

Socio-Economic Factors Affecting Spatial Planning of Entrepreneurship in Rural Area (Evidence from Masal County, Iran)

by

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is of vital importance in villages and is regarded as a step towards rural development. The socio-economic factors affecting spatial planning of entrepreneurship were analyzed in the villages of Masal city by a descriptive survey in 2015. The statistical society was composed of three groups of people involved in rural entrepreneurship planning in Masal (N = 1513) out of which 483 people were sampled by Cochran's general formula. The main tool of the study was a questionnaire used for data collection. It was designed on the basis of different theories of entrepreneurship as well as the organizational insights of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. The face validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by university teachers and experts. Cronbach's alpha was calculated as to be 0.8 showing acceptable reliability of the questionnaire. The data were analyzed by SPSS (ver. 21) Statistical Package at both descriptive and inferential levels. The economic and social factors were divided into three groups on the basis of the results of explorative factor analysis.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Rural Development, Socio-Economic Factors

1. Introduction

People have experienced continuous and fast changes in all aspects of their lives in the last century raising serious challenges for the global society so that the decision-makers are forced to find solutions for them (Saidikia, 2010). Rural development is a multi-facet concept with different economical, social and cultural aspects. All these aspects are of considerable importance because they are readily affected by rural environment. As a result, rural sector has always been interested by planners. However, villages have always had problems such as migration, poverty and discrimination all of which have been studied from social, economical and cultural perspectives (Ghadirimasoum & Gharagozloo, 2012). Studies show that one main objective of development (in cities and villages) is to create employment and welfare and that its main mechanism and tool is the entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship reduces the unemployment rate, increases people and resources' efficiency, and consequently, increases people's income. The word 'entrepreneurship' originated from the French word 'Entreprendre' meaning 'undertake'. According to Webster's definition, entrepreneur is a person who is committed to accept and organize the risks of an economical activity (Ahmadpour Dariani & Moghimi, 2007). Entrepreneurship can play a vital role in rural development through job

creation, life quality improvement, proper distribution of income, and optimal exploitation of the resources (Hosseini & Soleimanpour, 2006). It can create new chances for entrepreneurs to increase their income and capital. As well, it can improve life standards in rural communities through establishing new institutions and small and medium businesses (Henly, 2005). Like urban areas, entrepreneurship development in rural areas needs some major prerequisites including education, extension of entrepreneurship culture and infrastructure development (Sobel & King, 2008). Poor people of the world mostly live in rural areas of the developing countries and are known as the most vulnerable people suffering from poverty, undernourishment and literacy. Informed planning of rural development can make it possible to solve the problems of this huge population. Entrepreneurship activities are regarded as the driving force of economical growth, efficiency, innovation and job creation. Given the advantages of entrepreneurship, it is of a crucial importance in most developing countries including Iran. It has been regarded as a potential solution for such problems as the lack of economical improvement and growing rate of unemployment in the last decade (Nasirifard et al., 2015).

Literature shows that many studies have been already carried out on the most important economical and social factors affecting rural entrepreneurship. Some of these studies about economical and social factors are summarized in the next paragraphs.

In a study on economical factors, Lee and Tsang (2001) found that the distance from market and services was an obstacle to rural entrepreneurship that weakened business environment. Also, Wong et al. (2005) and Lundström and Stevenson (2001) suggested the creation of proper business environment through legal and tax-related supports (tax exemption, discounts and incentives) and provision of services and official supports as approaches to develop entrepreneurship. According to Kabir and Huo (2011), small investments help household subsistence considerably increasing women's participation among poor rural families in economical activities, especially decision-making. Also, Sharifzadeh et al. (2009) state that supporting environment, infrastructures and business environment are among the factors affecting the development of agricultural business.

Talking about social factors, Saxena (2012) found that rural entrepreneurs' problems are evidence of the effect of the lack of education among most rural people on the ignorance of the developments of technology, marketing and other modern technologies. Fogel et al. (2008) found the presence of experienced entrepreneurs, successful patterns and entrepreneurial people to be effective on creating new businesses. In a study on farmers, Ronning and Ljunggren (2007) observed that entrepreneurship development improved people's access to information resulting in the formation of a coherent business networks and new job opportunities.

