

Analysis and Assessment of Communicative Action Indicators and Variables; a Case of Tehran City

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Abstract

While there are a wide variety of studies about communicative action theory of Habermas, there is the need for building of indicators and variables for quantitative methods of assessing this concept in a particular case study. Especially as the development of communicative action theory has created new perspectives in urban planning, it is necessary to assess and promote this concept in cities and neighborhoods. The purpose of this paper is to identify communicative action indicators and variables and assess the communicative action in Tehran city as the case study. Seven indicators were derived of theoretical framework, which are Urban Space, Life world, Amenity, Social Capital, Communicative Rationality, Critical View Point and Economic Development. Variables related to each one were also identified and after testing reliability and validity, were served as a basis for assessing communicative action in Tehran city. In this regard, the hypotheses of the research were elaborated on the existence of the significant relationship between the seven indicators and communicative action in Tehran city. This research has been conducted with quantitative analysis based on field studies. Research hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling in Lisrel software, using data related to 384 questionnaires. Results show that all indicators have a significant relationship with communicative action in Tehran city and among them the strongest impacts relate to social capital, amenity and life world.

Keywords: Communicative Action Indicators, Communicative Rationality, Life world, Tehran City.

1. Introduction

Habermas critical theory, and particularly his theory of communicative action, has been applied in the theory and practice of planning (Matthews, 2012, 139) and has created new perspectives in urban planning as is called as a new paradigm for planning theory (Klosterman, 2011, 320). Planning tradition has generally been trapped within modernist instrumental rationalism for many years and in response, communicative and deliberative theories of planning have gained in popularity and have been strongly asserted as a reaction against instrumental approaches. At the heart of this communicative turn is an attempt to resolve the long recognized problem of power, by creating planning processes grounded in principles of communication, free speech and rational argument (Richardson, 2007). So an urban plan will be made to succeed, if there is a communication between stakeholders without distortion, from the lower levels of policy to the highest levels. But in the process of urban planning, deciding, implementing and evaluation of a plan in Iran, there is not any communication between people and state at all or there is a diminutive communication. The creation of this kind of communication has the requirements and conditions that it seeks to address in this paper. In hopes that by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the practical representation of the concept of communicative action in Tehran city as the case study, it can be presented and improved there and can be applied such a basis for use in other cities.

This paper is organized in four main sections. The first section of the paper devoted to the theoretical framework which discusses the concept of communicative action and its related concepts. In the second section, indicators and variables of the concept of communicative action are identified. Based on the theoretical framework, conceptual model is designed in this section too which involves seven hypotheses of the paper. Also research instrument is described in this section, followed by the finding of the analysis explained in the third section. Finally, section four is devoted to discussion and conclusion.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Communicative Action

Communicative Action, in general terms, is a framework for understanding and improving society that seeks to identify and remove unnecessary constraints that stem from the structure of social life (Duckett, 2017, 140). Habermas brought the positivist notion of communication into critical theory. For Habermas, as was the case with previous critical theorists, there was a very significant question of how the veil of the capitalist imperative could be removed. The key for Habermas was communication: because capitalist interests maintained the veil of commodity fetishism through distorted communication, for example, downplaying class interests or tarnishing government, Habermas and his followers in planning have argued that an ideal language of comprehensible, sincere, legitimate, and truthful communication would reveal the

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truth of capitalism's distortions (Whittemore, 2014, 302). Communicative Action has been employed in planning theory because of its emancipatory underpinnings (Matthews, 2012, 8). Some planning theorists (Friedman, 1987; Forester, 1989; Sager, 1994; Healey, 1993, 1997; Innes, 1995) introduced Habermas's ideal of communication to planners, arguing that planners could reveal democratic solutions and strip away oppressive ideologies by demanding the sincerity, comprehensibility, legitimacy, and truthfulness of participants' communication (Whittemore, 2014, 301). All political legitimacy, for Habermas, stems from communicative power, which is in turn generated by public discourse (Olson, 2011).

