

Algerian Municipalities: Reality of Administrative Organization, Participation of Elected, and Citizens' Challenges of Governance Case of Algiers Municipalities

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ABSTRACT

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Introduction: The province of Algiers faces mounting administrative and governance challenges linked to rapid urbanisation, spatial transformation, and the limited performance of local elected officials.

Objectives: To evaluate the organisational structures and framing of Algiers municipalities, assess the participation of elected officials and citizens in local governance, and identify the obstacles to implementing good governance standards in the capital.

Methods: The study combines analysis of official data from the National Office of Statistics with fieldwork comprising closed questionnaires and personal interviews distributed to 52 elected officials and 132 citizens across central and suburban municipalities in Algiers.

Results: Municipalities suffer from inconsistent organisational structures, low framing ratios (averaging 8.53%), and a lack of training for elected officials. Nearly half of elected officials do not participate in decision-making, and citizen participation in urban affairs remains weak at 24.24%, reflecting a significant gap in governance standards.

Conclusions: Algiers requires a special legal framework tailored to its metropolitan status, revised organisational structures, enhanced capacity-building for elected officials, and effective mechanisms for citizen and civil society participation to achieve good local governance.

Keywords: Province of Algiers, challenges, municipalities, participation, actors, governance.

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1980s, Algeria has undergone significant economic and political reforms in response to social pressures [1], [2]. Economic liberalisation opened the private sector and accelerated urbanisation, raising the urbanisation rate in northern cities such as Oran, Constantine, Annaba, and Algiers to 65.80% by 2008 [3]. This rapid growth generated spatial transformations and mounting urban challenges in municipal governance.

Politically, the government introduced pluralism and new mechanisms for citizen participation in local councils. The 1989 Constitution, amended in 1996, 2002, and 2008, established the municipality as the basic unit of the state [1]. Supporting legislation followed, including Municipal Law No. 90-08 (amended by Law n° 11-10 of June 2011) and the City Law of 2006, which called for the involvement of all local actors in governance. Despite these legal frameworks, governance in Algeria remains in its early stages. Decentralisation and participation are slow to materialise, even as the mechanisms, including state institutions, civil society, and the private sector, are nominally available [4].

Algeria comprises 1,541 municipalities and 58 provinces. This study focuses on the province of Algiers, the national capital, home to 57 municipalities and 12 administrative departments, where economic concentration and rapid spatial expansion have created acute governance challenges. Urban saturation, weak administrative organisation, inadequate public services, uncontrolled construction, and pollution have severely complicated the tasks of local authorities [5], [6]. Thus, Algiers faces several administrative and spatial challenges that hinder the implementation of sustainable local development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Ineffective Organisational Structure in the Municipalities of the Province of Algiers

The organisational structure of Algiers varies from one municipality to another, using the criterion of the number of inhabitants in the municipality. The organisational structure of a municipality is usually centred on the Secretary General and the directorates, departments, and offices responsible for the administration of the municipality. Order No. 29-81 of October 11, 1981, determined the preparation of organisational structures for municipalities based on the number of inhabitants in the municipality only. This choice is not sufficient; other important criteria can be adopted, such as the diversity and multiplicity of municipal services within the region and the nature of economic activities, etc.

When we observe the organisational structures of some municipalities in the state of Algiers, it becomes clear to us that the municipalities of the capital lack an organisational structure that reflects their reality and differs from one municipality to another. If it exists, it does not take into account several criteria but rather one criterion, which is the number of inhabitants. This means that each municipality has its own organisational structure, which negatively affects the good management of the capital. In an attempt to evaluate administrative management in the state of Algiers, we compared the municipalities of Bab El Oued and Dar El Beida as a sample of the municipalities of the centre and the suburbs.

