

Studying the social and cultural factors related to Tabriz citizen's participation

Mahmoud Elmi

Department of social sciences. Tabriz Branch Islamic Azad University, TABRIZ IRAN.

drmahmoodelmi@gmail.com

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to study the social and cultural factors related to Tabriz citizen's participation. The method of study is survey and the measurement tool for collecting data was questionnaire. The statistical population of this study includes the 15- 45 residents (male and women) in Tabriz who were 820000 people from whom we choose 680 people as samples. We categorized them in three age groups: 15-25, 25-35, 35-45. In this paper, there was a significant correlation between independent variables (social conformity, social trust, satisfaction from government, modernization, availability to mass communication media, age, gender, rate of following the culture, economical- social statutes of citizens) and dependent (participation). There was also significant and inverse correlation between modernization and participation. According to low rate of citizen's participation, we can say that this situation is the result of structural limitations in cultural and political system in Iran. People's linkage with society and relationship with it or dissociation from society, are all related with social and cultural environment of society. What lead the actions are the behavioral patterns and habits which can be found in society and different institutions of society.

[Mahmoud Elmi. **Studying the social and cultural factors related to Tabriz citizen's participation.** *Life Sci J* 2012;9(4):1319-1323] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 200

Keywords: participation, social conformity, social trust, modernization, following the culture, availability to media, satisfaction from government.

1. Introduction

Participation is a human right which leads to freedom, believe to people's ego, mobilization of human being in social processes. These days, the social scientists discuss some issues such as development, justice and mutual rights in which the most important criterion for division and categorizing them is "participation" (Roushan, 2007: 4).

According to the importance of citizen's participation in development process and being aware from this fact that participation is an interaction and forms the social life bases and the social life is based on citizen's participation in the way that human community can not be alive without citizen's participation, in this paper we try to find answer to this question that how is Tabriz citizen's participation? Which social and cultural factors are related to this fact? The aim of this study is to indentify the rate of citizen's participation in Tabriz and find the related factors with it in different social and cultural fields.

Ingelhart believes that high rate of participation in West refers to three factors: high level of education and political information, the altered dominant norms in women's participation and changes in value priorities. He also states that variables such as education, social- economical status, level of information and skill, communicational skills, work experience and organizational networks affect the rate of participation.

According to Oakley and Marsden, when participation equals informing people and making

important decisions in development, participation can not be independent from control and responsibility of government. Lerner considers as a modernization criterion in society. He also emphasizes on psychological and mental variables which help to get modernization. Huntington believes that development and participation needs the formation of personality and modern person. He says that traditional person focuses on being quiet and does not want any changes in nature and society, while a modern person faces with different attitudes and procedures. The modern person accepts any changes and alternations and tries to adopt himself with them (Huntington, 1991:54).

Almond and Powell stresses on the role of self reliance in modernization and citizen's participation. From their point of view, modern person is an informed citizen and participant who not only has self reliance in decision making and does every thing independently and also accepts ideas and new believes, the citizen's participation reflects their utilization from opportunities prepared by the institutions. Habermas calls it a public area in which the communicational action occurs.

Public area is a social area of human life in which they can shape believes in contact with public believes. Public area is one of the modern criterions of modern world that is bourgeois society. He states that public area is basically a network of communication that is used for creating a social place to exchange the concepts among people and groups. Unlike the other institutions which are dominated externally or involve the internal power relations, public area promises the

participation principles and democratic regulation (Houlab, 1999:26).

Based on exchange theory, people are exact creatures who consider their profits and costs in different material and non material forms. Then, they act. Although this theory is not limited to individual actions and moves towards the collective actions, therefore, it considers the collective action as the final product of all people's action. People argue the whole works based on profits and satisfaction and use it as a basis for participatory or non participatory action. People shows tendency towards participatory action when in a collective and participatory situations, it is possible to access the benefit rapidly and easily. Otherwise, they prefer to do act individually.

According to the results of Yazdan Panah study, there was low formal participation rate (voluntary one) in non government organizations among Tehran citizens. It shows that most of participations were informal and social one such as helping the poor and participation in mornings. This study also shows that the subjects have experienced many individual confusion and powerlessness and they also faced with different obstacles in social participation.

