

## The Impact of Attitude Toward Watershed Management Operation on Level of People Participation

<sup>1</sup>B.M. Golrang, <sup>2</sup>F.S. Lai, <sup>3</sup>M. Rostami, <sup>4</sup>Khamurudin, M.N.,  
<sup>5</sup>Kamziah Abd Kudus, <sup>6</sup>M. Mashayekhi and <sup>7</sup>R. Bagherian

<sup>1</sup>Department of Forest Management, Faculty of Forestry, University Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM, Malaysia

<sup>2, 4, 5</sup>Department of Forest Management, Faculty of Forestry, University Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Department of Mathematic, Faculty of Science, University Putra Malaysia, 43400, Malaysia

<sup>6</sup>Department of English Language, Faculty of Modern Language, University Putra Malaysia, 43400, Malaysia

<sup>7</sup>Department of Watershed Management, Khorasan Razavi Agricultural and Natural Resources Research Center of Iran

Received 2012-06-24, Revised 2012-07-15; Accepted 2012-11-19

### ABSTRACT

Recent studies in many countries had display the influence of many factors including: Satisfaction, Knowledge, Demographic and Attitudinal variables in level of people participation. The main question here is, whether these factors would also be effective on people participation in Iran? The purpose of this research was to investigate communication factors influencing attitudes of farmers' application of Watershed Management Operations (WMO) in the Kushk-Abad watershed in Khorassan Razavi Province of Iran (85 km<sup>2</sup>). The general objective of this study is to assess factors that influence people's participation in Iran. The study consist of all farmers in watershed study (N = 1500), of which 200 is selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique (n = 200). The study was a descriptive-co relational, survey research. In fact, this research was designed to assess relationship between attitude toward Watershed Management Operations (WMO) and the level of participation in WMO in Iran. In order to obtain this aim, a cross sectional survey was applied. Data for this research collected through personal interviews from three villages in Kusk-Abad sub basin in Iran. The scale of attitude toward WMO and Participation in WMO were in order 0.71 and 0.92. Findings in the study indicated that a majority of the farmers have positive attitude toward adaption of WMO. The results revealed that the level of the participation of WMO is moderate and there is a significant and positive correlation between farmers' attitudes towards application of watershed management operations. However based on the findings, the level of economical participation of people are the more than social and environmental participation. Moreover, the results indicated that the level of the respondents' attitude towards WMO is moderate to low. This study also proved that participation in WMO is positively and significantly correlated with attitude toward WMO ( $r = 0.534$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

**Keywords:** Attitude, People Participation, Evaluation, Operation, Kusk-Abad, Iran, Watershed Management Operations (WMO), Significantly Correlated, Attitude Towards, Economical Participation

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Natural resource degradation especially soil erosion is one of the most important problems all over the world especially in Iran. Although, many projects in Iran have been conducted over several decades including watershed and range management projects. But, after more than 40 years, it seems that these projects could not reach to their

objectives, because of increasing amount of the degradation and erosion processes (Mohseni *et al.*, 2008). In other hand people participation can be important in successes of watershed management. Therefore, it is necessary to assess these projects to recognize the reason of their failure. The main purpose of this research was to assess people participation in watershed management. User's partnership in revisory and reviver of pasture and

**Corresponding Author:** Bahram Mohammadi Golrang, Department of Forest Management, Faculty of Forestry, University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

watershed management is a necessary matter caused an important part of project success. Today, people participation role in revision, revival and natural resources management is touchable, a new event of county watershed and Range management organization (Hematzadeh and Khalighi, 2006).

One of the major communicative subjects in different implication and developmental activities is global participation, because the basis for development in a region depends not only on public pleasure but also on their participation and the objective of conducting any contractures and developmental project, are people and exploitants. Like development the concept of participation has more extensive and general concepts that it's nature depends on one hand to economic and communicative conditions and on the other hand depends on objectives, drawing on and different programs and the necessity for sustainable development and participation is systematic and comprehensive perception. The two properties of watershed management activities are the essence of water and soil management in extensive area and high costs associated with these types of activities. If the scientific researches and technologies not transferred to applied stage than it will be in advantage and for this reason the results of agricultural research in all situations should be used by the majority of people especially by villagers (Abdolmaleky *et al.*, 2011).

