



Global Scientific JOURNALS

GSJ: Volume 13, Issue 10, October 2025, Online: ISSN 2320-9186

www.globalscientificjournal.com

Examining The Consequences of Operational Managers' Participation in Strategic Planning

For Publication

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Kabul – Afghanistan
Year: September 2025

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the consequences of operational managers' participation in strategic planning within the Ministry of Higher Education. As is known, operational managers are an important and executive group that plays a key and fundamental role in implementing the organization's public programs, and their participation in strategic planning can bring about a glorious future for the organization.

In the present study, a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach was used, and the research sources were library-based, utilizing the most important Persian and English sources and scientific research from national and international journals.

The research results have indicated that the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education, as a credible organization at the national level, has played a key role in involving its operational managers in strategic planning, and the statistical results of the research indicate that 57% of respondents found their presence in this regard useful and sensitive. However, among the most important consequences of operational managers' participation in the strategic planning of the Ministry of Higher Education are a correct organizational culture, improved organizational processes, active presence, strengthened organizational justice, organizational trust, work effectiveness, timely progress of work, strong organizational commitment, and relatively encouraging and motivating operational managers. Although respondents generally agreed with the questions and expressed views that were about 40 to 60 percent positive, their responses regarding encouragement and motivation were more varied, possibly influenced by various behaviors or material concerns.

Keywords: Participation, Manager, Operations Managers, Plan, Planning, Strategic Planning.

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Introduction

Today's organizational world is transformed from a process where employees with specific characteristics are present at the head of each organization, capable of managing organizational affairs with a particular dynamism and vitality. What is felt from today's advancements and progress is a meaningful and beneficial trend that has emerged from successful organizations and is based on practices that exist among employees within the organization. Therefore, the participation of operational managers in strategic planning is one of the most important issues considered a fundamental value in management knowledge, and organizations pay due attention to this matter. Undoubtedly, the success of any organization depends on its order and management, and the participation of operational managers in strategic planning can be a prime example of this success. Based on what was said, one of the useful and effective trends in organizations is the way of managing and paying attention to their scientific and practical criteria. Considering the effectiveness and change in the work process of departments requires the right foundations, where organizational participation embodies this idea and is considered one of the manifestations of successful behavioral management in all organizational dimensions, especially at the operational level of organizations.

However, obstacles and problems in participatory management at the operational level of organizations often prevent the necessary realization of available ideas and capacities due to specific and impactful issues. Today, the life of organizations, whether private or governmental, depends on participation in organizational planning. Without the changes resulting from this approach, organizations cannot adapt to environmental changes and sustain themselves. The process of involving operational managers in planning at the operational level of the organization, which is considered the most fundamental and vital level of the organization, requires scientific and academic perspectives. This research, considering the importance and position of participatory management at the operational level of the organization, examines the consequences of this participation in strategic planning, particularly within the Kabul Provincial Education Directorate.

Chapter One

Research Overview

1-1. Problem Statement

As humans move along the path of evolution and intellectual growth, they gradually become aware of the necessity of planning in life and consider it a tool for managing and leading social systems. Today, administrative and institutional affairs have become so complex that they cannot continue without precise planning processes. Nevertheless, planning requires awareness of future opportunities and threats and predicting how to combat them. Therefore, planning is a fundamental and crucial task for managers at all levels, especially at the operational level, and it is also closely related to their other duties. If there is a planning-based approach throughout individuals' lives in organizations, it creates a kind of commitment to action based on forward-thinking and a firm determination to continue it.

Planning is crucial for achieving both individual and administrative goals, even for minor ones. In fact, the need for planning in organizations arises from the fact that all departments, operating in a dynamic environment, are careful to use their limited resources to meet their diverse and increasing needs. The dynamism of the environment, the turbulence within it, and the uncertainty resulting from environmental changes further emphasize the undeniable necessity of planning, especially strategic planning. Based on what was said, operational managers in an organization are based on a set of behavioral rules, among which participation holds a special place. By focusing on it, they can manage the organizational process regularly and purposefully.

In fact, one of the useful and effective trends in organizations is how to manage and pay attention to its scientific and practical criteria. Considering the effectiveness and change in the work process of departments requires the right conditions, and the organizational participation of managers exemplifies this idea. It is considered one of the manifestations of successful behavioral management in all organizational dimensions, especially at the operational level of organizations. However, obstacles and problems in participatory management at the operational level of organizations often prevent necessary ideas and existing capacities from being realized due to specific influential issues. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implications of operational managers' participation in strategic planning.

2-1. Importance of the Research

Participation and participatory management in planning sectors mean involving employees in the decision-making process, inviting everyone to think strategically, accepting individual responsibility for the quality of their work and products, and supporting and rewarding employee behavior that they believe satisfies customers moment by moment and improves organizational performance. It also welcomes individuals with constructive ideas equally, regardless of their job or position. In addition, it does not weaken or distort the decision-making power and management responsibility in any way, and it provides the necessary grounds for the material and spiritual encouragement of work personnel for offering constructive ideas so that their

creativity and dynamism of human thought can be used optimally for growth and development. Therefore, participatory management emphasizes expanding the scope of mental and intellectual engagement of employees in matters directly related to their fate, involving a large number of personnel in the exchange and analysis of ideas.

It utilizes their mental and intellectual capabilities to improve affairs. In fact, the survival of organizations today, whether private or public, depends on the participation of operational managers in various fields, especially in strategic planning. Without the changes resulting from manager participation, organizations cannot adapt to environmental changes and sustain themselves. Participatory management at the operational level of the organization for strategic planning requires scientific and academic perspectives to conduct comprehensive research, as this level is considered the most fundamental and vital for the organization. This study aims to discuss the consequences of operational manager participation in strategic planning, and the results of this research can ultimately be useful and practical for researchers, especially organizational managers.

3-1. Research Objectives

The main objective of the present study is to examine the implications of operational managers' participation in strategic planning.

The sub-objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. Substantive examination of operational managers' participation in strategic planning.
2. Examining the material consequences of operational managers' participation in strategic planning.
3. Examining the spiritual consequences of operational managers' participation in strategic planning.

4-1. Research Questions

Main Question: To what extent does the participation of operational managers in strategic planning have effective outcomes?

Sub-questions:

1. What is the essential role of operational managers' participation in strategic planning?
2. What are the material consequences of operational managers' participation in strategic planning?
3. What are the spiritual consequences of operational managers' participation in strategic planning?

5-1. Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis: It appears that various material and spiritual consequences arise from the

participation of operational managers in the organization's strategic planning, each of which can lead to results and effects.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. Operational planning appears to be one of the most important levels of organizational planning, where organizational participation plays a key and vital role and yields desirable results.
2. It appears that organizations are mostly pursuing financial goals, the achievement of which is based on a series of behaviors such as the participation of operational managers in the planning process. This means that planning is considered one of the most fundamental parts of managers' activities, and despite the collaboration between them, it brings useful goals to the organization.
3. It seems that organizations generally focus on the participation of operational managers, employing effective methods and strategies to achieve their goals, which can ultimately lead to the attainment of organizational spiritual objectives.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

1-2. Definitions of Basic Concepts

In fact, examining key concepts and defining terms in a scientific study holds a special place, preventing ambiguity and information gaps for readers and providing them with a correct understanding of the topic. Therefore, the most important basic concepts of this research are discussed below:

1-1-2. The concept of participation

The literal meaning of "participation" in English is "participation," which comes from the root "part," meaning a portion or section, and is close in meaning to "party." This is because "participation" means sharing in a task or taking part in something. (Kowsari, 2000: p. 60) Participation is a process of social and civic self-education, as working toward participation requires a change in mental and psychological state at all social levels. This change will lead to the establishment of new social and human relationships. This is a non-governmental organization that can systematize activities. (Tahmasebi, 2001: p. 27)

In another definition of the concept of participation, it is considered a type of sharing and involvement in decision-making, planning, and implementation. Participants aim to pursue this decision-making, engaging in cooperative interaction with others to achieve a common objective. (Ghasempour, 2001: p. 24)

Employee participation in management involves sharing employees in the organizational decision-making process so that employee involvement in organizational decisions gives them a

sense of ownership, increases their responsibility for implementing the decisions that are made, motivates employees to implement the decisions, and encourages employee creativity and growth. (Rahmani, 2020: p. 189)

Participation refers to the process that each individual participating in a social action must go through for participation to be realized and become concrete. Therefore, simply participating in a social action is not considered participation. This process includes:

- 1 - Decision Making and Planning
- 2 - Follow-up for project implementation
- 3 - Operation
- 4 - Protecting Achievements
- 5 - Evaluation and Review
- 6 - Fair distribution of resources. (Tahmasbi, 2001: p. 60)

2-1-2. The concept of participatory management

Participative management is a process aimed at the intellectual and practical engagement of management and employees and their collaboration in setting goals, making decisions at various stages (including strategic planning and operational programs), implementing programs at specific levels, monitoring the accuracy and correctness of program implementation, and assessing their effectiveness. (Hamadani, 2003: p. 14).

