Evaluation and Analysis of Human Development Indices in Urban Areas

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Human development is defined as a process for increasing people's options and level of life welfare. United Nations as the most authoritative organization believes that the target of development or various economic, social, and political indices is human. Therefore, if an economy grows but people do not take advantage of the economic development, there is no doubt that this development is devoid of any value. The concept of human development is much broader than conventional notions of economic development, because patterns of economic growth are generally measured by gross domestic product expansion, rather than improvement of the quality and level of human life.

Professor Frederick Harrison has written on the importance of human resources, which forms the basis of the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are secondary factors of production while men are active agents who condense capital, exploit natural resources, establish social, economic, and political organizations, and lead national development.

Sustainable human development makes us ethically responsible for the next generation. There are environmental, social, economic, legal, cultural, political and psychological aspects included in sustainable human development. Accepted forms of sustainable development are more acceptable to humans.

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The basis of any movement toward development is a human factor. Men are both the beginning and the target of development. Due to such importance, today people-centered development is at the heart of discussions on human development. Given the importance of human development (social, economic, cultural), which is considered as the foundation and basis of the development in any society both from rural and urban perspectives, and due to the fact that a significant proportion (about 72 percent) of Iranian society includes urban citizens; it is necessary to analyze human development indices for this group. The present study thus aims to assess each Iranian urban area in terms of human development indices.

2. Theoretical Framework

Human development is a concept that attempts to locate human being at the heart of development. In other words, the process of human development finally centralizes the spread of human options.

In the first Global Human Development Report in 1990, the process of expanding human choices is proposed as the definition of development. In human development approach, welfare is not just the result of consuming products and services, yet the expansion of necessary facilities such as health and education in order to use capabilities and talents as well as improving the capabilities are considered as the basic components of development. Although human development insists on physical
capacity growth along with mental growth, it considers economic growth as a tool in the service of human life. The goal of human development is the creation of an empowering environment for people to have a longer, healthier, and more creative life. Generally speaking, human development could be known as the process of expanding people's options. According to the annual report of UN in 2010, the dimensions of human development include life expectancy at birth, the average duration spent on adult education (adults over 25 years), and the expected duration of education for school-age children and GNI per capita.

3. Method
This is a descriptive-analytical and applied research. It uses a descriptive approach based on the statistics and data derived from authentic documents and index analyses in the Iranian urban areas in 2011.

4. Discussion and Results
The results from estimating a combination of three indices, including education, health, and life standards show that the mean index of human development in urban areas is 0.701. The desirable indices of human development are for the following urban areas, respectively: Tehran (0.756), Isfahan (0.752), and Qazvin (0.750). The least appropriate indices were respectively observed in Sistan and Baluchestan (0.628), Kurdistan (0.632) and West Azerbaijan (0.750).

5. Conclusion and Suggestions
The results of this research show that the first rank belonged to education index (0.806); the second rank was for life expectancy (0.748), and the third was for GPD per capita (0.617). Therefore, educational and life expectancy are in a better condition compared to per capita GDP. To raise the GDP per capita index, employment and income planning should be a priority. Classification of urban areas based on the human development index shows that very poor ranks belonged to West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Sistan-Baluchestan according to the Iranian border provinces. Furthermore, provinces with best indices were located at the center of Iran. Generally speaking, as we moved from the center to the borders, human development indices dropped, which is the result of giving too much attention to central provinces on the part of authorities. A strong disparity is observed among Iranian urban areas. This disparity is more frequent in standard of living index compared to the other two indices. Given that the aim of all development programs is to fulfill the ideals of Vision 1404, it is proposed that more attention be given to the deprived provinces for the two 5-year plans of economic development in Iran (i.e. 2015-2025).

Key Words: Health index, Education, Living Standards, HDI, Urban areas

References (in Persian)

References (in English)