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Women Entrepreneurship Development in Kosovo: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Business leadership by women is a special challenge in Kosovo, as, until the 90s, it was almost taboo. In this context, from 2000 onwards in Kosovo, there have been many businesses run by businesswomen, which is a great contribution to the emancipation of modern society. Women's businesses in Kosovo face many challenges and barriers; thus, this research study aims to address this issue. The purpose of this study is to investigate and find out the challenges and obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in their business activities. The empirical investigation will be conducted using a questionnaire-based survey of 213 women entrepreneurs in the Republic of Kosovo in 2021. The data were collected through a questionnaire with closed questions. A total of 213 female entrepreneurs from all regions of Kosovo participated in the research. Based on the results achieved through Factorial analysis, one of the main challenging factors of women-led businesses are the instability of doing business that is directly related to high taxes and high loans, bureaucracy, lack of support, lack of modern technology, and access to the market, with statistical significance at 5% level of significance. Business leadership by women needs to be supported by the Government by enabling lower interest rates and granted loans, investments in terms of staff and products, as well as technology modernization.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Barriers; Women Empowerment.

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Introduction

Business creation has recently taken exceptional attention since it is considered a developing and progressive idea leading to economic development and job creation (Neumann, 2021; Chahine, 2020; Ndemet al., 2018; Delfmannet al., 2016). Because many countries worldwide face different economic challenges, the conception of stimulating more entrepreneurial activity is becoming one of the main priorities for many national nations.

From a very early age, entrepreneurship has been characterized as a male-dominated phenomenon (Sheweta et al., 2018). It got such consideration because women, in contrast to men, have been categorized as weaker as gender in terms of physical and emotional aspects. In a social system, women have taken the back seat to men for centuries. Nevertheless, since the 1970s, such consideration started to get a different point of view by suggesting that women may help to solve stagnating global economic development (Meyer, 2018).

Even though women's entrepreneurship is getting global attention, when it comes to business creation, women entrepreneurs face some difficulties, such as gender barriers. One of the main barriers they deal with is access to finance, inferior education and training, sociocultural boundaries, lack of access to information and communication technology, and balance between work and home responsibilities (Norman et al., 2020). According to Eliana et al. (2018), women as entrepreneurs tend to grow more slowly, have useless external finances, and exhibit lower levels of profitability and productivity, which in turn make them have a weaker economic performance. This performance also depends on the choice of sectors they tend to concentrate on, such as service, retail, and hospitality (Dos Santos, Valdeci Ferreira et al. 2019).

Despite difficulties such as gender barriers, there exist opportunities as well. One of the main indicators of world development is women's entrepreneurship (Patil and Deshpande, 2018; Brush and Cooper, 2012). According to Cooney (2012), in terms of individual fulfillment, women's entrepreneurship provides social and economic growth by breaking class, gender, age, race, and sexual orientation barriers. The presence of women entrepreneurs in business activity has started to increase, which, in turn, has changed the demographic features of business (Jakhar et al., 2020). Women play an active role in society and the economy by producing jobs, human development, poverty reduction, education, health, wealth, and the nation's development, especially in developing countries (Sajjad et al., 2020).

This research paper reviews existing data on challenges and opportunities faced by women in entrepreneurial activities. Our goal is to identify the main chances and difficulties women entrepreneurs face and how to overcome those obstacles to improve women's entrepreneurial activity.

The first contribution of this paper is to offer new pieces of evidence on this study field since very few studies have been made to recognize the challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in Kosovo. The second contribution is not to present an overall frame or to involve all previous papers on this theme but to develop the conceptual outline and present a critical discussion of evidence. The third contribution of this paper is proposing recommendations that will support women entrepreneurs in building their skills and staying ahead of the competition in local and global markets.

The paper proceeds in four sections: Section 2 reviews the literature, Section 3 discusses the research methodology and data; Section 4 provides the results; Section 5 provides the conclusion.