Today, traditional and conventional management of service organizations and businesses is outdated, and it is emphasized that transformation and innovation, creativity, participation, foresight, motivation, and properly guiding employees are among the important characteristics of today's management, which is referred to as organizational leadership. This means having leaders who, under the current conditions, can transform managers and employees into capable and participatory individuals by employing effective methods. (Hamidi, 2006: p. 290).

Participatory management should be considered one of the relatively new management approaches that, by recognizing the importance of human resources, seeks solutions for the active participation of all individuals in the organization. This approach, based on strong theoretical foundations and utilizing practical methods, has been implemented in many production, service, and administrative organizations in recent years, resulting in desirable material and spiritual outcomes. (Tusi, 2005: p. 2).

Participatory management is a set of workflows and operations that involves and partners all employees and subordinates of an organization in the organization's decision-making process. The main emphasis in this type of management is on the voluntary and enthusiastic cooperation and participation of the general public, and it aims to utilize the ideas, theories, and initiatives of everyone to solve organizational problems and issues. Therefore, according to this management, authority is divided between management and employees. (Abbaszadegan, 2007: p. 305)

3-1-2. The concept of planning.

The term "plan" literally refers to a small map, a design, a view, or the relative distance of objects in a painting. (Amid, 2010: p. 294)

In the term "plan," it means a mental design or blueprint that organizes the activities for a task, or a systematic and coherent design or blueprint of purposeful activities is called a plan. (Position and Expression, 2010: p. 111)

Planning is the process of setting goals, obtaining or predicting the means to achieve them, deciding what actions should be taken, identifying the desired state, and finding and predicting the ways and means that will make it possible to reach it; it also involves designing activities to change a situation or issue, based on the predicted pattern. Therefore, to achieve the goal, sufficient mental abilities must be utilized through planning before taking physical action and performing the work. (Bahrami, 2017: p. 60).

2-2. Managers' Organizational Participation Theory

Although the topic of participation was considered alongside the emergence of human groups and organizations, it did not gain significant importance until the early stages of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, when management had yet to establish its distinct role among the factors of production and in administration. Therefore, the research and studies of Frederick Taylor and Lillian Gilbreth highlighted the importance of management in affairs. Over time, and with advancements in science and technology, this led to changes in management thinking, culminating in the emergence of participatory management ideas in various forms. With the expansion of the Industrial Revolution in the early years of the 20th century, the scientific management school, although it partially revealed the importance of management, did not fully address the complexities of human behavior and organizational dynamics. However, this school viewed human beings as tools of labor, and the workforce during this period was known as hired hands. During the maturity of the Industrial Revolution, with studies by researchers such as Maslow, Chester Barnard, and Likert, a new style of management called human relations emerged.

In this school, unlike the scientific school, management's emphasis is on engaging people's hearts in addition to their wages. Employees have emotions, needs, preferences, and satisfactions that management must understand and respond to accordingly. In the second half of the 20th century, which can be called the era of the post-industrial revolution, a new style of management called systems management emerged, which examined the quality of dealing with the workforce in the human resources model. Therefore, in this school, managers not only engage the hands and hearts but also the minds of employees, and some experts consider true participatory management to be a characteristic of the post-industrial and information age. In this style, the manager must encourage full employee participation in matters and create conditions where all employees contribute to the best of their abilities. (Jabbari, 2015: pp. 10-11)

Based on what has been said, managerial organizational participation is perhaps the most common topic in the examination and re-evaluation of organizational behavior in public administration. Participative management was at the center of attacks and criticism from

proponents of human relations behavior against traditional methods in organizational behavior, especially scientific management.

It was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s movements and in new public administration, and it currently holds the majority of efforts for organizational development. Given this, participation is a fundamental concept in the study of motivation and also a core issue in the study of decision-making, as it holds a special place in the process of selection and choice. However, despite much evidence of the importance of participation in public management, many government organizations still maintain a hierarchical structure and operate through non-participatory and relatively centralized processes. Despite its informal nature, participatory management has deep roots in human life and has undergone significant evolution over time. Two hundred years ago, participatory management entered the political systems of Western countries, gradually undergoing transformative changes. Over time, in the face of numerous difficulties, it grew and flourished to the point where people finally earned the right to be autonomous in determining their destinies and to participate in shaping their future. (Jabbari, 2015: pp. 11-12).

Based on what was mentioned above, organizational participation is a structured and specialized model that can strengthen and heal the foundations of an organization and engineer its successful future. To this end, employee participation in organizational affairs, along with the elimination of any form of discrimination and self-serving tendencies, leads to organizational closeness and ultimately achieves organizational goals. In fact, approaches to participation can be examined within the framework of the participation spectrum. On one end of the spectrum are those who view participation as a method for selecting qualified employees, and in this approach, the organization's interests in utilizing participatory processes are naturally given high priority. Evidence suggests that managers, particularly in developed societies, often adopt this model.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those who perceive participation as an extension of the democratic process, viewing it as a novel approach that bases organizational oversight on democratic principles and can be applied in any situation. In this section, the benefits of Employees are emphasized. This is an ideal and thought-provoking concept regarding participation, and in a way, it signifies a departure from existing structures of authority, control, and internal organizational representation, and a move toward the fundamental forms of self-management. It is interesting to know that there is also evidence and examples of this view in practice (Kakhki and Zahedi, 2012: p. 77).

Based on what has been stated, the most important theories related to organizational participation are discussed and examined below:

2-2-1 Participation in productivity and its effects Establishing a causal relationship between a participatory work environment and productivity is not clear, especially in the public sector, where measuring productivity achievements is accompanied by difficulties. Indeed, it is very

difficult to link social relationships within an organization to its outputs, products, and services, and this difficulty increases when separating the impact of participation from other factors affecting productivity and quality.

Additionally, partnership relationships vary significantly from one organization to another, which makes cross-organizational comparisons difficult. Despite the problems mentioned in this regard, it can generally be said that the majority of research conducted on the effects of management practices and work organization on productivity has provided numerous reasons to support the belief that participation has a strong and positive impact on productivity.

Here are a few examples of research conducted in this field:

1. The report from the Austrian National Center for Participation and Performance highlights 20 case studies where management and staff collaboration and participation in decision-making led to improved performance outcomes.
2. A report from the Australian National Association recorded findings from approximately 200 different studies, stating that the studies provide evidence showing a causal relationship between high levels of employee engagement and better performance.
3. In an analysis of reported cases from 12 industrialized countries and their edited summaries, Farnham et al. observed that in two of these countries, employee participation had a positive impact on public management reform; in 8 cases, the impact was more or less positive; in 2 cases, it was neutral; and in none of them was it negative.

Government managers believe that direct employee participation leads to better results and improves the productivity and performance of their organizations. Nevertheless, similar studies, whether considered pure scientific research or those with a practical approach, have similar conclusions. So far, based on what has been stated, participation can lead to improvements in organizational performance, which occurs when it guarantees the improvement of variables such as trust, commitment, and motivation. In other words, participation should guarantee the creation or maintenance of trust, commitment, and motivation. (Khakki and Zahedi, 2012: p. 79).

Two types of drivers are mentioned in the literature: substantive and procedural. Substantive drivers are mutual commitments to achieve or avoid specific activities or outcomes, which are primarily internal in nature. Procedural drivers are those that prioritize the position of employees and unions in decision-making. Simply put, procedural drivers state that a collaborative work environment possesses characteristics that lead to improved individual ability to perform job tasks. (Kalliola, 2003: P111)

Participation not only improves information flow within the organization and enhances the decision-making process, but it also facilitates the formation of a group of drivers that can lead to improved dimensions of human resource productivity. A group of these drivers operate internally and lead to the Employee's mental and cognitive system being directed toward achieving goals and increasing their efforts in this regard, which are known as intrinsic drivers. Additionally, another group of drivers is external and includes empowerment resulting from the implementation of a participatory system, which leads to an increase in the Employee's ability to

perform tasks. This category of propellers is named surface propellers, and the reasons mentioned in the second and third groups can be explained within this framework. (Kakhi and Zahedi, 2012: p. 71).