2.2. Central Concepts of Communicative Action

Communicative action has two-tiered Concept of Society, which are Life world and System (Von, V.; Buhmann, A., 2010, 19). Critical theorists argued that the capitalist imperative of value maximization had "colonized the life world," specifically, as Marx had argued, through commodity fetishism (Morris, 2001, 69). The clear distinction between the concepts of life world and system is the basis on which Habermas then grasps the pathologies of modernity (Habermas, 1987, 301–403). In Habermas's conception, the Life world offers freedom. The development of modern industrial capitalism means that the Life world has been corrupted by the System (Habermas, 1989). The system serves the material reproduction of the life world through the mechanisms of state and economy that mediate action by means of power and money (symbolic media) (Von, V.; Buhmann, A., 2010, 20). Habermas suggests to conceive of societies as both system and life world: in this perspective society is seen as an entity that is differentiated simultaneously, as a life world and as a system, during the course of social evolution; systematic evolution on the one hand "is measured by the increase in a society's steering capacity", whereas life world evolution on the other hand "is indicated by the separation of culture, society, and personality" (Habermas, 1987, 152).

Communicative reason allows humanity to counteract the colonizing forces of the economic system and the bureaucratic state, through the construction of barriers between 'system' and life world (Callinicos 1999).

Communicative rationality is central to communicative action concept (Baert, 1998). Communicative planning theorists argue that there are other forms of rationality that do not seek to replace instrumental forms of rationality in this way, but instead seek to complement them – rationality based on values and on moral, emotive or aesthetic reasoning (Theodórsdóttir, 2004, 125). Habermas's intellectual project has been to try and salvage the enlightenment from the paradox of rationality (Finlayson, 2005). Rationality for Habermas is a disposition of human subjects who are able to speak and act which shows it in behaviour patterns for which good reasons exist. Communicative action is action which is based on this sort of rationality (Stahl, 2002, 7). Life-world, rationality, validity claims, and discourse are closely related and mutually dependent (Stahl, 2002, 38).

Fundamental to Habermas's thought is the possibility of consensus inherent in the act of speech itself (Huxley, 2000, 370). To reach this consensus speakers make a claim for validity based on three standards. The truth claim is judged on: firstly its truth; secondly the speaker's truthfulness (whether they can be trusted); and lastly its rightness (whether it fits into expected norms) (Habermas, 1996, 125-126). However, consensus is not achieved automatically but must be created by identifying sources of systematically distorted communication in systematically unequal social structures, and by creating ideal speech situations in which self-reflexive, communicatively competent, and rational human subjects can achieve consensus on matters that affect their life worlds (Huxley, 2000, 370).

The ideal speech situation is a space in which citizens have the opportunity to freely participate in democratic decision-making (Allmendinger, 2009). Ideal speech, in Habermas' overall schema, underpins communicative action. Strategic action, in contrast, involves the failure of ideal speech whereby interests undermine legitimate argumentation (Duckett, 2017, 141). The "ideal speech situation" represents a counterfactual ideal that is approximated when communicative action is undertaken, regardless of whether the matized claims focus on truth, appropriateness, or sincerity. In communicative action, participants must be free to "call into question any proposal," to "introduce any proposal," and to express any "attitudes, wishes, and needs." A symmetrical distribution of opportunities to contribute to discussion must exist (Jacobson, 2004, 103). 'ideal speech situation' entails a number of important conditions: All parties have access to the same information with the implication that relevant implicit knowledge is (in theory) explicit (Harvey Brown and Goodman, 2001, 206); no relevant argument is excluded or ignored; and participants' views are based on the rationality of the argument rather than the instrumental steering mechanisms of 'status, money or power' (Duckett, 2017, 141).

Dialogue in Habermas's sense is oriented towards reaching mutual understanding; it is non-instrumental and not oriented towards success (Sager, 2006, 225). The mutual understanding inspiring creativity, innovative thinking, and development of shared identity develops in processes avoiding one-sided orientation towards means and ends, and the success of each participant (Sager, 2006, 245).

