



## Local Community Participation in Social Innovation Initiatives for Enhancing the Quality of Life: A Case Study in Rural Egypt

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the actors-related variables that would affect the rural people's participation in a grassroots social innovation (SI) initiative that has evolved and sustained since the 1980s in two geographically attached villages in Menoufia Governorate in Egypt. The study is based on the quantitative approach which used the socio-economic sample survey and applied a pretested structured questionnaire to a random sample of 221 household heads in the study area. The results revealed that there were significant positive relationships between the degree of respondents' participation and their attitudes towards the SI, their degree of sense of community, and the perceived attributes of the SI. Moreover, there were significant negative relationships between the degree of respondents' participation and their degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI and the degree of social loafing. Finally, 60.8% of the variance in the degree of participation could be explained by the variances in the respondents' age, geographic mobility, attitude towards the SI initiative, degree of social loafing, degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI, and the degree of sense of community. To the best of the authors' knowledge, few studies in Egypt dealt with the variables that might affect the local community participation in innovation in rural areas from actors-related perspectives. Hence, the results of this study might help to draw attention to the relationship between the actors' attributes, and their social and economic conditions with the participation in local social innovations in rural Egypt.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Innovation; Rural Development; Social Participation

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of social innovation (SI) has attracted the interest of policymakers, non-governmental organizations, charities,

entrepreneurs, scholars, and public thinkers from a range of disciplines across the world. It is perceived as an approach that goes beyond simply treating the symptoms of societal problems. Instead, it helps address their root causes.

Therefore, it is regarded as a tool for achieving a long-term transformation in the social lives of people (BEPA, 2014). Social innovations are manifested by the initiatives that emerge in response to the unmet needs of the local people, particularly in rural areas (Polman et al., 2017). Furthermore, social innovations can deal with wicked problems (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012; Polman et al., 2017). Hence, social innovations are believed to have the potential to play a vital role in enhancing the sustainable livelihood of marginalized communities.

Egypt has adopted the sustainable development approach since the nineties and recently launched a national sustainable development strategy "Egypt Vision 2030" in 2016. In addition, the state launched the "decent life" initiative in 2019 that aims to improve the livelihood of the marginalized sectors of the population, including rural residents across Egypt who constitute about 57.14% of the total population (World Bank, 2021). Nevertheless, many rural areas in Egypt are regarded as marginalized territories in terms of services and infrastructure. This is especially the case of satellite villages that are characterized by their tiny farms and dispersed small populations.

The local administration agencies in Egypt are officially responsible for the villages' cleaning and garbage collection system. Yet, due to a shortage of financial resources and the ineffective management of many of the local agencies in rural areas to perform these tasks, the concerned local communities suffered from an unsanitary environment and the accumulation of garbage on streets and in water canals. This situation bothered many of the local population in some rural areas, which motivated some leaders to call for local initiatives to resolve the problem based on voluntary local action.

The two villages of "Kafr Wahb" and "Kafr Abdo" in Menoufia Governorate in Egypt were among the early initiatives of this type that involved the reconfiguration of novel social and environmental practices different from the ordinary cleaning system applied in other rural areas in Egypt. They were able to improve the environmental and greenery conditions in their villages through voluntary collective action led by

the innovator. Their initiative resulted in clean and aesthetic villages, which played a key role in convincing the local authorities to support the two villages by covering the irrigation canal, paving roads, connecting the two villages to the public gas, electricity, and sanitation systems, and establishing a new decentralized cleaning system managed by the two villages' development organization. Since then, the community members have dedicated themselves to alternative methods such as collective action, self-reliance, donations (e.g., money, lands, tools, and buildings), and their networks with agents from the public and private sectors to address their community's other existing needs rather than relying entirely on the state. The local people have participated collectively in providing a water purification station, an elementary and preparatory school, a health unit, a youth club, greenery and beautification of streets, and a community development organization that has a nursery, computer lab, and women's economic activities (Khairy, 2015). Additionally, the two villages' religious facilities (mosque and church) provide many services for the local community such as periodical meetings, collecting donations, and environmental awareness campaigns. The two villages were recognized by UNESCO in 2013 as the best villages in the Arab region for their green economy, aesthetic environment, and sustainable development (Valero & Bryce, 2020). In 2021, a new hospital and culture center (palace) was under construction beside the renovation of the other existing facilities which indicated that the new generations are still committed to participating in the SI initiative.

### 1.1. Research problem and objectives

Local community participation is an imperative element for the emergence and success of such grassroots SI initiatives. However, more studies on SI mainly focus on policies, governance, and institutional arrangements as enabling or limiting factors. Moreover, there is a shortage of actor-oriented empirical research based on quantitative analysis that draws attention to the actors' related factors that may influence their participation in SI initiatives. This study is trying to fill this gap by shedding light on the

relationship between the actors-related variables and their degree of participation. Accordingly, the present study aims at achieving the following objectives.

