

GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN ASSESSING QUALITY OF LIFE IN CENTRAL KARAKORAM NATIONAL PARK INHABITANTS

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ABSTRACT. *This paper addresses geographical significance in assessing quality of life among inhabitants of Central Karakoram National Park, Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan. The aim is to evaluate the degree of the extent to which the quality of life conditions of an average person living in particular regions of Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP). Findings indicated that relationship of perception of quality of life among mountain inhabitants was a significant contributor factor in their lives (physical, psychological, social and environmental well-being, and satisfaction in life with hope, diversity in level of hope and planning to meet their goals). The presence of hope is positively associated with quality of life and subjective well-being of CKNP inhabitants. This has been important in identifying differences in mountain men and women and difference in valleys. Implications for mountain life and healthy living are indicated. This project was funded by the Research Grant from SEED project of KIU/Evk2 CNR to the first author with 2nd author assisting, acknowledgement of all those involved in data collection.*

Keywords: *quality of life, wellbeing, Central Karakoram National Park, hope, mountain*

Introduction. This is a small attempt to show a glimpse of an immense research project to measure the quality of life, psychological wellbeing, meaning in life, life satisfaction, and longevity of inhabitants in Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP) (Gilgit-Baltistan). Present project explores and assesses health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationships to salient features of the CKNP environment. The aim is to evaluate the degree of the extent to which the quality of life conditions of an average person living in particular areas of CKNP.

The CKNP is Pakistan's largest Protected Area, covering over 10,000km² and its Buffer zone is 7441 Sq KMs. It was officially notified as National Park in 1993 (Bilal, 2003; Shah, 2012). Most of the areas of CKNP has fragmented, fragile and challenging ecosystems. The park is characterized by heavy glaciations, with glaciers combining to form the largest and most extensive glacial systems outside the Polar Regions. Some famous world's highest peaks including K-2, Broad peak, Gashabrum and Mashabrum are lying within the boundaries of CKNP. The park area is rich and unique in terms of ethnic, cultural and biological diversity with a wide range of development opportunities. The Park area is comprised of watersheds of 17 valleys, and each valley has its own access road system up to an elevation of 10,000 ft (HBP, 2008). The Central Karakoram National Park is one of the immense unexplored areas of Pakistan, where biodiversity is now being evaluated systematically for

the better Protected Area management in future (Baig, 2009).

Ethnic groups may be differentiated on the basis of language: major languages of the area include Balti, Shina, Burushaski, and Wakhi. Besides the diversity of languages the spatial distribution of various Islamic sects is another attribute that characterizes the population of the area, for instance, religious groups are Ahle-Sunni, Ahle-Tasheeh, Ismaili, and Noorbukhshi. Apart from the highly critical demographic, cultural, and social settings, all the villages are rich with natural resources, particularly land, water, forests, and related resources. The remoteness and limited accessibility of the CKNP until now have meant that people here have had a high dependence on the natural environment, without access to many modern facilities. Traditional modes of living ensured harmony between the natural environment and human beings. But growing population, greater communication links and infrastructural and developmental interventions are changing traditional lifestyles and increasing the pressure on natural resources.

The objectives of the study are to explore domains of quality of life i.e. physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment of CKNP inhabitants; the relationship between wellbeing and quality of life among inhabitants of CKNP. However, the meaning of life as conceived by the inhabitants on gender basis was also discussed. The human values such as security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, and conformity among inhabitants of CKNP were also highlighted.

2. Method: All research measures were available in English language. For the viability of the indigenous natives of CKNP, it was necessary to translate these measures in Urdu language. Before the data collection from the inhabitants of CKNP valleys, all research tools have been translated and reviewed in group by the three research assistants who are lecturers in the department of Behavioural sciences. Finally these were reviewed by principal investigator and co-principal investigator. In addition, the final draft of the research tools has been reviewed by two judges (professors having command on Urdu and English languages). For tryout and to measure the test conceptualization, a small pilot study was conducted to ensure its reliability and validity.

2.1 Pilot Study:The resulting first draft of Urdu version of research tools and the original English versions were administered to postgraduate students (M.Sc. III = 14, 7 for English and Urdu versions each; M.Sc.I 5 for Urdu and 4 for English version) of the department of Behavioural Sciences with the instruction to identify the words which were not clear or confusing. The comments given by them have been thoroughly examined and incorporated in the corresponding statements of the scales. The final version of the research tools in Urdu language was printed and used for data collection.

2.2 Participants:The sample of 628 had been drawn from fifty villages of CKNP valleys (Shigar, Basha, Braldu, Khaplu, Hushey, Thalley, Astak-Tormik, Arandu, Haramosh, Bagrot, Hopper, Hispar, Rakaposhi, and Shimshal) through purposive-convenient sampling technique. 411 male (65.4%) and 217 female (34.6%), among 628 inhabitants 47.3% were early adults, 59.1% were Balti speakers, 22.8% matriculated and 22.2% were illiterate while 20.9% were intermediate. 48.6% were associated with farming and livestock. The monthly income of 45% inhabitants is below 10,000 rupees. 63.9% are married and 93% preferred to live in joint family structure. 43% families have one earner while 26% families have 2 earners at home; among them 49% were male earners and 17% female earners. Among 217 female, majority was farmers but they did not acknowledge themselves as earners for their families. The details of the demographic characteristics of the participants are given in appendix A and appendix B for a map of CKNP valleys.

