

Factors Effecting Social Participation Amongst Iranian Older Adults

LES FACTEURS INFLUENT SUR LA PARTICIPATION SOCIAL ENTRE LES ADULTES IRANIENS

Masoumeh Bagheri^{1,*}; Abdolrahim Asadollahi²

¹ PH.D., Academic Member of Shahid Chamran University, Dept. of Sociology, Ahvaz, Iran.

² PH.D., Social Gerontology, Inst. of gerontology, faculty of medicine, University of Putra, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

A problematic reduction of social participation in local communities of Khuzistān province in the southwest of Iran has become a serious issue for research in social planning and policy making. It has occasioned an attempt to search for risk factors as deterrents to social participation. The aim of this study was to investigate factors effecting social participation among gray citizens, focusing on the role of their religiosity as reducer or actives factor. A statistic community aged were 60-80 years old of 63 seniors citizens from municipal zones of Ahwāz city that selected through random sampling method. Gender, socioeconomic status, membership in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Duration of living in the city, a sense of satisfaction towards urban services, and traditionalism/fatalism. It was noticeable that religiosity has no significant relationship with social participation of aging citizens; though religious elders have less participating interactions in this study. Finally, some discussions and offers within the research itself were recognized as potential improvement and reinforcement energies toward participative planning within the population, especially among women and seniors. The resulting development of social networks and societal links, along with some revival of social trust appeared helpful.

Key words: Religiosity; Social Participation; Socio-economic status; Fatalism

Résumé

Une réduction problématique de la participation sociale dans les communautés locales de la province

du Khouzistan dans le sud-ouest de l'Iran est devenu un grave problème pour la recherche en matière de planification sociale et l'élaboration des politiques. Il a occasionné une tentative pour rechercher les facteurs de risque comme moyens de dissuasion à la participation sociale. Le but de cette étude était d'étudier les facteurs effectuer la participation sociale des citoyens gris, en se concentrant sur le rôle de leur religiosité comme réducteur ou un facteur actifs. Une communauté statistique ans étaient 60-80 ans, de citoyens aînés de 63 zones municipales de la ville d'Ahwaz qui ont choisi par la méthode d'échantillonnage aléatoire. Sexe, statut socio-économique, l'appartenance à des organisations non gouvernementales (ONG), Durée de vie dans la ville, un sentiment de satisfaction à l'égard des services urbains, et le traditionalisme / fatalisme. On a pu remarquer que la religiosité n'a pas de relation significative avec la participation sociale des citoyens vieillissants; si les chefs religieux ont moins d'interactions qui participent à cette étude. Enfin, des discussions et des offres au sein de la recherche elle-même ont été reconnues comme susceptibles d'être améliorés et les énergies de renfort vers la planification participative au sein de la population, surtout parmi les femmes et les personnes âgées. Le développement résultant des réseaux sociaux et sociétaux des liens, avec une certaine reprise de la confiance sociale semble utile.

Mots clés: La religiosité; La participation sociale; Statut socio-économique; Le fatalisme

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INTRODUCTION

Old people display many variations in the form of contin-

uation, substitution, or curtailment in the course of their activity patterns at older ages, for many of them the number of activities in which they participate and the intensity in which they do so appears to decline (Armstrong & Morgan, 1998; Bennett, 1998; Klumb & Baltes, 1999; Strain et al., 2002). The individual importance of activities comes to the fore in studies which find positive relationships between remaining active at older ages and developments in health, self fulfilment, and self esteem, feelings of freedom, having social contacts, and personal well-being. Hence in an interesting example, Towers (2003) investigated people who were in their 70s to 90s. He found that spiritual beliefs and, in particular, religious association over the life span had a positive impact on older persons' transition to care. Specifically, the link with spiritual matters sustained a sense of confidence in the self, and a belief that life still mattered and had a purpose. Religious affiliations provided a sense of order to their experience, so that time in care was still a period when old connections were sustained. Religion gave elderly people in care homes a sense of homeostasis a balance between their internal selves and their external environment. There are a number of reports in the literature on the psychological and physical benefits of religion and spirituality, with specific regard to older people, some of which could help mediate the effects of a potential traumatic event such as change of domicile. For example, a study by Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, and Benson (1991), employing their original spirituality measure, revealed positive relationships between core spiritual experiences and both life satisfaction and reduction of medical symptoms scores with participants aged 25 to 72 years. Krause (1998), in his research on coping with deteriorating neighbourhoods, found that people over the age of 65 years who were involved in the church (that is, organised religion) were less likely than were those with weak institutional ties to experience a decline in their self-rated health status. Krause argued that the feeling that one is not alone during adverse times, plus the presence of like-minded people who can provide social support, is responsible for this finding. Although not specifically concerned with religion, studies by Kahn, Hessling, and Russell (2003) with elderly people found significant relationships between perceived social support and measures of psychological well-being but, interestingly, not between the former and self-rated physical health after controlling for negative affectivity. Koenig (2002) carried out several investigations on the benefits to the elderly of religion. For example, he reported that nearly 90% of medical in-patients older than 60 years had indicated that they used religion to help them cope, with half of these stating that it was the most important factor that kept them going. Among the evidence cited is the notion that religious beliefs may provide older people with a form of control over health matters that their non-religious peers do not have, and that religious activi-

