



Investigating the Role of Entrepreneurship on the Empowerment of Women Heads of Households Covered by Dezful welfare (a case study of Women Heads of Dezful welfare Households)

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| ARTICLE INFORMATION | ABSTRACT |
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| Article type Original research Pages: 110-116 Corresponding Author's Info Email: faranakomidian2022@gmail.com Article history: Received: 2022/11/14 Revised: 2023/02/19 Accepted: 2023/02/22 Published online: 2023/12/01 Keywords: <i>Female Heads of Household, Empowerment, Organizational Entrepreneurship, rehabilitation.</i> | Background and Aim: women heads of poor households are one of the vulnerable groups of society, and due to the increasing growth of their numbers in recent years, how to deal with various issues affecting their lives has become an important challenge in Iran. Therefore, empowering this group to participate in various jobs is very important. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of entrepreneurship on the empowerment of female heads of households in Dezful city. Methods: The current research method is descriptive and correlational. The statistical population of the research was all women heads of households in Dezful city who had entered the empowerment and entrepreneurship plan in Dezful welfare organization during the years 2006 to 2021. This community included 44 households, all of which (all census) were selected as sampling. In order to collect the investigated data, questionnaires of culture and economic and social factors affecting women's entrepreneurship were used by Beech (2007) and empowerment of women by Gupta and Srivatava (2011). The resulting data were analyzed by statistical methods (multiple correlation analysis). Results: The research findings showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between entrepreneurship and women's empowerment. The correlation coefficient of two variables was (R=0.52) and the significance level was (P<0.000). Also, the multivariable regression results showed that the entrepreneurship variable has the ability to predict the women's empowerment variable. The determination coefficient of two variables was (R ² =0.36) and the significance level was (P<0.000). Conclusion: Based on this, it can be concluded that by creating targeted programs and entrepreneurship trainings, we can have a great help in order to improve the empowerment of women heads of households. |



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Introduction

Today, empowerment is considered one of the effective approaches for fasting life. In fact, societies seek to empower all their comprehensive people and increase their contribution to empowerment (Achmad et al., 2022). In this empowerment approach, although the goal of all groups of societies is mentioned, women have been given more attention. Because women are involved in various activities and sometimes they are placed in the role of men and earn money by being left alone (Altalani et al., 2022).

Women's empowerment is a method or social action in which women elaborate and recreate in situations that they previously denied. There are several principles of women's empowerment, including that in order for one to be empowered, one must come from a position of powerlessness. Women's empowerment is a process in which women do what they can be and elaborate and recreate in the conditions they were previously deprived of (Lee & Nagyan, 2021). Empowerment can be defined in many ways, however, when it comes to empowering women, empowerment means accepting and allowing women who are outside the decision-making process. Empowerment should mean that women gain the ability to challenge and fight against their oppression. In practice, this means a slight improvement in their material conditions (Madan et al., 2014).

Empowering women through entrepreneurship represents a strategy in pursuit of ostensibly complementary business and social goals that has been adopted in recent years by a significant and rapidly growing number of the world's most prominent figures in industry and politics. Indeed, one of the more common areas of concern of overlap between business and politics or third sector organizations has recently been women's economic activity around the world. Industrial support for women's entrepreneurship includes a significant range of industries and takes many forms (Johnston-Lewis, 2016).

One of the ways to empower women is entrepreneurship (Carrington et al., 2022). Entrepreneurship is the process of using entrepreneurial skills to generate wealth through new ventures that contribute to society and the country's economy by taking advantage of opportunities in a rapidly changing social, political, legal and economic environment

(Kumar & Singh, 2021). However, there are differences between women and men in their participation in entrepreneurship. This variation can be explained by the fact that women have fewer opportunities to establish a long-term career (Costa et al., 2016).

Women entrepreneurs are one of the fastest growing entrepreneurial populations and contribute significantly to innovation, employment, and wealth creation worldwide (Brush & Cooper, 2012). The development of women's entrepreneurship is vital for the progress of any country and is considered as one of the solutions to achieve sustainable economic growth (Mboko & Smith-Hunter, 2009). This is essential if a country wants to operate effectively in the global market. Storey and Green (2010) believe that there is no greater initiative than encouraging women to actively participate in entrepreneurship. By doing this, the civil position of women in society and their contribution to societies and national development will increase. Due to economic conditions in different countries, most women are forced to create small businesses as a means of survival. Unfortunately, these women experience various challenges that hinder the growth and development of their businesses. Despite this failure, women entrepreneurs are at the forefront of economic and social changes. Davis (2012) believes that women's contribution to global prosperity and development should not be underestimated. Therefore, the development of women's entrepreneurship forms an integral part of women's economic empowerment based on the fifth goal of sustainable development, which emphasizes the importance of "promoting gender equality and women's empowerment".

