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Explanation of Influential Factors in Citizen's Social Participation (research at socio-psychological level)

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Abstract

Citizen's participation in decision- making and urban affairs is one of the important issues in societies. So this study aims to explain some of the sociological and psychological factors that are influential in citizen's social participation in urban affairs.

Research method of this study was survey and to measure independent variables (social satisfaction, social verify, assessing participation consequences, belief in participation, participation experiences and improvement motivation) and dependent variable (social participation rate), we selected 700 heads of family from Isfahan's seven municipality zones that was based on multi -stage sampling. These respondents had been chosen as the final sample and filled out prepared questionnaires.

Statistical methods included one way ANOVA, Multiple regression and Path analysis. In order to measure the path coefficient, such as total casual effects, indirect effects, standard path coefficients and multiple correlation coefficients for structural equations, we used the Lisrel Method. All of the statistical tests and data were analyzed by SPSS16 software.

Results show that most of Isfahan citizens have ae high rate of participation in urban affairs. The other variables such as participation consequences, participation experience and improvement motivation have been influential in citizen's participation behavior. On the whole, according to the path analysis, the power of the independent variable in explaining the variable of the dependant variance was 63%. The rest of that, 37%, refers to the effects of other variables that were not studied here.

Keywords: Agency, assessing participation consequences, improvement motivation, social satisfaction and structural equations model

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Introduction

According to participatory models, participation, mental and emotional involvement of people happens in group positions that motivate them to try hard and achieve their group goals and participate in affairs (Toosi, 1993). So we can say that participation refers to effective involvement and supervision of citizens in decision makings (Verba, 1967:55). It enables people to participate in local affairs and receive the appropriate civic services (Schubler, 1996:5). It also causes people to form their social life that can be volunteer and willing (Mohsen Tabrizi, 1996).

During the last decades incredibly much more attention has been paid to human agency (Time&Allan, 2000; Graff, 2000; Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, 2004:970). According to Florida the twenty first century not only having the technology in higher levels is important but the human aspect is also important (Moore and College, 2000:22018). It means that if we want to have urban development, it is necessary to pay much more attention to the human aspect (citizen's participatory behaviors) besides the technology. Therefore, without people's participation we are not able to solve certain social and urban ecological problems in the present situation such as traffic, green space, and participation with the municipalities about infra structures, collecting garbage, city safety and the other major problems. We can mention the different factors that affect citizen's participation in urban affairs. Sociological variables such as social satisfaction and social verify are the key variables that have much more effect on citizen's participation rate in urban affairs. In addition to these variables, psychological factors can be the source of citizen's motivation, too. People who have these motivations such as the belief that participation is good, etc, are active in urban affairs (Verba, 1967:53-58). So we can say that people's participation in urban affairs especially the vulnerable strata will lead to high self

esteem (Saunders, Brown and Eardely, 2003:1-67), low stresses and conflicts (Toosi, 1993:69), higher self confidence (Azimi, Ramezani, 1998:45), creativity (Babai, 1997. Araste Kho, 1995) and enablement them (Abbott, Fisk and Forward Louise, 2000:330).

The basic question is that how was citizen's participation rate in Isfahan and which variables are the influential ones? In order to answer these questions, some researchers believe that analyzing the advantages and opportunities of participation will be very influential (Wee, 2005. Fardroo and Rezvani, 2002). Others think that some variables such as literacy and prospectively are the major factors in participation (Niazi, 2002. Tonn, 2004). In this study we try to answer the above mentioned questions accurately.

Theoretical and Empirical Literature

Klenderman's "value- Expectancy" model says that members do not think just about goals but they consider advantages and costs of the goals (Dehgan and Gaffari, 2005:72) is in harmony with Edwards model of "Expectancy- value" in which he says that decisions are based on two different outputs, value factors and the probability of getting each output, that is based on probable decision- making (Karimi, 2002). According to this, we can say that people are logical and rational decision-makers. They assess the losses and profits of each action and choose the best one. It means that people choose the case that has the maximum profit and the minimum loss.

