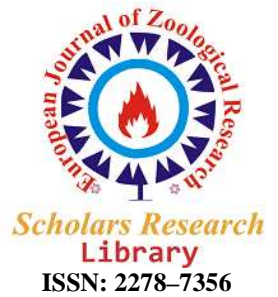




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Factors influencing on economic capacity building of rural women in Iran

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine factors influencing on economic capacity building of rural women in Iran. The methodological approach of this study was descriptive- correlative. The research sample consisted of 401 women, which was selected using randomizing sampling method. Validity of the instrument was established by a panel of experts consisting of senior faculty members and research committee advisors. Reliability analysis was conducted by using and Cronbach alpha formula and result was 87. The results of the multiple regression analysis (stepwise method) revealed that social influence, social participation, women's attitude toward capacity building, number of loans borrowed by rural women, their husbands' assets, age difference between spouses, social acts, amount of leisure time, age, amount of time devoted to reading and the rate of violence in their families explained 28% of variation of economic capacity building.

Key words: economic capacity building, rural women, Iran

INTRODUCTION

In every country, rural women, alongside men, play a big role in various productive activities for their family's welfare, agriculture efficiency and economy growth. However, this significant role is usually underestimated in traditional agriculture system or economical analyses and policymaking as men's are believed to have the key role and still highly valued [13].

Studies suggest that women have a considerable part in agriculture system outnumbered men in terms of workforce. Despite of this significant fact, they are less exposed to development resources comparing the other side. Although, within the past two decades, several programs have been performed to pave the ground for them to have more prosperity, only a few of them achieved the target due to the existing obstacles. One of the most fundamental problems in this case was lack of accessibility to appropriate extension services. The lack of efficiency in agriculture extension system, which provides them with services, not only caused by ill-structured organizations, but also spring from some other issues like cultural obstacles and improper assessments. In every country or area, one of the key points in agriculture extension is to find good approaches to educate women [11].

In developing countries, empowerment of rural women is one of the most important issues of rural development. Studies suggest that, historically, rural women were in a rather inferior level than men in terms of social and economic issues [5]. The discrimination could also be noticed in some other fields like literacy and level of education, job opportunities, authority on assets and political participation. Such contradictions in society, not only led into higher deprivation for rural women in many aspects, but also mostly obstructed the countries to make use of their potentials for development [3].

Practically, capacity building is to help to develop the capabilities of people, NGOs, organizations and communities, analyze their environment and notice their problems, complications, requirements, opportunities and also set strategies to cope with the issues [1].

Through a research titled as “Measurement of women’s empowerment in Bangladesh”, the concept of empowerment was scrutinized through some factors such as age, family’s economic status, women’s social status, official education and their usage of media. In this regard, the empowerment procedure is divided into four grounds: self-esteem, participation in family’s decision making, freedom of movement, and women’s extent of authority on economic resources. Based on the research, the aspect of self-esteem is considered less than the other factors. Totally, empowerment is not achieved in the research. Actually, freedom of movement, control on economic resources, and participation in decision making showed better results as age increased. The wealth and assets of family had negative effect on women’s decision making in family as well as freedom of movement while, in the contrary, had positive result on their control on assets. Also, official education and access to the media can improve women’s empowerment as well. Accordingly, by having them equipped with up-to-date information and ideas and more education, we could expect them to play much higher participation in decision making as well as freedom of movement and self-esteem [4].

The correlation results of a survey titled as “Analysis of the approaches and indices of empowerment of rural women in Iran” suggest that there’s a rational relation between economic capability with freedom of movement, sexual equality, confidence, feeling strong, self-effectiveness, economic skills, level of education, non-economic authority and farmland ownership. Also, according to the survey, women had higher economic power as well as social/cultural participation. According the results, the most effective element on women’s economic empowerment were economic participation, family issues and social awareness. In this case, the obstacles are classified as internal, external, contributive and fundamental issues. It is indicated that social participation, freedom of movement, confidence, and social/cultural abilities are of the most effective items in women’s economic empowerment [12].