On the one hand, the municipality of Bab El Oued represents a good example of the municipalities of the centre. It is characterised by an old urban centre and a concentration of public institutions. On the other hand, the municipality of Dar El Beida represents an example of a suburb that has expanded and turned into a second-service centre in Algiers since it has shifted from an ancient agriculture zone to a new urban area formed as a result of the Both the municipalities of Bab El Oued and Dar El Beida are similar in the legal framework, but they differ in terms of the organisational structure and population as well as the number of directorates and departments. While the municipality of Bab El Oued has a population of around 64,732 inhabitants [3], 06 directorates, and 15 departments, the municipality of Dar El Beida has 80,032 inhabitants [3], but it does not have directorates, which has negatively affected the functioning of the municipality, as the following (Table 1) demonstrates.

Table 1. The organisational structures of the municipalities of Bab El Oued and Dar El Beida

Municipalities	Population (2008)	General Secretary	Directorates	Departments	Elected offices
Bab el Oued	64732	X	06	15	35
Dar el Beida	80032	X	00	14	33

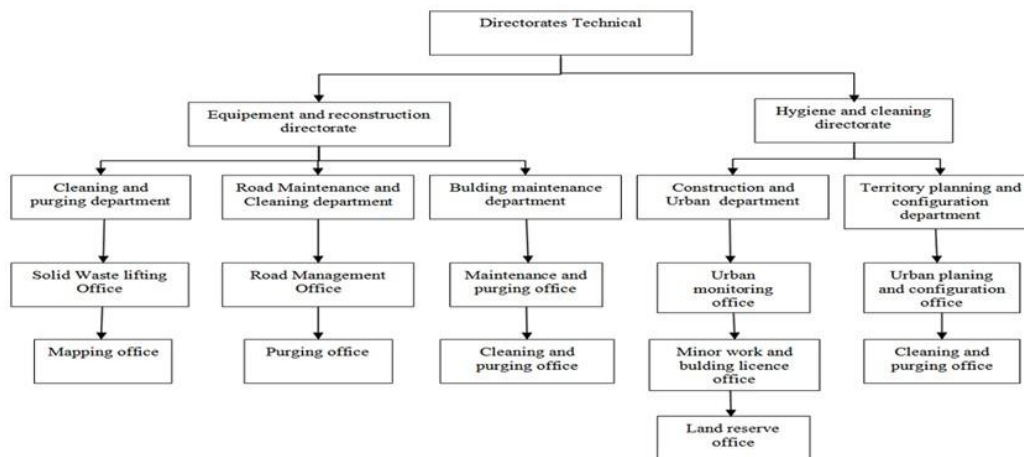


Fig. 2. Organisational structure of the municipality of Bab ElOued

The composition of the organisational structure of the two municipalities in terms of the number and nature of directorates, departments, and offices reflects the difference between the municipalities of the centre and the suburbs and the lack of homogeneity of the organisational structures with the reality of the role of the municipalities in their regions, which negatively affects decentralisation, transparency, local administration, and urban policy

of each municipality in the capital. heads of administrative departments, mayors, general secretaries, and all the experts, specialists, and academics. The completion of an organisational structure without this framework will be considered a waste of time and will remain inefficient.

