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Feasibility study and modeling of the concept of participatory urban management

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES: People usually welcome the spirit of cooperation to meet their needs using different methods and goals. In cities, the formation of non-governmental councils and organizations reflects this trend with the aim of creating equal social opportunities and positions (power, dignity). Participation and e-participation offers an intellectual and doctrinal framework with major applications in social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions of a country. This article aims to explore the association between participation and moral, religious, political, and psychological variables in Iranian urban management as a mode.
METHODS: This is a qualitative research and a descriptive-analytical method has been adopted for modeling.
FINDINGS: The results suggest a positive correlation between participation and four variables studied along with their applications in the Iranian urban management. Another finding of the research is the modeling of moral, religious-Islamic, political, and psychological variables related to Iranian participation and urban management toward urban governance.
CONCLUSION: The elevated social and political awareness of citizens has also led to social solidarity and the strengthening of democracy based on participation. Efforts to redistribute power in the urban system management represent another effect of social participation in urban management and urban governance in Iran. It is also experiencing the transition from urban government to urban governance with participatory, law-abiding, transparency, justice, efficiency, accountability, and decentralization approaches.

NUMBER OF REFERENCES	NUMBER OF FIGURES	NUMBER OF TABLES
53	6	0

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INTRODUCTION

As a measure of governments, participation plays an important role in the equal distribution of social, economic, and political opportunities in terms of structure and function. Inequalities in social, cultural, economic, and urban sectors underline the need for participation in management in various affairs. However, social participation is not unique to humans. For example, in Surah An-Nahl of Qur'an, reference has been made to the participation of creatures such as bees in doing ordinary things (Elahi Ghomshei, 2007). From a religious point of view, limited participation is one of the main issues concerned with the application of Islamic rules (Entezarian and Sanjari, 2013). The cooperation of community members in meeting human needs and addressing social, economic and cultural problems has a religious and intellectual basis. The school of Islam considers participation as one of the requirements of normative thinking. Islam emphasizes benevolence, piety, and haste in cooperation and participation of believers. Throughout the Holy Qur'an, people are also forbidden from participating in hostilities (Elahi Ghomshei, 2007). In religious and Islamic schools, participation and cooperation is rooted in the Holy Quran and emphasis has been placed on social justice. Participation has also been a key component in non-Islamic social schools, but it faces some challenges. In this context, the main drawback is constrained participation in business management (Ortmann and King, 2007) Creative and innovative managers that advocate participation are major competitive instruments in productivity (Abdollahi and Ebrahim, 2011). Meanwhile, disregarding participatory approaches for the empowerment of managers is one of the main challenges (Vakil Alroaia and Bidakhti, 2018). Therefore, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

- Is it possible to establish a link between moral, religious-Islamic, political, and psychological variables and the participatory approach in the urban management?
- Is it possible to model and apply participation process in Iranian urban management?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pluralism, is central to participatory governance. Also, Participation is a key dimension of governance (UN, 2018). Habermas communication theory has provided a good theoretical basis for analyzing participatory processes in urban affairs (Piotr *et al.*, 2020).Participation can increase the legitimacy of policy-making and endorse managerial decisions (Luigi, 2019). Limited research has explored participation and its relationship with urban management at the international and domestic levels. In this regard, Birchall (2001) conducted a study on the association between values and principles of participation and the emergence of moral, political, and psychological values. The results of this research revealed that participation leads to the creation of effective values in management and fosters participatory affairs such as planning. Len and Chong (2015) also pointed to the role of power in organizational leadership and management improvement, considering participation as a behavioral approach that is positively correlated with work environment, personal development, and the quality of a system like city and can therefore influence management. Mangi *et al*., (2018) explored land use management and planning as well as sustainable development in social and economic development. In their research, they also discussed the positive relationship between socio-economic affairs and development and management programs in cities, arguing that urban management goals and organization of social and economic affairs of the city can be achieved with the participation of citizens. In the context of Iran, Pilehvar (2002) looked at participatory approaches in urban management, reporting that the council system in Iranian urban management offered a valuable experience by implementing the Articles 100 to 106 of the Constitution. To him, the formation of the first Islamic city councils in 1998 marked the foundation of urban management and the crystallization of a democratic process in urban management, which was unprecedented in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nouri and Nouripour (2013) examined the application of conscious behaviors in participation in Boyer-Ahmad province. The results of their research showed that citizens are not eager to participate in planning. However, in terms of intention and readiness to engage in such works, more than 50% of participation in planning and management is promising. Ansari *et al*., (2016) studied the effect of religiosity on participation, reporting a positive relationship

