

EMPOWERING URBAN SPACES: A FUNCTIONAL EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION THROUGH PARTICIPATORY PLANNING – A CASE STUDY OF TEHRAN'S 20TH DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary urban planning and management, the underestimation of citizen participation has led many individuals to believe they lack the power to influence the direction of their city and society as a whole. However, the role of women in advancing social and economic activities is pivotal. Women's talent and capacity for civic engagement are instrumental in propelling society forward in the knowledge age. Entrepreneurship and women's participation are essential development indicators. Social and economic studies on women's involvement in society reveal that social and cultural factors, along with society's varying expectations for men and women, pose significant barriers to women's participation. Against this backdrop, this research endeavors to delve into the functional participation of women in urban spaces. The study is categorized as applied research with a descriptive-analytical approach. It assesses four key sectors: economic, cultural, political, and social. Utilizing Pearson's test and path analysis, the research measures the impact of women's participation. The findings highlight that social participation boasts the highest level of engagement in the 20th district of Tehran Municipality, with an average score of 2.52, while political participation records the lowest, with an average of 1.65. Moreover, a robust relationship is observed between economic and cultural components, represented by a correlation score of 0.688. Notably, the social component exhibits the highest average critical value, reaching 3.89. This study underscores the significance of women's participation in shaping the dynamics of urban spaces and society as a whole, offering valuable insights into avenues for enhancing their involvement across various domains.

Keyword: Participation, Women, Tehran, Statistical Analysis, Urban Space

1. Introduction

Participation is a multifaceted concept encompassing collaborative action, shared responsibility, and engagement in social interactions (Sirel and Sirel, 2018). In the realm of urban planning, active involvement by citizens holds practical significance, countering the limitations of traditional top-down planning approaches (Bartocci and Secinaro, 2024). The ineffectiveness of such strategies has been attributed to the lack of public participation in their conception, execution, and evaluation. Particularly crucial is the empowerment of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, providing them with the means to shape their destinies by accessing economic and political resources (Amini et al., 2022). The practice of involving people in planning processes gained traction in developed countries during the 1960s and later in developing nations during the 1970s, aligning with the increased emphasis on the social dimensions of development programs and forming a critical foundation for exploring sustainability (Ghalehtemouri et al., 2021). Anderson et al., 2017 conducted a survey focusing on users' subjective well-being (SWB) and their perceptions of the environment. The interventions, such as small-scale urban design changes, resulted in positive outcomes by boosting public space utilization. The results showed heightened interaction with space resources, increased vitality, and well-being activities. It is essential for upcoming research to share their methodologies and emphasize exploring the main factors influencing well-being. This research highlights how minor adjustments in public spaces can positively impact overall well-being, stressing the role of urban design in fostering community health and happiness.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a crucial factor for a prosperous, peaceful, and sustainable society. Despite some progress, current trends indicate that gender equality may not be achieved by 2030. Women and girls represent half of the world's population and potential, yet gender disparities persist and hinder societal progress. In the global labor market, women still earn an average of 23% less than men and spend approximately three times as many hours on unpaid caregiving and household responsibilities (Jafarpour, 2022). The unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, sexual abuse and exploitation, and discrimination in public services remain significant barriers (Teimouri and Raeissadat, 2019; Jafarpour, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened these inequalities: reports of sexual assault have increased, women have taken on increased caregiving responsibilities due to school closures, and 70% of health and social workers globally are women. It is estimated that it will take 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to close legal protection gaps and repeal discriminatory laws, 140 years for women to achieve equal representation in leadership and power positions in the workplace, and 47 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments if current trends persist. Addressing structural barriers to achieving Goal 5 requires political leadership, financial commitments, and comprehensive policy changes. Gender equality must be a priority in national budgets, programs, and institutions. More than 10,000 species are believed to be becoming extinct each year, a rate that is 1,000 times faster than at any other time in human history. These trends have serious implications for the well-being of all people, not just those who depend on their environment for essential needs. Just consider the COVID-19 pandemic, which ultimately has an ecological origin, as does the socio-economic crisis that follows. Healthy ecosystems are our primary defense, and we are effectively losing them as we encroach upon and destroy natural habitats and the wildlife that inhabits them (Collins et al., 2021; Tayebbeh et al., 2023; Ghalehtemouri et al., 2024).

