

## RESEARCH PAPER

# Explanation of strategic management pattern in rural sustainable development, case study: central part of Sirik township (Hormozgan Province of Iran)

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## Highlights

- Economic factors contribute to the progression of rural sustainable development.
- Other factors, including social, Physical spatial and environmental factors, take a role in the sustainable development of Sirik province.
- People participation in strategic sustainability programs is vital in the sustainability of Sirik province.

## Graphical Abstract



## Article Info

**Receive Date:** 21 November 2020

**Revise Date:** 15 December 2020

**Accept Date:** 25 December 2020

**Available online:** 28 December 2020

## Keywords:

Sustainable development  
Urban-rural domain  
Sirik township  
Environmental factors

## Abstract

Since rural areas are the main part of the national development of any country, so the sustainable development of the country depends on rural sustainability, as a subsystem of that country. This study aims to answer the question about the optimal rural development strategy in Sirik rural area has been done in order to identify the best development strategy for sustainable development and by prioritizing other strategies facilitate the planning of sustainable rural development in the mentioned region (Sirik township of Hormozgan Province- Iran). Present research is an applied study, and the methodology is a descriptive-analytical method in which field and library studies based on questionnaire usage. In order to evaluate the role of strategic management in the sustainable development of the Sirik township, AHP has been used. SWOT was carried out in order to prioritize internal (pros and cons) and external (threats and opportunities) factors. Results demonstrated that not only economic factors contribute to the progression of rural sustainable development, but also other factors including social, Physical-spatial, and environmental factors take a role in the sustainable development of Sirik township.



 10.22034/CAJESTI.2020.06.01

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, management is of the most important activities in human social life, and with its help, the missions and goals of organizations are realized. The need for proper development and management in allocating facilities and using the potentials and indigenous knowledge of rural areas is of the country's management affairs priorities. In the meantime; rural areas as a rule of the system and national activity play a key role in national development. If an interruption happens in rural spaces' development, its effects and consequences affect rural areas and urban areas, and finally, the whole land will be affected (Ye et al., 2013). In the framework of the above model, the World Bank has emphasized the importance of non-agricultural and multi-sectoral economic activities along with agricultural ones. In this theory, in sustainable rural development, diversity is considered the necessities of different societies, and observing this principle will facilitate the stability and sustainability of other structures (Mosayyebi et al., 2018; Bakhshi et al., 2021).

It seems that it seeks public attention to sustainable development as (human-centered and flexible development in rural areas) and cooperation of governmental and non-governmental factors and rural communities to implement the principles and strategies arising from the indicators of sustainable development in those communities (Mosayyebi et al., 2018). Thus, it necessitates prioritizing rural development strategies and using scientific techniques and methods to measure and evaluate these strategies and determine the most optimal strategy in developing rural communities. Drawing a schedule that determines rural areas' role in the country's planning system is of particular importance. Besides, the potentiality of 21 million populations living in these areas, adopting correct and prudent measures, leads to the prosperity and sustainable development of rural areas and the whole country (Izadi, 2015). A strategic view of sustainable rural development is of particular importance in rural development planning. Providing development strategies enables sustainable development and planning control (Tomashuk, 2017; Zeidali et al., 2021a).

Sirik township is in the desert part of Minab city in Hormozgan province, one of Iran's geographical centers. The prominent feature of arid areas has raised the need to create an economic resource as an agricultural supplement. As an example of rural instability due to its various natural and human factors, this region faced many problems. The most important include the relative deprivation of rural areas despite the high environmental potential, climate fluctuations, and especially severe water scarcity in recent years and its negative consequences in the economic and social structure of the region, the young age structure of the area and the lack of productive employment opportunities for them and ultimately the decline in the life quality of the villagers. Therefore, this study aims to answer the question about the optimal rural development strategy in Sirik rural area to identify the best development strategy for sustainable development and by prioritizing other strategies to facilitate sustainable rural development in the mentioned region (Sirik township).

### 1.1. Research background

Studies in the area of sustainable development in rural communities of Iran showed no sustainable development approach in social welfare and rural development planning in Iran due to the lack of theoretical development framework for and involvement of the people in planning (Izadi, 2015). They also considered the most important issue of the development planning system to be relying on top-down planning and inconsistency with the priority of real needs, characteristics, and cultural and structural conditions of local communities (Chaghakaboodi et al., 2021; Zeidali et al., 2021b).

