

## Participation in Rural Developmental Programs based on the Rural People's Cognitive Organization: Using Social Cognitive Theory

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**Abstract:** Rural development includes complicated and multidimensional process in which getting to it is conditioned to consider to group of factors and diverse levels of development analysis. Based on the focused rural development purpose, institutionalizing developmental characteristics in rural people, making organizations and developing decentralized governmental strategies in order to establish participation in a great number of rural people in decision making and implementing development programs is a great commitment to reach integrated rural development. What is important pertains to cognitive organizations in rural people dealt with key element to explain rural people's participation in rural developmental programs. So, considering to this importance can help to planning and implementing developmental programs. Using archival research and literature review, this study aimed at explaining participation issue in developmental programs based on the social cognitive theory. The results of this study can be suitable for planners and strategists tending to research about collective-developmental activities based on the social cognitive theory.

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**Key words:** Participation, Rural Development, Social Cognitive Theory.

### Introduction:

Today, many changes has been occurred in development priorities and thoughts and the concentration of infrastructures and objects has been focused on human and his/her capabilities in the way that in accordance with these changes in directions, many researchers emphasize on indexes such as welfare, life safety, empowerment, equality and sustainability as the tools or objectives for reducing disparity in social categories (Chambers, 1997). In this way, it is said that before anything, development is a commitment by, for and with human (Taghvaei & Nilipour Tabatabaei, 2006). Focusing on the importance of rural society in agriculture production system, and the fact that the development of nations is dependent to the renewal and development of rural societies (Ayanwuyi et al., 2007), it can be said that paying attention to the sustainable rural development is in the first priority for reducing poverty, sexual equality and sustainability (Biswas et al., 2004). In this regard the role of participation of rural people in making the fundamental decisions has a great importance in developmental changes (Abadi et al., ND) and this is due to the fact that the participation is a great tool for attaining a consensus, participating in decision making ,executing multiple strategies and resolving conflicts. In this regard the participation and cooperation of both central and

local authorities will cause more information diffusion and sharing (Hayati et al., 2009). A systematic approach to the rural development considers the "participation" as a fundamental and usual issue to the way that in this approach, a holistic view to the all of the elements of rural development will take into consideration (Malek Mohammadi and Hosseini Niya, 1990). In fact, the participation is a cyclic causality, i.e., it is the cause of cooperation, coordination and sympathy and other facts in the way that it is also the effect of these factors. The cyclic causality contends that we cannot predict participation as an effect of a single or abrupt factor (Malek Mohammadi & Sarani, 1990). Due to the fact that the human is the key for the development and the fact that all of the organizational activities will be done by direct or indirect impact of human (Chambers, 1997), it is necessary to focus on human advancement and improving his/her quality of life (Ayanwuyi et al., 2007).

### Rural Development:

During the history, the development or recession of the economies has been in issue of the interest for the researchers because this makes them able to develop their societies by knowing the causes of the recessions or developments (Chapra, 2008). In the last decades, the situation of Iranian rural societies has been subject to many changes. In this way

the share of rural society has been reduced from 30.59% in 1966 to 5.31% in 2006 and the average increase in the population of rural society has been reduced from 2.3 % in 1976-1986 to 0.3% in 1996-2006. These reductions are due to the factors such as the old and boutique system of production, uncertainty in producing agricultural and ranching products, the high rate of natural growth, the lack of supportive systems, the lack of welfare facilities, the high rate of immigration, poverty, low income per capita, and the mastery of city on the villages (Alini, 2006). Nonetheless, the rural societies can play an important role in the production, crude materials for industries, and ultimately economical growth and development (Mojtahed and Hassanzadeh, 2001). So, the development is a complex and multidimensional process and necessitates changes in social structure, people and authorities' conceptions and perceptions, reduction of inequality and removing poverty (Taghvaei and Nilipour Tabatabaei, 2006). Development is a self-generating process that optimizes people's relations and capabilities toward satisfying needs in the cultural context of any society (Ayanwuyi et al., 2007). In an analytical approach the rural development is consisted of two dimensions: contents and processes. In this approach the rural development is focused on the goals or is focused on the processes. At the first manner, the rural development is closed to theory but in the second manner is a practical issue (Elands and Wiersum, 2001). In the third millennium statement of United Nations it is emphasized on the rural development for the goals such as; reduction of poverty, humanitarian munificence, justice, and environmental sustainability (Roknoddin Eftekhari, 2006).

Rural development points to the process of reinforcing living capabilities in the rural areas (Elands and Wiersum, 2001) to the way that standards will be equal for urban and rural population and effectiveness and productivity will be improved (Ayanwuyi et al., 2007). Today, the failure in the rural development is the product of uncommitted plans and policies and it is hoped to gain the real rural development through standardization of policies and plans and making the opportunity for the production activities in the context of social justice (Ayanwuyi et al., 2007).

