



Effective Extension and Education Strategies on Empowering Rural Women in Commercialization of Agricultural Products (Case Study: Buein Zahra)

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Abstract

The agricultural extension and education is to provide opportunities for women to develop the competencies they need to become successful contributing members of their communities. Empowerment can be one of the most effective strategies for providing women with opportunities to develop competence. Over the past decade "empowerment" has become the practical in business, evaluation and women development. Therefore, purpose of this descriptive study was the role of agricultural extension and education on the empowerment of rural women (case study: Buin Zahra). The population of this study was all rural women who were working directly with the agricultural extension and education department (N=120). Using table Krejcie and Morgan, 92 of whom were selected as a sample and stratified sampling method was used with appropriate attribution. Data were collected using a researcher -made questionnaire and by using SPSS (16) were analyzed. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by a panel of experts. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability (0.85). The results showed that respondents with statements by creating employment opportunities in the economic, Improve the health status of women in the social sector and increase women's political participation and the cultural- political sectors in the most express consent. Results of independent t-test showed that women who have participated in training courses, membership in rural cooperative production, membership in microcredit fund, membership in extension employment projects and the women who used the internet are enabling more than other women.

Keywords: Agricultural Commercialization, Economic factors, Social factors, Political and cultural factors, Women's empowerment Strategies.

Introducción

Rural women constitute considerable population of various communities. Impact

and role of rural women in development and especially agricultural development has been focused extremely since 1970 and concurrent

with raising women-related issues and their role in development. It should be noted that inevitable role of rural women in various activities of rural communities has been cited as the main reason of the said issue. In most communities, rural women account for major workforce of agricultural activity. In the same direction, rural women are considerably involved in activities related to home and agricultural activities. Activities related to planting, caring and harvesting product, preserving and caring livestock and poultry and some activities related to marketing and selling products are considered as major fields of participation of women in agricultural activity (ASIADHRRA, 2007; Eftekhari, 1997).

Experts believe that failure to use women as workforce, who constitutes half of the population, will cause reduced growth in society. However, the role of women should be taken into serious consideration in this respect. Therefore, suitable way should be provided for women, so that they can highlight their social roles in society in the best form possible (Azadi and Karami, 1997).

Participating in activity for producing agricultural produce, preserving livestock and poultry, marketing and selling agricultural products, handicrafts, carpet weaving, converting and processing livestock and agricultural products, focusing on social activities, house management and also life management area of several roles of rural women which should be taken into serious consideration. (Mirzaei and Shahidi, 2007)

Despite their key and outstanding role in society, they (women) are suffering from low literary rate, participation rate of workforce and income as compared with men (Padala,

2011). Domination of underdeveloped situation of rural environment has caused them, despite their participation in daily social and economic activities (Heidari and Jahannama, 2003), to be considered as vulnerable class in rural development programs (Hashemi, 2001).

Ignoring share of Iranian rural women in economic activities of family and also value added created by them in agricultural sector have caused the value of their activity not to be taken into consideration in national calculations (Mehrabanyan and Moazeni, 2007).

Although women play a key and important role in economic activities of family and also creation of added value in the related field, their salient role is ignored in national computations. Women, living in rural communities, have undertaken economic activities that are not led to obtaining tangible income and the said issue has downgraded social and economic situation of women in community. Since economic activities of women are not led to the creation of palpable source of income, the said issue has limited their accessibility to resources and caused men to control income sources of family themselves (Afshar, 1998). Thus, policymakers discussed other theories which focused on salient role of rural women as producer (Holtom, 2004).

With due observance to the said issue, women were considered as key factor of sustainable development since 1990. Moreover, empowering women was taken into consideration as a holistic approach to create modern image and process of sustainable development in a way that World Bank (WB) emphasized on considering women's



programs as a basic dimension of social development programs. In the same direction, policy of empowering women was put forward by Ms. Langoy, a veteran development expert in Zimbabwe and her proposed plan was applied by United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) (Moridalsadat *et al.*, 2010).

