

Measuring NGOs' Active Participation in Municipal Decision-Making in Türkiye

Türkiye'de Belediyelerin Karar Alma Süreçlerine STK'ların Aktif Katılımının Ölçülmesi

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Abstract

This study develops a new scale for measuring the active participation relation between municipalities and NGOs. While citizen participation at the local level is a widely explored topic, a scale that aims to get NGO members' perceptions about their level of participation and focuses on the budgeting process is not available. We carried out an extensive review of the participation and budgeting literature and considered the inputs obtained from this review in developing our two-dimensional and 6-item participation scale. 'Participation mechanism' and 'participation process' were determined as two dimensions. This was a decision made based on the existence of an emphasis on the interplay between the participation mechanisms used and the participation process actualized in the relevant literature. As existing scales for examining local participation are designed to get data from public officials, we hope that obtaining data from NGOs will enrich our understanding of the complex participatory relationship between citizens and the local administration.

Keywords: Scale development, Active participation, NGOs, Municipality, Validity, Reliability

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, belediyeler ile STK'lar arasındaki aktif katılım ilişkisinin incelenmesinde kullanılacak yeni bir ölçek geliştirmektir. Yerel düzeyde vatandaş katılımı literatürde farklı yönleriyle ele alınmasına karşın STK üyelerinin belediye karar alma süreçlerine katılım düzeyleri hakkındaki algılarını bütçe sürecine odaklanarak ortaya koymayı hedefleyen bir ölçek mevcut değildir. Yazındaki bu boşluğu doldurmak yönünde, katılım ve bütçeleme süreçleriyle ilgili geniş bir kaynak taraması yapılmış ve bu tarama sonucunda elde edilen girdiler iki boyuttan ve altı maddeden oluşan yeni ölçeğin geliştirilmesinde kullanılmıştır. Ölçeğin içerdiği iki boyut, "katılım mekanizmaları" ve "katılım süreci" olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu kararda, seçilen katılım mekanizmaları ile pratikte gerçekleşen katılım süreci arasındaki karşılıklı etkileşime yazında sıklıkla vurgu yapılması etkili olmuştur. Yerel düzeyde vatandaş katılımını tespit etmeye yönelik mevcut ölçeklerin büyük oranda kamudaki yöneticilerin algısını ölçmeye odaklanmış olması dolayısıyla STK'ların algısını elde etmeye yönelik bu çalışmanın vatandaşlar ve belediyeler arasındaki karmaşık katılım ilişkisinin anlaşılmasına katkı yapacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ölçek geliştirme, Aktif katılım, STK'lar, Belediye, Geçerlilik, Güvenilirlik

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Introduction

In social sciences, a voluminous literature has grown on participatory governance and democracy as of the 1970s. Behind this heightened interest lie paradigmatic shifts both in the organization of life and in scholarly thinking. Two sets of interrelated developments are central to these shifts: a) the reorganization/ rescaling of economic and political activities (Swyngedouw, 1992; Brenner, 2004) b) the restructuring of state-society relations and public administration (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007; Chhotray & Stoker, 2009). The centrality of “networked or heterarchical coordination” rather than hierarchical authority is their main point of intersection (Jessop, 2016: 164).

As the discourse gradually moved away from seeing the state as the central governing actor to emphasizing state-society relations (Kooiman, 2003), discussions on such themes as participatory and direct democracy, civil society, active citizenship, and governance network have proliferated (Brannan et al., 2006; Zittel & Fuchs, 2007; Steffek et al., 2008; Veltmeyer, 2008). Many studies underscored the prominence of citizens’ active participation in a stable democracy and achieving “multiple accountabilities” (financial, political, and operational) (Rivenbark & Kelly, 2006: 36).

The increase in citizens’ trust in the government, political efficiency, legitimacy of decisions, efficiency in performance budgeting, and social and economic equality through enhanced political engagement are expressed as important outputs of the participatory decision-making process at both the central and local levels of government (Ebdon, 2002; Devas & Grant, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2004; Fung, 2006; Sintomer et al., 2008; Michels & De Graaf, 2010; Marquetti et al., 2012). Some studies remaining under this theme focused on the effect of adopting an active participation model on local budget performance and reported positive effects (Orosz, 2002; Ebdon & Franklin, 2004; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Shah & Shen, 2007; Berner et al., 2011).

The concept of active participation is linked with that of active citizenship (Chandler, 2001) and delineates the active inclusion of citizens as stakeholders in the public decision-making process. Therefore, the active participation of citizens clearly goes beyond being informed about policy decisions and electing political representatives and is about having a say in policy choice (Rios et al., 2016). In other words, realizing citizens’ active participation entails, to some extent, the model of direct democracy and implies that citizens should “take policy choices rather than merely selecting political personnel” (Zittel & Fuchs, 2007: 3).

This paper grasps the contemporary emphasis on participatory local governance and aims at developing a new scale for measuring non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs) active participation in the municipal decision-making process with a focus on budgeting in Turkey. We bring forward the question, “How do NGOs perceive and evaluate their participation in the local decision-making process?” and intend to elaborate on the civil society side of the local participation relationship. Existing studies, which examine citizens’ engagement in local decision-making, especially those using quantitative research methods, mainly include administrative actors as their unit of analysis. Our focus on NGOs also stems from the fact that policy development efforts for enhancing democratization and accountability at different scales often prioritize institutionalized

forms of participation (Cohen & Rogers, 1992; Posner, 2004 Ebdon & Franklin, 2006; Marien, Hooghe & Quintelier, 2010; Cheema, 2011).

