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Analyzing the influence of sociocultural variables on Civic engagement: A micro-level study in Alto Puno, Peru

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Abstract

The research aimed to determine the impact of sociocultural factors on the civic participation of residents in the specified urbanization. This was a basic and theoretical study with a quantitative approach, conducted at an explanatory-causal level using a non-experimental, cross-sectional design. The methodology was based on the hypothetical-deductive method. The study population consisted of 800 residents, from which a stratified sample of 260 participants was selected. Data was collected through surveys using questionnaires that were validated by experts and demonstrated high reliability through statistical testing. Analysis using Pearson's Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 90.040$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) showed a significant influence of sociocultural factors on civic participation. The study concluded that elements such as social cohesion, networks of trust, and shared values play a crucial role in strengthening civic engagement within the community. Promoting sociocultural development is key to encouraging greater citizen participation, thereby reinforcing the social fabric and fostering a more active community in collective decision-making.

Keywords: Citizen participation, Participatory democracy, Social capital, Social cohesion, Sociocultural factors.

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1. Introduction

Citizen participation is an essential element in the consolidation of democracy and the effective exercise of civil rights. In this context, sociocultural factors play a determining role in the way citizens engage in decision-making, budget planning, and community management. The objective of this research is to analyze the influence of these factors on the citizen participation of the inhabitants of the Totorani urbanization, paying special attention to the mechanisms

implemented by the municipality of the town of Alto Puno to strengthen civic engagement.

Despite the existence of a solid regulatory framework in Peru, including provisions such as Law No. 26300, Law No. 27783, Law No. 27972, and Law No. 28056, its effective implementation still faces challenges in diverse communities. In this sense, it is essential to evaluate the impact of sociocultural factors on citizen participation, identifying barriers and opportunities that affect the involvement of residents in local decision-making.

Different studies have addressed citizen participation and its relationship with security. Trujillo Huamán [1] examined the correlation between citizen participation and security in the Caja Agua urbanization, San Juan de Lurigancho, based on Salazar Castillo [2], who considers that citizen participation is a fundamental human right that legitimizes the intervention of citizens in public decision-making. Likewise, the United Nations Development Program [3] points out that citizen security is a planned process aimed at protecting the democratic civil order.

Trujillano's research employed a correlational-causal cross-sectional design, analyzing a population of 283 members from 24 neighborhood councils associated with the Caja Agua Police Station. Structured surveys were utilized, with questionnaires validated by experts and subjected to Cronbach's alpha reliability testing (> 0.7). The results indicated a positive and significant correlation between citizen participation and security (Spearman's $Rho = 0.827$), confirming the importance of community participation in crime prevention and the enhancement of social cohesion.

In the Chilean context, Gutiérrez [4] analyzed the social and cultural factors that facilitate community participation in Villa Santa Adela, using a qualitative approach based on the case study. Group semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents who have lived in the community for more than five years and are active participants in local organizations.

The content analysis, processed using Atlas. Ti 8 allowed the identification of active subgroups that led community activities, while most of the neighbors had a passive role. One of the most relevant findings was the profile of social leaders, where women heads of household predominated, who promoted improvements in the quality of life of the community and the beautification of the urban environment. The purpose of the study is to determine to what extent socio-cultural factors influence the citizen participation of the inhabitants of the Totorani 2024 Urbanization. The strengthening of citizen participation requires a deep understanding of the sociocultural factors that influence the civic behavior of citizens [5]. This research aims to provide a comprehensive diagnosis of how social cohesion, community trust, and civic education influence participation in Totorani, contributing to the development of strategies that enhance democratic inclusion. Additionally, the findings of this study will serve as a methodological reference for future research on citizen participation in urban communities, supporting the development of evidence-based public policies tailored to the sociocultural realities of the population.

Citizen participation is a fundamental pillar in the consolidation of democratic systems and effective governance. However, its practice varies significantly according to sociocultural contexts, which has motivated a broad academic debate on the determinants that facilitate or inhibit civic involvement. This article critically examines the existing literature on the relationship between sociocultural factors and citizen participation, with an emphasis on marginal urban environments, such as the case of the Totorani urbanization in Alto Puno, Peru.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Citizen Participation and Social Capital

Citizen participation has been conceptualized as an essential human right that legitimizes the intervention of citizens in public decisions UNDP [3]. Putnam [5]. It argues that social capital, defined as networks of trust, reciprocity, and shared norms, is a key predictor of participation. Recent studies in Latin America [6] support this thesis, demonstrating that communities with greater social cohesion have higher levels of neighborhood organization and collaboration with public institutions.