Literature Review

Women entrepreneurship is considered to be a very special and current topic since many types of research have been focused on investigating opportunities open to and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Gaur et al., 2018; Norman et al., 2020; Sheweta et al., 2018; Audretsch et al., 2006).

Sajjad et al. (2020) investigated the role of women entrepreneurs in economic activity. This study involved around 69 countries in 2015 by applying the Ordinary Least Square as an econometric technique. Based on the study results, they found three significant results: women entrepreneurs have a significant effect on economic and social development, globalization has an insignificant relationship with economic development, and gender inequality has a significant but reverse relationship with economic development.

Garima (2014) studied the main problems, challenges, and future opportunities of African Women entrepreneurs and found out that the main barriers faced by them are: financial problems, family issues, lack of skills, and lack of education.

Kumbhar (2021) studied the main serious problems faced by women entrepreneurs in rural India and found out that the major challenges faced by Indian women entrepreneurs are a lack of self-confidence and professional education, conflicts with male co-workers, the imbalance between family and career obligation, absence of direct ownership of the property to women and negligence by financial institutions.

Yaseen (2013) investigated challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in the Arab World, UAE Case, and found that women face both barriers and opportunities. Some opportunities open to them are developing effective leaders, empowerment through knowledge and technology, and holding talented women. At the same time, the main difficulties are categorized as work-home conflicts, biased promotion decisions, and lack of recognition and support by male CEOs.

Rudhumbu, Norman, et al. (2020) studied the challenges and obstacles women entrepreneurs face in their business activity in Botswana. Moreover, special attention has been paid to the role of entrepreneurship education. Based on the study results, several factors negatively affect women entrepreneurs' success in their ventures. Those factors are an imbalance between work and home responsibilities, gender discrimination, and the lack of entrepreneurial skills and access to finance. On the other side, entrepreneurship education has a positive impact on the success of women entrepreneurs, while the lack of family support does not have a significant effect.

Lourenço, Fernando, et al. (2014) found out that inability to access credit, lack of access to knowledge and education, gender discrimination, and negative prejudices towards women are the primary barriers women deal with when it comes to business creation.

Yunis and Anderson (2019) found that lack of resources, institutional corruption, and family support were the most serious barriers to female entrepreneurship progress. Similar results were achieved even by Sam Al-Kwafi, Osama, et al. (2020), which found that adequate knowledge and financial and governmental support are the key factors in stimulating female entrepreneurship.

Mutairi and Fayez (2015) investigated the main factors that encourage female entrepreneurs in Kuwait. Based on study results, the main factors leading to women entrepreneurs' encouragement are the freedom of decision-making and financial independence. At the same time, the most discouraging factors in preventing from becoming entrepreneurs include the role of women in the family and high levels of competition (in female traditional clothing activity). Regarding the role of women in

the family, Leung, A. (2011) found out that the role of a mother in Japan leads women out of business activity.

Achakpa and Radović-Marković (2018) investigated women's employment through education and entrepreneurship development in developing countries. Based on study results, education, training, and information through media exposure are the main factors that strengthen women's empowerment. At the same time, socioeconomic status in the agricultural groups tends to have a strong negative effect.

According to the World Bank Group (2016), women's entrepreneurship encourages economic development and helps reduce poverty. For example, in the United States, the role of women is undeniable since women entrepreneurs are contributing millions of jobs and trillions to the economy. In developing countries, women entrepreneurs contribute from 8 million to 10 million SMEs. Other researchers are supporting and achieving the same results (Hattab, H. 2012; Minniti et al., 2015) figured out that recently, female entrepreneurship has been growing and localized in many different sectors of activity.

Methodology

The research methodology includes both: quantitative and qualitative types of research. Through the literature review, some qualitative conclusions related to the research issue were realized, while through the questionnaire there was realized the quantitative research. The questionnaire was conducted with 213 female entrepreneurs in the entire territory of Kosovo, which included seven regions: Prishtina, Mitrovica, Peja, Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, and Prizren. The research sample was purposeful in selecting female entrepreneurs, whereas age and other factors were based on random sampling.