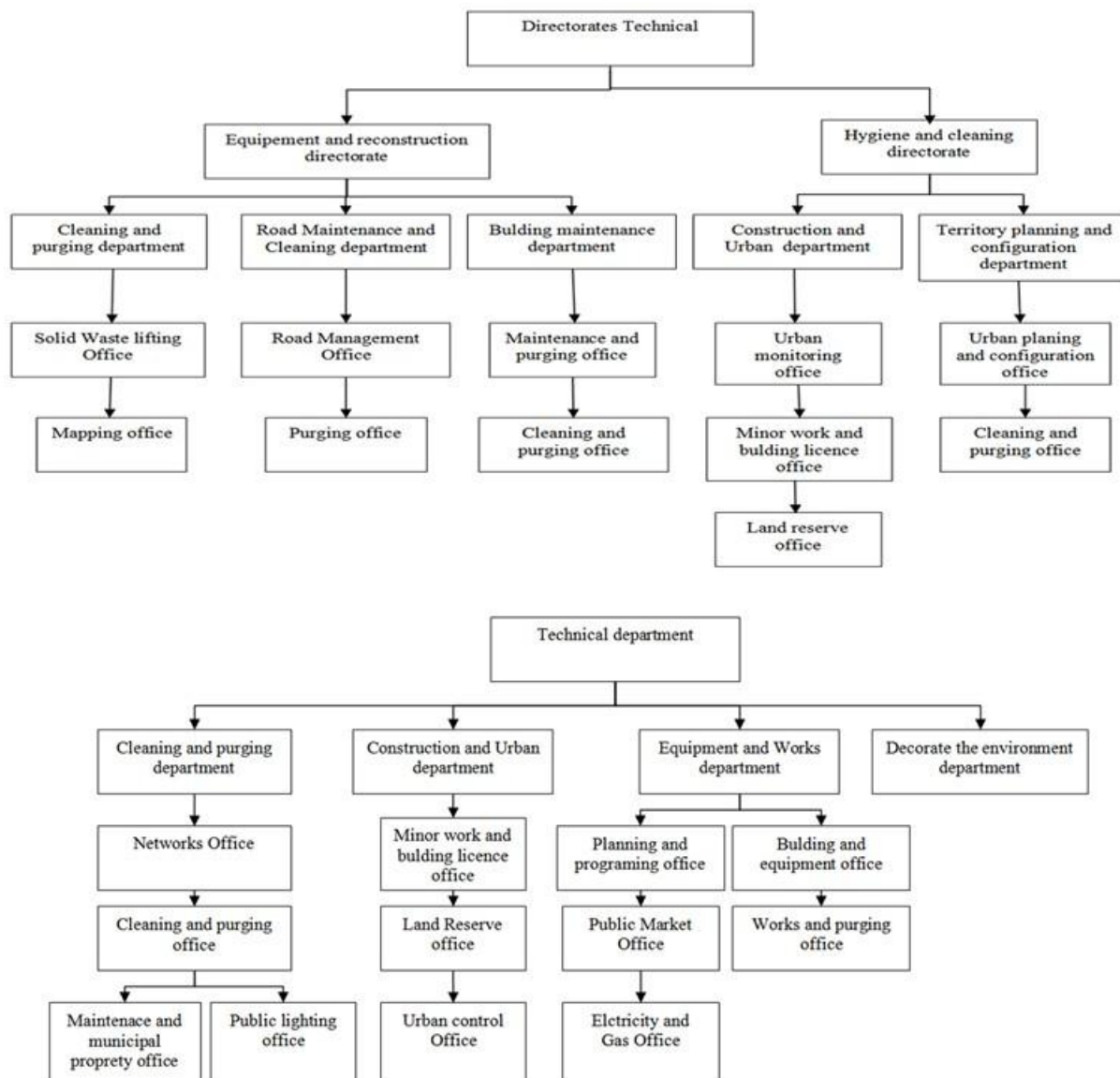


Fig. 3: Organisational Structure of the Municipality of Dar El Beida

II. Inadequate and Insufficient Framing in the Municipalities of Algiers

Framing, human resources, competence, and experience are essential to assess the good management and local development in the municipality. We try to compare some municipalities of the state of Algiers through the data of framing and specialisation, so we chose to compare the central municipalities (Bab El Oued, El Madania, and El Biar) and suburban municipalities (Bab Ezzouar, Dar El Beida, and Les Eucalyptus) as shown in the folding table.

We notice from the table that the framing ratio varies in the municipalities compared to the number of workers and the population density, where the municipality of Bab El Oued has 789 workers, including 58 frames (7.35%), while the municipality of Eucalyptus in the suburbs has a framing ratio of 6.33%, i.e., 76 frames, including 30 technical frames out of the total number of 1200 workers and the municipality of Bab E-zzouzar ranks first in terms of framing, reaching 13.06%, while the number of frames in the municipality of Casablanca reached 114 frames by 9.30%, which is inconsistent with its current organisational structure, which consists of departments and offices only, which led to overlapping tasks in its administration, while the municipality of El-Madania reaches 9.68% and shares with most municipalities the decrease in this percentage.

