

## Effective Factors in Women's Social Participation in Deylam City

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### **Abstract**

As a part of human capital, women can play a decisive role in developing a country with their social participation. With a look at the recent history of Iran, one can see the presence of women in political, social, economic and cultural arenas; a presence which has sometimes been really serious and sometimes weak, but irrefutably active in social developments of Iran. This research aims to study some factors influencing women's participation in Deylam city. The statistical population consisted of women, 18-45 years of age, living in Deylam city, out of which 245 individuals were selected using random sampling method. The data were analyzed by SPSS 24. The tool for data collection was one questionnaire. The results showed a significant and direct relationship between the independent variables (age, socioeconomic class, use of mass media and social security) and the dependent variable (women's social participation). Regression analysis also showed that social security with  $B= 0.49$ , and socioeconomic class with  $B= 0.44$ , had the highest share in explaining women's participation.

**Keywords:** Women, Social participation, Socioeconomic class, Mass media, Social security.

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## 1. Introduction

Participation refers to one's sharing something and their enjoyment or to one's participation in a group and their direct or indirect collaboration (Naizi and Ghafari, 2007, p. 12). As one of the main concepts of sociology, this is considered a basic in any democratic system. In fact, the stability and continuity of a democracy depends on the participation of all members of a society in the affairs related to their social life.

In recent decades, the concept of participation has always been embedded in the processes of development, with public movements proving the effect of human factors in the success of projects as a result of people's participation. In its 19th public session held in Nairobi in 1926, UNESCO put "human-oriented endogenous growth" forward as an approach and necessitated its implementation in the development program. In this approach, the necessity of participation was further emphasized and turned into the main tenet of development in the world (Rajabi, 2011, p. 102).

It was to large extent following the failure of solutions and development programs imported from the West to developing countries in 1950s and 1960s that the emphasis was put on participation as one of the main factors of development in developing societies. Not making use of public participation was evaluated as the main factor in the failure of development programs (Vahida and Niazi, 2003, p. 119). Meanwhile, a reason that advanced countries are developed is the participation of all groups of people, especially women in social, economic and political arenas. Hence developing countries, in order to reach sustainable development, must use women as a fundamental in their society. Momsen has clearly shown that women across the world have a determining role in the production and reproduction of activities and in the process of development. For instance in regard to economy, women produce half of rural products. However, in spite of their active and vital role in the activities related to development, they have been ignored in many of development programs and this basically causes problems in the process of development programs and projects (Momsen, 1991, p. 14).

Iran is a country which has gone through many cultural and social changes, especially in regard to the area of family in recent decades. With families structurally changing from extended to nuclear, women have found a different

role in their families and a stronger presence in social arenas (AbbasiShavazi, 2010 p. 33). Having found a different position in their society, women have gained a more important role in making decisions for their family in terms of economic and social affairs. Having largely been marginalized in social and political relations and with their role having been ignored in economic and social arenas on one hand and on the other hand, having enhanced their abilities thanks to increases in the level of literacy and higher education, now women seek a greater role in managing their families and society and expect higher societal positions. The developments in three recent decades, especially the significant increase in the level of awareness and education of women indicate that Iranian women want a political, economic and social share as equal to men, as result of which the culture of patriarchy faces serious challenges.

Among different social groups in Deylam city, women faced more problems than men in terms of forging identities, especially with regard to their access to necessary resources for giving a meaning to, a definition of and reconsideration on their identity-related signs, with their resources of identity being overshadowed by gender or their husbands' social status and class. This had reduced women's interactions, setting them within a framework of conventional and predefined feminine roles. However, within recent years the proliferation of the market in this city, the entrance of travelers from different cultures and with various identities, and the development of educational centers have brought women opportunities so as to develop a new role and identity and make their presence felt in diverse urban affairs.

Considering all the above mentioned facts, this research, in order to offer a tangible discussion, tries to answer these basic questions: what factors can lead to the social participation of this group of people in important affairs run in Deylam city? And what are the obstacles in this path which can be talked about? And finally, what portion does each factor take up in the rate of women's inclination toward social participation in different urban affairs?

