The Role of Rural Women’s Stress in Spatial Distribution of Rural Socio-economic Instability  
(Case Study: Maneh District, Mane and Samalghan County)  

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the new paradigm of development, especially rural development, to reach welfare, peace and a quiet life with no stress is one of the indices highly emphasized on. To improve social and economic conditions of rural people by supplying facilities, services and infrastructures and providing them with their basic needs, would surely make way to maintain their social, economic, and ecological stability and reach mental and psychical tranquility. In rural areas, women often have poor access to job opportunities, have lower social support, face difficulties in getting services and transportation, and are more likely to take inadequate care of their children as they have to cooperate with their spouse or family in production processes, etc. All these issues may cause privation, inequality, insecurity for women, and result in psychological distress. Studies also suggest that the prevalence of distressing symptoms and stress are especially more common among women receiving lower social supports, hazardous working conditions, job insecurity and higher levels of environmental tensions. Jacob believes that rural areas are economically poor; women and children in these areas are particularly subject to stress and likely to experience more stressful conditions. These conditions may also impact the stability of rural settlements. Clearly, the realm of sustainable rural development is not solely limited to protecting environment or wildlife, but also includes concepts such as city, village, energy, social justice, and fair distribution of wealth, public participation in decision-making and planning processes.

2. METHODOLOGY

Accordingly, the aim of this study was to recognize the factors affecting women’s stress, explain the role of women’s stress in rural instability and also discuss its spatial distribution in the villages of the study area. The study area is Mane district in Mane &

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Samalghan County. This study was conducted in a descriptive-analytical method. The data were collected through library research, field study and questionnaires measuring rural women’s psychological distress in the study area. Sample size was determined with regard to properties such as “general population in the rural areas, natural conditions of rural settlements and their distance from the cities as well”, eventually 240 women were chosen out of 16 rural areas.

3. DISCUSSION

Mean ranking of different kinds of stress suggest that social, environmental and economic stress, with the mean values of 2.82, 2.12 and 1.05 respectively represent the highest and the lowest stress levels among the women of the study. In addition, the results of clustered classification of sample rural areas in terms of stress levels (rural areas with high, moderate and low levels of stress) show that 7 rural areas were in high stress level, 4 rural areas were in moderate stress level and 5 rural areas were in low stress level. Kooshki with the mean value of 181.82 and Arnaweh with the mean value of 52.46 are the most and the least stressed rural areas, respectively. Results of clustered categorization of the sample rural communities based on index of stability (including high, moderate and low stability) shows that Arnaweh is the only village with high stability, three rural areas of Ghareh Chay, Yomogh and Kohne Jolge are of moderate stability and western Khoramdeh, Mohammad Abad, Ishq Abad, Kooshki Torkaman, Dashtak Sotla, Amin Abad, Mirza Abbas, Allah Gholi, Chehel Gozar, Chahar Bagh, Khartoot and Haj Hossein are of low stability. Meanwhile Arnaweh with the mean value of 935 and Amin Abad with the mean value of 325.7 respectively have the highest and the lowest stability. Finally the results show that according to inferential statistics, there is no significant relationship between rural women’s stress and stability index of rural families and sample rural areas; however, in presence of reverse correlation between the above-mentioned indices, it appears that the higher the women’s stress, the lower will be the stability of rural families and sample rural areas.

4. CONCLUSION

With due attention to the fact that the women are the unit of analysis in the research, and they are mostly involved with socio-cultural and psychological issues, as mentioned in the first hypothesis, it would seem reasonable to consider social factors as the most important factor affecting women’s stress in the study area, however economic and environmental factors shouldn’t be ignored. Since 94 percent of the samples were housekeepers who are neither responsible for providing household with their financial needs nor directly in charge of life expenses, then compared to men, they are more subject to social stress. In fact awareness and feeling underserved on the one hand and increasing complication of relations, the lack of self-sufficiency, growing needs, unemployment especially of their children on the other hands have highlighted the role of
stress therein. The findings suggest as the stability level of rural areas decreases, the stress of rural women increases. Therefore, the more developed the rural areas are in terms of stability indices, the more stress-free and intellectually stable the rural people will be. It is also concluded that highly-populated rural areas enjoying better economic conditions, more services and facilities, etc., compared to others, are more subject to high levels of stress. On the contrary, the less populated rural areas having weak economic performance are subject to less stress. Analysis revealed that stress levels in the study area are directly related to the individuals’ knowledge and education on the one hand and rural development level on the other. Thus, as the individuals become more aware of their properties and facilities, they are likely to experience more stress. The more developed rural areas are, the more the rural people are likely to have a sense of insecurity and psychological stress. Nowadays, urban changes has influenced the rural life in a way that villagers more than before are now having a sense of inequality and low self-confidence, they also feel deprived of urban facilities and welfare services and consequently in order to promote their welfare and development, get exposed to more stress and in most cases think that the only way to peace of mind lies in urbanization.

**Key words:** psychological stress of women, socio-economic and ecological stability, health, Mane district, Mane & Samalghan County.

**References (in Persian)**


**References (in English)**