According to Homans theory, if people's act was answered with rewards, the probability of doing that action again increases. If the result of an action is more important to him/her, he/she will be more probable to repeat that action again (Ritzer, 1995:426-429). V.Vroom believes that before doing any action people usually assess the probable consequences of that (Rezazadeh,

2000:74-75). Robert Dohl tried to assess the participation consequences (Salari, 2005:117-118) and belief in participation as the main influential factors. It should be mentioned that his procedure is a psychological one (Kledy, 1997:7).

The results of research by Wee (2005), Rabbani and Gandji (2005), Rahnavard and Radmanesh (2003) and Alavitabar (2001) show that assessing the advantages of participation is one of the influential factors in citizen's participation in urban affairs. Their studies approved the last theoretical issues.

Mazlow believes that all people have some needs that they try to answer. It means that people's basic needs are causes of human actions. People start doing some works that were motivated by needs (Razavi, 1998:116). One of these needs is social satisfaction from life, job and in general from social environment that can cause the continuity of each positive social action. Citizen's participation in urban affairs is one of them. It reflects the theory of Transmission by Gruenberg (Rafiepour, 2003:17). He believes that people transfer their satisfaction or non-satisfaction in one part of their life to other parts. So citizen, who is satisfied of his /her life, will be much more eager to participate in different social affairs (Rafipour, 1999:526). To verify the above mentioned ideas, results of researches by Kazemi, KordAsiai (2002), HosseinZadeh (2006:223) and Kowsari (2005) show that social satisfaction is very influential in increasing social participation.

Thinkers such as David Slize and Lipset believe that literacy is one of the important factors in participation rate (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2000). They show that people who have higher educations, because of being familiar with the consequences of participation, can make better decisions about their future. Results of studies by Lee (2006), Rebury (2005), Tagavi (2006), Movahed (2003) and Yavari (1995) show that people's literacy is very influential in participatory activities.

Other effective variables in students participation in urban affairs is their ideas about future. People who plan for future are hopeful and optimistic (Tonn, 2004:1046). Since that participatory activities show their results in the long run so it is not possible to achieve them during the action. So people who are doubtful about the future, think that participatory activities waste their time and therefore do not participate in them. The results of studies by Koosha (2000), Gasemi (2000) and Niazi (2002) show that being optimistic and having a good view about future is one of the main factors that affects citizen's participatory behaviors.

Several theories have tried to show how attitudes can affect our behaviors, of which we can name the theories of Russel Fazio, Bem's "self understanding" theory, the theory of Fishbein & Ajzin and the theory of Maclelland.

A) Theory of Russel Fazio

He offers the controlled and automatic cognitive processes. He thinks that controlled cognitive processes can reinforce the relationship between behavior and attitude. So getting some information and experience about it has the main role.

B) Bem's "self understanding" theory

This theory, that seems more rational, includes the processing of the data. The main hypothesis is that behaviors will be formed in situations in which people have the Laissez Faire.

C) Theory of FishBein & Ajzin

Previous theories asserted that attitudes directly affect behavior but in this theory it is claimed that attitudes can not affect them directly. At first attitudes affect our intention and then the

intentions affect our behavior (Urry, 2000:197-229). In other words, according to Fishbein and Ajzin, behavior is dependent on intention and the intention to behave is dependent on attitude to that behavior (dependent on utility expectancy and utility assessment) and mental norms (dependent on the main people's expectations or the other's expectations and motivation for following the others expects (RafiiPour, 1993:187).

D) Theory of Maclelland

The need for achieving success or hard working is especially important (Fanni, 1999). He thinks that in different social behaviors we can find active citizens who have a strong motivation for improvement.

On the whole, we can assess the influential factors 'that form people's actions, based on people's expectations about the results of an action, the action an analysis of the of results analyze, people's imagination about the other's assessment of their actions, rate of doing actions in the past and improvement motivation (person's experiences about participation). All the above mentioned theoretical aspects mostly focus on socio-psychological factors that affect participation. This study with its socio

psychological procedure wants to explain citizen's social participation. Therefore based on theoretical and research literature, the following hypotheses are offered.

