Investigating the relationship between public accountability, public participation and public trust in public organizations: Case study of 22 districts in Tehran, Iran

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ABSTRACT
This research seeks for assessing public accountability and its consequences. Public accountability is one of the signs of a modern and democratic administration. If governments that have power do not be responsive to the people in relation to their acts, mistakes, and decision making, democracy remains as an empty slogan. Therefore, public accountability as a subject is a public administration supplement in a democratic government. Accountable government in a society provides the general public trust of its citizens and finally increases the public participation of citizens in political and social affairs such as elections. Therefore, the present study is to identify the effect of public accountability on increasing the public trust and also public participation of citizens in 22 districts of Tehran, Iran. Survey - correlation is the method used in this study and typically based on structural equation modeling. According to this, five structural models performed to show how different relationships between these three variables work in LISREL software. The results of this study show that one of the models explains these relationships better than the others.

Keywords: public accountability, public trust, public participation, structural equation modeling.

1. INTRODUCTION
Public accountability has mentioned as a universal concept dominated a major body of political discourses, which take part in decision making process (Reference needed). Bovens,2005 argues that the word Public accountability brings an image of transparency and public trust in the mind of audience, thus the concept has emphasized severely in private sector and mostly tries to achieved through founding appropriate structures, and fair procedures. Despite the importance in private sector, this could be reasoning that this is more critical in Public sector, concern the public interest and pervasive influence of any public sector supposed to have on society. Changing the managerial
Paradigms and emergence of new forms of governance such as New Public Management, has made it necessary to mention accountability as a fundamental issue and cornerstone of the field of interest, in theory and practice. Public trust towards government and Public organizations is just one of the most important and favorite consequences of Public Accountability, which results to public support next to Public Policies formation and implementation. On the Other hand, a major reason of public distrust rise from ‘unaccountable officials’ who lack the sense of responsibility and accountability before the general opinion and customers. They mostly emerge and reinforce as a consequence of insensitivity and disregarding of government and top ranked officials which ended to corrupt of public trust on government and political system at all.

Public Participation shall be implied as another effective impact of public accountability on the society. Sense of being support by an accountable government may drive citizens to actively participate in society’s affairs, while the contradicted feeling will result in reverse. it has told that public accountability will increase public participation by improving public trust. According to all above mentioned, an important challenge for official is to guarantee the public trust and prevent from increased sense of mistrust among the citizens. According to all above mentioned, an important challenge for official is to guarantee the public trust and prevent from increased sense of mistrust among the citizens. Public accountability may be treated as a useful tool to ensure the public system about the healthy circulation of affairs. Thus, this is expected to mention an effective relationship among three variables implied on. Investigation of this relationship has been subject of the study and authors focused on firstly, whether the public accountability is effective on the amount of public trust and public participation; and secondly, exploring the nature of relationship. To reach the purpose, some questions have been required to answer, such as following:

1) Whether public trust mediated the relationship between public accountability and public participation?

2) Whether public participation mediated the relationship between public accountability and public trust?

3) Is there a relationship between these three concepts and also which one is effective on the other one?

Uncovering and Explaining the nature of relationship will help the officials towards more confident and informative decisions about improving the three variables. For being started to investigation of the relationship, this seems necessary to review the literature to extract the conceptual framework.

First many literature reviews and researches, related to these three different concepts will be reviewed and then after explaining the relationships between these variables, six hypothetical models of these relationships and also research hypotheses will be presented. It should be mentioned that the researchers of this article created a standard questionnaire with the help of Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis that will be presented. Hypothesis tests have been done by structural equation modeling method and LISREL software and based on analysis results, so proposals and final results will be presented.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Public accountability

A modern democratic Administration characterized by Public Accountability, cause this made the government responsible against its decisions, mistakes and actions before citizens, which is the main outcome of democracy idea. Therefore, public accountability as a subject is a public administration’s supplement in a democratic government (Bovens, 2005).

The English word of accountability is from the same origin of accounting and goes to the victory of the Normans in England in the years after 1066. In 1085 William I the King of England asked all the land owners throughout his domain to present a list of their lands and properties. After this, the land owners were asked to take an oath before the King. It means that this census in addition to goals of taxation auditing also flows the political goal.

