

Effects of Educational Empowerment on the Performance of the Rural Governors of Behnamir County, Babolsar

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ABSTRACT

The current research is a case study investigating the factors affecting the performance of the rural municipalities of Behnamir County, Babolsar. The main question proposed is as following: what are the factors affecting rural municipalities' performance? Two hypotheses are suggested to fulfill the aim of the study:

1-Rural governors' educational empowerment plays an important role in their performance.

In order for the hypotheses to be tested, a researcher-made questionnaire was filled out by 17 rural governors of the villages of interest. Based on the results, 58.82% of them attached significant importance to educational programs affecting their performance. Moreover, majority of the rural governors stated that the higher the job satisfaction, the better their performance while Thus, the hypotheses were confirmed.

KEYWORDS: Rural municipalities' performance, Educational Empowerment, Behnamir, Babolsar

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural municipalities, as the main organizations for rural management, play an effective role in providing public services and regulating rural life. This organization has permanently interacted with people. That is why villagers' ideas about its activities effectiveness count as an important factor regarding its success (Hafeznia, 2010). Rural management is defined as the comprehensive, generative and integrated way of social, natural and financial resources utilization at different times and locations. In other words, it is the process of regulating and leading rural societies and environment through forming organizations and institutions (Rezvani, 2009). Rural municipalities, as non-governmental institutions, are considered to be independent corporate bodies bearing some responsibilities. Having investigated some villages in Hamedan, Gonbad and Dasht, Taleb (1997) stated that for the executive activities of a village to be performed, the village is required to be managed by one of the villagers. Based on the study carried out by Chuichian & Kalantari (2007) regarding factors affecting Golestan Province's rural municipalities' performance, 59% of the rural municipalities' performance variance was determined by such variables as organizations' cooperation, rural governor's job satisfaction, Islamic Council's cooperation and public contribution. In addition, pervasiveness, integration, self-sufficiency, people-orientation, coordination with other institutions and opportunities continuation culture were reported as requirements of their positive performance. Suami & Proma (1992) who carried out a study titled *Factors Affecting Indian Agricultural Expert's Job Performance in the States of Bangalore and Mysore* suggested that achievement need, age, experience, job satisfaction, job involvement, job independence, job characteristics, organizational climate and commitment, in-service training and job stress had a significant relation with job performance.

Karimi (2007) concluded that rural development would lead to rural municipalities' better performance; there was no monotonic relation between the activities and services offered by rural municipalities and Islamic Councils regarding villagers' satisfaction rate with development, agricultural, social and cultural performance amongst others. In other words, rural municipalities held greater performance considering rural development and winning villagers' satisfaction compared with Islamic Councils. Challenges to interaction between Iranian villages' Islamic Councils and rural municipalities were studied by Kuchakianard (2007). He reviewed the history of the rural governors and rural municipalities, compared the rules and regulations of the two organizations and reported the responsibility conflicts between them. Finally, they were proposed with some solutions to improving their performance. Naeiji (2009) studied roles training rural governors plays in rural development. Based on the results taken through a field study, it was suggested that rural governors achieved to bring positive changes to the education index regarding the education of the villagers of interest compared to the past. Eftekhari (2007) provided different definitions of rural development and management. He also discussed rural management regarding different aspects of sustainable development including economic, social and environmental aspects. Rural management main driving forces as well as their functions and status were finally determined. Rural municipalities, as the supplementary link of rural sustainable development, have been established for about a decade protecting one third of the country population. Their performance is also highly effective on leading and regulating the activities and resources exploitation to satisfy villagers' needs. Furthermore, they are considered as a turning point in the history of rural management. Thus, investigating factors affecting their performance might lead to their performance improvement.

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2. METHODOLOGY

This is an applied and descriptive-analytical study regarding its aim and methodology, respectively. Data gathering was conducted through both infield (library research) and field methods (questionnaire). Behnamir geographical coordinates are as following; latitude: 52. 49. 54 E, longitude: 36.39.59 N. It covers 1200 square km located 7 meters above the Caspian Sea level and 22 meters below open water. The neighboring cities are Qaemshahr, Juibar and Sari; Babol and Babolsar in the east, south and west, respectively. It also shares a border with the Caspian Sea in the north. The area is placed on the sediments and recent alluvium (Quaternary). According to geological investigation, it was part of the Caspian Sea system related to Alpine orogeny and was repeatedly influenced by sea level changes during different geological eras. The area is also located in the structural geology zone of Gorgan-Rasht.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education

