A comparative investigation of Poverty rate based on the gender of Head of household among the households of Tabriz

Saeed Irani, Alireza Torfi, Fatemeh Mohammadi Youzbashkandi

ABSTRACT

Background: Poverty is one of the most dangerous social phenomena which can threaten the economic, political and cultural life of a nation. Objective: The objective of the present study is to investigate comparatively poverty rate and its dimensions among households of Tabriz based on the gender of the head of the household. The method employed in this study is survey and the population is composed of households residing in Tabriz, which are 391860 households. Sample size of 400 participants was calculated using Cochran formula. The research tool is researcher-made questionnaire. For presenting the results descriptive methods and statistics and for testing hypotheses, t-test were used. Data analysis was conducted by SPSS software program. The total poverty rate was obtained by calculating the total scores of cultural poverty, situational poverty, relevant poverty and housing poverty and was compared and tested between two groups. Results: The results obtained from t-test showed that there is no significant difference between poverty rates based on the gender of the head of household; Conclusion: Feminization of poverty seems to not be true regarding Tabriz.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the most dangerous social phenomena which can threaten the economic, political and cultural life of a nation. Existing evidence within communities indicates this reality that in recent years, there has been a severe increase in the rate of relative poverty line (the extent which individuals only are able to supply their basic biological needs) and consequently increase in poor population occurs. This issue is in the conditions which food crisis, if continues, may result in severe poverty among 100 million inhabitants of the earth.

Measuring poverty and its distribution among various social and geographical groups is the first step in line with identifying the target groups and adopting appropriate policies in line with decreasing poverty [1]. In addition, awareness of severity, depth and extent of poverty is important in the poverty alleviation programs. The lack of awareness of it has a lot of influences on the correct formulation of poverty alleviation policies. For the time being, poverty is the largest challenge of the world which pervades most societies. This is the situation that financial crisis has threatened fighting poverty. There is this danger that this crisis may mar all successes and improvements of this domain. This can be the last stroke which may shutter the poorest and the poor in such a way that they can survive no longer. The poverty resulting from an imbalanced and unequal social system and is a phenomenon which is the result of inequality. Economic poverty prevents forming healthy ethics and appropriate culture. Poverty, unemployment, lack of economic stability, unequal distribution of wealth, growth of marginalization, increase in the young population of a society and breakdown in traditional systems and family bonds are the main causes of social pathologies. Poor families often suffer from high depression, psychosomatic diseases and a lot of anxieties; their future horizons are closed; and do not enjoy required audacity and awareness to use their capabilities. The poor youths, in addition to the problems which other youths of the society encounter, suffer from the challenges of economic poverty and cultural deficiencies. The effects of poverty are more obvious on the life and future of children; they may be stressed or depressed due to stresses caused by poverty.

Furthermore, low investment and families with financial stress, by increasing poor children, may show their effects in future on these children' social behaviors and reducing their educational attainment [2].

In terms of the importance of poverty problem, and its negative consequences, particularly its determining influence on social pathologies is both necessary and useful for every society to always be careful of its severity
and extent in the society and to prevent from the occurrence of its negative outcomes. Therefore, regarding the significant importance of the phenomenon of poverty in personal and social dimensions, implementing such a study, other than identifying attentively its mechanisms and introducing them, can provide a suitable ground for designing and implementing short- and long-term programs, by which the control and prevention from this challenge can be applied; and guides the society in the path of justice and equality [3]. However, because tiny differences in determining the poverty line can have a great influence on calculating the poor people, sometimes in the situations of people's political dissatisfactions, in political decisions, governments present the unreal poverty rate and claim that poverty rate is lower than that of the status quo for presenting the status quo more clearly and defending their own programs, in such a way that these claims have no basis in the real life. One of the reasons of incorrectness of information related to poverty in the city is merely based on the official count of residential areas [4]. While millions of people who lives largely in unofficial regions and in the margins of big cities are not considered as some part of the population of the city, in general, the unofficial regions have a high density of the urban poor, high illiteracy rate, high unemployment rate or underemployment regarding daily or seasonal jobs, the domination of unofficial jobs, child labor, widespread environmental risks of disease regarding lack of primary services, narrow path between buildings, lack of privacy, unsanitary conditions due to overcrowding waste, insects and rodents [5]. Therefore, with a little pessimism towards state statistics, it should be considered that the realistic evaluation of poverty rate is a complicated issue and needs a high level of accuracy.