Based on these results, when there is high powerlessness and personal confusion, there will be low volunteer, conscious and purposeful participation in society. There are also family, economical, social obstacles which affected the rate of social participation (Yazdanpanah, 2007). The results of study among citizens of Tehran in zone 9 show that there is a relationship between powerlessness and citizen's participation, while there was not a significant relationship between people's tendency towards participation with municipality and getting benefit. The other results of this study show that there is a correlation between people's awareness from municipality activities and the citizen's participation. Between people's trust to municipality and participation with it was correlation, too. We can also find a correlation between education level, gender and people's tendency towards participation. The findings of study by Salahshour among some zones of Tehran reveal that the youth social participation was medium. The frequency of women participation was higher than men's participation but the intensity of women's participation was lower. Based on statistical analysis of this study we can see that there is a direct and significant correlation between sense of belongingness, social attachment, social satisfaction, using the mass media, social trust, age, social status and social participation. There as also adverse and significant correlation between confusion, alienation and social participation. There was a weak correlation between universalism, gender, rationality and social participation (Salahshour, 2006). Results of study by Alipour and his coworkers in some zones of Tehran

show that there is a significant correlation between social trust (in three forms: individual, generalized and institutional) and organized social participation, although the rate and orientation of this relationship in both cases are different from each other. Also, the regression coefficients of some variables show that among the studied variables, generalized trust and social- economical status are the best predictors of social participation (Alipour, Zahedi, Shyani, 2009).

In this research hypothesis as follow:

1. There is a relationship between social solidarity and rate of citizen's participation.
2. There is a relationship between satisfaction form government and rate of citizen's participation.
3. There is a relationship between social trust and rate of citizen's participation.
4. There is a relationship between social-economical status and rate of citizen's participation.
5. There is a relationship between group participation and rate of citizen's participation.
6. There is a relationship between social alienation and rate of citizen's participation.
7. There is a relationship between modernism and rate of citizen's participation.
8. There is a relationship between citizen's education level and rate of citizen's participation.
9. There is a relationship between following the social culture and rate of citizen's participation.
10. There is a relationship between the citizen's availability to communicational mass media and rate of citizen's participation.

Methodology

The method of this study is survey and the measurement tool is questionnaire. The statistical population of this study includes the whole 15-45 year old citizens in different parts of Tabriz who were 820000. The sample included 680 people which ere chosen through Cochran formula. We categorized them in three age groups: 15-25, 25-35, 35-45.

We used researcher- made questionnaire that included 54 questions about each of the different dimensions of participation.

We examined the content validity by using reviewer's evaluation of scale elements before data collection and Factor analysis for classifying participation scale elements in theoretical categories after data collection; so, we obtained the high validity of this study.

We obtain high reliability by using alpha Cronbach.

3. Results

From 680 samples of this study, there were 337 men, 343 women: 49.6% men and 50.4% women. In this study, we categorized the citizens to three age groups. In each group, 15-25, 26-35 and 36-45, we had 225 people which were about 33.1%. we also divided

the citizens to employed and unemployed groups: 375 (55%)0000 were employed and 306(45%) were unemployed, 14.7% workers, 12.1% technical job, 8.2% employee, 12.6% seller, 7.4% professional job. About the subjects' income we found out that 30% had low pay job about 3,000,000 Rial, 69% between 3,000,001-6,000,000 Rial, 87% between 6,000,001-9,000,000 Rial, 94.2% between 9,000,001-12,000,000 Rial in a month. About 51.1% of subjects had low social status, 35.9% medium social status, 13% high social- economical status. mean of citizen's participation, with 19.77 deviation standard, is 42.2 which is in low level: average social solidarity among these citizens, with 12.50 deviation standard, equals 52.63: average of modernization among these citizens are 65.62 and its deviation standard is 20.82: average of social alienation in these subjects is 19.57 and the rate following the culture is 77.92 whose deviation standard is about 15.44: mean of satisfaction from government is about 61.62 with 19.13 deviation standard: the last one is trust among citizen's which is about 72.09 and 17.64 deviation standard. In this research, the independent variables were social solidarity, social trust, satisfaction from government, modernism, accessibility to communication mass media, age, gender, rate of following the culture, education level, income and economical-social status of citizens.

