

## Do Public Health and Social Participation Matter for the Elderly? An Analysis of an Aging Community in Khuzistan Province, Iran

### UNE ANALYSE SUR LA COMMUNAUTE VIEILLISSANTE A LA PROVINCE DE KHOUZISTAN / IRAN : PAS DE SANTE PUBLIQUE ET NI DE MATIERE DE PARTICIPATION SOCIALE POUR LES PERSONNES AGEES?

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#### Abstract

Increasing aged population (3.1%) compared with natural growth of Iranian population (1.2%) is a problematic issue. The literatures acclaim that physical disabilities and health problems in end life have significant relationship with social participation of aged. This study illustrates social participation in Iranian background, its factors and obstacles especially among aged. The scale of aged participation (SAP) constructed according to selected theories in 4 basic items and its 35 sub items. The community of the study is aged people in four selected cities of Khuzistan province/Iran: Ahwaz, Behbahan, Mah-Shahr, Dezful, and Abadan in 2010, and sampled 768 urban and rural elders. Findings have mentioned that social participation is low. It has significant relationship with Burgess, high literacy, ethnicity, living with children, feminine, growth of welfare, having chronic disease of respiratory disorder, social alienation, cost of participation, reduction in benefits of participation, growth of their child's income.

**Key words:** Elderly; Social Participation; Literatures; Obstacles; Factors; Khuzistan Cities (Iran)

#### Résumé

L'augmentation de la population âgée (3,1%) par rapport

à la croissance naturelle de la population iranienne (1,2%) est une question problématique. Les littératures acclamé que les handicaps physiques et des problèmes de santé en fin de vie ont des relations significatives avec la participation sociale des personnes âgées. Cette étude illustre la participation sociale en arrière-plan iranien, ses facteurs et les obstacles en particulier chez les personnes âgées. L'ampleur de la participation des personnes âgées (SAP) construits selon les théories sélectionnés en 4 éléments de base et ses 35 sous-éléments. La communauté de l'étude est âgé de personnes dans quatre villes choisies du Khuzistan province / Iran: Ahwaz, Behbahan, Mah-Shahr, Dezful, et Abadan en 2010, et échantillonné 768 anciens urbains et ruraux. Les résultats ont indiqué que la participation sociale est faible. Il a une relation significative avec Burgess, d'alphabétisation élevé, l'ethnicité, vivant avec des enfants, féminins, la croissance du bien-être, ayant une maladie chronique des troubles respiratoires, l'aliénation sociale, le coût de la participation, réduction des avantages de la participation, la croissance des revenus de leur enfant.

**Mots clés:** Personnes âgées; Participation sociale; Littératures; Obstacles; Facteurs; Villes du Khuzistan (Iran)

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#### INTRODUCTION

The measurement and typology of participants have an incoherent and resemblance distribution within social actions in Iran. It should be noted that in poor and

low developing regions, there is a high participatory interactions and less political knowledge for example in south west of Iran. The main goal of the study is attention to measuring social participation of elder citizens who will be as reference group to younger generation during future planning. The study estimates amount of tendency to social participation and civic engagement among aged people of selected urban/rural regions of cities in Khuzistan Province (Southwest of Iran near Iraq's border line) named *Ahwaz*, *Abadan*, *Mah-Shahr*, *Behbahan*, and *Dezful* in the second midyear 2010.

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## OBJECTIVES

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It would not be simple to statement of formal and informal socialization and their roles to transmission of cultural element. So, measuring tendency of aged to participation as main actors of society and appointers of future social life for juveniles, can illustrates perspective vision to next years for us. Eventually, we will be able to plan conditions as possible as to engaging in civic participation and voluntary interactions for aged. This potentiality will be conducted with recognition of challenges and problem of aged people in social participation and risk factors which effect on their tendencies (Alavion, 2011). Additionally, Asadollahi (2011) stated that decision makers may reinforce to program their positive and continuing life in the near future for Iranian elder society as well (Asadollahi, 2011).