2.3 Research Measures:Translated measures have been used in the present study such as **WHO Quality of Life Scale –BREF** (WHO QOL-BREF) has been used to assess the individual's perceptions in the context of their culture and value systems, and their personal goals, standards and concerns. The WHOQOL-BREF instrument comprises 26 items, which measure the following broad domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment. The four domain scores denote an individual's perception of quality of life in each particular domain.

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) assesses how full respondents feel their lives are of meaning and how engaged and motivated respondents are in efforts to find meaning or deepen their understanding of meaning in their lives (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006).

Psychological Well-Being Scales assesses six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance (Ryff, 1998).

Satisfaction with Life Scale is a widely used and well-validated measure of life satisfaction (Diener, 1985). Satisfaction with life represents the cognitive aspect of subjective well-being (Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996).

Gratitude Questionnaire-6: The GQ-6 is a short, self-report measure of the disposition to experience gratitude. Participants GQ-6 is positively related to optimism, life satisfaction, hope, spirituality and religiousness, forgiveness, empathy and prosocial behavior, and negatively related to depression, anxiety, materialism and envy (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002).

Adult Hope Scale (AHS) measures Snyder's cognitive model of hope which defines hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991).

Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale assesses the need to obtain social approval using a series of statements concerning socially desirable opinions or behaviors that most people cannot truthfully claim to adhere to at all times, as well as 14 statements of socially undesirable opinions or behaviors that have been true for most people at least some of the time (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).

Schwartz's Value Inventory assesses the values, such as: how are individuals' priorities affected by social experiences? How do individuals' priorities influence their behavior and choices? And, how do value priorities influence ideologies, attitudes, and actions in political, religious, environmental, and other domains? Ten types of universal values are achievement, benevolence, conformity, hedonism, power, security, self-direction, stimulation, tradition, and universalism (Schwartz, 1992).

2.4 Procedure. After the pilot study, a team of three researchers & six assistants approached the respondents at their residences, work places and /or fields for main data collection. The purpose of research described briefly to the respondents. The research tools were administered individually after obtaining informed consent from the natives/villagers. The data was collected from fifty villages of fourteen CKNP valleys. The visits were started from July 2012 and ended in October 2013 (almost one and half year). Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for windows used for data analysis i.e. descriptive and inferential statistics.

3. Data Analysis & Interpretations. After data analysis of the collected data, the major findings are enlisting here categorically:

A. Quality of Life

- a. 52.4% participants reported good perception of quality of life while 53% are satisfied from their overall perception of health while 23% perceived their health in highly satisfactory way.
- b. The mean scores of female from Rondu and Shigar valleys reported good quality of life as compared to mean scores of male of same valleys while no significant differences were found on individual's overall perception of quality of life. Generally the mean scores of male perceived good health individually as compared to female of CKNP valleys
- c. Significant gender differences found on all research measures. Male from Haramosh & Thalley valleys reported high degree of physical health which indicated activities of daily living, energy and fatigue, mobility in community, sleep and rest, and work capacity as compared to female of same and other CKNP valleys.
- d. Generally the mean scores of male from CKNP valleys (especially Hopper and Thalley valleys) showed high degree of psychological health including positive and negative feelings, self-esteem, as well as thinking, learning, memory and concentration as compared to female of CKNP valleys.

- e. Inhabitants of CKNP valleys showed tendency of high social relationships in their community depicted their high degree of personal relationships, social support, and bond of relationship with their family and community whereas female of Rakaposhi valley are more prone in maintaining social relationships and social support than male of same valley
- f. Overall Male of Thalley Valley showed high quality of life on domains of physical health, psychological and social relationships as compared to female of same valley.
- g. The mean score of female of Rakaposhi and Khaplu valleys scored high on environment domain of WHO Quality of Life as compared to male, indicated the symbol of transformation of the socio-cultural perspectives and the gender roles. Women of Rakaposhi, Khaplu, and Shigar valleys are now playing a role of both homemakers and agriculturalists that enhance their responsibility to more control over household resources and farm-related income, as well as greater participation in community-level decision-making. It showed their life satisfaction.

B. Gratitude

- a. 80.7% inhabitants of valleys reported low gratitude that showed lack of expressions of gratefulness and appreciation in daily life, as well as feelings about receiving from others.
- b. Both gender and all age groups experienced poor expressions of daily life appreciation and admiration.

