



**A Study on the Villagers' Semantic Understanding of Functional Challenges in Rural Settlements  
(Case Study: Central District of Ravansar County)**

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Received: 25 February 2017

Accepted: 3 March 2018

**Abstract**

**Purpose-** During recent decades, rural settlements in developing countries have undergone significant changes in global development and in pursuit of development, in accordance with the geographic conditions governing them. The intensity and direction of these changes have been different. The study of functional changes of rural settlements located in the central district of Ravansar County is the main objective of this study.

**Design/methodology/approach-** This applied research is a qualitative research that has been carried out using Grounded Theory Method. The methodological approach of the dominant theory in this research is the Glaser's (1978) approach.

**Finding-** The findings of the research indicate that during a systematic process, rural subsistences have progressed towards gradual economic development through the two concepts of agrarian reforms and mechanization of the agricultural sector. This positive trend, with institutional interferences and inefficient rural development policies, the economic downturns of villages have finally provided the ground for the functional development of villages through the implementation of inheritance law, poor management of environmental resources, cross-sectoral supportive policies, and targeted subsidies. This functional development of villages has many symbols, including a strong tendency towards service activities, the prevalence of consumerism, the formation of affiliated villages, a strong market dependence, and so on. It should be noted that in the present research, "inefficient rural development policies" have been identified as a central issue.

**Research limitations/implications-** Low familiarity of the rural population with Persian language (due to the fact that the inhabitants of the study area are Kurds), the high cost of commuting to the villages, the difficulty of establishing trust with villagers, and the lack of welcoming support from institutions related to rural affairs for the researchers in the various stages of the research were the most important limitations of this research.

**Practical implications-** A fundamental revision of rural development policies in view of the changes that have taken place in rural settlements, in accordance with the geographic conditions governing them, is the most important scientific solution of the present research.

**Originality/value-** In the current research, for the first time in Iran, functional changes in villages have been deeply studied through Grounded Theory Method.

**Key words:** Rural development, rural function, Grounded Theory Method, Ravansar County.

**How to cite this article:**

Riahi, V. & Jamini, D. (2018). A study on the villagers' semantic understanding of functional challenges in rural settlements (Case study: Central District of Ravansar County). *Journal of Research & Rural Planning*, 7(2), 1-23.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.22067/jrrp.v5i4.62869>

## 1. Introduction

The role and place of villages in the process of economic, social, and political development on the local, regional, and international scales and the consequences of the lack of development of rural areas has attracted the attention towards villages and rural communities and even their priority over urban societies (Azkia & Ghafari, 2004). According to Michael Todaro, the necessity for prioritization and attention to rural development rather than urban development is that the main key to solving urban community problems is to improve the rural environment (Todaro, 1985). Therefore, paying attention to the problems of the rural community is worth twice as much. In this regard, the important thing that attracts the attention of rural development thinkers and researchers is how the improvement of rural environment is realized. The most important step towards achieving this goal is to improve the rural environment, referring to the various functions of rural settlements, including economic performance, ecological environmental function, historical cultural function, social function, business function, political function, legal function, etc. (Saidi, 2011; Saidi, 2012; Rahmani Fazli & Saidi, 2016). A review of the foundations and related literature shows that economic function is among the most important functions among different functions of rural settlements. (Behforoz, 1989; Moshiri, Mahdavi, & Amar, 2004). This activity has undeniably affected the economic production system, the pattern of nutrition, and many of the material aspects of rural life.

However, in the process of changing rural economies in the world and in line with current needs of these societies, it seems that by reducing the level of employment in the agricultural sector due to the mechanization and increase of unemployment, as well as the reduction of job diversity and the decline in the income of this sector, the agricultural sector alone cannot balance the economic indices of the villages and the population of these areas, and the need to address non-agricultural activities and the search for new subsistences based on the internal resources of the villages is more and more felt (Moshiri et al., 2004; Jamshidi, Jamshidi, & Shikhi, 2016; Nagler & Naude, 2017). The rural economy in Iran,

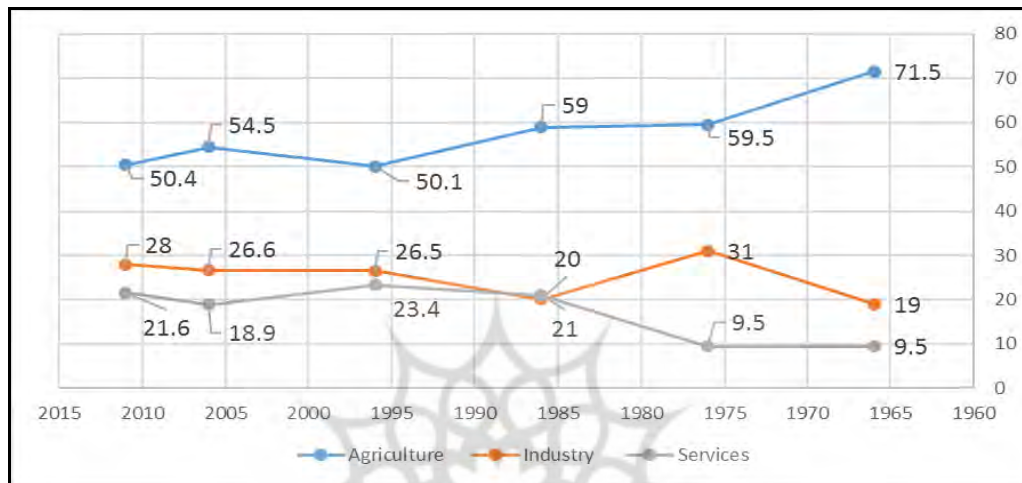
despite the important role played by the national economy, has undergone profound developments over the last half century. The accuracy of the status of economic activity in the rural areas of the country in the three sectors of agriculture, industry, and services in the past 45 years (Figure 1) shows that although agriculture activity is the most important function of rural settlements of the country during past decades, activity in this sector has decreased in favor of activity in two sectors of industry and services, and activity in the service sector has significantly increased. The status of economic activity in the rural areas of the country in the three sectors of agriculture, industry, and services in the past 45 years (Figure 1) shows that although agriculture activity is the most important function of rural settlements during past decades, activity in this sector has decreased in favor of activity in the two sectors of industry and services, and activity in the service sector has significantly increased. These changes in the functioning of rural communities indicate the effects of various factors on the natural and human environment of these societies over time and requires an examination of the causes and factors involved in it.

Considering the close relationship between the economic function of rural settlements and the spatial location, spatial structure, and spatial relationships (Saidi, Taleshi, & Rabet, 2013) on the one hand, and the manner of establishment and location of a very different settlement of rural settlements on the other hand, investigating and analyzing the economic performance of rural settlements of the country with a general view and without taking spatial differences into account will bring along serious deficiencies. It is worthwhile considering these differences in relation to the economic performance of rural settlements in the country, and considering the geographic conditions governing each region, it was necessary to study and analyze the functioning of rural settlements. A review of the literature related to the subject of research shows that despite the importance and significant effect of the rural economic performance on the development and welfare of rural communities, there is a significant research gap in this regard.

During recent decades, the functioning of rural settlements located in the central district of Ravansar County due to global, national, and

regional changes has undergone some shifts. The main purpose of the present study is to study the depth of these changes using the Grounded Theory Method. In this study, while explaining the status of economic functioning of rural settlements in the past and analyzing the positive and negative factors affecting the economic performance of villages, the current status of rural

economic functioning will be depicted as a logical and scientific process. Therefore, functional changes and the identification of categories and concepts affecting the functional changes of rural settlements located in the central district of the County of Ravansar are going to be investigated by the researchers in this study.



**Figure 1. Economic status trends in rural areas of the country from 1966 to 2011**  
Source: Research findings, 2016

## 2. Research Theoretical Literature

The investigation of the role (function) of phenomena, human beings and societies was carried out from different aspects. In the evolution of this concept, we face divisions such as internal and external functions (Elyasi, 1989), open and hidden functions (Tavasli, 1991), individualistic, factual, and social functions (Ritzer, 2000), proper and inappropriate functions (Tavasli, 1991), objective and abstract functions (Scheibling, 1998), and potential and actual functions (Dollfus, 1994) which reflect the contemplation of the concepts and principles of functionalism. In terms of geographical issues and socioeconomic characteristics, the above-mentioned functional divisions also have the spatial divisionability, which are generally classified as urban and rural functions. Therefore, all of the above functions require space-based spatial requirements that describe geography in the form of geographical zones and explain them.

Although geography is the contender of functionalism philosophy, it is not similar to anthropology and sociology; most of the empirical works in this science in terms of form and

function must be considered functionally. An overview of the views and thoughts of geographers in the last two centuries confirms the acceptance of functionalism as a school of thought by scholars of this science. There are several methods and perspectives on rural studies, four of which are the most famous including ecological approach, physical viewpoint, the centralization perspective or the study of external relations, and finally the functional view.

