Boolean Analysis of Factors Affecting Women’s Participation in Rural Tourism

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Abstract: Women’s participation is a significant development priority in tourism, especially rural tourism. Despite their critical role in rural tourism, women face different constraints and limitations that prevent them from fully participating in local tourist activities. This study explores the most influential factors on women’s participation in rural tourism, using qualitative methods of inquiry (semi-structured interviews and observations) to collect data from 17 women who are active in rural tourism in the villages of Khorasan Razavi, Iran. Eight fundamental causes were identified and classified into macro- and micro-level factors that affect women’s participation in rural tourism, using the Boolean algebra analysis. The findings show socio-geographic proximity, a newly emerging theme, and patriarchal structure influence women’s participation at the macro-level. Similarly, self-confidence, family support, financial assistance, and the absence of role conflict at the micro-level are necessary and sufficient causes to influence women to participate and overcome challenging situations in rural tourism activities.

Keywords: women’s participation; rural tourism; self-confidence; socio-geographical proximity; patriarchal structure; Boolean analysis

1. Introduction

Women play an important role in rural areas, especially in agriculture, and they also participate in many aspects of rural tourism businesses [1]. However, they face constraints and limitations that can prevent them from fully participating in rural life and, in particular, in tourism. Researchers have identified some factors that may lead to the low participation of women in rural tourism. Studies show that men’s dominant position in the society and the persistence of patriarchal ideologies within the farming household can discourage women’s participation in rural tourism [2]. In addition, families play a crucial role in shaping these women’s lives, but they receive little support from family members [3]. Societal traits such as patriarchy and gender norms can also hinder or facilitate rural women’s success in tourism [4,5]. Although tourism has positive impacts on women’s employment opportunities [6], it can also generate adverse effects, such as the disruption of gender roles in the family and social structures, which can further relegate women to low-income and low-skilled positions [7,8]. Previous studies have addressed the numerous challenges shaping women’s participation in rural tourism, but they have not adequately considered broader conditions affecting women’s participation. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by determining the necessary and sufficient causes for women’s participation in rural tourism and discussing the importance and priority of each factor affecting women’s participation, using a qualitative method and Boolean algebraic analysis.
2. Literature Review

Rural tourism is an effective way of supporting women's labor force, as women appear in most rural activities, such as animal husbandry, farming, household chores, forestry, and small-shop keeping, either directly or indirectly. Still, they are considered a passive workforce when it comes to rural tourism [9]. Many socioeconomic and cultural factors hinder them from utilizing their full potential in this endeavor. Scholars refer to multi-level (micro, meso, and macro) approaches, indicating that constraining and enabling factors for women's involvement in rural tourism require attributes at the personal, household, and society levels [10–14]. This paper aims to highlight these factors to build our understanding of how they affect women's participation in rural tourism activities.

As mentioned earlier, there are three different levels through which we can analyze the participation of women in rural tourism. Issues that affect an individual or a group of people are considered to be micro-level factors. Scholars have identified elements of gender stereotypes, education, language, physical condition, family background, and a person's independence to set a strategy for use in this sector [3]. The meso-level concerned household factors such as workload and family interference. The additional workload to serve visitors adds to women’s existing family and other responsibilities [2,15,16]. Therefore, women experience a more significant share of the domestic burden [10], especially in Asia, where they are responsible for elder care [17]. Similarly, some women typically fail to get support from their families because it is assumed that their traditional primary role is to take care of the house and their family. Their responsibilities are limited to housework [6], including doing laundry, preparing meals, and caring for children [3], which are highly demanding. Finally, macro-level factors include national policies, strategies, and cultural and economic aspects [15,18] influencing women's participation in society.

Furthermore, scholars have analyzed factors affecting women's participation in different dimensions. A study by Arroyo et al. in Andean communities revealed that agritourism contributes to four areas of empowerment for women: psychological, social, political, and economic empowerment [6]. However, the traditional sociocultural structures have limited women’s ability to empower themselves through conventional economic activities, such as agriculture and horticulture, livestock and poultry, food processing and preservation, making handicrafts, apiculture, and sericulture [19], thereby preventing women from receiving all the benefits of tourism development [6]. Recent studies by Jabeen et al. on the impacts of rural women’s traditional economic activities on household economy in rural Pakistan and Kala and Bagri on barriers to local community participation in tourism development in India showed that critical barriers that affect community participation, particularly women’s participation in tourism development, include practical, sociocultural, apprehension, institutional, demographic, social, cultural, religious, and economic factors [19,20].

