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ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

## A Qualitative Approach to the Success of Iranian Women Entrepreneurs



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### ABSTRACT

*Women entrepreneurs are those who, alone or with partnership or inheritance, started a business with creativity and innovation and, by accepting social, administrative, financial responsibilities and financial risks, offered new products to dominate the competitors in the market. The purpose of this study was*

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*to take a qualitative approach to the success of Iranian women entrepreneurs. The study is descriptive qualitative, with an inductive approach. The statistical population of the study included women entrepreneurs in Iran who have faced a crisis in the last 5 years and managed to succeed, and the research sample was drawn from a pool of 11 people using the purposive sampling method. The interview tool was used to collect the qualitative data, and the thematic analysis technique was used to analyze the interview data. The results of the data analysis showed that seven factors affecting the success of women entrepreneurs in Iran's country are strategic thinking, social capital, ethical characteristics, personality traits, brand management, comprehensive quality, and human resource management procedures. Also, the results showed that women share a high degree of future orientation and do not act opportunistically in order to maintain mutual relationships. Therefore, committed women play an important role in the survival and success of the company.*

**KEY WORDS:** *women, entrepreneurship, success, thematic analysis, qualitative approach*

## **Introduction**

The world is moving toward an information-centered society based on a universal economy; hence, dramatic changes are observed in economics (Rajabipour Meybodi et al., 2018). As a developing economy, Iran has experienced different variations recently. According to Salamzadeh et al. (2018), the startup community is evolving and prominent figures are dealing with this ecosystem these days (Salamzadeh et al. 2018). While a few startups have been established self-reliantly, the majority have been supported by principal mechanisms. Thus, the fast growth of this economic market has attracted diverse stakeholders to scrutinize and contribute to this ecosystem (Rezaei et al. 2017). Meanwhile, given that women make up half of the active population in societies, women's entrepreneurship can lead to increased production and sales, capital increase, economic prosperity, competitiveness and export, and overall economic development (Ge et al., 2022). It can also aid in the growth and prosperity of women (Kan & Mukhopadhyay, 2022). A society that seeks holistic development must allow for the development and flourishing of talents for all members of society, including women (Rabiee & Sarabi, 2013).

On the other hand, according to statistics, women's economic activities account for 25-30% of global economic activity (Kantor, 2001). As a result, it can be stated that women's entrepreneurial activities have become

increasingly important globally in recent decades (Hannington et al., 2022). According to the reports in 2016, Iran has been the most populated nation in the Middle East, considering a population of around 80 million people. Also, the GDP was measured at \$387.6 billion at the time. The OPEC estimates revealed that Iran ranked second in producing oil and exporting gas. Meanwhile, Iran has an expanded multidimensional economy compared to its oil-rich neighbors (Salamzadeh et al., 2017). Moreover, the World Bank (2019) reported that Iranian women's contribution to entrepreneurship has risen from 12% to 24 %, which was ranked 30<sup>th</sup> in the world. Besides, Iranian entrepreneurial business development has followed the recent global trend regarding the initial stages of entrepreneurship activities (Salamzadeh et al., 2014).

Therefore, given the significant increase in Iranian women's educational and employment levels in society, paying attention to entrepreneurial activities in this part of the population can lead to economic growth and development (Mirghofouri et al., 2009). Women can also demonstrate their abilities through entrepreneurship, overcome barriers to their talents, and increase their courage on a daily basis (McElwee et al., 2011), create new business opportunities, earn income, and contribute to their financial independence and job creation. Iranian women respond to professional segregation by highlighting self-employment and tend to take active roles in economic development accordingly. For instance, the younger generation follows higher university degrees despite the traditional basis of the community (Radovic-Markovic et al., 2013). With more job opportunities for women, society's culture and education are improving.

Women achieve self-sufficiency while the family's health and nutrition improve (Arora, 2022). Thus, women's entrepreneurial success benefits societies economically as well as socially and culturally (Cowling & Taylor, 2001). It is mainly due to restricted resources, market timing, and intensive competition. Meanwhile, female entrepreneurs are constantly dealing with the extent of support, along with their practical market experience and management capabilities (Salamzadeh & Kawamorita Kesim, 2017). Even today, women's participation in the labor force and in social and economic activities has become a critical indicator of human development because women's economic activity is directly linked to poverty and social well-being (Movahedi & Yaghoubiafrani, 2017). Despite all of the above and the fact that women are no longer housewives or skilled applicants with a university degree, they account for a relatively small share of the Iranian

labor market. As a result, despite accounting for 49.6 percent of the country's population, women's economic participation rate stands at 11.4 percent (Iran Statistics Center, 2011). Considering that the study of women entrepreneurs has been carried out on specific issues, but as far as the authors have investigated, no research has been done on the success factors of women entrepreneurs in Iran. Therefore, the current study examined and analyzed the factors affecting the success of women entrepreneurs in Iran because the existing literature on the success of women entrepreneurs in this country lacks a comprehensive theoretical framework that is agreed upon by all. Thus, the central question of this research is as follows: What factors contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs in Iran?