The engagement of women in decision-making processes is not only empowering but also fosters collective decision-making, critical thinking, and addresses social justice issues (Calvain, 2019). Recognized as a pivotal component of social sustainability, public involvement in urban development is deemed fundamental for achieving sustainable development (Cohen & Wiek, 2017; Mabuza, 2020). Acknowledging the vital role of women in achieving social and economic progress, societies are increasingly recognizing the need for their active participation in decision-making processes, despite historical marginalization. (Adefare et al., 2024; Ghalehtemouri and Eskandarian, 2012; Movahed and Ghalehtemouri, 2020; Ghalehtemouri et al., 2023). This transformative trend is gaining momentum, prompting development plans and policies to incorporate women's active involvement as indispensable for shaping society. Women around the world are often the ones who experience the worst effects of the extinction crisis, especially those in Indigenous communities. In many cases, they are the first to respond to natural disasters, provide security, and seek solutions to the challenges they face. The decline in biodiversity means that women and girls have to travel further and spend more time gathering essential resources like water, fuelwood, and food and medicine from plants and animals. This makes it even harder for them to access education, earn a decent income, and take part in the conservation and management of their community's natural resources.

Contemporary discussions emphasize efforts to strengthen women's participation in all spheres of life, recognizing that true progress is unattainable without their substantial role in decision-making processes (Javdan et al., 2023). Women's participation is deemed critical in alleviating poverty, and empowerment is seen as a means to eliminate gender-based inequalities, ensuring basic needs are met, promoting a fair division of labor within families, utilizing individuals' abilities, and eradicating legal discrimination (Hashemi, 2015; Mozayani et al., 2019). The importance of recognizing and empowering women in the development process has grown significantly, driven by the failures of traditional development theories and the disadvantaged status of women in various regions. In urban planning,

women face gender disparities as a result of insufficient public facilities, leading to a gender gap in employment where women are often confined to lower-tier positions and encounter discrimination in higher-ranking roles (Brixiová et al., 2020). Poorly planned urban development worsens gender inequality and contributes to urban crime against women, underscoring the importance of implementing gender-sensitive initiatives like public transport education, urban design interventions, and thorough data collection to improve women's safety. The complexities of urbanization further exacerbate these challenges, with haphazard urban growth resulting in gender-insensitive planning, forced evictions, and displacements that have a significant impact on women's security and well-being (Adams et al., 2012; Brickell et al., 2017; Corburn et al., 2020).

Participatory planning, as a dynamic approach, seeks to create and enhance living spaces through active involvement and collaboration such as the role of women in community-based disaster risk reduction efforts (Ruszczuk et al., 2020), local community participation (Szetey et al., 2021), urban regeneration (Hui et al., 2021). Bridging the gap between communication approaches in planning theory and the conceptual framework of institutional sociology, participatory planning involves diverse stakeholder groups striving for shared and effective consensus in the preparation and execution of plans, such as urban development projects (Faysse et al., 2018; Movahed and Ghalehtimouri, 2019). It acknowledges the diversity of stakeholder groups and their interests, emphasizing societal pluralism and the legitimacy of divergent interests while actively seeking conflict resolution. The core characteristics include an exchange of information among stakeholders to identify common ground and explore avenues for mitigating incompatibilities. The research objective within participatory planning is to bridge the gap between diverse groups and interests, fostering collaborative and equitable approaches to planning and development. This not only advances the principles of participatory planning but also contributes to the broader aim of achieving more inclusive and sustainable urban development.

2. Research objective

This critical perspective examines the role of women in urban planning, focusing on their participation in creating safer environments in Kurdish and Indian communities. Previous research has highlighted the importance of women's involvement in urban spaces, especially in areas where safety is a concern (Heydari, 2019; Tandogan and Ilhan, 2016; Mahadevia and Lathia, 2019). In poorer and developing countries, women's participation in urban spaces is often restricted to specific sectors and locations. Previous research has focused on various aspects such as planning, design, social inclusion, and urban policy. However, this study aims to highlight the importance of women's participation in urban planning by showcasing their effective and positive contributions to the planning process. This participation should be encouraged and supported across different facets of community life where women reside, encompassing economic, political, and cultural dimensions, rather than solely relying on social participation.

3. Research hypothesis

3.1 Economic variables

The impact of global warming is causing an increase in climate change-related disasters worldwide, resulting in higher mortality rates for women compared to men in these situations (Fatouros and Capetola, 2021). A study investigated how gender norms contribute to women's vulnerability to natural disasters in low to middle income countries. The analysis of fifteen articles highlighted issues such as gender stereotypes, discriminatory policies, and the lack of female leadership in countries including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Philippines, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. Women affected by

disasters face various health and social challenges, underscoring the need for gender-inclusive approaches in disaster response, research, training, advocacy, partnerships, leadership roles, legislation, and economic support. Further research is necessary to address the gender dynamics in disaster management and public health. Women's groups face challenges during COVID-19 lockdowns but can provide capital to help members in need. Organizations are funding community response initiatives through these groups, with ongoing research focusing on the impact of the pandemic on women's groups in India, Nigeria, and Uganda. The Evidence Consortium on Women's Groups is exploring this impact to inform programming and research (Hemachandra et al., 2020; Aziz et al., 2022).

