

Research Paper: Assessing the Impact of English Language Proficiency in Host Communities on the Sustainability of Rural Tourism (Case Study of Villages in Gilan Province, Northern Iran)

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to examine and analyze the effects of familiarity with English language skills among villagers on increasing tourist attraction in the touristic villages of Gilan Province.

Methods: This study is applied in nature and employs both quantitative and qualitative research methods. SPSS software, Grounded Theory models, and FARAS were utilized to analyze the data.

Results: The villagers' familiarity with the English language is below average. There is a significant positive relationship between the villagers' level of English proficiency and the increase in tourist attraction. Based on the findings, several factors were identified: Causal conditions: belief in the usefulness of English among villagers, lack of bias towards the mother tongue, continuous interaction with foreign tourists, and the presence of English signboards. Background conditions: educating interested villagers in the language, interacting and participating with foreign tourists, and leveraging the potential of the villages. Five intervening conditions: improving language skills through specialized classes, holding practical courses for villages, cooperation between tourism experts and rural managers, strengthening customer-oriented courses for rural sellers, and enhancing the information system. Among the strategies identified, educating and informing residents to prevent conflicts between tourists and locals was the most important, with a weight of 0.440. Additionally, obstacles such as foreign tourists' lack of trust in villagers, weaknesses in coordination and management, lack of expert and experienced personnel to utilize their knowledge and abilities for effective tourism, and villagers' unfamiliarity with the customs and cultural changes of foreign tourists were also identified.

Conclusion: Enhancing English language skills among villagers is a critical factor in boosting tourism dynamics and employment in the villages of Gilan Province.

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1. Introduction

The statistics provided by the World Tourism Organization continue to indicate the dynamism and rapid growth of the tourism industry (Ziaei et al., 2013). Tourism has been a significant phenomenon attracting human societies' attention since ancient times, maintaining its momentum in response to varying social and economic needs (Mansouri et al., 2016). Many countries worldwide leverage this dynamic industry as a primary source of income, job creation, private sector growth, and infrastructure development (Zare Mirkabad, 2016). Additionally, tourism supports sectors such as construction, food, beverage, and accommodation by creating regional job opportunities, providing foreign currency, and promoting transportation. It can also lead to increased production, higher incomes, improved living standards, public welfare, and more significant employment through the rising relative price of immovable goods (Sokhanvara, 2018). Rapid advancements in communication, transportation, and global economic integration often drive this growth (Coshall, 2005). Furthermore, as a multidimensional and multifaceted activity (Kurniawana et al., 2019), tourism has facilitated growth in international trade and global economic development (Xing et al., 2014).

In recent years, rural tourism has been increasingly recognized as a tool to address rural poverty, promote economic development, and enhance tourist satisfaction (Jumehpour & Ahmadi, 2013). Its goal is to address employment issues and economic challenges linked to depopulation caused by migrating rural populations to urban centers. By ensuring profitable employment in rural areas, rural tourism can encourage the return of migrants from urban areas, stabilize the active population, improve living conditions, and support environmental protection (Dragulanescu & Drutu, 2012). Tourism structure in rural areas includes various factors that can enhance the demand for tourism in these locations (Hashmi et al., 2013). A key factor among these factors is tourist attractions, which play a crucial role in drawing visitors. The number and quality of tourism resources at a destination are critical for attracting tourists, with attractions often being the primary element that captures their attention (Sajadian & Piri, 2015).

Destination Facilities: By providing essential services and facilities, tourist areas can offer a peaceful and pleasant environment and an attractive and dynamic at-

mosphere. This includes ease of access to transportation and other amenities (Mirabzadeh, 1996).

Infrastructural Factors of Tourism: These can be divided into soft and complex infrastructures. Soft infrastructures include information dissemination and advertising at national and international levels, effective management across various tourism industry sectors, security, and education and cultural programs for the local population. Complex infrastructures encompass expanding roads, transportation, and private and public sector investments (Vahedpour & Jafari, 2010).

