

Measuring Willingness to Participate and the Factors Affecting Citizen Participation (Case Study on Citizens in the 20th Municipal District of Tehran)

Mousa Khedmatgozar Khoshdel

Ph.D of Sociology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran
Mkhoshdel55@gmail.com

Yousef Bakhshan

Iran Rudehen Azad University M.A Graduated in Social Science Research
yousefbakhshan@gmail.com

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n3s2p155

Abstract

Participation is one of the issues emphasized by sociologists and urban management theorists. Sociologists emphasize participation, participatory strategies and bottom-up planning approach. This study aims to assess willingness to participate and the factors affecting citizen participation in the citizens living in the 20th municipal district of Tehran. To this end, a study was first conducted on the theoretical issues and empirical research on participation. Afterwards, a theoretical model was developed that focused on the independent variables of the research (e.g. neighborhood attachment, urban governance, etc.). The population of the study consisted of all Shahr Rey citizens above the age of 18. The sample size was calculated to include 400 citizens using Morgan's Table. The participants were selected using cluster random sampling. The data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire including 82 items. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0.77 for an administration of 30 scales using Cronbach's alpha formula. Correlation coefficient, linear regression, t test and one-way ANOVA were run to analyze the data. The results showed a significant difference between citizens' willingness to participate and neighborhood attachment, urban governance, social trust, satisfaction and mass media.

Keywords: willingness to participate, neighborhood, urban management, 20th municipal district of Tehran

1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

As one of the concepts emerging in social sciences, participation was seriously addressed by social science and development scholars since the latter part of the twentieth century. In its general sense, participation is as old a concept as human history since human survival depended upon collective cooperation to deal with natural disasters and fight wild animals on the one hand and upon intimacy with family, spouse, children and peer groups on the other hand. Social life has emerged from cooperation and collaboration. Social cooperation has emerged in different forms consistent with different circumstances of time and place over the course of human history (Fooladian&Ramezani Farkhad, 1999:5). Throughout history, there has been a tendency toward the extension of participation in political, economic and social domains. In the past decades, extensive research has been conducted on participation, particularly by the UN, to develop citizen participation in the third world countries. The World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) held by FAO in 1979 unanimously asserted that participation should be considered as an essential human need in order to attain participatory democracy. Participation can be considered as a goal or a method to teach people to engage in making collective decisions and sharing responsibilities. In the participation process, all participations should vote and learn to behave in a democratic manner (Saidee, 2012:15).

Goulet contends that public participation is the vital element in development strategies, which has three major functions. According to Goulet, social participation guarantees non-instrumental treatment of the government toward people and perceived worthiness. Besides, participation is considered as an important tool for mobilizing, organizing and elevating public development initiatives and alleviating social problems. Moreover, participation is a duct through which local groups and communities can reach the grand arenas of decision-making. Without participation, development strategies will be non-popular and vain (Mousavi, 2012:29).

Citizens' participation in urban management is one of the most recent methods of participation that is one of the requirements of modern social life. Citizen participation is realized when people abandon individualism and social

isolation and redefine their individual identity into citizenship through realizing citizen rights. Social beings are considerably different from other approaches to adaptation to the environment. Adaptability techniques prepare creatures for performing certain activities. What distinguishes social beings from other creatures is a potential characteristic that can be used for different purposes. This characteristic is the ability of collaboration that denotes the congregation of the members of the same species to establish mutual relations and satisfy their common interests (Fooladian&Ramezani Farkhad, 1998:28).

Inviting people to participate in urban and neighborhood affairs is a theory of participatory management. As a matter of fact, human is the axis of development. Social participation and social life characterize human species. Advances in human life owe to broad social participation. Mental and emotional involvement and participation in collective events encourage people to work together toward a collective goal and share the responsibilities. It guarantees social welfare when people feel they share a society and are not discarded from the ordinary course of social affairs. Nowadays, people have less trust in urban management (municipality), which may relate to a variety of factors. The present study addresses the issue of trust as one of the determiners of citizen participation relevant to urban management.

Considering the above discussion, the researchers aim to tackle the following questions.

Main questions

Is there any significant relationship between willingness to participate and neighborhood attachment?

