

Social and Economic Factors Influencing Developmental Orientation (Case of Study: Residents of Shahr-e Kord City)

Mansour Haghghatian¹

Associate Professor of Sociology, Islamic Azad University, Dehaghan Branch

Received 5 October 2015
Revised 11 November 2015
Accepted 15 December 2015

Abstract: Development is one of the basic and key issues of the social sciences that due to its importance and the particular status that it has in the transformations of human society, it has attracted the serious attention of many scholars. Given the fact that people's attitudes usually influences their actions and behaviors, and also because attitudes are among the important factors that have an impact on development, since negative attitude about the consequences of development can cause people to resist it, therefore it is necessary to study what factors can affect people's orientation towards development. The present study aims to investigate into social and economic factors that may be related to the developmental orientation of the residents of the city of Shahr-e Kord in the province of Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari. The research method employed was survey and data gathering tool was questionnaire. The questions had face validity and their Cronbach's alpha coefficient for reliability was above the 0.7 threshold. The research population consisted of all residents of Shahr-e Kord who were 15 years of age and above, of which, using the Cochran's formula, 384 individuals were selected as the sample. The results showed that the average for developmental orientation was 2.87 of 5. Statistical analysis of the data showed that having external experiences ($t= 4.37$), gender ($t= 5.34$), place of residence ($f= 5.7$), religiosity ($r= 0.18$), educational level ($r= 0.48$), and media usage ($r= 0.36$) were significantly related to developmental orientation.

Keywords: developmental orientation, place of residence, religiosity, education, media usage.

Introduction

The concepts of development, values, attitudes and orientation are among the concepts and issues that have a long precedence in the social sciences and have been among the major scholarly preoccupations of the sociologists from the beginnings of this field. As it relates to the concept of development, the dominant view in sociology has, for a long time, been an objectivist and structural one in which social development was conceived to result from economic and technological changes. But in the past few decades, theoretical and empirical research by scholars such as Anthony Giddenz, Michele Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and others (Ritzer, 2011; JalaePoor and Mohammadi, 2009) has shown that social and human phenomenon are much more complex than that was considered, and that the relationship between the actor and the structure or that between objectivity and subjectivity is a dialectical, complicated, and fluid one. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the relative lack of success of many developmental programs in the third world, which had been implemented without due attention to and concern with the cultural backgrounds of those countries, illustrated that development is not a one-sided issue and that it does not include only economic

¹ Email: mansour_haghghatian@yahoo.com

growth, the reduction of poverty, and the raising of standards of living, but it also concerns the cultural foundations and social relations of a society (Tavasoli, 1994: 26). One of the consequences of these intellectual changes has been an increased attention that has been paid to the culture of development and the way it is understood by the people of a particular society, meaning that the result of this change in approach, has been to conceive of development as a process which requires the continued improvement and growth of material and non-material aspects of a society and its economic and social foundations so as to pave the way of human betterment and perfection. This conception of development considers it to be a dynamic process which closely intertwined with people's attitudes and inclinations (Evens and Stephens, 1998:741). Hence, given the paramount importance of people's orientation towards development, which in many instances derives from their attitudes and values, it becomes necessary to study their values and attitudes toward development. It should be noted at the outset that it is not claimed that attitudes, without the necessary economic and infrastructural backgrounds can bring about development, but it is asserted that since development often brings about changes in behaviors that might seem (at least on the surface) contrary to established values, many people may resist it, therefore it is assumed that development can proceed more smoothly if favorable attitudes and inclinations are also present. Although many different definitions of social development have been suggested, the following one seems better suited to the purposes of this article: Social development seeks to improve the conditions of the people of a society, and to do that, it attempts to change behavioral obstacles, to promote an orientation towards a better ideal, a better attitude, and a better economic situation that can be responsive to social problems of a society (Azkia, 2009: 19). Since the city of Shahre-kord is relatively rich in terms of natural and human resources- there are two relatively large universities and a substantial number of college graduates in diverse academic fields – and it has the potential for much more development than what exists at the present, an investigation into the cultural and social factors that influence their orientation towards development could be worthwhile.

