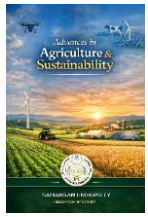
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Assessing the Activity and Performance of Community Development Councils in Implementing Local Projects in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan

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Abstract

The Afghan people lack access to essential social services, including schools, clinics, water, electricity, and transportation. To solve the aforementioned problems, Community Development Councils (CDCs) have been established in each village; however, after several years, the problems of local people remain unsolved. Therefore, this study examined the level of activity and performance of CDCs in local projects in Bamyan province. This was a quantitative study that used an SRS method to distribute questionnaires to 384 members of the rural community, and descriptive analysis was performed using SPSS. The results show that the performance of Panjab District's CDCs was 75 percent successful in pre-project implementation activities (needs assessment, prioritization and planning stages); 95.5 percent successful in project implementation activities (project initiation, division of labour, monitoring and control, reporting, evaluation and project closure); and 81.8 percent successful in post-implementation activities (during the use, exploitation and protection of the projects), the people are satisfied and they have achieved the highest percentage among the eight districts of this province. On the other hand, Yakawlang District No.1's CDCs were not successful with 78.6 percent in pre-project implementation activities, 85.7 percent in project implementation, and 75 percent in post-project implementation activities, and have not achieved the satisfaction of the local people, which shows the lack of success among the districts of Bamyan province. The other six districts fall between these two extremes, demonstrating varying levels of success in CDC performance and corresponding levels of satisfaction among local people.

1. Introduction

In many developing countries, agriculture remains a fundamental component of rural livelihoods, providing households with essential sources of income, employment, and food security. There is a need to guide these communities toward development and positive change so they can modernize their traditional farming practices (Faizi et al., 2025; Djokoto et al., 2024). Developed countries have long managed to bring prosperity and comfort to their citizens and, through medical science, create a healthy environment, peace of mind, proper nutrition, and access to clean drinking water, thereby reducing the prevalence of various diseases in their rural areas (Khan, 2024). Therefore, developing countries should aim to promote social justice and ensure access to health, education, recreation, environmental services, peace of mind, balanced nutrition, and clean drinking water. Efforts should also focus on tackling pressing issues such as unsafe drinking water, malnutrition, limited educational opportunities, insufficient healthcare facilities, environmental pollution, and high levels of poverty (Wirajing et al., 2023).

Villages are areas far from cities where most people in developing countries live. The only way to solve the problems mentioned is to focus on the agricultural sector, which forms the basis of income and is the main occupation of villagers. Villages are the place where most people in developing countries are raised and serve as the original center of human organization for national development. They are also the basic unit of production in the national economy, providing food to feed the nation, raw materials for industries, employment for human resources in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, and supplies of human resources for industry and services. This makes it possible to meet national needs during peace and war. More than 75 percent of Afghanistan's population lives in rural areas (Shaiq et al., 2022), but migration to big cities has increased recently. According to previous research, the main reasons are the lack of growth and development in villages and poverty. From 2003 to 2015, the National Solidarity Program established development councils in villages. During this period, there were 46,647 local development councils and 75,271 projects related to health, education, training, agriculture, emergencies, livelihoods, clean drinking water, transportation, hydroelectricity, farm irrigation, and agricultural storage facilities across the country (Akbari & Rahmani, 2020). Additionally, according to a World Bank report (2015), more than 80,000 projects have been carried out by development councils in 35,000 villages through other institutions throughout Afghanistan (World Bank, 2015).

Despite the projects mentioned earlier, no research has been conducted on how development councils perform in implementing these initiatives. It is necessary to research this so that government officials, institutions, and the public understand the outcomes of these projects and gauge public satisfaction. This can foster healthy competition among development councils and encourage the public to push these councils to do more. Therefore, this study will address the following questions: What is the level of activity of development councils in local projects across Bamyan province's districts? How do these councils perform within Bamyan's rural communities? The purpose of this study is to assess the activity levels and performance of development councils in local projects across eight districts of Bamyan, by district. Bamyan province has experienced complete security for many years, allowing more projects to be successfully implemented (Yar & Baidar, 2025). These councils can serve as a good example of research that can inspire positive change and social welfare, especially with support from the government and international organizations.

