

Evaluation of Factors Affecting People's Increase of Civil Rights Awareness (A Case Study: The City of Isfahan)

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ABSTRACT

Civil rights is a series of public and private rights, which forms social relations. Individuals' awareness of their civil rights is the first factor to facilitate the proper relations between the government and the nation and to promote social interactions. The realization of this depends on different economic, social, cultural, political ... factors and the current study aimed to identify the most important social factors related to people's awareness of their civil rights. The most important issue that has been pursued in this study is "whether the social trainings, using the mass media, participation in public affairs, social class... can change the level of people's civil rights awareness."

In order to implement the research, eight hypotheses have been designed and developed using the survey method in a questionnaire with 43 questions and a sample of 368 people living in five districts sampled (stratified sampling) of all residents of Isfahan's 11 districts. Descriptive (mean, mode, frequency...) and inferential (η Coefficient, Pearson's coefficient of skewness, path analysis...) methods of statistics have been utilized in the statistical analysis of this study. Statistical findings suggested the confirmation of six hypotheses and the rejection of two. Results showed a significant correlation between the levels of social trainings, using the mass media, people's participation in public affairs, social class, people's education and jobs, and their civil rights awareness. The correlation coefficient for each of these variables was 0.85, 0.85, 0.87, 0.88, 0.61 and 0.21 respectively. There was no significant correlation between people's gender & age, and their civil rights awareness.

KEYWORDS: awareness, civil rights, training, participation, mass media

1. INTRODUCTION

Citizenship is one of the most important social and political arenas that has spread in various forms and with different legal, political and philosophical interpretations throughout history. Experts, who have turned the pages of the book of history to examine the quality of the citizenship concept evolution, agree on one point and that are citizenship is a status which recognizes both the people's privilege to enjoy their rights and the citizens' collective responsibilities which the stable managing of affairs is based on them. Familiarity with the concept of citizenship clearly shows this idea is originally related to the political and economic rights of access and participation and those who move beyond the social rights in order to cover them, just set the promotion of equality as their goal to support the economic integrity (Shiani, 2005; 18).

In a citizen-based system, there are talks about major topics such as the tasks and duties of citizens towards their fellowmen and the authorities, people's "civil rights" in society and their participation in socio-political affairs. If we assume the rights as "a series of general and binding rules that reign to make order and establish justice in human life while their implementation is guaranteed by the government" (Katouzian quoting Naghizadeh, 2002; 24), the civil rights can also be proposed as a series of rules and regulations that provide citizens' enjoyment of social and civil benefits in addition to the possibility of their participation and serious involvement in the political affairs of the society and lead to the interaction between people and their government on a shared and collective basis.

Civil rights are an excellent basis to manage the human affairs and their lives which was previously determined by race, religion, class and gender or merely one of their identities, because citizenship can satisfy the humans' basic political impetus which Hegel described it as the need "to be recognized" more than any other forms of identity (William, 1997; 59-69).

So the fundamental rights have two major categories, including "people's rights" and the "government structure" and the first one is a kind of civil right, which is used in its individual meaning. On the other hand, because the fundamental rights are considered as a sub-category of the public law, we can consider the civil rights as

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one of the dimensions of the public law too. The public law is a legal disciplinary in which we discuss rules and issues that relate to the society, human communities and in short to the government-state in its broadest meaning (Ghazi, 1989; 5).

2. Objectives

This research has been done with the aim of studying and increasing the civil rights awareness of the people in the society (The city of Isfahan) and factors affecting it. It's also seeking an explanation for the relationships between variables such as using the mass media, social participation, social trainings, social class and social position (age, gender, education and job), and the level of civil rights awareness.

3. Views and theoretical basics

In sociological theories, citizenship encompasses a wide range so that various sociologists have been studied this concept in different fields. The common axis in all the definitions, however, is the emphasis on civil rights duties, participation, equality of citizens, citizenship identity and the role and position of citizens regardless of the society's social, hierarchical, ethnic, racial and religious attachments which some of these theories will be mentioned.

