

Unit Four: The Organizational Phenomenon

1 Definition of the Organizational Phenomenon

The term "organizational phenomenon" signifies the analytical study of organizations within Sociology's theoretical frameworks, based on the early contributions of sociological scholars and thinkers from the early beginnings of organizational sociology to the present day. Accordingly, the presentation of the aforementioned theoretical and analytical concepts will be attempted with considerations of the organization as a socioeconomic system, as a cooperative system, as an economic-cooperative system, and lastly as an open system.

2 Organization as a Socioeconomic System

In this framework, the analysis and interpretation of the organization is based on three theories: the traditional theory, management theory, and structural theory. Within this view, the organization is limited to economic aspects only, and it is considered as a "closed system" designed to achieve clear and specific objectives. Max Weber defined the organization as a cohesive group characterized by social relationships based on organizational rules that define membership conditions. The binding system of the organization's members is reinforced by the roles played by certain individuals in leadership positions, all operating under a specific administrative body.

The organization as a socioeconomic system has a set of distinctive elements that are:

- A. Interaction of members with the organization takes the form of formal relations that are far from randomness and governed by regulations and conditions in order to make part of the cohesive group;
- B. Existence of governing rules and regulations within the group, to which members adhere during selection in fulfilment of the organization's goals;

- C. Presence of a binding system that permits the distinctions of one organizational form from another;
- D. Structure of the organization and divisions adhere to an authoritative hierarchy and a division of labor, with certain members purposefully selected for leadership to ensure the achievement of its predefined objectives.

3 Organization as a Cooperative System:

The cooperative system view of the organization is more focused on informal aspects as it views the organization as a system that strives for a balance between the members' efforts and their participation in the achievement of its goals. In this context, Barnard Chester considered the organization as a balanced cooperative system to be founded on the organized member efforts through the voluntary participation in the achievement of the organization's objectives and involvement in decision-making within the system. Additionally, he considered communication to be a key process that ensures continuity and effectiveness of the organization.

In light of Barnard Chester's previous definition, the organization as a cooperative system has a set of distinctive elements that are:

- A. Necessity to accomplish and achieve the goals preset by the organization;
- B. Existence of members with ability to communicate effectively within the organization;
- C. Willingness of the members within the organization to engage in cooperative effort to accomplish the diverse tasks;
- D. Participation in decision-making as one side of the equation for a balanced system.

4 Organization as an Economic-cooperative System

The Economic-cooperative model focused on both the formal and informal aspects of the organization. In the belief of Philip Selznick, the combination of both views of Max Weber and Barnard Chester into a single framework is a necessity, as the organization is neither a pure economic structure nor a mere cooperative system. Rather, the integration of the two definitions broadens the study scope to include the formal roles of the cooperating members, analysis of their personal traits, and impact examination of the organizational leadership, informal relationships, and the interactive dynamics between personality and the organization.

Within this proposition, the organization, as an economic-cooperative system is based on the following elements:

- A. The organization is characterized by both an authoritative and functional hierarchical structure of both authority and functions, which are interconnected through formal communication to achieve the predefined objectives;
- B. The system works towards the maintaining of its continuity and achievement of integration among its components;
- C. The integrative level is associated with the availability of specialized administrative and technical skills within the organization;
- D. The organization, as an economic-cooperative system, holds distinguishable interests with its members. Thus, the existence of stable informal relationships is inevitable to maintain the continuity and stability of the organization;
- E. Emphasis is placed on the members' role and their understanding of the formal, instructional rules that regulate the control processes and the selection of the necessary tools to solve the possible issues that face the organization.

5 Organization as an Open System

The open system view of the organization involves the interaction with the surrounding environment and the reciprocal influence of both organization and environment. One example of the organizational definitions is that of Talcott Parsons that viewed the organization to be a social system with a primary direction of goal achievement. Such direction has two aspects: the first is the (external relations), which refer to the organization's relationship with society, and the second is the (internal structure) of the organization. The organization is also characterized by adaptability since it is a social system in need of four basic requirements: (adaptation to the surrounding conditions, goal achievement, integration, and latency).

In this view, the organization, as an open system, is based on a set of distinctive elements that, according to Parson, are as follows:

- A. Considering the organization as a social system adds an important social dimension to the definition, that is demonstrated in the composition of various subsystems, such as the technical system, the administrative system, the institutional system, and so on. The subsystems integrate with each other and connect to the larger society;
- B. Parsons' distinctive approach to the organizational issue of (authority/power) considers it as a driving force for organizational resources mobilization to organizational goals achievement;
- C. Placement of significant focus on the relational study between the organization and society from a cultural-institutional perspective.

In addition to Parsons' contribution, Katz and Kahn listed general features of the organization as an open system:

- A. Inputs: the primary energy, such as raw materials, labor, and legal legitimacy;

- B. Processes: the transformation of primary energy through the numerous internal processes into goods and services to the benefit of society members;
- C. Outputs: the exportation of the transformed goods and services to the external environment;
- D. System's Negative entropy: the provision of additional raw materials reserves as avoidance mechanism of unexpected circumstances that could threaten the continuous and regular primary energy provision to the system;
- E. Positive and Negative Feedback: the system receives information as a form of primary energy in relation to the external environment or functional performance in the internal environment. The organization success in achieving its goals depends on the amount of information, its organization, and ease of access when needed;
- F. Stability and balance: The organization strives for growth and development to align with changes in environmental conditions;
- G. Diversity: The organization continuously work towards work activities differentiation and integration;

Equifinality: The ability to select from the multiple and optimal ways to achieve its goals and objectives, especially in the context of the surrounding environment's constant change.