Exploring the Effect of Rural Residents’ Emigration on Rural Areas’ lack of sustainability: A Case Study of Shahrekord Villages

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Abstract

Iran, along with technological and population transformations across the world, has shared a great deal of features in economic and social affairs with most of the developing countries (Lahsaezadeh, 1989: 61). This study sought to investigate the causes and effects of rural residents’ emigration on rural areas’ lack of sustainability in Shahrekord villages. To this end, the data was collected through field study. A lot of factors contribute to rural emigration in ChahrMahal and Bakhtiari Province, and Shahrekord, in particular, which include proximity of some rural areas to cities and enjoying much city dwelling potentials and attractions, as well as lack of sufficient facilities and services (educational, recreational, sanitary, etc). The results of testing the hypotheses revealed that unemployment (r=.424), retirement (r=.470), and lack of sufficient facilities (r=.454) are the chief priorities and factors affecting rural residents’ emigration and rural areas’ lack of sustainability.

Keywords: emigration, rural population, rural lack of sustainability

Introduction

Rural emigrations all over the world, especially after the World War II, were propounded in national and international communities as a population phenomenon. Although such emigrations seemed to be natural and sensible at the outset, they were considered insensible and problematic in under-developed countries after several decades, as a result of their unpleasant consequences. The weakness of economic and social structure of rural areas caused rural residents to immigrate to urban regions in order to access better living opportunities (Taherkhani, 1380: 68). Emigration is a form of geographical or local movement that occurs between two geographical units (Amani et al, 1354:71). An English scholar Graham first used the word “rural emigration” in 1892 (Pitiye,1990:1).

Iran, along with technological and population transformations across the world, has shared a great deal of features in economic and social affairs with most of the developing countries (Lahsaezadeh, 1989: 61). There are significant differences in form and content of rural emigration due to Iran’s historical, ethnic, and cultural differences as well as natural and human specialties of each region. Therefore, it is necessary to examine and analyze these differences and utilize the results in rural and regional planning.

Statistics studies on population in ChahrMahal and Bakhtiari villages have shown that in different periods of time, there has always been a part of rural population who has left the village and immigrated to the cities. In other words, rural desertion has not only decreased but also increased to a large extent in recent years. Meanwhile, some of the villages have become desolate and some others are about to be desolate (Jalalian, 2000: 2). A comparison between the rate of normal growth in rural population and the ultimate growth, which is affected by emigration well, revels the rate of emigration to cities in such a way that regardless of the 3% normal growth in
villages, the ultimate growth rate has been less than 5%, and even followed a negative growth in some villages.

**Statement of the Problem**

The consequence of emigration to cities is the complete ruin of national bloom and development as well as the loss of freedom for degeneration of villages equals to degeneration of civilization, which guarantees citizen rights and protects human freedom reverence (Pitiye, 1990: 44). Emigration to the cities is one of the most important social and economic issues in developing countries like Iran. The emigrants cause a lot of problems such as various disorganizations arising from putting much pressure on limited urban resources and facilities, unemployment, under-working, a dearth of environmental and educational spaces, air and environmental pollution, oldness, entrusting agricultural affairs to women, the evacuation of villages, etc, both in the origin and destination regions.

According to the theory of selectivity of emigration, some residents select emigration at the first convenience, and some select staying. This does not happen by accident. An emigrant, compared to one who stays, possesses features, which cause him/her to have a different assessment of the reasons of staying at or leaving the village (Urbray, 1991: 82).

Studies on emigration, especially from villages to cities, both inside and outside Iran have all agreed that tendency to and decision-making on emigration depend on age, gender, and education. Emigrants between 15-30 years of age play a leading role in the process of emigration. According to the statistics results in 1375, most of the men and women who emigrate have 20-24 years of age (1320766 emigrants). Moreover, the results showed that the country’s gender rate is 103 while the emigrants’ gender rate is 123 (Iran Statistics Organization, 1996), suggesting that a majority of the country’s emigrants are men. Men leave their residence in order to get income, education, job, etc. as most of the emigrants are young job-seekers, a kind of imbalance (in terms of age structure) is made between the employed population in urban regions (as the centers of industrial and service-related jobs) and rural regions (as the centers of agriculture-related jobs). Such imbalance results in having an old population of farmers as well as a younger employed population working in industrial and service-related centers (Ramazanian, 2001).

