



Studying the Relationship between the Self-Sufficiency Activities of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee and the Empowerment of Women Heads of Households in Qahavand Region

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Abstract

One of the important issues for women heads of households is their empowerment. The overall objective of this study was to study the relationship between the self-sufficiency activities of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee and the empowerment of women heads of households in Qahavand region. The statistical population of this study included all women heads of households in Qahavand in 2019-2022 who benefited from the self-sufficiency activities of the Relief Committee, which numbered 627 people. Of these, 238 people were selected as the available sample based on the Cochran formula. The main tool in this study was the Empowerment of Women Heads of Households Questionnaire. In total, the results of the one-sample parametric t-test were examined in three dimensions of social empowerment (mean: 3.83), economic (mean: 3.81), and psychological (mean: 3.73). The results showed that the self-sufficiency activities of the Relief Committee had the greatest impact on social empowerment. This means that the self-sufficiency activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) based on education, acquisition of job skills and techniques, strengthening self-confidence and creating motivation, have brought them into the larger social environment.

Keywords

Self-sufficiency activities, empowerment, female heads of households

Introduction

Many factors contribute to the increase in poverty and the decrease in gender equality. The main point emphasized in most studies is that women are more vulnerable to poverty because of their gender (Greenspan, 2003; Sen, 2015; Patrick, 2002; Chaghatai and Hemmati, 2001; Mokhtarian, 2001). Among the broad social and demographic changes that Iranian society has experienced in recent years has been the increase in female-headed households. This increase can be attributed to the feminization of aging and the consequent feminization of household headship among the elderly population, as well as the expansion of household headship among never-married and divorced women (Statistics Research Institute, 2013: 11). In recent years, the number of “female-headed households” in Iran, according to official country statistics, has been on the rise. Female-headed households comprised 6.5 percent of all Iranian households in 1965 (6.5 percent), 1976 (7.3 percent), 1986 (7 percent), 1996 (8 percent), 2006 (9.5 percent), 2011 (12.1 percent), and 2017 (12.7 percent); the number of female-headed households increased to 3,061,753 households in 2016 (Statistics Research Institute, 2013; Statistics Center of Iran, 2018). Female heads of households face many issues and problems. Given the cultural and social situation of Iranian society, men have mainly been the heads of households, and this has led to different social expectations of female heads of households (Tofiqianfar et al., 2016; Torabi Momen et al., 2017); The average number of household members in female-headed households with single heads due to divorce or death of the spouse is higher than in male-headed households due to divorce or death of their spouses. This indicates that women have more responsibility than men in providing for the family's needs after separation from their spouse or death of their spouse (Ali Akbari Saba, 2016); Most female heads of households are illiterate or have a low level of education; Most female heads of households face poverty and related issues and are referred to as the poorest of the poor in development literature. In the group of female-headed households, 43.3 percent of households are in the first two deciles of expected income; the dependency burden in female-headed households is higher than in male-headed households. The dependency burden of female-headed households in the first two deciles is 5.5. This means that for every employed person in the household, there are 5.5 unemployed persons; The lower income of female-headed households causes them to be relatively poor compared to male-headed households; the employment rate of heads of female-headed households is much lower than that of heads of male-headed households (Statistics Research Institute, 2013); the mental health status of female-headed households is mostly inadequate (Enaitifar et al., 2018).

Therefore, the basic values of sustainable development are based on improving the quality of life and empowering people, and achieving social justice is one of the most important requirements for sustainable development. In fact, the basic values of sustainable development should be sought in improving the quality of life, namely, empowering women and men to meet basic needs, striving to eliminate class differences in society, increasing public awareness, self-confidence, and public belief in development goals and maintaining security and freedom (Rahimian, 2007). Empowerment and competence are among the most important factors in obtaining job opportunities and effective participation in economic and social development, as well as decent work. Today, understanding and applying the empowerment strategy is a clear goal for improving the mental health of societies, and empowerment is a process through which individuals will have more control over decision-making, lifestyle, and activities that affect their lives. The term empowerment is used in social dictionaries as the equivalent of empowerment, empowerment, and in political dictionaries as having power. Empowerment is the process of acquiring and developing individual capacities with a view to actively participating in shaping

