The State Fact of the Rural Area of the Kurdistan Regional Government

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ABSTRACT

The rural area of Kurdistan region has specific characteristics and faces many challenges. The rural space of Kurdistan is affected by poverty, and the farmers are dealing with many problems and they hardly survive. The Kurdistan Region is located SW of Asia and NE of Iraq and is composed of three governorates: Erbil (Hawler), Suleimani, and Duhok, located within the northern part of the Federal Republic of Iraq (Iraqi Constitution, Article 62). The aim of the paper is to analyze the current situation of the rural region of KRG (Kurdistan Region Government) in order to propose new solution for sustainable development of the area. For the purpose of the paper a survey was conducted during June-September 2012. The collected data were analyzed for each of the three governorates, and for each of the precipitation zones (A zone and B zone). The results of the field research show that the rural population of Kurdistan has an average age less than 26 years old. And at the same time is highly suffering from a lack of education which is higher in the case of older people. More than a quarter (28.45%) is illiterate, while almost 30% graduated only the primary school, meaning that they having the basic knowledge of reading and writing. The number of people not educated in zone B is one quarter higher than in zone A. The results of the survey revealed the necessity for improving the specific conditions for sustainable development in the research area.

Key words*: rural area, socio demographic, education, farmer*

INTRODUCTION

There is a few literature on the issue of rural area of the Kurdistan region, in general, and on the condition of the socio- demographic, education in particular. For this, take some facts from another countries and territories where had the same issues as we have in the study case, as well, by supporting the survey questioner for our case- study for the rural area of the Kurdistan region. The development as a term in rural area involves improvement in the pattern of life (Acharya, 2008). If there is any absence of each of basic necessities of life, freedom and self-respect, or limited in supply, it means absolute underdevelopment (Singh, 2009). In the modern society, the managing and developing of the rural area is one of the most progressing matters to equate between the conservation needs and the modernizing trend (Barbu and Capusneanu, 2012).

Also, this challenge obverse the rural areas in all around the world is in general the same, many questions are facing to governments to how to catalyze the rural economy so as to increase economic growth, retain populations and create sustainable living conditions (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development(OECD), 2008). The rural area of Kurdistan region has specific characteristics and faces many challenges. The rural space of Kurdistan is affected by poverty, and the farmers are dealing with many problems and they hardly survive (MoP, 2011). The aim of the study was to analyze the socio-demographic characteristics of the rural area of the KRG, especially of the farmers, since these play an important role in agricultural development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is located within the North-East part of Federal Republic (Iraqi constitution, article62). The region is divided into three governorates: Erbil, Sulaimani and Duhok. The research region lies between latitudes 34° 42' N and 37° 22' N and between longitudes 42° 25' E and 46° 15' E. The Kurdistan region mainly lengthens across the Zagross Mountain up to the Taurus Mountains in Turkey. The region shares it borders with Syria in the west, Turkey in the north and Iran in the east (Mizori, 2012). The area of the region is 42,812 Km2 (MoP, 2012) without the disputed area as Kirkuk, Shangar and Khanaqin, the total area is around 73,618 km2 (Talib, 2005), and represents 17% of the total area of Iraq. To achieve the purpose of this paper during June and September 2012, 236 questionnaires were applied to the farmers from 46 villages. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: the first part contained questions about the socio-demographic profile of the farmers and characteristics of the farms, the second part included question about the irrigation water, and the third part included questionnaire included the valuation questions about the willingness to pay for water in agriculture. To achieve the aim of the paper the data about the socio-demographic profile of the famers were analyzed.

To establish the size of the sample the simple random sample, without replacement, continuous variable, with a relative error of 2.5%, and 95% confidence interval was used. Based on the average rainfall the research area can be divided into two zones: secured rain-fed line (more than 600mm.yr-1), Sangassar Zone (A zone), and semi and unsecured rain-fed line (less than 600mm.yr-1), Kirkuk zone (B Zone) (Mohammad Ali, 2008) The size of the sample was establish by using the simple random sample, without replacement, continuous variable (age), with a relative error of 2.5%, and 95% confidence interval (Merce *et al.*, 2011).

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the rural area of the Kurdistan region, the distribution of the population by gender is balanced. The ratio of males in the total population represents 50.82%. The results are very close according to the national level (Iraq Household Socio Economic Survey (IHSES), 2012). Results of the survey shown that, villagers are living in rural area young, illiterates with an average age around 26 years (Tab. 1, Fig. 2). Around 45% of them are from the rural area around (15-29) years old, almost 70% are under 30 years old.