The term people participation has gained a lot of popularity during the last few years, particularly in reference to sustainable Natural resources and rural expansion projects. At the past time, emphasis was on people participation. In the past decade the promotion of people participation in development has been increased and the focus has extension to include other stakeholders as well (Karl, 2000).

According to Wainwright and Walter (1998), participation by farmers and users presents an essential concept and strategy for planners, designers, community organizers and government officials. According to Searle (1990); Nurick (1982) and Hunter (1982) participation in decision making reflects the opportunities for influence and as a result, need satisfaction. In this regard and with reference to the above mentioned, the degree of people participation in development programs is a major determinant of success or failure, but many opportunities for people participation are met with little enthusiasm or cooperation by citizens (Wandersman and Gary, 1980) and the policy which makes people participation efforts successful still remain a mystery this study is an attempt to revealing this mystery.

Many researchers have been shown that participation may depend on individual characteristic such as Knowledge, income, household size, Marital, age, gender, satisfaction and attitude on Watershed Management Operation(WMO) in the many countries (Dolisca *et al.*, 2006; ILbery, 1983; McDowell and Sparks, 1989). Some

studies have shown that attitude about Watershed Management Operation(WMO) issues make people more positive in their views (Fiallo and Jancobson, 1995; Heinen, 1993; Bagherian *et al.*, 2009).

Governments of Iran have established several policies to protect and manage the natural resources during the last decades. Most of these efforts have taken top down strategy and often have proven unsustainable and unsuccessful. In recent years government of Iran has developed new approaches to solve this problem. Along this a people centered program for sustainable management of land and water resources was initiated, as a joint program of UNDP and the government of Iran in 1997. Kushk-Abad watershed management operation is one of these attempts to sustainable management of land and water resources in Iran which is limited as a joint program of UNDP and Islamic Republic of Iran in 1997. This area includes the region that is characterized by high population density, natural resources degradation and declines in agricultural productivity, posing significant challenges to rural people to provide for the growing people participation while maintaining the productivity of land and water resources. This study was designed to analyze the role of this theory in explaining people behavior to people participation in WMO in Kushk-Abad basin in Iran.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population of this study include heads of households were living in the area Kardeh which had participated in the WMP plan. The total population which had participated in the program is 3600 people that is comprised six villages. Data for this research were collected from 200 respondents, through personal interview based on questioner in 3 rural village including Kushk-Abad, Goosh and Bahreh from July to August 2011. The Cronbach alpha for attitude toward WMP and participation in WMP are in order 0.71 and 0.92 which are more than 0.70 and proves high reliability of dimensions those make up these variables (Georg and Mallery, 2001).

Three set of instruments were applied to collect data in this research. Instruments with 14 questions were designed based on Likert scale to measure the attitude of respondents toward the plan. The respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with a series of the statements on a five point likert ordinal scale with the ordinal response categories ranging from strongly disagrees(1) to strongly agree (5). This rating for questions which are designed to be positive and the value of negative questions is contrary to them. So, negative questions have been recorded and their values changed to positive questions. These questions have combined by using factor analysis and finally their standard scores were derived. Then, by using the following formula, scores of attitude toward WMO were distributed between 0 to 100:

$$\text{Attitude toward WMO} = \frac{(\text{Zscore} - \text{Minimum}) \times 100}{\text{Maximum} - \text{Minimum}}$$

The second instrument, which has 18 questions, is dedicated to data collection about measure of respondent's participation in the watershed management plan. To measure these questions, 5 point Likert scales are considered based on participant's previous experience, from very less 1 to very much 5. This variable has three dimensions which include: (1) Social participation (8 items) (2) Economical participation (6 items) (3) Environmental participation (4 items) based on the model proposed by Dolisca *et al.* (2006). These questions have combined by using factor analysis and finally their standard scores were derived. Then, by using the following formula, scores of participation in WMO and its subscales were distributed between 0 to 100:

$$\text{Participation in WMP} = \frac{(\text{ZScore} - \text{Minimum}) \times 100}{\text{Maximum} - \text{Minimum}}$$

The third instrument was composed of 16 questions focus on individual profile of respondents such as gender, age and education. The level of measurement of these questions is ordinal and nominal. Several statistical methods according to need and appropriateness such as descriptive statistics, factor analysis, Independent sample t test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation were used to analysis of collected data (Hair and Anderson, 2010; Guilford and Fruchter, 1978).

