserve confidentiality and adhere to ethical considerations, some sensitive expressions extracted from the interview transcripts were omitted.

Table 2
Results of Expert Interviews

Extracted Statements from Interviews	Basic Theme	Organizing Theme
"We have a red line; anyone from outside who criticizes is immediately rejected. We think only we understand the situation, and everyone else is considered an enemy."	Team Identity Isolation	Normative Groupthink
"School managers formed a closed network together and ..."	Team Identity Isolation	Normative Groupthink
"After several years, I realized that the mental model of faculty members in the council had become exactly the same. Nobody had a different perspective on research anymore; intellectual diversity had reached zero."	Cognitive Homogenization	Normative Groupthink
"Deputies in the governorate gradually began thinking alike. If one person said something, others repeated the same statement in different words, as if they had emerged from the same cognitive template."	Cognitive Homogenization	Normative Groupthink
"In meetings, we convinced ourselves that the educational module was excellent and We created an imaginary world in which we were successful."	Perceptual Reality Construction	Normative Groupthink
"We kept convincing ourselves that the youth competitions had been conducted successfully, while ..."	Perceptual Reality Construction	Normative Groupthink
"We always try to ensure that our reports are written based on achievements that we ourselves perceive. When professors criticized international rankings and stated that the indicators had declined, it was argued in the meeting that such indicators could not truly measure our progress and that we should evaluate ourselves according to domestic capacities and internal conditions."	Perceptual Reality Construction	Normative Groupthink
"The performance evaluation system is designed in such a way that if you speak the truth, your commitment score decreases. Obedience to incorrect directives has become a rational behavior for promotion."	Structured Compliance	Normative Groupthink
"The hierarchical structure is designed in a way that if you disobey, you are immediately punished. Therefore, everyone obeys blindly; this is not our psychological weakness, it is the system's design."	Structured Compliance	Normative Groupthink
"In official messages, we talk about 'youth-oriented management,' but in actual meetings, if a young expert proposes an idea, they face humiliating behavior."	Norm-Oriented Hypocrisy	Normative Groupthink

