



## Evaluation of Factors Affecting Women's Political Participation in Society Case Study: Women's Population in Jahrom City, Iran

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### Abstract

*One of the most important indices of pro-democracy among individuals residing in a country is the extensive tendency to continuous participation of the public in election activities as well as social-political trends governing a society. On the other hand, the participation of all citizens including men and women, beyond their political and religious ideology and thought, in political activities of a society is a symbol of political development within that country. What is important in this regard is the motivation and involvement of individuals in elections and political participations within a society. So that, considering the current legal and social structures of the country, the individual's motivation for activity and participation in political affairs is different in different societies as for some features as the sex and the voters' ideology. This article, which is an analytical-descriptive research, is to study and evaluate factors affecting women's political participation in Jahrom, a city in Iran. The statistical population includes all women residing in Jahrom city, among which 120 individuals have been selected as the sample size through simple random selection and Cochran method; then the questionnaires were distributed among them. For data analysis, descriptive statistic methods (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (simple correlation coefficient and Chi-square) have been used. The research results show that there is a significant relation between the education level, occupation type, and social class of the studied women with their involvement in political participation in the society.*

**Keywords:** Involvement, political participation, women, social and economic base, Jahrom, Iran.

### Introduction

Human is a social creature and the participation is necessity for sociality. During the recent decades, political participation has been the concern of the majority of world residents specially citizens of developing countries. In other words, political participation is not only the result of liberality and political development in the society, but also a factor for their establishment and durability maintenance. Therefore, it is both a necessary condition for social and political development of a society and its outcome<sup>1</sup>. Participation in political processes, which is led to the election of political leaders and determines or influences public policy, is called political participation<sup>2</sup>. In this regard social-economic development is not practically possible without political development. In other words, with the political development, the people's participation in social and political affairs of the society is relatively increased. So that, it provides natural grounds for configuring an accountable government, and formulating and implementing welfare policies of the society<sup>3</sup>.

There is no doubt that the more pervasive the democracy in its general and specific sense is in a society, the more it would be appeared and expanded, and it will act more smoothly. However, its intensity and depth might be decreased<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, one of the most striking manifestations of society members' participation could be sought in voting and

conduction of national elections; and at the same time, it shows the individual's interest or indifference toward an important responsibility<sup>5</sup>.

Considering the fact that women constitute half of the world's population, in order to achieve development, it is necessary that women participate in development process and fully enjoy its consequences the same like as men<sup>6</sup>. Since without women's political participation, achieving political sustainable developments seems impossible. In other words, participation of all citizens including men and women, beyond their political and religious ideology and thought, in political activities of a society is a symbol of political development within that country. What is important in this regard is the motivation and involvement of individuals in elections and political participations within a society. So that, considering the current legal and social structures of the country, the individual's motivation for activity and participation in political affairs is different in different societies as for some features as the sex and the voters' ideology. In a way that in some third world countries, in most cases women are considered as the second sex and are kept separate from involvement and activities in political-social areas of the society. Among the major reasons for the lowness of women's participation in many countries, is their relative lack of access to economic resources<sup>7</sup>.

In Iran, considering traditional values and structures governing the society specially the emphasis on patriarchy as family identity during different centuries, women has had a marginal and very inconspicuous role in different political, social and economic areas of the country; until 1962 and specially after the victory of Islamic revolution which was concomitant with the motto of equality, equity, and participation of all people in the society, women’s participation in different areas of society specially in political activities has been dramatically increased. This persistent and significant participation of women in political affairs of the society remained substantially the same as what was in the early revolution, and the process of women’s participation in political affairs during the two recent decades has had a descending trend, and in terms of political typology, women have become more the silent majority group and political audiences, who was refraining from having active participation in political affairs<sup>8-12</sup>.