C. Meaning in Life

- a. CKNP inhabitants particularly male of Rakaposhi, Braldu, Basha, Haramosh & Hushey valleys reported the presence of positive meaning in their lives. Thalley and Hisper inhabitants showed the sense of life and their struggling, motivation and desire in order to find the meaning of their lives.
- b. Elderly and adults showed the sense of understanding the meaning of life, degree to which individuals feel that their life is full of meaning (e.g., I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful) as well as motivation and desire to find or deepen the meaning in their lives (e.g., “I am always searching for something that makes my life feel meaningful”) as compared to adolescents of Hushey Valley.

D. Social Desirability

- a. Generally significant gender differences found on social desirable scale showed that CKNP inhabitants are socially active and desirable in their community especially male of Bagrote and Haramosh valleys.
- b. Adults of Rakaposhi and Khaplu and elderly of Braldu are more socially active and played a significant role in community, welfare for others, and decision-making as compared to other age groups

E. Psychological wellbeing

- a. Male of Haramosh and Basha valleys depicted high autonomy, self-determination, independent, able to resist social pressures to think & act in certain ways as well as regulate behavior from within community and regional level as compared to female of these valleys. Adults of CKNP valleys are more self-determined, independent, and evaluate themselves by personal standards especially adults from Shimshal and Hopper valleys while adolescents are much more concerned about the expectations & evaluations of others.
- b. Female from Hopper has a feeling of continued development, observe self as growing & expanding by realizing her potential and open to new experiences while male from Thalley and Hushey reflected high personal growth indicated potential, sense of realization, and enhance to improve in self & behavior with the passage of time
- c. Inhabitants of CKNP valleys particularly male from Rondu, Thalley, Braldu, Basha, & Hushey valleys reflected high environmental mastery such as a sense of competency in managing the environment and make effective use of surrounding opportunities.
- d. Male of CKNP valleys mainly Rondu, Hisper, Khaplu, Basha, Hushey reported positive relation with others, warmth and trusting relationships, affection, & intimacy while female of these valleys showed few close trusting relationships with others, had difficulty to be open & concerned about others and usually isolated & frustrated in interpersonal relationships and these female were reluctant to make compromises to sustain important ties with others even within community.

- e. Generally inhabitants of CKNP valleys have purpose in life, they are goal-oriented and have sense of understanding of objectives for living. Male of Haramosh, Thalley, & Hushey valleys have a sense of directedness while female of these valleys lacked sense of direction and had few goals or aims in their lives.
- f. Male of Haramosh scored high on self-acceptances showed possessing a positive attitude toward the self and feels positive about past life but they are conservative and dissatisfied with the outsiders or visitors. Whereas female of the same valley are dissatisfied with self, having troubled with certain personal qualities and wishes to be different than what she is.

F. Human values

- a. The inhabitants of Shimshal, Thalley, and Basha valleys reported to have more benevolence, conformity, tradition, universalism, self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power and security values, indicated preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is infrequent personal contact and pleasure and sensuous gratification for themselves as well as provide an internalized motivational base for such behavior. However, they showed the presence of conformity which showed restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.
- b. Both power and achievement values focus on social esteem. However, achievement values emphasize actively demonstrating successful performance in concrete interaction among Shimshal inhabitants, whereas power values among Basha inhabitants emphasize attaining or preserving a dominant position within the more general social system. The conformity values exhort responsiveness to current, possibly changing expectations in inhabitants of Shimshal and Thalley while Basha inhabitants stressed out power, security, and tradition values that showed social status and prestige, dominance over resources, safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self and the demand responsiveness to immutable expectations set down in the past.
- c. Younger adults showed greater achievement orientation, independent thoughts and actions, the sense of power (showed social status and prestige), control or dominance over people and resources (farming, minerals, transport, livestock, decision making, shifted gender roles) in the valley. Whereas older adults showed more respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs, traditional culture, or religion as well as the sense of understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature. Both younger and older adults showed excitement, novelty, and challenges towards goals in life but both do not differ on benevolence, security, conformity, and hedonism values.

G. Hope

- a. Hope is defined as the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways. Inhabitants of Hushey Valley showed high level of hope, goal directed energy, and the extent of planning to meet goals. While male of CKNP valleys especially Thalley and Basha reported positive goal directed energy hope and planning to meet goals for future as compared to female of same valleys
- b. Adults from Rondu and Khaplu valleys reported the tendency of positive hope as compared to adolescents while adolescents of Basha & Hisper valleys reflected goal directed energy for their future as compared to adults

Summary:The correlations of all measures were positively significant at 0.01 and .05 level, depicted the relationship of perception of quality of life among inhabitants was the most significant contributing factor in their lives which shown their physical, psychological, social and environmental well-being, and satisfaction in life, including diversity in level of hope and planning to meet their goals. Age, education, gender, and income are correlated with the quality of life and basic values while family patterns and marital status did not play any significant role in basic values. The presence of hope is positively associated with quality of life and subjective well-being of CKNP inhabitants. However, having more meaning of life has been positively related to physical health, social relationships, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, gratitude, hope, and human basic values, and religiousness. The presence of poor gratitude

