

# **Investigating the Effects of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on the Sustainable Development in Rural Areas: (A Case Study of Zanjan Province, Iran**

Mahdi FakhrbinSobhani\*, Nasrollah Molaei Hashjin, Isa Pourramadan,

**Information technology has various effects on sustainable development of societies, particularly on rural communities. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of information and communication technology on sustainable development of rural areas in the Zanjan province. This is an applied research and which is descriptive. The statistical population of this study is the households of villages in the seven counties of the Zanjan province which have ICT offices. In 1395, 226 of the villages in the Zanjan province had the benefit of ICT offices. In order to have a higher precision, 10% of the villages which are 22 of them, were selected as the case studies. In order to them the 226 villages which all had ICT offices, villages were classified into five groups according to the percentage of their households and then according to the number of households in each class, the share of each household class and the rural area were determined. The data was obtained through documentary surveys and field studies (questionnaire, observation and interview). To analyze the obtained data descriptive statistics were used (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Wilcoxon signed -rank test and paired t test) were also used for the same purpose. The results of this survey revealed that communication and information technology affected the people's accessibility index to ICT offices positively. The Communication and information technology had a positive impact on social and cultural indexes, particularly on young adults' sense of belonging; besides it had a positive effect on enhancing the existing institutions; moreover in economics, considering the index of sustainable rural development, only**

the spread of electronic banking was effected by it positively but in other indexes it had no positive impact. The results also revealed that ICT's greatest impacts were on social and cultural dimensions of sustainable rural development and had the least impact on the economic dimension of it. Therefore, the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth hypotheses of the survey are confirmed.

**Keywords :** Social development, Digital divide, rural development, The Zanjan province.

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