individual life and economic, social and political factors. In the meantime, empowering women heads of households is an important factor in the advancement of women, reducing inequality and improving lifestyles. According to Article 2, Clause 1 of the Sixth Development Plan, empowering women heads of households and employment are among the priority and central issues, and the government is obliged to provide employment opportunities for 82,000 people covered by support institutions annually. Also, according to Article 80, Clause 1, the government is obliged to prepare and fully implement a comprehensive plan for empowering women heads of households in accordance with laws and approvals of the Social Council. Therefore, in our country, not only does the elimination of deprivation have historical and cultural roots, but today it is also considered a legal obligation that is carried out by support organizations.

Some of the theories and models in the field of empowerment are: Sarah Lange's empowerment model; the integration of empowerment and social integration in Lynn Bennett's theory; empowerment and freedom of choice in Amartya Sen's theory; David Fitterman's community-based empowerment theory; and the three-dimensional approach to empowerment in Nyla Kabir's theory. These theories are briefly explained below. While emphasizing the idea of the centrality of gender equality in any development program, Sarah Lange criticizes most development theories that define equality according to common divisions of different sectors of the economy and society, such as education, employment, legal standards, and the like. In Lange's opinion, this analytical method, by focusing excessively on various indicators that sometimes represent limited aspects of the entire social life, distracts attention from the important role of greater equality between women and men in advancing the development process (Kermani et al., 2013; Lange, 1991). Accordingly, she proposes a five-stage conceptual model that can serve as a basis for measuring women's empowerment. The five stages of this model are: a) Welfare, b) Access, c) Awareness, d) Participation, and e) Control (Keshavarz Shokri and Azarkashab, 2016; Tajuddin and Rahmatiwala, 2014).

For Bennett, a key element in most empowerment approaches is helping the poor and marginalized to actualize the power they derive from their collective action. In most cases, these approaches operate from the bottom up, aiming to convey the voice and demands of diverse groups of poor and socially excluded citizens (Kermani et al., 2013). According to Amartya Sen, on the one hand, income is an important tool in achieving empowerment, and on the other hand, increasing empowerment in non-income areas leads to increased income productivity (Sen, 2010). For him, empowerment of each individual is: "the ability to choose between different combinations of actions" (Sen, 2010). In this definition, empowerment is not simply about having and accessing high levels of various benefits, but also about enjoying the freedom to choose between different functions in various areas of life, which together depict the desired way of life from the individual's perspective (Kermani et al., 2013). David Fitterman considers empowerment to be a five-level process, which includes: a) Education: individuals' capabilities flourish through education; b) Facilitation: attempts are made to transfer the tools of initiative, decision-making, and creativity to marginalized individuals and groups; c) Support: includes creating belonging, intimacy, and social integration of individuals, creating opportunities and facilities, and the possibility of providing them with informational, emotional, and material assistance; d) Disclosure: includes actions and programs that lead to awareness, enlightenment, and motivation among individuals; e) Liberation: means being freed from existing expectations and roles (Fataei et al., 2014).

In defining the concept of empowerment, Naila Kabir uses the triad of "agency", "resources" and "achievements". "Resources" create the conditions under which choices are made. "Agency"

represents the main and focal point of the selection process, and finally “achievements” represent the results of different choices (Kermani et al., 2013). According to Kabir, “many of the resources, instances of agency and achievements that characterize the empowerment literature have a significant overlap with a number of well-known indicators of development programs. However, their role and relationship with empowerment can only be confirmed if it is somehow determined how and to what extent each of them, in a given social and cultural context, enables women or any other target group to make their own choices” (Kabir et al., 2010).

In studies such as the Shakari study (2005) and Mohammadi (2008), despite studying the status of female heads of households, less attention has been paid to their empowerment. In the case of addressing empowerment, such as the studies by Jamshidi and Mehdizadeh (2019) and Mello and Ashmink (2017), they have focused more on economic empowerment and have not examined other challenges and empowerment needs. As a result, their empowerment challenges still require research.