Is there any significant relationship between willingness to participate and good urban governance?

Is there any significant relationship between willingness to participate and social trust?

Subsidiary questions:

Is there any significant relationship between membership in groups and neighborhood attachment?

Is there any significant relationship between membership in groups and good urban governance?

Is there any significant relationship between membership in groups and social trust?

Is there any significant difference in willingness to participate based on education, age group, gender and household costs?

2. Research Objectives

- To determine how willing the citizens in the 20th municipal district of Tehran are to participate
- To determine the effect of neighborhood attachment on willingness to participate in the citizens in the 20th municipal district of Tehran
- To determine the effect of good urban governance on willingness to participate in the citizens in the 20th municipal district of Tehran
- To determine the effect of social trust on willingness to participate in the citizens in the 20th municipal district of Tehran
- To determine the relationship and differences among research variables and hypotheses

3. Significance of the Study

The association of cultural attitudes and social participation with urban management lies in the Aristotle's words that a city should guarantee the interests and felicity of the citizens. This utterance well defines the responsibility of new urban management in a civic society: a responsibility that has still remained an ideal. In this viewpoint, urban society seeks an ideal where relations are established at equal levels and citizens are allowed to exercise legal supervision consistent with citizenship rights. Thus, urban management both supervises the management of urban community and manages civic society. This approach would alter the responsibilities of municipalities in order to balance citizen-municipality relations. It requires a high level of citizen cooperation and acceptance of public rules and control. Urban management is expected to answer citizen needs. In reality, people help actualize the roles asserted in management guidelines, facilitate financing and develop physical resources (SaidiRezvani&Kazemian, 2001:175).

A review of the participation history reveals frequent ups and downs over the course of human history. In different historical eras from hunting and collection of food to the emergence of civilization and industrialization, different aspects of participation and cooperation have contributed to the promotion of humanity. With human societies turning more complicated, some scholars consider participation as necessity while some attribute it to human nature and instinct. After all, participation is an undeniable social process (Toosi, 1991:27).

To achieve its major goals, a social system needs to take measures the most important of which is participation.

The concept of citizenship entails civic, political and economic rights. Participation is a way to convey national-level demands to urban managers and policy-makers and has various levels that begin from non-participation (manipulation) to citizen control. Thus, citizen participation can be considered as a ladder to begin from citizen manipulation and to extend into delegated power and citizen control.

Participation is an important component of sustainable development that exerts a positive impact upon social efficacy. Local participation is an important capacity of human communities. Considering the assessment criteria of urban management, it is necessary to carry out studies on citizen participation in the management of urban and local affairs as well as the factors affecting citizen participation. The factors contributing to citizen participation can be of key importance since urban managers can identify the dimensions and factors affecting participation, either at local or regional levels, and consider them in regional planning. Moreover, citizen opinion can provide urban managers with good feedback on participatory plans.

4. Literature Review

Literally, participation refers to taking part and partnership (Moin, 1998:4127). Participation indicates engagement in something or sharing part of something (AryanpurKashani&AryanpurKashani, 1998:1172). Indeed, the essence of participation is involvement and influence. It also denotes taking a share of something and benefiting it or engaging in group cooperation (Birou, 1991:257). Thus, participation refers to conscious and voluntary involvement in decision-making and planning to satisfy social needs and goals.

Participation is one of the best approaches to transferring local-level demands to urban managers. Arnstein contends that participation has various levels that begin from mere citizen powerlessness to citizen control. Thus, citizen participation is described as a ladder to begin from citizen powerlessness and to extend into delegated power and citizen control.

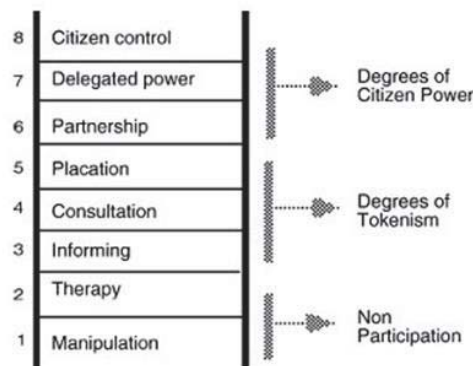


Fig. 1. Arnstein's ladder of citizen engagement ([3]).