Physical development of rural settlements on a sustainable development approach is another study that has been done in this area. This study evaluated the physical development of rural settlements (Pourtaheri and Naghavi, 2012). The results showed that due to the structural-functional problems of rural areas, the development of rural settlements in socio-economic and environmental sectors has been done not considering sustainable development approaches has been sustainable because the rural settlements faced with different level of intensity and weakness in challenges such as poverty, income inequality, rural migration and evacuation of villages, neglecting physical and spatial management and high vulnerability of rural settlements.

Rural housing construction is another issue that has been considered and evaluated by Iranian researchers. In this regard, studies on rural construction, participation and sustainable development show that the village should have a direct and decisive presence in the cycle of decision-making, planning, designing, and execution (Habibi et al., 2011). The mobilization of dormant rural forces and their training for the re-application of indigenous knowledge in the field of reproduction of the village's spatial and physical organization is a necessary condition for formulating the basics of rural design (Haghshenas and Ghanbari, 2021; Farokhian et al., 2021).

In the other project, social studies and analyzed the formation of water supply associations was studied in sustainable rural development in Firoozabad of Fars province of Iran. This study showed that social studies of establishing water supply associations in Firoozabad plain had had good achievements in the region (Noshadi et al., 2016).

A other study about examining land consolidation as an essential tool of sustainable development in rural areas in Lithuania shown that land consolidation leads to improved agricultural production and employment, tax policy and protection laws of land ownership rights in framed terms of environmental and sustainability considerations (Pasakarnis and Maliene, 2010).

In addition, was examined the impact of non-agricultural rural tourism policy on South Korean finances. This research has been done through measurable and evaluative indicators on rural households whose income is obtained through non-agricultural means (Hwang and Lee, 2015). The results show that the executive plans have been evaluated positively from both cross-sectional and longitudinal perspectives, and when these plans were not implemented, non-agricultural villagers faced many problems in earning money due to lack of internal competition and lack of man's labor.

The other research about the role of local conditions was done in the adoption of rural development policies in Brandenburg, Germany and shown that extensive rangeland management and valuable habitats and other social and economic factors including rural revitalization and tourism are key factors in developing development policies (Zasada and Piorr, 2015).

## 1.2. Theoretical Framework

Considering management's definition in general, rural management can be considered rural planning, organizing, and developing action while coordinating and monitoring them. In other words, rural management is the science and integration of various natural, human, and economic factors in rural society. In sustainable rural development, management means regulating human relations with their environment in which the connection between social and economic systems is done by ecological surveillance (Heim, 2019). Thus, in sustainable rural development, three dimensions are considered, including economic, social, and environmental economic dimension: It is one of the main dimensions that is emphasized, distributed, and consumed in different societies to achieve development. In the economic dimension, the goal of management is to create a suitable environment for economic development. Society increases the efficiency, goods distribution, and services needed and, consequently, increases the standard of living and public welfare (Sidali et al., 2015).

Sustainable development is of the most important and efficient issues on achieving the welfare and progress of human life with regard to the preservation and sustainability of resources for future generations. Therefore, the most important goal of sustainable rural development will be to increase the livability of current and future generations, emphasizing continuous improvement and development of human-environmental relations. Thus rural development strategies and models are classified into three general categories: technocratic, reformist, and radical (Mohebbi et al., 2019). In each of these groups, several approaches and strategies are mentioned in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Main patterns of rural development, approaches, strategies (Mosayyebi et al., 2018).

