The Role of the Offices of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Rural Sustainable Development of MeshkinshahrTownship

MolaeiHashjin N.*
Associate Prof., Dep. of Geography, Islamic Azad University of Rasht
Moradi M.
Assistant Prof., Dep. of Geography, Payam-eNour University
Mohammadi M.
M.A. in Geography and Rural Planning, PayamNour University

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Due to the growth in communication technology and overwhelming need to different forms of information, the second half of the twentieth century was a turning point to a new era in which human society was desperately dependent on circulation of information and on-time dissemination of information. Unlike the era of industrial civilization in that world started to expand, in this era the world is getting smaller. Rejecting the basis of industrial technology, the work of information age is based on data processing and the result of information technology. The most distinguishing feature of this era is higher speed and dependence on information as raw material needed by farmer, industry and development. A kind of comprehensive view overshadow this era.

Only if this technology expands in all parts of society is the potential merit of it achievable. We live in a world with a digital gap in which half of the world population is even deprived of having access to telephone communication.

Some researches talk about the importance and necessity of ICT with regard to the functions and services presented by it in rural areas and consider different points like social development, higher ability of villagers in making decision, rural expansion of villages and local markets, reduction in the effects of natural disasters and plant plagues, preservation of environment, empowerment of poor villagers, heightening life quality, decentralization, and providing work from far distance as the most important functions of rural ICT.

*E-mail:nmolaeih@iaurashtac.ir   Tel: 09111311751

One of the methods noticed by rural development planners as a result of recent developments in world is the utilization of information and communication technologies. Considering the massive effects of this technology in different societies, and the newness of this issue in our country, functional and field studies on the effects of ICT in rural development can usefully lead to correct use of this technology in our villages.

Methodology

Regarding the function and quality, the present research is descriptive-analytic. The process is based on collection of data and information, classification and organization of data, and analysis and conclusion. To collect data related to theoretical discussion, internet searches and library studies are used, and to have access to experimental data and information, questionnaire, interview, and direct observation are utilized. Combined questions and Likert scale are used in questionnaire and in the measurement of variables respectively.

Results and Discussion

The center of Meshkinshahr was approved as a city by then government in 1938. In 1993, this city became a city of Ardabil Province politically and officially. The latitudes and longitudes of this city are 47º 15´ to 48º 14´ Eastern longitudes and 38º 12´ to 38º 50´ Northern latitudes. This city is surrounded by cities of Germi and Ahar, Azerbaijan Republic, cities of Sarab and Ardabil, and cities of Ahar, Haris from north, east, west and south respectively. The altitude of this city is 1625 meters, and the highest point of it is the Sabalan Summit in Sabaln Heights and has four towns and twelve villages.

The findings show that predictive variables, production appropriate for market needs and production of new handicrafts, establishment of local markets, and creation of mental activities can predict the effect of the ICT offices.

The services presented in field of electronic government, office and computer services, telecommunication services, post bank services, business services, postal services, and different internet services can predict the effect of the ICT offices.

Among the variables of creating grounds of new jobs with giving the villagers the newest information, reducing migration through supporting producers of handicrafts, keeping graduates in villages through creating related jobs, creating jobs related to ICT, and raising the villagers' income can predict the effect of the ICT offices.

Effective and balanced use of basic resources, overall participation of people and local institutions in the process of ordering and planning, developing opportunities and capacities, variation in rural economy, and empowering vulnerable class of people can predict the effect of the ICT offices

Conclusion

Regarding the findings about the rate of information of villagers on services of rural ICT offices, most priorities go to the basic services of these offices, and the least ones go to familiarity with different internet services and the government's counter plan. About the

villagers' use of needed services, the basic services of offices such as paying bills, and telecommunication and post bank services had first priorities and electronic services such as health, business, and electronic commerce had the least priorities.Villagers' use of office services caused reduction in their commute to cities. Keeping graduates in villages through creating related jobs was the last priority, however. Creating grounds of new jobs with giving the villagers the newest information raising the villagers' income through cutting the role of dealers, creating jobs related to ICT had positive effect, and reducing migration through supporting producers of handicrafts and keeping graduates in villages through creating related jobs had negative effect. With regards to findings and regression results, the effects of ICT offices on the economic, socio-cultural, environmental dimensions, and eventually on rural sustainable development were not very comprehensive. Knowing that this technology is quite new to rural societies, making attempt to inform villagers of various services available in ICT offices, emphasizing more familiarity of villagers with basic informational and communicative services, giving out information on merits and advantages of using services ofICT offices, attempting to make extensive advertisement for services by authorities, training villagers on how to use the services better, acquainting villagers with information giving services and special services of rural ICT offices, and providing needed equipment in ICT offices can influence villagers' better enjoyment and more suitable use of services.

***Keywords:**Rural Development, Sustainable Development, Offices of Information and Communication Technology(ICT), Meshkinshahr Township.*