

# Research Paper: Investigating the Role of Economic Components in the Sustainability of Micro-Businesses of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee Pensioners (Case Study: Villages of Khalil Abad City)

Ali Vaez Tabasi<sup>1</sup>, Khadije Buzarjomehri<sup>2\*</sup>, Hamdollah Sojasi Gheidari<sup>2</sup>

1. PhD Student, Department of Geography and Rural Planning, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran.

2. Associate Professor, Department of Geography and Rural Planning, Faculty of literature and human sciences, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran.



**Citation:** Vaez Tabasi, A., Buzarjomehri, Kh., & Sojasi Gheidari, H. (2023). Investigating the Role of Economic Components in the Sustainability of Micro-Businesses of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee Pensioners (Case Study: Villages of Khalil Abad City). *Journal of Sustainable Rural Development*, 7(1), 123-136. <https://doi.org/10.22034/jsrd.2023.407461.1156>

 <https://doi.org/10.22034/jsrd.2023.407461.1156>

## Article info:

Received: 01 Nov. 2022

Accepted: 23 Mar. 2023

## Keywords:

Stabilization of micro-businesses, Economic component, Pensioners of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, Villages of Khalil Abad city

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The present study aimed to investigate the role of economic components on the sustainability of small businesses of the pensioners of the Imam Khomeini Committee in the villages of Khalil Abad city.

**Methods:** This research is practical in terms of purpose and quantitative and survey in terms of research method, and the required data has been collected by documentary-questionnaire method. In order to analyze data, the SPSS software (F-Mamdani) model and combined models (FARAS + FKOPRAS) were used.

**Results:** The results of one sample T-test showed that the status of the economic component in the indicators (wealth of the individual, the individual's attitude towards the economic situation and rural production, the attitude towards the impact of the formation of new companies, the income status and employment status); with the value higher than the average number (3), was evaluated as desirable in the studied villages. In order to relate the economic component and the small businesses' stabilization of the clients, Spearman's correlation test was used. The results showed that, among the indicators of stabilization of small businesses, at a significance level of less than 0.05, a significant and positive relationship with the economic component existed. In the following, the ranking results of each of the micro business stabilization indicators (based on their importance and effectiveness of the economic component) showed that economic growth with a value of 72/76, and compatibility with the environment with 72/21, have assigned the highest and the lowest level of importance and influence from the experts' point of view. Finally, it was found that Naqab village has the highest level of sustainability, and the villages of Kalate Shadi, Nasrabad, and Haftkhane have the lowest ranking in sustainability of small businesses.

**Conclusion:** The development of economic components can be an influential factor in the sustainability of micro-businesses through the elimination of poverty, income increase, creation of job opportunities for unskilled people, capital accumulation via increasing efficiency productivity in the rural area, and prevention of urbanization and excessive immigration, It helped the process of developing small businesses in the villages of Khalil Abad and brought economic growth to the villages.

## \* Corresponding Author:

**Khadije Buzarjomehri, PhD**

**Address:** Department of Geography and Rural Planning, Faculty of literature and human sciences, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran.

**Tel:** +98 (915) 5199112

**E-mail:** azar1334@gmail.com

## 1. Introduction

The concern of job creation and reducing unemployment is one of the fundamental issues and problems in all countries, and the high rate of unemployment in developing countries, including Iran, is more critical due to the imbalance between economic, social, cultural, and political structures. Considering various phenomena such as the high birth rate in the two decades after the Islamic revolution, the lack of homogenous and balanced development of economic structures, imposed war, political, social, and global events and sanctions, chronically, our country has experienced an unemployment rate of more than 10% (Ebrahimpour & Samadi, 2014). In the meantime, to reduce unemployment, SMEs' development is considered one of the essential models and factors of job creation, and attention to these types of activities has increased. Today, besides their previous functions, SMEs are considered the main focus of countries' development, and extensive support has been provided to them by government and public institutions (Khoshnodifar et al., 2010). Examining the contribution of SMEs in creating employment, value-added, and GDP of countries also indicates that more than 95% of all created jobs belong to these types of businesses. For example, until 1998, in the 21 countries of APEC, there were about 40 million SMEs, which created between 30 and 60 percent of the GDP and more than 80 percent of the employment of these countries (Hajji & Pasebani, 2009). Therefore, companies and small businesses in many countries significantly create employment and distribute income (Garavan, 2012). According to UNIDO, sustainable jobs have at least fifteen characteristics, including sufficient income, durability period, continuous quantitative and qualitative development, dynamism, and appropriateness to expertise (UNIDO, 2002). In addition, indicators like compatibility with people's abilities and expertise, compliance with standards, diversity of the final product, job creation, compatibility with the environment, supply of raw materials, availability of appropriate technology, availability of expert workforce, ability to export, availability of suitable capacity, etc. can be added to previous indicators (Baden-Fuller & Haefliger, 2013, 423).

Therefore, small businesses influence the global economy through the four channels of entrepreneurship, innovation, and dynamic technological change in the industry, ultimately creating job opportunities and increasing income (Ghaffari et al., 2017). However, obtaining the desired funds to start, continue, and sustain these jobs

and businesses is always a problem for entrepreneurs (Deakins & Freel, 2003). Professionals in business place a particular emphasis on recognizing the business sustainability elements and usually refer to their sustainability conditions as conceptual and descriptive models (Johnson et al., 2008). One of the most critical factors affecting the sustainability of small enterprises is the economic component, which is determined by the indicators including economic status and rural production, the individual's attitude towards the impact of the formation of new companies, and income and employment status.