- Marx: Class, Awareness and Civil rights

Marx defines the society with an ownership class and a lower class by considering the economy and its effect on people's economic roles as the basis and considers the society as a field of constant struggle between these two classes, stating that social classes are the real players in the process of history, and all the national and local developments are merely aspects of such a process. Marx considers the civil society as the bourgeoisie that is based on market and private property. The human rights declaration and the citizenship are therefore, an illusion to hide the truth and a mask on the social and economic inequalities (Shiani, 2002; 65). According to Marx, the citizenship is the economic, social and practical subjugation of the disadvantaged group, and it must be corrected. Based on this view, the people with a low economic position have a low awareness of their rights and therefore, do not enjoy their civil rights. So we should step towards creating a classless society by educating citizens and making them aware of their rights. The worker class will unite together upon the understanding their position and overthrow the capitalist system as a barrier to get their rights through a socialist revolution (Hezarjaribi *et al.* 2011; 7).

- Weber: City, Citizenship and Democracy

Max Weber considers the citizenship to be historically related to development of the Greek city-states where they provided a public space for a free and rational relationship between social actors. The concept of city and the evolution of independent cities throughout history have had a vital role in the development of an integrated thinking method about freedom, individuality and civilization. He believed this characteristic to be unique to the West (Zakati, 2001; 69). According to Weber, citizenship has been formed in the cities, and it was in fact depended on the counsel and measures which a city was committed to considering as a static union and a collective ritual that its members were determined based on their ownership of urban lands and having special affairs, duties and advantages. In his opinion, being a citizen meant the people's ability to participate in making decisions, adjust the policies and involve in the election of leaders while their special advantages included their civil rights in addition to the market monopoly, their rights of free trade, exchange permits and their right to reduce the competitive business, participation in judicial affairs and special situations for purposes such as military ones. Based on economic rights, the most important civil franchise in the form of formal rights was not the right to have semi-free associations of citizens but this was rather a guarantee for the manorial ownership of a city. Thus, Weber had paid more attention to the political rights of citizens such as the right to vote and elect the representatives and considered the participation of them as a basic principle in this field (Hezarjarbi *et al.* 2011; 8).

- Parsons: Universalism - Particularism Dichotomy

Parsons considers the citizenship a result of the rise of industrial capitalist society and believes that the changes which have been occurred in industrial society such as the urbanization and rationality have created a good platform for this phenomenon. He presents an image of citizenship as a social behavior directed to the social membership and cohesion based on pattern variables of Universalism, and a civil society founded on common law contracts (Tavassoli and Nejat Hossieni, 2004; 37).

According to Parsons, a full citizenship means the enjoyment of all social groups and classes of their civil rights and commitments and their awareness of their rights far from any kind of social discrimination. Thus, the civil rights awareness needs a supply of a variety of sources, the creation of opportunities and the reproduction of general values, on the one hand, and an appropriate attitude towards these rights on the other. The most important issue in

Parsons' opinion is those groups that are deprived of the privileges of citizenship. He, for example, asks this question that: "What prevents the enjoyment of the benefits of full citizenship by black people?" In answering this question, he pays attention to the role of thought and brings forth the issue of the cultural values. In his opinion, those groups that continue to insist on their old values and have not yet adapted themselves to the current requirements and social conditions, will not have an understanding of the rights and privileges of citizenship (Hesam, 2002; 11). Thus, the people who have particularistic views are less aware of their rights. In the meantime, education plays an important role in the widespread integrated sociability of people and the presentation of universalistic views and consequently, provides a context for people to be aware of their rights and as a result of their responsibilities.

