

Relationship Between Citizens' Trust in Local Government and Participation in Local Governance

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Abstract

The article analyses the relationship between citizens' trust in local government institutions and participation in local governance. The research results have revealed that citizens' trust in local government is still low and participation lacks activeness. Civic participation is more active than political participation. According to the research results, the main reasons of absence of participation in local governance are lack of information and knowledge about public participation, lack of information about participation opportunities, lack of communication and response to expressed opinion and suggestions. The results of quantitative research showed that participation and trust dimensions are related. Absence of clear communication and response to citizens expressed opinion and suggestions causes distrust and lower participation. However, the research revealed the weak relationship between the trust in local government and participation in local governance. This fact requires further research.

Keywords

Citizens' trust, Citizens' political and civic participation, Local government, Local governance, Democracy

JEL Classification

H83, Q28

Introduction

Citizens' trust in local government and participation in local governance processes have recently gained an essential part in new public governance theories and development across the countries. It became an essential indicator in measuring democracy of governance. Usually, it is emphasised that one of the strategic aims of public administration modernization reflected in today's reforms in European regions is search for democratic local governance. Active citizen participation in local government activities is necessary, and their initiatives are reflected in almost all national and local strategic documents. It is understandable that democracy cannot function well without active citizens' participation in civic and political process, and trust in government serves as a vital driving force for local economic development, which also increases the effectiveness of governmental decisions (Mossberger, Wu and Crawford, 2013). Therefore, mutual discussions between representatives of local government and citizens are essential while strengthening reversible trust, seeking for local democratic, social or political environment. Thus, one of the most important components of democratic government is active citizen participation in making governance decisions. The elected representatives make complicated decisions which they mostly cannot understand and know all society's problems without citizens' voice and opinion.

During the recent decades, local governments have moved towards more democratic path involving citizens more frequently in participatory decision-making in order to improve quality, transparency and ownership of policies at local level. Initiatives to increase citizen participation have especially made substantial progress in Europe. However, citizen's civic and political participation here still lack activity. People do not feel safe from the economic and social points, property and social inequality is growing, the prevailing opinion states that decisions are mostly made without considering ordinary people, and the final decision is usually made only by the ruling ones. The existence of a gap between what is expected from the government and, respectively, what is received, lead to dissatisfaction and distrust, weaker participation in democratic processes (Weymouth and Hartz-Karp, 2019). In 1975, Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki define such phenomenon as a "crisis of

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democracy” with the main symptoms of weakening democracy as “erosion” of confidence in political institutions and the leaders of those institutions (Hetherington, 2005).

Low trust in the government is observed in the different sources. The research in 2019 shows that globally the percentage of citizen trust in institutions reaches 52% (in Europe – 59 %), percentage of people around the world who trust their government is 47% (Index: Trust in Institutions, 2019; posted by Michelle Winowatan). According to the OECD’s trust in government is still low. By the Eurobarometer survey, between 2007 and 2015, trust in political parties decreased by an average of 2 percentage points in OECD/EU member countries (from 21% to 19%). In fact, in 2016, only 37% of the people in OECD countries considered that they had a say in what their government does. “Such discontent is often reflected in political narratives and election outcomes. Overall, this data shows that further action is needed to strengthen trust in governments and public institutions” (OECD, 2019).

Decreased citizens’ trust in local government and low participation in local governance are reflected by several scientific researches (Lee and Schachter, 2018; Lu, Qi and Yu, 2019, etc.). According to them, citizens’ participation is quite often limited by various factors: institutional and interpersonal (which mostly appears to be driven by institutional) trust (Sønderskov and Dinesen, 2016; (Lee and Schachter, 2018; Ulbig, 2008), technological situation (Shen and Guo, 2013; Becker, 2011), political situation (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006; Choi and Woo, 2016), cultural values (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006), etc. Technological decisions cause doubts regarding sufficiency of safety and privacy assurance means, functionality in electronic networks causes distrust in government’s manifestations due to insufficient safety of access to important personal information, possibilities of fraud or personality’s theft (Colesca, 2009, Lim et al., 2012). Lack of citizens’ trust in government causes suspicions regarding decisions, separate politicians or their groups, stimulates disregard of government’s actions or different ways of resistance to them when sufficient trust in government has a great potential in the spheres of efficiency increase regarding transparency, government’s politicians, implementation of control, tax collection, and distribution of income (Colesca, 2009; Goldfinch et al, 2009). Moreover, citizens have a high level of political trust when they are satisfied with the overall political situation (Lu, Qi and Yu, 2019; Choi and Woo, 2016).