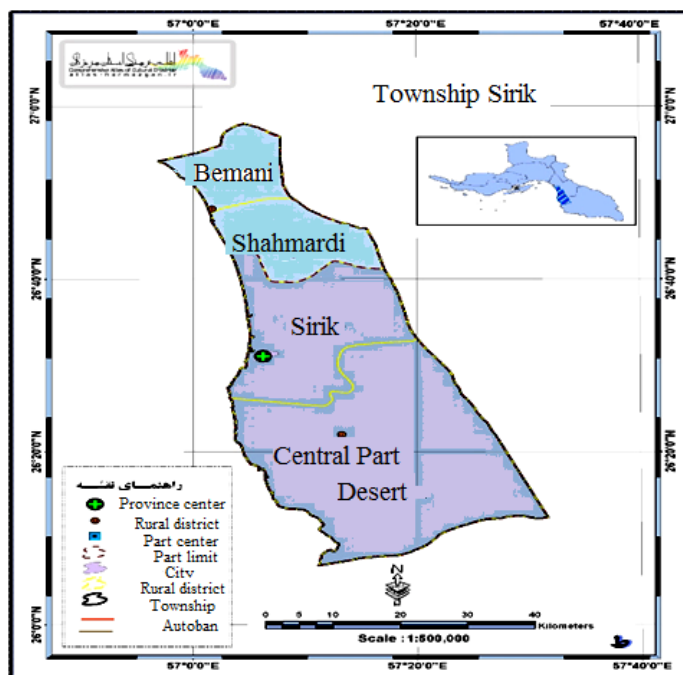
The main patterns of rural development	Approaches	Strategies
Fan-oriented and market centered patterns	a) Renovation approach b) Growth approach c) Free market approach	a) Industrialization strategy b) Planning strategy of regional growing centers
Radical patterns	a) Socialistic and monistic approaches b) Feministic approach	a) Resource redistribution strategy b) Forced housing strategy c) Empowerment of women d) Centralized, (cooperative planning) Strategy of production centers
Reformist patterns	a) Essential needs approach b) Corporative approach c) Rural sustainable development approach	a) Local development strategy b) Corporative development strategy c) Bioregionalism strategy d) Social-oriented development strategy e) Agropolitan strategy f) Green revolution strategy

**2. Materials and Methods**

This research is of a descriptive-analytical kind, and based on its purpose is applied research. Documentary library and survey methods have been used to collect information. In this research, the Delphi technique has been used to determine sustainable development strategies in accordance with the characteristics of the studied region (Sirik township, Hormozgan Province of Iran).

**2.1. The studied region**

Sirik is a township of Hormozgan province in southern Iran, which is located on the coast of the Oman Sea. This county is limited to Minab by the north, Jask by the south, Bashagard by the east, and Oman Sea from the west. The study area is about 3351 Km<sup>2</sup>, and its center is Sirik township (Fig. 1). According to the 2016 census, its population was 45,500.



**Fig. 1.** Map of Studied area.

There are certainly a variety of strategies that can lead to the sustainable development of the area; However, due to the lack of facilities and resources and also, according to the principle of optimal use of resources, it is necessary to pursue a strategy that would be the most effective in terms of constraints and resources on sustainable development. Accordingly, the Delphi technique was chosen as a safe way to achieve a superior strategy. Therefore, 20 panellists (experts and specialists) were selected based on expertise and specific conditions, and purposeful judgment methods.

Experts' ideas in the form of the Delphi technique were used to determine the criteria and sub-criteria. Since Cronbach's alpha value for all research variables is above 0.70, it can be said that the questionnaire has acceptable reliability (Table 2). For this purpose, during three rounds of measuring the optimal strategy for sustainable development of Sirik rural district in four categories of economic (with 6 sub-criteria), social (with 5 sub-criteria), physical-spatial (with 4 sub-criteria), and environmental (with 4 sub-criteria) were selected. In order to check the validity of the questionnaire structures and confirming the considered factors, in the first step, the opinions experts were used and some corrections were made, in the second step, the factor analysis method is used by rotating the orthogonal axes (Wari-Max) to obtain pure factors. Kaiser-Meier-Olkin (KMO) index was used for this purpose. The Swat technique was also used to prioritize internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunity and threat) in the study area (Tables 3 and 4).