The paper is outlined to present the literature review and the research method, which is followed by the findings section. Lastly, conclusions and suggestions for further studies are introduced.

## **Literature Review**

Expectations and standpoints of the business environment have been affected by women's involvement in developing business training models and promoting practical proficiency to meet the organizations' and the respective employees' demands. Consequently, women are increasingly establishing businesses in various industries, such as biotechnology and financial services (Moletta et al., 2023).

In addition, women's entrepreneurship is significant because some women can secure this business route for themselves as well as provide this opportunity for other employers or employees (Bouzari et al., 2021). Women generally run a business and establish a company, which belongs to the women enterprise business regarding the products and services that are commonly shared between them (Salamzadeh et al., 2022). On the other hand, Ribes-Giner et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate the social and economic dimensions of women's entrepreneurship in OECD countries. Different scholars argued that entrepreneurship has increased among women, which is majorly interrelated with their minor contribution to power positions in companies as well as the country's high risk (Salamzadeh, 2018).

Bouzari et al. (2021) concluded that women entrepreneurship was substantially associated with Facebook compared to other social networks in Hungary, highlighting that over 95% of these women used Facebook.

However, Instagram has proved the most popular and effective among female entrepreneurs in Iran, where over 92% of the respective participants owned a business Instagram page. Thus, the community context can determine the differences between the applicability and popularity of social networks in business affairs. Salamzadeh et al. (2021) also argued that greater opportunities have been developed as a result of such entrepreneurial activities (GEM report, 2014). Hence, startup activities are more likely to expand, which leads to higher women contribution and collective startup ideas.

Apparently, the startup system is prosperous and promising in some particular regions. Radovic Markovic et al. (2016) argued that women do not contribute to executive business activities adequately, although there is a number of competent women to take charge of such responsibilities. Therefore, research findings have highlighted the necessity for systematic methods to contend with business inequalities. According to Longoria (2018), women are more likely to demonstrate entrepreneurial orientation in developing countries mainly due to disappointment with their current employment, limited support in terms of education and profession-related activities, fewer working opportunities, and issues regarding supporting their own families. Moreover, Panda (2018) conducted a literature review and concluded that an unstable business, economic, and political (BEP) environment, gender discrimination, and improper education and training are among the major causes of the promotion of women entrepreneurship in emerging economies. On the other hand, women entrepreneurship is highly popular in developed economies because of a more innovative environment, access to higher education courses, greater employment opportunities, adequate business-establishment support, and prior managerial experiences.

According to Crittenden et al. (2019), social capital (constant interactions, educational chances, and social collaboration) has led to an enhancement in women's entrepreneurship behavior in the developing economy of South Africa. Consequently, these entrepreneurs perceived the support and were inspired to establish new occupations. In addition, the findings of another study by Neumeyer et al. (2019) in the US illustrated that both men and women would experience success and prosperity in their entrepreneurial activities with promoted social associations and proper allocation of social capital.

While men are more likely to establish social capital in managed-growth project networks, female entrepreneurs are inclined toward survival

project networks. Besides, Raimi et al. (2023) argued that experience and race could affect women entrepreneurs' ability to deal with social capital and networking, where white and experienced women are more likely to succeed (Raimi et al., 2023). Research findings demonstrate that women-owned businesses have recorded lower success rates despite the assumed scenario that female entrepreneurs will receive great socioeconomic support (Radović Marković, 2013). Gupta and Mir-chandani (2018) argued that it could be explained by the following reasons: limited cultural and social freedom, gender stereotypes, low career experience, inadequate financial support (bank loans), and bureaucratic barriers (Gupta & Mir-chandani, 2018).

Jagtap (2020) examined the entrepreneurial abilities of women entrepreneurs in rural India, focusing on the country's 50 most successful entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study was to look more closely at how rural entrepreneurial women define the benefits and limitations of their goals and perspectives in the face of starting a business, both in the real and potential sense. The findings of this study revealed that the structural factors that women require (competence/unemployment experience and family support) enable them to achieve their business goals and make decisions.