According to the fourth method, some of the research axes include population building and social hierarchy, the types of cultivation and development, various forms of ownership and production methods, the social-economic structure, and the organization of the irrigation system (Tavana, 2008). Each rural dwelling, according to the socioeconomic structure as well as the changes that have taken place from the past to the present, has certain functions that can be classified into four categories in a conventional division including housing function, service function facility, recreational communication function, and productive economic function

(Saidi, 2009). In another division, rural areas can be considered as housing, cultural, social, political, and economic categories, in which agriculture is the most important economic function of the rural world.

In spite of these divisions, the functioning of rural communities around the world is not the same. Dolphus (1994) believes that in a developed country, villages have functions such as agricultural production, population living, and spending free time. To illustrate the main functions of rural settlements, other categories (e.g., ecological environmental function, historical cultural function, economic-political function, and legal function) are presented (Saidi, 2011; Saidi, 2012; Rahmani Fazli & Saidi, 2016). It is noteworthy that the common function of all of the above divisions is the economic function of the village, which is linked to the role of production, conversion, exchanging, and forming the economic system of villages (Moshiri et al., 2004). At present, according to the International Labor Organization's (ILO) division, all economic activities (in rural and urban areas) are classified into three major groups of agriculture, industry, and services, and each of these groups include several subcategories (Statistical Centre of Iran, 1996-2011).

Meanwhile, agriculture is the oldest and the most effective economic sector in the countryside. Although in development theories before the 1950s, it did not play a significant role in the agricultural sector. Since 1950s onwards, the theories of economic growth and development recognized the undeniable role of agriculture in the development process. The link between rural development and agricultural development has led to the development of agriculture, which is one of the priorities of development, especially in Third World countries, due to the sizeable rural population in the world. Generally, agricultural development is a vital issue for improving incomes and living conditions in developing countries (Saidi, 2009) and the basis for all sectors of the economy (industry, services, etc.) in agriculture (Jamini, Taghdisi, & Jamshidi, 2014). Industry also affects these communities more or less as part of the economic functioning of the villages. Nowadays, the industrialization of villages is systematically pursued in the form of programs and goals such as increasing

employment opportunities, strengthening the economy and increasing rural incomes, processing agricultural product, and providing basic inputs and commodities for rural communities (Moshiri, Mahdavi, & Amar, 2004). In general, the industrial sector, in addition to its direct employment functions, is important in terms of the ability to directly generate employment in other sectors of the economy and to reduce the unemployment rate in this way.

According to Hirschman, because of the limited capital, investment must take place on the best option and in selected economic sectors leading to economic growth as well as unemployment reduction (Safavi, 2004); and concerning the services sector, it is enough to note that the breadth and variety of activities in the service sector in the economy, along with its share of value added and employment, are becoming more and more important to this sector. Studies conducted by international and domestic organizations indicate a high share of employment services and gross domestic product (Abasian & Mehregan, 2009).

Therefore, one of the infrastructural elements of each economy is service-providing sector, which is very effective in the production process (Meftah & Zarinsaz, 2002). In the context of rural development theories, some theories can be found that make it possible to explain a part of the subject under study. Nevertheless, according to Firouznia and Roknoddin Eftekhari, among the theories related to the subject of research, including the theory of rural subversion, the vicious circle, the theory of demographic transformation, the theory of life cycle, the rural agriculture theory of the development of Jorgenson theory, holistic development theory of Misra and Salima and ..., the theory of life cycle is more capable of explaining the different dimensions of the subject (the formation, change, and continuity of the functions of the villages), and other theories can explain some of the dimensions of the subject matter (Firoznia & Roknoddin Eftekhari, 2013). Based on the theory of the life cycle of villages, they have grown in their developmental process at a time since they emerged and continue to survive for a long time. In this process, some of them have started a new life in the city by integrating with other villages or merging into cities or increasing the population,

and some have continued to live as a rural settlement.

Another group of villages, with the changing economic and social conditions of the community and technological developments, are in decline, and as time passes, they face a decline in population. Some of the villages in the latter group have experienced a decline as a result of the emergence, growth, development (saturation), and loss of their population completely. According to the life cycle, it is possible that these villages will be destroyed or will start a new period of their life as a tourist village, production farm, chapel village, production place, etc. after passing the decline period (Jamshidi et al., 2016). The rural settlements of Iran during the history of the establishment and continuation of their lives are obviously undergoing various spatial changes. These developments can be studied in the spatial, socio-cultural, economical, and ecological environments. As the various factors and forces are effective in shaping, deploying, and supporting the village, the occurrence and development of economic performance in the villages is also affected by the impact of forces and various factors.

Depending on the range of activity, the nature, the time period, and the duration of the impact of these forces and factors, during the course of spatial changes, and depending on the scope and type of the impact of rural settlements on these forces and factors, the nature of these developments vary in different regions (Sidali, Rahmani, Saidi, & Tavakolinia, 2014). A general overview of the theoretical foundations and the history of the research show that in recent decades there have been fundamental changes in the economic functioning of rural areas of the country, and these evolutionary causes have different causes and due to geographical conditions governing different regions (natural and human conditions) the process of development has varied. However, the disadvantage of previous research has been the results which are based on figures. They merely presented a general report on the state of economic change, and there is no analysis related to the factor or factors that changed the economic performance of rural settlements.

In general, the present research has been fundamentally different in terms of method and

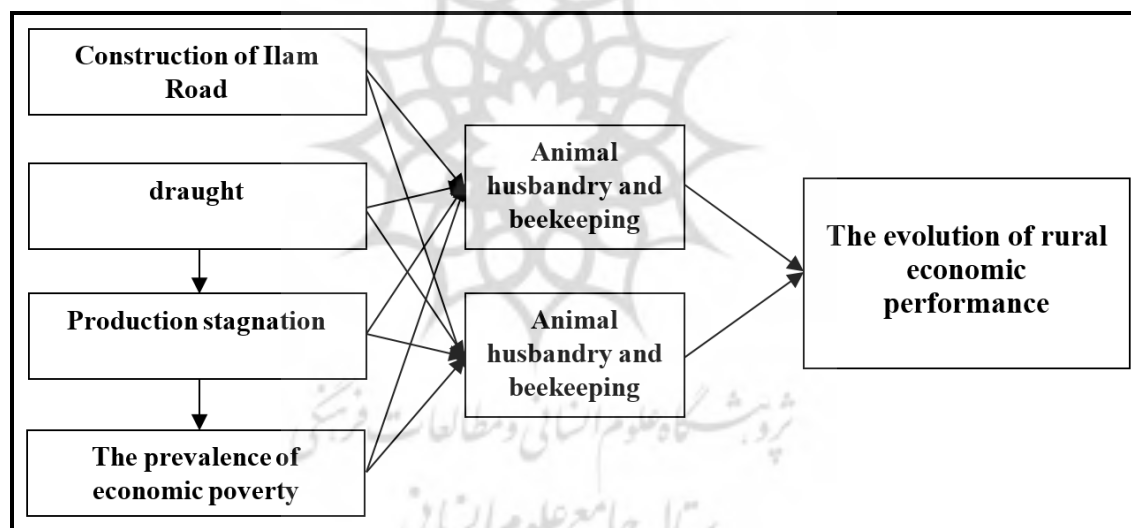
subject matter with other studies and it can be stated that the present research is innovative in terms of the subject and method of analysis. The dominant theoretical approach of this research is the constructive commentary approach. The constructive-interpretive approach of man as an active, creative, and meaningful being is constantly being constructed and giving meaning to social life and social reality. Therefore, social environment, in contrast to the positive paradigm, by itself is meaningless and is meaningful to humans through the attachment of meanings and objective symbols. If human beings are creative and meaningful, then the realities created by humans will be fluid, floating, lacking in uniformity and universality of rules and structures (Mohamadpour & Iman, 2008: 195). In the present research, the theoretical theme is that villagers are active and meaningful creatures, and their views on analyzing rural issues, and in particular the functional changes of rural settlements, are of fundamental importance, which contradicts the existing structure-based theoretical approaches.