**Table 2.** Questionnaire reliability.

Factors	Cronbach's alpha
Economic characteristics	0.788
Economic and managerial characteristics	0.741
Social characteristics	0.843
Physical and environmental characteristics	0.803

**Table 3.** Internal factors affecting the sustainable development of Sirik township.

Factors	Strength points	Weakness points
Physical-environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Numerous natural attractions</li> <li>b) Existence of heights in this city</li> <li>c) Suitable climatic conditions of Sirik township</li> <li>d) Historical antiquity of the city</li> <li>e) Existence of suitable castles and historical attractions</li> <li>f) Proper access to the surroundings</li> <li>g) Favorable lands for agricultural development and planting vegetables and tropical fruits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Excessive increase in temperature in hot seasons</li> <li>b) Existence of strong winds and fine dust in this area</li> </ul>
Socio-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Existence of local customs</li> <li>b) Tourism spirit of the people and their participation in all the affairs of the city</li> <li>c) Existence of security in the city</li> <li>d) Satisfaction of travelers and tourists from the visited places</li> <li>e) Tourists' satisfaction with the local people treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Lack of information and the city's attractions remain unknown</li> <li>b) Lack of proper education and lack of tourism acceptance</li> <li>c) Lack of people's participation in various city's activities</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) City's reliability for public and private investment</li> <li>b) Potentiality of livestock, horticultural and agricultural products marketing</li> <li>c) Existence of a labor force in various tourism, cultural and economic activities</li> <li>d) Job creation potentials of various jobs in tourism, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Inadequate health, recreation, and transportation facilities</li> <li>b) Lack of facilities and high tourist accommodation cost in this area (hotel, guest house, etc.)</li> <li>c) Poor economic situation of the people and the inability to create facilities for economic activities</li> <li>d) Lack of government investment and non-lending</li> </ul>



**Table 4.** External factors affecting the sustainable development of Sirik township.

Factors	Strength points	Weakness points
Physical-environmental	a) Suitable geographical location b) Proximity to the sea and the Persian Gulf c) Proximity to Hormozgan province of Iran d) Favorable communication routes with the Surrounding area	a) Security threats due to the position of the custom b) City pollution due to non-observance of travelers and tourists
Socio-cultural	a) Introducing the city as a suitable place for tourism-recreation b) Increasing people's desire to spend leisure time in this city c) Introducing the city by cultural heritage organization d) The city is known for having various natural and human attractions e) Introducing popular achievements such as handicrafts to the people	a) The arrival of foreign cultural elements to the city b) Inattention to natural and historical monuments preservation c) Ignoring the people's will in planning d) Insecurity prevalence in the city e) Lack of proper information in attracting more tourists
Economic	a) The growing trend and development of agricultural markets b) The developing trend of products and city's handicrafts c) Trading Increase in the city d) Increasing the facilities and willingness of more government investments in the city	a) Lack of governmental attention to implementation and funds allocation for further development b) Non-granting licenses and long-term loans to the private sector

### 3. Results and Discussion

The sample information shows that in terms of gender, 100% of the respondents are male. The highest percentages of respondents, i.e., 48.9% of them have a family dimension of 4 people, 32 and, i.e., 0.5%, have a family dimension of 6 people. Percentages of respondents, i.e., regarding the education level, 55.6% of them have a diploma, 38.9% have a bachelor's degree, and 5.6% have a master's degree. Most of the present study samples have a diploma. The job of all respondents is alderman (Table 4).

#### 3.1. Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

As it was observed, Sirik township faced with 16 strengths against 9 weaknesses and 13 external opportunities against 9 external threats for sustainable development. However, despite the heavyweight of strengths and opportunities, it necessitates providing an appropriate strategy to reduce the weaknesses and the city's threats (Table 5).

**Table 5.** SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

SWOT analysis table (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats)	Total weights	Average weights	Rank
S1 - Numerous natural attractions	622	4.79	1
S2 - Existence of heights in this city	614	4.51	3
S3 - Suitable climatic conditions for Sirik township	647	4.72	2
S4 - Historical dating of the city	460	3.33	16
S5 - Existence of suitable castles and historical attractions	464	3.43	13
S6 - Proper access to surroundings	515	3.78	10
S7 - Favorable lands for agricultural development and planting vegetables and tropical fruits	463	3.46	14