This research also found that studying marketing, strategic thinking, conscientious planning, and timely decision-making helped women entrepreneurs succeed. Baharudin et al. (2020) investigated the competencies that affect women entrepreneurs' success in "Entrepreneurial Competencies and Business Success among Women Entrepreneurs: Social Capital as a Moderating Effect." According to this study, the six competencies that contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs are the following: strategic competencies, relationship competencies, organizing competencies, commitment competencies, opportunity competencies, and conceptual competencies. The findings of this study also demonstrated the role of social capital as a moderator. Topimin (2020) investigated women's entrepreneurship from a gender perspective. A semi-structured interview with successful female entrepreneurs was used to conduct this study qualitatively. This study aimed to determine the factors that contribute to entrepreneurs' success. This research established that one of the critical components of their success is power. Rekarti et al. (2019) examined the factors that lead women to become business owners in a study titled "The Sustainability of Muslim Women Entrepreneurs: A Case Study in Malaysia." A semi-structured interview with 15 eminent women

entrepreneurs from Malaysia's successful businesses was used to collect qualitative data. The purpose of this research was to discover the factors influencing the success of a typical woman entrepreneur in this country. The findings indicated that the emergence of four factors — initial financial capital, human capital, family experience, and honesty as a spiritual and affective dimension of other factors — played a significant role in these entrepreneurs' success.

Gomathy and Aruna (2019) examined the impact of entrepreneurial women's leadership skills on their success in a study titled "Role of Leadership Skills in Success of Women MSME Entrepreneurs of Chennai" using a statistical sample of 130 people and structured questionnaires. The factor influencing entrepreneurs' success in this study, according to these researchers, should be found in their leadership skills. Ugwa et al. (2019) also discovered a positive and significant relationship between the culture of women entrepreneurs and their success in Anjo State, Nigeria. The study "Policy Support for Women Entrepreneurs' Access to Financial Capital: Evidence from Canada, Germany, Ireland, Norway, and the United States" was conducted by Coleman et al. (2018). This study aimed to look into the success of female entrepreneurs who received government assistance. According to the feminist theory, financial capital is the most effective factor in the success of women entrepreneurs.

Indrasari et al. (2018) used a phenomenological approach to investigate the structural factors influencing the decision to start a quality entrepreneurial women's business by interviewing ten successful women entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study was to look into the personality traits that influence their success. The findings revealed that sustainability and dynamism at work are determinants of success among women entrepreneurs' personality traits. Rahim et al. (2017) conducted a study to determine women entrepreneurs' motivations and challenges titled "Motivations and Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs." The researchers' findings showed that factors such as family ties, interest in work, education, work experience, dynamism at work, and opportunities for motivation are among the factors influencing the entire women entrepreneurs' entrepreneurship. Aston and Martino (2017) examined the factors that affect the success of women entrepreneurs' entrepreneurship. This study discovered that entrepreneurs' attitudes toward risk, management styles, and risk-taking were all significant factors in determining women entrepreneurs' success in the United Kingdom.

Maden (2015) examined women's entrepreneurship from a gender perspective in Turkey. The study used a semi-structured interview with successful female entrepreneurs in Turkey to collect qualitative data. The interviews focused on four key areas: the profile, key drivers, challenges, and support mechanisms. This study discovered that Turkish women entrepreneurs share several personality traits or characteristics. In Turkey, successful female entrepreneurs have been recognized for their persistence and determination, patience, mental fortitude and vision, and innovation. Additionally, the interviews revealed that capitalizing on unique business opportunities, working for the greater good of society, and exercising independence in one's decisions and actions are significant factors in Turkish women entrepreneurs' decision to become entrepreneurs. On the other hand, despite the existence of mechanisms, obtaining and managing capital emerged as the most significant challenge for women entrepreneurs in Turkey. Finally, the findings show that the majority of women entrepreneurs in Turkey obtain financial support through traditional methods (i.e., governmental, non-governmental, and banking support mechanisms). Other sources of support, such as family members and business partners, may provide moral support to the entrepreneur. Mohammadi (2018) conducted a study titled "Determinants of Female Entrepreneurship in Iran: An Institutional Approach" in order to examine the challenges and opportunities faced by female entrepreneurs in Iran. Their findings reflected the interaction between informal factors (entrepreneurial abilities and risk-taking) and formal factors (education and examining the success of women entrepreneurs in Iran. According to Davari et al. (2014), environmental factors such as cultural, social, political, and technological factors are determinants of entrepreneurial development in Iran. Women entrepreneurs' success in Iran is affected by factors such as social, cultural, legal, economic, political, technological, competitive, and natural factors. According to a study of 188 women entrepreneurs in Lorestan County, economic, social, and educational factors, all have an impact on women entrepreneurs in this country.