The history of the formation and establishment of the relief organization dates back to the years before the victory of the revolution (around 1963), when some of the first revolutionaries of the Islamic Movement, who were among the companions and comrades-in-arms of Imam Khomeini (RA), and some of them are the current officials of this organization, were entrusted by His Highness with the mission of taking care of the families of political prisoners and needy fighters. With the victory of the glorious Islamic Revolution and the resumption of administrative, economic and cultural activities of the country, the need to support the needy was at the forefront of the system's programs, and exactly twenty-two days after the victory of the Islamic Revolution and as the second revolutionary institution on March 14, 1978, the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee was established by issuing a historically blessed decree of Imam Khomeini (RA) for an indefinite period of time in order to realize the lofty goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Velayat-e-Faqih in supporting and assisting the deprived and oppressed and making them self-sufficient. Empowerment activities centered on employment in the Relief Committee began after the blessed meeting of the respected members of the Central Relief Council with the Imam (RA) in 1985 (Tawfiqianfar et al., 2016). The Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) currently supervises 1,030,000 female heads of households who are classified into different urban and rural, permanent and ad hoc, Shahid Rajaei Plan and Assistance Seeking Plan groups and have problems and needs (Godarzai et al., 2016).

In the context of evaluating the performance of the Relief Committee in the field of empowering women heads of households, we will limit ourselves to mentioning a few studies.

Molazadeh Klor (2019) evaluated the performance of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) from the perspective of empowering women heads of households. The results showed that among the projects implemented by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA), three factors, namely self-employment projects, income generation and loan projects, and career and business counseling, respectively, had the greatest impact on empowering women heads of households.

Safari (2017) conducted a study aimed at investigating the role of social support and self-efficacy on the empowerment of women heads of households under the support of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA). The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between social support and empowering women heads of households. There is also a significant relationship between self-efficacy and empowering women heads of households. In other words, with increasing social support and self-efficacy, the empowerment of women heads of households increases. Therefore, with social support, including emotional and psychological, especially economic, as well as strengthening the self-efficacy of women heads of households,

their living conditions can be improved and their mental health can be helped so that they are less exposed to social harm.

Tofiqianfar et al. (2016) studied the relationship between the self-sufficiency plans of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) and the empowerment of women heads of households. Overall, the findings of the study in the three dimensions of contextual variables, relief services, and social support circle have shown that women's empowerment based on self-sufficiency plans is based on education, acquiring job skills and techniques, strengthening self-confidence, creating motivation within the framework of technical and vocational training, and receiving modern career counseling appropriate to the conditions and requirements of the type of job.

Keshavarz (2016) also conducted a study titled "Investigating the Role of Empowerment of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) Helpers in Reducing Social Damages." The results of this study indicated that implementing empowerment programs correctly and accurately on vulnerable segments of society, such as female heads of households, not only leads to employment and an increase in household income and their promotion to higher levels of the social and economic classes of society, but also, with the help of job training, reduces their dependence on support organizations and makes them see themselves as other members of society in terms of socio-economics. In addition, it leads to their psychological empowerment in various psychological areas such as self-efficacy, self-worth and self-esteem, control over life, decision-making power and problem-solving, etc., which is an inexhaustible capital that is higher than financial and economic capacity. In his doctoral thesis, Kermani (2014) examined the process of empowering female heads of households with an emphasis on the social entrepreneurship approach. The findings of the study indicate that economic capabilities, especially income generation based on skilled employment, have a strong impact on the dependent variable of the study (ability to head a household). Also, psychological capabilities, especially indicators such as self-esteem, self-confidence, decision-making ability, along with mental health, have been other factors affecting the empowerment of the studied individuals. In addition, the social capabilities of individuals, including those regarding social trust, group membership and social participation, as well as their social relationship patterns, have also affected their empowerment. Among the contextual variables, age has a negative effect and the duration of guardianship has a positive effect on the dependent variable. Also, in general, divorced women have a higher level of empowerment than other women.

