



## Rural Elites; the Causes of Migration and Attracting their Participation in the Process of Rural Development with Thematic Analysis Approach (Case Study: Kurdistan Province)

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### Abstract

**Purpose-** Rural elites, as the most important human capitals of rural communities, are a distinct and progressive stratum in various dimensions of development, and their persistence in villages can be effective in accelerating the process of rural development. Nonetheless, studies show that due to various reasons, elites are less persistent in villages and often migrate to cities. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to analyze the causes of elites' migration and how to attract the elites' participation in the process of rural development in Kurdistan province.

**Design/Method/Approach-** This study was conducted in the framework of interpretative-constructive paradigm and the research method is thematic analysis. In-depth individual semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data.

**Findings-** The results showed two overarching themes namely rural repulsion (including six organizing themes: family and social determinism, weak infrastructure, geographical isolation, environmental challenges, weak economic conditions and weak local and regional management) and urban attraction (including four organizing themes: personal improvement, economic opportunities, social opportunities, and the use of infrastructures and facilities) are the most important causes of rural elites' migration. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the elites' participation in rural development could be possible through three overarching themes namely empowering villagers (including four organizing themes: capacity assessment, skill training, strengthening vitality, raising the level of villagers' demands), developing employment and entrepreneurship (including two organizing themes: promoting innovation and economic investment) and efficient rural management (including two organizing themes: managing social challenges and occupying managerial positions).

**Originality/value-** The rural elites' migration is accompanied by many negative consequences for rural communities. Nevertheless, there is a gap in studies regarding its causes and especially how to attract their participation in the process of rural development. The present study can be a basis for future researches in this field.

**Keywords:** Rural development, Rural elites, Immigration, Thematic Analysis, Kurdistan Province.

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## 1. Introduction

**I**ncreasing urban-rural disparities, accelerating urbanization and declining rural population have become a widespread concern around the world (Zhang et al, 2022). Creating added value and continuous production surplus, cities have become a place for population concentration and capital accumulation, and the bigger the cities are, the more this concentration increases. Therefore, urban spaces are organized in a hierarchy (regular or irregular) and in this hierarchy, big cities are at the top and the small ones are at the bottom. In this situation, small and sparsely populated settlements (especially small towns and rural settlements) have less capacity to maintain the population than larger cities, and the process of migration to big cities is increasingly taking place (Irandoost et al., 2013). Accordingly, one of the most important challenges of different countries, particularly developing countries, is migration and its consequences on the migrant-sending and receiving regions (Sasanfar et al., 2021).

Considering that migration is a reaction and a response to major social and economic disparities between rural and urban areas (Bernzen et al., 2019); nowadays, rural areas are increasingly facing the challenge of population decline and aging. Consequently, the regional policy makers are concerned about the migration of young people, especially aged 18 to 30 as they are worried about the lack of renewal of human resources to replace them and this may threaten the sustainability of rural areas (Hofstede et al., 2022).

The main causes of villagers' migration to the city are the difference in income and wage levels between cities and villages, the search for high levels of education (Paping & Pawlowski, 2018), the use of machinery in the agricultural sector (Rai, 2018), hope for welfare improvement (Abrishami et al., 2018), employment opportunities in cities (Jamini et al, 2022), economic fluctuations and instability, high unemployment rate, lack of land, climate change (Kaag et al, 2019) and etc.

Migration seems like a double-edged sword; moving in the principled direction, it will improve the situation of the society at the micro and macro levels, otherwise, it will have adverse

consequences for the society (Ahmadi & Tavakoli, 2016). In general, migration has many demographic consequences (such as changing in rural-urban sex ratio), economic (the loss of human capital in villages and the spread of sick economics in rural areas), social and cultural (failure traditional control over the family, especially among the young generation and the confrontation between tradition and modernism) and political (rural brain drain and the collapse of the power pyramid in the village) (Taherkhani, 2002). Thus, elites' migration is one of the consequences of the rural migration, which can lead to several negative impacts for rural communities.

Rural elites can be grouped under different headings namely political, scientific, religious and traditional leaders, etc. (Ridjal et al, 2021). Therefore, educated people can be mentioned as the rural elites. The rural settlements evacuation from educated and knowledgeable people in various fields and specialties, will have negative and irreparable feedbacks in the villages (Nazari & Adeli, 2014), as well as numerous negative economic, social and emotional consequences (Basiti & Gharba, 2021). Elites, as a segment of the society with higher level of knowledge, skills, awareness, expertise and experience, could be effective in the process of achieving development in various individual and social dimensions (Bon et al, 2022; Xu & Wang, 2022). Therefore, when migration occurs among rural elites, there should be more concerns as this situation can lead to the loss of various human and financial capitals of the rural community while reducing the ability and motivation of the workforce occupying in the villages (Basiti & Gharba, 2021).

Kurdistan province with 1,677 inhabited rural points and 468,778 rural population (29.24 percent of its population), is one of the border provinces of Iran, which is one of the potential areas in the west of the country in terms of human and environmental resources (human force, water and soil resources, tourism attractions etc.) and spatial (border with Iraq). Despite these capabilities, the evidence shows that Kurdistan province is in an unfavorable condition in terms of development indicators (Irandoost & Soleimani, 2020; Jamini et al., 2021). According to mentioned above, one of the most important reasons for the slow process of rural development in Kurdistan province could be the rural elites'

migration. The evidence indicates that the rural elites, as a leading stratum with a higher level of knowledge and awareness than most groups living in the village, can play a pivotal role in achieving sustainable rural development; However, in most villages of Kurdistan province (and probably in other provinces of the country) elites migrate from their villages due to various reasons (social, economic, political, etc.) and most villages are deprived of educated elites (especially elites with high levels of education). Therefore, investigating and analyzing the causes of rural elites' migration and identifying how to attract their participation in order to achieve rural development in Kurdistan province are two issues addressing in this study.

## 2. Research Theoretical Literature

Literal meaning of "Migration" is leaving the main land and living in another land either permanently or temporarily (Ahmadi & Tavakoli, 2016). According to Daniel Shafer et al. decision-making regarding migration is relative and can be completely different from one person to another and from one region to another (Taherkhani, 2002). In fact, the phenomenon of migration has a complex structure and mechanism and its interpretation is not possible by only variables such as revenue or employment (Irandoost et al., 2013).

The categories of people migrating are diverse. Some of these groups include: refugees fleeing war and disasters, skilled and unskilled labor migrants, students, businessmen and ranchers (Kaag et al., 2019), internal and external migration, etc. In our country, most internal migrations occur in different ways, such as migration from village to city, from city to village, from village to village, and from small cities to big cities (Ismaili et al., 2022). One of the most important types of migration is migration from the village to the city (Hofstede et al., 2022). The term rural migration was first employed by English Graham in 1892, and its equivalents are: internal migration, intra-rural migration, leaving villages, rural fleeing, rural evacuation, intra-rural-urban migration and land leaving (Ahmadi & Tavakoli, 2016).

In terms of the overall mechanism of development, rural development depends on complex economic, social and political processes in which multiple groups and actors operate to achieve results in accordance with their goals.

Meanwhile, local people are the main body of village development and rural elites are its main element. Village residents are the main body of village development and rural elites are its main element. Based on their knowledge of local resources, market demand, government policy, promoting motivation among the internal and external factors of rural development, etc., rural elites play a facilitating and pivotal role in the process of rural development (Li et al., 2019)

Rural elites can be defined based on their individual power positions. Even though, rural elites are not necessarily the official representatives of the society, they are expected to support collective interests and be influential in local development as representatives. Simply speaking, rural elites are people with local power in economic, political, administrative, managerial, civil and traditional institutions in society (Søholt et al., 2018). Among the most important characteristics of rural elites are high social prestige, high level of knowledge and capability, tendency to be popular, tendency to help the village, having a sense of responsibility and justice, trusted by the masses of rural society, high level of culture, sense of democracy and rule of law (Yuan & Li, 2018). Nevertheless, the rural elites' migration is one of the most significant challenges of rural development, especially in our country (Nazari & Adeli, 2014). The elites' migration has caused irreparable damage to the scientific capital of the country and different regions and is one of the challenges of higher education and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in Iran (Young Journalists Club, 2022) and a phenomenon observable in various ways in third world countries for a long time and caused irreversible damage in the economic, social and cultural sectors (Karimi, 2012).