ties might even be associated with longer survival of up to 7 years. Koenig stated that religious people pray to God, believing that He is capable of intervening they can thus do something (italics original) to help improve their situation. For a further review of additional evidence that suggests a link between religion and aspects of health see Levin (2001). A shortcoming of some previously reported research is that it does not always make explicit the differences between claimed benefits for organised religion that might potentially provide social support (with the actual religion activities involvement perhaps taking a secondary role), and spirituality which might involve a belief in a higher, caring entity on whom one can call for help and guidance. However, Gordon et al. (1976) and Purcell and Keller (1989) stated that expressive activity is important throughout the course of life, while Palmore (1979) found that later-life adaptation is strongly related to outside of the home activity and social contexts. A later study by Kelly et al. (1986) argued that leisure later in life is part of journeying the course of life, which enables older adults to cope with change, to maintain or develop important relationships, and to fill time or escape from problems. However, Graham, Graham, and MacLean (1991) and others researchers have suggested that some elderly people use urban shopping centers as places for social contact and exchange (Kowinski, 1985; MacLean, Brown, & Sijpkens, 1985). Oldenburg (1999) uses the term "third places" to describe public settings "that host the regular, voluntary, informal and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work". An important characteristic that makes "third places" suitable for such informal and voluntary gatherings is the option that people have to be as anonymous, impersonal, or social as they choose to be. Furthermore, third places are relatively inviting places to be in not just because of the informal and spontaneous nature of the setting, the nature of the social interaction is also nonobligatory. We believe that Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, and Saunders (1988), who took religion to mean participation in the particular beliefs, rituals and activities of a traditional religion. By contrast, they regarded spirituality as a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension, and that is characterised by values concerning the self, others, nature and life. MacDonald, Le Clair, Holland, Alter, and Friedman (1995) cautioned that many measures of transpersonal constructs appeared to be confounded with religion or religiosity, at least to some extent, and it is possible that one can have spiritual faith in a higher power whilst not necessarily being aligned to any orthodox religion. In similar vein, Worthington, Kurusu, McCullough, and Sandage (1996) stated that, spirituality is not necessarily marked by any alignment with a formal creed or set of doctrines. However, Likewise, an individual can have a deep-rooted conviction that tenets of an established creed are true, but

has never experienced any personal sense of the numinous. It would thus seem desirable for researchers in these topics to make use of instruments that at least attempt to measure religion and spirituality as discrete variables: an approach that is adopted in the present study. Koenig (2002) observed that individuals who are not specifically religious might nevertheless still have spiritual needs. It has been suggested that there are separate dimensions within the variable of religion per se. Mindel and Vaughan (1978) drew on their previous factor analysis findings to devise questions on organisational religious activity, such as attending and participating in services and other events, and non-organisational religious activities such as listening to events on radio or television, and praying alone. Krause (1998) also compiled questions to differentiate between these two aspects. A somewhat different dichotomy had earlier been suggested by Allport and Ross (1967). They referred to extrinsically motivated people who use their religion for their own ends (security, sociability, distraction), and the intrinsically motivated ones who live their religion (internalise, and follow it fully). Another form of religious orientation was suggested by Batson (see for example Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993) and was named quest. This is marked by treating religion as an open-ended search, rather than as a diagnostic foreclosure on presumed answers. Thus, Abelson et al. (2004) stated that increased interest in citizen participation in complex decision-making processes has emerged at a time when there has been a decline in public confidence and trust in representative democracy and in traditional political institutions, and a growing need for two-way interaction between the public and decision-makers. A key driver toward public participation in the UK came from being a member of the European Union, which placed a requirement on government bodies in 1992 to consult more widely with members of the public. Various approaches have been taken to fulfill this requirement with these reflecting different underlying motivations for involving the public and service users in policy and planning activities. Actually Selection in types of activity leads therefore to a relationship with just selective parts and characteristics of the environment in time and space (Golant, 1984). In addition, the choices that old people make with respect to taking part in certain activities depend not only on the opportunities and limitations which they themselves have, but also on those generated by the socio-spatial environment (Ellegård, 1999). As a way of summarizing these approaches it is useful to turn to Carter and Beresford (1999) who made the distinction between democratic and consumerist approaches to involvement. In other words The fact that activities are tied to time and space, as has been extensively described in time-space geography . actually has important consequences. On the one hand there are specific types of activity associated with specific socio-spatial domains. Cultural activities are associated with