Vali (2011) introduced the empowerment of female heads of households with an emphasis on creating home jobs and production clusters by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) and stated that by implementing this plan, the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) intends to prevent the complications of this social issue in a scientific and methodical manner by creating equal economic opportunities, because creating jobs for female heads of households, who constitute a large number of the active population of society, can both eliminate the feeling of futility and indifference of these people and turn them into productive forces that accompany Islamic Iran on the path of progress and justice.

Eslami and Hejazi (2011) conducted a study titled the impact of the Empowerment Programs of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the form of granting self-sufficiency facilities on private sector investment in Iran. They concluded that the impact of the Empowerment Program of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the form of granting self-sufficiency facilities on private sector investment in Iran is positive and has led to an increase in private sector investment.

Abbaszadeh et al. (2011) examined the empowerment of female heads of households with an emphasis on indigenous solutions in the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA). In this study, they stated that women's empowerment includes increasing participation, self-awareness, trustworthiness, and expanding women's freedom of choice by themselves.

Okpabio (2012) studied the role of NGOs in empowering rural women in Nigeria and concluded that NGOs have been able to help empower individuals through a wide range of actions through skills acquisition in the field of food expansion, increased production and necessary health awareness.

Brophy, Skiffman and Landenback (2011) showed that there is a significant relationship between the interactions and conversations of parents and their children with their socio-economic status. Parents with higher socio-economic status have more emotional-affective references in their interactions with their children.

Reed-No, Jurgasen and Peterson (2009) showed in a study that social support can increase resilience in infertile women.

Therefore, the researcher in this study seeks to examine the performance of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in empowering women heads of households in the Qahavand region in the economic, social and psychological areas. Therefore, the hypotheses examined in this study are as follows:

- 1) The activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) are related to the economic performance of women heads of households in the Qahavand region.
- 2) The activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) are related to the social performance of women heads of households in the Qahavand region.
- 3) The activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) are related to the psychological performance of women heads of households in the Qahavand region.

Research Methodology

A complete description of the research method in terms of purpose, type of data, and implementation method (including materials, equipment, and standards used in the implementation stages of the research separately):

The present study is of an applied purpose from the perspective of the objective, and of a descriptive correlational type from the perspective of information and data collection.

In this evaluation project, women heads of households covered by the Imam Khomeini Committee (RA) in the Qahavand region will be evaluated, which number is 627 people. In terms of the time frame, this evaluation project will evaluate the performance of the Imam Khomeini Committee (RA) in empowering women heads of households from 2019 to 2022. Of this number, 238 people were selected as a random sample based on the Cochran formula. Qahavand is the center of the Shara district of Hamadan city. The population of Qahavand city is 7,483 people and the total population of the region is 28,897 people in 2016. This region has 42 villages, the largest of which include the villages of Kozreh, Abdolrahim, and Bubokabad.