Literature Review

CDCs are multidimensional and a very complex process that includes various dimensions such as cultural, social, political, economic, and environmental development. Today's scholars and scientists are trying to solve the problems of villages and provide answers to their questions in order to improve the quality and contentment of life in rural areas and ensure social welfare (Phillips & Pittman, 2014). This study also examined the level of activity and performance of development councils in implementing local projects in Bamyan province. To enrich this study further, a brief review of the research of other scientists has been conducted, which is as follows:

The results of Hadi Noori's research (2017) entitled "Community Participation in the Sustainability of Development Projects" show that planning with the participation of all stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and identification of needs is one of the significant issues in the sustainability of development projects (Noori, 2017). Kuponiyi (2008) conducted a study titled “The Role of Local Leaders in CDCs Decision-Making in Iwo, Oyo State, Nigeria,” which showed that local leaders played a prominent role in religious issues, tribal elders, social security, and CDCs. Researcher noted that local leaders’ area of responsibility in any project is mobilizing people, organizing meetings, securing financial resources, and establishing connections (Kuponiyi, 2008).

Research has shown that there is a strong interaction between the government and local leaders, who are sometimes in conflict with each other and sometimes act as mediators between each other (Beer, 2014). However, there is a great need for local leaders in rural communities (Onitsuka & Hoshino, 2018). After years of efforts by development councils with the support of national and international institutions, research has shown that the effects of these efforts on development councils and local leaders have been moderately effective. However, more efforts are still needed, and regular programs in villages are needed to bring about positive change and improvement in order to reach a high level (Man et al., 2021; Faizi et al., 2023). The important role of local leaders includes decision-making, monitoring, project implementation, and communication between local people, government, and partner institutions (Ozor & Nwankwo, 2008). Recently, Noor Ali Sargand (2019) conducted a study titled "The Role of Tribal Leaders in Local Government of Kandahar Province, Afghanistan" and showed that the role of tribal leaders in Kandahar Province is very important. But unfortunately, tribal leaders are sometimes known to be a source of financial corruption and an obstacle to the participation of youth and women in social issues (Ali, 2019). Therefore, local leaders clearly observe the needs of the community, to facilitate the preparation of education, training, and upbringing for community members; to develop the skills and experiences of local people. Therefore, reasonable and timely budgets and decisions in development projects in villages are considered a vital need (Williams & Lindsey, 2011). Considering the above issues, for the proper implementation of local projects, it is necessary to make the right decisions, and the most appropriate type of decision is participatory decision-making that brings together community members for joint decisions and creates a sense of belonging to the community and recognition of responsibilities for CDCs, which is known as bottom-up decision-making. The people who can withstand the changes and crises they constantly face are those who maximize their commitment and capacity to educate their community members in the processes and different levels of decision-making and action of the organization. Therefore, participatory decision-making can be considered an appropriate space that enables sustainable individual and collective transformation. Creating a new context of competencies and situations of professional relationships, the active participation of community members in planning, management, and implementation is essential. Research suggests that participatory decision-making in rural areas is the basis of development projects in the community and also supports that it empowers community members, local leaders, NGOs, and the government, and allows the

right and duty of development councils to participate together, which is known as bottom-up decision-making for the community (Quiroz-Niño & Blanco-Encomienda, 2017).

Scholars have stated in their articles that there is limited research on the attention to decision-making in rural communities (Capler, 2020). Community leadership processes that develop existing community relationships and networks provide a solid foundation for rural community sustainability (Johns et al., 1999). Solo work is not easy, and individual efforts cannot easily achieve team goals. In addition, there is a common goal and vision for CDCs in villages, when each team member understands the efforts of the others, not only is the effectiveness of the work visible, but it also has economic and cultural benefits. Working together to create a successful relationship and develop a culture of teamwork and social work requires that each follower prioritizes his or her own success. This is also to work together, support each other, and encourage team members as reasons why they will stay together for a long time, and that the problems of the community are everyone's problem, and to work together and work together to solve it (Petkovski & Joshevska, 2014). While, residents of Bamyan province were living peacefully and security in 20 years of Republic government was very good and all projects implemented without any security problem (Lali et al.,2020; Emami et al., 2026), but still the villages of this province is not developed and there's residents are not confident. Therefore, this research is conducted to find the activity levels and performance of development councils in local projects across eight districts of Bamyan province.

