

Participation of Environmental NGOs in Conservational Activities: Evidences from Kani Barazan Wetland in Mahabad

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Expanded Abstract

Introduction

Today, human society is faced with tremendous challenges such as the environmental problems. If same process continues and serious efforts are not made to resolve this crisis, it will turn into a disaster. Although NGOs have a long history, but unfortunately they have not yet found a suitable place in the field of environment and natural resources. There is always one concern: what factors can attract people to participate in environmental activities effectively.

In one hand, because of uncontrolled use and application of natural resources without any special plan, the rate of degradation and exploitation of these resources is much greater than their renewal ability and this issue has destroyed a wide range of resources. Therefore, strategy formulation for conservation and sustainable use of these resources as a fundamental necessity is felt more than ever.

On the other hand, environmental problems have become pervasive global crisis and if we do not make any attempt to solve this problem, human will be faced with an enormous disaster. Fiftieth principle of Iran's constitution and fourth program of economic, social and cultural development has emphasized on the environmental protection. This is the criterion for national and community participation to protect the country environmental assets. According to these issues, in the recent years, public participation in environmental decision making at the regional, national and international level is increasingly institutionalized.

Participation is resulted from a dynamic process in which the person knows his/her real requests. Participation is a goal and also a dynamic activity that enables people to increase their role in developmental activities. In this type of partnership, each individual has the right to express and intervene in processes of making decisions about his or her own live. Participation is an instrument to expand the purposes, ideological and normative development, like equality and democracy.

Wetlands can be called as the most beautiful aspects of life in the world. The combination of onshore and offshore ecosystems leads to the emergence of "Wetland" or "wetlands". These critical environments are the most fertile, complex and sensitive habitats of the earth. Wetlands commission in 1362 is defined "wetland" as follows:

Wetland is an area of the natural manifestation of God that in the process of emergence, the soil becomes saturated by surface water and groundwater and over time it is formed with normal and environmental conditions and has biological sequences.

This ecosystem includes the communities of plants and animals that can be adapted to the particular ecological conditions. The wetlands are considered as natural and untouched and pristine. To most people, the peace of a wetland preferred relative to the mountains and deserts and deltas. Many plants and animals of the wetlands are attracting the attention of people. Natural enthusiasts know that wetlands even have mental healing value.

In this relationship, non-governmental organizations play an undeniable role in protecting natural resources and the environment. To clarify the situation that shows the importance of this role, we need a systematic research. Therefore, this study aimed at investigation about the factors affecting on participation of environmental NGO's in conservational activities.

In the present study, we emphasize on the non-governmental organizations that are active in the area of Kani

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Barazan Wetland. Three NGOs are active around Kani Barazan Wetland. The main problem of this study is to identify the major factors that influence participation of members in the concept of wetland protection.

Materials and Methods

A descriptive – correlation research was conducted in this study and data were collected through a survey. The study population were the members of three active NGO's in the field of environmental protection of Mahabad's Kani Barazan wetland (N = 120). Up to 92 people of them were selected as the sample. In this study, the factors affecting participation were assessed in five categories, including informational, economic, cultural, motivational and managerial factors.

A questionnaire was designed to collect the required data of the research. Its validity was confirmed by a panel of experts (Faculty members and PhD and MSc students of Department of Agricultural Development and Education of University of Tehran). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability. The reliability values are ranged more than 0.7 for each part of questionnaire. This indicates its reliability was appropriate. The 92 questionnaires were distributed among the participants to collect data. After that, 85 sheets of them were used in the final analysis. For data analysis SPSS₂₁ software was applied. To investigate the participation rate of conservation measures between male and female, the mean comparison was performed by using Student's T test.

Results and Discussion

The results indicated that there is a significant difference between male and female and degree of participation ($t = 2.937$). To determine the effects of variables on participation rates, stepwise regression analysis was used. Stepwise approach is a method in which the most powerful variables enter into the regression equation, in order, and this continues until the significance test error reaches 5%. In this study, after entering the variables that were significantly correlated with the dependent variable (participation in conservation measures), make an equation, in 4 steps. Therefore, the variables of economic factor, informational factor, cultural factor and management factor were entered into regression analyses (Table 1).

Table 1. results of stepwise regression analysis

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	5.466	-	5.217	0.000
F ₁ : economic factor	1.142	0.504	8.150	0.000
F ₂ : informational factor	1.187	0.488	7.966	0.000
F ₃ : cultural factor	0.774	0.251	4.134	0.000
F ₄ : management factor	0.415	0.144	2.349	0.021

According to the results presented in Table 1, the linear equation of the regression is as follows:
 $R^2 = 0.711$

$$Y = 5.466 + 1.142 F_1 + 1.187 F_2 + 0.744 F_3 + 0.415 F_4$$

The results showed that 71.1 percent of participation variance was determined by these variables. According to the values obtained for the Beta, independent variables that have the greatest effects on the participation rate are, in an order, as: economic factor, informational factor, cultural factor and management factor.

Conclusion

Based on the results, there is a negative and significant difference between male and female in line of participation rates at one percent level of significance. The significant relationship between age and participation rate at the one percent level was also observed. These results are consistent with research findings of some scientists.

Since the informational factor in this study showed significant and positive effect on participation in environmental activities and this is consistent with the results of previous studies, some activities such as exhibitions and conferences in the field of environmental pollution control and training workshops should be done to help people be familiar with the principles and objectives of the participations.

Another factor of significant effect in this study was cultural factor. This contains some items such as having the spirit of cooperation among community members, collective decision making in cooperative and public encourage toward the movement of participation.

Management is also another factor that has a significant effect on participation in environmental protection of wetlands. This is consistent with the results of some other studies. Therefore, improvement in the management

mechanisms from government and on behalf of wetlands board members can be followed by effective results. Another factor that has a significant impact on the participation is economic factor. Therefore, according to the results, this can be recommended that characteristics and their cultural and economic structure and level of their knowledge as well as their age should be carefully identified and evaluated.

We can apply this information in future planning to increase participation in conservation measures. Since the rates of women's participation in conservational activities are reported less than those of men, we must create necessary cultural and motivational background for increasing women's participation by doing measures such as festivals and seminars with educational purposes. People should be provided with the required information for enhancement of their science and knowledge in the field of environmental protection.

Keywords: conservational measures, environmental conservation, non government organizations (NGOs), participation.

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