It is necessary to mention that, in scientific literature, the dimensions of citizens’ trust in government or participation in governance processes gain scientists’ attention separately, however, relationships between these two concepts have been insufficiently investigated in practice by empirical methods. Referring to this, this paper empirically, in a quantitative way, aimed to disclose the relationships between citizens’ trust in local government institutions and political/civic participation in local governance, focusing on question: does citizen participation in local governance depend from their trust in local government? First, we seek to gain a better understanding expression of trust and participation, formulating hypothesis that both dimensions depend on sociodemographic characteristics. Does citizen participation and trust in local government institutions in general depend of sociodemographic characteristics? Secondly and primarily, this paper is an attempt to find relationships between citizens’ trust in local government institutions and participation in local governance.

Research methods: a) analysis of scientific literature; b) strategy of quantitative research selecting the method of survey; c) case study approach; d) statistical methods of data analysis. Data analysis has been processed, analysed and modelled with data analysis package SPSS 20.0.

Literature Review

Definition of Political Trust

The “Trust” concept in scientific literature started to be wider analysed from the second part of XX c. and is relevant until today, therefore, society’s trust in government and public sector institutions as a research object is not new. This is shown by scientific research carried out in various spheres about trust and aspects related to trust. Trust conceptions and models were analysed by Hamm et al. (2016), Schneider (2017), Hansen (2012), Susila et al. (2015), Marozzi (2015), Bouckaert (2012) et al, Christensen (2020) et al.

As a concept, “trust” is multidimensional and has various meanings. In some explanations trust is associated with moral values (Jamil and Askvik 2016), in others with positive expectations of the intention or behaviour of another (Rousseau et al. 1998). In the different relationships area trust could appear as interpersonal trust or in societal and political institutions – social and political trust. According to Lu, Qi and Yu, 2019, political trust is an extension of interpersonal trust, which is developed through cultural values of political institutions. Both types of trust accomplish and sustain each other and relate to the democratic processes. In general, trust is an essential condition for the functioning of social and political systems.

Citizen’s trust in government often is referred to as political trust. Political trust plays an important role in maintaining the stability of political regimes (Levi and Stoker, 2000). Political trust is defined as trust dimension, which is showing how a government should function. Political trust influences the stability and effectiveness of

political system, shapes individual citizens' political attitudes and behaviours (Lu, Qi and Yu, 2019; Bauer and Fatke, 2014; Rahn and Rudolph, 2005). There is still disagreement among scholars on whether political trust can be defined as citizens' trust in the government or confidence in governmental institutions and their performance.

From the citizens' perspective, trust facilitates consent to governmental decisions. Connotation of the concept "political trust" is disclosing expectation that political actors will not misuse their power. Whereas, a few studies point to the positive relationships of political trust on compliance with governmental institutions performance in tax law, towards welfare state policies, political trust for the support of governmental expenditure, ect. (Marien and Hooghe, 2011).

OECD (Trust in Government, 2018) identified six areas, which can help governments to restore, sustain or increase citizens' trust in government:

- Reliability. Governments have an obligation to minimise uncertainty in the economic, social and political environment.
- Responsiveness. Trust in government can depend on citizen's experiences when receiving public services – a crucial factor of trust in government.
- Openness. Open government policies that concentrate on citizen engagement and access to information can increase public trust.
- Better regulation. Proper regulation is important for justice, fairness and the rule of law as well in delivering public services.
- Integrity and fairness. Integrity is a crucial determinant of trust and is essential if governments want to be recognised as clean, fair and open.
- Inclusive policy making. Understanding how policies are designed can strengthen institutions and promote trust between government and citizens.

The mix of values that prevail in public administration provides a frame for citizens trust are disclosed widely in scientific literature. Research results reflects that positive perception, governmental transparent, openness, inclusive policy and satisfactory relationship with local authorities support citizen's trust in local government (Cheema, 2010, Diamond, 2007). Moreover, empirical researches are demonstrating that such factors as institutions performance or government's responsiveness highly predict citizen's trust (Kao, Huang and Lu, 2017; Armingeon and Guthmann, 2014). Diamond (2007) suggested that to build public trust, the government must be more vigilant, especially for law and the public interest (Beshi and Kaur, 2019). According to Cheema (2010), building trust is both the result and the determinant of inclusive governance. So, when trying to ensure trust, it is appropriate to analyse different indicated factors. In available literature, scientists also present other factors that could influence trust: political and administrative scandals, economic situation, interinstitutional trust, etc. Trust stimulates citizen participation in political life, they are more likely "to vote, follow politics, feel a sense of civic duty, and have high levels of political knowledge" (Lee and Schachter, 2018; Mishler and Richard, 2005).

Importance of Citizens' Participation in Local Governance

Citizens' participation in local governance is one of the most important features of democracy as well as free and open society (Sjoberg et al., 2017). In general, citizens' participation in governance refers to the meaningful involvement of citizens in different stages of the processes of government policy design and implementation. Usually, citizens are part of policy forming activities, decision making processes; they are involved in agenda settings and are willing to participate. Participating in political life, citizens form civic responsibility in such way expressing their interests that government must refer to.