Table 3. Distribution of executives by speciality in certain municipalities in the centre and suburbs of Algiers

Frames	Eucalyptus	Bab Ezzouar	Dar el Beida	El Madania	El Biar	Bab el Oued
Regional Manager and Administrator	31	51	57	21	25	20
Architect	6	4	6	1	2	2
State engineer and assistant engineer in technical and urban management	17	12	10	5	6	7
Senior Technician and Technician in Technical and Urban Management	10	6	5	4	7	7
veterinary	4	0	1	1	1	1
Senior Engineer and Technician in Statistics	2	1	3	1	0	0
Documentary	2	2	2	1	1	1
Engineer and senior technician in computer science	4	11	18	3	7	12
Inspector of hygiene and public property	0	5	2	1	1	8
Total	76	92	104	38	50	58
Number of workers	1200	706	1225	382	875	789
Percentage of the frames in relation to the number of workers	6.33	13.03	8.48	9.94	5.71	7.35

We find, for example, in the municipalities of the centre and suburbs consisting of only interests despite the high population and size of services, while we find both the Eucalyptus municipality in the suburb and Bab-el-Oued municipality in the centre, both of which consist of 06 directorates, each of which has different departments and offices, where the number of frames varies between 58 in Bab-el-Oued and 76 for Eucalyptus, hence the lack of frames is an obstacle to urban management at the level of municipalities, We conclude that the framing ratio in the municipalities of Algiers has reached 8.53%, which is a low percentage compared to the number of workers in each municipality, i.e. the number of administrators is less than the size of the tasks in the directorates and departments and the specificity of the capital area, and the municipalities of Algiers need a frame that improves their performance and governance.

III. The Local elected is a Major Player in Participation

The elected official in the municipality is the main person responsible for preparing and implementing development plans and is required to play a leading role in listening to the aspirations and needs of citizens and

communicating with them closely, not using the population as a tool to be used during the election period for his political ambition. According to the Directorate of Local Administration of Algiers, there are 1199 local elected officials distributed among 57 municipalities in the state of Algiers. Their number varies from one municipality to another, depending on the number of residents; the table below shows a sample of the studied municipalities.

We can see from the table that the state of Algiers is experiencing the diversity and multiplicity of political formations and free lists, which is a positive indicator for municipal management with a multiplicity of opinions and ideas, because the multiplicity of parties and diversity of opinions is an advantage that helps to promote the principles of governance, including accountability, transparency, and participation.

Table 4. Number of elected officials and the number of their responses to the questionnaire in the studied municipalities

Municipalities	Population (2022)	Elected offices	Number of elected responses
El madania	50 330	19	16
Casbah	45910	19	06
El Biar	59 111	19	06
Bab el Oued	80841	23	10
Dar el Beida	99 950	23	08
Bab ezzouar	120 636	23	06
Eucalyptus	145 001	33	00
Total	126751	159	52

A questionnaire was distributed to the elected officials and interviews were conducted with them, where the study reached the studied sample through the answers of the elected officials to the questions posed in the questionnaire and showed the sample shown in the table below, which consists of 52 elected officials distributed between 21 female elected officials, with a rate of 40.80%. This reflects the high percentage of females compared to the past, but this increased under the electoral law that gave them importance and gave them the right to participate in the elections, while we find the number of male electors up to 31 electors with 59.61%. We find that the sample is diverse and consists of 32 electors with 61.54% and 07 vice presidents and 13 committee heads with percentages, respectively 13.46% and 25%, and that the sample is made up of ordinary and responsible electors, which enhances the credibility of our research.