However, the research studies of the recent years clearly show that how respect and relative attention to women’s welfare influenced by variables such as the increase of education level and pursuing higher degrees of education, the increase of ability in earning money independently, working outside the home, having proprietary rights and the like, have led to increasing participation of Iranian women in decisions making both inside and outside the home<sup>1</sup>. This research, being conducted based on Talcott Parson’s theories, deals with the study and evaluation of factors effective on women’s political participation in Jahrom, a city of Iran. The researcher also tries to study and evaluate the relation between women’s political participation in the studied society and social factors such as social class, education, and type of occupation of the responding women. For this purpose, the following hypotheses are made: i. There is a significant relation between the women’s political participation and their social class. ii. There is a significant difference between the women’s political participation and their level of education. iii. There is a significant difference between the women’s political participation and type of their job.

### Methodology

Having applied a sociological approach and survey method, the present research tries to evaluate factors effective on political participation of the responding women and its dimensions. In this study, the major variable is political participation, the education level, type of job, and social class of the respondents has been evaluated as other fundamental variables. The studied statistical population includes all women residing in Jahrom city in 2006 who were 99863 women, among which 218 women have been determined as the sample size using Cochran formula, and then using a stratified random sampling method, the questionnaires were distributed among different job groups and homemakers. Having been coded, the research findings have been analyzed using SPSS software, data processing, and benefiting descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency and percentage, and analytical statistical techniques as Chi-square ( $X^2$ ).

### Results and Discussion

In order to have better analysis of the subject, the sample population has been asked some questions regarding their social and economic characteristics. A summary of these findings are as follows:

**Activity Status Variable:** The degree of activity and having job is one of the most important factors affecting participation in social-political areas of a society. In this regard, 39% of the studied population is employed, 20% are homemakers and 23% are unemployed (table 1).

**Table-1**  
**Frequency of the activity status variable in the studied statistical population**

Activity Status Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	47	39.2
Housewife	24	20
Student	15	12.5
Retired	6	5
Unemployed seeking work	28	23.3
Total	120	100

The analytical level of this variable is order-based; therefore, only the statistics of median and mode could be of use. However, for better description, the use of statistic variable of “mean” has been also reported. Therefore, the mean of the population’s activity status is 2.5, and the maximum frequency (mode) is related to the employed women (Table 2).

**Table-2**  
**Central Indices of Activity Status**

2.5	Mean
1	Mode
3	Median
1.5	Standard Deviation

**Type of Occupation Variable:** Being occupied in different service and industrial areas could be an indication of the employee’s political thought and idea. For this purpose, asking the sample population, we have found that more than 56% of the subjects are unemployed, also, 15% of the population has technical and vocational jobs, 5% are in business, management and service departments and 14% have office work jobs (table 3).

**Table-3**  
**Frequency of the type of occupation variable in the studied population**

Occupation Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Service	6	5
Technical and Vocational	18	15
Sales and Business	6	5
Administrative and Office	17	14.2
Management	6	5
No-employment	67	55.8
Total	120	100

The analytical level of this variable is order-based; therefore, only the statistics of median and mode could be of use. However, for better description, the use of statistic variable of "mean" has been also reported. Therefore, the mean of the population's type of occupation is 4.6, and the maximum frequency (mode) is related to the unemployed women (table 4).

**Table-4**  
**Central Indices of Type of Occupation**

4.6	Mean
6	Mode
6	Median
1.7	Standard Deviation

**Monthly Income Variable:** Based on the data taken from table 5, more than 56% of the studied population have stated that they had no source of personal income in the month and they are dependent to other family members, just 5% of the subjects have had the monthly income as much as Irani Rls.6,000,000/-.

**Table-5**  
**Frequency of the monthly income variable in the studied population**

Income Variable	Frequency	Percentage
No income	67	55.8
below 2 million Rials	12	10.0
between 2 to 4 million Rials	11	11.7
between 4 to 6 million Rials	21	17.5
Above 6 million Rials	6	5.0

The analytical level of this variable is order-based; therefore, only the statistics of median and mode could be of use. However, for better description, the use of statistic variable of "mean" has been also reported. As the result, the mean of the population's monthly income is 2, and the maximum frequency (mode) is related to the individuals who have no income (table 6).