4- Theoretical framework

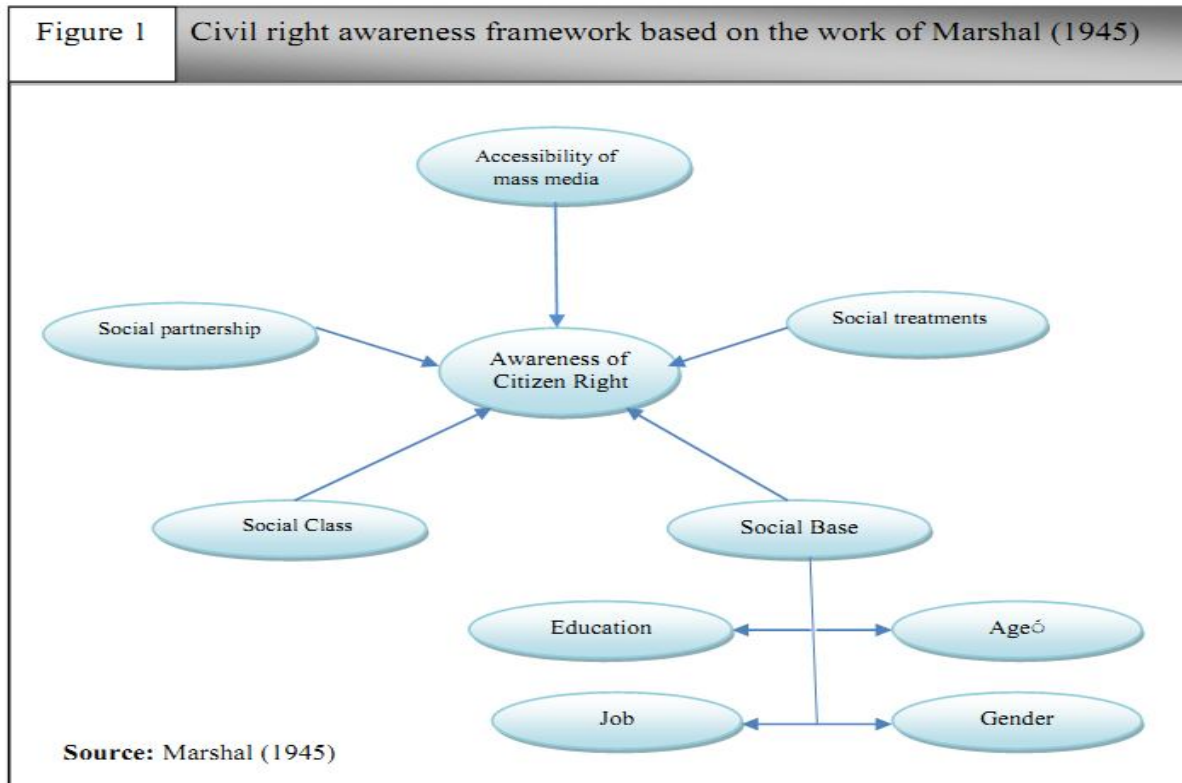
Turner considers the civil rights as a set of legal and official rights that have been defined for a given community, and a citizen claims to be benefiting from national resources based on them. Turner pays attention to the role of the social, economic and cultural conditions of the people & the society and believes the awareness of the rights to be different among various ethnic groups. Among those social conditions, the role of mass media requires an especial attention because they influence the social awareness of individuals as an intermediary. Thus, according to the Turner's theory, "the use of mass media" hypothesis was employed in this research as a source of society awareness (Hezarjaribi et al. 2011; 9).

Again, Marx believes that: economic status and existing inequalities in society lead people to compete and fight each other while legal equality is in truth a cover for the economic inequality. Thus, the equal participation of all the individuals in political and social affairs is not possible considering the existence of such inequalities. He calls for the emancipation of all human beings which is in conflict with capitalism. According to Marx, the citizenship is the economic, social and practical subjugation of the disadvantaged group, and it must be corrected. Based on this view, the people with a low economic position have a low awareness of their rights and therefore, do not enjoy their civil rights. So we should step towards creating a classless society by educating citizens and making them aware of their rights (Hezarjaribi et al. 2011; 10). Therefore, considering the Marx's theory, "the factors of gender, age, education and job influence the level of civil rights awareness" hypothesis has been studied in this research.

From the perspective of Habermas, the public sphere is an area where individuals come together to participate in open and free discussions. Equality and accessibility are considered as non-removable principles in this domain. He, therefore, considers participation and presence in the public domain as the main representative of citizenship and has analyzed it in different ways and because of that pays more attention to the participatory rights accessibility (Hezarjaribi et al. 2011; 10). The hypothesis: "The level of participation in public domain is effective on the civil rights awareness," based on Habermas' views has been studied in this research.

Citizenship dialogues were changed after 1945 because of T. H. Marshall's sociological analysis. Marshall's theoretical design is a response to the challenge between capitalism and democracy inside a welfare state which its main concern is to establish reconciliation and connection between the key components of the capitalist economic system namely social class and market, and democratic political system namely public participation and legal equality in a modern society. In summary, Marshall's social citizenship concept has been discussed a solution to the challenge that arises from social classes and their differences in the one hand, and the necessity of strengthening of sociopolitical commitments of all society members to the social system on the other (Tavasolli and Nejati Hosseini, 2004; 37). According to Marshall, citizenship is a "status" that is awarded to all members of a society. All the individuals who have such status, are equal to each other considering their given rights and responsibilities. There is not an all-inclusive principle to determine those rights and responsibilities, but those societies in which the institutional citizenship is developing, portray an image of the ideal citizen that achieving it is measurable, and we can lead people's tendencies towards it (Marshall, 1964).