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## 2. Review of Literature

Samadian and YazdanPanah (2008) in a research entitled "an investigation into factors influencing the rate of women's social participation: A case study of Kerman city" showed that demographic variables (marital status and educational level) had a significant relationship with formal participation but not with informal participation. Moreover, there was a significant and positive relationship between family features (existence of spirit of responsibility for consultation in the family, members of family's status of participation, the role of women in family decision makings) and informal participation. Among cultural factors, there was also a relationship between hope for the future, universalism, gender-related attitude and formal participation. The rate of using media was significantly related to formal participation as well as to informal participation. The evaluations of the benefits of participation were understood to be significantly related to only informal participation.

In a study entitled "women's social participation and its effect on the welfare of families: a case study of Tehran's district 9", Ghafari et al. (2013) wanted to know what relationship there was between women's social participation and the welfare of families. The results of their research revealed a significant relationship between women's political participation, associative participation and members of family's health observation. There was also a significant relationship between women's associative participation and the amount of time members of a family allocated for free time. In addition, a significant relationship was observed between women's religious participation, regional participation and the extent of their security. In a regression analysis of the six variables of (religious, charity, associative, regional, political and economic) participation, only regional and charity ones had a significant relationship with family's social welfare. And based on the findings of the research, the higher women's regional and charity participation, the better their families' social welfare was.

Amini and Amini (2016) in a research as "the examination of socioeconomic and background factors affecting the rate of citizens' participation in regard to urban affairs related to the municipality" sought to investigate the dimensions of participation in urban affairs among citizens over

18 years of age living in Shushtar city. According to the results of their research, there was a significant relationship between the independent variables of citizens' satisfaction, social trust, social sense of belonging, awareness and income with the dependent variable of rate of participation, which was a positive and direct relationship. In other words, the higher citizens' level of satisfaction, awareness, sense of belonging and income, the higher their participation. The findings confirmed the difference between the participation level of the employed and that of the unemployed. Also the mean of social participation in different social classes was statistically and in terms of F value significant and the rate of participation was higher in the middle and upper classes of society. Additionally the duration of residence in an area was a very important variable which was significant; the longer the residence of citizens in an area, the higher their level of participation.

Grootaert and Bastelaer (2002) in a research entitled "role of social capital in development" examined the effect of social capital on the participation of an area's people in waste management in different regions of Dhaka in Bangladesh. They began their discussion with two questions: why are some societies more organized in producing public goods and what social features lead to interaction and partnership among neighbors? They observed that in some regions where management was not correctly carried out, the residents of the regions had formed a voluntary group and signed a deal with the private sector for waste collection and had obtained some success. In reply to this question "why have some regions succeeded and other ones lacked such voluntary measures and the benefits of such actions?", they found social capital of the people in these regions to be the main reason, a capital which is the result of interactions and traditional or common institutions, values, racial or religious heritage and backgrounds shared by all.

Price (2002) in a study as "social capital and factors affecting civic engagement" conducted deep interviews with 32 leaders of voluntary associations in Texas and found that economic factors were more effective in people's engagement in voluntary associations in spite of the emphasis on the role of culture and values in such activities.

By analyzing secondary data, Bakker (2005) in a research as "participation in voluntary associations: relations with resources, personality, and political values" examined the role of social factors such as education, income, religious attachment and social capital, and psychological factors like personality type in explaining the activities of voluntary associations. The findings showed that social factors were far more decisive in explaining women's social participation than psychological factors.

At the end of this part it should be mentioned that although women's social participation has been widely investigated, most of these studies have focused on the effect of socioeconomic factors on women's social participation. The effect of cultural and individual factors has been less explored and never has an independent study investigating women's participation in a port city like Deylam been carried out. Thus, the need of conducting a research examining social participation and its effective factors among women citizens of Deylam city is much felt.