Table 5. Sample of the electorate

Feedback	Female	Ratio	Male	Ratio	Total	Ratio
Elected	13	61.90	19	61.30	32	61.54
Vice President	02	09.52	05	16.30	07	13.46
Committee Chair	06	28.58	07	22.60	13	25.00
Total	21	100.00	31	100.00	52	100.00

IV. Municipalities of Algiers, Through the Opinion of the Elected

We limited ourselves to taking the mentioned sample of the elected from the central municipalities, such as Bab El Oued, Casbah, Al Biar, and Madania and suburban municipalities such as Bab Ezzouar, Dar el Beida, and Eucalyptus and generalising it to the municipalities of the state, we obtained the following results:

The results of the questionnaire and interviews of 52 elected representatives from the municipalities of the centre and suburbs showed that their educational level is predominantly at the secondary level or less, with 30 representatives (58.77%) and the rest distributed between bachelor's and master's degrees, which together constitute 38.46%, this reflects the lack of framing the municipalities from the elected representatives, the results of the questionnaire also showed that 61.53% there is no department in each municipality interested in helping the elected to process files and obtain information. On the contrary, the results showed that most of the elected representatives have information in advance about the running of the municipality. We consider this a positive thing, but 19.23% with 10 elected members is a percentage that has an impact on local performance. The results showed that the rate of participation of elected members in decision-making is high, with 27 elected members participating, while on the other hand, we find that 48.08% of the 25 elected members do not participate in decision-making, as the mayor and his deputies are the ones who manage the affairs of the municipality, and this is an important matter that affects the standard of transparency in the management of the municipality. We limited ourselves to taking the mentioned sample of the elected from the central municipalities, such as Bab El Oued, Casbah, Al Biar, and Madania and suburban municipalities such as Bab Ezzouar, Dar el Beida, and Eucalyptus and generalising it to the municipalities of the state, we obtained the following results:

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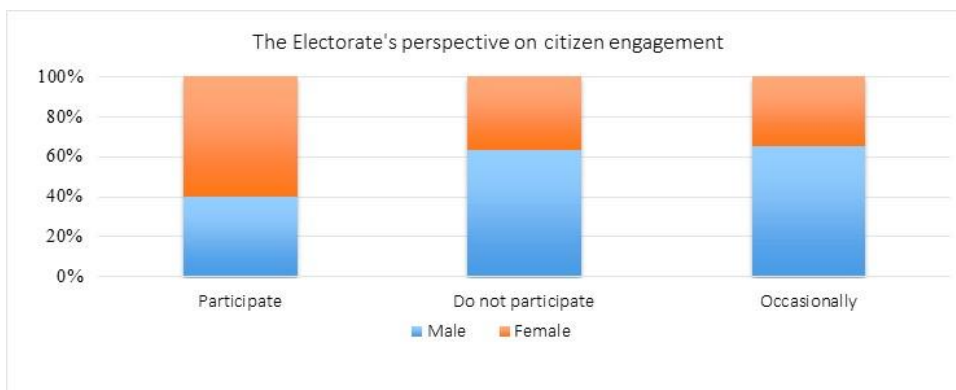


Table 6. The elected member's opinion on their involvement in the board's decisions

Feedback	Female	Ratio	Male	Ratio	Total	Ratio
Participate	14	66.67	13	41.93	27	51.92
Do not participate	07	33.33	18	58.07	25	48.08
Total	21	100.00	31	100.00	52	100.00

In addition, there is no training program for elected officials who lack experience and knowledge in the management of municipal affairs, as we find 24 elected officials from the sample have not done training courses

(46.16%), which has an impact on the performance and output of the elected officials in the management of municipal affairs. a we, note a contradiction in the opinions of the elected officials about citizen participation and involvement, as according to the opinions of the elected officials, we find that 42.31% of the elected officials do not believe that the citizen is not involved in the management process and 38.47% sometimes participate, and this of course negatively affects the criteria of participation, consultation and accountability that are essential in embodying governance in the municipality, and a small number of elected officials estimated at 10 elected officials believe that the citizen is involved in the management process, and this opinion cannot be judged.

Table 7. The Electorate's perspective on citizen engagement

Opinion	Female	Ratio	Male	Ratio	Total	Ratio
participate	06	28.57	04	12.90	10	01.92
Donot participate	08	38.10	14	45.16	22	42.31
Occasionally	07	33.33	13	41.94	20	38.47
Total	21	100.00	31	100.00	52	100.00

The opinions of the elected confirmed that citizen participation comes from a personal initiative (38.46%), through an association (28.85%), or through complaints, correspondence, and social media (32.69%).