Reviewing the literature showed that numerous studies have been conducted in this issue, the results of some of which are in the following. Taherkhani (2002) identified the effective factors in rural-urban migrations, emphasizing the migration of rural youth in Qazvin Province. The results indicated that economic factors (such as income, use of durable consumer goods), social-cultural interactions (such as communication and friends and relatives residing in the city), social and cultural conflicts (such as conflict with neighbors, family challenges), spatial factors

(such as distance from the city) and value and attitude factors (such as education, decent job, social status, reputation, finding a favorite spouse, having a good leisure time and acquiring money and wealth) are the most important causes of rural youth migration.

[Karimi \(2012\)](#) studied the causes and solutions of the phenomenon of elite migration in Iran. The results revealed that the most important causes of elite migration can be attributed to external factors such as the development of technology, the availability of research tools in other countries, and internal factors including inattention to the position of science and scholars, inattention to research, economic factors, political and legal factors, social factors, lack of meritocracy, government monopolies, the level of hope for the future, etc. [Paytakhti Oskooe & Tabaghchi Akbari \(2015\)](#) investigated the relationship between the literacy rate and migration in the provinces of Iran. The findings illustrated that the literacy rate and economic growth had a negative effect on migration while the unemployment rate and the internet penetration rate had a positive effect on migration.

[Sheely \(2015\)](#) studied the relationship between mobilization, participatory planning institutions and the recruitment of elites in the villages of Kenya. The results showed that mobilization had a significant effect on citizens' participation. Nonetheless, mobilization did not lead to an increase in the adoption of either the organization's preferred projects or the projects requested by citizens. The elite control over planning institutions could adapt to increased mobilization as well as participation.

[Rostamalizadeh \(2019\)](#) conducted a research on the role of immigrant elites in the development of the villages of Shabestar. The results illustrated that the immigrant elites with strategies such as the formation of developmental and supportive institutions, the formation of collective business networks, mutual support, focal participation have been effective in rural development. [Ismaili et al \(2022\)](#) studied the effects of migration on economic developments in the rural areas of Tehran Peripheral. The findings revealed that the increasing immigration of these villages has led to daily work trips (to Tehran city), diversifying the income pattern of the village, supposing land and housing of the village as capital, transforming in

the productive foundations of the village and lack of motivation to engage in agricultural activities.

[Kan \(2019\)](#) investigated the land commodification and rent extraction in peri-urban Guangzhou in China. The results indicated that the rural elites were making an attempt to seize the lands of the suburbs for their own benefit through rent. [Vazzana & Rudi-Poloshka \(2019\)](#) studied on the determinants of brain drain from Appalachia in the USA. The results showed that finding an interesting job with attributes such as good salaries and progress opportunities was the most important factor which affects the students' tendency to stay in Appalachia, and job opportunities for spouses or life partners and opportunities to advance their education in the region were among the most important factors of their staying in the villages. In addition, the strongest factor in keeping talents in the region was the creation of public-private partnerships to provide more job opportunities for educated youth.

[Ruan & Wang \(2022\)](#) investigated the influence of elite collusion on village elections and rural land development in China. The findings illustrated that village elites (such as village cadres, family heads/elders, wealthy businessmen, individuals with political and social influence, etc.) colluded in village elections and provided many benefits for themselves. As a result of widespread collusion and corruption by rural elites with the cooperation of other local institutions, democracy has been distorted and villagers' protests have been suppressed, and ultimately it has resulted in the loss of the lower-classes of the rural society.

Reviewing previous studies revealed that rural elites in different countries have different performance on the development process of local communities and the villagers' migration, especially the elite community, has different causes. Considering the relatively large research gap in the field of elite migration and particularly the ways of attracting their participation in the process of rural development, the present study, not only could be applicable for the institutions in charge of rural development, but also can pave the way for other related researches.

### 3. Research methodology

#### 3.1. Geographical Scope of the Research

According to the latest statistics in 2016, there are 468,778 people residing in 1,677 inhabited villages of Kurdistan province, of which 239,625 are male and 229,153 are female. Considering that Kurdistan province had 1735 inhabited villages and 584337 rural residents in 2006, it can be deduced that during the period from 2006 to 2016, 58 inhabited villages of the province had been demolished due to various reasons including constructing a dam, becoming empty of inhabitants, turning the village into a city, etc. Also, during the mentioned period, 115,559 of the

rural population of the province have decreased. Furthermore, among the 10 cities of the province, Saqqez and Sarvabad cities have the most and the least rural points with 272 and 74 rural points, respectively. In terms of literacy rate, Bane and Bijar cities have the highest and lowest literacy rates with 76.31% and 67.25%, respectively (General Population and Housing Census, 2015). Examining the cause and motive of migration in Kurdistan province during the years 2011 to 2016 revealed that the most important causes of migration were: following the family, pursuing education and seeking work. The location of Kurdistan province in Iran is shown in Figure 1.

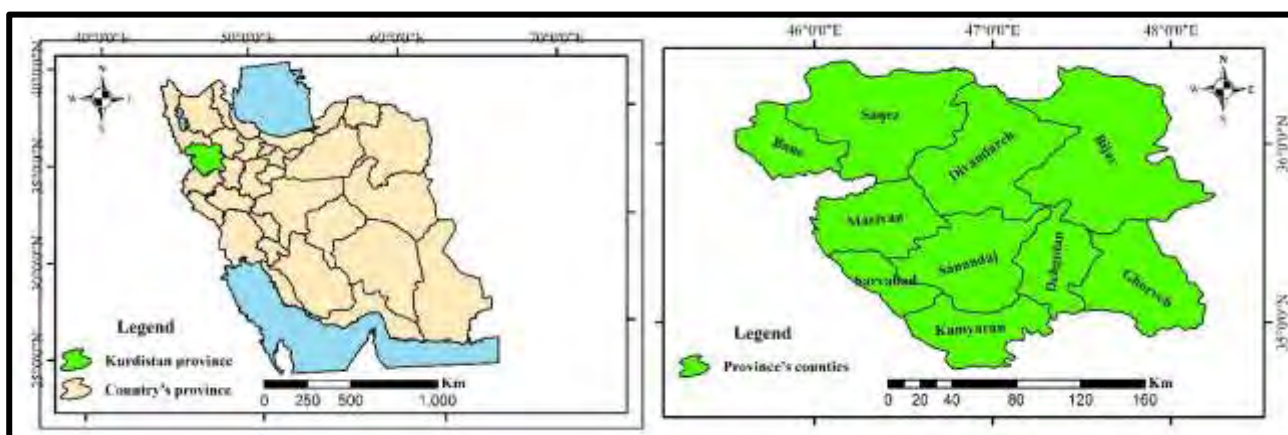


Figure 1. The location of Kurdistan province in Iran

Source: (Statistical Center of Iran, 2016)

#### 3.2. Methodology

This research has been conducted in the framework of interpretative-constructive paradigm and the dominant approach is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the most widely used methods of qualitative data analysis. Thematic analysis is an analysis based on analytical induction in which the researcher achieves an analytical genealogy through data classification and patterning within and outside data. In other words, thematic analysis is the act of coding and analyzing data in order to find out what the data says. This type of analysis looks for patterns in the data. The obtained pattern of data should be thematically supported (Mohammadpur, 2013).

Semi-structured in-depth individual interviews have been used to collect related data. Accordingly, 15 in-depth individual interviews were conducted with purposeful sampling (interviews carried out with rural elite migrants

with a master's or doctorate degree) using the snowball method. The aforementioned interviews were conducted in a period of four months (June to September 2023) and interviews continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Theoretical saturation is a criterion for determining the number of samples based on which the researcher continues the interviews until the responses to the main research questions are saturated or new data are not acquired in the data collection process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Riahi & Jamini, 2018). It should be noted that according to the title of the research, the process of data collection through interviews has been carried out in two main phases. In the first phase of the interview process, the researchers sought to identify themes related to the causes of rural elites' migration, and in the second phase, the most important goal was to identify themes related to how elites participate in rural development.