The first rung illustrates no form of public participation indicating public manipulation and therapy. The middle level has three rungs that deal with the transfer of information and receiving recommendations while it does not guarantee the enforcement of opinions and recommendations. Thus, it takes a one-sided form. The third stage involves partnership, delegated power and citizen control, where citizens monitor and manage urban management tasks.

Citizen participation in urban affairs is a key issue in urban planning. Urban planners attempt to seek citizen opinions in urban policy-making. They try to exercise their plans through citizen participation so that citizens can be turned responsible and legitimize decision-making processes. That is, public support facilitates the operationalization of plans (Brown & Harris, 2005:97-99).

Participatory methods and approaches are one of the agreed-upon strategies used by social and economic development policy-makers to infuse motivation in people. Engaging individuals in the development process is empowering the most disadvantaged social groups and encouraging them to execute development schemes and programs. Participation is of key importance as the vital element in achieving development goals, particularly urban development. The more citizens participate in urban affairs, the more successful the projects of urban development will be. Thus, disadvantaged social groups will benefit from the outcomes of citizen participation. One of the fundamental changes in municipality management has been a transition into participatory management. Although attempts have been made after the Islamic Revolution toward this goal, we may not still ensure appropriate participatory management with the

citizens being involved in urban management. Participatory management focuses on voluntary citizen cooperation and involvement with the aim of using citizens' ideas, recommendations, innovations and skills to solve organizational problems.

Social participation indicates between-group relations in the form of voluntary associations, clubs, unions and groups that are typically local and non-governmental and aim at involving people in social processes as part of social policies. Voluntary associations are the key areas for the formation and organization of participatory activities; thus, social participation is closely associated with civic society. They provide a good context for social participation. On the one hand, participatory associations encourage cooperation, establish a stronger link between individuals and the society at large and increase individual participation in social affairs. On the other hand, they extend social networks, strengthen social solidarity and facilitate active citizen participation (Chalabi, 1996:290).

A proper context is necessary to help actualize social participation. Such context can be provided by reinforcing civic society and its dependent institutions. The key to a successful civic society is to institutionalize participatory institutions while real public participation leads to the reinforcement of civic society. Social participation is linked to civic society as it is voluntary, conscious and willful. Voluntary associations provide an appropriate context for attracting social participation. Trade unions, political parties, economic and private enterprises, cooperative companies, art groups, media, charity organizations and local communities including neighborhood residents are examples of civic institutions. In explaining social participation, some theories have emphasized participation willingness, motivation, tendency and behavior while some have focused on the background, conditions and structural elements of participation. In social action theories, participation is divided into mental and behavioral aspects and is distinguished from reflexive behavior as a human behavior because people attribute a certain subjective meaning to their behaviors (Ritzer, 1994:327).

Nowadays, one of the effective strategies in management crystallized in strategic, prospective and participatory management is to use talents and potentials as well as subjective, physical and material capital of public and private sectors, which is achievable through effective communication and thoughtful planning. This could help improve efficiency, effectiveness and productivity, which will result in reduced costs, increased income and optimized performance in urban management and render the urban management sustainable.

Participation means doing a task together. In its contemporary sense, participation is an emerging phenomenon in the world, which does not date more back in time than two centuries ago. Participation refers to active involvement in political, economic and cultural life (Sarokhani, 1991:521). In other words, participation denotes engagement in social networks and relations and willingness to do shared tasks. Participation tightens the circles and chains of social relations and reinforces social capital (Motavali, 2005:129).