After studying 15 proposed approaches, Ghanian (2010) selected the approach of 'establishment of tourism-oriented service production networks' as the most optimum approach for the studied region. Also, Sharifzadeh et al. (2009) stated that supporting environment, infrastructures and business environment were among the factors affecting the development of agricultural business. Lee and Tsang (2001) found that the distance from market and services was an obstacle to rural entrepreneurship that weakened business environment. Also, Wong et al. (2005) suggested the creation of proper business environment through legal and tax-related supports (tax exemption, discounts and incentives) and provision of services and official supports as approaches to develop entrepreneurship.

2. Materials and Methods

Masal is a town located in the northwest of Gilan Province and southwest of Talesh region. With an area of 633 km², it is limited to Rezvanshahr from the north, to Sowme'eh Sara from the south and east, to Fuman from the southwest and to Ardabil Province from the west (figure 1). According to the census of 2011, Masal has two counties (Markazi and Shanderman), two cities (Masal and Bazar Jomweh or Shanderman), four village centers (Homeh and Masal as the village center of Markazi county and Sheikhneshin and Shanderman as the village centers of Shanderman county) and 108 villages out of which 98 villages are inhabited and 10 villages are desolate. Accordingly, Masal city has a population of 52,496 living in 14,993 households out of which 5,638 households including 19,182 people (36.5%) live in urban areas and 9,356 households including 33,314 people (63.5%) live in rural areas. Figure 1 shows the geographical location of Masal.

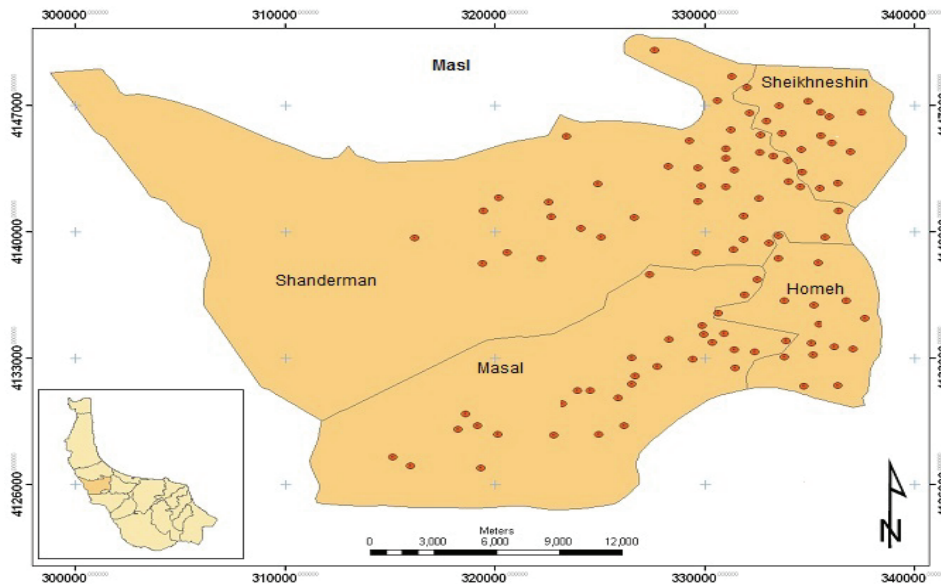


Figure 1 Geographical Location of Masal

The present study was a quantitative one which was a survey in terms of the control of variables and practical in terms of objective. Statistical population included three groups of rural entrepreneurs of Masal (N = 1513). Out of these three groups of rural residents of Masal including business owners, heads of the villages and members of Islamic Councils, 483 people were sampled by stratified sampling using Cochran's general formula. The data were collected by a questionnaire with five-point Likert scale. This questionnaire was filled out by a group of experts including faculty members to determine its reliability. The coefficient of Cronbach $\alpha = 0.77$ was in the range of 0.74-0.80 for both factors proving the high reliability of the questionnaire. The data were analyzed by SPSS (ver. 21) and MS-Excel Statistical Packages. Factor reliability of questionnaire was calculated by KMO static and Bartlett's test. KMO was found to be >0.5 showing the appropriateness of data for analysis. Bartlett's test, also, had significance level of <0.05 . KMO index and Bartlett's test in factor analysis were used to check the appropriateness of the number of data as pretest. In addition, given the nature of the indices, exploratory factor analysis was a good technique for the research.

3. Results and Discussion

Respondents' personal and professional characteristics

The study of the distribution of the frequency of respondents' personal and professional characteristics shows that most respondents (80.5%) were male. Also, most respondents had diploma or higher in terms of education. Rice growing had the highest frequency (31.5%) among respondents' jobs. Jobs like animal husbandry, official jobs and shop keeping had the next highest frequencies.