In this study, Braun and Clarke's approach was employed among various thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They considered the process of data analysis in three general stages: 1) Analyzing and describing the text, 2) Describing and interpreting the text, 3) Integrating and reintegrating the text. In the "analyzing and describing" stage, the data have been placed in a chronological order and the initial coding has been carried out. This stage includes three steps namely "familiarizing with the text", "coding", "searching and generating themes". In the "describing and interpreting" stage, the data has been organized, adjusted and categorized. Coding and categorizing the data has been carried out in this stage and two important steps have been taken in the interpretation of the data. The first step is extracting the themes and the second step is communicating between the themes in a suitable thematic map. Having reduced the data and generated the initial open codes, the main themes have been determined and the relationship between them has been investigated and finalized. In the stage of "combining and integrating the text", the final report has also been presented including re-analyzing the themes and relating them to the theoretical literature. These interpretations are mainly made with a comparative approach. At this stage, the report has been prepared (Abedi Jafari et al., 2012).

In terms of the evaluation of research results, the evaluation criteria of thematic analysis are in line with the evaluation criteria of qualitative research. Nevertheless, some authors of the qualitative research method have pointed out the criteria for evaluating the validity of thematic analysis. According to King and Horrocks, these criteria are: using independent coders, receiving feedback from participants and respondents, applying homogeneity matching and providing rich description and recording audit records (King & Horrocks, 2010; Creswell, 2012). In this research, the validation method of using independent coders has been applied. The purpose of this task is not to prove the validity and reliability of the theme analysis, but rather to assist the researcher to think critically about the structure of his proposed themes and the decisions made about coding. Independent coding is employed as a way to avoid the lack of objectivity of the analyst. To achieve

this goal, the experts in the field of the research subject have been asked to code some samples of the interview text, and then the result of their coding has been compared with the researchers' coding and consequently some codes were revised. It is worth noting that in all stages of coding, this task has been performed separately so that the results of the feedback could be effective in the coding of the next stages.

#### **4. Research findings**

##### ***4.1. Describing the individual characteristics of the interviewees***

Individual characteristics of rural elite migrants from the villages of Kurdistan province reveals that the respondents were with an average age of approximately 38 years, 10 male and 5 female, 7 with master's and 8 with doctorate degree. Furthermore, the specialization of the respondents showed that 5 of them had degrees in geographic sciences, 3 in urban engineering, 2 in agricultural engineering, 2 in political sciences, and the rest had degrees in economics, mathematics and remote sensing. The employment status of the respondents indicated that three of them were unemployed and looking for work, and the others were employed in government jobs.

##### ***4.2. Thematic analysis of the causes of rural elites' migration***

Based on thematic analysis of the interviews, the causes of rural elites' migration include two overarching themes namely rural repulsions and urban attractions. The overarching theme of the rural repulsions had six organizing themes (family and social determinism, weak infrastructure, geographical isolation, environmental challenges, weak economic conditions, and weak local and regional management) and the overarching theme of urban attractions included four organizing themes (personal improvement, economic opportunities, social opportunities, and the use of infrastructures and facilities). These themes have been acquired from a total of 101 basic themes (Table 1). The way of acquiring each of the themes during the process of interviews is described in the following.

**Table 1. The themes acquired regarding the causes of rural elites' migration**

Overarching themes	Organizing themes	Basic themes
Rural repulsions	Family and social determinism	The head household's decision, the friends and acquaintances' migration, the relatives' migration, the reduction of the amount of land and gardens owned by families due to inheritance, the pressure of spouses and children, the gradual decline of the village population, family problems, the villagers' inattention to the position of science and knowledge, the feeling of inferiority and disillusionment with living in the village, conflict with the villagers, prevalence of keeping up with the Joneses in the village
	Infrastructure weakness	Low road quality, narrow width roads, weak public transportation, lack of middle and high schools in the village, having to commute daily to continue education, lack of health center in the village, lack of medical personnel, lack of parks and green spaces in the village, lack of sports fields in the village, lack of workshops or employment-generating industries in the village, lack of gas supply in the village, poor access to the Internet, poor mobile coverage, lack of shops and stores
	Geographical isolation	Distance from the city, distance from the district, distance from the center of the province, distance from the main markets, high cost of commuting to the city, difficult access to supplementary books, difficult access to tutoring and institutes, bordering
	Environmental challenges	Drought, gradual decrease in surface and groundwater sources, crop freezing, precipitation fluctuations, contamination of the village environment, lack of location finding of rural waste and their sanitary burial, the discharge of wastewater in the village, flooding of the village due to the dam construction, flooding of agronomic and horticultural lands due to the dam construction, flooding of pastures due to the dam construction
	Weak economic conditions	Lack of job opportunities, low profit of economic activity in the village, high cost of economic activity in the village, weak financial capital, seasonal unemployment, weak investment of the public sector, weak investment of the private sector, intensive activity of middlemen, low price of guaranteed purchase of crops and products.
	Weak local and regional management	The lack of village councils' attention to the villagers' opinions, the lack of village managers' attention to the villagers' opinions, severe administrative bureaucracy to follow up on daily life affairs, the urban settling of rural decision-makers, the lack of a clear plan for rural development, the lack of managers' attention to rural development (Agricultural Jihad, Governorship, District Administration, Natural Resources, Housing Foundation, etc.)
Urban attractions	Personal improvement	Pursuing studying at the university, finding a decent job, employing in the public sector, achieving a better social status, acquiring money and wealth, favorably spending leisure time, finding a favorite spouse.
	Economic opportunities	The availability of more job opportunities in the city, the availability of more investment opportunities in the city, the profitability of investment in the city, the variety of jobs in the city, access to the main markets, acquiring higher revenue in the city.
	Social opportunities	Improving the level of knowledge and awareness, using training courses and classes, the possibility of communicating with specialists, the possibility of socially communicating with more people, membership in associations and social groups.
	The use of infrastructures and facilities	Better quality of urban schools, the presence of clinics and hospitals in the city, easy access to the market, the presence of workshops and user industries in the city, the presence of recreational space in the city, the presence of sports space in the city, easy access to public and private transportation, easy access to the Internet, higher-quality use of services (water, electricity, gas and telephone)

#### 4.3. Rural repulsions

The findings from the extracted themes showed that rural repulsions are one of the overarching themes regarding the causes of rural elites' migration. This overarching theme is derived from six organizing themes, each of which is acquired from several basic themes, the interpretations of which are presented in the following.

*a) Family and social determinism-* The studies show that one of the major problems of the rural community is the reduction of the amount of land and gardens owned by families due to inheritance. Despite the fact that this law is implemented in order to establish social and legal justice in families, it has caused the fragmented land ownership in the rural areas. The pieces of agronomic and horticultural land belonging to a household are

divided among the members during the time which does not have the capacity to provide the livelihood of all the people who started a family by themselves. In this regard, one of the interviewees stated that "we were four brothers and three sisters, we had about four pieces of garden, which provided our lives to a large extent. Getting marriage and forming a family, the gardens were divided among us and since the share of each of us was not able to provide for our living expenses, gradually we all had to sell our share and migrate to the city". The lack of amenities-services, education and health facilities, etc., in the villages compared to the urban spaces, has caused a series of challenges that increase the level of dissatisfaction as well as the negative feeling towards rural living among the family members and other villagers and accelerated the migration process. Mentioning a few key sentences from the villagers in this regard helps the clarification of this issue: "My wife says what is in the village that we are staying here, all the residents are leaving the village"; "The village is so small that whoever does any tasks, all the villagers are looking at him". In addition to the above causes, the findings revealed that, the lack of job opportunities for educated people in the village and the lack of attention to their qualifications and educational background have created a feeling of hopelessness and disillusionment among the educated rural population. In this regard, one of the interviewees pointed out that I have heard this sentence several times from the villagers, "What is this field that you have studied, what is the point? You have studied and spent all these years, what is the end of it?" Accuracy in the nature of the above themes and concepts indicates an organizing theme titled "family and social determinism" which played a significant role in the migration of other strata of the rural society, especially the elite society.