In her article, she encourages women to more control their life aspects. Moreover, she encourages women to participate in social life directly and also in development activities both as result and tool for empowering women (Mossafa, 1996).

As a training school, extension is after rendering services with the implementation of training and educational programs. World Bank (WB) has defined "extension" as process of empowerment through communications (Moridalsadat *et al.*, 2010).

Therefore, extension system plays an important role in development process especially rural development certainly and can cause improvement of productivity, increase of women's income, increase of welfare of rural families (Mirzaee and Shahidi, 2007).

The studies have shown that promoting and encouraging training has led to the increased life welfare condition and empowerment of elderly and adults (Hermann *et al.*, 2012). Thus, studies showed that the rate of received loan has had the maximum effect on psychological empowerment of rural women in Sari city. The studies also show that rural women received more loans as compared with other women living in urban areas. Group methods like organizing tutorial and training workshops for processing agricultural produce was the most useful method in offering extension – training services. Mistrust of women to one another was the most important

obstacle of empowerment. (Charmchyian Langerud and Alibeigi, 2013.) Moreover, taking membership in unions and productive organizations has an effective role in empowerment of women (Yavari, 2011).

On the other hand, financial credits are considered as effective factors in empowerment of women psychologically and mentally (Nikmanesh and Khodaverdilo, 2010). However, boosting financial power of rural women played a key role in empowering them in community and also can boost their self-confidence spirit in society. The results of study indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between variables of participation rate in cooperatives' decisions, rate of partnership management and fulfillment of group working (teamwork) in cooperatives with empowerment of members (Azadi and Karami, 1997).

The result of studies made by Kaldi and Salahshouri (2012) showed that social and information support has affected psychological empowerment, economic empowerment and physical empowerment. However, social support has played an important role in empowerment. In other words, social and information support has affected empowerment psychologically, economically and physically. The studies made by Fotovati *et al.*, (2011) study indicated that most rural women in Khuzestan acknowledged that the content of the extension was in line with their needs and that educational materials in the extension classes were understandable to them. Also, the results of the study showed that husbands of rural women showed less willingness for participation of their wives in extension and training. The results of correlation tests

showed that there is a significant relationship between motivation of rural women to participate in rural sustainable development and variables of education, participating in extension and training activities, obstacles of participation and family aspect

The results of prioritizing motivation of rural women to participate in the development showed that being introduced as a successful individual has had the maximum effect in instigating motivation of rural women to participate in rural sustainable development programs (Fotovati *et al.*, 2011).

Given the significant role of extension and training services in empowerment of women especially rural women, the present study can have a special significance in transparency and enlightenment for officials in women's Affairs of the Agricultural Jihad Ministry regarding problems facing women. Based on the above mentioned subjects, extension and education strategies in empowering of rural women in Bouein Zahra city is the general objective of the present study. Hereunder are considered as the exclusive objectives in this respect:

- Identifying factors affecting empowerment of rural women in Bouein Zahra city,
- Identifying role of extension factors in empowerment of rural women in Bouein Zahra city,
- Identifying role of social, economic and cultural factors affecting empowerment of rural women in Bouein Zahra city.

Materials and Methods

The present study-due to the impossibility of controlling the variables- is quasi-experimental; because full control of the

variables is not plausible due to the post-intervention nature of the research. The study was done in two ways: documentary and field research. Data was analyzed by SPSS software, version 16. The participants are rural women residing in Bouein Zahra city who are cooperating with the extension department of the city directly such as rural facilitator, members of Microcredits Fund, members of IPM Project and members of Atr-e Kowsar Women Cooperatives Company (N= 120). By using Morgan – Kejersy table (1970), 92 of them were selected as the final sample.

First, some data were gathered from studies done in and out of the country, different articles and searching scientific sources from the internet. Then, according to the gathered data, a questionnaire was designed which was used as the main instrument for the study. Participants answered the questionnaire in the form of interview and personal presence. To test its validity, the questionnaire was distributed to a group of experts; after receiving their opinions, it was modified. The Cronbach's alpha value for the questionnaire was 85% to ensure its reliability. Dependent variable of this study was women's empowerment and independent variables were personal, professional and social characteristic of the women's, Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics methods and indices including frequency, mean, standard deviation and in analytical statistics section to assess the correlation between different groups regarding empowerment of rural women using correlation tests and comparison of means.



