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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL WOMEN BY ICTs

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Abstract

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. Social development is one of the four dimensions of sustainable development. Direct and indirect impacts of the social development can affect the other dimensions of sustainable development. Hence, it is important to understand the factors affecting social development. The aim of this study was to investigate the social development of rural women by ICTs processes in rural areas. The statistical population of this study consisted of 5018 women that have been lived in rural areas in Shahreza Township in Iran, to be using Cochran formula, 190 rural women selected and the satisfied random sampling used for select of samples. This study was conducted to examine the validity of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the different sectors after a preliminary study for each of the indices greater than 0.7 were calculated separately. Regression analysis results obtained show that the three variables: rural women's economic independence, awareness about ICT services and the amount use of the ICT services that provided for rural women by rural ICT offices, entered in the regression analysis and explain 59% of the variable affect the social development of rural women.

Key words*: Iran, social development, regression, rural women*

INTRODUCTION

About half of the rural population is included of rural women. Use of ICT processes in the context of gender analysis could be improved the women empowerment and rural development process in developing countries. ITC are key promoting community connectivity in contemporary society (Novo-Corti and et al, 2014) .[10] Information and communication technology (ICT) is a principal driver of economic development and social change, worldwide (Kozma, 2005). [6] Some researchers believed that ICTs can be mechanisms that enable developing countries to leapfrog stages of development. Information and Communication technologies (ICT) have a potential for economic growth and social empowerment (Ebo, Amosa and Adenusi, 2012). [4] 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**).** [14] Some of these changes are very fast in such a way that increasingly today, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a development tool used to be. (Rubinoff, 2005). [12] 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). [9] Developing countries are now aware of the benefits derived through adoption and use of ICTs but there are many serious challenges which must be addressed and chief among them are:

Inadequate communications and power infrastructure
Shortage of ICT facilities and ICTs skills
Inadequate institutional arrangements
Limited financial resources
Inadequate public private partnership
Limited data management capacity
Inadequate horizontal and vertical communication
Inadequate bandwidth nationally and on the

Gateway

Some of the above challenges can be addressed through public-private smart partnerships

ICT infrastructure by itself is not sufficient for the dissemination of knowledge and information to occur through it. Access to ICT infrastructure must be accompanied by access to ICT services. In this respect, the other challenge is how to make ICT services both affordable and available in venues or modes that are convenient to smallholder farmers (Yimer, 2015) [15].

The rapid proliferation of information and communication technologies across the globe in recent decades has fostered the rise of scientific and business interest in the problems of uneven information and communication technology (ICT) usage and information society (IS) building among and within the countries of the world (Schlichter and Danylchenko, 2014). [13] General ICT as a tool to combat poverty, which enables rural women in order to improve the delivery of social services and increase the level of information to support food security and equal opportunity for all some people and raise strategy of innovative knowledge in the fields of agriculture must move (Bakhshizadeh and et al, 2010). [3] The ICT centers were also to create an enabling environment for research and tele-working to increase employment opportunities. (Alibaygi and et al, 2011).[1]

A number of aspects come together in rural women to make them more vulnerable and increase the difficulties of full inclusion in the labor market and socialization. Then, the risk of exclusion of labor market increases dramatically because of addition of rural work. 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). [11]

There is no doubt that, as a group, women are hit hardest by all aspects of the potential isolation mentioned above. Moreover, there are two factors of social workforce exclusion which combine with the female condition. First, women living in rural areas have less access to goods and services, social relations, knowledge and use of ICT (due to the distance from densely populated urban centers) and lack of infrastructure. Second, rural women play important support roles in the farming and livestock sectors. This not only takes time, but also on many occasions renders women's contribution invisible because it is informal in nature (Novo-Corti and et al, 2014).[10]

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. [8]

Novo-Corti and et al (2014) [10] investigated the role of ICT to break the walls of social exclusion of women rural. The result of research showed that since internet has become an important tool for women' social and labor inclusion some measures must be implemented to avoid this gender digital divides. The main barriers to the Internet penetration in women social life were employment, education and income. In the particular case of rural women, employment is frequently poorly paid, low-status or below their capacities. Thus, for rural women, to combine work or educational activities with everyday responsibilities is, in practice, very complicated since women are focus on agricultural activities related to farms or livestock. Also the results of this research showed that rural women are aware of the key role played for ITC on their way to achieve the participation on decision making process as well as in social life and labor. ITC helped them improve their social relationships, self-esteem, access to training and information, social participation, level of inclusion and integration in the labor market. Finally, some social and economic policy recommendations are proposed to increase ITC penetration and reduce social exclusion of this group from a triple perspective: access, skills and attitudes to the ITC. In particular, public policies measures are searched to reduce gender inequalities through ICT, increase their presence in the labor market; access to better

training; better harmonize work and family; develop new forms of self-employment; telecommuting or network companies; greater economic independence to make purchases on the web or simply as an instrument of social interaction and entertainment (Novo-Corti and et al, 2013).[10] Estes (2001) [5] believes that social development in search of material and social welfare of people at all levels of society.

