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## The impact of university education on women social resilience for development of small and medium enterprises

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** This research aimed the effectiveness the dimensions of university education on women's social resilience to develop small and medium enterprises. **Methodology:** The research was applied in terms of purpose and an exploratory blend in terms of the method type. The statistical population of the study in the qualitative section of the research included all faculty members, and in the quantitative phase, all female graduates of the Governmental and Azad universities in Babolsar, Ramsar, Babol, Behshahr, Joybar, Chalous, Sari, Savadkouh, Noor, Noshahr, Neka, Amol, Tonekabon, Ghaemshahr, and Mahmoudabad. Through the qualitative section, the purposeful sampling method was utilized and the sample size was determined based on the saturation law of 15 individuals. In the quantitative section regarding the unlimited size of the society, 384 individuals were selected as sample using the cluster random sampling method. The measurement tool consisted of two researcher-made questionnaires based on the data obtained from theoretical foundations and interviews with the due experts in which included a 28 questions on university education with the aim of identifying small and medium enterprises and 35 questions on social resilience. In order to analyze the data, in addition to the encoding, the descriptive statistics indices (mean and standard deviation) and the inferential statistics indices (confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis) were used in the framework of structural equations using the SPSS21 and Amos software. **Findings:** The results of structural equations showed that entrepreneurship education, university in-service training programs, virtual education, formal education, side skills training, and basic work and theoretical education affect the social resilience of graduated women. In addition, according to the standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), in-service training programs with an impact level of 0.510 had the most impact and formal education with the effect of 0.264 had the least effect on the social resilience of female graduates of Universities of Mazandaran. **Conclusion:** Based on the findings of the research, the decision makers and the appropriate policies of the university administrators help to make more and better university education to promote social resilience of their students.

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## 1. Introduction

Education has become an important strategic topic today. Although many scholars have done researches on teaching and development practices, most of them have focused on the benefits of education. However, there is a limited focus on the assessment of educational practices (Prasad, 2016). Education may be defined as systematic learning and adaptation of skills, concepts, attitudes, etc., which improve the performance. Education is necessary due to some reasons. Because the individuals selected for a particular job must have the right skills and knowledge on how to do the job, and it helps the individuals know the information about the organization process, the content of the work, and the importance and awareness of the job. (Borate, Gopalkrishna & Borate; 2014). In a rapidly changing society, education is not only desirable, but also an activity that must be considered for those resources to always have efficient and absolute manpower (Gupta et al., 2017). The experience of successful countries indicates that education has always been considered the key to development and progress. The effects of training on success for R & D centers are not unobtrusive (Weru et al., 2014).

The university is also the most important institution that has major missions such as education, research and service delivery, and it is capable of flourishing the spirit of creativity, empowerment, initiative, self-esteem in individuals (Moghaddasi, 2015). A university education program is of particular interest in most countries in order to respond to labor market demands for skilled and expertly trained human resources. Universities and educational centers are considered as the most important human resource training centers. These centers should be highly effective in training the qualified, expert, and entrepreneurial individuals (Nonahalfar et al., 2013); Because the general belief is that the university education can be considered as the driving force of social change and economic progress. Therefore, the achievement of economic development necessitates the universities to be expanded rapidly as the centers for training the human resources and the focus of technology facilitation (Farahani et al., 2010).

Given the rapid changes in enterprises, technology, products, and industries need to cooperate closely with universities in order to gain competitive advantage and increase productivity (Perkmann et al., 2011; Sugandhavanija et al 2010). Universities also need to collaborate with enterprises in order to flourish and develop (Cao et al., 2009). In the meantime, scientific literature has confirmed the general tendency to link small and medium-sized enterprises to the dynamism of creating more jobs. Public employment policy should also focus specifically on small and medium-sized enterprises. There are two reasons for this. First, despite the economic downturn, the enterprises show themselves as the key factors in explaining the quality of work. Second, by changing their value-production model, they can continue to create better-quality jobs (Díaz-Chao et al., 2017). According to the US Census Bureau (2011), more than 10 million small businesses are active throughout the United States. These businesses are driving forces and a major contributor to economic growth and community development in the United States (Chen et al. 2006; Varma, 2005; Xiong, 2015).

