

Original Research Article

# Identification of Sociocultural Aspects of Nightlife in the City of Tehran\*

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**Abstract** | Urban nightlife has long been discussed in the field of urban management and has been the subject of numerous studies. This issue needs to draw the attention of researchers to conduct in-depth studies and extensive research in order to raise awareness about the phenomenon of urban nightlife in terms of affecting various aspects of citizens' lives. The aim of this study therefore is to determine the social aspects of nightlife in the City of Tehran from the perspective of the beneficiaries. In this study, several semi-structured interviews were conducted with three groups of citizens, business owners, and experts. The interpretive analysis was then applied to analyse the texts. Finally, categories were revealed and explained under sub-categories such as beneficiaries, positive and negative aspects, characteristics, attractions, and individual and social repulsions. Positive and negative aspects were determined and it was revealed that citizens and business owners have attractions and repulsions to the nightlife phenomenon, but generally, they are optimistic about it. Moreover, different groups of participants are demographically identifiable.

**Keywords** | *Nightlife, Sociocultural aspects, Urban environment, Tehran.*

**Introduction** | “The urban night has [...] emerged not only as a significant space-time of productive economic activity but also as a key strategy in the urban regeneration of downtowns in many post-industrial cities” (Shaw, 2015). Concepts such as ‘the 24-hour open city’ or ‘the leisure city’ indicate the importance of urban nightlife in both revitalizations of many post-industrial cities and ‘the growing nocturnalization of Western life’ (Koslofsky, 2011, cited by: Nofre et al., 2017). Since the 1990s, night-time economy” and “twenty-four-hour city” have been widely welcomed by

urban planners and policymakers. Many cities, especially in Europe, have established nightlife districts with the aim of revitalizing the city, developing tourism, increasing tax revenues, and developing the cultural economy (Chew, 2009). Today, cities such as London, New York, Amsterdam and Barcelona have considerable experience in nightlife development. It is noteworthy that some of these cities, such as London and New York, according to the report on the “Global Destination Cities Index” published in 2019, were among the top 20 global destinations and ranked second and fourth, respectively. On the other hand, as Grazian (2008) pointed out, the night's economy has played an important role in reshaping the experiences of tourists, visitors, and local communities in today's cities (Nofre et al. 2017).

Urban nightlife, in terms of impact and role, has various dimensions and aspects, including economic, social,

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cultural, and environmental. Obviously, in order to be aware of the development effects of this urban phenomenon, it is necessary to study its various aspects. Today, nightlife is accepted in many parts of the world as an integrated part of the urban ecosystem and is referred to as an inevitable phenomenon. Nightlife has emerged as a result of changes in the structure of today's cities. On the other hand, nightlife should be considered in the light of cultural considerations and lifestyles in different cultures and societies. Today, the city of Tehran, due to its large population and the expansion of residential spaces, needs to distribute more activities, especially leisure activities during the day and night. The diversity of businesses and technological advances that have affected the nature of work and employment in this metropolis, as in other metropolises of the world, have also brought about changes in the leisure patterns of citizens. In particular, the disappearance of the old fabric of neighborhoods, the reduction of opportunities for local communities, and the transformation of large houses into small apartment spaces have made the phenomenon of nightlife more apparent.

In Iran, the issue of nightlife and its development in metropolitan areas has recently been raised. In 2017, the generals of the bill "Obligation of the municipality to plan, provide infrastructure and revitalize the nightlife" were approved in the 122nd session of the Tehran City Council. On May 15, 2017, it was decided to implement this project as a pilot in some areas of Tehran. Since many people are usually awake during the holy month of Ramadan in the hours after Iftar until dawn for various reasons and the city is ready for it, this month was chosen to implement the nightlife plan. The implementation of this plan was welcomed on the one hand and criticized on the other hand. Critics have cited the sociocultural damage caused by the plan as the main reason for their concern. Therefore, the present study intends to identify the sociocultural aspects of nightlife by examining the views of experts and officials as well as citizens. Accordingly, the main purpose of the study is: "Identification of sociocultural aspects of nightlife in Tehran".

The sub-objectives will also be considered as follows:

Awareness of what nightlife is like as a new urban phenomenon

Gaining a better insight into the sociocultural aspects of the intended phenomenon

Presenting the results and informing planners and officials (supporters and critics) in future decisions

Similarly, based on the mentioned goals, the present study seeks to answer the following questions:

What are the attitudes, repulsions, and attractions of Tehran residents towards nightlife?

What are the negative sociocultural aspects of nightlife?

What are the positive sociocultural aspects of nightlife?

## Literature review

There are several theoretical discussions about the 24-hour city, and their thematic range is very diverse. Leading experts in the field include Carmona, Paul Chatterton and Robert Hollander, Leon Kreitzman, Chapman, Heath Strickland, Bianchini and Montgomery, and Kevin Lynch. All the theories of experts about 24-hour cities can be classified into 8 approaches: the different approaches of theorists about space; an environmentally sound and sustainable approach; spatial and visual perception approach; social interaction approach; motion and pedestrian approach; security approach; humanitarian approach; and environmental approach (Hosseini & Gheybi, 2014; cited by Anizadeh, 2016).

As Chew (2009) suggests scholars over the decades have conducted their social studies on the various aspects of nightlife. However, it was not until the 1990s that a specific field of academic studies systematically addressing nightlife cultures and the night-time economy emerged. The time of this creation coincided with the emergence of significant social effects of rave-party culture from the early 1990s in Europe, the acceptance of the night-time economy by policymakers and its significant effects on city planning, as well as global awareness of the economic importance of the cultural industries. Two sub-fields can analytically be distinguished in the area: studies of nightlife cultures and studies of the night-time economy. The first sub-field deals with the cultural consumption of nightlife and the second one engages issues related to night-life production. The two subfields do not overlap at first, but some of the most recent studies of the Chinese night-time economy have adopted points of view from both subfields (Grazian, 2008; Lee, 2008; Talbot, 2004; cited in Chew, 2009). Both subfields emerged in the early 1990s, but the subfield of nightlife culture has developed more rapidly and has recently developed distinctive sub-subfields dealing with highly different problematics and empirical materials. A main strength and feature of these studies is their adoption of social critical views. At the same time, studies of nightlife cultures have their drawbacks to different extents. In other words, their relatively weak emphasis on the urban- spatial, sociostructural, and political economy aspects of nightlife (Chew, 2009).