In Iran, contrary to the fact that there is not much evidence of a coherent welfare system, supporting organizations are trying to provide employment opportunities for their pensioners and provide them with the possibility of self-sufficiency. One of these organizations is the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, which follows this goal through the employment and self-sufficiency plan framework. This institution seeks to provide a suitable environment for employment, stable income for the clients, and gradual self-sufficiency based on their capabilities and employment feasibility (Kashk Daman, 2017: 86). Due to the diminution of the role of agriculture and the non-responsiveness of the relief committee pension, programs should be designed and implemented to replace or complement the income generation of the rural pensioners, job creation, mobility in rural areas, and improving their living standards. It is possible by diversifying employment and developing non-agricultural activities, creating handicraft workshops, and starting SMEs (Ghanbari et al., 2015). Imam Khomeini Relief Committee was established as a revolutionary institution in order to provide services to the weak sections of society and to support the helpless and orphaned families at the very beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, which has provided services to the most disadvantaged sections of the society in all parts of the country during more than four decades of activity and has gained considerable experience in this field. The most important feature of this institution is the use of people's resources, capacities, and capabilities to support and empower people with low incomes (Rezai Tabar et al., 2013). So one of the main goals of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, according to the Fifth Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is to empower the affairs of the clients, make talents and skills and technical and executive ability feasible, and employ the clients in order to implement the employment opportunities (Strategic documents of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, 1386).

In this regard, this committee in Khalilabad city as a supporting institution, considering the talent and abil-

ity of the villagers, has created the field of employment in the form of small and medium business plans and improving the income status of this group and also, by paying different types of loans in the form of home businesses, handicrafts and agriculture, follows various goals including reducing the dependence of the clients, empowering families, improving the economic and income situation and finally preventing rural migrations. Besides, this committee (by creating business plans, 284 plans in urban areas and 553 plans in rural areas) has always tried to enable the independence of clients with empowerment programs through the development of Entrepreneurship culture, effort, and creation of the necessary platforms for turning potential talents into actual ones among the people. Achieving the set goals will only be possible through the empowerment of the pensioners (Employment and self-sufficiency expert of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, Khalil Abad City, 2019). Based on this, the residents of the villages of Khalil Abad city, with the support of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, regarding the economic situation and rural production, their income and employment status, as well as their positive attitude towards the formation of new companies, have implemented small business plans, which has gradually led to the sustainability of small businesses in this area.

In this regard, the present research, on one hand, considers the necessity of employment of human resources in the development of the villages of the city and especially its economic effects, which is one of the essential legal provisions of the sixth rural development plan. On the other hand, considering the necessity of equal distribution of investments and equal employment opportunities in rural and urban areas, which is confirmed by the inequality in past development programs, it is aimed to investigate the role of the economic component in the sustainability of small businesses of the pensioners of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in the villages of Khalil Abad city and seeks to explore the following question:

To what extent does the economic component affect the sustainability of the small businesses of the pensioners of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee?

## 2. Literature Review

In Western literature, various words are used in the meaning of Business, while the most important words are Commerce, Trade, and Business. Commerce means the economic system that forms an environment for Business. This system includes legal, economic, politi-

cal, social, cultural, and technological systems operating in each country. A Business is an organization trading goods or services with consumers (Sullivan, 2003: 29). One of the dictionaries in the field of Business defines the word Trade as follows: the activity of selling goods and services in order to make a profit, buying or selling in the market (A Dictionary of Business, 1996: 503). The word Trade seems closer to the meaning of “Sale (بيع) in Arabic.” In the current research, the intended meaning of the word Business is its most general meaning: all the activities that humans perform to earn profit to meet their material needs. Therefore, Business is the activities a person performs as an employee in a large or small organization or the actions he takes in the form of microeconomic activities (Masoudipour, 2015).

The literature related to micro-business is extensive. This wideness has caused various definitions for this unit to be presented in different countries. These definitions differ according to age, population, cultural structure, and degree of development. Small Businesses in different countries have many similarities. However, it is impossible to get a single and identical definition of them, and each country has its definition of this Business according to its unique conditions. Most of these definitions are based on quantitative criteria, such as the number of employees and turnover (Reeve, 2000). Micro-business is those activities formed by a family member or members in the form of a business plan and leads to the production of services or goods that can be sold to the market outside the residential environment. Small businesses include a wide range of traditional to emerging businesses, which have had good production and service provision conditions in our country for a long time (Pardazi Moghadam, 2018). According to studies, small and micro businesses can quickly respond to market changes and customer needs and easily adapt to new conditions (Zhang et al., 2006). They behave dynamically in changing environmental conditions (Sara, 2007). Also, their role as an employment generator, social cohesion, poverty reduction, competitive advantage increase, and national and regional development has been emphasized in many countries (Christina et al., 2014). Of course, it should be noted that sustainability is a different concept from the continuation of business activity and is more related to the ability of business units to remain in the environment and society and, finally, sustainability in the entire economic system (Moshirzadeh, 2011). Business sustainability leads to greater flexibility, enabling them to adapt to changes (Spence, 2015). Based on the research, the creation of desirable social values, including social efficiency, social effectiveness,

social responsibility, intergenerational justice, and foresight, are the things that Business and society are looking for (Gibbs, 2009). Moradzadeh and Ahmadzadeh (2006) also considered the concept of business sustainability as the commitment of business units to carry out fundamental reforms to build a just world, with prosperity and comfort for everyone, in which the surrounding environment and primary culture of the people are preserved, and the future generations share from these resources have remained. In another definition of the ISO/CD9004 standard (2007), the sustainability of a company/organization depends on creating a balance between the financial-economic, social, and environmental benefits of that organization. It relates this category to the direct or indirect stakeholders of the organization. Business stabilization is the ability to maintain or develop performance in the long term and the result of continued satisfaction of business stakeholders over time (Khayatian et al., 2015; Yeganeh et al., 2016). In another research, the concept of sustainable Business has been explained as socially responsible Business, which implies creating a business with positive relations with the society in which it operates. The relationship of the Business with society and the environment is considered a critical factor in its ability to practical function (Roknuddin Eftekhari et al., 2014). Business sustainability by creating a common understanding of business logic, the possibility of analysis, improving business management, and creating a clear vision makes companies enter the market with their plans and ideas. As a result, it is possible to maintain and improve their company's position in the domestic and global markets (Johnson et al., 2008: 59).

Small and medium-sized enterprises are among the most common forms of economic businesses, whose role is accepted as the basis of the national economy in most countries (Halback & Gabrilsson, 2013) and, to a large extent, help the growth of National income and employment creation in developed and developing countries (Christina et al., 2014). In this regard, numerous studies have shown that in the 21st century, small and medium-sized businesses have been the primary source of productive employment, creating an entrepreneurial environment, accelerating creativity and innovation, and opening up new business opportunities (Aliqli et al., 2011; Nyroun, 2005).