The research was conducted in 2021 through questionnaire distributions. The data were collected, entered in Excel, and exported to STATA 13. The STATA program was used for data processing. 13, while demographic-descriptive data were initially presented. Statistical parameters were categorized as frequency, percentage, and average value. The normality test was applied to measure the data distribution, Alpha was used for the level of data reliability, and the factor analysis test was applied to validate the hypotheses.

Results

Demographic results

The research was attended by 213 respondents, namely female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Kosovo.

The demographic data are presented in below Table 1. The age group of female participants or entrepreneurs was 1 in the age group less than 18 years or 0.47%, 49 of them in the age group 18-25 years or 23%, 75 were in the age group 26-35 years or 26.29%, 56 in the age group 36- 45 years old or 26.29%, 20 of the age group 46-55 years old or 9.39% and 12 others of the age group +55 years old or 5.63%. Regarding the level of education, it can be seen that 2 of them have a level of primary education or 0.94%, 22 others with vocational education or 10.33%, 38 with secondary education or 17.84%, 111 others with faculty or 52.11%, with a master's degree are 39 or 18.31% and 1 with Ph.D. or 0.47%. Regarding social status, 114 are married, or 53.52%; 33 live in cohabitation, or 15.49%, 14 or 6.57%, are divorced; 2 are widows, or 0.94%, and 50 are single, or 23.47%. Moreover, the research was conducted in the entire territory of Kosovo; more exactly 49 women entrepreneurs are from Prishtina, or 23%; 23 from

Mitrovica, or 10.80%; 28 from Peja, or 13.15%; 25 from Ferizaj, or 11.74%, 20 from Gjakova or 9.39, 49 from Gjilan or 23% and 19 from Prizren or 8.92%.

Table 1

Demographic Data

Age	Freq.	Percent
< 18 years	1	0.47
18 - 25 years	49	23.00
26 - 35 years	75	35.21
36 - 45 years	56	26.29
46 - 55 years	20	9.39
> 55 years	12	5.63
Education	Freq.	Percent
Primary education	2	0.94
Professional education	22	10.33
High School	38	17.84
Faculty	111	52.11
Master	39	18.31
PhD	1	0.47
Marital status	Freq.	Percent
Married	114	53.52
Together	33	15.49
Divorced	14	6.57
Widowed	2	0.94
Single	50	23.47
Region	Freq.	Percent
Prishtinë	49	23.00
Mitrovicë	23	10.80
Pejë	28	13.15
Ferizaj	25	11.74
Gjakovë	20	9.39
Gjilan	49	23.00
Prizren	19	8.92

Source: Author's illustration

Reliability test

The reliability test was conducted for the questions on challenges and barriers in business, resulting in a high reliability of 0.871 of Alpha Cronbach's coefficient. With this rest, it was concluded that the data are reliable and it can proceed with the interpretation of the hypotheses.

- Test scale = mean (unstandardized items)
- Reversed items: Competition Accesstocredit
- Average inter-item covariance: .2866795
- Number of items on the scale: 19
- Scale reliability coefficient: 0.8711

Hypothesis results

H01. The challenges and barriers in the business organized by women entrepreneurs are numerous.

According to the following results, it can be seen that the data are classified into five main factors, which have passed the value of 1 of Eigenvalues. According to the results, 212 observations were processed, while the p-value = 0.000 indicates that the

data are suitable for interpretation. Table 2 presents the Hypothesis results, and Figure 1 shows the Screen Plot of Eigenvalues after Factor.

