

Analysis of the Female-headed households' situation

a case study of Female-headed households in Iran

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Abstract-the current condition of the female-headed households in Iran and the world is dependent to the numerous factors. The research method of this study is survey and its statistical population is the female-headed households in Mazandaran province. The sample size is determined 2792 people. The results of the factor analysis test show that these factors, according to priority, were of the most affecting components and factors on the condition of these female in Mazandaran province: Socio-cultural conditions: 19.16%, economic conditions: 14.72% , entrepreneurship conditions: 13.06% and welfare conditions: 12.46%.

Keywords-female-headed households; Socio-cultural; economic; entrepreneurship; welfare

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a case study of Female-headed households (FHHS) in Mazandaran province that the female-headed households are of the hurted groups of the society. Sometimes the factors like divorce, the husband's death or addiction, his disablement, being abandoned by emigrant or careless men, make this wide range of the society more hurted. According to the formal statistics of the Iran country, today the female, headed 9.4% of Iranian households [1]. Unfortunately, in our present country, the female's life after leaving husband (for the reasons of death, divorce, etc) often confronts with some problems and dangers; some of them are heading children alone and sometimes with difficulty, economic problems, living alone coupled with depression and disappointment. Also, wrong attitude of the society towards divorced and widow female in absence of their husbands, makes numerous problems for them in social relations and attendance in the society. Thus, we pose the questions: "What are the sociocultural, economic, entrepreneurship and welfare conditions of the female-headed households?" some other questions of this study are: how is the state of the female-headed households regarding to socio-cultural, economic, entrepreneurship and welfare parameters? And what kind of findings will show secondary analysis of these parameters? What strategies can be offered to the female-headed households to confront with economic, socio-cultural and welfare conditions? So, the conceptual and methodological focus of this study is discussion and analysis towards these questions and finding some answers for them.

The paper is organized in four main sections. The first describes the context and the second outlines the methodology of the study. The third presents the major finding; while the fourth section offers discussion and conclusions.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Experiential records

Review of research done in the field of economic problems, social and cultural female-headed households and library study shows that valid research in this area is very limited. Range of problems of economic, social and cultural which accept eliminate the presence of family roles for men and the consequences resulting from the subject that in recent years, some research have been allocated to efforts and scientific studies.

"The study of the state of the widow and patron less female in Ardebil province and evaluation of the function of related departments as well as organs in regard to providing services for them" is the title of the research which is done, during 1996-97 [2]. According to the results of the study, these cases have been studied: Social and welfare problems of patron less female, crimes quantity and having relief as well as welfare services. In addition, some suggestions and strategies have been offered in order to improve life conditions of widow and patron less female and prevent their social damages. The result of a research in 2001 by Fateme Rezai Also reveals that: 96% of the female-headed households have low education; 50% of these female have low jobs; 34% have semi-important jobs; 16% do not have a job; 64% have low income and 24% do not have income. 80% of these families have middle and low social-economic status. The reasons for female's heading were in this way: 32% because of the husband's death, 22% the man's illness or disablement, 18% the man's imprisonment, 12% divorce and 16% for other reasons [3]. Most of the families believe that the aid by welfare department is not enough [3]. The results of the project "The study of psychological-social damages in female-headed households" by Zohre Khosravi in 2001 shows that the most important economic problems of these female are unawareness for management of economic affairs of the family, negative social attitudes towards the woman-headed household, concerns for the future of the children, and having different opposing roles [4].The results of the

research "The study of the success in Self-contained and entrepreneurship plans of Relief Committee for developing and fortifying suitable entrepreneurship for the female-headed households in Semnan province" by Dustmohammadi during 2002-2003 are: giving self-contained loans has provided suitable job opportunities for the female-headed households [5]. The most aid has been given through loans to buy primary materials for job requirements. Providing technical and professional instructions by Relief Committee has been useful for establishing and fortifying suitable job opportunities for the female-headed households. Holding instructional and productive workshops has been very useful for establishing and fortifying job opportunities for the female-headed households. Also giving loans for self-contained area has been useful for establishing and fortifying job opportunities in the female-headed households. Generally, the results and findings of the researches implied that the problems of female-headed households have different perspectives and recently, these problems have been increased. But, social-cultural problems have had notable importance.