Factor analysis was applied to measure the level of validity of participation in WMP as the main variable and identify latent dimensions underlying the variables which assessed the level of participation. Before the interpreting the factor analysis, Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) was considered by the researcher. According to (Hair and Anderson, 2010) if MSA is greater than 0.50, the result for factor analysis is an appropriate method for this aim. The value of Kaiser's Overall Measure (KMO) for this analysis is 0.778. It means the collected data for this research are appropriate for factor analysis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Socio Demographic Characteristics

The findings of study revealed that responder's age mean was approximately 45 years old. Also based on the results the majority of respondents (82%) were male and married (79%). The data revealed that 21% of respondents had high school education, diploma and bachelor degree. In addition, the finding indicated that 59% of responders had families with 4-6 members. Also, based on the results, 61.5% of respondents had 1-3 sons above 15 years and 21.5% of them had more than 3 sons in this category of age.

As results revealed, farming was the Main occupation of most responders (48%) while livestock was the alternative occupation of 43.5% of responders. About half of responders (48%) had within 3-4 million Rial of income per month from the main occupation while nearby one third of responders (30%) had within 2-3 million Rial of income per month from the alternative occupation. As finding showed more than one third of responders (43%) had less than 2 hectares irrigated agriculture land. However, about half of them (46%) had more than 4 hectares rain fed agriculture land. Finally, the most important institution to motivate respondents to participate in WMP was Village council (32.5%). Based on the finding, 31% of responders were member village council. 19.5% of them were member of village security guard. Also, 11.5% of responders were members of consumers' cooperatives. Moreover, minority of responders (9%) were members of teacher and parent association.

#### 3.2. Results of Factor Analysis

According to factor analysis finding, a three factors including (social, economical and environmental) are provided for participation variable. In this research study, only factors with eigenvalues of 1.5 or greater were examined and then confirmed by a scree plot test **Fig. 1**.

A criteria loading of 0.40 was applied to determine which items were included in each factor. Results from factor analysis using the varimax rotation shows that these three factors provide 64.5% percentage of the total variance **Table 1**.

The **Table 1** illustrates that, factor one is related to social participation that is composed of eight items: "attendance in WMO meetings" (factor leading = 0.80); "influence the decision" (factor leading = 0.82), "discussion in the meeting" (factor leading = 0.70), "make suggestion during the meetings" (factor leading = 0.72), "giving new idea during the meetings" (factor leading = 0.69), "Discuss the project progress with member" (factor leading = 0.75), "Discuss the project progress with people" (factor leading = .76) and the "Discuss the project progress with family" (factor leading = 0.75). Then factor 1 entitled social participation and shows 29.91 % of total variance.

Moreover as can be seen from the **Table 1**, factor two is related to environmental participation that is composed of six items: "Contribute to the tree plantation activities" (factor leading = 0.83); "Contributing in the check dams (Gabion and ...)" (factor leading = 0.88); "Contributing in the seeding activities" (factor leading = 0.88); "Contributing in the dike activities" (factor leading = 0.79); and "contributing in the Road repair and structuring" (factor leading = 0.88). Then factor 2 entitled environmental participation and shows 22.88 % of total variance.