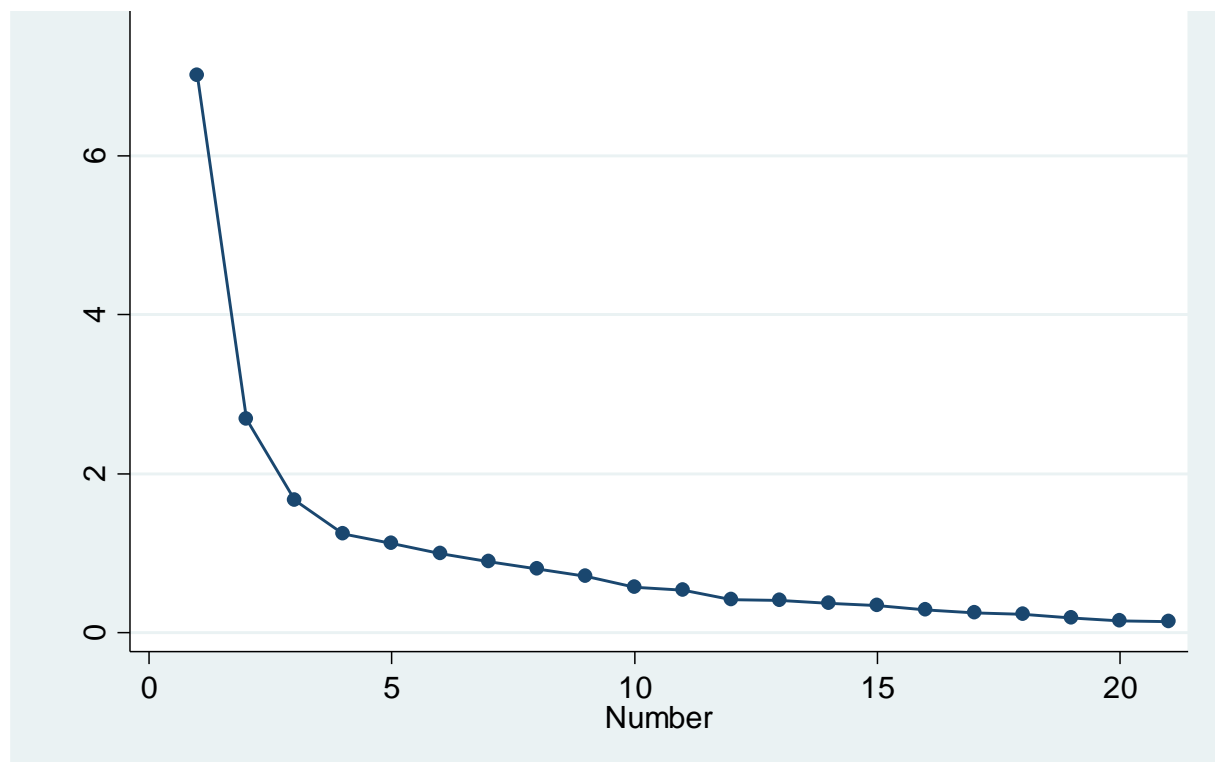
- Number of obs = 212
- Retained factors = 5
- Number of params = 95
- Chi (210_ = 2382.77
- Prob>Chi2 = 0.000 (<0.01).

Table 2
Hypothesis results

Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	7.01579	4.32417	0.3341	0.3341
Factor2	2.69162	1.02464	0.1282	0.4623
Factor3	1.66698	0.42673	0.0794	0.5416
Factor4	1.24025	0.11626	0.0591	0.6007
Factor5	1.12400	0.12957	0.0535	0.6542

Source: Author's illustration

Figure 1
Screen Plot of Eigenvalues after Factor, Hypothesis 1



Source: Author's illustration

Based on the following results, it can be seen that the variables are classified into five factors (Table 3), namely the challenges and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in Kosovo. According to the results, the first factor classifies the variables as fiscal evasion (0.718), crime theft (0.738), insufficient capacity (0.717), inadequate level of skills of employees (0.705), and lack of market demand (0.703). This factor can be termed as the instability of doing business. In the second factor are classified the variables as high taxes (0.721) and tax administrative work (bureaucracy) (0.709),

which can be named as bureaucracy. The third factor presents two variables: access to credit (0.600) and political instability (0.609), which can be named the policy of difficult banking. In the fourth factor are classified variables such as late payment (0.607) and lack of information in business (0.653) which is named as the lack of financial support and motivation factor. At the same time, the fifth factor classifies variables as fierce competition (0.644) and transport (0.611), which can be named as lack of trade transparency and the free market.