**b) Infrastructure weakness-** The weakness of the infrastructure needed by the rural community, including inter-village roads, public transportation, and educational centers, which forces the villagers to migrate temporarily or commute daily to pursue their studies, is one of the major infrastructure problems. Other infrastructural problems in the villages include the lack of health centers and clinics in the villages (if available, they are very deprived in terms of equipment and personnel), the lack of shops and stores, the lack of sports and recreational space, and the weakness of industrial infrastructure. The following statements have been mentioned: "Every year, several accidents occur on the road in our village, due to the high slope and low width of the road"; "After primary school, I had to go to my relative's house in the city to continue my study. If

educational facilities were available, I would not have had to bear these problems"; "There is no place in the village where I can work and this is not only the problem of our village, most of the villages do not have any facilities for employment". It should be noted that the migration of educated people was sometimes due to issues that have been resolved to a significant extent in the villages nowadays including gas supply, mobile coverage and internet access in the villages. However, some elites have migrated from the villages when these infrastructures were not available. In general, according to the general concept of the above themes, "infrastructure weakness" could be as an organizing theme regarding rural migration.

**c) Geographic isolation-** The results of the analysis of the interviews showed that due to the concentration of various facilities and services in the cities, the rural areas are relatively far away from the service and welfare centers. This distance from urban places imposes considerable financial and time costs on the rural community. It has also created many restrictions regarding access to educational services and facilities, including participation in courses and reinforcement classes and access to schools, especially for school and university students and educated people in general. These challenges have become more apparent in remote and border villages of Kurdistan province. One of the interviewees pointed out that: "For a person who continues his education, there is no other choice, but to migrate to the city, because in addition to the risk of accidents, the cost of commuting to the city or renting house is too high for a student. Considering the nature of the above themes indicates that "geographical isolation" is a main organizing theme regarding rural elites' migration.

**d) Environmental challenges-** The obtained findings showed that, similar to most rural parts of the country, environmental challenges have been one of the causes of creating restrictions for the rural community, particularly the rural elites. The reduction of surface and groundwater sources, drought, precipitation fluctuations, frost, etc., are among the challenges that have caused restrictions and, in some cases, great losses for the activities of the rural community. In this regard, one of the elites stated that: "Two years ago, due to the drought, most of the trees in my garden dried up, and every year the frost destroys the garden products." Furthermore, the results revealed that due to the various dam constructions in Kurdistan province, many environmental problems have arisen at the village level. Flooding of agronomic, horticultural lands and pastures, flooding of residential structures in the village are only



some of these challenges. Moreover, the poor management of garbage and waste in the villages as well as some polluted parts of the village have created an inappropriate landscape of the villages. As mentioned by one interviewee: "Due to the construction of Gavshan dam, more than 10 villages with their agronomic, horticultural lands and pastures were flooded, and the residents had no choice, but to emigrate". The above themes evoke the organizing theme of "Environmental Challenges" which have been directly and indirectly effective in the rural elites' migration.

**e) Weak economic conditions-** The findings indicated that from the elites' point of view, there are not many job opportunities in the villages and the financial foundation of the rural community is at a weak level to create new jobs. In addition, due to the high cost of providing inputs and using agricultural equipment and tools, guaranteed purchase of products and products at low prices, economic activity in the village is not very profitable. Furthermore, any economic activity in the villages have faced with various challenges owing to the seasonality of jobs in the village, the weak investment of the public and private sector in the village, the prominent role of middlemen and brokers, etc. Accordingly, it seems necessary to mention some key points from the interviewees: "There is no job in the village for my field and specialty, who has a doctorate in mathematics, and in general there is no decent job opportunity for postgraduates in the village."; "Production costs, etc. are very high compared to their final price. However, a significant share of the profit from our activity goes to the middlemen." The above factors show the organizing theme of "weak economic conditions" in the villages, which acts as a repulsive factor for the rural elite population.

**f) Weak local and regional management-** The analysis of the interviews revealed that in the villages of Kurdistan province, local managers, both councils and village managers, take the villagers' opinions and views, especially the rural elites', less into consideration due to reasons such as financial and administrative limitations, as well as poor experience and expertise in performing the tasks assigned to them. One of the interviewees pointed out that: "The village managers do not pay attention to our opinions at all; I had good opinions and ideas for the development of the village, but where is ear to hear." The findings indicated that another cause of the rural elites' migration is the sense of frustration with the conditions of rural management at the regional level. In order to obtain a license to operate in the village, they have to acquire several inquiries from the relevant

institutions which need to spend a huge amount of time and money. Also, most of the managers (Agricultural Jihad, Governorship, District Administration, Natural Resources, Housing Foundation, etc.) are settled in cities, which on the one hand leads to their superficial familiarity with the challenges and capacities of development, and on the other hand, they have no coherent plans for the village development and their decisions are directly involved in the process of rural development. This was one of the challenges of the villages emphasized by the elites. Mentioning some key points of interviewees will help to clarify the above content: "I tried several times to get permission to build a tourist complex on the side of the village road, but the administrative challenges were so great that I gave up altogether. You have to have acquaintances in the offices so that they can consider your request, I didn't have anyone and..."; "We have more than 1500 villages in Kurdistan province, the manager of which institution is the resident of the village, definitely someone who does not live in the village does not know enough about the problems and capacities of the village, and probably urban development for him and his family who live in the city is more important than rural development". The general concept of the above content indicates an organizing theme titled "weak local and regional management" which has been directly and indirectly effective in the rural elites' migration.

#### **4.4. Urban attractions**

The results of the themes analysis showed that the urban attractions are the second overarching theme regarding the causes of rural elites' migration. This overarching theme is derived from four organizing themes and numerous basic themes, which are explained in the following.

**a) Personal improvement-** The findings from the analysis of the interviews revealed that due to the weak services and facilities needed by the elite society in the villages on the one hand and the concentration of various economic and social services and facilities in the cities on the other hand, the rural elites embarked on migration to fulfill their interests and their personal need. Pursuing studying at the university, finding a decent job, employing in the public sector, achieving a better social status, acquiring money and wealth, favorably spending leisure time, finding a favorite spouse have been of these causes. For instance, the interviewees stated that: "I intended to continue my education and my goal was clear, do we have any other way than migrating to the city?"; "I have lived in the city for about 15 years after guidance school, at high school, and university, and

now, due to the conditions and limitations of the village, I cannot return there." The above themes indicates that the organizing theme of "personal improvement" is one of the main causes of elites' migration from the villages, which can be achieved in urban spaces, considering the huge differences between rural and urban areas.

**b) Economic opportunities-** Relatively unfavorable conditions of rural settlements in terms of economic components such as weak financial foundation of households, poverty, seasonal unemployment and temporary jobs, low profitability of economic activity and weak economic infrastructure on the one hand and the existence of more economic capacities on the other hand such as job opportunities and variety of jobs, access to main markets, investment opportunities, higher probability of investment profitability and acquiring revenue in cities have been of the main causes of elites' migration from the village. The fact is that according to the elites' age, financial and educational conditions, it is not possible to attract them in the current economy of the villages or it is confronting great difficulty. Considering the conditions, therefore, the rural elites have chosen the path of migration towards the cities. Regarding the above content, the following key sentence is mentioned: "Do you have any doubts that the conditions for economic activity in cities are better than in villages? The job in my head is such that currently only the urban environment is responsible for it." Accordingly, achieving "economic opportunities" in cities is one of the other organizing themes related to the causes of rural elites' migration.