Paying attention to the sustainability of SMEs can bring various environmental, social, and economic benefits, the most important of which are things like cost savings (waste reduction, unnecessary energy, fuel, and other inputs), better management of risks and dangers facing businesses (dealing with production chain pres-

ures and strict regulations, adopting sustainable strategies in beginning of activities and avoiding spending heavy expenses in emergencies) and maintaining social acceptance or license to act which means maintaining solid relationships with different stakeholders such as employees, customers, local community, other companies and moderators (Spence, 2015). So, all waste reduction and resource conservation programs are examples of business responsibility towards society and the environment. Commitment to such responsibilities, in addition to the direct benefit to society and the environment, brings many benefits to the businesses that imply it and creates opportunities to increase their income (Ambec & Lanoie, 2008).

The sustainability of businesses in the path of sustainable development leads to a win-win game for its owners on the one hand and society and the environment on the other hand (Parrish, 2010). Business sustainability is the strategic achievement and integration of a business's social, environmental, and economic goals through the systematic coordination of business processes within the leading organization to improve the long-term economic performance of a business and its value network (Carter & Rogers, 2008). In any case, it is clear that businesses are responsible for future generations, and it is not permissible to destroy the rights of future generations to the economic resources of the world, including the environment and other human beings, to gain more profit. Businesses' sustainability and continued profitability will only be possible if companies' sustainability affects the world economic system. Finally, Instability and the collapse of organizations and commercial enterprises will cause global economic stagnation and even collapse (Moshirzadeh, 2011). Accordingly, the sustainability of small businesses is also essential in rural areas.

The previous research that draws the development situation of the country's villages showed that the distance between the current situation and the desired one is so great that it is impossible to fill this gap with regular action and planning. So, in line with Lyons, it should be said that, from the economic aspect, the economic ideas used in the economic development of rural areas have not been practical so far. Therefore, in economic theories, special attention should be paid to spontaneous economic activities called micro-businesses (Roknuddin et al., 2009). Sustainable rural development is also capital due to its impact and relationship with economic growth and establishing social security. Countries lack rural development, have heterogeneous economic growth, and lack social justice. Accordingly, one of the most essential solutions in sustainable rural development is the growth

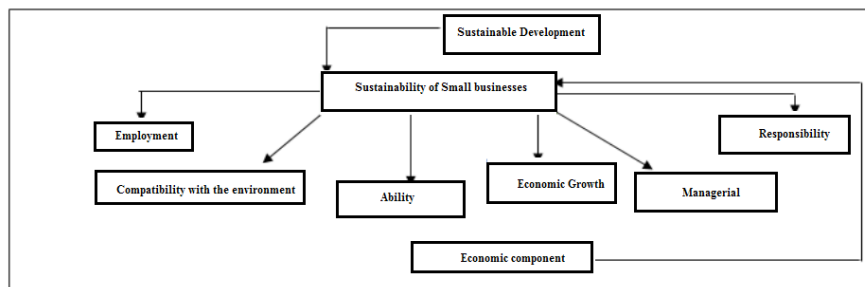
and development of small businesses (Shaft et al., 2009). Thereupon, the components of small business stabilization include responsibility, management, economic growth, capability, compatibility with the environment, and job creation, which focuses on the approach of sustainable development that is affected by the economic component in the following indicators: (economic situation and rural production, individual's attitude towards the impact of forming new companies, income and employment status) (Figure 1).

Regarding the literature review, research has been done inside and outside the country, and the most relevant findings have been mentioned.

Saadat and Daneshzadeh (2016), in research entitled "Identification and ranking the factors affecting business sustainability in small business classes (case study: Imam Khomeini Relief Committee of Mazandaran Province)," found that the highest priority is access to appropriate financial resources, which is related to the financial and economic criteria, and the lowest priority is the role of supporting organizations and marketing that is related to the product and market criteria. Khosravi-pour and Pourjavid (2016), in research titled "Study of factors affecting the growth of entrepreneurship in small businesses (SME) of rural women in West Islamabad city," using content analysis technique, concluded that promoting the quality of entrepreneurship in small businesses and expanding the culture of entrepreneurship and self-employment in rural society, especially among rural women who are considered as the capable arms of rural activities, are the application of encouraging and supportive policies by the government. Therefore, paying attention to the variables of each of these components and strengthening them can motivate rural women and develop this type of Business in the village. Razmjoo and Maqsoodi (2018), in research titled "Designing a model for the stabilization of micro-social businesses of the beneficiaries of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee," reached the results that the most direct impact on the stabilization of micro-social businesses is related

to strategies, the second variable is intervening factors which has a negative influence. Background and causal factors have a positive and significant impact on stabilizing social micro-businesses. The presented model with R2 of 0.47 expresses 47% of the total changes in stabilizing social micro-businesses. Sharafi et al. (2018), in research entitled "Designing a model of sustainability of small and medium agricultural enterprises in Kermanshah province," found that the main dimensions of sustainability of small and medium agricultural businesses include economic sustainability (consisting of financial performance, self-reliance and financial independence, customer and market performance, innovation and development of business activity), social sustainability (consisting social communication and interactions, social responsibility and mutual social trust), and environmental sustainability (including healthy and sustainable production, protection and optimal exploitation of environmental resources and waste disposal).

Karimian Bostani et al. (2019), in research titled "Analysis of effective factors in the stabilization of micro-businesses in informal settlements (case study: Shirabad, Zahedan)," reached these results that 44 tricks of the stabilization of micro-businesses are placed in four social-economic, infrastructural, extra- and intra-organizational, social capital and investment deposit categories. Karimi et al. (2021), in research entitled, Modeling the components affecting the sustainability of human resources in family businesses, found that among the identified components affecting the sustainability of human resources in family businesses, the components of family integrity, family organizational culture and balanced systems between work and life had the most significant impact. Javan and Esmaili (2021), in research titled, The Role of Keshavarzi Bank Loans in the Sustainability of Small Businesses (case study: Shanderman district, Masal city), concluded that there is a significant and positive relationship between Keshavarzi bank loans and business sustainability. Also, the employment and job creation component is influenced mainly by the credits of Keshavarzi Bank.