When the participation relationship between municipalities and NGOs in Turkey is evaluated, it can be argued that participation has been a political discourse for many years, but it has not been successfully implemented in decision-making and budgeting processes (Sarıbay, 1997; Tekeli, 2017). It can be claimed that this problem arises from such disadvantageous situations of municipalities. First, municipalities in Turkey are financially dependent -to a large extent- on the central government (Erođlu ve Serbes, 2018). As a matter of fact, it is important for municipalities to have a certain amount of taxation authority to directly determine their spending priorities according to the needs of the local people as well as to increase their own revenues and to be able to independently determine local tax rates and bases without the intervention of the central government (Pratchett, 2004: 360). Second, when the municipal system in Turkey is examined, it can be observed that the strong mayor model has been adopted (Bulut & Taşıyıcı, 2006; Toprak, 2011; Arıkbođa, 2013).

A new local government law, enacted in 2005, highlighted the incorporation of NGOs in the local governance process in different ways including their involvement in the preparation of municipal strategic plans and their contribution to specialized municipal committees in their areas of expertise (Municipal Law Numbered 5393, article 24/41). Besides, these reforms emphasized the importance of governance for enhancing efficiency in the provision of public services as well as increasing accountability. Citizens' voluntary participation in local service delivery was established as a statutory provision, and 'city councils' were introduced as a new governance mechanism, the primary goal of which is defined as the enhancement of participatory democracy and civic virtues at the local level.

Several regulations regarding the participation of NGOs have been included in the following laws: Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216 in 2004, Municipal Law No. 5393 in 2005, and Law No. 6360 on Establishing Metropolitan Municipalities and Twenty-Six Districts in Thirteen Provinces and Amending Some Laws and Decrees in 2012. Each regulation contains important clauses on governance and participation such as the articles numbered 13, 24, 41, and 76 of Law No. 5393. It is accepted that non-governmental organizations and municipalities are common stakeholders in Articles 7 and 15 of Law No. 5216. However, a more detailed analysis of the items reveals the necessity of making legislative changes or new regulations to render local participation effective and stronger. It can be claimed that there are many deficiencies in the legislation mentioned above. For instance, there are no provisions regarding the participation of NGOs in the preparation of the municipal budget, nor are there any obligations regarding the cooperation of municipalities with the NGOs. The references to the participation of NGOs in the relevant legislation are few, and they are also not clear and understandable. Statements on cooperation are of a general nature and there are no specific provisions regarding their content and form.

As known, scales are widely used in social sciences to collect quantitative data from people and using an existing scale would save time and resources. However, a scale for measuring NGOs' active participation in municipal decision-making processes

with a focus on the budgeting process is not readily available. Therefore, this study is an intention to fill this gap in the literature. It offers a two-dimensional participation scale with 'participation mechanisms' and a 'participation process' as its dimensions and takes into consideration the remarks made about structural, institutional, contextual, and human agency variances regarding the purpose, model, outcome, and efficiency of active participation in the literature.

Active Participation

In modern liberal democracies, the participation of people in administration has mainly been realized indirectly through electing representatives for the national assembly, the municipal council, etc. More direct forms of participation opportunities for the decision-making process have also existed such as referendums, public hearings, public meetings, citizen advisory boards, the right to attend (and monitor) municipal council meetings, etc. As governing, which is defined simply as "interaction in some way or another" by Kooiman (2003: 8), has been approached within the governance framework, normative considerations about the interaction between public officials and citizens have been shaped around themes including the horizontal organization of public administration, bottom-up approach to policy making, decentralization, transparency, and accountability (Novy & Leubolt, 2005) alongside active participation and active citizenship.

Thus, two of the premises of the governance paradigm are the vitalization of participation mechanisms that goes beyond citizens' role as voters or watchdogs and the active participation practices which allow citizens' direct deliberative engagement in the policy-making process. It is essential to note here that not all mechanisms of public engagement outside those of representation and information flow are classified under active participation. In this regard, the OECD (2001: 15-16) divides citizen engagement in policy-making into three: "access to information", "consultation/feedback", and "active participation". Access to information refers to the one-way conveying of documents prepared by public institutions and other kinds of public information. In 'consultation/feedback', opinions of citizens may be taken in the process of forming a certain policy, or they may only be asked for giving feedback on a policy paper draft or service provision. Active participation, on the other hand, accounts for a heightened level of mutual influence and citizens' exerting influence on public decisions as well as good communication between public officials and the citizens (OECD, 2001; Yang & Pandey, 2011).

In the Council of Europe's 'The Code of Good Practice', which focuses on improving the participation of NGOs in the decision-making process, four gradual levels of participation are identified as "information", "consultation", "dialogue" and "partnership"; the intensity of participation is the highest in the partnership level of participation (CoE, 2009). While NGOs' active involvement is seen both in dialogue and in partnership, "a partnership implies shared responsibilities in each step of the political decision-making process from agenda setting, drafting, decision and implementation of policy initiatives." (CoE, 2009: 8). "Delegation of a specific task to an NGO", "participatory forums" and "the establishment of co-decision-making bodies" are exemplified as partnership activities (CoE, 2009: 8). Along the same lines, Berner (2003: 428) advocates "authentic participation", which he refers to as "... give and take that would characterize policy

development, not just policy approval or disapproval” in his study on citizen involvement in local government budgeting.