Jones et al., 2015 the dynamic general equilibrium model presented in the document offers valuable insights into the factors driving changes in married women's labor supply. By examining the impact of discrimination, gender wage gap, and productivity growth in the home production sector, the model sheds light on the complexities of labor market dynamics. (Bucher-Koenen et al., 2021) conducted a study on financial literacy and gender differences, revealing the importance of confidence and knowledge in financial decision-making. The research emphasizes the need for customized financial education initiatives to reduce the gender gap in financial literacy and market engagement. The results indicate that enhancing both financial knowledge and confidence in women could result in better financial outcomes. The study underscores the importance of addressing confidence levels in addition to knowledge to promote financial empowerment and inclusion, especially among women in financial markets.

- E1 Women's cooperation in natural disasters and crises
- E2 Women's participation in economic activities
- E3 The amount of working women population
- E4 The amount of active female population
- E5 The rate of women's economic participation
- E6 Participation in new businesses and investments

3.2 Social participation

Scholars have differing views on the impact of increased gender equity on participation in the public sphere of The United States (McPherson et al., 2006). Some suggest that men reduce their non-kinship ties as gender equity rises, while others argue that women's increased labor force participation has decreased civic behaviors. However, little attention has been given to how women's activities outside the home affect participation in public spaces. The assumption that women are mainly confined to home and work overlooks the role of public spaces for social interactions. Women have reshaped interactions in public spaces over the past 30 years, with increased access compared to previous generations (Hampton et al., 2015). The study of women's status in cities and their social issues is well-established. Papanek (1976) identified five challenges for women, while Jelin (1977) focused on immigrant women in Latin American cities. Chant (2013) highlights the importance of considering women's issues in urban areas, including work, safety, and transportation. Moser (2012) emphasizes the need to mainstream women's safety despite technological advancements. Recent research also addresses equality in health, policy-making, and education. This study aims to fill scientific gaps in research on women in urban areas, offering a new typology of studies. Gender is viewed as non-binary, encompassing cisgender and transgender individuals. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of gender-related literature on women and cities from 1977 to 2019, aiming to be a valuable resource for researchers and students (Moghadam and Rafieian, 2019).

Despite facing historical obstacles, Afghan women are showing a growing interest in obtaining political rights. Factors such as powerlessness, socio-economic conditions, and cultural norms serve as barriers to their participation. While legislation has advanced women's rights, the actual implementation

remains a significant challenge. Political involvement in the post-Taliban era has been shaped more by external influences than internal values. Various forms and levels of political engagement have an impact on policymaking and leadership choices. Although there have been some improvements in women's political participation in Afghanistan, obstacles remain, highlighting the importance of enacting practical laws and promoting societal acceptance of gender equality (Akbari, 2020).

- S1 Commuting in urban spaces
- S2 Friendly relations
- S3 Daily tasks
- S4 Attending celebrations and mourning ceremonies
- S5 The degree of communication with each other

3.3 Cultural participation

The measure, backed by gender equality policies and the domestic violence act, criminalizes gender-based violence and empowers women across the board. It specifically focuses on marginalized, disabled, ill, oppressed, and young women, with customized programs for girls. It addresses gender bias in the arts, advocating for equal opportunities and the elimination of discrimination. Women, who make up 52% of the population, play a vital role in family, community, and nation-building. They pass on values and cultural traditions to children, nurturing the family structure. The goal of the measure is to achieve equal opportunities, full empowerment, and the advancement of women's status, while also nurturing their artistic abilities. The government is actively engaged in addressing current issues related to women's rights (Hák et al., 2016; Rickels et al., 2016; Nakhle et al., 2024). Cultural barriers often prevent women from fully participating in society. In Arab Muslim countries, UNESCO has noted that women have limited access to visibility and professional opportunities, leading to gender discrimination. This results in fewer cultural activities available to women compared to men, who have more choices and opportunities. Women also face limited investment in leisure activities and often must adhere to strict dress codes (Triantafillidou and Yannas, 2021; Emami et al., 2023). It is crucial for women to participate in intangible cultural heritage, as these areas play a significant role in preserving familial and social relationships. UNESCO's cultural policies can serve as a foundation for promoting gender equality in culture (Brown, 2020).

The Beijing Platform for Action seeks to empower women in economic, political, and cultural spheres across key areas of concern. While not legally binding, it holds moral authority. Initiatives have been undertaken to create gender-specific data and tools for women's advancement. Feminist social scientists have devised metrics to assess women's legal and social standing, informing studies on gender disparities and women's empowerment. This paper explores indicator frameworks proposed by feminist researchers and global bodies, offering its own framework with considerations of its strengths and weaknesses (Moghadam and Senftova, 2005).

