# Women's Political Participation in Mazandaran Province and Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting It

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*Abstract*

Political participation is one of the most important political and social behaviors of individuals that can play an important role in the process of socio-political development of society. Women, as half of the human population, can have an important impact on the socio-political activities of the country. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate and study the socio-cultural factors affecting women's political participation in Mazandaran. The views of Robert Putnam, Habermas, Lerner, Milbrath, and Lipset were chosen as the theoretical framework. The research method is a survey and the unit of analysis is women ages 18 to 39 years old. The sampling method is a multi-stage cluster and the sample size is 384 people according to the Cochran formula. The data collection tool is a researcher-made questionnaire. The data analysis method is Pearson's correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analysis using SPSS software. Face validity was used to measure validity, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the dependent variable of political participation was equal to 0.885.

The findings showed that the average political participation in the two dimensions of objective and subjective political participation was at an average level. About 8.9% of them considered their political participation to be very low. About 17.7% considered their political participation to be low, about 33.8% considered their political participation to be moderate, about 21.4% considered their political participation to be high, and about 14.6% considered their political participation to be very high. There is a positive and direct relationship between the variables of feeling of social security, political socialization, and the amount of social capital and the amount of political participation in the two dimensions of objective and subjective political participation. Regression analysis shows that 32.3% of the changes in women's political participation are related to independent variables. The most explanation of the variance and changes in women's political participation belongs to the variables of political socialization and social capital, respectively. As a result,

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strengthening and raising the level of social capital, socialization and political acceptance, as well as a sense of social security, can play a significant role in young women's attitudes towards the level of political participation in the dimensions of subjective political participation and objective political participation, and encourage young women living in the cities of Mazandaran province to increase political participation.

*Keywords:* Political participation, sense of social security, political socialization, social capital, youth.

## 1. Introduction

One of the most important issues that is important for every government and nation is the presence of people's participation in various political arenas, especially elections. In fact, people in the political arena and their participation in elections are the most important component in strengthening governments, and the more significant the presence of people, the greater and more effective their cooperation, assistance, and efforts will be in advancing the goals set for the country. The phenomenon of participation is one of the most important aspects of social, cultural, economic, and political development in every society, especially the growing society of Iran, and some of the structural problems and performance of development programs are due to the shortcomings we have in this area. What adds to the existing issues is that neither the concept of participation nor its dimensions in our society have been well defined, nor have the factors that strengthen or weaken it been seriously studied (Mohseni, 2003:11).

According to Keyes' social theory, social participation is: an assessment of the social value that an individual has, which includes the belief that the individual is an important part of society and what value he adds to his world. Social participation is similar to the concepts of efficiency and responsibility. Individual efficiency means that we believe that we can demonstrate certain behavior and achieve certain goals. Social participation indicates whether these individuals think that what they do is valuable to society or not. This view is in line with the theme that Marx proposes that humans are inherently generative (Keyes, 1989; quoted in Bani Fatemeh et al., 2013: 42). Political participation has a deep and inextricable connection with the most important topics related

to political science, such as parties, pressure groups, relations between people and the government, civil society, and the like. Despite the rich literature on this subject, the issue of participation and its causes and motivations is still a subject of discussion and debate, and the differences in this category are tangible and noteworthy, and in fact, it is still shrouded in ambiguity (Ayubi, 1999, 185).

Participation in elections is one of the important types of political participation, which itself refers to those voluntary activities through which members of a society participate in the selection of political decision-makers and directly or indirectly influence and interfere in shaping public policy. Voting in elections is the main criterion for measuring the level of political participation of the people of a society. In Iran, especially after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, elections, regardless of the importance they usually have in a political system based on popular votes, are practically considered as an indicator and test for the stabilization of the political system and its level of popularity and support among the people.

Political participation is considered a part of social behavior because, firstly, it is considered one of the main pillars and indicators of political development. Secondly, it is closely related to the legitimacy of political systems, and thirdly, it largely reflects the type of political system of any society. Therefore, studying political participation in any society enables the understanding of the political behavior of its people and determines what factors affect the level of political participation in various social contexts (Panahi, 2004, 90-91). Political participation is one of the examples of people's presence in determining their own destiny. It is one of the most basic forms of social relations and has been considered as one of the thematic axes in sociology. The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences has defined political participation as the voluntary activity of members of society in choosing leaders and participating directly and indirectly in public policymaking (Mostafa, 2006, 19).

Voting and participation in elections is the most obvious form of political participation for most citizens in democratic societies. Voting is the most effective and practical means for citizens to exercise their thoughts and beliefs in the administration of public and social affairs. The most basic function of

voting participation is to provide an opportunity for succession and transfer of positions and responsibilities in society. Therefore, political participation refers to voluntary and free activities of members of a society (whether individually or collectively) in government and political affairs that are carried out with the aim of directly or indirectly influencing the political decisions of the country. These activities may be to support the existing policies of government officials or the structure of the system, or they may be considered to seek to change the status quo. Citizen political participation is of particular importance for the stability and dynamism of society. Therefore, it is essential to understand the political attitudes of citizens and to pay more attention to the social factors that contribute to their political participation. Among the reasons for studying electoral participation is to examine the causes and factors affecting the presence of citizens at the ballot boxes and ways to increase this presence. Therefore, the question this research seeks to answer is: What factors motivate citizens to participate in politics?