5. Theories of Participation

- Seymour Martin Lipset
In the book *Political Man*, Lipset addresses the conditions that lead to high rates of participation and the situations where people are not willing to participate. Surveys in different countries showed that willingness to participate was greater in men than women, more-educated than less-educated, urbanites than villagers, 35-55 year olds than younger people, married than single people, high socio-economic class than low socio-economic class and organizational employees than self-employed people (Lipset, 1960:184).
- Theory of reasoned action (Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen)
It refers to behavioral intention. Fishbein and Ajzen contend that an act of participation entails motivation and the possibility of participation. In this regard, belief toward an outcome, evaluation of the outcome, beliefs of what others think, the amount of information, motivation to comply with others, action in the past and the facilities needed to do action are considered as the components required for forming an action (AlaviTabar, 2000:121).
- Homans's exchange theory
Introducing different cases, Homans considers that behaviors are not much the result of beliefs and attitudes as they are the outcome of calculating profit and loss. In other words, behaviors including participation develop and become institutionalized when their benefits outweigh their costs. Increased participation is subject to the individual's perception of objective benefits that outweigh the costs. The issues of reward, punishment, motivation, value and success appear in this domain. Thus, when participation entails earning points and positive evaluation of the action outcome, it will be sustained and repeated in future (Ritzer, 1994:423-428).
- Habermas
In public domain, Habermas suggests equal access as a requisite of discourse communities. Human is able to

change his social life and create a desirable, integrated life – a human that governs his own life and can determine his own ways and means. In this regard, people need to recover the idea of social development in the civic society and in relation with others (Sheybani, 2003:76).

- John Turner's participation theory

The establishment of local organizations by local communities is emphasized in the process of the transformation of the theories explaining the role of people and government in development which is theorized by the UN and its experts. Such non-governmental, local organizations take on an active role in the development and management of local affairs. As an expert of public participation with the UN, John Turner has developed significant theories. He has systematically categorized different types of participation through conducting extensive field studies and in-depth theorizing. He has made the theories of participation most viable and comprehensible. Studies by Turner and other researchers show that when the central government interferes with the local issues, it not only obscures the needs of local communities but also loses its facilities and resources by leaving the locals aside. Turner made a significant contribution to the development of participation theory by systematically classifying different types of participation in his well-known table.

1. In the first case, government acts centrally and feels no need for public participation. Arab states are examples of such governments.
2. Government is authoritative and centralized but not affluent. It either forces or encourages people to work for free in projects under government supervision and/or donate money while government executes construction plans.
3. Government abides by public decisions in all public domains while it provides the costs of construction from national wealth. Examples are governments that rely on participation and democracy such as Scandinavian countries.
4. Government does not interfere with local affairs. People establish public associations, provide national resources for development purposes and make decisions on all local issues. Examples are European states and the U.S.
5. Latest theories propose that government and people are partners that share their works. Participation researchers have retested the theories posed by the UN, World Bank, etc. and advanced a new theory. Researchers have advanced from participation theory to partnership theory. According to partnership theory, people and government should cooperate in development and management of local affairs as partners with definite rights and responsibilities and common resources. Both people and government work together. Government provides or decides on what people may not provide or decide on. Simultaneously, local people organized into local communities provide what they can and decide on what they wish (Ahmadi, 2008:37).

5.1 *Materials and method*

The research methods used in the present study are as follows:

A) Documentary and library research

The above method was used to obtain a theoretical framework, clarify social reality and familiarize with the literature.

B) Survey

A survey was conducted to collect, classify, describe and analyze the data. Survey design was used in the present study in order to examine the research hypotheses and get the citizens' opinion.

5.2 *Population*

Research population is the domain to which to generalize the results. Researchers need to select their participants from among the population. The population of the study consisted of all Shahr Rey citizens above the age of 18. The unit of analysis is thus a citizen and the unit of observation is the individual.

5.3 *Sampling technique and sample size*

The participants were selected using cluster random sampling and by grouping clusters. The sample clusters were finally selected using simple random sampling method. In order to administer the questionnaire to the subjects, house numbers were used to choose the participants using the above method. The sample size was calculated to include 400 citizens

using Morgan's Table.

5.4 Validity of the scale

The questionnaire was given to experts in order to ensure the validity of the items, questions and the rating scale. The items that were reported as irrelevant by experts were excluded from the questionnaire.

5.5 Reliability of the scale

Reliability is a technical issue and examines the accuracy with which the research instrument measures a phenomenon. Cronbach's alpha formula is typically used to estimate reliability. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0.702 using Cronbach's alpha formula, which indicated an acceptable reliability index.

6. Results

6.1 The relationship between willingness to participate and independent variables

Pearson correlation formula and linear regression were used to test the research hypotheses. These tests examine the significance and strength of correlation between willingness to participate and independent variables.

