Full Length Research Paper

A Survey of the Effects of Social and Psychological Indices on the Economic Capability of Rural Women (Case Study: Hamadan City)

Homa Soroushmehr¹*, Farhad Zand²

¹PhD Student, Bu-Ali Sina University, I.R. IRAN
²Department of Social Science, Payame Noor University, I.R. IRAN; Email: zandpnu2012@gmail.com
*Corresponding Author: soroshmehr@gmail.com

Received 04 October 2013; Accepted 10 November 2013

Abstract. Cooperatives have a special role for empowering women that provide a critical outlet for women’s empowerment and economic independence, building the way for faster, fairer, and more sustainable socioeconomic status for them. Many studies have recognized that paying attention to the economic aspect should not be considered as the basic means for empowering rural women, because they both suffer from lower psychosocial status, lack of property rights, environmental degradation and limited health and educational resources. In regards of participation women in cooperatives it’s important to investigate psychosocial factors to have successful participation rural women in cooperatives. This study was undertaken to explore the relationships between economic empowerment and social-psychological dimensions of empowerment. In this descriptive cross-sectional study 256 rural women from Hamedan County were selected as sample using Cochran formula and stratified proportionate random sampling technique. The validity of the main scales of questionnaire was approved by a panel of expert judgment. Using Cronbach’s-alpha formula, the reliability of questionnaire assessed (α=0.81). The correlations analysis has shown that there were significant positive relationships between economic empowerment with educational level, mobility, self-confidence, self-reliance and non-economic authority. In addition regression analysis and ANOVA analysis revealed that the main component identified in economic empowerment of rural women is self-confidence and significant psychological difference between groups of women with different level of economic empowerment. The study findings reveal that the effectiveness of any economic program of empowering rural women depends on the success psychosocial dimensions.

Key word: socio-psychological indicators, Economic empowerment, Rural Women, Hamedan

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the millennium development goals is the increase of gender equality and women's empowerment in order to prioritize the elimination of a form of poverty called gendered poverty (UNFPA, 2007). Gendered poverty connotes that men and women struggle with poverty for different reasons and each group suffers from different types of poverty and therefore, chooses different solutions for protecting itself against its own poverty and vulnerability (Chant, 2003). Investigations have shown that conventional indices for the evaluation of the level of inequalities between men and women, such as education and literacy level, do not show enough sensitivity to inequalities and do not reflect on the prevalent discriminations existing between two genders in the society, because, in reality, there also exist several other social, cultural, and psychological indices, such as the level of domestic violence, movement freedom, gender attitudes among women, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and the like, affecting women's situation in the society (Nassbaum,2000).

In order to reach gender equality, development theoreticians introduced to the underdeveloped world programs that are recommended for removing poverty from more vulnerable groups, specially rural women, and improving different dimensions of their life, in the form of some kind of empowerments (WorldBank, 2005). Empowerment is an aspect of development concerned with personal, psychological, social, institutional, economic, political, and cultural dimensions and mostly derived from feminists' writings and women's experiences in the third world rather than studies implemented in the developed countries, demonstrating that empowerment is not an issue imported from the west or a phenomenon stemming from urbanism and belonging to the reach or even the middle class of the society (Moser, 1989). Despite admitting the importance of empowerment for women, this theory tries to conceptualize the power less in the form of the privilege of one over another (given that increases in the power of woman will call decreases in the power of man) and more from the viewpoint of women's ability in increasing their self-reliance and inner powers (Moser,1989).

If empowerment is used as a means of poverty alleviation programs, the economic dimension acquires a significant importance in that the enhancement of women's economic foundations so
that they can benefit of their own abilities and talents, will make women independent and active members of the society that can manage their own and their family issues by themselves without other's help (Ghafari, 1381). Therefore, economic factors play a significant role in the empowering of women (Browning and Blumberg1998; Duflo, 2003). It is while investigations in the underdeveloped countries have shown that the expansion of women's access to financial resources does not necessarily end up in their empowerment. In other words, although accessing financial resources and controlling them is important, cultural and social situation of the society, women's education level, government's gender policies, financial ownership, and gender awareness are all of importance for the empowerment of women (Kabeer 2005, Deshmukh- Randive 2003, Malhotra and Mather 1997). Some other studies have demonstrated that the empowerment of women is only realized when they encounter the anti-women norms of the society they are living in and assert themselves in there (Swain and Wallentin, 2008). Thus, the economic capabilities of women depend on diverse social and psychological factors so that economic dimension cannot singularly reflect on a perfect image of their abilities.