Salamzadeh et al. (2017) investigated normative factors affecting the entrepreneurial technology sector. "Family concept," "social norms and beliefs," "women's expectations," and "country's technological growth" all play a role in the entrepreneurial performance of women entrepreneurs in the information technology sector in Iran. Zarandi (2012) identified the factors that affect women's employment in small and medium-sized businesses. Their findings indicate that the economic element

(environmental factor), the need for success (individual factor), and positive reinforcement (organizational factor) all have an impact on the success of such businesses. Gerard McElwee et al. (2011) studied 247 rural women from Gilan, Mazandaran, and Golestan in Northern Iran. According to the results of this study, educational, motivational, economic, and psychological/cognitive factors all influence rural women entrepreneurs' success. Individual skills, psychological characteristics, and entrepreneurial skills are regarded as the three most important factors affecting rural women's entrepreneurial skills in Ilam, Iran (Lashgarara et al., 2011). Besides, Radovic-Markovich et al. (2013) argued that female entrepreneurs are more likely to succeed because of their leadership style.

A review of the entrepreneurial women's research literature revealed that several studies had emphasized the importance and necessity of implementing women's entrepreneurship programs. For instance, according to Baharudin et al. (2020), cultures where women entrepreneurs must consider their competencies and act are more profitable and successful than cultures where women entrepreneurs lack specific competencies and engage in less activity. Additionally, Gomathy and Aruna's (2019) findings, as well as Radovich-Markovich et al. (2013), indicated that leadership development and women entrepreneurs planning should be prioritized. On the other hand, some studies indicate that women entrepreneurs require various capital to succeed. For instance, Rekarti (2019) and Gerard McElwee et al. (2011) discovered a positive correlation between financial, human, social, and psychological capital and women entrepreneurs' success. Additionally, Davari et al. (2014) and Asgari (2014) indicated that environmental factors influence the success of women entrepreneurs.

In general, the review of domestic studies (women entrepreneurs in Iran) reveals a dearth of research on women entrepreneurs in Iran. One could argue that the majority of research on the factors affecting women entrepreneurs' success has been conducted in other countries, with only a small portion of the research literature review focusing on Iran and its women entrepreneurs. While there is research identifying educational barriers to the development of entrepreneurial spirit among girls and boys at the University of Iran (Soleimanpour et al., 2012), the authors were unable to locate research indicating the success factors for female entrepreneurs in Iran.

Foreign studies (women entrepreneurs outside Iran) have a greater range of research topics and titles than domestic studies. One reason for this

is that international studies have a long history of entrepreneurial research. Extensive research has been conducted in virtually every sector of public, private, and family business. According to the authors' research, no qualitative study examining the factors affecting the success of women entrepreneurs has been conducted. Nevertheless, one study examined the motivations and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Rahim et al., 2017). Another study, *Women's Entrepreneurship in the United Kingdom* (Stone and Martino, 2017), examined risk, success, and failure, while another study emphasized the sustainable development of women entrepreneurs (Rekarti, 2019).

## Methods

The present study was applied, and its method was qualitative and had an inductive approach. The thematic analysis technique was used to analyze the data from the interviews and identify the model. The statistical population of the study included nurses who work in Iran. Sampling in this study was purposeful and theoretical. Sample selection was also ongoing to the extent that data was adequate, and researchers found that subsequent samples would not provide distinct information. Finally, the study was theoretically completed by 11 interviews. In general, given the time and the available resources, ten to fifteen samples would be sufficient for the interview (Kvale, 1996). Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the statistical sample.

*Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the interviewees*

Gender		Education Level		Education	
Female	7	Graduate	6	Management	4
Male	4	Post-Graduate	5	Non-Management	7

Given the study's central issue, the research question is: What factors affect women entrepreneurs?

Validity and reliability in qualitative research are subject to a variety of theories and approaches. Validity is defined in quantitative research as the research establishing the precise amount that will be quantified. However, this definition has little application to qualitative research, as the objective is not to evaluate or quantify anything. Rather than that, it is to comprehend

and identify a topic. Theorists believe that instead of the two terms validity and reliability, the term trustworthiness should be used in qualitative research. Validation and reliability of the findings are critical components of the interview process. The term "reliability" refers to the consistency of interview results, as well as the interview's validity and ability to measure the intended outcomes. Validity refers to a method's ability to measure the study's objective accurately. The reliability of the interviews was calculated in the current study using the inter-coder agreement method (reliability between two coders/evaluators). To this end, a university lecturer knowledgeable about the research subject was invited to collaborate on the research as a research collaborator (coder).

