

## **Effect of Social Capital Components on the Development of Rural Tourism**

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### **Abstract**

The concept of social capital has been emphasized through its connection with the basic social components including belief, awareness, participation, trust, cohesion and social network in the direction of sustainable development of societies, especially rural communities. This study aimed to investigate the effect of social capital components on the development of rural tourism. The present research method is descriptive-analytical. The main research tool is the questionnaire. The statistical population of this study is the households of the villages in four tourist target villages in the Torqabeh village, Binalood city in Khorasan Razavi province. To measure the reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire), Cronbach's alpha coefficient and KMO coefficient were used to validate the questionnaire. Six effective institutions in rural tourism development are (etc, council, village, private sector, heritage organization, district, public sector and non-governmental sector). In terms of villagers' belief in their effectiveness, villagers' trust in these institutions and villagers' participation in the development of tourism with these institutions were examined and the research results show that from the villagers' point of view, believing in the effectiveness of any institution ensures villagers' trust in it. Institution and ultimately participation in the development of rural tourism.

**Keywords:** Local Management, Participation, Rural Tourism, Trust.

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## **1. Introduction**

The concept of social capital has been emphasized through its connection with the basic social components including belief, awareness, participation, trust, cohesion and social network in the direction of sustainable development of societies, especially rural communities. The existence of social capital can facilitate economic capabilities and reduce its costs (Roth, 2022; Muringani et al., 2021; Salinas and Sastre-Merino, 2021; Hörisch and Obert, 2020). Considering the great importance of social capital and its impact on economic development, the existence of social capital, especially cohesion, participation and social trust, has an impact on the economic indicators of rural areas (Sonboli et al., 2021; Shayan et al., 2017).

There are differences of opinion on the cause and effect of the components of social capital. Some thinkers consider trust and participation to be the prelude or prerequisite for social networking, while others, on the contrary, see social networking as a prerequisite for social trust and participation (Li et al., 2022). Social capital through the participation of local people (villagers), social solidarity, membership in associations and networks, norms, values and beliefs as well as links and interactions through capacity building, empowerment, institutionalization, institutional development within the framework of the program (Shafiei and Khaksar., 2020; Taleshi., 2018). Participatory strategic planning at the national, regional and local levels leads to the formation of institutionalized, decentralized societies, which results in the realization of sustainable rural development (Meridsadat et al., 2016).

Increasing participation among villagers means a way to achieve sustainable rural development (Shafiei and Khaksar, 2020; Heydari, 2018). Because, since the share of agriculture in the employment and income generation of the villagers is decreasing, the expansion of new functions in the rural areas can (such as tourism) leads to the economic revival of the villages and the economic prosperity of these areas (He et al., 2022; Mohammadi et al., 2022; Ibănescu et al., 2018 ).

The tourism industry, as a new approach to the development of human and community coexistence, for economic productivity, has become a major player in rural development today (Darvishi et al., 2022; Soltani and Taleshi, 2020).

Rural tourism creates sustainable development of local communities in rural areas and is considered a tool for economic and social development of rural areas. Considering the natural and cultural capacities in the villages, rural tourism can play an important role in the revitalization of the villages, the protection of the natural, historical and cultural heritages and ultimately

sustainable rural development. (López-Sanz et al., 2021; Ćurčić et al., 2021; Ebrahimi and Izad, 2018).

The villages have many issues and problems such as poverty, unemployment, migration, weak education and lack of technological infrastructure, lack of credits and low productivity rate in the rural production sector on the one hand and social weaknesses such as (civic participation, cooperation networks and institutional efficiency, cohesion, trust, etc.), on the other hand, the development of villages and the creation of sustainable partnerships in them have been estimated somewhat weakly (Adamowicz and Zwolińska-Ligaj, 2020). Therefore, a necessary condition for the progress of any society, especially rural societies, is the development of social cohesion, the development of social participation, and most importantly, mutual trust (individuals and the government). In recent years, especially over the past few decades, the development of tourism in rural areas has become the main areas as a poverty alleviation strategy and sustainable development fewer developed countries in the world. This study aimed to investigate the effect of social capital components on the development of rural tourism.

The concept of social capital generally focuses on relationships between people. Social capital includes norms of trust (general or generalized trust and institutional-civic trust), mutual interaction behaviors, which operate within social networks, and also includes structural elements of networks and formal and informal partnerships (Murgaš et al., 2022; Son and Feng, 2019). Social capital, as a sector cohesion factor, plays an important role in accelerating and facilitating the development of local network structures, which ultimately leads to rural development (Wu et al., 2022; Meridsadat et al., 2016). Social capital in rural areas becomes the main resource for development in rural areas, because it affects their actions and improves the quality of life of rural communities from every perspective (Heydari, 2018).

