

## **ASSESS THE ROLE OF CITIZENS IN IMPROVING URBAN MANAGEMENT POSITION (CASE STUDY: SEMNAN CITY)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research tries to conceptually review the place of citizenship in managing Semnan as the center of the province as well as investigating the role of Semnan citizens in improving the place of urban management. This applied research has used library, documentary, and field study (questionnaire) data collection. It firstly determines the reliability of the questionnaire and the research by Cronbach's Alpha ratio to analyze data by descriptive and analytical method. At first descriptive data such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation of each participant was calculated, then to accept or reject each hypothesis of the study, Pearson correlation coefficient, and regression were applied and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was applied in order to test the normality by SPSS software. The results indicated: 1) there is a meaningful relation up to 52% between citizens' cooperation and improvement of urban management and the assurance ratio is about 95%. Also the cooperation of citizens had effect on improving urban management at an acceptable rate of 27.5%. 2) There is a meaningful relation of 31% between the rate of citizens' participation and improvement of whole (comprehensive) education with the assurance ratio of 95%. The role of whole (comprehensive) education using the results of the study is about 10%, which actually means there are other factors affecting increase and absorption of citizen cooperation. The general result of the study states the participation of citizens in the process of urban decision making, is one of the most basic factors of a democratic government. Increase in citizen participation in urban affairs can play a significant role in promoting urban management. In achieving this goal citizenship participation will certainly increase according to the role of whole (comprehensive) education.

**Keywords:** *Citizen, Urban Management, Education, SPSS, Semnan City.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

If we consider a city as an organization, it is necessary to use techniques to govern the city which are called urban management (Shie, 2003). In fact urban management is concerned with spatial issues in which citizens are involved. People build cities and its conditions indeed affect them. Through the history the cooperation of people in urban decision making has been one of the main elements of governments. The increase of citizens' cooperation in urban affairs can play a key role in creating the balance in cities (Jajarmi *et al.*, 2004).

Therefore the role of this cooperation and the factors affecting and increasing this cooperation is as a great importance in modern societies. Researches have shown that if people know that their cooperation in urban management directly affects their future they can develop workshops to strengthen properties like self-leadership and responsibility to build the grounds for changes which lead to the cities dynamic improvement (Alamvand *et al.*, 1998). In this study it is tried to review the role of citizens in Semnan in the improvement of urban management's position. In this practical study, regarding the data gathering method which is laboratory, documentary, and survey, questionnaires are used and then to approve or reject the hypotheses inferential statistics such as Pearson's correlation coefficient, regression, and Kolmogorov-Simonov test for the normality of distribution is used the tests of which is ran using SPSS software. In this study it is tried to determine the level of citizen's cooperation in the improvement of urban management and the effects of this cooperation. On the other side, regarding the importance of

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comprehensive education in increasing the citizen's cooperation, the role of comprehensive education is studied.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Regarding the subject in question, this study is descriptive (non-experimental) in which the relationship between variables are tested and practical suggestions are made. In descriptive studies the researcher tries to find the relationship between the role of citizens and the improvement of urban management's position, and then practical suggestions are made. Data gathering was conducted using survey in which the data are directly gathered from people. In this study a questionnaire without any name consisting of a pack of questions with sequential and multiple choices scales related to the hypotheses, is used.

The population in this study is all the citizens residing in Semnan, from which a sample is chosen using random sampling methods. Questionnaires are distributed among the sample. The questions in the questionnaire are designed around three main factors:

- Urban management's performance; 7 questions;
- The level of cooperation in citizens; 11 questions;
- The role of comprehensive education; 5 questions.

Totally there were 23 questions on the basis of Likert's 5 scale choices (from completely agreed to completely disagreed). The scores were designed as completely agreed 5, agreed 4, neutral 3, disagreed 2, and completely disagreed 1. In the end SPSS software is used for the analyses and final conclusion.

