A Survey of Perceptions and Expectations of Citizens from Improvement of Villages to City and its Effect on the Quality of Urban Services (Case study: Fazel Abad of Golestan Province)

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Abstract

One of the most important factors that citizens are faced after turning the village to city is the quality of presented services from urban management. The present study aimed to obtain an exact description of the distance between perceptions and expectations of citizens of Fazel Abad of the quality of urban services. The study is descriptive-survey by field method. Study population is all citizens of Fazel Abad city using urban services and the sample size based on Cochran's formula is 375 and they were studied by simple random method. The study findings showed that there is a significant difference between perceptions and expectations of citizens to presenting urban services and the highest gap mean (-3.31) of social indices and the lowest gap mean (-1.21) is dedicated to environmental indices.

Keywords: Perceptions, Expectations, Improvement, Services quality, Fazel Abad.

Introduction

Industrialization of countries and the changes after the Second World War created some grounds in terms of improvement of living conditions, increasing life expectancy during birth, increasing average life and reduction of mortality rate and the result is rapid increase of population and their more residency in most of the cities (Amchaki, 2004). This trend turned the urbanization to one of the most important phenomena of present era. Urbanization growth and concern of its abnormal outcomes in various fields namely in big cities and metropolises, directed urban planners to the new social theories and tendencies (Akbari et al., 2010). The creation and development of small cities and their promotion is one of the major policies in planning of developing countries (Rezvani et al., 2009). The rapid trend of improvement of villages to city in Iran is formed with wide demand of people to improve life condition and using the better services quality. As the quality of conceptual services is multi-media and interdisciplinary, different views and wide ranges are used (Vazife Dust, et al., 2009) and one of the examples is urban services quality. However, urban services quality as general term is a concept to show meeting human needs and criterion to perceive satisfaction and dissatisfaction of people and groups of various dimensions of life in urban societies. The general aim of the study is obtaining a relatively exact description of the condition of services quality in villages that are turned into a city in less than one decade by which we can take big steps to improve service providing to citizens.

In review literature of this mater we should state that There is no structured study regarding the difference between perceptions and expectations of citizens of improving village to city and its effect on urban services quality and this issue is not used in citizens satisfaction literature. It can be

said some studies are conducted regarding turning village to city in various aspects and some of them are as: The idea and the study of the role and effect of small urban locations at regional and local levels were started with Jonson (1970) (Baren, 2009). Hinderin and Titus by the study of small cities in 4 regions of Jave, Mali, Swaziland and Mexico and their relationship with regional development and found that we shouldn't generalize to the useful role of small cities in rural areas development and regional development. The development of surrounding region of these cities and political and economic conditions are considered (Hinderic et al., 2002). Nile Hinry to determine the small cities in national development, bottom developed urbanization with small and middle cities development is a tool to extend developing countries (Henri, 2007). Hassan Izadi Kharame in his PhD thesis (2001) by turning village to city and its role in rural development of Fars province, found that despite positive and negative aspects in turning the village to city to play the effective role of these centers in residential hierarchy and development, revision in criterion of turning village to city is necessary and necessity of implementation (strategy of small cities development) is felt for rural development in Iran (Izadi Kharame, 2001).

In a study done by Mohammad Hassan Zia Taana et al., (2007) regarding the turning of village to city and its outcomes in Talesh town, it was found that turning the villages to city not only created important social, economic and spatial changes in the centers, affected their influence field considerably (Zia Tavana et al., 2007). Mohammad Hossein Sarayi et al., (2007) regarding turning big villages to small cities and its role in regional balance of case study: Research of Kashmar town found that this city was unsuccessful in maintaining the weak performance population in extending the functions to surrounding regions and unsuccessful influence field in presenting the employment, facilities (Sarayi et al., 2007). Hamid Barghi et al. (2011) in a study " investigation of satisfaction of residents of rural areas in turning rural areas to city" found that turning rural areas to city by increasing satisfaction of living place, increasing expectancy to improving life conditions in future and increasing presentation of services to residents fix population and reduce migration. This can be a good measurement regarding population fixation in these regions to avoid problems in big cities (Barghi et al., 2011).