The rapid changes in today's world, which have continuously transformed and evolved production technology and service delivery methods, make resorting to collective wisdom in making and implementing strategic decisions an important option that should be adopted within the framework of the participatory system to ensure the survival and development of organizations. (Jahaniyan, 2009: p. 153).

Thinking and planning for effective employee participation in the organization is an ongoing and continuous process, and employee participation in the organization can be likened to a river that must flow continuously throughout the organization's lifespan. Therefore, an analytical approach to history, examining and analyzing the causes of government and organizational failures, shows that whenever the context and level of public participation in affairs have diminished and significantly decreased, indifference has increased, and the result and consequence have been failure and collapse. Therefore, recognizing and determining the level of participation or lack thereof can be considered a warning sign or an alarm bell and can be seen as a factor in management's success or failure. (Jabbari, 2015: p. 13).

Considering this, participatory management is a mental and cultural phenomenon that is shaped and manifested within mental frameworks, drawing marginalized individuals and observers into group activities and encouraging a sense of loyalty to the organization. Therefore, in today's world, management is considered the steering wheel, the most important factor for the growth and development or the decline of organizations. It is on this basis that the manager's strategic decisions at the operational level of the organization determine the organization's direction. Considering this, one of the important factors in organizational development today is the regular and fruitful utilization of human resources' thinking and creativity.

This means that the speed of organizational changes and developments is such that organizations must align and synchronize the knowledge and thoughts of their human resources. This approach can be the basis for better and greater utilization of the organization's qualitative and intellectual forces. Given that organizations have specific goals, participatory management is considered a fundamental principle within them. This means that the participation of individuals in organizational decision-making requires the deep intellectual and work involvement and sharing of all individuals who can play a role and be effective in the organizational arena so that it is maintained and achieved among them, allowing the organization to effectively utilize their presence and bring the organization closer to achieving these goals. (Saeedi, 2020: p. 23) Overall, one of the factors for organizational success is the proper governance of human relations between employees and executive managers, as well as among other organizational levels. This is a very appropriate step toward brainstorming the ideas put forward in the organization.

These approaches require the necessary principles in the organizational process. In this participatory management method, firstly, organizational leadership and management believe in the usefulness of employees in the organization, and secondly, organizational management considers itself responsible for utilizing these forces. (Bakhshi and Kalantari, 2016: p. 6) Ultimately, the nature of organizational participation at the operational level of the organization is the active, free, and enthusiastic involvement of all operational employees, including subordinates and, more broadly, all stakeholders of the organization, in the decision-making process and its implementation.

This is so that the organization can ultimately utilize their ideas, perspectives, and initiatives to address the issues and problems it faces. Accordingly, the process of this type of management is based on the division of authority between the organization's operational manager and employees. (Sabeti Far and Askari, 2006: p. 31).

Participative management leads to increased job satisfaction among employees. Today, manufacturing organizations and production enterprises are facing new challenges. Meeting the needs and expectations of managers and other employees is becoming more difficult day by day. Therefore, managers should strive to create a suitable atmosphere for their employees. Increased awareness in this area can lead to the adoption of appropriate leadership styles to improve organizational efficiency and also to finding ways to effectively and efficiently provide the necessary services to employees and customers. Optimal service delivery is not possible without the participation of all human resources and the continuous, desirable, and effective provision of their services. Providing effective services to the community largely depends on the teamwork of employees and the leadership and management style (Imani, 2011: p. 52).

According to the previous discussion, participatory management in organizational goal setting has the following benefits:

First, when employees participate in setting goals, they choose far more difficult and superior goals than those imposed by management, which leads to a higher level of performance, and this is only true when goals are set collaboratively.

Second, while goals set collaboratively are superior, employees also tend to accept them more readily because the selection process is their own.

Third, such participation creates an atmosphere of long-term trust and a favorable sense of security within the organization. It is within such an organizational environment and culture that employees feel job satisfaction and, by providing quality services and working hard to meet customer needs, gain their satisfaction. Therefore, customer satisfaction will ultimately lead to increased market share and competitiveness. In this regard, Mr. Matsushita states in his book "Not for Bread Alone" under the title of participatory management: "The quality of management is a determining factor in any business, and for me, the best type of management is one that allows employees to contribute to the work while achieving common goals based on their abilities and capacity." (Jabbari, 2015: p. 9).

Considering what has been said, a collaborative group is several individuals who actively and

responsibly work together to achieve a common goal, and each person feels responsible not only for their own behavior but also for the behavior of others. Therefore, the stages of development for a collaborative group are self-awareness, gaining power and influence, developing unity, and performing the task. Therefore, mutual respect and the love members have for each other, as well as volunteering to do work, are considered the most important characteristics of a high-performing collaborative group, which differs from typical and common groups formed in some organizations.

Typical and common groups can be transformed into participatory groups and participatory teams, and this is possible if, by being aware of the basic characteristics of a participatory group, you can distinguish a participatory group from a non-participatory one. Based on this, positive internal interdependence, a sense of individual and group responsibility, mutual communication and closeness of members to each other, learning social skills from each other, continuous evaluation of individual and group performance, member satisfaction with working together, the presence of addition and mutual respect among the members of the operational group, active participation of members in decision-making, equal opportunities for success, and the heterogeneity of group members are considered the basic characteristics of a participatory group. (Jabbari, 2015: pp. 9-10)

2-2-2. Faxes and pluralistic and unifying participatory management.

The organization is an environment mixed with uncertainty where multiple powers interact and negotiate to achieve their goals. There is a network of rules and regulations within the organization that, while allowing this process of power conflict to occur, simultaneously preserves the organization as a whole and makes its survival possible. According to this theory, organizations are fundamentally based on conflict. The organization serves as a platform for conflict, as well as for group and individual activities and orientations aimed at achieving specific "goals," "interests," and "values" for both groups and individuals. Many organizational theorists have considered the above elements as fundamental in examining organizations, but a theory with specific principles and assumptions on this matter has not yet been established, and we are still some distance away from reaching this stage of theoretical development.

Therefore, the discussion of conflict and power has so far been presented either as a peripheral phenomenon separate from the main organizational discussions or as a subset and secondary discussion of other main topics and has rarely been viewed as a phenomenon that constitutes the nature and essence of the organization. Various interpretations and explanations of pluralist theory have been put forward. However, what we have learned from extensive conversations we have had is that the pluralist theory, in contrast to the unitarist theory, emphasizes three key elements in organizational analysis: "interests," "conflict," and "power." This perspective views these three concepts as interconnected units that form the fundamental assumptions of the organization. However, in the discussion of benefits, while, from the perspective of unitarists, organizational members are colleagues who work together to achieve a common goal through collaboration, pluralists insist on individual benefits and objectives. The pluralist perspective

believes that if individuals show interest in organizational goals, it is solely because they see them as aligned with their individual and group objectives.

Organizational goals, if they are justifiable to individuals, are not because of their legitimacy, but rather they are considered important because they cover and provide for the collective interests of individuals and groups. However, in the discussion of conflict, unitarians view it as a rare, accidental, and temporary phenomenon that can be resolved or controlled with appropriate management intervention when it arises. This theory, because it sees interests as completely aligned at the organizational level, views conflict as an alien, inhibiting force and an undesirable element created by abnormal and problematic individuals. In contrast, pluralists see conflict as an inevitable and inseparable feature of organization and, indeed, as a daily aspect of life. They believe that an organization's survival depends on the existence of all-encompassing conflicts between the interests of individuals and groups within the organization.

The proponents of this theory believe that instead of trying to eliminate conflict, its constructive role should be harnessed for the benefit of the organization as a whole. Pluralists view organizational conflict as an institutional element that can be institutionalized and exist at all levels of the system without threatening the survival of the entire system. However, unitarians largely ignore the issue of power and are indifferent to its significance. They consider organizational excellence to be a coordinated and non-contradictory action that strives unitedly and integrally to achieve common goals and public interests.