Literature Review

Saraee and Sahami (2009) in an article titled “Studying the Effects of education of women's value orientation towards development (case study: the women of the city of Shiraz)”, which used universalism, attitudes towards globalization, trust, attitudes towards science, rationality, and satisfaction with life as indicators of development, studied their existence among 534 women between the ages of 15 to 45. Their results showed that higher education improves women's attitudes towards globalization and their attitudes towards science, and that this increase was statistically significant. Higher education also improves women's attitudes towards rationality and universalism, but this increase was not statistically significant. Their overall conclusion was that higher education as an independent variable has been able to create some kind of mental and intellectual flexibility towards developmental orientation (Saraee and Sahami, 2009: 5).

Haghghatian and Heydarkhani (2014) in their article “A Study of the Relationships between the components of social capital and Residents' view on urban planning (case of study: the city of Kermanshah)”, using a 380 individual sample of residents who were 18 years of age and above, found that the average for social capital in that city was 3.82 of 5 and that the average for developmental orientation was 3.07 of 5, which indicates a medium level of developmental orientation. Research results also showed that all the components of social capital were significantly related to residents' developmental orientation, such that the effects of social trust ($r=0.477$), social participation ($r= 0.594$), social awareness ($r= 0.214$), social solidarity ($r= 0.179$), and social interaction ($r= 0.369$) were all considerable. All variables together could

explain about 41 percent of the variance of developmental orientation (Haghighatian and Heydarkhani, 2014: 83).

Moeini and ShekarBeigi (2009) in their article titled “studying Iranian Families’ modernity (a research in the city of Tehran)”, drawing on the ideas of Giddens, Simmel, Beck, and Blumer concerning modernity and reflexivity, studied Iranian families’ inclinations towards modernity. Using Sharm’s indices (attitudes towards globalization, egalitarianism, attitudes towards science, democratic orientation, attitudes towards progress, self-determination, attitudes towards civic rights) of modernity, they studied their prevalence among a sample of 665 families in different districts of the city of Tehran. Their research results showed that Iranian families had a positive inclination towards modernity. It was also found that modernity has the most reflexivity in gender attitudes and religiosity had the least amount of reflexivity among Iranian families (Moeini and ShekarBeigi, 2009: 105).

Mohammadian (2005) in his article “Tabrizi Residents’ Opinions towards Development” studied the effects of individuals’ educational status, individual characteristics, economic situation, population, and marital status on social development. His results indicated that individual educational status, economic situation, individual characteristics, and participation in civic institutions were effective in explaining individual’s orientations towards development but there were no significant associations between marital status and gender (as independent variables) and orientations towards development (as the dependent variable). Hence he suggests that such individuals should be nurtured that they can, while keeping their autonomy and independence, be sensitive to the fate of others and the society as a whole. In that regard, he makes the following recommendations: 1) the process of the internalization of values congruent with social development should be promoted through institutions like the family, the media, and the educational system; 2) strengthening the process of political democratization so that governments dedicated to religious democracy and social development can succeed in their programs (Mohammadian, 2005: 247).

Ahmadi (2007) in his research titled “Studying the role of social, economic, and cultural factor the underdevelopment of the province of Mamasani”, looked at the effects of variables such as ethnicity, lack of economic innovation, lack of sufficient financial resources, lack of sufficient investment and economic income on the level of development in the different cities and villages of Mamasani province. His research results showed that variables like type of occupation; level of satisfaction with life conditions, individual’s attitudes towards development; marital status, and ethnicity were significantly related to social and economic development but such variables as individual’s age and monthly income had no significant association with development. On the basis of these results, he makes the following recommendations: 1) since attitudes towards development was significantly related to development, cultural activities like the holding of inter-province conferences should be undertaken to raise awareness about development and factors that can help bring it about; 2) since ethnicity was significantly related to development, it is necessary that awareness programs should be undertaken concerning the detrimental effects of strong tribal identification on national identity and the possible misuses of it that foreign powers can make. Also, educational programs for the children of ethnic groups should be promoted because level of education was also related to under- development.