After that gradually an accountability system was centralized to the royal government and every six months the accounts were checked in a form of centralized inspections. In modern times the public accountability has considerably evolved and not restricted to merely Accounting, Financial Administration, and being accountable to the governors, but has even reversed, while historically bottom to up, has turned to a up to bottom process, which required governors to take account to citizens.

At the end of 20th Century, the Anglo-Saxon world experienced major changes in traditional bookkeeping and accounting, aiming to promote the accountability, and resulted to a new style of public management under Thatcher Administration in U.K. and followed by reforms in Public sector under the Regan Administration in United States. the major characteristic of both was implementation of Private Sector procedures and methods in the Public sector (Pollitte and Bouchart, 2005).

2.1.1 Public accountability and its dimensions

From Sociology perspective, public accountability can be defined as “a social relationship in which an actor must explain and justify his/ her acts and performances to “important others””. (Romzek and Dubnick, 1998). Public Accountability has defined in Sociology as “a social relationship in which an actor must explain and justify his/ her acts and performances to “important others””. (Romzek and Dubnick, 1998).

O’Connell (2005) believes that public accountability exists when public services are offered with high quality, low cost, and in a proper way. Koppel (2005) Public Accountability characterizes by five aspects included transparency, commitment, controllability, responsibility, and insurability. These definitions beside some other various ones reveal the complicated nature of the concept and the difficulty to define its exact meaning. As we need a concise and certain definition about the concept, to measure it, thus we define Public Accountability as “government, government officials, and public organizations are to explain and justify their actions and decisions to the people and their representatives”. Based on this, accountability in this research is comprised of four dimensions: commitment, respect, transparency, and controllability. These four dimensions have been extracted
research literature and especially from Koppell’s five-dimensional model. Each of them has conducted as following:

Commitment is the level of responsibility the public authorities feel towards citizens. Respect for citizens implies being respected when faced with officials and public organizations. Transparency is honesty in giving information to citizens and not hiding it by authorities. The controllability implies on the government and public organizations authorities attitude against citizens.

Thus, Public accountability can be mentioned as a tool to guarantee the public trust, and in fact acts as a bridge to fill the gap between citizens and representatives, to blur the boundary and promote the trust and finally legitimacy of governance (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2000).

In most communities, public accountability is conducted through election. People donate the legitimacy to their representatives and appoint them as political officials which are accountable through public monitoring and audit mechanism. Political managers keep their subordinate officers accountable through a hierarchy of authority and responsibility and it is also true about courts and administrative courts that keep executors accountable toward law (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2000). When a government is accountable toward its performance to meet citizens’ expectations, consequently people show their satisfaction from the government and authorities by increasing their level of public participation in the affairs of the country and society.

2.2 Public trust

Trust is one of the important aspects of human relationships and also is the foundation of participation and cooperation among members of society. Thus trust accelerates transaction in different political, social, and cultural fields. In a trustable atmosphere, this is guaranteed that necessity of force and compulsion is reduced, and intention to treat by honesty will increase. While Trust is being pervasive, individuals’ tendency to group work and cooperations will increase and create a thriving network of voluntary gathering for social life. Trust replaces compulsion with satisfaction, and this is one of the important goals that elites and society administrators are seeking to achieve (Dasgupta, 1988).

Characteristics such as optimism, confidence in cooperation, and a sense of control over personal life, are variables which have an impact on trust. Meanwhile, individuals show their trust in different aspects of their lives, in their family, with friends and colleagues, and their political positions (Newton, 2004). Review of literature about trust and public trust reveals there is no consensus about a particular definition. However, a general meaning of trust can be explain as honest behavior, without the intention of getting self-benefit from it. in the other word trust could be considered as an expectation to get positive results that one side can get based on the expected action on the other side, in one interaction in which uncertainty is its main feature (Danaceefard, 2003).

Accordingly, public trust is people's belief toward behaviors and special actions that they expect to see from their government (Luhmann, 1979). in case of public trust, people expect that officials and employees of public organizations answer to their expectations in their interaction (in this interaction there is a kind of uncertainty and lack of understanding of how affairs are in public organizations). In other words, public trust is people's expectation to receive a positive response to their demands from custodians of public affairs. Public trust has a sociological nature and it can be observed in economic,
political, and cultural fields in society. Also is the result of individuals’ confidence to their abilities to be effective in the political development process, and their imagination from accountability hierarchy and responsibility toward people in government (Belanger and Nadeau, 2005).

