

The relationship between individual characteristics of women and their participation in rural development process (Case study: Darzab Dehestan - Mashhad County)

A.A. Anabestani, J. Javan, S. Ahmadzadeh

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

During recent decades, changes in rural women's participation in Iran have witnessed some ups and downs, and it is believed that individual characteristics of rural women play an important role in their participating or not participating in the rural development process. In this paper, it is tried to analyze the relationship between the individual characteristics of rural women and their effects on rural women's participation in rural communities.

Furthermore, this paper has also analyzed the spatial distribution of the relationship between these two variables in the study area so that one can use their results as a

basis for further investigations, planning and policy making in rural areas especially in the study area namely Darzab District of Mashhad County.

2- Theoretical bases

This study was carried out in a descriptive and correlational research method. Some parts of the data were collected by field studies, questionnaires and interviews, and some other parts of the data such as conceptual framework of theoretical research, documents and censuses have been obtained through library research. The study area included all the villages in the rural district that based on Cochran formula, 14 villages with a population of 1,315 households were surveyed. Sharp-Cochran sampling method with a confidence level of 95%, and 6% chance of error as a simple random sampling was used for estimating the number of samples. Accordingly, to investigate the relationship between individual characteristics and types of women participation in development process in rural areas, 250 women (18 year old women and older) have been questioned.

Author (s)

A.A. Anabestani (✉)
Associate Professor of Geography and Rural Planning, Ferdowsi
university of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran
e-mail: anabestani@um.ac.ir

J. Javan
Professor of Geography and Rural Planning, Ferdowsi university of
Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

S. Ahmadzadeh
M.A. of Geography and Rural Planning, Ferdowsi university of
Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

After data collection and processing in SPSS, ArcGIS software environments, etc., data were analyzed. The main question in this study was: "Is there any relationship between individual characteristics of rural women and their different types of participation in the rural areas?" The following hypothesis was proposed:

"There is a significant relationship between the individual characteristics of women and their participation in the process of rural development".

3- Discussion

Using Kruskal-Wallis, the study results show that there are significant differences between participation in different age groups which of course seems to be reasonable. The participation rate for women in the age groups under 40 was low; for they were usually busy doing homemaking activities, or taking care of kids. However, the participation rate for women over 60 years of age was also low for they were dealing with aging problems. Nevertheless, there was not any significant relationship between the level of participation and education and marital status. The participation rate among employed women, considering their monthly income, was not significantly different, but the participation rate for women of different age groups considering their household's income was significantly different. For example, 13 percent of households had a monthly income of less than 100 dollars, 36 percent of households gained less than 200 dollars a month and so on. Anyway, this statistical conclusion seems logical, because economic weakness and problems in low-income households are so immense that rarely provide them with any opportunity for participating in different activities.

Polling among the rural women of the study area shows that there is a significant

and positive correlation between individual characteristics affecting rural women's participation and various civic, community, non-formal activities among rural women. In other types of participation, namely political, religious, and economic ones, the value of significant coefficient is greater than 0.05; therefore, in this part, there is no a significant relationship between individual characteristics and participation. The level of correlation between individual characteristics and civic and local participation of rural women in the society is partially direct. In other words, the higher the level of individual factors affecting the participation of rural women, the greater the chance of women's participation in various social and economic activities.

4- Conclusion

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between women's participation in rural development process and their individual characteristics (age, education, marital status, duration of marriages, number of children, knowledge, level of self-confidence, development thinking and level of health) based on data collected from the surveys. Overall results show that there is not a strong correlation between women's participation of the study area and their characteristics, but generally it could be stated that there is a significant relationship between some individual characteristics and some types of participation in the study area. Besides, based on the results obtained from the perspective of rural women and their actual individual characteristics, there was not a significant relationship between individual characteristics of women and their level of participation (excluding local, civic and non-formal participation) in the study area.

5- Suggestions

The most important strategies proposed to improve rural and social capital include:

Providing training opportunities for women and girls in rural communities plays an important role in development of various kinds of participations. The training is useful not only for rural women, but also has a great impact on the overall health of their families and makes them ready to take advantage of future opportunities. By training, we do not mean just formal education.

To set up databases for identification of individual characteristics, and economic, and cultural potentials of rural women and evaluate their participation.

To hold a proper authority responsible for management of rural areas and addressing the issues of rural women in villages.

To strengthen the social capital of rural women by increasing their level of social trust, raising their awareness of their rights, talents, capabilities and benefits of participating in the society through education, mass media, and providing opportunities for people to set up none governmental and civic organizations in the villages.

Keywords: Knowledge, Self-confidence, Development thinking, Political participation, Economic participation, Civic participation.

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