Spatial Factors: The significance of space and location in capacity, capability, and attraction is crucial (Firouznia & Ziyatovana, 2010). Accessibility and economic factors also play a role in attracting tourists. In the modern world, interaction is vital, and language is one of the most important means of engaging with tourists. Language, culture, thoughts, and history can be communicated to foreign tourists. Given the political, economic, and cultural conditions, English is recognized as an international language. Anyone wishing to communicate globally must learn English. When foreign tourists visit a country, most are proficient in English. Therefore, villagers must acquire English language skills for effective communication and promotion (Deh et al., 2017).

In this context, Iran and its villages rank among the top 5 countries globally in terms of tourism diversity (Zangiabadi, 2006), solidifying their position as significant tourist destinations. Recognizing these attractions in rural areas and effectively introducing them to the world are crucial pillars for the successful establishment of tourism (Deh et al., 2017).

Indeed, beyond merely establishing tourism infrastructure and offering suitable products and services, it is crucial for villages to effectively communicate the benefits of visiting their locale and shape a positive image of the country and village in the minds of tourists. Gilan province attracts numerous tourists from various countries due to its favorable weather conditions, natural beauty, historical and cultural attractions, and delectable local cuisine. Many villages in this province actively engage in tourism, with some of the standout destinations being Masoleh, Rudkhan Castle, Qorouq, Khatbe Sera, and Damash. These villages boast clean, cool climates, breathtaking natural landscapes, and diverse environments ranging from forests to beaches and mountains. Moreover, they offer warm hospitality, rich cultural heritage, authentic customs and traditions, and delicious tra-

ditional cuisine, all of which contribute to the allure of traveling to Gilan for both domestic and foreign tourists.

To attract more foreign tourists, villagers need to possess English language skills. This proficiency facilitates the introduction of more tourist destinations and enhances the appeal of these locales to a broader audience. Therefore, this article aims to investigate the level of English language proficiency among villagers and its impact on attracting tourists, mainly focusing on the numerous tourist villages in Gilan province. Additionally, it explores a range of causal, contextual, and intervening conditions to formulate strategies for tourism development in rural areas of Gilan Province. Finally, it examines the strategies, outcomes, and obstacles associated with enhancing tourist attraction in Gilan's tourist villages through English language skills.

Although no prior studies have directly addressed the current research topic at either the domestic or the international level, drawing from the extensive literature available, it is essential to highlight studies that align with the objectives of this research. Alavi et al. (2014) conducted research titled "Pathology of the Quality of English Language Education Specialized in Tourism in the Country's Universities," which found that while most graduates possess acceptable English language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing as per the goals set by the Supreme Council of the program, they lack alignment with the curriculum of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology and the needs of the tourism industry.

Sejasi Keidari et al. emphasized the significance of language skills among tour guides in attracting tourists. Deh Balai and Rigi (2017) investigated the effects of English language proficiency among citizens on urban tourism, focusing on the coastal city of Chabahar. Their findings indicated that Chabahar's limited ability to attract foreign tourists stems from the local population's lack of English language proficiency. Poursaid et al. (2018) explored scientific tourism, uncovering four thematic categories: scientific, religious, cultural, economic, and leisure. Their research provided valuable insights for understanding the behaviors of scientific tourists and making future predictions to enhance tourist satisfaction.

Lastly, Rashidi et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between police officers' English language proficiency and the development of the tourism industry, particularly in Sistan and Baluchistan province. Their findings revealed a significant and positive impact of

police officers' English language skills on the province's tourism industry development.

Furthermore, Mahmoudi et al. (1401) researched the evaluation and prioritization of factors influencing the flow of rural tourism attraction in the Mashhad city tourism influence area. They found that accessibility, accommodation facilities, and amenities ranked as the top three priorities in influencing the creation and strengthening of tourism attraction flows.

Yegangi et al. (1402) analyzed the strategic factors for attracting foreign tourists, focusing on Zanjan province. Their research revealed that a defensive strategy was superior to other strategies.

Vetuva et al. (2019) explored the determinants of tourism flows to tiny islands in developing countries. Their findings highlighted the sustainability of tourism to small islands and its contribution to destination accessibility. They also emphasized that the development of tourism infrastructure depends on the political stability and economic development of both destinations and the tourists' countries of origin.