Research hypothesis

- participation rate of citizen's is different from each other to their literacy

-variables of prospectivity, assessing participation consequences, participation experience and improvement motivation will be influential in citizen's participation.

- 'social satisfaction and social verify' variables will be influential in citizen's participation in urban affairs.

Methodology

According to the goals of this study, the research method which is applicable the study and also in view of the data collection, the method is survey. In terms of time, is cross-sectional and in terms of intensity rate, it is an extensive study. In this study the population consist of all family heads in Isfahan, that is 305602 units (2007) of which we choose 700 people as the final sample.

$$n = \frac{t^2 pq}{d^2} = \frac{2.58^2 \times .5 \times .5}{.05^2} = \frac{1.6641}{.0025} = 665.64$$

$$n=666$$

After choosing the sample we specified some municipality zones and allocated samples to each one that was based on the Numbers of families in each zone. So the highest samples that are chosen from the municipality zones

are 8, 5, 10, 3, and 6,1,11. Table 1 and figure 1 show the different zones of Isfahan municipality and their samples.

Table1: number of the allocated samples to different municipality zones

Municipality zones	Numbers	Total population of family heads in the chosen zones	percent
1	52	22934	7.4
3	78	33975	11.1
5	158	68825	22.6
6	71	31042	10.1
8	188	82043	26.9
10	118	51719	16.9
11	35	15064	5
Total Numbers	700	305602	100



Figure1: Isfahan's municipality zones, 2008

Statistical methods used in this study

A: statistical methods for making measurement instrument

This method mostly focuses on items accuracy, measurement of subjective concepts and study scales that includes the reliability analysis of scales and has been done in the following processes:

Applicability process of the concepts and making appropriate indexes have been done through the document and pilot study and finally the prepared indexes were offered in Likert type scales with 6 items(in ordinal level).About reliability and validity of measuring instrument we can say that at first we gave them to related specialists and then by omitting and correcting some items, they

could show the formal validity of the measurement instrument. In order to study the reliability of items related to the dependent variable (participation rate) and other dependent variables, because of being one

dimensional, we had to use CronbaCh Alpha coefficient. The coefficient rate show that the internal stability among the items is acceptable (Tables 2, 3, and 4).

Table2: analyzing the reliability of items related to dependent variable “participation rate”

Social participation items	Total reliability coefficient
Thinking of participation in urban affairs as wasting one’s time, feeling a need to participate, maintaining the green space, necessity of paying the city charges ,participation in some plans such as welcoming the spring, prohibiting others from throwing rubbish in residential places, participation in their local affairs being interested in participating in city council elections in the future and etc.	0.819

Table3.The results of reliability analysis of items related to citizen’s attitude

variables	items	Reliability coefficient
Belief in the effects of participation	I believe that our participation in urban affairs is not useful	0.603
	Most people completely believe in the effectiveness of participation in urban affairs	
	Most people think that they can not do any good by participation in urban affairs	
Assessing the consequences of participation	I think that participation in urban affairs can provide better situations for improving social and personal life	0.608
	Participation in urban affairs is not interesting to most people.	
	By Participating in urban affairs we can get better opportunities	
Participation experience	Participation in protecting the green space	0.611
	Participation in local decision- makings	
	Being active in religious ceremonies	
Improvement motivation	Being patient in different life and work problems	0.621
	being ambitious for improvement	

Table 4: The results of items reliability analysis related to the prospectively, social verify and social satisfaction variables

variables	Items	Reliability coefficient
prospectively	People's situation will be worse than before	0.60
	We do not know what happens in the future, so it is better to enjoy the present	
Social verify	others ideas about my participation or non participation in affairs in not important to me	0.60
	I try to do things that are approved by others	
	I pay more attention to the elders and friends ideas about social activities such as participation	
Social satisfaction	Being respectful	0.623
	Satisfied by the neighbors	
	Satisfied by the job	

b) Statistical methods for analyzing the data and goodness analysis model

This method is mostly used to measure the correlation coefficient of the items and also concludes the theoretical concepts. These methods include One-Way ANOVA, Multiple regressions and the Path Analysis. In order to find the path coefficients such as total casual effects, indirect effects, standard solution coefficient, squared multiple correlation for structural equation, we use Lisrel Method Estimation. All of the statistics and data in this study have been analyzed by SPSS16. The results of this section have been given in multiple regression and path analysis section.