Sherry P. Arnstein (1969) provides one of the earliest studies about public engagement in the policy-making process by evaluating different mechanisms and practices of public participation put into effect around urban development issues based on the criteria of the reflection of people’s will to make decisions. She offered an eight-rung ladder of public participation, which was categorized under three levels of citizen involvement in the decision-making process (Arnstein, 1969). The three levels and the types of public participation are as follows:

- Nonparticipation¹ (1. Manipulation 2. Therapy)
- Tokenism (3. Informing 4. Consultation 5. Placation)
- Citizen power (6. Partnership 7. Delegated power 8. Citizen control)

Arnstein’s (1969) influential paper indicated that the effectiveness of active participation depends on multiple factors. The need for building consensus among stakeholders on the purpose and expected outcome of participation (Brannan et al., 2006; Michels & De Graaf, 2010), authentic dialogue, networks, and institutional capacity (Innes & Booher, 2004), continuous communication, and clarifying the roles of stakeholders (King et al., 1998; Roiseland & Vabo, 2015) are accentuated for the effectiveness of active participation practices in later studies. Beaumont & Nicholls (2008) and Zittel & Fuchs (2007) draw attention to social, political, and institutional contexts which affect the relationship between specific institutional reforms and political participation. For Beaumont & Nicholls (2008), formal institutions gain their actual meanings and functions under the sociopolitical context in which they are introduced. Callahan (2007) stated that there is a gap between the idea and the practice of citizen participation; she argued that while public administrators recognized that their traditional roles as “rulers”, “implementers” and “experts” were changing, they were falling short in adopting the alternative roles of “public servant”, “co-producer”, “broker” and “employee”². Roiseland & Vabo (2015: 7), in a similar manner, stated that interactive governance is dependent on the roles adopted by elected politicians, administrative staff, and citizens.

Berner et al. (2011) measured the perceptions of different stakeholders (elected officials, staff members, and citizens) about the meaning and the most effective method of citizen participation in local government activities and concluded that citizen participation is viewed in a variety of ways. Jurlina Alibegović & Slijepčević (2018), who conducted a survey among local city councilors in sixteen European countries, reported similar results. Their findings illustrate that while most of the elected officials agreed that residents should have the opportunity to convey their views before important local decisions are made, a significant share of the officials also desired to design policies independently of the opinions of local people (Jurlina Alibegović & Slijepčević, 2018). Fung’s (2006) insights, which are also based on the evaluation of cases of community participation in the

1 In Arnstein’s typology “nonparticipation” does not mean the non-presence of citizens, but carrying an objective by “powerholders to educate or cure the participants” (Arnstein, 1969: 26) rather than seeking citizens’ genuine participation.

2 She defined the dynamics of interaction between the administrator and the citizen to be “active” and the method of interaction to be “partnership” when both the role of administrator and the citizen is co-producer.

U.S., add to these empirical findings. According to him, the effectiveness of empowered participation at the local level is tied to three main conditions: 1. the participants of the decision-making process. 2. the way the participants communicate with each other, and the decisions that are taken. 3. whether deliberations throughout the process are reflected in policies or not (Fung, 2006).

The literature review presented so far indicates that analyzing active participation requires considering participation mechanisms together with process design and the larger social, political, and cultural context. Therefore, we defined two domains for active participation: participation mechanisms that include methods designed for realizing citizen involvement and the participation process that encompasses the structural, contextual, and personal dimensions of the participation practice. The participation process may include all the factors that add to the effectiveness of participation mechanisms. Table 1 below shows a summary of the existing literature on public participation in terms of different participation mechanisms and the factors affecting the involvement of citizens in the participation process:

Table 1
Summary of the Literature Review on Different Participation Mechanisms and the Factors Affecting Active Participation

Source	Participation mechanisms	Participation process (Factors affecting active participation)
CoE (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work group or work committee, -Hearings and public forums, -Citizens' forums and future councils, -Key government contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The rule of law, -Adherence to fundamental democratic principles, -Political will, -Favorable legislation, -Clear procedures, -Long-term support and resources for a sustainable civil society -Shared spaces for dialogue and cooperation.
Ebdon (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Meetings prior to budget development, -Citizen input to budget process throughout the year, -Formal groups, -Sending budget summary for comments, -Media coordination of input process, -Sending information to citizens, -Availability of budget to the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Local governance structure (including the distribution of power between central and local governments), -Cultural diversity/homogeneity, -Political culture.
Ebdon & Franklin (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public meetings, -Focus groups, -Simulations, -Advisory committees, -Surveys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Environment (a. form of government and administrative structure b. political culture c. legal requirements), -Process design (a. timing, b. type of budget allocation, c. participants d. sincerity and will- ingness), -Mechanism, -Goals and outcomes (a. gathering input for decision-making b. enhancing trust).

