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## Designing a strategic model for sustainable rural development (Case of study: Villages of Khalkhal city)

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### Detailed Abstract:

#### Introduction

In recent decades, discussions on the key axis of development have focused on sustainable rural development. In our country's programs, after half a century of applying various rural development models, poverty still casts a shadow over the country's rural communities, and problems such as a lack of social facilities, including health and educational services, a lack of income, and excessive migration to cities are evident. Like most villages in Iran, these programs also affect the towns of Khalkhal County. In recent years, even though the face of the villages of Khalkhal County has changed with the introduction of electricity, gas, telephones, agriculture using tractors, the reconstruction of rural settlements, and the implementation of guiding projects, the fundamental issues and problems in the economic, social, and environmental fields persist. According to data from the Statistical Center of Iran, during the five years (2011-2016), out of 86,731 people in Khalkhal County, 10,290 people have migrated. Also, according to information obtained from the Khalkhal County Civil Registry Office, in 1401, the number of registered divorces was 187, an increase of 5.3 percent compared to the previous year. In the form of a long-term program, sustainable rural development seeks to resolve economic, social, and environmental issues in villages. The first step to achieving such a goal is understanding the current state of sustainable rural development issues (ontology) and assessing their limitations and possibilities (feasibility). This research aimed to draw a strategic model for realizing sustainable rural development in Khalkhal County.

#### Literature Review

The development concept has undergone many changes after World War II and during its formation as an independent discipline. According to the first generation of development scholars and within the neoclassical paradigm's mechanical framework, development's goal was to increase real per capita income and, consequently, purchasing power through gross national product growth. The second generation of development thinkers examined the requirements of economic transformation and development more closely. It gradually paid attention to issues beyond gross national product, such as individual capabilities, health, and education. The third approach to development has been formed in scientific fields and at the policy and operational levels, in which social institutions and arrangements that had been neglected for a long time and were referred to as general assumptions with fixed conditions were taken into account (Zubiri, 2013: 10-11). Classical sociologists have considered the development of societies in the form of macro theories of social change. In his famous work called "The Division of Social Labor," the French sociologist Durkheim considers development to be the disappearance of old bonds based on mechanical cohesion and the emergence of organic bonds. (Ezki, 2009: 136), The German Max Weber emphasizes rationality in the development of societies; he considers the crystallization of the bureaucratic system and formal organizations arising from rationality as a sign of the development of societies (Kozer, 1400: 68). Recent sociologists have also considered the issue of development. Each of the contemporary sociologists has emphasized some indicators of social development. Parsons (social community), Coleman (social capital), Bourdieu (social action), Habermas (public scope and social communication and rationality of communication), Giddens (personal identity and social capital), Jenkins (social identity), and Burke (trust, commitment, and self-esteem). (Abdollahy, 1384: 14).

#### Method

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The research method is based on purpose, applied, and qualitative data collection and analysis, and the grounded theory technique was used. A purposive sampling method was used to select the statistical sample, in such a way that those people who had information on the subject of this research (rural councils, village heads, district governors, experts from the Housing Foundation, Jihad Keshavarzi, etc.) were selected and then, based on the snowball sampling method, each interviewee was asked to introduce other people who could provide information in response to the questions of this research. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 experts until theoretical saturation was reached. The coding process for the collected data was carried out using MAXQDA software. The data analysis method was carried out by entering text data into MAXQDA software based on a systematic plan (Strauss and Corbin) in three stages: 1- open coding, 2- axial coding, and 3- selective coding. To determine the accuracy of the named criteria and indicators, the degree of agreement of the judges was measured with the Kappa test, and the agreement coefficient (85%) was obtained, which indicates a high level of agreement among the judges.

### **Findings**

The analysis of the interview coding operations showed that 249 events were identified in open coding. In the axial coding stage, similar cases were merged at a more abstract level according to their similarity in content and organized around 63 subcategories and five major categories. The elements of the paradigmatic model of sustainable rural development include; causal conditions (economic issues, social issues, environmental issues, institutional issues, and physical issues), contexts (distance of the village to the city center and geographical location of the town), intervening conditions (urbanization, migration and disregard for the village's capabilities), measures and strategies (educational, supportive, encouraging and developmental), consequences (reducing the class gap, creating employment, sustainable lifestyle, optimal water management, infrastructure development and sustainable conservation of biological resources).

### **Conclusion**

According to the results obtained in this research, the development and use of strategic models for realizing sustainable rural development can act as a factor and driver of the country's development, especially the sustainable development of rural areas. According to the results obtained in this research, sustainable rural development in Khalkhal County is an achievable matter that, if realized, will have consequences such as (reduction of class gap, employment creation, sustainable lifestyle, optimal water management, infrastructure development, and sustainable conservation of biological resources). Therefore, based on the research findings, it is suggested that researchers interested in rural development conduct their research work on entrepreneurship development, creating incentives for investors in villages, life skills, paying attention to environmental capabilities, attracting elite participation in the rural guide plan, infrastructure development, raising awareness about rural ecological protection, and reverse migration.

**Keywords: Rural Development Issues, Sustainable Development, Strategic Model, Deprivation.**