Many studies have been carried out in connection with the functional changes of human settlements, in particular their economic functioning. The results of the research by Ghadiri Masoom and Azmi (2011), with the aim of studying the changes in rural employment and the factors affecting it, showed that the dominant economic pattern of villages in the country tend from agricultural and industrial sectors to service sectors. This change of migration has played a significant role. Moreover, some studies (e.g., Akbari & Mesrinejad, 2003; Farhodi & Mohamadi, 2006; Farshadfar & Asgharpour, 2010; Ghafari, Rajaei, Dastorani, & Nasiri, 2011) indicate the tendency of employees of other economic sectors towards the service sector. The results of the study by Aghajani, Zandavi, and Ataii (2014) in relation to the study of the effects of tourism on changing the function of villages in Ramsar showed that due to tourism effects, the function of the villages in the mentioned city has changed from the activities in the agricultural sector to tourism related businesses. In another study, Ghadiri Masoom, Barghi, Jamini, and Jamshidi (2014) with the aim of studying the employment status of rural areas of Isfahan province during the year of 1956, showed that

during the studied period, most workers from the agricultural sector in the villages of Isfahan province showed tendency towards activities in other sectors, especially services. Moreover, [Jamshidi \(2014\)](#) examined the effects of drought on the economic performance of villages in the cities of Sirvan and Chardavol. The results of this study showed that, due to drought and general climate change in the studied area, the function of villages has changed from activities in the agricultural sector to service industries. The study by [Jamini, Ghadermarzi, and Mafakheri \(2016\)](#) showed that the involvement of institutional factors has greatly undermined the main function of the inhabitants of Shaho village-city, to the point that the life of this human settlement has led to a gradual decline.

In another study, [Jamshidi et al. \(2016\)](#), with the aim of evaluating the functional changes of rural

settlements in Shabab Dehestan in the province of Chardavol, showed that as a result of the occurrence of several factors and problems in the studied area, the economic function of the villages has changed. With the emergence of drought and the collapse of agricultural crops, the main economic function of the rural population, i.e., rice cultivation, has been eliminated, and the villagers, due to the passage of the Karbala pilgrimage road from these villages, adapted their villages to new service jobs (including butchery, beekeeping, poultry, construction of shops, etc) to provide the needs of the pilgrims. Finally, researchers in this study presented the following model to illustrate the changes in economic performance in the villages of Chardavol ([Figure 2](#)).



**Figure 2. The underlying model of changes in the economic function of villages in the villages located in the vicinity of Chardavol County**

Source: [Jamshidi et al., 2016, p. 178](#)

Regarding the trend of changes in employment and wages in Indian villages, [Venkatesh \(2013\)](#) showed that due to the low wage level and lack of job security, the main function of rural settlements in India tended from jobs and activities in the agricultural sector to non-agricultural businesses. With regard to the functional changes in rural settlements in central Russia in the last 20 years, [Alekseev \(2014\)](#) showed that due to changes, the number and percentage of people employed in the agricultural sector has decreased. Due to the loss

of job opportunities in villages, most villagers are outside the agricultural sector and are providing service jobs in cities and towns. Moreover, the changes resulted in aging population and reduction in young population in rural settlements of central Russia.

With respect to the functional changes of rural settlements located in southwest of Tehran after the Islamic Revolution, [Ebadi, Ghoreishi, and Movlnei Hashjin \(2015\)](#) showed that the changes in rural settlements active in the agriculture,

horticulture, and livestock sectors were affected by the expansion of communication networks, the construction of factories, the construction of industries, and the low prices of agricultural land, and the function of rural settlements leaned towards the service sector.

Regarding functional changes in villages in China between 1997 and 2010, the results of the research by Li, Wang, Li, Zhang, and Tian (2017) showed that due to changes in land use and the conversion of wetlands and pastures to agricultural lands, rural settlements in China faced a major shift in function. The main function of rural settlements, which was producing agricultural products, changed and rural settlements were turned into non-crop production, and somehow urban functions overcame ural functions.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Geographical Scope of the Research

Ravansar is located in the geographical position at 46° and 20'' to 46° and 53'' east and 34° and 32'' to 35° north latitude. The county of Ravansar is divided into two parts (Shahu district consisting of two Mansour Aghaee and Quri-e-Qala districts and a central district consisting of 86 rural points and four rural districts of Badr, Hassanabad, Dolatabad, and Zalou Ab) (Figure 3). The central district of the county has a population of 16134 people (4261 households). According to the results of the last population and housing survey in 2011, 3238 households (equivalent to 12260) residing at the central district of Ravansar, were employed in the agricultural sector and its sub-sectors.

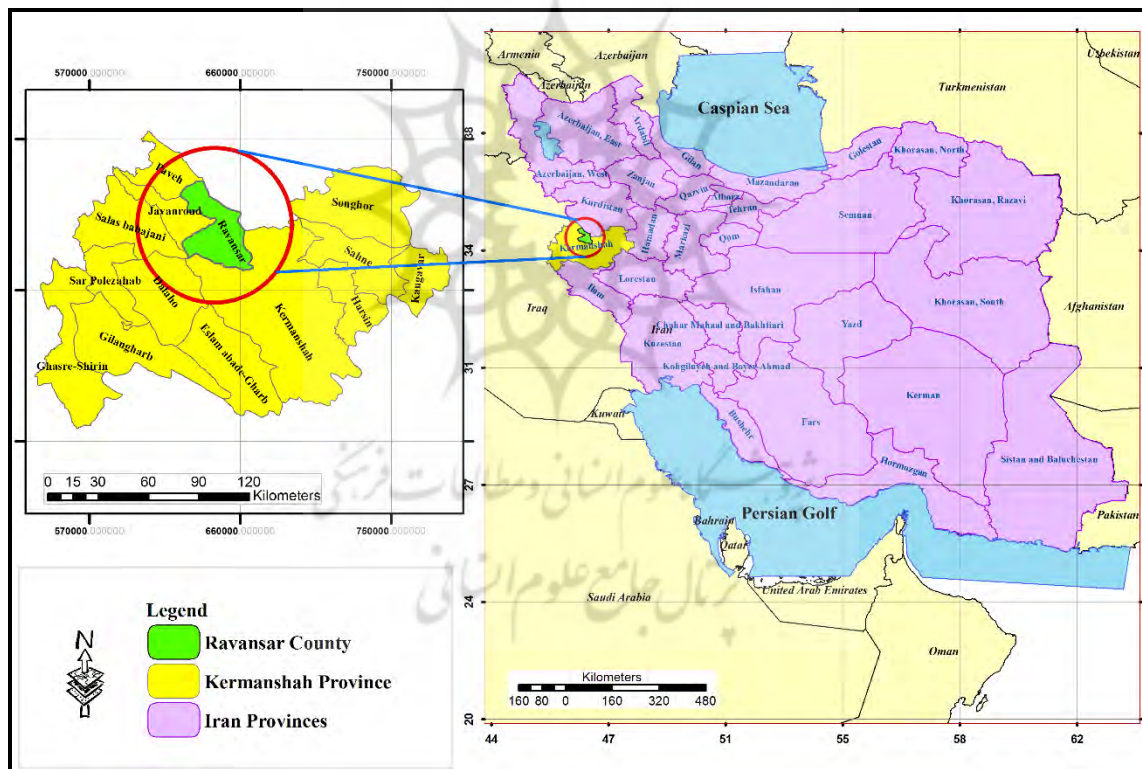


Figure 3. Geographical Situation of Ravansar in Kermanshah Province

Source: Administration Directorate of Ravansar County, 2016

#### 3.2. Methodology

This research is qualitative and utilizes Grounded Theory Method. Grounded Theory is based on "the discovery of theory from data which has been systematically taken into account in social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this way, the former literature has a "non-voluntary" status.

The point referring to the literature is made after the design of the theory, not before making the theory (Urquhart, 2013). In the methodology of data theory, the process of data collection and sampling has been combined. Data were collected using group interviews and semi-structured interviews. In the methodology of data theory,

sampling, collecting data, analysis, and interpretation are not separate from each other and are interrelated in a complex way. As a result, sampling is not predetermined, but will go along with other dimensions of the research and the decisions made regarding sampling which will appear during the research process itself. Sampling in the method of data theory is based on two dimensions. In the first dimension, sampling of the interviewed people is carried out, which is generally targeted sampling. However, in the second dimension, theoretical sampling is dealt with. In theoretical sampling, the researchers analyze the data and use the results of the data analysis to decide on the location of the next sampling. This process is called theoretical sampling, because the obtained theory will help to collect data in the future (Urquhart, 2013). In the present study, sampling in the first dimension has been done purposefully. This means that the selected people were those who had detailed information about the functional developments of rural settlements, had been involved in this

problem, and had experienced it themselves. To focus on more aspects of the study, three interviews of a group of five and two group interviews with residents of villages in the central district of Ravansar county were initially carried out (Table 1). The reason for the group interviews was that the primary categories that were the basis for coding the subsequent interviews did not seem to be limited to a particular person. Coding these interviews and its initial analysis aimed at identifying important categories. At this stage, based on theoretical sampling, the information was gathered from the people. The process of coding the interviews and the results of them was the basis for the subsequent individual selection, which eventually led to 26 interviewees (Table 2). The basis for completing the interview process was theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is a point or step in coding, in which it is no longer possible to create new codes in the data. At this stage, based on theoretical sampling, the information is requested from the people.