In Marshall's opinion, citizenship is divided into three (civil, political, social) principles or components. Civil rights are those essential for personal freedoms and include freedom of speech, opinion, thought and ownership of properties. Political rights include the right to participate in political power and decision-making and also the right to vote. Social rights include a wide range of rights pertaining to the welfare and economic security and comprise the right to live based on common standards of life in a society and are in a close relationship with the education and services system. Indeed, the social dimension of citizenship includes the acceptance of the government's responsibility to provide certain services in exchange for citizens' loyalty and their services (Heater and Oliver, 1994; 20).



5- Research Background

A research that was carried out in Syria and Lebanon by Rabo (1991) confirms Woekel's opinion. According to Marshall, civil rights are going through stages, and gender form a special internal border in them. The legal status of women is a complicated subject and not similar to that of men. They lack the minimum status of citizenship as freely committed individuals to the law and are somehow under the guardianship of their fathers or husbands while merely live on the land of their masters. So, in order to achieve the realization of citizenship, women should obtain their legal status and enjoy the benefits and privileges of citizenship by removing the contradictions (Rabo, 1991).

Shiani (2003) in his Ph.D. dissertation entitled: "Citizenship status and barriers to its realization in Iran," considers the main barriers to full citizenship as being related to the lack of resources and social opportunities at the macro level which is associated with the empowerment of society to meet the needs and aspirations of its members, on the one hand, and the lack of knowledge and understanding of intellectual and participatory skills, appropriate welfare status and participation in volunteer activities in addition to the type of individuals' views and values, which are indicative of the abilities of society members, on the other hand. It can therefore be concluded that, the real citizenship will be realized when its physical and mental backgrounds are being provided.

Hezarjaribi (2011) in a paper entitled as "Women's civil rights awareness and factors affecting it," investigates the level of women's civil rights awareness and factors affecting it among those women who are employed by Tehran's municipality as formal or contract employees. Results show that, the average civil rights awareness score of respondents is 11.32 with the standard error of 0.726. Respondents' range of changes of score for this variable was 0 to 18 while eventually 35.2 percent of respondents had a low civil rights awareness, 45.6 percent of them had a moderate awareness of this matter and only 19.3 percent of them had a high civil rights awareness. The level of presence in public affairs, use of mass media, socioeconomic bases and attitudes towards civil rights had a significant correlation to the level of women's civil rights awareness.

Shiani (2010) in a paper entitled as "An analysis of the level of civil rights awareness among students," describes the level of civil rights awareness among students and analyzes the affecting factors on it. Results showed that, the level of civil rights awareness was not the same among students. Among the various aspects of civil rights, the highest awareness was related to their gender aspect, and the lowest was associated to their civic aspect. There was also a significant correlation between students' level of social awareness and their attitudes towards various subjects, and their level of civil rights awareness.

6- Introducing variables & indicators

- Civil rights awareness

In this research, civil rights awareness means: what the people know about the civil rights in their mind and how much of this knowledge is in accordance to the truth? According to Marshall's view, civil rights include three categories namely civic, political and social rights. Civic rights comprise of 12 principles, 4 about the freedom & immunity from transgression, 4 about the supporting an individual and 4 about the equality. There are 10 principles regarding the political rights, 2 about the right to vote, 4 about the freedom of assembly and 4 about the freedom of information. There are finally the social rights, including 12 principles (the right to have a job, four principles – equality of opportunities, four principles – services & supplies, four principles have been chosen) which in total are 34 questions with equal importance factor for all of them.

- Using the mass media

The use of mass media, including radio, television, press, satellite TVs, the internet and internal newsletters will be questioned as follows. The mass media includes three instruments consisting of audio media (local & foreign radio) with an importance factor of 10, visual media (TV, satellite, the internet, cinema) with an importance factor of 10 and audiovisual media (newspapers, magazines, books, photos) with an importance factor of 20 which in total have an importance factor of 50.

- Participation in public affairs

Participation in public affairs, means any form of cooperation, involvement, membership acceptance, intellectual assistance or spiritual support, financial assistance or material support, participation in programs, accepting executive responsibilities and any other kind of activities that society members do in relation to the civil institutions, including cultural, social, political, economic and environmental ones. It includes the participation in public matters (elections, rallies...) and giving comments or feedbacks to the organizations (schools, municipality, radio & television...) that has an importance factor of 50.