From the study of foreign research, the results of some researchers can be mentioned. In their research, [Bouazza et al. \(2015\)](#) established the factors affecting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in Algeria and categorized the factors into two groups. The external factors include the legal and regulatory framework, access to external financing, and human resources capacities, and the internal factors comprise entrepreneurial characteristics, management capacities, marketing skills, and technological capacities. [Woodfield et al. \(2017\)](#), in a research entitled “Sustainable entrepreneurship: another avenue for family business scholarship?” found that although sustainable entrepreneurship has been traditionally concentrated in the environmental and social responsibility literature, there are emerging paths where family businesses can be considered alongside community-based enterprise, and as a result, maintaining family businesses among generations can be a sub-branch of sustainable entrepreneurship knowledge. [Al-Tit et al. \(2019\)](#), in their research, Critical Success Factors of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Saudi Arabia: Insights from Sustainability Perspective, by conducting exploratory factors analysis, categorized these indicators into six factors, namely Individual factors, business characteristics, management factors, business support, capital availability, and business environment. Also, the results indicated that business support was the most critical factor that significantly affects the success of SMEs in Saudi Arabia, followed by individual factors, capital availability, and management factors. They also indicated that business characteristics and business environment factors had no significant impacts on the success of these enterprises. [Wubishet and Bizuayeha \(2020\)](#), in the research titled “Challenges that hinder the sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in east Gojjam zone, Northern Ethiopia,” found that The main challenges for the sustainability of the SMEs in the study area are lack of infrastructure (electricity, clean water, and workplace), scares of resources or finance to expand the enterprise, lack of marketing linkage or access, lack of knowledge and poor access to technologies, unfair tax request by the revenue office and weak support from the government enterprise office. Efficient training and support on financial reporting systems, marketing, sales promotion, and customer relations for SME managers and members should be given frequently. [Winarno and Agustina \(2022\)](#), in research, Challenges that hinder the sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in east Gojjam zone, Northern Ethiopia, found that successful social entrepreneurship requires the integration of all parties, beginning with a leading figure who starts a home business by involving several residents. Then,

there is the involvement of the village head, who organizes the management of Village-Owned Enterprises.

In summarizing the background of the research, it can be concluded that in the studied area, research has yet to be done on the sustainability of SMEs of rural pensioners. Therefore, with library and field studies and the use of researchers’ experiences and their localization in the study area, the most important economic components affecting the sustainability of the small businesses of the pensioners of relief committees in the rural areas of Khalil Abad City have been investigated. The amount of its effects will be identified using fuzzy models.

### 3. Methodology

This research is applied in terms of purpose, nature, and method. It is a quantitative and survey study. The data was collected through a questionnaire. The statistical population of the research includes the rural pensioners of the Relief Committee in Khalil Abad City; 1,106 of them have received job creation loans from the beginning of 2018 to the end of 2022. In order to select the sample villages among the 24 villages of Khalil-Abad city, the villages with more than 20 households, with at least 10 cases of them receiving employment loans to create a business, were selected. So, 19 villages (79% of the villages) were selected, and with Cochran’s formula, 283 people were determined as the sample size from the total of 1085 Imam Khomeini Relief Committee applicants. The sample population was also distributed among the villages according to percentage determination. The sample was also distributed among the villages according to percentage determination in [Table 1](#).

The research tool is a questionnaire, and the indicators were collected based on the study of the theoretical foundations and literature review. They were reflected in the form of a questionnaire ([Table 2](#)). It should be noted that the economic component has five indicators and 35 items. The individual’s wealth component includes eight items, which are the cost of buying a computer and internet communication systems, the cost of buying an intelligent mobile phone, the cost of buying machines and devices related to Business, the cost of buying cars and vehicles, the price of a residential house, the amount of personal property and assets, the amount of current capital and Liquidity of the individual and income.

The component of a person’s attitude towards the economic situation and rural production includes 11 items: adequate financial support and access to capital, adequate distribution of loans and facilities to rural people, public

government subsidies to promote and create business activities, investment and financial support of government organizations, venture capitalists for private support of small business workshops, investment in business activities and reduction of 15-24 year youth unemployment rate, production rate, variety of production, amount of production in different sectors of rural businesses, familiarity with local, regional, national, urban and rural markets, identification of sales channels and finding suitable customers.

In the component of the attitude towards the impact of the formation of new companies, there are items such as the growth of industrial businesses in the village, the growth of small businesses, the growth of the number of new animal husbandry companies, the growth of the number of Aquatic animals and fish breeding companies, the growth of handicrafts businesses.

In the component of the income status, there are also items such as increasing income from business activities, increasing the amount of one's income compared to the cost of living, the effect of production income on increasing the well-being of people's lives, increasing income from small businesses and its effect on the purchasing power of the rural people.

In the job status component, there are items such as satisfaction with your business environment, feeling satisfied with your abilities in Business, job security, work benefits such as insurance and retirement in your job satisfaction, satisfactory job opportunities in the development of small businesses, employment generation through production business and its effect on the increase of the village population.

The sustainability of the micro-business component also has six indicators. In the job creation index, there are items such as creating jobs for young people, providing a platform for developing home businesses, developing previous businesses, activating production potentials, creating Self-employment, and decreasing seasonal unemployment. In the empowerment index, increasing people's risk-taking power, economic resilience, requiring employee insurance to secure the future, reducing economic dependence on others, planning power for the economic unit, job security, and job skills, increasing innovation and creativity, and appropriateness of businesses with the expertise of people, are the related items. In the economic growth index, the items like increasing production in the agricultural and manufacturing sector job opportunities, and the environmental compatibility index, the items such as preservation of histori-

cal and tourism textures, prevention of water pollution, the quantity of water and soil pollution, not harming pastures, preservation of plant and animal species, the development of ecotourism, the proper location of Business, and the prevention of garbage production exist. The management index includes knowledge and information management in Business, participatory management in Business, a plan for managing production and market risks, and the responsibility index. Social welfare includes items such as the level of interaction and social communication, responsibility and social commitment, social popularity and credibility among local people, creating social values, respecting the rights of business workers, helping to reduce poverty, preventing migration of local people, reducing class gap and increasing social equality.

