

The Effect of Social Capital, Mass Media and Ethnic Identity on the Political Participation of young Citizens in Ahvaz

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to study the effect of social capital, mass media usage rate and ethnic identity on the political participation of citizens over 18 years and living in the eight districts of Ahvaz municipalities. To describe and elucidate political participation in the theoretical framework of this research, theories of Theory of usefulness of political participation, Theory of social network, Theory of political trust, Theory of economic and class status have been used. The sample size of this research was equal to 384 people which was obtained using Cochran's formula and among the residents of streets, neighbourhoods and eight districts of Ahvaz municipalities by random sampling with multi-stage cluster sampling method. The data of this research have been collected in a survey using a researcher-made questionnaire. SPSS software was used to analyse the data of this research.

According to the data related to the regression table of this study, the independent variables of social capital, mass media usage rate and ethnic identity had the greatest impact on the dependent variable of the study, namely the political participation of citizens over 18 years in Ahvaz.

Keywords: political participation, social capital, mass media, ethnic identity.

1. Introduction

In developed countries, the city does not mean only the group of people living in a certain area, but the city is a social unit and has activists who, while having a series of duties, also have rights, and therefore consciously, voluntarily and purposefully in determining their own destiny, they also demand their participation and rights. Basically, conscious, active and voluntary presence in the concept of participation is accepted and undeniable, and any kind of forced presence is not considered as a mere duty, involuntary

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and unconscious participation. That is why the definition of citizenship emphasizes the two key concepts of social rights and participation. In fact, in defining the concept of citizenship, three different dimensions are more important: rights, individual obligations and political participation, including the right to vote and belong to a nation-state (Turner, 2006: 66).

Iranian political culture, culture of citizenship versus culture of participation and the channels of socialization and culturalization as a whole have strengthened this type of culture. Only changes in education and communication and the penetration of new ideologies have made changes in it. In general, in the culture of citizenship, people expect the government to be the source of all services and actions. However, there is sometimes a sense of distrust in political rulers and their promises. In general, in political culture, citizenship is a combination of political behaviour of individuals, opportunism, passivity, withdrawal, hidden protest and fear. Such a culture undermines the ability of individuals to cooperate and trust each other. The process of acculturation and socialization in such a culture creates in citizens and also in leaders create negative attitudes and tendencies towards the special work of political power (Bashirieh, 2007: 664). The study of the ethnic structure of Iranian society shows a diverse and heterogeneous set of different ethnic groups, which is also seen along with religious, linguistic and cultural differences.

The application of the words multi-ethnic and multi-ethnic community to its demographic composition indicates an undeniable fact. The presence and life of different ethnicities such as Persians, Turks, Kurds, Baluchis, Turkmens, Arabs and Lors together and within the framework of a single political geography shows the cultural-ethnic mosaic of Iranian identity and civilization (Mojtahedzadeh, 2002: 45). The word problem basically means something that is unknown or unknown to us (Targhi, 2006: 58). A research problem is a mental motivation for which it is necessary to provide an answer in a scientific way (Nachmias, 2002: 80). One of the topics discussed in political geography is the study of the political participation of citizens and different ethnic groups of a country in the decision-making process and macro-decision-making in order to create a sense of national solidarity and political unity of the country.

Iran is also an ancient land whose tribes has lived together for decades and has inherited a common land and acquired a common identity. Khuzestan province includes different ethnic groups that were scattered in its geographical area. Including the nomads and tribes of Lor and Bakhtiari who settled in the cities of the region during the last century worked in some industries and oil facilities and constitute the inhabitants of this region. Due to the dominance of non-Arab culture, this region should be considered as a continuation of the central part of Iran, which is in the east and north of the Khuzestan plain. The western and southern parts of the Khuzestan Plain include sub-regions that are generally Arab and have different cultures. And have a distinct human and cultural context.

Other tribes living in Khuzestan province include Dezfuli and Shushtari. The presence of these tribes shows the wide diversity of the cultural and social context of this province and the impact of this context on the political participation of the citizens of Khuzestan province. These are some of the main groups of citizens living in this province. The people of this region are mainly Shiites and are similar to the central part of Iran. The cities of Khuzestan province, especially the city of Ahvaz, are known as cultural treasures due to their ethnic and cultural diversity. The city of Ahvaz consists of various ethnic groups and is one of the regions that has undergone changes and transformations during its contemporary history. Citizens living in the city of Ahvaz have also played a key role in these changes. The city of Ahvaz, as a multi-ethnic city, is a suitable place to study the electoral behaviours of citizens. This research has an applied feature. On the other hand, it makes it possible to obtain a relatively accurate estimate of the political participation of citizens over 18 years in Ahvaz, and on the other hand, factors affecting their political behaviour, barriers to political participation and reasons for reducing or increasing political participation of citizens in Ahvaz.