Results

In this part, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to attain the predetermined objectives of the research.

Descriptive Statistics

Personal Specifications of Respondents

The results of the descriptive statistics showed that average age of subject of study includes from 31 to 82 years with standard deviation (SD), maximum and minimum age of 55 and 22 years respectively. Maximum frequency related to educational level (diploma and above- diploma) with 24 persons (26.1 percent) and minimum frequency related to two persons (2.2 percent) lacking educational level (illiterate).

Among rural women who were studied in this research, 41 (44.6 percent) and 51 (55.4 percent) women were found “single” and “married” respectively.

Among husbands of respondents who included 51 women, the results of the study show that maximum frequency related to the primary educational level with frequency of 17 persons (33.3 percent) and the least frequency related to educational level (illiterate) with the frequency of two persons (3.9 percent).

Of total 92 respondents in the present study, maximum field of activity related to the agricultural work with frequency of 22 persons (23.9 percent) while the least frequency related to the intermediate industries with the frequency of 1 person (1.1 percent).

The average, maximum and minimum working experience of subject of study with

the extension department stood at 5.5, 16 and 1 years respectively.

The results of the present study indicated that among total subject of study i.e. 92 persons, 48 respondents (52.2 percent) have received loan while the rest respondents i.e. 44 of them (47.8 percent) did not receive any loan from somewhere else.

Of total respondents who had received loan (48 women), 46 of whom (95.8 percent) were able to repay the loan while two persons (4.2 percent) did not cope with repaying the received loan.

The results of the present study showed that of total 92 respondents, 39 of whom (42.4 percent) were taken membership at microcredits fund of rural women while the rest 53 women (57.6 percent) did not take membership at the Fund.

Moreover, of total 92 respondents, 37 (40.2 percent) of rural women were considered as members of cooperatives unions of rural women while 55 of whom (59.8 percent) were not considered as member of the Cooperatives Union.

Extensions Factors

The results of the present study indicate that of total 92 respondents, 73 of whom (79.3 percent) participated in extension visits. In the same direction, average, minimum and maximum extension visits among women stood at 5.74, 1 and 15.

Among 92 respondents, 35 persons (38 percent) have used extension programs via radio and 12 rural women (13 percent) did not watch any extension programs via tv. Maximum frequency with 73 persons (79.3 percent) related to the number of 1- 10 extension program while the maximum and

average number of extension programs stood at 28 and 4.72 programs broadcast via tv.

The average share of participation of women on the ceremony held on the occasion of farming day stood at 2.97 percent while 23 women (25 percent) had not participated in the ceremony held on the occasion of farming day. The average rate of women participated in tutorial workshop stood at 4.64 percent, the minimum and maximum number of women participated in tutorial workshop stood at 1 and 12 respectively.

In the same direction, maximum and average number of reference to the extension experts since 2011 stood at 15 and 3.95 times respectively. The studies show that of total 92 women participated in the study, 54 of whom (58.7 percent) participated in job- generation

activities of extension department while 38 (41.3 percent) of whom did not participate in the related activities.

Empowering Factors

These factors have been comprised of five groups: 1- welfare, 2- accessibility, 3- awareness, 4- participation and 5- control.

Welfare Factors: this ID are comprised of four sub-factors including 1- food, 2- welfare facilities and housing, 3- special disease and 4- ability in paying medical expenses.

The results of the study show that rural women in this study used more cereal, fruit, fresh vegetables and red meat and they used less dried nuts and olive oil (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on the use of food (n=92)

Food	Frequency	Percentage
Fruit & vegetables, legumes	12	13.00
Red meat, fruit & vegetables, legumes	29	31.50
White meat, fruit & vegetables, legumes	17	18.5
Red meat, fruit & vegetables, legumes, nuts	2	2.20
Red & white meat, fruit & vegetables, legumes	16	17.40
Red & white meat, fruit & vegetables, legumes, nuts	14	15.2
Red & white meat, fruit & vegetables, legumes, nuts, olive oil	2	2.20
Total	92	100.00

The results of the present study showed that four women of total 92 respondents (4.3 percent) are not satisfied with housing and welfare facilities and 44 of respondents (47.8 percent) had relative satisfaction on housing and welfare facilities. Moreover, 44 women of total 92 respondents (47.8 percent) were fully satisfied with the housing and welfare facilities inside their home at all.