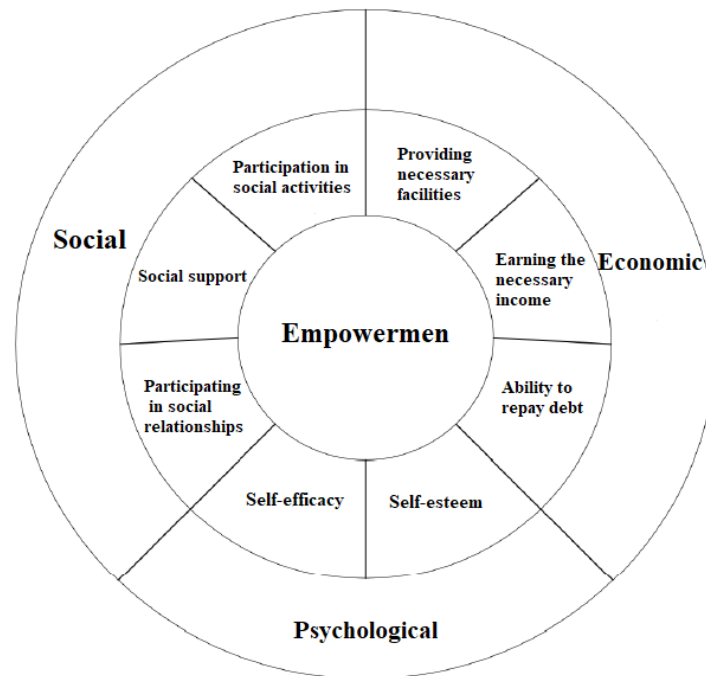


Figure 1- Conceptual research model

The data collection tool in this study is a researcher-made questionnaire that was provided to the target community. The questionnaire on the empowerment of female heads of households will include economic, social and psychological indicators.

The present correlation study was analyzed using the one-sample parametric t-test method using SPSS software.

Research findings

Table 1 evaluates the frequency distribution of female heads of households covered by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the Qahavand region based on demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of women based on demographic characteristics

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Age	20-30	۶۵	۲۷	۲۷
	31-41	۱۶۷	۷۰	۹۷
	More than 41 years	۶	۳	۱۰۰
	Total	۲۳۸	۱۰۰	-
Marital Status	Single	۹۰	۳۸/۵	-
	Married	۱۴۸	۶۱/۵	-
	Total	۲۳۸	۱۰۰	-
Education	Cycle	۵۸	۱۹	۱۹
	Postgraduate	۴۶	۱۶	۲۵
	Bachelor	۱۱۳	۵۷	۸۲
	Bachelor and above	۲۱	۸	۱۰۰
	Total	۲۳۸	۱۰۰	-

Table 1 shows that 238 women were studied in this study, most of whom were between 31 and 40 years old with a frequency of 70%, and the lowest frequency of 3% was for women over 41

years old. Also, married women had the highest frequency with a frequency of 61.5%, and 38.5% of them were single, and most of them had a bachelor's degree with a frequency of 57%. Table 2 examines the statistical information related to the level of empowerment and its dimensions from the perspective of women.

Table 2: Statistical indicators related to the level of research variables

Variable	Mean	Percentage	Standard Deviation	Variance
Empowerment	3.79	75.8	0.823	0.678
Economic	3.81	76.2	0.874	0.764
Social	3.83	76.6	0.865	0.749
Psychological	3.73	74.6	0.827	0.684

The above table shows that the empowerment variable is equal to 3.79 and among the empowerment dimensions, the social dimension has the highest average with a value of 3.83 and the mean value is related to the dimension of 3.73. Also, the empowerment level was 75.8%. Among the empowerment dimensions, the economic dimension was 76.2%, the social dimension was 76.6% and the psychological dimension was 74.6%.

First, before examining the research hypotheses, it is necessary to evaluate the normality of the research variable with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Therefore, Table 3 examines the normality of the research variable.

Assumption H^0 : The data distribution of the research variables is normal.

Assumption H^1 : The data distribution of the research variables is not normal.

Table 3: Normality of the variables

Variable	Z-statistic	Significance level
Empowerment	0.271	0.153
Economic	0.246	0.19
Social	0.242	0.08
Psychological	0.214	0.08

According to the above table, it can be concluded that the significance level of empowerment and its dimensions are more than 0.05. Therefore, the data distribution of the above variables is normal, so the normality of the aforementioned variables justifies the use of parametric tests to infer the research hypotheses. So the hypothesis H^0 is confirmed and the hypothesis H^1 is rejected.

