# The analysis of municipality performance in creation of citizens participation using urban governance excellence approach: Ghaemshahr city (A case study)

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the municipality performance in creation of citizens participation using urban governance excellence approach. Just an accountable local government can act independently on all of projects that creates citizen's trust on participation. For this purpose, the governance indices and factors influencing the creation of citizens participation were identified. This was a descriptive and analytical research. Population consisted of 120 persons including managers and employees of municipality. The questionnaires were distributed among them, and data were analyzed using LISREL and SPSS software. The results indicated that from the perspective of citizens, the participation creation of Ghaemshahr municipality was not good. The Trust and expertise indices were effective in the citizens participation with staff on urban affairs. The lack of them along with problems such as lack of clarity, lack of accountability, lack of compliance with laws and regulations, and injustice would exacerbate the Disaffiliation of citizens. Also, the results showed that municipal inefficiency and lack of proper accountability had been influenced by various factors that existed in the organization. With precise examination, it was found that the response structure of the municipal, weaknesses and problems in the organization, lack of funds and facilities for participation in the Municipal, lack of proper management and regulation, and dissatisfaction with salary had created difficulties for many of the officials. The implementation of good urban governance indicators, especially the indicators impact on accountability, may lead to citizens' participation.*

*Key Words: Accountability, Municipality, Citizens participation, urban governance, Ghaemshahr.*

**Statement of the problem:** The rapid growth of urbanization and urbanism, particularly in developing countries, has arised serious problems for urban governance (The growth of social, economic, physical, and cultural problems in cities has added to the complexity. So, restructuring of urban management system at all levels in needed for dealing with these issues and providing solutions. With current structure, there is no hope to improve (Latifi, 2008: 140). This rapid and uncontrolled growth of cities and urban population in the world has more than ever changed the urban identity and its needed applications (james, m, b.1991: 11), especially in large cities and their surrounding areas, and has converted the urban management to one of the most complex and most important areas of government relations and people. Successive changes in urban areas requires new types of planning (baud and dhanalakshmi, 2007: 133). The urban management in the twenty-first century will face with a challenge. The challenge itself will be a function of technological,

demographic, economic, political, and international changes (Athari, 19:2007). By looking at the urban management status in Iran, it will be found that urban management is dominated by government due to reasons such as centralism, exogenous urban programs and plans, and oil-based economics. It has frequently moved away from integrated and systematic management, has trapped in the vortex of cell and section management, has remained backward from the process of urbanization and its issues, and has caught up by top-down views and attitudes (Bojani, 12:2007). Therefore, the revision of urban management system in Iran has been seriously emphasized (Barakpour, 51:1999). Governance is the product of multilevel process and it requires mutual relationship between official, government and civil organization (Barakpour, 18:2006). The main issue is the accountability of municipal employees to citizens in order to create participation and trust. People have frequent relationships with this organization. Considering its importance in creating participation, this study aims to investigate the accountability of staff in Ghaemshahr municipality. Therefore, the following questions will be discussed in this research:

1. To what extent the municipality employees' performance is in direction of creation of citizens' participation?
2. What factors influence the municipality employees' accountability in order to create participation?
3. What is the strategy for improving the municipality employees' accountability and creating citizens participation?

**Materials and Methods:** This is an applied - development and descriptive - analytical research. The data were collected based on observation, field study (questionnaire), and documents (books and articles). Using Cochran method, the population size was determined 120 120 persons including managers and employees of municipality. The logical reasoning, descriptive statistics (tables and charts), and inferential statistics were used for analyzing the data. However, the one sample T-tests were conducted by using SPSS and structural equation modeling or path analysis was done using LISREL software. The reliability and validity of questionnaire was confirmed according to the opinion of supervisor professor, counselor professor, a group of professors, and some experts. Factor validity is a type of construct validity that is measured through factor analysis. The confirmatory factor analysis is used to assess the validity of the questions in this study.