### **Research Background**

By the end of 1960s, the role of cooperation in the development of societies has been paid a great deal of attention by decision makers. Ernestine was among the first people to use the role of citizens' cooperation in 1969 with the term citizenship power. He used cooperation ladder as a metaphor to explain it. In the late 70s, WHO (World Health Organization), used the term citizen cooperation for the first time in the context of initial health cares. In 1996, citizen cooperation was used by UN (United Nations) as one of the most effective plans in urban affairs in the field of urban residence in a program called cooperation on urban affairs. The political background of urban citizenship dates back to the time when the strategic goals for the third millennium were being set. This program was designed on the basis for UNESCO, UN, and Habitat from 2005 following global programs of Paris 2005, Barcelona 2005, Vancouver 2006, and Porto Allegre 2008, which consists of goals and strategies (Brown and Kristiansen, 2009). The first experience is that of European urban citizen which consists of a wide range of policies and experiences. Nevertheless, the basis for that can be attributed to ECSHRC in 2000, which was designed for 350 European cities from 21 countries. Also NCHR (Network Cities for Human Rights) policies 2003, Barcelona, Spain, can be referred to as well. Other experiences include PLDAGG in 2005 (called Aberdeen Instructions for 53 European countries (Wright, 2006). This literature in Iran dates back to the time of Parliament and the time constitution law was issued, which is of the greatest principles for citizen-oriented management. In other words, one of the most important achievements for the Constitutional Crusade alongside with separation of the three forces was that the power was divided between the central government and the local ones. By the time M. R. Pahlavi was the king of Iran a law was approved by the parliament about province and urban associations in June 30<sup>th</sup> 1970, which underwent adjustments twice; first July 17<sup>th</sup> and then June 26<sup>th</sup> 1976. According to this law for the purpose of improving people's cooperation in affairs related to them and for recognition of their needs and civilization of their cities and villages, in every city except for the capital, local associations were built. The development of parliament was of great goals of Islamic revolution too which was expressed in Imam Khomeini's fights. After the Islamic Revolution Majlis-e-Khobregan was developed to set the constitutional law and with the great endeavors by Ayatollah Taleghani articles 6 and 7, and 100-106 were devoted to the subject of Islamic Parliaments. One of the greatest achievements Islamic Revolution made was the creation of Islamic Parliaments which is of reflects the government of people by people. Islamic Parliaments started working on May/June 9<sup>th</sup> 1999. Although more than 12 years have passed the full cooperation of people is not achieved yet and urban management could not be responsible for the cultural, social, and physical tissue

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of the cities. Researches in Iran have always focused on some certain patterns of citizen's cooperation. For instance the book "citizen cooperation pattern in urban management" by Alireza (2000). Other books are "the position of the concept of citizenship in municipalities" by Mahmood (2001), urban research center publication, and "sustainable urban management, the similar experiences in municipalities and Associations" by Hussein Imani 2002, municipalities' organization publications. Aside from some other books which are mostly about urban management, there are theses by students and PhD candidates which have studied this broad subject in case studies. In this study it is tried to use descriptive-analytic methods to review the role of citizen cooperation in every aspect including social, economic, and political with emphasis on the role of local organizations and urban management, through a case study in Semnan. Then some suggestions are made to achieve citizen's cooperation which can be generalized to the whole Iranian management system.

### **Theoretical Basis of Research**

According to the conventional definition, citizen is a person who is entitled to political rights and their rights do not depend on government's or managers' will, but government's and managers' actions or at least their transparency depend on them (Dreyfus, 1999). Citizens must be allowed to determine their future, if they have no role in their future they are not citizens (Moghadam, 2009). Thomas H. Marshall argues that in relation with the government, citizen has three sets of rights; civil, political, and social rights. Citizen and citizen-orientation by the meaning that one is the citizen of a country taking into account all rights and responsibilities against the government brings equality, justice, and independence for the citizen. This citizenship is official only when people's rights and esteem are recognized and respected (Honarmand, 2010). The first point to start the theory of citizenship is the point where citizens city is defined which means getting citizen identities involved with citizenship and urban management, which reminds us to refer back to the identification of the rights of citizens. However nowadays citizens are citizen-users and recover the city through experience and consumption, the term urban citizen is beyond this since in this term there is combination of rights against the city and responsibilities in front of it (Usher, 2004). Cooperation; concepts like involvement, endeavor, reaction, information share, problem solving, locating, and cooperation in decision making can be deducted. In most of the contexts the focus is on one of the factors above but it seems that it is not enough and full cooperation must include all of them. The mechanism of citizenship-urban management relations, as Turner states is the argument on stabilization of rights and responsibilities with the process of modernization and creation of a new society. The reasons to this bond can be found in the quality and quantity properties of a modern society and the difference between this modern society and a traditional one. Some of these properties are the inconsistency in the urban population, social discrimination, social rating, and the great movement of the society in modern life. Furthermore the relationships between people and the new local governments and other political settings including urban management can be named too. The tendency toward living in cities can be effective too, while they grow inequality and the need to distribute resources and put the pressure on the urban competition. From the prospective of urban policy the unlimited demands of citizens is focused on some basic issues: 1. Use of urban resources 2. Affecting the mechanism of urban decision making. 3. Preparation of a mechanism for a better cooperation in urban life. 4. Stabilization of rights-responsibilities for citizens and urban management which includes local governments, urban governments, parliaments, authorities and municipalities (Mann, 1998; Massey *et al.*, 1997). These factors in fact affect the relationship between citizens and municipality which is the most basic organization for urban management. These effects include enforcement, reasonable and regulative relations between citizens and municipalities; citizens are more powerful, they feel they are more attached to the city, their commitment to cooperation with the municipality grows, they trust the city more, and the mechanism of democracy gets more powerful (Nejati, 2001). Citizenship rights and responsibilities are very different in societies in which the origin is the society in comparison with the ones in which the origin is the person (Varie, 2011). Planning in the past decades was based on centralization and on a top bottom basis. But in 1980s many researchers started thinking about a new approach, bottom to top (Navabakhsh and Arjomand, 2009). A common perspective which is effective in realization of a citizen-

