

Investigating the role of government housing policies in improving the quantity and quality of housing in the city of Sari

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Abstract. Initially, the need for housing was a matter of providing shelter but after satisfying this basic human need, users' expectation of housing has increased. Due to the population growth and increased need for housing followed with a rise in construction statistics, paying attention to quantitative and qualitative criteria is particularly important. This study is of a descriptive - analytic type and its overall purpose is to identify the effects of government policies on improving housing quality and quantity of housing in the city of Sari. The main hypothesis of this study is the effectiveness of government policies on the quality and quantity of housing in the city of Sari, and after carrying out surveys, data was collected by means of questionnaires and analyzed through SPSS software. The results of the study showed that applied government policies in Housing and Urban Development system have improved the quantity and quality of housing in this city that the most effective policies were the ones related to providing banking facilities for the construction and reconstruction of housing units and the least effective ones were the ones related to importing building materials from outside the country.

Keyword: Housing, government housing policies, quality and quantity conditions of housing, detailed plans

1. INTRODUCTION

Housing is the basic need of human and the most important commodity that its providing (either being the owner or tenant) has a high proportion of public's income. In fact, housing is the biggest asset of many families (Asgari and Ghaderi, 1382, 101). Having access to desirable housing has long been one of human concerns and one of the most important issues facing planners and designers (Saidi and Kazemi, 1390, 114). Today, the issue of housing not only as a shelter but also as identity, security and resource of asset is presented among residents of a city. The housing sector has been a source of conflict between the different factors and it has been a source of different positive and negative effects on macro, regional and local levels (Mohammadi et al., 1391, 17). On the other hand, it is worth noting that the safety of housing in the different aspects play an important role in the psychological comfort of the residents. Therefore, knowing the healthy housing standards and trying to provide desirable settlements, is an important issue in the discussion of healthy city (Qaderi, 1382, 128). Several factors affect families' choice for buying houses or renting housing units. Identifying these factors and their effectiveness can aid policy making and planning of housing and welfare and economic issues (Asgari and Qaderi, 1382, 115). On the one hand, the share of housing in employment, the added value of the country, household budgets and on the other hand, the imbalance of supply and demand, particularly in urban areas has increased the attention of policy makers in the housing sector (Qaderi, 1382, 113). In recent decades with the advent of new ideas, urban growth and development has been proposed and endogenous development is a part of it. The current policies in the country apart from considering these items, seek to answer immediate needs of society and thus the consequences of such decisions in the future development of the city are overlooked (Saidi Rezavani and Kazemi, 1390, 121). One of the problems of the plans of urban centers revival is their insignificant participation and ignoring the role and place of owners of such textures in the reconstruction process that has caused

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delays in the implementation of these plans and failure in achieving their goals in the predicted time period (Bahrami and Aslani, 1390, 59). Accordingly, we need special measures for current situation and preventing their spread in the future. Fixing this problem requires policy making and measures not just at the local level, but also at the national level and it demands cooperation with all relevant organizations.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH AREA

Sari is the capital of Mazandaran province and biggest and most populated city of this province. Sari is limited to Caspian Sea from north and northeast, to Alborz mountain range and Semnan province from south and southeast, to the cities of Behshahr and Neka from East and to Ghaemshahr, Savadkooh and Jooybar from West. In the census of 1390, the population of sari was announced to be 296,417 people. Given the importance of the city with its long history and the fact that it is located in the passage and is the focus of attention of activists in all activities particularly construction, it currently suffers from inconsistency of urban landscape, a disturbance in horizon line, lack of parking, low lifespan of buildings and increasing prices. Sari with about half a million urban and rural populations, in addition to being the center of Mazandaran, and the importance of urban landscape, there is no harmony between the design of buildings of a district with their surrounding environment and with local and climatic characteristics of that area. In recent years we have faced dramatic changes in government's operational policies which have had micro and macro effects on the quality and quantity of housing construction. In this study, these policies and their effects have been examined and based on a poll from the Society of Engineers; analysis has been done to check if these changes in operational policies of government had been positive or negative in the process of housing construction. Government's state policies in the field of housing include various parameters, each of them has a role in changing the process of construction. We need to investigate all the presented parameters in order to make a conclusion in this regard:

A: implementation of comprehensive and detailed city plans

Developing and implementing comprehensive and detailed plans as a part of the process of urban and regional planning in order to respond to urban problems and needs of citizens, including the most basic components of urban management. (Bavandi et al., 1393)

B: provide banking facilities for the construction and reconstruction of housing units

C: transferring the communal land in the form of residential townships

Communal lands are shared between two or more persons without their owners being identified (Amid Dictionary). About a third to half of the city's lands is occupied by housing in Iran. Housing works on issues that are the context of development in most of the programs and projects of urban development. However, policies for encouraging the construction of housing at their best aid to answer the need for housing and to provide housing for citizens, while ignoring the quality of development and construction (Keivanlu and Dadgar, 1391).

D: implementation of Maskan-e-Mehr plans

Maskan-e-Mehr policies can have an important role in improving the welfare of their residents (Mohammadnia and Azargoon, 1392).

E: Providing permits for construction of companies and manufacturers of building materials

F: The import of building material

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G: The implementation of the plan for land use change policies in recent years

Equitable access to land and its optimal use are of essential components in sustainable development and social justice. The concept of land and urban environment has had a change in its quality both naturally and socio-economically and thus the objectives and dimensions of urban land use have been much richer and broader. Obviously the use of land and space as a public and vital resource and a public treasure should be implemented under principled planning. Urban land use planning as urban land preparation deals with using , distributing and protecting lands, spatial regulation of activities based on wishes and need of urban society and it also specifies types of lands.

H: Changes in policies of engineering system in increasing the issuing of building permits

I: Permission for construction on the margins of cities (urban limits development)

J: non-issuance of permits to repair or make modifications to buildings in the context old town (around Saat square)

Programs for interfering in old contexts of cities are a part of effective and crucial policies of urban development that can be analyzed in social, cultural, political, economic, environmental and physical aspects. While the foundation and context of many ancient cities of Iran are matched with the environmental, historical, cultural and social values of the country, developing coherent and comprehensive policies for interventions in these contexts are severely neglected (Behzadfar and Soleimani Rad, 1387).

K: Legislation of an act for holding tenders to transfer implementation of Maskan-e-Mehr projects to private and sometimes foreign companies

This study attempts to deal with the effect of each of the variables of implementing policies of government on the quality and construction of housing by analyzing and drawing conclusions based on the presented variables and using field method.