between religiosity and participation. To do so, they evaluated the religious and Islamic values of subjects in their decision for social participation in important matters. In a similar study, Meshkini *et al*., (2017) looked at the relationship between urban justice and social capital in the city of Ferdowsi. The results of their research showed that urban management is significantly and directly related to the fair distribution of urban services. A greater participation of citizens in the urban management system indicates fair urban services and distribution. In another study, Soltan nejad *et al*., (2018) explored the positive relationship between citizens' behavior and organizational management in Kerman. They concluded that optimal organizational management is a function of psychological empowerment and behavior of citizens, which can ultimately reinforce participation in the management of urban affairs. Therefore, participation can be considered an important and democratic principle in organizational and urban management of Iran with more than two decades of experience. In these two decades, the strategy of e-government was considered in the law of the fourth, fifth and sixth programs. Therefore, through this, e-participation and e-democracy have been considered by the government as a valuable global experience. E-participation is usually considered part of e-government. E-participation refers to "those participation initiatives that are mediated through ICTs". Therefore, e-participation is an important tool for governments to achieve growth and development. Because e-participation is one of the accountability mechanisms of governments in the management process. (UN, 2019). At present, some strategies of smart city, e-city and e-services have been in this direction to finally lead to urban governance and its principles such as participation, transparency, legitimacy, efficiency, justice and decentralization. The latest study by Le Blanc at the UN department of economic and social affairs on e-government and e-participation has shown that government and e-participation contribute to the goals of sustainable development and smart management (Le Blanc, 2020). This article aims to explore the association between participation and moral, religious, political, and psychological variables toward management and urban governance as a model. The current study has been carried out in Bojnord in 2020.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

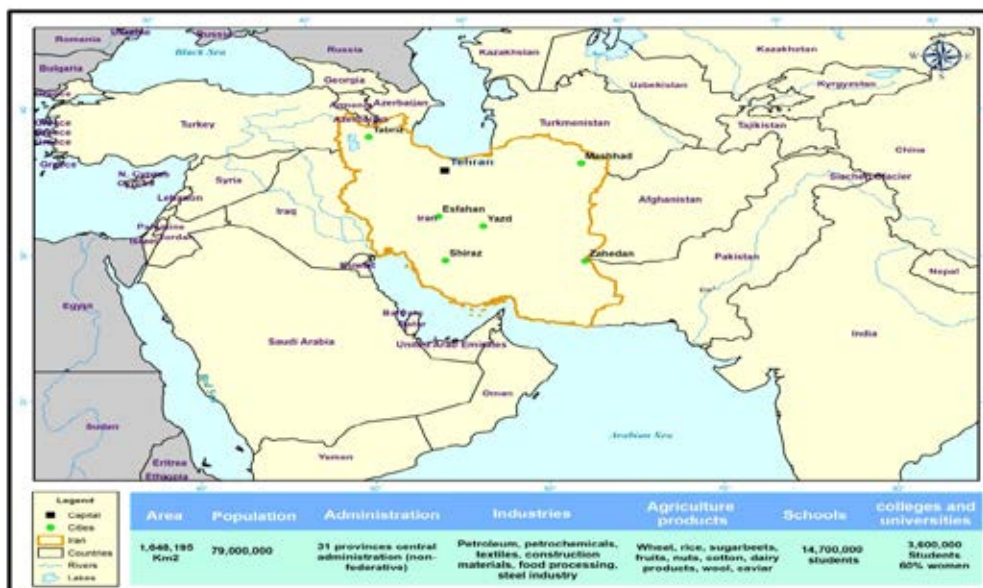This is a qualitative research and a descriptive-analytical and descriptive-argumentative method