The very possibility of communication and intersubjective understanding implies that individuals must assume the statements of others to be made comprehensibly and with integrity, legitimacy, and truth (Huxley, 2000, 370).

Central to Habermas' argument on the colonization of the life world is the idea of the transformation of the public sphere (civil society). The influence of the system on the public sphere can be seen in the influence of powerful lobbying forces invading the administration, the commodification of the means of communication, the formation of the 'culture industry' which transforms culture into ideological consumption, and a decline of the role of the family in socialization. The result of this

invasion of the life world is, in a sense, similar to Weber's 'iron cage of rationality,' where the life world is guided solely by instrumental rationality (Anderson 2005).

The public sphere, as Habermas initially proposed, is "a realm of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed". It is a discursive space of and for deliberation that serves in mediating between the public and various authorities. The public sphere impacts on governmental agencies and on public life, and contributes to shape public discourse, norms and behavior (Noy, 2017, 40).

In a free public sphere the life world, that arena of social life, geared towards the symbolic production and reproduction of its structural components: culture, society, and personality", can flourish (Cook, 2005: 56-57). Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens," and that "citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion" (Noy, 2017, 40).

In terms of social reproduction, life world functions refer to processes oriented toward the transmission of norms, the integration of social institutions, and the formation of individual identity. These functions can be fulfilled only through communicative action in which preferred ways of life are at issue rather than means by which ends might be attained. This is accomplished ideally in a public sphere. If not publicly achieved, then cultural change can result in cultural impoverishment, anomie, and the loss of identity, which Habermas labels "life world colonization." (Jacobson, 2004, 104). The concept of creating a public sphere in planning processes has been used as an "ought" that planners should seek to achieve to create a communicative rationality (Matthews, 2012, 139). Urban Spaces belongs to the "public sphere" in which citizens should freely have presence.

3. Methodology

The research method is descriptive-analytical and correlation type and based on case study. Theoretical framework of the research is based on the documentary method, but in the practical part of the study, a questionnaire has been used as a tool for collecting information based on the theoretical framework of the research, previous studies and the socio-cultural context of the case study.

3.1. Case Study

Tehran city has been selected as the case study. The metropolis of Tehran, due to the large population, various subcultures and much spatial-dispersed heterogeneity, including the existence of heterogeneous class differences and heterogeneous economic conditions, areas with physical conditions and different urban topologies, is a good example for this research. Since the organizational structure of the municipality is based on the regions, a multi-stage cluster sampling is used to obtain the findings of the research based on the regions and the results can be

used by the urban managers. Thus, in the first stage of sampling, according to the geographical dispersion, region three in the north, the region ten in the center and the region nineteen in the south of Tehran were selected. These regions were located on the basis of development indicators such as "housing, education, employment, demographic indicators, access to information and infrastructure" were identified respectively as developed, moderate developed and underdeveloped region (Davoudpour and Rezapour, 2016, 135; Rafiyan and Shali, 1391, 42). In the second stage, sample size was divided according to the distribution of the population of the administrative neighborhoods of the regions and ultimately (according to the sampling rules) the results will be generalized to the whole city of Tehran. The number of samples based on the Cochran formula was estimated to be 384 that were distributed in proportion to the number of neighborhoods in each of these three regions.