Since the findings of the different studied reported here indicate that no consensus exists on the variable that might affect development, and the results of some of these studies report a positive association between developmental orientation and development, further explorations of this

issue can help clarify the problems and pave the way for a better understanding of effects that different variables might have on development.

Theoretical Framework

Although development is one of the oldest issues of sociology and many scholars have offered different definitions of it, there is yet no definition on which all theorists may agree with since each of them has looked at development from a particular point of view. For example, Missra, the economist, considers development as a valuable concept which is a multidimensional and human-created concept that has assumed a somewhat ideological aura. Since development is a human creation, in its content and manifestation, it is loaded with cultural elements and implies an organic transformation, because development aims to bring about a fruitful life that has been defined by culture. Therefore, development implies the increasing attainment of cultural values and beliefs, and the following can be said about development: firstly, development is a dynamic process and not a static position; secondly, this process ultimately relates to people's values; thirdly, these values are the values of those people who do not belong to the Western world or any other world (NazarPoor, 1999: 23). Hozelitz believes that development or lack of development of a people depends of their attitudes and their general approach to issues like entrepreneurship, the advancement of science, and the way they try to establish institutions that relate to capital. He suggests that development is a process that not only affects economic relations, but it also influences all the social, cultural, and value system of a society and that it also is, in turn influenced by them (Bonyanian, 2007: 42). Different scholars may also consider different dimensions for development and state that while economic development may refer to the process that transforms a society's social and economic foundations, so that this transformation may result in a reduction of economic inequalities and change that society's patterns of production, distribution, and consumption, political development refers to issues like the institutionalization of democracy, general mobilization, and the spread of civic society, which may result in a more capable political system. Likewise, the major aim in human development is to provide an empowering environment for people so that they have a longer, healthier, and more fruitful life because it is the people that constitute the real resource of the society. Therefore, the fundamental issue for people at all levels of development is to have a long life accompanied with health, and the attainment of knowledge and capability to make use of resources needed for an appropriate standard of living. Furthermore, in this framework of human development, social, economic, and political liberties, and the ability to play a constructive and creative role, and the possession of appropriate personal status and guaranteed human rights assumes paramount importance (Azkia, 2010: 219-222). Compared to other aspects of development, cultural development is a more value-loaded concept and place far more importance on people's non-material needs. Therefore, it is a process through which transformations in the arenas of cognition, beliefs, and values take place; transformations which create new beliefs, new capabilities, and new identities for individuals which could be more congruent to development. In other words, the outcome of cultural development is the removal of cultural traits that are inappropriate for development.

An attitude is a learned and relatively durable inclination and/or predisposition to evaluate an event, a person, or situation in a certain way and to act in accordance with that evaluation. Therefore, an attitude is an orientation, that is, an underlying tendency to respond to something either favorably or unfavorably (Wiggins, Wiggins, and Vander Zanden, 1994: 173). This definition implies that each attitude consists of a cognitive element, an emotive element, and a behavioral element. The cognitive element includes an individual's beliefs concerning a thing or an idea. The emotive element consists of the evaluative dimension that is attached to his/her

beliefs. The behavioral element relates to the disposition of the individual to act in a particular way, which according to Gordon Allport, it is a nervous and mental tendency which is organized through experience and has a relatively instrumental and decisive impact on a person's reactions towards all things and events (Haralambus and Holborn, 2008: 304). Hence, given the definitions that were offered about development and attitudes, development orientation can be defined as an attitude which influences people to have a positive evaluation of development and directs them to behave in such a way that is congruent with development. In the Persian language, the concept of development is usually used interchangeably with the concept of modernization, and usually refers to the changes that underdeveloped countries go through to acquire the characteristics that modern or developed countries have (Azkia and Ghafari, 2009: 85).