**c) Social opportunities-** Different social conditions governing the villages including difficult access to people of the same field, difficulty communicating with social groups, lack of schools and specialized laboratories, etc. for the rural elite, who at least spent their academic career in the cities, are in such a way that strengthens their tendency to migrate. The results shows that other urban attractions are basic themes such as improving the level of knowledge and awareness, using training courses and classes, the possibility of communicating with specialists, the possibility of socially communicating with more people, membership in associations and social groups. In this regard, some interviewees pointed out that: "My specialty is political science and I had to come to the city to establish working and research relationships with people in the same field"; "Educated rural people need to establish extensive social connections to benefit from the hard work they endured". The general concept of the above themes indicates the organizing theme of "social

opportunities" in cities, which plays an important role in attracting rural elites to cities.

**d) The use of infrastructures and facilities-** Rural elites who have spent at least their education in big cities have used various urban infrastructures. Since access to most of these infrastructures, namely clinics, hospitals, markets, recreational and sports spaces, public transportation, Internet, etc., faces many restrictions in rural areas, whereas access to these infrastructures are associated with more quantity and quality in urban areas, rural elites have tendency to use them. Also, the existence of numerous industrial and economic infrastructures in cities compared to rural areas has intensified their willing to migrate and remain in cities. For instance, one of the elites has stated that: "It is very difficult for me to give up urban facilities and services, as I have used them for several years and have gotten used to them, urban infrastructures are not comparable to those in villages." According to the above content, "the use of infrastructures and facilities" in cities can be mentioned as an organizing theme that is a subset of overarching theme of urban attractions.

#### **4.5. Presenting the thematic network of the causes of rural elites' migration**

The findings of the themes analysis related to the causes of rural elites' migration showed that two overarching themes including "rural repulsions" and "urban attractions" are involved in the migration process, each of which is derived from several organizing and basic themes. Indeed, the accumulation of rural elites' problems on the one hand, and the attractions of the cities due to the concentration and establishment of various types of services, facilities and infrastructures, on the other hand, have strengthened and intensified the rural elites' tendency and willing to migrate. According to the mentioned contents, the thematic network of the causes of rural elites' migration is illustrated in [Figure 2](#)

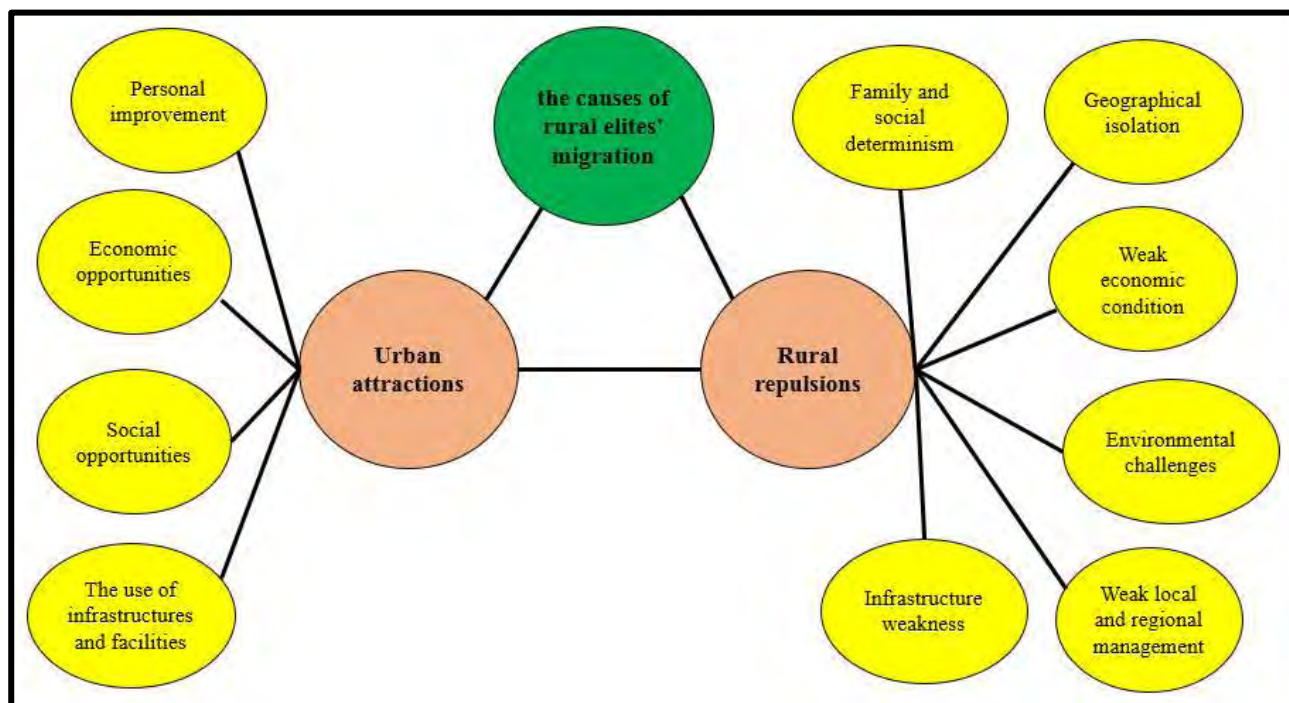


Figure 2. The thematic network of the causes of rural elites' migration

Source: (Research findings, 2023)

**4.6. Themes analysis of elites' participation in rural development**

In the following, the process of attracting elites' participation in rural development has been investigated using thematic analysis (Table 2). Based on the analysis of the interviews, 76 basic themes have been counted, and these themes includes eight organizing themes (Capacity assessment, skill training, strengthening

vitality, raising the level of villagers' demands, promoting innovation, economic investment, managing social challenges and occupying managerial positions) and three overarching themes (empowering villagers, developing employment and entrepreneurship and efficient rural management). The process of acquiring the identified themes is presented in the following.

Table 2. The themes acquired regarding the elites' participation in rural development

Source: (Research findings, 2023)

Overarching themes	Organizing themes	Basic themes
Empowering villagers	Capacity assessment	Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the village, identifying the opportunities and threats of the village, providing a plan for the village development, presenting solutions for the village development, identifying the limitations and legal requirements of the village development.
	Skill training	Holding a training course on processing livestock products, holding a training course on packing livestock products, holding a training course on planting, growing and harvesting agronomic and horticultural crops, holding a training course on electronic marketing, holding a training course on small household businesses, holding tutoring and reinforcement classes
	Strengthening vitality	Holding local conferences, developing parks, green spaces, entertainment centers, etc., holding local competitions, holding local festivals, promoting and updating local customs and traditions
	Raising the level of villagers' demands	Holding a meeting with regional managers (parliament representative, governors), effective bargaining with the officials to pay attention to the villagers' demands, preparing

Overarching themes	Organizing themes	Basic themes
		and compiling a document related to the villagers' needs to present to the institutions in charge of rural development
Developing employment and entrepreneurship	Promoting innovation	Producing idea in the field of economic and social development economic and social development, inviting exemplary entrepreneurs to visit the village to get ideas and models, promoting the use of modern tools and equipment in agronomy and horticulture, promoting modern methods of irrigation, promoting modern methods of animal husbandry. encouraging villagers to take initiative and innovation in their activities, renovating worn-out infrastructures in the village
	Economic investment	Constructing a carpet weaving workshop, constructing a greenhouse for producing mushrooms and vegetables, constructing the processing and packing industries for strawberries, grapes, etc., constructing light and heavy animal husbandry, developing beekeeping, constructing tourist complexes, constructing eco-residence
Efficient rural management	Managing social challenges	Mediating in resolving disputes among villagers, guiding regarding judicial issues, familiarizing villagers with immigration challenges, resolving conflicts related to agronomic and horticultural land among villagers, increasing the level of knowledge and awareness in relation to current society issues such as addiction, divorce, etc.
	Occupying managerial positions	Working in the village as a council and village manager, working as a governor, supervising executive projects in the village (implementation of the Hadi plan), supervising rural development programs (preparing the Hadi plan, establishing micro-credit funds, establishing rural cooperative, etc.)

**4.7. Empowering villagers**

The results of the analyzing the interviews showed that empowering villagers was one of the most important overarching themes identified regarding the elites' participation in rural development acquired out of four organizing themes and several basic themes, each of which is explained in the following.

