

# Journal of Rural and Community Development

## Geographical Perspective on Gender Relations in Rural Areas: A Comparative Study in North and West of Iran

**Author: Fazileh Dadvar-Khani**

**Citation:**

Dadvar-Khani, F. (2015). Geographical perspective on gender relations in rural areas: A comparative study in north and west of Iran. *The Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 10(2), 63-77.

**Publisher:** Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.



**BRANDON  
UNIVERSITY**  
Founded 1899

**Editor:** Dr. Doug Ramsey

**Open Access Policy:**

This journal provides open access to all of its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. Such access is associated with increased readership and increased citation of an author's work.



# **Geographical Perspective on Gender Relations in Rural Areas: A Comparative Study in North and West of Iran**

**Fazileh Dadvar-Khani**

University of Tehran

Teheran, Iran

[fazileh.kahni@gmail.com](mailto:fazileh.kahni@gmail.com)

## **Abstract**

Today, for a better understanding of rural features, we need a deeper understanding of our rural areas where social and gender relations are well understood. The goal of this comparative study is to identify the effect of geographical variation on creating gender identity and female participation in rural areas. To achieve this goal, two geographically different rural locations were examined in Iran—the Langroud Township in the North, and the Paveh Township in the West of Iran. The statistical population of the study were women and men who live in these rural areas and the data was gathered through a questionnaire. The results indicate significant differences in many aspects of the outlook between women and men in these two studied areas, towards women's social rights and duties regarding their participation in the economic and social activities.

Keywords: gender relations, rural areas, women's participation, men's attitudes, women and agriculture, Iran

---

## **1.0 Introduction**

Recently in geographical thought, it was perceived that the village is an atmosphere bounded in special place with a set of economic and physical circumstances; however this mentality should be revised (Dadvar-Khani, 2012). For a better perception of rural space we need a deeper understanding of social and gender relations which are the result of geographical and historical situation.

Rural areas, like other geographical areas, are highly gendered spaces; all the behaviors and actions reflect attitudes, beliefs, and opinions concerning the status, role, and responsibility of both sexes.

However, the meaning and purpose of “gender” are highly contested, and open to interpretation by policy-makers, consultants, and practitioners (Ferguson, 2010). The incorporation of “gender” into development policy has been contentious for feminists as certain elements of feminist politics have been adopted, while others have been sidelined (Perrons, 2005). Meanwhile “gender” is not a constant concept; it differs from time to time and in various geographic spaces.

Iran is a large country with many differences between and within regions; there are more than 65,000 villages which are mainly involved in agriculture and livestock. These economic activities play a major role in the production of goods for the domestic and foreign markets. Compared to developing countries, the Iranian population has rapidly changed from being predominantly rural to being predominantly urban.

Due to the strong cultural customs in the rural areas of Iran women carry traditional roles, although these roles are affected by environmental factors. Also, the development process has caused many changes in social relations in rural areas. These changes are more significant to a woman's role and status. For example, mechanized work has been considered as work for men so the mechanization of agriculture has led to the exclusion of women from agricultural activities and workforce.

Therefore, to understand how gender relations are affected by geographical variations, gender analysis strongly is needed. This can help planners and policy makers to better recognize the real need and performance of different rural regions.

By definition, gender analysis refers to the variety of methods used to understand the relationships between women and men their access to resources, their activities, and the constraints they face relative to each other. Therefore gender analysis is an essential component of socio-economic analysis. A comprehensive socio-economic analysis should provide information on different conditions that women and men face in a geographical environment, and the different effects that policies and programs may have on them; it is essential in ensuring that the different needs of both women and men are met. A gender perspective focuses on the reasons for the current division of responsibilities and benefits, and its influence on the distribution of rewards and incentives. An understanding of the socio-economic and gender relations is an integral part of policy analysis, and is essential in creating and implementing effective development co-operation initiatives. This can provide an understanding of the different impacts that legislation, cultural practices, policies, and programs can have on women and men and their access to and control of resources. When such information is available, it can be applied to develop appropriate strategies to achieve gender equality and effective participation of both sexes in the process of rural development.

Rural areas reshape themselves, and are reshaped through the vagaries of the global economy; layering on to existing social and economic relations and cultural meaning that have particular contours and tenacity in the rural (Pini & Leach, 2011).