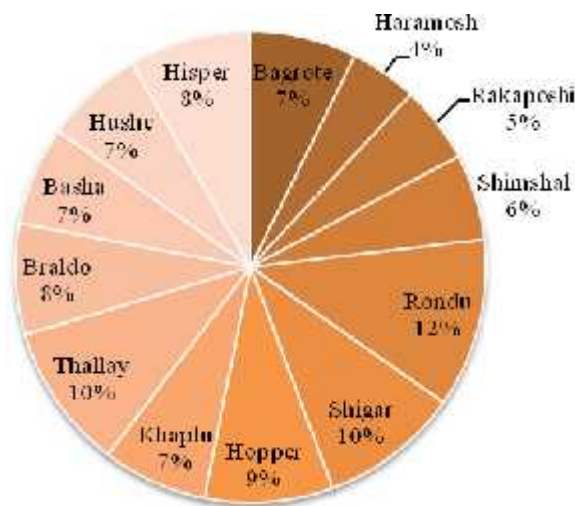
among CKNP inhabitants is really one of the unexpected findings. In addition, religion and cultural values also play significant role in decision-making as in many communities usually people do not express their opinions and views in front of community counselors or religious leaders due to social hierarchy as well as in cultural respect. Natural resources such as minerals, nallah, glaciers, pastures, and forests as well as farming and livestock enhance the quality of life individually in a harmonious way.

3.1 Conclusion. It is to be concluded that key findings are valuable in planning policy, governance model and management plan for CKNP. Lack of proper approach to basic necessities to life such as education, transport, electricity, and medical facilities as well as lack of leisure activities in a community leads to poor quality of life, hopelessness, uncertain fear, and deprivation of happiness and peace. In future, a commencement to allocate mental health professionals in each valley of CKNP is required in order to provide mental health, psychological well-being, health care delivery, and counseling and consultation services to community in order to enhance mental health literacy, decrease stigma of mental health problems, and encourage people with problems to get early help.

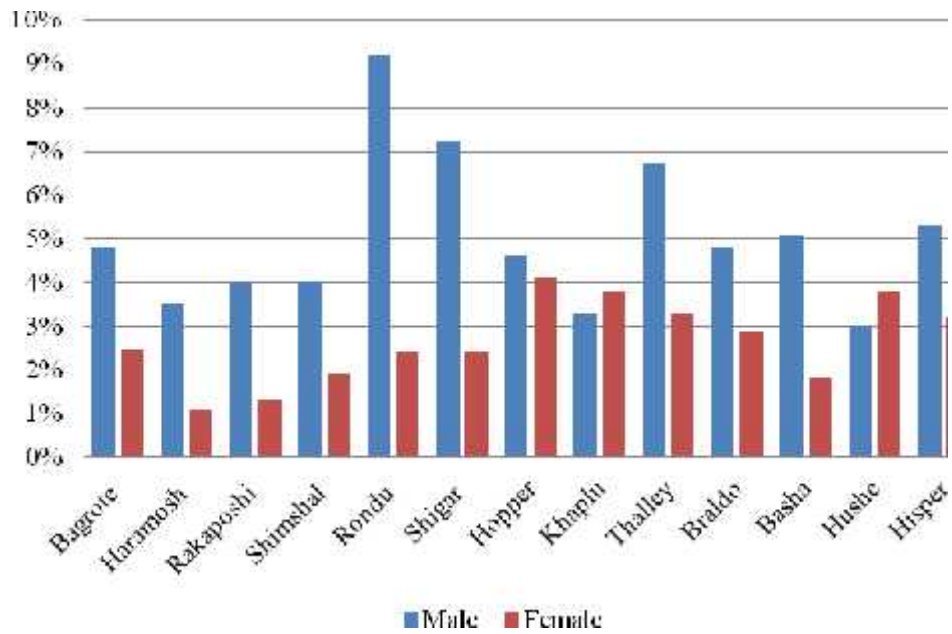
Appendix A

The details of the demographic characteristics of the participants are as follows:

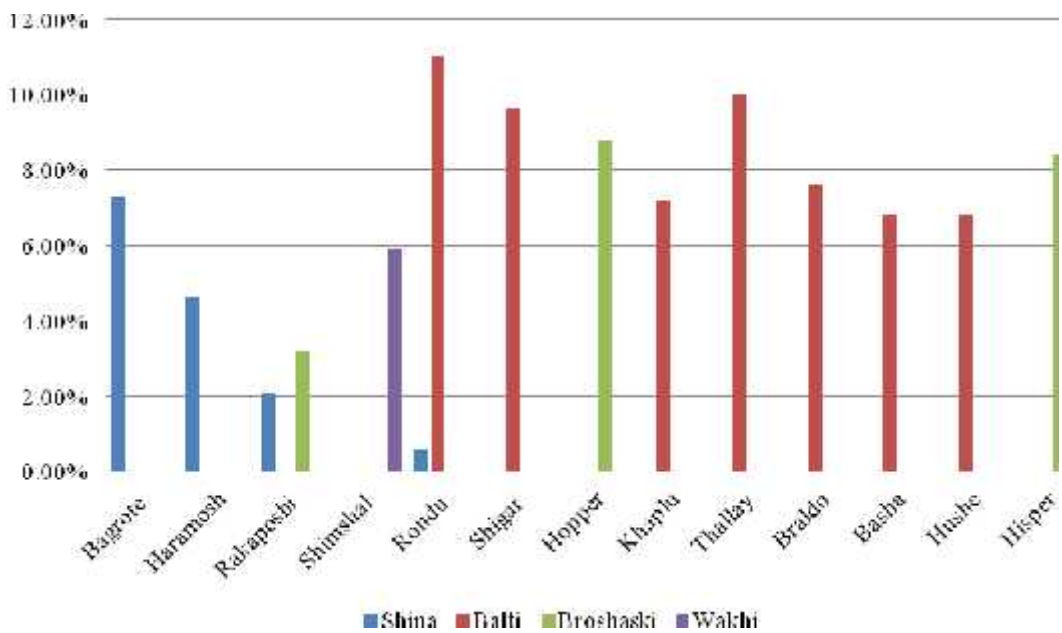
2a. Valley wise distribution of participants in CKNP (n=628)



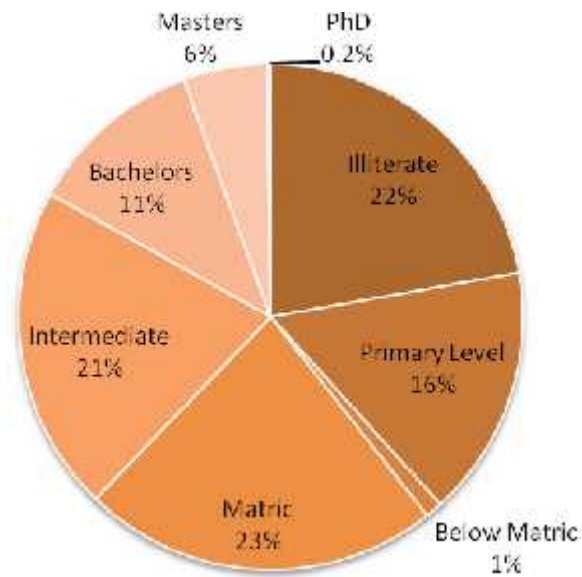
2b. Gender –wise distribution of CKNP Valleys (n=628)