Compared with the data registered in Romania in 2010, regarding the distribution of the rural population by age group, it was observed that in the rural area of Kurdistan Regional Government people are younger.
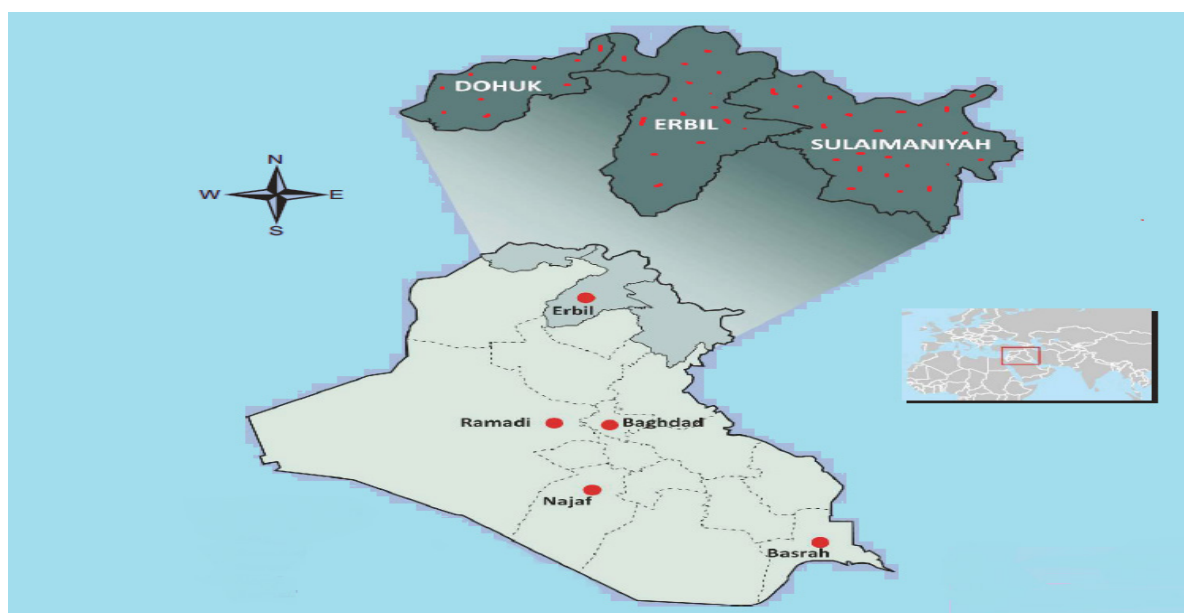

Fig. 1 Location of studied area, Kurdistan regional government (KRG-Iraq); MOAWR, 2010

While in Kurdistan region 25% of the rural population have between 0-14 years old, in the rural space of Romania this category of age represents around 17%. The percentage of persons younger than 30 years in the rural area of Kurdistan is around 70%, almost double the percentage of people below 30 years old from Romanian rural space, which represents 37.13% (Pocol, 2013).