The structure of society is the most important factor in the redefinition of a place. In modern geography, environmental, economic, social, and location phenomenon make up specific unique areas, in which place, person, time, and conscious action could constitute a unity of the place. As Massey argues "there are other levels at which space, place, and gender are interrelated: that is, in their very construction as culturally specific ideas in term both of the conceptual nature of that construction and of its substantive content —and in the overlapping and interplaying of the sets of characteristics and connotations with which each is associated" (Massey, 1994; Massey, 2005). Particular ways of thinking about space and place are tied up, both directly and indirectly, with particular social constructions of gender relations. Due to geographic variations different livelihoods are formed that are reflected in land use and cultivation patterns. Inevitably it creates stereotypes about roles of women and men in a family that have an impact on social relations and human behaviors. Therefore, it is expected that any two geographically different rural districts create a special gender relation which are different in nature and modes of operation.

So, to examine the hypothesis of the research we needed two different geographical regions with variation in livelihood and cultural aspects. For this purpose, two geographically different rural areas have been chosen in this research. The first area is the Langroud rural district in North of Iran with a

humid climate and domination of agricultural livelihood, and the second area is the Paveh rural district in the West of the country with a mountainous and arid climate region which is dominated by livestock activities.

This research has been designed to figure out how the different geographical space, which shapes different livelihood and social relation, has effected the emergence of special gender relations. The gender relation in this research has been examined by perception of rural women and men, in regard to women's right and duties in families and society. Also, this research is going to clarify how this perception affects women's participation in these two areas.

## **2.0 Rural Space and Women's Work**

Over the last two decades, there has been considerable research on rural women in developed and developing countries, documenting their contribution to the farm economy as well as the change and diversity of their work and life situations (Brandth & Verstad, 1993; Burg & Endevelde 1994; Whatmore, Marsden, & Lowe, 1994).

Rural women share abundant responsibilities and perform a wide spectrum of duties in running the family, maintaining the household, attending to farm operations, tending domestic animals, and engaging in rural artisan work and handicrafts. (Momsen & Townsend, 1987; Dadvar-Khani, 1996; Brydon & Chant, 1989; Ozbay, 1990; Moghadam, 1993, 1996; Sharoni, 1997; Prorok & Chhokar, 1998; Reed, 2003; Kaur, Malkit, & Sharma, 1991; Unnevehr & Stanford, 1985). As farming has declined in importance as an occupation for women, rural women today engage in many other kinds of income generating work, (Brandth & Haugen, 1997) such as services and industrial production. As Bock and Shortall have shown in their research, where a woman's acknowledged contribution is greater (e.g., earned income), they appear to have more access to resources and play an active role in the family decision-making. But, as it has presented in some research about rural women in developing countries like Iran, in the absence of alternative work women are excluded from economic activities. This affects their status in the society and the family, and changes the gender relations in rural areas (Dadvar Khani & Ahmadi, 2009; Hajyloo, Fattaney, & Davdar-Khani, 2008). Also, a growing body of literature has analyzed the ways in which patriarchal ideologies shape unequal gender relations and identities in farming families. The contradictions and tensions in the ways in which farmwomen deal with the processes of change and the diversity of their identities have been particularly emphasized in many researches (Alston, 1995; Argent, 1999; Grace & Lennie, 1998; Shortall, 1992; Leckie & Leckie, 1993; Naples, 1994; Kteather, 1996). Indeed, both women who work off-farm and on-farm are still responsible for taking care of the children and domestic works, as well as contributing to their husband's agricultural labour and the administrative works at the farms (Berlan-Darqu e, 1988; Symes, 1991; Stratigaki, 1988; Whatmore, 1991).

Meanwhile, feminist researchers have become aware of the diversity within the category 'women' and there is an increased acknowledgement that the identities and experiences of women are expressed in many different ways (Saugeres, 2002, Brandth 2002, Brandth & Haugen, 1997, Moss & Al-Hindi, 2008). Due to the various social, economic and cultural conditions of rural space, women, as surrounded by these conditions, do not form a homogeneous group. In her research about women's economic participation in developing countries, Boserup (1970) emphasized the characteristics of the diversity of women's participation in various economic structures.

Pini and Leach (2011) argue that globally rural areas, have been subjected in recent decades to change taking place at an unprecedented pace and with dramatic consequences for reshaping the rural.

Thus, in Iran, same as other countries, the geographic factors and existing subcultures' perspective can interpret women's status and their social and economic participation. Therefore it shapes a special gender relation and reproduces it over time.