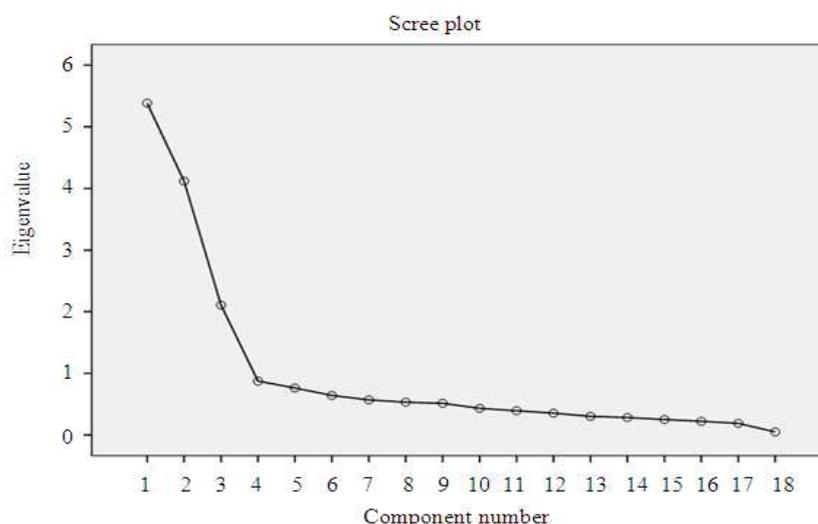


Fig. 1. Scree plot of factors of participation variables

Table 1. Varimax rotation factor pattern of people participation in WMO

| Statements                                      | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|
| Attendance in WMP meetings                      | 0.798    |          |          |
| Influence the decision                          | 0.816    |          |          |
| Discussion in the meeting                       | 0.701    | 0.186    |          |
| Make suggestion, during the meetings            | 0.718    |          |          |
| Giving new idea during the meetings             | 0.691    |          |          |
| Discuss the project progress with member        | 0.752    |          |          |
| Discuss the project progress with people        | 0.764    |          |          |
| Discuss the project progress with family        | 0.753    |          |          |
| Benefit from project road of WMP                |          | 0.106    | 0.843    |
| Benefit from the technical assistance of WMP    |          | 0.147    | 0.831    |
| Benefit from personal advices of WMP            |          | 0.204    | 0.821    |
| Benefit project Credit of WMP                   |          | 0.194    | 0.79     |
| Contributing in the tree plantation activities  |          | 0.834    |          |
| Contributing in the check dams (Gabion and ...) | 0.152    | 0.877    | 0.172    |
| Contributing in the seeding activities          |          | 0.884    | 0.115    |
| Contributing in the dike activities             |          | 0.768    |          |
| Contributing in the Rangeland                   | 0.121    | 0.786    | 0.237    |
| Contributing in the Road repair and structuring |          | 0.755    | 0.156    |
| Eigenvalnes                                     | 5.38     | 4.12     | 2.11     |
| Percentage of variance                          | 29.91    | 22.88    | 11.71    |

\*Values in bold show the factor loading

Factor three is related to economical participation that is composed of four items: “benefit from project road of WMP” (factor leading = 0.84); “benefit from the technical assistance of WMP” (factor leading = 0.83); “benefit from personal advices of WMP” (factor leading = 0.82); and “benefit project Credit of WMP” question (factor leading = 0.79). Then factor 3 entitled economical participation and shows 11.71 % of total variance.

### 3.3. Level of Participation in WMO

Descriptive analysis of data revealed that the level of the Overall participation of WMO is moderate. Also the table shows that 48% of respondents got scored moderate scores while 23.5% of them obtained low scores Contrary, 19% of respondents achieved high scores. Also, 7.5% of respondents obtained very low scores while 2% of them got very high score.

**Table 2.** Level of respondents' participation in WMO (n = 200)

| Level of participation      | Frequency | Percent | Mean  | SD    |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|-------|
| Overall participation       |           |         | 51.80 | 20.81 |
| Very low                    | 15        | 7.5     |       |       |
| Low                         | 47        | 23.5    |       |       |
| Moderate                    | 96        | 48.0    |       |       |
| High                        |           | 38.0    | 19.00 |       |
| Very high                   | 4         | 2.0     |       |       |
| Social participation        |           |         | 37.03 | 24.17 |
| Very low                    | 48        | 24      |       |       |
| Low                         | 79        | 39.5    |       |       |
| Moderate                    | 49        | 24.5    |       |       |
| High                        | 20        | 10.0    |       |       |
| Very high                   | 4         | 2.0     |       |       |
| Environmental participation |           |         | 43.19 | 27.97 |
| Very low                    | 44        | 22.0    |       |       |
| Low                         | 50        | 25.0    |       |       |
| Moderate                    | 65        | 32.5    |       |       |
| High                        | 31        | 15.5    |       |       |
| Very high                   | 10        | 5.0     |       |       |
| Economical participation    |           |         | 65.25 | 22.6  |
| Very low                    | 10        | 5.0     |       |       |
| Low                         | 18        | 9.0     |       |       |
| Moderate                    | 75        | 37.5    |       |       |
| High                        | 77        | 38.5    |       |       |
| Very high                   | 20        | 10.0    |       |       |