| Researcher/year | Subject | Results |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Ziari and colleagues, 1389 | A comparative study of Quantitative and qualitative indicators of housing in Babol city with urban areas of country with an emphasis on healthy city | Favorable conditions for the healthy city indicate that urban housing situation in our country, although is beyond many communities, but in many aspects lack desirable conditions of a healthy city |
| Saeedi Rezvani and Kazemi, 1390 | Recognition of frameworks of endogenous development in proportion to current policies of housing development(Maskan-e-Mehr) Case Study: Natanz | In cities where there is a possibility of loading of increased development, the settlement of Maskan-e-Mehr, beyond the structure and spatial organization of the city, imposes additional costs in providing infrastructure and utilities to the city management, however with guiding governmental investment flows to increased development, in addition to optimal use of existing capacity, civil development costs are significantly reduced. |
| Heidari and Azgami, 1389 | The strategic role of civil development Strategy (CDS) in policies of providing housing for low-income urban groups, case study: Rasht | Although the main purpose of these houses was providing housing for low-income groups in the city of Rasht, but most of their residents belong to to medium and medium to high-income groups. |
| Asgari and Ghaderi, 1382 | Determining factors affecting housing ownership in urban areas of Iran | In urban areas of Iran, current income, permanent income, age and having income without being the guardian of the family, number of people and the ownership of a car increase the likeliness of ownership and variables such as temporary income, guardian's being male and a student, the number of members of housing cooperatives, being a single-parent due to the death of spouse or divorce increase the possibility of being a tenant. |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Ghaderi, 1382 | Estimation of housing demand in urban areas of Iran | Variables of permanent, current and temporary income, marital status, guardian age, having an income without working, literacy the guardian, the number of literate people in the family have a positive effect on the demand for real estate and rental housing. The effect of renting each square meter of residential units, family size and the number of people with income in the family have a negative effect on the demand for real estate and rental housing. Income elasticity of demand for real estate and rental housing is lower than 1 which indicates that the item is necessary. |
| Razavi Sani and Faramarzi, 1391 | Identifying effective factors of architecture and Urban Development in housing market. A case study of Sari city | Factors such as proper installation system, the location of bathrooms, having a yard, foundation of the residential units, being located on busy streets, environmental quality, access to Main Street, internal architecture, the separation of private and semi-private space, Life and history of the building, seismic resistance and relative position in the city have the greatest influence on the market of buying and selling houses in Sari city. |
| Bahrami and Aslani, 1390 | Effects of oil price shocks on private sector investment in housing in a dynamic stochastic general equilibrium model based on real business cycle | In spite of extreme fluctuations in short term in the behavior of private investment in residential buildings in urban areas of Iran due to oil price shocks, this shock has not been permanent and has disappeared quickly. It is noteworthy that the study results suggest evidence of Dutch disease in the studied period. |
| Anas and Arnott, 1991 | An investigation of the Effects of government policies on the urban housing | Using a special algorithm, one can take a step towards dynamic development and making rents and housing prices balanced in each period and improve government's policies about urban conditions. |
| Malpezi and Mayo, 1997 | Effects of regulation, taxes, and subsidies on housing supply in Malaysia | Analysis of interventions shows that regulatory cost and limitations in pricing far outweigh the benefits of pricing subsidies and regulatory exemptions. |
| Dawkinz and Nelson, 2002 | Urban containment and housing prices policies | It seems that local planners can play an important role in the severity of the housing price inflation attributed to urban containment policy. |
| Ihlanfeldt, 2007 | The effect of land use regulation on housing and land prices | Permitting to have lands as a varied effect has a significant impact on the construction market and an increase in the size of houses. |

Social indicators of housing

Type of housing units in rural areas (flat and conventional), housing units 'having ownership documents, period of residential units 'using, the proportion of empty housing units, residential units' having living spaces and common areas of life and livelihood, access to health facilities, having educational facilities, type of residential units (property, endowment, rental, organizational), having comfort facilities and services, the number of households living in housing units, method of wastewater disposal, the number of people in each room, etc. (Lotfi et al., 1388)

Government policies on housing

Although policies for providing houses for low-income groups of people do not have a long history, but perhaps one could assume the official statement of Nicholson in 1973 about official aid of United States in building houses for low-income families as the first official and governmental policy in this regard. The primary interest of governments in developing countries was to indirectly deal with informal settlement, building housing for slum dwellers and their movement, these policies were formed from 1960s. These policies generally are affected by traditional approach to urban planning in which development and physical makeup and morphology of the cities are preferred to citizenship and social considerations (Heidari Chiyaneh and Azgamy, 1389).

Implementation of Maskan-e-Mehr project

Maskan-e-Mehr policies about housing planning and its place in community and planners' thoughts can have an important role in improving welfare of the residents in the process of evaluation of decision-making and purposes (Mohammad nia and Azargoon, 1392).

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Implementing the policies of land use change in recent years:

Equitable access to land and optimal use of it are essential components in sustainable development and social justice. Today, the concept of land and urban space has changed both economically and socially and as a result dimensions and purposes of urban land use have become richer and broader. Obviously, the use of land and space as a source of life and public wealth should be done under systematic planning. Urban land use planning as preparation of urban land deals with using, distributing and protecting lands, organizing activities based on requests and needs of urban community and it determines types of land use.

No permission to repair or make modifications to buildings in the context of old town:

Intervention in old contexts of cities in Iran is one of the effective and sensitive policies of urban development which can be analyzed in social, cultural, political, economic, and physical aspects. While the foundation and context of many ancient cities in Iran are matched with environmental, historical, cultural and social values of country, developing coherent and comprehensive policies of intervention in these contexts are severely ignored (Behzadfar and Soleimani Rad, 1387).

Implementation of comprehensive and detailed city plans:

These are plans in which based on the general criteria of the Master Plan, the use of urban lands in various neighborhoods of the city, the exact location and area of land for each of them, accurate and detailed traffic network, the concentration of population, congestion in urban centers, priority areas for improvement, development and solutions for urban problems are determined.