In general, any research is important and necessary from both theoretical and practical aspects. And each research increases the range of our information in relation to different dimensions of the subject under study (Abraksi, 1988: 289). Social indifference is one of the undesirable elements of modern culture, which is manifested by overemphasis on personal preferences and

individualistic interests in contemporary urban life and is seen as an obstacle to positive social communication and increasing citizen participation in social affairs. Even a halt to the national development process leads. Sociologists have enumerated many factors that contribute to the phenomenon of social indifference, especially the increasing growth of virtual networks. And believe that today's societies are in crisis in human relations (Kafashi, 2021: 2). Due to the importance of political participation of the general public, especially citizens, ethnic groups and minorities in the political arena, especially peaceful and legal political actions, the political effects of participatory actions in ensuring national security, effective role of citizens in the political structure of power in the country. The need for analytical and in-depth research has always been emphasized. Ahvaz is a multi-ethnic city and its unity and integrity is due to the coexistence of different ethnic groups.

Therefore, recognizing the social commonalities of ethnic groups with different political orientations in contemporary societies seems necessary. And these social commonalities of different ethnic groups, due to their inherent differences with the ruling political system, are a potential source for weakening the consensus and a threat to the national cohesion of countries. Identifying the contexts and factors of convergence and the challenges facing the national cohesion of countries is one of the important policy needs on national solidarity and political participation in any country. Khuzestan and especially the city of Ahvaz as the centre of this province and one of the most populous and important cities in Iran has a very important role in the economic and geopolitical structure of the country. Due to its economic importance, the city of Ahvaz has experienced high population growth in recent decades, which in turn has led to a widespread migration to the city. Extensive migration of Bakhtiari people in the northern and eastern regions of Khuzestan and indigenous Arab peoples on the one hand and social problems such as the expansion of informal settlements and unprincipled physical expansion of Ahvaz has caused social and political problems in Ahvaz. Obviously, awareness of the degree of political participation in the decision-making process is necessary and of great importance.

Therefore, in order to meet this need, while analyzing the sociological characteristics of Ahvaz city, especially its border and proximity to transnational centrifugal centres and ethnic diversity, and using a survey method to examine the issue of "Study of political participation of citizens over 18 years of Ahvaz city" has taken action. In this study, because the city of Ahvaz is one of the most important cities in the country and on the other hand, the location of this city and Khuzestan province in a region that is both agricultural, oil and industrial hub and a war zone doubles its political position has done. Also, the different ethnic context in this city has made the issue of political participation more colourful. The issue of ethnic and cultural diversity is closely and directly related to issues such as "national unity and solidarity" and "national identity" as well as "national security". The feature of "diversity and pluralism" in the city of Ahvaz is like a double-edged sword that can be both an opportunity and a threat. It is therefore important to note that the issue of ethnicity never violates the idea of "unity" or denies the principle of "national unity". Rather, not addressing such issues or paying marginal attention to them can be a threat to "national unity."

Therefore, it is necessary to study the political participation among citizens over the age of 18 in Ahvaz, and the researcher in this study seeks to answer the question "What are the factors affecting the political participation of citizens located at the voting age of Ahvaz?"

2.Review of Literature

Sociological explanation is one of the main approaches in explaining political participation. there are many research about this concept. Khoshfar and Bagherian Jelodar (2017) in a study entitled "The study of the relationship between the dimensions of religiosity and political participation of students at Mazandaran University" states that student political participation is the largest population group in developing countries, especially Iran. Considering that they are the officials of the community administration in the future. It is of particular importance for the stability and dynamism of society. This research was conducted on 249 students of Mazandaran University. A questionnaire was used to collect information. The data of this study showed that there is a

significant correlation between the four variables of religiosity (religious behaviours, religious beliefs, consequential dimension, and empirical dimension) and students' political participation.

Nawabakhsh et al. (2022) in a study entitled Model presentation of factors affecting the socio-political participation of citizens in the implementation of sustainable development projects in urban areas (Case study: employees of the executive apparatus of Arak) states that the statistical population of the study The employees of the executive apparatus of Arak city and the sample size of this research was equal to 361 people which was calculated using Morgan sampling table. The research data collection tool is a questionnaire and the validity and reliability of the questionnaire were confirmed through factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha tests with a coefficient of over 70%. Data analysis methods include the use of descriptive statistics, structural equation tests, PLS software was used to test research models and hypotheses. The results show that each set of social, cultural and economic factors are related to sustainable urban development through the mediation of socio-political participation. But there is no relationship between political factors mediated by socio-political participation and sustainable urban development.