Another research done by Kamarei suggests that the micro credit programs had more influence on women’s empowerment rather economic empowerment. To have the empowerment objective come true, the micro credit programs should be more focused on empowerment strategies [6].

Qandali et al. also surveyed the use of Information and Communication Technology in agriculture and technology development. Therefore, the functionality of ICT effect is scrutinized through the issues like natural resources protection, rural post services, utilization of ICT in agriculture and electronic commerce [8].

Consequently, in another survey titled as “the relation between economic, cultural and educational factors with empowerment of women who are heading the household”, the relevancy of education, skills training, self-employment programs through equity shares¹, loans and non-monetary incentives were considered as independent variables while empowerment presumed as a dependent factor. The analyses suggest that there is a correlation between the independent factors and empowerment also between these independent factors themselves in a way that boosting one factor can affect the others. Moreover, it suggests that education and self-employment programs cause women feel more capable and empowered. Since the women in charge of their household have multiple responsibilities, they are less likely to get educated and have less chances of learning. As they are less educated than the other women, the education has positive influence on their families. On the other hand, since these women find the economic issue as their main problem, every measure taken to resolve the issue is appreciated [9].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Since we tried to specify the factors affecting economic capacity building for rural women of Iran, as these results can improve this capacity building process, the survey, in terms of scope, is considered as an applied research. In other words, according to the method of gathering information, it is a non-experimental (descriptive) research as it’s impossible to control and manipulate the variables. Moreover, since it describes the existing condition and tries to find out the relation between the variables based on the survey purpose, it is a correlative one too.

¹ The stocks that the government allocated to poor people in order to settle justice in financial aspect

In the research, 22,464 rural women of Iran are the statistical population. The Cochran technique is applied for sampling with 401 persons as the samples through three areas of Iran as stratum.

Through questionnaires, which were based on research objectives and certain variables, the required information was obtained. To evaluate the validity of form and content of questionnaires, some copies were handed to professors and experts of agriculture extension and education. After eliciting the recommendations and refinements, the questionnaire was revised and made ready for sustainability evaluation. Then, to calculate the sustainability of research instrument and also sampling variance, a preliminary exam was held. By means of this exam, the questionnaires were handed to 15 rural women of Babol County who were culturally, socially, economical and regionally similar to our target population. After gathering data, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for all ordinal scale variables showed 87 percent. The content comprised of 11 questions were included to specify the personal or family characteristics, 11 questions regarding economic variable items as well as the psychological features including the variable of confidence with nine items and cognizance of personal potentialities variable with seven items, and also the cultural items consisting family violence with five items, women’s condition in society having four items, the process of making decisions in family with twenty two items, the variable of communicativeness with thirteen items and variable of education and extension activities with eleven items consisting social features (social activities with six, social participation with nine, social influence with five items) were included.

RESULTS

The extent of economic capacity building of Iran rural women was resulted with 28 five choice questions of Likert scale including Nothing=0, Very low=1, Low=2, Medium=3, High=4 and Very High=5. Accordingly, the maximum score is 140 and the minimum is set to zero. Regarding economic capacity building, 3.5 percent of rural women ranked very low, 48.6 low (highest frequency) and 40.1 were among medium range. Therefore, the average capacity was low.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of economic capacity building of rural women

	frequency	Frequency percentage	Cumulative frequency percentage
Very low (1-28)	31	7.7	7.7
Low (29-56)	195	48.6	56.4
Medium (58-84)	161	40.1	96.5
High (85-112)	14	3.5	100
Very High (113-140)	0	0	100
Total	401	100	-

Average: 53.03 Median: 54 Standard Deviation: 17.67 Minimum: 2 Maximum:105

The table below shows the extent, intensity, direction and level of significance between the variables of research and economic capacity building of rural women. There was a positive relation by 99 percent significance level between capacity building of rural women and the variables of age, number of rooms of house, time devoted to reading educational material, owned farm or orchard area, monthly earnings, social participation and activities. Also there was a significance level of 95 percent between number of children, amount of loans and rate of violence with rural women’s capacity building. On the contrary, among the leisure time period and capacity building of rural women, the number was 95 percent with a negative relation.