However, what results in the sociologists' attention to the issue of poverty was that they were aware that the increasing proliferation of poor masses is affective and damaging in the destiny of a society and nation. On the other hand, what makes this phenomenon considerable is its globalized nature. Statistics and figures which are conveyed to the world every day by mass media indicate that more than half of people in the world are captive to poverty; and this poverty is not only specific to the industrial world or underdeveloped countries; but also it is a universal issue [6].

Attention to the vulnerable status of developing societies, particularly Iran and metropolis Tabriz and the necessity of preventing from different types of social issues, work and research in the domain of poverty require great efforts. The present study is to step in the line with better identification of poverty using the ideas of specialists of this domain and the findings of the previous literature. Accordingly, the researcher aims at evaluating poverty rate based on the combination of some basic prospects for poverty (housing poverty, situational poverty, cultural poverty and relevant poverty). And then, he wants to access the objective of comparing the mean of poverty and its dimensions in the level of households in Tabriz in terms of the gender of the head of household and answers to the following question.

- Is the total mean of poverty is different (the total scores of housing poverty, cultural poverty, relevant poverty and situational poverty) based on the gender of the head of the household?

Review of literature:

Since in social sciences, phenomena are looked at from different perspectives with different objectives in mind; the existence of various definitions of a single phenomenon is natural. In this section, different definitions of poverty are presented to attain a comprehensive definition of it.

Some studies indicate that the prevalence and severity of poverty in terms of consumption are more in small towns. In general, it is identified by prevalent privation in the conditions of accessing to infrastructures, basic services such as electricity, gas, heating, sewage and solid waste disposal. However, inequality within big cities occurs by sharp dichotomy between slum dwellers and central regions [7]. Therefore, it is expected that to save more than one billion people of the world from poverty is by world attention in all multiple dimensions of poverty including development of conditions for reasonable move, rapid economic growth, avoidance from main crises (financial, cultivation and climate) and ensuring full participation of the poor in that growth, which per se require that those people enjoy accessing education, health care's, opportunities of work markets and financial resources [8].

Therefore, in the present study, in order to fill the existing gaps in every one of views, in the eclectic landscape context, and to measure the mean of poverty, four prospects were used. These prospects are as follows: 1. View of housing poverty 2. View of cultural poverty 3. View of situational poverty 4. View of relevant poverty.

Housing poverty, in the cities of the world of today, is considered as one of the manifestations of urban poverty, and principally whenever one speaks of urban poverty, unconsciously slums and the poor's huts come to the mind. In fact, if urban poverty is taken as equal to slum, which lack of house is its main feature, it is not an exaggerated claim. In this prospect, lack of accessing to an appropriate house is highly correlated to increase in crimes, divorce and social fragmentation; and it is considered as a factor inhibiting in the social - cultural and psychological promotion and development. In addition, not enjoying an appropriate house results in other anomalous social phenomena such as sleeping in streets and slum, and tougher problems such as beggary. Housing is one of the basic and biological requirements of human beings. Furthermore, in the article 31 of the
Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, enjoying an appropriate house is the very right of each Iranian family. To assess housing poverty usually two indices are used. The first one is "the proportion of households living in short-lived and ephemeral residential units" in the urban regions of provinces. All residential units which in terms of the type of material are all wood, all brick, wood and adobe, adobe and mud as well as shed are located in this group. The second index which some researchers use solely it as "the criterion of poverty", is "the number of four-person-or-more households living a single room". When a four-person-or-more household has to fulfill all of its own requirements in a single room, it signifies their economic poverty and privations [9].