This study aims to use the theories and frameworks presented by Kabeer (1999) and the World Bank (2005) concerning this subject as a guide in order to attempt to analyze the indices of rural women's empowerment. For this purpose, at first, theoretical concepts of empowerment, other related studies, and their results will be used as guides for understanding how to identify empowerment indices, afterwards, with the assumption of the existence of a cause-and-effect relationship between women's economic capability and its socio-cultural and psychological aspects, we will start to inspect the economic capabilities level of Hamadan county's rural women, and finally using multivariate regression, the relation of non-economic factors to rural women's economic capabilities will be explained.

1.1. Study's Theoretical Bases and Backgrounds

Empowerment implies rewarding liberty to persons (Random Dictionary, 1999) or giving facilities and the ability of controlling them (American Dictionary of English Words, 2006). According to other studies, empowering rural women is only when meaningful that women can define and choose their interests in their lives and find they capable of gaining access to them (Sen 1999; 1993; Kabeer 2001; Rowlands 1997; Nussbaum 2000; Chen 1992). In terms of Kabeer's definition "empowerment has a meaning equal to expanding the capabilities of people in making strategic choices in their life in contexts that such choices have been denied to them before" (Kabeer,2001). In this definition two very essential elements can be identified differentiating empowerment from other reforms: 1. insisting on the procedural feature of empowerment because of its alteration from a disempowerment status to empowerment and 2. Humans' agency in the decisions they make in their lives. In Kabeer's framework, empowerment procedure consists of three interconnected elements: 1. resources: situations under which prominent choices of life are made, 2. agency: the central point of the empowerment procedure or the person that is supposed to take decisions, and 3. consequences: the consequences of choices (Kabeer, 1999).

Ketabi and colleagues have also worked on the factors affecting women's empowerment. This study was implemented in an analytical-survey method about 380 women between 20-50 years of age residing in 10 districts of Isfahan County. Study's results show that factors like education level increase, access to financial resources, health improvements enjoying legal ownership, the alleviation of business segregations, and the elimination of traditional beliefs are among the elements affecting the empowerment of women (Ketabi et al., 2003). Shakouri and colleagues have studied the empowerment factors of householder women as one of the vulnerable groups and have explained the elements having an influence over them. According to the findings of this study, in spite of some efforts made in the form of supporting plans, their empowerment is still at a low level. The reasons lie in nature and the quality of these efforts, their low quantity, as well as the capability poverty of women. Authors suggest that structural changes are strongly needed for alleviating women's poverty and gender inequalities as well as reforming their economic and social positions (Shakouri et al., 2007).

Frankenberg and Thomas studied the role of women in the family decisions (as an index of capability) among 5168 Malaysian couples. Variables surveyed for the evaluation of capability involved control over the revenue, family costs, and the ways of spending time. In this respect, the influences of variables like age, education level, and social grade of the family of women on their capabilities and abilities were investigated. Findings implied the significant influence of social variables (specifically the social position of women's families) on women's capabilities (Frankenberg and Thomas, 2001).

In the same context, Grasmuck and Espinal's findings showed that the way women evaluate their position in the family and the amount of family dependence on women's revenue both had effects on women's freedom in the family (Grasmuck and
Espinal, 2000). Acharya and Bennet figured out that the women who earn their living directly through the formal economy of market have a more meaningful role in the decisions and the management of the family and the farm, in comparison to the women who do not have a certain revenue or do not sell their products themselves (Acharya and Bennet, 1983). Hashemi et al. also studied the amount of travel freedom, decision making freedom, social awareness, and domestic violence among rural women of Bangladesh admitting that the higher social position of women presents more values to women and incurs higher economic affordability for them (Hashemi et al., 1996). In another study, Kishor surveyed the improvement of women's abilities and its relation to the babies’ survival rate. Results indicated that the marriage system (like traditions and the amount of dowries) acts more effectively than the agency of women (the amount of woman's financial freedom, decision making, and value in the family) in the survival of babies (Kishor, 2000). Kabeer studied the social status of the rural women working in a factory in Bangladesh. The variables he studied included the rate of domestic violence, women's role in decision making, and their value in the household. According to the findings, women stated that they had higher social values in the family on account of their job and revenue, while men believed that worker women had lower social status in relation to other women of the village (Kabeer, 1997). Schuler and colleagues found out that the amount of domestic violence in the regions where women enjoy amounts of credibility is meaningfully less than other regions (Schuler et al., 1996).