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oriented city is cooperation alongside with citizen-orientation. This perspective states a kind of development which is involved with innovation and people's power through which powers are gathered are used in a more effective way. In this perspective the focus is on cooperation of local human resources and their strength. In a citizen-oriented city, cooperation must be considered in the lowest level in neighborhoods (Navabakhsh and Arjomand, 2009). The realization of citizens' cooperation also needs the preparation of grounds from municipalities for people to get involved in decision makings (Sarafi, 2011).

### The Area in Study

Semnan is a province with the area of 95815.676 square kilometer, which is 5.8% of the whole area of Iran which puts it in the sixth place. It is four times bigger than the capital, Tehran (statistical calendar of Semnan, 2010). Semnan city as the capital of province is located amidst a big desert which from west reaches Garmsar, east to Dameghan, south to Kavir, and north to Qaemshahr (urban planning organization, Semnan, 2006). In this study Semnan is chosen as the place to study, regarding the fact that the coefficient of urbanization in Semnan in 2011 was 77.5 which is beyond the national coefficient of urbanization, and on the other hand the biggest urbanization coefficient belongs to Semnan by 89.6%. In this paper it is tried to study the citizen pattern in Semnan considering that in the past few years due to unregulated extension of the city in one direction (northeast) the city has confronted a set of problems like lack of attention to the needs by the developed parts, the old part being abandoned, and some economic and cultural problems due to incremental growth in population, to find the relationship between citizen cooperation and urban management. In the end some suggestions are made for the improvement of urban management.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study for data analyses descriptive and inferential statistics were used. First in descriptive statistics for each property in participants a table was designed and frequency and percentage was shown, then descriptive statistics like mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were calculated for each participant.

**Table 1: The Corcoran equation to calculate the sample size**

84057	Population	N
1.96	table t	t2
0.05	Maximum acceptable difference	d2
0.5	Ratio of success in population (citizen-oriented planning)	p
0.5	Ratio in fraction of population	1-p
382	$n = \frac{Nt^2 p(1-p)}{Nd^2 + t^2 p(1-p)}$	n
0.45	-	Sample to population

Then bar graph was designed for each frequency related to the properties of participants. In this study using Corcoran test the questionnaire was distributed among people above 18 in Semnan and a statistics expert gathered the questionnaires to evaluate using SPSS software.

Sampling method in this study was category sampling regarding the subject and the nature of study. Using the Corcoran equation the number of sample was calculated which more than 223 people, chosen randomly were.

$$n = \frac{Nt^2 p(1-p)}{Nd^2 + t^2 p(1-p)}$$

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400 questionnaires were distributed among the sample from which 382 were completed and given back. The return rate of the questionnaire was 95.6% which is acceptable. Validity was studied to find out how much the questionnaire is evaluating the subject. To evaluate the validity of the questionnaire in pretest and the designing step experts were asked for their notions. Then their ideas were used. To evaluate the validity Spearman's coefficient was used.