Scholars such as Gilbert and Pearson, (1999) have studied cultural innovative aspects of music content, while others such as McKay (1998) have engaged the social-activist implications of electronic dance-music culture. Chew (2009) mentioned the study of the form of rave-parties as another issue in the sub-field of nightlife cultures studied by scholars such as Malbon (1999), McCall (2001), Skelton

and Valentine (1998) and Wilson 2006. Rave-parties and the rave-inspired club scene have been interpreted in terms of youth subcultures and sociocultural resistance (Huq 1999; Martin 1999; Redhead 1993; cited by Chew, 2009), or like what scholars such as Rietveld 1998 or Buckland 2002 suggested, as a sociocultural space being used by marginalized groups. Several researchers (Gauthier 2004; St. John 2004, 2006) have also studied rave culture from the perspective of religion as another sub-field of the area. Gender issues have also been considered, although they have not been properly addressed (Chew, 2009).

Studying night-time economy regarding the urban-planning aspect has drawn the attention of many scholars such as Jayne, Holloway and Valentine (2006). They suggested "where studies of the city have considered drinking it has tended to be seen as a peripheral concern, and the relationship between drinking and urban life has not been deemed an important topic in its own right". By adopting such perspective, others have studied social costs (Measham & Brain 2005; Roberts, 2006; ), negative impacts (Cricher 2000; Hobbs et al. 2000; Winlow & Hall, 2006) and to a lesser extent, positive consequences (Hesmondhalgh, 1998; Latham, 2003; Sellars, 1998) of night time economy within the urban areas (Chew, 2009). Political economy of nightlife is another perspective studied by researchers such as Chatterton and Robert Hollands (2003) in their book entitled 'Urban Nightscapes in terms of Youth Cultures, Pleasure Spaces and Corporate Power'. Chew (2009) identifies 'a third subfield that does not fit into either the category of nightlife-cultures studies or that of night-time-economy studies: public health, criminological, and police studies of nightlife practices as a social problem' which has rapidly grown in the 2000s. Studies in this sub-field consider nightlife as a deviant, drug-infected, and dangerous phenomenon that leads to social problems (Anderson & Kavanaugh, 2007; Berkley & Thayer, 2000; Sanders, 2006). As Chew argued, studies of this third subfield consider nightlife as a phenomenon which can bring about social problems such as deviant and drug-infested. He is of the opinion that being pragmatic policy research rather than an academic one, as well as focusing on certain issues (drug use, youth diversion, and violent crime) and ignoring all aspects of the night-time economy, is the main problem of the mentioned subfield.

Recently Nofre et al. (2017) in their study on opportunities and challenges of tourism and nightlife in Barceloneta found that current urban policy and planning are clearly insufficient to tackle and address the negative community-based impacts. Hence the final section highlights the urgent need for the development and implementation of a new community-based urban planning with the aim of ensuring community liveability and peaceful

urban coexistence between different social groups in Barceloneta.

Regarding the studies conducted in Iran, the Tehran Urban Research and Planning Center (2016), in a project entitled "Nightlife in Tehran, Challenges and Necessities", has addressed the issue of Nightlife in Tehran.

Habib & Sashourpour (2012) in a study examined contributory factors to the quality of urban spaces during the day and night in two Iranian cities of Zanjan and Abadan. The results of their study showed that social, functional, and perceptual dimensions are the most important dimensions in developing the quality of space at night. They also found that the image and perception of residents of the city are very different regarding day and night. For example, citizens' mind maps of the city showed that the roles of the neighborhood and the route had diminished.

Ghadimi and Keramati (2017) studied nightlife in the City of Tehran with an emphasis on the impact of cultural factors on urban space. In order to define nightlife in Tehran, they investigated three main components of urban space (physical structure, function, and meaning) in relation to three factors creating night's cultural sites (people, time, and creativity). They stated that the Center of Modern Activities in Tehran can be considered as a center of night economy development to attract domestic and foreign tourists. Ghadimi and Keramati believe that activity and dynamism at night will bring about security and safety by itself. Nahavandi (2017) has also studied nightlife in several cities of Iran. She found four key factors of pedestrianism, diversity of use, security, and lighting as effective factors. She considered police surveillance, safe transportation, and organizing missing spaces, as well as encouraging people to be present and stay in space, amongst the critical factors in this regard.

Based on the analysis of the literature, it seems that urban nightlife, in terms of its economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects, has considerably effects on urban environments. This study focuses only on the sociocultural aspect of the phenomenon and seeks to identify the sociocultural aspects of nightlife. Developing countries are mostly more sensitive to sociocultural impacts. If only the economic aspect of night's development is considered and other important aspects such as sociocultural one are neglected, it would result in a lot of problems in the future. So far, no comprehensive research has been conducted to identify and explain the effects and sociocultural dimensions of nightlife in the country. Therefore, the present study tries to identify and explain the impact

of this phenomenon on urban environments from a sociocultural perspective.

### Nightlife in Tehran

As stated by Anizadeh (2016), nightlife as one of the favorite traditions of Iranians is full of customs and rituals which can be understood from the Iranian lifestyle at night. In his study on nightlife in Iranian culture, he found that night has always been a great opportunity for decipherment and spirituality, as well as a chance for family gatherings in Iranian culture.