**Table 1. List of Group interviews**

Source: Research findings, 2016

Row	Group Interviews	Female	Male	Total
1	A group interview with council members and officials in the village of Badrabad and Benavach	0	5	5
2	A group interview with farmers in Badrabad	0	5	5
3	Group interview with seniors at Hasan Abad village	0	5	5
4	A group interview with farmers in the Khararjian village	1	6	2
5	A group interview with women in Zirchoobi and Sadegh Abad villages	5	2	7

**Table 2. Demographic characteristics of Interviewees**

Source: Research findings, 2016

Level of Education				Marital Status		Gender	
University	High School	Primary	Illiterate	Married	Single	Male	Female
3	10	8	5	22	4	15	11
Age Groups				Employment Status			
Over 50	40-50	30-40	Under 30	Unemployed	Industrial	Service-providers	Agriculture
9	8	6	3	5	1	9	11

#### 4. Research Findings

In the present study, the basis for coding the data is the Gelzier approach, a Ground Theory Method, which has been developed in three stages of open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding. In the open coding step, 134 codes and open concepts were obtained and the codes were classified in the form of 11 major categories in the

selection coding step, which describes these categories and how they relate to each other with the central categories (theoretical coding) to be discussed in detail (Table 3). It should be noted that only the main codes are mentioned. In the results section, first, major issues are discussed, then a theoretical diagram is limited to a particular reality.



**Table 3. Concepts, major categories, and discovered central categories**

Source: Research findings, 2016

Central Category	Major Category	Concepts
<b>Inefficient rural development policies</b>	<b>Subsistence Economy</b>	Production of different products to meet family needs; low income gap among villagers; use of domestic animals for daily routine; agricultural activities; seasonal departures of villagers; high level of cooperation and teamwork; communication; very little connection with the market; exchanges of products with other villagers; very poor amenities; simple communication ways; very little competition among the villagers; seasonality of businesses; lack of agricultural land or reliance on very low cropping; infusing power and intervention in most aspects of the villagers' life by the village master; the cultivation of a small part of the agricultural land due to the lack of agricultural equipment and so on.
	<b>Land reforms</b>	Relative reduction of the power of village masters; the division of a small part of the agricultural land among villagers in 1963; the land tenure of a small number of villagers in 1963; the contribution of the village master to the villagers; the restriction of the ownership of village masters to 40 hectares in 1979; all married villagers were given a piece of land in 1979 and ...
	<b>Agricultural mechanization</b>	Gradual use of cows and harrows; Development of crops and under cultivation; Increased use of crops; Gradual use of combines; Gradual abandonment of animal carriers; Ability to store and store more crops; Develop aquatic resources; From underground water resources; the gradual removal of villagers from conventional agricultural implements such as slaughtering and harvesting; gradual reduction of village activities; the ease of transferring products to the market; and so on.
	<b>Gradual economic development</b>	Increasing the number of livestock and the land area of the villagers; increasing the agricultural production of the villagers; increasing the income of the villagers; improving the relative communication and service infrastructure; improving the relative quality of life of the villagers; purchasing agricultural implements and equipment by the villagers; gradual increase in the ownership of capital resources The variety of economic activities; the significant prevalence of the production of handicrafts; the remarkable activity of women in providing family income and expenses; the level of low expectations; the value of the work culture and effort; the tendency of villagers to work and double activity; the availability of background Activity of all household members; increasing the relationship between villagers and businesses ; paying more attention to the market in terms of agricultural products and livestock and ....
	<b>Institutional involvement</b>	Loss of Arbab and Kadkhoda management in the village; paying attention to rural affairs by the institutions responsible for; the arrival of construction Jihad in the villages; the arrival of the village relief committee; the transfer of agricultural land to agricultural Jihad; the issue of housing and rural land issues to Housing Foundation Directorate; the involvement of the road and transportation department in the village; the transfer of the rural pastures to the environmental and natural resources organization; the formal delegation of village executive affairs to rural councils; the formation of a dispute resolution council; the transfer of part of the village affairs to the Bakhshdaries and governors; multilateral rural management and so on.
	<b>Enforcing inheritance law</b>	Division of households' assets among all household members; crushing of agricultural land owned by the villagers; breaking down of gardens owned by villagers; distributing livestock among household members; sharing other household capital resources among household members; the lack of economic activity on the land for heirs; the lack of economical business for the inheritance of the livestock sector; the gradual sale of capital resources inherited by household members;

**Table 3.**

Central Category	Major Category	Concepts
<b>Inefficient rural development policies</b>	<b>poor management of environmental resources</b>	Issuing permits for drilling wells; the lack of legal action with unauthorized drilling; drying of springs and rivers; the transfer of rangelands to indigenous and non-indigenous people; poor extension of agricultural conservation activities; the lack of a rangeland conservation program. Rangeland grazing method; Implementation of plan for cultivating gardens in sloping land; Transfer of lands around the village to owners before the revolution; failure to pay attention to flood burning pastures; Low implementation of watershed design; Contamination of physical space around the village; Gradual decline in the fertility of agricultural land; severe reduction of aquiferous land; severe erosion of farmland and pastures; reducing the diversity of animal species
	<b>Cross sectional support</b>	Provisional cross-sectional analysis of bank facilities; Difficulty in accessing bank facilities by obtaining surety and heavy collateral; High rate of bank interest; Absence of guaranteeing crops and animals; Lack of securing support for crop and livestock equipment to under-pressure irrigation systems. Implementation of cross-sectional plans supporting home-based business; cross-sectional training of educational and extension courses; poor financial support for industrial products (handicrafts) of villagers and so on.
	<b>Targeted subsidies</b>	Increased price of electricity; rising oil prices; rising gasoline and gas prices; rising food prices; increasing costs of using agricultural machinery; increasing cost of transporting rural produce to the market; increasing households' costs; reducing the profitability of activities in different parts; non- economical planting of some agricultural land due to the high cost of using agricultural machines; the high price of pesticides and chemical fertilizers; the decrease of family and village communications due to increasing expenditures and so on.
	<b>Depression in rural economy</b>	The low level of liquidity of villagers; The decrease in the income of the villagers; The bankruptcy of a large number of villagers due to early start-ups, especially in poultry and dairy farms; Unaffordable cultivating qualities; High production costs of producing crops; low prices of rural produce against their costs; tendency towards investment of villagers in cities; capital outflow from the village; youth unemployment in rural areas; the sale of rural property; the gradual disappearance of livestock, especially in rural areas; The subsistence of livestock; some people's dependence on subsidies and so on.
	<b>Functional transformation</b>	The tendency of villagers to service industry; the migration of young people from the village; the reduction of the motivation for work and work among villagers; the heavy mechanization of agriculture and the very low physical activity of the rural population in the agriculture sector; the strong dependence of the villagers on the urban markets; villagers' shopping in supermarkets; rising expectations; a strong tendency toward using mass media especially monthly satellite and virtual space; undermining work culture among villagers; reducing the level of women's activity at the family level; relying on only one bread-earner to cover living expenses; the prevalence of consumerism; villages dependent on cities and so on.

**4.1. Subsistence economy**

The villagers living in the study area, in accordance with their past generations and the geographical conditions governing them, often use domestic animals, with the cooperation of each other, to produce their own products, and in some cases, villagers are faced with many problems in their subsistences.

There were no facilities to increase production and even stock and store them. Also, due to the

lack of facilities and the share of the owner, a large part of the land was not cultivated. In this regard, the interviewed villagers expressed a few sentences: "Our products were for the needs of the family and we did not have enough space for the storage of materials"; "I only plowed with two male heads for about three months over the year (two months of fall and one month of spring)"; "Khan (village owner) takes a significant share of

our products." Studies show that in the subsistence economics, the relationship between villagers and the market is very little and most of them have exchanged their products among the villagers, and also the income gap between the villagers is very small. Also, the peak of the peasants' activity and endeavors occurred in mid-spring to mid-autumn as most of them stayed in their homes in winter. In this connection, mentioning a few sentences of the villagers may be helpful: "If we did not go to the city for several months, the problem would not be so much for us, because we needed to live our lives by exchanging products with other villagers"; "There was not much difference between the poor and rich people of the village"; "We worked for the rest of the seasons, and we used to stay at home in the winter and used our supplies." In sum, according to the above, it can be stated that the villages were somewhat self-sufficient and the subsistences and traditional economy and activities in the agriculture and livestock sector were the dominant function of the villages.

#### **4.2. Land reform**

In the years before the Islamic Revolution, with regard to the sovereignty of the kingdom regime, the sovereignty of the villages was handled by Khans and their assistants. Owners of villages and their lands had full plenipotentiary authority. All the lands of the villages were owned by Khans until the implementation of the Land Reform Plan and the change in land ownership of villages. Surveys show that land reform has been carried out in the 1963 study area. In this program, the agricultural land of the village is divided into three parts: two parts are allocated to the owner of the village and one part to the villagers.