Method:

1. Two experts in the field of study were chosen.
2. An explanation was given to them on the test (which was a precise description of the field under question) and the main contents were given to the two experts.
- 1- Each expert is asked to rate each question on the basis of relevance to the subject in question with a four scale range irrelevant 1, relatively irrelevant 2, relatively relevant 3, and relevant 4, irrespective of the other expert's opinion.
1. The data from expert's opinions were gathered in a table.
2. The degree to which two experts were agreed on relevance was calculated using Spearman's correlation coefficient:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum_{i=1}^K d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where  $r_s$  : Spearman's correlation coefficient,  $d_i$  : the difference between the rates given by experts.  $n$  : the number of questions.

**Table 2: Correlation coefficient calculated by Spearman's correlation coefficient for the two experts**

expert	Expert 1	Expert 2
Expert 1	1	+0.773
Expert 2	+0.773	1

In this paper the correlation is 0.773 which is acceptable.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha is used:

$$\alpha = \left( \frac{n}{n-1} \right) \left( \frac{s_t^2 - \sum_{i=1}^n s_i^2}{s_t^2} \right)$$

Where  $S_t$  is the total standard deviation,  $S_i$  standard deviation for the question number  $j$ , and the number of questions

**Table 3: Cronbach's alpha calculations**

Reliability Statistics				
N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Based on	Cronbach's Alpha	
Number of questions	Standardized cronbach's alpha		Cronbach's alpha	
32	0.815		0.808	Total questions
7	0.692		0.691	Urban management's performance
11	0.639		0.622	The level of citizens' cooperation
9	0.659		0.657	The role of comprehensive
5	0.483		0.428	Reliability Statistics



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Using SPSS software and normal calculations the Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was 0.808 which shows a desired reliability for the questionnaire. To reject or approve the hypotheses inferential statistics like Pearson's correlation coefficient, regression, and Kolmogorov- Smirnov test for normality are used. Data analyses were conducted using SPSS software and graphs were drawn using EXCEL Software. After the data is gathered to organize the information and to catch the norms to summarize the information to evaluate the performance of urban management and its relationship with the level of citizen cooperation and the role of comprehensive education in Semnan, in some key fields more than a few questions are combined and the following results were exploited. Regarding the below mentioned hypotheses, the results from the questionnaire were analyzed:

1. Citizens' cooperation affects the performance of urban management.
2. Citizens' cooperation can be enforced through comprehensive education.

The results of statistical analyses by SPSS software to approve both hypotheses are as following:

**Table 4: Description of statistical indexes between the variables**

Descriptive indexes					
Pearson coefficient	Correlation	Number	SD	Mean	Name
+0.525		382	0.62016	2.9768	Urban management's performance
		382	0.46833	3.2891	The level of citizens' cooperation
+0.307		382	0.55770	3.5507	The role of comprehensive education
		382	0.46833	3.2891	The level of citizens' cooperation

Also to study the relationship between the two variables of the performance of urban management and the level of citizen cooperation in a linear manner, regression line coefficients were estimated with the stepwise method.

**Table 5: one-way Variance analysis**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Sig.	F	Mean Square	df	Sum Squares	of Model	
Sig.	F	Mean Square	df	Squared error	Source of error	Model
		40.322	1	40.322	Regression line	Regression
.000b	144.263	.280	380	106.211	Model error	Residual
			381	146.533	Total	Total

a. Dependent Variable: urban management's performance  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), citizens' cooperation

On the other hand, the regression line coefficients show that variables that have a value of in the coefficients table are of an acceptable significance. Then the equation for the line comes from SPSS software's the output table.

$$p - value \leq \alpha \quad y_i = a + bx_i + \varepsilon$$

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$$y = 0.692 + 0.695x$$

**Table 6: Statistics related to the regression line**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Durbin-Watson	Std. Error of the Estimate	Adjusted Square	R	R Square	Model
Durbin-watson	sd	Standard coefficient	Determination coefficient	Correlation coefficient	Model
1.841	.52868	.273	.275	.525a	1

a. Predictors: (Constant), citizens' cooperation

b. Dependent Variable: urban management's performance

The results from table 4 show that there is a significant positive relationship (0.525) between the level of cooperation by citizens and the improvement of performance in urban management with the confidence level of 95%. It means that the more citizens cooperate the better the performance of urban management gets and vice versa. Regarding the p value from table 5, the regression model is significant with the confidence level of 95% (the relationship between the two variables is linear) and the results of regression line coefficients are shown in table 4.

$$y = 0.692 + 0.695x$$

Level of cooperation by citizens is the independent variable (x) and the performance of urban management is the dependent variable (y). Also the determination coefficient is  $R=0.275$  which shows that 27.5% of the changes in dependent variable is due to independent variable.