By reviewing theories about social participation and its effect on urban development, this conclusion can be made: Almond and Powell, in addition to emphasizing the role of education, income and occupational level in determining economic and social status, talks about the effect of economic and social status on people's political and social participation. Most of the conducted studies indicate that those who are educated and rich enjoy professional skills and are more likely to be eligible for participatory attitudes. The resources and skills such people obtain in their private life can, due to their duties or needs, pave the way for their social participation. Therefore, more well-off citizens in a society tend to be more active in politics than less well-off ones (Almond and Powell, 2001, p. 142).

Habermas believes that in communicative action individuals do not look for personal success but follow their objectives so that they can coordinate their action programs based on definitions of a shared situation, with this action being rational and fundamental and providing the ground for all to have access to tools of wisdom, opportunities of participating in a discussion, express their opinions and take part in making the final decision. This type of action is in search of reaching an understanding which, in addition to the obtained

communicative action, is based on rationality so that none of the party can force the other to accept (Craib, 2001, pp. 300-301). Habermas calls the space in which communicative action occurs 'public sphere'. By public sphere he means a realm of our social life in which we can form something in dealing with public opinion. When citizens freely discuss and confer about matters of general interest, they in fact behave as a public body (Nozari, 2002, p. 322).

Martin Lipset attempted to formulate a general model in which various variables could account for participation. These variables are clearly sociological that explain the phenomenon of participation or non-participation of different social strata and classes in a social and political process like in associations, city councils, elections, parties and the like according to several general social factors (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2012, p. 65). He maintains that educated people, marrieds, townspeople and prestigious individuals as well as members of organizations, parties, syndicates and councils have a higher rate of social and citizen participation (Niazi and Ghafari, 2007, p. 54).

From Huntington's perspective, social and economic development provides two avenues to social mobility. The first one is achieving higher levels of social status, which gives a person a sense of empowerment and effectiveness in the decision-makings of social and public organizations. Overall, these mental factors can be an encouragement for participating in social or political activities, in which case higher levels of social status and feeling socially and politically empowered and effective as mediator variables can be regarded as an encouragement for social and political participations. In his view, educational level as a status variable has the greatest effect on social participation and as a mediator variable encourages social participations. The second avenue of the effect of social and economic development on participation is organizational activities; that is, membership and active participation in a wide range of social groups and organizations, which increases the probability of attending social and political activities. This factor is more important in societies where opportunities for individual mobility is more limited because, as a last resort, the individual is forced to get involved in social and economic activities of political parties (Thaghafi and Rad, 2014, p. 32).

In his modernization theory, Daniel Lerner considers the four variables of urbanization, literacy, media participation and political participation interdependent, arguing that the more we move from traditional character to modern character, the more interdependent they get. Increasing urbanization brings about increasing literacy as a result of which access to media and political participation are reinforced (Ghafari and Niazi, 2007, p. 50).

From the perspective of Offe and Fuchs, age is an effective factor in forming social capital, which is usually characterized by childhood, adolescence, adulthood, parenthood and retirement. As age differs according to income and free time in different stages, so is one's social participation in different stages of age (Nateghpour and Firouzabadi, 2006, p. 65).

McClelland believe that internalizing 'need for achievement' should occur through the process of socialization from the very beginning of one's life and then be reinforced via necessary trainings, the press and other writings. In regard to social conditions affecting need for achievement, he also mentions factors such as family, social class, parents, social mobility and ideology (Rocher, 2015, p. 190).

In examining people's participation, Castells talks of macro factors, maintaining that the factor which has led to a greater extent of people's participation in society is the result of globalization and the increasing use of information and communication technologies. In fact, globalization has thrown identity construction into question and thus created a new kind of social change which is global citizenship. On the other hand, this phenomenon has reduced the power and authority of governments in dealing with some issues. As a result, it leads civil societies to assuming global citizenship responsibilities. Such a situation gives rise to a higher degree of global citizens' participation (Castells, 200, p. 298). Thus, the role of communications, especially mass media, is of high importance when investigating factors contributing to great political, social, economic and cultural developments.