From the perspective of participatory development, participation is considered both an agent and a synonym for development. If participation in development was a rational necessity in the past, today it appears as a moral and human necessity. Participation is one of the approved human and moral values that carries with it an element of responsibility and conscious and free action (Mensah and Casadevall, 2019). To achieve sustainable development, it is necessary for people's participation and the presence of local institutions and organizations and the use of strategies and policies that provide and strengthen participation (Ceptureanu et al., 2018). Today, the word participation is seen in all development texts. People's participation is the essential yet missing aspect of sustainable development in villages in general and in the agricultural sector in particular (Mensah and Casadevall, 2019).

Participation as the key element in achieving construction goals and rural development is of particular importance. It causes people to try to achieve the results of actions more quickly, to consider those actions as their own and to take care and protect them, and in case of depreciation or destruction, they will seek to build it again (Sisto et al., 2018; Jomehpour, 2017). Participation by participating in decision-making is a method to promote sustainability, balance economic and social development, comprehensive planning of tourism destinations, ensuring understanding of the place, education and of other social facilities, which results in It are improving the technical skills, communication and trade of local people (Machado et al., 2019; Einali and Romiani, 2013).

Also, one of the factors affecting the development of social capital is increasing the level of social awareness of villagers, society and social beliefs in their society, developing social networks and improving their social participation in development, which makes rural communities take place. They evaluate and understand their common characteristics (Dasanayaka and Matsuda, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). Social trust is not only an important aspect of social interactions but also a central component and key indicator in the discussion of social capital (Murgaš et al., 2022; Murayama et al., 2014). What is known as the main indicators of social capital are social trust, social cohesion and social participation, which most experts agree on (Payanifar et al., 2022; Branch and Origgi, 2022).

Tourism is a form of participation of all strata of rural society in the creation of development because when tourists enter an area, all people are unconsciously on the path of development (Ismailpour et al., 2022; Kaviani et al., 2017). The development of the tourism industry in rural areas is considered a new strategy by local communities, it can play a major role in the development of these areas (Ibănescu et al., 2018). Rural tourism can play a major role in empowering the local people and diversifying economic growth as well as creating new job opportunities in close connection with other economic sectors (Ivona et al., 2021). Therefore, the development of tourism in rural areas is a fundamental element and one of the ways to save villages from poverty, migration, social and economic problems (Hassan et al., 2022).

## **2. Literature review**

Park et al. (2012) research results showed that social capital is effective in managing conflicts among residents and high social capital can strengthen the development of rural tourism. Meanwhile, in a society with a high level of social capital, more economic benefits are obtained from the development of tourism. Also, their research showed that four factors of the social capital

of the local community are effective during the tourism development process in such areas, which include participation, norms, trust and networks. Meridsadat et al. (2014) research result showed that the components of awareness, participation, cohesion and trust were determined as variables predicting the sustainable development of villages by explaining 85.3% of the variance. Liu et al. (2014) research results showed that social capital, especially cognitive, acts as a mediating factor in improving the environmental behavior of residents and leads to the development of natural tourism. Also, social capital is both the result and the driver of natural tourism development. Ling et al. (2015) research results showed that there is a positive relationship between the dimensions of social capital and the participation of members in educational meetings and public meetings, which can be said to have a positive and significant effect on each of the dimensions of social capital in the cooperative economy.

Sadeghi et al. (2016) research result showed that the lack of suitable institutional interaction in different dimensions of rural development is one of the deficiencies and weaknesses in terms of rural sustainability. Ivona (2019) research result showed that tourism has shown that it can play a fundamental role in the development of rural areas, offering rural areas the opportunity to diversify their economy and improve the quality of life of the local population. Shafiei et al. (2020) research result showed that, increased social capital through the performance of local government increases the mean of the dimensions of sustainable rural development. In other words, increased social trust in the execution of social-economic plans by local governments increases the participation of villagers in the execution of plans, social activities, and economic investment in villages leading to the improvement of the means of the dimensions of sustainable rural development. Moqdas and Taleshi (2020) research result showed that, specifically, tourism develops social solidarity through the formation of micro-businesses and particular rural entrepreneurship that directly and indirectly contribute to the expansion of job creation in rural settlements. Also, these mechanisms are involved in producing local capital that strengthens sustainable rural income and livelihood. Curcic et al. (2021) results of the research show that educating the population outside formal education improves the sustainable and economic development of the village and enables rural tourism to become an important part of economic activities and a channel for the commercialization of natural and cultural content. Darvishi et al. (2022) research results showed that the increased employment and motivation for economic activities, creating more and more jobs for rural residents alongside agricultural work, reducing rural migration to urban

areas and rural women's employment in handicrafts have been the signs of increased employment in rural tourism.