B. To Explain Concept and Status of the female-headed households

According to the sociologists, the expression "head of the family" is a descriptive term and the head of family is someone who has notable power comparing to other members of family. Usually head is the oldest person in the family and he or she undertakes economic responsibilities of family [6]. According to the welfare organization, the female-headed households are the female who undertake material and intellectual livelihood of themselves and family members [4]. In one classification, the female-headed Households have been divided to some main groups: First group, families that do not have a man primarily and female because of the husband's death or divorce have been widowed or the girls who have not marry and live alone and undertake the responsibility of the family. Second group, families that the man primarily for these reasons is absent: emigration, being lost sight, hidden or prisoner, being soldier, etc. In these families, the female are forced to prepare livelihood of themselves and sometimes their children. Third group, the families that the man is in the family, but because of being unemployed, disablement, addiction, being soldier, etc. has no rule for providing the livelihood of the family and essentially the female undertake the responsibility of their life and sometimes their children. On the other hand, the study of the family developments in different parts of the world implies that the number of the families headed by female comparing to the whole population have been increased in the past 30 years. Some of the main reasons for this increase are divorce, increasing the age of female comparing to men and thus female's wideness, population and social factors, the emigrants because of the economic, environmental and political crisis, and the change of cultural patterns [7].

C. To explain theoretical views of the female-headed households

Since yet it has not been proposed a comprehensive theory for explaining problems of the female-headed households and each of the existing theories have addressed specific variables and perspectives of the research, so we need to select a combination of views for theoretical sufficiency, understanding and explaining these Kinds of problems. On the other hand, social and human entities have multidimensional property. For this reason, choosing a specific theoretical approach for study of these entities is difficult and sometimes impossible. Meanwhile, according to Gidens' interpretation, none of the studied theories provide a comprehensive explanation for economic, cultural, and social problems of female-headed households. These theories have interference in some respects and in some respects, they can combine together to provide a reasonable understanding of the main dimensions of the female-headed households [8]. So, this study tries to get a better cognition and explanation for dimensions of the life in the female-headed Households, by optimal selection of related and appropriate theories. In the field of psychology, the problems of the female-headed households are defined and explained by reference to the personal and psychological factors and variables. Adams, Sybil, summer and other psychologists believe that the female-headed households by accepting different roles confront with a series of problems like stress, psychological illnesses and depression [6]. In the field of sociology and social sciences, the experts' views provide proper grounds regarding to the problems of the female-headed households. The adherents of the theory of feminist's poorness believe that the female-headed households confront with problems like: having not access to suitable job opportunities, lower levels of education among these female and their children, committing more crimes by the children and poorness in different dimensions Of other properties of the families headed by female is that this group of female do not have access to high level jobs [9]. In other words, the female-headed households often are unemployed or have marginal, semi time, informal and low income jobs [7].

But, constructional-functional view, with opinions of Parsons and Dorkheim, believes that lock of one of the spouses, especially man, cause disorder or decrease in roles of the family and probably the family will be disorder. According to this theory, the families headed by female are in contrast with natural and traditional form of the families (With parents) and indeed, the appearance of this kind of families is considered as a deviance [8]. Also, the exponents of the classical theory, first, they believe that regarding to the female-headed households, being in hurt and poorness is a common situation. Second, they attribute the real reason of this situation to unequal economic system, i.e. capitalism [10].