Sadeghi Amroubadi and Budaghi (2022) in a study entitled Identifying and ranking the factors affecting women's economic participation in Khuzestan province with emphasis on interpretive structural modelling state that the main purpose of this study is to identify and rank the factors affecting women's economic participation Khuzestan province. In this study, interpretive structural modelling method was used through Mic Mac software. The results show that social capital (first place), society's attitude towards working women and patriarchy (second place) and women's education and awareness (third place), respectively, compared to other variables included in the model (rules and Regulations, unemployment rate for men and women and the economy as a whole, women's technical and professional skills, fertility rate and household size, inflation and economic instability, social and psychological security in society and media performance) play an important role in the economic participation of women in the province Khuzestan has.

Benxiang Zheng (2015) in a study entitled *Women's Political Participation in China; Improved or not?* "Sustained rapid economic growth has made China one of the largest economies in the world," he said. Chinese women have played an important role in many aspects of social and economic activities. However, women's political participation in China has not improved significantly in recent decades. The current form of women's representation in power structures in China does not support the sustained improvement of women's political participation in China. This article argues that prominent women politicians in China will contribute to political gender equality, but wider participation of women in politics is more fundamental. Hence, a preventive policy on women's political participation works only when it focuses not only on the middle level of power structures but also on the participation of popular groups. Phil Parvin (2015) in a study entitled *"Democracy without political participation: a new policy in a free age"* states that the changing and abstract patterns of political participation observed by political thinkers for half a century, the practice and practice of conventional democratic theory Slave analysis. The vast majority of democratic theories, especially quantitative democratic theories, have implicitly or explicitly acknowledged the need for broad citizen participation.

In a study entitled *"Cognitive and Structural Social Capital as a Predictor of the Quality of Life of Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Germany"* Adkenel et al. (2007) states that sub-Saharan Africa includes 49 independent countries and more than 20,000 ethnic and cultural groups with different cultures and languages; the study included data on the quality of life of African migrants and social capital in a cross-sectional study in 16 German federal states. Data from 518 African immigrants in Germany are included in this study. Participants were in the age group of 19 to 56 years. This study examines the relationships between the dimensions of social capital, namely structural capital, cognitive social capital and quality of life in the case of African immigrants in Germany using the structural equation modelling technique. The study found that about half of African immigrants in Germany have a high quality of life, and the two dimensions of structural social capital and cognitive

social capital were able to explain 15% of the variance in the quality of life of African immigrants living in Germany.

Ward et al. (2013) in a study entitled "Study of the Relationship Between Social Capital and Quality of Life among the Elderly in Urban and Rural Areas of Ireland Between 2012 and 2013" stated that participants using multi-stage sampling were selected. According to which, 640 geographical regions classified with socio-economic characteristics were identified, followed by 40 households in each region. Therefore, the analytical sample included 3629 people (2123 urban and 1506 rural) of participants aged 52 years and older. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between social capital, deprivation at the regional level, the quality of relationships and the area of quality control / independence of life. Quality of life was measured using a scale consisting of four variables: control, autonomy, self-assessment and satisfaction. Functional limitations, depressive symptoms, and loneliness were associated with poor quality of life. Social capital and socio-economic environment were independent of other factors affecting quality of life. The findings showed that while social disruption was important on both sides of the situation, social cohesion alone was related to quality of life among urban residents and higher levels of regional deprivation were associated with poor living quality of rural residents.

Theory of Utility of Political Participation is one of the most important theory. According to the theory of the usefulness of political participation, human beings act on the basis of calculating profits and losses. Before engaging in any kind of political participation, individuals wisely consider whether they will benefit from a particular political participation. They will refuse such political participation if the benefit of that kind of participation is not expected or if they are harmed by that participation. Otherwise, they will enter the field of political participation. This approach can also be called economic motivation theory (Rush, 2014: 140). Robert Dahl states that if people expect little value and reward from political activity, they participate less in politics than in other activities. He distinguishes between two types of rewards for political activity: direct satisfaction with the activity, because he is a good citizen in the eyes of himself and others; and indirect satisfaction, such

as a person gaining special satisfaction by establishing meaningful relationships with friends and acquaintances or increasing a sense of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Another type of profitability of political participation is the benefit of the tool that is achieved for the participant. Robert Dahl also divides them into two types: one is the benefit to a small number of people in gaining political positions and positions. The second is the benefits that come from the decisions of the government to certain individuals or classes. He concludes that "for many, the cost of the opportunity for political engagement is far greater than it is worth to them." Such individuals are unwilling to give up the direct and objective benefits and satisfaction they derive from non-political activities at the cost of achieving distant, unknown, and abstract benefits "(Dahl, 1984: 98). For this reason, Dahl considers the majority of people to be part of the non-political class, which avoids getting involved in political issues and membership in political organizations. According to Dahl, minorities are part of the political class and power-seekers and those in power who are very interested in political participation.

