

# Research Paper: Applying the Ecosystem Model for Obstacle Removal in Small Businesses with Emphasis on Rural and Peri-Urban Areas (Case Study: Guilan Region in the North of Iran)

Habib Mahmoodi Chenari<sup>1</sup>, Farzaneh Nasiri Jan Agha<sup>2</sup>, Mohammad Ali Rahimpour Sheikhani Nejad<sup>1</sup>, Seyyede Fatemeh Emami<sup>3\*</sup>, Seyyede Mohadeseh Hatami Shah Khali<sup>2</sup>

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Regional Studies, Environmental Research Institute, Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR), Guilan Province, Rasht, Iran.

2. Research Expert, Department of Regional Studies, Environmental Research Institute, Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR), Guilan Province, Rasht, Iran.

3. Postdoctoral Student, Department of Geography and Urban Planning, Faculty of Humanities, Guilan University, Rasht, Iran.



**Citation:** Mahmoodi Chenari, H., Nasiri Jan Agha, F., Rahimpour Sheikhani Nejad, M.A., Emami, S.F., & Hatami Shah Khali, S.M. (2021). Applying the Ecosystem Model for Obstacle Removal in Small Businesses with Emphasis on Rural and Peri-Urban Areas (Case Study: Guilan Region in the North of Iran). *Journal of Sustainable Rural Development*, 5(2), 237-246. <https://dorl.net/dor/20.1001.1.25383876.2021.5.2.6.2>



<https://dorl.net/dor/20.1001.1.25383876.2021.5.2.6.2>

## Article info:

Received: 16 Sep. 2020

Accepted: 05 Feb. 2021

## Keywords:

Business obstacles, Small businesses ecosystem, Guilan province, Maxqda

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to identify business obstacles and challenges in rural and peri-urban areas and provide an optimal model. The current research is applied in terms of its purpose and descriptive-analytical method in nature

**Methods:** Data analysis was carried out using content analysis and open and Axial coding, in the Maxqda software.

**Results:** The results of the research showed that the main small business obstacles are divided into four categories: financing factors and production inputs, cultural and social factors, skill training factors, and support and influential factors. The main obstacles include inflation and market fluctuations, high prices raw materials, insufficient financial support for farmers, low motivation for people to continue working due to existing problems and obstacles, weak sales market due to lack of proper advertising, weak demand and lack of appropriate training and advice for sales marketing, redundant administrative bureaucracy and insufficient supervision. It depends on the work process of the executive and administrative bodies and the long process of obtaining a permit from health.

**Conclusion:** to facilitate the path of business development in the rural and peri-urban areas of this province, an integrated business ecosystem model is needed, which can remove the challenges and obstacles of workers and producers from the beginning on the path to the sale of the product and provide them with the necessary specialized training and advice.

## 1. Introduction

**T**oday, small and medium businesses are the core of the economy of any country

(Davidsson & Gordon, 2016). The vital role of small and medium enterprises is increasing due to their ability to quickly respond to systematic shocks and their potential for job creation and income generation during the recession of large companies (Karami & Bozarjomehri,

\* Corresponding Author:

**Seyyede Fatemeh Emami, PhD**

**Address:** Department of Regional Studies, Environmental Research Institute, Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR), Guilan Province, Rasht, Iran.

**Tel:** +98 (911) 2926951

**E-mail:** f\_emami22@yahoo.com

2014). Regarding SMEs, there is no general definition that is widely accepted. Based on this, different countries have provided a specific definition of these companies according to their specific conditions; In fact, the economic and industrial conditions governing each country are representative of its small and medium enterprises (Rezaie & Safa, 2016). But there are criteria such as the number of employees, initial capital, sales, and income to define these companies (Hajari et al., 2015). The study of the impact of small and medium businesses by different experts indicates that the role of these types of businesses in the economy of different countries, especially developing countries, is very strong (Honjo & Harda, 2006). According to the studies, small and medium businesses can quickly respond to market changes and customer needs and can easily adapt to new conditions (Zhang et al., 2006). Also, their role as a generator of employment, strengthening social cohesion, reducing poverty, increasing competitive advantage and national and regional development has been emphasized in many countries (Christina et al., 2014; Atkinson, 2010; Thai & Turkina, 2014).