Source	Participation mechanisms	Participation process (Factors affecting active participation)
Ianniello et al. (2019)		-Contextual factors (a. information asymmetries b. public officials' attitudes), -Organizational arrangements (a. the criteria of community representation b. process design), -Process management patterns (a. group dynamics b. collaboration quality).
Pandeya (2015)		-Institutional and policy frameworks, -Organizational characteristics, -Bureaucratic responsiveness, -Participation mechanisms, -Representativeness, -Citizen competence.
Røiseland & Vabo (2015)	-Forums, -Committees, -Projects, -Hearings or public meetings.	
Yang (2005)		-Socio-economic context (a. social-economic status of the local government unit, b. metropolitan context, c. social capital), -Government institutions (a. form of government and council selection method, b. managerial attitudes and actions towards participation and communication).
Yang & Callahan & (2005)	-Neighborhood meetings, -Issue-oriented meetings, -Focus group discussions, -Round-table dialogues.	-Citizen involvement (CI) in local decision making, -The use of CI mechanisms, -CI in street-level services, -CI in management function.
Yang & Callahan & (2007)	-Public hearings, -Community or neighborhood meetings, -Citizen surveys, -Citizen focus groups, -Citizen advisory boards or committees, -Issue-oriented committees.	-Responsiveness to participatory values, -Responsiveness to external stakeholders, -Responsiveness to administrative practicality.
Yang & Pandey (2011)		-Local political environment (i.e., the support of elected officials), -Organization characteristics of local governments (a. bureaucratic red tape, b. hierarchical authority c. transformational leadership), -Involvement mechanisms (a. the use of multiple mechanisms b. interactive effect between transformational leadership and variety of involvement mechanisms), -Participant characteristics (a. participant competence b. participant representativeness).
Zhang & Yang (2009)	-Citizen groups or committees, -Coordination with media for input by city managers, -General citizen involvement.	-City managers' professionalism, -Political and institutional environment, -Willingness by city managers to represent citizens/ to incorporate citizen input into decisions.
Zhang & Liao (2011)	-Public hearings, -Citizen surveys, -Advisory boards, -Forums or workshops open to citizens, -Regular meetings on the budget, -Posting budget materials on the Internet.	-Public officials' attitudes and perceptions towards citizen participation, -Forms of local government, -Council's diversity and politics, -Community characteristics.

Other studies have also discussed the purpose, process, and outcome of active citizen participation at a more theoretical level (Fung & Wright, 2001; Beckett & King, 2002; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Chirenje et al., 2013; Heinelt, 2013;). The literature review made it explicit that analyzing active participation is a complex issue and although citizen participation in local decision-making is a widely expressed ideal, there is a clear gap between its ideal and implementation. Furthermore, the implementation and outcomes of active citizen participation vary to a large extent. Given these drawbacks, nonetheless, it is possible to define certain directions which will guide empirical research like taking into consideration the (existing and newly introduced) participatory mechanisms, the local political and institutional environment, public officials' attitudes towards citizen participation, and the competence and representativeness of participant citizens.

The extended literature review presented in this section also serves to justify our focus on measuring NGOs' participation in the local decision-making process since most empirical studies dealing with citizen involvement in local policy-making focus on evaluating participation from the perspective of local government officials. While participant characteristics such as competence and representativeness are taken into consideration by some researchers (Yang & Callahan, 2011; Yang & Pandey, 2011) as variables explaining citizen involvement, a scale for measuring NGOs' participation in the local policy development process based on NGOs' perspectives seems to be absent. While acknowledging the debates about the democratic and transparent characteristics of NGOs as well as their varied capacities (Kissling & Steffek, 2008), we assume that NGOs have a meaningful level of competence and representativeness for actively contributing to local decision-making. Departing from this assumption and in an effort to fulfilling the gap in the literature for measuring citizen participation at the local level from NGO members' perspective, the methodological steps of our scale development study are presented in the following section.

Method

Data and Participants

The data for this study, which had a cross-sectional characteristic, was collected from NGOs' executive members (e.g., executives or executive assistants in associations, foundations, professional chambers and trade unions, and provincial-district presidents and vice presidents in political parties) in Turkey between October 2020 and April 2021. By following the conclusion reached through the literature review on the classification of NGOs, all NGOs included in four different categories were discussed. These four categories are associations, academic chambers, political party representatives, and trade unions.

To represent Turkey, the number of NGOs in the provinces³ in NUTS Level 1 was examined in the first instance. Then, for each NUTS-1 level region (the total number

3 In Turkey, 'province' is the name given to largest administrative divisions at the national government level. Thirty provinces out of a total number of 81 contain metropolitan municipalities at the local government level. Metropolitan municipalities, borders of which overlap with that of the provinces, form a higher tier of municipal government having basically a coordination function over district municipalities. The remaining 51 provinces have provincial and district municipalities without a metropolitan administrative model.

of regions at the NUTS-1 level is 12⁴), a metropolitan municipality and a provincial municipality were selected depending on their level of development and the number of NGOs they had. Municipalities that are in provinces with the highest number of NGOs and with higher developmental levels were given priority in the selection. Consequently, 13 metropolitan municipalities and 10 provincial municipalities were included in the study. A total of 800 data were obtained from NGOs operating in 23 provinces through face-to-face and online questionnaires.