Experts confirmed the construct validity of the questionnaires, and to determine the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha statistic was used. The value was (0.81) for the small business sustainability questionnaire and (0.79) for the economic questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha results for questionnaires indicate acceptable reliability in order to analyze information, SPSS software and, and to rank each of the micro business sustainability indicators (based on the level of importance and effectiveness from the economic component, the integrated model (FARAS + FCOPRAS), as well as in order to rank villages based on the level of sustainability of their small businesses, emphasizing the role of the economic component, the (F-Mamdani) model were used.

Khalil Abad city is located in the eastern part of the country and west of the central district of Razavi Khorasan province. It is limited to the Kohsarakh part of Kashmar city from the north, Bejestan city, and Gonabad city from the south, Kashmer city and Faizabad city from the east, and the central part of Bardeskan city from the west. According to the general population and housing census in 2015, the population of this city was 51,701 people and 16,684 households. Also, according to the latest national divisions, Khalilabad city at the end of 2015 had two towns, two districts, four villages, 24 inhabited villages, and 22 villages with more than 20 households. (Program and budget, first volume, 2015: 415). The studied villages are included in two districts (Central and Sheshtaraz) and four villages (Sheshtaraz, Humeh, Rastaq, Kavir).

### 4. Findings

First, before examining the role of the economic component in the sustainability of small businesses in the studied villages, it was considered necessary to examine the normality of the indicators in the two mentioned variables. According to Table 3, the results obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicate that all sustainability of micro-businesses and economic indicators have a normal distribution. According to this, the obtained

results showed that the significance level in all indicators is greater than the error value (0.05); therefore, at a significance level of 95%, the distribution of this sample is normal.

In the following, in order to investigate the status of the economic component among the pensioners of the Imam Khomeini committee in the villages of Khalil Abad city, a one-sample T-test was used. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 1. Sample (studied villages)

	District	rural district	Village	Household Number	Sample size
1	Central	Humeh	Dehno	1347	28
2	Central	Humeh	Mazde	835	16
3	Central	Humeh	Nasr Abad	697	21
4	Central	Humeh	Mohamad Abad	227	12
5	Central	Rastaq	Neqab	780	21
6	Central	Rastaq	Ebrahim Abad	681	26
7	Central	Rastaq	Bezanjesrd	402	14
8	Central	Rastaq	Kalate Shaadi	281	11
9	Central	Rastaq	Hosein Abad	183	6
10	Shesh- taraz	Shesh- taraz	Jabuz	1070	13
11	Shesh- taraz	Shesh- taraz	Argha	834	18
12	Shesh- taraz	Kavir	Sad-e-din	611	13
13	Shesh- taraz	Kavir	Jafar Abad	455	13
14	Shesh- taraz	Kavir	Mehdi Abad	367	26
15	Shesh- taraz	Kavir	Kaheh	298	10
16	Shesh- taraz	Kavir	Ali Abad	105	6
17	Shesh- taraz	Shesh- taraz	Takmar	233	10
18	Central	Rastaq	Haft Khane	153	5
19	Central	Rastaq	Mir Abad	268	14
total	-	-	-	9827	283

Source: Iran Statistics Center, 2015



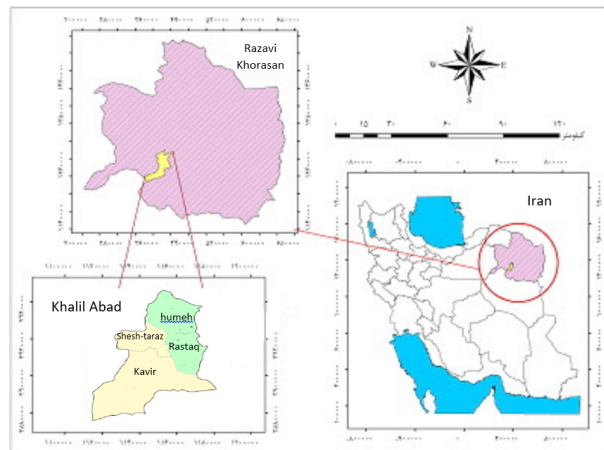
Table 2. Research indicators

Component	Indicator	Component	Indicator
sustainability of micro-businesses	Job creation	Economic	Wealth
	Compatibility with environment		Attitude towards the economic situation and rural production
	Empowerment		Attitude towards the impact of forming new companies
	Economic Growth		Income status
	Management		Employment status
	Responsibility and social welfare		

Source: Motiei Langroudi et al., 1391; Alidoust et al., 1391; Moradi et al., 1395; Hemati Vineh et al., 1391; Qhambarali & Rostami, 1394; Eftekhari et al., 1385; Tavakoli & Movahedi, 1395; Ghanbari & Nouri, 1396; Sharafi et al., 1398







**Table 3.** Kolmogorov Smirnov test results for micro business sustainability component and economic component

Micro business sustainability component indicators	significance level	Error rate	K-S test	conclusion
Job creation	333/0	05/0	330/1	Normal
Compatibility with environment	345/0	05/0	357/1	Normal
Empowerment	314/0	05/0	299/1	Normal
Economic Growth	341/0	05/0	351/1	Normal
Management	331/0	05/0	324/1	Normal
Responsibility and social welfare	355/0	05/0	366/1	Normal
Indicators of the economic component	significance level	Error rate	K-S test	conclusion
Wealth	344/0	05/0	354/1	Normal
Attitude towards the economic situation and rural production	355/0	05/0	366/1	Normal
Attitude towards the impact of forming new companies	334/0	05/0	322/1	Normal
Income status	351/0	05/0	360/1	Normal
Employment status	335/0	05/0	331/1	Normal

Source: results of the research (2023)



**Table 4.** The status of the economic component among Imam Khomeini Relief Committee pensioners

Indicator	Average	T	Significance level (2 domains)	Confidence interval	
				Up	Down
Wealth	15/3	136/25	000/0	21/3	10/3
Attitude towards the economic situation and rural production	11/3	112/25	000/0	19/3	02/3
Attitude towards the impact of forming new companies	15/3	123/25	000/0	21/3	04/3
Income status	21/3	156/25	000/0	29/3	17/3
Employment status	17/3	143/25	000/0	22/3	11/3

Source: results of the research (2023)



According to Table 4, the status of the economic component in the mentioned indicators (wealth of a person with an average value of 3.15, attitude towards the economic situation and rural production with a value of 3.11, attitude towards the impact of the formation of new companies with a value of 3.15, income status with a value of 3.21, employment status with a value of 3.17); With the value above the average number (3), was evaluated as favorable in the studied villages. Then, to relate the economic component and the sustainability of micro-businesses of the pensioners, Spearman’s correlation test was used, and the results were described in Table 5.