Table 8. Elected opinion on how to engage citizens

Opinion	Female	Ratio	Male	Ratio	Total	Ratio
Participate	06	28.57	04	12.90	10	01.92
Do not participate	08	38.10	14	45.16	22	42.31
Occasionally	07	33.33	13	41.94	20	38.47
Total	21	100.00	31	100.00	52	100.00

While the majority of elected officials agree that citizen participation is necessary (80.77%), this contradiction in opinions reflects the lack of seriousness of the elected officials in adopting the principle of consultation and participation in order to face the challenges of governance in the municipalities of Algiers Province.

V. Evaluating Citizen Participation in Neighbourhood Work

Most of the literature, therefore, stresses the effectiveness that participation brings to governance [12], The aim of involving citizens in the management of local affairs is to promote effective local governance by encouraging citizens to protect their interests, either by cooperating with the administration or by criticising and opposing it, strengthening the relationship between the administration and the citizen, ensuring transparency, or eliminating bureaucracy [13]. while Gardiol states that “the participation of ordinary citizens in initiating, formulating, implementing and monitoring public policy is increasing around the world” [8]. We take into consideration the traditions and the usages of the society. governing with participation is not necessarily a universally successful concept everywhere, but relies on local traditions and values[14]. While Marot calls for greater public participation and a broader scope for cooperation among all stakeholders [15].

The adoption of government authorities leads municipalities to sustainable local development stemming from a rational policy that involves society (citizens, specialised associations, experts, political parties), as confirmed by Article 02 Law 11-10, which states that the municipality is the central regional base and the place for the exercise of citizenship and constitutes the framework for citizen participation in the conduct of public affairs.

The idea of citizen civic participation is not only subject to laws, although most of the legal texts that provide for the introduction of participatory democracy are still just ink on paper, because there are major shortcomings in achieving this consecration, especially at the local level [13].

We tried to analyse the opinion and role of the citizen through the questionnaire that we completed and distributed to the residents of the state of Algiers in May 2024, and conducted some personal interviews. We obtained 132 responses from citizens.

Table 9. Study sample

Sample	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%
Count	92	69.70	40	30.30	132	100,0

We note from the table that the study sample consists of 132 citizens distributed among the municipalities of the state, 40 males (30.30%) and 92 females (69.70%), which shows that the response was more females than males, which is the opposite of what we expected is that the ratio is dominated by the number of males, but it does not change anything in the results of the study because the individual, whether female or male, in the end is a citizen in the state of Algiers.

The results also showed the extent of the citizen's relationship with his urban environment and the place and nature of his work. The results of the distribution of the population by place of work showed that 70.84% work in the centre, while the rest are distributed between the suburbs with 43 citizens (32.58%) and outside the state with 07.58% of the sample members, from which we note that most citizens work near the home and in the suburbs, and there is a significant percentage of workers from Algiers state working in neighbouring states (Blida, Boumerdes, Tipaza).