1. To investigate how actors' degree of participation in the SI initiative would vary according to their different attributes: age, gender, socio-economic status, working conditions, and migration.
2. To determine the relationship between the actors' degree of participation in the social innovation initiative in the two villages and the studied variables: i.e., respondents' degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI, attitudes towards the SI, the perceived attributes of the SI, respondents' degree of sense of community, and degree of social loafing.
3. To determine whether the studied independent variables could predict the degree of respondents' participation in the social innovation initiative and their contribution in explaining the variation in the degree of respondents' participation in the social innovation initiative.

### 1.2. Research hypotheses

Based on the above-mentioned objectives, the following research hypotheses have been formulated,

Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>): There are differences in the degree of participation according to village (H<sub>1.1</sub>), gender (H<sub>1.2</sub>), exposure to different cultures through migration (H<sub>1.3</sub>), and associational membership status (H<sub>1.4</sub>).

Hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>): There are differences in the degree of participation according to the subjective level of cosmopolitanism (H<sub>2.1</sub>), working condition (H<sub>2.2</sub>), and marital status (H<sub>2.3</sub>).

Hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>): There is a relationship between the degree of participation and the degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI.

Hypothesis (H<sub>4</sub>): There is a relationship between the degree of participation and the perceived attributes of the SI.

Hypothesis (H<sub>5</sub>): There is a relationship between the degree of participation and the attitude towards the SI.

Hypothesis (H<sub>6</sub>): There is a relationship between the degree of participation and the degree of sense of community.

Hypothesis (H<sub>7</sub>): There is a relationship between the degree of participation and degree of social loafing.

To achieve the study objectives and test the research hypotheses, this paper includes four main sections. First, a review of the literature encompassing the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. Second, the methodology, which includes a description of the study area, sampling technique, sample size, and study variables. Third, results and discussion, in which the data analysis and discussion of the study results are presented, Finally, the conclusion of the study findings in light of the study objectives and hypotheses.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, social innovation in rural development has become prominent in policy and academic research (Vilela, 2019). It is believed to have the potential to encourage self-reliant development in terms of capacity-building of citizens who suffer from less dependence on the public sector (Bock, 2016). Consequently, it is acknowledged as being strongly related to the endogenous development approach (Vilela, 2019) and a key driver for successful rural development (Neumeier, 2017). Social innovations are regarded as context-led and territorial-based phenomena (Vercher, 2022) that are defined in different ways to describe different outcomes (Bock, 2012). Hence, the term and the concept behind social innovation are not defined uniformly (Neumeier, 2012; Novikova, 2022). However, the SIMRA consortium proposed four criteria against which any initiative could be validated as social innovation. First, social innovation encompasses a reconfiguration of new social practices (new attitudes, networks, relationships, collaborations, etc.) that emerge in response to a societal challenge or need. Second, the reconfiguration process involves civil society members as active participants. Third, it aims to better address social, economic, or environmental goals looking to enhance societal well-being. Finally, social innovation takes place in a new

geographical setting or related to previously disengaged social groups (Bryce et al., 2017).

Literature on social innovation encompasses different approaches that are polarized by Cajaiba-Santana (2014) into structuralist and individualistic perspectives. The former perspective deals with social innovation as a process that is grounded in social change (Luciell Van Rheede & Saheed Bayat, 2019). Research pertaining to the structuralist approach focuses on the surrounding environment in terms of the social structural context as a determinant factor for SI. The second perspective is an agentic perspective that views the action led by visionary individuals to address their community's social problems as a fundamental cause of social innovation (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). This is an actor-oriented approach that deals with social innovation as a resolution to social needs (an outcome) and aims to enhance the well-being of community members (Luciell Van Rheede & Saheed Bayat, 2019). Therefore, according to the individualistic perspective, individuals' needs play a key role in motivating them to find innovative solutions to their social problems (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Luciell Van Rheede & Saheed Bayat, 2019). In his contribution, Cajaiba-Santana put forward a third approach that brings these two perspectives together. According to this view, social innovation is influenced by both actors' characteristics and the social structure that enables and constrains actions.

Yet, despite the lack of a uniformly accepted definition or theme for social innovation (Vilela, 2019), there is a consensus that the involvement of local community citizens is crucial to the success of SI initiatives (Davies et al., 2012). The emergence of SI is mainly related to the existence of social capital and the impetus behind people's participation (Neumeier, 2012). Moreover, the reconfigured social practices (e.g., new attitudes, behaviors, etc.) fundamentally result from the alliances of different actors (Kluvankova et al., 2017). Furthermore, solving most of the societal challenges (e.g., waste accumulation) is basically based on changes in attitude and behavior, which undoubtedly require citizens' "buy-in", participation, and collaboration (Davies et al., 2012). Likewise, participation is a necessary

element in rural development since community members are experts in their social context. In other words, local people are the ones who are most aware of their needs, challenges, strengths, and resources (Davies et al., 2012). Therefore, addressing local community problems is more effective and promising when it is led by its residents.