**a) Capacity assessment-** Since the rural parts of Kurdistan province have enormous capacities to achieve rural development and there is no compiled planning document of the capacities of the villages, the rural elites have realized this challenge and mentioned their capability to accurately assess the capacity of the villages. They have pointed out that relying on their knowledge, awareness and expertise, in various fields such as identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the village, presenting a plan for the village development, providing solutions for rural development and identifying legal restrictions and requirements of rural development, they have a tendency to participate in the process of rural development. Some interviewees noted the following key points: "My field of expertise is economic sciences with a specialization in urban and regional economics, and I am very familiar with the development capacities of the province and with the cooperation of a group of rural elites whom I know, we can compile a comprehensive document regarding rural development"; "Each village has its own features and requires its own planning, and this planning depends on the accurate capacity assessment of the villages". According to the

mentioned contents, the rural elites have mentioned the organizing theme of "capacity assessment" of villages as one of the ways of their participation in achieving rural development.

**b) Skill training-** The findings of the analyzing the interviews revealed that one of the issues emphasized by the rural elites was the low level of skill, the traditionality of the activities and the low level of productivity in the villages. Accordingly, they have believed that they can be effective in improving the skill level of the rural community through holding training courses on processing and packaging of livestock products, planting, growing and harvesting agronomic and horticultural crops, electronic marketing, small household businesses and holding tutoring and reinforcement classes,. Several rural elites have pointed out that: "Most of the villagers' farming and animal husbandry activities are traditional and they should be taught new and necessary skills in order to increase the productivity of the villagers' activities."; "I have a lot of expertise in the process of transplanting fruit trees to increase their productivity, and I have participated in this field with the villagers." The above points show that one of the other organizational themes identified in order to attract participation in the rural development process is "skill training".

**c) Strengthening vitality-** Considering the lack of welfare facilities and services in the villages and the feeling of relative deprivation among them, the rural elites have highlighted that holding local conferences, developing parks, green spaces, recreation centers, etc.,

holding competitions, local festivals and promoting and updating local customs and traditions can increase the sense of vitality among the villagers as their mental health is one of the fundamental principles of rural development and population stability in rural areas. In this regard, some interviewees stated that: " holding various festivals every year, such as the Pomegranate Festival, the festival of Pir Shalyar, etc., has created a sense of gaiety and happiness among the villagers"; "What if different sports, cooking, etc. competitions are held every year among the villagers of each region, with such activities, a good feeling can be created among the villagers". Accordingly, "strengthening vitality" among the rural community is one of the organizing themes considered by the elites in line with their participation in the rural development process.

**d) Raising the level of villagers' demands-** The results of analyzing the identified themes indicated that, from the elites' point of view, the rural people have a poor performance in terms of expressing and presenting their demands due to various reasons such as severe administrative bureaucracy, distance from the cities, little familiarity with the process of administrative affairs. Hence, the elites have noted that through holding a meeting with regional managers (parliament representative, governors), administrative communication with some managers, effective bargaining with officials to pay attention to the villagers' demands and preparing and compiling a document related to the villagers' needs to present to the institutions in charge of rural development, they can effectively convey the villagers' needs and wishes to the institutions and managers in charge of rural development. Accordingly, the following statement was expressed by one of the interviewees: "Perhaps our ability to raise and convey the problems and issues related to villages to the officials is more effective than the villagers. I, along with some friends, held several meetings with the governor regarding rural development and it has had good results". Based on the above content, "raising the level of villagers' demands" is one of the other organizing themes through which rural elites can be effective in the process of rural development.

#### **4.8. Developing employment and entrepreneurship**

The findings of analyzing the interviews illustrates that developing employment and entrepreneurship is one of the other overarching themes identified regarding the elites' participation in rural development, which is divided into two organizing themes and several basic themes.

**a) Promoting innovation-** From elites' perspective, in most villages of Kurdistan province, the level of creativity and innovation, which are the main indicators

of entrepreneurship, is at a relatively weak level. They pointed out that with various ways including producing idea in the field of economic and social development, inviting exemplary entrepreneurs to visit the village to get ideas and models, promoting the use of modern tools and equipment in agronomic and horticultural sector, promoting modern methods of irrigation and animal husbandry, encouraging villagers to be innovative in their activities and renovating worn-out infrastructures in the village can be effective in the process of rural development. Some key points are mentioned to clarify this issue: "My idea is to construct the conversion and complementary industries in the villages of the province, for example in the villages of Noshur (Noshur-e Sofla, Vosta, Olya), despite the production of a large number of strawberries, there are no standard processing and packaging workshops"; "In order to prevent the raw sale of products and crops, modern methods of processing, packaging and marketing should be used, such as the developing and promoting food tourism , etc. since the old methods cannot provide and guarantee their livelihood". Summing up the above, it can be deduced that "promoting innovation" among villagers is one of the organizing themes regarding the elites' participation in rural development.

**b) Economic investment -** This study showed that rural elites have acknowledged the lack and weakness of investment in various sectors of economic development in villages. Investing the public and private sector, it is possible to be effective in the process of rural development in Kurdistan province through constructing a carpet weaving workshop, a greenhouse for producing mushrooms and vegetables, processing and packing industries for strawberries, grapes, etc., and light and heavy animal husbandry, developing beekeeping, constructing tourism complexes and ecotourism residences, etc. In this regard, one of the elites has noted that: "If the conditions are met, I will build some eco-tourism camps on the way to Mount Avalan, where more than 30 people will be directly employed". Accordingly, "economic investment" in the villages is one of the other organizing themes through which the elites' participation can be attracted in the process of rural development.

#### **4.9. Efficient rural management**

Analyzing the interviews illustrated that efficient rural management is the last overarching theme identified in order to attract the elites' participation in rural development, which is acquired of two organizing themes and several basic themes explained in the following.

**a) Managing social challenges-** The investigations showed that in the daily life process of the rural community, there are many challenges namely quarrels among residents, disputes over the ownership of agronomic and horticultural lands and even the ownership of residential areas, divorce, the youth tendency to consume drugs and alcohol and etc. The rural elites have pointed out that in various ways, such as mediating in resolving disputes among villagers, guiding regarding judicial issues, familiarizing villagers with immigration challenges, resolving conflicts related to agronomic and horticultural land among villagers, increasing the level of knowledge and awareness in relation to current society issues such as addiction, divorce, etc. can be effective in the process of rural development. It is worth noting the following points: "Several times, I have tried to resolve the dispute among the villagers over public lands by inviting them to my father's house"; "I always try to make the youth of the village aware of the dangers caused by the use of drugs and alcohol." Accordingly, "managing social challenges" is one of the other organizational themes through which the elites' participation can be attracted in the process of rural development.

**b) Occupying managerial positions-** Optimal and coherent rural management at local and regional levels is a criterion of rural development, which always confronts various challenges. Based on these challenges, the rural elites have stated that through working in the village as a council and village manager, working as a governor, supervising executive projects in the village (implementation of the Hadi plan), supervising rural

development programs (preparing the Hadi plan, establishing micro-credit funds, establishing rural cooperative and etc.) can participate in the process of rural development. The interviewees have expressed the following key sentences: "According to my expertise, experience and knowledge of villages, if I am given a managerial position, I can be effective at solving the challenges of rural development."; "It is better to leave the management of rural affairs in organizations and departments to the rural elites, because compared to a manager who was born in the city, the rural elites have greater knowledge and understanding of the conditions of the villages as well as there is more sense of duty among them.". According to the above contents, "occupying managerial positions" can be mentioned as an organizing theme in order to attract the elites' participation in the process of rural development.

**4.10. Presenting the thematic network of elites' participation in the process of rural development**

The results of the themes analysis related to elites' participation in the process of rural development revealed that they can be effective in the process of rural development through three overarching themes: "Empowering villagers", "Developing employment and entrepreneurship" and "Efficient rural management". Each of the above themes is derived from several organizing and basic themes. Considering the nature of the themes identified, it seems necessary to use the potential of rural elites in order to achieve sustainable rural development. According to the mentioned contents, the thematic network of elites' participation in the process of rural development is depicted in Figure 3.