However, surveys show that among the three parts of the arable land, most of the lands of high quality are allocated to the owner, and the ineligible and inappropriate part of the land is divided among the villagers. In this regard, several villagers said: "Khan kept the best lands for himself and divided the poor lands among villagers"; "In 1963, we were given lands that were on the slopes of the mountains and often their cultivation was very difficult "; " People were working on them out of choice". Nevertheless, the survey shows that the owner of the village had no activity or cooperation at the

planting stage, or harvesting crops; he received exactly one-third of the net production of the villagers. In addition, the surveys showed that each rural household was obliged to pay some tax to the village Khan for having cows (used to plow their lands). The villagers said in this connection: "One third of the net production ruined the lives of villages"; "We did not dare to take a grain of wheat more than our own share of our product"; "Apart from Khan's share, there was nothing left for the farmer." Nevertheless, the 1963 land reform was a turning point in limiting Khan's power in villages, and the villagers were almost the owners of farming lands for the first time. So far, due to the victory of the glorious Islamic Revolution, and in 1979, the territorial divisions were re-implemented. In these divisions, the ownership of land owned by each village was limited to 40 hectares and the rest of the land was divided among the villagers. At this stage of land division, land was assigned to any eligible person (married and applicant for owning a land, who did not receive land in 1963). Also, the ownership of villagers' shares was generally eliminated. A few points mentioned by the villagers help to understand more: "Most villagers became landowners"; "For nearly 4 hectares of land, we paid 15 thousand tomans in installments of 20 years"; "From then on, our labor and benefits was for ourselves". With the above conditions, the villagers, for the first time in their lifetime, freely acted on their land and did not have to hand over a portion of their crops or livestock to Khan. At this time, the villagers worked enthusiastically and vigorously on their agricultural lands, and, besides it, they were on subsistence by growing livestock. At this stage, the functional changes of villages and activities in the agricultural sector, tended toward a new smell and color, and along with livestock and handicrafts, formed the main basis for the subsistences of the villagers.

#### **4.3. Agricultural mechanization**

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, most villagers became owners of agricultural land, and, with increasing motivation for activities on land and agriculture, they turned to agricultural machinery. Gradually, the traditional way of plowing (the use of male bovine animals) was eliminated, and the use of tractors and plows was replaced. Also, Chan<sup>1</sup> was replaced by

threshinghouse, and sickles were replaced by a combine. In general, the use of modern agricultural equipment was replaced by traditional and manual activities, and the gradual mechanization of the agricultural sector had a significant role in increasing the productions of the villagers and the needed storage capacity of most of the materials. A few key words expressed by villagers clarify the issue: "With the coming of the tractor, our problems are very few"; "We were only busy harvesting our products for about 4 months, with the training of tractors and combines, it takes less than 1 month to do our stuff "; "Our ability to store forage for our livestock is much more now." Also, the findings indicate that the use of new agricultural equipment has not been limited to the abovementioned materials and has been effective in increasing the area of water resources and increasing the storage capacity of villagers.

The use of diesel engines to drive water from rivers and pumps installed on wells has had a significant impact on the development of rural crops. Also, the use of new agricultural implements has been effective in increasing the transportation power of products and increasing the relationship of villagers with the market. Another significant point was the decrease in the level of group work and the participation of villagers through the use of agricultural machinery. As several villagers have said, "with coming of the combine, the herdsman disappeared". Altogether, by the use of new agricultural equipment, despite the decrease in the need of the villagers to cooperate with each other, the agricultural production of villagers increased providing time to engage in other sectors such as livestock breeding and increasing the relationship between villages and the market and so on.

#### **4.4. Gradual economic development**

In the rural settlements, due to changes caused by the loss of power of the villagers and landowners, and the land reform and mechanization of the agricultural sector, the amount of cultivated land and crops and livestock of the villagers increased. Increasing the income level of the villagers, the tendency to purchase agricultural implements, the variety of economic activities in the village, the boom of the handicrafts, especially among rural women, along with the improvement of

communication and welfare infrastructures in the villages and increasing their relationship with the market and paying attention to the products needed for the market to earn more profit and other interconnected connections improved the quality of life and prosperity of rural households.

In this regard, several villagers said: "Our access to agricultural equipment has increased"; "the number of livestock increased each year"; "We were no longer concerned about the lack of forage for our livestock"; "All members of the family were involved in work and activity"; "We no longer had to do anything that the village's Khan would impose on us, we did whatever we liked and would benefit more." Studies have shown that the value of work culture and efforts along the low level of rural population have had a significant effect on improving the economic situation of villagers. The villagers stated: "People blamed those who did not work"; "The villagers were taken for granted." In sum, the above factors provide the basis for the gradual development of the rural economy by influencing each other and diversifying the rural economy as much as possible.

#### **4.5. Institutional involvement**

A review of the basics and texts related to rural development shows that by increasing the functioning of rural settlements and their economic development, the attention of state institutions to rural areas increases. These institutions, which are a kind of rural municipality, affect the functioning and activities of villages with different kinds of planning and policy making. The surveys show that with the gradual development of rural settlements in the central district of Ravansar, the attention paid to these villages increased, as in most villages.

This increase in attention can be seen in the presence of provincial institutions and their policies in rural affairs. The active presence of the construction of Jihad and Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in the first decades after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, and after that, the presence of the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution, the Road and Transportation Administration, the Agricultural Jihad, the Organization for the Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources, rural and urban administration directorates and rural

councils are examples of the presence of custodial institutions in rural settlements.

Unlike the past few decades, the majority of village-related issues were managed by the village councils, under a unified management. However, a few years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the rural affairs were empowered to a large number of authorities.

Adopting different policies and sometimes conflicting ones created difficulties in the process of rural development in the study area. [Papoli Yazdi and Ebrahimi \(2002\)](#) acknowledged the lack of unified and integrated management of rural settlements in rural development theories in their book as a significant negative factor in rural development.

A few statements from the villagers will help to understand more: "To do anything previously, the only authority was the village master, but now we should get the satisfaction of different agencies and organizations for the start of any activity"; "The vacant space inside the village has been handed over to the Housing Foundation, the land and the gardens are being handed over to agricultural Jihad, pastures to the Environment Directorate, affairs related to the village to Shura (village council) and Dehyars"; "The Housing Foundation is providing land for construction, providing us with a space that does not consider any space for keeping animals". "So far, no one has asked about our problems?" "Our village did not need a guide to think about the jobs of the villagers"; "We are not allowed to work on our lands which are near roads." Nevertheless, surveys show that most rural affairs are currently assigned to new rural managers (Dehyarans and Council members). Regarding the performance of modern rural managers, it is worth mentioning that the study of several studies concerning the performance of modern rural managers in the study area and similar rural areas shows that these executive institutions have been operating very poorly in their performance. Regarding the poor performance of rural managers, the following few key quotes appear necessary: "I have been paid only 150 thousand tomans per month for four years and I have not missed anything"; "After 7 years, they have done nothing for the village, we have only been given 23 garbage buckets"; "No one pays attention to our requests "; " The Dehayar and the Council have no expertise ". In

any case, the interference of different inputs in the affairs of the villagers has been accompanied by a great deal of multiplicity and these institutions are implementing their own programs by adopting various policies regardless of the problems of the villagers. The demonstration of inefficient rural development policies can be seen well in the hard subsistence of the villagers.

Despite the fact that the above factors have had a significant impact on the activities of the villagers and have been somewhat restrictive of the activities of the villagers, the inefficient policies of the bodily institutions in several other areas, most important of which include the implementation of inheritance, poor management of environmental resources, cross-sectional support, and the targeting policies of subsidies have had a significant negative impact on the activities and subsistences of villagers, which will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

#### **4.6. Enforcing inheritance law**

Studies have shown that implementation of the inheritance law in our country has been one of the most important factors in land degradation. The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of inheritance law has had a significant effect on the fragmentation of land in rural settlements in the central district of Ravansar. However, activity on agricultural land is not cost-effective, and villagers have shown different responses to this situation. Some people continued to work on inherited lands and, in the same way, continued to engage in other activities, and sold a large number of inherited lands. A few words by villagers regarding the importance of enforcing the law indicate inheritance in land cultivation in the studied area. "I had 5 hectares of land divided between my 5 sons and my two daughters"; "I did not work on one or two hectares of the agricultural land at all"; "I was very poor and I had to sell it." It should be noted that the implementation of the law of inheritance has not been limited to land degradation and has been effective in weakening the economic basis of rural households through the distribution of other sources of household capital among members. Several villagers stated: "I divided my cows and my sheep among my children"; "I shared everything I had among my children"; "Whatever inherited, I sold, and now, except for a 60-meter

house, I have nothing left". In this way, the implementation of the inheritance law among household members has led to a limitation of the resources available to each member of the rural household. This situation has had a significant impact on the activities of the villagers.

The gradual sale of assets, the change in the subsistence of villagers from activities in the agricultural sector to other sectors, the tendency to work in urban centers, in particular the tendency to false occupations and day-work and the consequences of implementing the law of inheritance in the range have been studied.