### **3. Research methods**

The present research method is descriptive-analytical. This study aimed to investigate the effect of social capital components on the development of rural tourism. The present research method is descriptive-analytical. The main research tool is the questionnaire. The statistical population of this study is the households of the villages in four tourist target villages in the Torqabeh village, Binalood Township in Khorasan Razavi province. Necessary data were collected from 200 rural households in the Torqabeh district. To measure the reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire), Cronbach's alpha coefficient and KMO coefficient were used to validate the questionnaire. Based on the Census 2019, the Torqabeh district has 1950 rural households and from this population, 200 people were selected as the statistical sample for data collection.

#### *3.1. Study area*

According to the target villages of tourism in Torghabeh district, four villages of Kong, Hisar, Azghor and Mughan were selected in this district and the necessary data were collected from them. Torqabeh district in Binalood county of Khorasan-Razavi province in Iran. This region with its beautiful nature, historical and religious sites, as well a relatively suitable infrastructure for tourism, is one of the areas prone to attracting tourists to Iran (Alavipoor et al., 2016).

#### *3.2. Sampling and data collection*

This study, by using Cochran's formula and random sampling method, determined the sample size of farmers (Equation 1). The statistical population of the study was pistachio growers in the county of Kerman in Iran. Each sample was considered a representative of farmers in the statistical population.

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left[ \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} - 1 \right]}$$

Eq (1)

Where:

n = Number of samples (200)

$z^2 = 1.964$

p = 0.50

q = 0.50

$d^2$  = Sampling accuracy (0.05 to 0.10) (0.06)

N = Number of research statistical population (1,950) (Source: Statistical Center of Iran, 2019).

The validity and reliability coefficient of the questionnaires was confirmed by university professors. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire), which was calculated as 0.911 for economic effects and 0.910 for social effects. The KMO coefficient was used for factor validity of the research instrument (questionnaire), which was calculated as 0.895 for economic effects and 0.865 for social effects (table 1).

**Table 1.** Reliability Analysis (Alpha)

Scale Name	No. Of items	Alpha Value
Economic Effects	19	0.9
Social Effects	22	0.9

#### **4. Results**

The findings of this research showed that the average age of the respondents was about 50 years old, and 82% of respondents were married (table 2).

**Table 2.** The personal characteristic of rural households

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Age			
(years)			
20>	4	2	2
20-40	88	44	46
40-60	65	32.5	78.5
<60	43	21.5	100
total	200	100	-
Marital			
status			
Married	164	82	82
Single	36	18	100
total	200	100	-

Investigating the potential and social capacities of tourism in the development of rural tourism in the region were investigated, which shows the views of the villagers about the potential and social capacities of tourism in the development of rural areas. It has been found that from the point of view of the villagers, there have been 52% coordination of tourism development with the traditional beliefs of the people. After that, there has

been 45.5% social cohesion of people toward tourism development (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The social capacities of rural tourism from the respondents' point of view

Variables	5-level Likert scale				
	Very Low%	Low %	Moderate %	High %	Very High%
People's participation in tourism development	5	18	45	23	9
People's belief in the effectiveness of tourism	4	13.5	36	31	15.5
The importance of developing tourism	2	9.5	21.5	43	24
People networking in tourism development	12.5	41	36	8.5	2
The social cohesion of people	5.5	26.5	48.5	17.5	2
People's social identity	7	13.5	39.5	31	9
Social unity of the people	4	24	46	25	2

The findings of the research showed that from the point of view of the villagers, the average potential and capacity of rural tourism in the region is 47% (table 4).

**Table 4.** Distribution of abundance of tourism potential and capacities of the region

5-level Likert scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Total tourism potential and capacities			
Very Low	8	4	4
Low	90	45	49
Moderate	94	47	96
High	8	4	100
Very High	-	-	-
total	200	100	-

The findings of the table show that from the point of view of the villagers, the existing capacity of rural tourism in the natural tourism area with an average capacity of 58.97%, the existing importance of 71.45%, the current utilization rate of 46.82% and also the possibility of development is 73%. It has the most potential among other types of tourism (table 5).



**Table 5.** Frequency distribution of types of rural tourism capacity in the region

Type of tourism potential and capacities	Available capacity	The importance of existing	Current use	The degree of development capability
Cultural tourism	23.71	34.12	15.57	38.12
Natural tourism	58.97	71.34	46.82	73
Agro tourism	47.28	59.62	35.74	61
Regional tourism	14.86	18	11.60	20.14
Ecotourism	35.12	47.10	25.64	49
Historical	51	60.91	39.40	60.47
Customs tourism	21.29	29.33	13	29.71
Food tourism	19.35	25.71	11.23	26.63

The results of the research showed that the villagers have the highest level of trust in the institutions of the council and the private sector to develop tourism activities, and they know the importance and effectiveness of these institutions better than others, and they have also shown the desire to participate effectively with these institutions (table 6).