Generally, according to the existing theoretical bases regarding to the problems of the female-headed households, we can provide a proper theoretical model and in this way, we can assume that the problems of this group are affected by some factors:

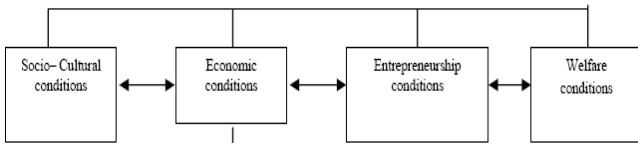


Figure 1. Affecting factors in the status of the female-headed households

III. METHODOLOGY

Since this study tries to discover data and or information by which, variables can be described and explained, so it is unexperimental regarding quality and in regards of methods, called survey method and of the kind of discoveries descriptive researches. The statistical society of this study is the female-headed households residing in Mazandaran province that amounts to 30000 people. Also the sample size according to the number of the female-headed households in the province and by Cochran formula is determined 2792 people.

The number of the female-headed households in all 16 cities has been determined in the way of classified sampling and then the number of the respondent female according to the list of the female-headed households has been selected in the way of the simple accidental sampling.

The tools for gathering required data was the questionnaire made by the researcher. Also, in this study, the method of cronbach's Alpha has been used for evaluating reliability of the tools. At first, the questionnaires have been done in a group of 25 people and then by cronbach's Alfa, internal equal coefficient of the questions related to the different scales of the questionnaire has been calculated which respectively they were:

Socio-Cultural conditions, welfare conditions, economic and entrepreneurship conditions which respectively were equal with 0.85, 0.81, .80 and 0.75. In order to determine the validity of the tools, the method of formal validity has been used and consulted with experts and researchers of social & cultural subjects. Then after appreciation of the questionnaires by those experts, they have been completed among the statistical sample.

In order to analyze the data, the statistical tests of factorial approval analysis (in order to give a new classification for the variables) as well as Freidman's non-parametric test (in order to rank the problems of the female-headed households) have been used.

IV. FINDINGS

Usually, in social and economic researches because of the work's quality and the scale of the evaluated variables, the researcher tries to decrease data and on the other hand, make a new structure for his / her data. These are done for better and more accurate analysis of the data and to reach more scientific results and meanwhile more applied. The statistical method placed in SPSS software to reach this aim, is Q-Type Factor Analysis test, 4 factors have been made of the total questions.

In this way socio-cultural, economic, entrepreneurship and welfare factors which had been considered as the main problems of the female-headed households in theoretical fig1, these titles are; the factor of socio-cultural, the factor of economic, the factor of entrepreneurship and welfare factor.

So, the first to 4th factors according to priority, have determined in total 59.4% of variance and changes of the variables affecting the status of the female-headed households in Mazandaran Province. These factors according to priority are: the factor of the social- cultural status (19.16%), the factor of the economic status (14.72%), the factor of entrepreneurship (13.06%) and the factor of the welfare condition (12.46%).

These factors have been classified in 4 groups according to their quality and the amount of their factorial charge.

Also, in order to rank the main factors & indices affecting the problems of the female headed households; Freidman's non-parametric test has been used. The results show that with 0.99 insurance and the error less than 0.01, there is a meaningful statistical difference among every one of the main factors and indices affecting the problems of the female-headed households. The mean grade of socio-cultural factor (5.1), the factor of economic conditions (4.9), the conditions of entrepreneurship (3.8) and the conditions of welfare conditions (3.1), according to the priority, show notable effect & share of the abovementioned factors and indices to the current condition of the female-headed household in the Mazandaran province.