## 2. Review of Literature

Zolfaghari et al. (2023) studied the relationship between social capital components and political participation: a meta-analysis of research from 2008 to 2010. Political participation is a collective perspective and policy-making that cannot be achieved without social capital. Therefore, this study aims to examine and explain the effect of social capital on political participation using a meta-analysis method. The research method is a meta-analysis. The population size is 28 research-survey documents that were conducted between 2008 and 2010. Having a correlation coefficient, significance level, sample size, and the year of the research were the criteria for entering articles into the meta-analysis software. The findings showed that the overall effect size of social capital on political participation is 46 percent. There is a significant relationship between the components of social capital, including social cohesion, social participation, religious affiliation, social awareness, social belonging, social trust, and elite reference group, and political participation. Social capital can be a solid foundation and guarantee for the realization of political participation. Social capital in communities is strengthened by the

connection and social cohesion of ethnic groups with ethnic groups, ethnic groups with the system, and citizens with political rulers.

Nawabakhsh and Hosseinzadeh (2023) studied the factors affecting women's political participation in elections. Political participation is a descriptive combination that means people's involvement in political affairs, namely governance. Political participation entered the political literature of political theorists following the process of human socialization and involvement in the political management of countries. The purpose of this research was to examine the factors affecting women's political participation in elections. The present research was conducted using the analytical-descriptive method. Ralph is one of the sociologists who considers authority to be related to the position of the individual and has talked about inequalities related to the appearance and abilities of individuals. In line with this research, we have found that according to Ralph, authority is not related to the gender of the individual and women all over the world can participate in politics regardless of any gender inequalities and gain authority by obtaining political positions. Elections are among the political issues in which women have shown with their participation that they can play an effective role in choosing the right person. And they themselves can also perform best in political positions and positions.

Sheikhzadeh (2022) studied the social factors affecting the participation of the people of Tehran in the elections of the 11th term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly. The subject of this article is to study the effect of social factors on the participation of Tehran citizens in the elections of the 11th term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, which was investigated based on the theories of Putnam, Coleman and Bourdieu and using the survey method; the research hypothesis is that: social indicators such as: social capital, education, social class, place of residence, job, ethnicity and public trust have a significant effect on electoral behavior. However, due to the discrepancy between the performance of some former elected officials and their electoral slogans, the issue of trust has been of particular importance in this period. To test this hypothesis, 430 researcher-made questionnaires were distributed among residents of different areas of Tehran. According to the research findings, social factors have had a significant effect on political participation

and voter behavior in the elections of the 11th term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and among the social factors, social trust has had the greatest effect. The complete change in voter behavior caused the number of elected officials affiliated with the ruling faction in the Radwalat and the Tenth Parliament to decrease sharply.

Babakhani et al. (2013) investigated the factors affecting the participation of volunteer forces in times of crisis. The present study is an attempt to investigate the factors affecting public participation in times of crisis. Therefore, first, a definition of participation and crisis was presented conceptually. Then, by reviewing the background and existing theories in this field, four variables of social trust, isolation, class base, and a feeling of anomie were identified as explanatory variables of participation. The present study is based on the survey method. The measurement tool is a questionnaire, and a multi-stage sampling method using a quota and random method was used to determine the sample size. The sample size is 319 Tehrani citizens. The results of descriptive tests indicate a relatively high average of people's willingness to participate in both dimensions; so that the average participation in times of war is 65.55 and in natural disasters is 68.94. The results of analytical statistical tests ultimately identify three variables: feelings of anomie, social trust, and personal isolation, as the most important factors influencing people's participation in times of crisis.

Nikpourqonvati, Moeini and Ahmadi (2012) concluded in a study that place of birth, education, occupation, social class, religious orientation, income, use of mass media, political affiliation of family, political affiliation of friends and interest in political programs have a significant relationship with women's political participation. The results of Jafarinia's (2011) study indicated that the level of willingness to participate in politics among citizens was moderate, with men's political participation being higher than women's, and that the level of willingness to participate in politics also increases with increasing education. Higher social classes had a greater tendency to participate in politics than lower social classes. Faghihzadeh Gorji and Goodarzi (2012) showed that there is a significant relationship between the variables of age, gender, education, marital status, social class, level of use of mass media, political legitimacy, type of

attitude towards the world of politics, level of political information and political effectiveness with political participation.

Imam-Jumezadeh et al. (2012) showed that by dividing social capital into three variables (social trust, social norms, and social networks), along with considering two aspects of political participation, namely psychological-attitudinal factors and the method of participation (formal or informal), it is observed that there is a significant correlation between the dimensions of social capital and the level of political participation of respondents. Movahed et al. (2008) studied the relationship between social capital and women's political participation in a study. By dividing social capital into four dimensions, along with considering two aspects of political participation, namely attitude towards participation and method of participation, it is observed that there is a significant correlation between the dimensions of social capital and the level of political participation of respondents. Considering the existing findings, it seems necessary to provide a suitable platform for women to expand their social networks and strengthen communication ties based on intimacy and interest, especially in the family.