| Table (1): the reliability of each of the variables | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Managers and staff<br>Cronbach's alpha | The number of questions | The research questions | Variables |
| 0.868 | 3 | 15-8-1 | Responsibility |
| 0.786 | 3 | 16-9-2 | Justice |
| 0.791 | 2 | 10-3 | Clarity |
| 0.801 | 3 | 17-11-4 | Law abiding |
| 0.859 | 3 | 18-12-5 | Expertise and competence |
| 0.783 | 3 | 19-13-6 | Trust |
| 0.812 | 3 | 20-14-7 | Participation |
| 0.845 | 20 | 20-1 | Total |

The confirmatory factor analysis was used to investigate the validity of the six variables considered in the research model. The confirmatory factor analysis is a model for theory test in which the researcher begins her/ his analysis with a previous hypothesis. Table 2 show the output of LISREL for confirmatory factor analysis model, the significance coefficient of all questions is higher than 1.96. Therefore, all questions of Managers and employees' questionnaire are approved.

| Table (2): The validity of any of the questionnaire questions by confirmatory factor analysis | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Significance coefficient | Standardized coefficient | Question | Variable |
| Managers and employees | | | |
| 7.81 | 0.70 | 1 Q | Responsibility |
| 2.68 | 0.23 | 8Q | |
| 5.29 | 0.45 | 15Q | |
| 7.13 | 0.60 | 2 Q | Justice |
| 6.94 | 0.58 | 9 Q | |
| 4.90 | 0.42 | 16 Q | |
| 9.19 | 0.72 | 3 Q | Clarity |
| 9.62 | 0.75 | 10 Q | |
| 5.48 | 0.45 | 4 Q | Law abiding |
| 8.14 | 0.63 | 11 Q | |
| 10.02 | 0.76 | 17 Q | |
| 5.85 | 0.48 | 5 Q | Expertise and competence |
| 8.92 | 0.71 | 12 Q | |
| 6.62 | 0.54 | 18 Q | |
| 6.99 | 0.55 | 6 Q | Trust |
| 9.92 | 0.75 | 13 Q | |
| 5.70 | 0.45 | 19 Q | |
| 6.73 | 0.58 | 7 Q | Participation |
| 8.83 | 0.76 | 14 Q | |
| 6.33 | 0.55 | 20 Q | |

According to the above table, the significance coefficient for all the questions is more than 1.96. So, this questionnaire has validity and all of the questions measure the variables.

**Introduction to the study area:** With an area of 24091.3 km, Mazandaran province forms 1.46% of the total area of the Iran. With an area of 740 km (2006), Ghaemshahr city is located in the central part of the Mazandaran. The Population and Housing Census showed that the population of Ghaemshahr has reached to 174,768 people. (Consulting Engineers of Piravash, 2006)

**Findings:**

**The analysis of respondents' characteristics:** First section of questionnaires is related to personal characteristics. The findings related to personal characteristics of participants are described in the following tables.

1. **Age:** Managers and employees are classified in five groups according to age. The objective of offering these age groups is providing basic understanding about the study population. According to Table 4, 26 of managers and employees are less than 25 years old, 37 managers and employees are 25 to 35 years old, 24 cases are 35 to 45 years old, 21 cases are 45 to 55 years old, and 12 cases are 55 years and older.

| Table (4): Evaluation of respondents by age | | |
|---|---|---|
| Managers and employees | | Age group |
| percent | Frequency | |
| 21.7 | 26 | Less than 25 years |
| 30.8 | 37 | 25 to 35 years |
| 20 | 24 | 35 to 45 years |
| 17.5 | 21 | 45 to 55 years |
| 10 | 12 | 55 years or more |
| 100 | 120 | Sum |

2. **Gender:** The second question of demographic questionnaire is about the respondents' gender. The data of this question categorize the respondents into two different class that their frequency is shown in the below table.

| Table (5): Evaluation of Respondents by Gender | | |
|---|---|---|
| Managers and employees | | Gender |
| Percent | Frequency | |
| 70 | 84 | Male |
| 30 | 36 | Female |

3. **Positive factors affecting managers and employees' accountability:** Considering the financial ability and citizens acceptance of financial laws is the first positive priority of the Municipality from the perspective of managers. That reflects the concerns of the officials for the funding and citizens participation to pay taxes on time in order to do duties and matters of city. This always has been a major problem in municipalities, especially in small towns. The placement of formulating certain laws and regulations in creation of citizens participation and proper management in the last priority of managers is mostly due to the lack of understanding of organizational functions. This requires special attention to training and participation courses for cooperating of citizens and managers.