The OECD (2020) has collected evidence and data that support the idea that citizen participation in public decision making can deliver better policies, strengthen democracy and build trust. Citizens' participation is effective and important to state and local governance because it: stimulates the dialogue between society and local government; increases transparency of government institutions' activities and accountability creating conditions for good governance; helps to solve community's problems and ensure that people's opinion will be considered while making political and strategic-programme decisions; helps to determine community's needs and priorities; creates an opportunity to obtain necessary information for the best decision and provides a possibility to explain the essence of the matter to people when it is necessary to make a complicated or unpopular decision; provides an opportunity to civil servants to show people that they know their job and do it responsibly – directly serve citizens; develops mutual trust, consciousness and forms the sense of responsibility; helps civil servants to solve conflicts, achieve consensus and ensure support to people; allows to receive society's support because people like to be asked of their opinion about important questions.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAPP) scale highlight five steps in public participation:

information; consultation; collaboration; involvement; empowerment (UN, 2018). Citizens' participation in governance is defined by the processes by which citizens receive information related to public policies and programs, share feedback about their needs and are directly involved in the formulation or implementation of these policies and programs (Lu, Qi and Yu, 2019). A large part of information goes through communication between government and citizens about rules, laws, regulations, etc. and individualized communication between the government and citizens regarding administrative transactions that concern them (Le Blanc, 2020). According to Le Blanc (2020) while the distinction between the first two steps - information and consultation - is conceptually straightforward, distinguishing among involvement, collaboration and empowerment is not always easy. E-participation can help to joint offline and online activities and help to minimise gap between government and citizens, increase involvement, and enlarge empowerment and to build inter-trust.

Simonofski et al. (2020) structured participation in three main categories. Firstly, citizens can be democratic participants in the decision-making process of local government and thus support democratic development. Secondly, citizens can be co-designers in order to contribute to creation of new ideas and new understanding in local government (Dawes, 2008; Nabatchi et al., 2017). Finally, the citizens can actively participate using the e-government technologies in a way that makes citizens perceive participation as accessible and enables them to participate more easily. Wijnhoven et al. (2015) categorizes citizen participation into three main categories: "citizen sourcing" (citizens support daily public administrative tasks, such as informing the road maintenance depot about road problems), "collaborative democracy" (citizens provide input for decision-making on general policy issues), and "citizen ideation and innovation" (citizens actively contribute to the identification of societal problems and the development of solutions) (Alathur, Ilavarasan and Gupta, 2016; Porwol and Ojo, 2018; Sussha and Grönlund, 2014; Sjoberg et al., 2017).

Citizen's participation can be described by two main forms: political and civic (or social) participation. Political participation includes a broad range of activities through which citizens develop and express their opinions regarding governance, take part in the decisions that affect their lives. Political participation can be divided in two categories: institutionalized or non-institutionalized. Institutionalized participation directly relates to election-related political activities (elections, referendum, etc.), while non-institutionalized participation might include such activities as strikes, signing petitions, taking part in demonstrations, participation in budget formation, citizens' surveys, planning groups, citizens' groups, constant forums, electronic meetings and other forms of participation. In addition, levels of citizen's participation in local governments may differ from information of community to consulting, involving and establishing partnership between local government and community (Robinson, 2002; Song and Lee, 2015).

Citizens' civic participation is any individual or group activity addressing issues of public concern. Voluntary work and participation in associations are typical examples of civic participation. As civic participation activities are denotations, local community's activities as environment cleaning, communication with municipality stakeholders regarding the new ideas or city problems, etc. According to Ekman and Amnå (2009) sometimes civil participation could be described as latent political participation, because "latently" it has relation to specific political parliamentary and extra-parliamentary actions.



Fig. 1. Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation.

Source: composed by the authors referring to Arnstein's (1969, p. 217) ladder

Arnstein (1969) developed the graduation and potential for citizen participation that later affected city planning approaches in United States. Citizen participation was typically viewed as a way to influence public policy. According to Arnstein, citizens participation is reflected in eight phases, reclassified into three major categories

namely non-participation (corresponding to manipulation and therapy), degrees of tokenism (comprising informing, consultation and placation) and degrees of citizen power (consisting of partnership, delegated power, and citizen control) (Rowe and Frewer, 2000) (see Fig. 1).

Non-participation is described as one where citizens do not have their say, yet are necessary for the power to demonstrate fake participation models (Arnstein, 1969). Tokenism includes a step towards a holistic citizen participation as community are informed and involved. Finally, citizens power as described by Arnstein, means active residents being effective in daily life of community. Even though Arnstein created a sort of divide between citizens and politicians at power, at the same time he also (1969) noted that partnership between a local government and citizens are the only way to eliminate distrust for the wider political system.

Methods

The research has been carried out on the basis of scientific quantitative research methodology and case study strategy.

Case study selected for the research was used trying to reveal, describe, and illustrate citizens participation in governance and its relationship with the trust to government in Šiauliai city Municipality (Lithuania¹), which in 2013 implemented a project called 'Promotion of Electronic Democracy in its Region'. The empirical part of citizens' surveys is based on the study of 341 surveyed Šiauliai citizens in 2019. To achieve a sociodemographic balance, different age, gender, educational and social background respondents were represented (see Table 3).