Financial support is among the most crucial factors shaping women’s participation in rural activities. A lack of financial support is the major obstacle that hinders women’s involvement in tourism activities, due to poor monetary resources [21–24]. Furthermore, women within the tourism villages are often subjected to harsher employment conditions than men. This limits women’s participation in rural tourism activities, because it is viewed as a male-dominated job with wage inequality and unpaid wages. Relatedly, tourist activities require an initial investment for education and training, small-scale food production, handicraft shops, and traditional rural accommodation, which all require financial investment and resources. Women may choose to participate in tourist activities at the local level if they receive financial support. As such, the high cost of tourism activities often frustrates rural women, since they cannot afford financial resources, thus limiting the number of women within the industry [25]. As Radović et al. showed with their study conducted in a Serbian countryside, rural tourism entities were not making sufficient investments, due to lack of financial resources, i.e., adequate financing modalities [26]. Additional research shows that female respondents needed more financial support than their male counterparts [27,28]. Butkouskaya et al., when investigating issues that facilitate
or hinder women’s entrepreneurs opening businesses in the tourism sector in Spain, found that finance can be a significant barrier to a person’s tourism ambitions. For instance, the cultural display of locally produced products requires substantial capital. Furthermore, small enterprises have complicated business licenses to engage in rural tourism [29].

Previous research also shows that the sociocultural environment is another factor that significantly impacts women’s participation in rural tourism. Specifically, patriarchy creates and reinforces gendered social roles [10], which cause women’s subordination and oppression in the private and public spheres [30,31]. Women do not have much decision-making power; thus, they typically face suppression [3]. In highly patriarchal communities, a woman would have to ask her husband before participating in rural tourism, and in some cases, the husbands would deny them permission. Women may also choose not to participate in rural tourism activities, due to the stereotypical nature of some duties. Since women would be expected to do house chores, they would not get the amount of support that they require from their families, thereby limiting their participation in rural tourism. Moreover, women’s participation in development is likely to be affected by their husbands’ interferences [32]. Relatedly, Jabeen et al. in rural Pakistan found out that, under the strict patriarchal system, women face restrictions, including religion and customs, society’s stereotypes toward their development that affect their social and economic conditions [19].

Additionally, previous studies have demonstrated that social and psychological factors also affect women’s participation in rural tourism. Socializing is one of the main features of hospitality activities, as it encompasses almost all the practices that occur within the tourist destination. Kastenholz et al., in analyzing the rural tourism experience of Portuguese, conclude tourists typically visit locations that they deem to be attractive [33]. Thus, the interaction of women with tourists makes the tourist destination friendlier and attracts more visitors to these destinations. Moreover, a research conducted in Georgia showed that, as part of patriarchal practices, the culture of the society contributes to rural women’s limited participation in development, as they also suffer from a lack of confidence and inferiority [34]. Similarly, the results of a study in Botswana revealed that an obstacle which hinders rural women from prospering in their tourism activities is low confidence as a result of gender socialization, as they often require the support and opinion of their husbands or a man [35].

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of factors affecting women’s participation in rural tourism.

As described above, most previous studies have focused on facilitating and hindering factors related to women’s participation in rural tourism. Still, they have not addressed the socio-geographic aspects and ignored determinant and priority factors affecting women’s
tourism involvement. This paper tries to fill this gap by identifying and analyzing the significance of potential factors and determining the necessary and sufficient causes affecting women’s participation in rural tourism and seeks to answer the following question: which factors are more effective on women’s participation in rural tourism? It employs Boolean algebra analysis with a specific interest in rural women in the northeast of Iran.

3. Research Method

3.1. Study Area

The study area includes tourism villages of Khorasan Razavi province located in Northeastern Iran. The province's total area is 118,854 square kilometers, the fifth-largest region in Iran. According to the general population and housing census [36], the province’s population equals 6,434,501 people (Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) has conducted the census of population every five years since 2006). The area consists of 28 cities, 70 districts, and 164 villages. Based on the statistics of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization, 15 villages promoted rural tourism in Northeastern Iran (shortlisted from 54 tourism villages [37]).

3.2. Data Collection

This study employed qualitative research based on interpretivism, as its nature is rooted in an exploration of experiences of rural women. An inductive research approach was used which helps in analyzing qualitative data [38] so that the researcher can consider the factors surrounding the women’s participation. Qualitative research can be defined as a process related to inquiry, in which data are drawn from the context of their occurrence so that these occurrences can be described [39]. The strength of qualitative research is that it can provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience participation in rural tourism in the cultural structure of Khorasan Razavi Province. This research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 17 women from 15 villages, whose main activities in rural tourism involved making and selling handicrafts, producing and supplying agricultural products, renting rural farmhouses, managing ecologdes, and offering tourism services to visitors and tourists (including local and international tourists). Their ages ranged from 40 to 45; they were all married and held high-school diplomas. Participants were purposively selected based on their background and experience in rural tourism through direct contacts facilitated by rural councils and municipalities. Based on the related theories and the literature reviews, a series of indicators were determined, and interview questions were designed accordingly. The main topics of interviews included the following: the type of activities in rural tourism, motivations for activities in this area, and the barriers and challenges to involvement in tourism, considering needs, identifying opportunities for change, and providing solutions to these challenges and obstacles. Interviews took place from August 2019 to October 2020 at times and locations convenient to the participants, mostly in their houses. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed. The participants’ names were changed to pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

3.3. Data Analysis

Transcripts were thoroughly read, and codes were developed based on the interviews and field observations, using manual data analysis. Techniques of coding, indexing, and labeling data were based on Corbin and Strauss’s approach [40]. Early inductive data analysis of transcripts and field notes were used to shape the later data collection. We reached data saturation when continued data analysis and sampling provided no discernible new themes or linkages between themes [41].