In a systematic review titled "Determinants of International Tourist Flow to Tourist Destinations," Bikel Gidio (2021) identified several factors influencing international tourist flows. These include supply in related destinations, socio-cultural factors, geography, international mobility, demographics, technology, health risks, and psychological and lifestyle considerations. These factors significantly affect the flow of international tourism.

2. Literature Review

Over the past few decades, rural areas have undergone significant socio-economic transformations, leading to a decline in economic viability and employment opportunities within traditional livelihoods, particularly agriculture, due to modernization and globalization. This trend has exacerbated rural-to-urban migration, resulting in substantial demographic shifts in rural populations. Consequently, rural communities and governmental and relevant institutions have been compelled to explore new economic avenues for rural environments, necessitating the formulation of specialized development and diversification policies for these areas (Ashely & Maxwell, 2001; Saarinen & Lenao, 2014). In recent years, increased attention has been directed towards complementary sectors of agriculture, such as handicrafts, food processing, and tourism (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). Rural tourism has emerged as a prominent economic activity

and an essential strategy for local development in many regions worldwide, prompting concerted efforts to promote and enhance it. This focus has led to the design and implementation of numerous initiatives and projects in rural tourism. It is perceived as a means to rejuvenate and revitalize rural areas and diversify their economies and as a tool to reduce rural businesses' overreliance on agricultural income (Hegarty & Przezborska, 2005).

Since the 1970s, rural tourism has witnessed a significant upsurge in Western and developed nations, serving as a source of services and fostering positive economic and social impacts within rural communities in these regions (Perales, 2002). This form of tourism has enabled villagers and farmers to supplement their income and has created new employment opportunities for locals. Conversely, in developing countries, rural tourism has recently garnered considerable attention as a viable tool for addressing rural challenges, fostering economic diversification, and unlocking avenues for income generation and employment (Rogerson, 2011; Mafunzwaini & Hugo, 2005; Telfer & Sharpley, 2007; Binns & Nel, 2002; Saarinen et al., 2009). Within Iran's economy, rural tourism holds promise to diversify the rural economy due to its environmental diversity and relative advantages. This is particularly relevant given the sharp decline in various activities within the rural economy and the income levels of farmers and villagers over recent decades, coupled with a rise in unemployment resulting from the migration of young and educated individuals from rural areas (Matiei & Nosrati, 2013). In this context, the spatial distribution of tourists is influenced by various factors, as outlined below:

Tourist attractions possess both quantitative and qualitative attributes, with their quality being a crucial determinant in tourists' selection of destinations and subsequent satisfaction (Gonzalez et al., 2012). Tian Kol et al. (2002) also highlight the significance of tourists feeling satisfied with the overall quality and quantity of attractions and services in enhancing tourist attraction. Additionally, cultural attractions, activities, events, and products serve as compelling factors in attracting tourists. Furthermore, various destination facilities (such as access to desired locations, accommodation options, and infrastructure provision), tourism infrastructure (comprising both physical and organizational elements), spatial considerations (including location, capacity, and diversity of attractions), accessibility quality, economic factors (such as foreign income exchange and potential economic development), and tourists' origin conditions (including urban pressures, noise, pollution, and the tranquil rural environment) play pivotal roles in attract-

ing tourists (Mahmoudi et al., 1401: 7-9). Among these factors, villagers' English language proficiency can be considered a critical infrastructural (soft) factor.

English proficiency permeates all fields, serving as a vital communication conduit for global product introduction. Similarly, tourism rapidly expands, necessitating well-rounded and tailored programs to attract international visitors (Boniface & Fowler, 1993: 12). Without English language proficiency, the tourism sector cannot operate effectively. Therefore, the English language skills possessed by villagers serve as a crucial asset in displaying the region's locales and rural tourism spots to foreign tourists, thus attracting investment to rural areas and fostering the sustainability of tourist villages in the long term.