Based on the estimates of the National Plan to Study Women's Political Participation, which was implemented in 28 provincial centers of the country by Mohseni Tabrizi and Qazi Tabatabaei and Marjaei at the request of the Women's Affairs Office of the Ministry of Interior and in cooperation with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in 2003-2004 with the aim of studying the scope and dimensions of women's political participation in Iran and the factors affecting it, five general dimensions have been studied in the discussion of factors affecting women's political participation, including: political, cultural, social, family factors and an assessment of the characteristics of the government and political and social groups. This research also addresses internal and individual factors and drivers affecting women's political participation. Also, a major study by Mohseni Tabrizi entitled "Investigating the Relationship Between Political Participation and Political Alienation of Female Heads of Tehran" has been conducted, which is one of the research projects of the Vice-Chancellor's Office of Research, University of Tehran.

Also, Pashazadeh Azari conducted a study in 2009-2010 titled "Investigating the Effect of Social Factors on the Level of Political Participation of Students at Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch." The independent variables of students' political awareness, students' parents' social status, students' level of communication with their peers, students' level of activities in university political organizations, students' gender, students' marital status, and students' field of study have a significant relationship with students' political participation. In other words, these hypotheses are confirmed, and the factors of students' use of mass media and students' age have no significant relationship with students' political participation (Pashazadeh, 2010: 73).

Darabi (2015) shows that there is a significant relationship between women's political participation and the variables of social capital, class position, mass media, political participation experience, and political effectiveness, but there is no significant relationship between the variables of membership in civil organizations and access to political figures with women's political participation. The results of regression analysis indicate that the variables of social capital, class position, mass media, political participation experience, and political effectiveness explain a total of 12% of the changes in women's political participation, respectively. The path analysis diagram also showed that the social capital variable had a greater impact on women's political participation than other variables.

Dargahi (2014) showed that there is a significant relationship between the two variables of social capital and students' political participation. According to the average obtained, students' political participation differs based on their gender (female and male), social class (parental education, and family income). According to the average obtained, students' political participation differs based on their marital status, and there is no difference in terms of parental education and field of study. There is a significant relationship between social capital and the level of political awareness of political participation through mass media. Chris Young and DeHart (2016) showed that online social capital, political self-efficacy, and group participation on Facebook were positive predictors of online political participation, while social trust did not have a

direct effect on online political participation. General political use of Facebook and Twitter was a positive predictor of online political participation. However, extensive use of Facebook and Twitter was a negative predictor.

The social approach or sociological explanation is one of the main approaches in explaining political participation. One of the most important theorists of this approach is Lipset. He has studied the factors affecting participation in various works. Lipset believes that the patterns of participation in elections are similar in countries such as Germany, Sudan, the United States, Norway, Finland, and some other countries. In these countries, more men than women, more educated people than illiterate people, more urban dwellers than rural dwellers, more married people than single people, more people with higher status than people with lower status, and members of organizations participate in socio-political processes more than non-members.

The variables considered by Lipset in explaining political participation can be divided into three general categories: 1) The economic status of the family, which includes variables such as income level, job, place of residence, and status. According to Lipset, these variables act as basic variables that indirectly affect individuals' political behavior through some other variables such as political ideology, party membership, etc. 2) The social status of the individual, which includes variables such as marital status, participation in political-social institutions, being urban or rural, being an immigrant or native, level of education, being middle-aged or young. 3) The political-religious status of the individual, in which the variables of these two aspects have a mutual effect on each other. Variables such as the individual's political ideology, which is closely related to the level of religiosity, which in turn is also affected by the political characteristics of the family (Fatemi Amin, 2009, 206).

Huntington and Nelson consider political participation to be one of the main factors of political development. They consider political participation to be subject to two factors: the attitudes and priorities of political elites and the status of intermediary groups, associations, and social institutions within society itself. They believe that the process of economic and social development can ultimately lead to the expansion of political and social participation through two channels:

A) A channel for social mobility, meaning that gaining a higher social status in turn creates in the individual a sense of ability and attitudes towards the ability and influence on the decisions of public institutions, and these mental factors collectively can encourage participation in politics and social activities. In this case, higher social status and the feeling of being politically capable and effective as intermediate variables encourage social and political participation. According to these two authors, among the status variables, the level of literacy or education of the individual has the greatest impact on political participation.

b) The organizational channel, meaning membership and active participation in various groups and social organizations (professional and trade unions, special interest groups, and the like), increases the likelihood of participation in social and political activity. These factors are more important in societies where individual mobility opportunities are more limited because, as mentioned, individuals engage in social organizations or political parties as a last resort to achieve a better social and economic status, but in general, involvement in the activities of organizations is more important than socio-economic status in explaining the difference in the level of political participation (Rezaei, 1996: 54-56).

Perry (1977) divides explanations of political participation into two types: instrumental theories and developmental theories. Instrumental theories view participation as a means to an end, i.e., to defend or advance an individual or group of individuals, and as a barrier against tyranny and tyranny. Thus, the instrumental theorist argues that individuals are the best arbiters of their own interests, that a government in which people participate is more efficient, that those affected by decisions have the right to participate in decision-making, and that legitimacy and government are based on participation. Thus, the ultimate heirs of instrumental theory are utilitarians and pluralists.

Evolutionary theory argues that the ideal citizen is a participatory citizen, and therefore participation is considered an exercise of social responsibility. Participation is a learning experience that develops the citizen not only aware of his rights, but also aware of his duties and responsibilities. Such a view is found in the writings of Aristotle, John Stuart Mill, de Tocqueville, and Rousseau, and is also an important part of conservative and socialist thought.