Transferring of mutual lands in the form of residential townships:

Mutual lands are shared between two or more people without their owner being identified (Amid dictionary). About a third to a half of city's lands are occupied by housing in Iran. Housing works on the issues which are the mainstream for development in most of plans and urban development projects. However, policies of housing construction at their best try to answer the need for housing while the quality of development and construction is ignored (Keivanlu and Dadgar, 1391).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

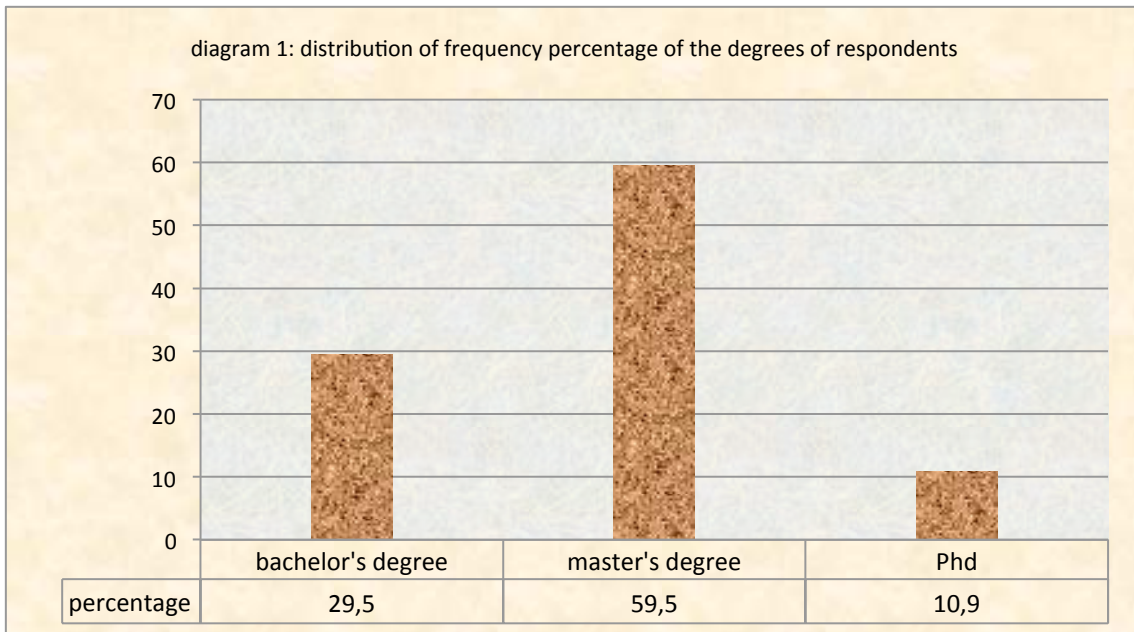
This study, based on its nature, subject and purpose is an applied one and its type is descriptive-analytical. Since in this study, a questionnaire was used to collect the required information, it could be a survey research from another viewpoint. The required data was collected in a field research method. In the field method, with respect to the objectives and main questions of the research, using tools such as observation, interviews and questionnaires, the data is collected. The population of this study consisted of all architects, designer engineers and engineers who were members in engineering system in Sari. Using Morgan and Jersey table, 220 samples were randomly chosen and questioned. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS software. The research's variables considered the effects of policies like implementation of comprehensive and detailed urban plans, providing banking facilities for the construction and reconstruction of housing units, transferring mutual lands in the form of residential townships, implementing Maskan-e-Mehr Housing Project, providing building permits for companies and manufacturers of building materials, importing building materials, change of land use policies in recent years, a change in the policies of engineering system in terms of the licensing of construction, permits for construction in the margins of cities (urban development policy), no permission to repair or

make modifications to buildings in the old context of the city(around Saat square), legislating an act for holding tenders for transferring the implementation of Maskan-e-Mehr projects to private or sometimes foreign companies as policies for qualitative and quantitative improvement of housing in the city of Sari.