Tab. 1. Distribution of the rural population by gender and age (years) classes

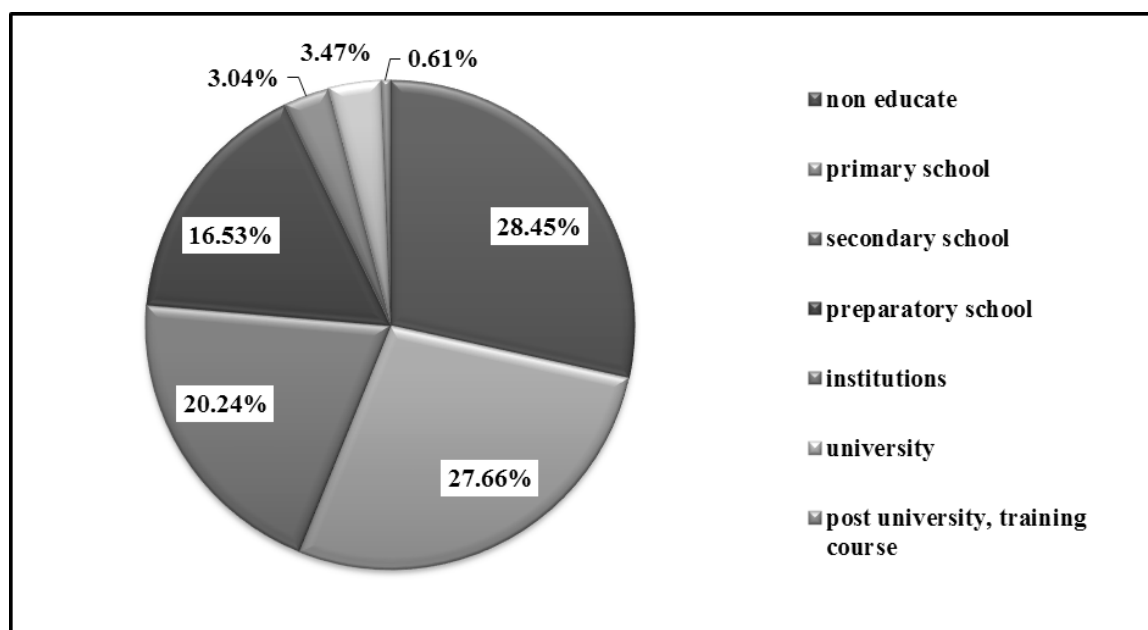| Region	Gender Age	0-14		15-29		30-44		45-59		60-74		75-89	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Duhok	Male	38	42.70	72	50.35	15	32.61	22	64.71	7	70.00	1	100.00
	Female	51	57.30	71	49.65	31	67.39	12	35.29	3	30.00	0	0.00
	Total	89	27.55	143	44.27	46	14.24	34	10.53	10	3.10	1	0.31
Erbil	Male	47	47.96	92	55.42	17	28.33	31	59.62	10	66.67	0	0.00
	Female	51	52.04	74	44.58	43	71.67	21	40.38	5	33.33	1	100.00
	Total	98	25.00	166	42.35	60	15.31	52	13.27	15	3.83	1	0.26
Suleimani	Male	114	52.29	237	55.37	48	33.10	55	51.40	29	85.29	2	100.00
	Female	104	47.71	191	44.63	97	66.90	52	48.60	5	14.71	0	0.00
	Total	218	23.34	428	45.82	145	15.52	107	11.46	34	3.64	2	0.21
Zone A	Male	97	52.72	183	57.01	49	38.58	50	49.50	24	70.59	4	80.00
	Female	87	47.28	138	42.99	78	61.42	51	50.50	10	29.41	1	20.00
	Total	184	23.83	321	41.58	127	16.45	101	13.08	34	4.40	5	0.65
Zone B	Male	102	46.15	218	52.40	31	25.00	58	63.04	22	88.00	1	100.00
	Female	119	53.85	198	47.60	93	75.00	34	36.96	3	12.00	0	0.00
	Total	221	25.14	416	47.33	124	14.11	92	10.47	25	2.84	1	0.11
Total	Male	199	49.14	401	54.41	80	31.87	108	55.96	46	77.97	5	83.33
	Female	206	50.86	336	45.59	171	68.13	85	44.04	13	22.03	1	16.67
	Total	405	24.53	737	44.64	251	15.20	193	11.69	59	3.57	6	0.36

Fig. 2. Distribution of rural population by education level

The analysis for the average age of the rural population shows that people from Duhok governorate are the youngest among the Erbil and Suleimani, with an average age of 24 years and 9 months, but the oldest one's are in Erbil governorate with an average age of 26 years and 5 months. From the precipitation distribution of the rural space observed that villagers from zone A are older than those from zone B by average with 2.4 years.

According to the results of the survey the rural community of the Kurdistan region is suffering from lack of education. Around (28.45%) are uneducated (illiterate), and 27.66%) graduated just the primary school, means that, they have the basic knowledge of reading and writing.

In the rural area, the ratio of illiterate rose with the increase of the age. The number of illiterate people between 30 and 44 years, which is by five times higher than the numbers of those are between 15 and 29 years. The situation is even worse in the case of the group age 45-59 years old, where almost three quarters are illiterates, the cause of the sorrowful facts regarding the injustice from former regimes and persecution against villagers in Kurdish rural area.

The number of dwelling villages having a higher education degree is quite low 3.47% by total, around 93% of them are between 15-29 years old. The same trend can be observed also at the national level where only 3.6% of the population has a bachelor degree, and 26.3% are illiterate and 17.5% just know how to read and write, but never graduated the primary school.

