The role of citizen participation in promoting social security and development (Case study: Herat city, Afghanistan)

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Extended Abstract

Objective: The city of Herat suffers from two types of insecurity that have affected the development of the city and its communities. One is domestic insecurity that is severely affected by poor economic conditions, poverty, migration, marginalization, and the other one is external insecurity affected by the presence of Taliban and opposition groups in the current government. According to statistics, more than one-third of citizens in Herat are suffering from economic poverty that has severely affected their social lives, and it has also increased the scope of social anomalies (World Bank report, 2018). Along with this, the presence of armed forces and their desire to dominate the city led to the occurrence of more than 180 security incidents in the city between 2016 and 2017, which caused nearly 250 civilians lost their lives in 2017 (EASO, 2017, and CPINA, 2019). Such basic problems made authorities decide to get help from people themselves in order to manage the city better and lead it to increased security and social development. In the meantime, authorities can gradually increase the level of people participation in urban activities by increasing their sense of sense of belonging, thereby making the public role more prominent in raising the level of security. By doing so, they can take other necessary measurements to develop the society. Therefore, in this study, the need to pay more attention to citizen participation in increasing the level of security in communities and consequently social development were the ideas that were taken into account by researchers. In this regard, the following questions were posed: What is the role of public participation in increasing citizens’ social development in the city of Herat? What is the role of public participation in enhancing security in Herat? What are different areas of Herat in terms of participation insecurity, and social development?

Method: This research study is a kind of applied research, and it is descriptive-analytical research study in terms of the nature of the research. In the present study, some data were collected using documentary studies. Then, fieldwork and questionnaires were used to collect the required data. In this regard, 38 questions were designed in accordance with the main variables of the research, and then they were distributed among individuals. After data collection, the data were analyzed, using statistical methods like Pearson correlation coefficient Friedman, one sample of t-test Chi-square, regression in SPSS software. Then, GIS and WASPAS software were used in order to map and analyze the spatial data in the city of Herat. The statistical population of the present study includes the citizens of Herat city and the administrative staff and executives in the city. To do so, a random method for selection was applied to measure the level of community participation in urban issues and their roles in enhancing security and urban development. The sampling method was prepared using Cochran's formula, and accordingly 382 questionnaires were prepared considering the population of 700,000 in the city of Herat.

Results: In this research, the first thing investigated was the correlation between the variables of the research, using correlation method. Based on the results, the responses which were related to the relationship between participation and such variables of research as social development, urban security were placed above average indicating the existence of citizen participation’s positive role in providing the
city of Herat with social development and urban security. In fact, based on the findings, public participation has a positive role in enhancing social development, which indicates the presence of a strong correlation between these indicators, public participation and social development index of the city. Among the questions about public participation, the most important item which was highly rated was "How much citizens are willing to participate in cultural and social activities". However, in term of social development, the item which was highly rated by people was "Although it is up to municipality to solve and deal with the problem of the city, I myself as a citizen feel really responsible for problems in my city and make a lot of effort to be involved in tackling and resolving the problems", and for urban security the highly rated item for participation was "I will report the issues affecting urban security to security agencies".

In the next phase and in order to investigate the status of participation in urban areas, a spatial analysis of the city was carried out using WASPAS and GIS software. The results indicated that district 10 in the city of Herat had the highest level of public participation, while the lowest level of that belonged to district Velsvaliha (suburb area). According to security index, the highest score belonged to district 10.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, it can be well concluded that people in some parts of the city have shown a high tendency to cooperate with officials to promote the status of their city. Besides, it can be useful to take all necessary measurements to persuade people to be more involved in the activities in their own community, and to heed to neighborhoods where people are less interested in being involved in social affairs in order to provide those places with necessary planning, to raise the level of public participation, and to increase social development and urban security in those areas. This can be achievable provided authorities come up with accurate and operational approaches and address the issue of public participation and its role in social development and urban security.

**Keywords:** Partnership, Security, Social Development, Afghanistan, Herat City.


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