The effect of variables on economic capacity building of rural women

In order to tell the effects of the variables of this research on capacity building of rural women of Iran, stepwise regression approach was applied. Regression analysis can enable researchers to estimate the changes of the given dependent variable by means of independent variables and calculate the rate of these impacts. In stepwise approach, the strongest variables enter the equation one by one until the test error is significant at 5%. As shown in the table below, social influence, social participation, number of rooms of house, women’s idea about capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loans borrowed, age difference with spouse, social activities, amount of leisure time, age, amount of time to read papers and rate of violence in family are inserted in the equation from one to twelve steps respectively. The variable of social influence had the highest rate of effect on the dependent variable- that is the capacity building of rural women- by 9 percent. Also, in the second step, social influence and women’s participation both together showed 12 percent and, respectively, in the third step, social influence, rural women’s participation and number of rooms of house totally showed 15 percent; in the fourth step social influence, rural women’s participation, number of rooms of house, women’s idea about capacity building showed 17 percent ; in the

fifth step, social influence, rural women’s participation, number of rooms of house, women’s idea about capacity building and area of land owned by spouse had 19 percent of effect, in the sixth step, social influence, women’s participation, number of rooms of house, women’s attitude toward capacity building, land owned by spouse and amount of loans borrowed by rural women with 20 percent of effect; in the seventh step, social influence and participation of rural women, number of rooms of house, women’s attitude toward capacity building, land owned by spouse, amount of loans borrowed by women and spouse age difference all were effective for 21 percent; in the eighth step, social influence, women’s participation, number of rooms per house, women’s attitude toward capacity building, area of land owned by spouse, amount of loans borrowed, spouse age difference and social activities by 23 percent; and ninth step comprising social influence, number of rooms of house, women’s attitude toward capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loans borrowed by rural women, spouse age difference, social activities and amount of leisure time all by 25 percent; in the tenth step, social influence, participation, number of rooms of house, women’s attitude toward capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loan borrowed by rural women, spouse age difference, social activities, amount of leisure time and age totally by 26 percent; in the eleventh step, social influence, participation, number of rooms of house, women’s attitude toward capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loan borrowed, spouse age difference, social activities, amount of leisure time, age and amount of time devoted to reading publication by 27 percent; and in twelfth step, social influence, participation, number of rooms of house, women’s attitude toward capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loan borrowed, spouse age difference, social activities, amount of leisure time, amount of time devoted to reading publication and rate of violence explained 28% of variation of economic capacity building of rural women.

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient of variables of study and economic capacity building of rural women

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Level of significance
Age	0.15**	0.002
Female children	0.099*	0.048
Male children	0.108*	0.031
No. of rooms in house	0.176**	0.000
Amount of time to listen to radio	-0.018	0.71
Amount of time to watch TV	-0.006	0.91
Amount of time to read newspapers	0.026	0.61
Reading educational materials	0.15**	0.003
Reading educational pamphlets	0.077	0.123
Watching movies	-0.035	0.48
Reading book	-0.034	0.49
Reading magazine	-0.06	0.20
Internet surfing	-0.036	0.47
Times leaving the village per week	-0.026	0.62
Amount of leisure time	-0.115*	0.02
Home	0.000	0.99
Spouse’s house	0.060	0.227
Rice field area	0.136**	0.006
Dry cultivation area	0.034	0.5
Orchard area	0.14**	0.005
Vegetable field area	0.013	0.79
Annual earnings	0.139**	0.005
Money saved	0.069	0.17
Loan borrowed	0.114*	0.022
Self-confidence	-0.047	0.351
Self-recognizance	0.029	0.56
Violence	0.099*	0.048
Women’s self-analysis on their condition	0.043	0.39
Communication	0.093	0.063
Level of education	0.085	0.090
Social activities	0.21**	0.000
Social participation	0.26**	0.000

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

Table 3: Determining variables affecting on economic capacity building in stepwise regression