In order to test the relationship between social solidarity, social trust, using mass media, modernism, collective actions, social alienation, following the culture, satisfaction from government, social trust and citizen's participation we used R Pierson test. Results of these tests are shown in table1.

Table 1: Pierson coefficient correlation test

independent variables	Citizen's participation
Social solidarity	N=68 R=0/202 Sig =0.000
using mass media	N = 68 R=0/14 Sig=0.000
Modernism	N=68 R=0/216 Sig =0.000
Collective actions	N = 68 R=0/06 Sig=0.881
Social alienation	N = 68 R=0/26 Sig=0.507
Following the culture	N = 68 R=0/321 Sig=0.000
Satisfaction from government	N = 68 R=0/252 Sig=0.000
Social trust	N = 68 R=0/146 Sig=0.000

We used T- Test to find the difference between gender and citizen's participation. The result of study shows that there is a significant difference between men and women's participation mean. That is, the rate of women's participation is more than men's one.

Table 2: T-Test for comparing participation into gender groups

statistics Gender	N	Mean	standard Deviation	t	sig
Men	337	38.49	18.68	4.92	0.000
women	343	45.84	20.15	4.92	0,000

In order to find the difference between job status and citizen's participation we also used T- test. The result of test shows that there was not significant difference between employed and unemployed citizen's participation mean.

Table 3: T-TEST for comparing participation into job status groups

Statistics	N	Mean	standard Deviation	t	Sig.
Employed	374	39.89	19.96	3.387	0.001
unemployed	306	45.01	19.17	3.4	0.001

We used analysis of variance test to measure the difference between education level and citizen's participation. The results of study show that there was not significant correlation between these two variables. In other words, education level does not have any affect on increasing or decreasing the participation rate.

Table4: descriptive statistics of citizen's education and participation level

Education level	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.
illiterate	62	41/13	15/90	12/50	
Reading and writing literacy	70	42/44	18/45	12/50	87/50
Elementary school	77	47/78	19/60	8/33	83/33
Secondary school	104	42/95	18/57	0	79/17
High school	79	43/41	20/70	0	87/50
Diploma	94	40/96	21/30	0	87/50
Higher education	177	40/11	20/98	4/17	95/83
Total	663	42/30	19/83	0	95/83

We also used analysis of variance test to find out the relationship between these two variables. The results show that there is a significant correlation between participation and age groups of citizens. In table 6, we have offered the results based on age groups (15-25), (26-35), (36-45).

Table 5: one way analysis of variance test of citizen's participation based on their age groups

Citizen's participation		Sum of squares	Df	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
	Between groups	7319/599	2	3659/799	9.657	0.000
	Among groups	244665/586	672	387/967		
	Total	26985/185	674			

According to significance of F- test, in order to follow up the significant differences in multi group analysis, we use LSD test. Result of this study show that the highest mean difference is observed in 15-25 age group because it has low mean in comparison with the other age groups.

Table 6: one way analysis of variance test of participation based on the citizen's social- economical status

Status						
citizen's participation		Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
	Between group	4375.611	2	2187.805	5.453	0.004
	Within group	251554.8	627	401.204		
	Total	255930.4	629			

According to significance of F- test, in order to follow up the significant differences in multi group analysis, we use LSD test. Result of this study show that the highest mean difference can be found in high and low social economical status.

Table 7: one way analysis of variance test of participation based on the citizen's income

Citizen's participation		Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
	Within group	5358.484	4	1339.613	3.384	0/009

According to significance of F- test, in order to follow up the significant differences in multi group analysis, we use LSD test. Results of this study show that the highest mean differences can be found among group with an income less than 3,000,000 Rial in a month.