Until several decades ago, it was believed that internal emigration was a natural process by which additional labors gradually left villages in order to turn into required labors helping industrial growth of the urban regions. It was suggested that this process was socially useful as it was speculated that human resources were transferred from the regions in which social productivity was low (mostly close to zero) to the regions in which final products were not only positive but about to increase rapidly due to the accumulation of capital and technological development (Todaro, 2004: 284).

However, the developing countries’ experience has showed that the consequences become even worse and excessive emigration to cities leads to extreme regional imbalance. Such imbalances along with the increasing rate of active labor while the decreasing rate of urban jobs caused economists no longer considered emigration as “a process useful and necessary to solving the issue of the increasing demand of cities to labors”. These economists even went beyond that and pointed out that today, we shall consider emigration as fundamental and enhancing factor of the phenomenon of “additional urban workers available everywhere”, which needs to be studies as a factor leading to intensifying urban unemployment. On the other hand, many theorists suggest that the effects of emigration on the process of urban development are far more extreme than enhancing unemployment and under-working of the urban workers. These effects become more evident in economic growth and growth features, especially income distribution.
Therefore, to know emigrants’ features and factors affecting emigration with the purpose of better understanding of the nature and characteristics of development and formulating appropriate policies is too important. For example, every policy that encourages the difference between rural and urban incomes will have both direct and indirect effects on the process of emigration as well (Abrishami, 1996: 148).

**Significance of the Study**

Emigration, as the most important form of local movement within a geographical location, is defined as the movement a person or a group of people across the borders of a residential unit to another unit, aiming at having permanent or temporal residence in a place other than the person’s hometown (Khatari, 2002). Emigration to cities is considered as an indispensable part of the economic development process in such a way that according to some economists, economic development equals to transferring active labors from the agriculture section to industry section (Louise, 1954; Fi & Ranis, 1961).

Excessive emigration is a social disease and a factor of much political, social, and cultural disorganization. Anderson regards rural people’s poverty as the chief factor of immigrating to cities and points out that they starts to cities to get rid of the damages arising from poverty (Anderson, 2002). Boog (1997) suggested that rural attraction factors include better job opportunities, appropriate chances of getting higher income, recreational interesting centers or cultural activities, better and acceptable work and living condition like house, education, etc, and acceptable opportunities to get access to specialized and professional trainings. The factors of rural repulsion include hidden unemployment, the great ownership system in villages, the backwardness of exploitation system, the relationship between farmer and owner of the farm, lack of living facilities, and more specifically, low income of the rural people.

As villages are fundamental backbones of any country, noticing the villages’ flourishing conditions at all sections cause the young workers do not intend to emigrate. Various factors affect attraction to or repulsion of each section (Lahsaeezadeh, 1989: 61). Here, studying the effect of emigration and factors related to it as well as the effect of emigration on rural areas’ lack of sustainability are of remarkable importance.

One of the most important causes of destruction and evacuation of Iran’s villages is rural people's emigration. Emigration as a social phenomenon has long been existed throughout the history. It is necessary for related officials and scholars to know and examine the causes and factors of emigration and offer solutions and strategies thereof.

**Review of the Literature**

HosseinAbri (2004:190) summarized the causes of rural emigration in one sentence: deprivation of all rural people in country, which includes family deprivation (lack of sufficient income and meeting the living needs), social deprivation (lack of mass welfare facilities) and accessibility deprivation (to better sell their products and buy cheaper necessaries).

SeyyedMirzae on his study on the socio-economic causes and consequences of population transition investigated why rural people immigrate to cities. He concluded that population transition is a combination of economic, social, and cultural factors, and results in various socio-economic changes.