4. FINDINGS

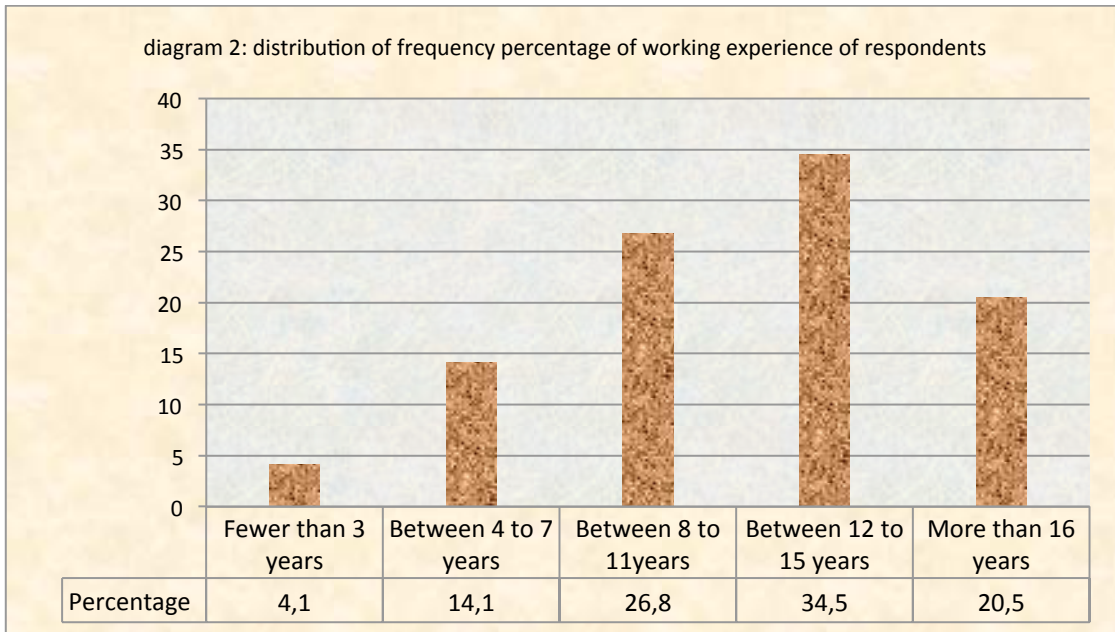
In this study the highest frequency was 50.9 % for females and 49.1 % for males. The results about the age of respondents showed that 75 % of respondents were 22 to 33 years old.

- 1- The results showed that more than one third (59.5 %) of respondents had master’s degree, and less than one third of them (29.5 %) had bachelor’s degree and the smallest part of them 10.9 % had PhD.



- 2- The results showed that about half of the respondents 41.1 % studied architecture and after that 39.1 % of them were experts in civil engineering and 11.4 %of them studied mechanics and then 8.2 percent were expert in mechanical installations.
- 3- The results showed that more than a half of respondents i.e. 55 % had 12years or more working experience and 45 % of them had working liscence of fewer than 12 years of working experience.

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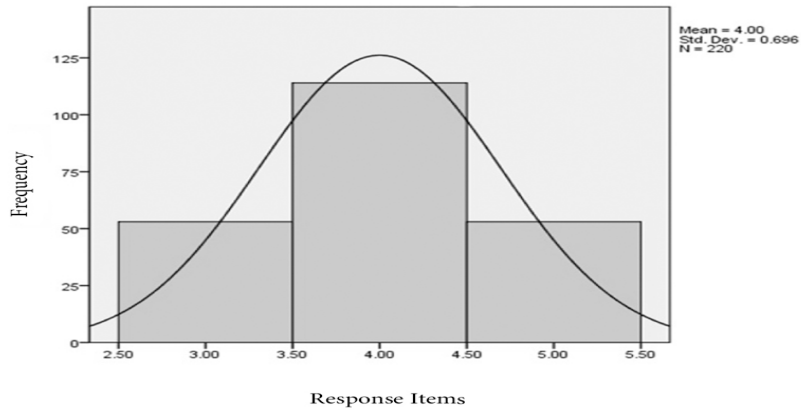
4- According to the findings about the impact of government's state policies on the qualitative and quantitative condition of housing it was concluded that 51.8 % believed that this impact is great and 24.1 % believed in a very high impact and 24.1 % believed that the impact is of an average size.

