



The Impact of Good Urban Governance Components on Achieving Sustainable Development (Case Study: District 2 of Tehran Metropolis)

Mojtaba Jalalvand

Ph.D. Student, Department of Geography and Urban Planning, IsI.C., Islamic Azad University, Islamshahr, Iran

Hamidreza Joodaki ¹

Department of Geography and Urban Planning, IsI.C., Islamic Azad University, Islamshahr, Iran

Azadeh Arbabi Sabzevari

Department of Geography and Urban Planning, IsI.C., Islamic Azad University, Islamshahr, Iran

Maryam Rostam Pisheh

Department of Architecture, IsI.C., Islamic Azad University, Islamshahr, Iran

Abstract

The rapid growth of urbanization has highlighted the need for good urban governance to address environmental and social challenges. Good urban governance, characterized by components such as accountability, effectiveness, responsiveness, transparency, and participation, is considered a cornerstone for sustainable development. District 2 of Tehran, due to its unique features, provides an appropriate context to examine the impact of good urban governance on sustainable development. The aim of this research is to investigate the effect of components of good urban governance on achieving sustainable development in District 2 of Tehran. The research method of this study is applied-developmental in terms of purpose and descriptive-analytical in terms of methodology. Data were collected through a standardized questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale from 384 randomly selected residents of District 2. Analysis was performed using SPSS software and statistical techniques such as Pearson correlation and regression. The findings showed that good urban governance, with a mean of 3.5839, and sustainable development, with a mean of 3.6640, are both above the average level. A positive and significant correlation was observed between the components and sustainable development: accountability (0.702), effectiveness (0.689), responsiveness (0.630), transparency (0.588), and participation (0.526), with accountability having the greatest impact. The results confirmed that good urban governance strengthens sustainable development. It is recommended to enhance sustainability by improving service quality, transparency, and civic participation.

Keywords: Good Urban Governance, Sustainable Development, District 2 of Tehran Metropolis, Urban Management

¹.Corresponding Author



Extended abstract

Introduction

The swift pace of global urbanization has imposed considerable strain on city systems and emphasized the demand for effective governance frameworks to handle the complexities of modern urban life. At present, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, and forecasts suggest that this share will increase to nearly 66 percent by 2050. This demographic shift makes the adoption of sustainable urban management strategies increasingly urgent in order to address environmental degradation, social inequality, and infrastructure pressures. Tehran, the capital of Iran and a rapidly growing metropolis, faces challenges such as air pollution, socio-economic disparities, and heavy demand on its urban infrastructure. These issues underline the necessity of innovative governance approaches to enhance resilience and sustainability in urban environments. District 2 of Tehran, with a population of 701,303 people across 239,992 households and a density of 127 persons per hectare, represents a significant case study. Covering 6,959 hectares, the district includes diverse geographical features ranging from the dry plains of the south to the temperate northern foothills near the Alborz Mountains, along with vast vacant lands, a strong transport network, and the presence of numerous governmental institutions. This diversity makes District 2 a small-scale model of Tehran's urban landscape and provides a suitable setting to explore the relationship between good urban governance and sustainable development. Good governance is framed by five main principles—responsibility, effectiveness, accountability, transparency, and participation—which ensure efficient administration, fair distribution of resources, and inclusive decision-making. Sustainable development, likewise, emphasizes a balance among economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection to meet current needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to do the same. This study examines the influence of these governance principles on sustainable development in District 2 of Tehran and tests two hypotheses: (1) that a significant relationship exists between good urban governance and sustainable development, and (2) that responsibility, effectiveness, and accountability exert stronger effects.

Data and Method

This research adopts an applied-developmental approach with a descriptive-analytical methodology to assess the effect of good urban governance on sustainable development in District 2 of Tehran. Geographically, the district is bounded by the Alborz Mountains to the north, Azadi Street to the south, Chamran Highway to the east, and Ashrafi Esfahani Highway to the west. It consists of 9 administrative areas and 21 neighborhoods, providing diverse social and physical contexts. The statistical population of this study comprised the residents and workforce of District 2, from which a sample of 384 participants was determined using Cochran's formula and selected through random sampling. Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire designed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) to measure participants' perceptions of the five governance principles and their influence on sustainable development. The validity of the questionnaire was verified through expert evaluation, while its reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.85. To enrich the quantitative findings, field observations were also conducted, adding contextual depth to the analysis. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) as well as inferential techniques including the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for normality, Pearson's correlation, and linear regression models to provide a precise assessment of the relationship between governance and sustainability.