Fig. 1: Basic statistics of Iran
(Pilehvar, 2020)

has been adopted. The research variables were selected based on their importance and relevance to the concept of participation and urban management. To analyze findings, first the research framework was developed by researching valid sources and reviewing different schools of thought, theories, and models. In the next step, based on four moral, religious-Islamic, political, and psychological variables, the association of these variables with the participation index was examined to develop the final model for the management of Iranian urban system. In the last step, the research variables of modeling and its analysis are presented.

Research area

Iran is a country that sits on the southwest Asia, with population of 79 million, as shown in Fig. 1.

At present, Iran has 1245 cities and 8 cities with a population of more than 1 million people and is known as a middle-income developing country (Pilehvar, 2020).

Theoretical Foundations
Social participation

The United Nations Development Program defines social participation as active involvement of users in time and resources, decision-making and actions to achieve a desirable development goal (Esmail Asadi and Godarzi, 2018). On the other hand, social participation can be considered as the mental and emotional conflict of individuals in a group that spurs them to share responsibilities in achieving each other's group goals (Hosseini *et al*, 2012). Participation is a complex concept that depends on a wide array of variables with different relative weights (Hashemian *et al.,* 2013). In general, the factors affecting social participation can be divided into two categories: internal variables and variables derived from the external environment (Alizadeh Aghdam *et al.,* 2013). The development of civil society relies on the process of internalizing and institutionalizing public participation. Accordingly, three processes and strategies have been defined to strengthen social participation:

A) Elaborating on the value of participation

B) Institutionalization and reduction of social disorders

C) The development of civil society, through the formation of unions and guilds (Rajabi, 2011)

When the central government interferes with the affairs of local communities, the actual needs of these communities would be dependent on the central government and the local people would lose their power and facilities (Turner, 2005). Hence, by classifying the types of participation in his famous table, Turner (2005) has made a significant contribution to the formation of the participation theory (Alizadeh *et al*., 2014).A city represents a complex form of human community that is home to rural communities. In an urban society, there is a need for social discipline to establish the foundations of democracy and social justice as the law is institutionalized. On an urban scale, social participation marks a step towards growth and development and the dismantling of barriers through the implementation of urban development projects (Rydin and Holman, 2004). Therefore, several indicators have been emphasized for citizen participation in urban management:

1- Participation in urban affairs is a goal per se. (meting out justice).

2- Participation is a valuable learning process that helps people deal with various issues and problems in their lives. (Boost self-confidence).

3. Participation makes the project more effective by meeting the real needs and needs of the people.

4- Participation and cooperation increase the productivity of a project by stimulating people's desires for investors.

5. Participation strengthens national unity and cohesion (social cohesion).

6- Participation strengthens the sense of citizenship and develops a participatory culture (strengthening the sense of spatial belonging).

People's participation plays an essential role in strengthening the proper management of the urban system by converging in the institutionalization of civil rights. Thus, social participation provides an effective strategy for decentralization and distribution of social and political capacities in each country.

Participation from the perspective of social schools

Social participation is a system of mutual aids and universal values for human beings. From a social point of view, the core of participation is the formation of family, and its evolutionary process is closely interlinked with specialization

and delegation of social works, with the fulfillment of collective through the practice of participation has being high on agenda (Akhtar Mohagheghi, 2006). The participatory approach was developed in response to challenges mounted by the industrial system in Europe (Taleb, 2012), and this idea swiftly spread to Asia in the twentieth century. From a global perspective, four schools of thoughts have provided valuable insights into participation (Sabbagh Kermani and Aqeli, 2004):

A. The Commonwealth School, which underscores the role of participatory movement in socio-economic affairs in the form of a limitless system in the development process, which is considered as an idealistic school for the discussion of participation.

