An Investigation of the Effects of Well-being and Social Capital on Quality of Life (QoL) in Rural Areas of Boyer-Ahmad County

Ahmadvand. Mostafa
Assistant prof. Agricultural Development and Advancement, Yasouj University, Yasouj, Iran

Hedayatinia. Saied
M.A, in Rural Development, Yasouj University, Yasouj, Iran

Abdollahi. Khosro
M.A, in Rural Development, Yasouj University, Yasouj, Iran

Received 15 December 2012 Accepted 31 December 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

the most common and probable starting point in the literature for definition of Quality of Life (QoL) was generally attributed to a warning that the area would be full of confusion and complexity. Generally, the concept of QoL is quickly becoming a popular and world-wide concept especially in Iran. Therefore, QoL and its dimensions are the goal of development in all countries. Low QoL in rural areas, result in rural urban migration and consequently bring about social, economic and environmental issues and challenges. Therefore, the role of QoL in advancing the sustainable development programs in rural areas is undeniable.

2. THEORETICAL BASES

The concept of QoL represents new ideas about the state of the environment, housing, and people’s state of happiness, employment and marital satisfaction and the total well-being of the population. Therefore, it includes a wide range of physical and physiological dimensions. On the other hand, social capital and subjective well-being have been widely assumed in the recent development literature to have positive consequences on QoL. Generally speaking, social capital refers to the networks of relationships between people, groups, the norms of trust, reciprocity and the mutual benefits that hold them together. These networks constitute a resource or asset. Therefore, the term "capital" could be valuable in a range of situations. The key focus in this part of study was to examine, albeit briefly, a number of models of social capital that highlight the impacts, outcomes or effects of social capital. However, most studies examine the impacts of social capital using some narrow indices of QoL such as income, poverty, education and health. While these indices do measure and represent the standards of living of a society, and are important development objectives, they focus only on the material aspect of well-
being. Although, there is a general acceptance in most of the literature that an improved level of social capital leads to desirable QoL and well-being, but it does not really shed light on whether social capital and well-being are associated with quality of life. This study attempts to fill this gap by extending the analysis not only on the impact of social capital but also on well-being and QoL. Therefore, the aim of this study was to contribute to ongoing development of a better understanding of the conceptual and practical links between the critical concepts of social capital, well-being, and quality of life (QoL) in rural areas of Boyer-Ahmad County.

In this study, a survey was conducted using questionnaires. The data were collected between October and November 2012 using a sample of rural households in the villages of the County. Therefore, the survey questions were designed to collect the socio-economic, demographic, and physiological data of the respondents. The face validity of questionnaires was confirmed by experts, and the questionnaires were subjected to reliability testing by using data collection in the pilot study with Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.65 to 0.77 for all variables. Statistical population of the study included the heads of rural households in the county and 223 subjects were selected using multi-stage random cluster sampling.

3. DISCUSSION

The study results showed that QoL of rural households can be categorized into three main groups: low, medium, and high. Besides, it suggests that there is no significant relationship between the QoL and social capital but the relationship between QoL and well-being was significant. Furthermore, the results of this study suggest that social capital is not important and therefore, play no role in improving the QoL. In addition, investment in social capital was expected not only to raise the standards of living, but also to improve the QoL. Also, the regression model results showed that among the variables postulated in the model; the number of family members, farmlands, and well-being were the most important determinants to predict the QoL of rural households and was able to explain 45.7 percent of variability in the rural QoL. Therefore, the improvement of well-being can improve QoL.

4. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings, the following suggestions were made:

• Since income is an important determinant of QoL, more emphasis on education of rural people with regard to job skills and opportunities in different sectors especially in agriculture and handicraft industries through Jihad-e-Agriculture Organization are recommended.

• Given the low level of education in rural areas of Boyer-Ahmad, providing and increasing equipment and instruments for education and training purposes such as school, books, extension houses, cultural centers, and libraries are suggested.
• Empowerment is a crucial element of increasing QoL. Therefore, empowering rural people, especially in social well-being by holding workshops on social relations, friendship activities, team working, and meditation are recommended.

• Establishing the micro-credit foundation for improving economic condition of rural people is recommended.

Keywords: Quality of life (QoL), Social capital, Well-being, Rural development, Boyer-Ahmad County.

References (In Persian)


References (In English)