- Social trainings

Social trainings include non-formal education such as: trainings for family and close friends, movies, non-formal classes, theaters, local meetings and corporate advertising (centers dependent upon the ministry of education, private organizations, municipality, the Bus Company and police force) that has an importance factor of 50.

- Social niche

Alan Biro in the glossary of social sciences considers this concept as a place occupied by everyone in the social structure. It can also be described as the social status or credit that is conferred by each individual's contemporaries to him/her inside the society he/she lives in., In other words, a place which is occupied by a certain individual in a certain system at a certain time is called his/her social niche (Biro, 1997; 381). This variable will be evaluated in this research using a linear combination of age-gender-education-job of society members. Each of these factors will be evaluated as a separate hypothesis in form of four hypotheses in total.

7- Research Hypotheses

1. The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their social trainings.
2. The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their level of access and use of mass media.
3. The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their level of participation in public affairs.
4. The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their social class.
5. The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their gender.
6. The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their age.
7. The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their education.
8. The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their job.

8- RESEARCH METHOD

We have used both the documentary and the survey methods in this research. We have referred to the resources and documents in order to study the research theories and experiences while using the survey method to collect data. The statistical population of research includes all citizens of the city of Isfahan who have the age of 15 or above and considering the unlimitedness of this statistical population; a sample was calculated using the Cochran formula. Based on this, the sample size of this research is determined using the formula 1 (Cochran formula):

$$n^1 = \frac{t^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{d^2} = \frac{1/96^2 \times 0/4 \times 0/6}{(0/05)^2} = 368$$

So, the sample size of research is 368 citizens with different age, gender, class and other social characteristics.

Considering the use of survey type as the method of research in this study, we have used a questionnaire in order to evaluate the hypotheses. This questionnaire is of researcher-made type that contains 43 questions. Questions 1 through 9 have been designed to evaluate independent variables in this research while questions 10 through 43 evaluate dependent ones. All questions are multiple-choice questions, including simple and scaled types.

We have used the nominal reliability method to calculate the reliability of measuring tool in this study. Thus, we have asked the opinions of scholars and experts in this field and after verifying the statements, questions and scales were set as a questionnaire and pretested in the next stage. The questionnaire reliability has been also confirmed by Cronbach's alpha test ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Descriptive (mean, mode, frequency...) methods of statistics have been utilized in the statistical analysis of this study while inferential (η Coefficient, Pearson's coefficient of skewness, path analysis...) statistical indices have been used to evaluate the effects of independent variables on civil rights awareness.

- Hypotheses Analysis

"The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their social trainings."

The η Coefficient and Pearson's coefficient of skewness have been used to investigate the correlation between two variables of social trainings and civil rights awareness which both are relative variables. According to results, the correlation coefficient between people's social trainings and their civil rights awareness is significant in $p \leq 0.05$. The calculated correlation coefficient is 0.85, so it can be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the level of people's social trainings and their civil rights awareness. Statistical results for this hypothesis show that any increase in the level of social trainings for the members of this statistical population, will increase their civil rights awareness too.

"The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their level of access and use of mass media."

Correlation coefficient between the level of using the mass media by individuals and their level of civil rights awareness is significant in $p \leq 0.05$ with a calculated amount of 0.85. Thus, it can be suggested that there is a significant correlation between the level of using the mass media by the people and their civil rights awareness. Based on the findings by statistical techniques, any increase in the level of using and accessing the mass media by the people in this statistical sample, will increase their civil rights awareness too.

"The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their level of participation in public affairs."

Correlation coefficient between the level of participation in public affairs by individuals and their level of civil rights awareness is significant in $p \leq 0.05$ with a calculated amount of 0.87. Thus, it can be suggested that there is a significant correlation between the participation in public affairs by individuals and their civil rights awareness.

Statistical results for this hypothesis show that any increase in the level of participation in public affairs by the people in this statistical sample will increase their civil rights awareness too, in which the correlation between people's participation in social affairs and their civil rights awareness is of utmost importance.

"The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their social class."

Correlation coefficient between people's social class and their level of civil rights awareness is significant in $p \leq 0.05$ with a calculated amount of 0.88. Thus, it can be suggested that there is a significant correlation between people's social class and their civil rights awareness. Statistical results for this hypothesis show that the higher was the social class of respondents, the higher was their civil rights awareness.

"The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their gender."