3. Methodology

The current study, in terms of its purpose, is practical, interpretive, and analytical, while methodologically, it falls within quantitative and qualitative research realms. Data analysis involved the utilization of SPSS software, Grand Theory, and FARAS models. Information was gathered through documentary and library studies, employing questionnaires and interviews as the primary means of data collection. The study comprised two main parts: the quantitative segment involved administering a sample T-Tech test to gauge the familiarity of English language skills among villagers, followed by Pearson correlation testing to examine the relationship between rural English language proficiency and tourist attraction. In the qualitative segment, the contextual theory model was employed to identify causal, contextual, and intervening conditions and strategies, consequences, and obstacles in enhancing tourist attraction in rural areas through villagers' English language skills. Subsequently, the fuzzy Aras model was utilized to rank and determine the importance of each category. The statistical population for this study was divided into two parts: firstly, the residents of tourist villages in Gilan province, comprising 218 individuals as outlined in Table 1. Secondly, experts and elites in rural areas, tourism, and the English language were purposefully sampled, resulting in a sample community of 30 individuals.

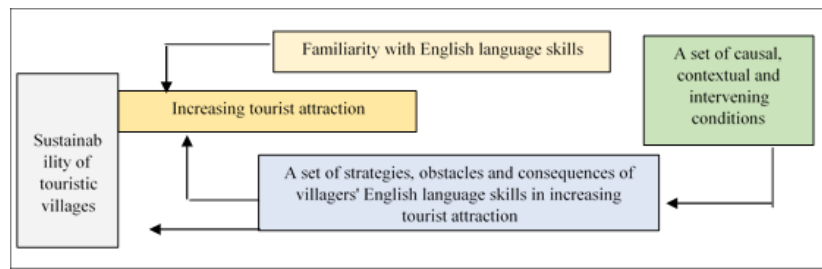


Figure 1. Conceptual model of research, source: research findings, 2024



Table 1. Statistical population and sample size distribution among touristic villages

Village	County	Sample mass	Village	County	Sample mass
Masuleh	Fuman	8	Qaleh Rudkhan	Fuman	25
Emamzadeh Ebrahim	Shaft	8	Damash	Rudbar	11
Sarvelat	Rudsar	11	Olsabelangah	Masal	10
Salansar	Rudbar	15	Kalasra	Talesh	9
Subatan	Talesh	11	Leyla Kuh	Langarud	7
Javaher Dasht	Rudsar	12	Darband	Astara	8
Molmeh	Siahkal	7	Bolur Dokan	Langarud	15
Halu Dasht	Amlash	9	Milash	Rudsar	11
Simbari Khaleh	Rezvanshahr	11	Bashman	Bandar Anzali	12
Khotbeh Sara	Talesh	10	Qoruq	Talesh	9

Source: Authors of the research, 2024



Gilan province, situated in the country's northern region, spans an area of 14,711 square kilometers. Positioned between 36 degrees and 34 minutes to 38 degrees and 27 minutes north latitude, and 48 degrees and 53 minutes to 50 degrees and 34 minutes east longitude from the meridian, it stretches approximately 235 kilometers from northwest to southeast. Its width varies from 25 to 105 kilometers. To the west and south, the Alborz Mountain range, averaging 3000 meters in height, forms a formidable barrier. The only access to

the Iranian plateau from this region is through the Manjil Valley. The closest point of the mountains to the Caspian Sea, located in the Haweiq area of Talesh city, is roughly 3 kilometers away, while the farthest point from the sea, situated in Imamzadeh Hashem along the Rasht-Qazvin Road, spans about 50 kilometers. Gilan province shares borders with the Caspian Sea to the north, the independent countries of Central Asia, Ardabil province to the west, Zanjan and Qazvin provinces to the south, and Mazandaran province to the east.

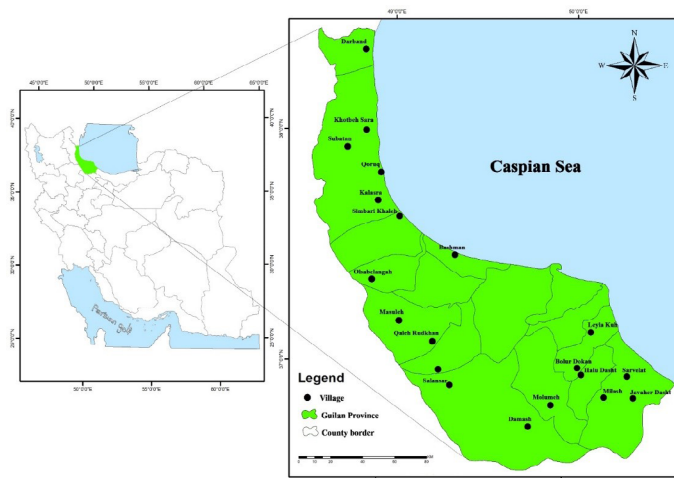


Figure 2. Map of the geographical location of Gilan province and the distribution of the studied villages