### **3.0 Gender Relations in Rural Areas**

There is a widespread agreement that even though the wider processes of agricultural and rural restructuring in the West led to changes in the gender relations, farmwomen are mostly marginalized from agricultural productions (Barthez, 1986; Berlan-Darqué & Gasson, 1991; Buttel & Gillespie, 1984; Brandth, 1995; Canoves, Garcia-Ramon, & Solsona, 1989; Gasson, 1992; Lagrave, 1987; Liepins, 1996; Leckie & Leckie; Sachs, 1983; Shaver, 1991; Shortall, 1994; Symes, 1991; Kteather, 1996; Whatmore, 1991). Bryant uses the concept of "Rural idyll". As she discusses in her book the rural idyll is a dynamic concept that include the centrality of nature, community cohesion, safety and physical gains associated with "outdoor" lifestyles ,harmony, permanence, security, inner strength as well as family values, community cohesion, and an emblematic nationhood (Bryant, 2011). Francis (2000) posits that households with different kinds of livelihoods show different kinds of relations between women and men, and that changing opportunities for constructing a livelihood may alter the terms on which women and men attempt to gain access to different resources, and shift household relations between dependence and interdependence. Meanwhile, Butz and Berge (2002) argue that men need to be aware of their masculinity as a factor that has enabled them to gain particular privileges. Also, Foroutan from the social perspective has investigated the generation gap in gender roles between females in Iran. He shows that particular changes in female education , marriage pattern and their fertility's behaviour and occupation have led to emerge and extending of the generation gap (Foroutan, 2011). Also, Little (1987), in her study on gender relations in rural areas, focused on the importance of these relations in the structuring of theoretical perspectives in rural geography. She pointed to popular debates about the nature and importance of women's domestic roles and patriarchal systems which deal with the formation of these roles. She concluded that the characteristics of rural areas, particularly the size, accessibility, and limited access to resources, along with the direction and strength of their ideology, have remarkable impacts on gender roles and gender relations. In other words different kinds of livelihoods create different kinds of pressures on household relations with implications for the extent to which household members are interdependent, the relative power of women and men within the household, and for household stability (Bock and Shortall, 2006: 32). Brandth (2002:190) argues that earning their own money turns women into more self-assured, more visible and autonomous subjects.

Simultaneously Arku and Arku (2005), in their research, examined the extent that development constructs, particularly dependency theory and globalisation can explain the cause and effect of existing gender relations in developing countries with emphasis on rural households. These theoretical constructions are generally used to examine issues such as gender roles, the creation of unequal gender relations and vulnerabilities to poverty, as well as the complexities surrounding addressing rural development challenges. The conclusion is that the dependency theory and globalisation can largely explain what we see within gender relations today. However, they may not necessarily provide the viable

solutions for gender inequities. Various studies reveal how masculine definitions of participation, development, and innovation not only restrict women's benefits from development policies and tools, but define women's activities as irrelevant and therefore invisible (Little & Jones 2000, Bock 2004).

In another research, El-Waheshy (2002) examined factors influencing men's attitudes toward women's roles in Libya. Multivariate analyses examined respondents' attitudes toward women's roles in the division of labor at home, family decision making, labor force participation, and political participation. Men's age, education, and type of family of orientation (nuclear or extended) were important in both types of analysis. The results indicated that non-traditional attitudes are being displayed among the young and the educated. Attitudes toward the status of women in Libya appear to be changing from those characterized as traditional to those viewed as more modern or egalitarian (El-Waheshy, Pendleton & Garland, 2002). However, as some recent research indicates, new ways and opportunities of earning farm household income and rural development initiatives have a contradictory impact on gender relationships on family farms throughout Europe (Bock & Shortall, 2008:65).

Gorman-Murray, Pini and Bryant draw their attention to the heterogeneity of rural contexts and the diversity of meanings about sexualities within and across these spaces. Their research begins the processes of furthering discussion and knowledge about the inherently dynamic and constantly changing nature of the rural and the multiple, varied and complex sexual subjectivities lived through corporeal experiences and virtual and imagined lives (Gorman-Murray, Pini, & Bryant, 2012).

Fine-Davis (1989) explored attitudes towards women's roles as a larger part of the belief system in Ireland. His emphasis was on attitudes in reproduction of inequality and stereotypes about gender roles in society. Especially, he focused on the effect of those attitudes on the role and status of women in the labor market. He concluded that Irish women are experiencing rapid changes; however, they are surrounded by the beliefs that limit their participation. Removing these obstacles is very difficult because of their invisibility, and it mainly arises from people's attitude about women's work. Dadvar-Khani's (2012) studies in the North of Iran indicated that women's work in rural area has low prestige even amongst themselves. In other words they assess their own work to be less valuable than men's. Therefore, they want their daughters to do higher studies, because they believe that this is the only way that they can release womanhood from the situation that their mothers have experienced. Also, Dadvar-Khani and Hajilo (2008), in their study of the factors effecting female facilitators' success in rural areas of the North-West of Iran, found that positive attitudes of male members of the family or rural community regarding women's work has an important role in success of rural female facilitators.