3.2. Conceptual Model

According to the theoretical framework, a Conceptual Model (Figure 1) is designed which involves hypotheses of the paper. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: There is a direct positive relationship between urban space and communicative action;

H2: There is a direct positive relationship between life world and communicative action;

H3: There is a direct positive relationship between amenity and communicative action;

H4: There is a direct positive relationship between social capital and communicative action;

H5: There is a direct positive relationship between communicative rationality and communicative action;

H6: There is a direct positive relationship between critical view point and communicative action;

H7: There is a direct positive relationship between economic development and communicative action;

3.3. Indicators of Communicative Action

There are Indicators and Variables of communication action in the urban context which are numbered from X1 to X65 (Table 1) These variables are derived of theoretical framework and are categorized to seven indicators that are, Urban Space, Life world, Amenity, Social Capital, Communicative Rationality, Critical View Point and Economic Development. Among these indicators, two cases are divided into sub-categories. That way, Life world is divided to four subsections, which are: being in coordination with nature, aesthetics consideration, social/cultural services and legitimacy. The other case is Social Capital which is divided to four subsections, which are: social trust, social participation, social communication and social belonging.

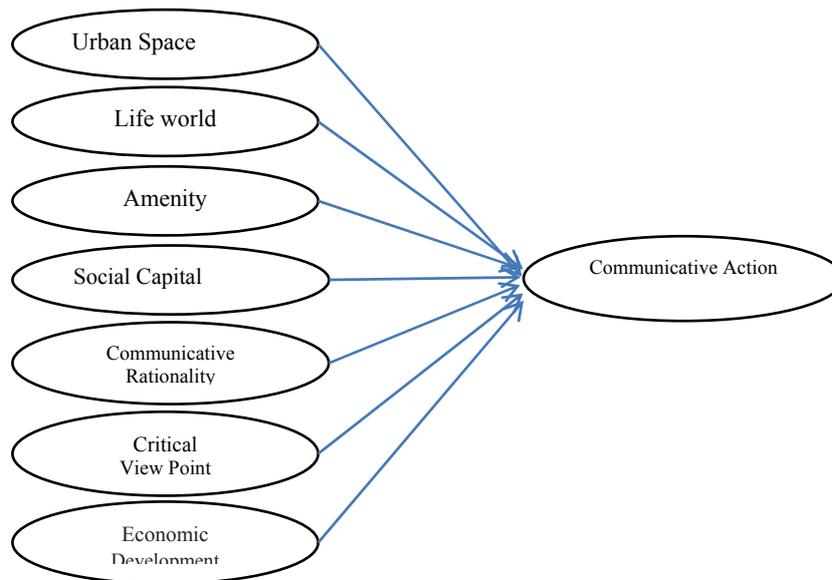


Fig.1. Conceptual Model

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3.5. Questionnaire

According to the stratified sample of households which is a scientific valid method for assessing, around four hundred questionnaires were conducted in three regions of Tehran from 2th of Oct 2017 through to 19th Oct 2017. The questionnaires were completed by face-to-face interview. A small group of Tehran residents were sampled and selected to perform a pre-test to ensure that the questionnaire made sense. Among 414 questionnaires collected, 384 questionnaires have been analyzed. The first 30 primary questionnaires that were used in the pre-test for modifying the questionnaire were excluded from the analysis.

3.5.1. Validity and Reliability of Questionnaire

The researcher-made questionnaire of this research is based on content validity and has been reviewed several times. Structural validity (factor analysis) was measured using the Bartlett test and the KMO test, which indicates the fitting of the data, and the degree of adaptation between the theoretical and empirical constructs was evaluated. The result of the KMO test (0.881) shows that there is a possibility of performing factor analysis on the Table 1

research data. Based on the Bartlett test (5641/7), the data correlation matrix is not the same matrix. This means that, on the one hand, the items within each factor are highly correlated with each other, and, on the other hand, the degree of correlation between the items of an agent with the other factor items is low.

Reliability of the questionnaires was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. Using Cronbach's alpha, the internal matching coefficient of items related to the seven factors has been calculated. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are higher than 0.70, indicating high alpha in these indicators, in other words High reliability of measuring instruments.

3.5.2. Factor Analysis

The survey comprised seven scales totaling sixty five items, each item being a statement to which participants were invited to respond on a five-point Likert-scale, where "strongly agree" was coded as 5 and "strongly disagree" as 1 (Tabibian and Rezapour, 2016).