Relationship		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f	β	Sig.
Relationship between willingness to participate and neighborhood attachment	Regression	14764	1	14764	133	0.501	0.000
	Residual	44158	398	110			
	Total	58922	399				
Relationship between willingness to participate and good urban governance	Regression	10063	1	10063	81.97	0.413	0.000
	Residual	48859	398	122			
	Total	58922	399				
Relationship between willingness to participate and social trust	Regression	13129	1	13129	114	0.472	0.000
	Residual	45792	398	115			
	Total	58921	399				

The level of significance of the above tests indicates a significant correlation of willingness to participate with neighborhood attachment, good urban governance and social trust. This is because the value of Sig. is smaller than the acceptable alpha coefficient. The value of correlation coefficient shows a direct, moderate correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Considering the level of significance of the above test, it can be predicted that the higher neighborhood attachment is in the citizens, the more they are willing to participate in neighborhood affairs. Besides, willingness to participate will increase in citizens when good urban governance increases in the municipality. Moreover, the more citizens trust urban managers and authorities, the more they are willing to participate in local affairs.

The subsidiary hypotheses including education, age group, household costs and citizens' willingness to participate in local affairs were supported. That is, citizens' age, level of education and household costs affect their willingness to participate in managing local affairs. The subsidiary hypotheses assuming the relationship of gender, ethnicity and marital status with citizens' willingness to participate in local affairs were rejected. That is, no significant relationship was found between these variables.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The present findings suggest that the more citizens are attached to their neighborhood, the more they are willing to become a member of groups and institutions, the more they are emotionally fond of their neighborhood and the more they know neighborhood residents, the more they feel attached to their living environment. Thus, they are more willing to participate in the development of their neighborhood.

Urban areas including neighborhoods have a set of physical, social, cultural and human capacities that are key elements in defining the neighborhood status. Instances of deficient physical, social, cultural, health, educational and political capacities can be found in neighborhoods. These capacities are the opportunities that a neighborhood and

society provides for their members in order to offer the appropriate context for the growth of their abilities and talents. However, a structure developed based on social and economic distinctions that has led to unjust distribution of opportunities and facilities and has even justified or legitimated it does not provide a fair opportunity for all to have equal access to capacities. Thus, institutional arrangements are required to frame such opportunities and provide a context for citizens' participation in managing their daily life at the local level. The establishment of neighborhood institutions can help develop such a context that institutionalize citizens' engagement in managing neighborhood affairs.

Mobilizing functional capacities of neighborhoods can answer part of cultural and social needs and lead to increased satisfaction with life. A cultural and social view of the city can remedy the disproportion of the urban space, improve living conditions consistent with cultural changes and citizens' concerns and play a key role in citizens' quality of life.