### **3. Methodology**

In order to collect data, this research used two research methods: documentary and survey, the former for studying theories and gaining information, and the



latter for measuring and analyzing the collected data. The statistical population consisted of women aged 18-45 in Deylam city, out of whom a sample size of 254 was selected using Lin's sample size estimation table (1976: 446) with an error level of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. For getting access to the samples under study, stratified random sampling was used. The stages of sampling were as follows: at first the statistics and information related to the population were extracted and a pretest was conducted. For increasing accuracy and comparability among regions of the city, then, proportion-to-size stratified sampling was used. In the end, the number of sample clusters in the regions of the city was calculated using simple random sampling method. For data analysis, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were utilized. In addition, all stages of data processing was done with SPSS.

Face validity was used to test the content validity of the questionnaire which was administered to professors and academic experts after the items related to the scales were developed (based on the conducted researches and theoretical views). The opinions of these people concerning the evaluation of the items related to each scale led to choosing appropriate items for each scale. To test the reliability of the research instruments, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was applied. This coefficient was equal to 77%, 79%, 70% and 81% for social participation, socioeconomic class, use of mass media and social security, respectively.

#### **4. Findings**

In this research, the main hypotheses were considered in regard to age, socioeconomic class, marital status, use of mass media and social security. These hypotheses measured the relationship between the abovementioned variables and the rate of women's social participation. Measures of central tendency and dispersion of the independent variables and the rate of women's social participation were measured in this study. For each hypothesis and its related variable, tables along with their explanations are given as follows.

1. There is a significant relationship between women's age and the rate of their social participation.

As can be seen in table 1, the results of Pearson's test, given the measurement level of the independent and dependent variables being internal,

shows a significant relationship between the two variables of the respondents' age and the rate of their social participation. In this regard, the Pearson coefficient and confidence level are 0.271 and 0.001, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant and direct relationship between women's age and their social participation.

**Table 1: Correlation between age and social participation**

Variable	Number	Pearson coefficient (r)	Confidence level
Age	254	0.271	0.001

2. There is a relationship between women's marital status and their social participation.

With the independent variable being two-level nominal and the dependent variable being interval, difference in means t-test is used for examining the difference between these two. Table 2 shows that given the value of T (0.460) and confidence level (sig 0.645), there is no significant difference between single women and married ones in terms of social participation and thus the hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 2: Average difference test of women's social participation in regard to marital status**

Marital status	Number	Standard deviation	Mean error	Statistical test
Single	198	1.91	0.49	T=0.460
Married	56	1.95	0.39	Sig=0.645

3. There is a significant relationship between women's socioeconomic class and the rate of their social participation.

As can be observed in table 3, there is a significant and positive relationship between women's socioeconomic class and the rate of their social participation in Deylam city. In this regard, Pearson coefficient and confidence level are 0.42 and 0.000, respectively. It can be, thus, concluded that as women's socioeconomic class goes higher, their social participation increases, which creates a significant relationship between these two variables.

**Table 3: Relationship between women's socioeconomic class and the rate of their social participation**

Variable	Number	Pearson coefficient(r)	Confidence level
Socioeconomic class	254	0.42	0.000

4. There is a significant relationship between women's use of mass media and the rate of their social participation.

As can be seen in table 4, there is a significant and positive relationship between women's use of mass media and the rate of their social participation in Deylam city. In this regard, Pearson coefficient and confidence level are 0.46 and 0.000, respectively. It can be, thus, concluded that as women's use of mass media increases, their social participation goes higher, which builds a direct and significant relationship between these two variables.

**Table 4: Relationship between women's use of mass media and their social participation**

Variable	Number	Pearson coefficient	Confidence level
Use of mass media	254	0.46	0.000

5. There is a significant relationship between women's social security and the rate of their social participation.

As can be observed in table 5, there is a positive and significant relationship between women's social security and the rate of their social participation. In this regard, Pearson coefficient and confidence level are 0.241 and 0.001, respectively. Hence, it can be concluded that as women's social security increases, their social participation rises, which builds a significant relationship between these two variables.