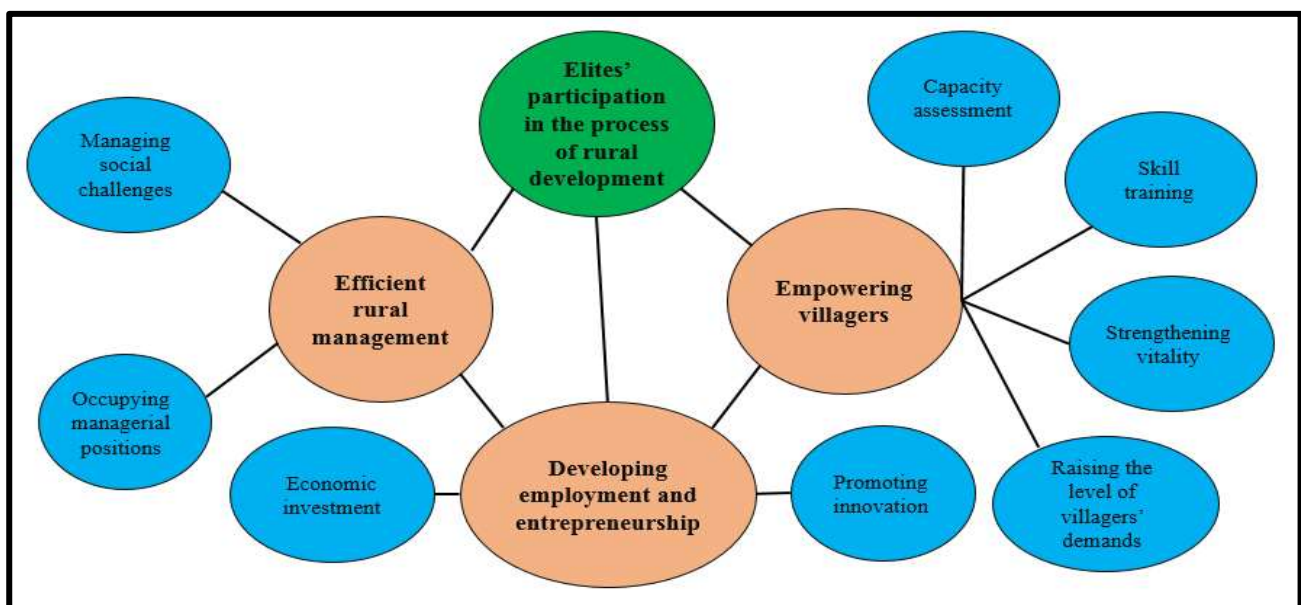


Figure 3. Thematic network of elites' participation in the process of rural development

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

Nowadays, rural communities are facing various challenges such as poverty, unemployment, drought, youth migration, addiction, lack of services and health infrastructure, economic challenge, etc. Nonetheless, these communities have numerous capacities in order to achieve development. One of the most significant of these capacities is the educated rural elites. Overcoming various challenges including poverty, busy life in rural society, lack of facilities, especially in terms of required educational services, geographical isolation of villages and etc., they have acquired high university degrees and are recognized as rural elite. Due to the sense of place belonging to the majority of the rural elite to their hometown, there is always the motivation to serve the villages among this educated class. However, studies indicate that in a situation in which on the one hand, the rural elite is driven off their village owing to various challenges and on the other hand, the conditions are prepared to attract them to the urban spaces, migration from the village might be the most probable decision. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to analyze the causes of elites' migration and how to attract the elites' participation in the process of rural development. Considering the huge gap existed in previous studies, this study was conducted in Kurdistan province, where is confronted with a significant decrease in the percentage of rural population and inhabited rural areas.

The results revealed that various factors are involved in the migration of rural elites which can be divided into two overarching themes namely rural repulsions (including six organizing themes: family and social determinism, infrastructure weakness, geographical isolation, environmental challenges, weak economic conditions and weak local and regional management) and urban attractions (including four organizing themes: personal improvement, economic opportunities, social opportunities, and the use of infrastructures and facilities).

The results of this study are consistent with Taherkhani (2002), Karimi (2012) and Vazzana & Rudi-Polloshka (2019) that noted the identified factors as drivers of rural migration. Having identified the causes of elites' migration from the villages, the ways of attracting their participation in the process of rural development have been

investigated. The findings showed the elites' participation in the process of rural development is possible through three overarching themes namely empowering villagers (including four organizing themes: capacity assessment, skill training, strengthening vitality, raising the level of villagers' demands), developing employment and entrepreneurship (including two organizing themes: promoting innovation, economic investment) and efficient rural management (including two organizing themes: managing social challenges and occupying managerial positions). Sheely (2015), Rostamalizadeh (2019) and Vazzana & Rudi-Polloshka (2019) also pointed out the above identified themes regarding the attraction of elites' participation in the process of rural development. Thus, the results of this phase of study is in line with the aforementioned studies.

According to the obtained results, it can be said that the elites' migration from the villages of Kurdistan province is a widespread phenomenon and this process leads to depriving the villages of an important part of the human capital capacities which can contribute to increase the inequality gap between urban and rural areas. Therefore, firstly, policy makers and rural development planners should put effective and efficient measures to prevent elites from leaving the villages on their agenda. This is achievable by different ways including economic investment of the public and private sectors in villages, providing job opportunities for rural elites, insuring rural elites, strengthening various educational, communication, service, health and infrastructure facilities and transportation in villages in such a way that there is no significant difference between urban and rural facilities and infrastructures. Secondly, necessary measures should be taken to attract elites' participation in the process of rural development. This is also obtainable by various ways such as occupying rural elites in managerial positions related to rural development affairs, allocating bank credits to elites for developing employment and entrepreneurship, considering special economic and research concessions and discounts from the public sector for elites' returning to the villages, establishing an organization or department for the rural elites and obliging the organizations in charge of rural development to apply the rural elites' viewpoints.

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**Authors' contributions**

The authors equally contributed to the preparation of this article.

**Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## نخبگان روستایی؛ دلایل مهاجرت و جذب مشارکت آن‌ها در فرایند توسعه روستایی با رویکرد تحلیل مضمون (مطالعه موردی: استان کردستان)

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### چکیده مبسوط

#### ۱. مقدمه

نخبگان روستایی را می‌توان در عناوین مختلفی مانند نخبگان سیاسی، علمی، رهبران مذهبی و سنتی و غیره، گروه‌بندی نمود. بنابراین از افراد تحصیلکرده روستایی می‌توان به‌عنوان بخشی از نخبگان روستایی یاد کرد. تهی شدن سکونتگاه‌های روستایی از قشر تحصیلکرده و صاحب دانش در رشته‌ها و تخصص‌های مختلف، علاوه بر بازخوردهای منفی و جبران‌ناپذیری در روستاها، پیامدهای منفی اقتصادی، اجتماعی و عاطفی متعددی را به همراه دارد. نخبگان به‌عنوان قشری از جامعه که از سطح دانش، مهارت، آگاهی، تخصص و تجربه بالاتری برخوردار هستند، می‌توانند در ابعاد مختلف فردی و اجتماعی، در فرایند دستیابی به توسعه موثر باشند. به همین دلیل زمانی که مهاجرت از روستا به شهر در میان نخبگان روستایی رخ دهد، باید نگرانی‌ها در مورد آن بیشتر گردد. زیرا این وضعیت می‌تواند ضمن کاهش توانمندی و انگیزه نیروی کار شاغل در روستاها، به اتلاف سرمایه‌های مختلف انسانی و مالی جامعه روستایی منجر شود. شواهد نشان می‌دهد نخبگان روستایی، به‌عنوان قشر پیش‌رو و دارای سطح دانش و آگاهی بیشتر نسبت به اکثر گروه‌های ساکن در روستا، می‌توانند نقش محوری را در راستای دستیابی به توسعه پایدار روستایی ایفا نمایند؛ با این وجود در اکثر روستاهای استان کردستان (و به احتمال زیاد در سایر استان‌های کشور) نخبگان روستایی بنا به دلایل متعددی (اجتماعی، اقتصادی، سیاسی و ...) از روستای خود مهاجرت می‌کنند و اکثر روستاها از فرصت برخوردار از نخبه‌های تحصیلکرده (به‌ویژه نخبگان دارای

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سطوح بالای آموزش عالی) محروم هستند. با توجه به مطالب عنوان شده بررسی و تحلیل دلایل مهاجرت نخبگان روستایی و شناسایی نحوه جذب مشارکت آن‌ها در راستای نیل به توسعه روستایی در استان کردستان، دو مسأله اساسی پژوهش حاضر است.

