

# **The Reality of Rural Economic Development from the Perspective of the Residents "Case Study of Selected Villages in Bethlehem Governorate"**

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## **Abstract**

The study aims to identify reality and future predictions for the economic development of selective villages situated in the eastern countryside of Bethlehem governorate from the perspective of the inhabitants. Also, it identifies the most important obstacles that constrain rural economic development, and to study the most important factors that affect the rural economic development especially the political and governmental factors. This study as well attempts to explain the essential methods followed to enhance the development, and it seeks to recognize the predictions and the future of the economic development in the area of the study, in addition to acknowledging whether there is a connection between rural economic development and other social and demographic characteristics. The study follows the descriptive approach, analytical approach, a regional approach, a case study approach, and a qualitative approach. The study also relies on a number of tools represented in the survey that was distributed on a random sample consisting of (400) respondents after confirming its validity and stability. It also depends on making interviews which has addressed its questions to (10) respondents who include local council heads, planners and specialists in the field of economic development.

After collecting the data, it was analyzed using SPSS, and it was processed by calculating and comparing the mean and standard deviations. In this process, One Sample Test and One Way ANOVA tests were used. Consequently, the study has concluded a number of results, most important of all is the existence of an economic rural development in the study area, but it is below the required level. Besides, the geographic location of the area being near Bethlehem city is the most influential factor in the development process, as the average is (4.37), and the least influential is the

location of the area and its role in attracting investors of the development field, with an average of (2,75).

In addition, the results demonstrate that there is an impact of location on the rural economic development process represented by the soil in the region as well as the water which plays an essential role in the development process, and the average of both reached (4.21), and the least influential were the areas that are currently available for the establishment of development projects with an average of (4.01).

The results as well indicate that there is an impact of the political factor on the rural development represented in the confiscation of lands by the occupation authorities, which hinders the development process, and negatively affects the attraction of the investors to those areas as its average is (4.62), also, less importantly, is the limited sources of income within the areas, which are considered insufficient to provide a decent living with an average of (4.01).

Furthermore, the results show that the government factor has an impact on the rural economic development process through the implementation of rural economic development projects that would improve the living standards of the inhabitants in the area, as the average is (4.01), while the least important was the lack of social justice in the distribution of development projects between the areas, as the mean is (2.91).

Moreover, the results indicate that the social and demographic factors has an effect on the process of the rural economic development represented in the developmental awareness of the area's inhabitants, which plays a major role in the development process as its average is 4.2386, and the least important is the enrollment of male and female residents of the areas in governmental and private jobs Which has a negative impact on the rural economic development process with an average of (3.34).

The results also demonstrate that the villages of the eastern countryside especially the town of Shawawra can be used to build resorts for tourists and for entertainment. In addition, it can be used in the establishment and construction of dairy factories, or the establishment of animal and poultry farms.

Based on the concluded results of the study, it recommends to create periodic courses and workshops for the residents of the villages of the eastern countryside in order to motivate them to establish development projects in their areas.