Therefore, people rarely raise questions and issues about power and its resources. Here, concepts such as authority, leadership, and control are preferred as special privileges for the manager to guide the organization as a whole toward its goals and objectives. This perspective views power as an impartial resource that propels the entire system, irrespective of the interests of any individual or group. In contrast, from a pluralist perspective, the power of different groups within the organization must be considered a very important variable for understanding the activities that occur every day in the organization. Power is a tool that determines the outcome and result of organizational conflicts. (Khakki and Zahedi, 2012: pp. 78-79).

Fox, a prominent management theorist, has shared his perspectives on participatory management. Therefore, one of these theories is the difference in participatory management in the public sector compared to the private sector, which is based on the type of relationship between employees and employers. Based on this classification, which was done in two groups, the first group can be called the pluralistic perspective. This view assumes that Employee interests are inevitably in conflict with the interests of Employers and managers. The second perspective can be called the unificationist view. This view, held by Fox, is based on the assumption that conflict of interest (with regard to management programs and strategies aimed at maintaining and improving productivity) is an illusion and that such conflict does not exist. Therefore, when comparing the characteristics of the public and private sectors, it can be said that considering the characteristics of the environment of government organizations, they fall on the side of unificationist views among the two mentioned spectrums (pluralist - and unificationist); this is because the basis for goal setting in these organizations is based on public goals and policies rather than the interests of the owners.

The public value perspective mentioned above states that the interests of citizens and Employees are typically aligned. In other words, private sector Employees are affected by the success or failure of their Employers in the market environment, and particularly within the organizational environment (and are therefore classified as pluralistic), while the interests of public sector employees are usually aligned with and in the direction of the collective interests of citizens. (Partnership Resource Center, 2006: P4).

2-3. Benefits of Operational Manager Involvement and Its Approaches.

Participatory management in the operational sector of an organization has specific benefits and importance, which are implemented through various approaches and methods and bring significant effectiveness. Therefore, we will discuss the benefits of operational manager involvement and its approaches below.

2-3-1. Benefits of operational managers' participation in the organization.

In reality, we can examine the benefits of participation and participatory management from the following two angles:

1. Social Aspects of Participation in the Organization: Including awareness of goals and striving to achieve them, increased Employee creativity, fostering a forward-thinking spirit among Employees, Employee collaboration in resolving various organizational problems, Employee cooperation in organizational changes, and increased Employee accountability.

Based on what was said, the social aspect and social capabilities of participatory management, especially at the operational level, include the following five dimensions:

1. Self-efficacy,
2. Autonomy,
3. Influence,
4. Meaningfulness,
5. Self-efficacy, therefore, means that individuals have the necessary capacity and skills to successfully perform a job. Autonomy refers to the feeling that capable individuals have independence in performing their responsibilities, can make decisions about their work activities, and have the necessary authority to determine how and when to carry them out. Impact means feeling effective in organizational goals, and these individuals can control job outcomes and results and influence what happens. Meaningfulness also refers to individuals feeling that they are pursuing important and useful career goals, and ultimately, trust means individuals' positive expectations regarding the competence, reliability, and benevolence of organizational members toward each other. Empowered scientific environments are organizations that create opportunities for selection, independence, and the development and stabilization of their members' competencies to promote progress and the emergence of capabilities. These same researchers, in another study, consider empowerment to be a process by which participants enhance their professional growth.

Employee capabilities can be achieved with the following two objectives:

1. As a set of management practices aimed at increasing Employee autonomy and accountability,
2. He was an active person, ready to work.

The social abilities of team members are divided into three main categories:

1. Functional capabilities: Each individual must possess specific technical and professional skills based on their role within the team.
2. Problem-solving and decision-making abilities: Team members need this ability to address the issues and problems the team faces.
3. Human Capabilities: This capability is essential for team members to connect with each other and build relationships. Today's organizations need people who are problem-solvers and innovators and who can use their abilities to ensure the organization's survival in a competitive environment. Recently, for organizations, capabilities can lead to significant behavioral outcomes. Accordingly, employee autonomy in their tasks leads to their quick response to obstacles and problems.

Additionally, the link between job autonomy and improved team performance in terms of cognitive and motivational aspects has been confirmed. They realized motivationally that empowerment, by creating autonomy for employees, provides the necessary motivation for them to improve team performance. On the other hand, a sense of effectiveness derived from capabilities creates the feeling among members that there is an audience within the organization to listen to their thoughts. For this reason, they will feel that they can play a role in determining the direction of their tasks and will therefore demonstrate more desirable team performance. Also, the results from the studies by Siebert et al. and Chen et al. showed that teamwork increases effectiveness and improves employee performance through employee empowerment.

Also, the results of research conducted by Campion showed that teamwork has a cohesive structure, social interactions, and flexibility, which ultimately leads to increased employee capabilities. In relation to the present study, other studies have been conducted, each of which has examined and explored a dimension of the research. (Baquerianfar, 2016: pp. 28-29)

2. Economic benefits of participation: greater coordination in production, improved quantity and quality of products, reduced waste, optimal use of equipment, cooperation in solving economic problems, and reduced conflicts (60:15).

Generally, at least ten core values are presented as guiding principles for the participatory institution: customer focus, commitment to participation, shared power, rights and responsibilities, accessibility, internal oversight, attention to rational and irrational balance, practical thinking, universal legitimacy, and diversity and inclusion. (Hamadani, 1379: p. 81) Teamwork is an effective outcome of participation at the operational level of an organization, indicating that it is a complex process where balance and mutual communication are crucial. Humans, as complex and social beings, can also exchange their feelings and attitudes with others within a team setting, thru communication, and meet their own and others' psychological needs. Also, in terms of under-the-surface and teamwork, an effective team can provide more agreement and initiative than individuals alone, which increases individuals' professional and specialized satisfaction. If team members understand each other's roles, they will be able to work together effectively toward the desired goal with better quality. According to Pratt and colleagues, a team is successful when it is cohesive, and this depends on its members' ability to build strong relationships and have a solid support system.

Building a work team essentially means establishing a culture where collaboration is valued and individuals come to believe that when plans and decisions are made with the cooperation of each team member, the outcome will be far better than working individually. Jitendra believes that the guiding principle in advancing teamwork is the win-win process, meaning that the benefits derived from the collective efforts of team members should be shared equally among all.

Recently, teamwork has been mentioned as one of the methods used to respond to the aforementioned competitive challenges, with teamwork being considered a way to achieve group flexibility and other benefits such as cost reduction, faster goal attainment, creativity, efficient decision-making, higher work ethic, and the delivery of higher quality service.

Therefore, in summary, previous studies have considered three advantages for teamwork as follows:

- Group judgment is better than personal judgment.
- When they want to solve a problem through division of labor and information exchange, they are more successful as a group than individually.
- Groups can be considered more creative and innovative than individuals, and groups tend to challenge decision-making. (Katzenbach and Douglas, 2005: p. 215)

Despite the generally positive view of teamwork, certain factors are recognized as detriments that can lead to the failure of achieving goals. These factors include:

Distrust,

- * Lack of responsibility,
- * Neglecting team goals,
- * Lack of commitment,

Generally speaking, teamwork is the result of the unified effort of all team members, which leads to the development of skills and the strengthening of relationships between individuals, resulting in outcomes such as mutual support, balance, and cohesion in completing the work. Many people inherently struggle to determine their place and position within a team and perform their roles effectively. Such individuals are usually highly individualistic and tend to attribute any success or progress to their personal efforts. This type of individualistic thinking deprives a person of the valuable benefits and effects of teamwork. Using a conceptual model, they refer to the teamwork element, including team management, supportive behavior, adaptability, team orientation, and supported monitoring, facilitated by a shared mental model. (Katzenbach and Douglas, 2005: pp. 217-218).

According to the statements made, participatory management is a process that integrates with a horizontal structure, aiming for democratic distribution among individuals. The influence of group members on each other helps achieve team or organizational goals, and they state that this model is directly opposed to traditional vertical management structures, which are directionally indicative of the one-sided dominance of the manager over subordinates. Participatory management is an interactive and dynamic process that occurs between individuals in a group or organization, where each individual influences the others toward achieving the group's or organization's goals. (Kazemi and Alavi, 2012: p. 43).

Participative management has three characteristics, which are:

1. Increased power and knowledge among members, enabling rapid response to information without any longitudinal or hierarchical bias within the organization.
2. Group members can expand their management capabilities by participating in strategy implementation, value creation, and other organizational responsibilities.
3. All individuals constantly share their understanding of the external environment as perceived by leaders at various levels, as well as their knowledge of the organization's internal capabilities. This leads to a unified perspective on the organization, enabling better and faster decision-making. Therefore, the two main components of participatory management are the sharing of the manager's tasks and mutual influence. According to Merriam and Martin, the main elements in participatory management and leadership include relationships based on goodwill, participation, and universal accountability, and its key components include trust-based communication, participation, and collective conscientiousness.