Table 1 frequently distribution of personal and professional characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Single	74	15.3
Married	409	84.7
Total	483	100.0
Un educated	14	2.9
Reading and writing	67	13.9
Intermediate	89	18.4
Diploma	183	37.9
Graduated	129	26.7
Total	483	100.0
Pedy farmer	152	31.5
Husbandry	113	23.4
Government employment	87	18.0
Shop keeper	37	7.7
Handy craft	32	6.6
Rice factory	23	4.8
Bee keeping	22	4.6
Wood Industry	15	3.1
Hospitality	2	0.4
Total	483	100.0

Analysis of economic factors

As is evident in Table 2, exploratory factor analysis shows that out of all economic variables affecting rural entrepreneurship planning from respondents' viewpoints, three indices explained 58.43% of the variance of economical factors affecting entrepreneurship.

Four variables were loaded in the first index which was named 'governmental support' index considering the nature of the loaded variables. This index explained 21.87% of total variable of economic factors affecting rural entrepreneurship. The variables loaded in this index included (in the order of importance) governmental supporting policy, production subsidization, prevention of the importation of similar foreign products and lowering production costs.

Three variables were loaded in the second index, named 'business environment' according to the nature of the variables. This index explained 18.94% of the total variance. The variables loaded in this index (in the order of importance) included appropriate location for production, small and home business, and relatives and friends' financial support.

The third index was also loaded with three variables and named ‘investment capacity’ which had the highest contribution in its formation. This index could explain 17.61% of total variable. The loaded variables included (in the order of their importance) ready access to production tools and inputs, ready access to sale market, and possession of financial credit. Table 2 shows the results of exploratory factor analysis for 10 economical variables affecting rural entrepreneurship planning as well as their standard deviations and mean in the studied statistical society. As is evident, the mean of all 10 economical variables was higher than average.

Table 2 Summary of factor analysis of economic factors affecting rural entrepreneurship planning

Economical variables	Governmental support	Business environment	Investment capacity	Mean	SD
Governmental supporting policy	0.804			4.25	0.854
Production subsidization	0.799			4.05	0.965
Prevention of the importation of similar foreign products	0.622			4.30	0.859
Lowering production costs	0.613			4.25	0.843
Appropriate location for production		0.826		4.40	0.817
Small and home business		0.686		4.22	0.889
Relatives and friends’ financial support		0.580		4.28	0.807
Ready access to production tools and inputs			0.809	4.33	0.899
Ready access to sale market			0.752	4.37	0.879
Possession of financial credit			0.606	4.58	0.681
Specific value	2.18	1.89	1.76	-	-
Explained variance (%)	21.87	18.94	17.61	-	-
Accumulated variance (%)	21.87	40.81	58.43	-	-

Figure2 shows three economical indices affecting rural entrepreneurship planning as well as the extent of their effectiveness and the variance explained by them

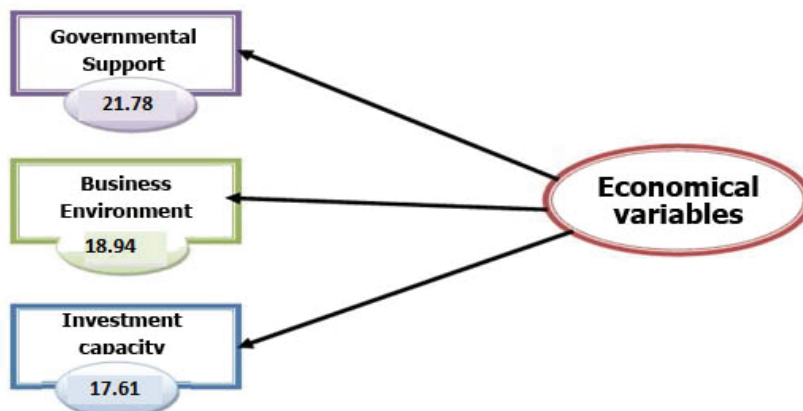


Figure 2 Triple economic indices affecting rural entrepreneurship planning

Analysis of Social factors

Social factors effective on rural entrepreneurship planning were, in total, 12 variables out of which three factors with specific value of >1 were inferred on the basis of Kaiser Criterion (Table 3). They explained 55.76% of the variance of the social factors effective on entrepreneurship.

The first index was loaded with five variables and was named ‘membership in social networks’ according to the nature of the accumulated variables. The specific value of this factor was 2.44 and could explain 20.38% of the total variance by itself. The variables loaded on this factor were (in the order of their effectiveness) continuous relation with village center and city center, introduction of successful businesses, sound perception of the concept of entrepreneurship, membership in rural cooperatives and syndicates, and familiarity with business rules and regulations.