B. The capitalist school, according to which participation and participatory approach is based on a materialistic and profitable basis, considering the participatory system as a special type of capitalist system.

C. The socialist school that gives participation to public credit, considering the government as the system leader and the participatory system as a subset of that system. In this school, the participation index is a process for transition from capitalism to socialism.

D. The participatory school, in which participation is an independent variable that accompanies private and public sectors. This school has presented a more valid and acceptable theory in today's society.

Participation and urban management

At present, all socio -economic affairs in the world are connected to urban programs (Mangi *et al.*, 2018). Cities are the embodiment of man- made environments, the most concentrated development areas, the densest form of human land use and the most compact spaces for human needs, and they are constantly expanding (Dutta, 2012). A city is the reflection of human activities where various social, cultural, and economic issues are founded upon participation and a cultural perspective that has undergone massive changes in its social structure since the Industrial Revolution (Beumer, 2010). Still, they continue to grow more and more complex (Giddens, 2009). Today, cities are of great importance in two respects: as a gathering place for a large group of people and as the main player in the national economy (Ziari *et al.*, 2009). On the one hand, this trend has intensified the rise of social issues in urban communities (Forrest and Kearns, 2001), and on the other hand, it has led to a decrease in participation and social solidarity (Ahmadinejad Rashti *et al.*, 2014). This trend has also affected the competition and division of social activities in the city in the process of urbanization (Afrough, 1998). From this perspective, the city is a social space that, as a result of competition and division of labor, strengthens values such as responsibility and solidarity in the process of participating in the urban system.

Therefore, by modeling in urban management, the concept of participation can be analyzed and explained. Thus, recognizing the material dimensions (distribution of facilities, wealth, economy, etc.) and spirituality (justice, etc.) of a city shows the importance and level of citizen participation in the process of urbanization and urbanization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Moral Values

The participatory approach is one of the best systematic popular mechanisms in social activities (Nouri and Nouripour, 2013). Participation describes a sort of collective action utilized in various types of human relations and is not merely limited to a particular religion or region (Razzaqi, 1992) Also, in all divine religions, special emphasis has been placed on participation (Sabbagh Kermani and Aqeli, 2004). Since the dawn of creation, humans have used the spirit of participation to meet their needs, associating themselves with values and principles such as honesty, care, interest, and social responsibility. Thus, some recognized values of participation have gained global acceptance as moral values (Birchall, 2001). Fig. 2 shows the positive and direct relationship between moral variability and participation in the form of important criteria such as honesty (truth in purpose), openness (possibility of participation), care (self-control), interest (participation), and social responsibility (participation) as the pillars of the relationship between the two components.
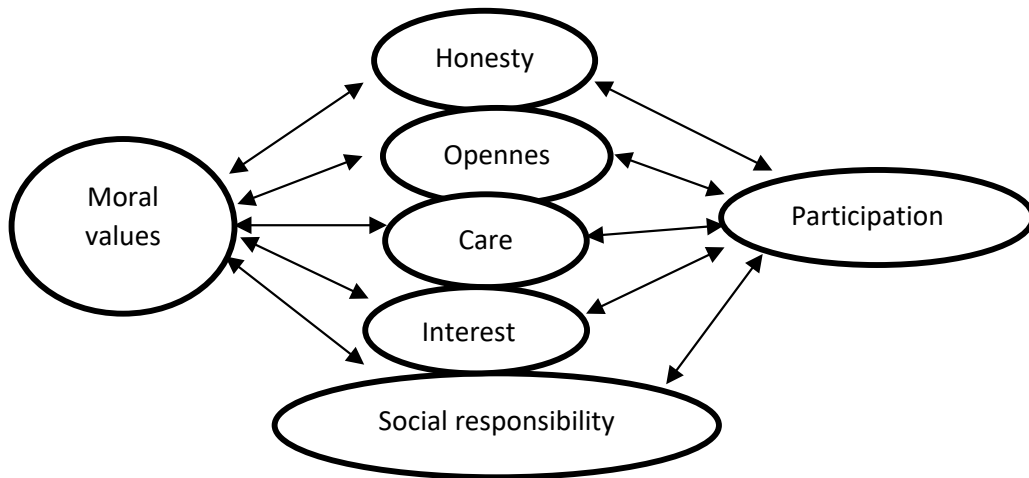
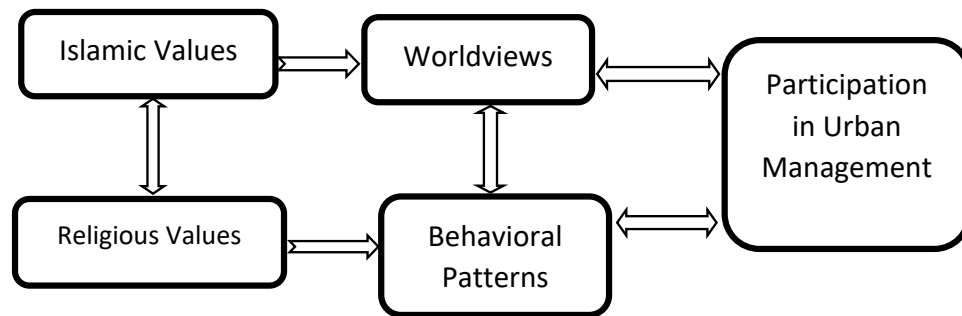Fig. 2: Mutual relationship between moral values and participation