The researchers coded three interviews in collaboration with a research collaborator and calculated the percentage of inter-coder reliability agreement to be used as a research reliability index using the following equation.

$$\text{Percentage of Inter-Coder Reliability Agreement} = \frac{\text{Number Of Agreements} \times 2}{\text{Total Number Of Codes}} \times 100\%$$

*Table 2: Calculate the Reliability between the Two Coders*

Item	Interview Code	Number of Codes	Number of Agreements	Reliability Between Coders (Percentage)	
1		82	9	22	S3
2		76	11	29	S5
3		89	3	21	S9
	<b>Total</b>		80	29	72

Table 2 shows that using the mentioned equation, the two coders' reliability for the study's interviews is 82 percent. The coding reliability has been confirmed, with a reliability rate of more than 60% (Cowell, 1996). It could be argued that the current interview analysis is reliable.

## Results

After implementing and typing the interview data, each interview was assigned a number. The text of the interviews was analyzed using the thematic analysis method, which is widely used in qualitative research. Based on this, the interviews were read frequently, and the researcher's

relevant and favorite materials were identified, which were, in fact, the answer to the main research question. The qualitative data that had been chosen were then coded. Data encoding was carried out in accordance with the interview and the previously defined numbers. After completing the coding step, the researchers used their imagination to choose a tag for each code. They then combined the sub-themes with the greatest semantic and conceptual affinity to create new meanings and words. They organized the sub-themes in the same way they organized the main themes. The answers to the research questions extracted from the qualitative data are the main themes (Abedi Jafari et al., 2011). Figure 1 depicts an overview of the data analysis process.

*Figure 1: Data analysis process*

Main themes → sub-themes → Preliminary codes

Due to the large amount of data, not all of them are provided, and Table 3 only contains the method for extracting one of the main themes, as well as other information.

*Table 3: Example of the primary themes extraction process*

Strategic Thinking	Knowledge Management	The primary purpose of this company is to use technology and up-to-date science in this field. One of our company's long-term goals is to achieve and use the latest technology in the world.
	Creativity and Creative Destruction	We need to use the potential within ourselves and our employees to advance the company. One of the main factors in this company's success is the high management's ability to cultivate attractive ideas.
	Gaining Opportunities	One of our company's goals, which the management emphasized, was to take advantage of the market opportunities because opportunities are like the wind, and they need to be exploited quickly. Losing opportunities is a sign of stupidity and causes depression.

Additionally, because the repetition of the preliminary codes extracted from the interviews primarily indicates their significance, the frequency with which they are repeated is provided. Table 4 also includes the final results.

*Table 4: Sub-themes and main themes (factors affecting the success of women entrepreneurs)*

<b>Sub-Themes</b>	<b>Main Themes</b>
Social Capital	Social Trust, Social Participation, Sense of Belonging and Responsibility, Social Commitment, Shared Values and Norms, Work Links, Family Ties, Managers' Support for Research Projects, Social Health
Comprehensive Quality.	Achieving Customer Mindset, Meeting Customer Needs, The Best Way to Demonstrate and Implement Management Commitment to Customers, Improving Service Quality, Flawless Products, Process Management, Careful Daily Management of Fundamental Processes, Strong Leadership, Healthy Competition, Dynamic Planning, Direct Monitoring of Product Quality
Strategic Thinking	Inductive Reasoning, Creativity, and Creative Destruction, Knowledge Management and Application of Knowledge, Knowing the Industry, Ideal Modeling, Optimization, Systematic Attitude, Foresight, Gaining Opportunities, Economic Thinking
Ethical Characteristics	Altruism And Humanism, Value and Respect for Others, Honesty, Intimacy, Compassion and Empathy, Transparency, Purity of Imagination, Open-Mindedness, Being Honest, Talking to People, Meditation, Attention to Human Dignity.
Personality Characteristics of Women Entrepreneurs	Mind Capacity, Work Dynamism, Capital Utilization, Innovation, Resilience, The Spirit of Initiative, Perseverance, Dynamic Planning, Determination, Flexibility, Foresight, Conscientiousness, Work Conscience

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<b>Sub-Themes</b>	<b>Main Themes</b>
Human Resource Management Procedures	Continuous Monitoring of The Environment, Readiness for Change in The Organization, Training, Discipline, Compensation of Employee Services, Job Security, Work and Literacy, The Minimum Level of Jealousy at Work, Rewards, Salaries and Benefits, and Justice.

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## **Discussion**

Given the above findings, it is impossible to say that all seven themes are present in women entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study is not to claim that these are the only factors influencing entrepreneurial behavior. Instead, according to the interviewees, these factors are observed more frequently in women entrepreneurs and may not be compatible with one another or overlap to some extent. The following summarizes the findings, which explain the factors that shape women entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial behavior.