Studies on the division of tasks between women and men in rural space and participation in daily activities show that in analysing the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities, income, expenses, and interests in agriculture gender is considered as an important factor. Therefore it is argued here that analysing symbolic representations of gender in everyday discourse is necessary in order to understand how unequal gender relations in rural families are maintained, and how the different geographical space affects this relation differently.

#### **4.0 Methodology**

As mentioned before, this research has relied on gender analysis that tries to find how geographical space, especially rural areas, affects both women's and men's

attitudes towards women's participation. In this study we used descriptive method and the data was collected through a questionnaire survey. To determine the standard deviation and optimal probable accuracy, 30 samples from both rural districts were randomly selected and pretested. Also reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha that calculated 0.88 for women's participation, 0.93 for men attitudes towards women's work, and 0.90 for women's attitudes towards their work. The statistical society encompassed both sexes living in two rural districts in two different provinces that have different type of livelihoods. The research was conducted during the summer of 2012.

According to population census, the selected rural district of Langerud has a population of about 1,633 people and in the selected rural district of Paveh there are about 1,627 people. Standard deviations that were obtained from the pilot test were 4.24 and 3.14 with 4.64 and 3.45, accuracy respectively. From the total of the statistical population, 124 families from Langroud, and 106 households in Paveh, were randomly chosen using the Cochran Formula. These households were either directly or indirectly engaged in agriculture and other related activities. Sample populations were drawn from 4 Villages of Langroud and 3 Villages of Paveh district.

With the understanding that a diversity of standpoints often exists with regard to the effects of geographical space, an effort was made to capture input from a broad range of places and groups, including villagers of varied ages and both genders, and with different occupations, concerning attitudes towards women's participation. In addition, many informal interviews and discussions were held with residents concerning their feelings about women's participation and their status in the family and the society. On-site observations were conducted of people's daily activities. Since the dependent variable in the study was women's participation; it was examined through 24 items considering all aspects of economic, social, and cultural development.

Questionnaire items were generated to incorporate the issues emerging from the content analysis. The initial questionnaire had 64 items. Response scales for the items were based on a five-point scale, with the additional option of the item that did not apply to the person. However, at this stage, we generated more items than that eventually needed to develop a long version to be used in pilot testing. This preliminary step would generate data informing which items to retain based on high internal consistency. The questionnaire mainly addressed the following themes linked to the alleged challenges of gender relations:

- Attitude of women and men towards gender duties and rights, and their relationship with the involvement of rural women in rural activities.
- The effect of geographical factor on community attitudes toward women's participation in economic and social activities.
- The relationship between women's self-consciousness, and their motivation for attending the skill training classes, and also between men's willingness for women's participation in different activities in rural areas.

#### **4.1 Study Areas**

As samples taken for analysis and also due to the importance of geographical characteristic of these two places; the rural district of Langroud in Gilan province and rural district of Paveh in Kermanshah province, creating a special gender relation; below is a brief background information about these places:

Langroud is located in the south of the Caspian Sea and is limited by the Alborz Mountains from the south. The rural district is on a plain, being 5 meters above

the sea level. Due to the humid climate, rural people are more engaged in agriculture, with domination of labour intensive products such as rice, tea, and vegetable gardens. Fishing is also popular in the coastal areas of the Caspian Sea and provides supplemental income for the coastal dwellers. Similarly when men benefit from rural diversification, women try to sell their products in the weekly markets which are held in Langroud city on Saturdays and Wednesdays. Here most women work in agricultural and related activities all year around, such as poultry breeding, processing products, handicraft, and so on. Therefore, they are engaged in different kinds of economic activities and their salaries are important for the family's welfare. This condition shapes the pattern of gender relations in which women enjoy more freedom, authority, and have more active participation in rural activities and family management. It turns men's attitudes towards women's abilities to be positive. Mackenzie has also quoted in his research, about how women on farms are not simply accepting victims of patriarchal relations, but rather they are active agents, constructing and shaping their roles within farming (Mackenzie 1992, Teacher 1996).

Although most of the women in Langroud rural areas have access to education, the number of illiterate women is still higher than men. The number of literate population in the district is 3,906 people out of whom 2,077 are male and 1,829 are female.

Paveh is located in the western part of Iran. It is a mountainous region with average height of 1,540 meters above sea level. It has relatively cold and semi-humid weather. The main district's food is produced by small-scale farmers cultivating tiny plots of land, who depend on rainfall rather than irrigation systems. Due to limitation in agricultural lands, more people are engaged in animal husbandry, horticulture, and limited dry farming, forming a special livelihood that is different from farming livelihood. The local horticultural production in these rural areas is walnut, plum, fruit, tobacco, peanuts, grapes, figs, and turpentine. So this current geographical situation with cultural aspects creates a tribal lifestyle.