Jalili (2017) mentioned that due to population overload, Tehran needs time expansion in addition to geographical expansion. Tehran is overcrowded and that is why the people of Tehran need the city to be alive for more hours in order to achieve urban space. In the past, big houses, neighborhoods, and mosques created a place for citizens to interact with each other, however today, with apartments and houses without yards on the one hand, and destruction of neighborhoods and communities around it, on the other hand, it is impossible for people to interact easily.

In 2015, an issue was raised in urban management under the title of “Save the city from being dead in the night” project. Regarding this idea, the central areas of the city by administrative-commercial uses and being free from movement and the presence of citizens from the beginning of the evening were supposed to be saved from being dead in the night by establishing mobile service-entertainment centers. In the next period of urban management, relying on this idea, in addition to the central area of the city, the municipality of Tehran was obliged to present a plan for “Revitalization of nightlife” in certain areas of the city within three months.

The nightlife project was implemented by the Tehran Municipality as a pilot in several zones. In zone 1 from Tajrish Square to Quds Square, in zone 20 in Haram Abdolazim Street, in zone 2 from the first square to the second square of Sadeghieh, in zone 6 from Valiasr Square to Fatemi Street, and in zone 8 East Janbazan Street were the areas intended for nightlife use. This project was implemented on a trial basis in 2019, during the holy month of Ramadan

### Methodology

The present study is applied research in terms of purpose and a descriptive one in terms of data collection. Due to the nature of the data, this research is qualitative and has been done using interviews as one of the most important tools for data collection. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted using the interpretive analysis method. The research population can be divided into 3 groups. The first group includes all citizens and residents of Tehran who participate in the nightlife activities. The second group

includes all economic stakeholders, especially businessmen and economic activists in Tehran, who are affected by the night's phenomenon and are involved in it. Finally, the third group, experts who have expertise in the field. In the first and second groups, the convenience sampling method was used. Therefore, 23 citizens were involved in the nightlife phenomenon and 10 businessmen and economic activists were interviewed. In the third group, purposive sampling was conducted in a targeted manner, sometimes called a judgmental method

Since this section required interviews with experts, this method was used for sampling. Thus, 13 experts were interviewed. Unlike probabilistic sampling methods in which the objective is to expand and generalize the results of a selected sample to the whole study population, in qualitative research, the objective is to describe and explain a phenomenon in detail. Hence, the endpoint of interviewing individuals is to obtain maximum data and information about the intended phenomenon. Accordingly, in the present study, the basis for selecting the number of samples in each of the desired categories was to achieve saturation, so that the answers of the final interviewees are converging to the answer and more interviews did not convey new information to the authors.

Regarding the validity of the present study, the participants in the interview were individuals including businessmen, residents, and people who were directly involved in the phenomenon under study, as well as managers, activists, and experts in the field with the necessary knowledge and experience. Besides, allocating sufficient time and accuracy in conducting the interview process and also using peer review strategy are factors that have been effective in increasing the validity of this research. On the other hand, all interviews were conducted by one interviewer, which was effective in increasing the validity of the research due to the semi-structured nature of the questionnaire. Regarding the transferability of research, according to what Lincoln and Guba (1985) have stated since the steps and details of the present research process are described in detail, its transferability is possible.

In the present study, a semi-structured interview was used. In other words, according to the objectives of the research, the interview questions were clear in advance and all respondents in each of the groups were asked the same questions, but they were free to answer the questions as they preferred. Sometimes it was necessary to ask additional questions in line with some of the interview questions in order to get more complete and better answers. First, the data was initially coded. At this stage, the data were systematically coded and the data related to each code was identified. There was also a back-and-forth between the codes extracted from previous interviews and the new

ones. Table 1 provides a sample of the data along with the extracted codes.

Tables 2 to 4 summarize the sample information.

**Findings**

Based on the objectives and questions of the research, and according to decodings and the results of reviewing the answers, variables such as participants, beneficiaries, citizens’ and businessmen’s attitudes, and sociocultural aspects of the phenomenon, were adopted. These variables were considered as the main variables and dimensions of the subject. Then, the identified concepts of the transcripts were determined and categorized. In the following, the descriptions and findings of each of the mentioned variables are presented in detail. Table 5 also shows the frequency of responses concerning each of the research variables.

• **Beneficiaries**

At the citizen level, the beneficiaries of the nightlife phenomenon were considered in two groups: «participants» in recreational and leisure activities as recipients of night services and products, and «business owners» as suppliers of these services and products.

- **Participants**

Participants were examined in three dimensions: characteristics, attractions, and repulsions. In the following, the findings in each section will be presented separately.

**A. Characteristics**

Regarding participants in nightlife activities, it is important to obtain information about demographic and individual characteristics, as any planning in this area requires marketing and assessing the needs in order to implement the plans. Therefore, information on age, gender, type of occupation, social class, family composition, and cultural and religious beliefs are important to further elucidate the nature of potential participants in nightlife activities. What is considerably important here is the citizens’ point of view on this issue, because by discovering their views, one can somehow understand their mental model for participation. It should be noted that this is not necessarily true in all circumstances, and sometimes people’s opinions may not be a true reflection of their behavior.

Regarding the age for participation, most respondents

(70%) believed that people of all ages could be nightlife participants. However, some have pointed out several differences and found night activities to be more common and appropriate for young people. For example, P5, who is himself a young and single student, stated:

*In my opinion, the youth are mostly awake at night (p. 5).*

Others (20%) believed that young people were more likely to be unemployed nowadays, so young people were more likely to take night walks and participate in nightlife-related activities.

Another challenging issue is the gender of the participants. Although a number of respondents mentioned the equality and non-difference in the presence of men and women in the nightlife, more (75%) emphasized the difference between the two. for example:

*Men can participate because our society has not yet been able to provide sufficient security (P 21)*

or:

*Regarding gender, it is different for men and women because women may be vulnerable during night tours (P. 12).*

Another issue is the type of job of individuals. Since most of the people's time is devoted to working outside the home and on the other hand, the type of individuals' work shapes their leisure and recreation patterns, so from this perspective, there is a significant difference between people (80 Percent):

*Employees who work during the day can not participate. It is only for those who have a night business and sellers of goods (P4, employee).*

Unfortunately, in the life of an employee, one cannot expect to be awake and walk around at night (Sh. 16, employee).

