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FACTORS AFFECTING THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL WOMEN- A CASE STUDY FROM IRAN

Farhadi Fariba and *Mohammad Sadegh Ebrahimi
Department of Rural Development, University of Omran-Tosses, Hamadan, Iran
Department of Rural Development, Collage of Agriculture, Isfahan University of Technology PO box 84156-83111, Isfahan, Iran
*Author for Correspondence

ABSTRACT

Social development is about improving the well-being of every individual in society so they can reach their full potential. Social development means investing in people. It requires the removal of barriers so that all citizens can journey toward their dreams with confidence and dignity. It is about refusing to accept that people who live in poverty will always be poor. Rural women in developing countries are often faced with poverty, they live under conditions of poor access to basic infrastructure. The statistical population of this study consisted of 5,018 women who have been living in rural areas in Shahreza Township in Iran. By using the Cochran formula, 190 rural women were selected and the random sampling used for the selection of the samples was satisfied. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting the social development of rural women. This study was conducted to examine the validity of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the different sectors after a preliminary study was conducted in which each of the indices greater than 0.7 were calculated separately. A factor analysis showed that factors affecting the development of rural women included: awareness of ICT services, the amount that the ICT services that were provided for rural women by rural ICT offices were used and the individual characteristics of women. These three factors explained 70% of the total variance of the factors affecting the social development of rural women.

Keywords: Factor Analysis, Social Development, Rural Women, Iran

INTRODUCTION

Development is a process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes of the people, national institutions, accelerating economic growth, reducing inequalities and eradicating absolute poverty (Todaro, 2006). General ICT as a tool to combat poverty, which enables rural women to improve the delivery of social services and increase the level of information to support food security and equal opportunity for all or some people and increase strategies of innovative knowledge in the fields of agriculture, must move forward (Bakhshizadeh *et al.,* 2010). Information and Communication Technology has led to significant changes in the way people live, work, interact and learn to be active (Nechita and Timofti, 2011). Some of these changes are very fast in such a way that today Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is increasingly used as a development tool (Rubinoff, 2005). It is believed that ICT is the most important factor for integrating developing and developed (Abbasi *et al.,*2008) countries. However, many developing countries have not adopted Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to the fullest possible extent as a means of achieving increased socio-economic development by entering the knowledge economy (Rahman *et al.,*2013). International policies always call on under developed countries to create simple tools for local development. In Iran, information technology service-providing centres and centres for rural communication were established thanks to popular support and backing from state-run organizations. Ten thousand telecentres are currently active (Jalali and *et al.,* 2010).

The Research Background

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Keoleian and Andersoon (2008) identify population, quality of life, health, education, employment, the Todaro (2006). .Environment and social development component as indicators of social development quantitative indicators of social development are population growth rate, lower life expectancy, higher living standards, productivity, lower mortality rates, proportional distribution of income, high levels of employment, participation. In Todaro's quality indicators, freedom of choice and self-esteem are introduced. Estes (2005) social development indicators are divided into three categories, which generally explain the basic indicators, indices and indicators of slow symmetrical knowledge. Matsui's (2004) social development indicators include standard of living, level of awareness, poverty reduction, good life expectancy, health, equality and justice. Estes (2001) believes that social development is the search for material and the social welfare of people at all levels of society. For Nancy (2000) social development involves human rights, the right to development and the right to high quality services, as well as the communication knowledge and accountability necessary for social development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
The demographic results of the study showed that the respondents' mean age was 35 years, the average number of children was three and the self-support index of rural women was 34% (Table 4).

The results of the factor analysis categorized the variables into three factors: (Table 5). The varimax rotated factor analysis is shown in Tables 5-8.

For the determining factors, factor loadings greater than 0.50 were considered to be significant. The first factor, i.e., knowledge of services was21.060% of the total variance and eight variables were loaded significantly.

Table 6: Variables loaded in the first factor using Varimax rotated factor analysis

Factor name	Variables loaded in the factor	Factor loadings
Knowledge of services	Knowledge of postal service	0.765
	Knowledge of communication services	0.721
	Knowledge of job opportunities	0.801
	Knowledge of methods of disease prevention	0.699
	Knowledge of council meetings	0.767
	Knowledge of employment and working remotely	0.803
	Knowledge of computer and internet training	0.769

The knowledge of services was the most important factor (3.250) influencing the social development of rural women. The variables that can be loaded in this factor include: knowledge of the postal service, knowledge of communication services, knowledge of job opportunities, knowledge of council meetings, knowledge of employment and working remotely and knowledge of computer and internet training.

Table 7: Variables loaded in the second factor using Varimax rotated factor analysis.

Factor name	Variables loaded in the factor	Factor loadings
Use of services	Use of communication services	0.591
	Use of university-level education	0.801
	Use of existing job opportunities	0.634
	Use of council meetings	0.731
	Use of e-commerce	0.691
	Use of internet service	0.678

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The second factor affecting the social development of rural women was the use of services that are provided by rural ICT offices. The eigen value for this factor was 3.198 which explained 20.077 of the total variance (see in Table 7). In this factor, six variables were loaded significantly. These variables include: use of communication services, use of university-level education, use of job opportunities, use of council meetings, use of e-commerce and use of internet service.

Table 8: Variables loaded in the third factor using Varma rotated factor analysis.

Name of factor	Variables loaded in the factor	Factor loadings
Profile of rural women	Self-support index	0.753
	Number of children	0.670

The name assigned to the third factor was the "Profile of rural women". This factor with an eigen value of 3.079 explains 18.042% of the total variance. In this factor, two variables were loaded significantly. These variables include: the self-support index and the number of children.

Conclusion

Establishing rural ICT centres has been one of the main national policies of Iran to provide Information and Communication Technology services to rural communities. Women living in rural areas have less access to goods and services, social relations, knowledge and use of ICT. It seems that an increase in access to ICT services for rural women could affect their social development. Therefore, we conducted this research to investigate the factors affecting the social development of rural women in Iran. The findings of this study showed that rural women's average age was 35 years. They had three children and the average percentage of the self-support index for rural women was 34%. The results of a factor analysis showed that the factors driving the social development of rural women include: information about services that are provided by rural offices, ICT (knowledge of services), use of services by rural women and the rural women's characteristics. These three factors explained 70% of the total variance that affected the social development of rural women. The results of the research confirmed other research results, such as those of Jalali *et al.,* (2010) and Okavvat *et al.,* (2009) that sharing rural ICT experiences is a very important issue. Limited access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) means that rural communities lack the basic information that could assist them in improving their livelihoods. ICT services can support development in rural areas.

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