The term participation in social innovation is defined as "*the many ways in which more diverse actors can be brought into the process of developing and then sustaining new solutions to social challenges – essentially how citizens can be involved in developing social innovations and in social projects which are innovative*" (Davies & Simon, 2013). According to Davies and Simon, there are three defining features of Participation in social innovation. First, participants must take some sort of action to be engaged. This is in line with Neumeier's (2017) suggestion that Promising and sustainable SI initiatives are those developed and led by the members of civil society themselves rather than externally governed ones. Therefore, external entities should be careful about the extent of intervention they would exert to support grassroots initiatives; otherwise, their intervention would create a state of dependency upon them and subsequently hinder the participation process. Second, participation should involve collaboration and collective action towards a shared interest. In this regard, social capital facilitates coordination and cooperation towards achieving the group's mutual interests through shared norms, trust, and social networks (Sanginga et al., 2007). Third, engagement in SI activities can be incentivized not compelled. Therefore, the tendency to accept the initiative is mainly based on the extent to which participants sense a benefit from their participation (Neumeier, 2017).

Previous studies that pursue the association between the actors-oriented factors and their degree of participation in the social innovation context are likely to be limited. This study is therefore geared towards the individualistic perspective and the extent to which actors' attributes would explain their degree of participation. To achieve this aim, the theoretical background of this article is based on the literature

of innovation adoption, social innovation in rural development, determinants of social behavior, and community-led development.

**a) Motivation as a determinant factor for participation in SI**

Motivation is defined as “*an activated internal need state leading to goal-directed behavior to satisfy that need*” (Lantos, 2015). Satisfying societal needs as a desirable outcome is considered a defining feature of SI (Bock, 2016). The involved actors are triggered by a need or a problem to change their behavior, perception, or attitude (Neumeier, 2012). Hence, satisfaction of needs is considered one of the social determinants of participation in SI initiatives. According to El-Nagar (2015), the available services and infrastructure, in any community, could be regarded as satisfiers for the residents’ hierarchy of needs described by Abraham Maslow (1987). For instance, the existence of a decent shelter equipped with sanitation and clean drinking water (physiological needs), the availability of educational facilities (cognitive needs), and living in a clean and beautified environment (aesthetic needs). In this view, the negative aspects characterizing rural areas, such as the lack of services and infrastructure, would trigger SI emergence (Steiner et al., 2021). This idea is supported by Peinlang’s (2018) findings that the motive behind people’s participation in a development initiative is considerably underlined by the negative factors in their community (e.g., lack of environmental hygiene and its health consequences).

**b) Attitude and perception as key influences of participation in SI**

According to Rogers (1983), actors develop a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the SI and then decide whether to accept or reject it. Therefore, it is significant to explore the role of attitude in predicting actors’ social behavior in the SI context (Gobattoni et al., 2015; Kabus & Dziadkiewicz, 2022). According to Lantos (2015), attitude is regarded as “*the predisposition to think, feel, or behave in a positive or negative way towards a stimulus*”. An attitude structure consists of affectional, cognitive, and

behavioral components and their relationships (Jain, 2014). The cognitive component refers to the subjective beliefs people hold towards the stimulus through the acquisition of knowledge. The affective component implies the feeling state and emotions regarding the attitude object. Finally, the conative or behavioral component is concerned with peoples’ overt behavior, intentions, or how they are likely to act according to their beliefs and feelings (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Jain, 2014; Lantos, 2015). The knowledge people acquire regarding the SI initiative plays a key role in their attitude formation and, consequently, their decision regarding their participation. In this regard, Rogers (1983) assumed that actors’ general perception of the SI plays a key role in the persuasion stage in which attitude is formed. Hence, the perceived attributes of SI (i.e., relative advantage, complexity, observability, trialability, and compatibility) have a subsequent outcome on overt behavior. The relative advantage refers to the degree to which the initiative is considered a better alternative to the existing solutions. Compatibility concerns the degree to which the initiative is consistent with the peoples’ previous experience, their needs, and their existing values and beliefs. The complexity implies the degree to which the initiative is simple and could be implemented. Trialability refers to the degree to which the idea behind the SI initiative could be experimented with on a limited basis. Finally, observability indicates the degree to which actors can observe the outcomes of the initiative. Neumeier (2017) viewed these 5 perceived attributes of SI as significant factors for the success of the overall SI process since these factors influence people’s participation in rural developmental SI initiatives.

**c) Sense of community as a catalyst for participation in social innovation**

The social environment significantly impacts residents’ participation in SI. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how local people are attached to and perceive their community (Gobattoni et al., 2015). Sense of community, as proposed by MacMillan and Chavis (1986), covers four dimensions of how an individual experiences his geographic community life (Hyde

& Chavis, 2008). The four dimensions of the sense of community (membership, fulfillment of needs, influence, and shared emotional connection) are interactive and interdependent (Ramos et al., 2017). Membership refers to the feeling of belonging and being a part of a community with a shared history, defined boundaries, a common symbol system, a personal investment in community life, and emotional safety. Influence implies the perception of having an opportunity to exert some influence over the community and to make one's own contribution. Additionally, influence embraces the recognition that the community affects its members' decisions and actions. The fulfillment of needs expresses the extent to which a community helps its residents meet their individual and collective needs. Finally, shared emotional connection refers to the quality of interaction among community members and their social ties and shared goals (Hyde & Chavis, 2008; Ramos et al., 2017; Talò et al., 2014). These dimensions enhance residents' attachment to their community (Ramos et al., 2017). Sense of community and social participation are believed to develop simultaneously. In other words, a sense of community could catalyze participation, and participation, in turn, could lead to a greater Sense of community (Levine & Perkins, 1987; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009; Ramos et al., 2017). Therefore, Sense of community is regarded as a catalyst for civil society participation and community development (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). Moreover, it is believed to stimulate collective action among community members to resolve their needs and problems (MacMillan & Chavis, 1986; Wang et al., 2021). At the same time, collective action is viewed as a determinant element for SI to achieve systematic change and cause an impact on a wider social context (Kluvankova et al., 2017). The different relationships that rural households form through blood relationships, kinships, and economic activities result in a rich social network that is believed to play an important role in building social capital, establishing a sense of belonging, enhancing social responsibility, and reducing the cost of information dissemination (Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, Rural communities are