GaffariMoghadam proved that the number of active labors in agriculture section, the amount of capital, and education of rural people have positive effects on the agriculture productivity while the amount of land under cultivation and machinery have negative effects. Increasing the amount of rural residents’ wage leads to decreasing the rate of emigration while increasing the amount of city-dwellers’ wage leads to increasing the amount of emigration. In addition, examining the relationship
between emigration and agriculture inputs (such as active labor, capital, education, machinery, and the amount of land under cultivation) revealed that increasing capital, the number of active workers, as well as the education level decreased the rate of emigration while increasing the amount of land under cultivation and machinery increased the rate of emigration.

Zangeneh in his article on the rate of population and emigration growth in Sistan and Baluchestan Province showed that though there were differences in the process of changes on the working market indices in 1986 and 1996, there was significant relationship between the working market changes and emigration and population changes. In terms of economic structure, the results showed that in both periods of time, the proportion of service-related activities to the whole employment, particularly in city districts, has been more than other economic sections.

Ebadi in his study on application of Todaro’s theory of expected income (urban unemployment and emigration from villages to cities in Iran) concluded that the phenomena of emigration to cities and unemployment in Iran could be explained based on an economic duality framework. He pointed out that the chief causes for emigration to cities are the centralization of service-related activities and industries in urban regions and agriculture-related activities in urban regions.

Karimi Hasnijeh studied emigration and change in agriculture productivity. He found out that the number of active labors in agriculture section, capital, and rural people’s education level have positive effect on agriculture productivity while the amount of land under cultivation and machinery have negative effect. This study showed that increasing rural residents’ wages leads to decreasing rate of emigration while increasing city-dwellers’ wages leads to increasing emigration to the cities. Investigating the relationship between emigration and agriculture inputs (such as active labor, capital, education, machinery and the amount of land under cultivation) revealed that increasing the amount of capital, the number of labors and education level leads to increasing emigration while increasing the amount of land under cultivation and machinery leads to increasing rate of emigration to cities.

Anderson (2002) considered rural residents’ poverty as the main cause for their emigration to cities and believed that they drive into cities to escape from difficulties arising from poverty.

In 2008, Lour et.al emphasized the positive significant of income, population, and geographical factors on emigration in 16 countries who were members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The pattern presented by researchers proved that life style indices had not significant effect on emigration (Lour, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

There are several different theories and approaches on village-city emigration, each of which have considered it from different perspectives, especially micro- and macro-economy. Some scholars like Todaro, Louise, and Lee propounded theories such as functionalism, dependency, dual economy, etc. some of the above theories which focus on emigration are mentioned here.

The adherents of functionalism state that all social needs and requirements will be met within social systems framework. Activists in each system believe in needs that system cannot meet. Therefore, necessary changes to reduce such imbalances between the need and possibility of meeting it may occur in activists, the system or even both of them. Understanding imbalances between the individuals’ characteristics and social structure cause them to emigrate in order to reduce such imbalances (Lahsaezzadeh, 1989: 61).

Kazemi poor (1995 utilized this theory to clarify the causes for emigration from villages to Tehran. He stated “as individuals’ social needs are not fulfilled in rural regions and some cities cannot even provide suitable grounds to fulfilling them, so a kind of imbalance is made between
rural communities and urban communities, leading rural residents to emigrate with the hope of meeting their unanswered needs in their own villages.”

The theory of dependency sees emigration as a result of villages’ structural transfer from landholding-traditional system to industrial system and their combination in a capitalism system. As such, with regard to emigration, the main focus of this theory is on world economy structure rather than the individual development of a country. Followers of this theory have considered two classes of factors to explain the cause for movement and emigration: the change factors and the recession factors. Change factors refer to transformations based on technology and mechanization in agriculture, which lead to unemployment or under working of the farmers and result in rural residents’ emigration. Recession factors refer to, also called “demography of emigration” in the present study, are effective only when the population growth precedes over the growth of traditional agriculture products due to an improvement in the health care and medicine conditions, and so the labor is forced to move into the cities.

The Louise-Fee-Ramis model of development is the first and most famous developmental models, which implicitly refer to the process of transferring the labor from villages to cities. According to this model, economy consists of two parts: 1) the traditional part, in which there is additional labor with low productivity or no productivity, 2) the traditional-urban part that has high productivity and the labor is gradually transferred from the livelihood part to this part. The primary concern of this model is about both the process of labor transfer and the employment growth in the new part. The speed rate of the two elements is identified through the accumulation rate of industrial investment in the new part (Todaro, 1988: 26).