Social Network Theory is one of the theories that can explain the contexts and reasons for the use of virtual social networks and mobile messaging tools and in general new social media in political processes and of course political participation and voting behaviour of citizens. In his theory, Robert Putnam has well explained the relationship between social media and political participation. Putnam defines social capital as a characteristic of social organization with three components. The first component in this discussion is networks. In his view, there are formal and informal networks of communication and exchange in any society, whether modern or traditional, feudal or capitalist, and so on. He considers social networks as one of the essential forms of social capital. The denser these networks are in a society, the more likely it is that citizens will be able to work together for mutual benefit. Putnam divides networks into two parts: 1. horizontal networks or "Equal demands" in the form of civic partnerships (associations, clubs, etc.) which are the origin of two other components. 2- Vertical networks or "Monopolies" that lack the ability to establish trust and norms of cooperation (Ashtarian, 2016:

827). Meanwhile, massive horizontal networks strengthen intra-group cooperation. They create wider cooperation by bridging class gaps. Putnam considers the vertical network or hierarchy to lack trust and social cooperation, because the flow of information in the vertical network is not as transparent and effective as in the horizontal network. Also, the norms of reciprocity and the punishment for violating it, which hinders opportunism, are less established and enforced in vertical networks for high-ranking officials (Ibid).

According to Putnam, in a network society, people who are not socially and politically involved are marginalized. Civic and social institutions and organizations in the networked society have the main and real power; because information and communication networks, even in societies with absolute power, will question the legitimacy and power of the state and make the actions of individual actors important. Since the process of identity building is directly related to individuals' access to relationships and social networks, it is political participation that enhances the power of these networks, and social networks, in turn, will facilitate political participation and empowerment (Putnam Quoted by Ebrahimi et al., 2013: 271). So the characteristics of social networks are action-oriented. Social networking is the ability to expand and enrich action. The social network is the source of social action and also its carrier and result. A social network is created from a social interaction and is not possible without the presence of others. Social networking is actually part of the relationship structure. Improving social network performance in a relationship builds goodwill and mutual trust and strengthens mental convergence and cohesion. Thus, the growth of social networks creates opportunities for actors to enhance their individual capabilities and increase their chances of success. In fact, the weakness of social networks imposes a cost on actions that either hinders them or makes existing actions difficult (Ibid).

Theory of Political Trust is one of the important theories. Political effectiveness or political trust is one of the psychological theories. Political effectiveness is an attitude in which a person feels that he / she influences and controls political processes through his / her political participation and can satisfy his / her needs in this way. Robert Dahl's theory, based on a behavioural psychological approach, writes about political effectiveness: When people

think that what they are doing will not have a significant effect on political outcomes, they become less involved in politics. So it can be said that the less a person feels politically effective, the less his political participation will be. He also calls this feeling political self-confidence and states that this judgment about one's political inefficiency, whether realistic or not, instils in citizens that officials do not pay attention to people like them and they do not. They can influence the political process (Danesh and Mahdian, 2014: 560-559).

In another book, Robert Dahl discusses this phenomenon as political trust: Those who have relative confidence in being able to influence the political decision-making process are more likely to be involved in politics than those who do not give such a possibility. He adds that a sense of confidence in the ability to influence government officials seems to be a general, beneficial and enduring attitude in an individual. Some people bring constant optimism to the political scene that does not go away despite the failures. Others are incurably pessimistic. One of the salient features of political activists is their relatively high level of trust in what they do; in contrast, inactive citizens are more likely to doubt their effectiveness. A citizen who tends to feel that people like him have nothing to say in local government affairs, or that the only way to express an opinion is to vote, or that political and governmental affairs are so complex that he cannot understand what is going on. , or that public officials do not pay attention to what he thinks, compared to someone who thinks in front of him, he is very unlikely to participate in political affairs (Ibid: 560).

According to Theory of Economic and Class Status, the social and economic status of individuals such as gender, age, education, occupation, ethnicity and income determine the extent of their participation in political activities. The relationship between class and political participation and the type of political activity is one of the most important issues in sociology. In many cases, the most important factor explaining the type of political participation is considered to be the social class of individuals. Some even believe that the highest correlation between different variables and political behaviour is a social class variable; so, how people participate or their political attitudes depends more on this factor. That is, although knowing the social class of an individual cannot predict his political behaviour, but the difference

in political behaviour of social groups can be largely understood from their class differences.