The observed F was not significant in $p \leq 0.05$, so there was no significant correlation between people's gender and their civil rights awareness. In other words, men and women in statistical population had no significant difference in their level of civil rights awareness.

"The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their age."

The observed F was not significant in $p \leq 0.05$, so there was no significant correlation between people's age and their civil rights awareness. In other words, people with different ages of 15 years or above had no significant difference for their level of civil rights awareness.

"The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their education."

The observed F was significant in $p \leq 0.05$, so there was a significant correlation between people's education and their civil rights awareness. In other words, the level of civil rights awareness was a function of higher education levels.

"The level of individual's civil rights awareness is a function of their job."

The observed F was significant in $p \leq 0.05$, so there was a significant correlation between people's job and their civil rights awareness.

A summary of the results above are being shown in table 1.

Table I		Regression statistics and regression model			
Independent variables	Dependent variables	N	r	r ²	sig
Awareness of Citizen Right	Social treatments	368	0.852	0.725	0.000
Awareness of Citizen Right	Accessibility of mass media	368	0.857	0.734	0.000
Awareness of Citizen Right	Social partnership	368	0.873	0.762	0.000
Awareness of Citizen Right	Social class	368	0.886	0.784	0.000
Independent variables	Dependent variables	N	f	Eta ²	sig
Awareness of Citizen Right	Gender	368	1.85	0.01	0.158
Awareness of Citizen Right	Age	368	0.034	0.001	0.512
Awareness of Citizen Right	Education	368	37.16	0.38	0.000
Awareness of Citizen Right	job	368	7.98	0.062	0.000

Path analysis

Path analysis is a technique to describe the dependencies between independent and dependent variables in the form of direct and indirect effects. This technique is based on a set of multiple regression analysis and the assumed correlation between independent and dependent variables. This differentiation was based on the analytical model of the current research and is as depicted in figure 2. Table 2 shows the direct and indirect effects of independent variables on dependent ones.