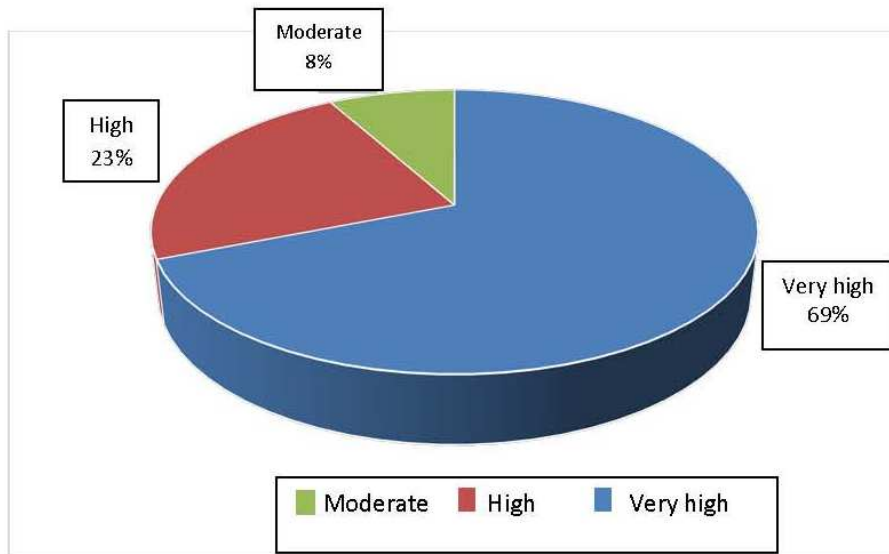
As it is indicated, 94.12% of the rural governors believed that the effect of education on their performance was very high and high (Table 1 % Figure 1).

Table 1. The effect of education on rural governors' performance

Education and performance rate	Frequency	Percent
Very high	12	70.59
High	4	23.53
Moderate	1	5.88
Low	0	0
Very low	0	0
Total	17	100

Source: Author, 2014

Fig. 1. The percentage of education effect on rural governors' performance



Source: Table 1

Active participation in training courses

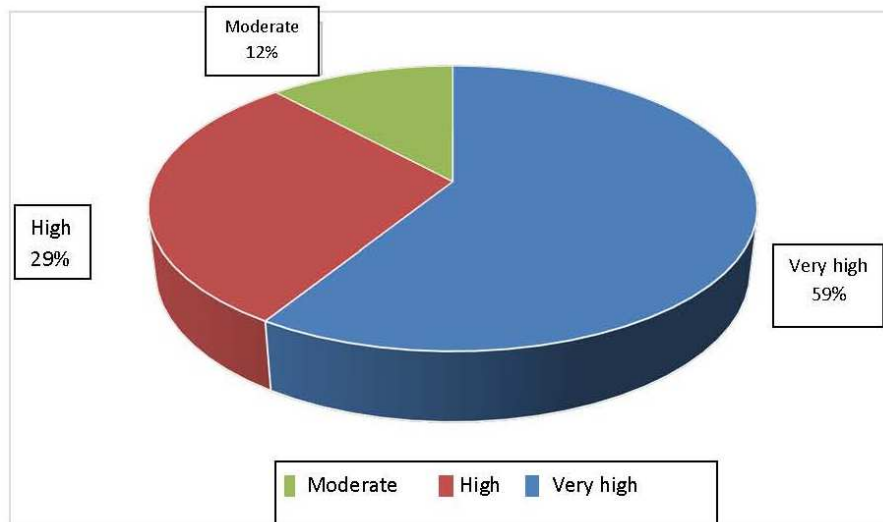
Based on the information presented in Table 2 and Figure 2, active participation in training courses had a very high and high effect on rural governors' performance (88.23%).

Table 2. The effect of active participation in training courses on rural governors' performance

Active participation rate in training courses	Frequency	Percent
Very high	10	58.82
High	5	29.41
Moderate	2	11.76
Low	0	0
Very low	0	0
Total	17	100

Source: Author, 2014

Fig. 2. The percentage of the effect of active participation in training courses on rural governors' performance



Source: Table 2

Rural governors' educational empowerment positively affects their performance.

Based on the information presented in Table 7-4, active participation in training courses had a very high and high effect on rural governors' performance (88.23%).

Table 2. The effect of active participation in training courses on rural governors' performance

Active participation rate in training courses	Frequency	Percent
Very high	10	58.82
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Moderate	2	11.76
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Total	17	100

Source: Author, 2014

Rural governors' educational empowerment will result in the following:

- 1- Efficiency improvement and educational productivity promotion
- 2- Assisting rural governors with independent learning
- 3- Providing suitable conditions for the knowledge cycle, considered to be more important than knowledge creation, in rural municipalities
- 4- Assisting rural governors in nurturing their creativity via self-learning
- 5- Assisting the change from teacher-centered to student-centered learning through regulating learning process
- 6- Training rural governors regarding their objectives and needs
- 7- Improving the relation among rural governors using other rural governors' experiences
- 8- Enhancing the accuracy and clarification in rural governors' activities
- 9- Increasing incomes and reducing costs

Creating better feelings in cooperation with people, villages' Islamic Councils and the government, reconsidering decisions and implementing villages' development plans

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