Karl Marx is one of the leaders of this institution. Marx considers political power to be primarily due to economic power and believes that in any society, the economic ruling class is also the political ruling class. In the Communist Party statement, Marx explicitly states that the modern state is nothing but the executive committee of the bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels, 1977: 110-111). In fact, in Marx's analysis, economics underlies and determines politics, which is in the social superstructure. The extent and manner of political participation of individuals is determined by their class and economic status.

According to the theoretical framework, the Research Hypotheses are:

1: There is a relationship between social capital and political participation among citizens over the age of 18 in Ahvaz.

2: There is a relationship between ethnic identity and political participation among citizens over the age of 18 in Ahvaz.

3: There is a relationship between the use of mass media and political participation among citizens over the age of 18 in Ahvaz.

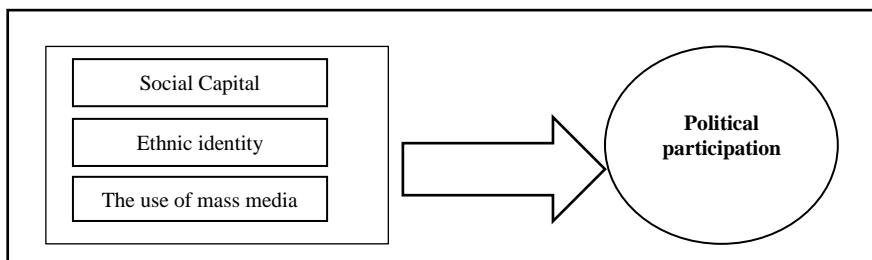


Figure 1. Analytical model of research

3. Methodology

In this research, the survey method (descriptive method with descriptive and exploratory goals) has been used. The statistical population of this study is citizens over 18 years old and living in eight districts of Ahvaz municipalities. Estimation of sample size using Cochran's formula and selection of statistical samples was performed by multi-stage cluster sampling in 5 steps in the eight districts of Ahvaz municipalities. Randomly out of 875,160 (437,616 men / 437,544 women) citizens over 18 years in Ahvaz (according to the latest

census in Iran, i.e. the national census in 2016), 384 people were selected to live in residential houses, neighbourhoods and streets of Ahvaz.

The questionnaire of the present study is researcher-made and approved by the supervisors and consultants. Therefore, it has a formal validity, which is one of the important types of content validity. Also, to measure the reliability of the research tool, the most widely used validation method, Cronbach's alpha, was used in this study. The alpha obtained for all items was a significant value of 0.87, and in this study, SPSS software was used to analyze the data.

In the following, the theoretical and operational definition of variables is discussed.

Political Participation: According to Michael Rush, political participation is the involvement of an individual in various levels of activity in the political system, from non-involvement to having a political official position. In fact, it can be said that political participation is a global phenomenon if it is not defined in a limited way, synonymous with democracy, not in the sense that all people are necessarily politically active, and not in the same form or extent in all societies. Size is common, but in the sense that it is found in all societies (Rush, 2014: 123).

Social Capital: A term coined by James Coleman to describe the types of relationships that exist between individuals within families and communities that are said to have a major impact on academic achievement levels. This concept is similar to the concepts of physical and human capital in economics (Marshall, 2009: 1081).

Mass Media: Mass media includes a wide variety of media such as television, movies, magazines, radio, advertising, video games and CDs. These media are called groups or masses because they are presented to the masses of the audience. That is, an audience that includes a large number of people. Sometimes these media are also called mass media (Giddens, 2019: 653).

Ethnic Identity: Ethnic identity is a type of collective identity and means a sense of emotional solidarity with the large ethnic community and a sense of loyalty to it. Ethnic identity is formed in the conflict of our perception of others (Tanhaie quoted by Ashraf, 2020: 229).

Political Trust: According to Milbrath and Goel, more confident citizens believe that government activities are aimed at improving the situation. Political trust can be considered as an effective approach to the fundamental evaluation of government. The range of trust can range from high trust to high distrust or political pessimism (Milbrath and Goel, 2007: 100).