| The fifth priority | The fourth priority | The third priority | The second priority | The first priority | Positive factors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Table (6): Evaluation of respondents in terms of prioritizing positive factors by managers and employees** | | | | | |
| 16 | 44 | 32 | 20 | 8 | Municipal facilities and its ability to perform the participation services and duties |
| 20 | 8 | 28 | 16 | 48 | Increase of budget for participation |
| 20 | 32 | 20 | 32 | 16 | Salary increase |
| 11 | 45 | 12 | 20 | 32 | Applying certain rules for creating citizen's participation |
| 8 | 20 | 20 | 24 | 48 | Committed and accountable Management |

**4. Negative factors affecting managers and employees' accountability:** From the perspective of managers and employees, lack of proper planning in the field of participation has the most negative effect on the accountability. Thus, it is hoped that by providing legal plans that will not be changed in each period according to the interests of emerging leaders, the participation of citizens with building trust to be achieved. For creating participation the last priority was related to problems of urban and population growth that always exist in all cities. The experiences of successful cities in Iran and around the world show that this issue had not been troubling for even the city managers and employees.

| The fifth priority | The fourth priority | The third priority | The second priority | The first priority | Negative factors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Table (7): Evaluation of respondents in terms of prioritizing negative factors by managers and employees** | | | | | |
| 20 | 8 | 24 | 16 | 52 | Lack of proper planning in the field of participation |
| 8 | 20 | 24 | 44 | 24 | Lack of credit and financial services for participation |
| 16 | 40 | 32 | 24 | 8 | Lack of equipment and facilities for participation |
| 12 | 40 | 12 | 32 | 24 | Displacement of managers |
| 63 | 13 | 28 | 8 | 8 | Urban and population growth problems |

**5. Analysis of factors affecting citizens' participation from the perspective of managers and employees:**

**5.1. Responsibility of managers and employees:** According to Figure 3 and 4, the standardized coefficient between two variables is 0.73 and the significant coefficient between these two variables

is 6.42 (greater than 1.96). It can be concluded that there is significant relationship between the responsibility of managers and staff in accountability and participation level of citizens.

**5.2. Justice of managers and employees:** According to Figure 3 and 4, the standardized coefficient between two variables is 0.28 and the significant coefficient between these two variables is 2.44 (greater than 1.96). It can be concluded that there is significant relationship between the justice of managers and staff in accountability and participation level of citizens.

**5.3. Clarity of managers and employees:** According to Figure 3 and 4, the standardized coefficient between two variables is 0.48 and the significant coefficient between these two variables is 4.74 (greater than 1.96). It can be concluded that there is significant relationship between the clarity of managers and staff in accountability and participation level of citizens.

**5.4. Law abiding of managers and employees:** According to Figure 3 and 4, the standardized coefficient between two variables is 0.21 and the significant coefficient between these two variables is 0.88 (less than 1.96). It can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between the law abiding of managers and staff in accountability and participation level of citizens.

**5.5. Expertise and competence of managers and employees:** According to Figure 3 and 4, the standardized coefficient between two variables is 0.24 and the significant coefficient between these two variables is 2.33 (greater than 1.96). It can be concluded that there is significant relationship between the expertise and competence of managers and staff in accountability and participation level of citizens.