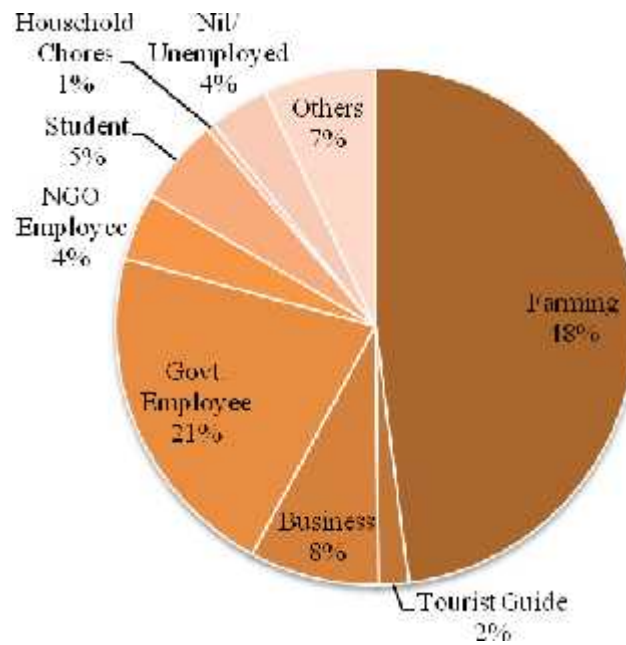
2c. Languages speaking in CKNP Valleys



2d. Education of participants

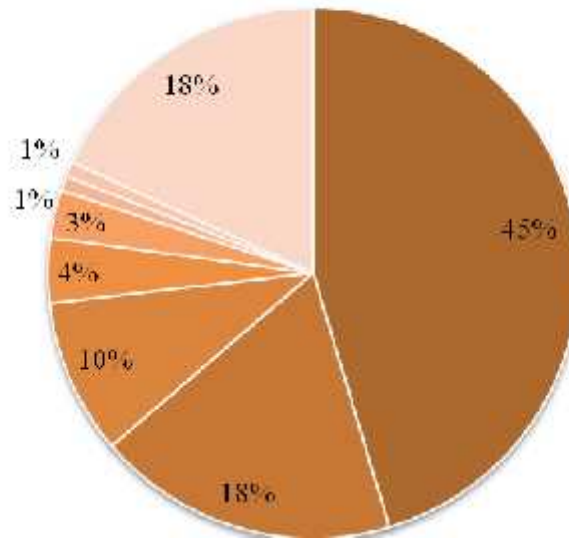


2e. Occupation of participants

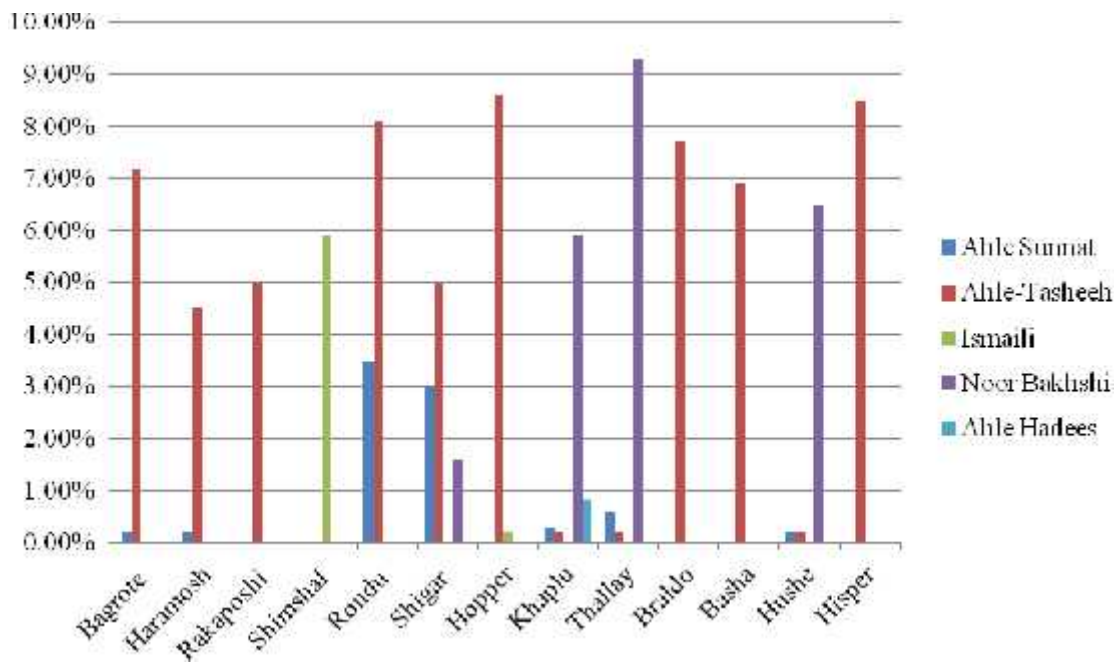


2f. Monthly Income of Participants

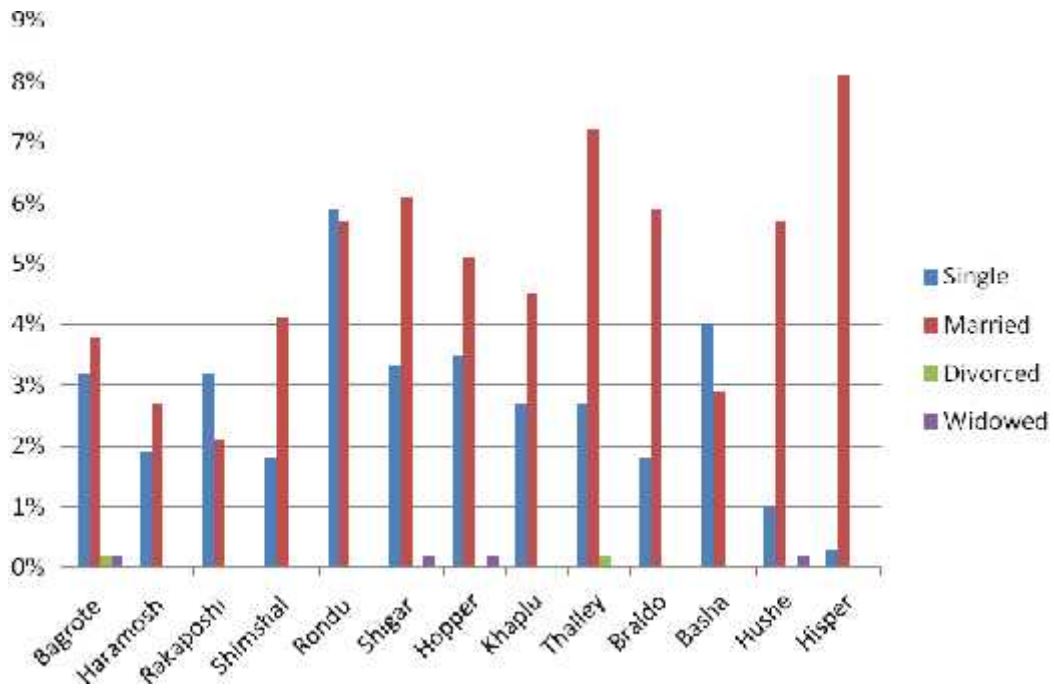
below 10,000 11,000-20,000 21,000-30,000 31,000-40,000
 41,000-50,000 51,000-60,000 61000-70000 None