The development strategy of the Ministry of Planning (2012), regarding the education sector is mentioning these bad aspects of education and plan to improve teacher quality which is considerate to be the major gap of the education system in rural area of the Kurdistan region, to improve effectiveness of new curricula, to build new schools etc. so people can participate and take advantage of the education system. Compared with the rest (middle and south) of Iraq where around 85%, Jordan (91%) and Lebanon (92%) of their children which under 9 years old are enrolled in school, but in the Kurdistan region, around 94.3% are going to school (MoP, 2012). People who are living in rural space of the Kurdistan region, based on the collected data from the survey, 49.30% of them are considerate to be labor force (in the farm or other sectors), and the average age of the labor force from rural area is 37.8 years.

Also, the demographic characteristics of the head household were analyzed. The average age of the head of household is around 50.25 years, with small differences from each governorate to another (Tab. 2). This can be explained by the large number of family members (seven members by average).

The data from Tab. 3 shown that, over 53% of the head of household from the rural area of the Kurdistan region is illiterate, with the highest percent in Duhok

Tab. 2. Age distribution of the first family member (years)

	No. of observations	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Duhok	44	28	77	49.98	10.540
Erbil	56	26	73	50.00	11.760
Suleimani	136	26	86	50.47	11.353
Zone A	118	26	86	50.44	12.352
Zone B	118	26	73	50.09	10.052
Total	236	26	86	50.27	11.238

Tab. 3. Education level of the first family member (%)

	Non educated	Primary school	Secondary school	Preparatory	Other	N.A
Duhok	63.64	20.45	9.09	4.55	2.27	0.00
Erbil	48.21	28.57	8.93	12.50	0.00	1.79
Suleimani	52.21	31.62	9.56	5.88	0.74	0.00
Zone A	40.68	35.59	11.86	10.17	1.69	0.00
Zone B	66.10	22.03	6.78	4.24	0.00	0.85
Total	53.39	28.81	9.32	7.20	0.85	0.42

governorate (63.64%) and the lowest in Erbil 48.21%, which is mean the difference between Erbil and Duhok governorates are more than 15%.

A significant difference can be observed between the two precipitations zone. The number of those who are not educated in zone B is one quarter higher than in zone A. The age does not seem to play any role in this situation, regardless that by general it was noticed that older people are less educated and the fact that people from zone B are younger than those from zone A.

To see if there is any link between the level of education and the age of the respondents the null hypothesis was assumed:

H_0: The education level is not related with the age of the respondents.

H_a: The education level is related with the age of the respondents.

The Chi-Square test was applied in order to see if the null hypothesis is assumed or not.

The null hypothesis was not accepted, the χ^2_{value} (305.479) is higher than the theoretical $\chi^2_{0.05;\ 44}$ (60.5). The relation between respondents' education and age is significant at 0.05 level.

The Contingency Coefficient indicates that, the level of education of the respondents with main activity farming and their age is a high association (Tab. 5).

The Pearson's R correlation coefficient indicates a weak negative relationship between the two variables, which indicates that when the age of the people who have main activity agriculture increases, the level of education decreases.

CONCLUSION

The socio-demographic in the collected data were analyzed from three different points of view to obtain general information about the gender, age, education level's distribution, family in rural area of Kurdistan. Furthermore were analyzed the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents whom declared their main activity farming, this was done to see a clear profile of the persons involved totally in the agricultural activity.

The results of the field research show that the rural population of the Kurdistan has an average age less than 26 years old. And at the same time is highly suffering from a lack of education which is higher in the case of older people. Around (28.45%) is illiterate, while (27.66%) graduated in the primary school, it means, they having the basic knowledge of reading and writing. The illiterate people in zone B, it is about quarter higher than in zone A.

The results of the study revealed the necessity for improving the specific conditions for sustainable development of the rural area. The events that occurred in KRG during the last decades of the last century (wars, Anfal genocide etc.) had direct impact on the depopulation of the rural are. It is considered necessary to convince the migrated farmers to return to their abandoned villages in order to conduct and develop agriculture activities. A possible solution is to assure them the access to new technology such as machines and cultural practice facilities, offering financial support, know-how, consultation and education, by subsidies.

Tab. 4. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Degree of freedom	P
Pearson Chi-Square	305.479[a]	44	.000
Likelihood Ratio	122.067	44	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.825	1	.050
No. of Valid Cases	165		
a. 51 cells (85.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.			

Tab. 5. Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	P
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.806			.000
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.153	.127	-1.973	.050[c]
	No. of Valid Cases	165			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis. c. Based on normal approximation.					

From the precipitation distribution of the rural space can be observed that people from rural zone A are older than those from rural zone B by average with 2.4 years. The reason for this disparities between the two precipitation zones and the governorates, have already been mention above (wars, genocide etc.), especially in B zone of Suleimani and Erbil (Hawler).

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