"Universities promote freedom of thought as a slogan, but when a professor criticized the system, they were pressured in the promotion committee. We have an academic appearance but an authoritarian core."	Norm-Oriented Hypocrisy	Normative Groupthink
"In strategic documents and organizational slogans, we constantly emphasize participatory and innovative schools and even award statues for them, yet when it comes to major decisions in the school council, traditional and centralized approaches still dominate, and teachers' opinions are ignored in practice. There is a form of duality between discourse and action."	Norm-Oriented Hypocrisy	Normative Groupthink
"I believed the modernization plan should not be implemented in this way, but I realized the director-general was determined. To preserve relationships and avoid tension in the meeting, I withdrew my opinion."	Social Conformity	Accommodative Groupthink
"Today's students have high expectations, and social media has increased sensitivity. To avoid conflict in the faculty environment and maintain a tension-free educational process, we were compelled to introduce flexibility in defense and evaluation procedures, which may differ from the strict academic standards of the past."	Social Conformity	Accommodative Groupthink
"In the faculty council, everyone approved and applauded the new supervisor. However, afterward, they privately said that the individual understood nothing. The agreement in the meeting was merely superficial."	Superficial Convergence	Accommodative Groupthink
"In the crisis management headquarters meeting, everyone signed the final preparedness version, although each person knew their own department was not actually prepared. It was merely a paper-based agreement."	Superficial Convergence	Accommodative Groupthink
"At the beginning of the year, our plan focused on sports development, but when we encountered budgetary and infrastructural limitations, we decided during workgroup meetings to shift our approach toward 'sports for all.'"	Goal Compromise Orientation	Accommodative Groupthink
"Our primary goal was prisoner rehabilitation, but since it could not be achieved, the objective in practice was reduced to maintaining security and preventing escapes."	Goal Compromise Orientation	Accommodative Groupthink
"The goal of non-oil export development was highly ambitious. In the second year, we realized it was unattainable, so the goal was downgraded to merely participating in exhibitions."	Goal Compromise Orientation	Accommodative Groupthink
"I proposed a specialized solution for the crisis, but because the deputies were in conflict with each other, the governor selected a neutral proposal simply to satisfy both parties."	Mediating Rationality	Accommodative Groupthink
"Instead of allocating the budget scientifically to the best research projects, a meaningless formula was created so that each group could receive a small portion and no professor would complain."	Mediating Rationality	Accommodative Groupthink
"In some cases, due to workload pressure and the need to accelerate transfers, certain administrative and safety protocols were temporarily bypassed. Strict adherence to regulations would have disrupted coordination and created interdepartmental tension, so we overlooked certain details to preserve workflow continuity."	Conflict-Avoidant Ethical Tolerance	Accommodative Groupthink
"The procurement process for official competitions is highly time-consuming, and if all legal procedures are followed precisely, events may be missed. Some administrative departments used particular legal interpretations and shortcuts to expedite the process. We were aware of this, but remained silent because objections would have jeopardized the entire event."	Conflict-Avoidant Ethical Tolerance	Accommodative Groupthink
"We knew that the renovation of a school had been approved outside legal regulations, but we ignored it to prevent managerial meetings from becoming tense. Unfortunately, ethics were sacrificed for the sake of organizational calm."	Conflict-Avoidant Ethical Tolerance	Accommodative Groupthink
"The organization is being managed through fabricated statistics."	Organizational Illusionism	Passive Groupthink
"Progress reports are filled with exaggerated and grandiose language. We have created an imaginary world in which everything is progressing perfectly, while outside the building people are protesting."	Organizational Illusionism	Passive Groupthink
"Club owners reported registration statistics ten times higher than reality, and although we knew the numbers were false, we entered them into the system to demonstrate growth in grassroots sports."	Organizational Illusionism	Passive Groupthink
"When experts presented statistical analyses and argued that the policy was flawed, the manager responded: 'We do not believe in your complex analytical approaches; we understand through conscience and field experience,' and the entire group applauded."	Anti-Intellectual Collectivism	Passive Groupthink
"Urban planning experts analyzed the situation and stated that the traffic plan would be disastrous, but it was argued that such analyses were merely theoretical and that ordinary people believed the plan was beneficial."	Anti-Intellectual Collectivism	Passive Groupthink
"Young professors discussed new research methodologies, but senior professors responded that such foreign approaches were unsuitable for us and insisted on maintaining traditional methods."	Anti-Intellectual Collectivism	Passive Groupthink
"When the industry collaboration project failed, the president stated that it had been the council's decision. Yet within the council, nobody felt ownership of the decision; everyone believed it had originated from higher authorities and that they had merely signed it."	Decision Ownership Crisis	Passive Groupthink
"In workgroups, when an implemented directive fails, individuals immediately claim: 'I did not support it; I was merely the executor.'"	Decision Ownership Crisis	Passive Groupthink
"We ourselves designed the educational program for the new academic year within the workgroup, but when teachers objected, the manager stated that the program had come from the ministry."	Decision Ownership Crisis	Passive Groupthink
"Instead of addressing the crisis of research funding, all of us became occupied with ceremonial conferences and arranging tables and chairs. It was a form of collective escape from the core problem."	Collective Cognitive Avoidance	Passive Groupthink
"Our main problem was the lack of infrastructure, but instead of addressing it, we engaged in symbolic activities so that we would not confront structural challenges."	Collective Cognitive Avoidance	Passive Groupthink

"Everyone was aware of the prison crisis, but in meetings we continuously discussed Quranic and cultural competitions. We diverted our minds toward easier activities to escape psychological pressure."	Collective Cognitive Avoidance	Passive Groupthink
"When news arrived that the feedback received in the meeting had been negative, we immediately gathered in the governorate and collectively justified the situation by arguing that the broader national environment was responsible and that we were not at fault."	Collective Rationalization	Passive Groupthink
"We justified the severe decline in scores with statistical excuses such as changes in the evaluation system, and everyone collectively accepted this explanation."	Collective Rationalization	Passive Groupthink
"When the university's ranking declined, professors argued in the meeting that international indicators were inconsistent with our realities and were Western-oriented."	Collective Rationalization	Passive Groupthink

As noted earlier, the components of pluralistic ignorance in governmental organizations were extracted from the literature. The conceptual correspondence of each organizing theme and basic theme in the core category of the model is presented below.

Normative Groupthink

The theme of "normative groupthink" was extracted from a critical analysis of conformity in social influence theory. Cialdini and Goldstein (2004), in explaining "normative influence," explicitly state that the main driver of individual behavior is the "desire to be accepted and to avoid social rejection." This theme allowed us to move beyond Janis's classical theory of groupthink. It was shown that, in Iranian organizations, deviation from group norms is suppressed not merely because consensus may not be achieved, but because of the "threat to internalized moral norms" and fear of social isolation. Accordingly, we labeled this condition, in which self-censorship becomes a tool for survival within social relations networks, as "normative groupthink."

Team Identity Isolation

The theme of "team identity isolation" was extracted from the analysis of codes related to intragroup dynamics. Based on the social identity theory of Hogg and Terry (2000), the phenomenon of "depersonalization" leads to "in-group favoritism and out-group derogation." As noted in the main text of the article, group mental patterns define and dictate what is acceptable. This concept shows how the formation of team identity operates as an informational barrier and leads to disconnection from external realities; this consequence was labeled "team identity isolation."