Hatch and Dolbow, in a study aimed at using participatory management in organizational resource planning and implementing a human resource management system, concluded that participatory management in an organization increases employee participation in various organizational programs. Increased participation leads to the identification of diverse employee abilities, which in turn results in the optimal allocation of human resources across different parts of the organization. The principal difference between participatory management and other management styles is the informal, collaborative, and participatory process that takes place continuously and affects the functioning of the team, group, or organization.

Participatory management theory, unlike the traditional approach, focuses on the social processes and phenomena of group members and does not recognize only one person as the manager of affairs and at the top of the group or organizational pyramid. In fact, it assigns a role to all members and followers as a single unit to influence the management style. In participatory management, individuals are motivated in their teamwork because they feel more valued by and involved in the organization's issues, thus gaining self-esteem, job satisfaction, and voluntary cooperation with the organization or team.

Participatory management makes all employees feel like partners in responsibility, risk-taking, and success, and it's a way to open a window to solving chronic organizational deficiencies and team performance issues such as employee disinterest, job dissatisfaction, employee resistance to decisions made, increased costs, and employee lack of conscientiousness. (Baqerianfar, 2016: pp. 27-28).

2-3-2. Approaches to operational managers' participation in the organization.

Given that humans are inherently equal and desire respectful and participatory treatment, especially educated and specialized individuals in the current century, they demand the right for their opinions to be heard. The participatory system in organizations and management listens to and values this desire. Nevertheless, humans instinctively and naturally support and defend things that belong to them, such as children, spouses, homes, positions and ranks, their own opinions, and their manufactured products. Therefore, if employees and customers of an

organization are involved in providing feedback, making decisions, and implementing their ideas, such feedback will receive serious and stronger support within the organization.

Of course, many of the issues organizations face today are a direct result of unproductive competition over overlapping tasks or tasks for which it is unclear who is responsible. Various methods have been devised to help individuals address these issues, and these methods all depend on effective teamwork that leads to participation. In such cases, the solution is not the only thing that matters; the level of understanding and commitment of those involved in the process is also important. In fact, humans continuously strive for perfection in organizational participation, which means that improving work standards has always been important; today, due to the need for increased productivity, cost reduction, greater customer and client satisfaction, and enhanced competitiveness, this importance is even more pronounced.

No day should pass without making improvements to activities, according to the principle of continuous improvement. If we want our two days in life to be unequal, we must use better methods every day, with higher productivity, less waste, more knowledge, greater power and technology, and so on. One suitable method for continuous improvement is to use the ideas, opinions, and suggestions of Employees and customers, which can improve dozens, even hundreds and thousands of organizational work methods every day. This is what we call intellectual participation with management. Furthermore, participation leads to human resource development; this is because involving organizational Employees in expressing their opinions, decision-making, and implementing their ideas creates an environment within the organization that fosters human resource development.

Today, organizations require human resource development before any kind of development, whether cultural, economic, or social. In an organization where thousands of suggestions are submitted annually by employees and customers, undergo expert review, and a percentage of them are implemented, this will lead to the spontaneous development of employees. This is because carrying out these activities requires study, consultation with experts, reference to the organization's technical master, examination of equipment mechanisms, and so on. This process leads to a continuous increase in both information and the quality of human resources, thereby strengthening the foundations of organizational development. The suggestion system is one of the effective tools for nurturing minds. In the future, sustainable competitive advantage will rely more on new production process technologies than on product manufacturing technology. Future new industries will rely on human brainpower. (Jabbari, 2015: pp. 15-16).

In an organizational participatory system, improving human relations between management and organizational employees becomes more institutionalized; this means that one of the most important factors for the success of organizations is the establishment of appropriate human relations between operational or executive managers and the organization's employees. In organizations where hostile and unfair human relations prevail, employees lose their motivation to cooperate with management, the organization fails to perform its duties, and it will not achieve its goals. Employee participation increases their motivation to solve organizational problems.

Because employees have a space to express their opinions and management listens to these views, the relationship between management and employees improves, and psychological complexes that cause dissatisfaction are reduced or eliminated. However, in a participatory system, there is a serious need for comprehensive information in management decision-making; this is because decision-making in today's dynamic and mobile world requires accurate and comprehensive information. Given the vast volume of information and its rapid changes, it is impossible for management, especially in medium and large organizations, to have oversight of the information needed for dozens, or even hundreds, of decisions per day, and it is necessary to use information from all employees in organizational decision-making.

Employee participation in decision-making enables management to utilize more comprehensive and accurate information. Accordingly, in participatory management, there is a need to coordinate the rapidly changing national and global environment; in the past, because change did not put much pressure on people, it did not attract their attention significantly. Therefore, in our time, the pressure is intense and thus attracts attention and care. The current pace of change is so immense that delaying a response could be very costly and even disastrous. Companies and governments are going bankrupt every day because they have failed to adapt to this change or have acted too slowly. Adapting to the rapid changes currently underway requires frequent and significant adjustments to the type of work and how it is done.

As Peter Drucker, the renowned management thinker, put it, managers must now manage discontinuity. Changes in management, which is responsible for overseeing the transition, have become a major concern for stakeholders. We still believe that the complexity of the issues we face increases with the pace of change. The more complex the issues, the more time it takes to solve them. The faster the music changes, the more our issues change, and the shorter the lifespan of the solutions we invent for them. Therefore, by the time we find solutions for many common issues, those issues have changed so much that the solutions we developed are no longer relevant or useful. These solutions are stillborn. In other words, many of our solutions are for problems that, once solved, no longer exist. (Jabbari, 2015: pp. 19-21).

Regarding the philosophy of employee participation management, thinkers have addressed four approaches as follows:

- 1. Management Tool:** The participatory management approach is essentially a tool through which managers can involve employees in performing tasks.
- 2. Democratic Theory:** The democratic perspective views employee participation in decision-making as a tool for distributing power within organizations, believing that sharing power with employees is the foundation of leadership theories.
- 3. Humanistic Psychology:** This perspective believes that if employees are involved in organizational decision-making, they will assist in implementing programs and decisions, resulting in increased productivity.
- 4 Ideological Perspectives:** Various schools of thought from different perspectives have supported the implementation of participatory management in organizations, including the Islamic Revitalization School, which considers individual participation in decision-making to

lead to personal growth and development, foster internal responsibility and commitment, create mutual relationships between managers and employees, and promote integration (Rahnvard, 1997: pp. 32-42).

Employee participation in the organization brings benefits to the organization, including making employees feel more connected to their work and the organization, which in turn increases the likelihood of group norms emerging and support for the work and the organization. Furthermore, by involving members in matters, management's ideas and opinions gain more acceptance, cooperation with management increases, absenteeism and work absences decrease, and changes and developments within the organization are more easily accepted. (E. & Locke, 1995: P285).

2-4. Operational planning by managers in the organization.

Operational planning is very similar to strategic planning in general, as operational objectives are substituted for overall goals, and the methods for achieving them are predicted in the form of a series of operations. In operational planning, the sub-goal becomes the operations plan, and the way to achieve the goal is broken down step by step. Therefore, operational planning can be defined as predicting operations to achieve specific goals, considering the facilities, limitations, and general guidelines outlined in strategic planning. Therefore, in operational planning, certain key components are considered, including the operational goal and forecast:

2-4-1. The purpose of operational planning.

In operational planning, the goal or destination typically serves as the focal point for directing efforts. In planning, the goal can be considered the outcome of the operation that the planner intends to achieve. The goal in operational planning should be specific and detailed, measurable, and realistic. In other words, general and broad goals that are not measurable and impractical will not be useful for planning; for example, changing and reforming the administrative system, providing welfare services, and similar goals are general forms of objectives in operational planning. The realism of the goal and its feasibility are also important points. A goal in planning will only be successful if it is formulated in accordance with the organization's resources and requirements. Goals that exaggerate possibilities or overlook existing resources will fail and waste resources. Occasionally, the planner faces multiple objectives and wants to prioritize them over each other. When faced with two or three goals, the situation is not very difficult; however, if the number of goals increases, we must compare them carefully and establish their priorities. (Mobini Dehgerdi and Soleimanpour Khoei, 2016: pp. 196-197).

