



The Entrepreneurial Spirit of Rural Women: An Example from Iran

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Received: 24 April 2016,
Accepted: 01 January 2017

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the personality characteristics related to entrepreneurial spirit of rural women. The statistical population of the study included rural women in the central district of Nimrooz County in Sistan and Baluchistan Province (N=406). Krejcie and Morgan Table was used to determine the sample size. To this end, 186 participants were selected through stratified random sampling with proportional allocation. Data were collected by a questionnaire that validity was confirmed via face validity procedure and its reliability was measured by calculating a Cronbach's alpha coefficient. SPSS software was used to analyze data. The results showed that more than 50 % of rural women were strong in terms of balanced risk taking, internal locus of control, need for achievement, mental fluency, tolerance for ambiguity, daydreaming, and innovation. Yet, around 30 % of rural women were weak in terms of balanced risk taking, mental fluency, independence, and innovation. Furthermore, 17 % were weak in terms of daydreaming and challenging. The results of one sample t-test also indicated that 10 dimensions of rural women's entrepreneurial spirit were significantly higher than the average. Therefore, in order to increase rural women's entrepreneurial spirit, it seems necessary to strengthen such characteristics as balanced risk taking, innovation, independence, mental fluency, challenging, and daydreaming.

Keywords:
entrepreneurial characteristics, entrepreneurial spirit, rural women, Nimrooz County

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is an important issue that many developed and developing countries have paid serious attention to. In these communities, entrepreneurship is perceived as a powerful tool that can be used to solve some problems such as unemployment, lack of creative and dynamic human resources, dramatic decline in productivity, reduced product and service quality and economic recession (Mohseni & Shafizadeh, 2012). Rural communities are no exception from the above rule, and entrepreneurship in these areas could lead people to overcome many challenges such as unemployment, low income, and lack of economic diversification and so on. Due to women's undeniable role in rural development, strengthening rural women entrepreneurship would be an effective strategy to achieve sustainable rural development (Jamshidi et al., 2013).

In the study of entrepreneurship and its application, several approaches such as psychological, social and economic approaches have been considered. In this study, psychological and personality characteristics of entrepreneurship was used in which it is believed that entrepreneurs are people with the same guiding values, attitudes and needs (Alipour, 2013). In other words, in entrepreneurial characteristics approach, it is believed that there are some personality characteristics which could lead to the development of entrepreneurial spirit in human (Mohseni & Shafizadeh, 2012). The following is some research on entrepreneurial spirit.

Yaghoubi Farani and Soleymani (2015) studied personal characteristics of rural female entrepreneurs in Hamedan Province, Iran. The results revealed that the rank mean of personality characteristics of the women was higher than average. Furthermore, need for achievement of rural women was at a higher level than other characteristics. Mardanshahi and Dolati (2015) compared entrepreneurial abilities in students of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences. The findings showed that more than 99, 98 and 96% of students were very poor and poor in terms of independence, creativity, and internal locus of control, respectively. Rabieyan et al. (2015) studied entrepreneurship spirit of students in school of Allied Medicine

of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. The results showed that all students had the lowest score in terms of independence. Overall, the score of all students' entrepreneurial spirit was 59.90, which was higher than the average. Vatankhah and Rezaei Moghaddam (2015) investigated the students' entrepreneurial spirit in Agricultural College of Shiraz University. They reported that among variables of entrepreneurial spirit, internal locus of control and need for achievement had the highest mean score whereas independence had the lowest one. Yaghoubi Farani et al. (2015) analyzed the factors affecting rural women entrepreneurship. The findings revealed that the rank mean of personality characteristics of the women was higher than the average. Movahedi and Ghanbari (2014) investigated the relationship between university education and agricultural students' entrepreneurial spirit. The findings indicated that entrepreneurial spirit of the students was between moderate to high. In other words, the mean score of all 11 dimensions of entrepreneurial spirit was above average. In addition, among the indicators, self confidence, internal locus of control and need for achievement had the highest mean score, whereas innovation and risk taking had the lowest mean score. Karani et al. (2014) explored factors affecting the entrepreneurial spirit. The results indicated that the respondents received the highest score in terms of need for achievement whereas they received the lowest score in terms of independence. Moreover, the mean scores for all indicators of entrepreneurial spirit was less than the acceptable score. Mahboobi and Sharifzadeh (2013) studied entrepreneurial spirit among students of agricultural sciences in Gorgan University and showed that entrepreneurial characteristics such as balanced risk taking, internal locus of control, need for achievement, mental fluency, pragmatism, daydreaming and challenging were low and very low in majority of the respondents, but tolerance for ambiguity was strong. Movahedi et al. (2013) studied entrepreneurial personality traits of agricultural students. The findings revealed that among four entrepreneurial personality traits, internal locus of control obtained the highest mean score while

