Extended Abstract

Formulation of drivers and scenarios affecting population policies in West Azarbaijan Province with a spatial planning approach

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ABSTRACT
Background and Aim: The population and its characteristics are considered one of the most important components for achieving development. In fact, neglecting demographic indicators and characteristics in regional and national policymaking and planning can result in a mismatch between the potential of the region and its population, leading to numerous problems in achieving balanced development at the national level.
Methods and Material: Consequently, the aim of the present research is to formulate drivers and scenarios impacting demographic policies in West Azarbaijan Province with a spatial planning approach. The data collection method in this study is both documentary and field-based. Finally, for data analysis, the future studies software MicMac and Scenario Wizard have been utilized.
Results and Discussion: The results indicate that among the three present scenarios, the first scenario, which encompasses all optimistic scenarios, is recognized as the most desirable scenario, while the third scenario, which includes all pessimistic scenarios, is regarded as the least desirable. The second scenario comprises those scenarios that are more intermediate; in other words, they cannot be classified as strong or weak scenarios. The distinguishing factor among them is the difference in the degree of static and critical conditions. This group encompasses all intermediate situations among the scenarios in terms of frequency. In general, the third scenario is identified as a critical scenario because it is completely opposite to the first scenario, containing ten critical conditions.

Keywords: Population Policies, Spatial Planning, Population, West Azarbaijan.

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Many countries have focused on population planning policies in recent decades to achieve goals such as economic efficiency, social justice, political stability and sustainability, equitable income distribution, welfare, and improved environmental quality. In countries like Iran, where the population is ethnically and racially diverse, understanding geographic patterns of settlement, existing changes, and efforts for optimal redistribution of the population are of greater importance. Not all regions and areas have the same locational advantages, therefore, coordination between

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policies and strategies on one hand and population distribution and relocation on the other seems essential (Shojaei, 2013: 22). In this context, the population distribution in West Azarbaijan Province is classified as “dense” within the threefold classification of population distribution in the country (Entezare Mehdi, 2014: 13). The disproportionate population distribution in this province, which acts as a driving force that could cause future problems, requires special attention from managers and planners. Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to develop the drivers and scenarios that influence population policy-making in West Azarbaijan Province with a focus on spatial planning, such that, while identifying the effective drivers, optimal population policies are proposed for West Azarbaijan Province.

2. Methods and Material

This research is applied in nature, and its examination method is descriptive-analytical and exploratory. The data collection method in this research is both library-based and field-based; in the library method, articles and reputable scientific journals are utilized, while in the field method, a researcher-made questionnaire is employed, which includes a spectrum of standards from MicMac and Scenario Wizard software. The statistical population of this study consists of 15 experts and specialists in the fields of population, Spatial planning, and futures studies. For data analysis, MicMac and Scenario Wizard future studies software have been used.

3. Results and Discussion

The results indicate that among the three present scenarios, the first scenario, which encompasses all optimistic scenarios, is recognized as the most desirable scenario, while the third scenario, which includes all pessimistic scenarios, is regarded as the least desirable. The second scenario comprises those scenarios that are more intermediate; in other words, they cannot be classified as strong or weak scenarios. The distinguishing factor among them is the difference in the degree of static and critical conditions. This group encompasses all intermediate situations among the scenarios in terms of frequency. In general, the third scenario is identified as a critical scenario because it is completely opposite to the first scenario, containing ten critical conditions. Finally, ten variables were identified as key and influential drivers in population policies. In fact, these ten variables are those that demonstrated a high level of impact in the software; among these ten variables, six pertain to the economic dimension, which are: employment rate, unemployment rate, income, level of inequality, economic infrastructure, and economic stability. Two drivers related to political-security indicators are investment security and internal-social security, and two drivers are classified as socio-cultural components, which are education and quality of life.

4. Conclusion

The population of each country is a fundamental basis for any planning. Therefore, paying attention to demographic indicators and criteria and applying them in the execution of planning can play a significant role in sustainable planning. Population can be examined from two perspectives: one regarding its growth and movements, and the other regarding its distribution and dispersion. Population distribution refers to the spatial distribution of the population. There is a direct relationship between population distribution and favorable geographic conditions as well as the level of development. The manner of population distribution in a country is one of the most essential factors that policymakers consider for controlling the population and directing demographic shifts. Neglecting demographic indicators in regional and national policymaking and planning results in a mismatch between the capacity of the region and its population, leading to many problems in achieving balanced development at the national level.