Findings

Descriptive analysis

Dependent variable: citizen's participation in urban affairs:

The results show that most of the citizens have high rate of participation in collecting rubbish, protecting the green space, building under the municipality supervision, interested in participating in choosing parliament members and city council, trying to solve their local problems and so on. In other words we can say that the mean of citizen's participation is 91.71 out of 123 and its Skewness equals -0.402. It shows that direction of the dispersion is towards the left. It means that large Numbers of the citizens got the top mark of mean about participation in urban affairs (table 5).

Table5: dispersion statistics related to citizens participation in urban affaires

variable	maximum	minimum	Range	Skewness	mean	Numbers
Participation in urban affairs	123	46	77	-0.402	91.71	700

Independent variables**Literacy**

According to the descriptive results we can say that most of the respondents were "third grade in middle school and high school graduate" and others were under third grade in middle school and high school graduate ".To assess the significance of differences in the mean of citizen's participation in urban affaires we used the Variance Analysis Test that was based on the differences of literacy.

Results show that this test was meaningful. It means that there is a meaningful relationship between citizen's participation rate and their level of literacy .According to Lsd test, participation means among people with different literacy levels was meaningful. Therefore, based on the results we can say that the highest rate of participation have been seen among people who were high school graduate and beyond high school. Others had a little participation (Table 6).

Table 6: descriptive and inferential statistics related to social participation and Literacy

literacy	Numbers	mean	Standard deviation	One way variance analysis test		LSD
				Significance level	F	
Under the third grade in middle school(1)	170	85.93	2.32	0.0480	3.0413	1&2 are in lower than 0.05 significance level
third grade in middle school and high school graduate (2)	336	88.73	2.37			
Post graduate(3)	164	87.18	3.40			
total	700	87.69	2.64			

Social verify

According to the results, most of the citizens said that they pay more attention to the ideas of reference groups such as elders and their neighbors and try to ask their ideas about participation in urban affairs. By including the

dispersion statistics (mean=11.19, Skewness=-0.604) we come to this conclusion that most of the citizens have got the higher mark in mean for participation under the social verify supervision (table7).

Table7: dispersion statistics related to Social verify

variable	maximum	minimum	Range	Skewness	mean	Numbers
Social verify	18	3	15	-0.604	11.19	700

Prospectively

Results showed that most of the citizens are hopeful about the future and do not believe in "what happens will happen". According to dispersion statistics and the total marks of two

items we can say that the mean of this variable is 7.56 and its skewness equals -0.48. It shows that Skewness was directed toward the left .It means that most of the citizens are hopeful (table8).

Table8: dispersion statistics related to prospectively

variable	maximum	minimum	Range	Skewness	mean	Numbers
prospectively	12	2	10	-0.48	7.56	700

Social satisfaction

Results showed that generally most of the citizens were satisfied by their jobs and their of living place. According to the dispersion statistics and the marks of these three items, under the social satisfaction title, we can say that mean of citizen's

social satisfaction is 13.53 and Skewness equals -0.277. It shows that the Skewness has leaned toward the left. Citizens have got the higher mean marks about social satisfaction (table9).

Table9: dispersion statistics related to social satisfaction

variable	maximum	minimum	Range	Skewness	mean	Numbers
Social satisfaction	18	3	15	-0.277	13.53	700

Assessing the consequences of participation

According to the results, most of the citizens believe that participation in urban affairs can provide good opportunities for personal and social life. So based on dispersion statistics

(mean=12.15, Skewness=-0.310) we can say that the citizen's assessment of participation consequences was positive (table 10).

Table 10: dispersion statistics related to assessing participation consequences

variable	maximum	minimum	Range	Skewness	mean	Numbers
Assessing participation consequences	18	3	15	-0.310	12.15	700

Belief in participation

Results showed that citizens strongly believe in participation. Dispersion statistics (mean=10.55, Skewness=-0.262) show that citizens believe that

they can be influential in urban affairs through participation (table11).