The homogeneity test is performed to homogenize or homogenize the questions of each dimension, and in other words, this test examines the confirmatory factor analysis of the research variable questions. Therefore, in Table 4, the factor loadings of each of the questionnaire questions are given:

Table 4: Factor loadings of questions in the research measurement model

Variable	Dimension	Question	Factor Loading	Result
Empowerment	Economic	1	0.86	Confirm question
		2	0.62	Confirm question
		3	0.802	Confirm question
		4	0.592	Confirm question
		5	0.807	Confirm question
		6	0.776	Confirm question
		7	0.834	Confirm question
	Social	8	0.629	Confirm question
		9	0.797	Confirm question

Variable	Dimension	Question	Factor Loading	Result
		۱۰	۰/۶۷۸	Confirm question
		۱۱	۰/۸۲۷	Confirm question
		۱۲	۰/۷۵۹	Confirm question
		۱۳	۰/۵۶	Confirm question
	Psychological	۱۴	۰/۷۳۳	Confirm question
		۱۵	۰/۷۶۸	Confirm question
		۱۶	۰/۸۲۴	Confirm question
		۱۷	۰/۸۲۳	Confirm question
		۱۸	۰/۶۵۱	Confirm question
		۱۹	۰/۷۶۷	Confirm question
		۲۰	۰/۶۳۹	Confirm question

Table 4 shows that questions with factor loadings greater than 0.4 remain in the external measurement model and are confirmed, and questions with factor loadings less than 0.4 are removed from the final model, and the hypothesis analysis is performed based on the final model, while the factor loadings of all research variables are greater than 0.4 and none of the questions are removed from the measurement model.

The validity test of the model is assessed based on convergent and divergent validity. Convergent validity is in relation to the average variance extracted (AVE) test and the test of comparing the composite reliability coefficient and the average variance extracted, and divergent validity is in relation to the Fornell and Larker test. In relation to convergent validity, one of the tests is the average variance extracted (AVE) test, or the shared reliability coefficient, which is given in Table 5:

Table 5: Examining convergent validity in the measurement model

Variable	Shared reliability coefficient
Empowerment	0/581
Economic	0/581
Social	0/532
Psychological	0/558

As is clear, for all variables the average extracted variance or shared reliability coefficient was more than 0.5. Therefore, the convergent validity of the measurement model is confirmed and this shows that the questions of each dimension have the necessary convergence with each other, in other words, the questions measuring each variable are correlated with each other.

Regarding the divergent validity, the Fornell and Larker test is examined. This validity is based on the research of Hensler et al. (2009). The divergent validity of the Fornell and Larker test is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Examination of divergent validity in the research measurement model

	Social	Economic	Empowerment	Psychological
Social	0/762			
Economic	0/728	0/762		
Empowerment	0/671	0/669	0/729	
Psychological	0/686	0/670	0/653	0/747

Based on Table 6, it can be said that the values on the main diagonal, which are the mean square of the extracted variance, are greater than the numbers in each row, and therefore there is

divergent validity between the variables, and in other words, it can be said that there is divergence or non-collinearity between the questions of each variable compared to the questions of another variable.

In this section, the reliability of the model is assessed based on the Cronbach's alpha test, the composite reliability test, and the Spearman test. In Table 7, the reliability of the measurement model is examined.

Table 7: Examination of the reliability of the measurement model

	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Spearman's correlation	Composite reliability coefficient
Social	0/852	0/862	0/891
Economic	0/876	0/886	0/905
Empowerment	0/953	0/956	0/957
Psychological	0/866	0/874	0/897

Based on Table 7, it can be concluded that Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all research variables are greater than 0.7, and therefore the correlation between the questions of the variables is confirmed outside the measurement model and the variables have internal consistency outside the measurement model. Spearman's correlation examines the correlation between the questions of each variable, and since all coefficients are greater than 0.7, according to Hensler et al. (2009), the seven-option Likert scale is an ordinal scale, so this nonparametric test is used to examine the correlation between the questions of the variables for the five-option Likert scale. Also, since the composite reliability for all variables is greater than 0.7, there is also a correlation between the questions of each variable within the measurement model. Since the issue of shared reliability is how generalizable each question is from one model to another, shared reliability is confirmed for all variables, because these values are all greater than 0.5.

First research hypothesis: The activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment are related to the economic performance of women-headed households in the Qahavand region.