Table 3
Factor Analysis, Hypothesis 1

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5
Taxes	*	0.721	*	*	*
Burkocracy	*	0.709	*	*	*
Lawsinforce	*	*	*	*	*
LawEnforce~t	*	*	*	*	*
Competition	*	*	*	*	0.644
Corruption	*	*	*	*	*
Tax evasion	0.718	*	*	*	*
Crime	0.738	*	*	*	*
Informalec~y	*	*	*	*	*
Accesstocr~t	*	*	0.600	*	*
Insufficie~s	0.717	*	*	*	*
Politicali~y	*	*	0.609	*	*
Managerial~s	*	*	*	*	*
Licensing	*	*	*	*	*
Inadequate~s	0.705	*	*	*	*
Transport	*	*	*	*	0.611
Electricit~y	*	*	*	*	*
Provisiono~t	*	*	*	*	*
Lackofmark~d	0.703	*	*	*	*
Late payments	*	*	*	0.607	*
Lackofbusi~n	*	*	*	0.653	*

Source: Author's illustration

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the main challenges and obstacles to doing business by women in the Republic of Kosovo are the instability of doing business due to tax problems, high bureaucracy, difficult banking policies with high-interest rates, shortages of lack of financial support and the lack of a free market.

H02. Overcoming challenges and barriers can be achieved through investing in staff, generating new ideas, and teamwork.

- Number of obs = 213
- Retained factors = 4
- Number of parameters = 15
- Chi (15) = 519.79
- Prob/Chi2=0.000

Based on the following results, it's noticeable that the variables are classified into a factor and exactly passed Eigenvalue over 1, which has the value of 2.65647, which means that the variables focus on a common pillar (Table 4). According to the analysis, the goal is to recognize the main elements that can save women entrepreneurs from challenges and barriers in business.

