



Providing a Framework for Citizen-Centric Development in Public Administration (Case Study: Zanjan Municipality)¹

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Extended Abstract

Citizen-centric public administration is an approach to governance that places the needs and interests of citizens at the center of decision-making and service delivery. This concept encompasses designing and implementing public policies and programs that respond to citizens' needs and preferences, ensuring that public services are accessible, efficient, and effective. Therefore, the present research aims to provide a framework for citizen-centric development in public administration within Zanjan. This qualitative study employs thematic analysis based on semi-structured interviews with 177 experts in policy-making, public management, and urban management.

The findings were analyzed using the 2020 Maxqda software, from which relevant dimensions were extracted, and the importance and priority of each were determined using the Shannon entropy technique.

According to the research approach, three aspects, 31 components, and 146 codes were extracted. National and provincial managers and officials must first gain a precise understanding and awareness of the antecedents of citizen-centric development and then proceed to adopt and implement effective strategies to achieve the identified outcomes. In this study, the citizen-centric development model is presented in the form of 31 components. Since no comprehensive model for citizen-centric development has been proposed to date, this research can contribute to the development of literature in this field and elucidate the importance of local democracy.

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The overall conclusion of this study shows that the citizen-centered development framework in public administration, especially in municipalities, is a strategic and necessary approach that can lead to improved service quality and increased civic participation. By focusing on the needs and interests of citizens, this framework not only helps to promote a sense of trust and responsibility in society but also leads to the creation of stronger and more inclusive societies. The present study has presented a local model by identifying the antecedents, strategies, and consequences of effective citizen-centered development, especially in Zanjan Municipality. The results obtained from data analysis and interviews with experts show that attention to the public interest, coordination of involved institutions, civic education as key antecedents, participation mechanisms, fluidization of bureaucracies, and public reporting as effective strategies are important. This study shows that to achieve citizen-centered development, it is necessary for national and provincial managers and officials to gain accurate knowledge and awareness of these factors and to utilize them in decision-making and policy implementation processes. Finally, this study, as an important step in filling the existing study gaps in the field of citizen-centered development in municipalities, has presented a comprehensive and indigenous model that can be used as a guide to improve urban performance and services in other provinces and cities. Compared to the results of previous studies, the citizen-centered development framework in public administration, especially in municipalities, clearly emphasizes the importance of direct citizen participation.

Göçoğlu & Karkin's (2023) study points out that in public policymaking, there is a need to pay more attention to the role of citizens as beneficiaries and service applicants. This is also emphasized in your research, where the importance of engaging with citizens and incorporating their feedback into decision-making processes is emphasized. Both studies seek to improve the quality of public services and increase the sense of trust and accountability in society, but your research focuses specifically on municipalities and the need to customize services based on the needs of different neighborhoods. On the other hand, Gürses' (2023) research shows that metropolitan municipalities in Turkey do not effectively use social media to create citizen-centered policies and are mostly limited to one-way information sharing. These findings are in line with your emphasis on the importance of using technology and innovative approaches to make municipal services more accessible and user-friendly. Finally, Potipiroon's (2023) research looks at the impact of formal rules on bureaucrats' behavior and their interactions with citizens, which highlights the importance of maintaining an "optimal" level of rules in citizen-government interactions.

This point has also been addressed in your research by emphasizing antecedents such as justice-centeredness and coordination of the institutions involved. Overall, your research addresses the gaps in previous studies by emphasizing the need for a local and comprehensive model for citizen-centered development and introduces new dimensions to this issue. This research has added significant innovation to the field of science by presenting a local and comprehensive model for citizen-centered development in public administration, especially in municipalities. This model not only emphasizes the importance of direct citizen participation and their active interaction in decision-making processes, but also identifies key antecedents and strategies such as public interest, institutional coordination, and civic education that can lead to improved service quality and increased public trust. This research also examines the challenges in using technology and innovative approaches in providing urban services and emphasizes the need to customize services based on the needs of different neighborhoods.

Therefore, this research helps to fill the existing research gaps in the field of citizen-centered development and introduces new dimensions of this issue that can be used as a guide to improving the performance and urban services in other provinces and cities. According to the results obtained from this research, some suggestions are made:



To improve citizen-centered development in public administration, especially in municipalities, it is suggested that first, educational programs and participatory workshops be held for citizens to familiarize them with decision-making processes and their rights and help increase their active participation. Second, municipalities should use new technologies and social media effectively to establish two-way communication with citizens and include their feedback in policymaking. Third, establishing transparency and public reporting mechanisms can help increase citizens' trust in government institutions. It is also necessary for municipalities to pay attention to customizing services based on the specific needs of neighborhoods and to provide the necessary coordination for the implementation of citizen-centered policies in cooperation with various institutions. Ultimately, paying attention to justice-centeredness and ensuring equal rights for all citizens in governance processes can lead to the creation of more inclusive and stronger societies.

Considering the above, the limitations of the present study include several aspects that can affect its results and generalizability. First, the purposive sampling may not be completely representative of the larger society and, therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other regions or similar groups. Second, rapid changes in policies and social conditions may make the results of this study less reliable in the future and require frequent and updated reviews.

Therefore the limitations presented, it is suggested that future studies, using a broader and more diverse sampling, examine the effects of the citizen-centered development framework in different regions with different social and economic characteristics. Also, conducting quantitative research along with qualitative analyses can help deepen the understanding of the different dimensions of this issue. In addition, examining the impact of new technologies and social media on citizen participation and the quality of public services can lead to identifying more effective solutions in this field. It is also suggested that future research examine successful experiences in other countries and compare them with local conditions to provide better models for citizen-centered development. Finally, paying attention to social and political changes and the need to continuously update research results can help to continuously improve urban policies and services.

Keywords: Citizen-Centered, Local Democracy, Public Administration, Zanjan Municipality

Contribution of authors

All authors have participated in this research in equal proportion.

Ethical approval

Written informed consent was obtained from the individuals for their anonymized information to be published in this article.

Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest are declared by the authors.