**Table 3.** Level of respondents' attitude toward WMO (n = 200)

| Level of attitude toward WMO | Frequency | Percent | Mean  | SD    |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|-------|
|                              |           |         | 54.11 | 21.51 |
| Very low                     | 13        | 6.5     |       |       |
| Low                          | 30        | 15.1    |       |       |
| Moderate                     | 107       | 53.8    |       |       |
| High                         | 41        | 20.6    |       |       |
| Very high                    | 8         | 4.0     |       |       |

**Table 4.** Correlations between attitude toward WMO and participation factors

| Participation factors       | r       | P(2-tailed) |
|-----------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Social participation        | 0.271** | 0.000       |
| Economical participation    | 0.591** | 0.000       |
| Environmental participation | 0.335** | 0.000       |
| Overall participation       | 0.534** | 0.000       |

The mean and Standard deviation of overall participation were in order 51.80 and 20.81%. However, the **Table 2** shows that the level of economical participation of people is the more than social and environmental participation. The **Table 2** reveals that the mean scores of respondents' participation in economical activities was 65.25% that is moderate to high.

### 3.4. Level of Attitude toward WMO

As presented above, a total of 14 items were developed and used to measure level of attitude toward WMO. A five point likert scale were utilized for this instrument that

ranged from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. All 14 variables were combined by factor analysis technique and were obtained their Z-Scores. After that, These values were standardized from 0 to 100. Hence, the minimum value for attitude toward WMO is zero and the maximum value is 100. **Table 3** reveals the level of attitude toward to WMO. As can be seen from the table, the total mean score is 54.11 and standard deviation is 21.51. Consequently, level of the respondents' attitude towards WMO is moderate to low. The table shows that, Majority of respondents obtained moderate scores (53.8%) while 20.6% of them got high scores. Contrary, 15.1% of respondents achieve low scores Also, 6.5% of respondents obtained very low scores while 4% of them got very high score.

### 3.5. Relationship Between Participation and Attitude Toward WMO

A appropriate statistical method as Pearson Correlation was used to test whether there is significant relation between attitude toward WMO and participation factors. **Table 4** presented the result of correlation test. As can be seen from the **Table 4**, there are appositve and significant correlation between Attitude toward WMO and social, economical and environmental participation in WMO, ( $r = 0.271$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), ( $r = 0.591$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and ( $r = 0.335$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). In general, overall participation is positively and significantly correlated with attitude toward WMO ( $r = 0.534$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). It means, moderately people

who have more attitudes toward WMO, have more interest to participate in WMO, especially in economical and environmental activities.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this research two model were examined and confirmed for measuring participation and exchange factors. In the first model result of this research confirmed the model of participation which was suggested by (Dolisca *et al.*, 2006), findings of this study showed that this model is an appropriate model for measuring the participation. In the second model result of this research confirmed the model of exchange factors which was suggested by Searle (1990). Based on this model four hypotheses which are related to social exchange theory were examine and tested with level of participation. Findings of this study showed that exchange factors have significant relationship with level of participation. Based on this model, a person who was more benefited from program had more participation in program. The results of research showed that level of rural people participation in watershed study is approximately moderate. Based on the results, there is a significant correlation between Attitude toward WMO and participation in WMO,  $r = 0.534$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . In other words, relationship between Attitude toward WMO and participation in WMO is positive and moderate. It means, moderately, people who have more Attitude toward WMO, have more interest to participate in WMO. The results of this study indicate certain aspects that policy makers should take into account in planning the future WMO policy. This study has highlighted that the study of individual attitudes remain important for understanding the participation behavior of certain group, but much study remains to be done to allow more general conclusion to be drawn. Thus social exchange theory can be considered as a main theory in people participation studies. Because, people participation is a complex issue and future researches might benefit from pluralistic approach and perspectives to explain the level of participation.

#### 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are thankful to be the participation of 200 respondents in the Kushk-Abad basin in this study. We also thank University Putra Malaysia and Agricultural and Natural resource center of Khorasan of Iran to support of this study. Furthermore, we are grateful to anonymous referees for their additional comments.

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