According to Azimi's definition, two-person households which are living in a single room or less, and 8-, 9-, and 10-person households which are living in three rooms are also considered as deprived [10]. This deprivation basically indicates itself in the number of rooms specific to a household and consequently in the interference of the lives of individuals living in one-person and multiple-persons households with each other. This type of poverty causes the personal capabilities for education and promotion of skills decrease; therefore, the members of poor families are kept poor. In addition, the interference of lives of different genders causes that social pathologies increase. In fact, inappropriate housing may be transformed into a "space trap". It means that in general, a person's is born in low-income social classes, automatically decreases his opportunities to attend in higher-income groups and higher social classes (compared to high-income classes). This factor is called "class trap" of poverty. "Space trap" of a house is produced in two ways: one is the internal quality and the other is the external one. By external quality, the researchers mean housing location. In Iran, the location of a house in the unofficial residential space and rural regions is considered as falling into a space trap. Unofficial residence which arises from not considering low-income people for supplying their own houses, both internally and externally may plant for them space traps. Internally, a house built with inappropriate materials and facilities and inadequate infrastructure levels, externally it has the least access to basic services. In addition, spatial separation between classes may deprive low-income people from the company of other social segments and enhance the civil promotion resulting from it. Therefore, other than traditional urban-rural conflict, which is a kind of space trap for the rural regions, it produces a larger space trap in unofficial residence [11].

**Cultural poverty** was distributed by Oscar Lewis in 1959. According to this view, the culture of poverty is a special syndrome which grows in some conditions and the poor are the visualization a set of shared values, norms and behavior patterns which are different from the dominant public culture. In fact, the poor have their own lifestyle or particular subculture [12]. Based on the cultural approach or deficient manner and character, the low social classes present particular behavioral and value patterns, which may block the path to their successes. These values are transferred generation after generation to them and this issue has caused them to be drowned in a closed whirlpool of poverty. These unique behavioral and value patterns are transferred by the process of socialization and are considered the indices of subculture of the economic and social status of the poor. In this approach, four main indices which are indicative of the poor's being problematic are presented: Rates of crime and offense, type and severity of mental illness, educational status of these people as well as large and populated families [13].

On the other hand, Schiller (1980) introduces the prospect of cultural poverty under the name of "deficient manner". According to this perspective, the natural consequence of individual defects is in enthusiasm and capability or in more recent words, work motivation and ethics. This group believes that if each mentioned factor, whether motivation or capability, is inadequate in an individual, it more or less may result in poverty. In this view, the only reason for poverty is the lack of these two factors, i.e. if individuals want to achieve the required capabilities; they can save themselves from poverty. Since the society provides adequate opportunities for all individuals and only the will of individuals and consequently achievement of necessary instruments can be considered as the factor of freeing from poverty [3]. To understand better the concept of culture, it should be considered that it is related to the concept of society. The concept of culture should necessarily be looked at based on its relation with the society. The imagination of the culture and society to be separated from each other or vice versa is only an abstraction by itself. A vast range of scientific writings is biased in their analysis of the relationship between the culture and society. Some researchers give priority to the culture. In many cases, there has been a kind of artificial dichotomy between these two concepts. However, a social structure requires culture to organize the continuity of its own principles. In addition, culture requires a structure for recreation, publication, rationalization or transformation [14].

**Situational poverty** is the just the opposite view of culturalism. Therefore, this view investigates the reason of poverty not in individuals, but outside of them. This theory explains the different behaviors of the poor because of not enjoying resources and opportunities of adaptation to the methods of the middle class. Although the theory considers the structural conditions of poverty as important, it focuses on the individual responses to the concrete situation of poverty. Its difference with the theory of the culture of poverty is that it presumes the existence of subculture guiding the poor's behaviors. This group of theorists know the reason of poverty not in the values of lower classes, but they see this reason in discriminations and inequalities underlying the society. Therefore, poverty is imposed poverty from the outside. A poor person is poor because he does not enjoy adequate access to good schools, proper job and income. Since he is discriminated and does not enjoy the fair
proportion of governmental support, subsidies and services. A poor person is the son of the poor; and a rich person is the son of the rich, and the society is not able to reduce these distances [15].

According to this view, the behavioral patterns of a poor person are the results of the situations imposed by the dominant social structure and limits the liberty and selection of lower class. The main issue should not be searched in values and cultural patterns of classes, but the external determining factors related to limiting social structure should be studied. The poor have a different behavior; but not because of the reason that they have a particular value system; but for this reason that they have internalized the dominant values and do not have this opportunity to identify these values in the social sanctioned and exclusive path. To achieve a change, the image of the poor should not be changed, but their status should be changed via the amendment of the limiting social construction, their status should be changed. Poverty is a part of our broad question regarding construction and distribution of resources over the society, the control power and use of them [13].