Scale Development and Analysis

There exists a considerable body of literature on scale development, translation, and validation. In the development process of a new scale, the first step is to make sure that a scale about the identified construct of interest is not available. Secondly, the indicators of the domain of interest must be decided on and at this stage, it is vital that previous studies and expert judgments are reviewed. In this way, existing questionnaires in the literature can be evaluated for the determination of indicators (DeVellis, 1991; Hinkin, 1995; Clark & Watson, 1995: 309; Tsang et al., 2017: 80). Figure 1 shows the steps of developing a new scale as summarized by Tsang et al. (2017).

As seen in Figure 1, if a validated questionnaire is not available for the identified construct of interest, developing a new scale becomes the objective, and issues related to the scale to be developed are evaluated by a committee consisting of experts in the next step. Since a scale measuring the active participation relationship between municipalities and NGOs with a focus on NGOs' perceptions and local budgeting was not available, our study aimed at developing a new scale for this construct of interest and used different statistical methods in different steps of the scale development process. Members of the research team as well as two external academic experts, one from the field of political science and one from public finance, constituted our expert committee.

4 Regions at NUTS-1 level are divided into sub-regions at NUTS 2 level and ultimately 81 provinces of Turkey are represented at the NUTS-3 level.

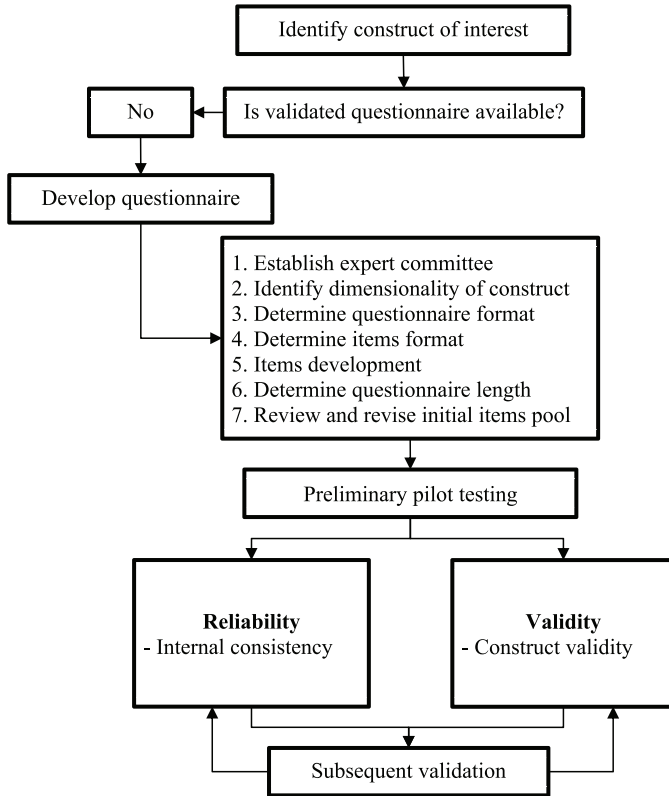


Figure 1. Questionnaire development process

Identifying the dimensionality of the construct is one of the primary issues in developing a new scale. Many constructs contain multiple dimensions. The dimensionality of the construct of interest is determined based on the literature and it is decided whether the scale has a unidimensional or multidimensional structure (Turker, 2009: 416; Tsang et al., 2017: 82). In our study, we proposed a two-dimensional structure for the active participation scale. These dimensions are the ‘participation mechanisms’ and ‘participation process’.

Another important issue in the questionnaire development process is the format of the questionnaire form and its items. In our study, a five-point Likert scale was preferred for scale items to indicate the degree of agreement (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree). As known, the five-point Likert-type scale is the most common scale used in social sciences (Jenkins & Taber, 1977; Weijters et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2015; Chyung et al., 2015). Particular attention has been paid to designing the scale items to be easily understood (Tsang et al., 2017) by the participants, and as many short and clear items as possible were formulated. In designing the scale items, we considered other important issues such as building the internal consistency of the items, avoiding using items that may produce biased answers, and deciding on whether the reverse-coded items will be included in the scale or not (Tsang et al., 2017).

Although there is no specific rule about the length of the questionnaire, attention should

be paid to the length so that the participants keep their willingness to answer. It should also contain adequate items about the structure of interest to be measured. It is desirable that the final form of the questionnaire be short. However, since a number of items may be eliminated in the later stages of the study, it is useful to keep the items pool-wide at the beginning. A pool of scale items should be written, and these items should be reviewed by experts. Grammar checks should also be done. In addition, it is recommended to conduct the questionnaire on a small sample before starting the pilot test. Thus, suggestions for possible improvements to the questions can be received and the questionnaire form can be improved (Simmons, 2001: 103; Tsang et al., 2017: 83).

In our study, all items that will measure the relevant concepts were included in the questionnaire; expert reviews were received; grammar checks of the questions were made, and the questionnaires were carried out with a small sample of 32 people. After suggestions for possible improvements were obtained and evaluated at this pre-test stage, the questionnaire form was revised. The pilot test started afterward, and further revisions were made to the questionnaire by examining the pilot data. Finally, validity and reliability analyses were performed using the main data.