Considering Public trust as one of the pervasive concepts subject to different academic sciences such as economics, anthropology, sociology, organizational behavior and etc., this is not surprising to see various definitions (Pirannejad, 2007). In this study, based on previous researches and literature review, public trust has been recognized based on following three dimensions:

1. Confidence: is a kind of positive feeling that people find after towards the government and officials of public organizations and their performance and decisions.

2. Risk taking: shows the extent of risk that people can take in terms of initiating a connection with the government and officials of public organizations, in order to propose their criticisms and suggestions freely.

3. Integrity: shows the degree of people's belief in honesty and integrity and proper performance of duties by the government and public officials.

2.3 Public participation

Human history is the history of cooperation and conflict. When human found out that he/ she can overcome the problems by gathering his/ her power with others in the first place, participation was born. Initial democracies in the world like Athens, was the consequence of citizen’s participation in determining their fate. Nowadays, participation in the context of democratic and civil society turns to be institutionalized. Institutionalized participation has formed in three contexts: civil society, citizenship, and democracy. Accordingly, increasing the number of public participation in public policy processes and managing the society affairs at the local, regional, and national levels is one of the important factors in the development of democratic societies (Nader, 2004).

Participation in the Oxford dictionary has defined as "action or fact of participating, having a part of something or forming something".

One of the research institutions of United Nations defines participation as: "organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulatory institutions in specific social conditions from people, groups, and movements which were deprived and exempted from action domain of such control (Ghaffari, 2001). Based on this definition, all the individuals in society have the right to participate in decisions that affecting their future.

According to Robert Dahl, democracy provides a "real participation” opportunity. Interaction between civil institutions and government takes place in a democratic process. The product of this interaction is a type of modern democracy that shows itself as a kind of republic that human beings are entitled to it and government is representative and accountable toward citizens. Thus, while participation builds of democracy, is its product too. In participation typology it is possible to mention a variety of social, political, economic, and cultural participations.

2.3.1 Conceptualizations of public participation in this study

Researchers define public participation as individuals’ awareness and desire to involvement and influencing public policies, public affairs, and play an effective role in the way the society pave to.
This, the concept includes two distinguished dimensions of Willingness for participation and participation act. Willingness for participation is the extent of people's interest and motivation for involving and influencing on public policies and public administration affairs. participation act means, the type and amount of people's participative behavior for involving and influencing on public policies, public administration affairs, and determine the destiny of themselves and their country unanimously.

2.4 Relationship between public accountability, public participation and public trust:

2.4.1 Accountability and public trust

In this study, public trust has been proposed as one of the consequences of public accountability. It seems that in every society, citizen's trust placed on a–close relationship with efficiency and accountability of government. As mentioned before, public trust is people's expectation from government and public organizations to perform certain behaviors. Accountability of Public Officials towards their actions and decisions, is one of the most important behaviors that people expect. So it can be expected that if people really believe on the public accountability, then this is expected that public trust in government and public organizations will increase. In fact, for promoting public trust between citizens and public organizations, public administrators should introduce citizens as critical audience of their organizations which made it possible to accomplish their intrinsic missions. Therefore, if managers feel integrated with their citizens, citizens equally will have the same feeling; something that is possible just through being accountable and sensitive in public organizations toward citizen's expectations.

2.4.2 Accountability and public participation

Public participation is also one of the consequences of public accountability. People have the tendency to participate in managing their society affairs and also attempt to participate, when they feel they are able to influence. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of public participation could be people's trend and action towards criticism and making questions about decisions and actions of government and public officials. Obviously, the tendency to participation increase when they feel that government and public organizations are accountable towards their own performance and also people's demands. Therefore it can be expected that public accountability could increase public participation.