facilities such as museums and concert halls, while social activities in the form of entertaining and visiting friends can take place at home. Selection in types of activity leads therefore to a relationship with just selective parts and characteristics of the environment in time and space (Golant, 1984). Democratic approaches emphasize the right of citizens to have a say in decisions that affect them and, more recently, the citizens' moral duty to take part in the construction and maintenance of their community. In contrast consumerist type initiatives, for Caterer and Beresford, bring to the fore models where the public is viewed as a consumer of goods and services, and issues of consumer choice and information are stressed. Involvement, from both of these perspectives, is generally considered to be a good thing for the participant and for society. So far, Bevil, O'Connor, and Mattoon (1993) not only reported that the older adults who were more satisfied with their lives reported the greatest number of activities conducted at least weekly and more varied activity participation, but also that participation benefited these older adults physiologically, psychological, socioculturally, developmentally, and spiritually. A much less developed theme is the spatial diversity that relates to the participation of old people (Biggs & Daatland, 2004). Thus, he social interactions to reflect the concept of "sociability," which Simmel (1950) defined as the "interaction that exists for its own sake, that is spoiled if its contents grows significant or its emotional impact too strong, and that is separated from interaction solely geared to providing or receiving information". The fact that activities are tied to time and space, as has been extensively described in time-space geography. Actually has an important consequence. On the one hand there are specific types of activity associated with specific socio-spatial domains.

METHODS

In this research survey method is used which is one of the common methods in quantitative researches. The sample of the research includes a 63 aged persons, comprising 22 women and 41 men, They are responded positively to invitations to participate in this study; who reside in Ahwaz capital of Khoozistan Province in Iran. all respondents were married and had grown children, which selected through random sampling method. Data collection involved in-depth one-on-one personal interviews (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Fine, 1994; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Yin, 1994). and included data validation and analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha of the dependent variables worked out at 0.78, with corrected Item total correlation between the statements in the 0.35-0.51 interval. Religious affiliation was recorded as Muslim totally. Thus, the participant sample was deemed to be homogenous. Participants were sought from different areas and districts within the Ahwaz city.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this research 32.4 % of men and 64 % of women were widowed, 23.4 per cent self employed, 29.8 per cent of samples mentioned they have chronic diseases.

T-Test on Social Participation and Gender

Gender	Frequency	Mean	T	sig	df
Men	41	11			
female	22	9.65	2.78	0.006	62

Table1 represent to the analysis at the level of inferential statistics in which Pearson correlation coefficient were used. pearson correlation coefficient at $r=0.74$ and ($\text{sig}=0.000 < 0.05$), shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between independent variable (Health status) and with dependent variable (social participation of older adults).

Table 1
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Social Participation and Health Status

Sig	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.014	0.74	Health status

The result shows that, when the family power structure is more husbands' oriented it is more drawn to social participation of older adults. pearson correlation coefficient at $r=0/52$, $\alpha=0.000$ and ($\text{sig}=0.000 < 0.01$), shows that there is a significant relationship between (independent variable) a sense of belonging to the one's city with social participation of older adults (dependent variable).

Table 2
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Social Participation and a Sense Of Belonging to the One's City

Sig	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.008	0.52	A sense of belonging to the one's city

The result shows that, when the Social contact & interpersonal trust is more so, it is more drawn to the social participation of older adults . Pearson correlation coefficient at, $r=0/52$, $\alpha=0.000$ and ($\text{sig}=0.000 < 0.01$), shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between (independent variable) Social solidarity & interpersonal trust with social participation of older adults (dependent variable).

Analnsis of data on the base of T-test rate showed that , male elders have more participation than female, As expected, there were few differences between men and women in the level of social participation .

Table 3
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Social Participation of Older Adults and Social Contact & Interpersonal Trust

Sig.	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.000	0.52	Social contact & interpersonal trust

The result shows that, when the Traditionalism & Fatalism aging adults is high, the less it is drawn to the social participation of older adults social participation of older adults. The Pearson correlation coefficient test of the variables social participation of older adults and Social contact & interpersonal trust at, $r=0/274$, $\alpha=0.000$ and ($\text{sig}=0.000 < 0.01$), brought out a significant inverse correlation.