But for the conservative, the emphasis is on the individual responsible citizen and therefore on individual action, and for the socialist, the emphasis is on the responsibility of society to the individual and therefore on collective action (Rush, 1998: 139-140).

One of the ways in which a system supports and preserves itself is through political socialization. Therefore, any political system that seeks to survive must develop expectations of support among its members. In this regard, according to Almond, the process of political socialization is fundamentally what determines the stability of political culture and the structure of society over time. According to Almond, political socialization never truly ends and continues throughout an individual's life.

In their book Civic Cultures, Almond and Verba provide a concept of political culture that is defined as the political system as it is internalized in people's cognitions, emotions, and evaluations, and as a pattern of individual attitudes and orientations toward politics among members of a political system. In that book, we encounter three types of political culture: a) limited, b) restrictive, and c) participatory (Naqibzadeh, 2000: 76; Kamrua, 1993: 142).

A narrow-minded political culture is characterized by low awareness of the government, low expectations from the government, and low levels of political participation. A subjective political culture is characterized by high levels of awareness and expectation but low levels of participation, and a participatory culture is characterized by high levels of awareness, expectation, and participation. Almond and Verba used the theory of political socialization to examine political participation in five countries: Italy, England, the United States, Mexico, and Germany, and examined the three socializing institutions of the family, school, and work in terms of the level of participation patterns. "The argument of Almond and Verba is that the more the three socializing institutions mentioned above have institutionalized a stronger participation pattern and the more an individual participates within these three socializing institutions, the more political participation he or she will have in later stages of life, and the related society will be closer to a participatory culture in terms of political culture" (Irfani, 2004: 76). In this theory, much emphasis is placed on the role of the authority model outside the political system, or in other

words, on political learning from the models that govern social institutions - or constructive experiences arising from institutional situations - and political elites, and the impact of institutions and elites on the political culture of the people (Inglehart, 1993: 479; Diamond, 1994: 235).

Almond and Verba conclude from their data that there are significant differences in participation patterns within different class groups, with those in higher social classes participating more. They argue that one reason for the low political competence of those without adequate information and education is that they grow up in families where the expectation that anyone who disagrees with a decision can express their opposition is not nurtured.

Max Weber proposed four ideal types of explanations of social and therefore political action and behavior, such as participation. Two of them are rational: action "rational in relation to ends" and action "rational in relation to values" and two are irrational (but not irrational): "emotional action" and "traditional action" (1947: 115–118; see also Giddens, 1971: 152–154). Rational action in relation to ends is behavior in which the individual evaluates a potential action in terms of the costs and benefits of means and ends; whereas rational action in relation to values does not question ends, but rather evaluates the costs and benefits of particular means. Rational economic behavior, maximizing benefits and minimizing costs to achieve a desired goal, is an example of goal-related rational action. Accepting a religious or ideological ideal as an end and seeking the most effective means of achieving it, subject to any limitations imposed by that ideal, is an example of value-based rational action. Affective action is dominated by emotions, and traditional action is dominated by custom and habit. Although Weber's account of ideal types of actions and social behavior can be criticized for its inability to explain how behavior changes, that is, the movement from one type of action to another, it clearly recognizes the importance of values and the satisfaction of individual needs (Rasch, 1998: 141).

In general, in Weber's political sociology, since human life is subject to rational and irrational forces and many social behaviors are considered irrational, therefore, the irrational foundations of behavior in political life are also strong. Political behavior is not entirely rational behavior, that is, it is not

carried out in accordance with the calculation of economic and social interests, but man, as a complex being, has, in addition to these interests, profound irrational interests and lives that naturally affect various areas of his life, including political behaviors. Politics and domination in each of its three types is a group action and behavior in which command and obedience are carried out for different reasons. In examining three types of examples of domination or politics (traditional authority, charismatic authority, rational authority), which from his point of view are the only types of domination and politics, Weber paid attention to the social and historical trends related to each and thus examined them from the perspective of political sociology (Bashirieh, 2009: 59).

The research hypotheses are:

1. It seems that there is a significant relationship between social capital and the level of political participation.

2. It seems that there is a significant relationship between political sociability and the level of political participation.

3. It seems that there is a significant relationship between the feeling of social security and the level of political participation.

## 3. Methodology

The present study was a correlational study conducted as a survey. The statistical population of the study consisted of young women aged 18 to 39 in Mazandaran province, whose number was 65,240 according to census statistics. Using the Cochran formula, 384 people were selected as a statistical sample using multi-stage cluster sampling. The sample size was determined using the Cochran formula. Sampling is a set of measures that are taken to select a number of individuals from the community in a way that is representative of it. In the sampling method, multi-stage cluster sampling was used. The selection of individuals in the relevant areas was as follows: first, the cities were divided into several main areas, and in each area, the number of houses was considered, and the interview was conducted with the first person who appeared in front of the door, provided that the person in question was willing to be interviewed and that no third person (as a nuisance) was present, and that the respondent in question was in the desired age group. The

questionnaire technique, which is the most common technique used in survey research, was used. In discussing the validity of the measuring instrument, several different types of validity can be imagined, each dealing with a different dimension of the measurement subject. Face validity was used, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to ensure the reliability of the research instrument.