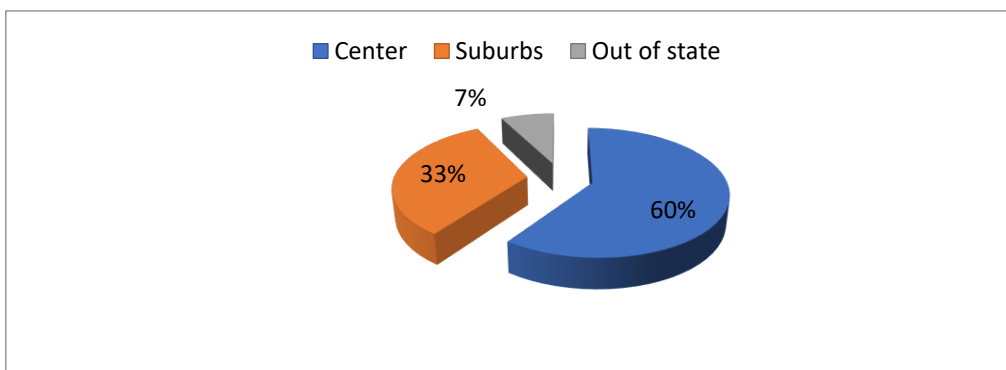


Figure 7. Population Distribution by Place of Work in the City of Algiers

We conclude that the majority of the state's population works in Algiers city centre, where 59.84% of job positions are available in the centre, while the suburbs only have 32.58% of job positions, and this reflects the workforce in Algiers, due to the concentration of most ministries, administrations, financial, service, and commercial institutions in the capital city, which affects the daily situation in Algiers in terms of traffic, the daily movements of individuals to the centre to meet their needs, as well as the pollution issue, the economic and service attractiveness of the capital, all factors that affect the governance process in the capital city .

VI. Citizens' Perception of Their Participation in Urban Services in Algiers

Table 10. Citizen Opinion on Participation

Opinion	Female	Ratio	Male	Ratio	Total	Ratio
Participated	07	17.5	25	27.18	32	24.24
Did not participate	14	35	29	31.52	43	32.58

Occasionally	19	47.5	38	41.30	57	43.18
Total	40	100.00	92	100.00	132	100

The percentage of citizens expressing their opinion on urban services and participation reached 24.24% of the sample members, indicating that participation is low compared to non-participation, which sometimes reached 75% of the sample members. This reflects the citizen's lack of interest in what is going on around him or the lack of interest of the authorities concerned with managing the urban area of the capital to involve the citizen, which confirms our findings in expressing the opinion of the elected officials about citizen participation, and we consider it a negative point that stands as a barrier to achieving the standard of participation and thus urban governance in the capital, because citizen participation is most democratic when it gives voice to everyone, includes and empowers the weak, holds representatives, professionals and government accountable, and promotes redistribution and social justice.

DISCUSSION

The research paper shows that the Algiers governorate is facing administrative problems and local challenges, and the administrative management policies adopted are not qualified and do not respond to the most important challenges of administrative restructuring, spatial organisation, and coordination between actors. The limited performance in the municipalities of Algiers is due to the same law that governs the rest of the country's municipalities, as well as the different organisational structures between municipalities, the inability of most local elected officials to obtain information, their lack of professional experience, and the absence of citizen and civil society participation in the preparation and implementation of decisions. We note a contradiction between the administrative and spatial management of the capital's municipalities due to the difference in functions and interests between them, and we often find that the municipalities do not adopt future forward-looking aspirations for management in the absence of a culture of evaluation, so the study showed that these shortcomings affected the governance standards of transparency, accountability, and participation of citizens and civil society in local policies. Facing the challenges requires reconsidering local policies, starting with reviewing the organisational structures of municipalities and making them consistent with the potentials and demographic and local characteristics that distinguish the municipalities of the capital, adopting other criteria for preparing organisational structures, creating new departments concerned with the concerns of citizens and civil society, and searching for ways and mechanisms to enhance governance standards. The role of the local electorate should be highlighted as a starting point for promoting sustainable local development through its ideas, perceptions, competence, and openness to the community. Therefore, the competence of elected officials should be enhanced through training and training courses, providing them with the necessary information, involving them in the preparation of local policies and decisions in the municipality, and urging them to involve citizens and civil society in the management of local affairs.

Ultimately, the implementation of a governance policy to face the challenges in the city of Algiers in each municipality is required in order to improve thinking and find solutions as they are the municipalities of the capital, and their management must be reconsidered by giving a special law to the municipalities of the state of Algiers under the municipal law, because Law 10-11 considers the state of Algiers as any other state of the country, while it needs a special legal framework that allows the establishment of joint structures between its municipalities as a metropolitan city and the political and economic capital of Algeria characterised by diversity and specificity of services and structures and multiple actors and partners in managing the local affairs of the capital. The necessity of establishing effective mechanisms for follow-up, monitoring, and periodic evaluation of how the principles of management are applied on the ground to ensure good governance.

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