The research scales were constructed relying on theoretical ideas and empirically validated facts on the citizen's participation and trust. The scales' items were designed using Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation model approach and the International Association for Public Participation (IAPP) scale. An anonymous closed type questionnaire consisted of five question blocks. This article is focusing on three of them: 1) interest in municipal activities; 2) peculiarities of citizens' political and civic participation in local governance; 3) peculiarities of citizens' trust in local government. The scales' psychometric validity was evaluated using factorial analysis and the method of Principal Components with VARIMAX rotation (see Table 1).

Table 1. Psychometric validity of the scales.

Construct scale	KMO	Total Variance, %	Factor Weight
Interest in local activities	0.72	80.64	0.86-0.93
Participation in local governance	0.74	42.15	0.28-0.57
Trust in local government	0.71	79.94	0.85-0.93

Data analysis was completed using SPSS Statistic Package for Social Sciences.

Results

Interest in local government activities

Seeking to evaluate respondents' interest in local government activities they were asking to answer a group of questions about how important for them is to know more about different local government decisions, to be familiar with financial reports and participate in formation of the city budget, about municipal projects which are under implementation and project to be implemented, etc. Research results showed that citizens in general have big interest to local government activities: in answers "important" and "very important to know" vary from 87% - 95%.

According to Martin, Van Deth (2007), a low level of political interest determines the relatively low level of political trust and participation in general. We disclosed that citizens' interest in local governance processes is very high. Higher interest at the local level in comparison with other governmental levels like the regional or national ones was also identified by Bonet et al. (2006). Being specific (in 2013 Šiauliai city implemented a project called 'Promotion of Electronic Democracy in its Region') our research case is to be analysed and looking deeper to the situation. Hypothetically we assume, that the high interest to local activities has impact wider possibilities to use e-democracy and e-participation tools as E-forums, E-consultations, E-petitions, E-meetings, E-complaints, E-surveys, Website systems of Council meetings translations and presentation of accepted decisions.

¹ As a context of the case in general is Lithuania, which since the restoration of independence in 1990 has built a democratic society. According to the terms of the Constitution (approved by referendum in 1992), Lithuania is a parliamentary republic. Lithuania is, by the standards of most Council of Europe states, relatively sparsely populated – approximately 2.8 million with a surface area of 65.300 square kilometres. Šiauliai city, as a case city of the study, is in the north of Lithuania. Šiauliai is a city with a population of 101.511 (2020) and a total city area of 81.13 square kilometres.

Political and civic participation in local governance

To disclose the situation of political and civic participation in local governance, respondents were asked to answer about their participation during the last 24 months. Research results reflected that citizens political participation is still low, more than half of the surveyed does not participate in any political activities. The highest political participation was seen in signing petitions (32.1%) and in public consultations and meetings organised by the municipality traditionally or on-line (21.3%). The less likely action respondents would take would be work for the political parties, movements or initiative groups (6.3%) (see Fig. 2).