The other view is the prospect of "relevant poverty". The subculture of poverty is dependent on the external interaction of the poor with the non-poor. The culture of poverty, is neither by itself internal nor external, but according to the relevance theory, it is a relevant concept; it is a dependent subculture. To understand better the lower class and the culture of poverty both internal action and the external interaction between the poor and the non-poor should be considered. According to this theory, the image which a society and the non-poor have of the poor has a significant role in emergence of poverty. Poverty is a phenomenon of social type and occurs as long as a poor person feels that he is poor. Believing that a person is poor is a social issue. A social group finds that it is poor when look at itself in the mirror of the judgment of others. According to Simmel, poverty is only considered as a social type when the society knows poverty as a particular social status and necessities certain people to help the poor (ibid).

A poor person is a social type and a time will come when the society considers poverty as a social status. Simmel in a section of the book on social issue titled as The Poor translated in to English by Claire Jacobson, writes that "this fact that a person is poor means that he is belong to the special social category of the poor; and he has been known as poor since he was helped and therefore, he is the member of a group whose index is poverty. These groups will not remain coherent among its members by interaction; but the total attitude of the society towards them makes this group sustainable. Poverty is not a quantitative and substantive; but it is identified in terms of a social reaction due to a particular situation. Poverty is a unique sociological phenomenon". As soon as the poor accept the charity donated by others, then these poor persons are not identified by what they do; but are identified more by what others do for them [16].

On the other hand, the relevant prospect knows poverty neither only influenced by the particular patterns of the poor nor only influenced by social inequalities and discriminations, but it claims that the interaction of these two categories results in poverty. This prospect is based on understanding the situation of a poor person compared to another poor person and the effects of these attitudes and actions on the poor. A poor person is considered as poor when he is donated charity; therefore, he enters the group whose index is poverty. This group cannot be coherent by interaction among its members, but the attitude of the whole society towards them can make the group sustainable. Poverty cannot be described as a substantive condition; but the poor are only identified in terms of a social reaction due to a particular situation. Poverty is a unique sociological phenomenon. It refers to a group of individuals who based on a totally personal destiny occupy their own organic status within the society. However, this status not only involves in personal destiny of the poor, but also is explained more based on this reality that others attempt to improve its conditions (Haghverdian, 2006: 62). This prospect is based on understanding the situation of a poor person in the framework of social construct of the attitude and behaviors of a non-poor person towards the poor one and the effects of this attitudes and actions on the poor person [15].

Akindola, in a research titled as "Towards a Definition of Poverty: Poor People's Perspectives and Implications for Poverty Reduction" discusses that the definition of poverty in a higher level as a show itself as a shortfall in the income level. In this line, via the active participation of poor people, he takes poverty in multiple dimensions and proposes some steps to reduce it. By the results obtained from a sample of rural families in all over the country and vies of the group debate in the Nigerian Ministry Foreign Affairs, he found that poverty is not only a lack of adequate income, but it also is a combination of different forms of deprivation which allow each other to reduce the human capabilities. He also showed that the only way to reduce poverty is not increase in income [5].

Sabry in a study titled as "How poverty is underestimated in Greater Cairo", indicates that poverty rate in the Greater Cairo is severely underestimated. According to the census data and conducted studies in the domestic investigations, poverty line, considering people's accounts in the urban life, has increase extensively in relation to the most basic urban costs and requirements [4].

It should be considered that the viewing the concept of poverty based on only one of these prospects presented, one cannot has a correct picture of poverty conditions, deprivation and its dimensions. To make a comprehensive analysis of poverty one should uses a combination of multiple approaches in such a way that in a recovery process, the deficiencies of individual views and methods will be compensated. Therefore, in the
present study, for a performance definition of poverty, a researcher-made questionnaire prepared from the questions of the operational definition of four dimensions of poverty (cultural poverty, situational poverty, relevant poverty and housing poverty) in different levels of measurement was used.