Table 1. Table of operational definitions of research variables

Variables	Variable Measurement Components
Political participation	1- Voting 2- Interest in political issues 3- Communication with political officials 4- Participation in marches and demonstrations 5- Nomination for political office and political office 6- Refusal to vote in elections.
Social Capital	1- Membership and cooperation in social groups and institutions 2- Interest in the workplace and the number of friends in the workplace 3- Participation in collective activities (related to family, relatives, neighbours, friends and colleagues) 4- Responsible level of trust To: family, relatives, neighbours, friends and colleagues 5- The amount of travel and socializing with: family members, family and relatives, friends, neighbours, colleagues 6- The amount of communication and interaction of the individual with groups and social institutions including (municipality, city council , People's Office of Representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, law enforcement centres, judicial and legal departments, etc.).
Ethnic Identity	The respondent is asked to choose his / her ethnicity from among the ethnicities living in the city of Ahvaz. (1- Arab 2- Lor 3- Dezfuli 4- Shoushtari 5- Other)
Mass Media	The respondent is asked to rate the use of mass media such as newspapers, radio, television and the Internet from five options (1- Very little or half an hour 2- Low or an hour 3- Medium or two Mark 4-hours or three hours (5- many hours or more than three hours) in the questionnaire.

4. Findings

The city of Ahvaz is the capital of Khuzestan province, and the major ethnic groups living in this city are: Arabs, Lors, Shoushtari, Dezfuli, Fars. The city is divided into eight municipal districts, which have been used in this study. 89.5% of the total population of the country live in Khuzestan province.

According to the research 25% of the province's population lives in Ahvaz. The population of Ahvaz city has decreased due to new divisions of the country compared to the previous census (2011). Population and area (hectares) of Ahvaz city According to the latest census (2016), the population of Ahvaz city is 1184788 people and the area of Ahvaz city is 19494 hectares. Marital status of Ahwaz population aged 10 and over: Out of 972732 people over the age of 10, 66% have been married at least once (61% with a spouse, 3% without a spouse and 2% without a spouse due to divorce) and 34% of the population never they are married. Of the never-married population, 55% are men and 45% are women. 89% of women and 11% of unmarried men in Ahvaz are due to the death of their spouse. Activity status of the population aged 10 and over in Ahvaz: Out of 972732 people aged 10 and over, 34% are employed, 6% are unemployed, 22% are students, 30% are housewives and 8%

have no income. Out of 333295 employed people, 81% are men and 9% are women. Out of 52,652 unemployed, 67% are men and 33% are women.

The most people with 202 people have a bachelor's degree, 85 people have a master's degree, 60 people have a diploma, 20 people have an associate degree, 14 people have a doctorate and 3 people have a bachelor's degree. The frequency of the respondents' activity status shows that the total number of respondents was 384, of which 289 were 75.3% employed, 32 were 8.3% unemployed, 29 were 7.6% housewives, and 9 were 2.3%. Students, 21 people, i.e. 5.5 percent of students or soldiers or students and 4 people, i.e. 1 percent, have no job income.

Table 2 shows the people surveyed and participants in the presidential elections of the twelfth period of 2017 in which occupational groups have been questioned. According to the frequency table No. 2, we find 245 employed, 15 unemployed, 16 there are housewives, 3 students, 12 pupils or soldiers or students and 4 people have no job income.

Table 2 shows the individuals surveyed and participants in the elections of Islamic councils of cities and villages in the fifth period of 2017 in which occupational groups have been questioned. According to the frequency table No. 2, we find 251 employed, 13 unemployed, 12 housewives, 4 students, 2 students or students, and 3 have no income. Table 2 shows the individuals surveyed and participants in the elections of the Islamic Consultative Assembly in the first phase of the eleventh term of 2019 in which occupational groups have been questioned. According to Table 2, we find that 220 people are employed, 17 are unemployed, 9 are housewives, 4 are students, 13 are students or soldiers, and 3 have no income.

Table 2. The frequency of participation in the elections of respondents by job

Social Elections	Job	Yes	No	D,not legal age	Total
President (2017)	Employed	245	43	0	288
	Unemployed	15	15	2	32
	Housewife	16	13	0	29
	Student	3	2	4	9
	Scholar, soldier, student	12	2	7	21
	Unemployed income	4	0	0	4
	Total	295	75	13	383
Islamic Council of Towns and Villages (2017)	Employed	251	35	0	286
	Unemployed	13	17	2	32
	Housewife	12	16	1	29
	Student	4	0	4	8
	Scholar, soldier, student	2	12	7	21

	Unemployed income	3	1	0	4
	Total	285	81	14	380
Islamic Consultative Assembly (2019)	Employed	220	66	0	286
	Unemployed	17	15	0	32
	Housewife	9	19	1	29
	Student	4	3	1	8
	Scholar, soldier, student	13	3	5	21
	Unemployed income	3	1	0	4
	Total	266	107	7	380

Table 3 is the distribution of respondents stating that they did not participate in the elections in order to protest against the decisions and behaviour of political officials in the surveyed neighbourhoods. Out of 377 respondents, 294 never and 57 only once and 24 twice and 2 more they have protested three times.