**Table ١. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the reliability of variables**

| Variables | Items | Cronbach's alpha coefficient |
|---|---|---|
| Political Participation | 35 | 0.946 |
| Social Capital | 50 | 0.734 |
| Political Socializatiom | 12 | 0.932 |
| Sense of Social Security | 27 | 0.792 |

The Cronbach's alpha value of the independent and dependent variables under study is between 0.734 and 0.946, indicating that the correlation and internal consistency between the items related to the variables are appropriate and acceptable. In other words, it has reliability and trustworthiness. For example, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the independent variable of political sociability is 0.932, the feeling of social security is 0.946, and the social capital variable is 0.734. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for political participation is 0.946, which is very high and its items have been able to have the necessary internal consistency. Since the coefficients obtained for the questionnaire are high, it can be concluded that the research tool is a stable and reliable tool.

**Feeling of social security:** Feeling of security creates an environment where an individual can work and engage in activities with greater motivation and effort in the shadow of social trust that has spread throughout society. In fact, social trust arising from a feeling of security affects all aspects of human life, and the resulting distrust disrupts social order and the flow of action of members of society (Hazar-Jeribi and Yari, 2012). In this study, the feeling of social security has been examined in four dimensions: physical, financial, emotional, and communication security (Gholam-Niarmi, 2017).

**Political participation (dependent variable):** According to Milbrath, participation is a behavior that affects or intends to affect the results of government (Mousfa, 1996, 21). Panahi means by political participation any

type of voluntary political activity related to qualifying, selecting, and being selected for political positions in society, influencing the formation and public programs, and in the institutions and political system of society (Panahi, 2007; 88). Lester Milbrath also considers political participation to be a set of activities and actions of citizens to exert influence on the government and support the political system. In this definition, the scope of people's actions in political participation includes: applying pressure, competition, and influencing on the one hand, and supporting and supporting on the other (Vosoughi, 2004: 110). Therefore, the definition used in the present study falls within the framework of Milbrath and Panahi's definition. Two dimensions have been considered for political participation, which are: electoral political participation, active or non-electoral political participation.

**Social capital:** According to James Coleman, social capital consists of standards, social networks, and relationships between adults and children that are valuable for children's development (Field, 2006; 37-38). According to Putnam, social capital is various aspects of social organization such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions (Putnam, 2001; 285). To measure the social capital variable, two dimensions were used: cognitive (social trust, sense of social belonging) and structural (social cohesion, network of social relationships).

**Political socialization:** Socialization theories consider the family, and especially parents, as the most powerful factor in familiarizing children with the accepted values of society. Therefore, from this perspective, families, in addition to the socialization process, teach their children and adolescents to understand family values and internalize the values of the larger society through learning social norms, patterns, and orders. Socialization means the individual's adaptation and conformity to group and social values, norms, and attitudes, or in other words, socialization is a process through which each individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary for effective and active participation in group and social life. The set of these values, norms, and attitudes enables the individual to have relationships and interactions with groups and individuals in society. The socialization process is continuous and lifelong. The socialization process creates an identity for the individual by

satisfying desires and wishes or preventing them from being achieved. In the past, each individual acquired his or her identity based on family history and social class (Sarokhani, 1997: 937). The socialization variable has been operationalized through the following indicators and components: trusting others, cooperating, having order and discipline in life, learning the norms of society, respecting elders, increasing the learning of knowledge and skills, being adaptable, observing laws and regulations, forming personality, and having emotional relationships.

### Table 2. Theoretical and operational definition of variables

| Variables | Theoretical definition | Operational definition |
|---|---|---|
| Social Capital | Various aspects of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. | Two dimensions, cognitive (social trust, sense of social belonging) and structural (social cohesion, social network) |
| Sense of Social Security | A kind of positive psychological orientation (satisfying, convincing, calming) of citizens towards the lack of impact of the presence and occurrence of anti-security events and incidents (threats) in current and future conditions in various social, economic, political stability, identity cohesion, territorial integrity and security areas. | Physical, financial, emotional and relational security |
| Political Participation | Any type of voluntary social activity related to qualifying, selecting, and being selected for political positions in society, influencing the formation and public programs, and the institutions and political system of society. | It has two dimensions: electoral political participation, active or non-electoral political participation. Electoral participation: An individual's participation in elections and their presence at the ballot box and participation in an important political event. Active participation: The degree of in-person and non-in-person contact (telephone, correspondence, etc.) with each of the political institutions and organizations. |
| Political Socializatiom | Socialization means an individual's adaptation and conformity to group and social values, norms, and attitudes. | Trusting others, cooperating, having order and discipline in life, learning the norms of society, respecting elders, increasing the learning of knowledge and skills, being adaptable, observing rules and regulations, forming a personality, and having emotional relationships. |

## 4. Findings

According to the research findings, 51.5 percent are male and 48.5 percent are female. The minimum age is 18 years and the maximum age is 29 to 35 years. About 60.5 percent of the total respondents were married. Also, 32.9

percent of the respondents in this study had a bachelor's degree and accounted for the highest frequency, and 2.4 percent of the respondents had a primary education and accounted for the lowest frequency.