In this study, assuming socio-psychological indices as independent variables and economic capabilities of rural women as dependent variables and presuming a meaningful correlation between socio-psychological factors and economic affordability, our research model is as shown below.

Given the presented model, the main goal of this research is the specification of the influences of non-economic factors on the economic abilities of rural women, along which the following incidental goals are also considered:
1. Determining the economic capability level of the rural women of the under-study community.
2. Determining the level of women's social, cultural, and psychological indices and explaining their relation to economic capabilities.
3. Providing efficient solutions for improving women's economic and social status in the under-study region.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Methods

This study in terms of quality, quantity, and the control over the variables is non-experimental and in terms of its goals acts kind of functional. The study’s statistical population consists of all over-15-year-old women settling Hamadan County’s villages that accounted for 45334 persons according to the population estimations of 2006 censuses (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2009). In order to estimate the sample volume, first, a preliminary study was carried out on 30 persons of interviewees to specify the variance of the under-study subject (the amount of economic capability), afterwards, using Cochran's formula with a 95% certainty and a %5 probable certainty, the sample volume was determined for 256 persons. The study's sampling method was the leveled proportional assignment through which 13 villages were accidentally selected from a total of 9 rural districts. The information collected through questionnaires belonged to 1388, the consistency of which was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha and the credibility of the questionnaire was also acknowledged by asking around the ideas of agriculture and rural development professionals of the University of Tehran, women of some villages, and the Agriculture-Jihad Organization professionals. The questionnaire was put together by researchers and in the form of interview.
2.2. Variables

In this study, the concept of economic capability was investigated and measured in accordance with socio-cultural and psychological indices as follows:

1. Economic capability: measured by indices like employment, revenue amount, savings amount, economic skills amount, economic freedoms in family, and economic participation.
2. Psychological indices: conceptualized by indices like self-confidence, the feeling of power, self-efficacy amount, and having equal and non-gendered attitudes towards men and women's employment.
3. Socio-cultural indices: travel freedom, freedom from domestic violence, social participation amount, social freedom, and receiving information from the mass media are among the indices used in the framing of this indicator.

In this study, the economic capability of rural women in cultural, social, and sociological terms is assumed as the independent variable and the economic capability of rural women is singularly assumed as the dependent variable of the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Personal Characteristics

Study findings show that the rural women of the studied community are between ages 15 and 70 years. Women's average age is 37 years and the largest number of samples lies in the age-group 21 to 30 years old. Inspecting the number of family members showed that 66.8% of interviewed families had 5 or less members and surveying the marriage status of women showed that 6.6% (17 persons) of them were family holders and about 92% (235 persons) married.

A survey of the age differences between couples revealed that most of the cases did not have meaningful differences, the highest one being 44 years. 126 women (49.2%) had age differences of 6 to 10 years with their husbands, making up the biggest group.

Study results imply that out of 256 under-study rural women 72 (28.1%) are illiterate, 27 (38.7%) are under education at Literacy Movement Organization of Iran (reading and writing ability), 87 (34%) have dropped out at the elementary level, 41 (16%) go to middle school, and 19 (7.4%) to high school and only 10 (309%) have a diploma. According to this information, it can be stated that 72.7 percent of women do not enjoy a considerable education and are at an illiteracy or low-literacy status.

3.2. Economic Characteristics

In the current study, rural women were involved in 15 types of waged economic activities accounting for 80% of the statistical sample. Selling dairy products and weaving (carpet weaving) providing incomes for 104 people are known as the most popular waged jobs among women. Rural women's monthly incomes from these occupations showed that 30.37% of women had revenues less than 50000 Rials, 25.85% between 50000 and 200000 Rials, and 43.41% more than 200000 Rials per month. Specifying the level of women's economic capability, their economic-productive skills were evaluated as well. Producing garden and dairy products and olericulture are respectively three skills that most of the women of the study sample are able to do and less popular economic activities include apiculture, mushroom cultivation and computer related jobs. On the whole, 58.2% of women enjoy low levels of economic skills, 34.4% enjoy medium levels and only 7.0% of them embody high amounts of economic skills. Summing up the considered indices, the economic capability of 33.2% of women was evaluated low, 47.7% of them medium, and the remaining 19.1% at a high level.