Once these codes were redefined and categorized into macro-level factors (including socio-geographic proximity, patriarchy, seasonality, and ethnic structure) and micro-level factors (such as family support, self-confidence, financial assistance, and role conflict), they were analyzed by using the Boolean algebra analysis. The Boolean analysis is one of the
analytical models that have been widely used in the qualitative analysis of research [42]. It considers cases where a researcher cannot use statistical analyses, due to a small number of collected data [43]. The researcher compares possible data pairs to identify redundant causal conditions and their impact on the variables [44]. There are ten aspects of Boolean algebra essential to its use in social science [45]:

1. Use of binary data: In a Boolean analysis of social data, independent and dependent variables must be nominal-scale measures. There are two sets which are represented as binary variables, in which “1” indicates presence (true) and “0” indicates absence (false).

2. Use of truth table to represent data: Each logical combination of values on the independent variables is represented as one truth-table row. Once this part of the truth table is constructed, each row is assigned an output value (a score of 1 or 0 on the dependent variable) based on the scores of the cases which share that combination of input values (that combination of scores on the independent variables). Note that the outcome variable must be either 1 or 0, not an average or a probability.

3. Boolean addition: Addition in Boolean algebra is equivalent to the logical operator OR. Thus, the statement \( A + B = Z \) becomes as follows: if \( A \) equals 1 or \( B \) equals 1, then \( Z \) equals 1.

4. Boolean Multiplication: Boolean multiplication differs substantially from normal multiplication. Boolean multiplication is relevant because the typical social science application of Boolean algebra concerns the process of simplifying expressions known as “sums of products”. A product is a specific combination of causal conditions, with uppercase letters indicating the presence and lowercase letters indicating absence.

5. Combinational Logic: In Boolean-based qualitative comparison, causes are not considered in isolation but always within the context of the presence and absence of other causally relevant conditions.

6. Boolean Minimization: If two Boolean expressions differ in only one causal condition yet produce the same outcome, then the causal condition that distinguishes the two expressions can be considered irrelevant and can be removed to create a simpler, combined expression.

7. Implication and the use of prime implicants: Boolean expression is said to imply another if the membership of the second term is a subset of the membership of the first. For example, \( A \) implies \( A_{be} \) because \( A \) embraces all the members of \( A_{be} \) (that is, \( A_{be} \) is a subset of \( A \)).

8. Use of De Morgan’s Law: Rather than start from the very beginning and construct and minimize a new truth table, it is possible to apply De Morgan’s Law to the solution already derived for positive outcomes to obtain the solution for negative outcomes.

9. Necessary and sufficient causes: An additional aspect of the Boolean approach to consider is the relation between the results of Boolean minimization and necessary and sufficient causes in social research. A cause is defined as necessary if it must be present for a certain outcome to occur. A cause is defined as sufficient if it can produce a certain outcome by itself.

10. Factoring Boolean Expressions: Often it is useful to factor the results of the Boolean analysis. Boolean factoring does not differ dramatically from standard algebraic factoring [45].

3.4. Validity and Reliability

In this study, triangulation is used as a validation strategy to collect different data and build a coherent justification for the themes. The authors use various data-collection techniques to achieve data validity and reliability. For instance, semi-structured interviews, observations, and literature reviews, as well as reviewing the data by members of the research team, were the primary triangulation techniques used. As Creswell [46] suggests, interview recordings, field notes, and transcriptions can also enhance research reliability and provide confidence in the identification of factors affecting women’s participation in
rural tourism. A thorough review of collected data and coding process was performed by the members of the research team to ensure that all concepts pertaining to the study were included and findings compared with previous studies.

4. Study Findings

The eight themes obtained from interviews were divided into two sets of factors based on their nature: macro- and micro-level factors that affect women’s participation in rural tourism.

4.1. Macro-Level Factors

4.1.1. Socio-Geographic Proximity

Socio-geographic proximity refers to the geographic distance to the nearest tourist attractions and interaction with tourists. It directly affects women’s participation, as it relates to the extent of interaction with visitors to whom women can introduce their products and identify, analyze, and meet visitors’ needs. Consequently, the higher the proximity of tourist attractions, the more potential for interaction. Hence, the proximity of recreational facilities could influence women’s participation [47]. Most women stated that socio-geographic proximity is the most important factors for their involvement in rural tourism. For instance, Afsaneh, who managed an eco-lodge, noted the following:

“To access the attractions outside the village, the tourists have to pass through the village. It gives an opportunity to women in our village to talk to visitors pleasantly and encourage them to buy traditional food crops which were prepared by our rural women. In this way, we can boost our businesses”.