Results and Discussion

The analysis of responses from 384 participants in District 2 provides strong evidence of the significant role of urban good governance in advancing sustainable development. Descriptive statistics reflected generally positive perceptions: good governance scored an average of 3.58 (SD = 0.78978, range = 1.40–5.00), while sustainable development reached an average of 3.6640 (SD = 0.79133, range = 1.40–5.00). Both values exceeded the neutral midpoint of 3.00 on the Likert scale. Tests of data normality yielded significance levels of 0.059 for governance and 0.077 for sustainability ($p > 0.05$), confirming the suitability of the dataset for parametric analyses. Pearson's correlation indicated positive and significant associations between each governance principle and sustainable development ($p < 0.001$): responsibility ($r = 0.702$, $R^2 = 0.493$), effectiveness ($r = 0.689$, $R^2 = 0.301$), accountability ($r = 0.630$, $R^2 = 0.281$), transparency ($r = 0.588$, $R^2 = 0.231$), and participation ($r = 0.526$, $R^2 = 0.159$). Among these, responsibility and effectiveness were the most influential, explaining 58.1% and 30.1% of the variance in sustainability, respectively. Accountability (28.1%), transparency (23.1%), and participation (15.9%) followed in order of impact. Regression models further supported these findings, with p-values below 0.001 and standard errors ranging from 0.592 to 0.725, demonstrating strong predictive accuracy. The results are consistent with prior research, including Khajouei Nia (2023) and Malashahi & Maleki Moghadam (2025), which underline the centrality of governance in addressing urban challenges. Responsibility and effectiveness emphasize the need for reliable service delivery, while accountability and transparency reinforce public trust. The relatively weaker effect of participation highlights barriers such as limited opportunities for civic engagement, a pattern echoed in comparable urban settings. Compared with other districts of Tehran, District 2 performs better on governance indicators but lags in civic participation, pointing to areas requiring improvement. The local focus and methodological rigor of this study set it apart from earlier works with less conclusive outcomes.

Conclusion

The study establishes that effective urban governance plays a decisive role in strengthening sustainable development in Tehran's District 2. Among the governance principles, responsibility ($r = 0.702$) and effectiveness ($r = 0.689$) emerged as the strongest predictors, followed by accountability ($r = 0.630$) and transparency ($r = 0.588$), thereby validating both research hypotheses. Although participation ($r = 0.526$) was statistically significant, it appeared less impactful and requires greater reinforcement. The results underscore the importance of governance mechanisms in advancing sustainable urban growth. In practical terms, municipal authorities in District 2 should concentrate on improving service delivery, adopting digital tools to foster transparency, and creating local councils to expand citizen engagement. Such initiatives can consolidate existing strengths in governance while addressing weaknesses in participation. From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the literature on urban governance by supplying context-specific empirical evidence and proposing a framework that can be applied in other metropolitan settings. Future studies could extend this work by tracking long-term changes, examining qualitative perceptions, or conducting cross-district comparisons within Tehran to generate a deeper understanding of the governance–sustainability nexus.



References

- 1) Aghajeri, S., & Aghaei Jobani, M. (2024). Social identity and its effects on the threat to social cohesion in urban neighborhoods: A case study of Bandar Mahshahr. *Journal of New Ideas in the Geographical Sciences*, 4(1), 30-45 (In Persian)
- 2) Baradaran Khaniyan, Z., Azari, Z., & Asgarpoor, H. (2024). Examining the indicators of good urban governance with an emphasis on smart city initiatives: A case study of the metropolitan area of Tabriz. *Journal of Geography and Development*, 22(75), 193-219 (In Persian)
- 3) Papeli Yazdi, M. H., & Rajabi Sanajardi, H. (2003). *Theories of cities and their surroundings* (1st ed.). SAMT Publications, Tehran (In Persian)
- 4) Pakdel, A., Khadem-Hosseini, A., Saberi, H., & Mahkoyi, H. (2025). Evaluation of development indicators in region 9 of Isfahan from the perspective of experts. *Journal of New Ideas in the Geographical Sciences*, 3(9), 30-45 (In Persian)
- 5) Khamjani, S., Sarvar, R., Amirizadi, T., & Arbab Sabzevari, A. (2022). A comparative analysis of good urban governance: A case study of districts 2 and 10 in Tehran. *Geography Quarterly Journal (Iranian Geographical Association)*, 20(72), 79-94 (In Persian)
- 6) Khajavinia, L. (2023). The role of urban services management in neighborhoods of metropolitan cities: A case study of district 2 in Ahvaz. *Journal of New Ideas in the Geographical Sciences*, 1(1), 69-86 (In Persian)
- 7) Shahabadi, A., & Jameh Bozorgi, A. (2013). The theory of good governance from the perspective of Nahj al-Balagha. *Journal of Nahj al-Balagha Studies*, 1(2), 1-17 (In Persian)
- 8) Salehi, M., Salari, H., & Imani, A. (2022). Examining the principles and perspectives of good urban governance for achieving sustainable urban development. *Geography and Human Relations Quarterly*, 5(1), 237-254 (In Persian)
- 9) Qasemi, A., Alavian, M., Lotfi, S., & Rahmani, M. (2021). Analyzing the themes of good urban governance in the development programs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Strategic Studies of Social Issues Quarterly*, 10(3), 117-141 (In Persian)
- 10) Ghazi Tabatabai, M., Nasrati, R., & Kazemi, A. (2012). Evaluating the theoretical model of good governance in explaining human development status. *Local Development Journal (Rural-Urban)*, 4(1), 39-52 (In Persian)
- 11) Ghiravani, Q., Montazeri, M., & Zahedi, S. S. (2024). Proposing a model for factors influencing smart governance in the country. *Value Creation in Business Management Quarterly*, 4(1), 279-301 (In Persian)
- 12) Karim, M. H., & Arbab Afzali, M. (2018). *The role of good governance and administrative divisions in balanced and sustainable development*. National Conference on Sustainable Progress: Approach through History, Culture, and Civilization of Dar-al-Wilaya Sistan, Zahedan (In Persian)
- 13) Golchini, S., Moradi, S., & Khazarnazhad, P. (2017). Examining good urban governance within the framework of urban management systems: A case study of the city of Sanandaj. *Environmental Planning Journal*, 14(52), 45-64 (In Persian)
- 14) Iranian Statistical Center. (2021). *Iranian census of population and housing*. Iranian Statistical Center, Tehran (In Persian)
- 15) Ma'roofnezhad, A. (2025). Survey of disabled community opinions on the accessibility of office entrances: A case study of Rood Zard Mashin City. *Journal of New Ideas in the Geographical Sciences*, 3(9), 30-45. (In Persian)
- 16) Molashahi, H., & Maleki Moghadam, M. I. (2025). Identifying neighborhood issues with a neighborhood-based planning approach: A case study of neighborhood 49 in district 2 of Zahedan. *Journal of New Ideas in the Geographical Sciences*, 3(7), 39-64 (In Persian)
- 17) Molaei, Y., & Amin-Mansour, J. (2019). National sustainable development strategy: Challenges and opportunities. *Political Science Quarterly*, 49(3), 837-862 (In Persian)