**Table 5.Continue**

S8 - Existence of local customs	470	3.50	12
S9 - tourism spirit of the people and their participation in all the affairs of the city	463	3.35	15
S10 - Existence of security in the city	543	3.93	5
S11 - travellers and tourists' Satisfaction with the visited places	523	3.81	7
S12 - Tourists' satisfaction with the people's treatment	528	3.82	6
S13 – city's reliability for public and private investment	547	4.02	4
S14 – The potentiality for livestock, horticultural and agricultural marketing	478	3.51	11
S15 - Existence of labor force in various tourism, cultural, economic area.	520	3.76	8
S16 - Job creation potentiality in various commercial and tourism area	516	3.87	9
W1 - Excessive temperature rise in hot seasons	523	3.84	7
W2 - Existence of strong winds with fine dust in this area	532	3.88	6
W3 - Lack of information and anonymity of city attractions	590	4.27	1
W4 - Lack of proper education and tourism spirit	587	4.25	2
W5 - Lack of people's participation in various activities	528	3.85	7
W6 - Inadequate health, recreation, transportation facilities	582	4.21	3
W7 - Lack and high cost of accommodation for tourists and travellers (hotel, guest house, etc.)	499	3.61	10
W8- Poor economic situation of the people and the inability to create facilities for economic activities	394	2.89	11
W9 - Lack of government investment and non-lending	509	3.71	9
O1- proper geographical situation	536	3.94	5
O2 - Proximity to the sea and the Persian Gulf	577	4.18	6
O3 - Proximity to Hormozgan province of Iran	521	3.80	13
O4 - suitable communication routes to the surrounding area	587	4.25	4
O5 - Introducing the city as a suitable place for sightseeing - recreation	625	4.52	1
O6 - The increased desire of people to spend leisure time in the city	488	3.56	10
O7 - Informing and introducing the city by cultural heritage organization	486	3.54	11
O9 - Introducing social products such as handicrafts, etc. to the people	581	4.24	5
O10 - The trend of growth and development in agricultural markets	524	3.91	8
O11 - The developing trend of products and handicrafts of this city	523	3.81	9
O12 - Increased trading in the city	544	4.00	7
O13 - Increasing the facilities and desire for more governmental investments in the city	597	4.42	3
T1 - Existence of security threats due to customs position	582	4.21	1
T2 - Pollution of the city environment due to non-observance of passengers and tourists	525	3.88	3
T3 - The arrival of foreign cultural elements to the city	451	3.26	6
T4 - Inattention to the preservation of natural and historical monuments	554	4.01	2
T5 - Ignoring people's will in planning	516	3.87	4
T6 - Prevalence of insecurity in the city	391	2.87	9
T7 - Lack of proper information in the province on attracting more tourists	392	2.86	8
T8 - Lack of governmental attention to the implementation and allocation of funds for further development	413	3.03	7
T9 - Failure to grant licenses and long-term loans to the private sector	512	3.73	5

According to the analytical matrix table, in ranking the strengths of Sirik's sustainable development; Factors of multiple natural attractions with an average weight of 4.79 are in the first place. The favorable climatic conditions of Sirik township are in second place and the existence of heights with an average weight of 4.51 in the third place. This shows the natural-physical potential of the region in promoting its sustainable development. In ranking the weaknesses, the factors of lack of information and the city's anonymous attractions with an average weight of 4.27 have the first rank. Lack of proper education and lack of tourism spirit by the average weight of 4.25 and a slight difference is in the second rank.

The inadequacy of health, recreation, and transportation facilities with an average weight of 4.21 are in the third rank. When people recognize these factors as the most important weaknesses on the sustainable development path of Sirik township, it indicates that the lack of necessary facilities hinders the development of this city. Also in ranking opportunities: the factor, introducing the city as a suitable place for sightseeing-recreation with an average weight of 4.52 and city's fame as having various natural and human attractions with an average weight of 4.46 in the rank second and increasing facilities and more investment Government in the city with an average weight of 4.42 are ranked third. Factors in the ranking of threats: Existence of security threats due to customs position with an average weight of 4.21 has the first rank. Inattention to the preservation of natural and historical monuments with an average weight of 4.01 is in the second rank and pollution of the city due to non-observance travellers and tourists with an average weight of 3.88 has the third rank, that also shows that people pay more attention to the existing threats in the city, so all the threats in this sector should be turned into opportunities to provide the grounds for sustainable development and progress of the central part of Sirik township. Presenting sustainable development strategies in the central part of Sirik township based on SWAT analytical model.