To examine the above hypothesis, a one-sample parametric t-test is used. The reason for using the above test is that, firstly, the economic performance variable has a normal distribution and, secondly, the average of the economic performance variable is compared with a value or standard value (option to some extent = 3). Table 8 shows the descriptive indicators related to economic performance from the perspective of women-headed households covered by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the Qahavand region.

Table 8: Descriptive indicators in the first research hypothesis

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Standard Error
Economic performance	۳/۸۱	۰/۸۷۴	۰/۰۵۶

Table 8 shows that the average of the economic performance dimension is higher than the value value or the standard value (option to some extent = 3). Table 9 also examines the first hypothesis of the research.

Table 9: Examination of the first hypothesis of the research

Variable	Test value	t-statistic	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	Mean difference
Economic performance	۳	۱۴/۳	۲۳۷	۰/۰۰۱	۰/۸۱

As can be seen, the significance level obtained from the t-statistic is less than 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference between the value and the population mean at a

confidence level of 95%. On the other hand, considering that the mean of the sample under study in Table 8 is somewhat higher than the value or standard value (option somewhat = 3) in the economic performance dimension. Therefore, in response to the first hypothesis of the study, it can be said that "the status of the economic performance dimension based on the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) method has been established at a high level and the activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment are related to the economic performance of women-headed households in the Qahavand region."

Second hypothesis of the study: The activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment are related to the social performance of women-headed households in the Qahavand region.

To examine the above hypothesis, a one-sample parametric t-test is used. The reason for using the above test is that firstly, the social performance variable has a normal distribution and secondly, the mean of the social performance variable is compared with a value or standard value (option to some extent = 3). Table 10 shows the descriptive indicators related to social performance from the perspective of female heads of households covered by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the Qahavand region.

Table 10: Descriptive indicators in the second hypothesis of the research

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Standard Error
Social function	۳/۸۳	۰/۸۶۵	۰/۰۵۶

Table 10 shows that the mean of the social performance dimension is higher than the value value or the standard value (option to some extent = 3). Table 11 also examines the second hypothesis of the research.

Table 11: Examination of the second hypothesis of the research

Variable	Test value	t-statistic	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	Mean difference
Social function	۳	۱۴/۸۹۲	۲۳۷	۰/۰۰۱	۰/۸۳۵

As can be seen, the significance level obtained from the t-statistic is less than 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference between the value and the average of the population at a confidence level of 95%. On the other hand, considering that the average of the sample studied in Table 10 is somewhat higher than the value or standard value (option somewhat = 3) in the social performance dimension. Therefore, in response to the second hypothesis of the study, it can be said that "the status of the social performance dimension based on the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) method has been established at a high level and the activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment are related to the social performance of women heads of households in the Qahavand region."

The third hypothesis of the study: The activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment are related to the psychological performance of women heads of households in the Qahavand region.

To examine the above hypothesis, a one-sample parametric t-test is used. The reason for using the above test is that firstly, the psychological performance variable has a normal distribution and secondly, the mean of the psychological performance variable is compared with a value or standard value (option to some extent = 3). Table 12 shows the descriptive indicators related to psychological performance from the perspective of female heads of households covered by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the Qahavand region.

Table 12: Descriptive indicators in the third hypothesis of the research

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Standard Error
Psychological performance	۳/۷۳	۰/۸۲۷	۰/۰۵۳

Table 12 shows that the mean of the psychological performance dimension is higher than the value or standard value (option to some extent = 3). Table 13 also examines the third hypothesis of the research.

Table 13: Examination of the third hypothesis of the research

Variable	Test value	t-statistic	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	Mean difference
Psychological performance	۳	۱۳/۷۹	۲۳۷	۰/۰۰۱	۰/۷۳۹

As can be seen, the significance level obtained from the t-statistic is less than 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference between the value and the population mean at a confidence level of 95%. On the other hand, considering that the mean of the sample under study in Table 12 is somewhat higher than the value or standard value (option somewhat = 3) in the psychological performance dimension. Therefore, in response to the third hypothesis of the study, it can be said that "the status of the psychological performance dimension based on the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) method has been established at a high level and the activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) in the field of empowerment are related to the psychological performance of women heads of households in the Qahavand region."

Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between the self-sufficiency activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA) and the empowerment of women heads of households in the Qahavand region. The results of the one-sample parametric t-test showed that the more women heads of households are supported by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA), the more they will enjoy economic, social and psychological empowerment. The results of the research by Molazadeh Klor (2019) confirm this. In their research, they showed that among the projects implemented by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA), three factors, namely self-employment projects, income-generating projects and loans, and career and business counseling, respectively, have had the greatest impact on the empowerment of women heads of households. The more we strengthen the training and skill-building techniques in individuals, the better the efficiency can be observed in the field of empowering individuals. Women heads of households, who are considered one of the important and yet vulnerable groups in society, if they receive the necessary training in addition to financial facilities and relief services, in accordance with their level of literacy, age, physical abilities, mental readiness, etc., their empowerment can undoubtedly be strengthened in various dimensions. Education has five real values for improving socio-economic conditions, especially in the Third World: 1- Education has material benefits in terms of women's self-reliance, which increases mobility in society. 2- Education facilitates access to job opportunities and provides women with economic resources. 3- Education and increasing the level of education increase the demand for health and medical services, maintaining social security, participation in political assemblies and other needs. 4- Education prevents children from working in childhood and directs their energy towards science and knowledge. 5- Education and increasing the level of education enable individuals to be more present in the aforementioned societies and areas through participation in political, social, and economic groups (Abbaszadeh, 2011).

Sharma and Kantavarma (2008) found in their research that the more financial services women receive, the more their productive activities will generate income, and women's participation in productive activities will contribute to women's empowerment in various dimensions. According to Maslow's theory of needs, the better a person's basic needs are met, the better they can express their capabilities, and in a way, a person can develop a sense of self-esteem, the ability to deal with life's problems, etc. Therefore, if welfare and financial services are considered appropriate to the problems of this vulnerable and deprived group, their empowerment can undoubtedly be strengthened in various aspects. Many previous studies and statistics from the Relief Committee conducted in this field in Iran confirm this.

Social support components work in the direction of women's empowerment. Therefore, supportive social relationships as an external source can reduce the effects of problems. Social support is an interpersonal exchange in which one person helps another and may be obtained in several ways: a) emotional support, which is provided through a bond of love or sympathy; b) instrumental-assistive support, such as providing goods or services, which includes lending or borrowing to the individual; c) informational support, which includes providing information about a difficult situation. Experiences and research results have shown that the information and suggestions we receive from others help us solve problems effectively. If women have enough emotional and tangible support from their social networks, it has a significant impact on protecting them from anxiety and stressful life events such as loneliness, insecurity, etc., and makes them more resilient to most problems and difficulties in life. This result is justified by and consistent with Cassell's theory. According to this theory, when people receive social support, they gain the power to be more patient in dealing with inconsistencies and problems and, relying on the power of their confidence and self-esteem, gain the necessary peace and confidence to overcome difficult life situations. Booker's (1984) study also showed that most vulnerable women sought informal networks for help. In another study, in interviews with a smaller sample of women who had experienced violence, women admitted that the emotional support they received from members of social networks was beneficial to them (Tofiqianfar et al., 2016).

Based on the results and findings of the study, some strategies for increasing empowerment in the studied community are presented:

1. Establishing production cooperatives, forming support groups and associations, and providing services to women heads of households with the goals of finding jobs, spending free time, exchanging experience and knowledge, and managing their family crises.
2. Changing attitudes towards women heads of households, creating a spirit of empathy instead of a pitying or pessimistic view of them, and creating public responsibility in resolving their problems.
3. Prioritizing training in professional, occupational, and family skills, as well as talent identification for unemployed or job-seeking women heads of households, in order to provide them with new knowledge and skills and increase their job opportunities.
4. Increasing and reviewing the granting of long-term loans and self-sufficiency facilities to self-headed women due to the serious increase in the inflation rate.

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