risk taking obtained the lowest one. [Mohseni and Shafizade \(2012\)](#) focused on the entrepreneurial characteristics of the students in State Universities in Tehran. They reported that the students were in low level in risk taking, mental fluency and challenging, and were in high level in terms of internal locus of control, need for achievement, pragmatism and daydreaming. Furthermore, they were in very high level in terms of tolerance for ambiguity. On the whole, entrepreneurial spirit of the students was in high level. [Pour Rajab Miandoab et al. \(2012\)](#) stated that the mean of self-employed women's features regarding risk-taking, internal locus of control, need for achievement, creativity and challenging was above the average and the mean of tolerance of ambiguity was below the average. [Hooshmandan Moghaddam Fard et al. \(2012\)](#) measured entrepreneurial spirit of agricultural high school students. The results showed that 89 and 54.5% of the respondents had high levels of need for achievement and innovation, respectively. In addition, 49, 54.5, 69 and 65.5% had average level in terms of internal locus of control, risk-taking, tolerance for ambiguity and independence, respectively. Overall, 52.4% of the respondents had high level of entrepreneurial spirit. [Fallah Haghighi et al. \(2011\)](#) revealed that 70% of agricultural students in Tehran University had moderate and high level of entrepreneurial spirit. In addition, the finding showed that among the entrepreneurial traits need for achievement, internal locus of control, risk taking and creativity were in high level whereas tolerance for ambiguity was in low level among the agricultural students.

Some research ([Ghaffari & Younesi, 2012](#); [Rezaee & Rahsepar, 2010](#); [Siadat et al., 2012](#)) has shown that mean independence, need for achievement, creativity and internal locus of control were higher than the average score while risk taking was lower. [Movahedi et al. \(2011\)](#) studied the entrepreneurial spirit in agricultural students. The findings revealed that students had high level of entrepreneurial spirit. [Vahedi et al. \(2009\)](#) investigated entrepreneurial mentality among students of Ilam Islamic Azad University. The findings revealed

that the majority of students had high level of tolerance to ambiguity, need for achievement, risk-taking, creativity, and internal locus of control while they had low level of independence. [Badri et al. \(2006\)](#) investigated the entrepreneurship capabilities of Isfahan University students. The results showed that entrepreneurship capabilities of the students were above the average in terms of independence, internal locus of control, need for achievement and creativity, but risk-taking score was below the average. [Khedmati Tavasol \(2000\)](#) carried out a research on fostering entrepreneurship among male high school students in Karaj County. The results showed that need for achievement, independence, risk taking and internal locus of control among students were above average.

According to the previous studies, ten key personality characteristics of entrepreneurs were identified to be explored in this study. The following is their brief definitions ([Mahboobi & Sharifzadeh, 2013](#); [Sheikhan, 2011](#)).

- Balanced risk taking is the acceptance of moderate risks that can be restrained by personal effort.
- Internal locus of control is defined as people relating their specific incident to their behavior or stable characteristics.
- Need for achievement means having tendency to superior or success and attempting to achieve a set of standards.
- Mental fluency is meant as someone's ability to gather diverse and numerous thoughts about a subject or issue.
- Pragmatism is defined as rapid fulfillment of the decision that is made.
- Tolerance for ambiguity means accepting uncertainty as a part of life, the ability of living with imperfect knowledge about the environment and having a tendency to set up an independent activity without considering whether it will succeed or not.
- Daydreaming is the ability and capacity of making and developing an ideal future which is attractive and appealing.
- Challenging is defined as being dissatisfied with the present situation and challenging tasks.
- Independence or internal autonomy means

that the person feels in control of their own fate.