### 3.2. *Competitive-aggressive strategies (SO)*

The Important Competitive-Aggressive Strategies (SO) including the below items:

- a) Preservation and promotion of historical monuments of the city and proper exploitation without destroying them; By registering, restoring and introducing these works to visitors; Preparing and installing the history next to the watchtower, sycamore trees, castles, etc., forming a headquarters to protect the monuments.
- b) Utilizing and honoring the local culture and preventing its forgetfulness by holding and supporting the local celebrations of the city and allocating credit and comprehensive support for this ceremony, the presence of officials in these ceremonies and paying special attention to them.
- c) Benefiting the participatory spirit of the villagers and their participation in the development plans and programs of the city.
- d) Utilizing the labor force of women and youth, defining new jobs (small and handicrafts) in various sectors.
- e) Benefiting from the introduction of Sirik township as a village targeted for its development by extensive publicity and information in the city and neighboring provinces.
- f) Grounding and benefiting from private and public sector investment, through long-term and low-interest loans to private investors.
- g) The main focus of economic, social and cultural activities on utilizing the resources and potentials of the city;

### 3.3. *Diversification strategies (ST)*

- a) Introducing natural and human attractions to the city itself and all provinces by the responsible organizations for the expansion and development of the tourism industry in this city.
- b) Diversify facilities and equipment, services and programs to attract more young people and prevent migration and evacuation of villages and cities.
- c) Implementation of various development plans and participation of individuals and residents on them.
- d) Diversification of propaganda and information programs in the surrounding areas to introduce the city.



### 3.4. Review strategies (WO)

- a) Reviewing the way of governmental supports on various economic, social and cultural sectors by providing the necessary facilities for officials.
- b) Reviewing and making necessary changes and encouraging the private sector to invest through long-term and low-interest loans, assuring investors of profitability in various sectors;
- c) Reviewing and modifying programs and methods of informing and introducing the city, using the updated methods of advertising and putting aside obsolete and repetitive methods;
- d) Rehabilitation and reconstruction program, securing the region's entrance routes, improving road transportation facilities; proper road construction, and connecting routes to the city.

### 3.5. Defensive strategies (WT)

- a) Increasing the government's attention to the implementation and funds' allocation for the sustainable development of the city through relevant organizations.
- b) Considering people's will and involving them in issues and decisions.
- c) Solving youth unemployment problem in different villages in the central part of Sirik township.
- d) Encourage people and residents who invest outside the city.
- e) Extensive publicity to introduce various tourist attractions such as natural attractions, museums, and other recreational places and entertainment.
- f) Assuring investors about the high profit of their investment.
- g) Creating more facilities in the city and self-reliance of residents in all areas.

## 4. Conclusion

The SWOT analytical model results showed that the existence of natural attractions and suitable climatic conditions are among the first and second ranks of the city's strengths and in the ranking of weaknesses, the factors of lack of information and the city's attractions remain unknown has the first rank. Lack of proper education and lack of tourism spirit and facilities are in the second place with a slight difference, and the health, recreation, and transportation facilities are in the third place in terms of people's opinion; Indeed, in ranking opportunities, factors: introducing the city as a suitable place for tourism and recreation and city's fame as having various natural and human attractions are ranked second and increasing facilities and governmental will for investment in the city are ranked third. That is consistent with the results of Hwang and Lee (2015), by the entitlement of The Impact of Non-Agricultural Rural Tourism Policy on South Korean finance (Hwang and Lee, 2015). In ranking the threats, factors: Existence of security threats due to customs position has the first rank. Inattention to the preservation of natural and historical monuments is in the second place. The city's polluted environment due to the non-observance of travelers and tourists is in third place. Therefore; based on the present study, the following suggestions are made:

- a) Paying attention to the potentials of the region and the interrelationship between rural and urban areas.
- b) Paying attention to the fact that to sustainable rural development, in addition to agricultural activities, complementary and income-generating activities should be provided according to the potential and environmental capabilities.
- c) Efficiency of using rural space through the mobilization of villagers and officials.
- d) Due to the tourism potential of this region, advertising and introducing to attract tourists are necessitated.

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#### How to cite this paper:

Jahandini, A., Soleimani, H., Ghaffari, S.R., 2020. Explanation of strategic management pattern in rural sustainable development, case study: central part of Sirik township (Hormozgan Province of Iran). *Cent. Asian J. Environ. Sci. Technol. Innov.*, 1(6), 281-290.