The results of the present study showed that of total 92 respondents, 88 of whom (95 percent)

are not diagnosed with special diseases while four of them (4.3 percent) are diagnosed with special diseases such as hypertension, blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, etc. Data analysis indicates that of total four respondents who were diagnosed with special diseases, two of them (50 percent) had affordability of paying medical and healthcare expenses while one person (25 percent) could not afford to pay relevant costs while one



person (25 percent) managed to pay her medical and treatment cost partly.

Accessibility Factor

This part includes as follows: getting direct access to drinking water, sanitary bath, ownership, training and educational facilities, employment, production factors and internet. The results of the study showed that of total 92 respondents, two rural women (2.2 percent) did not access to hygienic drinking water and also sanitary bath. The results of the study showed that of total 92 respondents, 26 of whom (28.3 percent) owned saving account and only one of the rural women owned all cases of agricultural machinery and equipment, saving account, housing and jewelry wares (1.1 percent). Of total 92 respondents, three of them had direct access to primary, guidance and high schools while 22 of them (23.9 percent) did not have accessibility to the training and educational facilities.

The results of study with regard to the situation of employment indicate that 76 of total 92 respondents (82.6%) were found “unemployed” while 16 of them (17.4 percent) were found “employed”.

Among employed women participated in this study, maximum frequency related to corporation (37.5%) while the minimum frequency related to daily- and contractual-basis wage each with frequency of three persons (18.8 percent).

Data analysis indicates that rural women are of the opinion that there is significant difference between women and men in accessing production factors (land, workforce, agricultural raw materials, etc.) with the frequency of 77 persons (83.7 percent).

Awareness: Awareness includes ability of improving future situation, feeling of life change, feeling of destiny change and also feeling of ability to do activities outside home. The results show that 48 persons (52.2%) of total 92 respondents are of the opinion that they own the ability of improving future of their situation and families while 52 persons (56.5 percent) of whom believe that their efforts are fruitful and beneficial and can change life conditions of themselves and their families. Only 4 persons (4.3 percent) of respondents believe to destiny, saying that their destiny has been predetermined. In the same direction, 56.5 percent of respondents believe that women can cope with activities outside home excellently.

Participation: Partnership includes decision making in life, partnership in agricultural activities and social – cultural activities and also management of spending at home.

Data analysis showed that 47 persons (51.1 percent) of rural women stated that they have key role in important decision makings such as marriage of children, purchasing home, etc. while seven rural women in the present study (7.6 percent) stated that they did not have any role in important decision makings in their life. Of total 92 respondents, 54 of them (58.7 percent) participated in agricultural activities along with their family while four of them (4.3 percent) did not participate in agricultural activities.

Of total 92 respondents, only three of them did not participate in social and cultural activities of village while 15 rural women (16.3 percent) did not have any role in decision making of managing home spending.

Control: Control includes selection of job, income option, coverage option and purchasing clothing and balance between woman and man. The obtained data include that maximum frequency with 47 persons (51.1 percent) can select job for themselves optionally. Among total 92 respondents, maximum frequency related to 53 persons (57.6 percent) who can control spending themselves while three of them cannot spend their income source. Of total 92 respondents, 65 of whom (70.7 percent) have full power in selection of clothing and garments for themselves while one person (1.1 percent) did not have the power to select clothing.

The results of study showed that 58 women of total 92 (63 percent) believe that there is a balance between woman and man at their villages partly and 13 persons (14.1

percent) also believe that there is not a balance between woman and man at their villages, citing that men have more power, supremacy and governing power than women.