Research such as that of Peña González [7] and Quecaño Condori and Dominguez Pillaca [8] points out that social exclusion, inequality, and institutional mistrust reduce participation. In contrast, communities with strong support networks and access to basic services demonstrate greater civic engagement [9]. These findings coincide with the results of the present study, where 57.7% of respondents with positive perceptions of their social environment reported high participation.

2.2. Collective Identity and Practices

Culture shapes not only individual identities, but also patterns of collective action [10]. Studies in peripheral neighborhoods [11, 12]. They emphasize that participatory traditions, communal festivities, and grassroots organizations strengthen the sense of belonging and facilitate citizen mobilization. In Totorani, 45.4% of those who positively valued their cultural environment demonstrated high participation, supporting this correlation Barra-Quispe et al. [13]

They found that in marginal urban contexts, women heads of households tend to lead community initiatives, a phenomenon also observed in other Latin American research [14]. This finding suggests that public policies with a gender focus could enhance participation in communities like Totorani.

Although most studies support a positive relationship between sociocultural factors and participation, some authors warn of possible mediating effects, such as the influence of local institutions [15] or the availability of economic resources [16]. In addition, research such as that of Mamani-Flores et al. [11]. They emphasize that in contexts of high marginalization, even communities with strong social capital may face structural barriers that limit their political influence.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted with the inhabitants of the Totorani urbanization, belonging to the Municipality of the Alto

Puno Populated Center, during the year 2024. The research is of a basic-theoretical type, with an explanatory-causal scope, which allows for analyzing the influence of sociocultural factors on citizen participation. The method used was hypothetical-deductive; a non-experimental and cross-sectional research design was employed, and the study population consisted of 800 inhabitants of the Totorani urbanization. A stratified sampling method was applied, with a representative sample of 260 citizens, selected based on previously established criteria to ensure the diversity and representativeness of the participants in the research.

For the collection of information, a structured questionnaire was designed, which addressed key aspects related to sociocultural factors and citizen participation. This instrument was validated through expert judgment, ensuring its relevance and clarity in the measurement of the variables of interest. The data processing and analysis were carried out using advanced statistical tools. To evaluate the influence of sociocultural factors and citizen participation, Pearson's Chi-square test was used, which allows measuring the influence between variables and establishing significant patterns in the data collected. Likewise, the reliability of the instruments used was determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which guarantees the precision and internal consistency of the items used in the measurement of the variables studied.

3.1. Data reliability

To determine the reliability of the instruments measuring Sociocultural Factors and Citizen Participation, Cronbach's Alpha was applied, which indicates the level of precision of the instrument according to the following scale:

Table 1.

Precision of the instrument according to the following scale.

Reliability scale for Cronbach's alpha	
Reliability level	Valúes
Zero reliability	0.53 or less
Low reliability	0.54 to 0.59
Reliable	0.60 to 0.65
Very reliable.	0.66 to 0.71
Excellent reliability.	0.72 to 0.99
Perfect Reliability	1.00

Source: Herrera [17] Methodology of Scientific Research.

To determine the reliability of the SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS instrument with 11 items, the following results are obtained:

Table 2.

Cronbach's alpha for the instrument of sociocultural factors.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alfa	N of elements
0.863	11

Therefore, in the Table 2 it is observed that Cronbach's alpha for the instrument of *sociocultural factors* is 0.863, which ranges from 0.72 to 0.99, that is, it has excellent reliability.

To determine the reliability of the CITIZEN PARTICIPATION instrument with 11 items, the following results are obtained:

Table 3.

Cronbach's alpha for the instrument of citizen participation.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of elements
0.875	11

Therefore, in Table 3, it is observed that Cronbach's alpha for the instrument of citizen participation is 0.875, which ranges from 0.72 to 0.99, indicating excellent reliability.

4. Results

4.1. Sociocultural Factors Influence the Citizen Participation of the Inhabitants of the Totorani Urbanization

Table 4 shows a significant relationship between sociocultural factors and citizen participation, indicating that environmental conditions directly influence the level of community involvement. It is observed that 54.6% of the sample, considering the sociocultural situation as "good" exhibits a high level of participation, suggesting that trust, community networks, and social stability promote citizen engagement.

Table 4.