Cognitive Homogenization

The theme of "cognitive homogenization" refers to the reproduction of shared mental models within teams. Mohammed et al. (2010), in defining team mental models, refer to a "shared, organized understanding and mental representation of knowledge," which ultimately results in a "state of convergence." The extraction of this concept indicates that cognitive convergence is essentially a process through which diversity of thought is eroded and may turn

into a blind form of unity; this concept is represented here as "cognitive homogenization."

Perceptual Reality Construction

The theme of "perceptual reality construction" is rooted in the epistemological theorization of Daft and Weick (1984). They explicitly state that organizations often "construct their environments rather than discover them." This theoretical extraction enabled us to show that, in decision-making, the group does not confront objective reality but becomes involved in perception-based processing, which we positioned as "perceptual reality construction."

Structured Compliance

The theme of "structured compliance" was extracted from the analysis of initial codes. Based on the findings of Morrison and Milliken (2000), organizational silence is not an individual phenomenon but rather the product of "systematic forces." As noted in the main text of the article, implicit power dynamics place members in conditions in which they feel that expressing opinions is unsafe. This semantic unit shows that obedience in groupthink is structural and engineered, which we labeled "structured compliance."

Norm-Oriented Hypocrisy

The theme of "norm-oriented hypocrisy" was extracted from value contradictions at the macro-organizational level. Cha and Edmondson (2006) refer to the "gap between espoused values and actual practices" and emphasize that leaders may tend toward "symbolic management" rather than "substantive change." This concept indicates the structural justification of behaviors that contradict norms and was placed in our conceptual model under the title "norm-oriented hypocrisy."

Accommodative Groupthink

The theme of "accommodative groupthink" was developed to fill a theoretical gap in models of group polarization. Based on the findings of Stasser and Titus (1985), groups in decision-making processes are affected by the bias of "shared information"; that is, information presented by only one person, such as a radical or innovative

idea, is rarely discussed. The extraction of this concept showed that the group, instead of confronting challenging ideas, moves toward decisions that merely reflect the members' "common and shared knowledge." Interpreting this phenomenon through thematic analysis showed that the group actually sacrifices decision quality in order to maintain apparent balance and tends toward an "empty moderation"; this process was positioned as "accommodative groupthink."

Social Conformity

The theme of "social conformity" was interpreted in the context of conflict management. De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) define accommodation as a process in which an individual is "willing to sacrifice their own outcomes in order to satisfy the needs of the other party and preserve the relationship." The extraction of this statement shows that sacrificing intellectual boundaries merely to maintain apparent balance is a defensive mechanism, which we labeled "social conformity."

Superficial Convergence

The theme of "superficial convergence" refers to the difference between hidden and visible layers of diversity in groups. Harrison et al. (1998) argue that although "surface-level diversity" decreases over time, "deep-level diversity" continues to negatively affect group cohesion. This theoretical extraction explains that the apparent agreement of groups may simply be a defensive shell for concealing unresolved deep conflicts; this concept was coded as "superficial convergence."

Goal Compromise Orientation

The theme of "goal compromise orientation" was extracted from the theoretical foundations of goal setting. Locke and Latham (2002) explicitly state that when individuals face extremely difficult goals, they may "lower their goals or abandon them entirely," which is equivalent to a "reduction in performance standards." Interpreting this behavior in a group context shows that the illusion of collective achievement is formed through the downgrading of standards, which we labeled "goal compromise orientation."

Mediating Rationality

The theme of "mediating rationality" originated from critiques of strategic decision-making processes. Dean and Sharfman (1996) refer to political behavior in decision-making and state that rational procedures may be used "not to find the best solution, but to resolve conflicts among powerful stakeholders." This key extraction showed that logic can become an instrument for reducing tension without

solving the problem; this phenomenon was coded as "mediating rationality."

Conflict-Avoidant Ethical Tolerance

The theme of "conflict-avoidant ethical tolerance" was extracted from the concept of unethical pro-organizational behavior. Umphress et al. (2010) define this behavior as actions intended to promote organizational interests but that "violate core societal values and norms." This theme, alongside the motivation to avoid conflict, explains how groups overlook ethical standards under the pretext of protecting collective interests and preventing tension; we labeled this "conflict-avoidant ethical tolerance."

Passive Groupthink

The theme of "passive groupthink" is rooted in the theoretical reconsideration offered by critics of classical groupthink. Whyte (1989), in revisiting Janis's model, argues that group failure is not always caused by an "excessive drive for consensus," but is often the product of "excessive caution, delay, and collective inability to mobilize for action." The extraction of this key semantic unit enabled us to describe a phenomenon in which the group is neither engaged in normative polarization nor compromise, but rather remains in a state of "stagnation and paralysis." Interpreting this state of collective indifference and repetition of past procedures without analysis led to the formation of the new concept of "passive groupthink" within the framework of the present study.