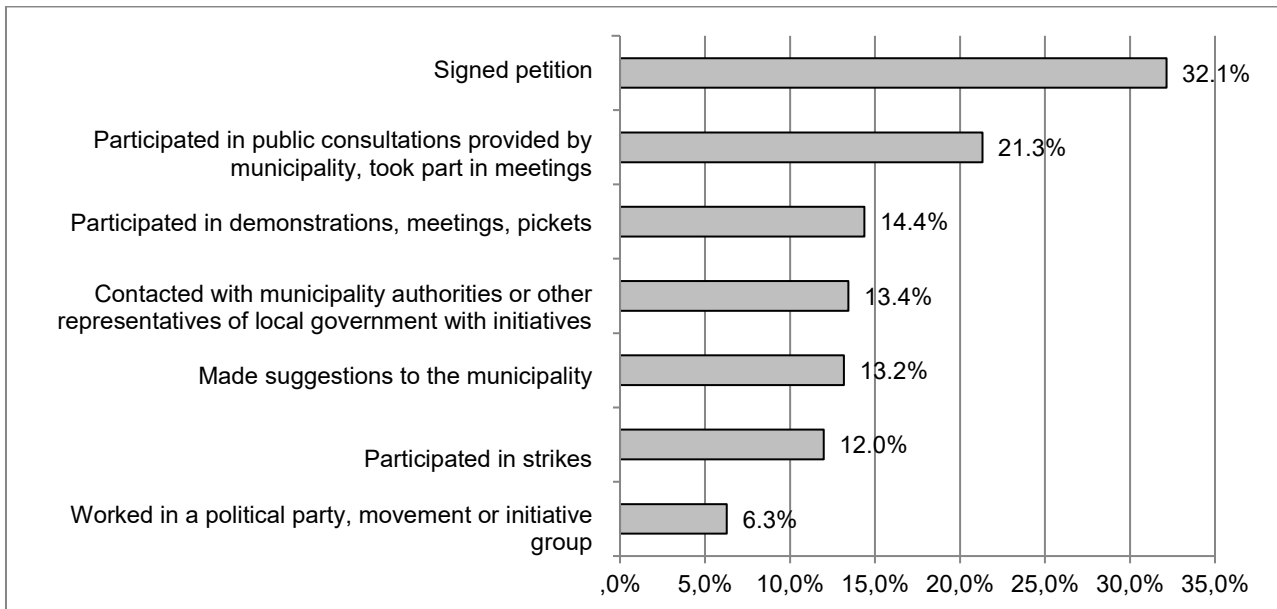


Fig. 2. Citizens Political Participation.

Research results disclosed that even the participatory mechanisms are generally open and acceptable to citizens, and could involve higher numbers of participants, citizens' political participation in local level government still need attention of science and practice. The main reasons for non-participation were identified as lack of information and knowledge about tools of public participation, lack of user-friendly information on participation opportunities, lack of proper municipal communication and quick response to citizens expressed opinion and suggestions.

Survey results on the citizen's civic participation shows higher percent of participation. The biggest part of respondents (66.7%) expressed civic participation activeness within 24 months by giving money or other goods to charity or supporting people in other ways. The results also show that respondents actively participate in environment clean-up activities (48.4%), participated as volunteers in others local community's activities (45.8%) (see Fig. 3).

According to Flanagan, Levine and Setttersen (2009), Barber, Mueller and Ogata (2013), civic participation varies by generation, age and education. Today's young adults may be less likely to participate in civic activities because they may not have access to information on how to participate, individuals with higher education levels may have more opportunities for civic engagement, male are less likely to engage in civic activities than female.

Trying to disclose the influence of sociodemographic variables on participation in local governance the following hypothesis has been formulated: (H₁) Participation in local governance depends on sociodemographic characteristics: (H₁₁) depends on gender; (H₁₂) depends on age; (H₁₃) depends on education level; (H₁₄) depends on monthly incomes.

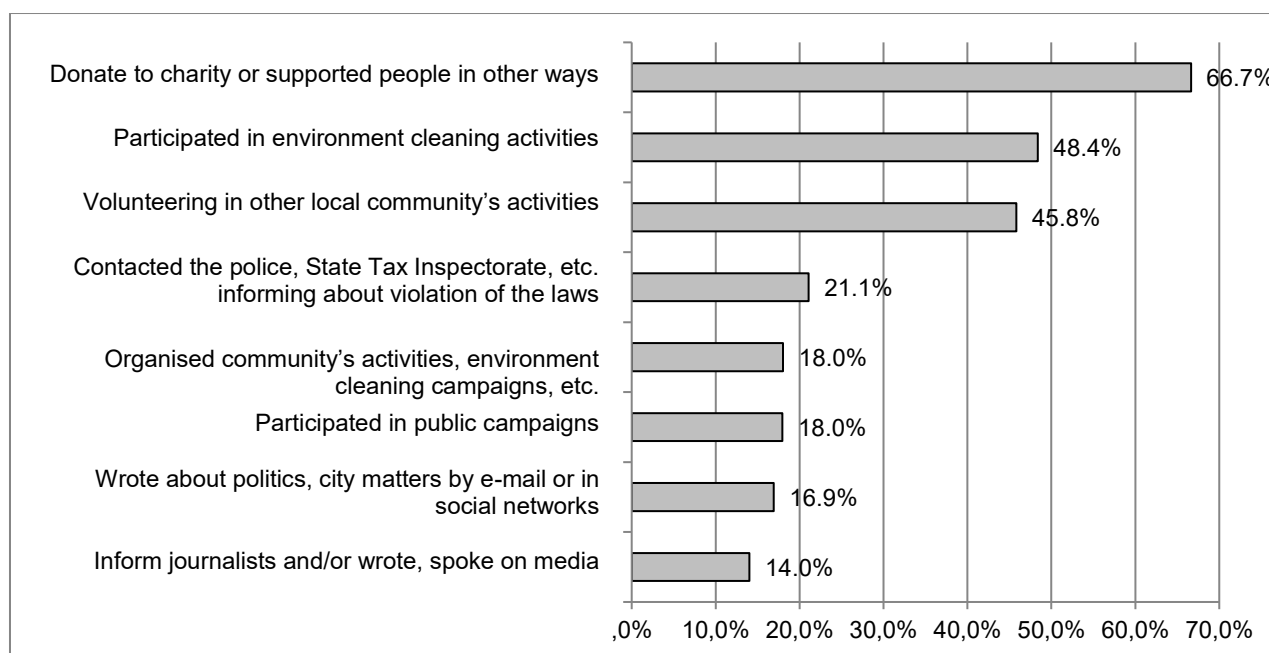


Fig. 3. Citizens Civic Participation

As the construct of participation in local governance covers political and civic participation scales, before starting to analyse participation in local governance in general, using statistical methods scales on political and civic participation were joint to one factor – participation in local governance. Table 2 presents research results on participation in local governance by sociodemographic characteristics.