The (Principal Component Analysis - PCA) was used in this paper in order to extract the factors. Using Kaiser Method, the value of seven factors is higher than one. The first factor has been able to explain about 28% of the total variance of the 65-items set (questionnaire). The following factors have been explained by 7.5, 6.37, 5.93, 5.14, 4.52, and 4.11% of the total variance of the 65-items set, respectively. The total variance explained by the 7 factors of the 65-items set is 67.4%.

After performing a confirmatory factor analysis on all items eleven items (X7-No sense of restriction when attending cultural-artistic centers; X10-Air pollution; X11-Noise pollution; X19-Access to healthcare facilities; X20-Function of mosques and religious centers; X22- A short distance from home to work; X23-Lighting of Roads; X25- urban waste disposal system; X39- Ethnic freedom; X56- Strengthening intercultural perspectives; X64- Easy daily shopping) were deleted, leaving 54 items for subsequent analysis.

Indicators and Variables of the research

	Indicators	Variables
	Urban Space	X1- Having adequate public space to communicate with others. X2- The presence of different classes, including women and children, in urban spaces X3- Having tranquility in urban space X4- Attending and communicating with others in Public spaces free of coercion of power institutions X5- The presence of cultural and artistic centers in the city such as cinema, theater, concert halls, museums, painting exhibitions, etc. X6- Citizens attending at cultural and artistic centers X7- No sense of restriction when attending cultural-artistic centers
Life world	Being in Coordination with Nature	X8- Green spaces X9- Maintaining valuable agricultural land X10- Air pollution X11- Noise pollution X12- Health and cleanliness of the city
	Aesthetics Consideration	X13- The aesthetics of urban and public spaces X14- Building facades
	Social / Cultural Services	X15- Social justice and equal opportunities for citizens X16- Supportive policies of the deprived X17- Appropriate access to information (media, computer, Internet) X18- Access to Leisure,Cultural and sports facilities X19- Access tohealthcare facilities X20- Function of mosques and religious centers X21- Proper training X22- A short distance from home to work X23- Lighting of Roads X24- Width of Sidewalks X25- urban waste disposal system X26- Accessibility and quality of public transportation X27- Access to parking (home and public) X28- The performance of urban service providers such as the municipality and the city council
	Legitimacy	X29- Rate of participation in government voting X30- Transparency and Accountability of Urban Institutions X31- Integrated urban management
	Amenity	X32- Feeling of security X33- Political security X34- Possibility of free thinking, free expression and interpretation of ideas X35- Freedom of the press and media X36- Sanction X37- Citizenship rights X38- International relations of the country X39- Ethnic freedom
	Social Trust	X40- Trust between family, friends and colleagues X41- Trust in neighbors and locals X42- Trust in public and governmental institutions and Government directors
Social Capital	Social Participation	X43- The desire to attend religious groups, associations and so on X44- The desire to engage with city councils, political parties, and academic and cultural associations
	Social Communication	X45- Desire to discourse, debate and dialogue with family members, relatives, friends and colleagues X46- The tendency to discourse, debate and to establish contacts and agreements between neighborhoods and fellow citizens X47- The tendency to establish communication and agreement without violence
	Social Belonging	X48- The sense of belonging to the neighborhood X49- The sense of responsibility and efforts to solve the problems of the neighborhood and the city X50- The sense of responsibility for urban infrastructures and amenities X51- Feeling responsible for the health and beauty of the city
	Communicative Rationality	X52- Communicating with others without regarding for personal interest X53- The tendency to participate in urban affairs without regard to personal interest X54- The tendency to communicate with others without deception X55- The tendency to reach understanding in relation with others rather than to profit and personal goals
	Critical View Point	X56- Strengthening intercultural perspectives X57- Having the capacity to criticize X58- Possibility to criticize the status quo X59- Possibility to criticize the upstream official X60- In case of criticism, there is no damage to the job position X61- Possibility to defend against criticism
	Economic Development	X62- Having a good job and the quality of the work environment X63- Sufficiency of income versus living expenses X64- Easy daily shopping X65- Local self-sufficiency

4. Findings

In this paper the relationships between variables affecting communicative action (CA) have been analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). In the Structural Equation Model, the causal relationships between latent variables that are not observable and measurable are investigated and the causal effects and the degree of variance are analyzed. Structural equation models with latent variables are useful in measuring and testing hypothesized causal structures involving different variables in the social and behavioral sciences (MacCallum, 2000).