Based on the above statement, if the tourist attractions are far from rural areas, that may affect the tourist activities because the woman does not have any chance for interaction with visitors.

4.1.2. Patriarchy

Gender stereotypes negatively impact women’s participation in rural tourism activities by enhancing stigmatization and derailing the motivation of women to engage in the activities. When women attempt to participate in rural tourism activities, they feel a kind of isolation because the patriarchal structures are present in rural areas; therefore, they are less confident in their ability to handle some of the matters independently. As a result, women’s self-esteem declines, thus hindering their participation in tourism activities at the local level. The majority of interviewees pointed to this problem. For example, Maryam, a rural woman making handicrafts, stated the following:

“Our society does not accept a wide range of activities for women because men dominate here. It does not provide the support that women deserve. Many times I have heard that “stop working, you should raise children”. It may be a joke, but if you try to persuade men, they say it is better to do your main activities such as housekeeping, taking care of children, and other related house chores. Women are supported verbally, but not in action”.

Zohre, another women involved in making handicrafts, said the following:

“You know, the men in this village are very hesitant and do not let their wives talk to the strangers”.

These quotations show that patriarchal systems which lead to discrimination affects women’s desire to engage in the core multi-gender activities necessary to rural tourism activities, thereby limiting the participation of women in rural tourism activities.

4.1.3. Seasonality

Seasonal tourism imposes tremendous pressure on women, and they may experience more oppression than men. It cannot provide women with a sustainable income, so they
fail to start a job because they do not have a fixed salary and lack economic support. In addition, seasonality affects women more than men because they have fewer chance to interact with tourists and visitors who intend to buy local products. Moreover, cultural limitation prevents women from finding a suitable market for their local crops. Many participants referred to this issue. Shahin, who rents her farmhouse to visitors, expressed her dissatisfaction by saying the following:

“No cooperation in this village, because it is not crowded and tourism is seasonal. In the cold season, the number of tourists decreases significantly. Fortunately, about fifteen retirees have started returning to the village, and they tend to develop their farms and engage in agricultural activities”.

Based on this statement, it is clear that tourism seasonality has a notable impact on women’s participation in this sector and negatively affects the rate of their participation in tourism activities.

4.1.4. Ethnic Structure

In the study area, there were two types of ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds, values, traditions, accents, and dialects: the first group consisted of the households who moved from smaller neighboring towns and villages, seeking work; and the second group was from different tribes who lived in the same village. These ethnic structures led to diversity, which drew more tourists, as it presented different cultures and traditions to them and more significant interaction with locals. However, in some cases, this diversity turned into a negative aspect. One main challenge was conflict and lack of coordination among different tribes in the villages. In these regions, many tourism activities are run by rural women. Still, the male-dominated tribes imposed further social and cultural limitations on women, and it was a concern regarding their integration. Women were not able to develop closer working relationships with one another and tourists. Narges, a rural women involved in producing and supplying agricultural products, described it in this way:

“Here, we have several tribes. A lot of visitors come to our village. But due to various tribes with different cultural limitations, the women prefer not to work in the eco-lodges and guest houses”.

Atiyeh, who offered tourism services to visitors, noted the following:

“People from different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds visit this village and its attractions. Rural men think there is no safe environment for women or girls to offer services to visitors”.

Generally, in a region dominated by ethnic groups, the participation of women in rural tourism is shaped by several challenges, including relations between these communities. If rural women have a good relationship with one another, work together, and support each other, they collaborate and participate equally. Their participation will probably be challenged unless they become part of the relationship. Therefore, the presence of different ethnic groups in these rural areas can cause a conflict, as factors such as tribalism can present a significant obstacle to tourism and other forms of development.

4.2. Micro-Level Factors

4.2.1. Family Support

Family plays a crucial role in an individuals’ general well-being and social activities. In most case, families also influence the type of work that women can undertake; it is the main factor shaping development and the participation of women in rural tourism activities. As many participants stated in their interviews, this issue substantially impacts (positively and negatively) the number of women participating in rural tourism. For instance, Maliha, the manager of an ecolodge, expressed her satisfaction in the following way:
“My husband supported me a lot. We started this job together, and the result was great. My husband has been fully supportive of this idea and made a great effort for establishing this place even more than me”.

For married women, the spouse acts as the primary support in their actions, especially in matters that involve economic activity. Tourism is a challenging task, especially for women who are often vulnerable. Women face several obstacles when participating in rural tourism; thus, they need their families’ help and support to continue this activity.

4.2.2. Self-Confidence

Women participating in rural tourist activities usually interact with many strangers. If women lack sufficient self-confidence, they can end up fearing to participate. Moreover, having self-confidence can also help them face and address some of the challenges that may come their way. For instance, they can ask for help from experienced participants and use their best practices to run their business. Self-confidence also helps women improve their abilities and interpersonal skills, which affect their willingness to participate in rural tourism activities. Most of the participants declared it as a serious concern. For example, Najma, the governor of a rural district, decisively said the following:

“We did not learn these things from the childhood. No one taught us such a thing at school. They just told us that the girl should be like this: They repeatedly said ‘Be careful, you are a girl’ and other similar statements. They did not teach us to be independent. They did not tell us that: ‘You can change the world.’ What we have, is our own perseverance. We did not learn how to achieve our goals”.