Theoretical views about women and their empowerment have been proposed in the context of entrepreneurship. Neoclassical theorists believe that women's gender inequalities are due to women's general education, their lower human capital compared to men, and special social conditions governing society and organizations. Proponents of the "labor market fragmentation" theory believe that the labor market is divided into primary and secondary jobs, and generally women are employed in secondary jobs, which face limitations such as job instability, lower salaries and benefits, and the possibility of low advancement; Therefore, the main factor in the continuation of gender inequalities is this issue

(Sadr, 2002). In explaining the existing inequalities, the theorists of the gender perspective emphasize on assigning "domestic work" to women and as a result less opportunity for them to be present in other social fields. They also believe that because women's jobs (such as teaching, nursing, etc.) are a reflection of their domestic role, they also consider these jobs to be of low value. Finally, the job evaluation system's criteria to determine the "value of work" rely on the quality and characteristics that are generally attributed to men. Some experts, including Morrison von Gelino, consider the existence of a "glass ceiling" to be the most important cause of gender inequality in organizations and the main obstacle to women's career advancement (Lavan, 2002).

There have been studies on empowerment and entrepreneurship, some of which are mentioned below. Onu (2021) showed in a research that the level of better family economy can be increased through the introduction of entrepreneurial activities as a tool to empower women. Also, the model of female entrepreneurs is very effective in increasing their self-reliance. Tanti et al. (2021) commented on the value of the global network among women businesses and entrepreneurs that women entrepreneurs implement many strategies that can include relying on social relationships to manage the expectations and challenges of home and organizational businesses. Banihani (2020) found a strong correlation between women's status in society and economic development in several countries, indicating a link between women's emancipation and national economic growth. Bhukuth et al. (2019) explored how women can increase their well-being and gain more influence in their homes, communities, and companies. They presented two cases for empowering women through entrepreneurship. They concluded that women entrepreneurs cannot develop their business independently and need the help of their family members. Furthermore, they found that the main motivation for starting a business was the opportunity for financial independence and autonomy. Ali and Salisu (2019), the strategy of entrepreneurship and empowerment of women, for the purposes of national development, were examined. It was found that cultural stereotypes, unequal access to education and lack of funding

have affected women's entrepreneurship and empowerment. In the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, Alexadre and Kharabsheh (2019) studied the evolution of women's entrepreneurship and showed a new type of women's entrepreneurship in the Arab region based on supporting the socio-cultural environment and empowering women. Chatterjee et al. (2019) showed that increased participation of female entrepreneurs may boost national growth and empower women. Bhardwaj (2018) also investigated the role of education in improving the status of women entrepreneurs through empowerment and self-employment and found that there is a significant relationship between the size of business expansion and business sector and the profit created to increase social services.

Despite the significant role played by women entrepreneurs, research in this field is lacking at the global level and has created a research gap. The available literature shows that studies on women entrepreneurs comprise less than 10% of all research in this field (Brush & Cooper, 2012). Interestingly, a higher percentage of these studies examined women's entrepreneurship in developed countries (Stendemmer et al., 2012). Therefore, it seems necessary to pay attention to the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship as a mechanism to increase the quality of life. In order to educate women about the value of their participation in society and strengthen women's entrepreneurship, women's empowerment and their participation in the labor market should be considered (Melovic & Djuricic, 2019).

On the other hand, the difficult situation of female heads of households raises the issue of empowering these women. In fact, with the increase of economic problems, the number of women who enter the business space with the title of head of the household and earn money at different levels has increased. This presence, which includes a wide range of jobs from labor and presence in the production line to management and social entrepreneurship, is accompanied by special challenges and issues that affect their earning process. The point to consider is the difficulty of entrepreneurship and job creation processes for women heads of households. Female heads of households, who are responsible for providing for their families and belongings, usually endure a lot of

economic, emotional and personal pressures that make it difficult and unattainable for them to improve their conditions (Akbari Torkamani et al., 2018). Also, in the necessity and importance of the present research, it should be said that nowadays one of the discourses of solving social problems is based on the empowerment of all vulnerable groups, especially the homeless women, which causes us to witness the reduction of social and cultural problems and the increase of their economic power through their empowerment; Therefore, the main purpose of the current research is to investigate the role of entrepreneurship on the empowerment of female heads of households covered by Dezful welfare.