**Table 7: One-way variance analysis**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>							
Sig.	F	Mean Square	df	Sum Squares	of	Model	
Sig.	f	Mean Square	df	Sum Squares	of	Source of error	model
		7.806	1	7.806		Regression	1
.000b	39.420	.198	379	75.053		Model error	Residual
			380	82.859		total	Total

a. Dependent Variable: citizens' cooperation

b. Predictors: (Constant), the role of comprehensive education

The results of the regression line show that:

**Table 8: The summary of statistics related to the regression line**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Durbin-Watson	Std. Error of the Estimate	Adjusted Square	R	R Square	Model
Durbin-Watson	sd	Standard coefficient	Determination coefficient	Correlation coefficient	model
1.317	.44500	.092	.094	.307a	1

a. Predictors: (Constant), the role of comprehensive education

b. Dependent Variable: citizens' cooperation

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This shows that the level of citizens' cooperation affects the performance of urban management in the acceptable level of 27.5. Also the linear relationship between the two variables of citizens' cooperation as the dependent variable and comprehensive education as the independent variable was analyzed through linear regression in a stepwise manner:

The results from the test and the correlation table (4) show that there is a positive relationship between citizens' cooperation and comprehensive education with the value of 0.307 in a confidence level of 95%. It means that with a higher level of comprehensive education one can get a better cooperation from the citizens and vice versa. Regarding the p value from table 7, the regression model is significant with the confidence level of 95% (the relationship between the two variables is linear) and the results of regression line coefficients are shown in table 4.

$$y = 2.379 + 0.257x$$

Level of cooperation by citizens is the dependent variable (y) and the comprehensive education is the independent variable (x). Also the determination coefficient is  $R=0.094$  which shows that 9.4% of the changes in dependent variable is due to independent variable. Basically there are other factors affecting citizens' cooperation amongst which comprehensive education offers a share of 10%.

### **Conclusion**

Cooperation is of great advantages in political, social, cultural, economic, and planning affairs. The greatest one is the activation of citizens who tend to escape responsibilities. They can be more committed. Cooperation grows the grounds for education of less fortunate and links them to the society. From a planning perspective, cooperation makes it possible to share ideas and priorities, cover the interest of public, and accept the suggestions. Politically cooperation is supportive of democracy. Economically it fastens urban projects. Maybe its best advantage is that it brings people and authorities closer and replaces me and you with us. In traditional societies in Iran, religious and economic cooperation was significant. In Semnan regarding the answers people have given to the questions in the questionnaire most of people tend to cooperate in urban affairs of their city but practically they are not very cooperative and this has led to many problems in the development of the city. Regarding the importance of political, economic, and social cooperation, comprehensive education seems like a good idea. The fact that comprehensive education has only a 10-percent effect does not make it insignificant. However the major factors affecting the cooperation by people must be found.

Regarding the importance of cooperation in the improvement of urban management a precise planning must be conducted for the realization of such plans. For Semnan according to the social, cultural, and economic structure following suggestions are offered:

1. Basic changes are necessary to make the grounds for coordination of organizations. Regarding the fact that in Iran this needs new laws and regulations an urban civilization committee can help coordinating all the organizations to solve problems and prevent parallel work as well, and build a basis for people to trust them.
2. Legal mechanism should be designed for the managers to be responsible in every level.
3. Participating in sessions held by city councils should be open to everyone and also people must be informed fully of the decisions made by this organization.
4. Precise studies and investments should be made to recognize the needs and the ways to satisfy them.
5. Annual performance, budgeting, and planning report should be published for people to gain their trust.
6. Grounds for development of local gathering in a neighborhood level must be prepared for people to get involved in the process of decision making more and more.
7. People's commands and critiques should be gathered on a regular basis.
8. The culture of civilization and the principles to it should be taught to people (this is one of the most important basis to fully gain the cooperation of people and make them more responsible, also to enforce the urban management).
9. Building culture houses and local cultural centers to teach people and promote the culture of respect to law and cooperation.



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