Reliability analysis is important to evaluate the consistency of scale items. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient was used for reliability analysis. Validity analysis allows for examining the structure of the scale. Construct validity, which investigates the validity of the theoretical structure, is mainly considered in the validity analysis.

Findings

Item Development and Pre-test

In this study, we referred to the literature review presented above to create the items of the active participation scale. As stated earlier, we defined two domains for active participation as 'participation mechanisms', and 'participation process'. An item pool was created to include 14 items, 8 of which belonged to the domain of the participation mechanism, and 6 to the domain of the decision-making process.

To explore participants' perspectives on the proposed scale, we conducted a pre-test that was applied to 32 voluntary participants. To make the questionnaire more comprehensible and clearer, the participants were also asked to report the deficiencies they identified in questions that caused confusion. After getting participant feedback, items were reviewed by the expert committee. At the end of these revisions, we ended up with a 10-item scale.

Item Performance and Pilot Test

After the survey form was finalized, pilot data analysis was performed. A total of $n = 151$ data including political parties, unions, professional chambers, and associations from seven different municipalities were collected.

The asymmetry and kurtosis of the scale items and then the correlations between the scale items were examined (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011). When asymmetry and kurtosis were examined, none of the items of the ten-item scale were found to be more than ± 1.96 . After that, we examined the inter-item correlations. One item was found to have a low correlation ($r < .20$). This item ("NGOs deliver opinions on matters of their

interest in specialized municipal committees.”) was removed from the scale. One item (“Municipalities get opinions from NGOs by organizing advisory board meetings.”) was also removed because it was highly correlated with another item ($r > .90$, $p < .001$). After these items were removed, the scale consisted of eight items.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Eight hundred data obtained in this study were approximately divided into two, and one half ($N = 380$) was used for the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and the other half ($N = 420$) for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Demographic information for $N = 380$ data is included in Table 2.

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics (N=380)

	Frequency	Percent
NGO types		
Political parties	29	7.6
Unions	82	21.6
Professional chambers	65	17.1
Associations	204	53.7
Gender		
Female	79	20.8
Male	214	56.3
Approximately equal	87	22.9
Age		
18-29	15	3.9
30-39	139	36.6
40-49	140	36.8
50-59	73	19.2
60 +	13	3.4
Education		
Primary school	14	3.7
Middle school	46	12.1
High school	121	31.8
University	170	44.7
Higher education	29	7.6

We conducted the Principal Component analysis (PCA) using all eight items to find out the number of components. While determining the number of components, we examined the eigenvalues greater than one. Two domains were planned while creating the initial active participation scale, but all items were collected in three factors as presented in Table 3; we examined the factor loadings, items cross-loaded, item-total correlations, and communalities.

Table 3
Item-Total Statistics and Factor Loading Matrix

	Item-Total Statistics			EFA		
	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Factor loadings		
				1	2	3
PPI*	.439	.280	.703		.667	

	Item-Total Statistics			EFA		
	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Factor loadings		
				1	2	3
PP 3	.490	.374	.692		.759	
PP 4	.365	.213	.717	.400	.319	
PM 1	.072	.025	.770			.862
PM2	.499	.335	.690	.752		
PM3	.589	.511	.670	.849		
PM4	.489	.384	.694	.806		

*'Participation process' and 'participation mechanisms' were abbreviated as PP and PM, respectively

The results of the EFA suggested three-factor structures for the eight items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test score was .75 and Bartlett's test score was 696.398 ($p < .000$). These results mean that the sample size was adequate, and Bartlett's test was significant; thus, it is convenient to use factor analysis. The Cronbach Alpha was found to be .73 on the 8-item scale. The explained variance value was obtained as 64.44%. However, problems were detected in two items of the scale. The first problematic item is PM1 ("NGOs generally attend municipal council meetings."). The values in the column "Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted" reveal that removing the PM1 item from the scale increases the Cronbach Alpha value. The item also did not load on its expected factor "participation mechanism". The second problematic item is PP4 ("The municipality consults and gets information from NGOs in planning service delivery."). It is seen in Table 2 that the factor loading of the PP4 (PP8) item is low ($< .50$) and loaded on both factors. When the items were reevaluated under these results, we decided to remove two of the items (PM1 and PP4) from the scale.

After these two items were removed from the scale, the 6-item active participation scale was reevaluated. The results of the EFA suggested that two factors explained over 65% of the variance. Table 4 shows the factor loadings and all loadings were relatively high, ranging from .70 to .85. According to the scale statistics, the mean value of the scale was obtained as 17.67 (± 4.46) and the Cronbach Alpha value was found .76.