The second index was loaded with three variables and was named ‘cooperative actions’ according to the nature of the accumulated variables. Its specific value was 2.21 and could explain 18.44% of the total variance by itself. The loaded variables included (in the order of their effectiveness) expansion of entrepreneurship trainings at all levels, fast and easy access to experienced experts, team-working, and inhibition of rural-urban migration.

The third index was also loaded with three variables and was named ‘communications and media’ according to the nature of the accumulated variables. Its specific value was 2.03 and could explain 16.93% of total variance by itself. The loaded variables included (in the order of their effectiveness) continuous use of broadcasting services, continuous relationship with friends and relatives, and noticing rural women. Table 3 presents the results of explorative factor analysis for 12 effective social variables on rural entrepreneurship and their standard deviation and mean in the studied society. As can be seen, the means of all 12 social variables were higher than the average.

Table 3 Summary of factor analysis social factors affecting rural entrepreneurship planning

social variables	Membership in social networks	Educational activities	Communications and medi	Mean	SD
Continuous relation with village and city center	0.768			3.87	0.980
Introduction of successful businesses	0.688			4.03	0.940
Sound perception of the concept of entrepreneurship	0.658			4.14	0.911
Membership in rural cooperatives and syndicates	0.542			3.63	1.199
Familiarity with business rules and regulations	0.526			4.05	0.922
Expansion of entrepreneurship trainings at all levels		0.724		4.20	0.901
Fast and easy access to experienced experts		0.696		4.29	0.806
Team-working		0.690		4.39	0.730
Inhibition of rural-urban migration		0.593		4.03	1.018

Continuous use of broadcasting services			0.830	3.96	1.024
Continuous relationship with friends and relatives			0.675	3.52	1.094
Noticing rural women			0.607	3.85	0.977
Specific value	2.44	2.21	2.03	-	-
Explained variance (%)	20.38	18.44	16.93	-	-
Accumulated variance (%)	20.38	38.82	55.76	-	-

Figure 3 depicts three effective indices on rural entrepreneurship planning in the order of their effectiveness and explained variance.

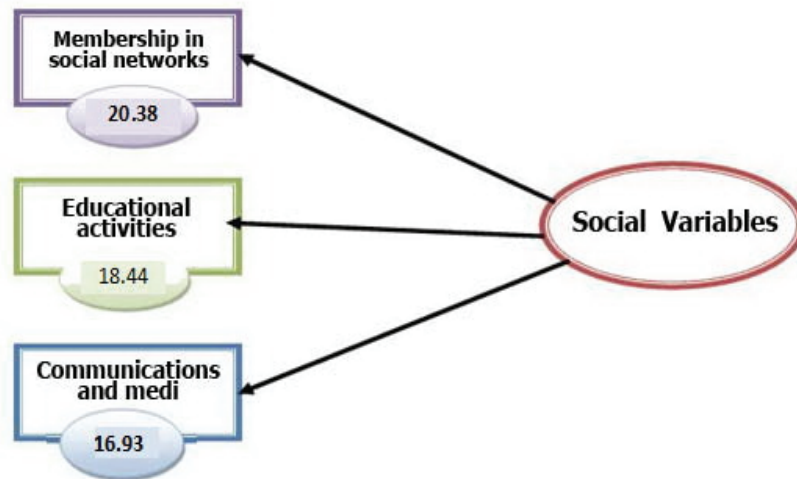


Figure 3 Triple social indices affecting rural entrepreneurship planning

4. Conclusion

The present study examined the economical and social factors affecting rural entrepreneurship planning from the viewpoints of those involved in rural entrepreneurship planning in Masal. The conceptual model of the study was introduced with 10 economical variables and 12 social variables.

According to the results of explorative factor analysis, economical variables were categorized in three indices named 'governmental support', 'business environment' and 'investment capacity'. Out of these three indices, 'governmental support' estimated the variance of economical factors more than two other indices and so, it should be the first priority in planning. Undoubtedly, economical factors play crucial role in effective enforcement and development of entrepreneurship in the studied villages and as rural experts believe, governmental supportive policy-making enriched with production subsidization to reduce its costs can be the key index of entrepreneurship. The huge potentials of the studied region for economical growth in various fields needs appropriate investment for realization. But the private sector does not have the capability for this investment. Thus, the public sector as the most important investing agent and/or sponsor can be effective in various

entrepreneurial economical fields in rural areas. These findings are in agreement with Kavooosi and Rahmati Zanjantalab (2011), Gharakhany (2011) (and Zerbinati and Souitaris (2005).