Results of regression analysis on factors explaining the citizen's participation show that among the independent variables only 6 variables: following the culture, social solidarity, modernism, satisfaction from government, using media and social trust remained in the final model. These variables could explain 20% of variance changes in dependent variable. The final multi regression coefficient is 0.45 and its square is 0.20. Corrected R^2 is 0.198. The real and correct percent of changes of dependent variable made by independent variable is 20%. Results of multi regression analysis can be written in standard form as follows:

$$Y = \beta_1^* Z_{1i} + \beta_2^* X_2 + \beta_p X_{pi} + \xi_i$$

$$\beta(x'x)^{-1} x'Y$$

Citizen's participation = 0.239 (following culture) + 0.155 (social solidarity) + 0.155(modernism) + 0.122 (satisfaction from government) + 0.120 (using media) + 0.109 (social trust)

4. Discussion

Based on Parson's theory, when in different social situations, the individual's action are focused on the others, it leads to cooperation and solidarity with the others. There will be high solidarity when the individual's actions are ethical and collective one. In these actions, the responsibility, loyalty about the others, participation in society will be in high level.

The results of this study verify the theories and findings of the last studies. Findings of this study show that rate of participation is affected by education: it means that when the education level and social-economical status of people is high, there will be higher participation. This finding is in harmony with theories of Lerner and Engelhard who believe that whenever the people's education level; is high, they will have higher tendency towards participation. Engelhard believes that the large group belongs to the youth and educated people. Lerner also believes that there is a relationship between education factor and social participation. Huntington and Nelson state that when people belong to high social- economical status and class, there will be high social participation. Among different variables, the education level has had the highest effect on social participation. Findings of this study show that there is a significant correlation between social status of people and their participation.

Theorists such as Engelhard and Putnam believe that trust encourages people to participation, collective and volunteer action. Findings of this study verify this theory. Data collected from the population of study also show that there is a significant correlation between social trust and participation($r=0.146$). That is, when people trust their relatives, rate of participation, collective action and cooperation will be high. Daniel Lerner considers participation as one of the main variables in development and modernism. He also believes that the development potential will be present in a society in which the communication instruments and social participation facilities are available there. Lipsit focuses on the correlation between increasing the education level, mass media and emerging the democratic participation institutions. From Habermas' point of view, in a modern society, that is communication action in which the people are free from domination and can make their own world based on communicational- rational and democratic way. Communicational action is also formed in a public area. Public area, liberal dialogue and free from domination

are all necessities of participatory action. If person does not think that he/she is part of a society and feels that his/her action does not have any effect in society and also feels powerlessness in facing with problems and solving them, he/she will never participate in collective actions.

Recommendations

According to low level of citizen's participation in Tabriz (42%), we offer the following suggestions to increase the participation level:

1. Since that participation means commitment and accepting social and individual responsibility, there should be necessary situation for increasing the participation rate.
2. It seems that modern people do not have much tendency towards participation and the people's participation is mainly traditional one. Therefore, because of expanding the modern believes among the citizens, their participation has decreased. It is necessary that the civil and participatory institutions are formed in NGOs in the way that the citizens can voluntarily participate in these institutions.
3. Election right, liberty, rationality should be possible in society and people can participate in social affaires easily.
4. Private section should be separated from public area in the way that citizens can participate in the active way.

Acknowledgements:

The authors would like to thank Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University for the financial support of this research, which is based on a research project contract.

References

- 1- Roushan, S. (2007) sociological study of Tehran citizen's social participation in municipality affaires and its affect on the city management, Tehran: Islamic Azad University, Research and Science branch.
- 2- Salahshour, h. (2006) sociological study of the youth (18-39 years old) social participation in Tehran, M.A thesis, Tehran: Islamic Azad University, Research and Science branch.
- 3- Alipour, p. & Zahedi, m. & Shyani, M. (2009) trust and participation (studying the relationship between trust and social participation in Tehran), Iran Sociology Magazine, 10th edition, No: 2.
- 4- Gaffari, G. (2007) participation Sociology, Tehran: Nazdik press.
- 5- Huntington, S. (1991) political order in changing societies, translated by: Mohsen Solasi, Tehran: Elm press.
- 6- Houlab, R. (1999) criticism in public area, translated by: Hossin Boushrye, Tehran: Ney press.
- 7- Yazdanpanah, L. (2007) the social participation obstacles of Tehran citizens, Research and Science quarterly of social welfare, 7th year, No: 26.

9/6/2012