perceived as fertile ground for SI to flourish due to the strong social ties, sense of community, and reciprocity that characterize these localities (Steiner et al., 2021).

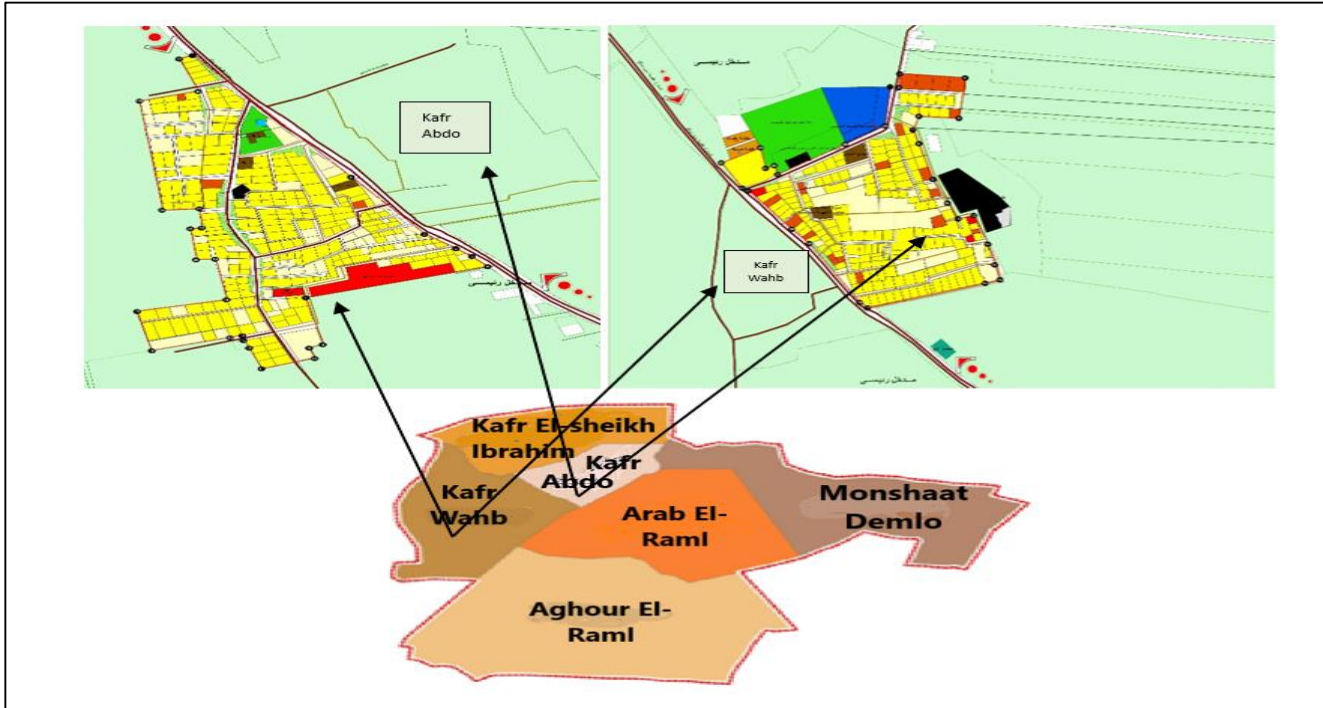
#### **d) Social loafing as a constraining factor for participation in SI**

The social loafing tendency was argued to restrain rural citizens' participation (Deng et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2022). According to Mulvey & Klein (1998), individuals' tendency to put less effort towards a shared goal is associated with the perception and anticipation they hold towards their fellows. In this view, people tend to play a free-riding role when they perceive and expect loafing behavior from others. In this sense, reaching the outcomes of the SI would be grounded in recognizing that accommodations among conflicting interests are predicted to take place (Kluvankova et al., 2017). To combat such anti-social behaviors, cooperation is necessary to yield desirable social outcomes in the existence of free-rider incentives (Herrmann et al., 2008).