Organizational Illusionism

The theme of "organizational illusionism" was extracted from the psychoanalytic approach to organizations. Gabriel (1995) argues that organizations are often sustained not by rational designs but by "shared fantasies, stories, and unconscious processes" that create a "veneer of reality." This concept deeply reflects the capture of power structures by collective illusions, which we labeled, by combining related concepts, as "organizational illusionism."

Collectivist Anti-Intellectualism

The theme of "collectivist anti-intellectualism" was extracted from the literature of political science and mass psychology. Motta (2018) defines anti-intellectualism as "distrust of experts and a preference for the common sense of ordinary people over the complex knowledge of elites." Applying this concept at the micro level of the team shows how scientific analyses are suppressed within the group in favor of populist and lay discourse; this phenomenon was coded as "collectivist anti-intellectualism."

Decision Ownership Crisis

The theme of “decision ownership crisis” was derived from the intersection of psychological ownership and diffusion of responsibility. Pierce et al. (2003) define psychological ownership as a sense of possessiveness, but emphasize that “diffusion of responsibility in groups can prevent the formation of ownership toward collective decisions.” This extraction showed that group decisions may be perceived as anonymous outputs lacking individual responsibility, which we positioned as “decision ownership crisis.”

Collectivist Cognitive Avoidance

The theme of “collectivist cognitive avoidance” was reinterpreted from the theoretical foundations of social loafing. Karau and Williams (1993) define reduced individual effort in groups as a process in which individuals tend to “hide in the group.” By extending this concept from

the behavioral dimension to the cognitive dimension, this semantic unit explains how members collectively avoid confronting intellectual challenges and retreat into a culture of indifference; this was labeled “collectivist cognitive avoidance.”

Collective Rationalization

The theme of “collective rationalization” directly refers to a fundamental element in classical groupthink theory. Baron (2005) defines this phenomenon as a condition in which members “discount warnings or negative feedback and construct rationalizations to justify threats.” The extraction of this statement confirms that the group uses logic not to discover truth, but to defend itself against failure and preserve illusion; this concept was retained in our model as “collective rationalization.”

Table 3

Results of the Review of Previous Studies

Theme Title	Text Extracted from the Article	Article Title	Author/Year of Publication
Normative Groupthink	“Normative influence occurs when one conforms to be liked or accepted by the members of a group... driven by the desire to avoid social disapproval or rejection.”	Social influence: Compliance and conformity	Cialdini & Goldstein (2004)
Team Identity Isolation	“Depersonalization of self and others produces in-group favoritism and out-group derogation... prototypes define the group and dictate what is acceptable.”	Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts	Hogg & Terry (2000)
Cognitive Homogenization	“Team mental models are team members’ shared, organized understanding and mental representation of knowledge... a state of convergence.”	Metaphor no more: A 15-year review of the team mental model construct	Mohammed et al. (2010)
Perceptual Reality Construction	“Enactment... organizations often construct their own environments rather than discover them.”	Toward a model of organizations as interpretation systems	Daft & Weick (1984)
Structured Compliance	“Organizational silence is... shaped by systemic forces. Implicit power dynamics... create a climate where employees feel it is not safe to speak up.”	Organizational silence: A barrier to change and development in a pluralistic world	Morrison & Milliken (2000)
Norm-Oriented Hypocrisy	“The gap between espoused values and actual practices can lead to employee cynicism... leaders may engage in symbolic management rather than substantive change.”	When values backfire: Leadership, attribution, and disenchantment in a values-driven organization	Cha & Edmondson (2006)
Accommodative Groupthink	“Group discussion tends to focus on information that all members share... unshared information is less likely to be discussed... leading to decisions that reflect the common knowledge rather than the best available information.”	Pooling of unshared information in group decision making	Stasser & Titus (1985)
Social Conformity	“Accommodation involves a willingness to sacrifice one’s own outcomes to satisfy the other party’s needs, often to maintain the relationship or avoid conflict.”	The psychology of conflict and conflict management in organizations	De Dreu & Gelfand (2008)
Superficial Convergence	“Surface-level diversity... diminishes over time, whereas deep-level diversity... increases in impact on group cohesion as members interact.”	Beyond relational demography: Time and the effects of surface-and deep-level diversity on work group cohesion	Harrison et al. (1998)
Goal Compromise Orientation	“When people are faced with a goal that is too difficult, they may lower their goals or abandon them entirely... a reduction in the standard of performance.”	Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey	Locke & Latham (2002)
Mediating Rationality	“Political behavior in decision making involves using rational procedures not to find the best solution, but to resolve conflicts among powerful stakeholders.”	Does decision process matter? A study of strategic decision-making effectiveness	Dean & Sharfman (1996)
Conflict-Avoidant Ethical Tolerance	“Unethical pro-organizational behavior is defined as actions that are intended to promote the organization’s interests... and violate core societal values, mores, or laws.”	Unethical behavior in the name of the company: The moderating effect of organizational identification...	Umphress et al. (2010)