Table 4
Factor Loadings

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Extraction	Factor Loadings	
				1	2
PP1	2.88	1.09	.536	.700	
PP2	2.78	1.11	.743	.857	
PP3	2.88	1.18	.586	.742	
PM2	2.64	1.09	.606		.755
PM3	3.15	1.14	.774		.852
PM4	3.34	0.98	.674		.812

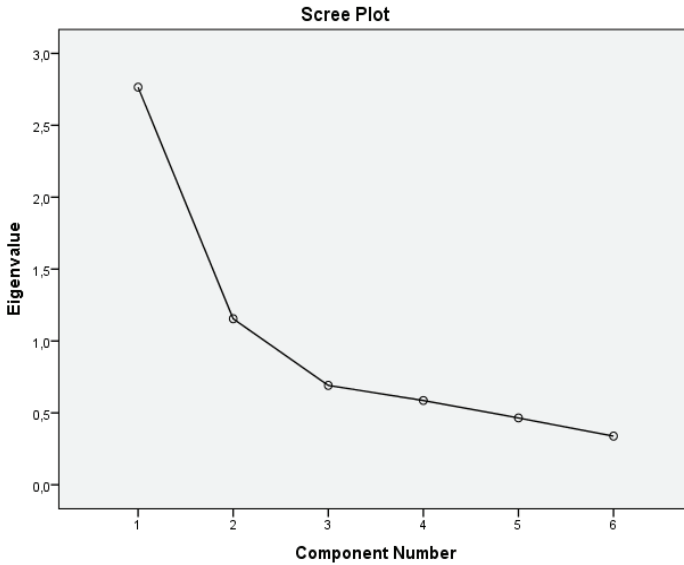


Figure 2. Scree plot

Along with eigenvalues, the scree plot was also examined (Weber et al., 2004: 363). In a scree plot, the line usually runs from the top left to the bottom right of the chart, as each factor explains less variance than the previous factors. The first point, where relatively less variance is explained, and the line becomes horizontal, indicates the number of factors. When Figure 2 is examined, it is seen that the scree plot also points to a two-factor structure.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

At this stage of the study, the CFA analyses were performed with the other half of the sample (N=420). Table 5 depicts the demographic information about the sample.

Table 5
Demographic Characteristics (N=420)

	Frequency	Percent
NGO types		
Political parties	37	8.8
Unions	97	23.1
Professional chambers	93	22.1
Associations	193	46.0
Gender		
Female	54	12.9
Male	260	61.9
Approximately equal	106	25.2
Age		
18-29	12	2,9
30-39	156	37.1
40-49	160	38.1

	Frequency	Percent
NGO types		
50-59	70	16.7
60 +	22	5.2
Education		
Primary school	8	1,9
Middle school	44	10.5
High school	133	31.7
University	190	45.2
Higher education	45	10.7

Normality was examined before performing the CFA analysis. When the skewness and kurtosis values were examined on the item basis, it was seen that the values were within ± 1.96 . In addition, the Mardia value calculated for multivariate normality was found to be $c.r.= 1.617$.

As the EFA suggested a two-factor solution, the model was specified with two latent factors. The CFA analysis was performed to verify the factor structure found by the EFA analysis. The estimates were made with the Maximum Likelihood (ML) commonly used in the CFA. The standardized regression weights obtained as a result of the CFA and the two-dimensional structure of the scale are shown in Figure 3.

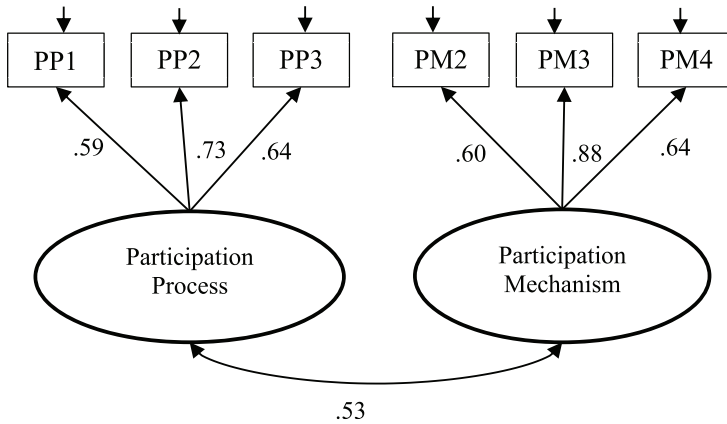


Figure 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (N=420)

The factor loads obtained in the CFA model range between .59 and .88 as seen in Figure 3. After estimating the models, goodness-of-fit statistics were obtained. In the CFA analysis, the model is desired to have insignificant chi-square values. In the other words, a nonsignificant p-value is obtained if a CFA model fits the data well. The CFA produced a chi-square of 17.273 (8) with $p<.027$ in this model. Commonly reported fit indices can be listed as follows; Model Chi-Square (χ^2), (Adjusted) Goodness of Fit (AGFI/GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Fit indices indicated a good fit with the data ($\chi^2/df=2.159$; $p=.027$; $RMSEA=.053$; $SRMR=.034$; $GFI=.987$; $AGFI=.966$; $CFI=.984$; $NFI=.971$). These goodness-of-fit statistics show that the structure has a good fit.

Internal Consistency and Convergent Validity

The active participation scale of 6 items showed a good degree of internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha .75). The item-total correlation is detailed in Table 6 together with the mean and standard deviation.

Table 6
Item-Total Correlation for Active Participation Scale (N=420)

Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Extraction	Item-Total Correlation
PP1	2.89	1.16	.570	.427
PP2	2.75	1.14	.707	.479
PP3	2.92	1.13	.565	.490
PM2	2.44	1.10	.644	.416
PM3	3.01	1.14	.744	.599
PM4	3.22	1.03	.609	.504

Table 7 depicts the active participation scale's Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and validity values calculated. CR (Composite Reliability) was found to be .84 and AVE (Average Variance Extracted) was equal to .47.