There are more research and review about social participation of citizens especially on political participations that have stated to important of this concept. They have mentioned to effect of multi variables and factors e.g. individual benefits, opportunities of participatory, difference between political movements and knowledge. Other vision of research on participation is for women's participatory in society which stated to main effect of some issues i.e. literacy, participation in family decision making and their motivation, combat to traditional roles and actions versus new roles and careers for women, negative attitude of men on these new roles, main effect of male blocking on beginning or continuation of male employee, and inequality in job positions and incomes between ethnicity and gender groups (Abdullahi, 2000; Azimi, 2001).

Other researchers have regarded to rural participation and participatory interaction of ethnic groups in the society and its factors e.g. social trusty, social alienation, tendency to virtual, etc (Ghaffari, 2001; Asadollahi, 2010). The vision of post research on social participation hasn't developed to elder studies and social Gerontology that is a polemic issue (Asadollahi, 2011 & 2010).

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## LITERATURES

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The statement of theoretical approaches about social

participation could be expanded among sociological theories for example are about subject of participation (a phenomenon that participation is being shaped for It.), participated background, severs of participation, its factors and situations, and so on. In the other side, causes and kinds of social participation show deferent aspects in this area for conflict and order theoreticians in sociology and accompanied by deferent interpretations. For order theory, participation is combined for goal achievement of social system. According to this aspect, social participation is basic condition for societal membership. Based on Durkheim's dialogue (1910), participation would be either within traditional society similar *Gemeinschaft* by Ferdinand Tunnies (1936) as public participation. This is a kind of traditional ritual and protected by Collective Consciousness. In modern society (*Gezellschaft*), participation is among inhomogeneous actors in different situations e.g. building trade union, codification of laws and acceptance of them, and worth in Individual Consciousness (Giddens, 2007).

In opposite view, the participation is a class criteria and unconsciousness in Conflict theory. Within inter-class participation, there is a collective goal for exploitation of common classes by dominant class and group. In the other words, it is companion of exploited groups for combat to upper class and group. Additionally, unconsciousness participation states to participatory of exploited and obsessed class in their exploitation due to their false consciousness on current situation. When there is no classification and polarized community, there is unconsciousness participation about upper and dominant class especially in the first stages of social mobilization. The society is not bipolarized exactly between two classes. Dominant class of productive instruments interacts with other classes for residues of their individual benefits than group and collective benefits (Verba, Bums, & Lehman-Schlozman, 2001).

Optter and Payne (2001) in "*Political Opposition and Social Change*" state to three dimensions of political opposition: cultural believes, structure and behaviour. According to Optter and Payne, there are two approaches on causes of citizens' participation in elections and community. First of all, Neoclassical Public Choice Approach by Anthony Buns, James Buchanan, William Riker, Pitter Everard Shak, Anthony Dawns, and Denis Mauler that states to attitude of persons. This aspect notes that people participate and elect candidates who prepare their individual profits and privileges (Opter & Pinne, 2001).

Opposite approach is Intellectual Structuralism Approach which concentrates to sociological concepts such as values, norms, and structures for analysis of election behaviours by Georg Humans, Michele Hatcher, Carl Dieter Opp, Denis Chung, and Daniel Little. The approach states to effect of cultural believes (values and norms) and social-political structures on voters' attitudes.

Although, the voters have an active role in political process and analysis, but structural opportunities empower them to make their selections. Structural limitations interdict their selections as well (Opter & Pinne, 2001).

## METHODOLOGY

Statistical community of the study is aged population who

**Table 1**  
**Population of Aged Dwellers in Selected Counties upon KSCC & ISCC in 2007**

City	Total Population	Aged Population	Aged* Pop. 2017	Aged Samples % (n=768)	Aged Population in Rural Area		Aged Population in Urban Area	
					Male	Female	Male	Female
Abadan	277261	36318	46946	11.5	1336	1359	5695	6052
Ahwaz	1338126	160018	206844	51.2	6143	5747	26891	25454
Mah Shahr-Port	252587	42917	55476	13.6	1029	917	4256	4227
Behbahan	175373	23642	30560	7.53	2141	1902	4491	4653
Dezful	401558	50712	65552	16.17	3533	2882	8734	7902
Sum of selected cities	2444905	313607	405378	100	14182	12807	50067	48288
Province	4274979	539880	675003	---	53316	42824	84810	76536

Source: (ISCC, 2008 and KSCC, 2008) \* Population of 2017 was estimated by the authors.