References

- AbdiDaneshpur, Z. (2008). *An introduction to planning theories with an emphasis on urban planning*. Tehran: ShahidBeheshti University Publications.
- Ahmadi, H. (2003). Participatory urban planning, planning with people. *Municipality Monthly*, 36.
- AlaviTabar, A.R. (1999). *Investigating citizens' participation pattern in managing urbanaffairs*. Tehran: National Municipal Authority.
- AlaviTabar, A.R. (1990). *Participation in urban management*. Tehran: Centre of Urban Planning of Ministry of the Interior.
- Amirkafi, M. (2001). Social trust and the factors affecting it. *Research Index*, 18.
- Ansari, H. (2003). A research on the factors affecting public participation in the NAJA affairs in Tehran. *Proceedings of a Conference on Social Security*, 2. Tehran: NAJA Social Deputy.
- AryanpurKashani, A., & AryanpurKashani, M. (1998). *A concise English-Persian Dictionary*. Tehran: Amirkabir Publications.
- Barkpur, N., & Asadi, I. (2009). *Urban management and governance*. Tehran: Research Deputy of Arts University.
- Birou, A. (1991). *Lexico de sociologia*. B. Sarokhani (Trans.). Tehran: Keyhan Publications.
- Boyle, P. G. (1995). *Planning better programs*. Gh. Ahmadi, & S. Shahabi (Trans.). Tehran: Ghoghnoos Publications.
- Brown, R., & Glenn, H. (2005). Co management of Wildlife Corridors: the Case for Citizen Participation in the Adirondack Proposal. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 74 (2).
- Chan, Ch., & Elder Jr., G. H. (2001). Family Influence on the Social Participation of Youth: The Effects of Parental Social Involvement and Farming. *Rural Sociology*, 66 (1), 22.
- Chalabi, M. (1996). *Sociology of discipline*. Tehran: Ney Publication.
- Department of Social and Cultural Studies (2012). *A guideline of neighborhood research in Tehran*. Tehran: Komeil.
- Ejlali, P., Rafiyan, M., & Asgari, A. (2012). Planning theory: traditional and new approaches. Tehran: Agah Publications.
- Fooladian, M., & RamezaniFarkhad, A. (1999). *Paradigms and theories of participation in sociology*. Mashhad: SokhanGostar Publications.
- Ghafari, Gh., & Niazi, M. (2007). *Sociology of participation*. Tehran: Nazdik.
- Habibi, S.M., & SaidiRezvani, H. (2005). *Participatory urban planning: a theoretical inquiry into the situation in Iran*. Tehran.
- Kaldi, A.R. (2007). Investigating citizens' attitude toward participation in urban management: a study in the 7th municipal district of Tehran. *Municipality Monthly*, 79.
- Khedmatgozar Khoshdel, Mousa, Ghasemi, vahid & Alikhah, Fardin (2014), *Social Impact Assessment of the Neighborhood House (Case Study: Sixth Municipal District of Tehran)*, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, Vol 5 No 3 March 2014
- LahsaieZadeh, A.A. (2004). Environmental crisis and comprehensive, sustainable development. *Proceedings of Iran's Sociological Issues, Iran Sociology Society*. Tehran: Agah.
- Malek, H. (2006). *Sociology of strata and inequality*. Tehran: Payam-e Noor University.
- Marschall, M. J. (2004). Citizen Participation and Neighborhood Context: A New Look at the Coproduction of Local Public Goods. *Political Research Quarterly*, 57 (2), 231.
- McFarland, D.A., & Thomas, R. J. (2006). Bowling Young: How Youth Voluntary Associations Influence Adult Political Participation. *American Sociological Review*, 71 (3), 3.
- MohseniTabrizi, A.R. (1990). Investigating areas for villagers' participation and their relationship with agricultural extension. Deputy of Extension and Public Participation of Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture. Tehran.
- MohseniTabrizi, A.R. (1996). Alienation: a barrier to participation and national development. *Research Letter*, 1.
- Moin, M. (1998). *Farsi Thesaurus*. Tehran: Amirkabir Publications.
- Motavali, R. (2005). Theoretical perspective of social capital. *Social Security Research Quarterly*, 1(1).
- Mousavi, T. (2012). *An introduction to social participation*. Tehran: Sociologists.
- Oakley, P., & Marsdem, D. (1991). *Approaches to participation in rural development*. M. Mohammad Nezhad (Trans.). Tehran: Jihad Sazandegi Publications.
- SaidiRezvani, N., & Kazemian, Gh. (2001). *Feasibility study of outsourcing new tasks to municipalities*. Tehran: National Municipal Authority.
- Saidee, M.R. (2012). *An introduction to public participation and non-governmental organizations*. Tehran: SAMT.

- Sanoff, H. (2007). *Methods of architectural programming.Planning and urban design standards (Vol.I)*. Gh. Maleki (Trans.).Tehran: Ma'ani Publications.
- Sarokhani, B. (1991). *Encyclopedia of social sciences*. Tehran: Keyhan Publications.
- Sarrafi, M.,&Abdollahi, M. (2008). *Analyzing the concept of citizenship and its position in national urban rules, regulations and management.Geographical Research Quarterly*, 63.
- Sharifi, M.,&Rashidifar, F. (2007). Public participation in urban planning.*Municipality Monthly*, 82.
- Shokoe, H. (2004). *New approaches to urban geography*. Tehran: SAMT.
- Toosi, M.A. (1991). *Participation in urban ownership and management*. Tehran: Publications of the Public Management Training Center.