**5.6. Trust to managers and employees:** According to Figure 3 and 4, the standardized coefficient between two variables is 0.59 and the significant coefficient between these two variables is 5.41 (greater than 1.96). It can be concluded that there is significant relationship between the trust to staff and participation level of citizens.
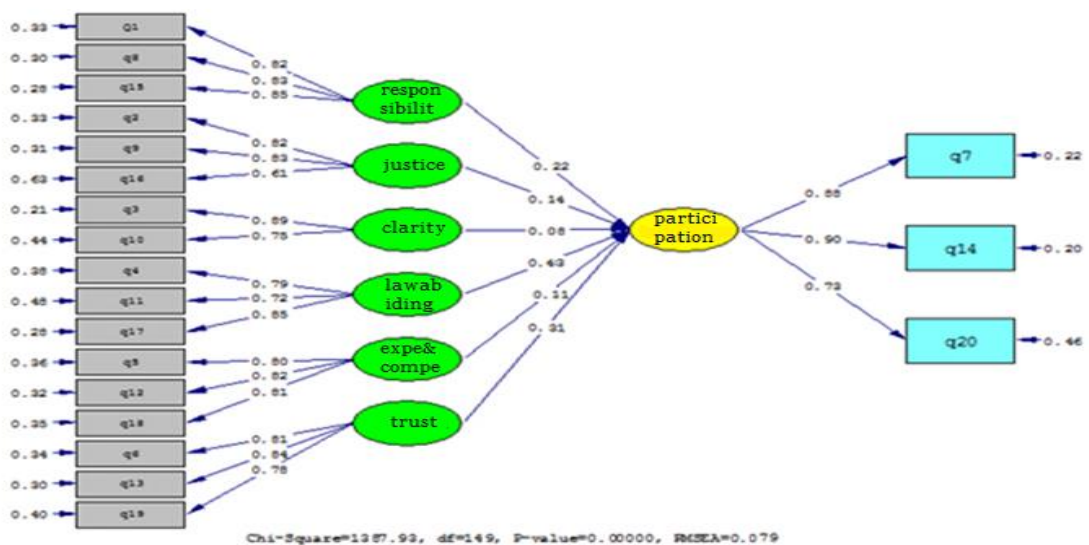


Figure (1): The model of standardized coefficients for testing the research variables – managers and employees

As is shown in Figure 1, the standardized coefficient for the responsibility, justice, clarity, law abiding, expertise and competence, and trust is 0.22, 0.14, 0.08, 0.43, 0.11, and 0.31, respectively.
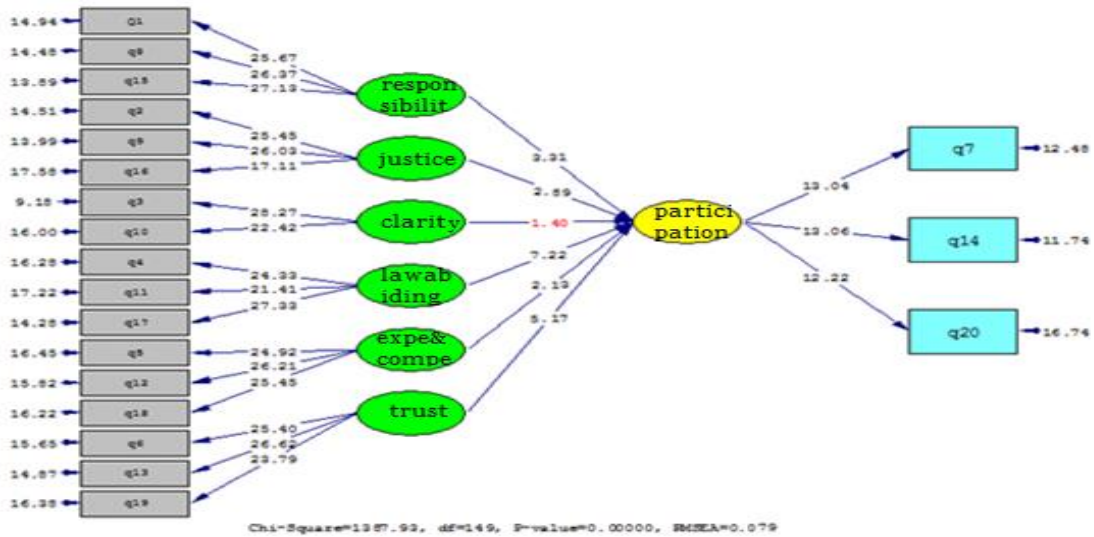


Figure (2): The model of significance coefficients for testing the research variables – managers and employees

As is shown in Figure 2, the significance coefficient for the responsibility, justice, clarity, law abiding, expertise and competence, and trust is 3.31, 2.89, 1.40, 7.22, 2.13, and 5.17, respectively.