Prioritizing the Factors Affecting the Empowerment of Rural Women Economic Factors

Rural women in this study were requested to specify effect of each of the following statements, from very low to very high, in Likert Scale. Table 2, showed that creation of job opportunities and entrepreneurship for women have stood at first and second priority respectively and studied rural women agree with the mentioned statements to a great extent.

Table 2. Prioritizing economic factors affecting women's empowerment

Items	M	SD	C.V	Priority
Creating employment opportunities (job creation projects, etc.)	3.76	1.06	0.2800	1
Entrepreneurship for Women	3.71	1.17	0.3150	2
Increase awareness of rural women in the use of credit	3.59	1.20	0.3340	3
Access to finance (loans facilities, etc.)	3.41	1.21	0.3540	4
Elimination of discrimination in the labor market	3.00	1.09	0.3600	5
Women's access to local markets – Regional	3.20	1.23	0.3800	6
Facilitate credit from banks	3.32	1.30	0.3910	7
Incentive policies (contributions No Return - Inputs)	3.27	1.37	0.4180	8

Measure: Likert (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = high, 5 = very high)

Social Factors

The findings mentioned in Table 3 showed that from rural women points of view, paving

suitable way for improving health situation of women has been put atop agenda.



Table 3. Prioritizing social factors affecting women's empowerment

Items	M	SD	C.V	Priority
Improving the health of women	3.74	0.99	0.2640	1
Increase confidence in women	3.67	1.00	0.2650	2
The formation of self-help groups	3.60	0.98	0.2700	3
Increasing the Level of education	3.54	1.06	0.2900	4
Holding the Extension education courses	3.71	1.12	0.3000	5
Encourage women to join the cooperative organizations and companies	3.64	1.09	0.3000	6
Introduce & celebrates the top producers of women	3.41	1.05	0.3010	7
Increasing the mobility of women by Division of labor	3.42	1.11	0.3200	8
Legal awareness	3.40	1.16	0.3400	9

Measure: Likert (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = high, 5 = very high)

Cultural – Political Factors

Based on the results obtained in this regard, increase of political participation of women

stands at first priority and existence of partnership political institutions stands at the last ranking priority (Table 4).

Table 4. Prioritizing Cultural and political factors

Items	M	SD	C.V	Priority
Increase women's political participation	3.22	0.95	0.2900	1
Change in the attitude of the villagers through the media	3.60	1.08	0.3000	2
Increase awareness of men towards women empowerment	3.61	1.14	0.3100	3
Increase women's awareness of gender discrimination	3.45	1.11	0.3200	4
Participatory political institutions	3.10	1.04	0.3300	5

Measure: Likert (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = high, 5 = very high)

Inferential Statistics

Correlation and means' Comparison Tests were used for studying relationship between studied variables and measuring difference between various groups with regard to the empowerment of rural women, details of which have been mentioned in below.

Correlation Analysis

In order to investigate the relationship between the research variables according to each scale, the correlation coefficients between them were calculated and their significance levels were investigated. Table 5, shows the variables, their correlation coefficients, and their significance levels.

Table 5. Correlation of research variables with the empowerment of rural women

First variable	Second variable	Spearman	Significant level.
Empowerment of rural women	Age	-0.87	0.410
	Level of education	0.007	0.940
	History of Contact the agricultural extension, s Office	0.165	0.110
	Extensions visits	0.30*	0.030
	Workshop on extension	0.30*	0.040
	Associated with extension specialists	0.34**	0.001
	Radio extension programs	0.25	0.170
	Television extension Programs	0.31	0.020
	Relationship with facilitators	0.22	0.030
	Using the Internet	0.11	0.270
	Ceremony on the farm	0.18	0.760
SMS promotion	0.17	0.100	

** significant level at 0.01 * significant level at 0.05

According to the information in Table 5, as the results of Spearman's correlation coefficient show, there is a positive and significant relationship between attending extension's

visits, attending workshops, communicating with extension's experts, communicating with facilitators and using empowerment television program with women's empowerment.