Received: 15/08/2025

Accepted: 25/10/2025

- 18) Mehrgan, M. (2024). Old city, modern life: A case study of Dezful city. *Journal of New Ideas in the Geographical Sciences*, 4(1), 46-60 (In Persian)
- 19) Nadery, M. M. (2011). Good governance: An introduction and a brief critique. *Islam and Management Studies Journal*, 1(1), 69-94 (In Persian)
- 20) Hashemi, S. A., Rah-Najat, M., Sharifzadeh, F., & Saadi, M. R. (2020). The relationship between good governance and smart cities: A case study of Tehran. *Social-Cultural Strategy Quarterly*, 9(34), 67-90 (In Persian)
- 21) Boța-Avram, C., Groșanu, A., Răchișan, P. R., & Gavriletea, M. D. (2018). The bidirectional causality between country-level governance, economic growth and sustainable development: A cross-country data analysis. *Sustainability*, 10(2), 502.
- 22) Brundtland, G. H., Khalid, M., Agnelli, S., Al-Athel, S., & Chidzero, B. (1987). *Our common future*. United Nations. Relatório Brundtland.
- 23) De Guimarães, J. C. F., Severo, E. A., Júnior, L. A. F., Da Costa, W. P. L. B., & Salmoria, F. T. (2020). Governance and quality of life in smart cities: Towards sustainable development goals. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 253, 119926.
- 24) Giuliadori, A., Berrone, P., & Ricart, J. E. (2023). Where smart meets sustainability: The role of Smart Governance in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in cities. *BRQ Business Research Quarterly*, 26(1), 27-44.
- 25) Güney, T. (2017). Governance and sustainable development: How effective is governance?. *The Journal of International Trade & Economic Development*, 26(3), 316-335.
- 26) Kabumba, I. (2005). *Good governance and sustainable development in Africa: Meaning, Relationship, Problems and Strategies*, African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM).
- 27) Omri, A., & Mabrouk, N. B. (2020). Good governance for sustainable development goals: Getting ahead of the pack or falling behind?. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 83, 106388.
- 28) Ramzy, O., El Bedawy, R., Anwar, M., & Eldahan, O. H. (2019). Sustainable development & good governance. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 8(2), 125-125.
- 29) Sachs, J. D. (2015). *The age of sustainable development*. Columbia University Press.
- 30) Satterthwaite, D. (2016). Missing the Millennium Development Goal targets for water and sanitation in urban areas. *Environment and Urbanization*, 28(1), 99-118.
- 31) Sheng, Y. K. (2009). *What is Good Governance?* United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.
- 32) Habitat, U. N. (2002). *The global campaign on urban governance: concept paper*. Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).
- 33) UN-Habitat. (2006). *Urban governance index: A tool for measuring urban governance*. United Nations Human Settlements Programme.
- 34) United Nations. (2018). *World urbanization prospects: The 2018 revision*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- 35) World Bank. (1992). *Governance and development*. World Bank Publications.
- 36) World Bank. (2020). *World development report 2020*, Trading for development in the age of global value chains. World Bank.
- 37) World Health Organization. (2021). *Air quality and health in urban areas*. World Health Organization.