Keoleian & Andersoon (2008) [2] declined the social development index included to: population, quality of life, health, education, employment. Also Todaro (2006) [14] categorized the social development index in to: quantitative and quality indicators, quantitative indicators included to: population growth rate, lower life expectancy, higher living standards, productivity, lower mortality rates, proportional distribution of income, high levels of employment, participation and quality indicators included to: freedom of choice and self-esteem. Matsui (2004) [7] believed the social development can be summarized in such as indexed: standard of living, right in the heart of awareness, poverty reduction, with long life, health, equality and justice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is an applied research carried out by the survey method.

The statistical population consisted of 190 rural women in Shahreza township of Esfahan Province in Iran.

The questionnaire-by-interview method was used for data collection.

To examine the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted on 30 rural women, and the Cronbachs Alpha coefficients for the different variables on Likert type scales were calculated.

The results of the Alpha coefficients, shown in Table 1, indicated that the selected scales were appropriate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The demographic results of the study showed that respondents' mean age was 53 years. The average size of households was 5 people (3 children). Also the average of awareness about rural offices services was 9 from 30 (30.5%) and also the average of the amount use of the ICT services that provided for rural women by rural ICT offices was 7 from 30 (24.9%). The index of rural women's economic independence was 34%.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach Alpha Coefficients)

Scale Name	No. of items	Alpha Value
Index of knowledge and partnership	11	0.864
Index of quality of life	6	0.790
Index of satisfaction of the local area resident	4	0.831
Index of Social Justice	5	0.802
Awareness about rural offices services	14	0.841
Use of the ICT services by rural women	14	0.799

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Some Characteristics of rural Women

Variables	Mean	SD
Age	35	6.82
Number of children	3	1.57
Rural women's economic independence	34%	20.46
Awareness about rural offices services	9.166	4.23
Use of the ICT services by rural women	7.464	2.51

Pearson correlation was used to test the relationship social development of rural women's and other variables. According to Table 3, there are positive correlations between rural women's economic independence, awareness about rural offices services and use of the ICT services by Social development of rural women.(Table 3)

Step by step multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the impact of ICT on the social development of rural women's. According to the results, in first step, the variable of the rural women's economic independence 0.588 coefficient of

determination was taken into analysis.

Table 3. Correlation between and other variables

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Significance
Rural women's economic independence	*0.160	0.027
Awareness about rural offices services	0.184*	0.011
Use of the ICT services by rural women	0.442**	0.000

*Significant at 0.05 level
**Significant at 0.01 level

This variable specified 34.5% of the changes related to the dependent variable. At the tow steps variable of awareness about rural offices services was analyzed.
This variable specified 14% of the changes related to the dependent variable. At the three steps variable of the use of the ICT services by rural women was analyzed.
This variable specified 11% of the changes related to the dependent variable. Analyses of these total variables showed that they specify about 58.8% of the changes related to social development of rural women.

Table 4. Factors affecting the social development of rural women

Variables	B	SBE	Beta	T	Sign.
Fixed coefficient	37.054	11.200	-	15.090	0.000
Rural women's economic independence (x1)	0.856	3.471	0.583	12.199	0.000
Awareness about rural offices services (x_2)	0.763	1.342	0.355	7.472	0.000
Use of the ICT services by rural women (x_3)	0.801	1.021	0.328	6.907	0.000

Analyzing β of the changes showed that the rural women's economic independence (0.583) was the most influential variable to effect in social development of rural women. Other results are shown in tables (4) and (5).

Table 5. Stepwise regression analysis of factors affecting the social development of rural women

Steps	R	R2
1	0.588	0.345
2	0.695	0.483
3	0.767	0.588

According to the regression coefficient the regression line equation could be written as:

$$Y=37.054+0.856(x_1)+0.763(x_2)+0.801(x_3)$$

CONCLUSIONS

Information and Communication technologies (ICT) have a potential for economic growth and social empowerment.
Women living in rural areas have less access to goods and services, social relations, knowledge and use of ICT.
It seems the increase accesses to ICT services for rural women could be effected the social development of them.
The result of this research showed that there are positive correlations between rural women's economic independence, awareness about rural offices services and use of the ICT services by Social development of rural women.
In other ways by increase the awareness of rural women about the ICT services could be exported the amount of use of them will be improved and finally this parameters could be improved the social development of rural women.
Although the rural woman's economic independence is a key parameter to social development of rural women.
The result of research showed that the average of index of rural women's economic independence was 34%.
This index is low in Iranian rural women. The regression analysis also confirmed this variable is a key important variable to develop of social empowerment for rural women. It seems the strategically solution to improve the social development in Iranian rural women is to increase their accessibility to Information Communication Technology.
In this Strategy the rural ICTs offices' have the key important role.

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