**Means' Comparison Test
Personal Factors and Empowerment of Women**

Mann-Whitney test was used to examine the presence or absence of differences in

empowerment and individual factors (Table 6). According to the findings of the study, there was no significant difference between empowerment in the study groups.

Table 6. Comparison of empowerment in the study groups

Grouping variable	Sup Groups	Number	Mean	SD	z
Job	Employment	16	12.83	2.15	0.505
	Unemployed	76	11.77	1.90	
Marital status	Single	35	12.19	2.15	0.86
	Married	57	11.82	1.86	



Extension Factors and Empowering Women

Mann-Whitney test was used to determine the presence or absence of differences in empowerment with the variables studied (Table 7). According to the findings of the study, empowerment in the study groups is as follows.

A. Educational visits

There is a significant difference between the ability of people who participated in extension and educational visits and those who did not, and based on the average, those who participated in the visits were more capable.

B. Radio programs

There was no significant difference between the level of empowerment of

those who promoted radio programs and those who did not.

C. Employment Project, Credit Union Membership, Cooperative Membership and Loan

There is a significant difference between the ability of people involved in employment projects to be a member of the micro credit fund, the use of the internet, and other people. There is a significant difference between the empowerment of rural women who are members of rural women's production cooperatives and non-members. There was no significant difference between the empowerment of women who received loans and those who did not.

Table 7: Comparison of empowerment in the study groups

Grouping variable	Sup Groups	Number	Mean	SD	Z
Educational visits	Participate	73	12.00	0.22	2.41
	Non-Participate	19	11.90	0.46	
Radio	Use	35	12.19	2.15	0.86
	Non-use	57	11.82	1.86	
Employment projects	Participate	54	12.31	2.04	2.06
	Non-Participate	38	11.46	1.78	
Subscribe to fund microfinance	Membership	39	12.52	2.06	2.39
	No membership	53	11.54	1.81	
Membership in the production cooperative associations	Membership	37	12.77	2.04	3.42
	No membership	55	11.41	1.74	
The Internet	Use	24	13.00	1.80	3.12
	Non-use	55	11.59	1.91	
Loan	Receipt	44	12.03	2.22	0.37
	Not-Receipt	48	11.88	1.68	

Discussion

Personal Factors: The findings obtained from the present study showed that there is not any significant difference between age, educational degree, experience of relationship with extension taking advantage of extension tv programs, using internet, participating in ceremony held on the occasion of farming day and extension messages with the empowerment of rural women.

The results of study of means' comparison showed that there is not any significant difference between capability of single and married women. Also, there is not any significant difference between capability and age of respondents with having or lacking job. It should be noted that these results are consistent with the results obtained by Khadem Abbasi and Farajollah Hosseini (2014).

Economic Factors: Based on the results obtained at the present study, rural women put creation of employment opportunities and entrepreneurship at first and second priority respectively among various economic factors affecting empowerment of women. In other words, extension led to increased skill of manpower with fulfilling supportive and training programs, promoting handicrafts and also generation of employment opportunities and finally, the said issue led to the increased capability among rural women.

The results of the study showed that there is a significant difference between capability of women who are and/or are not member of microcredits fund with 95 percent confidence. Also, data mining showed that rural women who took membership in microcredits fund have high capability than the women who did not take membership in microcredits fund.

Consequently, with expansion of microcredits fund, suitable way can be provided for other walks of life to these credits through taking advantage of results of the present study in Rural Women's Affairs.

It should be noted that results of the present study are fully consistent with the results obtained by Rahmani (2007), Yaghoubi (2005), Faghiri *et al.*, (2014).

Studies conducted by Gholipour and Rahimian (2011) showed that general training services and self-employment plans have had maximum correlation with the empowerment of women breadwinners.

The results of study showed that there is not any significant difference between capability of the rural women who received or did not receive loan. The studies conducted by Gholipour and Rahimian (2011) showed that "loan" played an important and significant role in empowerment of women breadwinners, for, they can generate new job opportunity for themselves at home and/or develop their business activity. Since receiving loan is partly a difficult task for women breadwinners due to the prolongation of executive trend and specific terms and conditions of some organizations as well as insufficiency of amount of loan, it should be noted that offering loan to women breadwinners did not boost capability of rural women in this respect, the results of which are consistent with the results of the present study.