As it was shown in Table 5, among the sustainability indicators of micro-businesses: job creation with a cor-

relation value of 0.554, compatibility with the environment with a value of 0.567, empowerment with a value of 0.577, Economic growth with a value of 0.556, management with a value of 0.533, and responsibility and social welfare with a value of 0.576, at a significance level of less than 0.05, a significant and positive relationship was observed with the economic component.

Then, in order to rank each of the sustainability indicators of micro-businesses (based on their importance and effectiveness of the economic component), the technique of integrated models (FARAS + FCOPRAS) was used. The results are as described in Table 6.

**Table 5.** The relationship between the economic component and the micro-businesses sustainability among clients

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	correlation coefficient	significance level	type of relationship
economic component	Job creation	554/0	002/0	Significant and Positive
	Compatibility with environment	567/0	001/0	Significant and Positive
	Empowerment	577/0	001/0	Significant and Positive
	Economic Growth	556/0	002/0	Significant and Positive
	Management	533/0	003/0	Significant and Positive
	Responsibility and social welfare	576/0	001/0	Significant and Positive

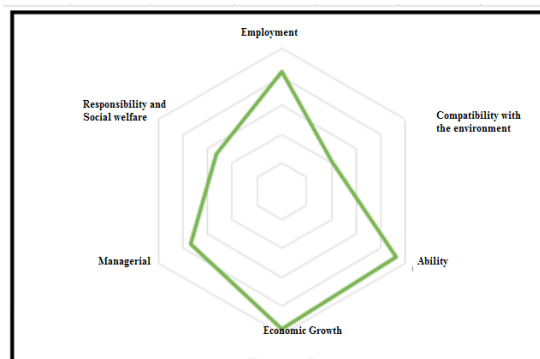
Source: results of the research (2023)



**Table 6.** Ranking the micro business sustainability indicators

indicators	QL	QMAX	QMIN	QMAX - QMIN	Final score
Job creation	213/14	213/15	334/13	879/1	64/72
Compatibility with environment	00/14	000/15	145/13	855/1	21/72
Empowerment	421/14	443/15	231/13	212/2	72/72
Economic Growth	556/14	765/15	453/13	197/2	76/72
Management	113/14	109/15	223/13	889/1	54/72
Responsibility and social welfare	103/14	009/15	223/13	786/1	33/72

Source: results of the research (2023)



**Figure 3.** The importance and effectiveness of each of the micro business sustainability indicators with an emphasis on the economic component. Source: research findings, 2023



According to Table 6, among the sustainability indicators of small businesses, economic growth with a value of 72.76, empowerment with a value of 72.72, job creation with a value of 72.64, management with a value of 72.54, responsibility and social welfare with a value of 72.33 and compatibility with the environment with a value of 72.21, have the highest and lowest importance and influence from the experts' point of view.

After ranking each of the sustainability indicators of small businesses, the Fuzzy Mamdani model was used to rank the villages of Khalil Abad city based on their level of sustainability in small businesses with an emphasis on the economic component. The results are described in Table 7.

As the results showed, the stability of small businesses in the villages of Khalil Abad city in the rural areas (Homah et al.) is favorable and moderate. Also, according to Figure 4, the village of Naqab has the highest rank,

and the villages of Kalate Shadi and Nasrabad, Haftkhane, have the lowest rank.

Based on the results, the favorable stability of small businesses indicates that the concentration of most of the activities of micro-businesses in this city is in the places that, in terms of natural resources and geographical areas, are in the locations with suitable climate and most of the lands in this area are agricultural lands. In addition, in the studied villages, the rich pastures were the origin of small business centers, and all the centers of small business activities are connected to the centered village and the city with suitable transportation roads and systems. Most of these centers are located the shortest distance from the city center (Kashmar and Khalil Abad), with a distance of less than 20 km. Also, industrial centers such as industrial factories, conversion industries, and Jihad Keshavarzi service centers located in rural centers have influenced the growth and expansion of successful small business activities in rural areas, including Neqab village.

Table 7. Sustainability of micro businesses in villages with emphasis on the economic component

Village	Membership function	Condition	Village	Membership function	Condition
Dehno	55/0	moderate to favorable	Hosein Abad	53/0	moderate to favorable
Mazde	56/0	moderate to favorable	Jabuz	58/0	moderate to favorable
Nasr Abad	51/0	moderate to favorable	Argha	55/0	moderate to favorable
Mohamad Abad	57/0	moderate to favorable	Sad-e-din	52/0	moderate to favorable
Neqab	66/0	Favorable	Jafar Abad	54/0	moderate to favorable
Ebrahim Abad	61/0	Favorable	Mehdi Abad	59/0	Favorable
Bezanjesrd	58/0	moderate to favorable	Kaheh	57/0	moderate to favorable
Kalate Shaadi	51/0	moderate to favorable	Ali Abad	55/0	moderate to favorable
Mir Abad	53/0	moderate to favorable	Haft Khane	51/0	moderate to favorable
Takmar	55/0	moderate to favorable			

Source: results of the research (2023)

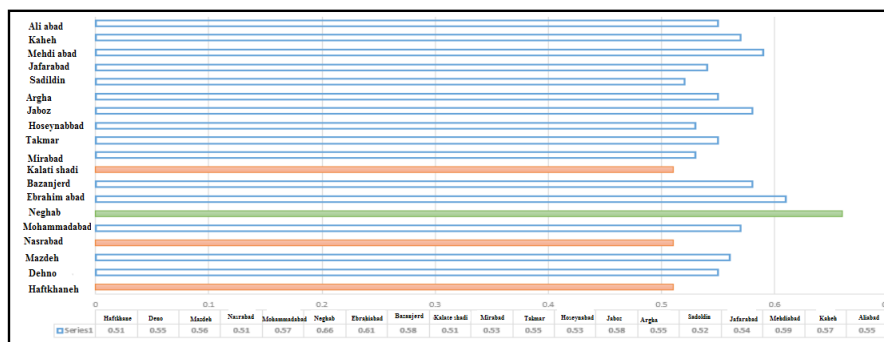


Figure 4. The state of sustainability of small businesses in villages. source: research findings, 2023