Some also believed that nightlife is only suitable for people who are self-employed or whose jobs are flexible over time. However, a respondent whose job is a worker has a different opinion:

*The worker cannot give up his daily work, so it may be better to go to the park with his family at night if it is safe (P. 3).*

Regarding characteristics of the participants in terms of marital status, the respondents (85%) consider the nature of night entertainment to be more in line with the spirits and characteristics of singles and young people. They believe

Table 1. A sample of extracting primary codes for “individual repulsions.” Source: authors.

Interviews’ transcripts	Initial codes
I’m afraid to <u>oversleep</u> in the morning (p. 1). People who do not have an <u>administrative job</u> have the right to do so (p. 6).	Job nature, job restrictions
The night is <u>dedicated only to sleep</u> (p. 11). I prefer s to sleep. Even if I went for a night walk, the next day was hard because I did not have <u>enough energy</u> (Sh. 2).	Need to rest, reduce the efficiency needed for daily works
It is difficult if the children are <u>going to school</u> the next day (p. 10). It disrupts <u>daily life</u> . Because he did not sleep well at night (p. 4).	Disruption of life plan, contradiction with daily plan

Table 2. Demographic information related to the sample of citizens participating in night leisure activities. Source: authors.

Code	Gender (M=Male, F=Female)	Age	Education	Job	Marital status
P1	F	54	Master	Employee	Married
P2	M	43	Bachelor's degree	Employee	Married
P3	M	36	Elementary Education	worker	Single
P4	F	42	Bachelor's degree	Employee	Single
P5	F	25	Master	Student	Married
P6	M	51	Diploma	Employee	Married
P7	M	52	Bachelor's degree	Retired	Married
P8	M	54	Associate Degree	freelancer	Married
P9	M	62	Bachelor's degree	Retired	Married
R10	F	44	Bachelor's degree	housekeeper	Married
P11	M	44	Bachelor's degree	Employee	Married
P12	F	48	Associate Degree	obstetrician	Married
P13	F	34	Bachelor's degree	Employee	Single
P14	M	29	Bachelor's degree	Employee	Married
P15	M	41	Ph.D.	University professor	Married
P16	F	40	Bachelor's degree	Employee	Married
P17	M	40	Bachelor's degree	Employee	Married
P18	M	39	Master	Employee	Married
P19	M	24	Bachelor's degree	freelancer	Single
P20	M	40	Bachelor's degree	freelancer	Married
P21	F	45	Diploma	Employee	Married
P22	M	37	Bachelor's degree	freelancer	Married
P23	F	43	Master	Employee	Married

that the necessary infrastructures for adaptation are not provided for family recreation:

*Nightlife is mostly for singles and is not very family-friendly yet (P. 18).*

From viewpoint of eligible people for night activities, most of the respondents believed that youth are the main users of nightlife activities. The literature review also showed that in other societies there are similar perceptions.

As previous researchers (Brenner & Theodore, 2005) have pointed out, in some European cities, the development and production of youth-centered nightlife in city centers has been accompanied by a strengthening of racial, ethnic, class, and labor inequality issues. Also in many large cities of Southern Europe, the development of youthful nightlife in the city center has been associated with the emergence of social problems for residents and has affected the sustainable coexistence between different social groups in the city. On the other hand, in traditional Iranian society, the family system has a special position. As the pattern of

Iranian domestic travel especially during Nowruz shows, Iranian families are as willing as possible to engage in group recreation and to strengthen family ties as much as possible. Therefore, it seems that in the face of the phenomenon of nightlife, the same patterns of collectivism and the tendency to collective and family entertainment are still followed. However, it should not be forgotten that today some Iranian adolescents and young people are also influenced by global patterns, especially consumerism and the globalization of culture, and there is a possibility of conflicts between young people and parents within families.

Cultural and religious beliefs of individuals also have a significant impact on their decision-making and attitudes toward the phenomenon of nightlife (85%):

*If I stay up at night, I like to pray, read the Qur'an, and read a book (P. 4).*

*I prefer to pray from 2- 3 o'clock a.m. onwards, unless the pilgrimage to the shrines and religious-recreational places such as the shrine of Hamideh Khatoon ... I agree only if dancing*

Table 3. Demographic information related to the sample of business owners and economic actors. Source: authors.

Code	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Experience (Year)	Monthly income (Million IR)
B1	M	20	diploma	Sale man	4	3
B2	M	50	Bachelor's degree	Super market owner	16	-
B3	M	50	Bachelor's degree	florist	25	6
B4	M	24	Associate Degree	Sandwich for sale	5	3
B5	M	35	Primery school	Fruit Juice seller	15	-
B6	M	25	Associate Degree	Super market owner	3	-
B7	M	29	Primery school	confectionary	11	-
B8	F	30	Associate Degree	seller of Van food	5	-
B9	F	42	Diploma	Caffee shop owner	10	-
B10	M	30	Bachelor's degree	Snacks for sale	5	3

Table 4 . Demographic information related to the sample of experts. Source: authors.

Code	Gender	Specialty	Education	Job	Experience	Organization
E1	F	Family Counseling	PhD.	Social manager	18	Municipality
E2	F	Human resources	PhD.	University professor	15	Municipality
E3	M	Civil engineering	Master	Civil manager	12	Municipality
E4	M	Civil engineering	Master	Municipality manager	29	Municipality
E5	M	Urban planning	Master	Manager	20	Municipality
E6	F	Public relationship	Master	Manager	25	Ministry of industry
E7	M	Police	Bachelor's degree	Executive Officer	20	Police Office
E8	M	Tourism Management	PhD.	University professor	15	Nazar Research Center
E9	M	Management	PhD.	Mayor	15	Municipality
E10	M	Urbanism	PhD.	Civil manager	10	Municipality
E11	M	Urban planning	Master	Expert	12	Islamic Azad University
E12	F	Tourism Management	PhD.	University professor	23	Sharif ACCE CR1
E13	F	Tourism planning	PhD.	University professor	11	University of Science and Culture

*will not be prevalent in the resorts and our religious values are preserved (P. 9).*

The level of income and financial status of individuals are also amongst the characteristics that can affect the behavior and participation patterns of individuals.