2.4.3 Public trust and public participation

It seems that public trust has also an effective role in public participation. The probable reason for this could be the increase in people's tendency to participate in managing the affairs when they trust in public official's responsibility and accountability. Conversely, when citizens of a society find their participation impact on government decisions and actions inconclusive and lose their faith in government consequently, society faces with a phenomenon called "participation crisis" in the beginning, and "legitimacy crisis" in the end. So, high level of public trust could be considered as one of the reasons for public participation. However, it should be noted that there maybe a kind of mutual relationship between public trust and public participation. This means that increasing public trust will increase public participation and in a society that public participation is up, public trust increases also. However, the fact that public participation is the result of public trust is more likely.
2.4.4 Mediating role of public trust and public participation

One of the worth to talk about phrases is that the public trust can act as a mediator in the relationship between public accountability and public participation. Therefore, beside direct effect of public accountability on public participation, it effects indirectly the public participation through public trust mediator. In fact, an accountable government is able to found a nation with high levels of public trust, while this create sequentially high levels of desire and action toward public participation. One other conceivable mode is that, public participation acts as a mediator between public accountability and public trust. So, beside direct effect of public accountability on public trust, this will indirectly effects on public trust through a public participation mediator, more intensive than the former case. In aggregation, there are five conceptual models that are conceivable between these three variables that will be investigated in this study.

3. Theoretical framework of the research

As literature reviewed, the following conceptual model has been proposed to explain the nature of relationship among three variables of research; Public Accountability, Public Trust and Public Participation.

(Note: variables in all models are as latent; that's why they have oval shape)

1. First conceptual model

2. Second conceptual model

3. Third conceptual model

4. Fourth conceptual model

5. Fifth conceptual model

4. Hypotheses of the research

According to the models mentioned, at least the following assumptions are considered:

1. Public accountability has a positive effect on public participation.
2. Public accountability has a positive effect on public trust.
3. Public trust has a positive effect on public participation.
4. Public participation has a positive effect on public trust.
5. In the relationship between public accountability and public participation, public trust has a mediating role.
6. In the relationship between public accountability and public trust, public participation has a mediating role.

5. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH
Since the study aimed to determine the causal relationships between variables of public accountability, public trust, and public participation, therefore, this research categorizes applicable regarding goal, and is a descriptive regarding mode of data collection and to relational type, and specifically based on structural equation modeling. Various methods have been offered in recent decades towards examining the relationship among variables. One of them is structural equation modeling or multivariate analyses with latent variables. Structural equation modeling is a comprehensive statistical approach to test some hypotheses about the relationship between observed variables and latent variables. Through this approach, this is possible to test the credibility of theoretical models in certain societies, since most variables in management researches are as latent or covered or hidden, the necessity for using these models has an upward trend (Segares, 1997). In all analytical models, public accountability is an exogenous variable and public trust and public participation are endogenous variables. Questionnaire has used as data gathering mean of the study, thus for any of the variables includes public accountability, public trust, and public participations, nine, ten and eight questions, sequentially designed. A prototype comprising 50 questionnaires pre-tested for reliability evaluation and then the amount of confidence coefficient calculated, according to Cronbach's alpha method based on obtaining data from the questionnaires. This coefficient has been calculated 0.908, 0.731, and 0.723, sequentially for public accountability, public trust, and public participation respectively. This amount indicate that the questionnaire is reliable or in other words meets the required reliability. Exploratory and confirmatory Factor analysis used to scale up the variables of research. For this purpose, some questions are designed and factors analyzed according to the operational definitions and dimensions of each variable. After explanatory factor analysis and elimination of some questions concerning their low factory load, the questionnaires also had a confirmatory factor analyzed. Results of confirmatory factor analysis by structural equation modeling, confirms the suitability of designing questionnaires. Tables 1 to 3 show the derived dimensions from explanatory factor analysis and also the results of confirmatory factor analysis or measurement model.

To test the validity of questions, both content validity and factor validity have been used. To evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire, experts and University professor's comments have been used and necessary reforms have been done. The factor validity test for the questionnaire, as mentioned before, has been done by LISREL software and with the help of confirmatory factor analysis. It should be noted that, for confirming the measurement model or confirmatory factor analysis, firstly the related indexes should be well fitted and secondly, the standard coefficient values of the t-value should be meaningful. If the amount of $\chi^2$ considered to be low, degrees ratio of $\chi^2$ about degree of freedom
(df) considered to be less than 3, RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) considered to be less than 0.05, and also GFI (Goodness of fit index) and AGFI (Adjusted goodness of fit index) considered to be more than 90%, it can be Concluded that the model is fitted very good. If the results of "t value" will be more than 1/96 or less than -1/96, consequently it will be meaningful.  