Regarding the effects of rural development incomes on the subsistences and rural activities of the villagers, it is possible to prevent the division of assets among all members of the household through effective planning and institutionalization of coherent programs. In any case, the implementation of the law of inheritance in rural areas is one of the most important inefficient policies to reach the development of villagers affecting the rural areas in different ways in the affected area.

#### **4.7. Management of poor environmental resources**

Rural settlements have been affected by the subsistence of the villagers and the environment around them, due to the type of subsistence and the geographical conditions that govern them. Evidence suggests that by paving the way for the custodial institutions and their involvement in rural affairs through inefficient rural development policies, the link between the natural environment and the rural community has been weakened and the environmental sources of rural settlements in the area of the study is subject to serious threats and even degradation. Applying inefficient policies can be seen in the poor management of water, soil, pastures, forests, wildlife conservation, and so on. Due to the strong link between the economic performance of the rural settlements of the study area and the surrounding natural environment, as a result of inefficient policies, with the gradual reduction of water resources, water crops in most of the villages have been eliminated and the amount of rural products has decreased. Rangelands have been greatly reduced for livestock maintenance; crops have been plowed due to the sloping of some of them;

which were always plowed in one direction. Moreover, on account of the villagers' requirement, no attention has been paid to the land cultivation system and land fertility rate has fallen sharply.

In this regard, the villagers said: "A few years ago, paying a small amount of money, they gave each person the permission to dig a well"; "The rich investors, by purchasing the land of the villagers dug deep wells. As a result, all the springs and hand-held wells of the villagers, dried up"; " Many unauthorized wells were dug "; "Regarding the unauthorized drilling of ditches, the officials only are only ordinary villagers, not rich people"; "Some people are already given a permit for digging wells"; "A large area of rangeland has been given to non-indigenous people and unfamiliar to them"; "Unlike a few years ago, a few people have access to water-irrigating lands"; "The most accessible rural gardens in the form of a plan for the cultivation of gardens left a number of people who have migrated from the village for several years"; "The public lands around the village were left to one of the children of the Khan of the village (the village owner)"; "How some people allow construction on arable land, and we have no right to even put a stone on another stone?"; " Many pastures have been burned and no one has taken any action "; "In the past, mountain goats were living in this mountain, but now ... nothing"; " Flood hinderances have been built where there has never been a flood there"; "We burn the crops"; "Our land is narrow and low and we can always plow it in one direction". As a result, the above factors have had hand in hand and, by restricting the variety of jobs and reducing the economic prosperity, the functioning of the rural settlements under investigation has encountered several problems. This situation can be attributed to inefficient rural development policies related to poor management of environmental resources.

#### **4.8. Cross-sectional support**

The findings of the study indicated that the unsustainable and non-consistent supporting policies and, in other words, the supportive policy as well as cross-sectional policies have been other negative factors of institutional involvement in the studied villages. Due to inefficient rural development policies, the functioning of villagers

has been influenced by significant negative effects. The failure to buy or guaranteeing the purchase of products of the villagers at an affordable price, providing cross-sectional bank facilities by obtaining a surety and heavy collateral which at the same time had a high interest rate, holding a cross-sectional and non-coherent planning course on agronomic activities, home-based businesses, cross-sectional support of agricultural land utilization to under-pressure irrigation systems, etc. are typical examples of cross-sectional support of rural communities in the central district of Ravansar.

In this regard, the villagers said: "I was going to the city a few days a week every week for a year, and finally I was disappointed"; "We do not know what to do next year"; "I sold my tomatoes last year for 100 tomans and I lost everything"; "The price of meat has not changed so much over the recent years"; "I began to build a warehouse in hopes of getting a loan; and now the loan for building the warehouse is over"; "Only half a square piece of land is under rain irrigation and there is no other budget left"; "I left my storehouse halfway because I no longer could get any loans"; "We had a very large bankroll on poultry loans"; "The price of chicken is very low, now many others are bankrupt"; "A few years ago, a carpet weaving and embroidery courses were held in the village of Badrabad, and they were very welcomed, but now there is no course held".

Given the lack of sustainability of supportive policies, these supports may have had some effects on improving the economic situation in the short term, but overall, in the economic stability of the villages in the study area, it has played a weak role and in significant cases, there has been a negative impact. Therefore, due to the application of supportive policies by the bureaucratic institutions, the effect of inefficient rural development policies on the functioning of villagers has already been revealed in the above field and has been effective in limiting the activities of the villagers to weaken their functioning.

#### **4.9. Targeted subsidies**

Another program implemented by the institutions in rural settlements is the targeted subsidies policy. This program was implemented in the

country at the end of the current decade, including rural settlements in the central district of Ravansar. The surveys show that at the beginning, most villagers were satisfied with the implementation of the policy due to the monthly acquisition of money. However, with a gradual increase in the cost of flour, bread and other food items, energy, transportation, the use of agricultural machinery, fertilizers, pesticides, etc. they questioned the implementation of targeted subsidies policy.

In the early years of the subsidy targeting, this situation did not increase the price of rural products, putting significant economic pressure on the rural economy. In this regard, the villagers expressed a few key points: "If prices did not increase with subsidies, it would be very good"; "Our products have not increased in price compared to other products"; "We have never been able to go beyond subsistence", "The cost of an hour to plow the tractor has increased from five thousand to 20 thousand toomans"; "It was very costly to us"; "The cost of traveling to the city has been tripled". In addition to the above, surveys show that due to the policy of targeting subsidies and the rise of household expenditures, the amount of traffic between rural households have decreased and its adverse effects are not only economic, but also has led to the weakening of rural social relations and family relationships. In this regard, the villagers have said: "One cannot invite over to his house because it really costs a lot"; "We try to have less family get togetherness because we know that the cost is too high to invite people over".

According to the above-mentioned points, it can be stated that due to the implementation of targeted subsidies policies, the villagers' expenses are uptrend and besides, the price of their products has not increased significantly. This fact has affected the various aspects of the life of the villagers and, with decreasing the profitability of the activities, it has played a significant role in weakening the functioning of the villagers.

#### **4.10. Depression in rural economy**

The findings of the research show that the economic performance of rural settlements in the central district of the city of Ravansar has suffered from a significant recession, as a result of the impact and effectiveness of the various factors

described in the previous sections. In other words, as a result of the interference of institutional factors and the implementation of inefficient rural development policies through programs and actions, in particular, the implementation of inheritance law, poor management of environmental resources, cross-sectional support, and targeted subsidies policy, the process of gradual development of the studied villages has experienced a recession.

Lack of affordability of most activities in the studied villages, especially in the fields of wheat, barley, chickpea, maize, vegetables, livestock, and beekeeping by families and industrial activities, including livestock and poultry-breeding industries, mostly gone bankrupt, are symbols of the economic decline at the level of the studied villages. Moreover, the low level of capital at the hands of the villagers, the decrease in the income of the villagers, the unemployment of a large number of young people, a significant reduction in the number of livestock, the abandonment of a large number of villagers from subsidies, and so on are other signs of a recession in settlements in rural areas under study. Some villagers pointed to the economic downturn in the villages of the central district of the city of Ravansar: "We have no desire to work"; "Everything we do is to lose"; "Villagers cannot make the ends meet"; "I first hope in God, and then in subsidies"; "There is really no way left for us". Besides, the research findings showed that due to the lack of profitability of activities in villages, villagers have found a significant tendency towards investment in cities and, in hopes of acquiring profits, they sold their assets in the village and with their money in cities, they have provided land or housing and, despite the current state of price stagnation in real estates in cities, they have suffered more than ever.

In this connection, several villagers said: "No one invests in cities, and most of them seek more profit in the cities"; "I sold everything I had, and with that money, I purchased a land in the city, but no one buys it due to the recession"; "There is no investment opportunity left in villages". The result of these factors is the economic downturn of villages, which could have adverse consequences for rural development and, ultimately, has resulted in the development of urban societies.

#### **4.11. Functional transformation**

The findings of this study showed that the effect of various factors on the activity of rural residents' living in the central district of Ravansar city has significantly changed. The tendency of villagers to non-agricultural businesses and especially tendency towards service activities, immigration of young people from the village, low motivation to carry out economic activities, weakening of work culture and efforts among villagers, use of modern agriculture and the least body movements of villagers, rising expectations, a significant reduction in the activity of women and children in the household economy, the overemphasis of households on the income derived from the activity of the head of household etc. are the functional changes in the rural household economy.