As it has known in contrast of labour intensive agriculture, some activities such as livestock herding (pastoral) are mostly male dominated activities. In such environments, the roles of women are mostly defined by men. This situation not only has an impact on men's attitudes toward women's rights and duties, but also has effect on women's attitudes towards themselves, putting them in a passive position. Meanwhile, the latest population census shows that despite various natural potentials the population in this area is decreasing (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2006). According to this census, 6,417 people were living in the rural settlements which are experiencing a Growth rate of -1.4 in recent decades. This is happening due to insufficient earnings from substantial agriculture and reduction in livestock in the region due to the extension of urbanization.

## **5.0 Results**

We described procedures for drawing samples from the populations we wish to observe; for specifying indicators that measure the amount of the concepts contained in the sample observations and to compare the two populations, we focused on a population's age and sex composition as the most important independent variable which affects the respondents' attitudes and their participation rate in order to facilitate a better understanding of their differences and similarities.

As has been mentioned before, the sample population was chosen randomly from married couples who were living in rural areas. The population age has



been divided into 5 major groups, starting with less than 30 years old and continuing to over 61 years old, as shown in Table 1.

Table.1 Distribution of sample population in different age groups

Age group	Langroud		Paveh	
	Women%	Men%	Women%	Men%
-30	16.1	9.7	25.9	9.6
31-40	24.2	25.8	38.9	32.7
41-50	32.3	33.9	14.8	30.8
51-60	25.8	19.4	16.7	17.3
+61	1.6	11.3	3.7	9.6

Our sample populations in both study areas show some differences regarding the age groups of women and men, which should be considered in the analysis.

The population of young couples aged 30 and under are the same between men in the both areas. In general, it seems that the two populations are slightly similar. However, in Langroud, 40% of women and 35.5% of the male population are less than 40 years of age, while this population is 64.8% for women and 42.3% for men in Paveh .This data indicates that the Paveh sample population is younger than that of Langroud's.

Women's education is another effective variable that has been tested in the research, the population parameters are presented in Table 2, along with the simple data array from which they were derived.

Table 1. The Comparison of the two Rural Districts in Terms of Age and Education Level (in Selected Variables)

Row	Dependent variable	Variable categories	Statistics			T	sig
			n	sd	$\bar{x}$		
1	Women's age	Langerood	62	11.145	42.95	2.002	0.048
		Paveh	54	11.337	38.75		
2	Woman's education level	Langerood	62	4.244	8.580	4.536	0.00
		Paveh	54	3.860	5.134		

T-test results show that the two districts have some differences in terms of age and education level. The average age of women in Langroud is 42.95 years, while the average age of women in Paveh is 38.75 years.

In regard to education levels, the data has been gathered from sample populations and is shown in Table 3 below. The data indicates that women in Langroud enjoy things more from higher education. It seems that geographical potentials and greater involvement of women in economic activities, as well as freedom, derived from such conditions has contributed to this situation.

Table 3. Education Levels of Women and Men in Langroud and Paveh

<b>Education Levels</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Illiterate	8.1	4.8	23.1	3.9
Elementary school	25.8	21	51.9	23.9
High school	24.2	21	15.4	21.6
Diploma	33.9	38.7	5.8	29.4
University Levels	8.1	14.5	3.8	21.6

The data related to education level in Langroud shows that women in this area have a higher education level in comparison with women in Paveh rural district. The average years of schooling for women in Langroud are about 8.5 years, but it is only 5 years for the sample women in Paveh. These figures show that there is a significant difference between the education of the sample women in both study areas (At 95% and 99% confidence level). So, the data from two study areas shows that although literacy rate is high, it is higher in Langroud, and also male participants in both areas have a higher education level than females. Understanding that education can facilitate women's participation, a T test was carried out between the two variables to figure out the women's participation situation.

According to the data in Table 4, findings show that there is a significant difference between women's attitudes and their social rights, and duties in both rural spaces. It shows that women in Langroud district have a positive attitude about their rights with an average of 22.17. These include participation in rural elections, membership in cooperatives, participation in a variety of cooperative activities, candidacy for rural council, attending public education sessions and workshops, participating in income generation and training classes, having savings, participation in volunteer activities, participation in cooperative credit funds, and participation in religious ceremonies, pilgrimages, etc. The results also show that in Langroud women are more active in agricultural work. They participate in a range of social works, and they have positive attitudes about their rights and social roles. More explicitly said, it is indicated that high participation of women in economic activities due to geographical situation and access to farm work and other related activities facilitate their participation in other aspects of community affairs and even give them more self-esteem to seek more information about their rights and duties.