Steps	Variables	R	R square	Adj R square	F	Sig
1st	Amount of social influence	0.30	0.092	0.090	40.47	0.000
2 nd	Amount of social participation	0.35	0.12	0.123	28.92	0.000
3rd	Number of rooms of house	0.39	0.15	0.146	23.76	0.000
4th	Women’s attitude toward capacity building	0.41	0.17	0.162	20.33	0.000
5th	The area of lands owned by spouse	0.43	0.19	0.181	18.62	0.000
6th	Amount of loans borrowed by women	0.45	0.20	0.192	16.82	0.000
7th	Spouse age difference	0.46	0.21	0.206	15.76	0.000
8th	Social activities	0.48	0.23	0.219	15.01	0.000
9th	Amount of leisure time	0.50	0.25	0.233	14.50	0.000
10th	Age	0.51	0.26	0.244	13.86	0.000
11th	Amount of time devoted to reading publication	0.52	0.27	0.254	13.32	0.000
12 th	Rate of violence in rural women’s family	0.53	0.28	0.260	12.65	0.000

Table 4: Standardized and unstandardized coefficients of rural women’s capacity building

Step	Variables	B	Beta	t	Sig
	Constant	-4.53	-	-	0.000
1	Rural women’s social influence	0.68	0.17	3.55	0.000
2	Rural women’s social participation	2.29	0.10	2.02	0.043
3	Number of rooms of house	3.24	0.12	2.68	0.008
4	Women’s attitude toward capacity building	0.56	0.16	3.65	0.000
5	Lands area owned by husband	0.000	0.14	3.15	0.002
6	Amount of loans borrowed by rural women	4.39	0.13	3.01	0.003
7	Age difference with spouse	0.87	0.17	3.86	0.000
8	Social activities of rural women	0.66	0.16	3.58	0.000
9	Amount of leisure time	-0.14	-0.13	-2.90	0.004
10	Age	0.16	0.12	2.49	0.013
11	Amount of time devoted to reading	2.96	0.11	2.60	0.009
12	Violence rate in rural women’s family	0.14	0.090	2.04	0.042

Dependant variable: Capacity building of rural women

According to the amount of β in the table, the regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = 0.17X_1 + 0.10 X_2 + 0.12 X_3 + 0.16X_4 + 0.14 X_5 + 0.13X_6 + 0.17X_7 + 0.16 X_8 - 0.13 X_9 + 0.16X_9 + 0.12 X_{10} + 0.11X_{11} + 0.9 X_{12}$$

- X1 = Amount of social influence of rural women
- X2 = Social participation of rural women
- X3 = Number of rooms in rural women’s house
- X4 = Women’s attitude toward capacity building
- X5 = Land area owned by spouse
- X6 = Amount of loans borrowed by women
- X7 = Age difference with spouse
- X8 = Women’s social activities
- X9 = Women’s leisure time
- X10 = Age
- X11 = Time devoted to reading publications
- X12 = Rate of violence in women’s family

CONCLUSION

The correlation analysis suggests that between capacity building of rural women and the variables of age, number of rooms of house, time devoted to reading educational publications, area of owned lands and orchards, monthly earnings, social participation and activities, there was a positive relation with 99 percent level of significance in a way that the older women with more rooms in house, more farms and orchards, more earnings and more social participation and activities enjoy more of capacity building. The extent of this correlation regarding the variables of age, number of rooms of house, time devoted to reading publications, the area of farms and orchards, earnings per month, and social participation and activities was 0.15, 0.18, 0.15, 0.14, 0.14, 0.14, 0.12 and 0.26 respectively.

Between variable of capacity building of rural women and variables of number of children and amount of loans borrowed, there's a positive relation with 95 percent level of significance. In other words, women who had more children borrowed more loans had higher economic capacity building. The amount of this correlation was 0.09, 0.10 and 0.11 respectively.

Also, between the variable of capacity building and leisure time, there was a negative relation and significance as the less amount of leisure time, the higher extent of economic capacity with the correlation of 0.11.

The results of this survey regarding farm ownership, economic ability and social-cultural participation conform with Soroush Mehr's research (2009) as well as Kamaei's (2010), NikManesh and Khodaverdiloo's (2010), Qolipour and Rahimian's (2011) and Yaqoubi's (2005) surveys in terms of the amount of loans. Moreover, it doesn't agree with Mahmoud's survey (2012) in terms of education and study but it isn't similar with Akinsanya (2011).