In this regard, the need to preserve survival and sustainable success has led many organizations (eg, universities) to rethink business priorities and focus on adapting to business changes and appropriate responses to environmental requirements. In order to achieve this, a new concept of resilience has entered into the science of management and psychology (Fiksel, 2006). Accordingly, behavioral science experts considered three components for resilience, which are: psychological resilience, emotional resilience and social resilience. This social resilience reflects the sustainability and resilience of individuals against harmful social conditions, such as poverty, indigence, family disputes, and social conflicts. In such situations, individuals, before they submit to conditions, try to control social stress by adopting rational solutions in a spirit of partnership with others in order to promote the status quo in a positive direction (Maddi, S. R & khoshaba, 2005). Effective exposure to social, economic, social turbulence and social damage is necessary for being resilient, since it can include self-organization, tolerance, and maintenance of competencies in

difficult conditions and ultimately it can create the ability to repair and progress. In this sense, we will find out that social resilience will increase the predictive power and the planning ability for the future (Mousavi, 2015). Therefore, given the undeniable role of small and medium-sized enterprises in realizing the economy, the resilience of industries and especially human resources seems necessary in order to achieve stability and to remain safe from threats and environmental fluctuations (Ebrahimi et al., 2017).

In today's world, where countries compete for their full potential of growth, the use of all human resources is of particular importance. Women are through the most valuable assets of each country, especially in developing countries such as our country (Taleghani et al., 2009), while most studies focus on more women among the workforce, less attention is paid to whether women can work well and how other organizational variables can help improve women's performance. These issues should be important for achievement of women's values and ultimately for helping organizations (Zhu, 2014). Therefore, it is important to consider whether university education can improve the social resilience of female graduates. Although comprehensive researches are not conducted in this regard, Etzkowitz et al. (2000) pointed out the applicability and development of knowledge through universities over industries and firms. Russian (2010) in his research stated that proper and effective communication between the university and industry could increase the innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology. Rose (2010) stated that proper and effective communication between the university and industry could increase the innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology. Diaz Chao et al. (2017) also stated in a study conducted in Spain that during the Spanish recession, the quality of work in companies has improved and the biggest progress was made through SMEs. In a study, Kamaruddin (2016) highlighted the role of the government in the importance of entrepreneurship education among students at the University of Malaysia, which showed the positive impact of the university on employment and entrepreneurship. In the research OF Hosseini Talab et al. (2014), it was stated that the role of the university on empowerment is positive and significant. The researches of Welles (2012) Hunjet (2013) Lekhanya (2015) Davy et al. (2016) Yadollahi Farsi (2005) Kordnaeej & Shams (2003) Talebi & ZareYekta (2008) PeykarFar & Mahnegar (2012) also emphasized on the importance of entrepreneurship and employment of students.

As can be seen, there are no conducted researches on the impact of university education on women's social resilience for small and medium-sized development, which can be the issue of this study itself. On the other hand, given the fact that university and small and medium enterprises are among the most crucial social institutions of each society, especially after the industrial revolution, it will not be possible to achieve development without establishing effective communications between the two institutions. The country's higher education system has weaknesses that have failed or cannot provide a capable and resilient workforce with high-level capabilities. The severe lack of applied researches on universities and the lack of consideration of the issues required by the domestic industry and business enterprises indirectly lead to the trainings given away from the spirit of industry-university communications. Therefore, the question arose in the mind of the researcher that what model can be presented based on the impact of university education on women's social resilience to develop small and medium-sized enterprises?

## 2. Methodology

In this research, a combination of sequential exploratory research method was used. At First, the qualitative method and then quantitative method were conducted. The statistical population of the research in the first stage (qualitative) was the "exploration of the factors" through in-depth interviews from all the faculty members and university officials to meet the due theoretical saturation point. (The characteristics of the research experts approved by the supervisors and counselors, those who were prominent in the field of information and could provide the exact information about the community). The individuals were selected to conduct interviews and obtain the necessary information regarding the subject in a completely random

manner based on the purposeful and snowball sampling method. Therefore, in the present research, the opinions of 15 elite and expert individuals were collected during the semi-structured interviews and the procedure ended when the interviewed subjects became at least 15 one in number. To collect the data, qualitative interviews from the due experts were utilized. The method for collecting the information in this study consisted of the in-depth interviewing method. On the subject of the research, the interviewees were asked to give their opinion on the dimensions and indices of academic education and social resilience based on the research topic in order to identify the dimensions of the research variables. Due to the validity of the question in the interview process, the opinions of 10 experts and professors were used. At the same time, the participants assisted with the analyzing and interpreting the data. In the current study, the open-ended test and the intra-subject agreement method were used to calculate the reliability of conducted interviews. The results indicated that the test-retest reliability was 0.68%, which indicates a proper reliability. The content analysis method was used to analyze the qualitative research data. Through this design, the process of collecting qualitative data analysis was performed by the open coding method. Generally, the research findings were extracted using a simultaneous analysis and open coding process during and after interviews.