2. Materials and Methods

This is a quantitative research that firstly conducted a library review to organize the research background, research questionnaire, and consideration of similar research works that have been done before in order to renew and innovate in this research. Secondly, using previous research, a questionnaire was developed and given to five professionals and experts to express their opinions on the questions and the purpose of the research. After expressing their opinions, 30 questionnaires were distributed and analyzed to test the stability and find Cronbach's alpha which was above of 0.7. It is worth noting that the sample size was determined based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, which states that if the population is more than 100,000, the sample size should be 384 people. While, the population of Bamyan province is 495,500 people (World Population, 2026). Samples were selected from residents of the center and eight districts (Yakawlang No. 1, Yakawlang No. 2, Saighan, Waras, Panjab, Kahmard, Shibar, and Ghandak) of Bamyan

province, and data were collected from them. In this study, the performance of development councils as a dependent variable and activities before project implementation, activities during project implementation, and activities after project implementation as three independent variables were prepared and arranged in the form of a closed and structured questionnaire. Samples were selected randomly from all over Bamyan province, and then the questionnaire was distributed to them. The responses were later collected and entered into the computer. This field research was conducted to obtain statistics from councils and local people, and descriptive analysis of the data using SPSS version 22 software yielded results that are explained below. The selection of theory or model for pre-project, during-project, and post-project activities for implementation as the three independent variables is grounded in the project life-cycle perspective. The three categories provide a logical temporal framework for investigating how activities implemented at different stages of a project may influence the study's dependent variable. This approach is consistent with the PMBOK® Guide, which distinguishes pre-project work, the core project life cycle, and post-project work (Project Management Institute, 2017).

3. Results

The results of the descriptive analysis presented contain information about the respondents of this study. The collected data show that 384 community members who are residents of the provincial capital of Bamyan and its eight districts responded, of which 148 people (38.5%) are below 25 years of age; 95 people (24.7%) are between 26-35 years of age; 79 people (20.6%) are between 36-45 years of age; and 62 people (16.1%) are above 46 years of age. Therefore, the average age of the respondents is 33 years, with the lowest age being 18 years and the highest age being 65 years.

In terms of gender, the majority of respondents are male, with 312 (81.2%) males and 72 (18.8%) females. The level of education of the respondents is 203 (52.9%) with a bachelor's degree, 62 (16.1%) with an illiterate, 67 (17.4%) with religious studies, and 52 (13.5%) with a 12th pass. The occupation of the respondents is 54 (14.1%) government employees, 22 (5.7%) non-government employees, 134 (34.9%) students, 74 (19.3%) farmers, 81 (21.1%) engaged in self-employment, and 19 (4.9%) unemployed.

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of samples based on the districts of Bamyan province that participated in this study. Center of Bamyan with 72 people (18.8%), Yakawlang No. 1 with 38 (9.9%),

Yakawlang No. 2 with 39 (10.2%), Waras 57 (14.8%), Panjab district 35 (9.1%), Kahmard district 23 (6.0%), Saighan 41 (10.7%), Shibar 45 (11.7%), and Ghandak district 34 (8.9%) participated as samples.

Table 1: Sample characteristics based on districts of Bamyan province

Districts	Numbers = 384	Percentage
Central of Bamyan	72	18.8
Yakawlang No. 1	38	9.9
Yakawlang No. 2	39	10.2
Waras	57	14.8
Panjab	35	9.1
Kahmard	23	6.0
Saighan	41	10.7
Shibar	45	11.7
Ghandak	34	8.9
Total	384	100.0

Hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of the level of development council activities before the project implementation.

H1: There is a significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of the level of development of council activities before the project implementation.

In the first stage, the data were divided into three levels, namely Low Level, Medium Level and High Level, and in the next stage, the analysis was done in such a way that two levels were considered, Low Level and High Level, and the Medium Level was excluded from the analysis and analysis of the figures.