Fig. 3: The association of religious and Islamic values with participation in urban management

Religious values and Islamic views

In the Islamic school, the establishment of convergence centers like unions and councils has been stressed as a way of meeting the needs, empowering human groups, and creating equal social opportunities. In this way, people in the community can access scarce resources such as wealth, power, and prestige through participation. Islamic and religious teachings emphasize the paying attention to the spatial justice of services, piety, and participation in the urban planning system, architecture, and urban management. Islamic values have a bearing on the worldview of citizens and their behavioral models, the results of which is the interaction of worldviews on behavioral patterns and ultimately the inclusion of participation

in the planning and urban management system (Baran and Behro, 2017). Thus, there is a direct and positive association between religious and Islamic values and participation in the management of the urban system, as shown in model and Fig. 3.

Political values

In this research, political values in the analysis of governance, participation and urban management have been considered appropriate. Political values are one of the accepted principles in all social and political schools worldwide. The fact that these values are in line with the demands of citizens and consistent with psychological and moral values have something to do with their global acceptance (Birchall, 2001). The Researcher's analytical findings

show that there is a significant relationship between political values and four indicators of equality, democracy, responsibility and social integrity, each of which contribute to the emergence of values and therefore politics. Political values are linked to sociology, which contributes to good governance.

And good governance leads to successful leadership (Mirahmadi and Mirahmadi, 2018). Leader-ship as the main process of management along with politics helps to create value and participation in the political and managerial arenas. Political values in the society also have a direct effect on the sustainability of the above four indicators, and therefore a positive correlation with participation can be established (Fig.4).