However, in contrast, women in Paveh Township have lower self-esteem, with an average of 15.13. This can be partially related to their livelihood which is more male labour intensive. For example, livestock grazing on pasture is mainly men's duty and they are engaged in livestock trading too. On the other hand, women in this region are more isolated from economic activities in the family as well as the society.

Table 2. Comparison of Samples Population Average in Term of Women's Attitude Toward their Rights and their Responsibilities

Row	Dependent variable	Variable categories	Statistics			t	Sig
			n	sd	$\bar{x}$		
1	Women's Attitudes towards their rights	Langroud	62	5.65	22.17	7.73	0.00
		Paveh	54	7.42	15.13		
2	Women's Attitudes towards their duties	Langroud	62	5.8	56.72	10.61	0.00
		Paveh	54	6.4	42.40		

In relation to women's duties such as attending children's school sessions, doing administrative tasks, participating in agricultural and non-agricultural activities, managing home affairs, etc., women in Langroud, with an average score of 56.72 in comparison with women in Paveh with an average score of 42.40, have more positive attitudes about themselves. The T-test in Table 5 shows the differences related to women's attitudes towards their activities in the both areas.

Table 3. Comparison of Samples Population Average in Term of Women's Attitude toward their Activities

Row	Dependent variable	Variable categories	Statistics			T	Sig
			n	sd	$\bar{x}$		
1	Women's Attitudes towards their activities	Langroud rural areas	62	4.59	97.69	12.79	0.00
		Paveh rural areas	54	10.77	76.47		

The result of the T-test shows that there is a significant difference at the level of 99% confidence between the study areas in this regard. Women in Langroud with average score of 97.69 have more positive attitude toward their activities as compared with women in Paveh with an average of 76.47. Based on the geographical conditions in Paveh, the society has been structured on patriarchy which limits women's activities, even though these activities have been determined by men.

To investigate more about the relationship between independent and dependent variables (selected variables shown in table below) and women's participation in family and society, the Pearson correlation coefficient is used. The results are presented in Table 6.

As the result of the correlation test indicates, there is a significant positive relationship between optimistic attitudes of women towards themselves, women's willingness to participate in public education and training workshops, willingness and positive attitude of men towards women's rights and roles, and

women's participation in social activities. Also, there is a significant positive relationship between women's education levels, women's income and women's participation. Indeed, we can observe that women who have husbands with positive attitudes towards women's roles and rights are more successful in their social and economic activities. Also, the women whose husbands have positive attitudes about capacity building and training programmes for women, are more active in participating in social, economic, and cultural rural activities. More of these couples are found in the Langroud Township. It should be mentioned that women with higher education and higher income levels have a more effective role in social participation as well.

Table 6. *Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Selected Variables and Women's Participation*

Selected variables	r
Women's educational level	0.359*
positive attitudes towards themselves	0.780**
Women's income	0.214*
Women's willingness for participating in public education and training workshops	0.708**
Willingness of men toward woman's participation in social activities	0.753**
Attitude of men towards women's participation	0.788**

Previously we discussed testing women's self-esteem. Here, we explore how both sexes react to women's duties and rights, and the effect of men's attitude towards women on women's participation. For analysing the above scenario a T-test is used and presented in Table 7.

Table 4. *Comparison of Women's Participation Rate and Attitudes of Men toward Women's Activities between Two Sample Regions*

Row	Dependent variable	Variable categories	Statistics			t	Sig
			n	sd	$\bar{x}$		
1	Women's participation rate	Langroud	62	9.55	103.24	11.274	0.00
		Paveh	54	18.308	72.00		
2	Positive attitudes of men toward women's activities	Langroud	62	11.70	91.53	2.657	0.000
		Paveh	54	15.49	84.38		

As the table shows, women's participation rate in Langroud is 103.24. That shows a significant difference from women's participation in Paveh with an average of 72. Likewise, there is a positive and significant correlation between the positive attitudes of the male members of the family towards the importance of women's roles in the family and the society, by women's participation. This highlights that for more effective participation, women need their men's support and this reality should be considered in any kind of gender program in rural

areas. Comparing the results for the two study areas reveals that there is a significant difference between male attitudes toward women's activities in the two areas. For example, men's positive attitudes toward women's activities in Langroud, with an average of 91.53, were higher than male attitudes in Paveh, with an average of 84.38. These findings indicate that in Langroud women in rural areas have more opportunity to engage in agricultural works, they enjoy more freedom, self-esteem, and confidence; that is accompanied by positive attitudes of men regarding women's role and position.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The study was initiated to identify how different geographical environments create various gender relations in rural areas. A humid environment is suitable for agriculture, which is predominantly labour intensive in third world countries. This situation creates the opportunity for women to work in the field and play an active role in economic and social activities. As it is described in the literature, when women are engaged in revenue generation or value production they appear to have higher position in the family, leading men to hold more positive attitudes towards the women's rights.