The approaches that emphasize the relationship between attitudes and values, on the one hand, and development, on the other hand, mainly draw their inspiration from Max Weber's emphasis on the cultural and attitudinal aspects of human behavior which he describes in his book "the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism". In this work, Weber claims that the prevalence of certain type of values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes- namely rationality, hard work, frugality, delaying of immediate gratification of wants, planning for the future, and the like- paved the way for a certain kind of economic activity- namely capitalism (Ritzer, 2011: 147). In this regard, also drawing on Weber, Talcott Parsons claims that for a society to develop, it needs to replace the norms of "particularism" and "ascription" with those of "universalism" and "achievement" (Turner, 2003: 87). Daniel Lerner in his book, on the basis of cultural diffusion theory and emphasizing that due to the spreading of cultural elements of the western countries in the third world countries, the process of modernization is taking place in those countries, claims that the spreading of mass media, public education, urbanization, and political participation have been the most important variables that have helped this process come about (taken from Shirani, 2007). Inkeles and Smith too claim that the human being has been the starting point in the process of modernization, and suggests that there were two sets of characteristics that defined this new human being. They consider factors like urbanization, education, mass communication, industrialization, politicization, work in factories and like as cultural elements and view the following characteristics as indication of being modern: 1) openness to new knowledge and experience; 2) believing in the freedom of expression and acceptance of differences in opinions; 3) being oriented more to the present and the future rather to the past; 4) having a tendency to organize things and plan ahead; 5) thinking that it is possible to know the world and have respect for science; 6) being disciplined and punctual; and 7) respecting equality and observing the rights of others (). After conducting a relatively comprehensive study, they concluded that the traits that characterize modern individuals can be summarized into three items: a) they are active and aware individuals have a sense of competence; b) they are relatively independent of traditional sources of power and usually make their own decision without letting others interfere into their business; and c) they are willing and ready to experience new things and hear others' opinions. In other words, they are intellectually free and personally flexible.

Therefore, in this research, drawing on the theoretical perspective presented, presuming, on the basis of past research, that there is a congruity, although not a perfect one, between people's attitudes and their behavior (Wiggins, Wiggins, and Vander Zanden, 1994:), the following indices were chosen to indicate developmental orientation: rationalism instead of relying on fate, universalism instead of particularism, future orientation and planning for it, achievement orientation in contrast to ascription, willingness to risk and not be conservative, being thrifty

and not having consumerist orientation, and affect-neutrality instead of placing a high value on affections as a basis of behavior.

Research Method

The research method employed was survey and data collection tool was questionnaire. Independent variables of the study included the following: religiosity, education, having experience beyond the place of residence (external experience), gender, length of stay in the city, ethnicity, monthly income of the head of household, media usage. The dependent variable was development orientation that was measured (through 27 questions) using 7 indicators (rationalism, universalism, future orientation, achievement orientation, willingness to risk, non-consumerism, and affect-neutrality). The questionnaire had face validity and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for reliability of variables (as shown in Table 1) were all above the 0.70 threshold, acceptable for social sciences. The research population consisted of all residents of Shahre-kord city who were above the age of 20, of which, using Cochran's formula, 384 individuals were chosen as the sample. Age 20 was based on the presumption that individuals have had a chance to experience the outside world (through attending university, going to the military service or having had a job elsewhere) so that they can form attitudes independently of their immediate family.

Table (1): Reliability coefficients of variables

Variable	Cronbach alpha
Religiosity	0.88
Media usage	0.83
External experience	0.73
Future orientation	0.77
Non-consumerism	0.81
Achievement vs. ascription	0.76
Rationalism vs. fatalism	0.79
Universalism vs. particularism	0.83
Rationality vs. affectivity	0.79
Risk taking vs. conservatism	0.75
Developmental orientation	0.78

The alpha figures in Table (1) show that the indices chosen to indicate developmental orientation have a relatively high level of internal congruence since all of them are more than 0.70. Table (2) presents descriptive statistics of the respondents on some of the variables.