Apart from that, a large part of the needs of living are purchased in stores and shops. The dependence on products in urban markets, the widespread use of mass media and the virtual space, the prevalence of consumerism culture etc. has led to the formation of affiliated rural settlements in the studied area. In this regard, the villagers said: "No one tends to work anymore. Despite the high cost of using agricultural machinery, all villagers have tended towards using these tools"; "More than 95% of the villagers go to supermarkets to buy their milk and yogurt." "In our villages, up to ten years ago, more than 50 households raised livestock, and now only one household keeps livestock"; "Those who work hard in the village are blamed by others"; "Most of the villagers have a satellite receiver"; "Most villagers use Telegram (a smartphone messenger application) and use the virtual space"; "My husband has the duty to afford us"; "The space inside and outside my home should not be different from a city-dweller family"; "I am ready to work as a construction worker, but do not keep the livestock." The surveys show that as a result of the above factors, the function of rural settlements has been gradually transformed and changed in different dimensions, and in general, we face city-dependent rural settlements.



#### **4.12. Theoretical coding: Relationship between the categories and the emergence of the nuclear category**

Glaser (1978) defines a theoretical coding as how the codes are bound to the studied reality (selective codes). In other words, the theoretical coding involves a phase in which the codes are linked together and the nature and relationships between these codes are examined and this is what makes the theory (Urquhart, 2013). As mentioned, in the selected coding stage, 11 major categories (i.e., livestock economics, land reform, agricultural mechanization, gradual economic development, institutional intervention, implementation of inheritance law, poor management of environmental resources, cross-sectional support, targeted subsidies, stagnation of rural businesses, and functional transformation) were selected, all of which have chain-linking relationships. The villages of the study area had the function of subsistences and were traditional economies before the victory of the Islamic Revolution. After land reform and gradual mechanization of the agricultural sector, the villages of the central district of the city of Ravansar came out of subsistences and the trend of development gradually increased. Nevertheless, the trend has been overwhelming and by attracting the attention of the institutions responsible for rural settlements, after the disappearance of the management of Khans in the villages, the affairs of the villagers were assigned to various institutions and these institutions left significant impacts by applying various policies.

Applying the law of inheritance regardless of the subsistences of villagers and the importance of unified capital resources for the survival of the villagers, poor management of environmental resources, cross-sectoral supportive policies and the implementation of targeted subsidies policies have been among the inappropriate policies set by policy makers in rural areas, which have caused the economy of villages in the central district of the city of Ravansar to shatter and has led to a recession in these villages. Despite the economic recourse and the lack of cost-effectiveness of most of the activities in rural settlements, finally, the function of villages has been transformed and, in general, villages with very poor economic performance have been formed to villages with

some kind of service-providing and dependent villages.

The accuracy of the nature of the discovered categories shows that all of them are in a variety of ways (direct and indirect) caused by a central issue. This central and basic category is the "inefficient rural development policies" that form the basis of the functional transformation in the present study.

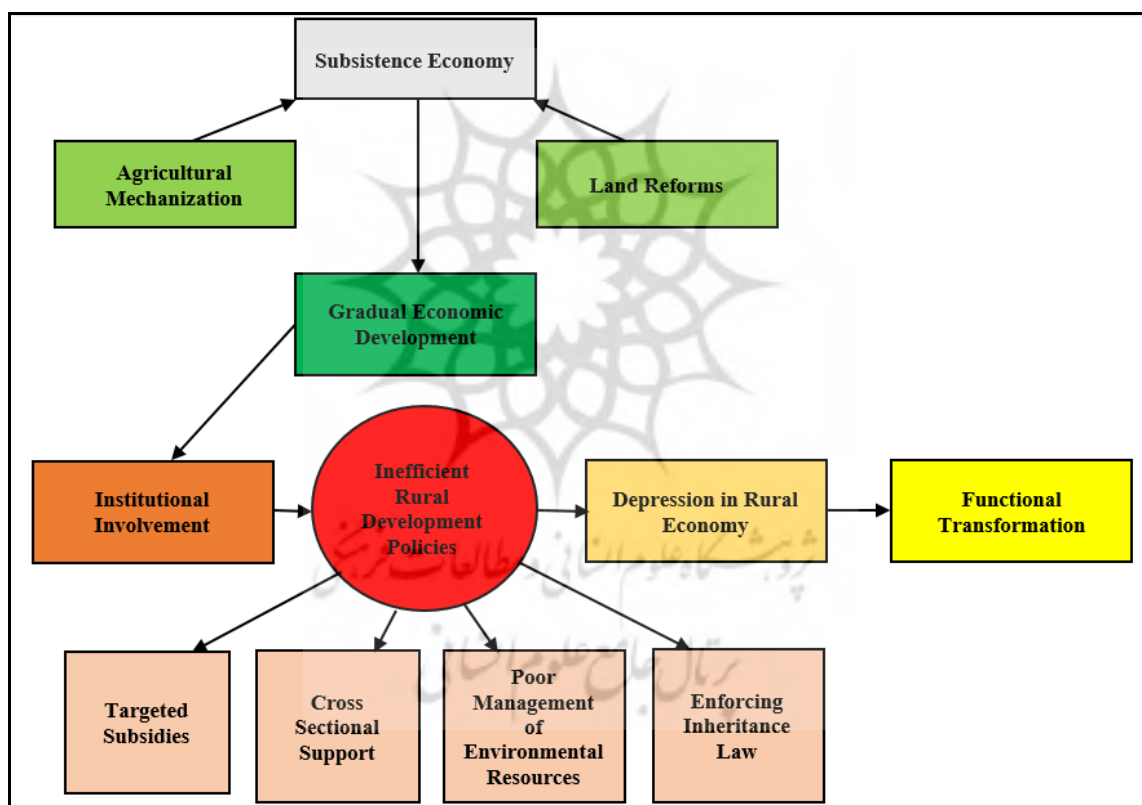
#### **4.13. The presentation of a theoretical diagram limited to a particular reality: The process of functional transformation of villages in the central district of Ravansar**

There are several ways to present a limited theory to a particular reality. One of these approaches is the use of a theoretical diagram that shows the relationship between major categories and the nuclear category. Of course, only a simple layout of these relationships is not enough, but each relationship should be well described, and this description should be presented by referring to the findings of the theory (Urquhart, 2013: 165). On this basis, in this part of the research, first, the theory is limited to a particular reality based on the relations between the categories, and then the diagram of the theory is limited to a particular reality. Before the Islamic Revolution, all the affairs of the villagers were owned by Khans, and somehow they had a significant impact on the activities of the villagers. In any case, the economics of the majority of villages are a closed and subsistence-based economy with a very narrow market link. Gradually, with the advent of land reform in 1963, a number of villagers were provided with lands and for the first time, though limited, worked on the agricultural land of their own with a significant share from the products given to the owner of the village. This process, with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, experienced a new dimension, and by carrying out land reform, most villagers became landowners. The motivation to work on agricultural lands and to escape the undisputed power of Khans, along with the development of agricultural equipment were beneficial for the gradual economic growth of the villages. Due to the development policies of the country and the transfer of management of different affairs of villagers to different institutions, various layers of authority in rural affairs management occurred. It

should be noted that most programs and policies have occurred regardless of the nature of activities in rural settlements, its consequences and the weak management of the institutions, which had devastating effect on the functioning of rural settlements. Implementation of inheritance law, poor management of environmental resources, unsustainable support, and targeting of subsidies are inefficient policies of development which have led to the economic decline of the villages of the study area.

However, the changes that have taken place in the context of inefficient rural development policies have led to the functional development of villages in the central district of Ravansar and similar rural

settlements and created inefficient rural settlements. These villages have witnessed big changes in the last two decades. They are no longer villages, but small urban settlements that are mostly service-oriented. Unlike the past, the function of these villages is often service-providing settlements and the rural community has been transformed to pseudo-communities. In Figure 4, the theoretical diagram of the process of functional development of rural settlements in the central district of Ravansar city in the form of major categories (in the form of a square and rectangular) and the central category (in the form of a circle) and their relationship patterns are plotted.



**Figure 4. A Diagram of Limited Theory to a Special Reality; Functional Transformations of Rural Settlements in the Central District of Ravansar County**

Source: Research findings, 2016

### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study of the process of change and development of any geographical phenomenon in the context of time is an important issue that is currently considered less at least in rural settlements. A review of most studies on rural areas shows that most of them are quantitative and

cross-sectional studies (explaining the status of rural settlements), and in these studies, however, very weak attention is paid to functional changes in rural settlements. Therefore, due to the weaknesses mentioned, the researchers in this study, using a qualitative approach and using a Grounded Theory Method, have tried to study the

functional changes of rural settlements. The results of this study showed that the performance of the villages in the study area experienced significant changes during a complex process and were influenced by various factors. In the first instance, the studied villages had a subsistence and traditional economy functioning and, to a large extent, they were self-sufficient. As a result, two very important factors, namely gradual land reform and mechanization of the agricultural sector, resulted in significant changes in the development of rural settlements. As a result, it can be referred to as the gradual economic development of villages. Nevertheless, with the importance of rural secrecy in the early years after the Islamic Revolution, and with the development of economic and social development programs in the country, the management of rural affairs was entrusted to various organizations or institutions. In fact, there was significant institutional involvement in the affairs of the villagers. As Jamini, Ghadermarzi, and Mafakheri (2016) pointed out in their research to the negative effects of institutional involvement in the development of rural settlements and urban villages, the findings of the present study showed that due to the application of inefficient policies of development, the impact of these institutions has been negative on the part of the accountable institutions, in particular on the implementation of inheritance rights, poor management of environmental resources, cross-sectional support, and targeted subsidies. Finally, due to the involvement of numerous negative factors, there has been a recession in the studied villages. As a result of the economic downturn and its numerous negative effects, the functioning of the studied villages has changed.