Some view the phenomenon of nightlife as a luxury commodity that is unique to certain classes of society (30%): Nightlife is for the rich. Because those who are in the middle and weak class are so busy that they do not have the mood for night entertainment (P. 1).

Table 5. Percentage of responses frequency. Source: authors.

Percent	Variables
70	Nightlife compatibility with different ages
85	Youth attitudes towards nightlife
75	Effect of gender differences
80	The impact of job on attitudes towards nightlife
85	Composition of participants in the nightlife in terms of marital status
85	Young people as the main target of nightlife
85	The impact of cultural and religious beliefs
30	Income level and financial status
95	Nightlife as a opportunity for job and income generation
95	Night is the best time to escape the hustle and bustle of the day
20	Night as an opportunity to think
85	City vitality
65	congestion and tension reduction
35	Feeling of more freedom and flexibility
45	Being with family
75	Job limitations
25	Need to rest at night
85	Sense of insecurity
30	Disruption of the life plan
40	Criminal acts
30	Contradictions with culture and beliefs
95	More customer and more income
80	More customer's convenience
70	Fear of continuity and habit of working at night
30	Supplying a certain range of products
45	Getting away from family
95	Development of cultural businesses
100	Tourism industry development
65	Social cohesion increase
80	Increase in city vitality and dynamics
75	Help to create public security
65	Family consolidation
45	increase in time of visiting cultural and social places
70	Increase citizens' happiness
30	Disturbing the sleep and rest of others
40	Culture shock in the early stages
70	The possibility of family conflicts
50	Decreased daily efficiency

However, some consider nightlife to be an ordinary rather than luxury product that can be accessed by all classes (70%):

*In terms of income, I do not think it matters whether you are rich or poor because night activities do not cost much (P. 14).* Today, the public considers leisure and nightlife to be a luxury item that is unique to the affluent. There is talk of a phenomenon called «perambulating» among the citizens, which refers to the competitions and betting of the prosperous youth and the crazy driving in the middle of the night in the city. This abnormal phenomenon is the product of abusing night time by these young people, and it seems that if nightlife develops and public oversight increases, the rest of the citizens can claim their citizenship right to enjoy public spaces and places. It would play a significant role in reducing and eliminating these civil anomalies.

One respondent has a third view by considering the nightlife as an opportunity for low-income groups:

*The rich spend their money and the low-income earn income and money (P. 3).*

*From a business perspective, nightlife is a great opportunity to work and increase income, and almost all respondents (95%) welcomed the phenomenon and, based on their previous experiences, acknowledged the benefits of nightlife:*

*During Ramadan, my shop is open until 5 a.m., our income was almost doubled (B6).*

### B. Attractions

Citizens' attitudes towards the nightlife phenomenon can be examined in terms of existing attractions and repulsions. From this perspective, two categories of individual and social attractions and repulsions were identified and each of the following subcategories was extracted.

#### • Individual attractions

##### - To reduce stress

Respondents (90%) believed that due to the crowds, hustle and bustle during the day, the person does not feel psychologically comfortable. Also, daily activities are associated with stress, which in the last hours of the day leads to depression and anxiety. For this reason, the night is considered the best time to enjoy peace and quiet:

*It is invigorating, energizing, and relaxing. Because the day does not have this peace ... Depression does not happen to a person. Negative waves leave the body (p. 8). I prefer parks with music. Because now people are very depressed and need to renew their spirits and vitality (p. 13).*

##### - Reflection and thought

Some have gone further and pointed to more philosophical aspects by considering the night as an opportunity for thinking (20%):

*I feel I see beauties at night that I do not see during the day. I feel closer to God (p. 1).* There is a special kind of silence in

the night, which is an opportunity to think. People are more spiritual at night. *They look thoughtfully at what they have done during the day (P. 21).*

#### • Social attractions

##### - City vitality

The majority of respondents (85%) believed that if nightlife develops in Tehran, the city will be lively and will become more dynamic and vibrant. Today, one of the effective criteria for choosing a neighborhood to live in the city is security. Dynamism and livelihood have a significant impact on people's assessment of security or at least their mental security:

*For some, the criterion for buying a home in an area is how much the area is alive at night and not secluded (P. 1).*

##### - Reduce congestion and tension

Respondents point to the benefits of night entertainment due to the reduction of congestion and stress at night (65%):

*People are calmer at night and more cheerful during the day. The sellers are also calm and laugh, they are joking, but during the day, everyone is violent and hasty (P. 14). I profoundly tend to have fun at night because the day is so busy, it is overwhelming. Even crowded recreation places make the space very unbearable (P. 10).*

##### - The feeling of freedom and more flexibility

Some citizens (35%) consider the night as an opportunity to get rid of daily constraints and, of course, within the framework of social norms, due to the darkness of the night, as well as the lack of work requirements during the day and the lack of need to be present in the formal spaces:

*At night, humans seem to be released from their cages, feel free, and can easily laugh together without being stopped (E. 1).*

##### - Being with family

Although some common perceptions and beliefs in the society about nightlife emphasize that the prevalence of nightlife may weaken the foundations of the family, but some respondents (45%) pointed to the role of nightlife in increase family cohesion:

*Nightlife causes family members to become very close (p. 23).*

##### - Increase social cohesion

One of the respondents stated in his experiences of participating in nightlife:

*People were shopping with pleasure, they were out late at night as if the cohesion between people was much greater (P.14).*

Others (40%) reported some positive interaction between participants as well as between participants and overnight service providers.