**Society and statistical sample:** citizens of 22 districts of Tehran are being considered as statistical sample. Sampling has been done randomly. The following equation has been used to calculate the sample size:

\[
N = \frac{NZ^2 \alpha}{\epsilon^2 (N-1) + Z^2 \alpha} \frac{2 \times P(1-P)}{2 \times P(1-P)}
\]

Therefore, the required sample size for a study with approximation is: \( N \approx 600 \). For more confidence, 620 questionnaires were distributed and afterwards, 606 questionnaires collected.

**Table1. Dimensions derived from exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis results (measurement model) for public accountability.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Standard coefficient</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Citizens are entitled in government and public organizations services suitably.</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Government and public organizations are accountable for their actions.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>7.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Government and public organizations, feel responsible toward their citizens.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>8.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>In my opinion, government and public organizations are loyal toward their citizens</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>7.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Citizens, who go to public organizations, are respected enough.</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Government and public organizations are doing their duties clear.</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>9.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Government and public organizations act completely clear to giving information to people.</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>10.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Controllability</td>
<td>In my opinion, government and public organizations, accept criticism.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>8.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Controllability</td>
<td>Government and public organizations, consider suggestions and criticisms of citizens sensitively.</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>8.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = 30.96 \)

\( \text{df}=21 \)

RMSEA=0.069

GFI=0.94

AGFI=0.86
Table 2. Dimensions derived from exploratory factor analysis and results of confirmatory factor analysis (measurement model) for public trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Standard Coefficient</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Government treats people with honesty.</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>I think the society officials are honest people.</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Risk Taking</td>
<td>In our country people are risk taking in dealing with organizations and institutions that are unfamiliar to them.</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Risk Taking</td>
<td>In our society communication between people is more limited between their family and acquaintances.</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>7.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>I think the society officials are reliable people.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>I think the foreign news media is more reliable than domestic media.</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>I believe in the courts of our society justice is fully observed.</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>People trust the government in identifying and fixing the problems of the society early.</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 11.96$</td>
<td>df=21</td>
<td>RMSEA=0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Dimensions derived from exploratory factor analysis and results of confirmatory factor analysis for (measurement model) Public Participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Standard Coefficient</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Willingness for</td>
<td>I want to explain my ideas to officials about improving the administration of government and public organizations.</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Willingness for</td>
<td>People should provide government and public organizations with their suggestions and criticisms for their improvement.</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Willingness for</td>
<td>People should have a sense of responsibility toward improving their society management.</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>8.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Willingness for</td>
<td>People need to have discussions and interlocutions, in order to determine the fate of their society.</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>6.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Participation act</td>
<td>I do participate in social activities consciously and voluntarily.</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Participation act</td>
<td>I do participate with charity organizations consciously and voluntarily.</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>8.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. FINDINGS OF RESEARCH

Aim to the test of hypotheses, firstly Spearman correlation test, using "SPSS 16" software has been applied to measure the correlation between variables. Afterwards, the causal relationship between dependent and independent variables in research have been tested with structural equation modeling using Lisrel 8.53 software. Table 4 shows the results of correlation between three main variables of the research.

Table 4. Spearman's correlation matrix between variables of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public accountability</th>
<th>Public trust</th>
<th>Public participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public accountability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public trust</td>
<td>0.742</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public participation</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>0.400</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ALL COEFFICIENTS IN THE 99 PERCENT CONFIDENCE LEVEL ARE MEANINGFUL.

6.1 Structural Equation Modeling

Then after being confident about accuracy of first order measurement models (exploratory factor analysis) and second order (confirmatory factor analysis), hypotheses should be tested. The result is as following:
Among the casual relationships in conceptual model, just the relationship between public participation-public trust has been confirmed. The Meaningful value of this relationship is 7.54 and other causal relationships have not been confirmed.

Causal relationships between variables are meaningful and meaningful amounts are 7.93 and 5.64 for Accountability- Trust and Trust- Participation respectively.
On third conceptual model, just the casual relationship between Public Accountability and public trust has confirmed. The meaningful value of this relationship is 6.07. The other causal relationships have not been confirmed.

