

The Analysis of Livability Indices in Rural Areas Developed into Cities (Case Study: Bolbanabad City, Dehgolan County)

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The policy to transform villages into cities is a strategy to improve the quality of life in small urban settlements. Yet despite such policy making, the progress of developing services and facilities has been slow in many of these newfound cities. Moreover, demographic trends in certain areas are on the decline even prior to becoming a city. Located in Kordestan province, Bolbanabad transformed into a city in 2009. However, the degree of livability and quality of life in different physical, economic, social, and environmental dimensions are at a low level in this city. The present study seeks to provide answers to the following question: What role has the policy of transforming villages into cities played in Bolbanabad with respect to the improvement of urban livability indices?

2. Review of Literature

Newly established cities are small cities. These cities are, in fact, suitable areas for administrative, economic, social, and welfare decentralization from the cities within the region, driving rural development, balancing the population settlement system, and providing the means for sustainable development. They are also suitable areas for biological sites that somehow cater for livability in former villages. Livability refers to the degree to which the necessities of a society are provided with respect to the extent of needs and capacities of individuals and reflects the welfare of the local community. This concept involves a set of relative criteria and indices. While livability in an area for certain people is to have a dynamic economy and sufficient employment and income, socioeconomic security is of priority for others. In general, the purpose of the policy to transform villages into cities is the comprehensive development of livability dimensions in small cities.

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3. Method

The present applied research was conducted using a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) and can be considered a descriptive-analytical study. Data were collected using library studies and survey. The total population of the study included Bolbanabad residents. Since collecting data from the entire population was impossible, Cochran's modified method was used and 120 individuals were selected randomly as sample population. In the qualitative section of the study, content analysis technique (the grounded theory) was employed through MAXQDA software. To prioritize urban livability indices, the importance-performance analysis (IPA) matrix was used to indicate the gaps between priorities and the perceived quality of livability in Bolbanabad. In addition, the questionnaires were validated using Cronbach's alpha in the SPSS software.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the content analysis method, four core concepts including infrastructures, facilities and equipment, beautification, and accessibility and security were identified in MAXQDA software as the most important livability factors from the perspective of Bolbanabad residents. The objectified quality caused by transformation from village into a city and the expectation of infrastructural index improvement demonstrate that the largest importance-performance average gap lies within the transportation sector with regards to the restoration of streets and asphalt quality in the city with a mean difference of -1.65. In the accessibility dimension, the lowest performances were related to weakness in creating green spaces, absence of certain government offices and lack of constant access to drinking water with average gaps of -2.36, -2.27, and -2.04, respectively. This has resulted in a decline in the livability level of the settlement. According to the residents, the importance priority of security sub-indices from high to low, include financial security, spiritual-mental security, and social security. According to the IPA method, the importance (priority)-performance gap present in dimensions including infrastructures, accessibility, and security are negative; therefore, the status of sub-indices in all aspects are undesirable.

5. Conclusion

The use of the IPA technique on the urban livability importance-performance showed the significant importance of livability indices and low objective performance in line with improving said indices, the results of which have been a -1.68 average gap and reduced quality of life. Given these conditions, the livability status of the village is below the desirable level. This means that despite its transformation into a city almost a decade ago, expectations are still at a level beyond the perceived quality of residents, and the policy has failed to bring about considerable developments to the improvement of residents' quality of life in different urban livability aspects. Considering the results of the study, it can be concluded that not every policy that changes the title of a settlement into a "city" is capable of improving the livability of that settlement. Accordingly, more people have emigrated from this city during said period and the population of Bolbanabad

is fewer than the time it was politically and administratively considered as a rural area.

Keywords: Livability, Life Quality, Bolbanabad, IPA Technique, Villages Transforming into Cities

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