Table 2 shows the eight districts of Bamyan province that have assessed the activities of their development councils before the project implementation. Center of Bamyan with 22 participants, which constitutes 41.5% of them; assessed the activities of its village development councils as low level and 31 people (58.5%) as high level; Similarly, Yakawlang No. 1 district with 22 people, of whom 78.6% of the respondents of the said district included in this analysis assessed them as low level and 6 people (21.4%) as high level; Yakawlang No. 2 with 18 people, of whom 64.3% assessed them as low level and 10 (35.7%) as high level; Waras district has 32 (65.3%) low level and 17 (34.7%) high level, Panjab district has 6 (25.0%) low level and 18 (75.0%) high level, Kahmard district has 12 (66.7%) low level and 6 (33.3%) high level, Saighan district has 13 (35.1%) low level and 24 (64.9%) high level, Shibar district has 9 (39.1%) low level and 14 (60.9%) high level and finally Ghandak district has 7 (30.4%) low level and 16 (69.6%) high level. Pre-project implementation activities, including needs assessment, prioritization, and planning,

have been carried out at a high level by the Panjab District Development Councils, and after the aforementioned district, it has also resulted in people's satisfaction in the districts of Ghandak, Saighan, Shibar, and the center of Bamyan province, as noted in the research (Yar & Baidar, 2025) on the implementation of successful infrastructure projects. This is confirmed; however, the greatest weakness of the development councils in relation to the aforementioned activities has been expressed in the districts of Yakawlang No. 1, Kahmard, Waras, and Yakawlang No. 2. In Table 3, the test results show that the P value <a is lower than alpha (p=0.000). Therefore, H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This analysis shows that the results of the statistical test are significant at a confidence level higher than 95% and provide sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of the activities of the Development Council before the implementation of the project. The probability that this difference occurred by chance is less than 5%.

Table 2: Cross-tabulation analysis between Bamyan Province districts and pre-project implementation activities

Districts	Low Level	High Level	Total
Central of Bamyan	22 41.5%	31 58.5%	53 100.0%
Yakawlang No. 1	22 78.6%	6 21.4%	28 100.0%
Yakawlang No. 2	18 64.3%	10 35.7%	28 100.0%
Waras	32 65.3%	17 34.7%	49 100.0%
Panjab	6 25.0%	18 75.0%	24 100.0%
Kahmard	12 66.7%	6 33.3%	18 100.0%
Saighan	13 35.1%	24 64.9%	37 100.0%
Shibar	9 39.1%	14 60.9%	23 100.0%
Ghandak	7 30.4%	16 69.6%	23 100.0%
Total	141 49.8%	142 50.2%	283 100.0%

(Pearson Chi-Square) = 33.425, p – value=0.000

Hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of the level of activities of the Development Councils during the implementation of the project.

H1: There is a significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of the level of activities of the Development Councils during the implementation of the project.

Table 3 shows how each district of Bamyan province assessed the activities of their village development councils during the project implementation. Bamyan provincial center, with 25 participants (45.5%) assessing the activities of its village development councils as primary and 30 (54.5%) assessing them as advanced; similarly, Yakawlang District No. 1, with 24 (85.7%) assessing them as primary and 4 (14.3%) assessing them as advanced; Yakawlang No. 2 has 17 (68.0%) low level and 8 (32.0%) high level, Waras district has 21 (65.6%) low level and 11 (34.4%) high level, Panjab district has 1 (4.5%) low level and 21 (95.5%) high level, Kahmard district has 14 (70.0%) low level and 6 (30.0%) high level, Saighan district has 11 (30.6%) low level and 25 (69.4%) high level, Shibar district has 6 (26.1%) low level and 17 (73.9%) high level and Ghandak district has 12 (57.1%) low level and 9 (42.9%) high level. The performance of development councils during the implementation of local projects includes: project initiation, division of labour, monitoring and control, reporting, evaluation and timely completion of the project. Development councils in Panjab district have performed very well, and after that, Shibar, Saighan and the center of Bamyan districts have been able to satisfy the people. On the other hand, development councils in Yakawlang No. 1, Kahmard, Yakawlang No. 2, Waras and Ghandak districts have been weak in the aforementioned activities that are implemented during the implementation of the project. The test result in Table 4 shows that the $p < 0.05$ ($p=0.000$), therefore rejecting H0 and confirming H1. The results of the statistical test are significant at a level higher than 95% confidence and provide sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of development council activities during project implementation. The probability that this difference occurred by chance is very low (less than 5 percent).