Table11: dispersion statistics related to belief to participation effect

variable	maximum	minimum	Range	Skewness	mean	Numbers
Belief in the effect of participation	18	3	15	-0.310	12.15	700

Participation experience

Results show that most of the citizens tried to participate in some religious affairs in the past and maintained the green grass offered by municipalities. So dispersion statistics

(mean=11.86, Skewness= -0.201) show that the citizens have experience in participation (Table12).

Table12: dispersion statistics related to participation experience

variable	maximum	minimum	Range	Skewness	mean	Numbers
Total participation	18	3	15	-0.201	11.86	700

Improvement Motivation

According to the results, the citizens were ready to tolerate the difficulties of the improving urban conditions. Therefore based on the dispersion

statistics (mean=7.60, Skewness=-0.47) we can say that the improvement motivation among the citizens was considerable (table13).

Table13: dispersion statistics related to improvement motivation

variable	maximum	minimum	Range	Skewness	mean	Numbers
Improvement motivation	12	2	10	-0.47	7.60	700

Regression analysis

The aim of regression analysis is to identify the effects of this studies' main variables and predict the changes of the dependent variable .According to the results we can say that the dependent variable (participation in urban affairs) was mostly affected by "improvement motivation" and "participation experience". In other words, the citizen's participation in urban affairs had the highest effect and "social satisfaction "and "belief in participation" had the lowest effect. Also we

omitted the prospectively item from the model. The final result of this multiple analysis is that the relationship between dependent and independent variables have was statistically meaningful verified and is linear. Its Adjusted R² shows that 0.63 percent of changes among the observations by the linear regression model have been explained by in dependent variables. It means that regression model is meaningful in less than 0.01 significance level (table14).

Table 14: multiple regression analysis of participation rate

variable	Beta	t	Sig. level	Variance analysis		Multiple regression coefficient		
				Sig. level	F	R ² Adjusted square	Estimate value error	
prospectively	-0.038	-0.388	0.6	0.000	171.284	0.79	0.630	
						Durban-Watson quantity	1.93	
Improvement motivation	0.406	-4.05	0.000			Kolmogrove-Smirove	Z	1.159
Assessing participation consequences	0.238	8.87	0.000			Significance level	0.1	
Social satisfaction	0.52	2.18	0.02					
Participation experience	0.312	12.40	0.000					
Belief in participation	0.096	2.63	0.000					
Social verify	0.107	4.21	0.000					

Path analysis

Path analysis helps us to go beyond the direct effects of estimation and also it makes possible the assessment of the causal processes of observed relationship and their relative importance in the

influential paths (Homan, 2001).So in order to assess the indirect effects and the total effects of all the independent variables in citizens participation, (figure2), we used the Lisrel software that its result are given in table15.