In conclusion, participation in grassroots SI initiatives is a self-determined behavior (Schmidhuber et al., 2019) that is, to a large extent, influenced by individuals' attributes such as gender, age, social status, degree of cosmopolitanism, and occupation (Laura Secco et al., 2017; Neumeier, 2017; Rogers, 1983). Moreover, social needs play a vital role in motivating actors' participation. Furthermore, participation could be catalyzed by how individuals perceive their community and the SI initiative. Finally, free riding is considered opportunistic and anti-social behavior that challenges collective action and collaboration.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study was implemented in a rural area that has experienced the application of a social initiative related to the local environment since the 1980s. The area comprises two geographically attached villages (Figure 1); Kafr Wahb and Kafr Abdo, which are affiliated administratively to Arab El-Raml local unit, Quwesna district, Menoufia Governorate. The two villages used to be separated by a water channel. The open channel was replaced by a tube-covered channel and thus



**Figure 1. Illustration of the study area's location on the map of Arab Al-Raml local unit.**

eliminated the geographical borders between the two villages.

### 3.1. Data collection procedure

Considering the research problem and objectives, this study adopted the quantitative research approach, where a structured questionnaire and personal interviews were used for field data collection. The measures of variables were reviewed for validity by a jury of five experts in rural sociology and agricultural extension, then pretested in a nearby rural area. The unit of study in this research was the household head as he/she was the main guide for the rest of his/her family members for any action needed.

### 3.2. Sample size

According to the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), the two villages have 734 households that are distributed into 45% and 55% in Kafr Wahb and Kafr Abdo, respectively. A sample of 254 households was chosen randomly to represent the population according to Krejcie and Morgan's sample size table (1970). With the help of the local informants and facilitators, each village was geographically divided into three areas. The

households were selected using a randomly proportional sampling technique from each area. Due to the COVID pandemic and uninterested attitude, about 13% of the targeted cases did not show up. Yet only 221 household heads were met in the two villages in August and September 2021.

### 3.3. Study variables

The variables of this study were determined based on the research problem and related objectives as well as to test the proposed research hypotheses. The main dependent variable is the local community participation in the SI initiative activities. On the other hand, the independent variables that were thought to be in relation to the local people's participation were determined based on the theoretical framework used. The respondents' residential area, gender, associational membership status, and exposure to different cultures through migration were measured using binary scales. Working conditions and marital status were measured using nominal scales. Ordinal scales were used to measure the degree of geographic mobility and the subjective level of cosmopolitanism. For geographic mobility, five categories of places were pre-

defined depending on their geographical proximity. Respondents were asked to define the extent to which they frequently visited these places on an ordinal scale (six categories ranging from daily (6) to annually (1)). The subjective level of cosmopolitanism involved asking the respondents to report whether they perceive themselves as high, moderate, or low cosmopolitan compared to other community members. The ratio and interval scales were applied to measure the respondents' age, family size, and socioeconomic status. For socioeconomic status (SES), a composite variable was created by summing the standardized z-scores of all the SES-related variables (Song et al., 2013; Andrade, 2021). This included respondents' degree of education, household's monthly expenditures, the availability of an additional source of income, farmland size, and housing quality status based on the available facilities, number of house appliances, the land area of the house, and type of house tenure. Included also in the SES, are respondents' possessions in terms of the number of livestock, transportation facilities, and farm machinery.

For the sense of community variable, an index of 28 statements was developed based on MacMillan & Chavis (1986) and Perkins et al. (1990). The social loafing index was adapted from Mulvey & Klein (1998). To measure actors' perception, an index of 17 statements was tailored to reflect the perceived attributes of the SI that

were first introduced by Rogers (1983). To measure the respondents' attitude towards the SI initiative, an index of 24 items was developed depending on the ABC model of attitude (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Jain, 2014). The above-mentioned items were measured on a 5-point scale, then scores were summed up. To measure the degree of satisfaction, an index of 32 statements that reflect the different levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs was applied to measure the extent to which services and infrastructure available in the two villages satisfy the respondents' needs before the emergence of the SI initiative (El-Nagar, 2015; Maslow, 1987; Zavei & Jusan, 2012). For instance, the socializing needs item involved the existence of a social/youth club that serves all community members from different age groups and genders. The esteem needs item was reflected by the villagers' perception of their recognition by the public authorities, academics, and the media for their achievements. All items were measured on a 3-point scale, then scores were summed up. To measure the degree of participation in the activities of the SI initiative (DV), an index of four different forms of participation (effort, money, opinion, and decision-making) in the SI activities (i.e., providing service, enhancing infrastructure, beautification, and environmental hygiene) was measured by related statements on a 3-point scale. To ensure the internal consistency of these composite indices, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was used, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Overview of the study variables.**

Variables		N (221)		
		Alpha	Mean	Std.
IVs	Degree of Sense of community	0.88	104	16.3
	Attitude towards SI	0.62	97.3	9.2
	Degree of Social loafing	0.79	1.1	0.2
	Perceived attributes of SI	0.75	67.6	7.9
	Degree of satisfaction before the SI emergence	0.84	60.9	10.1
DV	Degree of participation	0.96	8.7	1.5

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed statistical analysis techniques to test the research hypotheses. The descriptive analysis of the study variables was followed by an independent t-test that was applied

to compare the means of binary variables (i.e., village, gender, associational membership status, and migration.) for the degree of participation (H<sub>1</sub>). Moreover, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences among the means



of the different categories of the categorical variables (i.e., working condition, subjective level of cosmopolitanism, and marital status) for the degree of participation (H<sub>2</sub>). Furthermore, a correlation analysis was applied to test the hypotheses H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>5</sub>, H<sub>6</sub>, and H<sub>7</sub>. Finally, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the effect of the independent variables on the degree of participation.