Table (2): Descriptive statistics of the respondents on some of the variables

variable	Items	frequency	percent
Gender	Male	187	48.7
	Female	197	51.3
Ethnicity	Lor	165	42.9
	Fars	139	36.2
	Turk	80	20.9
Income (in Tumans)	Up to 1 million	52	13.5
	Between 1 to 1.5 millions	161	41.9
	Between 1.5 to 2 millions	104	27.1
	More than 2 millions	67	17.5
	Illiterate	34	8.8

Education	Up to high school diploma	181	47.2
	Up to Baccalaureate	121	31.5
	Up to Doctorate	48	12.5
Place of residence	Urban areas	306	79.7
	Rural areas	78	20.3
Employment	Employed	141	36.7
	Unemployed	87	22.7
	High school student	46	12.0
	College student	38	9.9
	homemaker	72	18.7

As can be seen from the data in Table (2), the majority of respondents are of the Lor ethnic background and the Turk group has the least number of representatives. Also the figures show that more than half of the population has monthly income that is less 1.5 million tumans, which for a city that is the center of a province, does not amount to much. Close to half of the respondents had up to high school education and only 12.5 percent had educational levels above the baccalaureate level, which, again, for a center of province may not be very high. If pursuing an education be considered as an occupation, then a little more than half of the respondents were employed. However, if homemaking does not count as employment, then a little more than 40 percent of the respondents reported to be unemployed, which in any case can be considered to be very high. Table (3) presents descriptive statistics of the indices development orientation and that of some of the independent variables.

Table (3): Descriptive statistics of development orientation indices and some of the independent variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	range	Sample size
Religiosity	3.98	2.2	1.8	384
Media usage	3.67	1.9	2.7	381
External experience	3.19	2.3	3.1	384
Future orientation	2.20	2.78	2.6	383
Non-consumerism	3.16	1.19	1.3	384
Achievement vs. ascription	3.06	2.18	1.8	384
Rationalism vs. fatalism	3.65	2.26	3.1	382
Universalism vs. particularism	2.69	2.37	2.9	381
Rationality vs. affectivity	3.52	1.09	2.8	384
Risk taking vs. conservatism	1.93	2.66	1.9	383
Developmental orientation	2.87	2.23	2.4	384

The figures in Table (1) show that the level of religiosity is relatively high in Shahre-kord because their mean number is nearly 4 out of 5. Media usage is comparatively high and this could be due to the wide spread use of the TV and to some extent satellite TV. Risk taking had the lowest mean, reflecting the conservative attitudes of people which to extent might be due to their relatively low economic status which does not leave much leeway as it concerns financial matters. As can be observed from the data in Table (1), the level of developmental orientation among the respondents is less than the medium level and is relatively low. Although mean of some of the variables favorable to development (media usage, external experience non-consumerism, achievement relative to ascription rationalism, rationality) is all above the mean expected by chance, but the mean of other variables (future orientation, universalism, risk

taking) is below the average expected by chance. The mean for overall development orientation is 2.87 out of 5 which is relatively low.

Table (4): Results of Tests of Statistical Relationships

Variable	Value of the test	Level of significance	Margin of error
Type of occupation	F= 3.14	0.109	0.05
Education	R= 0.48	0.008	0.05
Gender	T= 5.34	0.001	0.05
Place of residence	F= 5.7	0.000	0.05
Media usage	R= 0.361	0.001	0.05
Ethnicity	F= 2.65	0.04	0.05
Income	R= 0.033	0.262	0.05
External experience	T= 4.37	0.001	0.05
Religiosity	R= 0.18	0.006	0.05