The quantitative phase of this research involved a comprehensive field survey that was based on concepts and categories derived from the theoretical foundations and interviews. The quantitative method used in this phase was survey-based. The statistical population of the quantitative part of this research included all female graduates of the Governmental and Azad Universities of Mazandaran Province located in Babolsar, Ramsar, Babol, Behshahr, Joybar, Chalous, Sari, Savadkouh, Noor, Noshahr, Neka, Amol, Tonekabon, Ghaemshahr, and Mahmoudabad. Considering that the size of the society was unlimited, 384 individuals were selected by cluster random sampling based on the Morgan's table. Finally, due to the lack of access to some of the interviewees because of their scratched questionnaires, 331 individuals were selected as the final samples to fill in the questionnaires. In order to collect the needed data for research and determine their accuracy in the quantitative section, a researcher-made questionnaire based on the interview codes and theoretical foundations was adjusted.

A) University education questionnaire due to development of SME job creating small and medium-sized enterprises. This part includes 28 items that were extracted based on the theoretical bases of the research and interviews. These items are closed and range from I totally agree (5) to I totally disagree (1) through a 5 point Likert scale. In order to investigate the factor structure of women's university education questionnaire, exploratory factor analysis, and main components analysis with varimax rotation were used. Based on the exploratory factor analysis through the combination of the 28 remaining academic items, the due university questionnaire was reducible to seven factors. The predictability of these factors according to the total percentage of the factor cumulative variance was equal to 69.696%. Therefore, for university education graduates of Universities of Mazandaran province the following 7 factors were identified which are: 1- entrepreneurship education (13.405), 2- university in-service training programs (11.044), 3- virtual education (10.420), 4- Formal trainings and education (9.409), 5- informal trainings and education (0.920), 6- secondary skills training (8.201), and 7 basic theoretical work trainings (6.128). Factor analysis was used to investigate the structure validity. The results indicated that all the indices related to the components of university education have an acceptable t and factor loadings; and to measure these components (the seven above-mentioned) are considered appropriate indices, the fitting indices of the model also showed the desirability of the items.

B) Social Resilience Questionnaire: This section contained 35 closed items. The items were closed and with a 5 point Likert scale ranging from I totally agree (5) to I totally disagree (1). Regarding the variance values of the reported common factors, 5 items had a common factor variance less than 0.5 that were excluded from the set of variables. Therefore, based on exploratory factor analysis, the composition of the remaining 30 items of the social resilience questionnaire in the research can be reduced to seven factors; therefore, it can be said that seven factors were identified as dimensions of social resilience of the graduates.

The predictability of these factors according to the total percentage of the factor cumulative variance was equal to 61.629%. To present the social resilience model of female graduates of Universities of Mazandaran province; the following 7 factors were identified: 1- Trust in individual instinct and negative affection (11.800); 2- Organizing capacity and learning (10.280); 3- Social preparedness and individual competencies (8.954), 4- Change and positive acceptance and improvement of responsibility (8.705), 5-Emotional adjustment (7.947), 6-Control (7.001) and 7- Coping and resistance (6.609). The results of the factor analysis for assessing the structure validity indicated that all the indices due to the dimensions of social resilience had acceptable t and factor loadings. The fitting of the social resilience model also showed that the values of fit indices were optimal and acceptable.