Social Factors: Prioritizing social factors affecting role of extension in empowerment of rural women from respondent's perspectives showed that health situation of women and their increased self-confidence spirit have stood at first and second priorities respectively. It should be noted that these



results are consistent with the results obtained by Kalantari *et al.*, (2010).

Also, prioritizing cultural and political factors showed that increased political participation of women and creation of development in villagers' approach via mass media have stood at first and second priority respectively (Kalantari *et al.*, 2010 and Bandarzi, 2012).

Data analysis showed that taking membership in Cooperatives Unions of Rural women has positive and significant effect on empowerment of rural women.

Also, findings obtained by Rezaei Moghaddam and Ne'matpour (2014) showed that raising awareness level of women and also increased self-confidence spirit among them are of the most important impacts of these Women's Unions.

Of the other salient specifications behind establishment of Women's Unions, it should be referred to: increased self-confidence spirit among rural women and also invigoration of leadership spirit. It should be noted that removing role of agents and also generating employment opportunity are of economic consequences of activity in these unions (Rezaei Moghaddam and Nematpour, 1393).

Extension and education Factors: Also, results of the present study showed that there is a significant relationship between participating in extension visits, participating in tutorial and training workshops, establishing relationship with facilitators, using tv extension programs and empowerment of rural women with 95 percent confidence in 5% error level. It should be noted that these results are fully consistent with the results obtained by Amiri, *et al* (2007), Sabouri, *et al.* (2008), Khadem Abbasi and Farajollah Hosseini (2001), Faraji and Mirdamadi (2006).

The Mann-Whitney test showed a significant difference between the empowerment of women who participated in extension visits and those who did not. In other words, women who participated in extension products were more empowered; the results also showed that women who participated in extension projects were more empowered

The results of mean comparison between empowerment of rural women, who had used radio programs and/or had not used radio programs, showed that there is not any significant difference among them. In other words, extension radio programs did not have an effect on empowerment of rural women.

The results of the present study showed that there is a significant difference between empowerment of rural women who used internet services and/or did not use internet services with 95 percent confidence. The studies conducted by Bahadori (2012), showed that government of Afghanistan uses internet as a useful tool for empowerment of Afghan women. According to many experts and researchers in the field of media, internet is considered as a constructive tool for development and change of identity if it is used appropriately.

However, internet has direct effect on social capital and paves suitable way for increasing civil liability and commitments, social trust and partnership coupled with creating a community based on network. In general, internet has created a considerable change in human communities. In the actual world, power of women has limited in some cases but in virtual or online world, such restricting borders have been removed and women face a myriad of options.

Information technology and communications (ICT) is so powerful that can be considered as an effective and constructive tool in line with empowerment of rural women. The phenomenon of Third Millennium i.e. Internet is able to boost equal opportunities in favor of women and also paves suitable way for empowering women as well (Amiri Ardekani, 2006).

Eventually, it can be acknowledged that rural women have not enough opportunity and chance to participate in extension and education courses due to their several duties (especially women breadwinners) and rural women usually lack proper education than other women. Therefore, training and education will have a very positive effect in their life. Also, economic problem is the major concern of rural women. Hence, conducting any effective steps in this respect will be fruitful.

In the same direction, extension and education agriculture, due to its training nature, can promote capability and boost living standard of rural women considerably.

Suggestions

Based on the obtained results, it is proposed that more extension services should be planned for visiting successful projects of rural women in line with generation of employment opportunities and entrepreneurship. Moreover, it is suggested that special credits should be allocated for rural women and accessing these credits for generation of employment and entrepreneurship should be eased. In other words, suitable way should be provided for rural women for easy accessing to these credits. In addition, it is proposed that rural

women should be encouraged to take membership in Microcredits Fund and also Rural Cooperatives Society and the government should support activities of these women in the best form possible. Generally speaking, it is suggested that microcredits Funds, Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) should be set up in line with boosting and promoting participation of women in various fields of activity.

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