**Level of Education Variable:** Among the studied women population, 47% of the women has had bachelor's degree, 44% graduate degree and 8% had high school diploma (table 7). The analytical level of this variable is order-based; therefore, only

the statistics of median and mode could be of use, and the maximum frequency is related to those holding bachelor's degree (table 8).

**Table-6**  
**Central Indices of the monthly income of the subjects**

2	Mean
1	Median
1	Mode
5	Maximum
1	Minimum
1.3	Standard Deviation

**Table-7**  
**Frequency of the level of education variable in the studied population**

Education Level Variable	Frequency	Percentage
High school diploma	10	8.3
Bachelor's degree	56	46.7
Master's degree	37	30.8
Ph.D.	17	14.2

**Table-8**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Education Level among the subjects**

3.5	Mean
3	Median
3	Mode
5	Maximum
2	Minimum
0.8	Standard Deviation

**Data Analysis:** One of the hypotheses of this research is the presence of significant relation between the subject's level of education and their political participation. The findings of table 9, shows the frequency distribution and the percent of the subject's political participation in triple orientations based on their level of education. As it is seen in the table, as the subject's level of education raises, their triple orientations with regard to political participation is increased, and the statistical data indicates significant different between the subject's triple orientation with the education level.

**Table-9**  
**Frequency Distribution and Percentage of the Subjects' Triple Orientation in Political Participation based on Education Level**

Education Level	Cognitive Orientation			Emotional Orientation			Evaluative Orientation			Total
Elementary education	50 2.2%	5 2.3%	3 1.4%	4 1.8%	6 2.8%	3 1.4%	5 2.3%	6 12.8%	2 0.9%	13 6%
Junior and secondary education	9 4.1%	15 6.9%	11 5%	5 2.3%	14 6.4%	16 7.3%	12 5.5%	11 5%	12 5.5%	35 16.1%
High school diploma and associate's degree	9 4.1%	48 22%	52 23.9%	7 3.2%	53 24.3%	49 22.5%	20 9.2%	42 19.3%	47 21.6%	109 50.00%
Bachelor's degree and above	3 1.4%	2 110%	36 16.5%	2 0.9%	20 9.2%	39 17.9%	5 2.3%	28 12.8%	28 12.8%	61 28.00%
Total	26 11.9%	90 41.3%	102 46.8%	18 8.3%	93 42.7%	107 49.1%	42 19.3%	87 39.9%	89 40.8%	218 100%
	$x^2 = 22.94, df = 60$ $\sigma = 0.001$			$x^2 = 19.8, df = 60$ $\sigma = 0.004$			$x^2 = 14.82, df = 60$ $\sigma = 0.001$			

Based on these cases, which indicate the significance of the effect of social class on women’s participation in political affairs, we tested the relation between social class and the subjects’ triple orientation in political participation. Table 10 shows frequency distribution and the percent of the subjects’ triple orientation with their social class. The results of the findings show that there is a significant difference between female subjects’ cognitive, emotional and evaluative orientation in their political participation based on their social class. So that in all three cases, lower classes are seen more in low levels of education in triple orientations and instead they are less seen in higher and intermediate levels of education.

In this line, based on the field findings, we could conclude that political participation of the middle class of the city is more than higher and lower classes and the less rate of participation are seen in lower classes. More than half of the lower classes have had low social participation, which was far beyond the expected limit, but the middle class have allocated the maximum percentage of high participation to itself. In general, the observed difference in the subjects’ participation based on their social class is statistically significant and the statistical data confirms the significance of these differences (table 11).

Women’s occupation and its type, as a social variable effective on the women’s political participation have been put to test. The results of the findings indicate that there has been just a significant difference in the subjects’ cognitive orientation in the political participation based on the type of their job, and there has been no significant relation between the subjects’ job and

their emotional and evaluative orientations in political participation (table 12).