4.1. Goodness of fit of the statistical model

The purpose of goodness of fit is to assess the compatibility and agreement of the model with the

experimental data used. In order to assess the fit of the model, at least one of the indicators of absolute fit, relative fit and adjusted fit is evaluated.

Given the LISREL output shown in the table 2, the calculated χ^2/df value is 2.50 the presence of χ^2/df smaller than 3 represents the fitting of the model. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) should be less than 0.05 which in the presented model is 0.069. The components of GFI, AGFI, NFI, NNFI should also be more than 0.9, which is 0.95, 0.97, 0.92 and 0.94, respectively. Regarding the indicators and outputs of LISREL software, it can be said that the data are consistent with the model and the presented indices indicate the suitability of the proposed model. In short, the empirical data is well suited to the model and The LISREL result has acceptable goodness of fit.

Table 2
“Model Fit” measures for the causal model of Communicative Action for Tehran City

Model fit measures	Acceptable value	Model fit
χ^2/df	< 3	2.50
RMSEA	< 0.05	0.069
GFI	> 0.9	0.95
AGFI	> 0.9	0.97
NFI	> 0.9	0.92
NNFI	> 0.9	0.94

Source: Analyzing questionnaire data

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

This paper hypothesized that seven exogenous latent variables (Urban Space, Life world, Amenity, Social Capital, Communicative Rationality, Critical View Point

and Economic Development.) would influence one endogenous latent variable (CA). Table 3 and Figure 2 illustrate the result of this model.

Table 3
Hypotheses Test results according to T-values and Standard Models

T-values	Standardized parameter	Direction
3.16	0.07	The impact of urban space on communicative action
11.92	0.21	The impact of life world on communicative action
13.05	0.24	The impact of amenity on communicative action
14.68	0.31	The impact of social capital on communicative action
2.08	0.04	The impact of communicative rationality on communicative action
3.43	0.08	The impact of critical view point on communicative action
2.59	0.03	The impact of economic development on communicative action

(Source: Analyzing questionnaire data)

The structural equation model can be used to assess the goodness-of-fit of a model to data, as specified by the degree to which the correlation (or covariance) matrix of measurement variables reproduced by the model differs from its input matrix. Use of latent variables in structural equation models enables estimation of relationships among theoretically important constructs and thus avoids the effects of measurement unreliability. Appropriate and careful use of this methodology has potential for theory development, construct validation, and theory testing (Raykov, 1991, 501). This work combined the measurement variables using a computational software

package, LISREL, to examine the causal linkages between the antecedent variables and CA.

All seven hypotheses are confirmed because the value of the T statistic for all exogenous latent variables is greater than 1.96. Therefore, it can be concluded that the influence of (Urban Space, Life world, Amenity, Social Capital, Communicative Rationality, Critical View Point and Economic Development) on communicative action is positive and significant at 95% significance level, so the claim is accepted. In short, (Urban Space, Life world, Amenity, Social Capital, Communicative Rationality, Critical View Point and Economic Development) has a significant relationship with communicative action.