Passive Groupthink	“A group may fail to act not because of an excessive drive for consensus, but because of excessive caution, delay, or a collective inability to mobilize for action... a state of procedural paralysis.”	Groupthink reconsidered	Whyte (1989)
Organizational Illusionism	“Organizations are often held together not by rational designs but by shared fantasies, stories, and unconscious processes that create a veneer of reality.”	The unmanaged organization: Stories, fantasies and subjectivity	Gabriel (1995)
Collectivist Anti-Intellectualism	“Anti-intellectualism involves a distrust of experts and intellectuals... favoring the ‘common sense’ of the ordinary people over the complex knowledge of elites.”	The dynamics and political implications of anti-intellectualism in the United States	Motta (2018)
Decision Ownership Crisis	“Psychological ownership is a feeling of possessiveness... diffusion of responsibility in groups can prevent individuals from feeling ownership over collective decisions.”	The state of psychological ownership: Integrating and extending a century of research	Pierce et al. (2003)
Collectivist Cognitive Avoidance	“Social loafing is the reduction in individual effort when individuals work in groups compared to when they work alone... a tendency to ‘hide’ in the group.”	Social loafing: A meta-analytic review and theoretical integration	Karau & Williams (1993)
Collective Rationalization	“Collective rationalization involves members discounting warnings or negative feedback... constructing rationalizations to explain away threats to their shared assumptions.”	So right it’s wrong: Groupthink and the ubiquitous nature of polarized group decision making	Baron (2005)

At this stage, after identifying the basic themes of pluralistic ignorance, the questionnaire for determining relationships and structuring the model was completed by experts, including five members of the panel who had participated in the previous stages. Subsequently, using the Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) method, the patterns of influence and interdependence among the components, as well as the hierarchical structuring of the factors and the model framework, were determined. By transforming the

matrix and establishing consistency within the relational matrix, the ISM graph was drawn as a graphical representation of the relationships among the components. In this stage, the factors identified in the previous phase were considered as ISM inputs, and hierarchical leveling was conducted based on them.

In the present study, the variables were classified into five levels. The results of the interpretive structural model of the basic themes are presented in Figure 1.

Table 4

Driving Power and Degree of Dependence

Row	Organizing Themes	Symbol	Driving Power	Dependence
1	Superficial Convergence	C1	1	15
2	Norm-Oriented Hypocrisy	C2	5	14
3	Ethical Tolerance	C3	5	14
4	Mediating Rationality	C4	5	14
5	Goal Compromise Orientation	C5	5	14
6	Perceptual Reality Construction	C6	9	10
7	Organizational Illusionism	C7	9	10
8	Social Conformity	C8	9	10
9	Cognitive Homogenization	C9	9	10
10	Team Identity Isolation	C10	13	6
11	Structured Compliance	C11	13	6
12	Decision Ownership Crisis	C12	13	6
13	Collective Rationalization	C13	13	6
14	Collectivist Anti-Intellectualism	C14	15	2
15	Collectivist Cognitive Avoidance	C15	15	2

Figure 1

Interpretive Structural Model of the Basic Themes of Pluralistic Ignorance

Figure 2

Diagram of Driving Power and Degree of Dependence (MICMAC Output)

In the conceptual model, there is no variable with low driving power and low dependence. This indicates that, within the phenomenon of pluralistic ignorance, there are no isolated factors; all components are interconnected.

The themes of superficial convergence, norm-oriented hypocrisy, ethical tolerance, mediating rationality, and compromise orientation exert almost no driving influence on the system, yet they possess the highest degree of dependence.

The themes of perceptual reality construction, organizational illusionism, social conformity, and cognitive homogenization function both as causes and consequences. Any change in control mechanisms immediately affects this domain, and in turn, this domain shocks behavioral patterns.

These variables are highly volatile and sensitive. If organizational illusionism can be disrupted, due to its high driving power, it will generate severe cascading effects on behaviors. However, if the underlying roots remain intact, these patterns rapidly re-emerge.

The themes of identity isolation, structured compliance, decision ownership crisis, collective rationalization, collectivist anti-intellectualism, and collectivist cognitive avoidance constitute the driving engine of the system. They possess the highest driving power and the lowest degree of dependence.

In this analysis, variables are classified into two groups: linkage variables and dependent variables.

Dependent Variables: These variables exhibit high dependence and low driving power. In other words, they are highly influenced by the system while exerting minimal influence on it.