4. Findings

Investigating the skill level of villagers in the field of the English language and its effects in increasing the attraction of tourists

Initially, a sample T-Tech test was administered to assess rural proficiency in English. The results are outlined in Table 2. Based on the findings, the villagers' English language proficiency was deemed unfavorable, indicated by an average score below 3. Additionally, specific results indicated that some rural sellers possess English language skills to elucidate products to foreign tourists (score: 2.66), accurate translation of uses of northern products by rural sellers (score: 2.54), meeting the needs of foreign tourists with English language skills (score: 2.31), villagers' proficiency in communication with foreign tourists in local restaurants (score: 2.24), some rural youth being familiar with introducing rural attractions in

English (score: 2.21), establishment of specialized classes for effective communication with foreign tourists and offering cultural and historical explanations of tourist villages in English by villagers (score: 2.16), and villagers' proficiency in communication with foreign tourists while providing services such as villa or suite rental and transportation (score: 2.00), indicating the highest and lowest average rankings, respectively.

Table 2. Examining the level of rural skills in the field of English

Object	Symbol	mean	T	Significance level (2 domains)	The confidence interval of the difference is 0.95		The relationship between English language skills in increasing the attraction of tourists (correlation coefficient)	Significance level
					down	top		
The presence of English language skills among some rural sellers to better explain products to foreign tourists	X1	2.66	25.670	0.000	2.53	2.76	0.543	0.001
Accurate and correct translation of the uses of northern products by rural sellers	X2	2.54	25.665	0.000	2.41	2.67	0.512	0.001
Acquaintance of some rural youth in introducing rural attractions with the English language	X3	2.21	25.354	0.000	2.11	2.34	0.500	0.001
Creating specialized classes for solid communication with foreign tourists	X4	2.16	25.122	0.000	2.05	2.26	0.488	0.001
Providing cultural and historical explanations of tourist villages in English by the villagers	X5	2.16	25.122	0.000	2.05	2.26	0.479	0.001
Meeting the needs of foreign tourists with English language skills	X6	2.31	25.540	0.000	2.19	2.45	0.50	0.001
The mastery of villagers about foreign tourists in providing services such as renting villas, suites, transportation	X7	2.00	25.223	0.000	1.98	2.09	0.466	0.001
Dominance of villagers about foreign tourists in local restaurants	X8	2.24	25.457	0.000	2.12	32.47	0.510	0.001

Source: Research findings, 2024



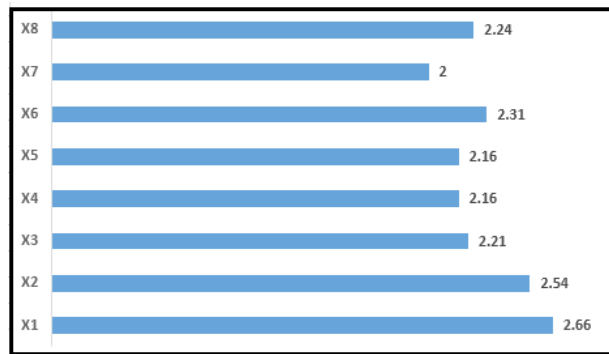


Figure 3. Examining the level of rural proficiency in the field of English, source: research findings, 2024



According to Table 2, the results of the Pearson correlation test reveal a significant and positive relationship between villagers' familiarity with English language skills and the enhancement of tourist attraction, with a correlation coefficient obtained at a significance level of less than 0.05. Essentially, the lack of proficiency in English among villagers in Gilan province hampers their ability to engage with foreign tourists, resulting in lower tourist attraction rates in these villages compared to urban areas within the province.