Table 7
Mean, Standard Deviation, and Reliability Values

Scale	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alfa	CR	AVE
Active participation	6	17.23	4.46	.75	.84	.47

The Cronbach Alpha and CR values calculated to investigate the reliability of the scales were found to be above 0.70. This shows that the scale has internal consistency. At the same time, the calculated AVE value of 0.50 is required to investigate the convergent validity. This value was 0.47 on the scale and it is very close to 0.50. This value provides validity when evaluated together with CR (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). It is also desired to be $CR > AVE$. This means that the variance explained by the structure is greater than the variance caused by the measurement error. In other words, the variance of the measurement error is small. In this study, $CR > .70$ and $CR > AVE$ conditions are satisfied.

Conclusion

The purpose of our study was to develop a scale for measuring NGOs' active participation in the municipal decision-making process. In parallel with the rise of the governance paradigm, many studies, as well as policy initiatives, were devoted to analyzing active participation at the local level to enhance its practice and obtain several expected benefits including democratic/civic awareness and budget efficiency. Much of the empirical research on local participation which focused on identifying factors that affect the level of citizen participation has targeted public officials. The number of studies that examined NGO members' participation in the local decision-making process per se is quite limited (Orbista, 2012; Sener, 2014) and they do not adopt a scale development approach.

Given the decisive position public authorities hold for the realization of citizen participation in representative democracies, the fact that the substantial proportion of the scale development research focuses on examining public officials' attitudes may seem reasonable. However, obtaining more data on citizens as the other stakeholder of the participatory relationship is likely to help the efforts for designing effective participation

mechanisms and processes to a great extent. Besides, developing a scale for measuring NGO members' perceptions amounts to focusing on a group of citizens who are likely to be more competent and display a higher degree of representativeness, especially with respect to the budgeting process. Obtaining data on NGOs by using such scales will allow us to comprehend in more detail 'organized citizens' as well as the variations regarding their level of participation in local decision-making depending on the differences between them (issue characteristics, organizational structure, member demographics, etc.). Data on NGOs' participation in the local decision-making process when evaluated together with data obtained from public officials may also contribute to clarifying the level of tokenistic tendencies regarding citizens' involvement (Yang & Callahan, 2005; Pandeya, 2015). We hope that the development of a new scale that aims to measure citizen perception alone will contribute to the literature as investigating a multi-faceted phenomenon like citizen participation requires such diversification efforts.

The scale developed in this study included six items under two dimensions. Items under the dimension of 'participation mechanisms' included different participation mechanisms such as city councils -a relatively new mechanism in Turkey-, regular meetings, and individual contacts. While these items do not directly match with participatory mechanisms that are categorized under active participation in the literature, it is essential to note that whether a participation mechanism contributes to active citizen involvement is dependent on the participation process, which includes several factors related to the social-cultural, political, and organizational environment. In other words, the actual effect of participation mechanisms in the decision-making process is determined throughout the participation process, which is measured in our study by a combination of items formulated around NGO members' opinion delivery to the municipality and their perception as being 'active stakeholders' in the policy development process. This is consistent with the essence of the debates on active participation, i.e., the reflection of opinions delivered by citizens into policy decisions.

Regarding the items of the participation mechanism dimension, it is possible to attribute the co-existence of 'individual contacts' together with city councils and regular meetings to political patronage (Heper & Keyman, 1998) and "tamed civil society" in contemporary Turkey (Yabancı, 2019: 285). On the other side, individual contacts may be interpreted as a facilitator for the development of genuine and continuous communication between the NGOs and the local administration as well as an indicator of public officials' positive attitudes towards citizen involvement, which are often mentioned in the literature as variables that are important in increasing the effectiveness of public participation. These possible interpretations are partly related to the participant's social expectations bias, a limitation that is associated with the survey data used in our study. To evaluate the extent of this bias, applications of this scale in different local contexts are thought to be helpful. As another limitation of our study, we can mention our data's cross-sectional feature since longitudinal data were also suggested during the scale development in different studies (Morgodo et al., 2017). Longitudinal use of this scale in specific localities may reveal temporal changes in NGOs' perceptions about their participation in local decision-making, which may contribute to evaluating the evolution of the local context regarding citizen involvement. Moreover, like similar studies, this study is based on the responses

of single NGO informants. Multiple respondents per NGO would increase reliability. Despite the limitations, the findings obtained in this study offer a deeper understanding of the active participation relationship between NGOs and municipalities in the local decision-making process.

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Appendix. Final Version of The Active Participation Scale

	Please select the number that best represents how you think about the statements below. Please choose only a single number for each statement and do not leave any statements blank.	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
PM2	NGOs can monitor municipal expenditures through city councils.	1	2	3	4	5
PM3	The municipality holds regular meetings with relevant NGOs in the decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
PM4	Individual contacts between the municipal officials and NGOs are effective in designing local services.	1	2	3	4	5
PP1	The municipality considers the opinions of NGOs about budgeting decisions on municipal services.	1	2	3	4	5
PP2	NGOs take part as active stakeholders in the decision-making process of the municipality.	1	2	3	4	5
PP3	The municipality receive opinions from NGOs in the decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5