2-4-2. Predicting operations for planning

Once the desired objective is defined during operational planning, the necessary operations to achieve it must be predicted. Therefore, there is undoubtedly a percentage of error in any forecast because a forecast is not a prophecy, and the goal of a forecaster is to estimate the future with minimal error. Various forecasting techniques have been developed, which can be categorized into three general groups: theoretical and judgmental forecasts, past trend forecasts, and cause-and-effect forecasts. Therefore, in theoretical and judgmental forecasts, we seek the opinions of individuals and experts on future issues and base our operational forecasts on them.

The prediction error in this method is high, and it cannot be guaranteed that the opinions of experts will always be accurate, especially since the correct selection of experts in the desired field is itself a problem in achieving precise and accurate predictions.

Therefore, in past trend forecasts, we predicted the future trend based on available information and statistics from the past. This prediction assumes the future will follow past trends, which is not always true. However, forecasting based on past trends allows planners to use historical data to estimate the future. Causal predictions rely on the relationships between variables and are made possible by the degree of correlation and connection between them. For example, if there is an inverse relationship between healthcare costs, one can estimate the other based on each. Econometric methods also propose a type of cause-and-effect relationship that can be used in predictions. (Mobini Dehgerdi and Soleimanpour Khoei, 2016: pp. 197-198).

2-5. Research Background

After thoroughly examining the studied works and the background research on this topic, we reach the following conclusion: Extensive research has been conducted on participatory management, each with its own unique position in terms of results and findings, which are discussed and examined below:

1. Hasibullah Sultani conducted research in 2019 titled "Examining Participatory Leadership and Creating Reforms in the Administrative Reform Commission." The results of this research indicate that participatory leadership encourages subordinates to be committed and, as a result of consulting and sharing employees in decision-making, makes them more interested and committed to their work affairs, improves their teamwork spirit, increases their interest in their duties, and ultimately leads to good human relationships within the organization. Furthermore, this leadership style has its effects. Based on this, the responses provided indicate that implementing participatory leadership in the Civil Service and Administrative Reform Commission brings about positive inter-organizational relationships, enhances the capacity of all individuals within the organization, and increases accountability among people. Participatory leadership in the Independent Administrative Reform Commission of Afghanistan has led to the eradication of corruption, increased transparency, and improved work efficiency. Considering this, all group members within the organization can carry out their duties scientifically and enthusiastically.

2. Zainab Amiri conducted research titled "The Impact of Participatory Management on Employee Talent" in the form of a scientific article in 2016:

The results of this research have shown that participatory management has an impact on employee talent management with a path coefficient of 0.58. The results also showed that the dimensions of participatory management in the organization, including participation, fairness,

accountability, and a sense of ownership and responsibility, have a positive impact on employee talent management with path coefficient values of 0.45, 0.39, 0.55, and 0.48, respectively.

3. Kurt Lewin (1947) conducted research titled "Directing Managers in Organizational Work and the Role of Participation in It" in 1927"

The results of this researcher's study have shown that whenever people are involved in directing tasks, their resistance and opposition to change, modernization, and innovation decrease, and they adopt a path of adaptation. Following this research, many studies were conducted by his colleagues and students, and through this, they found that participation in management in organizations increased employee morale and deeply impacted their identity with the organization and its goals. In an organizational environment where participation flows smoothly, heavy formalities, conflicts, and competition are reduced, and the level of tolerance and patience individuals have toward each other increases.

4. David Lewin conducted research titled "The Impact of Participative Methods on the Economic Performance of Human Resources" in 1998 at Columbia University:

The results of this research show that participatory methods have achieved valuable results in the economic performance of human resources, including companies that share profits and benefits with their employees, which have significantly better financial performance compared to others. Companies that widely exchange information and have extensive programs for employee empowerment perform better.

Organizations that combine group economic participation, intellectual participation, flexible job design, on-the-job training, and scope development have higher productivity. Flexible work design, flexible hours, job rotation, and expanding the scope of work and individual skills are effective for the organization's financial success. However, this research did not pay particular attention to the challenges and obstacles of participatory management, especially at the operational level of the organization, which could be included in the current study.

5. Ramadan Jahanian conducted research in 2009 titled "Strategies for Developing a Participatory Management System in Educational Units, from the Perspective of Managers, Vice Principals, and Teachers.

The results of this research have indicated that the most important strategies for developing a participatory management system in educational organizations are:

- In terms of creating the foundation for the participation system, this includes raising employee awareness and knowledge of the concepts, philosophy, and goals of the participation system; encouraging and motivating employees to join the participation system by managers; and building and developing trust between management and employees.

- In terms of systemizing participation, this includes developing regulations and executive bylaws for the participation system in educational units and providing the necessary training for the implementers and stakeholders of the participation system.
- In terms of the gradual evolution of the participation system, including the voluntary initiation of the participation system, starting the participation system with suggestions as the simplest form of voluntary participation, restoring employees' sense of self-confidence and self-esteem, and so on.

Managing the participation system requires that managers have sufficient authority to engage teachers, ensure transparency and clarity in the decision-making process within educational units, and establish good relationships with staff.

Based on the research and studies conducted, none of them answered the main and secondary questions of this study and could not meet the objectives of this research. Therefore, we are making efforts to conduct research in this field to contribute our fair share.



Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3-1. Research Method

Choosing a research method is considered one of the important steps in any research. At this stage, the researcher must determine which specific method to choose for their research. The choice of research method depends entirely on the research objectives, the nature of the research topic, and the researcher's implementation capabilities. Therefore, every scientific research project has specific characteristics, the first of which is adherence to established etiquette and protocols; scientific research must be conducted objectively rather than subjectively. In this type of research, the researcher must comprehensively evaluate the problem they choose to study.

Then, to carry out the research, a suitable research design should be prepared in which the problem is well-defined, the hypotheses are correctly formulated, and the methods of data collection and analysis are specified. Most importantly, at the end of the work, the research report should be written and published. Generally speaking, such a plan should contain all the activities and elements that make the research process practical in a systematic way. Nevertheless, scientific research must discover something new, increase the volume of human knowledge and understanding, and enhance the researcher's information based on positive results.

In this study, the researcher not only focuses on the nature of the problem but also analyzes, breaks down, and explains the reasons behind its situation. The primary motivation of this study is to describe and analyze the information received about the consequences of operational managers' participation in strategic planning. This study employs an analytical-descriptive type of analysis and is classified as a mixed-methods study, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3-2. Research Variables

In a study to answer research questions or prove hypotheses, identifying variables is essential. In this research, two types of variables have been considered.

Independent variable: a characteristic of the physical or social environment that, after being selected, intervened upon, or manipulated by the researcher, takes on values to observe its impact on another variable (the dependent variable). It is a variable whose changes are influenced by the independent variable.

Considering this, the variables of this research are as follows:

A: Independent Variable: Participation in Strategic Planning

B: Dependent Variable: Operations Managers

3-3. Data collection method

Hypotheses, as conjectures, guesses, potential solutions, and answers surrounding the research problem, are put forward. The researcher must collect the necessary data from the statistical population (sample) using appropriate tools and then test the hypothesis by analyzing, processing, and converting the data into information. Therefore, various tools are needed to

collect data. The type of these tools depends on various factors, including the nature and method of the research. Therefore, scientific research requires logical and systematic methods for gathering information, which compels the researcher to collect and analyze data accordingly. Therefore, the data collection method in this research is a questionnaire and document-based approach. Initially, information was gathered from relevant sources and books, articles, journals, and quarterly publications, as well as through the use of digital libraries and certain websites in the theoretical framework section. Subsequently, questionnaire data and findings were utilized in the findings section.

4-3. Statistical population

In scientific research and studies, a statistical population refers to a collection of individuals or units that share at least one common characteristic or multiple common characteristics. All elements of the statistical population share a common characteristic, which sets it apart from other populations. Based on the above, the present quantitative study with a descriptive and analytical approach requires questionnaire data. This research takes into account a specific population. The statistical population of this study includes employees of the Ministry of Higher Education. The sampling in this study, which is probabilistic, means that 50 employees of the Ministry of Higher Education provided responses in this study, which were then analyzed.