‘Business environment’ was ranked as the second most effective economical factor on rural planning. Family and relatives have a special place in rural jobs especially in rural regions because united, uniform family groups as micro-groups for familiar exploitation and business, particularly in highly diverse agricultural sector ensure the success of rural entrepreneurship plans at both design and implementation phases. These findings are consistent with Sarfaraz *et al.* (2014), Wong *et al.* (2005) and Jamshidi *et al.* (2013).

‘Investment capacity’ was found to be the third most important economical index. Ready access to production inputs on the one hand and ready access to sale market on the other hand are important factors in rural areas, investment on which is vital for the development of entrepreneurship. The potential to supply the required inputs especially agriculture inputs like bred seeds, fertilizers, herbicides and water is one the choices that undoubtedly enhance the effectiveness of agricultural activities considerably and therefore, it is necessary in entrepreneurship plans to pay a special attention to their supply and investment in proportion with regional capacity for agriculture businesses. As well, this process is completed with an appropriate market for the sale of agricultural products which can help the boost of this business and its growth. These findings are in agreement with Sharifzadeh *et al.* (2009), Saxena (2012), Hoy (1996) and Afarin *et al.* (2008).

According to the results of explorative factor analysis, social variables were divided into three indices named ‘membership in social networks’, ‘educational activities’, and ‘communications and media’. Out of these indices, ‘membership in social networks’ estimated the variance of social factors more than other indices. Given the close relationship between the residents of rural areas, researchers believe that business networking is easier and more efficient in these regions. Businesses work together on the basis of trust. Young (2010) showed that local networks are vital for the development of rural firms. These networks can help each other to access bigger markets, to increase their flexibility and tolerance and to improve their ability to accept risk. Our findings are in agreement with Ghanian (2010), Moti'e Langaroudi *et al.* (2012) and Kanani (2012).

‘Educational activities’ was ranked as the second priority of social factors. Today, entrepreneurship is recognized as a scientific discipline with its own models, processes and issues and its success depends on the acquisition of its relevant knowledge. A lot of experiences have been already gained about how to design plans, how to motivate and how to help entrepreneurs and have resulted in a considerable growth and development of entrepreneurship as the main mechanism for building the foundations of rural economics. With respect to management-oriented entrepreneurship education approach, the government is not expected to directly interfere in entrepreneurship education; rather, it should play its policy-making role and help the growth and development of entrepreneurship in society and the enhancement of businesses in rural areas by using informed experts’ knowledge and a public training process. Undoubtedly, entrepreneurship training and hope for employment can inhibit the migration of villagers to cities. They can increase the attractions of rural areas. These findings are in agreement with Ahmadi and Omid Najafabadi (2009), Azizi (2003), Charney and Libecap (2000), Saeedi Mehrabadi (1998) and Sharifzadeh and Zamani (2005).

The third priority of social factors was found to ‘communications and media’. Entrepreneurship is the prerequisite for technology development and technology development is the ground for entrepreneurship proving the importance of providing the ground for entrepreneurship and the responsibilities of the government. Government should development the ground for entrepreneurship in the framework of modern technologies, i.e. communications and information

networks, and should provide everybody with the access to these networks. In addition, it should create and develop the culture of their use and should adopt the relevant legislations. People who are members of social networks take fast actions to grasp the opportunities because of their access to information. The development of communications and contact with more extensive world by different methods exposes individuals to new opportunities allowing them to develop innovation. Stronger interaction with relative and friends and membership in new vocational opportunities can strengthen the inter-personal communication helping people to understand entrepreneurship and develop their activities quantitatively and qualitatively. These findings are consistent with Ahmadpour Dariani *et al.* (2004), Kumbhar (2013), Young (2010) and Alidoust and Lashgar Ara (2013).

5. Recommendations

According to the results of the present study, the followings are recommended:

- Holding training courses and conferences for villagers by experienced trainers or successful entrepreneurs about entrepreneurship and innovation,
- Supporting entrepreneurial activities and innovations of villagers by giving rewards in proportion with their performance and by compensating for the possible losses,
- Providing the facilities for the development of communications and production networks on the basis of the local attributes, and
- Redefinition of governmental supports by improving business environment and emphasizing entrepreneurship-oriented economical development.

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