- C1 The amount of participation in solving the problems of local residents
- C2 Participation in cultural meetings
- C3 Participation in group projects
- C4 Awareness of problems and possibilities
- C5 The amount of participation in neighborhood councils
- C6 Knowledge of citizenship education programs
- C7 The amount of participation in voluntary activities
- C8 The sense of responsibility

3.4 Political participation

The leadership of women, especially in politics, results in favorable social outcomes such as diminishing inequality, fostering cooperation across party and ethnic boundaries, and emphasizing important social issues like health and education. Women in influential roles in both public and private sectors contribute positively to female voter engagement, political involvement, and the responsiveness of public services towards women. Furthermore, female leaders serve as inspirational figures that promote the acceptance of women in positions of authority, bridging the gap in aspirations between genders and enhancing educational achievements, as exemplified by the 2018 general elections in Fiji where a historic number of women were elected to Parliament (ESCAP, 2019; Varghese, 2020). Political participation in China is essential for democratic progress, particularly in countries undergoing transitions. This study focuses on Chinese women and the factors influencing their involvement in political activities. The use of technology has broadened the ways in which individuals can participate, blending traditional and contemporary forms of engagement. To better understand women's participation in politics, it is important to research factors such as social capital and personal motivations. Psychological elements like life satisfaction and political efficacy, as well as social factors like well-being and trust, are key in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to political engagement. In 2017, the Women's Marches and #MeToo movement highlighted the issues of harassment and suppression faced by women. Women involved in politics encounter higher levels of interruption, sexual harassment, and mistreatment. Women activists are also subjected to increased threats and violence (Jiang et al., 2024). Current research primarily examines the experiences of elite women in politics, leaving a gap in understanding the challenges faced by everyday women in the public sphere in the US. Barriers to women's political engagement include financial constraints and family obligations. Women are more likely to experience harassment when participating in activities that symbolically represent women as a collective group (Yan and Bernhard, 2024; Chowdhury, 2024).

P1 Activity and cooperation in political organizations

P2 Candidacy in elections

P3 Participation in community activities

P4 Awareness of political news

4. Theoretical framework

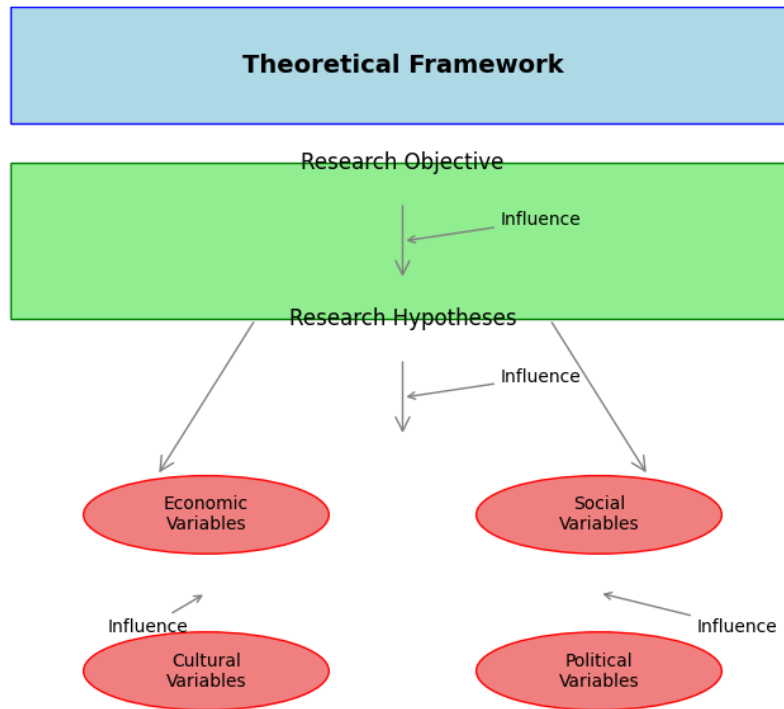


Figure 1 Theoretical framework

5. Methods and materials

5.1 Methodology

Research Design and Type: This study falls under the category of applied research due to its practical nature and aims. In terms of methodology, it adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, focusing on the systematic analysis of data to draw meaningful conclusions.

Population and Sample: The research's statistical population comprises women residing in district 20 of Tehran municipality, totaling 223,909 individuals. A sample size of 383 respondents was determined using Cochran's formula.

Data Collection Instrument: The primary research tool used in this study is a structured questionnaire. To create the questionnaire, initial data was obtained through extensive literature reviews and consultations with municipal authorities. Subsequently, the questionnaire was designed to assess women's participation across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.

Measurement Scale: The questionnaire employs a Likert scale with four levels of response, ranging from "very low" (score 1) to "very high" (score 4).

5.2 Validity and Reliability

Content Validity: To ensure the questionnaire's content and structure were valid, experts and specialists in the field reviewed it, and their feedback was positive, confirming both content and form validity.