**Table 6.** The importance and effectiveness of influential institutions in the development of rural tourism

Type of effective institution in tourism	Trust	Importance	Effectiveness	Participation
Village Council	60.70	78.65	56.90	31.25
Village Manager	55.50	73.50	51.60	23.35
Government representative (GR)	48.15	66.75	44.45	13.90
Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (CHTO)	52.75	66.60	50.10	17.40
Private sector	63.60	75.00	57.00	22.05
Non-government organizations(NGOs)	39.40	50.90	32.05	10.05

The relationship between the variables of social and economic effects of rural tourism with the variable of trust in institutions also shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between the level of people's trust in local institutions in the development and their views on the positive social and economic impact of tourism in the development of rural areas.

**Table 7.** The importance and effectiveness of influential institutions in the development of rural tourism

Dependent variables	Independent variables						
	Total trust	Trust in the council	Trust in the village manager	Trust in the GR	Trust in the CHTR	Trust in the Private sector	Trust in the NGOs
Economic effects	0.437** 0.000	0.554** 0.000	0.505** 0.000	0.294** 0.006	0.283** 0.008	0.133 <sup>ns</sup> 0.060	0.156* 0.041
Social effects	0.360** 0.000	0.413** 0.000	0.421** 0.000	0.322** 0.002	0.367** 0.001	0.107 <sup>ns</sup> 0.156	0.058 <sup>ns</sup> 0.280

\*Significant at 0.05 levels ( $p < 0.05$ ) \*\*Significant at 0.01 levels ( $p < 0.01$ ), Source: Research findings

### 5. Discussions and Conclusion

The result of the research showed that the average age of the respondents was about 50 years old, and the results of the research emphasize that with the arrival of tourists in rural areas, the attitude and intellectual orientation of rural residents can be improved towards the development of rural tourism, especially for people with better financial resources. Also, six effective institutions in rural tourism development are (etc, council, village, private sector, heritage organization, district, public sector and non-governmental sector). In terms of villagers' belief in their effectiveness, villagers' trust in these institutions and villagers' participation in the development of tourism with these institutions were examined and the research results show that from the villagers' point of view, believing in the effectiveness of any institution ensures villagers' trust in it. Institution and ultimately participation in the development of rural tourism.

The results show that from the point of view of the villagers, the greatest tourism capacity is in the area of natural and historical tourism, and the evidence of the researcher's observations is in line with confirming this issue. The results of the research show that from the point of view of the villagers, the most reliable Institutions affecting rural tourism in the region have been the private sector and the council. So the overall trust is reported to be close to 53%. From the point of view of the villagers, the most

important institutions affecting rural tourism in the Shura area are the private sector and rural areas. So the impact of institutions is reported to be nearly 58%. Also, from the point of view of the respondents, the highest level of their participation was with the organizations affecting rural tourism in the village council, village managers and the private sector. In general, the participation rate is reported below 17%. These results are consistent with the research results (Park et al., 2014; Link et al., 2015; Curcic et al., 2021; Darvishi et al., 2022).

The results of the study showed that local development programs must first work with institutions that rural people trust, such as local institutions, to be successful. These measures will then show the positive effects of development programs for the local people and pave the way for their trust and, as a result, their partnership with secondary institutions, especially specialized institutions in the field of rural tourism. The results showed that in rural areas, the level of trust and participation had a positive and significant relationship with each other, so it can be said that due to the high social cohesion in the past, in rural areas there is a minimum level of trust between rural people and institutions. There is a place in the village. Of course, this level of trust has decreased in recent years for various reasons, such as the failure of development programs at the village level, so as the level of trust increases, the research results show that the rural trust network to development institutions decreases. However, according to the theory of social capital, trust is a prelude to the effective participation of villagers, and in this study, while confirming this issue, it can be seen that high levels of trust have provided higher participation of villagers.

According to the research results, it is suggested that the development of rural tourism and agriculture can be an effective strategy for sustainable rural development, especially the diversification of the rural economy and the reduction of unemployment in rural areas, but in this regard, top-down planning according to The social division of villagers into insiders and outsiders and the lack of trust and as a result their non-participation with external institutions and outsiders cannot be effective, therefore, the capacities and capabilities of local institutions, especially the village council and village manager, should be taken into consideration. First, it was used to take advantage of the presence of other influential institutions (in the second step, the use of the private sector as the second influential institution) in the development of rural tourism. The need for planners and policymakers to pay attention to social issues, especially rural behavior patterns, especially in the topics of participation and trust, and as a result, the development of their social capital, is another noteworthy issue from the results of this research.

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