hypothesis testing and analysis of the study's findings

Table 1. "Results Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the normality of data distribution." One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

| Assumptions | Independent variables | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|--|-----------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|-------|
| | The impact of government policies on the quality and quantity of housing in Sari | Implementation of comprehensive and detailed city plans | Provide banking facilities for the construction and reconstruction of housing units | Transferring of mutual lands in the form of residential townships | Implementation of Maskan-e-Mehr project | Provide building permits companies and manufacturers of building materials | Import of building material | Implementing the policies of land use change in recent years | Change of engineering system policies in the field of issuing more building permits | Permitting construction in the margins of cities | No permission for reconstruction or modifications in the building in the old context of the city | Legislating the act of holding tenders for transferring Maskan-e-Mehr project to private companies | |
| N | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 | |
| Normal Mean | 4.0000 | 4.1455 | 4.5818 | 3.5273 | 3.3545 | 3.4909 | 3.2955 | 3.3364 | 3.6000 | 3.6545 | 3.6182 | 3.5136 | |
| Parameters Std. Deviation | .69571 | .71304 | .58726 | .55244 | .66327 | .60054 | .71448 | .74976 | .80750 | .80451 | .58101 | .56922 | |
| Most Extreme Absolute | .259 | .244 | .394 | .358 | .276 | .347 | .265 | .317 | .285 | .266 | .322 | .335 | |
| Differences | Positive | .259 | .244 | .238 | .276 | .263 | .248 | .233 | .188 | .206 | .202 | .279 | .285 |
| | Negative | -.259 | -.228 | -.394 | -.358 | -.276 | -.347 | -.265 | -.317 | -.285 | -.266 | -.322 | -.335 |
| Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z | 3.843 | 3.626 | 5.838 | 5.317 | 4.089 | 5.149 | 3.934 | 4.694 | 4.231 | 3.948 | 4.772 | 4.975 | |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | |

Figure 3. "The impact of the government policies on the quality and quantity of housing in the city of Sari"



As the results of Table 1 show the value of z in Kolmogorov - Smirnov test for the variable related to the original hypothesis of the study was less than the value of z in the table and A significant level is less than Permissible error (05/0) so the difference of data distribution in this variable was significant with normal distribution and data distribution cannot be assumed normal. For this reason, two-sentence non-parametric test was used to test the main hypothesis of the study.

The main hypothesis of the research:

- It seems that the state government policies on the quality and quantity of housing in the city of Sari have been effective. H1
- It seems that the state government policies on the quality and quantity of housing Sari have not been effective. H0

Binomial Test

| | | Category | N | Observed Prop. | Test Prop. | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--|---------|----------|-----|----------------|------------|------------------------|
| The impact of government policies on the quality and quantity of housing in the city of Sari | Group 1 | <= 3 | 53 | .24 | .50 | .000a |
| | Group 2 | > 3 | 167 | .76 | | |
| | Total | | 220 | 1.00 | | |

a. Based on Z Approximation.

Since data distribution in this hypothesis was not normal, non-parametric distribution was used to test this hypothesis. As the results of Table 1 show the frequency of responses which were lower than average was 53 (24 %) and the frequency of responses which were more than average were 167 (76%). Due to the fact that significant level is less than 0.05, the frequency difference of two groups of responses was significant in the level of 99 %. Therefore, the null hypothesis that the state government policies on the quality and quantity of housing Sari have not been effective is rejected and the opposed hypothesis (researcher’s hypothesis) is accepted. A very important point in this research is the extent to which government policies have affected the quality and quantity of housing. Comparative analysis of the results of respondents` answers which are presented in table 2 show that of 11 factors which were considered the highest contribution was related to providing banking facilities for the construction and reconstruction of housing units with an average rating of 9.51 and the second contributing factor is the

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implementation of comprehensive and detailed urban plans with an average rating of 7.80 also the least impact was related to the import of building materials with an average rating of 4.63. This fact suggests that the role of government in various areas of the economy, especially the housing sector as the second sectors for promoting jobs after petrochemical sector is of great importance and a large amount of liquidity in the banking system has been used in this area that if in the next year, this infusion of money is limited in the form of bank loans, it will have a significant effect on the qualitative condition of housing in the country.