5-3. Method for analyzing and breaking down information

After the research questionnaire was set up using the Likert scale system, it was distributed within the statistical population. After the data was collected, the statistics for each response were entered into an Excel program, graphs and tables were created, and the resulting information for each question was analyzed separately. Finally, the validity of the research hypotheses was determined. Additionally, information citation analysis was also used in this research. Citation analysis is considered a broad field of bibliometrics that studies citations to documents. These studies can focus on the documents, their authors, the publications in which they were published, the organizations or countries that produced them, and the purposes of the citations.

In the data analysis method used for this research, we first utilized books and studies published prior to the review of this paper regarding the participation of operational managers in strategic planning. Subsequently, articles and topics related to the subject of this research available on websites and scientific journals were used. This means that to obtain up-to-date and reliable information for better and more current research results, global websites, research findings from other countries, scientific articles, and communication with other researchers in the relevant field were used. Since the present research is quantitative with a descriptive-analytical approach, discussions from qualitative research and studies were also used in the theoretical section.

This approach is one of the main strategies that scientists and researchers in the field of management and leadership have employed to collect descriptive data, including interviews, focus groups, internet research, and research in archives or documents. Note that non-textual artifacts like monuments and memorials, maps, artwork, and other human social creations can also contribute to qualitative data.

6-3. Research Obstacles and Limitations

The author encountered various obstacles during the research process, as briefly described below:

The first serious problem I encountered was my lack of experience with scientific research methods, which I struggled with in numerous instances. Therefore, I believe this has had negative effects throughout the research.

The second fundamental problem of this research is the lack of domestic sources. Most of the available sources are from foreign countries, and the scarcity of resources causes serious difficulties in the research process.

The third problem in this research is the existence of an environment of distrust and lack of confidence among respondents, leading them to withhold necessary information.

Finally, the fourth fundamental problem in this research that is worth mentioning is the lack of cooperation from study and research centers, such as public libraries and other libraries.

Despite the aforementioned problems and obstacles, I have tried my best to complete my research accurately and based on scientific principles.



Chapter Four

Data analysis and interpretation

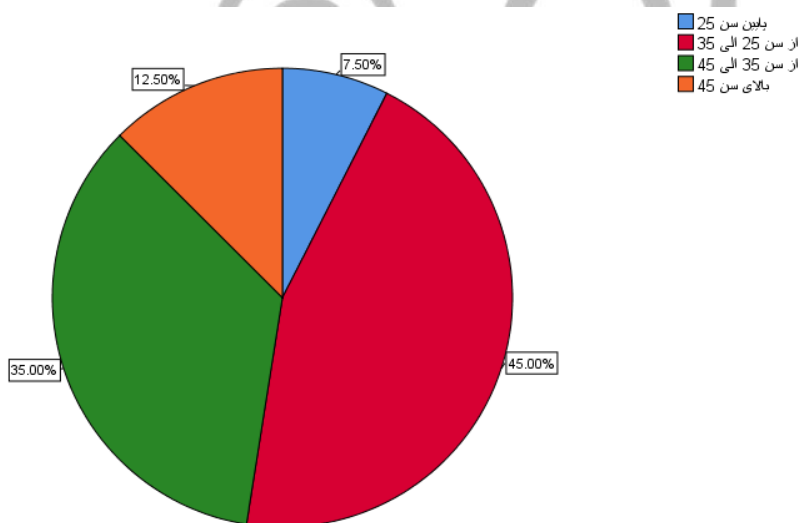
1-4. Analysis of respondent data

The statistics observed from the following tables and charts represent the information about the respondents, including items such as the respondents' age, educational level, work experience, and gender. Each of these is described and explained, and an analysis is conducted on them.

Table (1 – 4) The Ages of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 25	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	25 to 35 age	18	45.0	45.0	52.5
	35 to 45 age	14	35.0	35.0	87.5
	Above 45 age	5	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Chart (1-4) Age of Respondents



Based on the table and chart above, the majority of respondents are between the ages of 25 and 45; this means that 7.5% are below the age of 25, 45% are between the ages of 25 and 35, 35% are between the ages of 35 and 45, and finally, only 12.5% are over the age of 45.

Table (4-2) The Level of Education of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	High School	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Bachelor	30	75.0	75.0	80.0
	Master	8	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4-3) The Level of Experience of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 to 5 years	15	37.5	37.5	37.5
	5 to 10 years	18	45.0	45.0	82.5
	10 to 20 years	5	12.5	12.5	95.0
	Above 20 years	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Work experience is considered one of the most important principles in any organization, based on which employees can gain special capacity and ability in their work process.

Consequently, the work experience of the respondents in this questionnaire is as follows:

*One to five years: 37.5%, which is 15 respondents.

*Five to ten years: 45%, which is 18 respondents.

*Ten to twenty years: 12.5%, which is 5 respondents.

*Above 20 and over: 5%, which is only 2 respondents.

Therefore, most of the respondents who participated in this questionnaire have one to ten years of work experience, with the majority of them having five to ten years.

Table (4-4) The Gender of The Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	40	100.0	100.0	100.0

Based on the table and chart above, all respondents who participated in this questionnaire and provided answers were male. This means that due to restrictions imposed on women's work and activity in government offices, their participation in this questionnaire was also inaccessible. Therefore, 100% of the respondents in this research sample were male.

4-2. Findings

After reviewing the respondents' information regarding age, educational level, work experience, and gender, this section will analyze the findings as follows:

Table (4-5) The Range of Respondents (1st)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Disagree	7	17.5	17.5	25.0
	Neutral	7	17.5	17.5	42.5
	Agree	19	47.5	47.5	90.0
	Totally Agree	4	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Based on the statistics obtained from the table and graph above, it can be concluded that 7.5% of respondents completely disagree with this question, 17.5% disagree, and another 17.5% are neutral. Meanwhile, 47.5% agree and the remaining 10% completely agree. Considering the results of this poll, it is clear that the percentage graph and statistics for those who agree are higher and more significant than those who disagree. Therefore, it is evident that operational managers in the Ministry of Higher Education consistently participate relatively actively in efforts to improve strategic planning.

Table (4-6) The Range of Respondents (2nd)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	6	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Disagree	10	25.0	25.0	40.0
	Neutral	9	22.5	22.5	62.5
	Agree	14	35.0	35.0	97.5
	Totally Agree	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Strongly Disagree: Respondents who selected the "Strongly Disagree" option account for 15 percent.
2. Disagree: Responses that focus on the disagree option are 25%.
3. Neutral: Respondents who are neutral in the first question section are 22 percent.
4. Agree: 35% of respondents agree with the second question.
5. Strongly Agree: 2.5% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement. Based on the statistics obtained from this questionnaire regarding the second question, it can be concluded that one of the fundamental outcomes of operational managers' participation in the strategic planning of the Ministry of Higher Education is the formation of a correct organizational culture.

Table (4-7) The Range of Respondents (3rd)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	Totally Disagree	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	8	20.0	20.0	25.0
	Neutral	5	12.5	12.5	37.5
	Agree	19	47.5	47.5	85.0
	Totally Agree	6	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Strongly disagree: 5 percent, which is only 2 respondents.
2. Opposed: 20 percent, which is 8 respondents.
3. No opinion: 12.5%, which is 5 respondents.
4. Agree: 47.5 percent, which includes 19 respondents.
5. Completely agree: Ultimately, those who chose the "completely agree" option are 15%, which includes 6 respondents. Therefore, organizational improvement is one of the fundamental outcomes of operational managers' participation in the strategic planning arena of the Ministry of Higher Education.

Table (4-8) The Range of Respondents (4th)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Disagree	10	25.0	25.0	37.5
	Neutral	8	20.0	20.0	57.5
	Agree	14	35.0	35.0	92.5
	Totally Agree	3	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Strongly disagree: 12.5%, which is only 5 respondents.
2. Opposed: 25%, which is 10 respondents.
3. No opinion: 20 percent, which is 8 respondents.
4. Agree: 35 percent, which includes 14 respondents.
5. Strongly Agree: 7.5%, which is 3 respondents. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Ministry of Higher Education organization utilizes the experience and active role of operational managers in strategic planning.

Table (4-9) The Range of Respondents (5th)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	5	12.5	12.5	17.5

Neutral	5	12.5	12.5	30.0
Agree	20	50.0	50.0	80.0
Totally Agree	8	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Strongly disagree: 5 percent, which is only 2 respondents.
2. Opposed: 12.5 percent, which is 5 respondents.
3. No opinion: 12.5%, which is 5 respondents.
4. Agree: 50%, which includes 20 respondents.
5. Completely agree: Ultimately, those who chose the "completely agree" option are 20%, which is 8 respondents. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no injustice in the Ministry of Higher Education regarding the participation of operational managers in strategic planning.