Table 2. Participation in local governance (Kruskal-Wallis test)

Characteristic	Respondents' groups	N	Kruskal-Wallis test			
			Average rank	Chi2	df	p value
Gender	Male	112	173.51	0.11	1	0.74
	Female	229	169.77			
Age	18–29	80	147.89	10.07	4	0.04
	30–39	94	169.38			
	40–49	68	198.92			
	50–59	45	174.48			
	60 and more	54	170.00			
Education	Basic	4	140.25	9.85	4	0.04
	Secondary	35	145.90			
	Secondary with professional qualification	52	148.89			
	Higher non-university	89	166.24			
Incomes	Higher university	161	186.99	15.18	3	<0,001
	Current incomes are sufficient to avoid any deficiency	33	170.92			
	Current incomes are sufficient	206	157.85			
	We manage poorly with current incomes	94	203.21			
	We manage very poorly with current incomes	8	131.56			

Even though some scientific research emphasises a more active female role in political and civic life than male, our research results in evaluating political and civic participation in local governance by gender state that the difference between participation among male and female is not statistically significant, they both tend to be active citizens' in civic society, there is no "gender gap". However, the research results revealed that participation in local governance statistically significantly defer by the age, education and level of income.

According to the research results the respondents of age 40-49 tend to participate at the local level governance more actively than the younger generation. Particular age dimension was notable in civic participation, were participation is mainly related to charitable activities, and not very expressed into other volunteering context. Lithuania does not yet have a deep tradition of volunteering, but recently, especially among young people, volunteering has been growing very rapidly.

The research data is showing tendency that respondents with higher education tend to participate in local governance more often. The higher education level, the higher level of participation. And when evaluating participation considering incomes, the results show that people who poorly manage with their current income tend to participate less, and those who have sufficient income to avoid deficiency tend to participate in local governance more often. However, it is worth mentioning that only 94 respondents who poorly manage with current incomes and only 33 respondents who have sufficient incomes to avoid any deficiency participated in the research, therefore, the research did not reveal statistically significant differences that only people who manage poorly with current incomes or only people who have sufficient incomes to avoid any deficiency tend to participate less actively and more actively in local governance. Referring to the obtained data we may state that people who have sufficient income tend to participate in local governance most.

In general, we may state that H_1 hypothesis, which mentions that participation in local governance depends on sociodemographic characteristics was confirmed: the obtained data show that middle aged and senior persons tend to participate in local governance more often; participation in local governance also depends on education level and monthly income. The research data revealed that the higher the level of education a person has the more actively he/she participates in local governance. In addition, the respondents who have sufficient income tend to participate in local governance more, therefore we can make a conclusion that the following points were confirmed: (H_{1_2}) participation in local governance depends on age, (H_{1_3}) participation in local governance depends on educational level and (H_{1_4}) participation in local governance depends on monthly income, whereas (H_{1_1}) hypothesis that participation in local governance differs in men's and women's groups was not confirmed.

Trust in municipal institutions

In order to disclose citizens trust in local government, the respondents were asked to evaluate (0 – do not trust, 10 – highly trust) how much they trust in local authorities: Mayor, Municipality Council, Municipality Administration. The biggest trust was expressed to the city Mayor (value – 6). Municipal Council, which is the main authority in decision making, is trusted the least, where the average of the answers was only 4 points out of 10. The average of general trust is also quite low, reaching only 5.1 points out of 10. This fact is showing that citizens' trust in local government is still low.

Trying to reveal the influence of sociodemographic variables on trust in local government the following hypothesis has been formulated: (H_2) Trust in local government depends on sociodemographic characteristics: (H_{2_1}) depends on gender; (H_{2_2}) depends on age; (H_{2_3}) government depends on education level; (H_{2_4}) depends on monthly incomes.

Research results indicating how trust in local government institution depends on sociodemographic characteristics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Trust in local government (Kruskal-Wallis test)

Characteristic	Respondents' groups	N	Kruskal-Wallis test			
			Average rank	Chi2	df	p
Gender	Male	107	176.89	3.49	1	0.06
	Female	218	156.18			
Age	18–29	78	135.47	15.20	4	<0.01
	30–39	92	175.16			
	40–49	63	147.55			
	50–59	43	190.73			
	60 and more	49	179.52			
Education	Basic	3	137.50	0.80	4	0.94
	Secondary	32	156.33			
	Secondary with professional qualification	51	158.90			
	Higher non-university	85	168.78			

	Higher university	154	163.05			
Incomes	Current incomes are sufficient to avoid any deficiency	32	171.48			
	Current incomes are sufficient	195	169.81	7,50	3	0.06
	We manage poorly with current incomes	90	141.57			
	We manage very poorly with current incomes	8	204.19			

While evaluating trust in local government institutions, it has been determined that there are no statistically significant differences between male and female groups, men and women equally trust the local government institutions. However, as research results shows (see Table 4), trust in local government depends on an individual's age. Senior people (50-59 years) trust local government institutions the most whereas the youth (18-29 years) – the least. According to Læg Reid and Christensen (2005), “trust in government increases with age; older people tend to be more collectively oriented, and whereas younger generation has experienced a public sector that is either decreasing or blending in elements from the private sector, older people have experienced the build-up of the welfare state and will therefore tend to have more trust in government”.