**Table 1.** index of university education model fit and social resilience

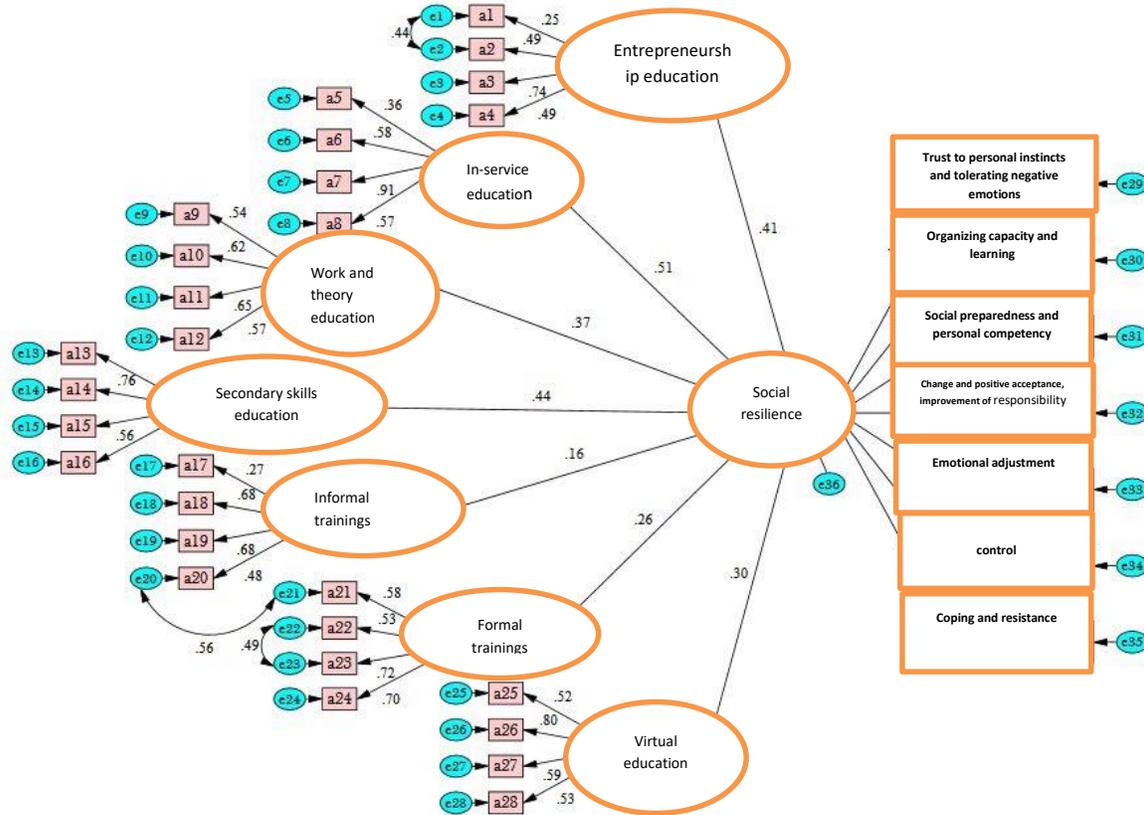
Fitting indices	Desirable values	Index values of university trainings	Social resilience indices	interpretation
Chi- square	-	1511.324	906.497	-
Degrees of freedom	-	326	354	-
Chi-square ratio to degree of freedom ( $\chi^2 / df$ )	Less than 5	4.636	2.561	Optimal
goodness of Fit index ( GFI )	More than 0.9	0.905	0.932	Optimal
Adjusted goodness of Fit index ( AGFI )	More than 0.8	0.849	0.893	Optimal
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ( RMSEA )	Less than 01	0.091	0.069	Optimal
Root Mean Squared Residuals (RMR )	Less than 0.05	0.048	0.039	Optimal
Comparative Fit Index ( CFI )	More than 0.9	0.927	0.944	Optimal
Normed fit index ( NFI )	More than 0.9	0.913	0.920	Optimal
Incremental of fit index ( IFI )	More than 0.9	0.929	0.947	Optimal

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The calculated values were above 0.7 representing the desirability of the tools; according to the obtained results for the university training questionnaire, the coefficient was equal to 0.77 and 0.85 for the university education. In order to analyze the data, in addition to the encoding, the descriptive statistics indices (mean and standard deviation) and the inferential statistics indices (confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis) were used in the framework of structural equations using the SPSS and Amos software.

### 3. Findings

According to the findings of the research, the number of the graduates ageing from 31 to 35 years old was 110 that are in fact 33.2% of total individuals. Regarding the findings, it can be said that 177 (53.4%) of the samples were between 31 and 40 years old and also 38 (11.5%) individuals were between 20 and 25 years old. Among the research samples 119 individuals or 36% were 5 to 10 years old and 105 individuals or 31.7% had 11 to 15 years work experience. In addition, 54 individuals or 16.3% were more than 15 years old and 53 individuals or 16% had a job record of less than 5 years. In addition, 226 individuals or 68% of the samples were married and 105 individuals or 32% were single. Most of the research samples had incomes less than 2 million Tomans (46.2%, 153 individuals) and 105 individuals (31.7%) had a monthly income of between 2 and 4 million Tomans. The monthly income of 73 individuals (22.1%) was more than 4 Tomans. Finally, 185 (55.9%) of the research samples had a bachelor's degree or a lower one, 119 (36%) ones had a Master's degree and 27 individuals (8.2%) had a Ph.D.