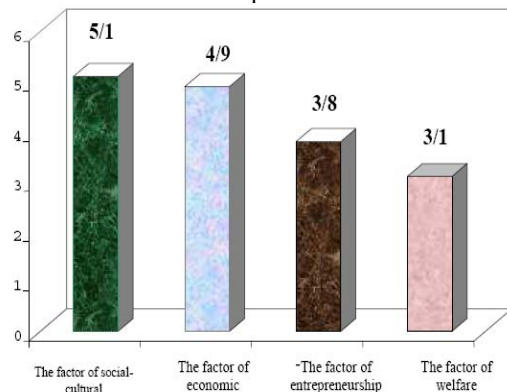


Figure 2. The ranking of the main problems affecting current condition of the FHHS in the Mazandaran province

V. DISSCOSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall, as we note in the results & findings of the research, the socio-cultural problems of the female-headed households, according to the importance, were in the 1st place among all the problems of the female-headed households. So we can conclude that we will never see a healthy and intact society unless we construct a proper cultural & social ground in the society on the other hand, the element and item of education of different dimensions (theoretical & skilled) has been ignored among the female-headed households and the measures by the related foundations & organizations have been low and periodical. When we can think to the employment of the female-headed

households that we would provide bases, principles and conditions of work and entrepreneurship. So, the basis of all economic discussions & problems of the female-headed households related to their lack of self-confidence and the primary teachings (whether formal or informal). It is in a way that they are of the low education group, of the society meanwhile; a factor called entrepreneurship has been emerged from the factor analysis structure. In this way the results showed that low self-confidence and lack of self-believing among the female-headed households has led to the fact that their economic dependence to their husbands make very improper economic conditions after self-heading and thus they do not have relations with any kind of department and organization, do not have the primary power & capital for entrepreneurship & even they do not have the necessary power & spirit for entrepreneurship.

The welfare factor as the 4th factor also shows that the female-headed households regarding to the primary requirements of the life have been in the worst possible conditions. In a way that they do not have proper financial & food conditions and because of the lack of financial afford, their children do not have access to the most of the necessary formal & informal teaching. Even some of the female-headed households because of being unaware of the law cases, are forced to work in the worst condition and have been engaged to some low income works in home without any kind of support by the related organizations and foundations.

According to what is said, in sum some of the most important factors for emerging of the problems of the female-headed households in the Mazandaran province are in this way:

- The lack of positive attitude for the second marriage among the female-headed households.
- The marginal conflict with the husband's family & the family of the married children & being abandoned with many problems.
- The lack of power to provide the children's financial and material needs.
- The lack of emotional-spiritual patron for the life course and thus emerging many kinds of depression, illnesses for these female.
- Unsafely of the society an increasing growth of the concerns & problems specific to the female-headed households.
- The problem of access to a proper job with regards to not having enough skill and problems of specific social relations.
- Not having enough skill for cooperation between provision of the family's livelihood and education of the children. This makes to emerge some decreases in moral & social education of the children & these female can not support their children in the problems and as a result, the continuous relations with children decreases.
- The lack of the necessary, continuous supportive mechanisms by the government & the country's executive organs.

In general, to solve the problems of the female-headed households in the Mazandaran Province of Iran country, we can refer to the below strategies:

- 1) *To define the share of the female-headed households in executive laws in supportive cases & priorities.*
- 2) *To make culture and to give education to the families for supporting the female-headed households and give responsibility to these female with supports of father-in-law, law head, etc.*
- 3) *To provide job equipment and to find some jobs in accordance with different ages of the female, in regards to the specific conditions of having no head in families, to find the talent, of these female in order to provide employment and to decrease their social & cultural problems by: amusement & filling spare times, increase of self-confidence, to provide life expenses and to increase the family's financial stores & finally member by the social consultants in the Mazandaran province.*
- 4) *To give the necessary teaching to the female-headed households in the grounds of entrepreneurship skills regarding courses & workshop instructional methods in applies & executive from in the localities.*
- 5) *Education & support of high income home jobs like making different kinds of local foods and other skills specific to cooking as well as sewing & handicrafts in the form of home workshops and also early output foundations & so selling these products in entrepreneurship markets in different areas of the cities as a factor for taking tourist, and even exporting these products with proper packaging to the other cities of the country and the countries that have a good market for selling these home products.*

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