Table 2. "The results of Friedman rank test to evaluate the effectiveness of state government policies on the quality and quantity of housing"

| Facilities | Average | Average Friedman Rating | Chi square | Degree of freedom | Level of significance |
|--|---------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Providing banking facilities for construction and reconstruction of residential units | 9/51 | 1 | 542/394 | 10 | 0/000 |
| Implementation of comprehensive and detailed city plans | 7/80 | 2 | | | |
| Permitting construction in the margins of cities | 6/07 | 3 | | | |
| Change of engineering system policies in the field of issuing more building permits | 5/93 | 4 | | | |
| No permission for reconstruction or modifications in the building in the old context of the city | 5/90 | 5 | | | |
| Transferring of mutual lands in the form of residential townships | 5/55 | 6 | | | |
| Legislating the act of holding tenders for transferring Maskan-e-Mehr project to private companies | 5/45 | 7 | | | |
| Provide building permits companies and manufacturers of building materials | 5/41 | 8 | | | |
| Implementing the policies of land use change in recent years | 4/90 | 9 | | | |
| Implementing Maskan-e-Mehr project | 4/85 | 10 | | | |
| The import of building materials | 4/63 | 11 | | | |

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In recent decades with the emergence of new ideas, growth and urban development have been proposed and endogenous development is part of it. This is while the current policies in the country, apart from considering these ideas, seek a temporary and immediate response to the needs of society. One of the problems of these initiatives is their lack of partnerships and ignoring the role and place of owners, which causes slowness and delays in implementing plans and failure in their goals realizations in the predicted time period. However the quality and quantity of residential units are of great concern for permanent and temporary users of buildings. Accordingly we require special policies and measures to improve the current situation and to prevent their spread in the future. Fixing this problem requires policy and measures not just at the local level, but also at the national level. The results of the findings of this study have shown that the basic hypothesis of the research is correct and the state government policies have been effective on the quality and quantity of housing in the city of Sari. These policies include different issues that according to the results obtained from respondents we conclude that

providing banking facilities for constructing and reconstructing residential units has been the most effective factor on the qualitative and quantitative control of housing in Iranian cities in general and in Sari city in particular, this result was in agreement with the results of Asgari and Ghaderi's research (1382) which studied factors affecting ownership of housing in urban areas of Iran and concluded that financial conditions and banking facilities have an impact on the quality of family housing, they also suggested that a good way for strengthening this factor is the implementation of new banking facilities with less interest rate to ease the process of providing facilities, this is while the implementation of comprehensive and detailed plans is one of the most effective solutions in improving the quality and quantity of housing. In this regard, Noorian and Sharif (1388) in their paper entitled "attitude on the preparation of detailed urban plan" about the important and essentiality of providing detailed plans, suggested that this plan at the first place is an accurate tool for determining the position of real estate to urban network plans and service applications. They believe that plans of detailed plan are a bridge between the plans of Master Plan and what that is going to be implemented in the city which shows the need for preparation of a detailed plan. The import of building materials to promote the quality and quantity of housing in the cities is another result of this study which is one of the least important factors in respondents and experts' opinions. According to the conducted studies, an appropriate strategy for controlling this effect is monitoring of the import of building materials to strengthen local production. In this context and in line with the results obtained in this study, some strategies are presented:

- Implementing new plans with less banking interest to ease the process of getting facilities
- Financing the implementation of detailed and comprehensive plans from all elements of the city, not necessarily the land and housing sector, for example banks, telecommunication center, finance center, justice organization, etc.
- Adoption of clear and binding rules on the construction of margins of the cities (including density, infrastructure, etc.)
- More seriously in terms of controlling the licensing of construction and technical certificates of buildings
- Providing permits for construction within the old context with adequate supervision and in accordance with the regional context
- suitable availability and adequate facilities for the urban fringe settlements
- Greater government control over the progress of the construction of Maskan-e-Mehr Housing projects
- Greater control over issuing construction licenses for factories producing building materials and permanent monitoring of processes and production
- Preventing the change agricultural land use to residential and treating the offenders legally
- The correct implementation of Maskan-e-Mehr to achieve the goals set for it
- Monitoring and restrictions on the import of building materials to strengthen local production materials

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