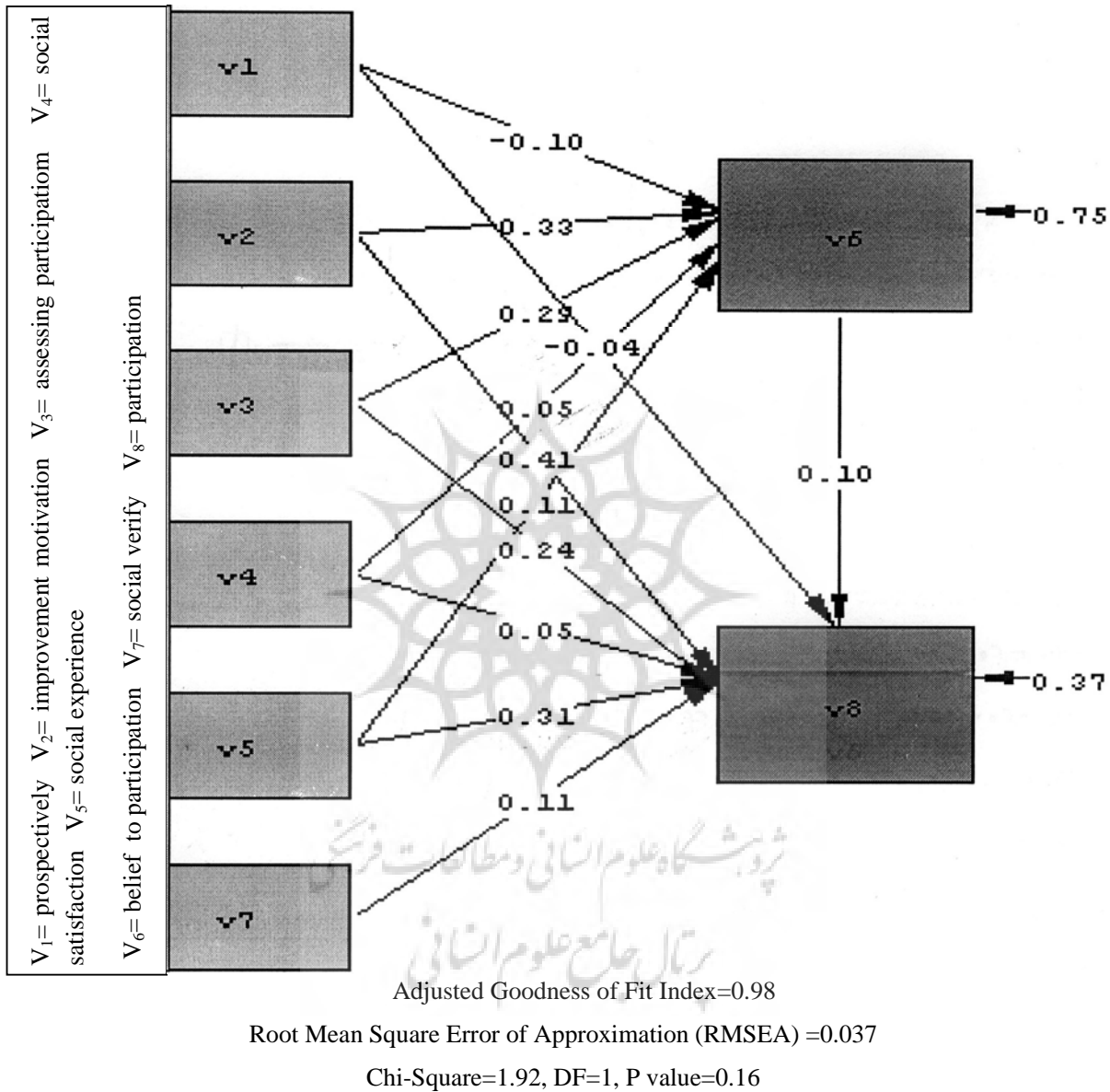


Figure2: explaining citizen’s participation in urban affairs that is based on independent variables

According to “goodness of fit” indexes of structural model 2 and table 15 we come to this conclusion that the tested model has been verified. Also the results of Path Analyze show that:

Direct effect of “improvement motivation” variable on the dependent variable is 0.406 and its

indirect effect on the belief in participation is 0.029 and the whole effect of that was 0.267. It means that “the participation consequences” variable, directly and indirectly affects the “participation belief” variable.

Table 15: The study of independent variables effect on citizen's participation in urban affairs

Dependent variables	Kind of effect			Analyzed effects	Non-analyzed effects	meaningful	meaningless
	direct	Indirect	Total effect				
prospectively	-0.038	-	0.038	.63	0.37	-	0.6
Improvement motivation	0.406	0.033	0.439			0.000	-
Assessing the participation consequences	0.238	0.029	0.267			0.000	-
Social satisfaction	0.052	-	0.052			0.02	-
Participation experience	0.312	0.031	0.343			0.000	-
Belief in participation	0.096	-	0.096			0.000	-
Social verify	0.107	-	0.107			0.000	-

Direct effect of 'participation experience' variable was 0.312 and its indirect effect on 'belief in participation' was 0.031. Its total effect was 0.343. It means that participation experience, directly or indirectly affects participation rate through 'the belief in participation'. Generally, variables such as 'improvement motivation, participation experience and assessing the participation consequences have the highest effect and variables like 'social verify, belief in participation and 'social satisfaction' have the least effect on the dependent variable.