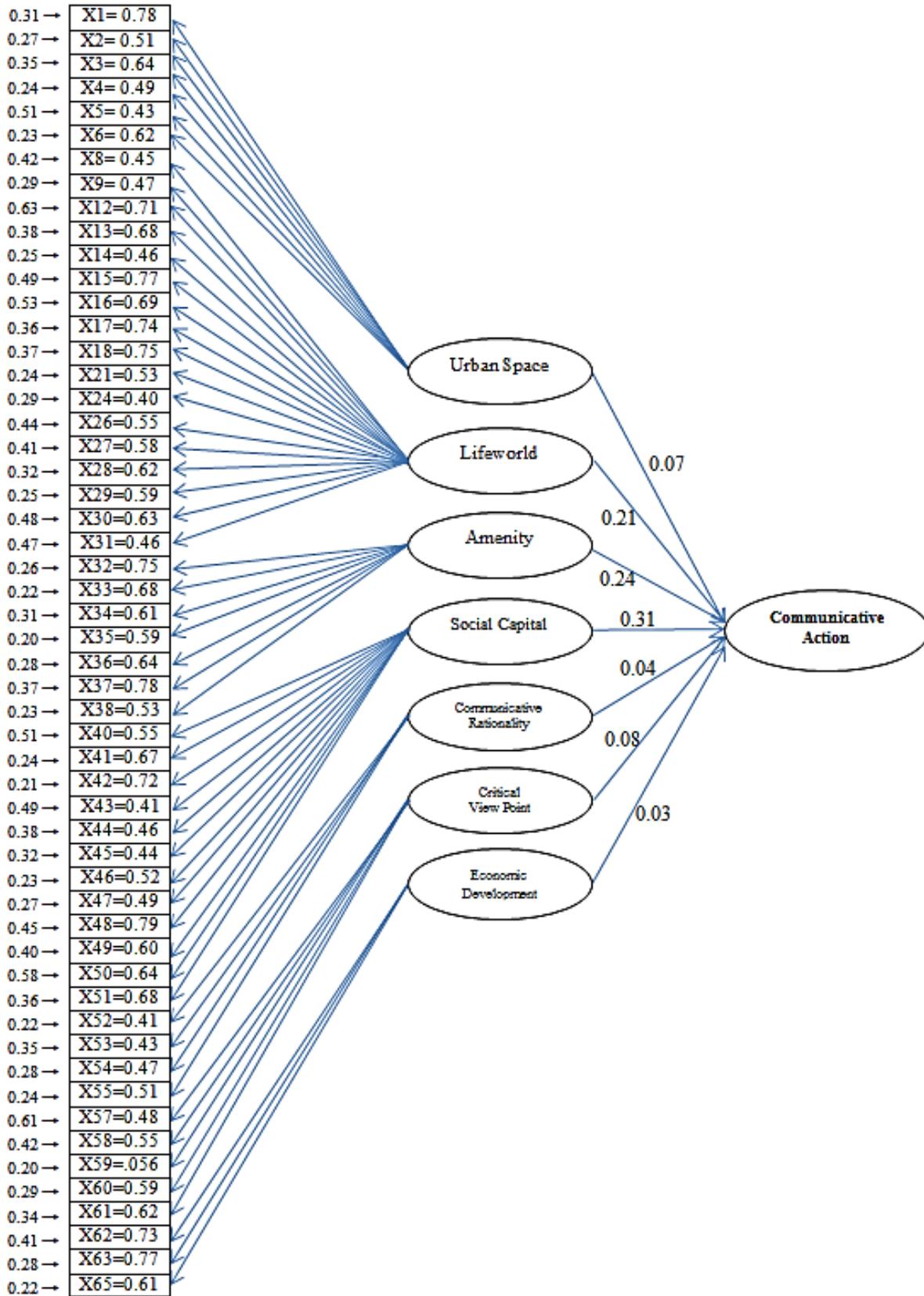


Fig. 2. Causal Model

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to identify CA indicators and variables and assess the CA in Tehran city. The causal model examined in this study suggests that CA is influenced by seven distinct latent variables: Urban Space, Life world, Amenity, Social Capital, Communicative Rationality, Critical View Point and Economic Development.

