

Evaluating the Impact of Social Capital Indicators on Willingness to Participate: The Case of Community Council Members of Mashhad Neighborhoods

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The establishment of social councils of Mashhad's neighborhoods is one of the approaches in making citizens participate in affairs so that better cooperation and interactions with the urban management are achieved. Undoubtedly, of the factors affecting the council performances, mention could be made of the level of trust among the members in the form of members' social capital indices. This study aims to examine trust in the municipality, trust in the efficacy of councils, trust in the abilities of the other members of the council as social capital indices and a feeling of belonging to the neighborhood, as a variable affecting social capitals and members' tendency towards participation in the neighborhoods' affairs, among the members of social councils of neighborhoods in the region 9 of Mashhad's municipality.

2. Theoretical Framework

Not as a new concept, the beginning of participation could be found in many cities around the world such as ancient Greece. Citizens' participation seems to be a very general idea, but can be taken as a set of behaviors of which a civil society makes use of when intervening in collective life. Social capitals are among the main reasons for citizens' participation in the urban affairs. Inglehart (2007) takes the culture of trust and compromise into consideration as social capitals. From a sociological angle, at least three types of trust could be named which are: interpersonal trust, generalized trust, and institutional trust. All these indices are investigated in this paper.

3. Method

This study favors a descriptive-analytical approach. The population of the study includes all the members of social councils of neighborhoods

in the region 9 of Mashhad's municipality and the sampling units equal the population units. The social councils in the region 9 of Mashhad's municipality have 177 members. To collect the data, documentary approaches and questionnaires were employed. The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS and EXCEL software.

4. Results

Initially, the mean of members' attitudes was calculated as high -over the average- which can hold positive effects on the performance of the council. Afterwards, the relationship between the variables under the investigation was examined. As for the effect of age on the studied variables, age did not affect any of the variables. As for the effect of education on the studied variables, there is a significant relationship between the level of education and trust in municipality and confidence in the efficacy of the council.

5. Discussion

The establishment of social councils of neighborhoods in the Mashhad metropolis is a major step in achieving goals of sustainable development and in assigning citizens to affairs. The members of this council are chosen by the municipality. They attend the sessions of council once a month to examine the issues in the neighborhood and offer solutions for the improvement of the neighborhood.

6. Conclusion

There is no denying that the members' trust in the performance of the council is a deciding factor affecting the performance of the councils. Beside the trust factor, there exist other significant factors affecting the efficacy of the council members which include the feeling of belonging to the neighborhood and the members' tendency towards

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participation. In the present study, therefore, the relationship between the chosen variables affecting the council performance among the members of social councils of neighborhoods in the region 9 of Mashhad's municipality was examined. Based on the variables under the investigation and the obtained results, the following suggestions are offered:

The limits of duties and authorities of the council should be elaborated in detail for the members so that the members would be actively engaged in all

the aspects related to the neighborhood management.

The council members must be chosen from the neighborhood's inhabitants.

Great care must be taken when choosing the council members, hence, the members accept them and feel safe with each other.

Keywords: Social council of neighborhood, Social capital, Participation, Mashhad .

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