As described in the methodology, firstly, to identify the dimensions of university education and social resilience, the content of the data obtained from theoretical foundations and the interview with the experts was coded through the coding, based on which the final questionnaire was elaborated. Therefore, in order to investigate the effect of university education on women's social resilience to develop small and medium-sized enterprises, a structured equation model was used based on the questionnaire made through the interviews and theoretical bases. In this model, the effect of university education dimensions on social resilience of graduates was also examined.



**Figure 1.** Model of effectiveness of university Education Dimensions on Social resilience (Standardized Regression Coefficients)

According to the obtained results from the structural equation model through Figure 1, all factor loadings (standardized regression coefficients) were obtained greater than 0.3 so the model for measuring university education and social resilience was confirmed. Therefore, according to the findings of Fig. 1 and the results of the study of the model of university education and social resilience, it can be said that the values of standardized regression coefficients and the t statistics were of acceptable values at a significant level less than 0.05. These indices indicated that measured observational variables reflect the hidden variables properly (entrepreneurship education, university in-service training, theoretical and work training, secondary skills training, informal education, formal education, virtual education, social resilience).

In the following, according to the results of the research model, the relationship between variables is examined.

**Table 3.** path coefficients and t values of the effectiveness of university education dimensions on social resilience

Independent variables	path	dependent variable	Path coefficient	T value	Significance level	Result
<b>Entrepreneurship education</b>	→	Social resilience	0.414	4.260	0.001	Confirmed
<b>In-service training campus work and theoretical training</b>	→	Social resilience	0.510	4.930	0.001	Confirmed
<b>secondary skills training</b>	→	Social resilience	0.372	3.678	0.001	Confirmed
<b>Informal education</b>	→	Social resilience	0.436	4.298	0.001	Confirmed
<b>Formal education</b>	→	Social resilience	0.155	1.293	0.196	Confirmed
<b>Virtual education</b>	→	Social resilience	0.264	2.179	0.029	Confirmed
	→	Social resilience	0.300	2.295	0.022	Confirmed

In the Table (3), the direct impact of Exogenous variables (entrepreneurship education, university in-service training, theoretical and work training, secondary skills training, informal education, formal education, virtual education, social resilience) are reported on the endogenous variables (social resilience). In the following, the results are investigated according to the values of path coefficients and t values (standardized regression coefficients).

1- Entrepreneurship education has a positive and significant effect on social resilience of the graduates (Sig = 0.001, t = 4.260).

2- In-service training programs have a positive and significant effect on social resilience of the graduates (Sig = 0.001, t = 4.930).

3- Work and theoretical training has a positive and significant effect on social resilience of the graduates (Sig = 0.001, t = 3.678).

4-secondary Skills Training has a positive and significant effect on the social resilience of the graduates (Sig = 0.001, t = 4.298).

5- Informal education does not have any significant effect on social resilience of the graduates (Sig = 0.196 t = 1.293).

6- Formal education has a positive and significant effect on social resilience of the graduates (Sig = 0.029, t = 2.179).

7. Virtual education has a positive and significant effect on social resilience of the graduates (Sig = 0.022.2, t = 2.295).

In addition, according to the results of the Table 2, the standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), the effect of university education dimensions on the graduates' resilience was as follows:

- 1-The effect of the entrepreneurship education on social resilience ( $\beta = 0.414$ )
- 2- The effect of the university in-service training programs on social resilience ( $\beta = 0.510$ )
3. the effect of the work and theoretical training on social resilience ( $\beta = .372$ )
4. The effect of the secondary skills training on social resiliency ( $\beta = 0.436$ )
5. The effect of the formal education on social resilience ( $\beta = 0.264$ )
6. The effect of the virtual education on social resilience ( $\beta = 0.003$ )

Finally, according to the values of standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), it can be said that in-service training programs has the most impact with 0.510, and formal education has the least effect with 0.264 on social resilience of the female graduates of Mazandaran Universities.