In fourth conceptual model, just the casual relationship between accountability and trust has been confirmed. The meaningful value of this relationship is 9.74. The other causal relationships have not been confirmed.
Finally in fifth conceptual model, just the casual relationship of public accountability and public trust has been confirmed. The meaningful value of this relationship is 7.42. The other causal relationships have not been confirmed.

7. Comparison of conceptual models
Table 5. Comparison between proportion indices of research's conceptual models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>Confirmed causal relationships</th>
<th>Effect level (standard mode)</th>
<th>Meaningful number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>97.38</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>Participation $\rightarrow$ Trust</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>7.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>54.25</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>Accountability $\rightarrow$ Trust</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>7.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust $\rightarrow$ Participation</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19.39</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Accountability $\rightarrow$ Trust</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>86.48</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Accountability $\rightarrow$ Trust</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>9.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>98.45</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Accountability $\rightarrow$ Trust</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>7.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fitting indices of the model reveal that the second model offer the best fitting index and therefore, the second conceptual model can be mention as the best one to explain the casual relationship among public accountability, public trust and public participation. In the above mentioned model, public accountability effects on public trust and the later consequently effects on the public participation.

8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
The aim of this article has been to investigate the relationships between public accountability, public trust, and public participation. The study investigated relationship among public accountability, public
trust, and public participation. Five presumed models of relations among the variables have studied using LISREL software and the second one resulted as the best, which offers positive relationship between public accountability and public trust, and between public trust and public participation. In result, second and third hypotheses of the research confirmed, while the second one have strongly been endorsed in other models too. The fourth hypotheses confirmed just in the first conceptual model. Rest of hypotheses, include first, fifth and sixth have verified in none of the models.

According to the results obtained, it can be derived that public accountability is the key factor to create public trust in citizens. In fact, in every society, citizen's trust has a close relationship with government's accountability. Public trust is people's expectation from government and public organizations to perform certain behaviors. As accountability of public officials against their actions is one of the people’s most critical expectations, so this is reasonable to conclude the public accountability will promote public trust against government and public organizations.

Some of the experts considered accountability as a main source of trust, and argue that lack of efficacy and accountability are the major causes of general mistrust next to public organizations. However, the point should be noticed which higher levels of trust, won’t blur the accountability and not resulted public managers to feel free about responsibility.

in case of some countries which government avail to some sources of income separated from public tax, the accountability plays an even more critical role, as may be mention in countries like Iran. In this country, as a case, government has grow in body thanks to Oil income and thus there is no affiliation towards the nation, thus the Oil revenues allow the government to operate in a non-accountable manner. Also is can be discussed that tradition of monarchy in the country has kept the rulers immune to be responsible against their deed and has led to a dramatic reduction of public trust in the general opinion.

The relationship between trust and public participation approved too, as logically expected, because public participation will achieve merely under the shadow of public trust against the government and public organizations. This is not surprising that government will be able to increase citizen’s participation and cooperation in the time when promote the public trust. Hence the government should always be aware toward the trust level in society and tries to keep trust in society as high as possible to be benefited from people's support in difficult conditions and failures.

The relationship between public participation and public trust was confirmed just in one of the models. It can be argued that citizen's participation in society affairs increases their trust slowly as well. This is considerable that the assumptions not confirmed in the study may be confirmed while different definitions use for. Clearly more studies needed to enable us about a generalization about the concepts and relationships.

It is being recommended to the government and public organizations to increase the level of public trust by improving their relationships with citizens, act transparently, and being accountable toward their decisions and actions. They are also being reminded that if they could be able to enhance the level of public trust, citizen's amenability toward their own fate and their society will increase spontaneously.
and the level of participation in society affairs will rise. This is a big step toward democracy and civil society.

It is also being recommended to the future researchers to consider important issues in public management more carefully, such as mentioned variables in this article. Particularly the consequences of public trust and public accountability are much broader than the issues evaluated in this article. Thus this is recommended to firstly try to identify the factors effective on important variables, and also to analyze and scrutinize the consequences of them. The effort of government officials, public organizations leaders, and citizens to improve public variables in society such as public accountability, public trust, and public participation will be a herald for Iran as a proud and developed country. Focus of scientific researches about public accountability will resulted to better understanding of the relations among the identified variables, and also open up new horizons about the promotion of public accountability, especially in developing countries.

REFERENCES