#### ۲. مبانی نظری و ادبیات پژوهش

نخبگان روستایی را می‌توان بر اساس موقعیت قدرت فردی آنها تعریف کرد. در هر صورت نخبگان روستایی لزوماً نمایندگان رسمی جامعه نیستند، اما از آنها انتظار می‌رود که به‌عنوان نماینده، از منافع جمعی حمایت کنند و در توسعه محلی تأثیرگذار باشند. در یک عبارت ساده می‌توان چنین عنوان کرد که نخبگان روستایی، افراد دارای قدرت محلی در نهادهای اقتصادی، سیاسی، اداری، مدیریتی، مدنی و سنتی در جامعه، هستند. از مهم‌ترین ویژگی‌های نخبگان روستایی می‌توان به اعتبار اجتماعی بالا، سطح دانش و توانمندی بالا، تمایل به داشتن محبوبیت، تمایل به کمک به روستا، داشتن احساس مسئولیت و عدالت، مورد اعتماد توده‌های جامعه روستایی، سطح بالای فرهنگ، حس دموکراسی و حاکمیت قانون اشاره کرد. با این وجود، مهاجرت نخبگان روستایی یکی از مهم‌ترین چالش‌های توسعه روستایی به ویژه در کشورمان است. مهاجرت نخبگان خسارت‌های جبران‌ناپذیری را به سرمایه علمی کشور و مناطق مختلف وارد نموده و یکی از چالش‌های آموزش عالی و وزارت علوم در ایران است و پدیده‌ای است که از دیرباز تاکنون به گونه‌های مختلفی در کشورهای جهان سوم دیده می‌شود و از این رهگذر در این کشورها صدمات جبران‌ناپذیری در بخش اقتصادی،

مطالبه‌گری روستاییان)، توسعه اشتغال و کارآفرینی (شامل دو مضمون سازمان‌دهنده ترویج نوآوری و سرمایه‌گذاری اقتصادی) و مدیریت کارآمد روستایی (شامل دو مضمون سازمان‌دهنده مدیریت چالش‌های اجتماعی و تصدی پست‌های مدیریتی) محقق می‌گردد.

#### ۵. بحث و نتیجه‌گیری

مهاجرت نخبگان از روستاهای استان کردستان پدیده‌ای فراگیر است و این فرایند به مثابه محروم شدن روستاها از بخش مهمی از ظرفیت‌های سرمایه‌انسانی است و این مهم می‌تواند در تشدید شکاف و نابرابری میان نقاط شهری و روستایی موثر باشد. لذا، در وهله اول باید سیاست‌گذاران و برنامه‌ریزان توسعه روستایی با اتخاذ تدابیر موثر و کارآمد، جلوگیری از خروج نخبگان از روستاها را در دستور کار خود قرار دهند. این مهم به شیوه‌های مختلفی مانند سرمایه‌گذاری اقتصادی بخش دولتی و خصوصی در روستاها، فراهم نمودن بستر شغلی برای نخبگان روستایی، تحت پوشش بیمه قرار دادن نخبگان روستایی، تقویت امکانات و زیرساخت‌های مختلف آموزشی، ارتباطی، خدماتی، بهداشتی و حمل و نقل در روستاها، محقق می‌گردد به گونه‌ای که تفاوت فاحشی میان امکانات و زیرساخت‌های شهری و روستایی وجود نداشته باشد. در وهله دوم باید تدابیر لازم برای جذب مشارکت نخبگان در فرایند توسعه فراهم گردد. این مهم نیز به شیوه‌های مختلفی مانند استفاده از نخبگان روستایی در پست‌های مدیریتی مرتبط با امور توسعه روستایی، تخصیص اعتبارات بانکی به نخبگان جهت توسعه اشتغال و کارآفرینی، در نظر گرفتن امتیازات و تخفیف‌های ویژه اقتصادی و پژوهشی از سوی بخش دولتی برای بازگشت نخبگان به روستاها، تأسیس سازمان و یا اداره مختص نخبگان روستایی و اجبار سازمان‌های متولی توسعه روستایی به استفاده از نظرات و دیدگاه‌های نخبگان روستایی، محقق می‌گردد.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** توسعه روستایی، نخبگان روستایی، مهاجرت، تحلیل مضمون، استان کردستان.

#### تشکر و قدردانی

نگارندگان بر خود لازم می‌دانند از همکاری تمامی افرادی که در فرایند مصاحبه‌ها شرکت داشته‌اند، صمیمانه تشکر نمایند.

اجتماعی و فرهنگی به‌همراه داد و جبران آن یکی از دشوارترین کارها برای این قبیل کشورها است.

#### ۳. روش تحقیق

این پژوهش در چارچوب پارادایم تفسیری - برساختی انجام شده است و رویکرد غالب بر آن، تحلیل مضمونی است. تحلیل مضمون یکی از پرکاربردترین روش‌های تحلیل داده‌های کیفی است. برای جمع‌آوری داده‌های مربوط به موضوع مورد بررسی، از مصاحبه‌های عمیق نیمه‌ساخت‌یافته فردی استفاده شده است. به این صورت که ۱۵ مصاحبه عمیق فردی به صورت نمونه‌گیری هدفمند (مصاحبه-های انجام گرفته با نخبگان روستایی مهاجر که دارای تحصیلات کارشناسی ارشد و دکترای تخصصی هستند) با استفاده از روش گلوله برفی انجام گرفته است. مصاحبه‌های مذکور در بازه زمانی چهار ماهه (خرداد ماه تا شهریور ماه سال ۱۴۰۲) انجام شده است و مبنای اتمام مصاحبه‌ها، اشباع نظری بوده است. اشباع نظری معیاری است برای تعیین تعداد نمونه‌ها که براساس آن محقق تا جایی مصاحبه‌ها را ادامه می‌دهد که پاسخ به سؤال‌های عمده تحقیق اشباع شده یا داده‌های جدیدی در فرایند گردآوری داده‌ها تولید نشود. لازم به ذکر است با توجه به عنوان پژوهش، فرایند گردآوری داده‌های از طریق مصاحبه، در دو بخش بررسی اصلی انجام گرفته است. در بخش اول فرایند مصاحبه محققان به دنبال شناسایی مضمون‌های مرتبط با علل مهاجرت نخبگان از روستا بوده‌اند و در بخش دوم، مهم‌ترین هدف شناسایی مضامین مرتبط با نحوه مشارکت نخبگان در توسعه روستایی بوده است.

#### ۴. یافته‌های پژوهش

یافته‌های پژوهش نشان داد دو مضمون فراگیر دافعه‌های روستانشینی (شامل شش مضمون سازمان‌دهنده جبر خانوادگی و اجتماعی، ضعف زیرساخت‌ها، انزوای جغرافیایی، چالش‌های زیست-محیطی و ضعف شرایط اقتصادی) و جاذبه‌های شهرنشینی (شامل چهار مضمون سازمان‌دهنده پیشرفت شخصی، فرصت‌های اقتصادی، فرصت‌های اجتماعی و استفاده از زیرساخت‌ها و امکانات) مهم‌ترین علل مهاجرت نخبگان روستایی هستند. همچنین نتایج نشان داد تحقق مشارکت نخبگان در توسعه روستایی از طریق سه مضمون فراگیر توانمندسازی روستاییان (شامل چهار مضمون سازمان‌دهنده ظرفیت‌سنجی، مهارت آموزی، تقویت سرزندگی، ارتقای سطح

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