- Innovation is a creative or unusual search for a new solution to problems and needs. Innovation in entrepreneurship consists of producing new products or services within a company or organization.

The research carried out with the entrepreneur's characteristic approach could be a guidance to nurture and develop these characteristics by investigating the entrepreneurial personality characteristics in the community. Although rural women constitute half of the rural community, their labor force participation rate is only 11.8%. Similarly, rural women in Sistan and Baluchistan Province have low labor force participation rates (5.7%) in Iran (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2013). In order to increase rural women's labor force participation rate, it seems necessary to notice entrepreneurship and recognize personality characteristics and entrepreneurial spirit and the factors which can lead to higher rural women's labor force participation rate. Therefore, this study is to investigate rural women's personality characteristics related to entrepreneurial spirit. The conceptual framework of the current study is illustrated in Figure 1.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A survey research method was used in this study. The statistical population of the study consisted of 406 rural women aged 15-64 years in the central district of Nimrooz County in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. The Krejcie and Morgan Table (Patten, 2002) was used to determine the sample size, and 186 ones were selected through stratified sampling with proportional allocation. A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool whose validity was confirmed via face validity procedure and its reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from 0.65 to 0.89, which indicated the reliability of the study tool (see Table 1). The 10 dimensions of entrepreneurial spirit were measured using 99 items in five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The respondents were classified into three stages ranging from very weak to very strong. First, the greatest possible amount of each dimension assuming the selection of strongly agree (5) by all respondents was subtracted from the lowest possible amount of that dimension assuming the selection of strongly disagree (1) by all respondents. Then, the resulting number was divided

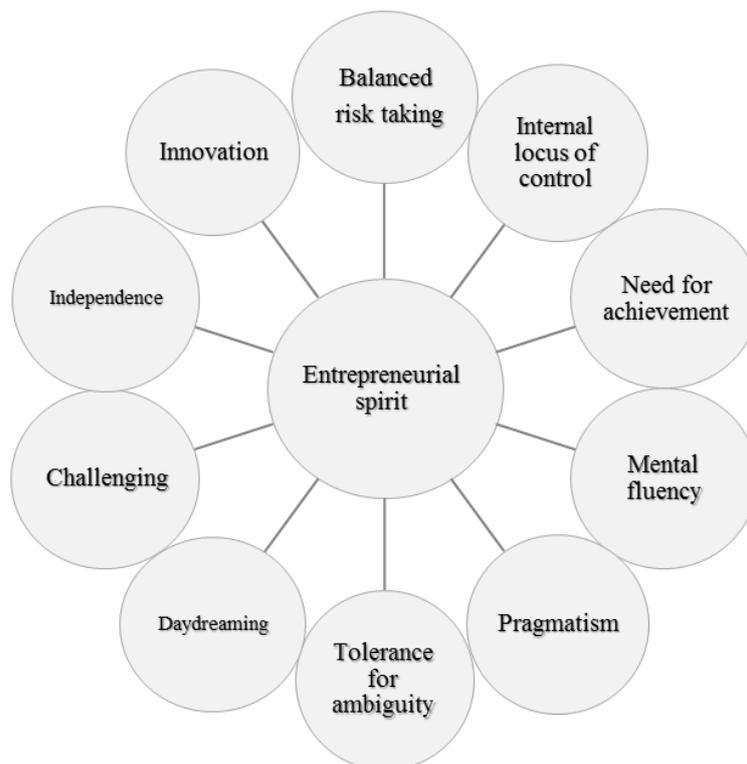


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Table 1
The Result of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Questionnaire

Components	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Balanced risk-taking	16	0.65
Internal locus of control	16	0.87
Need for achievement	15	0.81
Mental fluency	10	0.89
Pragmatism	7	0.67
Tolerance for ambiguity	11	0.83
Daydreaming	6	0.66
Challenging	5	0.82
Independence	6	0.67
Innovation	7	0.70

Scale: 1=Very Little to 5=Very Much

by 4. Finally, the respondents were recoded into four (from very weak to very strong) categories.