In light of this, it became imperative to examine the array of causal, contextual, and intervening conditions and subsequently identify strategies, consequences, and obstacles to bolster tourist attraction in rural areas through English language skills. To this end, interviews lasting between 60 and 90 minutes were conducted, recorded, and promptly transcribed to facilitate a more comprehensive analysis and review of expert opinions. Subsequently, utilizing the FARAS model, each desired condition was identified, and the ranking and importance of each were deliberated upon. The findings are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. The set of causal, contextual, intervening conditions in increasing the attraction of tourists in rural areas through the villagers' English language skills

Axial coding	Categories	Symbol	Weight	rank
Causal conditions	Belief in the applicability of language among villagers to gain economic benefits from tourists	A1	0.455	2
	Not being prejudiced against the mother tongue among the villagers	A2	0.467	1
	Continuous interaction with foreign tourists	A3	0.434	4
	There are signs in English in the villages	A4	0.445	3
Background conditions	Training interested villagers in the field of English language in order to use advertising and tourism agencies in the northern provinces	B1	0.466	1
	Interaction and participation with foreign tourists in order to invest and plan for the use of rural capacities	B2	0.441	3
	Taking advantage of the potential of villages and providing explanations about it in English	B3	0.431	4
	Adding tourism offices from elites and rural youth with English language skills	B4	0.458	2
Intervening conditions	Improving English language skills by creating specialized classes in tourist villages	C1	0.465	2
	Holding practical courses for tourist villages	C2	0.476	1
	The consensus of tourism experts with village managers on how to communicate with tourists	C3	0.423	5
	Strengthening customer orientation courses among rural sellers in attracting tourists	C4	0.439	4
	Strengthening the appropriate information system and monitoring appropriate marketing in rural tourism	C5	0.450	3

Source: Research findings, 2024



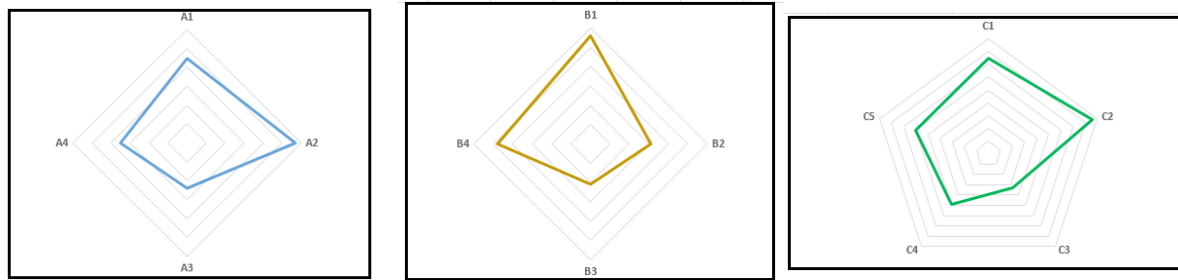


Figure 4. The importance of each of the causal, contextual, and intervening conditions in rural areas through the English language skills of the villagers, source research findings, 2024



Based on Table 3 and Figure 4, the absence of bias towards the mother tongue among villagers has a weight value of 0.467 within the causal conditions. In the contextual conditions, the education of interested villagers in English language skills for leveraging advertising and tourism agencies in the Northern provinces has a weight value of 0.466. Furthermore, within intervention condi-

tions, the prioritization of practical courses for tourist villages, with a weight value of 0.476, emerges as the most significant aspect.

Table 4. The set of strategies, obstacles, and consequences in increasing tourist attraction in rural areas through the English language skills of villagers