Construct Validity: For this study, construct validity was assessed by examining the internal consistency of the questions. The reliability of the questionnaire was established through Cronbach's alpha

coefficient calculation, resulting in a value of 0.7, indicating high internal consistency and, hence, reliability.

5.3 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software. To examine relationships between variables, Pearson's correlation test was employed, and quantitative estimates between variables were evaluated through path analysis.

5.4 Selected Variables and Components

The study considered various dimensions of women's participation, which are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1 Selected variables

Variables	Symbols	Components
Women's cooperation in natural disasters and crises	E1	Economic
Women's participation in economic activities	E2	
The amount of working women population	E3	
The amount of active female population	E4	
The rate of women's economic participation	E5	
Participation in new businesses and investments	E6	
Commuting in urban spaces	S1	Social participation
Friendly relations	S2	
Daily tasks	S3	
Attending celebrations and mourning ceremonies	S4	
The degree of communication with each other	S5	
The amount of participation in solving the problems of local residents	C1	Cultural participation
Participation in cultural meetings	C2	
Participation in group projects	C3	
Awareness of problems and possibilities	C4	
The amount of participation in neighborhood councils	C5	
Knowledge of citizenship education programs	C6	
The amount of participation in voluntary activities	C7	
The sense of responsibility	C8	
Activity and cooperation in political organizations	P1	Political participation
Candidacy in elections	P2	
Participation in community activities	P3	
Awareness of political news	P4	

5.5 Study area

Tehran, Iran's 32nd official capital, is a bustling metropolis. As of 2015, it houses 8,693,706 people and comprises 22 districts, including historical areas like Ray and Tajrish. District 20 (Urban), the focus of our study, sits at the southernmost tip of Tehran Municipality, encompassing five inner and two outer neighborhoods across a 21.84 square kilometer area. With a population of 453,740, of which 223,909 are women, District 20 is renowned for its 6,000-year history and the presence of historically

significant sites, including the shrine of Hazrat Abdul Azim (PBUH), which draws pilgrims and imparts distinct historical and religious characteristics to the region (Hosseini et al., 2022). Notably, the district's physical isolation from Tehran, a feature that persisted until recent times, has contributed to its unique identity. Furthermore, it holds a crucial role in Tehran's urban landscape, serving as a central and cohesive element (Talkhabi et al., 2022) (See Figure 2).

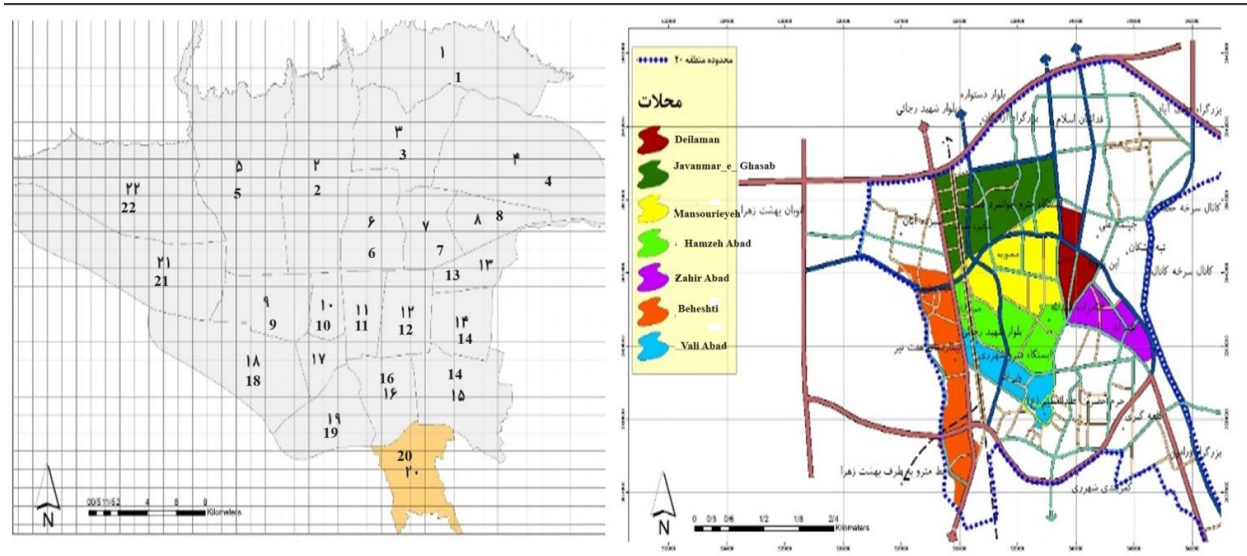


Figure 2 study area

6. Research finding

According to the investigations and completion of the questionnaire, the average age of the respondents is 36.48 years. About 52.3% of the respondents have bachelor's and lower education, 32.4% have master's degree and 15.3% have doctoral education (Table 2).