Ratio and cluster sampling had been upon two variables gender and kind of settlement in urban and rural areas. Data collection had used questionnaire of SAP (scale of aged participation) that was classified into 35 items with five answers in Likert scale. The SAP was validated by Cronbach's alpha too ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ) (Delaware, 2003; Sarmad *et al.* 2005). According to table 2, internal validity upon Cronbach's alpha are well adjusted to four basic items of SAP. Items of SAP are reliable. Overall, scores states that these concepts were moderately internally consistent. The study has mentioned to new definition for social participation in the gerontological aspect.

**Table 2**  
**Internal Reliability for the Four Basic Variables of SAP (n = 768,  $\geq 95$ )**

Basic variables of SAP	No. of Q.	M (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
Governmental	7	2.29 (.68)	.43	.25	.70
Communal	6	2.58 (.62)	-.56	.33	.71
Carity	10	3.78 (.72)	-.47	.35	.74
Religious	12	3.35 (.88)	.41	-.31	.69
SAP	35	3.02 (.79)	.38	.37	.72

Also, the relationship of factors and its significant has estimated by ANOVA and Multi Regression tests (Kerlinger, 2004).

## RESULTS

Measurement of social participation of aged was weak among community of the study and the samples was graded into 83 (max. score= 175). There are deferent situations and degrees among selected counties in social

is 60 years old and above among four selected counties in Khuzistan province in south west of Iran near Iraq's border line. The five cities are most crowded areas: *Ahwaz, Dezful, Abadan, Behbahan, and Mah-Shahr* that are estimated 313607 aged dwellers. Finally, the authors sampled 768 aged according to cluster-ratio method (see table one) (ISCC, 2008; KSCC, 2008).

participation but Ahwaz County has most degree of it ( $F = .102, \rho = .000$ ). It supports findings of Seraj-Zadeh in 1989 among urban dwellers of Iranian counties and Daniel Lerner (1951) in the Middle East region that had asserted signification relationship between modernization and participation in society. Social participation of aged population has been gender-related ( $t = .257, \rho = .000$ ).

The male elders have more participation than women which was stated by post studies e.g. Bahmani-Teraz (2000), Bavar (1995), Jaafari (1997), and Asadollahi (2007). The sample of aged female was less than men, so generalization of findings would be validated sorely (Bavar, 1995; Ja'afari, 2009; Lerner, 1964; Asadollahi, 2007; Bahmani, 2000). Social participation of educated elders was more than illiterate aged persons ( $F = .012, \rho = .002$ ). These findings like Bahmani-Teraz (2000) in scholar context between literacy and political participation of students (Bahmani-Teraz, 2000). Social participation of aged Persians was more than other ethnic groups i.e. Lors and Arabs ( $F = .103, \rho = .001$ ). These findings are like Asadollahi (2008), Azimi (2001), Seraj-Zadeh (1989), and Saleki (1990).

Effect of income and welfare situation of aged samples in participation was tested. Participation of elders with fewer average and poor status is more than wealthy dwellers ( $F = .0017, \rho = .013$ ). There was significant relation between health situations of samples and their participation. The elders' participation with heart-capillary disorders was more than diabetics and respiratory patients ( $F = .004, \rho = .000$ ). Urban dwellers have more participation than rural elders and significant difference was accepted ( $t = .107, \rho = .000$ ). Bavar (1995) mentioned to significant and Ja'afari (2009) to insignificant