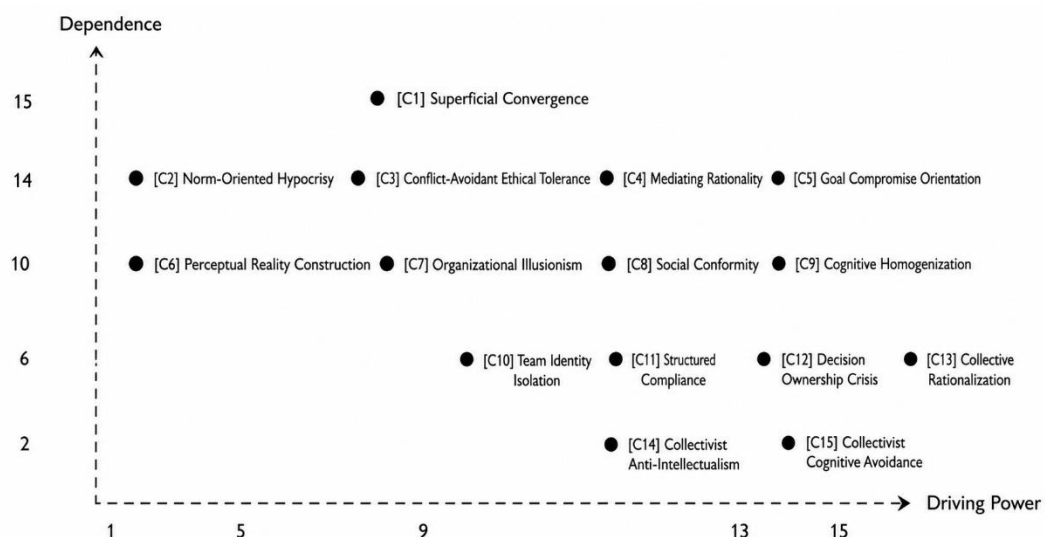
Linkage Variables: These variables demonstrate both high dependence and high driving power. Accordingly, their influence on and susceptibility to the system are both extremely high, and any minor change in these variables leads to substantial transformations throughout the system.

Based on the diagram, the themes of perceptual reality construction, organizational illusionism, social conformity, and cognitive homogenization possess high dependence and high driving power; therefore, they are classified as linkage variables. In contrast, the themes of superficial convergence, norm-oriented hypocrisy, ethical tolerance, mediating rationality, and compromise orientation exhibit high dependence and low driving power and are therefore classified as dependent variables.

Finally, in response to the main research question, namely, “What is the conceptual model of pluralistic ignorance in governmental organizations?”, the following model is presented.

Figure 3

Conceptual Model of Pluralistic Ignorance



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study demonstrated that pluralistic ignorance in governmental organizations is a

multidimensional and layered phenomenon that emerges through the interaction of cognitive, behavioral, structural, and relational processes. The extracted conceptual model showed that pluralistic ignorance is not merely an individual

perceptual error, but rather a socially and organizationally reproduced mechanism that shapes collective behavior, suppresses authentic communication, and institutionalizes superficial consensus. The identified dimensions, including normative groupthink, accommodative groupthink, and passive groupthink, revealed that pluralistic ignorance in governmental organizations operates through different but interconnected forms of conformity, silence, symbolic adaptation, and collective cognitive distortion. These findings are consistent with the theoretical arguments suggesting that organizational ignorance is socially constructed and reinforced through institutional dynamics and communication systems (Jalonen, 2023; Seeme, 2020).

One of the major findings of the study was the central role of normative groupthink in reinforcing pluralistic ignorance. The results showed that themes such as team identity isolation, cognitive homogenization, perceptual reality construction, structured compliance, and norm-oriented hypocrisy collectively create an environment in which members perceive deviation from dominant norms as risky and undesirable. This finding aligns with the perspective of Cialdini and Goldstein (2004), who argue that individuals conform primarily because of their desire for acceptance and fear of social rejection (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). In governmental organizations, where hierarchy and institutional legitimacy are strongly emphasized, this pressure toward conformity becomes more intense. The findings further support Hogg and Terry's (2000) theory of social identity and self-categorization, according to which individuals define themselves through group prototypes and become increasingly motivated to preserve collective identity and cohesion (Hogg & Terry, 2000). The emergence of team identity isolation in the present study confirms that organizational actors may gradually disconnect themselves from external realities and alternative viewpoints in order to maintain symbolic loyalty to the group.

Another significant finding concerned the theme of cognitive homogenization. The study revealed that members of governmental organizations gradually develop similar cognitive patterns and increasingly reproduce shared mental models without critical evaluation. This finding strongly corresponds with Mohammed et al.'s (2010) argument that team mental models create shared representations of organizational reality that guide interpretation and decision-making (Mohammed et al., 2010). However, the present study extends this argument by showing that under conditions of pluralistic ignorance, such shared cognition may evolve into a rigid and uncritical consensus that

suppresses intellectual diversity. In this regard, the findings are also compatible with Baron's (2005) reinterpretation of groupthink, which emphasizes that polarized and irrational group decisions emerge when members avoid critical disagreement and reinforce collective assumptions (Baron, 2005).