Table 2 Respondent profile

General components		Total average	Total frequency
Mean age		36.48	383
Education	Bachelor's degree and above	52.3	168
	Master	32.4	128
	Ph.D.	15.3	87

In this study, various statistical methods were employed to analyze the variables related to women's participation, including the measurement of mean differences, degree of relationship, and significance levels between independent and dependent variables. The analysis was conducted separately, and then the interdependence of these variables was assessed. The methods used for analysis included the one-variable t-test (T) to measure mean differences and the Pearson correlation coefficient to evaluate relationships between variables.

T-Test Results (Table 3)

The study employed a 5-point Likert scale to measure the level of participation and its influence, with scores ranging from 1 (indicating the least influence) to 5 (indicating the highest influence).

Table 3 presents the findings, indicating that the highest average participation was in the social component at 2.52, while the lowest was in political participation at 1.65.

The distribution of the components was around an average score of 3, with all four components falling below this mean. This suggests that women's participation is not in an ideal state, supported by the total average score of 2.08, which is lower than the neutral score of 3.

The t-test results, conducted at a 95% confidence level, confirm the significant difference between the theoretical average and the observed averages, further indicating that women's participation is in a suboptimal state.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient

The Pearson correlation coefficient was employed as a suitable method to assess the relationships between variables in the study, helping to quantify the degree of association between two variables.

Table 3 Results of t-test on women's participation

Analytical statistics						Analytical statistics		Components
95% confidence interval		T test value = 3				Standard deviation	Mean	
Upper limit	Lower limit	The significance level	Degrees of freedom	T value	The mean difference			
1.293	1.405	0.000	382	47.968	0.0281	0.281	1.65	Political
0.942	1.158	0.000	382	19.335	0.0543	0.543	2.52	Social
0.602	0.987	0.000	382	8.192	0.097	0.97	2.20	Economic
0.367	0.594	0.000	382	8.378	0.0573	0.573	1.95	Cultural

These statistical analyses provide valuable insights into the state of women's participation across various components, shedding light on their involvement in different aspects of society.

Correlation of Research Components

Table 4 displays the correlation between various functional components of women in Tehran's 20th district, wherein each variable represents the cumulative score of the mentioned components. The findings, as presented in Table 4, highlight a positive correlation between the different participatory components. In essence, as one component increases, the others also tend to increase, and conversely, a decrease in one component is mirrored by a decrease in the others.

The data from Table 4 illustrates several key relationships among these components:

Political and Social Components: These two components exhibit a moderate positive correlation with a correlation coefficient of 0.521, indicating that as political participation increases, social participation also tends to rise, and vice versa.

Economic and Cultural Components: The highest correlation score among the components is found between economic and cultural components, with a coefficient of 0.688. This suggests a strong positive relationship between economic and cultural participation, where an increase in one component is associated with an increase in the other.

Economic and Political Components: The lowest correlation score is observed between economic and political components, indicating a relatively weaker relationship.

These findings provide insights into the interplay between different aspects of women's participation in the 20th district of Tehran, highlighting how changes in one component can influence the dynamics of others.

Table 4. Correlation of research components

	Items	Cultural	Economic	Social	Political
Correlation Coefficient	Political	0.278	0.265	0.521	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		.0	.1	0.00	0.00
Correlation Coefficient	Social	0.316	0.496	1	0.521
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	.00	0.00	0.00
Correlation Coefficient	Economic	0.688	1	0.496	0.265
Sig. (2tailed)		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Correlation Coefficient	Cultural	1	0.688	0.316	0.278
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Path Analysis using Structural Equation Model Fit

In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed, utilizing AMOS software, to analyze the collected data. The research encompasses four first-order variables. The analysis process began with the examination of the assumptions required for structural equations. Subsequently, a first-order confirmatory factor analysis was conducted, which evaluates whether the questions designed to measure the latent variables have effectively captured these variables based on the collected data (Figure 3).