Table 4
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Social Participation Older Adults and Traditionalism & Fatalism

Sig.	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.000	-0.76	Traditionalism & Fatalism

The result shows that, when the socio-economic status of older adults were not high, the less it is drawn to the social participation of them . The Pearson correlation coefficient test of the variables ageing's socio-economic status and the social participation of older adults at, $r=0/45$, $\alpha=0.006$ and ($\text{sig}=0.006 < 0.01$), pointed to a significant correlation.

Table 5
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Social Participation of Older Adults and Socio-Economic Status of Older Adults

Sig.	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.006	0.45	Older adults' socio-economic status

The result shows that, when the sense of satisfaction towards urban services is high, the more it is drawn to the social participation of ageing people. The Pearson correlation coefficient test of the variables, a sense of satisfaction towards urban services and the social

participation of older adults at, $r = 0.65$, $\alpha = 0.000$ and ($\text{sig} = 0.000 < 0.01$), brought out a significant relationship correlation.

Table 6
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Social Participation of Older Adults and a Sense of Satisfaction Towards Urban Services

Sig.	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.001	0.65	a sense of satisfaction towards urban services

The result shows that, when the Duration of living in the city is high, the more it is drawn to the social participation of ageing. The Pearson correlation coefficient test of the variables Duration of living in the city and the social participation at, $r = 0.38$, $\alpha = 0.000$ and ($\text{sig} = 0.000 < 0.01$), brought out a significant relationship correlation.

Table 7
Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Social Participation and Duration of Living in The City

Sig.	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.000	0/ 38	Duration of living in the city

The result shows that, when the older adults is holding a membership of NGOs, the high it is drawn to the social participation of them. The Pearson correlation coefficient test of the variables ageing's NGO's membership and the social participation of older adults at, $r = 0.112$, $\alpha = 0.034$ and ($\text{sig} = 0.034 < 0.05$), pointed to a significant correlation.

Table 8
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Social Participation and NGO's Membership

Sig.	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.034	0.112	Membership in ngos

The result shows that, There is no significant relationship between religiosity and social participation of older adults. The Pearson correlation coefficient test of the variables ageing's NGO's membership and the social participation of older adults at, $r = -0.102$, $\alpha = 0.045$ and ($\text{sig} = 0.151 > 0.05$), pointed there is not significant correlation between the religiosity and older adult's social participation.

Table 9
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Social Participation and Older Adult's Religiosity

Sig.	Pearson correlation	Variable
0.151	-0.102	Social participation and older adult's religiosity

It was noticeable that religious elders have less participatory social interactions. However, everyone who has defined him/herself as non-religious citizen was at almost the same level. Generally, religiosity is a neutral variable and apathetic toward increasing or reducing the social participation of gray citizens. It means that each side of the religious behavior scale has the least impact on the social participation of older adults in the city of Ahwaz.

CONCLUSION

The fact that education, income, and the availability of a car have a positive relationship with participation in activities such as culture, going out, and sport can signify that future old people will be able to maintain a more varied package of activities. So far contraction and convergence operate more strongly, because health limitations and doubtless age itself will continue to exert a negative effect on participation. Old people who combined many activity types when they were younger may have to let go more of them as limitations increase with increasing age. Hence, It reveals the distance of urban seniors from social interactions and citizenship participation arenas where they might go face to face with younger adults and juveniles. This distance could negatively impact on social control and collective consciousness. Aggregation of population with overall social anonymity; individualism with centrality of personal interest; and ascendancy of a vertical hierarchy with social discrimination has a main effect of reducing social participation in Iranian urban arenas. The senior society of Ahwaz city with this background on urban regions evaluated their community with a participatory view to their community and the factors which trace on that variable.

According to findings, social dependency has the most consequence on social participation of elder dwellers. That means the increasing dependency of aged citizens on their society for basic needs accompanied growth of their own social participation. The variables such as, fatalism, a sense of belonging to the one's city, health status, and a sense of satisfaction towards urban services have more significant relationships with social participation of ageing. Thus The data indicated, that there is no significant relationship between social participation and religiosity and did not show any deferences between religiosity and social participation. It appeared important to mention the neutral variable and non-impact status of religiosity to participatory interactions of old adult citizens. In the marital status, those widowed elders have more participation in community than others and this deferences was significant. There is significant relationship between socioeconomic status and social participation. The result showed that the aging people who live in low and poor socioeconomic status have the less participation in social activity.

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