



Woman in Development and Politics

Designing a Theoretical Framework for Entrepreneurial Success and Personal Fulfillment among Women Entrepreneurs in Iran: A Narrative Study

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article Article history: Received: 5 May 2025 Received in revised form: 8 August 2025 Accepted: 8 September 2025 Published online: 23 October 2025 Keywords: <i>Environmental Factors, Entrepreneurial Success, Individual Skills, Narrative Inquiry, Personal Fulfillment, Women Entrepreneurs.</i>	Introduction In recent years, women's entrepreneurship has emerged as one of the growing phenomena in the global economy, playing a significant role in economic development, job creation, and poverty reduction. Despite these advancements, female entrepreneurs continue to encounter a multitude of obstacles, including gender biases, societal expectations, limited access to capital, and a lack of networking opportunities. These challenges have erected significant obstacles to the personal development and entrepreneurial success of women. Despite the notable contribution of women to the economy, existing entrepreneurial frameworks are generally gender-neutral and fail to adequately address the specific requirements of female entrepreneurs adequately. Given the significance of gender equality as one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, this study aims to develop a comprehensive, theory-based framework that will empower women entrepreneurs and facilitate their professional success and personal growth. The framework that has been suggested is specifically engineered to overcome the distinctive obstacles encountered by female entrepreneurs and facilitate the attainment of personal excellence and business success. Methodology Theoretical framework was developed by integrating the main and sub-categories. This research is developmental-applied and employs a qualitative approach. Narrative inquiry was employed to investigate the lived experiences of female entrepreneurs in-depth. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight Iranian female entrepreneurs, and the narratives were analyzed to extract concepts and patterns related to entrepreneurial success and personal growth. The data analysis process followed three stages: open, axial, and selective coding, using MAXQDA software. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the interview protocol was revised based on expert feedback, and the inter-rater reliability coefficient for the coding process was 0.77, indicating acceptable reliability. Participants were selected purposefully, and the interviews continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Ultimately, the theoretical framework was developed by integrating the main and sub-categories. Findings A conceptual framework was created to elucidate the personal development and entrepreneurial success of Iranian women entrepreneurs, utilizing open, axial, and selective coding and the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews. The results resulted in the identification of six primary categories. In the initial category, "Personal Skills and Abilities," there are four subcategories: cognitive skills (creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, strategic thinking, and continuous learning), communication skills (negotiation, effective customer communication, leadership, and team-building), personality traits (self-confidence, perseverance, patience, flexibility, responsibility, resilience, motivation, and the capacity to balance work and life), and management skills (time

management, crisis management, delegation, prioritization, and financial management”). The second category, “Business Success,” emphasizes two critical dimensions: innovation and creativity (including the generation of innovative ideas and the continuous development of creative ideas) and business management (including the expansion of networks, the use of modern technologies, and financial management). The third category, “Personal Growth and Excellence,” encompasses factors such as the establishment of clear boundaries between work and personal life, the reinforcement of individual mindsets and beliefs, the adaptation to environmental changes, and the preservation of mental and physical well-being. The fourth category, “Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Success and Personal Growth,” is divided into two levels: environmental factors (access to financial resources, technology, networks, entrepreneurial culture, technical infrastructure, family and community support, legal support, and government support) and individual factors (risk-taking, passion for work, and the development of strong teams). The fifth category, “Outcomes of Entrepreneurial Success and Personal Growth,” is differentiated into three levels: individual (increased self-esteem and self-confidence, improved quality of life, enhanced creativity and innovation, and strengthened leadership skills), organizational (growth and development of the business, product and service portfolio expansion, and market share increase), and social (economic growth, sustainable job creation, social development, local production, and export expansion). Lastly, the sixth category, “Intervening Conditions,” encompasses technological advancements, environmental crises (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), regulatory reforms, social and cultural factors, market competition, and societal attitudes. These factors can either facilitate or impede the process of personal growth and entrepreneurial success. This study’s conceptual framework offers a comprehensive, dynamic, and multidimensional perspective on the personal growth and entrepreneurial success of female entrepreneurs. It can be used as a foundation for future research, the development of supportive policies, and the design of programs to promote women’s entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

The objective of this investigation was to develop a framework for the personal development and entrepreneurial success of female entrepreneurs. The results indicated that the success of female entrepreneurs is contingent upon a variety of environmental and supportive factors, in addition to their personal abilities. This research underscores the significance of personal skills, such as cognitive, communication, personality, and management skills. It emphasizes that these skills, particularly when combined with personality traits such as self-confidence and perseverance, are critical to the success of female entrepreneurs. Additionally, the success of women-owned enterprises is strongly influenced by environmental factors, including access to financial resources, legal and governmental support, and modern technologies. The findings also underscore the importance of social and familial support in women’s entrepreneurial success, particularly in societies where social and cultural barriers exist for women. The success of women entrepreneurs is an interactive process that is influenced by a variety of factors, as demonstrated by the complex interactions between individual and environmental factors. This study specifically examined these interactions. Consequently, the development of a comprehensive framework for personal development and entrepreneurial success can be a critical resource for policymakers, consultants, and the entrepreneurs themselves. This framework not only recognizes the demands and challenges encountered by female entrepreneurs, but also provides practical solutions to address these obstacles and promote their success. Especially in societies where women face cultural, economic, and social barriers, this framework could provide strategies for improving business conditions and strengthening supportive environments. However, the study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results and generalizing them to other communities and cultures. The use of narrative inquiry methodology is one of the primary constraints, as it may be susceptible to personal biases as a result of the unique character of individual experiences. Therefore, it is recommended that future research incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to facilitate the generalizability and comparison of findings. Additionally, the social and cultural conditions of Iran may be

distinct from those of other societies, as this study concentrated on female entrepreneurs. Consequently, future research could investigate the application of this framework in various communities and cultures.

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