Similarly, Todaro attempted to make clear the phenomenon of village-city emigration. His main hypothesis was that every potential emigrant decides to move to cities or not based on the goal of prophesy-making the “expected income”. Two economic factors play role in his/her decision-making. The first factor has to do with the real difference between wages in villages and cities, arising from different skills and courses the workers possess and pass. In fact, the discrimination between the wages of urban workers as compared to those of skilled rural workers has a fundamental role in emigration. The second factor is the possibility of achieving a job in the city. This factor is not evident in other emigration patterns.

The key to understanding the conflicting phenomenon of continuous immigration to places in which unemployment is rampant is examining the process of emigration from the perspective of “expected” or “permanent” income, which is related to both urban workers’ wage and the probability of achieving a job in cities (Todaro, 1971).

Lee categorized factors affecting decision-making on the process of emigration into 4 groups:
1) Factors related to the origin
2) Factors related to the destination
3) Inhibiting factors
4) Personal factors

In each group, there are various factors affecting emigrants’ attraction and repulsion. These factors make some individuals emigrate and some others stay in their own habitant (Zanjani, 2001:133). Therefore, emigrants’ characteristics including age, gender, education, self-dependency, and ethnical and racial solidarities have remarkable effects on emigration (ibid: 201). In the present study, personal factors suggested by Lee are described as subordinate and personal. Subordinate factors refer to factors affected by incentives including the continuation of their own and their children education, keeping up with Jones family, age, family size, and the total rate of fertilization.
Lee’s theory can also be called “attraction” and “repulsion” theory. Repulsion factors are more related to the origin while attraction factors are more related to the destination. Experts and educated people emigrate because of attraction factors while non-experts like farmers emigrate because of repulsion factors. BilsBaru and Ubery summarized the causes for emigration with regard to different theories as follows:

1) Rural emigrations are done from regions with less job opportunities to regions with higher job opportunities.
2) In case of large differences between villages and cities income, people immigrate to cities, especially large cities.
3) All people hope to reach their highest amount of income in their adulthood when they possess higher efficiency. Therefore, rural residents immigrate to cities with the hope of achieving this goal.
4) Domination of the economic duality mode (the new part and the livelihood part) with no relation with each other causes rural residents to emigrate.
5) Factors leading to repulsion from villages and attraction to cities accelerate the growth of rural emigrations. In the livelihood part, there is no possibility of attracting new labors while in the new economic part, cities demand new labors every year (Shokuee, 1994: 470).

Research Hypotheses

Main Hypotheses
- Rural emigration affects lack of sustainability of rural regions of Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari Province.

Secondary Hypotheses
- There is a relationship between unemployment and emigration and rural lack of sustainability.
- There is a relationship between difficulties of agriculture-related jobs rural lack of sustainability.
- There is a relationship between attraction factors of city dwelling and rural lack of sustainability.
- There is a relationship between lack of sufficient facilities in rural regions and rural lack of sustainability.
- There is a relationship between retirement and rural lack of sustainability.

Research Methodology

This research is a descriptive-analytic study. In the first step, to formulate theoretical framework of the study and examine the related literature, the data was collected through documentary and library methods. Then, a field study was carried out. In the second step, a questionnaire was used to collect the data on participants. It was administered to a specific sample of rural residents. The data was analyzed inferentially using SPSS software, i.e., the Pearson correlation and multiple regressions. The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through the past research as well as convening a panel of experts in this regard. Reliability of the test was computed through Cronbach’s alpha and reported a high level of reliability (r=.90).