The importance of the role of small and medium enterprises in the economy of both developed and developing countries is clear to everyone. This role is not only in terms of the number and diversity of their activities but also because of the participation of such companies in all economic aspects of countries. Participating in regional development, job creation, innovation, export development, and playing a complementary role to large industries are among their prominent and well-known aspects (Subrahmanya, 2015; Ensari & Karabay, 2014). In the face of many social and economic challenges in an era and due to the rapid evolution of technology, new business models must organize their focus (Giesen et al., 2007). Considering this, a developed business model based on customer needs and social, public, and private demands should be formed (Rizos, 2016; Teece, 2010). Achieving this requires a detailed understanding of the current situation and even examining the obstacles in the way of businesses (Moriggi, 2019).

Despite the importance of small and medium businesses and their role in the economic development of countries, most of these businesses fail. The failure rate of these businesses is very high in different countries including Iran (Barclays, 2012). Various definitions have been proposed for business failure, including exit from business (regardless of the reasons), bankruptcy, exit from business due to inability to pay debts, and exit from business due to lower performance. He pointed out the acceptable limit (Ucbasaran et al., 2010), entrepreneur-

ship and the creation of small and medium-sized businesses as the engine of economic and social development play an essential role in the development process of societies (Low, 2009; Murphy et al., 2006; Zimmerman, 2008; Shane & Venkataraman et al., 2003). Small and medium enterprises are the main support of the economy in the process of industrialization. These companies and production centers in developing countries, especially in Iran, are facing many problems and all their capacities are not used. Among the areas where micro and small businesses and production centers have been neglected or are economically isolated due to the lack of competitive conditions and strong financial support and infrastructure policies, the geographical area of Guilan province is. Meanwhile, in this province; 9% of the area and 3.3% of the total population of the country, 2.18% of the gross domestic product, 36% of rice, 90% of tea, 83% of olives, 16.17% of tobacco, 82% of irrigated lands, 18% of dry lands. 5% of the country's agricultural producers, 34 towns and industrial areas, 5.2 million tons of cement production per year, 7.3 million tons of steel products, 700 thousand tons of raw steel, 5.7 million square meters of ceramic tiles, and 30 medium and large auto parts production unit has 103 active and being equipped mines. It is also known as a coastal province with marine resources and as a tourism target province. But studies show that the current situation of Guilan province is not suitable, because the unemployment rate of the province in the winter of 2018 is equal to 10.6% (the national average is 10.7), the male unemployment rate is 8.2%, the female unemployment rate is 13.4%, the unemployment rate is Urban areas, 13%, the unemployment rate of rural areas is 4.5%, also the rate of economic participation in the winter of 1398, -3%, the rate of incomplete employment is 10%, the share of workers in the agricultural sector of the province is 22%, the share of industrial employment in the province is 26%, per capita income in less than 4 million rials per month, the unemployment rate of 15-29-year-olds in the province was 29% (national average, 25.3). Also, the high rate of immigration and change of land use and the increase in the rate of sending migrants (11th in the country), especially in rural areas, and many other problems of the spatial structure of the province, especially the unfavorable conditions resulting from the spread of the Coronavirus need to be reconsidered and develop new solutions to get out of the situation current and being on the path of growth and development. Due to the importance of this issue, this research aims to accurately identify the obstacles facing micro-businesses in rural and peri-urban areas and finally to present a model for the improvement and economic development of Guilan province. Based on domestic and

foreign research investigations, studies have been conducted in the field of business challenges and obstacles, some of which are mentioned below.

## 2. Literature Review

Small and medium-sized companies influence the global economy through entrepreneurship and creating job opportunities and increasing income, and they can also more easily adapt themselves to rapid environmental changes and react faster to economic and political factors. The development of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial businesses is a powerful tool for recognizing opportunities that can be used to solve problems such as employment, lack of creative and dynamic human resources, low Productivity, decrease in the quality of products and services, economic stagnation, and increase in competition (Landstrom, 2005: 31-39). Small and medium-sized industries are more user-oriented than large industries, and for this reason, they need little expense and investment to create new jobs (Tommaso & Sabrina, 2000). Therefore, it seems that the main benefit of the growth of small and medium businesses is related to the contribution of these types of businesses to the employment sector (Hamilton & Dana, 2003). This type of business is very important for governments due to its nature and special characteristics, as well as due to its significant contribution to the level of employment in countries and increasing the economic growth and development of societies (Svetlicic et al., 2007). The literature related to small and medium enterprises is very extensive. Therefore, various definitions for small businesses have been presented in different countries. These definitions are different according to age structure, population, culture, and level of development. Small and medium-sized companies are innovative and considering that they have many comparative advantages over large industries in many sectors, this enables them to react faster and more efficiently to the growing global changes. Due to their great flexibility and the ability to adapt to market changes and customers' tastes, they have undeniable advantages (Askari et al., 2007). Small and medium-sized enterprises are special economic units that are not homogeneous in terms of nature and size and directly or indirectly play a significant role in national production, job creation, and labor recruitment. Each country has defined small businesses according to its specific conditions. So that most of these definitions are based on quantitative criteria such as the number of company employees, the total net assets of the company, the number of sales and investments, as well as the number of company employees. Although this index