3.3. Social Characteristics

By summing up the personal-economic indices of women (age, personal income from nonagricultural activities, marriage period, economic freedom amount, and women's portion of agricultural activities), the rural women's economic participation index is calculated. The results revealed that 34.8%, 38.3%, and 26.2% of women respectively had low, medium, and high levels of participation in economy.

The amount of women's freedom to travel alone or out of their husbands' supervision is called travel freedom (Kabeer, 1999). This index was evaluated by summing up 6 factors of freedom (i.e. meeting friends, going to the health care center, shops, and government offices, drifting around the town, and selling products in the city market). According to the findings, the most referred places usually met by women are relatives' homes and the health care center (85.5% and 84.9% of women respectively) and the least referrals go to drifting around the city and selling products in the city market (50% and 41% of women respectively).

One of the important social indices having close relationship with economic capability is the amount of domestic violence (Kali, 2007). In the current study 6 types of domestic violence were evaluated. Verbal violence with a rate of 99.2% was the most popular type while 73.8% of women complained of physical violence. 51.2% were threatened to take a second wife.
by their husbands. 49.6% of men threatened to leave the household, 46.5% of them threatened to cut women's allowances, and finally 34.4% bothered their wives with the threat of divorce.

The amount of women's participation in non-economic decisions like children's marriage is another factor reflecting on their social capabilities in the community (Wallentin and Swain, 2008). Findings indicated that the amount of women's non-economic interference, evaluated in terms of the possibility of out of house occupation, participation in decisions regarding children's marriage, and travel suggestions, is at a low rate for 66.4% of women, at a medium rate for 22.3% and at a high rate for 11.3% of them.

Research showed that 82% of rural women have no kind of study (newsletter, magazine or book) and 18%, equivalent to 40 persons, enjoy only about 30 minutes of study per day. 60.5% of women never listen to the radio, 37.5% under 2 hours a day and 2% above 2 hours a day listen to the radio programs. It is while only 9 women, equivalent to 5.3% of all the women, refuse to watch television, 64.5% of them spend below 2 hours a day and 30.2% above 2 hours on watching television programs.

3.4. Psychological characteristics

An investigation of the status of self-confidence showed that 89 persons (32.7%) enjoyed a low self-confidence and 79 and 88 persons of rural women (30.9% and 36.4% in order) enjoyed medium and high amounts of self-confidence respectively.

Self-efficacy as another factor connotes one's trust in themselves and their own abilities for performing a particular activity or showing a particular behavior, meaning that one attains a level of awareness that they can see the ability of doing a certain duty (doing waged work) in different situations in themselves (Godin et al., 1987). According to research results, 39.8%, 23.9%, and 36.3% of interviewees enjoyed low, medium, and high self-efficacy respectively.

Agency together with resources determines the level of ability feeling: Ability feeling means what one wants to be or become that depends whether and the degree they can give it reality (Sen, 1985). On this basis, the amount of rural women's control over environmental phenomena and life incidences was evaluated. 72.7% of women believed that they did not have enough power to change the fate awaiting them and 27.3% claimed that they themselves were the most important factor in the decision of fate.

Belief in women's abilities to have waged jobs like those of men, self-expression in men's groups and belief in self work abilities in the same level as men's work are among the factors specifying the gendered beliefs of women. In the present statistical sample close to 50% of women believed that women have to impress their financial ideas in men's groups, 56% preferred to have waged jobs like those of men, but nevertheless, 42.6% disagreed with this claim. 52% of women also agreed that women just like men have a significant role in the money-making process of the family.

In this regard, by means of Spearman and Pearson correlation coefficients (according to their scales), the relation of rural women's capability index to each of social and psychological indices was investigated, results of which shown in Table 1.

The correlation matrix of the socio-psychological indices of the under-study rural women, depicted in Table 1, shows that apart from the variable denoting the amount of information reception from the mass media, other social variables statistically represent a meaningful and positive (negative in the case of domestic violence) relation to the economic capability index. This relationship, in terms of the intensity of correlation, represents a medium correlation for the variable corresponding to the number of family members and a high powerful correlation for other variables. With a little attention it appears that more education and fewer family members have considerable and positive influences on the improvement of women's empowerment process, and the lack of any meaningful relation to the age variable shows that aging does not affect rural women's economic capabilities. Psychological variables including self-confidence, self-efficacy, gender attitude, and the feeling of power are all in positive, meaningful, and intense relation to economic capability.