SPSS software was used to analyze data. Given the objectives of the present study, descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, mean, standard deviations, and inferential statistics such as one sample t-test were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the descriptive statistics of respondents' characteristics indicated that the mean age of the respondents was 28.90 years with a standard deviation of 11.62.

Marital status of the respondents (see Table 2) showed that 35.9% of the respondents were single, whereas 64.1% of them were married. The result of respondents' level of education is

presented in Table 2. As is shown in the table 2, 8.4% were illiterate, 12.9% had primary school education, and 22.5% had secondary school education. Most respondents (42.1%) had diploma and only 14.0% had academic education.

The findings also showed that most household heads were farmers (45.1%), 17.7% were privately employed, 17.1% were employees, 10.9% were unemployed and 9.1% were laborers.

According to the range of responses to the questions, the entrepreneurial spirit of rural women was divided from very weak to very strong. As shown in Table 3, most rural women's entrepreneurial characteristics were shown to be strong as balanced risk taking (61.0%), internal locus of control (52.9%), need for achievement (58.5%), mental fluency (50.9%),

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents According to Their Individual Characteristics

Components	Frequency	Percentage
Marital status		
Single	52	35.9
Married	93	64.1
Level of education		
Illiterate	15	8.4
Primary school	23	12.9
Secondary school	40	22.5
Diploma	75	42.1
University education	25	14.0
Household heads' job		
Farmer	79	45.1
Privately employed	31	17.7
Employee	30	17.1
Unemployed	19	10.9
Laborer	16	9.1

Scale: 1=Very Little to 5=Very Much

Table 3
Frequency Distribution According to the Entrepreneurial Spirit of Rural Women

Components	Very weak		Weak		Strong		Very strong	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Balanced risk-taking	1	0.7	51	34.9	89	61.0	5	3.4
Internal locus of control	0	0	6	3.9	82	52.9	67	43.2
Need for achievement	0	0	8	5.0	93	58.5	58	36.5
Mental fluency	8	4.8	57	34.1	85	50.9	17	10.2
Pragmatism	1	0.6	10	6.2	39	24.2	111	68.9
Tolerance for ambiguity	0	0	12	8.0	93	62.0	45	30.0
Daydreaming	10	5.9	29	17.1	85	50.0	46	27.0
Challenging	10	5.9	30	17.6	69	40.6	61	35.9
Independence	9	5.3	54	31.6	62	36.3	46	26.9
Innovation	4	2.3	59	34.5	87	50.9	21	12.3

tolerance for ambiguity (62.0%), daydreaming (50.0%), challenging (40.6%), independence (36.3%), and innovation (50.9%) were at a strong level, and only pragmatism (68.9%) was at very strong level. Furthermore, the results indicated that rural women were weak in balanced risk taking (34.9%), mental fluency (34.1%), daydreaming (17.1%), challenging (17.6%), independence (31.6%) and innovation (34.5%). These results are consistent with Mahboobi and Sharifzadeh (2013) and Mohseni and Shafizade (2012).

The mean scores of 10 dimensions of rural women's entrepreneurial spirit are shown in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, pragmatism (4.09) and internal control (3.85) have the highest mean score while mental fluency (3.13) and innovation (3.12) have the lowest one.

In order to investigate the 10 dimensions of rural women's entrepreneurial spirit and to com-

pare them with average score (3), one sample t-test was applied. The results indicate that nine dimensions of entrepreneurial spirit – i.e. balanced risk taking, internal locus of control, need for achievement, pragmatism, tolerance for ambiguity, daydreaming, challenging, independence and innovation – were significantly ($p < 0.01$) higher than the theoretical average (3) at the 0.01 level (Table 4). However, mental fluency was significantly higher than the theoretical average (3) at the 0.05 level. In other words, the entrepreneurial spirit of rural women is above the average in all dimensions. These results are consistent with findings reported by Badri et al. (2006), Ghaffari and Younesi (2012), Khedmati Tavasol (2000), Pour Rajab Miandoab et al. (2012), Rezaee and Rahsepar (2010) and Siadat et al., (2012) in terms of internal locus of control, need for achievement, and creativity. Furthermore, the