The identification of perceptual reality construction and organizational illusionism as central dimensions of pluralistic ignorance also represents an important contribution of the study. The findings demonstrated that governmental organizations may construct symbolic and imagined versions of organizational success that are detached from objective realities. Such patterns are reinforced through selective interpretation of information, symbolic reporting, and collective rationalization. This result supports the arguments of Plesner and Justesen (2023), who demonstrated that institutional systems may reproduce "collective ignorance" through bureaucratic and technological mechanisms (Plesner & Justesen, 2023). Similarly, Jalonen (2023) emphasized that organizational ignorance is often sustained not through absence of information, but through selective interpretation and institutional filtering of knowledge (Jalonen, 2023). The present study expands these perspectives by illustrating how governmental organizations may become trapped in cycles of illusion-based governance in which symbolic compliance replaces authentic organizational learning.

The findings related to structured compliance and organizational silence are also noteworthy. Participants emphasized that obedience and silence were often not voluntary behaviors, but rather products of structural and systemic pressures embedded within organizational hierarchies. This result strongly aligns with Morrison and Milliken's (2000) theory of organizational silence, which describes silence as a collective phenomenon shaped by implicit power dynamics and institutionalized fear (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). In the present study, employees often perceived dissent as unsafe and potentially damaging to professional survival. Consequently, silence became normalized and transformed into a mechanism for preserving organizational stability and avoiding conflict. These findings further support Ospina's (2024) argument that authoritarian leadership styles intensify subordinate compliance and reinforce pluralistic ignorance within organizations (Ospina, 2024).

Another important finding of the study concerned accommodative groupthink, which included themes such as social conformity, superficial convergence, goal

compromise orientation, mediating rationality, and conflict-avoidant ethical tolerance. The results indicated that organizational actors often sacrificed authentic opinions and professional standards in order to preserve relationships, avoid tension, and maintain apparent harmony. This finding corresponds closely with De Dreu and Gelfand's (2008) discussion of accommodation and conflict management, which suggests that individuals frequently suppress personal preferences to maintain social equilibrium (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). The present findings indicate that such accommodative behaviors, while temporarily reducing organizational tension, ultimately weaken decision quality and reinforce superficial consensus.

The concept of superficial convergence identified in this study further demonstrates that organizational agreement is often symbolic rather than genuine. Members publicly support decisions while privately disagreeing with them, thereby reproducing a culture of apparent unity and hidden dissatisfaction. This finding is highly consistent with Glavin and Schieman's (2025) discussion of the "job satisfaction paradox," in which individuals mistakenly assume that others are more satisfied or supportive than they actually are (Glavin & Schieman, 2025). Similarly, Munsch et al. (2014) and Munsch and O'Connor (2018) showed that employees frequently misinterpret colleagues' attitudes regarding workplace norms and organizational expectations (Munsch & O'Connor, 2018; Munsch et al., 2014). The present study extends these findings to governmental organizations by showing how superficial agreement may become institutionalized and gradually undermine authentic communication and organizational trust.

The findings related to goal compromise orientation and mediating rationality also deserve attention. The results indicated that organizational members frequently reduced standards, modified objectives, or selected neutral decisions merely to maintain organizational equilibrium and avoid conflict. This finding is consistent with Locke and Latham's (2002) argument that individuals lower goals when they perceive them as unattainable (Locke & Latham, 2002). However, the present study demonstrates that in governmental organizations this process may become collective and institutionalized, thereby creating a culture in which mediocrity and compromise are normalized. Furthermore, the identification of mediating rationality suggests that organizational rationality may be used not to solve problems, but to distribute dissatisfaction and reduce political tension. This interpretation corresponds with

broader critiques of bureaucratic decision-making, in which symbolic rationality replaces substantive effectiveness.

The theme of conflict-avoidant ethical tolerance revealed another critical dimension of pluralistic ignorance. Participants frequently described situations in which ethical violations, procedural shortcuts, or questionable practices were tolerated because confronting them could generate organizational conflict or instability. This finding strongly supports Umphress et al.'s (2010) concept of unethical pro-organizational behavior, according to which employees may violate ethical standards in order to protect organizational interests or maintain loyalty (Umphress et al., 2010). Similarly, Halbesleben et al. (2005) found that pluralistic ignorance can normalize ethically problematic behaviors because individuals incorrectly assume that others approve of them (Halbesleben et al., 2005). The present study extends these arguments by demonstrating that governmental organizations may develop institutionalized forms of ethical tolerance in which silence and conformity become more valuable than accountability and transparency.