The stepwise regression results also indicate that social influence, extent of social participation, number of rooms of house, women's attitude toward capacity building, farms owned by spouse, amount of loans women borrowed, age difference with spouse, social activities, amount of leisure time, age, time devoted to reading publications and rate of violence in families, were inserted into the equation from 1 to 12 respectively. This means that the variable of social influence had the maximum effect on dependent variable (capacity building of rural women) by 9 percent.

As shown in the table below, social influence, participation, number of rooms of house, women's idea about capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loans, age difference with spouse, social activities, amount of leisure time, age, amount of time to read papers and rate of violence in family are inserted in the equation as first to twelfth step respectively. The variable of social influence had the highest rate of effect on the dependent variable- that is the capacity building of rural women- with 9 percent. Also, in the second step, social influence and women's participation both together showed 12 percent and, respectively, the third step social influence, rural women's participation and number of rooms of house totally 15 percent; the fourth step social influence, rural women's participation, number of rooms of house, women's idea about capacity building 17 percent ; in the fifth step, social influence, rural women's participation, number of rooms of house, women's idea about capacity building and area of land owned by spouse by 19 percent, in the sixth step, social influence, women's participation, number of rooms of house, women's attitude toward capacity building, land owned by spouse and amount of loans borrowed by rural women by 20 percent; in the seventh step, social influence and participation of rural women, number of rooms of house, women's attitude toward capacity building, land owned by spouse, amount of loans borrowed by women and spouse age difference all by 21 percent; in the eighth step, social influence, women's participation, number of rooms per house, women's attitude toward capacity building, area of land owned by spouse, amount of loans borrowed, spouse age difference and social activities by 23 percent; and ninth step comprising social influence, number of rooms of house, women's attitude toward capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loans borrowed by rural women, spouse age difference, social activities and amount of leisure time all by 25 percent; in the tenth step, social influence, participation, number of rooms of house, women's attitude toward capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loan borrowed by rural women, spouse age difference, social activities, amount of leisure time and age totally by 26 percent; in the eleventh step, social influence, participation, number of rooms of house, women's attitude toward capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loan borrowed, spouse age difference, social activities, amount of leisure time, age and amount of time devoted to reading publication by 27 percent; and in twelfth step, social influence, participation, number of rooms of house, women's attitude toward capacity building, land area owned by spouse, amount of loan borrowed, spouse age difference, social activities, amount of leisure time, amount of time devoted to reading publication and rate of violence totally by 28 percent affected the capacity building of rural women.

The results of this survey fairly agree with what Soroush Mehr's who considered the factors of social participation, freedom of movement, self-confidence and socio-cultural abilities as the most influential ones and also relatively conforms with the studies conducted by Saei and Valipour (Bita), Nikmanesh and Khodaverdiloo (2010) and Yaqoubi (2005) but it doesn't comparatively agree with surveys conducted by Rahnavard and Hosseini (2008) and Qolipour and Rahimian (2011).

Recommendations

- 1-According to this survey, the better economic condition for rural women improves economic capacity building process. It's very important to pave the ground for training more profitable skills and better earning opportunities.
- 2-Based on the survey, allocating more credits to rural women can lead into better economic capacity building for them.
- 3-Creating opportunities to increase social participation and activities outdoor can lead into better capacity building.
- 4-We can also help to publish functional education materials and distribute papers about extension issues among farmers since it has positive results in economic capacity building of rural women.
- 5-It looks compulsory to provide rural people with educational programs to improve cultural norms using multimedia; specifically through local TV.
- 6-Changing men's opinion to accept their wives taking part in social activities.
- 7-Encouraging entrepreneur women to contribute in rural women section and take part in extension and education activities.
- 8-Considering the decisive role of men of families in women's participation and, consequently, their likely role in certain activities, it is recommended to observe women's viewpoints. In this regard, holding gender analysis trainings for men and women both together could be helpful.

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