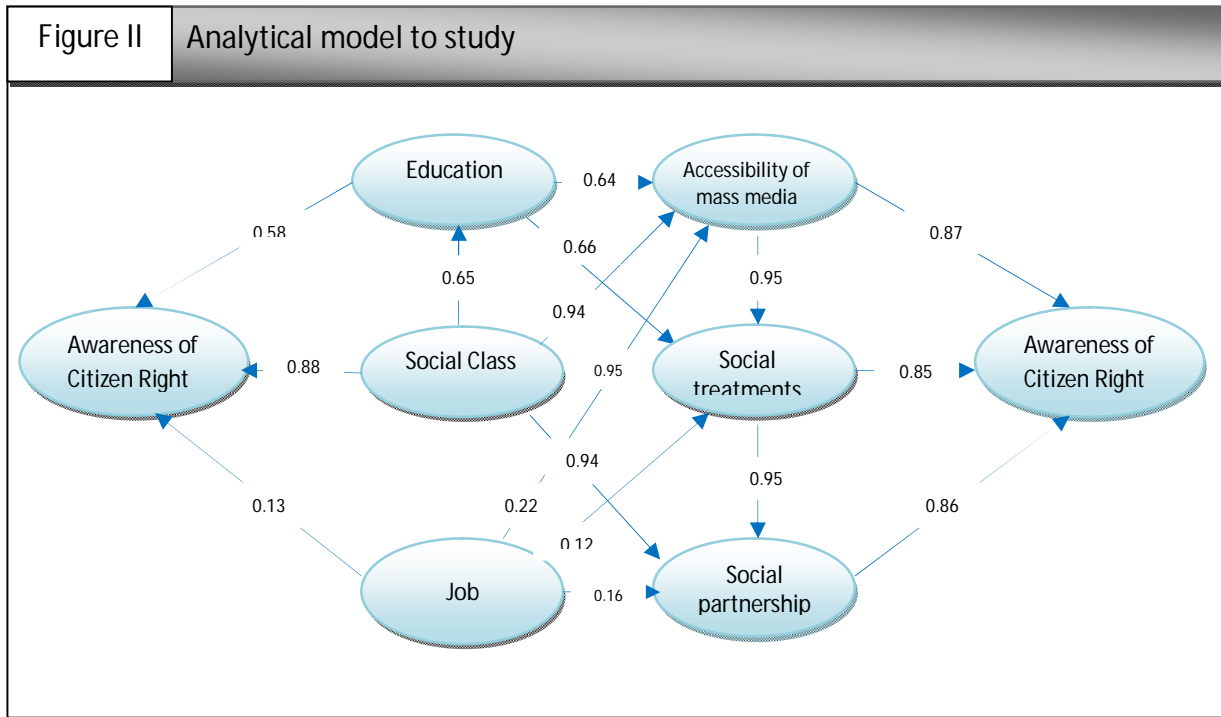


Table II Direct effect and Indirect Independent variables on Dependent variables of Civil Right			
Variables	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total
Education	0.58	(0.64*0.87)+(0.66*0.85)	1.117
Job	0.93	(0.16*0.86)+(0.13*0.85)+(0.22*0.87)	0.43
Social class	0.89	(0.95*0.87)+(0.95*0.85)+(0.94*0.86)+(0.65*0.58)	2.83
Social treatments	0.85	(0.95*0.86)	0.81
Accessibility of mass media	0.87	(0.95*0.85)	0.8
Social partnership	0.86	-	

So, the social class variable had the highest direct effect on the level of civil rights awareness, and it also had the highest indirect effect through its influence over other variables.

10- Conclusion

Today, the concept of citizenship focuses on believing your responsibilities in social matters and having positive and inherently communicative beliefs about cooperation with the others in order to manage life, in addition to other various concepts and legal principles, which include social responsibilities and commitments too. Among these concepts, the main objective of this research is to study the relationships between effective variables such as the mass media accessibility, social trainings, participation and class, gender, age and job, and the level of civil rights awareness among the society (City of Isfahan) members.

Findings of this study, confirmed six hypotheses but both gender and age hypotheses were rejected. According to results:

- The level of trainings towards people's civil rights awareness done in current society, have not been at a desirable level. Therefore, people's civil rights awareness is not high as expected. It is also important to explain, while paying attention to the subject of civil rights in Iran goes back to the constitutional revolution, but this subject still is in the initial stages of its formation and there is a long way until it reaches a good point of social trainings and consequently, increases people's awareness about gaining their rights in civic, political and social aspects and also respecting the rights of others while sets a proportional relationship between having the rights and doing your responsibilities in the form of your relationship with the state – nation, and this is worthy of attention.

- Considering the results of this research for the current society, the level of using the mass media, especially for instruments such as books, newspapers, the internet, magazines... is not that high. Television & radio are probably the most widely used instruments among the mass media. Therefore, the lack of using various mass media instruments can lead to the lack of growth and development of people's social awareness in different areas, including civil rights.

- The level of participation in public affairs is one of the most important factors that can provide necessary conditions and backgrounds for the involvement of the society members in making decisions, implementation, supervision and evaluation of social actions. Indeed, while people have no interactive relation with any social institutions and organizations, or these institutions do not prepare the required conditions for the intervention of people in making decisions, they cannot completely step towards strengthening their legal rights.

- If a person's social class goes up, his/her awareness would also increase. This statement can be true due to various reasons. Increasing of people's social class level, provides necessary economic conditions and facilities for their climb to a higher stage of social needs and this can be effective on many parameters of social life. Social class has also had an indirect influence over other variables in this study (the level of using the mass media, social trainings, participation in public affairs and education).

- There is no significant correlation between people's gender and their level of civil rights awareness. In other words, there is no significant difference between men and women for this. Indeed, in developing societies, women usually have a less sociocultural awareness than men due to their incomplete participation in public affairs but considering the development process of these societies and the presence of women in various social scenes, this imperfection is being resolved.

- There is no significant correlation between people's age and their level of civil rights awareness. In other words, people of different ages have no significant difference for this. Therefore, there are other conditions and backgrounds affecting the level of civil rights awareness, which control the role of people's age in this matter.

- There is a significant correlation between people's education and their level of civil rights awareness. The correlation coefficient for these two variables has been 0.61, and it was a direct correlation. Thus, an increase in the level of education would also increase people's level of civil rights awareness. Education (formal education), therefore, can provide appropriate conditions and backgrounds for the growth and development of people's thoughts and their awareness of various parameters of social life, including civil rights.

- There is no significant correlation between people's job and their level of civil rights awareness. The calculated coefficient correlation for these two variables was low (0.24). Thus, it can be suggested that people who occupy governmental jobs, and positions had a higher level of civil rights awareness. Today, however, other people with other kinds of jobs can also have the possibility to develop such thoughts and ideas due to the spread of communications.

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