Axial coding	Categories	Symbol	Weight	rank
Strategies	Holding educational workshops for villagers and necessary training for communication and interaction with tourists	E1	0.419	6
	Using examples from the experiences of countries and villages in the field of attracting foreign tourists	E2	0.410	7
	Broader and more consistent advertising for recreational and tourist attractions in villages, along with strengthening and supplementing English information and guidance resources to provide to tourists during advertising.	E3	0.410	7
	Development of communication media in order to teach English	E4	0.434	3
	Education and information to residents in order to prevent conflict between tourists and people	E5	0.440	1
	Establishment of specialized seminars to use the opinions of elite people in the field of attracting tourists by the relevant authorities	E6	0.428	4
	Allocation of appropriate funds for English language training among interested rural youth	E7	0.421	5
	Creating a suitable educational environment and English extracurricular classes	E8	0.435	2
Obstacles	Foreign tourists do not trust the villagers	F1	0.400	5
	Weaknesses in the coordination and management department	F2	0.430	1
	There is a lack of expert and experienced staff to take advantage of the knowledge and abilities of these people in order to bring together a capable half of tourism.	F3	0.427	3
	Lack of familiarity of villagers with customs and cultural changes of foreign tourists	F4	0.429	2
Consequences	Sustainability of rural settlements	G1	0.426	3
	Income development and employment growth	G2	0.420	4
	Development of participation of local communities in the tourism sector	G3	0.436	2
	Reducing the migration of villagers	G4	0.441	1
	Strengthening the sense of belonging of the villagers	G5	0.419	5

Source: Research findings, 2024



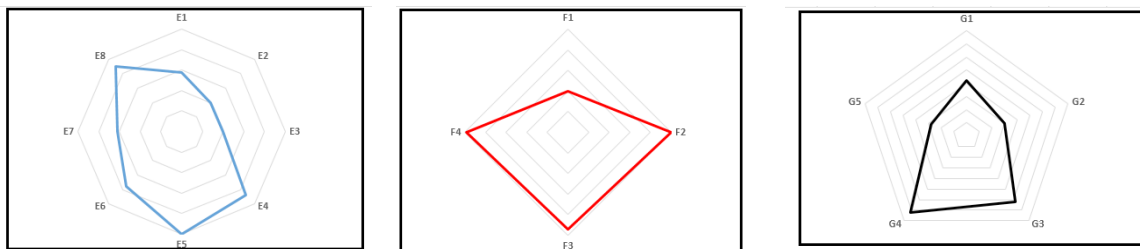


Figure 5. The set of strategies, obstacles, and consequences in increasing the attraction of tourists in rural areas through the English language skills of the villagers, source: research findings, 2024

Based on Table 4 and Figure 5, eight strategies have been identified: 1. conducting educational workshops for villagers and providing necessary training for communication and interaction with tourists. 2. Utilizing models from the experiences of countries and villages to attract foreign tourists. 3. Implementing extensive and more consistent advertising for the recreational and touristic attractions of the villages. 4. Strengthening and supplementing English information and guidance resources available to tourists during advertising. 5. Developing communication media specifically for teaching English. 6. Training and informing residents to prevent conflicts between tourists and locals, prioritized as the most important with a value of (0.440). 7. Organizing specialized seminars to gather opinions from elite individuals in the field of tourist attraction, overseen by relevant authorities. 8. Allocating appropriate funds for teaching English among interested rural youth and establishing a suitable educational environment, including extracurricular English classes. In addition, according to Table 4, there are

four obstacles on the way to increasing the attraction of tourists in rural areas through the English language skills of the villagers; among them, the weaknesses in the coordination and management sector with a weight of 0.430 are the most important. Ultimately, the findings indicate that several positive outcomes ensue as English language proficiency improves in tourist villages across the Northern provinces. These include bolstering rural settlement stability, heightened engagement of local communities in tourism, decreased rural migration, strengthened sense of belonging among villagers, and ultimately, enhanced income generation and employment opportunities. Among these, mitigating village migration emerges as the most crucial factor. Figure 6 is drawn as a paradigmatic model of increasing tourist attraction in rural areas through the English language skills of the villagers in the northern provinces of Iran.