Table (4-10) The Range of Respondents (6th)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Neutral	2	5.0	5.0	10.0
	Agree	20	50.0	50.0	60.0
	Totally Agree	16	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Agree				
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Opposed: 5%, which is only 2 respondents.
2. No opinion: 5 percent, which is 2 respondents.
3. Agree: 50 percent, which is 20 respondents.
4. Strongly agree: 40% which includes 16 respondents. Based on these statistics, it is absolutely clear that one of the fundamental outcomes of the active participation of operational managers from the Ministry of Higher Education in strategic planning is the development of organizational trust within the ministry.

Table (4-11) The Response (7th)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Neutral	4	10.0	10.0	17.5
	Agree	20	50.0	50.0	67.5
	Totally Agree	13	32.5	32.5	100.0
	Agree				
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Opposed: 7.5%, which is only 3 respondents.
2. No opinion: 10 percent, which is 4 respondents.
3. Agree: 50%, which includes 20 respondents.
4. Strongly Agree: 32.5%, which includes 13 respondents. Based on these statistics, it is again evident that the participation of operational managers in strategic planning has led to increased work effectiveness in the Ministry of Higher Education.

Table (4-12) The Response (8th)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Disagree	3	7.5	7.5	15.0
	Neutral	5	12.5	12.5	27.5
	Agree	24	60.0	60.0	87.5
	Totally Agree	5	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Strongly disagree: 7.5%, which is only 3 respondents.
2. Opposed: 7.5 percent, which is 3 respondents.
3. No opinion: 12.5%, which is 5 respondents.
4. Agree: 60 percent, which includes 24 respondents.
5. Strongly Agree: Ultimately, those who chose the "Strongly Agree" option are 12.5%, representing 5 respondents. Based on the high statistics, it is clear that the participation of operational managers in strategic planning has led to timely progress in the Ministry of Higher Education organization.

Table (4-13) The Response (9th)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	1	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	3	7.5	7.5	10.0
	Neutral	2	5.0	5.0	15.0
	Agree	22	55.0	55.0	70.0
	Totally Agree	12	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Strongly disagree: 2.5 percent, which is only 1 respondent.
2. Opposed: 7.5 percent, which is 3 respondents.
3. No opinion: 5 percent, which is 2 respondents.
4. Agree: 55%, which includes 22 respondents.
5. Completely agree: Ultimately, those who chose the "completely agree" option are 30%, representing 12 respondents. Therefore, the result is that the participation of operational

managers from the Ministry of Higher Education in strategic planning has led to a strong organizational commitment within the ministry.

Table (4-14) The Response (10th)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	7	17.5	17.5	17.5
	Disagree	11	27.5	27.5	45.0
	Neutral	11	27.5	27.5	72.5
	Agree	9	22.5	22.5	95.0
	Totally Agree	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

1. Strongly disagree: 17.5%, which is only 7 respondents.
2. Opposed: 27.5 percent, which is 11 respondents.
3. No opinion: 22.5%, which is 9 respondents.
4. Agree: 47.5 percent, which includes 19 respondents.
5. Entirely agree: Ultimately, those who chose the "entirely agree" option are 5%, which includes 2 respondents. Therefore, the results of the responses indicate that the respondents' answers regarding the last question of the questionnaire were relatively negative, and it is inferred that the participation of operational managers from the Ministry of Higher Education in strategic planning did not significantly encourage or motivate them. Although the percentage of agree and strongly agree options is considerable, the respondents behaved differently regarding this question compared to other questions.

4-3. Proving Hypotheses

After discussing and reviewing the statistical data, the findings of this research (regarding the confirmation or rejection of the hypotheses) are as follows:

The research's main hypothesis states that operational managers' involvement in the organization's strategic planning has various material and spiritual consequences, each with its own outcomes. The findings of this research have shown that the consequences of operational managers' participation in strategic planning include both material and spiritual dimensions, each of which ensures that, on the one hand, the work process and assigned tasks of managers are properly organized, and on the other hand, leads to the growth of operational managers, further increasing their organizational commitment. Therefore, the main hypothesis of the research is confirmed.

According to the first sub-hypothesis, operational planning is one of the major levels of organizational planning where organizational participation plays a key and vital role and yields desirable results. The findings of this research have shown that organizational classification has

enabled each existing class to make a significant contribution in its field, considering organizational principles. The operational class, located in the implementation stage, is one of the most important and effective classes. Planning at this stage can significantly increase organizational effectiveness, and this research's findings undoubtedly confirm the first sub-hypothesis.

According to the second sub-hypothesis, organizations are primarily pursuing financial goals, which are achieved through a series of behaviors such as the participation of operational managers in the planning process. This means that planning is considered one of the most fundamental parts of managers' activities, and despite the collaboration between them, it brings beneficial goals to the organization. The findings of this research indicate that the role of operational managers in planning is to achieve organizational justice and establish a logical basis for improving organizational affairs. With this approach, on the one hand, organizational goals can be achieved, and on the other hand, the ground for the spiritual encouragement of employees is provided, and they feel safe and a sense of belonging and organizational commitment. Undoubtedly, this research confirms the second sub-hypothesis.

According to the third sub-hypothesis, organizations primarily pay special attention to the participation of operational managers by utilizing useful methods and strategies to achieve their goals, and this process can lead to organizational spiritual goals. The findings of this research have shown that among the most important outcomes of operational managers' participation in the strategic planning of the Ministry of Higher Education are a correct organizational culture, improved organizational processes, active presence, strengthening organizational justice, organizational trust, work effectiveness, timely progress of work, strong organizational commitment, and relatively encouraging and motivating operational managers.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5-1. Conclusion

Given that scientific research requires drawing conclusions, the researcher must pay more attention to this aspect. Reaching results and proving hypotheses is considered a fundamental principle in scientific research. Therefore, the most significant findings derived from the research process are regarded as follows:

The results of this research have indicated that the participation of operational managers in planning is deeply effective and beneficial. As is known, operational managers play a key role in implementing organizational plans and are more aware of organizational needs and requirements than any other organizational members. Their participation in strategic planning can lead to positive and meaningful outcomes for the organization. Undoubtedly, one of the most important consequences of this participation is a positive trend in the work process and the achievement of the organization's major goals.

The research results have indicated that the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education, as a credible

organization at the national level, has played a key role in the participation of its operational managers in strategic planning, and the statistical results of the research have shown that 57% of respondents found their presence in this regard useful and sensitive.

The statistical results of this research have shown that among the most important outcomes of operational managers' participation in the strategic planning of the Ministry of Higher Education are a correct organizational culture, improved organizational processes, active presence, strengthening organizational justice, organizational trust, work effectiveness, timely progress of work, strong organizational commitment, and relatively encouraging and motivating operational managers. Although respondents generally agreed with the questions and expressed views that were about 40 to 60 percent positive, their opinions on the final option regarding encouragement and motivation were more varied, possibly influenced by a range of behaviors or material concerns.

5-2. Suggestions

Officials of the Ministry of Higher Education are advised to provide necessary opportunities for the operational managers of this organization, enabling us to observe a positive change in the educational processes of the country's institutions.

2. It is suggested to the officials of the Ministry of Higher Education that they pay serious attention to the training of employees and provide them with opportunities for in-service training seminars.
3. Officials of the Ministry of Higher Education are advised to focus on their responsibilities toward middle and operational managers, as the results from respondents indicate a need for increased encouragement and motivation.
4. It is recommended to the officials of the Ministry of Higher Education that they investigate the fundamental reasons for the operational managers' concerns and departures from their jobs technically and organizationally and resolve this issue peacefully and with responsible methods and tactics.
5. It is recommended to the operational managers of the Ministry of Higher Education that they avoid personal pragmatism and a conservative culture within this organization and prioritize the organization's work principles, which will lead to the advancement of their organizational affairs.
6. It is recommended that serious efforts be made to increase the operational efficiency of the organization.
7. Operational-level employees of the organization should be trained to prioritize initiative, a sense of responsibility, and participation in strategic planning.
8. For operational-level employees, the context of integrating intellectual and work responsibilities with higher organizational levels such as strategic planning should be taught, and the necessary efforts should be made in this area.
10. A practical mindset and behavior should be fostered among operational-level employees of the Ministry of Higher Education to increase mobility and job opportunities.

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