The data in Table (4) show that educational level ($r= 0.48$), gender ($t= 5.34$), place of residence ($f= 5.7$), media usage ($r= 0.36$), external experiences ($t= 4.37$), and religiosity ($r= 0.18$), were significantly related to developmental orientation whereas type of occupation, ethnicity, and income did not have a significant association with developmental orientation.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study looked at the relationship between social and cultural variables and attitudes towards development on the presumption that favorable attitudes towards development could facilitate and not impede development. This basic assumption was based on theoretical and empirical research that had sought to investigate this issue but has not, as yet, come to a consensus. The data in this research showed that the overall developmental orientation of the residents of Shahre-kord city is relatively low. The data showed that gender was an important factor in this regard. The mean developmental orientation grade for men was 2.61 and that for women was 3.71, showing that women have a more favorable attitude toward development than men and that this gap is relatively large. Acknowledging that ChaharMahal and Bakhtiari province is a rather traditional province in which the status of women is not very high, and given the fact that in recent years, more of the women of that province have been able to pursue higher education, it seems reasonable that women aspire to new roles and positions that can advance their situation. Media usage was also significantly related to developmental orientation and this could be due the relatively widespread use of satellite television which shows the outside world and thereby can diffuse western modes of life and conduct. In this regard, it could also be noted that the variable “external experience” was also significantly related to developmental orientation. This experience is usually obtained through attending universities and colleges outside the province which also introduces the young to other traditions and ways of life

References

1. Ahmadi, Fayeze. (2007). Ahmadi (2007). "Studying the role of social, economic, and cultural factor the underdevelopment of the province of Mamasani", M.S. Thesis in Sociology. Azad Islamic University- Dehaghan Branch[in Persian]
2. Azkia, Mostafa, and GholamReza Ghafari. (2009). Sociology of Development. 8th edition. Tehran: Keyhan publications [in Persian]
3. Bonyanian, Hassan. (2007). the Culture of Development in Iran. Tehran: AmirKabir Publications. [in Persian]
4. Evens, Peter B, and John D. Stephens. (1998). "Development and the World Economy" in Neil J. Smelser, Handbook of Sociology, NY: Sage Publications
5. Haghghatian, Mansour, and Habeel Heydarkhani .(2014). "A Study of the Relationships between the components of social capital and Residents' view on urban planning (case of study: the city of Kermanshah)", Urban Research and Regional Studies, V. 5, n. 20 [in Persian]
6. Haralambus, Mike, and Martin Holborn. (2008). Sociology: Themes and Perspectives. London: Harper Collins Publishers.
7. JalaeePoor, Hamid, and Jamal Mohammadi. (2009). Contemporary Theories in Sociology. Tehran: Ney Publications. [in Persian]
8. Moeini, Seyed Reza, and Alieh ShekarBeigi. (2009). "studying Iranian Families' modernity (a research in the city of Tehran)", Contemporary Sociology, v. 1, n. 2 [in Persian]
9. Mohammadian (2005) in his article "Tabrizi Residents' Opinions towards Development" [in Persian]
10. NazarPoor, Mohammad Taghi. (1999). Values and Development. Tehran: Culture and Thought research Institute. [in Persian]
11. Ritzer, George. (2011). Sociological Theory. 8th edition. NY: MacGraw Hill
12. Saraee, Hamid, and Susan Sahami (2009). "Studying the Effects of education of women's value orientation towards development (case study: the women of the city of Shiraz)", Contemporary Sociology, v. 1, n. 2 [in Persian]
13. Shirani, Azeem. (2007). "Democratic Attitude and Development", Humanities, University of Seestan and Baluchestan, n. 19 [in Persian]
14. Tavasoli, GholamAbas. (2004). "The Comprehensiveness of the concept of Development and its Relations to Culture", Culture of Development, v. 3, n. 15 [in Persian]
15. Turner, Jonathan H. (2003). The Structure of Sociological Theory. Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Wadsworth Publications
16. Wiggins, James A., Beverly B. Wiggins, and James Vander zanden. (1994). Social Psychology. 5th edition. NY: MacGraw Hill