relationship of these variables (Ja'afari, 2009; Bavar, 1995). There is no significant relation between job status and social participation of aged samples ( $F = .004$ ,  $p = .107$ ). Aged citizens that live lonely and are separated from their children have more participation than others ( $F = .276$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Participation of aged samples whom were settled in nursing homes was more than elders who live alone or with their children ( $t = .0121$ ,  $p = .0003$ ). There are significant relations within these variables. There is a significant relationship between aged participation and income of their children ( $t = .0102$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Logistic Regression pointed to decreasing social participation of aged during growth of their child's income. Even though, Bavar (1995) mentioned to insignificant relationship, but Kazemi-Pour (1999) approved the relationship with income of family. Logistic Regression show that increasing benefits of participation affects on the social participation of aged directly ( $\beta = .67$ ,  $p = .040$ ). If attends of elders are eliminated by civic institutions, they will participate in society more (see table four). However, Ojaqlou (2002) has denied this significant affection in educational institutions (Ojaghrou, 2002).

**Table 4**  
**Logistic Regression for Predicting Social Participation**

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	R	$\rho^*$
Social capture (Alienation)	-0.106	0.042	2.808	-0.49	0.050
Income of their children	-0.471	0.013	5.312	-0.45	0.001
Applause of participation	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.02	0.001
Literacy	0.261	0.032	1.516	0.39	0.002
Living in nursing home	0.243	0.087	2.190	0.45	0.034
Expenditures of participation	0.106	0.062	2.818	0.48	0.028
Marital status	0.456	0.019	5.278	0.51	0.006
Kind of settlement	0.769	0.129	3.003	0.55	0.010
Public health	0.261	0.018	6.561	0.63	0.011
Socioeconomic status	0.527	0.067	4.276	0.64	0.000
Benefits of participation	0.229	0.191	5.030	0.67	0.040
Job status	0.342	0.032	4.276	0.68	0.029
Gender	0.551	0.012	6.236	0.76	0.007
Constant	1.564	0.143	12.10	0.56	0.002
-2 log likelihood	5.201				0.067
Model $\chi^2$	112.96*				0.000

\*  $\rho < 0.05$ ; n: 768

According to table four, social participation of aged was decreased by growth of its expenditure in two parts: times and benefits ( $\beta = .48$ ,  $p = .028$ ). Reinforcing motives will increases social participation within aged samples in selected counties. Regression analysis of variables for social participation with social rapture (Alienation) and income of senior's children pointed to their inversed relation ( $\beta = -.49$  and  $\beta = -.45$ ,  $p = .050$ ). Gender is most predictor and affective factor that has modified social

participation ( $\beta = -.76$ ,  $p = .007$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings mentioned to weak participation among aged samples of selected counties in Khuzistan province. The multi factors effect on weak social participation of elderly such as individual, familiar, and social agents which uphold rational selection theory, neoclassical approach to public selection, and Individualism. Social participation have had more among urban dwellers, male elders, educated, median social class holders, heart patients, aged whom are settled in nursing homes, and less income holders. But rural dwellers, female elders, illiteracy, highest social status holders, respiratory patients, grays who are inmate with their children, and high income holders have participated less.

Above converged findings connote to individualization of aged situation in society whom is upraised from a kind of rationalized personality. It called Microeconomic Rationality. Collective action theory as rational aspect demonstrates this theorem that acclaims human endeavor to increase her/his benefits than obtain necessities of group. This condition notes companionship of development in the society with urbanization, education, and economic welfare lead to decrease in social participation. Some of these polemic issues might proceed from cynic and pessimist personality of urban dwellers, citizens with literacy and wealthy situation in society.

There is high alienation and social rapture among aged samples of selected counties in Khuzistan province. Social alienation booms to progress in urban area and effects on participation of citizens negatively. This variable has different status within ethnic groups. Arabs and Lors have sensed too social isolation than Persian aged. This cynic view may lead to recent social structures that assemble tendencies and roots of social participation for minorities and especial groups in social system. They have not critical citizenship status in Iranian society after fundamental revolution in 1979. Also, it may result to intolerant attitude by technocratic elites and educated class of society and the province. The effective relationships of increasing benefits and decreasing expenditures on social participation mention to growth of individualization of aged citizens. This was stated in more contemporary literatures of Iranian scholars as well.

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