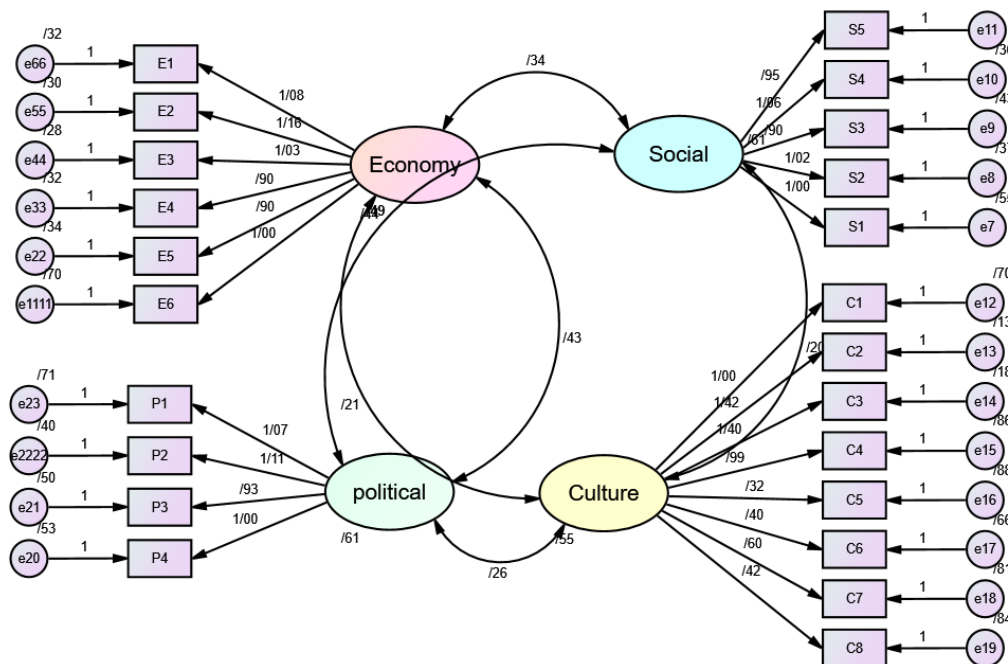


Figure 3 Standardized model solution

Table 5- Fit indices of the research model

Results	Acceptable limit	Amount	Model fit criterion	Type of Index
		159.64	Chi-Square (CMIN)	Absolute indices (fitness of the model)
		93	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	
Acceptable	Less than 0.05	0.000	significance level (P)	
Acceptable	Between 1 and 5	1.71	Chi-square ratio to degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF)	Relative indicators
Acceptable	0.1and less	0.103	root mean square error of estimate (RMSEA)	
Unacceptable	0.9and up	0.747	goodness of fit index (GFI)	
Unacceptable	0.9and up	0.689	Modified goodness of fit index (AGFI)	
Unacceptable	Close to 1	0.757	Modified Fit Index (NFI)	
Unacceptable	0.9 and up	0.86	Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	
Unacceptable	0.9 and up	0.88	Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	
Acceptable	0.9and up	098	Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	
Acceptable	0.6 and up	0.725	Relative Fit Index (RFI)	
Acceptable	0.6 and up	0.697	parsimonious comparative fit index (PCFI)	
Acceptable	0.6 and up	0.670	Parsimonious Normalized Fit Index (PNFI)	

Additionally, after verifying the model through significance testing, two partial indices, Critical Ratio (CR) and P-value, were examined. A CR value greater than 1.96 at a 0.05 significance level indicates the importance of a variable in the model, while P-values smaller than 0.05 suggest a significant difference in regression weights at a 95% confidence level.

7. Discussion

In an age defined by the pursuit of knowledge, enhancing participation within society stands as one of the most critical components. All members of society, with a particular emphasis on women, hold significant roles in the development of economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions. Participation serves as a potent tool for fostering efficiency and facilitating societal growth, particularly within metropolitan settings. Women's participation, especially in the realm of employment, reflects their vital social roles and generates expectations for these roles to be fulfilled. Functional participation of women not only plays a pivotal role in the advancement of social and economic life but also underscores the nurturing of talents and abilities within a substantial segment of society. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that women's participation in Iran is lower in comparison to many other countries worldwide. The societal and economic roles women play are of paramount importance. As development and progress are at the heart of the planning process, maintaining a balance and synergy between women's contributions and the developmental objectives is imperative. Neglecting this aspect could exacerbate social inequalities.

In essence, the overarching goal is to propel economic and social growth to benefit diverse sections of society by harnessing women's labor, especially in critical and sensitive roles.

The study examined 23 variables related to different forms of participation, such as political, economic, cultural, and social. Path analysis was used to explore the complex connections between these variables, identifying key factors. The results show that social participation is the highest in the 20th region of Tehran Municipality, with an average score of 2.52, while political participation is lower at 1.65. Additionally, the study reveals a strong correlation between economic and cultural factors, with a score of 0.688, while the relationship between economic and political factors is weaker. These findings have important implications for policymakers and society, highlighting the need to address barriers to women's participation in Iran. Failure to do so perpetuates social inequalities and hampers women's full potential, hindering overall societal progress and development. Possible factors contributing to lower levels of women's participation in Iran include cultural norms, traditional gender roles limiting access to education and employment, discriminatory laws, lack of supportive policies, and socio-economic challenges disproportionately affecting women.