Sociocultural factors according to citizen participation.

		V1: Citizen Participation							
		Casualty		Moderate		Loud		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
V2: Sociocultural Factors	Suitcase	3	1.2%	7	2.7%	1	0.4%	11	4.2%
	Regular	7	2.7%	30	11.5%	69	26.5%	106	40.8%
	Good	0	0.0%	1	0.4%	142	54.6%	143	55.0%
	Total	10	3.8%	38	14.6%	212	81.5%	260	100.0%

In contrast, negative sociocultural contexts exhibit low levels of participation: only 1.2% of individuals who perceive the environment as "bad" demonstrate low participation, and only 0.4% report high participation. This confirms what Putnam [5] pointed out that social capital, made up of shared norms, trust, and reciprocity, is a fundamental element for strengthening democratic participation.

Likewise Pérez [18] in his study on urban communities in Latin America, he points out that shared values, civic education, and communal identity contribute to generating greater citizen engagement. This statement is reflected in the results obtained, where those who perceive a positive sociocultural environment have high levels of participation.

On the other hand, Gutiérrez et al. [19] highlight that training in democratic values, the existence of cultural spaces, and mutual recognition are key factors in encouraging community involvement. This is evident in the group of 143 citizens who consider their environment as "good" and demonstrate a high level of participation.

In contrast to these findings, the research by Ramírez and Cárdenas [20] highlights that adverse sociocultural contexts, characterized by social exclusion and institutional distrust, can inhibit citizen participation. This phenomenon is consistent with the low levels of involvement observed in the group that described their environment as "bad," evidencing the need to strengthen sociocultural conditions to promote more active and inclusive democratic participation.

4.2. Social factors influence the citizen participation of the inhabitants of the Urbanization of Totorani 2024

Table 5 shows that 57.7% of individuals who perceive good social factors demonstrate high citizen participation. In contrast, only 1.2% with poor social perception achieve that level of participation.

Regular levels of social factors concentrate the greatest dispersion between moderate and high participation, but they also have a limited impact on low levels. This correlation of statistical cause and effect supports the hypothesis that the strengthening of social factors has a significant impact on citizen involvement.

Table 5.

Social factors according to citizen participation.

		V1: Citizen Participation							
		Casualty		Moderate		Loud		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
D2: Social	Suitcase	3	1.2%	14	5.4%	3	1.2%	20	7.7%
	Regular	7	2.7%	21	8.1%	59	22.7%	87	33.5%
	Good	0	0.0%	3	1.2%	150	57.7%	153	58.8%
	Total	10	3.8%	38	14.6%	212	81.5%	260	100.0%

Social cohesion, support among neighbors, and belonging to community networks are key to promoting civic involvement. A study carried out in urban communities in Silva and Almeida [21] showed that community social networks, reciprocity, and mutual trust are the most relevant social determinants to explain participation in neighborhood councils and local decisions. This is consistent with the result that 57.7% of those who perceive "good" social factors actively participate.

The article by Pineda et al. [22] in *Revista Estudios Sociales* shows that conditions such as social exclusion, unemployment, or limited access to basic services generate distrust of the State and reduce participation. This idea is related to the 7.7% of the sample that considers their social factors as "bad," focusing on low and moderate levels of participation (1.2% and 5.4%).

Trust in the institutional and social environment is positioned as a mediating variable. A meta-analysis by Castro and Rodríguez [23] shows that in communities with a greater perception of social justice, security, and collective well-being, citizens are more likely to organize. This supports the fact that even when there is no precariousness (as in the "regular" group), participation tends to be high (22.7%) but remains lower compared to highly favorable contexts.

Finally, research such as that of Torres and Fajardo [24] in *Civitas Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, it affirms that the existence of grassroots organizations (clubs, committees, youth networks) not only strengthens social ties but also channels citizen participation toward collective goals. In the analyzed sample, the group with "good" social factors could be associated with contexts where these organizations are present or active, which would explain the high levels of participation.

4.3. Cultural Factors Influence the Citizen Participation of the Inhabitants of the Totorani Urbanization 2024

Table 6 shows that the group perceiving regular cultural factors represents 50% of the sample and is mainly concentrated in high participation (34.6%) and moderate participation (11.5%). Bad cultural factors are found in a lower percentage of 4.2% of the total, distributed between moderate levels (2.7%) and high levels (1.5%) of participation, but with a very low incidence.