Method

According to the problem and objectives of the research, the current research was of applied type. Its method was descriptive-survey, non-experimental and correlational. The statistical population of the research includes all female heads of households who entered the empowerment and entrepreneurship plan in the welfare organization of Dezful city during the years 2007-2021. According to the statistical population of the research, the census sampling method was used. 44 households were identified and all of them were selected and studied as the final sample. After selecting the sample people, the data was collected by visiting each sample and completing the questionnaires. The questionnaires used in the research included the following:

Materials

1. Questionnaire of Culture and Economic and Social Factors Affecting Beach Women's Entrepreneurship (2007). The questionnaire of culture and economic and social factors affecting women's entrepreneurship was designed by Pitch in 2007 and has 8 questions. The questions are scored on a Likert scale (very little to very much) and the obtained Cronbach's alpha is above 0.70. To check validity, face validity was checked and to check reliability, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The

results showed that the reliability of the variables was above the desired criterion (0.70).

2. Women empowerment questionnaire. Women empowerment questionnaire was designed and validated by Gupta and Srivastava (2011). This questionnaire contains 37 closed-ended items based on five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire measures the dimensions of decision-making, access and control over other resources, mobility, security, gender awareness. This questionnaire has been validated by Karimi (2013).

Implementation

After determining the research sample, the researcher prepared the questionnaires and some of them were delivered to the respondents in person and some were sent to them by mail. Some of the questionnaires were not returned, but the majority of the questionnaires were received again with the follow-ups. For data analysis, descriptive statistics (mean, median and percentage) and inferential statistics from multiple correlation and regression analysis were used to predict the contribution of each variable with Spss24 software.

Results

At first, some characteristics of the respondents have been presented. Regarding the age of the respondents, 5 people (0.11) were in the age group of 30-35, and the largest age group was 14 people (0.32) 40-36 years old. In terms of education, 23 people (0.23) had less than a diploma and 7 people (0.16) had a bachelor's degree. Also, 10 people (0.23) had 1 to 5 years of experience as guardians, and most of them, including 19 people (0.43), had more than 20 years of family guardianship experience. It should be noted that at the time of conducting the research, all the research samples had no husbands due to various reasons and were the heads of their own families. In the following, some descriptive statistics of the main research variables are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of empowerment status of the studied women

| Variable | Mean | SD | CV | Rank |
|---|------|-------|-------|------|
| Identifying and entering new product markets | 3/49 | 0/691 | 0/197 | 1 |
| Income level growth | 3/18 | 0/520 | 0/163 | 2 |
| Increasing the level of annual production and productivity | 3/17 | 0/517 | 0/162 | 3 |
| Using new production methods and practices | 2/92 | 0/767 | 0/262 | 4 |
| Production and presentation of new and diverse products | 2/87 | 0/815 | 0/283 | 5 |
| Attracting capital and various financial resources | 2/81 | 0/434 | 0/154 | 6 |
| Using creative and different methods compared to similar businesses | 2/51 | 0/772 | 0/307 | 7 |
| Using new production tools and technology | 2/38 | 0/667 | 0/279 | 8 |
| Creating job opportunities | 2/37 | 1/056 | 0/444 | 9 |

The results of table (1) show that in terms of empowerment indicators, the index of identifying and entering new product markets has the highest average and the first priority,

and the index of creating job opportunities has the lowest average, and thus, the lowest priority with an average of 2.37.

Table 2. Prioritization of factors determining the level of entrepreneurship of women heads of households

| Item | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|-------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | | |
| Using donations from friends and acquaintances | 80/3 | 12/8 | 6/0 | 0/9 | 0 | 0 | 2/27 | 0/610 |
| Access to the necessary equipment and technology | 0 | 15/4 | 40/2 | 42/7 | 1/7 | 0 | 2/30 | 0/748 |
| Easy access to the required skilled manpower | 0/9 | 5/1 | 28/2 | 60/7 | 5/1 | 0 | 2/64 | 0/700 |
| Easy access to raw materials and inputs | 0 | 1/7 | 26/5 | 67/5 | 4/3 | 0 | 2/74 | 0/559 |
| Use of information and communication technology | 82/1 | 8/5 | 1/7 | 3/4 | 3/4 | 9.0 | 2/40 | 0/034 |
| Access to the market for the supply of services and products | 3/5 | 44/7 | 31/6 | 18/4 | 0/9 | 0/9 | 1/71 | 0/899 |
| Access to product sales channels | 0 | 10/6 | 13/3 | 70/8 | 5/3 | 0 | 2/70 | 0/728 |
| Demand for products produced in the region | 0 | 0 | 10/3 | 30/8 | 52/1 | 6/8 | 3/55 | 0/770 |
| The amount of use of the transportation system | 0 | 5/1 | 12/0 | 67/9 | 6/0 | 0 | 2/83 | 0/601 |

The results of table (2) show that according to the respondents, the important priorities of entrepreneurship according to the level, including the presence of demand for

manufactured products in the region with an average of 3.55, and access to the market for the supply of services and products, have the lowest average.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between the level of entrepreneurship and empowerment

| Independent variable | r | p |
|----------------------|-------|-------|
| Empowerment | 0/529 | 0/000 |

According to the findings of table (3), it is concluded that there is a positive and significant correlation between the level of

entrepreneurship of women heads of households and the expansion of their job empowerment.