Even if some research results (Rainie, Perrin, 2019) state that education stimulates trust in government, having analysed our research results, it has been determined that there is no statistically significant difference between education and trust in government. Further research requires deeper analysis of this phenomenon.

Research data shows that income is an important factor in expression of trust to government. This confirms the results of other studies that claim that high levels of income inequality decrease citizens' trust in governments across various countries around the world. Moreover, investigators have found that societal heterogeneity has a negative impact on trust: the more homogeneous a country is, the higher its trust, and vice versa (Aitalieva, 2017).

In general, we may state that hypothesis H_2 – trust in local government depends on sociodemographic characteristics was confirmed: the obtained data revealed that municipality institutions are trusted most by senior respondents, therefore (H_{2_2}) hypothesis, according to which trust in local government depends on age was confirmed. The hypothesis (H_{2_4}) that trust in local government depends on income was also confirmed. Such sociodemographic characteristics as gender and education do not have any influence on trust in local government institutions, therefore the following hypotheses were not confirmed: (H_{2_1}) trust in local government depends on gender, (H_{2_3}) trust in local government depends on education.

The relationship between trust and participation

It is important to mention that while analysing trust and participation, the relationship between trust in local government variables and participation in local governance is not always empirically detected because it is difficult to determine the consequence and the result. Seeking to disclose a relationship between citizen's trust in local government and participation in local governance, a multivariate regression analysis was used. It helps to find a relationship between dependent variable (as a result) – participation in local governance and several independent variables – trust in local government, evaluation of local democracy, interest in municipal activities, and adequacy of information provided by the municipality. Regression analysis results showed that the coefficient of determination is sufficiently high – $R^2=0.56$, which means that 56% of citizen participation is influenced by selected independent variables. The significance of constant is less than 0.001 and suggesting that there is at least one independent variable in the model that affects dependent variable. Standardized beta coefficients and p value of the ANOVA criterion indicates significant relationships. Research results highlighted, that the greatest impact on dependent variable – citizens participation – has citizens' interest in local activities ($p<0.001$) (see Table 4), then – trust in local government ($p=0.09$). We can assume that it is important for the local government to use different ways of communication and other actions in order to engage citizens in local activities, events, to give them more information and knowledge about local possibilities and challenges.

The deliberative democracy theory and other data and sources find that most citizens, who trust governmental institutions, are more likely to participate in political activities. However, research data provided limited support for relationship between the trust and participation. This fact requires future scientific research. However, we hypothesize that citizens' trust in government relieves them from responsibility to be as an active part of local democracy. Thus, citizens value democracy and local policy and handing over rights to local government representatives, not having much interest to participate in the democratic process themselves.

Table 4. Multivariate Regression Analysis Results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.99	0.08		12.43	<0.001
Interest in local activities	0.10	0.02	0.30	5.38	<0.001
Trust in local government	0.00	0.00	-0.13	-1.69	0.09
Evaluation of local democracy	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.26	0.79
Adequacy of information	0.00	0.03	-0.01	-0.16	0.87

Discussion

Following the research results in this article we were trying empirically to verify the relationships between citizens' trust in local government and participation in local governance, trying to answer the question does citizen participation in local governance depend on their trust in local government. In order to achieve the main research aim, first of all it was purposeful in general to gain understanding about citizens' expression of trust in local government and participation in local governance and their dependence upon sociodemographic characteristics. It has been revealed that expression of trust in local government institutions and participation in local governance is not high and needs attention. Moreover, research data provided limited support for relationship between the trust and participation. Citizens are interested in local activities, value democracy, however, they do not show much interest in participation in the democratic process themselves. Political trust in local government is not the main factor for the active participation in local governance. This fact requires further research that would prove or deny it and would reveal the reasons.

Given fact, that this study was conducted in a pre-Covid-19 situation, the results of the study may vary and be a slightly different in the coronavirus crisis situation. As newest scientific studies are showing (Oude Groeniger, et al., 2021; Esaiasson, et al., 2020; Schraff, 2020), the coronavirus crisis increases levels of institutional and interpersonal trust. In particularly difficult and dramatic times support for government institutions often increases (Dinesen and Jæger, 2013). For example, the COVID-19 lockdown measures introduced by the Dutch government in March 2020 had substantial positive effects on trust in the governmental institutions (increases in 18%) (Oude Groeniger, et al., 2021). The positive impact of the lockdown measures on trust in government could be interpreted as confidence in institutions that take action at times of crisis. However, the trust research is diverse and complex, depends from the context, term perspective and situation. This issue requires further research.