Currently, we are witnessing the emergence of new villages with unmotivated villagers, villages

which are market-dependent and villagers who are consumerists, and tend to live like urban-dwellers and there has been tendency towards working in low-skilled professions. The findings of this section of the research are consistent with the research findings of many other studies (e.g., Akbari & Mesrinejad, 2003; Farhodi & Mohamadi, 2006; Farshadfar & Asgharpour, 2010; Ghafari, Rajaei, Dastorani, & Nasiri, 2011; Ghadiri Masoum & Azmi, 2011; Aghajani, Zandavi, & Ataii, 2014; Ghadiri Masoom, Barghi, Jamini, & Jamshidi, 2014; Jamshidi et al., 2016; Venkatesh, 2013; Alekseev, 2014; Ebadi, Ghoreishi, & Movlaei Hashjin, 2015; and Li, Wang, Li, Zhang, & Tian, 2017), which all indicate the tendency of employees in other economic sectors towards the service sector.

According to the results, it can be stated that due to the application of disproportionate developmental policies along with inappropriate conditions governing rural subsistences and by implementing similar rural development policies for rural settlements of the country, which, in view of many vital criteria, are very different from each other, there has been a development in the function of rural settlements in the study area and other similar areas, which can be attributed to the mismanagement of rural settlements in the study area. Therefore, a fundamental revision of rural development policies taking into account the spatial variations of rural settlements is essential in order to prevent the changing trend of rural settlements and their tendency towards dependent villages and consumerism seems reasonable.

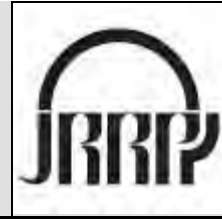
**Acknowledgments:** This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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## مطالعه درک معنایی روستاییان از تغییرات کارکردی سکونتگاه‌های روستایی (مطالعه موردی: بخش مرکزی شهرستان روانسر)

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تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۲/اسفند ۱۳۹۶

تاریخ دریافت: ۷/اسفند ۱۳۹۵

### چکیده مبسوط

#### ۱. مقدمه

اقتصاد روستایی در ایران علی‌رغم نقش مهم و فعالی که در اقتصاد ملی داشته، اما در طول نیم قرن اخیر دستخوش تحولات عمیقی شده است. دقت در روند وضعیت فعالیت اقتصادی در نواحی روستایی کشور در سه بخش کشاورزی، صنعت و خدمات در ۴۵ سال گذشته نشان می‌دهد با وجود اینکه فعالیت در بخش کشاورزی مهم‌ترین کارکرد سکونتگاه‌های روستایی کشور طی دهه‌های گذشته تاکنون بوده است اما میزان فعالیت در این بخش سیر نزولی داشته است و به نوعی فعالیت در بخش کشاورزی به نفع فعالیت در دو بخش صنعت و خدمات، کاهش یافته است. اما در طی دهه‌های گذشته فعالیت در بخش خدمات به نحو قابل توجهی روند صعودی داشته است.

#### ۲. مبانی نظری تحقیق

مرور کلی بر مبانی نظری و پیشینه پژوهش نشان می‌دهد در دهه‌های گذشته تحولات اساسی در کارکرد اقتصادی نواحی روستایی کشور به وجود آمده و این تحولات معلول علل مختلفی بوده و با توجه به شرایط جغرافیایی حاکم بر مناطق مختلف (شرایط طبیعی و انسانی) روند تحولات متفاوت بوده است. با این وجود نقطه ضعف پژوهش‌های پیشین در آن بوده که با استناد به ارقام و صرفاً گزارش کلی از وضعیت تغییرات اقتصادی را ارائه کرده‌اند و در ارتباط با عامل یا عواملی که کارکرد اقتصادی سکونتگاه‌های روستایی را تغییر داده‌اند، تحلیلی انجام نگرفته است. در مجموع پژوهش حاضر هم به لحاظ روش و هم به لحاظ موضوع با دیگر پژوهش‌های انجام گرفته دارای

تفاوت‌های بنیادی بوده و می‌توان چنین عنوان کرد که پژوهش حاضر به لحاظ موضوع و روش تحلیل، دارای نوآوری می‌باشد.

#### ۳. روش شناسی

روش پژوهش کاربردی حاضر از نوع کیفی و به‌طور خاص روش نظریه داده‌بنیاد است. همان‌طور که بنیان‌گذاران این روش ذکر کرده‌اند، روش نظریه داده‌بنیاد «کشف نظریه از روی داده‌هایی که به‌صورت روشمند در پژوهش‌های اجتماعی به‌دست آمده و مورد تحلیل قرار می‌گیرد». در روش نظریه داده‌بنیاد، فرایند گردآوری داده‌ها و نمونه‌گیری در هم تنیده شده است. داده‌های پژوهش حاضر با استفاده از مصاحبه‌های گروهی و مصاحبه‌های فردی نیمه ساخت‌یافته جمع‌آوری شده‌اند. در روش نظریه داده‌بنیاد، فرایند نمونه‌گیری، گردآوری تحلیل و تفسیر داده‌ها از یکدیگر جدا نبوده و به‌صورت پیچیده‌ای با هم در ارتباط هستند. در نتیجه نمونه‌گیری به صورت از پیش تعیین شده نیست بلکه، همزمان با دیگر ابعاد تحقیق پیش خواهد رفت و تصمیمات اتخاذ شده در خصوص نمونه‌گیری در خلال فرایند خود تحقیق ظاهر می‌شود.

#### ۴. یافته‌های تحقیق

طی یک فرایند نظام‌وار، اقتصاد معیشتی روستایی، به‌واسطه دو مفهوم اصلاحات ارضی و مکانیزاسیون بخش کشاورزی، به سمت توسعه تدریجی اقتصادی پیش رفته است و این روند مثبت، با دخالت نهادی و با اعمال سیاست‌های ناکارآمد توسعه روستایی، از طریق اجرایی ساختن قانون ارث، مدیریت ضعیف منابع محیطی، سیاست‌های حمایتی مقطعی و هدفمندی یارانه‌ها، زمینه رکود اقتصادی روستاها و نهایتاً تحول کارکردی روستاها را فراهم آورده است. این تحول کارکردی روستاها دارای نمادهای متعددی از جمله گرایش

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نظر اساسی در سیاست‌های توسعه روستایی با در نظر گرفتن تفاوت مکانی سکونتگاه‌های روستایی، جهت جلوگیری از روند تغییر و تحولاتی سکونتگاه‌های روستایی و گرایش آن‌ها به سمت روستاهای وابسته و مصرف‌گرا، امری ضروری و منطقی به نظر می‌رسد.

**کلیدواژه:** توسعه روستایی، کارکرد روستایی، روش نظریه داده بنیاد، شهرستان روانسر.

### تشکر و قدرانی

پژوهش حاضر حامی مالی نداشته و حاصل فعالیت علمی نویسندگان است.

شدید به‌سوی فعالیت‌های خدماتی، رواج مصرف‌گرایی، شکل‌گیری روستاهای وابسته، وابستگی شدید به بازار و ... است. لازم به ذکر است در پژوهش حاضر «سیاست‌های ناکارآمد توسعه روستایی» به‌عنوان مقوله مرکزی شناسایی شده است.

### ۵. نتیجه‌گیری

با توجه به نتایج حاصل شده می‌توان چنین عنوان کرد که در اثر اعمال سیاست‌های توسعه نامتناسب با شرایط حاکم بر معیشت روستاییان و با اجرا نمودن سیاست‌های مشابه توسعه روستایی برای سکونتگاه‌های روستایی کشور که به لحاظ بسیاری از معیارهای حیاتی با هم بسیار متفاوت می‌باشند، شاهد تحول کارکرد سکونتگاه‌های روستایی در محدوده مورد مطالعه و سایر نواحی مشابه با آن هستیم. لذا، تجدید

**ارجاع:** ریاحی، و. و جمینی، د. (۱۳۹۷). مطالعه درک معنایی روستاییان از تغییرات کارکردی سکونتگاه‌های روستایی (مطالعه موردی: بخش مرکزی شهرستان روانسر). *مجله پژوهش و برنامه‌ریزی روستایی*، ۷(۲)، ۱-۲۳.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.22067/jrrp.v5i4.62869>