The dependent variable of the research is women's political participation, which has two dimensions: subjective political participation and objective political participation. The findings showed that about 8.9 percent consider their political participation to be very low. About 17.7 percent consider it to be low, about 33.8 percent consider it to be moderate, about 21.4 percent consider it to be high, and about 14.6 percent consider it to be very high. The descriptive findings of the research showed that about 9.6 percent consider their subjective political participation to be very low. About 13.8 percent consider it to be low, about 36.2 percent consider it to be moderate, about 25 percent consider it to be high, and about 14.4 percent consider their subjective political participation to be very high. The findings showed that about 17.7 percent consider their objective political participation to be very low. About 18.8 percent consider the level of objective political participation to be low, about 29.9 percent to be moderate, about 20.3 percent to be high, and about 13.3 percent to be very high.

**Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to level of political participation**

| Objective dimension | | Subjective dimension | | political participation | | Participation rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | N | % | N | % | N | |
| 17.7 | ٦٨ | 9.6 | ٣٧ | 12.5 | ٤٨ | Very low |
| 18.8 | ٧٢ | 13.8 | ٥٣ | 17.7 | ٦٨ | low |
| 29.9 | ١١٥ | 36.2 | ١٣٩ | 33.8 | ١٣٠ | medium |
| 20.3 | ٧٨ | ٢٥ | ٩٦ | 21.4 | ٨٢ | high |
| 13.3 | ٥١ | 14.4 | ٥٩ | 14.6 | ٥٦ | Very high |
| ١٠٠ | ٣٨٤ | ١٠٠ | ٣٨٤ | ١٠٠ | ٣٨٤ | total |

**First hypothesis:** There seems to be a significant relationship between social capital and women's political participation.

**Table 4. Pearson correlation coefficient between social capital and  political participation**

| Dependent variable | Pearson correlation coefficient | sig | result |
|---|---|---|---|
| Subjective dimension of participation | 0.390 | 0.000 | Confirmation |
| Objective dimension of participation | 0.417 | 0.000 | Confirmation |
| Women's political participation | 0.398 | 0.000 | Confirmation |

Pearson correlation was used to measure the relationship between the amount of social capital and women's political participation. The results

showed that there is a significant correlation between the two variables of the amount of social capital and women's political participation. The higher the amount of social capital, the higher the level of women's political participation, and conversely, the lower the amount of social capital, the lower the level of women's political participation. This positive correlation is significant with a probability of more than 99 percent. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the amount of social capital and women's political participation is 0.398 and its significance level is zero. Because the significance level of the correlation coefficient is less than 5%, there is a significant relationship between the two variables of social capital and women's political participation. The objective dimension of participation has the highest correlation coefficient with the variable of the amount of social capital, and the Pearson correlation coefficient between them is 0.417. Also, the subjective dimension of participation has the lowest correlation (0.390) with the amount of social capital among the dimensions of women's political participation.

**Second hypothesis:** It seems that there is a significant relationship between political socialization and the level of political participation.

Considering the level of measurement of the variables of political sociability and women's political participation, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between the variables. Examining the relationship between the variables showed that there is a significant correlation between the two variables and that the relationship between these variables is positive and direct. This means that the more political sociability increases, the more political participation of women increases, and conversely, the less political sociability decreases, the more political participation decreases. This positive correlation is significant with a probability of more than 99 percent. The Pearson correlation coefficient between political sociability and political participation is 0.409 and its significance level is zero. Because the significance level in the correlation coefficient is less than 5%, there is a significant relationship between the two variables of feeling of political sociability and women's political participation. The relationship between political sociability and the dual dimensions of women's political participation

is positive and the correlation value of the objective dimension is greater than the subjective dimension of participation.

**Table 5. Pearson correlation coefficient between political socialization and political participation**

| Dependent variable | Pearson correlation coefficient | sig | result |
|---|---|---|---|
| Subjective dimension of participation | 0.368 | 0.000 | Confirmation |
| Objective dimension of participation | 0.514 | 0.000 | Confirmation |
| Women's political participation | 0.447 | 0.000 | Confirmation |

**Thired Hypothesis:** It seems that there is a significant relationship between the feeling of social security and the level of political participation.

One of the variables that can create the basis for individuals' political participation is the sense of social security. Given the level of measurement and testing of the normality of the data in the variables of sense of social security and women's political participation, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between the variables. Examining the relationship between the variables showed that there is a significant positive and direct correlation between the two variables. The greater the sense of social security, the greater the level of women's political participation. This positive correlation is significant with a probability of more than 99 percent. The Pearson correlation coefficient between sense of social security and women's political participation is 0.422. Because the significance level in the correlation coefficient is less than five percent, there is a significant relationship between the two variables of sense of social security and women's political participation. The variable of women's political participation has two dimensions, and their relationship with the independent variable of sense of social security is positive and significant.

**Table 6. Pearson correlation between sense of social security and political participation**

| Dependent variable | Pearson correlation coefficient | sig | result |
|---|---|---|---|
| Subjective dimension of participation | 0.485 | 0.000 | Confirmation |
| Objective dimension of participation | 0.411 | 0.000 | Confirmation |
| Women's political participation | 0.422 | 0.000 | Confirmation |

To examine and test the research hypotheses, in addition to correlation coefficients, regression analysis and analysis of variance tables were used. The value of the multiple correlation coefficient was 0.568, which indicates a high relationship between the independent variables and the level of political

participation. The value of the coefficient of determination was 0.323, which indicates the fact that 32.3 percent of the changes in the level of political participation are related to these independent variables (social capital, sense of social security, and political sociability). The results of the Durbin-Watson test indicate the independence of the data from each other and its value is 1.63.