The present study emphasized on the study in Fazel Abad city of Golestan province and evaluated policy of improving village to city, its role in quality development of urban services namely in economic, social, environmental and structural dimensions and answered the basic question whether creating city via turning big rural locations to urban locations, is a suitable policy to present services quality to citizens and how is the perception and expectations of citizens to urban services quality.

Materials and Methods
Study Area
In accordance to approved No. 31589t/24847 h dated on Sep 30, 2001, Fazel Abad was turned into city by government board. This city is located in center of Kamalan Ali Abad of Katul town of Golestan province in terms of geography location and country divisions as 8km far from the town center and 25km of Gorgan, center of Golestan province and its urban area is 2.5km^2 and its current population based on management and planning organization of province is more than 13036 people.

Theoretical basics
The issue of regional imbalances and urban and rural inequalities based on the views of growth center and center were formed during 1950, 1960 in the third world countries and this provided the condition to present some theories regarding spatial imbalance development (Nouri et al., 2009). Friedman raises rapid rural development strategy as appropriate development choice or

second strategy to economic development strategy as the first strategy in developing countries. Indeed, city village is operating the rapid rural development strategy and spatial basis to implement this strategy (Jomepour, 2006) and it means changing rural areas via adaption of urban life elements on specific rural grounds. It means that instead of investment in cities and encouraging transfer of villagers by investment in rural areas, encourages them to remain and change the present villages and give a new combination to them and it is called village city (Azarakhsh, 2010). The urban services presentation are effective factors and by responding the population need, increasing public benefit and considering qualification of people can establish spatial justice, social justice and economic justice dimensions by fair establishment (Varesi et al., 2007).

One of the effective factors in improving village to city is satisfaction of citizens via improving quality of presented services to them. Due to the increasing importance of quality on citizens' satisfaction, this question is raised how can we evaluate the quality of services? In theoretical review of literature, evaluation of the quality of services is done via comparing the expected services of citizen and citizen perception of real performance of service organizations (Zeithaml, 1990). The service quality from the view of Parasuraman et al., (1988) is full judgment of customer about superior nature of service to similar services with its important benefits (Shahin, 2011). The policy of improving village to city in Iran is based on the strategy of urban performance strategy of urban performances in rural development and its aim is providing the minimum conditions for villagers enabling them to make rural communities and the related regions to socio-economic development (Karimi et al., 2012). Thus conceptual model of this study is based on the expectations and perceptions of citizens based on urban services quality strategy (Fig 1). Based on this model, village improvement to city process is evaluated in city services quality.
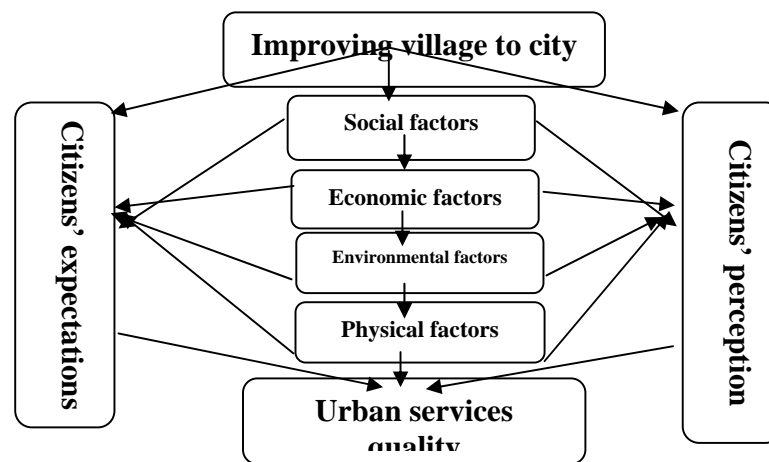
Figure 1: Conceptual model of study

Methodology

This study is survey-descriptive. At first library studies and similar studies are conducted. Then, they were evaluated by quality indices of city services in accordance to local conditions of region. The present study focused mostly on field studies of questionnaire. Two types of questionnaires perceptions and expectations questionnaire urban services quality is used. The data collected were analyzed by SPSS software and gap techniques and Friedman test. Cronbach's alpha is including the following items.