Table 6.
Cultural Factors according to Citizen Participation.

		V1: Citizen Participation							
		Casualty		Moderate		Loud		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
D1: Cultural	Suitcase	0	0.0%	7	2.7%	4	1.5%	11	4.2%
	Regular	10	3.8%	30	11.5%	90	34.6%	130	50.0%
	Good	0	0.0%	1	0.4%	118	45.4%	119	45.8%
	Total	10	3.8%	38	14.6%	212	81.5%	260	100.0%

These results suggest a clear trend toward better valuation of cultural factors and greater citizen participation. This implies that culture, as a set of values, symbolic practices, collective identities, and forms of interaction, plays a structuring role in the exercise of citizenship.

5. Discussion

Various studies have highlighted that culture not only influences individual identity but also structures patterns of civic behavior. According to Martínez and López [25], in a study on political culture and participation in urban areas, contexts with strong participatory traditions (such as neighborhood assemblies, communal festivities, or active cultural networks) foster a sense of belonging, collective responsibility, and organized citizen action. This phenomenon explains why 45.4% of those who perceive the local culture as "good" show participation.

5.1. Relationship between Sociocultural Factors and Citizen Participation

The findings of the present study strongly confirm the determining influence of sociocultural factors on the levels of citizen participation in Totorani urbanization ($\chi^2 = 90.040$, $p < 0.001$). This result aligns with the classical theory of Putnam [5] on social capital, but provides specific empirical evidence for Andean marginal urban contexts, a scenario little explored in the literature. The most revealing data shows that 54.6% of residents who perceive their sociocultural environment as "good" have high levels of participation, contrasting drastically with only 1.2% of high participation in the group that rated their environment as "bad." This substantial gap reinforces the postulates of García [26] on how networks of trust and reciprocity operate as catalytic mechanisms for collective action in vulnerable communities.

However, the study reveals important nuances when compared to research in contexts of extreme marginalization. While in Totorani, there is a clear correlation between social capital and participation, works such as that of Pastor-Seller [27] in peripheral neighborhoods of Lima, the analysis shows that, in the absence of basic institutional conditions, even communities with high social capital can see their capacity for political influence limited. This apparent contradiction suggests that Putnam's model would need conceptual adaptations to explain the realities of extreme urban marginalization, where structural factors (access to basic services, legal certainty) could act as moderating variables.

Finally, the results invite us to rethink strategies for promoting citizen participation. As he points out [15] in contexts such as Totorani, where high levels of community cohesion but also institutional constraints are simultaneously identified, interventions should combine: 1) strengthening grassroots social organizations, 2) improving institutional mechanisms for participation, and 3) capacity building for advocacy. Such a multidimensional approach would make it possible to overcome the traditional dichotomy between sociocultural and institutional factors.

5.2. Impact of Social Factors

The analysis of social factors reveals particularly significant patterns for understanding participatory dynamics in Totorani. The most striking finding shows that 57.7% of residents who perceive "good" social conditions (community cohesion, neighborhood support, access to basic services) exhibit high citizen participation. This result corroborates the studies of Kliksberg [28] in Brazilian slums, where they demonstrated that the existence of basic social infrastructure operates as a minimum requirement for the development of sustainable participatory practices, our study goes further by demonstrating that it is not simply a binary relationship (presence/absence of services), but a continuum where incremental improvements in social conditions generate proportional increases in participation levels.

A particularly revealing finding is the behavior of the intermediate group (33.5% of the sample), who rated their social factors as "regular." Within this segment, a bimodal participatory distribution is observed: while 22.7% showed high participation, 8.1% remained at moderate levels. This dispersion suggests, in line with Kliksberg [28] and Portocarrero et al. [12], that in contexts of medium vulnerability, the presence of community organizations (sports clubs, parents' associations, monitoring committees) can compensate for structural deficiencies and maintain acceptable levels of participation. This phenomenon would explain why some communities manage to sustain participatory practices despite adverse social conditions.

The results also raise important questions for public policy. As he warns Herrera [17] and González [29], the risk of simplistic interpretations would lead to overvaluing the role of social organizations without addressing the structural bases of participation. Our data suggest that, while community networks are critical, their maximum effectiveness is achieved when they operate in synergy with tangible improvements in quality of life (employment, safety, services). This implies that citizen participation programs in contexts such as Totorani should be integrated with broader social policies, avoiding the sectoral approach that has dominated state interventions in the region Páez [30].