The results indicate that there is a significant difference between men's attitudes toward women's works and rights in the rural district of Langroud in contrast to the rural district of Paveh. Also, a significant difference between women's self-esteem, and their attitudes regarding their talents and rights, has been found between these two study areas.

This research has been able to demonstrate the higher participation of rural women in Langroud as a humid climate which was related to agricultural work opportunities and lower participation rate of women in Paveh due to the nature of their livelihood, which is mainly male dominated. In addition, a positive relationship has been found between women's positive self-esteem, women's motivation to attend in programs for promoting skills, and men's willingness for participation of their womenfolk in social activities with variation in women's participation. These results confirm the findings of Little (1987), Fine-Davis (1989) and Hajyloo et al. (2008).

Also the results showed that among different factors affecting female participation in both areas, the male's positive attitude towards a working female is *the* most significant, which led to more successful participation of women. This finding is the same with the Dadvar-Khani (2012) research.

At the end it should be re-emphasised that the geographical factors such as climate, location, Topography, etc. create the particular potentials for shaping the special livelihood, and within these contexts the special economic, social and cultural relation are emerging which led to particular gender relations, as it has found in the studied areas. Finally, it can be concluded that due to geographical effect on gender relations, in all rural development programs, a deep understanding about the geographical characteristics of rural areas and restructuring of gender relations are needed.

## References

- Arku, C.; Arku, F. S. (2005). Development constructs and gender relations: Assessing rural gender relations within the context of dependency theory and globalization. *Journal of Research in Peace, Gender and Development* 2011, 1(2), 28-33).

- Barthez, A. (1986). Du labour paysan au métier d'agriculteur: l'élaboration statistique en agriculture. *Cahier d'Economie Sociologie Rurales*, 3, 45–72.
- Berlan-Darque, M., & Gasson, R. (1991). Introduction to the special issue on Women in Agriculture. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 7, 1-3.
- Boserup, E. (1970). *Women's role in economic development*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Brandth, B. (1995). Rural masculinity in transition, gender images in tractor advertisement. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 11, 123-133.
- Brandth, B., & Verstad, B. (Eds.). (1993) *Kvinnelivi landbruket*. Oslo, Norway: Landbniksforlaget.
- Brandth, B., & Haugen, M. S. (1997). Rural women, feminism and the politics of identity. *Sociologia Ruralis Volume*, 37(3), 325-344.
- Brandth, B. (2002). Gender identity in European family farming: A literature review. *Sociologica Ruralis*, 22(3), 227-244.
- Bryant, L., Pini, B. (2011). *Gender and Rurality*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brydon, L., & Chant, S. (1989). *Women in the third world: Gender issues in rural and urban areas*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Burg, M. van der, & Endevelde, M. (Eds.). (1994). *Women on family farms. Gender research - gender research, EU policies and new perspectives*. Wageningen, the Netherlands: Circle for Rural European Studies.
- Buttel, F. H., & Gillespie, G. W. (1984). The sexual division of household labour: An exploratory study of the structure of on-farm and off-farm labour allocation among farm women and men. *Rural Sociology*, 49(2), 183–209.
- Bye, L. M. (2003) Masculinity and rurality at play in stories about hunting. *Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 57(3), 145–153.
- Canoves, G, Garcia-Ramon, M.-D., & Solsona, M. (1989). Mujeres agricultoras: Un trabajo invisible en las explotaciones familiares. *Revista de Estudios Agrosociales*, 147, 45–70.
- Dadvar-Khani, F. (1996). *The role and status of women in rural development process*. Ph.D. thesis in Geography and Rural Planning, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.
- Dadvar- Khani, F., & Saeidi, A. (2010). Gender, common policy and rural development. *Journal of Geography*, 7(23), 59-76.
- Dadvar-Khani, F., & Hajiloo, F. (2008). The Influence of men's attitudes towards the formation of rural women independent groups: A case study of East Azarbaijan Province of Iran, p.151-172 (In original language).
- Dadvar-Khani, F., & Ahmadi, M. (2009). *The analysis of factors affected on socio-economic decision-making of women within households in rural areas*. Case study of Zanjan Township in Iran. (In original language).
- Dadvar-Khani, F., & Chobchian, S. (2012). Gender relations in the rural spaces and its effects on women's participation. *Rural Research Journal*, 3(3), (In original language).
- Dadvar-Khani, F. (2012). Participation of rural community and tourism development in Iran. *Journal of Community Development*, 43(2), 259-277.