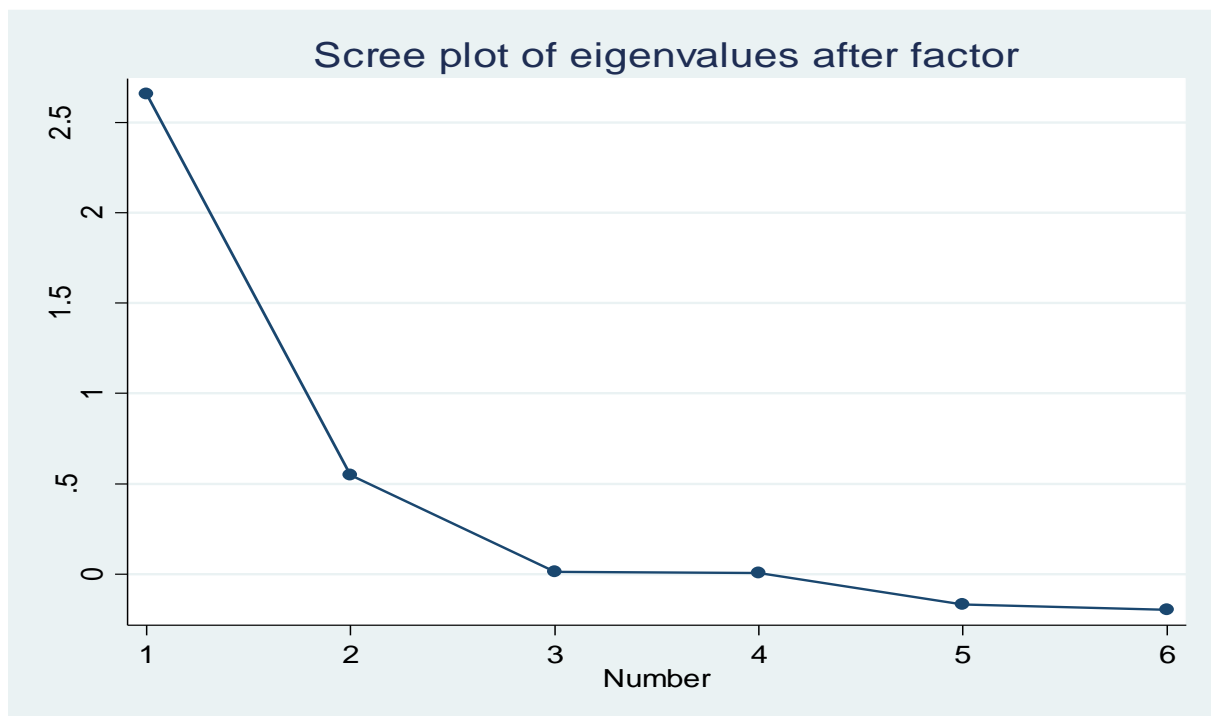
Table 4.
Eigenvalue Table, Hypothesis 2

Factor	Eig. Envalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	2.65647	2.10977	0.9284	0.9284

Source: Author's illustration

Figure 2 shows the creation of factors, i.e., that from the second factor, the decline has started and that only one factor has been created.

Figure 2
Scree Plot of Eigenvalue After Factor, Hypothesis 2



Source: Author's illustration

According to the following results, it can be concluded that the variables are classified in the first factor, namely investing in staff (0.755), then generating new ideas (0.782), and dedicating group work (0.803) (see Table 5). Based on these results, the hypothesis is accepted, and the factors that enable the passage of challenges and barriers are investing in staff, generating ideas, and dedicating teamwork.

Table 5
Factor Analysis Table, Hypothesis 2

Variable	Factor 1
Marketinfo~n	*
Informatio~s	*
Staffexper~e	0.755
Ideasgener~d	0.782
Dedicatedt~a	0.803
Applicatio~s	*

Source: Author's illustration

H03. Barriers to innovation include lack of funding and innovation, lack of knowledge, and other technological aspects of products.

- Number of obs = 213
- Retained factors = 4
- Number of parameters = 21
- Chi (21)=1148.76
- Prob/Chi2=0.000

According to the results, the data meet the conditions to interpret factor analysis results about the research hypothesis. It is understood that the data are classified into a key factor, while the eigenvalue value is 4.29 (Table 6).

Table 6

Eigenvalue Table, Hypothesis 3

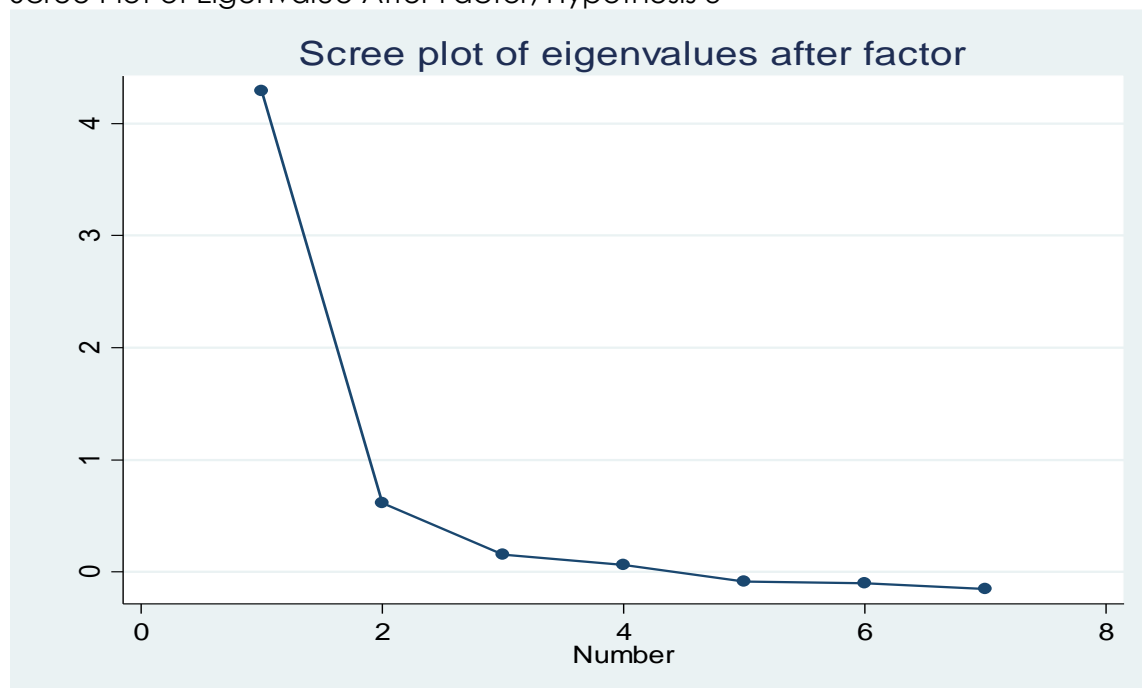
Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	4.29056	3.67435	0.8984	0.8984