Definition of cultural poverty: according to this view, the poor and the lower class have specific values and behavioral patterns which are contrary to the dominant cultural values of the society. These behavioral patterns are transferred to the next generation by socialization and sociability. In addition, from this perspective, poverty is the natural result of personal deficiencies in enthusiasm to capability or work motivation and ethics. This view believes that if each mentioned factors, whether motivation or capability, is not available in the individual, this lacking will result in poverty. This approach refers to four main indices indicate that the poor are problematic: Rates of crime and offense, type and severity of mental illness, educational status of these people as well as large and populated families [13]. The present study, for indexing cultural poverty, uses from the questions designed in the distance level and for assessing the concepts of "fatalism, tendency to education, will to control services. A poor person is the son of the poor; and a rich person is the son of the rich, and the society is not able on the poor. A poor person is poor because he does not enjoy adequate access to good schools, proper job and income. Since he is discriminated and does not enjoy the fair proportion of governmental support, subsidies and services. A poor person is the son of the poor; and a rich person is the son of the rich, and the society is not able to reduce these distances [13]. To have an operational definition of this view, the questions designed for the assessment of the rate of the concepts of "employment, education, lack of governmental support and the school conditions" were used.

Definition of relevant poverty: relevant prospect the relevant prospect knows poverty neither only influenced by the particular patterns of the poor nor only influenced by social inequalities and discriminations, but it claims that the interaction of these two categories results in poverty. This prospect is based on understanding the situation of a poor person compared to another poor person and the effects of these attitudes and actions on the poor. A poor person is considered as poor when he is donated charity; therefore, he enters the group whose index is poverty. This group cannot be coherent by interaction among its members, but the attitude of the whole society towards them can make the group sustainable. Poverty cannot be described as a substantive condition; but the poor are only identified in terms of a social reaction due to a particular situation. Poverty is a unique sociological phenomenon. It refers to a group of individuals who based on a totally personal destiny occupy their own organic status within the society. However, this status not only involves in personal destiny of the poor, but also is explained more based on this reality that others attempt to improve its conditions [13]. To have an operational definition of this prospect, the questions designed for the assessment of concepts of "attitude towards poverty and social support" were used.

Definition of housing poverty: housing poverty can be defined as lacking in access to an appropriate house or lack of a standard one. Basically, this deprivation shows itself in the number of rooms possessed by the members of the household and consequently in the interference of the individuals' lives of a household and multiple households with each other. This poverty type results in reduction of personal capabilities for education and enhancement in skills; therefore, it keeps the members of a poor family poorer [11]. In the present study, to assess housing poverty, two indices were used. The first one is "the proportion of households living in short-lived and ephemeral residential units" in the urban regions of provinces. All residential units which in terms of the type of material are all wood, all brick, wood and adobe, adobe and mud as well as shed are located in this group. The second index which some researchers use solely it as "the criterion of poverty", is "the number of four-person-or-more households living a single room". When a four-person-or-more household has to fulfill all of its own requirements in a single room, it signifies their economic poverty and privation.

Methodology:

In terms of objective, the present study is an applied one and in terms time, because it is related to a particular period of time, is sectional and in terms of data collection, is a survey study. The population of the study includes all households residing in Tabriz, which according to the latest Statistical Yearbook (2009) this population consists of 391860 households residing in Tabriz.

In terms of concepts of poverty's being sociological and through the bread than scope of the studied population as well as limiting the population, to identify the sample Cochran formula with the degree of confidence of 95/0 and the error of measurement of 5/0 was used; accordingly 384 households were obtained as the sample which because of covering the potential error, it was enhanced to 410 households. The stratified sampling method was used which randomly is consistent with the sample size. These households were identified in the decathlon regions of municipality and neighborhood sand blocks. In the study, to evaluate the sample size, Cochran formula was used.

The data collection instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire designed to measure poverty and its dimensions in different levels of measurement. Some presented questions in the questionnaire were in the form
of multi-item scales, which in addition to enhancing the response rate; it provides both the possibility of identifying mental objectives and the possibility of measuring variables in the distance level and consequently provides the possibility of applying advanced statistical tests. The validity of this questionnaire was measured from formal validity by specialists and its reliability was measured using Cronbach alpha.