Table 3. The distribution of respondents based on not participating in the elections with the intention of protesting

Region	No	Once	Twice	More than three times	Total
Amaniyeh	36	4	4	0	44
Kianpars	33	12	1	1	47
Korosh	40	3	3	1	47
Zeton	39	6	3	0	48
Golestan	35	7	6	0	48
Shahrak Bargh	38	8	2	0	48
Campolo	35	10	3	0	48
Khashayar	38	7	2	0	47
Total	294	57	24	2	377

According to statistics and social scientists, the most widely used method for modelling in regression analysis is the step-by-step method. In this method, regression operations and entry of variables are performed one by one until a significant test error of 5%. In this method, in other words, the first variable whose calculated value of T or F is greater than other variables is entered into the analysis. Then the variables whose F is gradually larger than the other variables are entered into the transaction (Mansourfar, 2012: 173). Since each time a variable is entered, the variables that have been entered so far are re-examined so that if their significance level is reduced, they leave the model and otherwise remain in the model, so this method benefits both. The method has progressive regression and regressive regression. That is, the variables enter the equation in a progressive way and exit the equation in a progressive way (Curlinger, 2017: 396). Therefore, according to the advantages of this method, we perform data regression analysis in this section with a step-by-step method.

Table 4. Independent variables removed from the model by stepwise regression

Variable removed from the model	Beta	t	Sig	Differential correlation coefficient	Tolerance	VIF
Social Capital	0.161	1.312	0.032	0.081	0.765	11.292
The mass media	0.017	0.354	0.049	0.202	0.496	2.614
Ethnic identity	0.016	0.232	0.056	0.014	0.384	2.601

According to Table 4, it can be seen that out of the independent variables entered into the regression, three variables remain in the model. In total, these three variables explain 43.6% of the changes in the political participation of citizens in Ahvaz. The value of coefficient F and beta weight determine the importance of the remaining variables. Based on beta weight, the importances of factors are: social capital, mass media usage, ethnic identity.

In this section, the relationship between political participation and independent research variables is examined. Since the index made for the research dependent variable (political participation of citizens in Ahvaz) is at the distance measurement level, so to examine the correlation between political participation and independent variables that are at the distance and relative measurement level, the coefficient technique Pearson correlation is used. However, for those independent variables that are at the level of sequential and nominal measurement, Chi-square technique has been used.

Table 5. Test of the relationship between social capital and political participation

Independent variable	Dependent variable	test	Pearson correlation	Sig
Social Capital	Political participation	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.473	0.05

According to Table 5, the results of the hypothesis test is "there is a relationship between social capital and political participation of citizens in Ahvaz" Pearson correlation coefficient (0.473) and a significant level of 0.05. Since the significance level is less than 0.05, then H0 hypothesis is rejected with 95% confidence and H1 hypothesis is confirmed. As a result, there is a positive and significant relationship between the independent variable of social capital and the political participation of citizens over 18 years in Ahvaz. That is, the greater and wider the social capital of the citizens, the greater their political participation. Therefore, the research hypothesis on the relationship

between social capital and political participation of citizens located at the voting age of Ahvaz city is confirmed.

Table 6. The relationship between the use of mass media and political participation

Independent variable	Dependent variable	test	Pearson correlation	Sig
Mass media	Political participation	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.270	0.05

According to Table 6, the results of the hypothesis test is "there is a relationship between the use of mass media and the political participation of citizens over 18 years in Ahvaz" Pearson correlation coefficient (0.270) and a significant level of 0.05. Since the significance level is less than 0.05. Hypothesis H0 is rejected with 0.95 confidence and hypothesis H1 is confirmed. As a result, there is a positive and significant relationship between the use of mass media and the political participation of citizens in Ahvaz. This means that the more the citizens of Ahvaz over the age of 18 uses the mass media, the more their political participation will increase. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 7. The relationship between ethnic identity and political participation

Independent variable	Dependent variable	test	Chi-square	Sig
Ethnic identity	Political participation	Chi-square	28.67	0.05

According to Table 7, the results of the hypothesis test "there is a relationship between ethnic identity and political participation of citizens over 18 years of age in Ahvaz" the value of the Chi-square test (28.67) and the level of significance is equal to 0.05. Since the significance level is less than 0.05. Hypothesis H0 is rejected with 0.95 confidence and hypothesis H1 is confirmed. As a result, there is a positive and significant relationship between ethnic identity and political participation of citizens in Ahvaz. It can be said that the stronger the citizens have an ethnic identity, the more their political participation increases. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed.