5.3. Role of Cultural Factors

The analysis of cultural factors offers new perspectives on their influence on citizen participation. The most significant data reveal that 45.4% of residents who positively valued their cultural environment demonstrated high participation, confirming the postulates of Acevedo [31] about how shared cultural practices (festivities, oral traditions, cargo systems) create cognitive frameworks that favor collective action. However, the study goes further by identifying that 50% of the sample with "regular" cultural conditions maintained moderate-high participation, suggesting that cultural factors operate more as amplifiers than as primary generators of participation.

A counterintuitive finding was the participatory distribution in the group that rated cultural factors as "bad" (4.2% of the sample). Contrary to expectations, this segment showed greater moderate participation (2.7%) than high (1.5%), a pattern that differs from what was observed with social factors. As Pérez [18] explains, this could be due to the fact that in contexts of rapid urbanization such as Totorani, cultural erosion does not necessarily lead to absolute apathy, but can generate alternative forms of participation more linked to practical needs (e.g., soup kitchens) than to traditional identities. This phenomenon would require complementary qualitative studies to explore the new forms of sociability that emerge in these processes of cultural transition.

The implications for policy design are particularly relevant. As they argue, López-Feldman et al. [32] interventions that seek to strengthen participation through culture should avoid folkloric or static approaches. In contexts such as Totorani, where ancestral traditions and modern urban dynamics coexist, the most effective strategies would be those that: 1) rescue cultural elements with current meaning for the community, 2) create bridges between traditional practices and contemporary forms of participation, and 3) recognize the new cultural identities that emerge in processes of accelerated urbanization. This dynamic and non-essentialist approach to culture seems crucial for effective public policies in contemporary Alto Puno.

The discussion of results reveals that citizen participation in Totorani is conditioned by a complex network of sociocultural factors that interact in specific ways. While social factors show a more direct relationship with participation levels (evidenced by the high percentages in the "good" group), cultural factors seem to operate as modulators that enhance or attenuate this relationship. This distinction is crucial because it suggests that, in terms of public policies, prioritizing the improvement of basic social conditions could have more immediate impacts on participation, while cultural strategies would be necessary complements to sustain these achievements in the long term.

A cross-cutting finding across the three objectives is the identification of "intermediate" groups (socially and culturally) that maintain significant levels of participation despite less than optimal conditions. This phenomenon, also observed by Moreno Orozco [33] in marginal neighborhoods of Colombia, suggests the existence of reservoirs of community resilience is suggested, which public policies could strategically enhance. In Totorani, these reservoirs appear to be associated with: 1) female leadership, as reported by Bellón Cárdenas [34], grassroots organizations with territorial roots, and 3) flexible cultural practices that adapt to new urban realities.

6. Conclusions

The results obtained in this study show that sociocultural factors significantly influence citizen participation within the Totorani urbanization. Pearson's Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 90.040$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.000$) confirms this relationship, indicating that social cohesion, networks of trust, and shared values are key elements to strengthen community civic engagement. In this sense, the strengthening of sociocultural factors not only generates a more solid social fabric but also contributes strategically to consolidating an active, deliberative citizenship committed to community development.

Regarding social factors, the results reveal a Pearson's Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 98.459$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.000$), which confirms its significant impact on citizen participation. It is reaffirmed that the strengthening of support networks, reciprocity, neighborhood integration, and community infrastructure not only improves the social conditions of citizens but also represents an essential structural variable for democratic development and the exercise of active citizenship. The promotion of inclusive, trustworthy, and cohesive social environments is, therefore, an effective strategy to increase citizen participation and consolidate local governance from the community base.

On the other hand, the analysis of cultural factors reflects a Pearson Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 59.604$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.000$), which indicates that culture has a significant impact on citizen participation. Culture, by shaping individual and collective identities, also structures the material and symbolic conditions for the full exercise of citizenship. In this sense, recognizing the relevance of the cultural factor implies that any policy aimed at promoting citizen participation must be articulated with inclusive cultural strategies, capable of strengthening social memory, expanding access to cultural goods, and consolidating shared values that sustain a participatory democracy at the local level.

The findings of the study reinforce the importance of strengthening sociocultural factors as a comprehensive strategy to consolidate a more active and engaged citizenry. The implementation of inclusive public policies, which consider the impact of social and cultural factors, will be key to promoting democratic participation and improving interaction between citizens and institutions, generating environments of greater trust and cooperation within the community.

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