The equation of factors influencing CA in Tehran City is as follows:

$$CA = 0.7\text{Urban Space} + 0.21\text{Lifeworld} + 0.24\text{Amenity} + 0.31\text{Social Capital} + 0.04\text{Communicative Rationality} + 0.8\text{Critical View Point} + 0.03\text{Economic Development}$$

As it is shown on the equation, the strongest causal impact (0.31) is between Social Capital and the CA, and this is followed by the impacts for Amenity (0.24), Life world(0.21), Critical View Point (0.08), Urban Space (0.07)Communicative Rationality (0.04) and Economic Development (0.03).

These findings indicate that efforts to promote the CA should be focused on Social Capital, Amenity and Life

world. On the other word, to increase CA, improvement policies or strategies should focus on Social Capital, Amenity and Life world which are the key influences on communicative action for Tehran city. These results satisfy the informational needs of local decision makers.

In addition, based on the 5-unit Likert spectrum, the whole average of CA can be “1 to 5”. Number “1” is the lowest CA, “5” is the highest (ideal CA), and “3” is the middle. After analyzing questionnaires via statistical analysis, the average rank of CA in Tehran city was around 2.2, which shows Tehran city is in a low position in case of CA. Figure 3 shows the radar chart of CA dimensions. In this chart, the situation is compared with the ideal state of CA. The optimal mode is that the seven-side that shows the status quo is closer to the seven-side that represents the ideal status. As it is shown in the chart, communicative action in each dimension in Tehran city is very different from the ideal state.

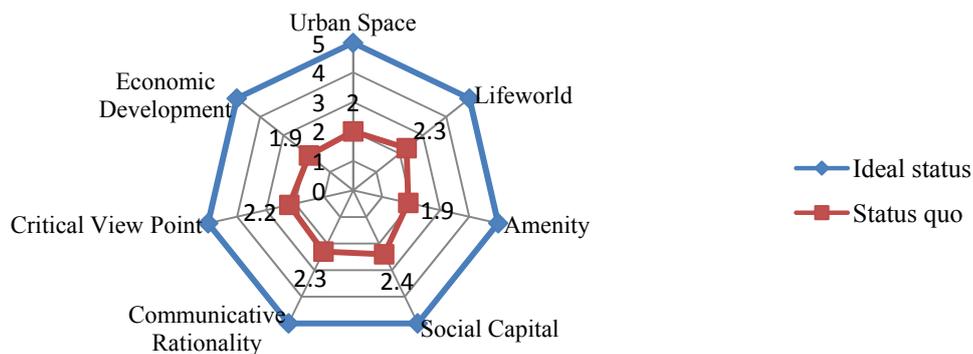


Fig. 3. The comparison between status quo and ideal status

Here are some suggestions for improvement of CA in Tehran city based on the key influences. But it is not enough and planners and specialists should not neglect to help improve the conditions of other indicators and dimensions in the context of communicative action improvement of Tehran city.

- Identifying factors that can increase citizens' sense of belonging to the neighborhood.
- Making policies in the direction of improving trust.
- The formation of participatory programs between citizens and urban organizations will lead to increased trust and inter-group solidarity.
- Providing solutions to increase people's participation in activities related to neighborhood councils and, in general, urban affairs.
- Creating a structure for Participation and consultation of citizens regarding the planning and implementation of civil and urban projects.
- Educate the culture of communicating with others without violence and force.

- Creating a structure for direct communication between citizens and government agencies.
- Improving international relations.
- Improving people to voice their own opinions through legitimate immediate organizations or representatives.
- Establishing the rule of Law, enforcing legal framework impartially, especially on human right laws.
- Accountability of Governmental institutions, private sectors, and civil society organizations to the public and institutional stakeholders.
- Accessibility, understandability and monitoring of Information to the public.
- Serving all stakeholders by Institutions and processes.
- Producing results by processes and institutions that meet the needs of the community.
- Giving to People opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

Finding of this paper and testing its proposed model puts forward a foundation that can be used by researchers to research communication activities. This has important

implications for policy. More research is needed in this context and the present study provides a platform for the research on the CA.

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