Source: Author's illustration

The chart below (Figure 3) shows the decline from the second factor, which means that the data were classified into a single factor. In this analysis are classified six main factors can be found to belong to the two main areas which hinder the innovation of women's businesses in Kosovo.

Figure 3

Scree Plot of Eigenvalue After Factor, Hypothesis 3



Source: Author's illustration

The variables which are classified in the following factor are the cost of financing (0.760), the cost of innovation (0.859), the lack of staff knowledge (0.877), the lack of information on technology and markets (0.810), lack of demand for new products (0.771) and there is no need for new products because they have been produced in the past (0.795) (Table 7)

Table 7
Factor Analysis, Hypothesis 3

Variable	Factor 1
Costoffina~g	0.760
Innovation~t	0.859
Lackofbusi~e	0.877
Lackofinfo~n	0.810
Uncertaind~d	*
Noneedfor~s	0.795
Lackofdema~s	0.771

Source: Author's illustration

According to this, it turns out that the factors are classified into three camps, high costs of financing and innovation, lack of modern technology, and lack of market demand. Three very powerful elements hinder further development. In this context, the hypothesis is accepted, which means that the impediments to innovation are lack of funding and innovation, lack of knowledge, and other technological aspects of products.

Discussion

The research was conducted when businesses worldwide declined due to Covid19, which has affected the market in Kosovo, especially that of female entrepreneurs in our country. As a result, most businesses are in Prishtina and Gjilan, with the largest number of enterprises, while most entrepreneurs are married or single. The vast majority are highly educated, and the most common age is between 26-35 years, or about 35.21% of the sample, and those between 36-45 years, or 26.29%.

The main challenges women face in business are the instability of doing business due to tax problems, high bureaucracy, difficult banking policies with high-interest rates, lack of financial support with granted and lack of trade transparency, and lack of free market. At the same time, the barriers they face to financing and innovation lack modern technology and access to the market, as the market does not give them many opportunities.

To cope and make good decisions, female entrepreneurs must pay attention to investing in staff, generating ideas, and dedicating teamwork. In general, female entrepreneurial businesses have a growing professional approach that requires special attention, especially in the challenges and barriers they face.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that female entrepreneurs face real problems which challenge them at all times, starting from the so-called instability of doing business due to high taxes, problems with banks, and other problems with high rents. The other problem these entrepreneurs face is the lack of financial support from the Government and the lack of modern technology that affects the impossibility of competition in the market. In this context, we came up with some recommendations which we think should be taken into account and would have improved the situation of women-run businesses. Possible recommendations to improve the actual situation for women entrepreneurship in Kosovo are: providing grants to help improve working conditions; providing grants for training and modification of the products they offer; low-interest loans in terms of employment, investment, and investment in technology in particular;

linking women-run businesses with other businesses in the EU; and the possibility of marketing products abroad.

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