We should note that 'citizen's ideas about the future did not have any statistical effects on citizens participation in urban affairs. The analyzed effects of about 0.63 shows that this study's independent variables have explained 63 percent of changes in the dependent variable. The rest of that, 37%, refers to other variables that have not been studied here.

Conclusions & suggestions

Carol Patman as a thinker says that all of human achievements are the result of citizen's interfering in participatory processes. (Bowler and Donovan, 2002:373). Participation is a process by which people can affect the structures, organizations and authorities and get the appropriate civic services (Schubler, 1996:5), therefore citizen participation has been discussed as a main and vital subject in social and cultural systems. In a way that it is called 'the central point in democracy' (Letki, 2004:668). So for explaining citizen participation we have used different psychological theories. In this section, we try to specify the applicability of theories and the studies' results in this population.

Klndreman, Edwards, Homanz and Worum believe that citizens at first evaluate the benefits of a social action and then decide to act. In fact in these two models we have an economic view about the subjects and claim that people are logical and rational. The results of this research

show that "assessing the benefits of participation" has been influential in directing citizens toward participation. So we can use this part of theories in population. According to psychological procedures of Robert Dohl and the results of studies by Wee (2005), Rabbani and Ganji (2005), Rahnavard & Radmanesh (2003) and Alavi Tabar (2001), citizens of a society will participate in affairs if it becomes useful for them. The result of this study shows that "assessing participation consequences and believing in participation" affect participation rate. So part of the last studies' results and the related theories are applicable in this population.

Maslow is one of the thinkers who believe that gratifying different human needs such as social satisfaction has a very important role in different social activities such as participation. He thinks that we can not expect people to have positive activities until we answer their needs. The results of studies by Kor Asiari (2002), Hosseinzadeh (2006) and Kowsari (1995) verifies the relationship between social satisfaction and participation. The results of this study show that social satisfaction has a main effect on participation. Therefore this section of the study and the related theories can be used in this population.

In attitude theories, variables like "people's experience and social verify" have an important role in preparing them to have participatory behaviors. In other words, according to Glikin, citizen's empirical knowledge that is based on personal experience (Janse, Knijedijk, 2007:24-25) is influential in citizen's participation. The results of this study also show that these variables have much more effect on participation. So they can be used in this population.

In Fazio's theory "getting experience and information" in Beem's "self understanding theory" assessing the benefits and opportunities of participation are influential factors in participation. The results of this study verify the applicability of these theories in this population. Theory of Fishbein and Ajzen shows that in addition to benefits and opportunities we can use social verify as the other factor that affects the participation. Results of this study show the applicability of these theories in this population.

McClelland is one of the thinkers who believes that improvement motivation causes participatory behaviors. The results of this study show that this

part of the mentioned theories can be used in this population. According to the results of studies by Koosha (2000), Gassemi (2000) and Niazi (2002) citizens who were prospective tried to participate in such activities. The results of these studies show that this variable does not have any effects on participation. Therefore it can not be used in this population (it refers to high effects of the other variables in regression analysis).

Based on the theory of David Slize, Lipset and studies by Lee (2006), Riburi (2005), Tagavi (2006), Movahhed (2003) and Yavari (1995) citizen, literacy is one the influential factors in participation. The results of this study show that people's literacy has a positive effect on participation. Therefore, we can apply this part of these theories and studies in our population.

The results of this study generally show that firstly citizen participation in urban affairs was high. Secondly, variables such as improvement motivation, participation experience etc. have a basic role in directing people toward participatory behaviors. In a way that these variables can explain 63% of the variance of dependent variable. So we suggest that:

The city authorities should consider the social aspects besides the psychological ones and also pay much more attention to decision-making. Since we showed in this study that citizen improvement motivation is very high and they are more interested in participation. Knowledge and training have been the basic issues in all the periods and in the recent century have maintained a especial part in different psychological, sociological theories. So we expect that official or non official teaching and training authorities and the media become much more serious in communicating the venefits of participation and clearly describe its importance to the public.

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