Therefore, self-confidence is an important trait for marginalized groups such as women and as a way of encouraging them to share their views in men-dominated environments. Moreover, it helps women to access the market and be successful in it by associating with tourists.

4.2.3. Financial Assistance

As described above, financial support is the most crucial factor in terms of increasing women’s participation in rural activities. Some individuals are willing to join the sector, but they do not have adequate financial resources which are needed to facilitate their entry into the industry. Lack of access to this support significantly affects the number of women participants in rural tourism. This concern was frequently stated during the interview with one of the rural women who was the manager of women cooperatives:

“A woman in this village makes hand-made carpets. I think she is the first in the country. She did an excellent job and even participated in different national events. She held good exhibitions. Yet, she needed a loan to establish her carpet store. Thus, she asked for support, but they did not support her. This led to disappointment and prevented her from starting her business”.

This quotation demonstrates that financial support could help women be more active in the rural tourism, but it is not easy to find. The cultural display of the products that have been produced locally requires a substantial amount of capital to establish and maintain. The women’s funds to acquire cultural products are minimal and lacking.

4.2.4. Role Conflict

Role conflict is a significant problem for women who attempt to participate in rural tourism. It limits their involvement in the practice because they are subjected to other roles and are overloaded. When women in our study attempt to participate in the rural tourism activities, it creates a conflict with other family members, since it is perceived to be deviating from their usual role in society. This obstacle was a vital concern of most women. For example, Atiyeh, the manager of an eco-lodge, stated the following:
“Women also do gardening and animal husbandry here. It seems that it is their duty. That’s why they don’t do any other activity. They like to do tourism activities, but their husbands do not work. It’s their responsibility to do more work in household chores and on the farm. Our female labors may be 30 to 35 years old, but they look more aged. Here, women work hard and are overloaded”.

This multitasking limits the time for women that would be available for participation in tourism activities. Therefore, limited time does not allow women to freely participate in rural tourism activities. This activity will only add to their heavy duties, without any advantages.

4.3. Truth Table and Analysis

4.3.1. Macro-Level Causes

At the macro-level, four themes were identified as significant factors that affect women’s participation. These themes are represented with binary variables in Table 1. In this study, variables with positive impacts on women’s participation have been shown with uppercase letters and those with negative impact with lowercase letters.

Table 1. Binary data for macro-level factors.

| Variable                  | Positive Symbol | Negative Symbol |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Socio-geographic proximity| Proximity       | No Proximity    |
| Seasonality               | All-seasons     | Seasonality     |
| Ethnic structure          | Homogeneous     | Heterogeneous   |
| Patriarchy                | Non-Patriarchy  | Patriarchy      |
| Participation             | Participation   | Non-Participation |

To construct a truth table, we divided the villages into 0 and 1 codes based on the participation comparison of the average of the relevant variable in each village to the average of other villages, except the related village. For example, in the participation variable, if the participation number in each village is higher than the average of other villages, except the intended village, it gets 0. It indicates that the village does not participate in rural tourism. Suppose the amount of participation in that village is lower than the average of other villages, except for the relevant village. In that case, that village gets code 1 and indicates that the village participates in rural tourism. Moreover, participation output drew from the observations, surveys, and interviews with rural women and rural informants. The data relating to the causal conditions and the effect (participation) in tourist villages are reflected in Table 2.

Table 2. Truth table of tourism villages based on causal conditions and effect (participation).

| Outcome | Causal Conditions | Cases (Villages) |
|---------|-------------------|------------------|
| Participation | Patriarchy | Ethnic Structure | Seasonality | Proximity | Cases (Villages) |
| 1      | 0                 | 1                | 1           | 1         | Bilond         |
| 1      | 1                 | 0                | 0           | 1         | Shorestan      |
| 1      | 0                 | 0                | 0           | 1         | Gharasoo       |
| 1      | 0                 | 0                | 1           | 1         | Kang           |
| 1      | 1                 | 0                | 0           | 1         | Hesar          |
| 1      | 1                 | 0                | 1           | 1         | Radkan         |
| 0      | 0                 | 0                | 0           | 1         | Derathe-Sepidar |
| 0      | 0                 | 1                | 1           | 1         | Zafaraniyeh    |
Table 2. Cont.

| Outcome | Causal Conditions | Cases (Villages) |
|---------|-------------------|------------------|
|         | Participation Patriarchy Ethnic Structure Seasonality Proximity | Roodmajan |
| 0 0 1 0 0 | | Rivash |
| 1 1 1 1 1 | | Kariz |
| 1 0 1 1 1 | | Dizbad-e Olya |
| 0 1 1 0 0 | | Bazangan |
| 0 0 0 0 1 | | Pivehjan |
| 0 0 0 0 1 | | Akhlamad |

The above table can be reconstructed in the following value table (Table 3).