#### 4.1. Descriptive statistics

This section presents the frequency distribution of the respondents for a better understanding of the characteristics of the sample under study. There were 162 male respondents, accounting for 73.3%. The average age was 50.3 (SD = 15.29). Most of the respondents are married, accounting for 80%. In terms of working conditions, 10.4% of respondents reported that they had no job, and only 1.8% were engaged in agriculture, while the proportions of employed and retired respondents were 40.3% and 29.9%, respectively. The categories of socioeconomic status were low, moderate, and high with proportions of 5.4%, 67%, and 27.6%, respectively. The average family size was 3.9 (SD = 1.6). The categories of subjective level of cosmopolitanism were low, moderate, and high with proportions of 52%, 20.4%, and 27.6%, respectively. Regarding associational membership status, only 67 reported that they have official membership in a local organization, accounting for 30.3%. Finally, 67.9% of the respondents were exposed to different cultures through migration.

#### 4.2. Differences in the degree of participation according to the village, gender, associational membership, and migration

During the preparatory stage of the study, the innovator, the local informants, and the leaders of the two villages assured that there was collaboration and participation between the local villagers from the two villages in the activities of the initiatives and that they perceived themselves

as one community. This was tested during the study, and the respondents from Kafr Wahb and Kafr Abdo were compared in terms of their degree of participation. As shown in Table 2, the results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference. Thus, hypothesis H<sub>1.1</sub> was dismissed, and subsequently, the respondents were regarded as one sample for further data analysis. Comparing respondents' degree of participation according to their gender revealed a significantly higher average degree of participation for males than females. This could be explained to a large extent by the disparities between men and women in rural Egypt in terms of education, household responsibilities, control over assets, and participation in formal groups that are highly shaped by the social norms and rules that constrain women's physical mobility and communication with non-family or non-kinship men. Results also revealed that respondents with an official membership in community-based organizations were found to have a significantly higher mean degree of participation than non-organizational members. From the personal interviews, respondents who are members in community-based organizations are more likely to be aware of their community needs and priorities. Moreover, their networks with agents from public authorities facilitated their attempts to advocate for the initiative. Finally, respondents who were exposed to different cultures through migration scored higher than respondents who never migrated. Exposure to different cultures, especially through migration, would play a vital role in changing local people's behaviour. According to the innovator, his exposure to clean and aesthetic places outside his village played an important role in reflecting the bad environmental condition he used to live in, which in turn, triggered him to persuade his community members to change their unsanitary environmental conditions. Accordingly, hypotheses H<sub>1.2</sub>, H<sub>1.3</sub>, and H<sub>1.4</sub> were all supported.

**Table 2. Differences in the level of participation according to village, gender, status of associational membership, and migration**

Variable		Mean	SD	DF	t-test	p
Village	Kafr Wahb	8.7516	1.41521	219	.226	.821
	Kafr Abdo	8.7055	1.60301			
Gender	Male	8.9425	1.54023	219	3.593	.000
	Female	8.1376	1.26894			
Associational membership	Yes	9.4092	1.58166	219	4.618	.000
	No	8.4311	1.38521			
Migration	Yes	9.1191	1.50624	219	2.684	.008
	No	8.5423	1.48485			

**4.3. Differences in the degree of participation according to working condition, cosmopolitanism, and marital status.**

As shown in Table 3, the ANOVA test revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the degree of participation according to respondents' working condition ( $F_{(6,214)} = 3.953, P = .001$ ). A post hoc analysis using Bonferroni revealed that retired respondents have a higher degree of participation ( $M = 9.3380, SD = 1.36908$ ) than unemployed respondents ( $M = 7.9851, SD = 1.17404$ ) and respondents employed in the private sector ( $M = 8.2696, SD = 1.05487$ ). It seems that retired people in the two villages have witnessed their community's situation before the emergence of the SI initiative; therefore, they are keen to pass their spirit and acquired skills to the next generation to ensure the sustainability of their initiative. Moreover, they are considered opinion leaders in their community. Finally, personal interviews revealed that older retired adults participate in their

community's developmental activities to add meaning to their life. The analysis was also conducted on cosmopolitanism categories regarding participation. High cosmopolitan respondents ( $M = 9.2138, SD = 1.522259$ ) recorded a higher degree of participation than low cosmopolitan respondents ( $M = 8.505057, SD = 1.478757$ ), ( $F_{(2,218)} = 4.622501, P = .011$ ). According to the innovator, the initiative in its very early phase before establishing the new cleaning system relied mainly on local collective action in terms of cleaning and beautification with greenery and painting trees. Yet, the initiative was met with resistance from a significant number of the local villagers due to these uncommon practices. Therefore, it seems that openness to different cultures plays a vital role in accepting and promoting unusual practices. Finally, no significant differences were found in the degree of participation according to marital status. Accordingly, the analysis supported hypotheses H<sub>2.1</sub> and H<sub>2.2</sub> and dismissed H<sub>2.3</sub>.