Table 3: Cross-tabulation analysis between districts of Bamyan province and during project implementation activities

Districts	Low Level	High Level	Total
Central of Bamyan	25 45.5%	30 54.5%	55 100.0%
Yakawlang No:1	24 85.7%	4 14.3%	28 100.0%
Yakawlang No:2	17 68.0%	8 32.0%	25 100.0%
Waras	21 65.6%	11 34.4%	32 100.0%
Panjab	1 4.5%	21 95.5%	22 100.0%
Kahmard	14 70.0%	6 30.0%	20 100.0%
Saighan	11 30.6%	25 69.4%	36 100.0%
Shibar	6 26.1%	17 73.9%	23 100.0%
Ghandak	12 57.1%	9 42.9%	21 100.0%
Total	131 50.0%	131 50.0%	٢٦٢ 100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square = 53.621, p - value =0.000

Hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of the level of development council activities after project implementation.

H1: There is a significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of the level of development of council activities after project implementation.

Table 4 shows how each district of Bamyan province evaluated the activities of its development councils after project implementation. Bamyan provincial capital with 25 people (49.0%) at low level, 26 people (51.0%) at high level, Yakawlang District No. 1 with 24 people (75.0%) at low level and 8 people (25.0%), Yakawlang District No. 2 with 18 people (69.2%) at low level and 8 (30.8%) at high level, Waras District 23 (50.0%) at low level and 23 (50.0%) at high level, Panjab District 6 (18.2%) at low level and 27 (81.8%) at high level, Kahmard District 11 (57.9%) at low level and 8 (42.1%) at high level, Saighan District 13 (35.1%) at low level and 24 (64.9%) at high level, Shibar District 5 (50.0%) at low level and 5 (50.0%) at high level and the newly established district Ghandak has assessed 11 (52.4%) as elementary level and 10 (47.6%) as high level. Exploitation, proper use, and protection of local projects are among the post-project activities, where the performance of the development councils of Panjab and Kahmard districts was

excellent, but the performance of Yakawlang No. 1 and Yakawlang No. 2 districts was very poor. It is worth noting that the districts of Ghandak, Saighan, Waras, Shibar, and the provincial center were average. The $p < 0.05$ ($p=0.000$) and accordingly rejects H0 and accepts H1. This result indicates that the results of the statistical test are significant at a level higher than 95% confidence and provides sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a significant difference between the districts of Bamyan province in terms of development council activities after project implementation. The probability that this difference occurred by chance is less than 5%.

Table 4 Cross-tabulation analysis between districts of Bamyan province and post-project implementation activities

Districts	Low Level	High Level	Total
Central of Bamyan	25 49.0%	26 51.0%	51 100.0%
Yakawlang No:1	24 75.0%	8 25.0%	32 100.0%
Yakawlang No:2	18 69.2%	8 30.8%	26 100.0%
Waras	23 50.0%	23 50.0%	46 100.0%
Panjab	6 18.2%	27 81.8%	33 100.0%
Kahmard	11 57.9%	8 42.1%	19 100.0%
Saighan	13 35.1%	24 64.9%	37 100.0%
Shibar	5 50.0%	5 50.0%	10 100.0%
Ghandak	11 52.4%	10 47.6%	21 100.0%
Total	136 50.0%	139 50.0%	275 100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square=28.992, p - value =0.000

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Researchers have found results in their research that mostly confirm this study. The results of the research (Kuponiyi, 2008; Bhatia et al., 2018) have pointed out that local leaders have played a prominent role in religious issues, tribal elders, social security and CDCs. They also pointed out that local leaders are responsible for mobilizing people, organizing meetings, securing financial resources and establishing connections in each project, which also confirms the results of this study. On the other hand, (Beer (2014) has stated in his research that there is a strong interaction between the government and local leaders, who sometimes confront each other and sometimes act as mediators between each other. (Onitsuka & Hoshino,

2018) stated in their research that there is a great need for local leaders in rural communities, which supports this research. Recently, restrictions have been imposed by the Afghan government on development councils, as Akseer et al. (2022) have discussed in their research. Development councils, on the one hand, and restrictions on the female class, which constitutes half of the society, on the other hand, have affected the level of growth and development in villages in general and have slowed down to an unprecedented extent. However, research conducted (Yar & Baidar, 2025; Faizi et al., 2023; Man et al., 2021; Bhatia et al., 2018) shows that development councils have had a significant positive impact on the growth and development of rural communities in Afghanistan.