#### **Participation and Rural Development:**

In spite of the existence of frequent opportunities for improvement, individual,

contextual and organizational limitations have seriously weakened the attempt for attaining a sustainable paradigm for development (Chambers, 1997). 60s and 70s poems such as: better world with sufficient attempt, primary world education, better income, health for all, the provision of healthy water for all and going forward a dynamic population, hasn't been satisfied yet and this is the product of not believing development on a holistic approach. As the result in the last decades especially in 70s, participatory approaches to the development have been developed and concentrated (Malek Mohammadi & Hosseini Niya, 2000). Chambers, (1997) believes that the problems exist in all of levels and dimensions such as international, national, state, city, village, family and personal level or race, categories and order dimension.

Real rural development depends to destroying and rethinking previous governed beliefs, values and thoughts to the way that the real rural development is attainable through decentralization, regarding diversity, supporting human not objects, and prioritizing rural citizens in rural development programs (Alini, 2006). The content of rural development is related to improvement of rural economy, quality of social life, identity of scenes, attractiveness of villages and preservation of environment (Elands and Wiersum, 2001). In this regard, the collective participation of people in planning, decision making, execution and evaluation of development projects has been considered as one of the most important ways for development (Veron, 2001). In fact some revolutions such as the emergence of new movements, renewing and re-evaluation of human needs, the emergence of thoughts such as post modernism and renewing citizenship definition and content have been caused the most attention to the participation (Azkiya & Ghaffari, 2001). The motives of individual and organizational participation in rural development are considered as the main axes of rural development (Mojtahed and Hassanzadeh, 2001).

Attaining to the goals such as improving rural citizens' income, benefiting from services, and suitable life conditions will be accessible using participatory processes (Alini, 2006). In 1980 two words of "participation" and "participatory" have entered to the rural development dictionary (Chambers, 1997). The word "participation" in one aspect points to confirmation of government control and in the other hand points to

empowering peoples (Dalal-Clayton and Bass, 2002). The social participation is a completely ideological word and it is only the reflector of beliefs of social and political theories in relation to the way of administering societies and its logic is based on decentralization, respecting to human intelligence and impact, and unavailability of the government. It is developed by the idea that the government is extended to the extent that has reduced the permitted and legal rights and freedoms of people (Azkiya & Ghaffari, 2001). Alini (2006) believes that empowerment in the rural development process, brings the capacity of facing environmental and local changes to the local societies (Veron, 2001).

In a process based approach to the rural development, the main aspects are renovation institutions that their process will be affected and will impact rural cultures, norms and beliefs (Elands and Wiersum, 2001).

It can be said that participation in social activities is related to social democracy. From the Weber and Durkheim's views, democracy will provide the most important aspect of human life i.e. freedom and support it (Shortal, 2008). From the Durkheim's point of view, democracy is a dynamic political force that impacts all of the social spaces and will be executed by a dynamic and cohesive population while from Weber's point of view; democracy is consisted of some organizational rules and obligations that will provide official rights of citizens. Following up a society based sustainable development needs a political system that warrants the participation of citizens. In this regard it seems that decentralization will serve as a useful tool. In this manner it is perceived that the elected local representatives that have a concise understanding of local positions will provide a more useful insight to the national decision makers from the rural society (Veron, 2001). For example, rural development programs that executed in 90s in Europe are the example of the ability of local people for self-empowerment, Community-based initiatives and Partnerships (Shortal, 2008) or, in environmental aspects, there are many instances that local consumers play a key role in the preservation of jungles & water resources (Veron, 2001). Based on an intellectual approach, people oriented thoughts that emphasize on partiality of common people and anarchism confirmation, and also the emergence of beliefs that more focus on human rather than the objects, all have been caused more

development of social participation theory (Azkiya & Ghaffari, 2001).

From a theoretical view, thoughts related to democracy have been played the most important role in the development of social theory and in this regard, the theory of local democracy supports the creation of small institutions for attaining political missions in the villages and rural areas in the third world developing countries (Azkiya & Ghaffari, 2001). So, empowerment for sustainable development means the creation of capacity for legal choices for satisfying today's needs and preventing future deficiencies (Alini, 2006). According to Shortal (2008), citizens who are not engaged in the social development are entitled "Socially Excluded Groups". He emphasizes on three elements on the optimizing rural development plans: The growth of capacities and human talents, structural changes, and economical renovation and ongoing reduction of proscriptions. Dalal-Clayton and Bass (2002), consider participation as the collaboration between public sector, private sector and citizens and for this purpose suggest examples of decision making for the different levels based on collaboration of agencies in these three parts [Table 1].