Psychological dimensions

One of the important reasons for paying attention to psychological values in management and participation is its profound impact on attitudes. Each attitude affects three behavioral, emotional and cognitive factors in the individual and the manager. And the above factors appear with honesty, transparency, intimacy, merit and tolerance as capital and psychological values (Ghanbari Nasrabadi *et al.*, 2019). It also shows the psychological values in the management and participation process of being active or passive on the one hand and being constructive and destructive on the other. Therefore, psychological values have been considered as an important factor in the analysis of this research. In fact, psychological participation represents a behavioral practice in the society and in any organizations. That is, from a psychological viewpoint, there is a positive correlation between workspace and the role of organizations and
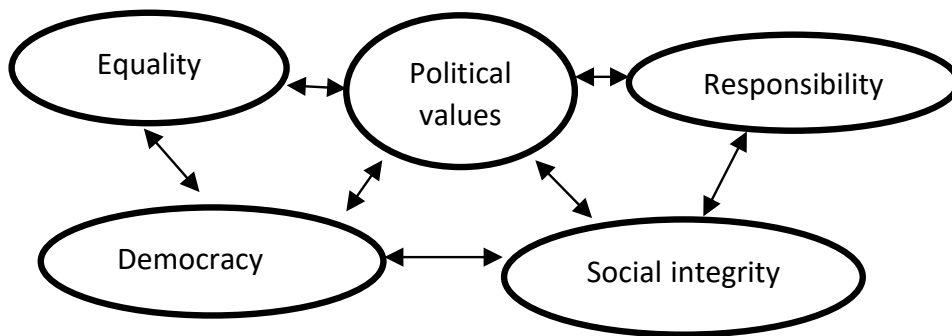

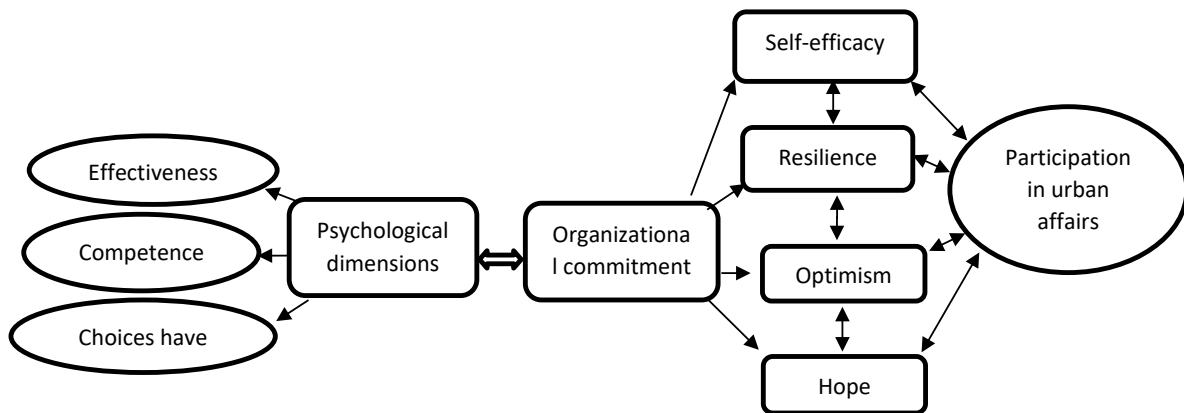Fig. 4: Mutual relationships between political values and participatory principles