To analyze the data, regarding the measuring scales of the data, the appropriate statistical methods were used. To describe the qualitative variables, percentage and frequency indices and to evaluate the quantitative ones indices of central tendency and dispersion were used. To test the research questions, according to the nature of questions, t-test was employed.

Findings:

According to t-test, no significant difference was observed between total poverty rates among households in terms of gender of the head of household. Because \( t = -1.214 \) with \( df = 411 \) in the level of \( p = 0.062 \) is not significant.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Gender of the head of the household</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Test for equality of variances</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( df )</th>
<th>sig</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
<td>2.965</td>
<td>-1.224</td>
<td>.062</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11.44915</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.776</td>
<td>28.562</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and conclusion:

The objective of the present study is to compare poverty rates among households of Tabriz based on the gender of the head of the household. The population of the study includes all households residing in Tabriz, which according to the latest Statistical Yearbook (2009) this population consists of 391860 households residing in Tabriz. To identify the sample Cochran formula with the degree of confidence of 95/0 and the error of measurement of 5/0 was used; accordingly 384 households were obtained as the sample which because of covering the potential error, it was enhanced to 410 households. The stratified sampling method was used which randomly is consistent with the sample size.

According to the findings of descriptive statistics, 26.6% of the studied households were under the supervision of a parent. And 66.3% of the households were under the supervision of fathers, 5.6% mothers and 1.5% were under the supervision of brothers.

Regarding the incomes of families, 21.8% of the studied households have income less than 300 thousand Tomans; 34.4% of families 300 to 500 thousand Tomans, 19.9% of the households 600 to 800 thousand Tomans, 13.1% of households 900 up to one million and two hundred thousand Tomans, 5.6% of households one million and three hundred thousand to one million and six hundred thousand Tomans and 5.3% of households have one million and seven hundred thousand Tomans and more for their income.

Regarding the households' costs, 19.9% of the studied families have the monthly costs equal to less than 300 thousand Tomans. 33.7% of households have 300 to 500 thousand Tomans, 21.1% of the households 600 to 800 thousand Tomans, 13.6% of the households 900 to one million and two hundred thousand Tomans, 3.6% of the households one million and three hundred thousand to one million and six hundred thousand and 2.8% of the households have costs equal to one million and seven hundred thousand Tomans and more for their income.

In case of income's being adequate for costs, 15.5% of studied households find their incomes adequate for compensating their costs and 84.5% of the households find their incomes inadequate for compensating their costs.

No significant difference was observed between total poverty rates among households in terms of the gender of the head of household. Because \( t = -1.214 \) with \( df = 411 \) in the level \( p = 0.062 \) is not significant. According to the sociologists' theories and previous literature, this reality is clarified that social, economic, cultural, environmental, physiological … factors influence greatly the emergence and severity of poverty. In the present study, to measure total poverty, the measurement of total scores of four prospects (cultural poverty, situational poverty, relevant poverty and housing poverty) was used.

Therefore, contrary to Kamali's results (2004) in which gender and identification of its influence on depth and severity of poverty as the most important factor were considered, and the results indicate "feminization of poverty" and rising its level among households whose heads are women. In the present study, no significant difference was observed between poverty rate and its dimensions between female-headed households and male-headed ones. It seems that what causes the difference among the findings of these two studies is the difference in the method and prospect because in Kamali's research, to measure poverty only some general features such as dimension and combination of households, marriage status, education, literacy, housing and costs and incomes were used, while in the present study, to measure poverty four basic prospects of poverty (housing poverty, cultural poverty, situational poverty and relevance poverty) were used. Some attitudes, supports and different social, cultural and economic aspects were used in measurement indices.
Regarding the depth and severity of poverty in a significant part of city particularly marginal neighborhoods (both in female-headed and male-headed households) and also because this socio-historical sharp issue in long-term, makes poverty loop and capitvates the next generations of these families and enters this ominous loop (a reality which scholars like de Gérando (1839), Oscar Lewis (1966), Robert Chambers, Halman Powers explicate); solving this issue requires the serious decision of the government, the parliament, high rank officials, and the participation of people, communities, public associates, researchers and specialists particularly sociologists and economists.

REFERENCES