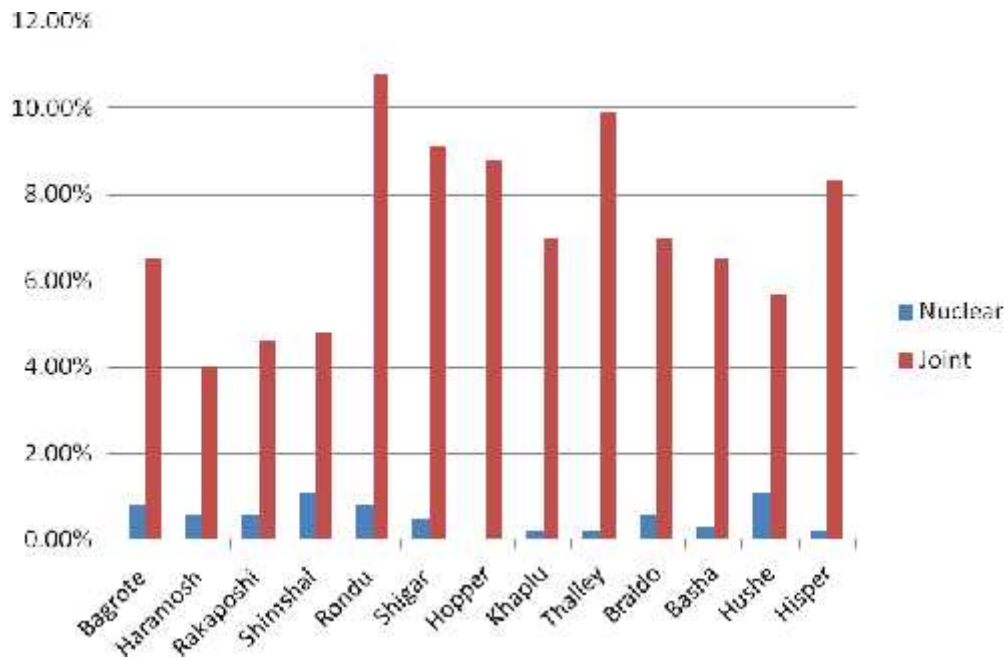
2g. Religious groups of Participants



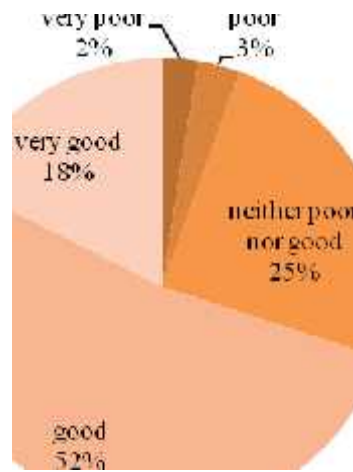
2h. Marital Status of Participants



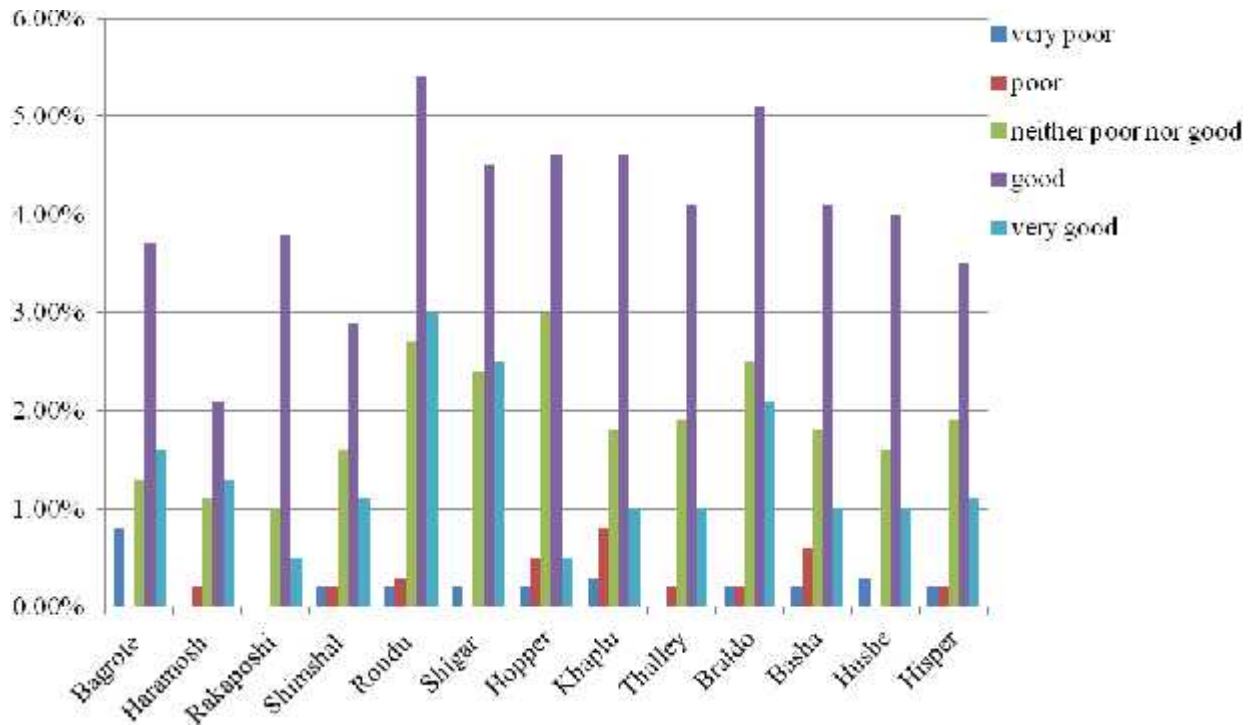
2i. Family structure of Participants



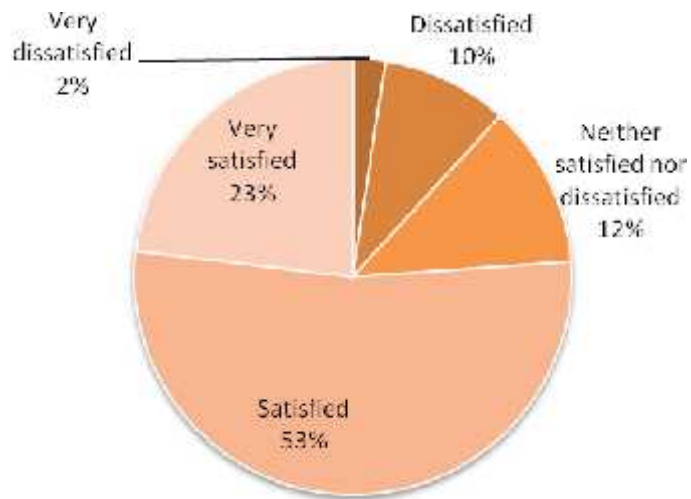