Fig. 5: Relationship between psychological dimensions and participation
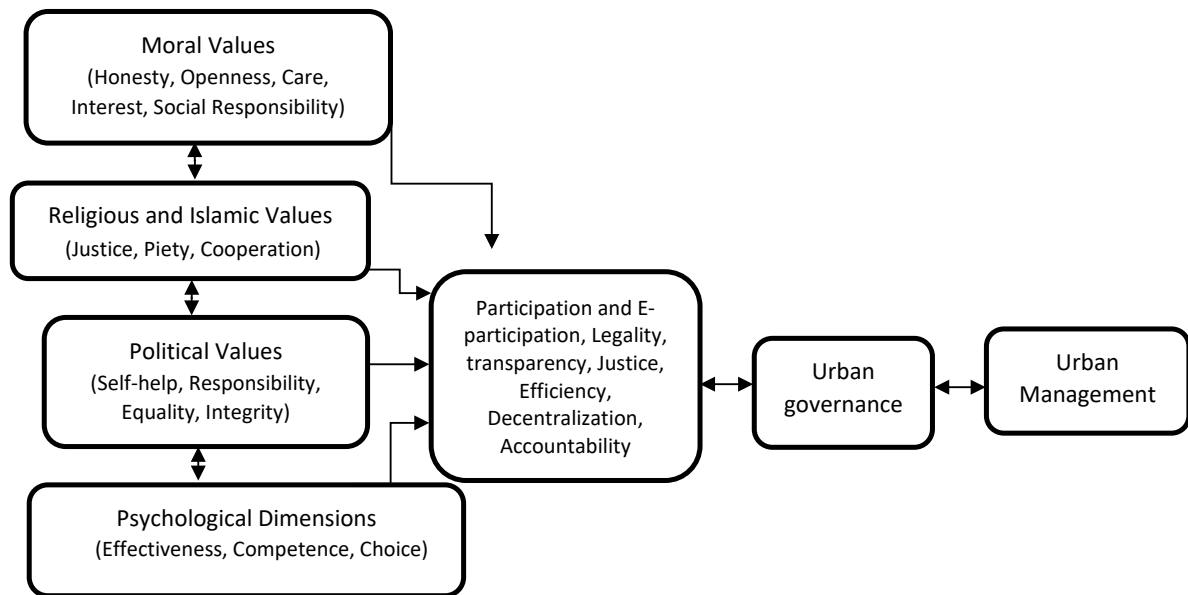
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Fig. 6: The relationship between values affected by participation in Iranian urban management

individuals in the survival of system (community, city, etc.) (Lan and Chong, 2015). There is, however, little emphasis on empowerment as a key variable in promoting managerial performance in any organizations (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012), particularly in light of the effect of psychological dimensions on improving the performance of the organization and the system (Ibrahim *et al*., 2016). This is mainly due to the intrinsic nature of empowerment (Soltan Nejad *et al*., 2018), which can directly lead to effectiveness (Chiaburu *et al*., 2017). Therefore, psychological empowerment, commitment, loyalty, and trust in the target community will yield desired results (Yadav and Rangneker, 2015). This ultimately promotes commitment and trust in participatory behaviors (Akgunduz and Sanli, 2017); meaning that psychological values and dimensions such as effectiveness, competence, and choice are related with citizens' participatory behaviors (Memarzadeh *et al*., 2012). Fig. 5 shows the association of psychological dimensions and participation in the process of organizational commitment.

Participation modeling in Iran's urban management

After the 1979 revolution, according to Articles 100 to 106 of the Constitution, the council

management system in the administration of Iran was recognized as important. The institutionalization of the council management system has drawn people's attention to social participation in advancing the goals of social justice. The formation of the Islamic Council of Cities in 1998 marked a new experience and approach in Iran's urban management, which is rooted in the spirit of citizen participation and cooperation. These councils have played an important and effective role in urban management, creating suitable grounds for the improvement of the living conditions of the citizens. Efforts to protect the public interests, and reduce inequality and social injustice in the urban space are important tasks of the city's Islamic councils in Iran. Therefore, the participation and formation of Islamic city councils in urban management of Iran offers a practical model. The results of a study about the formation of Islamic city councils in Iran have shown that public participation of citizens has a positive effect on the structure and functioning of cities and contributed to more appropriate distribution of facilities (Tashakor, 1999). This action can cement justice in the distribution of urban services and strengthen the capacity to achieve goals (Hakli and Minca, 2009). According to Article

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7 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Fathi and Kohi esfahani, 2018), councils are a pillar of decision-making and administration of the country's administrative affairs. Cities can also have public participation through political, economic, and social participation. Therefore, the Islamic councils of the city and the council system management are a manifestation of citizens' participation in advancing urban development policies and programs in Iran. Studies show that indicators of fair distribution of urban services such as equality, balance, legality, and fairness are related to a major component of the council system and urban management in Iran (Meshkini *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the most obvious mechanism for citizens to participate in Iranian urban management is to be active and effective in developing and presenting plans and programs. This could be achieved by sharing ideas on projects (Hui, 1998) and attending debates, training workshop, and advisory committee (Turner, 2005). The participation and cooperation of citizens in the establishment of the Islamic Council in cities has balanced expectations and demands of people from the government, institutionalized the involvement of people in diverse scenes, changing public discontent into political satisfaction, and strengthening national identity and solidarity (Tashakor, 1999). In this regard, the main priorities of participation in Iran's urban management are as follows:

1. Increasing the share of public participation in the urban management.
2. Taking a step towards decentralization of manag-ement in cities, especially administrative concen-tration.
3. Balancing the proportion of municipal organizations to council management.
4. Establishing a more efficient system, problem-solving strategies and advancing goals of urban systems.
5. Legalizing requests by institutionalizing participation in the planning process (Banerji, 1999).

The results of this trend in the urbanization and urbanization system have led to the emergence of new approaches by combining thinking and action. It seems that urban planning and management in recent decades is moving towards good governance and the transition from management and urban government to urban governance is being experienced.

In urban governance according to UN indicators, participation, legality, transparency, justice, efficiency, decentralization and accountability are important principles of urban management in the new conditions (Rahnama, 2010). With this process, the Iranian government assumes the role of facilitator and facilitator of the growth and development of cities and encourages citizens to make decisions and policy on urban affairs through the tools of participation. It seems that urban management in Iran has established a significant relationship with regard to the principles of urban governance and other moral, religious-Islamic, political and psychological values of society.

From the above analysis and the relationship between the principles of urban governance and selected values in this study (moral, Islamic, political and psychological) can be presented a participatory model in urban management. Fig.6 shows a model and the relationship between moral, Islamic, political and psychological values as an infrastructure of participation on the one hand and the process of urban management and governance as a desirable strategy in the process of urban planning and management in Iran on the other hand. Considering this model in Fig.6 shows how values affect patterns of behavior and participation in management, and the principles of urban governance in relation to community values can be a valuable strategy in urban management.

CONCLUSION

In this research, the effect of assessed variables (moral, Islamic, political, and psychological) on urban participation and management in modeling and the relationship between indicators and variables have been evaluated. The results suggested that participation through assessed variables has directly correlation with urban system management. As for the management of councils in the urban system of Iran (city council and mayor), encouraging people to participate in various social, cultural, economic affairs of the city has strengthened the pillars of justice and social participation. Another outcome of this research is concerned with raising public awareness and their political knowledge of government programs

in the field of urban management by examining participation in the Iranian urban management model. That is, if the government pursues long-term plans (e.g. implementation of e-government, etc.) in the urban context, people can be informed about these plans through their representatives (city councils) with the participation of the government, councils, and people. The persistence of this process will be an effective step in the realization of civil society and social justice. Entering decision-making areas and urban development programs are other ways to participate in the urban management. This has contributed to improved quality of life and social satisfaction. The elevated social and political awareness of citizens has also led to social solidarity and the strengthening of democracy based on participation. Efforts to redistribute power in the urban system management represent another effect of social participation in urban management in Iran. People's participation has also affected material aspects (the reduction of social inequality, profitability and concentration of wealth) and spirituality (strengthening the spirit of brotherhood and cooperation), preparing the grounds for the spread of social justice and social capital in the city. Also, the management of cities and metropolises in Iran is experiencing a transition from urban governance to urban governance. This process can help democratic methods in management and strategy from the down to up by participation and E- participation. Therefore, it is suggested that the down to up management strategy in the form of promoting the culture of neighborhood management and councils will always be considered by the system and the government. Also, with the institutionalization of the participation culture, the participatory approach constitutes a social and religious capital in the urban management of Iran.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

A.A. Pilehvar performed the literature review, experimental design, and analyzed and interpreted the data, prepared the manuscript text, and manuscript edition.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work. In addition, the ethical issues including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and, or falsification, double publication and, or submission, and redundancy have been completely witnessed by the author.

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