**Table 3. Significance of differences among categories of working conditions, cosmopolitanism, and marital status in the degree of participation**

Variables		Sum of squares	DF	Mean squares	F	p
Working condition	Between groups	50.223	6	8.370	3.953	.001
	Within groups	453.133	214	2.117	—	—
	Total	503.355	220	—	—	—
Subjective level of cosmopolitanism	Between groups	20.478	2	10.239	4.623	.011
	Within groups	482.877	218	2.215	—	—
	Total	503.355	220	—	—	—
Marital status	Between groups	5.368	3	1.789	.780	.506
	Within groups	497.987	217	2.295	—	—
	Total	503.355	220	—	—	—

#### 4.4. Relationship between degree of participation and other study variables

Table 4 shows that the degree of participation positively correlated with age indicating that older adults in rural communities have a significant role in sustainability of such initiatives. As mentioned above, elderly in rural Egypt can influence opinions and the direction of social behaviors since they are respected and valued by the community members based on the value system. Moreover, there was a positive correlation between participation and socioeconomic status since the SI activities have mainly relied financially on the elite local community members. Furthermore, their social capital in terms of relationships with representatives from public authorities increased the level of support the initiative received. The positive correlation between the degree of participation and geographic mobility indicated that frequenting places other than the home community supported the innovator's suggestion that exposure to different aesthetic and luxurious urban areas had a significant role in promoting people's participation in uplifting their community's services and infrastructure. The positive correlation between the degree of participation and all of degree of sense of community ( $r = .583$ ), perception of the attributes of the SI initiative ( $r = .358$ ), and attitude towards the SI ( $r = .624$ ) ( $P < .001$ ) supported hypotheses H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>5</sub>, and H<sub>6</sub>. Additionally, the negative correlation existed between degree of participation and degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI ( $r = -.242$ ), and degree of social loafing ( $r = -.359$ ) ( $P < .001$ ) supported hypotheses H<sub>5</sub> and H<sub>7</sub>. The variables that showed significant correlation with the degree of participation were included for further analysis using multiple regression.

#### 4.5. The predictors of the respondents' degree of participation

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate whether the respondents' degree of participation in the SI initiative could be significantly predicted by the independent (predictor) variables (i.e., gender, age, socioeconomic status, associational membership, geographic mobility, migration, degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI, degree of sense of community, attitude, and perception). First-line analyses were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity of residuals. A multicollinearity investigation was conducted and revealed that none of the correlation coefficients among the variables was above 0.7, all the VIF values were less than 2, and all the tolerance values were above 0.5, which indicated that there was an absence of the problem of multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Thompson et al., 2017). The results revealed that the independent variables explain 60.8% of the variance in the degree of participation ( $F(11, 209) = 29.486, p < .000$ ). As shown in Table 5, six independent variables were statistically significant, with attitude towards the SI recording the highest positive beta value ( $\beta = .441, p < .000$ ), followed by degree of sense of community ( $\beta = .266, p < .000$ ), geographic mobility ( $\beta = .163, p < .005$ ), and age ( $\beta = .137, p < .005$ ). The negative effect can be observed for both degree social loafing ( $\beta = -.156, p < .01$ ) and degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI ( $\beta = -.134, p < .005$ ).

**Table 4. Correlation matrix among study variables**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Age</b>	1.000									
<b>Family size</b>	-.181**	1.000								
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>	.084	.163*	1.000							
<b>Geographic Mobility</b>	-.283**	.061	.154*	1.000						
<b>Degree of needs satisfaction before the SI initiatives</b>	-.096	-.153*	-.019	-.055	1.000					
<b>Degree of Sense of community</b>	.291**	.024	.231**	.187**	.156*	1.000				
<b>Degree Social loafing</b>	-.166*	-.042	-.165*	0.39	.119	-.286**	1.000			
<b>Perceived attributes of the SI</b>	.119	.004	.227**	.044	.015	.494**	-.422**	1.000		
<b>Attitude towards the SI</b>	.010	.100	.201**	.162*	-.049	.416**	-.235**	.403**	1.000	
<b>Participation</b>	.211**	.098	.292**	.276**	-.242**	.583**	-.359**	.358**	.624**	1.000

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 5. Multiple regression results – predictors of the respondents’ degree of participation**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Constant)	-1.711	1.795		-.954	.341
Gender (male=1, female=0)	.044	.175	.013	.253	.801
Age	.014	.005	.137	2.673	.008
Geographic mobility	.082	.027	.163	3.051	.003
Migration (yes=1, No=0)	-.007	.152	-.002	-.045	.964
Associational membership (yes=1, No=0)	.151	.162	.046	.936	.351
Socioeconomic status	.021	.015	.072	1.479	.141
Attitude towards the SI initiative	.073	.008	.441	8.727	.000
Degree of Social loafing	-1.263	.403	-.156	-3.136	.002
Degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI	-.020	.007	-.134	-2.990	.003
Degree of Sense of community	.025	.005	.266	4.587	.000
Perceived attributes of the SI initiative	-.012	.011	-.062	-1.120	.264
R <sup>2</sup>	.608				
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.588				
<b>F (11,209) = 29.486, p &lt; .000</b>					