**Table 7. Summary of the results of the multivariate regression of political participation**

| R | $R^2$ | F | Sig | Durbin Watson test |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.568 | 0.323 | 8.37 | 0.000 | 1.63 |

Analysis of variance also showed the significance of the regression and the linear relationship between the variables, which confirms its significance level. Analysis of variance shows that the F value is 8.37 and with a significance level of zero, it can be said that there is a significant difference with a probability of more than 99% confidence between the independent variables (social capital, political sociability, and sense of social security) and the dependent variable of political participation.

The regression coefficient values show that the variables of social capital, political sociability, and sense of social security are at the 99 percent level. For every unit change in the level of political sociability, there is a change of about 0.276 units in the level of political participation. This change in the dependent variable of political participation for the political sociability variable is equal to 0.219 units. According to the beta values, the political sociability and social capital variables have the greatest effect and the social security variable has the least effect on political participation.

**Table 8. Regression coefficients of the independent variable with political participation**

| Variables | b | Std. Error | Beta | T | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constants | 5.282 | 18.361 | | 4.276 | 0.005 |
| Social capital | 0.105 | 0.080 | 0.219 | 9.282 | 0.000 |
| Political socialization | 0.122 | 0.071 | 0.276 | 10.212 | 0.000 |
| Sense of social security | 0.121 | 0.102 | 0.169 | 6.861 | 0.000 |

## 5. Conclusion

In our society, women and youth are considered the most crucial and sensitive segment of society, and the level of their political participation is considered to indicate the importance and availability of the field for participation of individuals in political affairs. Many factors may be effective in the political participation of individuals in a society, especially women and youth. Therefore, the present study was conducted with the aim of

investigating the social and cultural factors affecting the political participation of women in Mazandaran province. Political participation is one of the important topics in political sociology and is considered one of the branches of political development in countries. Political participation is any voluntary act, successful or unsuccessful, organized or unorganized, occasional or continuous, including legitimate or illegitimate use, which aims to influence the selection of general policies and guidelines of the country, the management of state affairs, and the selection of political leaders in any government, whether local or national. Today, the discussion of development and the trend towards quantitative and qualitative improvement of indicators of progress and development are among the very important factors that have occupied all the efforts of decision-makers and leaders of countries, especially the Third World.

The data obtained from the status of citizens' political participation show that the findings showed that about 8.9 percent of them consider their political participation to be very low. About 17.7 percent consider their political participation to be low, about 33.8 percent consider their political participation to be moderate, about 21.4 percent consider their political participation to be high, and about 14.6 percent consider their political participation to be very high. The results of the present study show that the average political participation of the respondents was moderate. Citizens' political participation is of particular importance for political stability and the dynamism of society. Therefore, it is essential to understand the political attitudes of citizens and pay more attention to the social factors that contribute to the political participation of these individuals. Various factors such as political socialization, social capital, and a sense of social security have had an impact on the level of women's political participation.

One of the results of this research was that the feeling of social security affects the level of women's political participation. That is, if women in society feel secure from different angles, the ground for their political participation is more prepared. Stability and sustainability of security can only be achieved through institutionalizing it in a society, a feeling of participation and public responsibility for social security (Rezazadeh and Elmi, 2014: 116). Citizens' political participation is formed in conditions of feeling of social security and

continues along with political perception and its application in society. The feeling of social security is one of the basic requirements for the sustainable and balanced development of a society. The feeling of security means mental and psychological peace in the face of dangers and incidents that threaten an individual in their daily lives. In establishing social security mechanisms, the role of people's participation is more important than any hardware-based measure. Because the desired outcome of any political system, which is also affected by the security environment of the society, is the level of satisfaction that individuals have with the performance of that system in interacting with the surrounding environment (Hersich et al., 2012: 2). Therefore, the findings of this study show that if women feel more secure, the situation of political participation will improve. Social conditions such as social security and economic issues are among the important influential factors that the existence of "security" as one of the basic needs both in practice and in the eyes of the people has an impact on the country's issues. Gerber and Rogers (2009) show that when the influence of social norms and values in society is at a low level, the level of participation in elections decreases significantly. However, when social norms in society become stronger, on the one hand, political participation increases and on the other hand, participants are encouraged to continue this process.

Another finding is that with increasing political socialization, the level of political participation increases. George Herbert Mead, in analyzing the actions of individuals, places special emphasis on the self-concept and the individual's perception of reality. According to this view, the pattern of action or the way individuals deal with reality is not subject to external realities or internal tendencies, but rather to the perception that they find of reality in the form of institutions. These perceptions are formed through interaction with others and are variable and dynamic, so that they can be interpreted according to each situation (Abdollahy, 1999: 24). According to this view, the political and social participation of individuals and their cooperation with civil and political institutions is subject to the perception that they acquire of themselves and other matters in the process of socialization, and it is an interpretation that individuals find of civil and political institutions and the issues of interest,

participation, expectations of others, and roles related to themselves, according to each situation. One of the ways in which a system supports and preserves itself is through political socialization. Therefore, any political system that seeks its survival must develop supportive expectations among its members. In this regard, according to Almond, the process of political socialization essentially determines the stability of political culture and the structure of society over time. According to Almond, political socialization never really ends and continues throughout an individual's life. The findings of Bagheri, Hosseinzadeh, Alihossein, and Shojaei (2019) indicate the relationship between political socialization and women's political participation.