Table 3. Truth table of the effect of participation ($n = 15$).

| Proximity | Seasonality | Ethnic Structure | Patriarchy | Causal Conditions | Number of Observations | Number of Participation | Participation Output |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1         | 1           | 0               | 0          | AbDe              | 1                      | 1                     | 1                    |
| 1         | 0           | 1               | 1          | AbDE              | 1                      | 1                     | 1                    |
| 1         | 0           | 1               | 0          | AbDe              | 1                      | 1                     | 1                    |
| 1         | 1           | 1               | 0          | ABDe              | 3                      | 2                     | 1                    |
| 1         | 0           | 0               | 1          | AbdE              | 1                      | 1                     | 1                    |
| 1         | 1           | 0               | 1          | ABdE              | 1                      | 1                     | 1                    |
| 1         | 0           | 0               | 0          | Abde              | 3                      | 0                     | 0                    |
| 0         | 0           | 1               | 0          | abDe              | 2                      | 0                     | 0                    |
| 1         | 1           | 1               | 1          | ABDE              | 1                      | 1                     | 1                    |
| 0         | 0           | 1               | 1          | abDE              | 1                      | 0                     | 0                    |

It is noted that, here, the Boolean analysis focused on cases where their participation output was 1, and those with output 0 were removed. Based on the combinations of conditions that have had at least one instance of participation, the Boolean equation of participation can be written as follows:

$$P = ABde + AbDE + AbDe + ABDe + AbdE + ABdE + ABDE$$  \hfill (1)

As noted earlier, using the BOOLEAN MINIMIZATION, we created a simpler, combined expression.

Then, we simplified it even more:

$$P = Abe + Abd + AbD + AbE + ADE + Ade + ABD + AdE + ABE$$  \hfill (2)

where

- $ABde + ABDe = Abe$
- $ABde + ABDe = Abd$
- $AbDE + AbDe = AbD$
- $AbDE + AbdE = AbE$
- $ABDE + ABDE = ADE$
- $AbDe + ABDe = ADe$
- $ABDe + ABDE = ABD$
AbdE + ABdE = AdE
ABdE + ABDE = ABE

\[ P = AB + Ab + AD + AE + Ad \]  

(3)

where
Abe + ABE = AB
Abd + AbD = Ab
AbD + ABD = AD
AbE + ABE = AE
ADE + AdE = AE
Ade + AdE = Ad

\[ Ade + AdE = AdA \]  

(4)

\[ P = AE \]  

(5)

Considering that the set of causal compounds is expressed as a necessary and sufficient condition (Ragin, 1987), this equation indicates that the combination of socio-geographic proximity and non-patriarchal structure fulfills the women’s participation in rural tourism activities.

4.3.2. Micro-Level Causes

Four themes were identified as significant factors that affect women’s participation in the micro-level. These themes are represented with binary variables in Table 4.

Table 4. Binary data for micro-level factors.

| Variable             | Positive        | Symbol | Negative        | Symbol |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| Family support       | Having family support | A      | Lack of family support | a      |
| Financial assistance | Having financial support | B      | Non-financial support | b      |
| Self-confidence      | Self-confidence | D      | Lack of self-confidence | d      |
| Role conflict        | No role conflict | F      | Role conflict   | f      |
| Participation        | Participation   | P      | Participation   | p      |

The data relating to the causal conditions (rural women) and the effect (participation) are reflected in Table 5.

Table 5. Truth table of individuals based on causal conditions and effect (participation).

| Cases (Individuals) | Family Support | Financial Support | Self-Confidence | Role Conflict | Participation (P) |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|
| Maryam              | 1              | 0                 | 1               | 0            | 1                |
| Zahra               | 0              | 1                 | 1               | 0            | 1                |
| Najma               | 1              | 1                 | 1               | 1            |                  |
| Narges              | 0              | 0                 | 1               | 0            | 1                |
| Afsaneh             | 1              | 0                 | 1               | 1            |                  |
| Soudabeh            | 1              | 1                 | 1               | 0            | 1                |
| Saeedeh             | 1              | 1                 | 1               | 1            | 1                |
Table 5. Cont.

| Cases (Individuals) | Causal Conditions | Outcome |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------|
|                     | Family Support    | Financial Support | Self-Confidence | Role Conflict | Participation (P) |
| Maliha              | 1                 | 0          | 0               | 0            | 0               |
| Marziyeh            | 0                 | 0          | 0               | 1            | 0               |
| Mahboobe            | 0                 | 0          | 0               | 1            | 0               |
| Sedigheh            | 0                 | 0          | 0               | 0            | 0               |
| Somayeh             | 1                 | 1          | 1               | 1            | 1               |
| Atiyeh              | 1                 | 1          | 1               | 0            | 1               |
| Shahin              | 1                 | 1          | 1               | 1            | 0               |
| Atefah              | 1                 | 0          | 0               | 1            | 0               |
| Mahdiyeh            | 1                 | 1          | 0               | 1            | 0               |
| Zohre               | 0                 | 1          | 0               | 1            | 0               |

The above table can be reconstructed in the following truth table (Table 6).