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study draws attention to the individualistic perspective of the social innovation process, where citizens’ participation was found crucial for the emergence and success of local social innovation initiatives. Thus, SI is believed to play a vital role in sustainable rural development. Shedding light on the actor-related factors that may influence local people’s participation in successful developmental SI initiatives showed that they are becoming of great interest. Therefore, this study selected an initiative that has been boosted by local community efforts for decades and has been widely recognized by the media, academics, and international entities. According to the literature, participation in such initiatives is determined by various demographic and social variables. In this study, the analysis of the data revealed salient results. First, the degree of satisfaction of some basic needs before the emergence of the SI initiative was found to be negatively associated with the degree of participation. Accordingly, it seems that actors were motivated to participate in initiatives that were believed to help satisfying their unmet social needs. Moreover, the shortage in basic services and infrastructure in the study area could be

considered as motivating factor for the emergence of grassroots SI initiative. Second, the perception and attitude that the local people developed towards the SI initiative played a significant role in determining their degree of participation, which is supported by the positive correlation between the degree of participation and respondents’ attitudes as well as the perceived attributes of the SI initiative. Third, the degree of sense of community and degree of participation are positively associated, which indicates that the local people who perceive their community positively tend to participate more actively in developmental SI initiatives. Finally, social loafing is considered an obstacle to collective action and community-led initiatives, which is supported by the significant negative correlation between degree of social loafing and degree participation in the SI initiatives.

Respondents’ degree of participation was compared among the different categories based on gender, associational membership, cosmopolitaness, mobility, and working condition. Results revealed that retired males with official membership in community-based organizations, respondents exposed to different cultures through migration, and highly

cosmopolitan respondents had higher levels of participation. Hence, exposure and openness to other cultures and sub-cultures play a crucial role in facilitating the adoption of new social practices with less resistance. Moreover, networks with agents from public authorities facilitate the advocacy for community-led SI initiatives. Elderly and elite local community members have a significant role in the sustainability of such initiatives.

Employing a multiple regression analysis indicated that 60.8% of the variance in the degree of participation could be explained by the variation in the age, geographic mobility, attitude towards the SI initiative, degree of sense of community of the local community actors, degree of social loafing, and degree of needs satisfaction before the emergence of the SI.

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## الملخص العربي

مشاركة المجتمع المحلي في مبادرات الابتكار الاجتماعي لتحسين جودة الحياة: دراسة حالة من الريف المصري

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تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من المتغيرات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية المتعلقة بالفاعلين التي من شأنها التأثير على مشاركة المجتمع المحلي في مبادرة الابتكار الاجتماعي التي أطلقها ودعمها السكان في قريتين متصلتين جغرافياً وهما "كفر وهب" و "كفر عبده" بمحافظة المنوفية منذ الثمانينات.

اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الكمي الذي استخدم فيه المسح الاجتماعي لعينة عشوائية قوامها ٢٢١ مبحوث من أرباب الأسر، وتم جمع البيانات الميدانية في النصف الثاني من عام ٢٠٢١ باستخدام استمارة استبيان بالمقابلة الشخصية تم اختبارها مسبقاً. كشفت النتائج عن وجود علاقات طردية معنوية بين درجة مشاركة أفراد العينة وكل من خصائص الفاعلين، كالعمر والمكانة الاقتصادية الاجتماعية وحراكهم الجغرافي، اتجاههم تجاه مبادرة الابتكار الاجتماعي، ودرجة شعورهم بالانتماء للمجتمع، والخصائص المدركة لمبادرة الابتكار الاجتماعي. علي الجانب الآخر، كانت هناك علاقات سلبية معنوية بين درجة المشاركة وكل من درجة رضاهم عن إشباع احتياجاتهم قبل ظهور المبادرة ودرجة التخاذل الاجتماعي. وأوضحت نتائج الانحدار المتعدد أن 60.8% من التباين في مستوى المشاركة في أنشطة الابتكار الاجتماعي للمبحوثين يمكن تفسيره بالتباين في كل من (١) خصائص المبحوثين من حيث العمر والمستوي الاقتصادي الاجتماعي، (٢) اتجاهات المبحوثين نحو مبادرة الابتكار الاجتماعي، (٣) إدراك المبحوثين لخصائص مبادرة الابتكار الاجتماعي، (ومن جانب آخر ٤) مستوى إشباع الاحتياجات قبل تنفيذ مبادرة الابتكار الاجتماعي، و (٥) مستوى التخاذل الاجتماعي، واللدان يؤثران - بعكس باقي العوامل - سلبي علي المشاركة.

بحسب ما توفر للباحثين من معلومات، تناولت دراسات محدودة في مصر المتغيرات التي قد تؤثر على مشاركة المجتمع المحلي في مبادرات الابتكار الاجتماعي في المناطق الريفية. لذا تعود أهمية تلك الدراسة إلي محاولتها توجيه الاهتمام لبحث مقومات استدامة جهود التنمية الريفية من خلال مبادرات الابتكار الاجتماعي وعلاقتها بخصائص الريفيين أنفسهم وظروفهم الاجتماعية والاقتصادية التي قد تحثهم علي المشاركة فيها في ريف مصر.