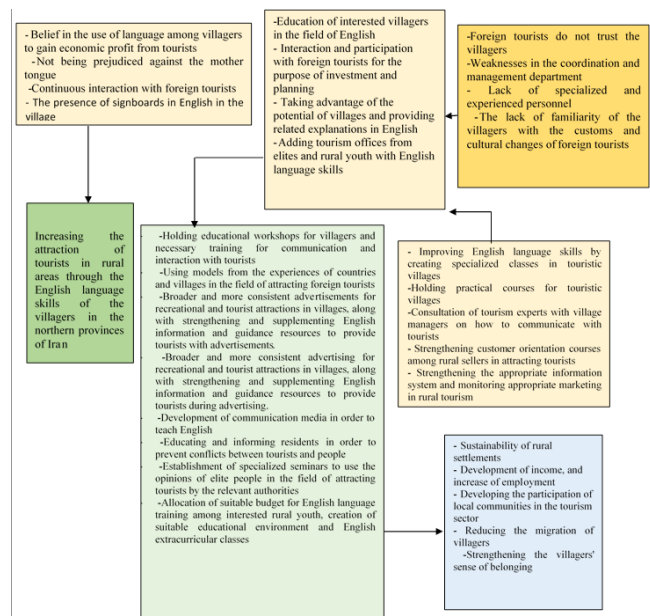


Figure 6. The Framework for Enhancing Tourist Attraction in Rural Areas through English Language Skills of Gilan Villagers, Source: Research Findings, 2024

5. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate and analyze the impact of familiarizing villagers with English language skills on enhancing the attraction of tourists in the touristic villages of Gilan province. The findings revealed that the villagers' level of English proficiency is below average. Many rural sellers lack the skills to effectively interact with foreign tourists and explain their products in English, such as handicrafts and local foods. Consequently, they are unable to promote their products to tourists adequately. Moreover, despite many young individuals with master's and doctoral degrees in these villages, their insufficient familiarity with English prevents them from effectively displaying rural attractions to tourists. Based on these findings, the lack of interaction and communication between tourists and the host community (villagers) significantly reduces tourist attraction. The results demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between these two variables at a significance level of less than 0.05. These results are consistent with the studies conducted by Sejasi Keidari et al. (2016) and [Deh Balai and Rigi \(2017\)](#). Given this, it was deemed necessary to examine the causal, contextual, and intervening conditions, as well as the strategies, obstacles, and consequences, to increase the attraction of tourists in the rural areas of Gilan through enhanced English language skills.

Based on the results obtained, four causal conditions were identified: (1) belief in the use of language among villagers to gain economic benefits, (2) lack of bias towards the mother tongue among villagers, (3) continuous interaction with foreign tourists, and (4) the presence of guide signs in English in the villages. Additionally, four background conditions were recognized: (1) education of interested villagers in English, (2) interaction and participation with foreign tourists, (3) leveraging the potential of villages and providing related explanations in English, and (4) establishing tourism offices staffed by skilled rural youth.

Five intervening conditions were also identified: (1) improving language skills through specialized classes, (2) holding practical courses for villagers, (3) collaboration between tourism experts and rural managers, (4) strengthening customer-oriented courses among rural sellers, and (5) enhancing the information system and marketing supervision in rural tourism.

Eight strategies were identified and highlighted. The most crucial strategy, weighing 0.440, was educating and informing residents to prevent conflicts between tourists and locals. The least essential strategies, weigh-

ing 0.410, included using models from other countries and villages to attract foreign tourism and conducting extensive and coherent advertisements for recreational and tourist attractions.

Several obstacles were also identified: (1) lack of trust from foreign tourists towards the villagers, (2) weaknesses in coordination and management, (3) lack of expert and experienced personnel to utilize their knowledge and abilities for robust tourism, and (4) villagers' unfamiliarity with the customs and cultural changes of foreign tourists.

Several outcomes were identified from the totality of these conditions, strategies, and obstacles: stability of rural settlements, income development, employment growth, increased participation of local communities, reduced rural migration, and a strengthened sense of belonging among villagers. Among these, the reduction of rural migration, with a weight value of 0.441, was considered the most important.

In summary, the research findings indicate that the villages of Gilan province, with their high tourism potential and numerous tourist attractions, require young and educated individuals with English language skills to attract foreign tourists more effectively and display these villages and their capabilities to the world. Strengthening English language skills among the villagers is the most crucial factor for enhancing dynamics and employment in the tourism sector within these villages. This is because foreign tourists offer significantly higher economic benefits than domestic tourists. Also, fostering a language-learning culture among villagers is essential, as it promotes employment growth in various tourism-related fields.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

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