Since our research was designed for identification relationship between trust and participation, focusing on how citizen participation in local governance depending from their trust in local government, it has not been specifically powered to detect what governments can do to improve their citizens' trust. Meanwhile, COVID-19 fastened application of all kinds of e-tools at municipal level as well. So, citizens can watch as regular council meetings as well as to participate in e-platforms based public forums. However, there is no data on impact of COVID-19 inspired e-tools on long term citizens participation modes and sustainable behaviour changes. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has facilitated not only a significant economic crisis at the national and local level, but also a crisis for local democracy as some policies has been postponed "for better times". From the psychology point of view, during crises and extreme events, people are tended to stick to current belief and social norms. Thus, we might assume that citizens would like to see back "old and trusted participation tools", not only online inspired tools.

The availability of data to verify this issue is limited due to the challenges of trust measurements in general and in COVID-19 situation. For disclosing scientific insights, we need excellent and holistic data, based on regular investigations across the world.

Conclusions

Scientific literature analysis demonstrated a great variety of trust and participation conceptions, but there is lack of research on relationship between trust and participation. Representatives of every scientific sphere define these conceptions in a different way and differently distinguish elements characteristic to these conceptions.

Several models of participation have been developed. The earliest and probably the most well-known model was presented by Sherry Arnstein as the ladder of participation (1969), which identified eight rungs of participation with little or no citizen participation at one end to a fully citizen-led form at the other. Participation

ladders have been described in last century, why in nowadays new forms and mechanisms (especially in Covid-19 situation) changed the perspective on how people can participate and allow constituting real citizen power and the fullest form of citizen participation. The question in this case is how citizens are involved, how citizens are confident with new forms of participation, in the participation and how power is redistributed. It also focuses on the question on whether citizen participation is related to the trust in government.

While analysing conceptions of trust in local government, it has been noticed that in definitions of trust conception scientists use elements of psychology and social sciences. In trust definitions that involve psychological elements, quite often trust is identified with a person's feelings, emotions, expectations, and relationships with other people or institutions. Sociologists treat trust as a belief in situations or even structures, consider it the essential person's value that must be cherished in each organisation. It is possible to state that, theoretically, trust is composed of very many various elements that determine a persons' trust not only among the surrounding people but also in institutions that implement state or municipality functions.

Having analysed the conceptions of participation in local governance we may state that participation is perceived as one of the principles of successful democracy. In democratic countries, each citizen has possibilities to participate in state and local governance. Only actively participating citizens are able to influence political process, and in this way - control activities of the local government. Participation is related to society, to be more precise – with citizens, therefore the conception of participation refers to citizenship conception as a basis.

Having analysed the results of the empirical research, it has been revealed that expression of trust in local government institutions and participation in local governance is not high in the research case. The general average of trust in local government institutions received 5 points in a ten-point system. When evaluating trust in every local government institution separately, research results showed that a municipality Mayors is trusted the most, when the trust average reached 6 points out of 10, while Municipal Councils are trusted the least – only 4 points out of 10.

The research results revealed that people quite inactively participate in local governance. The respondents mentioned that they would like to get involved in local governance more actively while making decisions, however, they do not have sufficient information about opportunities to participate in public consultations, Council's sessions or making suggestions, expressing opinion, and mainly – to communicate and receive response from the government authorities. Even almost 10 years ago in research case was implemented project on Electronic Democracy with high possibilities to participate in local governance by the electronic means did not give high positive results.

Using nonparametric statistical criteria (Kruskal-Wallis H test) the hypotheses on how trust in government and participation in local governance depend on sociodemographic characteristics were tested. The hypothesis that participation in local governance depends on sociodemographic characteristics was confirmed: the obtained data revealed that middle-aged and senior respondents, also those who have higher education and respondents who have sufficient incomes participate in local governance more actively. The obtained results showed that activeness of participation in local governance does not depend on gender. The hypothesis that trust in local government depends on sociodemographic characteristics was confirmed: the obtained data revealed that senior respondents trust most in local government institutions, income is important factor in the context of trust and such sociodemographic characteristics as gender and education do not have impact on trust in local government institutions.

The relationship between citizens trust in local government and participation in local governance were analysed using multivariate regression analysis. According to previous scientific research insights, exaggerated trust harms democracy because it stimulates political apathy, decline in alertness, and control of government institutions. At the same, a deliberative democracy theory predicts that the citizens who trust governmental institutions are more likely to participate in political activities. Our research results showed that citizens are still very much interested in politics and the most important factor in participation is interest in local activities. However, the data provided limited support for a relationship between the trust and participation. Citizens value democracy and local policy and handing over rights to local government representatives, not having much interest to participate in the democratic process themselves.

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