## **Ethical Characteristics of Entrepreneurs**

Morality is the principle and standard distinguishing between right and wrong behavior (e.g., honesty and lying). Practical ethics, on the other hand, cannot be defined by a set of rules. Instead, it is a human issue, with daily innovations and initiatives to address behavioral problems. As a result, managers with ethical characteristics are two sides of the same coin. Honesty, altruism and humanism, meditation, and respect for human dignity exemplify managers' moral character. According to the findings of this study, women entrepreneurs who possess qualities such as honesty, altruism, and humanism, as well as an awareness of human dignity, will perform better and more successfully in the collection. It is because, in today's world, no organization can exist without moral principles, the most important of which are honesty and altruism. If ethical principles are followed by the organization, management, and even its employees to avoid harming the organization, it will be beneficial in several ways to the organization's success. The organization's ethical principles will be institutionalized as a value; second, effective, transparent, and friendly relationships between management and employees will be established; and

third, the organization's positive performance and success will be witnessed. The statements of the interviewees provide an example of this:

*"..... Honesty has been the first principle in my life, and I have been looking for a healthy life and work because the peace of mind from this experience is commendable ..."*

The research conducted by Rekarti et al. (2019) backs up and confirms the findings of this study. According to them, the moral characteristics of entrepreneurs, as a spiritual component, play the most crucial role in women entrepreneurs' organizational success.

Women will demonstrate fair behavior in response to their responsibilities, even when they are allowed to take advantage. Hence, women can focus on particular values and tend to create values accordingly. Such values will facilitate standardization and process management, leading to the development of efficient career procedures and the optimization of responsibilities based on priorities. Thus, ethics help develop an integrated mental overview of the organization whose output can result in innovation and the perception of inconsistencies within the organization.

### **Personality Characteristics of Entrepreneurs**

The personality traits of management are another factor influencing success. Personality traits are fixed and stable sets in individuals, as well as a unit of relatively stable characteristics that differentiate one person from another. The character is a complex structure on which no agreement has been reached. According to the findings of this study, creativity is one of the manifestations of personality traits. The creative management of an organization is critical to its survival; therefore, when the management is creative in its work, it will present and implement novel and valuable ideas regarding the organization's products, performance, services, or procedures. Managerial resilience is also a characteristic associated with success; resilient managers, while determined, loyal, and fearless, are humble in front of others, do not feel helpless in the face of adversity, and appear resilient while achieving the success they envision. Conscience is a personality trait that demonstrates dependability by being accurate and responsible in all aspects of one's life. Conscientiousness is exhibited by an organization's management and employees because they have perseverance, hard work, and motivation to succeed. Due to the cases mentioned above, the management's conscientiousness is considered a factor in the company's success. The statements of the interviewees provide an example of this:

*"..... When the company's management, Mr. Salehi, started working in 2016, after buying the shares of all shareholders, and bought many devices, and made a lot of expenses until today, with his great perseverance, this company is one of the companies that has been able to satisfy its customers.... "*

To corroborate the findings of this study, Jagtap (2020), Baharudin et al. (2020), Rekarti et al. (2019), Coleman et al. (2019), Indrasari et al. (2018), Mohammadi (2018), Rahim et al. (2017), Aston and Martino (2017), and Maden (2015) have addressed several sub-themes of this research, including job dynamics, capital utilization, and decisiveness. According to the findings of the present research, female entrepreneurs' resilience leads to competitive advantage and creates new sets of values for the organization and stakeholders. Hence, women can have a substantial influence on enhancing mutual trust between employees and stakeholders through sharing knowledge and facilitating communications. As a result, it is easier for businesses to acquire new contextual and environmental knowledge from women, integrate such knowledge into the business routine processes, and renovate practical capabilities based on new environmental requirements. Therefore, given the entrepreneurship potentials, female entrepreneurs should understand the possible necessity to violate outdated routine regulations, implement new approaches, and integrate diverse patterns and strategies into intuition and innovation.