is different in terms of number in different countries; most countries define small and medium enterprises in terms of the number of employees in a certain range from one to two hundred and fifty workers (Imani Rad, 1995). Zhao, Ritchie and Echtner (2011), considered entrepreneurship as "initiating change through creation or innovation that is usually associated with risk" (Zhao et al., 2011). Some have considered it as the process of creating new opportunities and accepting their risks and benefits (Hisrich et al., 2005), which is initially the creation of a business that is created using people's capital (Sahin & Asunakutlu, 2014: 851; Sharma et al., 2013). Due to the characteristics and diversity of the activities of these companies and the existence of various indicators, there are many definitions and perceptions of small and medium businesses, and so far, a globally accepted definition has not been provided. The size of the business or the number of employees, the field of activity, the value of assets, the amount of turnover, etc., are among the most common indicators used to define small and medium enterprises (Lopez-Ortega et al., 2016). Among them, the size or number of employees is one of the most reliable indicators, so in most countries, businesses are classified based on this indicator (Olusegun, 2012). Ambois and Maldini (1988) consider small and medium businesses as economic units that can be easily established and managed by an independent person (entrepreneur) (Karimi & Bouzarjamhari, 2014). Based on the definition of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the accepted definition in most countries of the world, small and medium enterprises are classified as follows:

- Companies that have less than 10 employees are micro-enterprises.
- Companies that have from 10 to 49 employees are small enterprises.
- Companies that have from 50 to 249 employees are medium enterprises. In addition, their financial turnover should be less than 40 million Euros and with a balance sheet of fewer than 27 million Euros. Finally, from an economic point of view, they should be independent and more than 50% of it should belong to the private sector.

The European Union's criteria for defining and identifying SMEs are:

The number of employees, the volume of the company's annual turnover, and the number of its assets and liabilities. Small and medium businesses in four dimensions: social (by increasing employment), economic (by

a more homogeneous distribution of income in society), political (by proper distribution of opportunities among Persons), and personal dimension (by providing a more suitable space for creativity). It causes transformation in society. Transformation in these four dimensions is also associated with flexibility increase and flexibility against global changes and transformations (Noori et al., 2006). Al bulushi & Bagum (2017), in their research entitled “SMEs growth strategies, challenges and problems” stated that SMEs are important for the success and economic performance of any country, which is why all countries focus on the growth of SMEs. After success in the local market, SMEs need to grow their business towards international markets or larger-level markets. But SMEs, face many problems and challenges including limitations on human resource management, financial management, operations management and marketing management. Abeh (2017), in research “titled problems and limitations of growth and development in Nigeria” examined the contradictory views in different paradigms of challenges and prospects and the efforts of the government for small and medium enterprises in Delta state. The results of the research indicate that the owners of these businesses agree that they are facing different challenges and problems. Their view showed that the government should act to encourage SMEs in Nigeria to achieve their potential through growth and development.

Benzazoua et al. (2015) identified the factors affecting the growth and success of small and medium-sized enterprises in Algeria including two categories of internal factors (entrepreneurial characteristics, management capacity, marketing skills, and technological capacities) and external factors (laws, access to financing and resource capacity) human) have been categorized. Regasa (2015) in the study of the “factors affecting the sustainability and success of industrial enterprises in the Tigari region” concluded that infrastructure development and competition and access to the market have a positive and significant relationship while interest rate and access to credits have a negative relationship with the sustainability of the enterprises. Romeo Asa & Shalendra Prasad (2014) in a research about the “factors influencing the sustainability and success of small and medium businesses in Zambia” determined that managerial factors, motivation, responsiveness, and strategic agility were among the factors influencing the sustainability of these types of businesses. In the research by Lindstrand et al. (2011), it is emphasized that financial instruments play the most important role in the growth and development of small and medium businesses. Today, the economy of developed countries is based on the axis of small and medium-sized businesses, and usually, entrepreneurs establish these companies who often do not have the needed funds to develop their plans and ideas.