As it can be seen in Table 2, there is a connection between the economic capability of under-study women and the socio-psychological indices. The implications from Duncan's multiple comparison tests imply that the groups enjoying higher levels of socio-psychological indices also have higher economic capabilities. The result of this test is indicative of the influence of social ability indices on the rural women economic capabilities. Mayoux's researches also show that micro-credit programs concerned with rural women's empowerment, by facilitating their membership in groups and their participation in self-sustaining local financial programs, can improve women's capabilities, however, for the efficiency of this groups, it is necessary to have considerable knowledge of social norms, local networks and communities, and women's needs and interests (Mayoux, 2001).
In this study, in order to survey the effect of understudy independent variables over the dependent economic empowerment variable, multiple regressions have been used. The purpose of regression analysis was to evaluate the influence of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable, predict the amount of the dependent variable changes, and specify the role of each independent variable in the explanation of the dependent variable variance. The consequences of regression analysis, depicted in the table, show that at a confidence level of 99% the regression equation consists of five levels. According to this table, multivariate regression coefficient of (R) in the first level equals 0.542 and the coefficient of determination for $R^2$ is calculated equal to 0.294. In this level the self-confidence of women was invited to the equation. In the second level, including the amount of social travel freedom in the equation, the regression coefficient (R) and the coefficient of determination have increased by 55% and 32%
respectively. In the third level, the multiple correlation coefficients (R) and the coefficient of determination for $R^2$ have been obtained 0.588 and 0.346 respectively and subsequently they are calculated 0.599 and 0.359 in the fourth level. Finally, in the last (fifth) level both of these coefficients are calculated equal to 0.608 and 0.370, respectively. The prediction equation in the final level is as the following

$$Y = 0.933 + 0.294X_1 + 0.329X_2 + 0.346X_3 + 0.359X_4 + 0.370X_5$$

Other variables not included in the equation are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>The correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Coefficient of determination</th>
<th>Adjusted coefficient of determination</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>self-confidence</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>0.291</td>
<td>104.704</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Freedom of Movement</td>
<td>0.574</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>61.582</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Economy in the Family</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>0.346</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>44.081</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The feeling of power</td>
<td>0.599</td>
<td>0.359</td>
<td>0.348</td>
<td>34.830</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>0.608</td>
<td>0.370</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>39.246</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prediction equation in the final level is as the following

$$Y = 0.933 + 0.294X_1 + 0.329X_2 + 0.346X_3 + 0.359X_4 + 0.370X_5$$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>education level</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.475</td>
<td>0.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>non-economic freedom amount</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.841</td>
<td>0.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>home's distance from the health care center</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td>-1.29</td>
<td>0.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>home's distance from the roadway</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>-0.478</td>
<td>0.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>home's distance from the farmland</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>-0.542</td>
<td>0.589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>age</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>1.614</td>
<td>0.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>the number of family members</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td>-0.887</td>
<td>0.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>the length of marriage</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.134</td>
<td>0.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>husband's age</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.988</td>
<td>0.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>age difference with husband</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
<td>-1.162</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>husband's education level</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.165</td>
<td>0.869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the alleviation of poverty in rural regions and among disadvantaged classes is attained through programs that are carried out in the form of economic empowerment planning (WIEGO, undated; World Bank, 2005). In the present study, at first, the different social and psychological indices and the economic capability of the under-study society were estimated and in the following the differences between groups of women in terms of enjoying these indices were evaluated by means of economic correlation. The findings of the research are indicative that the highest correlation of the dependent variable of women's economic empowerment is, in order, with these indices: travel freedom, social freedoms, gender attitudes, feeling of power, and self-confidence. Also, domestic violence amount represents an inverse correlation with the dependent variable. Out of the studied population variables, only the education level represents a meaningful and positive relationship with economic capability (sig = 0.005, r = 0.124). It is while about 72% of the statistic population enjoy a low level of education, thus nevertheless, educating women plays a prominent role in breaking the inherited vicious cycle of low-level education, low income, high fertility, and children's poor health and nutrition. Studies show that educating women results in lower baby mortality rates and incurs that babies will be provided with more human capital (Todaro, 2003). Another noteworthy result of the study would be the meaningful difference between the level of enjoyment of socio-psychological indices and the amount of economy capability. Therefore, it could be concluded that the women interacting with more social networks receive more social and, sometimes, economic services (Swain & Wallentine, 2008), have higher levels of knowledge regarding their society, and insisting on their relative travel freedoms, can improve their abilities. With this explanation, it is
A Survey of the Effects of Social and Psychological Indices on the Economic Capability of Rural Women (Case Study: Hamadan City)