## **Social Capital**

The availability of social capital, another form of capital, has been found to have a positive impact on the company's success (Tajpour et al.,2023). In Fukuyama's view, social capital is the ability of individuals to work together in groups and organizations to achieve common goals (Fukuyama, 1994). Individuals do not possess social capital; groups do. According to the findings of this study, social capital is a desirable component of intra-group collaborations because it enables the group to accomplish its objectives more economically. Assume that a group lacks sufficient social capital due to a lack of trust, participation, commitment, values, and professional connections. In that case, collaboration costs will rise, and achieving performance will require establishing costly monitoring and control systems. In comparison, adequate and appropriate social capital has resulted in cohesion, participation, commitment, work and family ties,

and mutual trust. As a result, group performance improves, resulting in the group's and company's success. This company has a high level of social capital, contributing to its success. One example can be found in the interviewees' statements:

*"..... There is excellent interaction between the management and the workers and employees, as well as between the employees and the workers themselves, and our work in this company has been based on trusting subordinates and consulting them.... "*

In support of the findings of this study, Baharudin et al. (2020) identified social capital as a factor influencing the success of women entrepreneurs. On the other hand, Jagtap (2020), Rekarti (2020), Rahim et al. (2017), Maden (2015), and Salamzadeh et al. (2017) identified family ties as one of the sub-themes influencing entrepreneur success. Women share high degrees of anticipation, and they do not behave opportunistically so that they can maintain their mutual relationships. It is necessary to develop a constant flow of technical (primary resource materials and information), social (persistent recruitment opportunities and maintaining skilled workforce), and economic (constant business affairs or development through different strategies to access financial assets) resources to deal with various risks.

### **Comprehensive Quality**

Comprehensive quality is another factor affecting success. Quality means everyone in the organization working together to meet the needs of customers and more than their needs. Accordingly, companies are required to examine their consumers' behaviors to observe prosperity and economic growth (Guerrero et al., 2015). Therefore, organizations can survive in today's world of competition based on the findings of this study. One of the principles that must be observed in the field of business competition is to attract and retain more customers, which will not be possible unless better and more services are provided, as well as paying attention to the needs, demands, and expectations of customers, flawless products, and product quality monitoring. Companies have attempted to be as informed as possible about customers' needs, demands, and expectations by providing goods or services based on customer needs and expectations and adhering to the principles of responding quickly to their needs and demands. The company has retained current customers and added new customers by using direct

supervision of the work process, one of the basic principles of customer management, to improve the quality of goods or provide services. Customer management and providing products and services of the desired quality are two keys to the company's survival. The following is an example taken from the interviewees' statements:

*"..... We have seen positive feedback from our customers in this collection, for example, a sample of our products was not available for two weeks; during this time, our customers called and asked for the product. Two weeks later, when our product was ready, and I called them, they said that they had not purchased the required product from another place and were waiting for our call ...."*

The findings are consistent with the findings of Baharudin et al. (2020), Gotami et al. (2019), Aston and Martino (2017), and Radovich-Markovich et al. (2013).

## **Brand Management**

Brand management is the process of preserving, enhancing, and promoting a successful brand. This dimension encompasses indicators of brand trust, brand performance, brand success, and brand reputation. According to the study's findings, organizations that use a brand performance index are more successful because brand performance is determined by consumer awareness of the brand, employee attitudes toward the brand, and the brand's financial value. The consumer mentality of a brand indicates its existence and performance, as well as a stable and unrelated mindset to temporal and spatial requirements. Thus, when the organization, its employees, and management genuinely believe in the brand's performance, they can deliver on their external promises. As a result, they succeed, just like the business in question. On the other hand, trust is widely recognized as a necessary condition for marketing to maintain customer-business relationships successfully. According to the research presented in this article, brand trust and brand reputation have been critical to Kashmar Company's success as a result of its commitment to providing superior service and quality. The following is an example from the interviewees' statements:

*".... The company seeks to meet the needs of customers at different times and has been able to do so efficiently; we have always tried to be in line with the needs of our*

*customers and owe our success to the trust we have created among our customers... "*

It should be noted that the statistical sample used in the research has an effect on the factors affecting brand management.

### **Human Resources Management Procedures (components)**

Another factor affecting Saleh Kashmar Company's success is its resource management practices. According to the findings of this study, effective human resource management procedures result in organizational success. Material and welfare benefits, particularly salaries and wages, are not the most critical factor in successfully completing assigned tasks; employees are, however, the most tangible factor. Indeed, in most disputes and strikes, wages and bonuses can be viewed as significant factors in deciding to leave the service. Thus, by implementing appropriate compensation policies and incentives, it is possible to increase employees' readiness and enthusiasm to perform their duties in order to help the organization achieve its goals and mission and find a way to succeed. On the other hand, when an organization intends to compensate its employees, it must consider factors other than wages. Job security is a non-financial benefit designed to enrich employees' lives and reassure them about their future careers. Because the implementation of these policies fosters a desire among employees, both external and internal, to attract and retain the best talent. As a result, the company's management can leverage this issue to reap the benefits of attracting and retaining talented and capable employees, ultimately leading to success. The findings of this study demonstrate that organizational fairness results in organizational success. When employees believe that organizational interests and resources are allocated fairly, that the procedures for allocating these resources are also fair, and that supervisors treat subordinates fairly, they will be encouraged to express their views and ideas to improve and benefit the organization, thereby contributing to its success. An illustration of this is found in the interviewees' statements:

*"... All the workers in this complex are insured. Their salaries are also credited to their accounts before the tenth of each month, and a shuttle service is provided for them, and there is a dining room for lunch... "*

Commitment creates a collective sense of identity among company members that leads to different social behaviors, such as sharing ideas

voluntarily. Committed female employees can play a crucial role in the survival and success of an organization. In other words, women's commitment to their job refers to particular attitudes toward loyalty, which is realized as a continuous process highlighted by contributing to business decisions and focusing on organizational objectives. It will result in business accomplishment. It is necessary for organizations to review and pay attention to female employees' demands as well as seek and implement their opinions in order to achieve organizational commitment. Otherwise, the entire business process and organizational commitment would be exposed.

### **Strategic Thinking**

Another factor affecting the company's success is strategic thinking. Strategic thinking is defined in this research as a method for solving strategic problems that combines a rational and convergent approach with creative and divergent thinking processes. This way of thinking is not about forecasting the future but anticipating market changes and identifying opportunities that others miss. Strategic thinking entails being innovative, copying successful organizations, seizing opportunities, and applying cutting-edge knowledge and technology to achieve organizational success. An example of this is stated in the interviewees' statements:

*"...Within two decades, our company was able to turn the livestock factory complex into a commercial complex in the first decade, which includes five production sections. In the second decade, it was able to become a chain and take a long way from our competitors and achieve success ..."*

The findings of Baharudin et al. (2020), Abdolrahim et al. (2017), and Maden (2015) all corroborate the findings of this study. Strategic thinking is regarded as an understanding at the large-scale level. Accordingly, female employees should focus on such understanding to identify environmental realities and respective norms and regulations accurately, particularly in complicated competitive conditions. They can also perceive new competitive characteristics quickly. In addition, these employees are more likely to implement environmental opportunities to obtain a competitive advantage and change environmental threats into opportunities through strategic thinking. They will develop innovative solutions and values to respond to environmental flips. Therefore, strategic thinking can lead to appropriate changes and enhancement of organizational flexibility.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the factors influencing the success of Iranian women entrepreneurs. In-depth interviews were used to collect data, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. As a result, this research was conducted to address the central question of the research, "What factors influence the success of women entrepreneurs?" The study findings indicate that comprehensive quality, moral and personality traits, and social capital all contribute to the success of Iranian women entrepreneurs.

Among the study's limitations is the paucity of research on the subject. The second limitation was that the factors influencing the success of women entrepreneurs were identified solely through interview data. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods can help to increase the validity and reliability of certain findings.

The impact of comprehensive quality components like meeting customers' mental demands and brand management, such as brand evangelism, was identified and examined for the first time in this research. Given the significance of comprehensive quality components, women entrepreneurs should prioritize customer satisfaction and product quality in their efforts. They respond quickly to customer needs and demands by providing goods and services tailored to the customer's expectations because they can be informed about customer needs, demands, and expectations using customer management principles and rules and customer satisfaction measurement models. They can keep existing customers and attract new ones by continuously improving the quality of goods and services, one of the basic principles of customer management.

In the brand management section, it is suggested that the research sub-themes be considered the criteria for their branding success. Also, in the interpersonal communication section of entrepreneurs, their moral and personality characteristics should be the basis for entrepreneurs' success. Given the role of social capital in women entrepreneurs' success, it is recommended that in the design of entrepreneurial activities, the sub-themes of social capital, such as trust and social participation, be at the forefront of their work. In the field of human resources management, it is suggested that educational workshops, as well as human resource procedures, be designed and implemented to strengthen entrepreneurial skills. Given that strategic thinking components, such as creativity and opportunity hunting, are among

the fundamental components proven in various studies affecting entrepreneurial activities, it is recommended that people who want to succeed in their entrepreneurial activities develop a sense of risk-taking in their creative thinking.

Overall, it is recommended that managers and policymakers attempt to promote women's innovative thinking capabilities to have a better understanding of the market and help them out of critical situations, plan training courses for women to improve their skills and overcome diversity issues, identify their major concerns and provide low-cost effective solutions, and motivate women to implement novel approaches at work and acquire new skills. Given that the present study was conducted in Iran, the results should be generalized to other settings with caution. Lastly, researchers are advised to perform similar studies in other countries and compare the findings respectively.

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