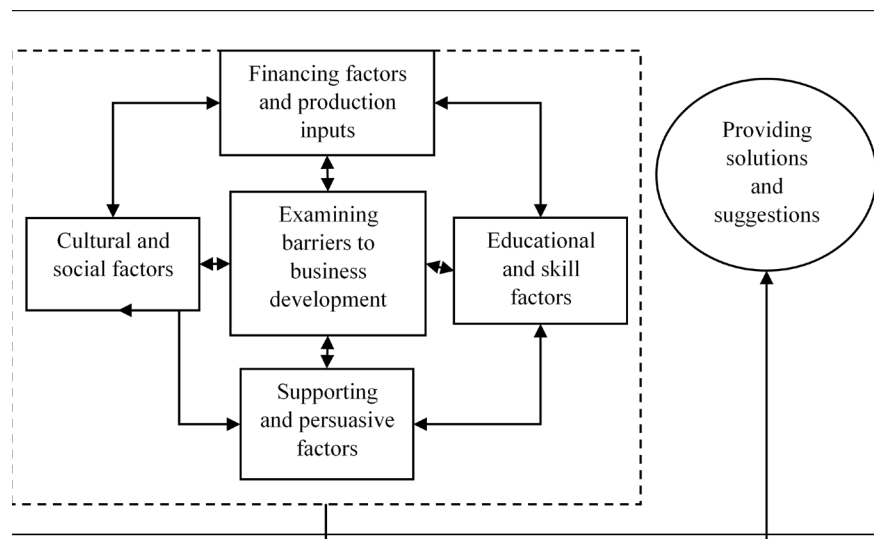


Figure 1. Research conceptual model

### 3. Methodology

The current research is applied in terms of its purpose and descriptive-analytical method in nature. The research method is qualitative. To analyze the data, Colaizzi and Dickelman method was used. The statistical population includes experts, business owners in two independent and supporting groups, and experts from government institutions and various executive, regulatory and legislative departments in public and private offices of Guilan province. Also, the sample size from the community of activists in two independent and supporting sectors was determined by experts. The method of data collection includes documentary studies and field investigations. 200 individuals were interviewed. Also a targeted method was used to identify the most effective solutions for the development of production centers and small workshops. In this way, in the beginning, the opinions of the community were collected through the interview. In each step of the research, the collected data, which were in the form of field notes and tapes, were transcribed by the researcher in the word software. After a line-by-line review of the interviews, the sentences related to the research questions were identified and specified. Data analysis was done using content analysis and two stages of open and axial coding using version 11

of Maxqda software, the output of which is presented in Table 1. Finally, according to all the examined cases, a small business ecosystem model was presented in Guilan province.

Guilan province is located in the north of Iran between the southern shores of the Caspian Sea and the Alborz highlands in the south and has an area of about 14,000 square kilometers. Guilan province is divided into 16 cities, namely Astara, Astana Ashrafieh, Amlash, Bandar Anzali, Rasht, Rezvanshahr, Rudbar, Rudsar, Siahkol, Shaft, SoumesaraTalesh, Foman, Lahijan, Langrod, and Masal, with Rasht city as the centre.

### 4. Findings

To design and identify indicators of obstacles and challenges of small businesses, 200 experts, were interviewed. Two main questions were asked in interviews: “what are the major obstacles and challenges facing small businesses?” and “What is the main challenge in this field of work? According to the results obtained (Table 1), the main challenges and obstacles facing small businesses in most occupations were the same, which are categorized below:

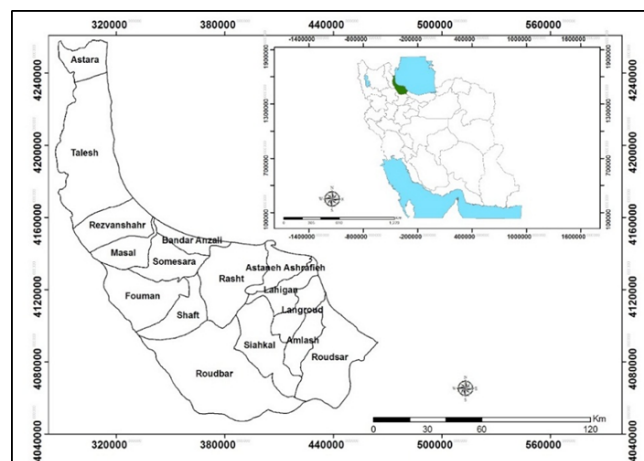


Figure 2. The location of Guilan province in the country

Table 1. Review of business barriers

Priority	variables (open coding)	Frequency of Variables	Main category (axial coding)
1	Inflation and market fluctuations	180	Financing factors and production inputs
	Expensive raw materials	177	
	Lack of financial support for farmers	176	
	The existence of brokers	145	
	The high cost of the devices required for work and the lack of proper financial support in this field	145	
	Problems related to receiving bank facilities	130	
	Lack of medicine and specialized laboratories in livestock matters	125	
	Lack of proper reception of local markets for products	120	
	Financial inability to employ more labor despite the high potential for activity development	115	
	The high cost of electricity consumption and the need to share industrial electricity to small businesses in the field of packing dried fruits and vegetables etc.	86	
	Issuance of employment permit without inspection	74	
	Inability to be present in foreign markets	65	
	Limiting pastures by the government, as well as the lack of ability and compensation for livestock farmers if their cattle graze on government lands	49	
	Absence of transparent, easy and timely banking and crediting system	45	
2	Persons lack of motivation to continue working due to existing problems and obstacles	174	Cultural and social factors
	Weak sales market due to lack of proper advertising	165	
	Limited holding of art exhibitions by the government	145	
	Lack of proper culture to encourage Persons to buy handicrafts	120	
	Forgetting many industries and professions	117	
	lack of labor force and the unwillingness of young Persons to work in this field	105	
	Lack of entrepreneurial spirit among decision-making elements and agents	98	
	lack of proper cohesion of unions and trades	91	
	Lack of sufficient specialized training and advice for those working in the business field	161	
	Weakness of the market and lack of proper training and advice in the field of sales marketing	110	
3	Failure to train Persons in order to develop and start a new business	97	Skill training factors
	Lack of a specialized laboratory to measure the quality of products	96	
	Lack of marketing training for Persons in order to sell products (not using virtual space for sales)	95	
	Recruitment of non-specialist teachers and trainers	89	
	the oldness of the designs to be presented to the sales market	69	
	Existence of useless administrative bureaucracy and inappropriate monitoring of the work process of executive and administrative institutes	170	
4	The long and challenging process of obtaining a license from the Food and Drug Administration	160	Supporting and persuasive factors
	lack of support and support from relevant organizations for producers	145	
	Lack of full support from relevant institutions such as the insurance institution	145	
	Lack of support for the entrepreneurial spirit and new entrepreneurial ideas of employees	135	
	The continuity and incompleteness of the main model plans of jihad keshavarzi	132	
	lack of sufficient monitoring of the work process of executive and administrative institutions	125	
	Inadequate government support for key products such as silk, etc., which led to the destruction of this industry	110	
	lack of attention and supervision on the allocation of funding to applicants	104	
	lack of proper support for new business ideas	100	
	Failure to support the cultivation of new and high-yield crops	99	
	The problem of renting a suitable place for work	98	
	Failure to settle accounts on time with work skills training instructors	95	
The lack of full support from the relevant institutions for livestock farmers	75		
The absence of a clear and active union of beekeepers	69		
Lack of proper insurance support	65		
The presence of many executive institutions in decision-making	45		

To identify the main challenges and obstacles to the development of small businesses in Guilan province, by using questionnaires, online and interviews in several stages, the views of independent activists, support, and experts in the field of business of the studied institutions were received and examined. The factors expressed by these people were classified into four categories: financing factors and production inputs, cultural and social factors, educational and skill factors, and supportive and persuasive factors. Financing factors and production inputs include the problems of inflation and market fluctuations, expensive raw materials, lack of financial support for farmers, the existence of brokers and the high cost of equipment needed for work and the lack of appropriate financial support in this field as the main obstacles respectively. Many respondents have considered financial challenges as one of the most important obstacles to the extent that they have affected many other aspects of work and made it difficult to continue their business process and many people had to close their businesses due to bankruptcy. Another category is cultural and social factors, which are among the most important issues discussed by people: lack of motivation of people to continue working due to existing problems and obstacles, weak sales market due to lack of proper exhibitions, limited holding of exhibitions presenting works of art by the government, etc. and lack of proper