Table 1- Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Services quality items	Reliability coefficient
Social	0.86
Economic	0.84
Physical	0.83
Environmental	0.81

The population (13036 people) is including all citizens of Fazel Abad city that using urban services. The study sample is based on Cochran's formula 375 questionnaires and based on consistency principle. All citizens were sampled by random method.

Results

The findings showed that the majority of the number of respondents was 44.6% of age group (21-30) and the lowest number of participants was age groups above 51 years and 7.2 years.

Table 2: The results of statistical sample of citizens from age group

Age group	F	F%	Accumulative frequency
16-20	35	9.5	9.4
21-30	170	44.6	55.2
31-40	117	30	86.1
41-50	31	8.7	94.8
Above 51	375	7.2	100
Sum	375	100	------
Source: author's finding, 2014			

In another section, the data of education of respondents is investigated. As shown in table 3, the education of most of the study respondents was BA and diploma with 3.3% and 30% and the lowest MA and above with 5.9.

Table 3- The results of statistical sample of citizens from education level

Education	F	F%	Cumulative frequency
Below Diploma	57	14.9	14.9
Diploma	106	30	44.9
Associate	62	15.9	60.8
BA	129	33.3	94.1
MA and above	23	5.9	100
Sum	753	100	------
Source: author's finding, 2014			

Based on the results of table 4, significant association is between perceived and expected tangible factors in social variables (P=0.01), perceived and expected reliability in economic variables (P=0.001), perceived and expected responding in environmental variables (P=0.001) and perceived and expected reliability in physical variables (P=0.02). Thus, null hypothesis is rejected in

all hypotheses and study hypotheses are supported. It means that there is a difference between perceived and expected services quality dimension (social, economic, environmental and physical).

Table 4- The distance between perceptions and expectations

Hypotheses	Mean	S.D	T	D.F	P
Distance between perceptions and expectations of social factors	Before being city 4.11 After being city 7.42	0.82 1.00	198	5.14	0.01
Distance between perceptions and expectations of economic factors	Before being city 2.26 After being city 4.27	0.75 1.27	198	2.88	0.001
Distance between perceptions and expectations of environmental factors	Before being city 2.94 After being city 4.15	0.82 0.77	198	3.44	0.001
Distance between perceptions and expectations of physical factors	Before being city 2.22 After being city 4.16	0.87 189	198	3.42	0.02
Source: author's finding, 2014					

To generalize findings of the study to study population, the comparison of the expected mean and perception mean of various dimensions in study, Friedman test is used. Based on the Friedman test result in table 5, there is significant difference between the mean of gaps in various dimensions of existing condition and based on table 5, the ranks mean, these dimensions are ranked.

Table 5- Non-parameter test of Friedman ranks

Rank	Mean
Gap-f1	4.25
Gap-f2	3.68
Gap-f3	3.25
Gap-f4	4.10
Source: author's finding, 2014	

The results of the test are shown in table 6 as it is observed in calculation of gap, all the values were negative. In other words, regarding all dimensions, inference of citizens of presented services quality is less than their expectation. On the other hand, the highest gap number is regarding the first dimension (social indices) and the lowest gap is about third dimension (environmental indices).

Table 6- Ranking services quality based on the highest gap

Indices	Gap mean	Perception mean	Expectation mean	Rank
Social	-3.31	4.11	7.42	1
Economic	-2.1	2.26	4.27	2
Environmental	-1.21	2.94	4.15	4
Physical	-1.64	2.22	4.16	3
Source: author's finding, 2014				

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, by analysis of citizens' views, there was an opportunity to calculate the existing gap between the expectations and perceptions of citizens regarding the presented services to Fazel

Abad citizens when they are turned into city and by results, the presented solutions are managed to reduce the created gaps and manage the citizens' expectation. Based on the study findings, the services quality is different in dimensions (social, economic, environmental and physical) as presented quality of services with the gap mean (-1.21) in environmental dimensions is the best. This indicated more consideration of urban management to the places by which citizens deal and there is the lowest gap based on Friedman test. But the highest gap mean is dedicated to social dimension (-3.31) while citizens had the highest expectation with mean (7.42) of social sector and they expected that after village was turned into city is the main focus of urban management on social studies and then economic issues are considered. This shows the serious difference between what citizens expected and what urban management does.

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