## 5. Discussion

The present study was conducted to investigate the role of the economic component in the sustainability of micro-businesses of the Imam Khomeini Committee beneficiaries in the Khalil Abad City villages. Based on the obtained results, the economic component has had a positive and significant impact on the sustainability of the small businesses of the Imam Khomeini Committee's clients in the villages of Khalil Abad city. Considering the significant and positive relationship between two variables, if computer and internet communication systems at home, smart mobile phones, machines and devices related to businesses, in addition to providing vehicles, capital and money Liquidity, receiving loan facilities and financial support from government and private organizations provided for the entrepreneur, and on the other hand, entrepreneurs have enough familiarity with local and regional markets, identify sales channels and find suitable customers to supply their products, It will provides a suitable platform for the sustainability of micro-businesses in terms of (job creation, compatibility with the environment, empowerment, economic growth, management, responsibility and social welfare). The growth of the economic component caused employment and reduction of unemployment for the youth of the village, the development of home businesses, the creation of new businesses, the expansion and development of previous businesses, and the increase of innovation and creativity in the villages of Khalil Abad city. Also, based on the results, it was found that among all the sustainability components of small businesses, economic growth has the highest impact from the economic component in the studied villages. Results also showed that the stability of small businesses in the villages of Khalil Abad city in the rural areas (Humeh et al.) is favorable and moderate.

Based on the results, moving towards small businesses is not only an optimal and profitable thing but also, in the country's current conditions, achieving sustainable development and the goals of Iran's 20-year vision plan is necessary. Due to the emergence of micro business concepts and their tangible role in job creation, creation of innovation in products and services, penetration in particular markets, creation of healthy competition, and prevention of monopoly that follows sustainable economic growth in a strategic environment, the necessity of the development of the Khomeini Relief Committee becomes more evident for the government. So, in the villages of Khalil Abad city, it can be briefly said that the development of economic components can be an influential factor in the sustainability of small businesses and

through poverty reduction, increase of income, creation of opportunities, job opportunities for unskilled workforce, accumulation of capital through increasing efficiency, productivity in the rural sector, and also by prevention of urbanization and indiscriminate migrations, helps in the process of developing small businesses in the villages of Khalil Abad city and grows the economic in the villages. The research results are consistent with the studies (Saadat & Daneshzadeh, 2016; Khosravipour & Pourjavid, 2016; Sharafi et al., 2018; Karimian Bastani et al., 2019; Javan & Esmaili, 2014; El-Tit et al., 2019). Finally, in line with the obtained results, the following solutions were suggested:

In any development program, the stability of small businesses is one of the essential features in villages, which leads to the continuation of the programs. Because the durability and stability of the villages of Khalil Abad depend on the dynamics and durability of the economy and the development of small businesses is considered the primary economic goal in the villages, the creation of suitable economic conditions, such as granting small loans to the beneficiaries has been proposed as one of the most appropriate economic methods to achieve the goal of developing small businesses.

### Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

### References

- Alidoost, S., Lashgar Ara, F., & Farajalah Hosseini, S. (2013). Prioritization of barriers to entrepreneurship development of rural women in Garmsar city. National conference of entrepreneurship and management of knowledge-based businesses, November 2013. (In Persian)
- Alitavakoli, F., & Movahedi, R. (2015). The role of microcredit in the development of rural women's entrepreneurship. *Journal of agriculture in entrepreneurship*, 3 (3) 39-55. (In Persian)
- Al-Tit, A., Omri, A., & Euch, J. (2019). Critical Success Factors of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Saudi Arabia: Insights from Sustainability Perspective. *Administrative Sciences*, 9(2), 32.