Table 6. Truth table of the effect of participation ($n = 17$).

| Causal Conditions | Causal Combinations | Number of Observations | Number of Participants | Participation Output (P) |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Family Support    | Financial Assistance| Self-Confidence | Role Conflict | AbDf       | 1          | 1          | 1          |
|                   |                     | 1                      | 1                      | 1                      |
|                   |                     | 0                      | 1                      | 1                      |
|                   |                     | 1                      | 1                      | 1                      |
|                   |                     | 0                      | 1                      | 1                      |
|                   |                     | 1                      | 0                      | 2                      |
|                   |                     | 0                      | 1                      | 2                      |
|                   |                     | 1                      | 0                      | 2                      |
|                   |                     | 0                      | 1                      | 2                      |
|                   |                     | 1                      | 0                      | 2                      |
|                   |                     | 0                      | 1                      | 2                      |
|                   |                     | 1                      | 0                      | 2                      |

As in the micro-level factors above, the resultant effect using Boolean algebra analysis is possible. The resulting summation is in the equation below.

1. $P = \text{AbDf} + \text{aBDf} + \text{ABDF} + \text{abDF} + \text{ABDf}$
2. $\text{AbDf} + \text{ABDf} = \text{ADf}$
3. $\text{aBDf} + \text{ABDf} = \text{BDf}$
4. $\text{ABDF} + \text{ABDf} = \text{ABD}$
5. $\text{ADF} + \text{BDF} + \text{ABD} = \text{D (AF + BF + AB)}$
6. $P = \text{D (AF + BF + AB)}$

The Equation above shows that, at the micro-level, four causal combination affects women’s participation in rural tourism:

Self-confidence is a necessary condition that, when combined with the following combinations, is sufficient to fulfill women’s participation in rural tourism activities:

1. Family support and no role conflict;
2. Financial assistance accompanying no role conflict;
3. Family support along with financial support.
5. Discussion

This study confirmed that women’s participation factors include patriarchy and ethnic structure, self-confidence, economic support, family support, and role conflict, which were previously identified in the literature. Moreover, the current research added two new significant factors (socio-geographic proximity and seasonal tourism) that delineate women’s participation in rural tourism. Additionally, these factors fall into two categories: at the macro-level (village), socio-geographic proximity in combination with non-patriarchal structure; and at the micro-level (rural women), self-confidence, family support, financial assistance, and non-role conflict are necessary and sufficient conditions for women’s participation in rural tourism.

The socio-geographic proximity plays a crucial role in women’s involvement in rural tourism activities, yet it was an unexpected finding. It is thought the relationship of traditional society with tourists who have modern values would increase the challenges. In this regard, the study by Tusawar Iftikhar and Farooq concluded that geographic factors such as the distant location of the villages from the city and agro-climatic conditions of the areas did not show a statistically significant effect in determining the magnitude of women’s involvement in livestock-management activities [48]. However, the results showed that, despite the traditional nature of a society, the more interaction it has with tourists, the more women’s willingness to participate in rural tourism activities. This can be justified that integrating traditional and modern values plays a crucial role in developing culture and attracting more tourists. An increase in tourists guarantees a higher number of women participating in tourism activities. Indeed, Bayat et al. [49] claim the participation of native women in tourism activities at the rural level is directly proportional to the presence and the number of tourists available.

Socio-geographic proximity and a non-patriarchal structure are necessary and sufficient causes for women’s participation in rural tourism. The socio-geographic proximity enhances the interaction between rural women and visitors. In case of no socio-geographic proximity and distance from rural attractions, low interaction between rural women occurs, significantly reducing women’s financial resources and discouraging them from participating in rural tourism activities. As a result, women lose a chance to interact with tourists. They are unwilling to participate in the activities [50], which impacts the living standards of the women by eradicating revenue and income. In the absence of patriarchy, women fully participate in rural tourism, as patriarchy creates conditions that lead to women’s subordination and impedes women’s promotion in the society. Indeed, gender basis is an obstacle that significantly affects the tourism industry [51].

Self-confidence is a necessary cause, along with sufficient causes such as family support, financial assistance, and non-role conflict, helping the marginal group, i.e., women, to engage in tourism activities. Some scholars acknowledge the importance of self-confidence for rural women. Martinez et al. [52] claim that self-confidence barriers are considered one of artisan women’s main limitations when undertaking a small-scale food processing project. In addition, lower self-confidence may lead to reduced participation of women in tourism activities, further resulting in the lack of confidence, skills, and experience they need to be active in this area [53]. Women’s negative perception of their abilities may prevent them from applying for formal financial support and exacerbate any objective external financial constraints already present [54]. This finding is consistent with the results of a study in rural areas of Canada, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, and Serbia that highlighted how the respect, trust, and belief in the women who initiated the cooperation made other women believe in the success as well, thus creating self-confidence among local women regarding their potential to work outside their homes [55]. Moreover, this is agreed with work by Sood et al. [56], who showed that daily workload of women, lack of awareness/information, lack of finance, lack of institutional mechanisms, lack of skills and confidence, fear of loss of cultural values, and safety concerns as critical barriers for community participation.