**Table 5: Women's social security and the rate of their social participation**

Variable	Number	Pearson coefficient (r)	Confidence level
Social security	254	0.241	0.001

Based on the multivariate regression test using a simultaneous method for determining the rate of women's social participation in Deylam city after considering the total independent variables, it can be seen that the multivariate correlation coefficient and the obtained coefficient are equal to  $R=0.712$  and  $R^2=0.511$ , respectively.

**Table 6: Explaining effective factors in women's social participation**

Statistical Indices	Multivariate correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination
Values	0.712	0.511

That is, based on the independent variables the variance of women's social participation can explain the significance in the model for almost 51%. Meanwhile, based on standardized beta coefficients in table 7, it is seen that the independent variables of social security, socioeconomic class, access to mass media and age have the highest effect in explaining the rate of female citizens'

participation by  $B=0.49$ ,  $B=0.44$ ,  $B=0.40$  and  $B=0.09$ , respectively. Finally it can be said that given the value of sig, the variables of social security, socioeconomic class, the rate of using mass media and age have a direct and significant effect on the dependent variable.

**Table 7: Statistics related to the independent variables of the regressive model in regard to women's social participation**

Variables	B	Beta	T	Sig.
Social security	2.18	0.49	1.68	0.000
Socioeconomic class	0.16	0.44	2.63	0.002
Rate of using mass media	0.259	0.40	2.689	0.000
Age	0.46	0.09	3.48	0.001

## 5. Conclusion

Participation is a multidimensional and complicated concept, with each society, depending on its cohesion, having different layers of it in various dimensions. Thus, societies try to make citizens' participation possible and increase it at diverse social arenas because social participation plays a key role in reinforcing social unity. The presence of all members of a society in social activities lead to their unity and sympathy, which thus results in the development of civil and democratic institutions. As women make up half of the society's population, their presence in the society facilitates development, enhances humans' life and reduce inequalities, and their involvement and participation in public arenas and decision makings bring rewards for their society and families. A large part of societies' lack of development and flourishing is the result of a historical negligence of the half the human's population rights which they deserve to have. And this negligence has done harm to all human throughout history. The humiliation and prevention of half the human population from obtaining their rights and dignity is a factor that has blocked whole human civilization to fully grow and step toward social justice and the desired growth and development.

Based on the author's lived experience, being a port city, the market's prosperity and the establishment of grounds for girls and women to be educated thanks to the growth of educational centers have quickly changed the identity and culture of women and shifted their lifestyle from a traditional one to a modern one. In this regard, this study tried to examine the impact of factors such as age, marital status, socioeconomic class, the rate of using mass media and social security on the rate of women's social participation in Deylam city,

the results of which revealed that as women's age increased from 18 to 45, their desire for social participation went higher. Offe and Fuchs argue that age is an effective factor in social participation, which is usually characterized by childhood, adolescence, adulthood, parenthood and retirement.

However, the results obtained in this study show that marital status has no significant effect on the rate of women's participation in social activities in Deylam city. According to Huntington and McClelland's theories, socioeconomic class is effective in the rate of women's social participation, something which can be easily noticed in this research as well. In this study, women's social status was found to be significantly and directly related to social participation. In the previous researches like the ones conducted by Samadian and YazdanPanah (2008) and Almond and Powell (2001), socioeconomic class was significantly related to women citizens' social participation; the higher women's socioeconomic class, the greater their degree of participation in political, social and cultural issues. Put simply, the higher women's social class, the more opportunities they can find for participating in diverse social and cultural events. The results of hypothesis 4 also showed that the rate of using mass media had a direct effect on their social participation. Amini and Amini (2016) report the same finding. Moreover, the importance of this variable can also be seen in the theories of Lerner and Castells. Both believed that the increase in the access to mass media and growing public awareness would lead to reinforcing social participation in the end. At last, based on the Beta coefficient, the variable of social security has the biggest effect on women citizens' social participation because security and participation are among major factors of social capital and regarded as citizenship rights. The increase or decrease in social security results in an equal increase or decrease in women's social participation, the same variable emphasized by Habermas. Furthermore, this finding is also observed in the researches of Ghafari et al. (2013), Bakker (2005) and Grootaert and Bastelaer (2002).

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