- Baden-Fuller, C., & Haefiger, S. (2013). Business Models and Technological Innovation, *Long Range Planning*, 46 (6): pp. 419-426.
- Benzazoua Bouazza, A., Ardjouman, D., & Abada, O. (2015). Establishing the factors affecting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in Algeria. *American International Journal of Social Science*, 4(2): 101-115
- Carter, C.R., & Rogers, D.S. (2008). A framework of sustainable supply chain management: moving toward new theory. *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*, 38 (5): 360-387.
- Deakins, K., & Freel, D. (2003). Nordicentrepreneurship research. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32 (2): 313-338.
- Ebrahimpour, H., & Samadi, A. (2014). Investigating the effect of stabilization factors on the empowerment of home business plan implementers; Case study: the pensioners of Khomeini Relief committee of Ardabil city. *Work and Society Quarterly*; 185(1) 38-52. (In Persian)
- Garavan, T. N., Costine, P., & Heraty, N. (1995). The emergence of strategic human resource development. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 19(10): 4-10.
- Ghafari Ashtiani, P., & Pirmohammadi, F. (2017). Organizational innovation in small and medium companies. *Tadbir Monthly*, 199(1). (In Persian)
- Ghanbari, Y., Nouri, R., & Ghafoorzadeh, H. (2015). Evaluation of the role of Imam Khomeini's relief committee in the development of sustainable rural employment. *Islamic Economy*, 16(4) 117-146. (In Persian)
- Hajji, R., & Pasebani, M. (2009). UNIDO industrial cluster development approach in the study of SME: case study of automotive parts manufacturers in East Azarbaijan province. *Journal of Industrial Administration*, 4(8), 31-53. (In Farsi).
- Hemati Vinne, H., Abedi Sarvestani, A., Abdollahzadeh, G., Mahbubi, M. (2013). Investigating obstacles to the development of home businesses and businesses of rural women in Kermanshah. *National Conference on Entrepreneurship and Management of Knowledge Enterprise*, November 2013. (In Persian)
- Javan, A & Esmaili, R. (2022). The role of Keshavarzi bank credits in the sustainability of small businesses (case study: Shanderman district, Masal city). *Quarterly Journal of Geographical Studies of Mountainous Regions*; 3(1) 135-159. (In Persian)
- Johnson, M.W., Christensen, C.M., & Kagerman, H. (2008). Re-inventing your BusinessModel. *Harward Business review*, 86 (12): 5768-.
- Karimi, Y., Dostar, M., Akbari, M., & Esmailpour, R. (2022). Modeling the factors affecting the sustainability of human resources in family businesses. *Management research in Iran*, 26(2) 71-93. (In Persian)
- Karimian Bostani, M., Mir, M., & Shahraki, D. (2019). Analysis of effective factors in the stabilization of small businesses in informal settlements (case study: Shirabad neighborhood, Zahedan). *Psychology studies and educational sciences*; 6(4) 1-12. (In Persian)
- Khoshkdaman, M. (2008). A view of the relief committee's employment and self-sufficiency plans. *Monthly Book of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 86-89. (In Persian)
- Khoshnodifar, Z., Sokhtanlo, M., & Malekmohammadi, I. (2010). Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Organization performance impact on the success rate of small businesses and medium entrepreneurs in agricultur. *Journal of Agricultural and Development Economics*, 18(72), 139-160. (In Farsi).
- Khosravipour, B., & Porjavid, S. (2016). Analyzing the factors affecting the growth of entrepreneurship in small and medium enterprises (SME) of rural women in Islamabad West, *Rural Development Strategies Quarterly*; 4(3), 299-315. (In Persian)
- Masoudipour, S. (2015). Halal business concepts and indicators from the perspective of Islam. *Ethic Scientific and Promotional*, 6(24) 49-70. (In Persian)
- Moshirzadeh, H. (2013). Corporate sustainability. *Auditor Journal*, 59(1) 62-54. (In Persian)
- Motiei Langroudi, S., Ghadir Masoom, M., Yadollahi Farsi, J., & Torkashvand, Z. (2013). Explanation of the factors affecting the empowerment of villagers in the development of entrepreneurship (case study: Zand and Samen sections of Malayer city). *Human Geography Research Quarterly*, 80(1) 119-138. (In Persian)
- Parrish, B.D. (2010). Sustainability-driven entrepreneurship: Principles of organization design. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25: 510-52.
- Qafari, M. (2019). Expertise in employment and self-sufficiency of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee of Khalil Abad city. *Personal interview*. (In Persian)
- Qanbar Ali, R., Rostami, F. (2014). Investigating the relationship between entrepreneurs' values and their understanding of success. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Agriculture*, 1(2) 77-92. (In Persian)
- Razmjoo, M., & Maqsoodi, T. (2018). Designing a model for the stabilization of micro-social businesses of the beneficiaries of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee. *Social Capital Management*, 6(1), 23-39. (In Persian)
- Reeve, P. (2000). Practical implications of sustainable development. *The safety & health practioner*, 18(4): 56-57
- Rezai Tabar, R., Zare, H., & Moghimi, S. (2013). The model of interaction empowerment through social partnerships in Imam Khomeini relief committee with a mosque-centered approach. *Journal of Islamic management*, 20(2), 147-173. (In Persian)
- Roknuddin Eftekhari, A., Imani Khoshkho, M., Purtaheri, M., Pourjam, A. (2014). Analysis of the social dimension of sustainable entrepreneurship management in the hotel industry (case study: 4 and 5 star hotels in Tehran). *social tourism studies*; 3 (6). (In Persian)
- Roknuddin Eftekhari, A., Sajasi Qeidari, H. (2019). Rural development with emphasis on entrepreneurship (definitions, views and experiences). *Tehran: Samt Publications*, first edition. (In Persian)
- Saadat, A., & Daneshzadeh, M. (2016). Identifying and ranking factors affecting business sustainability in small businesses (case study: Khomeini Relief Committee of Mazandaran Province). *The third annual conference on business management and economics*. (In Persian)

- Sarosa, S. (2007). The information technology adoption process within Indonesian small and medium enterprises. University of Technology, Sydney
- Shaft, A., Darvish, H., Namdar Ali Abadi, A., & Gholami, R. (2019). Presentation of rural entrepreneur model in economic and social development. National conference of sustainable rural development with emphasis on the agricultural sector. North Khorasan, Islamic Azad University, Bojnord branch. September 23 and 24. (In Persian)
- Sharafi, L., Rezaei, R., Mirakzadeh, A., & Karami Dehkordi, E. (2016). Examining models for measuring the level of sustainability of agricultural SMEs. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Agriculture*, 4(4) 1-20. (In Persian)
- Sharif Zadeh, A., Razavi, M., Arabion, A., Gholamrezaei, S. (2017). Facilitating collective entrepreneurship as a behavior for the emergence and development of entrepreneurial co-operatives. *Cooperative Monthly*, 196(1) 115-123. (In Persian)
- Strategic documents of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee. (1356). Tehran. (In Persian)
- Sullivan, A., Sheffrin, S. M. (2003). *Economics: Principles in Action* (1996), Second Edition, Oxford, p. 503.
- Tavakoli, M. (2014). Factors affecting the success of rural entrepreneurs in Mahidasht region. Master's thesis in the field of civil engineering and rural development, Razi University of Kermanshah. 5-17. (In Persian)
- Winarno, A., Yuli, A. (2022). The social entrepreneurship integration model: an alternative to community income stability in rural area in East Java, Indonesia. *Central European Management Journal* VOL30 Issue4 2022.
- Wubishet Ayele, A., & Bizuayeha Derseh, A. (2020). Challenges that hinder the sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in east Gojjam zone, Northern Ethiopia. *International journal of development research*, 10(7) 37926-37934.
- Woodfield, P., Woods, Ch., Shepherd, D. (2017). Sustainable entrepreneurship: another avenue for family business scholarship?. *Journal of family business management*.
- UNIDO. (2002). UNIDO Business Partnerships for Industrial Development. Available at: [https://www.unido.org/fileadmin/user\\_media/Publications/Pub\\_free/Partnership\\_guide](https://www.unido.org/fileadmin/user_media/Publications/Pub_free/Partnership_guide).
- Zhang, M., Macpherson, A., & Jones, O. (2006). Conceptualizing the learning process in SMEs: Improving innovation through external orientation. *International Small Business Journal*, 24 (3): 299-323.