5. Conclusion

From a sociological point of view, participation means a sense of belonging to a group and active and voluntary participation in it that leads to social activity. In this sense, participation is an organized process in which citizens

engage in voluntary activities. "Social participation is the participation of activities in political, economic and cultural life and in all aspects of life in general. Social participation refers to those voluntary activities through which the members of a community in the affairs of the neighbourhood, city and village directly; or indirectly participate in shaping social life. Therefore, according to the theories related to political participation and research on participation in various places in Iran and other countries, in this study, the factors affecting political participation among citizens in Ahvaz were studied. And through the obtained statistics, it has been determined that political participation among the citizens in Ahvaz is influenced by various factors, which will be briefly reviewed in the following results of this study.

Social capital in supposed societies includes institutions, relationships, views and values that govern the actions and reactions between people and contribute to economic and social development. But social capital is not a simple set of institutions that comprise society. It is also a mortar that connects the mentioned institutions. Social capital also encompasses the common values and norms necessary for social behaviour that are reflected in individuals' personal relationships, their trust in each other, and in their shared sense of civic responsibility. Entity that makes society something more than a group of people. The hypothesis "there is a relationship between social capital and political participation of citizens over 18 years of age in Ahvaz" was extracted from the social network theory in the theoretical framework of the research. In this theory, citizens' participation in social affairs, including participation in politics, is explained based on the social capital of individuals. Manouchehr Rashadi (2016) in his research entitled "Trust and social participation (Case study: citizens of cities in Hamadan province)" has acknowledged the existence of a positive and significant relationship between social capital of citizens of cities in Hamadan province and their social participation. And Behrouz Sadeghi and Ali Budaghi (2022) in a study entitled "Identifying and ranking the factors affecting the economic participation of women in Khuzestan province" consider the social capital variable to be effective on the economic participation of women in Khuzestan province. Also, researchers outside Iran such as Adkenel et al. (2020) and Word et al. (2021) in their research showed

the existence of a significant relationship between the variable of social capital and quality of life of citizens that is affected by political participation. The present study has reached the same results as the above research. Which show that among citizens over 18 years in Ahvaz, there is a significant relationship between citizens' social capital and their political participation (at a significant level of 0.05 and Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.473).

The factor of ethnicity is generally relevant in the context of ethnic diversity and pluralism, especially when combined with spatial segregation. In terms of the target variable (dependent), the level of elections (national or local) is also very decisive. In local elections (such as the city council and parliament), the ethnic factor becomes more important and relevant than national elections (especially presidential elections). In national elections, the type of ethnicity can be more influential in directing votes to specific candidates. And most importantly, the inclusion of ethnicity in any analytical model requires the existence or access to segregated data on the number of different ethnicities in the study population. The hypothesis "there is a relationship between ethnic identity and political participation of citizens over 18 years of age in Ahvaz" has been extracted from the theory of economic and class status of the theoretical framework of the research. Gholamreza Khoshfar and Mostafa Bagherian (2017) in their research entitled "Study of the relationship between the dimensions of religiosity and political participation of Mazandaran University students" showed a positive and significant impact of political participation of Mazandaran University students on their ethnic identity. Manouchehr Rashadi (2016) also acknowledged the existence of a positive and significant relationship between ethnic identity and social participation of citizens of Hamadan province. In studies outside Iran such as Word et al. (2016) and Adkenel et al. (2015), these researchers showed a positive and significant relationship between the independent variable of ethnicity and political participation which are consistent with the results of the present study. Also, in the present study, by analyzing the data obtained from the survey through a questionnaire and hypothesis test used Chi-square in the amount of 28.669 and at a significance level of 0.05, we can say between ethnic identity

and political participation of citizens over 18 years old in Ahvaz. There is a significant and positive relationship.

Mass Media or Mass Communication refers to a set of non-personal media that transmit audio, visual message or both to a large number of people in remote areas. The indicator of these devices is the connection with the plural. Thus, mass media are the means by which the masses, or the individual and the masses, are connected. The hypothesis "there is a relationship between the use of mass media and the political participation of citizens over 18 years in Ahvaz" was extracted from the social network theory of the theoretical framework of the research. Abdollahi Nejad (2015) in a study entitled "Social media and political participation in elections" showed the variable effect of mass media on political participation. John Vail and Robert Hollandes (2014) also showed the relationship between the use of mass media and political participation. The results obtained in this research are in line with the results of the present study. Also in this study, based on the analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire and the test of Pearson correlation coefficient with a value of 0.270 and a significance level of 0.05, we can say that a positive and significant relationship between the independent variable of mass media use and There is political participation of citizens in Ahvaz.

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