The Area under Study

Shahrekord consists of 27 villages including: Pahna located in South Zayandeh rood rural district (312 inhabitants), Cham Jangal (259 inhabitants), Cham Khalifeh (1015 inhabitants), Chelevan (778 inhabitants), Cham Aali (630 inhabitants), Kahkesh (764 inhabitants), Cham khorram (119 inhabitants), Mohammad AbadTabatabaee (74 inhabitants), Cham Chang (1648 inhabitants),
Horeh (2629 inhabitants), Yasecha (762 inhabitants), Garmdare (1204 inhabitants), and Cham Kaka (546 inhabitants), all of which are located in Saman rural district and most of their inhabitants are farmers. Kakolak (581 inhabitants), Sirak (296 inhabitants), No Abad (712 inhabitants), and Bahram (1732 inhabitants) are located in the central district of the city. Toomanak (709 inhabitants), Larak (600 inhabitants), Harchegan (2114 inhabitants), and Bardeh (2534 inhabitants) are located in Ben district. Asad Abad (177 inhabitants), Aghbolagh (289 inhabitants), Khoy (2715 inhabitants), Katak (174 inhabitants), Vanan (2955 inhabitants), and Oje Boghaz (69 inhabitants) are located in Laran rural district. The total population of Shahrekord villages is 26931, who are distributed in 7718 families.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants according to their gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, 51.8% of the families consists of men (F=198) and 48.2% consists of women (F=184). 36.1% of the participants (F=138) are between 20-30 years old, 25.4% (F=97) are between 30-40 years old, 21.2% (F=81) are between 40-50 years old, 13.1% (F=50) are between 50-60 years old, and 4.2% (F=16) are between 60-90 years old. This shows that most of the population is young.

Table 2: Distribution of Participants according to their age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-90</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3: Distribution of the participants according to their job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-employed</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3, 34% of the participants are farmers. 34.5% are graduates (have completed their school), and have the highest frequency. 27% are able to write and read (literate), 7.6% are illiterate, 17.3% are graduated (have got their first degree at university), and 4.7% have got a postgraduate degree and above.

**Research Findings**

The data was analyzed and the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Correlation test and regression analysis. The results are presented in Table 4 as following.
Table 4: Correlation of the related variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variables</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient (r)</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Mean Differences (m.d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>2.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of one of the relatives</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>2.953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractions of city dwelling</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>2.970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements in mass media</td>
<td>.445</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>3.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of enough facilities in rural regions</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>3.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>3.220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of testing hypotheses showed that unemployment, lack of enough facilities in rural regions, advertisements in mass media, attractions of city dwelling the presence of one of the relatives in the city, and retirement could best explain immigration to city regions and rural areas’ lack of sustainability in Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari province. To find out the degree of correlation of influential variable and rural areas’ lack of sustainability, we used the correlation coefficient matrix. In other words, the closer the correlation coefficient to +1, the higher the correlation. As such, there were high correlations between unemployment (r=.624), the presence of one of the relatives in the city (r=.280), attractions of city dwelling (r=.412), advertisements on welfare and luxury in cities in mass media (r=.445), and retirement (r=.470) and emigration and rural areas’ lack of sustainability.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

In developing countries including Iran, emigration is among the most important socio-economic issues (Ghasemi Ardehaee, 1387: 53). Migration from villages to cities has negative effect on rural areas’ lack of sustainability. There are various influential factors thereof in the case villages in Shahrekord, among which are proximity of some rural regions to cities, attractions of city dwelling, lack of enough facilities in villages (educational, sanitary, etc). The testing of hypotheses revealed that unemployment (r=.624), retirement (r=.470), and lack of enough facilities (r=.454) are the most important and influential preferences affecting rural areas’ lack of sustainability.

According to the results of the study some suggestion are presented to avoid excessive migration from villages to cities in Iran, especially in rural regions of Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari province:

- Having a better understanding of the rural young people and providing them with sufficient facilities with the purpose of meeting their expectations
- Making jobs through agriculture-related secondary professions
- Raising educational facilities in rural regions
- Enhancing the security of rural regions through reducing local disputes
- Providing rural residents with more facilities to be used in uncultivated lands
- Constructing dams or deep wells in order to provide farmers with necessary amount of water
- Reducing the attraction factors of urban pseudo-professions
- Imposing restrictions on the settlement of people in the periphery of cities
- Making an institution to arrange and organize migration process (this has been experienced in most cities, especially in China).
References

Openly accessible at http://www.european-science.com