In the development process it is very beneficial also to note to the levels of participation in the main processes. Dalal-Clayton and Bass (2002) have divided this type of participation to 6 categories:

- Only listeners: in this regard they gain information from public agencies or informatory service
- Listening and Informatory: this task will be done using daily media and newspapers.
- The participators receive consultancy: this can be done by the group consultancy
- Participators will analyze and prepare drafts of sessions and records: this will be done by beneficiary groups using commissions and sessions
- Participators are receiving to an agreement and consensus on a way : this will be done by commissions for removing potential conflicts
- Participators participate directly in decision making or accepting special procedures and methods.

### Social Cognitive Theory and Participation in Social Activities

The completion of Social learning theory of Bandura (1960), has resulted in Social Cognitive Theory (Black, 2004). The social cognitive theory considers the human behavior in the interact manner between the personal and social network activities and the core variables are self-efficacy and performance prediction (Chiu et al., 2006; Lin & Huang, 2008; Ishibashi, 2007; Samer & Yoon, 2001).

**Table 1-** Examples of the levels of decision making and sample organizations in the cooperation between three parts of public sector, private sector and citizens

Level	Divisions		
	Public & Semipublic	Citizens and voluntary	Private and Semi private
International	Multi functional donor agencies	Society for international development	Multinational collaborations (like NGOs)
National Ministries	Public ministries	National Cooperation committees	National cooperation and national NGO
Regional	Regional organizations	Local cooperation committees	Regional NGOs and firms
Sectors	Sector Association	Sector Cooperatives	Sector Firms
Subsectors	Subsector associations	Subsector cooperatives	Rural initiatives and hospitals
Local	Guidance Schools, promotion offices	Association of Jungles' Care	Business in urban market
Social	Rural Associations, elementary schools	Association of parents and educators	Mosques, religious institutions, rural markets
Group	Neighborhood session	Mothers' club	Initiatives in micro level
Family/individual	Citizen, voter	member	Customer, auditor, benefit

In other words, this theory explains cognitive processes of humans that will be effected from perceived self-efficacy, perceived outcomes and perceived expectancy of outcomes in a context of

ethics, standards, and personal goals that determine human behavior (Hawley et al., 2009). The social cognitive theory includes personal factors such as perceived self-efficacy, perceived outcomes and perceived expectancy of outcomes (Ishibashi, 2007). Self-efficacy shows the individual's belief about doing things (Lin & Huang, 2008). Perceived self-efficacy shows that how people motivate for their goals and changing themselves (Benight and Bandura., 2004). Samet & Yoon (2001) believe that this theory is consisted of two key concepts: social referral frame of person and the process that this frame can be changed. This theory asserts that if the doer perceives the inability to do a specific task, his perceptions from the positive results is meaningless (Lin & Huang, 2008). This theory often will be combined with socio-ecologic theories for creating specific structures and specific variables for explaining mechanisms in which one factor impacts other factor (Ishibashi, 2007). Fort (1977) believes that ideas basically don't shape without perceptions that are necessary elements of intellectual activities. Additionally, specific personal variables that contribute to the participations and voluntary activities of the people in joining social activities include the followings:

- Extroversion, Sociability, and Friendliness
- Ego strength, Psychic adjustment, Positive self-image, and high self-esteem
- Dominance, Perseverance, individual independence, leadership and assertiveness
- Achievement motivation, compatibility, profitability & Perseverance
- Flexibility, adaptation, preparation for morality change, Super ego strength and Altruism

Thus, social cognitive theory shows methods of impact for gaining a usable result additionally, it shows a process using it the fertilization system will impact the psychological functions and in this process dominance on the experienced issues can bring the usable result (Benight and Bandura, 2004). Bandura suppose that environmental phenomena, personal forces and behavior, all are the interactive determining factors to the way that their expectations from the results and internal personal feedbacks will predict the person how to behave (Bandura, 1986). So it can be seen that the rural citizens

have different ideas and perceptions about their world and needs and this is the most important issue determining their decision to participate in social activities. Even the perception of a rural citizen from doing a specific task may be a result of his/her cognitive system. However with recognizing such a cognitive perceptions or using psychological instruments we can be aware from the cognitive systems of rural citizens and through it we can add to the participation levels of rural citizens. So it is important to consider the role of the cognitive systems in participatory activities as an important role. In this regard, Fort (1977) believes that thinking is the product of perceptual development and this completion only will be shaped in the social context of human activities with their environment and more the touch with the environment more complex the content of perception.

#### Conclusion:

The current study aimed at investigating phenomenon of participation from social cognitive theory point of view plus to have a literature review focusing on rural development. The most remarkable conclusion is the fact that individuals have different perceptions and expectations about their environment and their skills, abilities and performances. Whereas the culture i.e. the context that individual lives in it, plays an important role in shaping cognition and perception. From this point of view, each of rural citizens interprets their unique meaning from items such as collaboration and participation. In this case, it is advisable to the agriculture promotion system to apply psychological plans for trainers and educators of agriculture promotion and establish some collaboration with the psychologists and consultants in this area.

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