2j. Individual's overall perception of quality of life



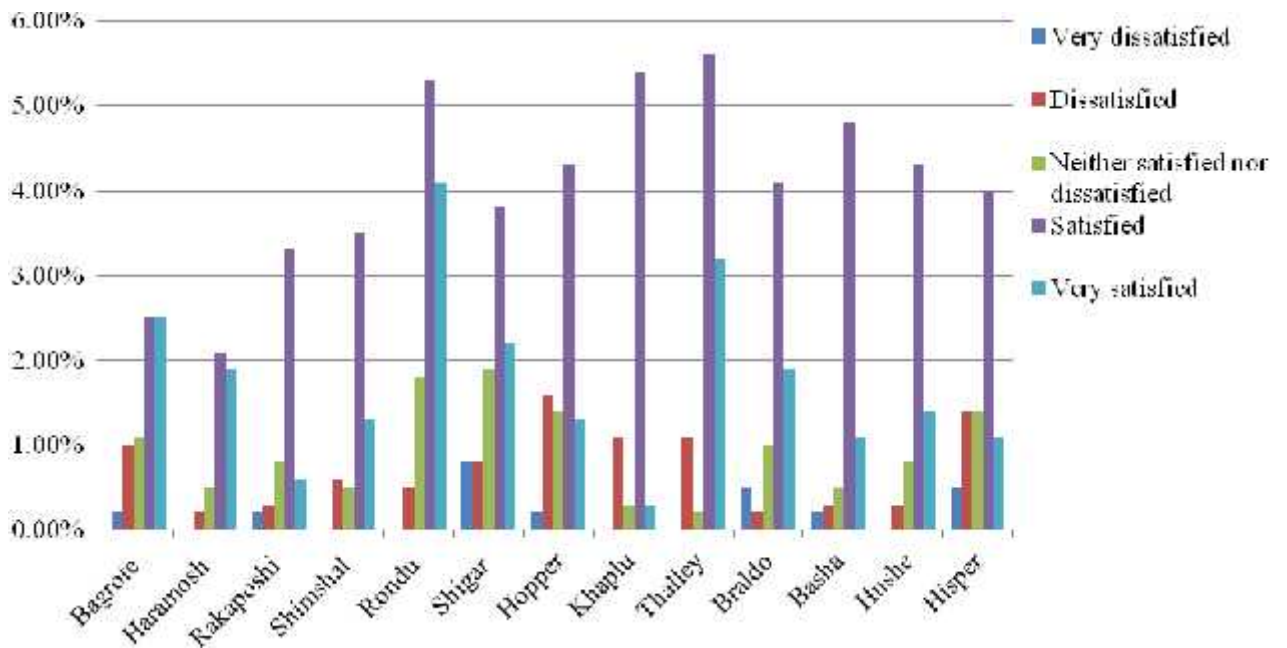
2j.1. Individual's overall perception of quality of life in CKNP valleys



2k. Individual's overall perception of participants' health



2k.1. Individual's overall perception of health in CKNP valleys



Appendix B

Map of CKNP valleys