Table 4
Mean, Standard Deviation and One Sample t-Test of Ten Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Spirit of Rural Women

Components	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Risk-taking	3.15	0.48	3.965	0.000**
Internal locus of control	3.85	0.47	22.322	0.000**
Need for achievement	3.76	0.55	17.228	0.000**
Mental fluency	3.13	0.72	2.430	0.016*
Pragmatism	4.09	0.63	22.268	0.000**
Tolerance for ambiguity	3.72	0.60	14.330	0.000**
Daydreaming	3.42	0.79	6.809	0.000**
Challenging	3.45	0.86	6.728	0.000**
Independence	3.27	0.84	4.220	0.000**
Innovation	3.12	0.71	2.712	0.007**
Total entrepreneurial components	3.51	0.40	14.345	0.000**

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

finding is consistent for independence and is inconsistent for risk-taking with the results obtained by Badri et al. (2006), Ghaffari and Younesi (2012), Rezaee and Rahsepar (2010) and Siadat et al. (2012). This inconsistency with previous studies could be due to the fact that the prior studies were conducted among university students, who are young and inexperienced. Therefore, their risk taking could be lower than average.

In addition, the result is consistent with findings reported by Pour Rajab Miandoab et al. (2012) for risk-taking and challenging dimensions, but inconsistent with their findings for tolerance for ambiguity. This inconsistency might be related to the fact that the mentioned study focused on self-employed women, who deal objectively with business. As a result, they may have fewer tendencies to start a business regardless of its success and consequently, they exhibit a lower tolerance to ambiguity than average.

CONCLUSION

The results showed that more than 50% of rural women were strong in balanced risk taking, internal locus of control, need for achievement, mental fluency, tolerance for ambiguity, daydreaming, and innovation. Nevertheless, around 30% of rural women were weak in balanced risk taking, mental fluency, independence, and innovation. Furthermore, daydreaming and challenging were found to be weak in 17% of rural women.

In addition, we found that from among 10 dimensions of rural women's entrepreneurial spirit, pragmatism and internal control showed the highest mean score whereas mental fluency and innovation showed the lowest one.

The results of one sample t-test to compare 10 dimensions of rural women's entrepreneurial spirit with the average score of 3 indicated that nine dimensions including balanced risk taking, internal locus of control, need for achievement, pragmatism, tolerance for ambiguity, daydreaming, challenging, independence, and innovation were significantly higher than the average score at the 0.01 level and mental fluency was significantly higher than the average score at the 0.05

level.

It could be concluded that, in general, entrepreneurial spirit of rural women was significantly above the average. Nevertheless, some of them were weak in balanced risk taking, mental fluency, independence, innovation, daydreaming, and challenging.

the following recommendations are given based on the results of the present study:

- Training courses in setting up a businesses and interviewing with successful rural women entrepreneurs should be conducted to help rural women be more familiar with the challenges associated with starting a new business as well as use their experience. As a result, challenging and risk taking capabilities of rural women may be enhanced.

- Free entrepreneurial training workshops should be held in order to improve and develop particular entrepreneurial characteristics such as innovation, daydreaming, mental fluency, and independence.

- Given the fact that the entrepreneurial spirit of rural women was above average, mental and financial supports such as low-interest loans and free consultation to set up a new business should be provided in order to fulfill entrepreneurial potential of rural women.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors would like to sincerely thank all participants in this research since it would not be possible to conduct the research without their contributions.

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How to cite this article:

Nooripoor, M., Eskandari, A., & Sharifi, Z. (2017). The entrepreneurial spirit of rural women: An example from Iran. *International Journal of Agricultural Management and Development*, 7(3), 337-345.
URL: http://ijamad.iaurasht.ac.ir/article_527228_6a80cf5ba4e3797fd43978ae43f5064b.pdf