Another hypothesis of the research is that social capital and cultural capital affect women's political participation in Mazandaran province. Resource theory is a sociological theory that claims that some socio-economic resources, including education, social capital, and cultural capital, affect individuals' political participation. Therefore, individuals' participatory behavior should be explained in terms of their membership in various social, economic, and cultural groups. One of the theorists who pays attention to the effect of social capital on political participation is Robert Putnam. On the one hand, voluntary associations and informal networks directly affect political participation. On the other hand, they indirectly affect citizens' political participation through political mobilization and membership. According to the results of research by Quinter et al. (2011), having various social networks and acquiring civic social capital (support, trust, and participation) increases political participation, and this in turn causes various political contacts with others. Imam-Jumehzadeh et al. (2012) conducted a study to examine the relationship between social capital and political participation of students at the University of Isfahan. The findings showed that by dividing social capital into three variables (social trust, social norms, and social networks), along with considering two aspects of political participation, namely attitudinal psychological factors and the method of participation (formal or informal), it is observed that there is a significant correlation between the dimensions of social capital and the level of political participation of the respondents. Khoshfar (2008) shows that the main

dimensions of social capital alone explain 16.3 percent of the changes related to political participation.

According to the results obtained by Nejat et al. (2014), youth political participation is more evident in the form of formal participation such as participation in elections and formal political rallies, and there is less desire and tendency in the informal dimension of political participation. Therefore, in order to increase the areas of political participation of youth, especially in the informal dimension, the platforms for developing social capital, civic participation, support, and civic trust in society must be facilitated. In general, the role of social capital in the field of political participation is undeniable (Nejat et al., 2014: 180). The results of Jafari's (2006) research also show that social capital has a positive and significant relationship with political participation. In addition, social capital consists of five main indicators (social participation, social relations, self-confidence, civic commitment, social trust), and the indicators of civic commitment, social relations, social participation, and self-confidence also have a positive and significant relationship with unconventional political participation. However, social relationships and self-confidence are not related to this type of participation, while social trust has a significant relationship with both types of participation. Dargahi (2014) examined the effect of social capital on political participation of students at Babol Azad University. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between the two variables of social capital and political participation of students. The results obtained are consistent with the findings of Dargahi (2014), Darabi (2015), Rahmatabadi and Aghabakhshi (2007), Bostrom (2019), Zolfaghari (2014), Najafi et al. (2014), Zolfaghari et al. (2013), Hosseini Nejad Mah Khatuni et al. (2013), Niazi et al. (2000), Sheikhzadeh (2000), Amini et al. (2010), Habibpour and Mousavi Khorshidi (2016), Akbari (2004), Chavoshian (2003), and Niqabi et al. (2016). So, in conclusion, it must be said that political participation is a necessity of today's societies, which is influenced by many factors. One of these factors is social capital, which, by introducing components such as trust, social networks, and norms, facilitates social solidarity and ultimately improves political

participation in societies where the amount of this type of capital is at an acceptable level.

In this study, by observing the results of the hypotheses, it can be said that youth political participation, based on what theorists such as Lipset, Milbrath, Goel, Lerner discuss, depends on factors such as political motivations, social status, and personal characteristics. The research findings indicate that the independent variables of social capital, political sociability, and sense of social security have a significant relationship with the dependent variable of political participation. These three variables together explain 32.3 percent of the changes in political participation. Resource theory is a sociological theory that claims that some socio-economic resources, including education, job, and income, affect individuals' political participation. Therefore, individuals' participatory behavior should be explained in terms of their membership in occupational, income, and educational groups, etc. It is worth noting that both dimensions of political participation, namely the objective and subjective dimensions of women's political participation in Mazandaran province, have a positive and significant relationship with variables such as a sense of social security, social capital, and political socialization, and the effects of these variables have had a significant effect on both the objective and subjective dimensions of women's political participation.

According to the findings, it should be said that the higher the level of political socialization, the higher the level of women's political participation in the dimensions of subjective political participation and objective political participation. Therefore, to increase or change the level of women's political participation in society, more changes should be made to political socialization, especially during adolescence and youth, according to the findings obtained in this study. In other words, the norms and rules of social and political life should be taught to individuals in society, especially children, adolescents, and young people, both in the family environment and the school environment, and in the social environment of society as a whole. Increasing the sense of social security in economic, social, and cultural dimensions can affect women's attitudes toward political participation and participation in political and social activities. Therefore, to increase the level of women's political participation in

Mazandaran province, it is necessary to think of a solution in the field of feeling security in its various dimensions. Therefore, increasing social connections and increasing the sense of social security in society are other important suggestions of this study. Also, strengthening social capital and its dimensions and components. As a rule, changes in the various dimensions and components of social capital, as well as the types of social values of women, provide the basis for changes in their political behavior and increase the political participation of this segment of society.

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