Table 4. Multiple correlation coefficient, determination and determination coefficient of entrepreneurship level on empowerment

| Step | Multiple correlation coefficient | R ² | R ² (Adjusted) | F | sig |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------|---------|
| 1 | 0/468 | 0/219 | 0/212 | 32/260 | 0/000** |
| 2 | 0/602 | 0/362 | 0/351 | 32/342 | 0/000** |

The results of Table (4) show that in the first step, the empowerment variable was entered into the equation, and its multiple correlation with the dependent variable was 0.468. At this stage, the adjusted coefficient of determination is estimated to be 0.212. In other words, 21.2% of the changes in the equation related to the level of entrepreneurship of female heads of households are explained by this variable.

Conclusion

In the present research, the role of entrepreneurship on the empowerment of women heads of the household was

investigated. The results showed that entrepreneurship has a significant relationship with women's empowerment and has the power to empower homeless women. This finding is consistent with the results of some studies such as: Ono (2021), who concluded that the level of better family economy can be increased through the introduction of entrepreneurial activities as a tool to empower women; Tanti et al. (2021) who concluded that female entrepreneurs implement many strategies that can include relying on social relationships to manage the expectations and challenges of home and

organizational businesses; Banihani (2020) who concluded that there is a strong correlation between the status of women in society and economic development and indicates the connection between women's liberation and national economic growth; Ali and Salisu (2019) who concluded that entrepreneurial strategy and women's empowerment are related; Bhardwaj (2018) who concluded that there is a significant relationship between the size of business expansion and business sector and the profit created to increase empowerment.

In explaining the present results, it can be said that female entrepreneurs, especially in the market of their products, faced many obstacles (including family responsibilities) that must be overcome in order to access the same opportunities as men. In addition, in some countries, women may face obstacles related to holding property and entering into contracts. Increasing women's participation in the workforce is a prerequisite for improving the status of women in society and self-employed women (Kumar & Singh, 2021). In particular, the entry of women into micro-enterprises will be encouraged and intensified. Women can be amazing with their effective and competent participation in entrepreneurial activities. Women have the indigenous knowledge, skills, potential and resources to create and manage the company. What is needed now is knowledge about access to loans, the procedure of various financing organizations regarding the issuance of certificates, awareness of government welfare programs, motivation, technical skills and support from family, government and other organizations. Therefore, women's entrepreneurship promotes and empowers women (Costa et al., 2016).

On the other hand, it should be said that despite the ideas that there may be about women heads of households and their entrepreneurial characteristics among welfare environment referents, women heads of households have potential and actual abilities in the field of entrepreneurial activities. It necessitates the need to provide the necessary platform for talents to flourish and strengthen their entrepreneurial spirit. In explaining these findings, it can be said that the necessity of social entrepreneurship in the field of women heads of households; With the increase of economic problems, the number of women who enter the business space with the title of head of

the household and earn money at different levels has increased (Tanti et al., 2021). This presence, which includes a wide range of jobs from labor and presence in the production line to management and social entrepreneurship, is accompanied by special challenges and issues that affect their earning process. The point to consider is the difficulty of entrepreneurship and job creation processes for women heads of households. Women heads of households, who are responsible for providing for their families and belongings, usually bear a lot of economic, emotional and personal pressures that make it difficult and unattainable for them to improve their conditions (Zamani Moghadam & colleagues, 2021). Many governments in economic crises have been able to overcome the crises of their society by adopting measures and policies and benefiting from women's labor force and succeed in the path of development. Considering that a huge part of the society is made up of women, among women, examining the situation of female heads of the household is of particular importance. Because the women heads of the household are often considered as the poorest social strata in the society due to the unstable economic situation, lack of suitable jobs, insufficient pension and lack of income source. Also, in the current society of Iran, which is suffering from chronic unemployment and employment crisis, and men are looking for a job from which they can earn a steady income, there is very little room for the life and work of women who are the breadwinners of the family. (Zamani Moghadam et al., 2021).

Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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