evident that the women that are economically capable are those that also enjoy a higher social capital. Studies have shown that in rural regions the social capital has an efficient and direct relationship with institutional efficiency, education level increase, government confidence, and the formation of resource utilization organizations (Brehm and Rahn, 1997), thus, non-governmental institutions concerned with women could play an essential role in the extension of the social capital, specifically in rural populations.

These organizations could make women's role in the increases of social capital more specific and could provide enough provocation for their maximal participation in economic, social, and political developments. Increasing women's social, economic, and political awareness through promotional programs and making them aware of their real position in the society could also increase their tendency to participation in development programs. Likewise, in order to dispel different social barriers in front of women's maximal presence in the development processes, specifically in rural regions, different kinds of education would be necessary. One of the recommended ways of facilitating the proceeding through empowerment processes, specifically in rural regions, is to use collective participation methods including participatory action researches. In this method, people are divided into separate but congruent groups according to their personal properties like age, social class, and the like, they express their every day issues, problems, and needs, observe common aspects of their lives, weaknesses, and deficiencies, and try to find social and collective solutions in accordance with them. In this method, facilitators do not intermediate in the current processes of groups and they are only supposed to lead groups and facilitate the processes. The formation of such groups in a powerful and efficient manner leads to the appearance of new social capital resources whereby women could identify and find solutions to their needs without outside help (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; Patton, 2002).

In addition, the regression study in the present research is indicative that having all other independent variables of the study under control, two variables of self-confidence and travel freedom will bring the highest dependent variable changes or, in other words, the highest economic empowerment of women. This finding is indicative of the influences of human capital on the empowerment of rural women. Human capital includes elements like health, education, knowledge, and social skills required for life (Frankenberg and Thomas, 2001). It can be concluded that the higher levels of human capital women enjoy, the more positive attitude they have towards the importance of their work, they can increase their awareness of themselves and their society, their abilities soar in economic terms, and they can gradually stand against the prohibiting norms of society and try to remove the barriers to their success, because in the rural life these are the culture and traditions that decide who can reach education and who can select to have a more intelligent life (Nussbaum, 1996 from Thapan, 1997). It is deduced that one of the preliminary duties of agencies creating work possibilities especially for women in rural regions is to notice the barriers existing to their social participation in such communities. FAO suggests efficient planning in respect of rural women's human capital development in three steps: 1. specification of needs, priorities, difficulties and probabilities recounted by women, 2. making sure that the development packages including education, programs, facilities, and utilities represent the required gender sensitivities, 3. making deep relationship with rural women in order to receive the reactions to the programs (FAO, 2007). It should be mentioned that the goal of all the programs recommended by FAO, according to the theoretical framework of this study, is to provide appropriate resources to increase the agency of women. Also, the promotional education seems essential for crossing cultural barriers specifically in the context of domestic violence, economic management of family, women's awareness of their rights, and the necessity of the continuation of girls' education for the more efficient presence of rural women in development processes as well as the elimination of wrong cultural beliefs of the society.

REFERENCES


fertility transitions.” Population and Development Review 22,


Longwe S (1994). Gender analysis criteria for empowerment of women , Unisef women’s development section New York


Soroushmehr and Zand
A Survey of the Effects of Social and Psychological Indices on the Economic Capability of Rural Women (Case Study: Hamadan City)


Homa Sorushmehr: She was born in 1985 in Hamedan city. She is a research Scholar in Agricultural with tendency of Extension and Education development in the University of Bu-Ali Sina. Her field researches are rural women. I and has more than 12 International papers.

Farhad Zand: I was born in 1968. I am an assistant professor in PN University (I.R.IRAN). My field of academic is rural planning. I have 20 research projects in various fields, and more than 40 research papers that have been published too.