#### 4. Discussion

The structural equation model was utilized to study the research questions. In this model, the effect of university education dimensions on social resilience of the graduated females was investigated. Entrepreneurship education, in-service training programs, work and theoretical training, secondary skills training and virtual education have a positive and significant effect on social resilience of the graduates. However, informal education did not have any significant effect on social resilience of the graduates. According to the standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), it can be said that in-service training programs with 0.510 have the maximum effect and formal education with 0.264 has the least effect on social resilience of the graduates of Mazandaran Universities. Borate, Gopalkrishna & Borate (2014), in their research, developed a case-based approach to assess the effectiveness of staff training and the development plan based on the Patrick model that was performed on 330 quality employees. The results of their research on the basis of the t-test showed that employees of educational programs are effective on their work quality. Yusefi & Barat Ali (2011) in a study entitled Women, Employment and Higher Education showed that higher education plays an important role in the employment and promotion of women in their work life, which is somewhat consistent with the research findings. Kamaruddin (2016) highlighted the role of the government in the importance of entrepreneurship education among students at the University of Malaysia, which showed the positive impact of the university on employment and entrepreneurship. In their study, Pour Jafari and Jozi (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of educational programs, which showed that educational programs were conducted to increase knowledge, change attitudes, and enhance the skills of the effective staff. . The results of Welles (2012) Hunjet (2013) Lekhanya (2015) Davy et al. (2016) Yadollahi Farsi (2005) Kordnaeej & Shams (2003) Talebi & ZareYekta (2008) PeykarFar & Mahnegar (2012) were also in line with the findings of tis research.

Due to the core features such as human capital in the form of students and faculty members, the university is a good place for knowledge-based innovation. Hence, university as the most important reference for the production and dissemination of new knowledge can educate students who can, after graduating, create new jobs with innovation and initiative. Therefore, the generated knowledge at universities can be a competitive advantage for industry (Salter & Bruneel, 2009). Graduates need different trainings; for instance, the in-service training is required for successful implementation of the teaching-learning process, especially new changes and developments. In-service training programs provide the students with optimal adaptation to the new educational developments. These programs play a decisive role for optimal performance and empowerment of the graduates with issues such as unplanned developments, lack of resources, problem management, and market changes. Therefore, in-service training courses usually enhance the capabilities of graduates and experts, as well as gaining knowledge, and it develops skills and abilities for improving the performance and social resilience of graduates. In this regard, Lin (2010) stated that one of the keys to success is the in-service training. Therefore, the in-service training is needed to improve the development of social resilience among the female graduates. On the other hand, given the need for social resilience, it seems that investing in the resilience is an opportunity. If we consider the resilience as a synonym for flexibility, then the society can have constant power with it in order to face change and adaptation to the new requirements. Universities can be effective through the development of diverse knowledge and information and skills, creativity and innovation, and empowerment and perseverance spirit in women's social resilience, which will lead to the development of economic enterprises under the management and administration of women. Universities can increase their ability to defeat women's issues through their social resilience training, and by pursuing trainings such as value engineering, economic needs, and the creation of credible small business enterprises that will increase the overall growth and prosperity of employment. With adequate trainings and timely warnings, Universities are able to provide individuals with the means to secure capital and provide economic development and innovation for

the community. While the universities are active in any country, the economic growth of the society becomes more dynamic, and the more investment occurs in research and science, and a better and more favorable future for the country will be expected.

Through the current state of the country's economy and the unemployment of many graduates, universities should provide the theoretical and practical training ground in a particular (normal and critical) environment with an open and transnational vision for the social resilience. In addition, there should be clear and brilliant future for the development of small and medium-sized businesses through the financial environments that can affect the business and create many challenges in improving the productivity.

Considering the social resilience, it seems that investing in social resilience is an opportunity, and women with social resilience have a steady power in confronting changes and adapting to their new needs. Therefore, support and planning of university education in order to increase the effective social participation of women and the development of interactions based on the growth of awareness and trust of this group of women is recommended for development of small and medium-sized enterprises. University education should also be able to play a role in providing students with appropriate educational programs that address the characteristics such as independence, risk taking, creativity, self-belief and futurism and social empowerment and social resilience, so they can also play the role as a productive force in improving the economy of the community and the development of business enterprises. Given that in the current situation of societies, women have a wider and more significant role in economic, social, and cultural development than before, and in fact, they are able to make a significant contribution to the workforce of the community; therefore, the need for planning to increase scientific and practical capacity is necessary and obvious. Assistance to women's preparedness in the face of changes in various cultural and socio-economic areas and the provision of appropriate infrastructure for the active and effective participation of women in social, economic, cultural, and political affairs is necessary.

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