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to evaluate women’s political participation and analyzing the effect of social factors on that. The major studied variable is the women’s political participation, and the subjects’ level of education, type of occupation, and social class has been evaluated as other fundamental variables of the research. The results have shown that the majority of the female subjects, whether employed or homemaker, belong to the middle class and the mean of the level of their education is high school diploma, their highest degree is Ph.D. and the lowest is elementary education. The results of the research also indicate that the tendency of the Iranian women, even in the regions like Jahrom, to participation in political affairs in each cognitive, emotional, and evaluative aspect is in a high level and the maximum tendency to political participation among the subjects is related to their emotional orientation. However, the findings indicate that there is a significant difference between the rate of women’s participation based on their level of education, type of occupation and social class. So that the more the level of education, and consequently the more employment in the occupations, which require high level of education, the more women’s participation would be, and the maximum rate of women’s political participation is seen in middle class. So that three hypotheses of the research are proved.

**Table-10**  
**Frequency Distribution and Percentage of the Subjects’ Triple Orientation in Political Participation based on Education Level**

Education Level	Cognitive Orientation			Emotional Orientation			Evaluative Orientation			Total
Higher	2 0.9%	3 1.4%	11 5.1%	0 0.0%	8 3.7%	8 3.7%	1 0.5%	9 4.3%	6 2.8%	16 7.4%
Middle	19 8.8%	82 38.1%	87 40.5%	14 6.5%	81 37.7%	93 43.3%	33 15.3%	73 34.0%	82 38.1%	188 87.4%
Lower	5 2.3%	3 1.4%	3 1.4%	4 1.9%	3 1.4%	4 1.4%	7 3.3%	3 1.4%	1 0.5%	11 5.1%
Total	26 12.1%	88 40.9%	101 47.0%	18 8.4%	92 42.8%	105 48.8%	41 91.1%	85 38.5%	89 41.4%	215 100%
	$\chi^2 = 22.94, df = 60$ $\sigma = 0.001$			$\chi^2 = 19.8, df = 60$ $\sigma = 0.004$			$\chi^2 = 14.82, df = 60$ $\sigma = 0.001$			

Source: Research Findings, 2011

**Table-11**  
**Frequency Distribution and Percentage of the Subjects' Political Participation Based on Social Class**

Education Level	Cognitive Orientation			Total
High	1 0.5%	6 2.8%	9 4.2%	16 7.4%
Intermediate	15 7.0%	78 36.6%	95 44.2%	188 87.4%
Low	6 2.8%	2 0.9%	3 1.4%	11 5.1%
Total	22 10.2%	86 40.0%	107 49.8%	215 100%

**Table-12**  
**Frequency Distribution and Percentage of the Subjects' Triple Orientation in Political Participation based on Occupation Type**

Education Level	Cognitive Orientation			Emotional Orientation			Evaluative Orientation			Total
Housewife	12 5.5%	21 9.6%	27 12.4%	10 4.6%	20 9.2%	30 13.8%	146 7.3%	22 10.1%	22 10.1%	60 27.5%
Teacher	6 2.8%	18 8.3%	19 8.7%	1 0.5%	24 11.0%	18 8.3%	5 2.3%	20 9.2%	18 8.3%	43 19.7%
Employee	7 3.2%	43 19.7%	40 18.3%	7 3.2%	40 18.3%	43 19.7%	19 8.7%	29 13.3%	42 19.3%	90 41.3%
Self-employed	1 0.5%	6 2.8%	8 3.7%	0 0.0%	7 3.2%	8 3.7%	2 0.9%	10 4.6%	3 1.4%	15 6.9%
Physician and instructor	0 0.0%	2 0.9%	8 3.7%	0 0.0%	2 0.9%	8 3.0%	0 0.0%	6 2.8%	4 1.8%	10 4.6%
Total	26 11.9%	90 41.3%	102 46.8%	18 8.3%	93 42.7%	107 49.1%	42 19.3%	87 39.9%	89 40.8%	100 -
	$x^2 = 11.57, df = 8,$ $\sigma = 9\%$			$x^2 = 86.158, df = 8,$ $\sigma = 44\%$			$x^2 = 113.64, df = 8,$ $\sigma = 9\%$			

Source: Research Findings, 2011

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