## Repulsion

### • Individual Repulsion

The following are some of the issues extracted from reviewing the contents of the interviews as the factors preventing individuals from participating in night activities:

#### - Job Restrictions

Restrictions due to the type of job and the time required to be out of home are some of the things that make some people reluctant to participate in night-related activities.

*I'm afraid to oversleep in the morning (P1, employee). People who do not have an administrative job are able to participate in nightlife activities (P. 6).*

Some interviewees (75%) deemed job restrictions as a deterrent to participating in nightlife activities. Although this is true for people who have administrative and time-sensitive jobs, it is also important to note that this category of employees is also able to experience nightlife activities due to weekends, public holidays, vacations, and other opportunities. Therefore, most members of the community can alternately participate in night activities.

#### - Need to rest at night

Some interviewees (25%) believed that physiologically, nights are the best time to sleep and rest, and if there is a change in the use of this time period of the night, it will have negative consequences:

*The night is dedicated only to sleep (p. 11). I prefer to sleep. Even if I went for a night walk, the next day was hard because I did not have sufficient energy (P. 2).*

#### - Sense of insecurity lack of perception of security

Despite the tendency to walk around at night and enjoy participating in nightlife activities, most respondents (85%) were pessimistic about the security of the city at night and pointed to the feeling of insecurity as one of the deterrents. for example:

*At night, I am afraid of the existence of thugs and the insecurity of society (p. 12).*

#### - Disruption of the daily plan

Common patterns of work rest, and leisure times in the community have a significant impact on people's attitudes towards daily or nightly activities. Opening hours of offices, schools, universities, as well as job requirements and social constraints, can affect people's desire to participate in nightlife:

*It is difficult if the children are supposed to go to school the next day (p. 10). It disrupts daily life. Because he/she did not sleep well at night (p. 4).*

On the other hand, one of the interviewees had a different opinion and referred to the issue of planning. From this perspective, in the long run, individuals

and families may form their own patterns of night entertainment and leisure in a way that is appropriate to their daily routine, and thus it is obvious that the formation of these patterns is a time-consuming process and requires experience and adaptation to new conditions:

*Those who participate for the first time may have some disruption in their lives, but in the long term run they can plan properly (P1).*

### Social repulsions

#### • Criminal acts

Abnormal behaviors such as robbery snatch thefts, drug abuse, and harassing families especially women, are amongst issues that respondents (40%) expressed concern about. On the other hand, some researchers such as Durkheim (2008) believed that the interactions that take place in the nightlife environment can help reduce insecurity. In Durkheim's opinion, the existence of interactions within urban spaces is the most important monitoring and control tool that can reduce many crimes and delinquencies. He believed that if a society has strong social cohesion, its members will be more in line with the values of society.

#### - Contradictions with culture and beliefs

One of the most prominent factors mentioned by some respondents (30%) as a deterrent is the cultural and religious beliefs of the community:

*Some nights my daughter wants us to go out and eat ice cream, for example. I will not leave my daughter alone. The young should go with the family (P 1).*

In my opinion, it is not possible in Islamic societies and we cannot compare our society with other ones (P. 2).

#### • Business owners

##### A. Attractions

Here are several factors implicitly mentioned by interviewees as nightlife attractions for businesses:

#### - More customer and more revenue

The vast majority of respondents (95%) who were businessmen in Tehran, acknowledged the advantage and prosperity of night work in terms of market size and earning more:

Night business is better than day one, income is more (B6, supermarket). We have more customers at night, around 12 to 3 a.m. ... During Ramadan, I was sometimes at work until 4 a.m. Please do not reject it (nightlife). I had a lot of income (B5, juice seller). Our business is booming these nights. People buy a lot (B 4 sandwiches).

#### - Calmer customer

The majority of interviewees (80%) believed that customers were more relaxed at night. Citizens also

confirmed it during the interviews and believed that sellers were calmer at night and had a better behavior: It's excellent. People (customers) are more relaxed. They are not aggressive or rash (B8, owner Vanfood).

### B. Repulsion

#### • Insecurity

Despite the agreement of most respondents and the emphasis on the economic benefits of nightlife that some have experienced, some also complained about insecurity:

At night, two people robbed my shop around 10 p.m. (B2, supermarket). We are generally open until 11 pm. Because it is not safe (B7, confectionery).

#### - Fear of continuity and habit of working at night

Businessmen and sellers, like citizens who engage in nightlife for leisure, follow daily patterns that have long been formed. Therefore, night-shift working for sellers is considered temporary and not common:

I'm afraid I can no longer work during the day (B10, selling snacks).

#### - Supply of certain products

Some business owners (30%) believed that not all businesses can necessarily benefit from nightlife development, and only those suppliers offering products related to leisure and recreational activities take advantage of the opportunity:

Some jobs like Florists, boutiques, home appliances stores, etc. do not thrive at night (B3, Florists).

On the other hand, due to the greater variety of services and goods offered during the day, customers may also prefer daily shopping rather than night shopping. As one citizen stated:

*I can have more choices during the day (P. 6).*

#### - Getting away from family

Business owners, like other citizens, need leisure and nightlife. Some (45%) believed that working at night shifts keep them away from their families due to the inconsistency of their schedule with other family members' one:

*I like to be with my family and only work during the day (B3, florist).*

#### • Sociocultural aspects of nightlife

According to the interviews, the sociocultural aspects of nightlife fall within two types of positive and negative dimensions, as follows.

#### - Development of cultural businesses

Experts interviewed (95%) believed that a range of cultural businesses has the opportunity to operate and grow in the night. Cinema, theater, visiting museums and cultural centers, libraries, and other cultural activities were some examples mentioned by citizens as their favorite activities at night.

### - Development of the tourism industry

The development of urban tourism and the creation of capacities for tourism in Tehran, especially for those who do not have the opportunity for city tours during the day, are among the issues mentioned by experts (100%). Today, the city of Tehran, with its historical sites, resorts, museums, and shopping attractions, has a significant potential for urban tourism.