Lessons learned highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach addressing social, cultural, economic, and political factors simultaneously. Data collection and analysis are crucial to understanding root causes and informing evidence-based policy interventions, emphasizing the need for targeted initiatives to empower women economically, politically, and socially. Recommendations for improving women's participation include legal reforms to protect women's rights and promote gender equality, investment in education and training, economic empowerment policies, measures to enhance political representation, awareness campaigns to challenge gender norms, social support systems, and continuous data collection and monitoring. By implementing these recommendations and addressing gender disparities, Iran can create a more inclusive and equitable society where women have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from social, economic, and political development (Table 6).

Table 6 Summary of the findings of the models

Model	Component analysis	Result
Average test	Social participation, 2.52 Political participation 1.65	Social participation has the highest score Political participation is the lowest score
The correlation coefficient	Economic and cultural correlation 0.688 Political economic solidarity 0.265	The weight of the contributions in order from the highest correlation to the lowest correlation: economic, cultural, social, political
Structural equation	The average critical value in economic components is 2.85, social 3.89, cultural 2.82, political 2.93	Social participation has the most path in the structure of women's participation in the 20th district of Tehran.

8. Conclusion

In an era focused on knowledge and societal progress, the role of participation, especially women's participation, is crucial for driving economic, social, cultural, and political development. Collaboration among all members of society, regardless of gender, is essential for the growth and prosperity of any community. Participation is key for efficiency, progress, and bridging gaps in civil society, especially in large urban areas. In Iran, under the Islamic Republic, there may be strong cultural norms and societal expectations that encourage women to participate in community activities and social networks. These activities are often seen as more acceptable and aligned with traditional gender roles, fostering a sense of belonging and social cohesion among women. However, political participation, which involves engaging

in formal decision-making processes and challenging existing power structures, may face greater resistance due to entrenched gender biases and stereotypes. After 45 years of Mullahs ruling in Iran, society has changed, giving more space to women for social activities. However, the gap between social activities and political participation remains significant due to the Islamic rules followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Women in the 20th district of Tehran have greater access to resources and opportunities for social participation compared to political participation. Community activities and social networks require fewer resources and are more accessible to women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. In contrast, political participation, such as running for office or participating in political campaigns, requires greater financial resources and connections with political networks, which can act as barriers for many women.

There may be obstacles of an institutional and legal nature that impede women's involvement in politics in the 20th district of Tehran. These barriers could stem from discriminatory laws, a lack of representation in political institutions, and limited opportunities for women to engage in decision-making processes. Without adequate support structures and representation, women may encounter difficulties in accessing political spaces and influencing policy outcomes. Traditional gender norms often dictate that women are responsible for caregiving and household tasks, which can restrict their ability to participate in political activities that require time and dedication. This gendered division of labor can widen disparities in political participation, as women may prioritize their family responsibilities over engaging in formal political processes. To bridge the gap between social and political participation, targeted interventions are needed to promote gender equality, challenge stereotypes, and create inclusive spaces for women to participate in political decision-making. This could involve implementing policies that enhance women's representation in political institutions, offering resources and support for women interested in pursuing political office, and raising awareness about the significance of women's voices in shaping public policy. The study conducted in the 20th district of Tehran Municipality sheds light on women's participation in various aspects. Social participation emerged as the most active component, indicating strong involvement in the community's social fabric. Conversely, political participation scored the lowest, suggesting areas for improvement. The research underscores the importance of striking a balance and coordinating women's workforce participation to prevent exacerbating social inequalities. To further boost women's participation and roles in societal progress, it is essential to harness their potential in political, economic, cultural, and social spheres.

9. Suggestions

Enhancing Women's Participation in District 20 of Tehran.

To promote gender equality and empower women in District 20 of Tehran, the following recommendations are crucial:

1. Awareness and Sensitization: Conduct campaigns to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes.
2. Data Collection and Monitoring: Collect gender-disaggregated data to track progress and inform policies.
3. Economic Empowerment: Support women's economic empowerment through access to credit and entrepreneurship training.
4. Education and Training: Invest in education and vocational training for women.
5. Neighborhood Councils: Establish councils with active women's participation to enrich local communities.
6. Training Campaigns: Launch campaigns to engage and educate women in District 20.
7. Legal Reforms: Enact laws that protect women's rights and promote gender equality.

8. Political Representation: Promote women's participation in political decision-making processes.
9. Municipal Support: Rally support for comprehensive initiatives that empower women in District 20.
10. Legal Framework: Scrutinize laws to ensure they align with societal development goals.
11. Social Support Systems: Develop childcare facilities and parental leave policies to support women in balancing work and caregiving.
12. Geographic Information Systems: Use GIS to identify deficiencies and needs related to women's participation in targeted interventions. These recommendations aim to strengthen women's participation in District 20, fostering growth and progress for the community. Empowering women as agents of change will lead to a more inclusive and prosperous society.

10. Conflict of interest

On behalf of the authors, I would like to say that this paper does not have any matter of conflict of interest between this journal and third party.

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