However, our findings have some implications that were noted in other studies. The findings of prior studies [57,58] revealed that lack of confidence has real and wide-ranging
consequences for rural women. As stated by Yueh, the lack of self-confidence is a significant constraint to women’s entrepreneurial entry in China [57]. Furthermore, Javadian and Singh argued that, among female entrepreneurs in Iran, the fear of failure and lack of self-confidence are “non-factors” because of the challenges they face in their daily lives [58]. Jamali found that the primary obstacle mentioned by Lebanese women entrepreneurs was the challenging act of balancing work and family [59]. In another study of married female entrepreneurs in Turkey, respondents reported role conflict in their personal and professional lives. They said that being an entrepreneur hurt their family life, even though it positively affected their social, economic, and individual lives [60]. The scholars argue that increased responsibility for the family is one of the explanations for the lower profitability of women-owned firms [61].

Some empirical and theoretical studies confirmed a relationship between lack of self-confidence and no proximity or interaction with tourists, which leads to low participation. A number of studies report that women benefit from interactions with other cultures facilitated by tourism. Women in Costa Rica, Belize, and Honduras viewed working in tourism very positively, saying that it was a great way to earn a living, meet a diverse array of people, and gain more confidence through these interactions [62]. Similarly, women’s participation in social life can develop through tourism, and their involvement in business leads to meeting more people and enriching their social lives [63]. Evidence from Nepal, France, Turkey, Uganda, Botswana, Japan, Mauritius, and the United States shows that when women are socially, economically, psychologically, physically, and politically empowered, there can be many positive impacts that are multiplied at the household and community levels [62]. These include economic independence and increased self-confidence [64]. As Çakmakçı concluded, the main reason for increased self-confidence is women’s economic independence [63].

6. Conclusions

The current study aimed to contribute to our understanding of issues shaping women’s participation in rural tourism. Thus, it focused on necessary and sufficient conditions for women’s participation in rural tourism by identifying a set of combinations that fulfill women’s involvement at the macro- and micro-level. The findings identified fundamental causes that affect women’s participation in rural tourism: socio-geographic proximity, a newly emerging factor in this study, and non-patriarchal structure at the macro level. Similarly, self-confidence, family support, financial assistance, and non-role conflict at the micro-level are necessary and sufficient causes that were not addressed in other comparative studies. Our study extends knowledge concerning necessary and sufficient conditions, mainly socio-geographic proximity and self-confidence variables, as the novelty of this research when measuring women’s participation in rural tourism.

The main practical aspect is to reanalyze the obtained results in other countries with the same situation. Additionally, further research is suggested to test the necessary and sufficient factors, such as socio-geographic proximity and self-confidence, obtained in our study in a given community. Furthermore, various solutions based on global best practices deliver for women involved in rural tourism and rural development to overcome these challenges. For example, training programs address specific skills and expertise and enhance women’s self-confidence [65]. Moreover, countries with cultural similarities can modify their development policies based on these findings by emphasizing women’s participation in rural tourism. Practical communicative approaches are significant, as they connect women deeply with tourists and improve women’s participation. According to the gathering strategy, coming together resulted in collaboration and more connection between community groups, and a sense that all are trying to achieve rural destinations’ development [66]. The solution to patriarchy is empowering within; this does not mean empowering women within their society’s structures instead of trying to destroy those structures, but both [67]. Last but not least, women’s involvement in the cooperative
programs encourages a progressive integration of rural women’s businesses into the formal economy, resulting in more interaction and increased self-confidence.

However, some limitations to our study should be addressed. This study revealed a new concept for women’s participation in rural tourism in Iran based on field observation. In this sense, participation is perceived as an individual matter, not collective action by local women. They perceive participation as any willingness or effort that directly or indirectly contributes to rural tourism development. It might be necessary to redefine how different societies think about participation and consider the various levels of participation in these societies. This will help us to better respond to the need to improve women’s success in rural tourism and rural development.

Moreover, there were no formal data regarding the amount of women’s participation in rural tourism activities. Thus, before performing the qualitative research, a quantitative study was conducted in the study area to describe the extent of women’s involvement in rural tourism. The result revealed that women’s participation in rural tourism in this region is very low. However, their willingness to participate in rural tourism was significantly higher than their actual work. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic might have an impact on women’s participation. Therefore, a future study is suggested to conduct quantitative research in this field in a larger location to measure the increase or decrease of the amount of women’s participation and the study’s generalizability.

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