### - Social cohesion Increase

Some experts (65%) believed that due to the nature of the night space and especially in the case of developing cultural activities, an increase in social cohesion is possible. Citing an example one of the interviewees referred to past experiences and mentioned 'Basij' Centers. As Durkheim stated, the existence of interactions and cohesion within living spaces can reduce many crimes and delinquencies. If a society has strong social cohesion, its members' values will be more in line with the values of society.

### - Increase in vitality and dynamism of the city

The development of nightlife can prevent the city from inactivity at night by bringing vitality to the city. In the long run, this can reduce the number of night criminal acts.

### - Help to create public safety at night

Some interviewees (75%) believed that, contrary to popular belief, the existence of nightlife could provide security: I felt good in Lahijan city lifenight. The vendors were operating normally. It was normal for people. The restaurants were active and I felt very secure (P 1).

### - Strengthen the family ties by doing family leisure activities at night

Some interviewees see nightly entertainment as an opportunity to be with family and maintain strong family ties because of their busy schedule and daily work activities. According to his observations, one of the sellers stated:

Here, families sit together for hours and talk (B9, coffee shop).

### - Increased hours of visiting cultural and social places

One of the current issues is the working hours of some cultural and recreational places, which due to the working hours of the offices, sometimes it is not possible for all to visit these places. One of the citizens believed:

If places such as museums, libraries, etc. are active at night, people's cultural insight will also increase (p. 9).

### Entrepreneurship and income generation opportunities

Experts (100%) believed that nightlife could provide opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and income. The results of the interview with the business owners also confirm this claim.

### - To increase the vitality of citizens

The vitality and dynamism of the city at night and the creation of recreational opportunities for people who are

unable to do daily recreation due to their daily activities can affect the vitality of the citizens in the long run.

### - Negative sociocultural aspects

Although the interviewees mentioned the positive aspects of nightlife, they did not neglect to mention the negative effects and expressed the concerns which are addressed below:

### - Disturbing people who want to rest at night

Sick people, especially those who are hospitalized and need to rest, the elderly, children, and people who prefer to spend the night sleeping and resting at home, can be affected by congestion and noise pollution, which may occur if nightlife develops; Therefore, special criteria need to be considered to select proper locations in the city for the development of nightlife.

### - Culture shock in the early stages

Culture shocks and conflicts may arise due to the existing belief that the nightlife phenomenon is inconsistent with the cultural values of the society, as well as the potential oppositions that currently exist from a part of the society and some institutions. To manage and control it, special measures must be taken and proper planning must be done.

### - The possibility of conflicts within families

The phenomenon of nightlife, like any other emerging sociocultural phenomenon, can have major effects on social values and norms, especially in traditional societies. The leisure pattern of Iranian families and the way of using and allocating time to work and leisure activities have all been influenced by traditional and cultural beliefs and patterns that have been prevalent in Iranian society for many years. Due to the historical importance and value of work and dawn to start the daily effort among Iranians, the night has a special place for rest, rejuvenation, and physical health:

Gradually, people's culture changes, and their sleep is delayed. This is harmful to the health of citizens (P. 15, University Professor).

Although today the indefatigability spirit, especially in the youth, is not as strong as before and is different from previous generations but still traditional frameworks have remained and have shaped the lifestyle and behavioral patterns of a significant part of society, especially parents.

I will not leave my daughter alone; the young must go with the family (P 1). If so, I would like to go to the park, to the cinema, but my wife disagrees. He says there is no security (P 21).

### - Decreased daily efficiency

Obviously many of the social activities in urban communities take place during the day. On the other hand, daily activities and efforts require energy and renewal. For this reason, some (50%) have mentioned the decrease in the efficiency of the person to pursue daily

activities as one of the negative aspects of participating in night activities:

It causes lack of sleep, lethargy, depression, and mood swings, which reduced work during the day (P. 15, University Professor).

**• Summary of the Findings**

Fig. 1 shows the thematic dimensions of nightlife along with the relevant variables and categories that were

revealed in the analysis of the text of the interviews. According to the objectives of the present study, only the sociocultural aspect of the phenomenon has been considered.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

The phenomenon of nightlife, as an emerging sociocultural phenomenon, can have significant effects