**6. Assessment of model fit:** After modeling and parameter estimation, the first question that arises is whether the measurement model is suitable. The answer to this question is possible only by examining fitness. The model fitness means the extent to which a model has consistency and agreement with the relevant data. The fitness measures for a model is obtained by comparing the estimated covariance matrix for population (based on the model, as specified by the researcher) with the sample covariance matrix which is calculated from the data. When the implied covariance matrix of model is equivalent to observed data covariance matrix, it will be said that the model fits the observed data; in other words, the residual matrix and its elements matrix is near zero. When a model is exactly identified, has similarity characteristics, and its estimate and test is possible, then there will many criteria for evaluating its fitness. The most important ones are given in table 8:

| Table (8): Indices of goodness of fit of model. | | |
|---|---|---|
| Statistics of managers and employees Model | Acceptance criteria | The fit index |
| 1.7 | $\chi^2/df \leq 3$ | (Chi square) $\chi^2$ |
| 0.079 | RMSEA<0.08 | RMSEA[1] |
| 0.97 | NFI>0.90 | NFI[2] |

| 0.96 | CFI>0.95 | CFI[3] |
|------|----------|--------|
| 0.88 | GFI>0.90 | GFI[4] |
| 0.85 | AGFI>0.85 | AGFI[5] |

The presented indices and comparing them with the desired quantity for a fitted model show proper fit of both models. The remarkable point in model fitness is: while the model is confirmed by the fitness of structural model, it never proves that the model is the only valid model.

| Table 9: Summary results of research variables | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Results | **T value** | Path coefficient | Path |
| Citizens | | | |
| Confirmation | 3.31 | 0.22 | Responsibility................. citizens participation |
| Confirmation | 2.89 | 0.14 | Justice.................... citizens participation |
| Rejection | 1.40 | 0.08 | Clarity.................... citizens participation |
| Confirmation | 7.22 | 0.43 | law abiding....................citizens participation |
| Confirmation | 2.13 | 0.11 | Expertise and competence................. citizens participation |
| Confirmation | 5.17 | 0.31 | Trust.................... citizens participation |

**Conclusions and recommendations:** The present study analyzed the municipality performance in creation of citizens participation using urban governance excellence approach (Case Study: Ghaemshahr city). The results showed that the accountability of municipal employees in Ghaemshahr for creating participation and citizen's trust has not been satisfactory and has failed to execute correctly many indicators affecting the accountability. In other words, managers and employees have showed that the accountability position of municipal employees in Ghaemshahr for creating participation an citizens trust is not good. The present study tried to suggest strategies for improving the accountability of municipality of Ghaemshahr in direction of citizens participation. Considering the results of analyzing the data obtained from the questionnaire, the following suggestion was provided to resolve problems of accountability and creating participation and trust, in line with urban good governance system:

> ➢ Free and available information for all citizens
> ➢ Attracting citizens trust and using Persuasive policies
> ➢ Creating motivation for citizens participation and communication on urban plans and affairs
> ➢ Using local Councils as mediator between citizens and authorities
> ➢ Avoiding Pessimistic environment between citizens and authorities through public festivals
> ➢ Giving service to all beneficiaries and benefiting from all opportunities by vulnerable groups

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[2]Normed Fit Index
[3]Comparative Fit Index
[4]Goodness of Fit Index
[5]Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index

➢ Eliminating unnecessary steps in the work process and using computer networks (office automation).
➢ Continuous evaluation of citizens' views about the accountability by regulatory bodies
➢ Providing an organizational chart for people to avoid from wasting time
➢ Increasing the municipality's financial capabilities and facilities to perform the services and duties when necessary
➢ Using partnership programs of advanced and successful countries
➢ Taking advantage of people for holding of festivals and ceremonies
➢ Employing expert managers and staff, according to the office jobs
➢ Providing services equally to all parts of the city
➢ Providing equally to all people the rules, town planning and building regulations, revenue, and services
➢ Establishing a control system to ensure proper use of funds
➢ Establishing regulatory bodies to ensure the correct functioning
➢ Identify the duties and responsibilities of citizenship to citizens, and organizational duties to enterprise employees and managers to eliminate the current abnormal condition.

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