From this research, it can be concluded that development and growth have taken place in all communities of Bamyan province; however, in some communities, it has been very excellent, and in some communities, it has been weak. At the district level of Bamyan province, the performance of Panjab District Development Councils has been excellent by 75 percent in the stages of needs assessment, prioritization and planning, which are called pre-project implementation activities, and 95.5 percent in the activities of project initiation, division of labor, monitoring and control, reporting, evaluation and project closure, which are related to the activities of the project implementation process. It is worth noting that 81.8 percent of the development councils of the said district have also performed excellently during the use, exploitation and protection of projects, which are called post-project implementation activities, and the people have expressed their satisfaction through this research, which shows that the highest percentage of public satisfaction with the performance of the development councils among the eight districts of this province is achieved by Panjab District Councils. On the other hand, in Yakawlang No. 1 district, the local people were satisfied with the performance of the development councils with a percentage of 78.6 percent before the implementation of local projects, 85.7 percent during the implementation of the project and 75 percent after the implementation of local projects, that is, in protection and exploitation, it has performed initially and has not achieved the satisfaction of the local people, which has achieved the lowest percentage of satisfaction among the districts of Bamyan province. The councils of other districts, namely Panjab, Saighan, Shibar, and Bamyan province center, have performed satisfactorily, and Yakawlang No. 1, Yakawlang No. 2, Waras, Kahmard, and Ghandak districts are at the initial level and have low satisfaction of the people in terms of the performance of the development councils. The results obtained encourage the Bamyan Village Development Councils

to use the development opportunities available in this province, and in addition to acquiring planning skills, residents of Bamyan villages should participate in the implementation, control, review, evaluation, skill acquisition, protection, and maintenance of the implemented projects. These projects are essential in Bamyan villages for solving problems, economic development, and public welfare, which should be given due attention.

5. Limitations

Illiteracy of officials and members of development councils, local people, limitations and prohibitions for females to reply to the questionnaires, impassable roads in remote districts of Bamyan province, lack of comprehensive information in print and electronic publications about projects, and lack of previous research in the field of rural development were among the important limitations of this research.

6. Research Suggestions

- Rural development is highly dependent on the mental and physical participation of people in local projects.
- In the first step, the planning system should start from a decentralized method, that is, bottom-up. Because in the central planning system, lack of transparency, lack of trust between local leaders and people in relation to local projects in Afghanistan has caused this country to fail to meet the development needs of the community.
- On the other hand, transparency, accountability, and trust-building between people and local councils with local leaders in the villages of the country should be carefully reviewed, and necessary reforms should be made. All stakeholders should be informed of the facts, and all matters related to local projects and the gaps between people and leaders should be eliminated so that misunderstandings and false assumptions do not arise.
- In Bamyan province, the Panjab District Development Councils can be a model for neighbouring districts, and they can learn from them, in addition to creating a healthy competition. The officials of the Development Councils in Yakawlang District No. 1 and other districts whose performance has been stated to be weak should pay maximum attention and focus on the activities mentioned in this study.

7. Statements and Declarations

7.1 Competing interests

The author(s) declare no competing interests.

7.2 Data availability

Data is Available

7.3 Ethics Approval

No Applicable

7.4 Consent to participate/Consent to publish

Not Applicable

7.5 Funding

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7.6 Acknowledgments

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7.7 Author Contributions

Mohammad Salem Faizi: Wrote the report, collected and analyzed data. Muhammad Asef Shaiq: planning, design, and management of work in the research area. Abdul Wares Koshan: supervised the research and critically reviewed the manuscript.

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