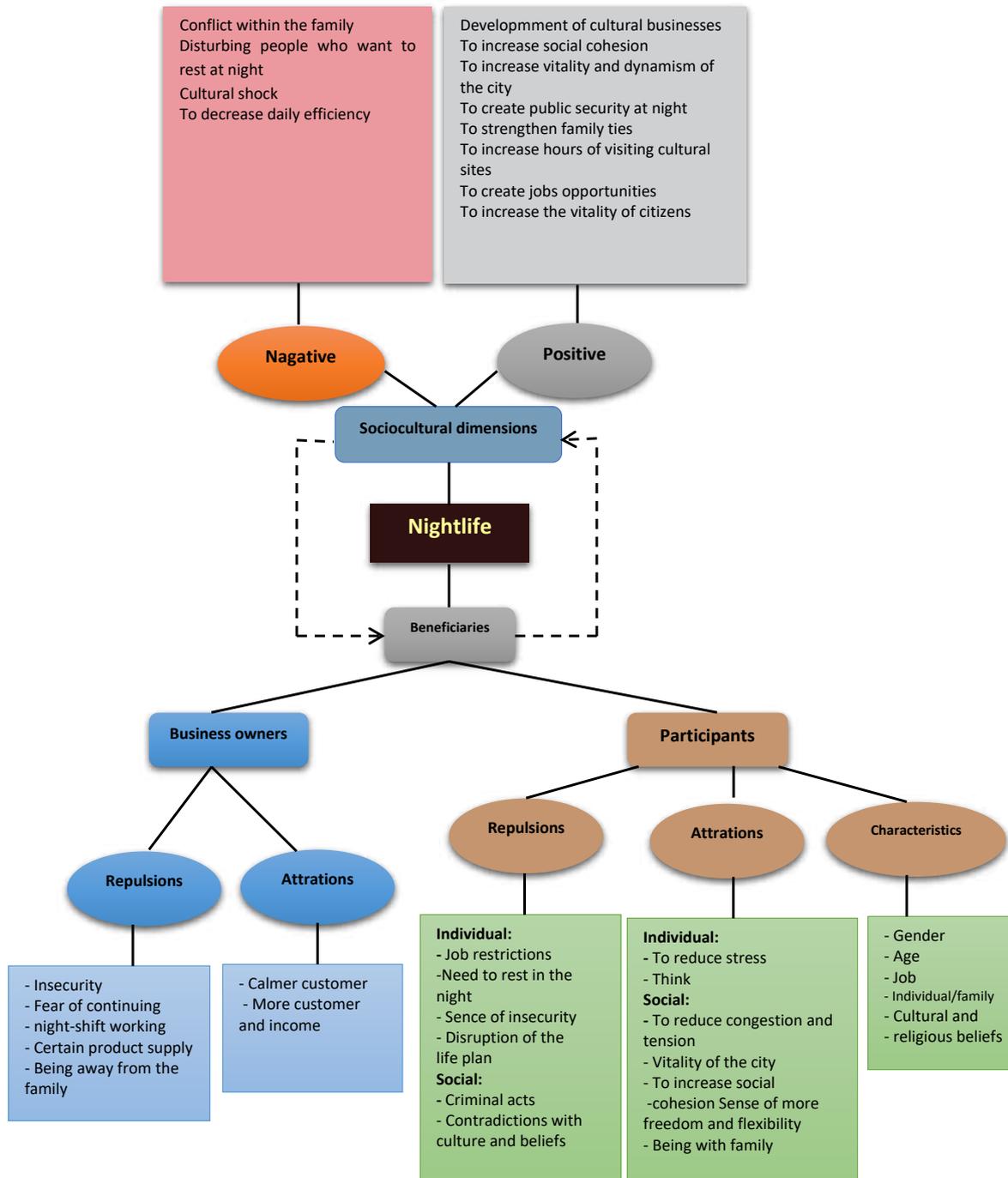


Fig. 1. Concepts and variables of nightlife from a sociocultural perspective. Source: authors.

on the culture and cultural values of societies, which is especially noticeable in traditional societies. Today, nightlife has become a dominant aspect of people's culture and lifestyle in many parts of the world. From this perspective, the main participants and beneficiaries of this process are both producers and consumers of nightlife cultural products. On the other hand, day and night have long had special meanings and functions in Iranians' culture and lifestyle. However, cultural changes which are the result of pervasive phenomena such as globalization, cultural convergence, diminishing linguistic, cultural and national borders and barriers, will inevitably change the Iranian society in terms of cultural production and consumption. Changes that have been going on for a long time and its appearance is becoming more visible day by day.

The city of Tehran, as one of the metropolises of the country, which is also the administrative and political center of the country and has witnessed the largest volume of immigration among the cities of the country, along with the expansion of its cultural and geographical territory, also needs redistribution of time. The hustle and bustle of the city during the day has made the night a good time to have fun, relax, and get away from the congestion of the city. The research findings indicated that citizens have a positive attitude towards participating in night-related activities. On the other hand, due to the ambiguities surrounding this emerging phenomenon, and influenced by traditional and social beliefs, as well as the attitude they have based on their perceptions or some previous experiences towards the night security situation in Tehran, there is some doubt. Most of the interviewees expressed their concerns in terms of feelings of insecurity, fear of disrupting daily life, parents' concerns about changing their children's lifestyles, and the like. Findings also indicated that regarding mental imagery of nightlife, most of the interviewees only consider evening to 12 a.m., and when it comes to midnight, they have many concerns about Security issues. On the other hand, some consider the possibility of conflicts between young people and parents within families as a consequence of nightlife. Nightclubs for teens and young adults may become what Goffman (1963) calls "places back" where people can hide from parents, teachers, and the judiciary, or at least give them that feeling. In this regard, institutions such as education and the media have a significant role in shaping the culture of nightlife and localization of this phenomenon in the community, so that it is consistent with the cultural and religious beliefs of Iranian society. Regarding the current state of Iranian society, some experts believe that nightlife

currently exists furtively among young people, and its symptoms can be found in houses and hidden places. They believe that by legitimizing nightlife and public control and oversight, these activities can be directed in the right direction and public and social security can be increased.

Disruption of people's life plans is another concern about the development of nightlife. As mentioned earlier, in the long run, citizens can shape their nightly entertainment patterns to fit their daily routine. However, the formation of these patterns is a time-consuming process and requires trial and error, experience and adaptation to new conditions.

Finally, it should be noted that with increasing technological change and rapid changes in work and lifestyle around the world, most societies will be affected by these changes. As the use of the Internet and other mass media has created many changes in our way of working, organizational structures, and business relations in the country, it is predicted that in the future we will see more changes and developments, especially in the City of Tehran. For example, future jobs will be inherently different from current ones, so that we may see more teleworking, work from home, and other virtual forms of business. Thus, the leisure patterns and lifestyles of people in urban communities will be influenced by new work patterns and we will be witnessed different interpretations and perceptions of day and night functioning among communities. In the following, according to obtaining the points of view of experts, solutions to maximize the positive, and reduce the negative impacts of nightlife development are presented.

- Support of policymakers and executive organizations including police, media and other influential and decision-making institutions
- Cooperation and coordination of educational and cultural organizations and institutions in order to create and shape a suitable culture of nightlife.
  - Connecting families to the community by participating in popular and cultural centers
  - Increasing social and cultural programs at night and not focusing solely on tourism with the aim of food industry.
- Considering and following cultural and ideological traditions and experiences of the Iranian society in designing and implementing the best night activities
- Consider places that are isolated from residential areas, hospitals, and other special places
- Planning to allocate useful programs, especially for different age groups.

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