The third major dimension identified in the study was passive groupthink, which consisted of organizational illusionism, collectivist anti-intellectualism, decision ownership crisis, collectivist cognitive avoidance, and collective rationalization. The findings indicated that organizational members often avoided intellectual engagement with complex problems and instead relied on symbolic activities, simplified narratives, and collective justifications. This finding corresponds with Motta's (2018) concept of anti-intellectualism, which emphasizes distrust toward expertise and preference for simplified collective assumptions over complex analytical knowledge (Motta, 2018). In governmental organizations, such tendencies may suppress evidence-based policymaking and weaken institutional adaptability.

The emergence of decision ownership crisis was another significant result. Participants frequently described situations in which collective decisions were treated as anonymous outcomes for which nobody accepted responsibility. This finding aligns with Pierce et al.'s (2003) theory of psychological ownership, which emphasizes that diffusion of responsibility within groups reduces individuals' sense of ownership toward collective decisions (Pierce et al., 2003). In the present study, the absence of ownership intensified organizational passivity and reinforced the reproduction of ineffective routines.

The study also identified collective rationalization and collectivist cognitive avoidance as core mechanisms

sustaining pluralistic ignorance. Organizational members often redirected attention away from structural problems toward symbolic activities and collective justifications. Such findings support Gunther and Chia's (2001) argument that pluralistic ignorance is reinforced through distorted perceptions regarding collective beliefs and attitudes (Gunther & Chia, 2001). They are also consistent with Swim et al.'s (2014) findings regarding the role of social influence in shaping public discourse and suppressing confrontation with difficult realities (Swim et al., 2014). In governmental organizations, these mechanisms contribute to institutional inertia and reduce the capacity for adaptive learning and organizational reform.

The MICMAC analysis further demonstrated that variables such as perceptual reality construction, organizational illusionism, social conformity, and cognitive homogenization possess both high driving power and high dependence, indicating that they function as linkage variables within the conceptual model. This means that small changes in these dimensions may produce cascading effects throughout the organizational system. In contrast, variables such as superficial convergence, norm-oriented hypocrisy, conflict-avoidant ethical tolerance, mediating rationality, and goal compromise orientation were classified as dependent variables due to their high dependence and low driving power. These findings indicate that pluralistic ignorance operates as an interconnected and systemic phenomenon in which cognitive, ethical, structural, and relational dimensions continuously reinforce one another.

Overall, the findings of the present study contribute to the literature by presenting an integrated conceptual model of pluralistic ignorance in governmental organizations. While previous studies have primarily examined pluralistic ignorance in isolated domains such as ethics, social norms, environmental behavior, or workplace flexibility (Hao-Fan et al., 2019; Reiber & Garcia, 2010; Wood et al., 2011), the present research demonstrates that pluralistic ignorance constitutes a broader organizational system involving multiple interacting mechanisms. The study therefore extends existing organizational behavior theories by illustrating how silence, conformity, symbolic rationality, collective avoidance, and organizational illusionism jointly shape dysfunctional organizational dynamics within governmental institutions.

One limitation of the present study is that the research was conducted exclusively within governmental organizations in Kerman Province, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other administrative,

cultural, or national contexts. Additionally, because the study adopted a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews, the findings rely heavily on participants' perceptions and interpretations. Some participants may also have exercised caution in describing sensitive organizational experiences despite assurances of confidentiality. Another limitation concerns the contextual nature of pluralistic ignorance, which may vary significantly depending on organizational culture, leadership style, and institutional structure.

Future studies are encouraged to examine pluralistic ignorance in different organizational sectors, including private organizations, non-governmental institutions, and international administrative systems. Comparative studies across cultures and governance systems may provide deeper insight into the contextual mechanisms shaping pluralistic ignorance. Quantitative research may also test the causal relationships among the dimensions identified in the present conceptual model. Moreover, future scholars could investigate the role of organizational technologies, digital governance systems, and artificial intelligence in reinforcing or reducing pluralistic ignorance. Longitudinal studies may further help explain how pluralistic ignorance evolves over time and how organizational reforms influence its persistence or transformation.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that governmental organizations should strengthen psychological safety, encourage constructive dissent, and reduce excessive hierarchical pressures that reinforce silence and symbolic conformity. Managers should establish transparent communication systems that allow employees to express disagreement without fear of punishment or exclusion. Organizational evaluation systems should also reward critical thinking, ethical responsibility, and authentic participation rather than symbolic compliance. Leadership development programs may help reduce authoritarian and passive managerial styles that intensify pluralistic ignorance. Furthermore, promoting evidence-based decision-making, institutional accountability, and intellectual diversity may weaken collective rationalization processes and enhance organizational learning and adaptability.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this 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

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In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were considered.

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