- El-Waheshy, B., Pendleton, B. F., & Neal Garland, T. (2002). Correlates of men's attitudes toward women's roles in Libya. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 11(3), 295-312.
- Ferguson, L. (2010). Interrogating 'gender' in development, policy and practice, tourism and microenterprise in Honduras. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 12(1), 3-24.
- Fine-Davis, M. (1989). Attitudes toward the role of women as part of a larger belief system. *Political Psychology*, 10 (2), 287-308. Retrieved November 16, 2010, from: [http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791649?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791649?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)
- Foroutan, Y. (2011). Generational gap associated with gender roles and demographic changes in Iran. *Iranian Journal of Sociology of Youth*, 1(1), 119-144. (In Persian)
- Gasson, R (1992) Farmers' wives and their contribution to the farm business. *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 43, pp. 74-87.
- Gorman-Murray, A., Pini, B, & Bryant, L. (2012). *Sexuality, rurality and geography*. Plymouth, United Kingdom: Lexington Books.
- Kaur, M., & Sharma, M. L.(1991). Role of women in rural development. *Journal of Rural Studies*,7(1-2), 11-16.
- Kteather, E. (1996). Rural women's self-concepts and aspirations as members of selected voluntary organizations in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. *New Zealand Geographer*, 52 (2), 35-45.
- Lagrave, R. (1987). *L'agriculture inclassable: Les fonctions sociales du flou statistique*. In R. Lagrave (Editor), *Celles de la terre. Agricultrice: l'invention politique d'un métier* (pp. 89-110). Paris: Editions Ehess.
- Leckie, G. J. (1993). Female farmers in Canada and the gender relations of a restructuring agricultural system. *The Canadian Geographer* 37(3), 212-230.
- Liepins, R. (1996). Reading agricultural power. Media as sites and processes in the construction. *New Zealand Geographer*, 52(2), 3-10.
- Little, J. (1987). Gender Relations in rural areas: The importance of women's domestic role. *Journal of rural studies*, 3(4), 335-342.
- Little, J., & Leyshon, M. (2003). Embodied rural geographies developing research agendas. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27(3), 257-272.
- Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London, & Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Massey, D. (1994). *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.
- Moghadam, V. (1996). *Patriarchy and economic development, women's positions of the end of the twentieth century* (pp. 184-219). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Momsen, J. (1987). *Gender and geography in the Third World*. London: Routledge.
- Moss, P., & Falconer Al-Hindi, K. (2008). *Feminisms in geography: Rethinking, space, place and knowledges*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Ozbay, F. (1990). *Women, family and social change in Turkey*. UNESCO Supported Series on Women's Studies in Asia and the Pacific, pp.171. Record Number: 19926713533.

- Perrons, D. (2005). Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality in the New (Market) Economy: An Analysis of Contradictions. *Social Politics*, 12(3), 389-411.
- Pini, B., & Leach, B. (2011). *Reshaping gender and class in rural spaces*. Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Prorok, C. V., & Chhokar, K. B. (1998). *Asian Women and their work: A Geography of Gender and Development*. Indiana, PA: National Council for Geographic Education.
- Saugeres, L. (2002). The cultural representation of the farming landscape: masculinity, power and nature. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 18(4), 373-384.
- Sharoni, S. (1997). Women and gender in Middle East studies trends, prospects and challenges. *Middle East Report*, 27(4), 27-29.
- Shaver, F. (1991). Women, work and the evolution of agriculture. *Journal of Rural Studies* 7(1-2), 37-43.
- Shortall, S. (1994). Farm women's groups: Feminist or farming or community groups, or new social movements. *Sociology*, 28 (1), 229-291.
- Statistical Centre of Iran. (2006). *National Population and Housing Census*. Iran.
- Stratigaki, M. (1988). Agricultural modernisation and gender division of labour. The case of Heraklion, Greece. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 28(4), 248-262.
- Symes, D. (1991). Changing gender roles in productivism and post-productivist capitalist agriculture. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 7, 85-90.
- Unnevehr, L. J., & Stanford, M. L. (1985). *Technology and the demand for women's labor in Asian rice farming*. In: *Women in Rice Farming*, International Rice Research Institute, Los Banos, the Philippines, pp. 1-20.
- Whatmore, S. (1991). Women in agriculture. *Journal of rural studies*, 7 (1/2), 79-84. (Special Issue)
- Whatmore, S., Marsden, T., & Lowe, P. (Eds.). (1994). *Gender and rurality*. London: David Fulton
- Whatmore, S. (1991). *Farming women. Gender, work and family enterprise*. London: Macmillan.