

## **Social and Economic Challenges of Adopting Sustainable Urban Development in Developing Economy: A Stakeholder's Perception**

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**Abstract :** Due to rapid urbanization, developing countries faced significant urban challenges that accompanied the population growth such as the inability to provide adequate housing; sustain human and community's health and wellbeing; ensure the safety in urban areas; the prevalence corruption; lack of jobs; and a shortage of investment. The destruction, degradation, and lack of planning are acute in countries such as Iraq that have suffered for more than four decades because of war and international sanctions, resulting in severe damages to the ecology sector, social utilities, housing, infrastructure, as well as the disruption of the economic sector. Many of significant urban development, housing, and regeneration projects are currently underway in different regions in Iraq, labelled as a means to reform the environmental, social, and economic sectors. However, most often with absence of public participation. Hence, there is an urgent need for understanding public perception, especially of urban socio-economic challenges, which represents a crucial concern for many planners, designers, and policy-makers in order to develop effective policies in addition to increasing their participation. The aim of this study is to investigate stakeholder perceptions of the socio-economic challenges of urban development and their priorities in the all Iraqi provinces. A nationwide questionnaire has been conducted (N = 643) across Iraq, using 19- item structured questionnaire where the stakeholder's perspectives were collected on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The indicators were identified through deep investigation in previous studies. Principal component analysis (PCA) and statistical tests were utilized to the collected responses in order to investigate the linkage between the perceptions of socio- economic challenges and demographic factors. A high value of internal consistency and reliability of the instrument has been achieved (Cronbach's alpha= 0.867). Five principal components have been identified, namely: economic, cultural aspects, design context, employment, security and housing demands. The item 'safety of public places' was ranked as the most important, followed by the items 'minimize unplanned housing', and 'provision of affordable housing', respectively. Promote high-rise housing from the housing demands group, was ranked the lowest component between all indicators. 'Using sustainable local materials in construction' item had the second lowest mean score. The results also illustrate a link between deficiencies in the social and economic infrastructure because of the destruction and degradation caused by political instability in Iraq in the last few decades.

**Keywords :** public participation in development, socio-economic challenges, urban development, urban sustainability

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