culture to encourage people to buy handicrafts. Another factor that can be considered a basic category is the educational and skill category. Based on the investigations, it can be acknowledged that one of the reasons for the failure of businesses is the lack of sufficient specialized training and advice for those working in this field. Many people enter this field without prior knowledge and any training and expertise, so they failed. Another case is the weakness in product sales due to the lack of proper marketing training for business owners in a new way. This caused many people not to be able to survive in the current conditions of the competitive market even with the production of new products and eventually facing failure. The lack of training for people to develop and launch new and emerging jobs was another challenge. In fact, the best situation is for people to start a new business based on the knowledge of educational categories and background conditions. The examination of support and persuasion is one of the most important categories that many respondents are involved with. This category affects many other categories as well. Among these cases are the existence of redundant administrative bureaucracy and insufficient monitoring of the work process of executive and administrative institutions, the difficult and long process of obtaining a health permit, issuing a permit without inspection, and lack of support and support from the relevant institutions.

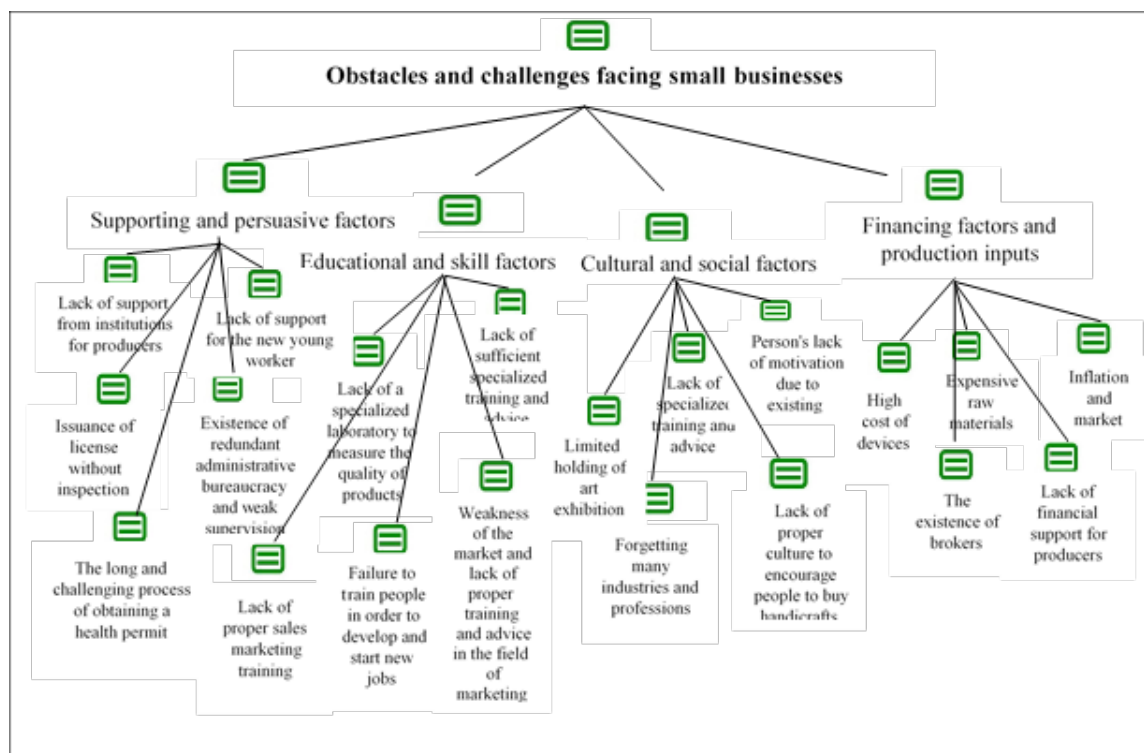


Figure 3. The most important obstacles and challenges facing small businesses

According to the investigations and studies carried out in this research, the main challenges and obstacles facing small businesses in Gilan province were identified, which are mentioned in figure 1. These challenges can be seen in all stages from obtaining a license to the end of the work, such as marketing and product sales. Therefore, it seems that to facilitate the development of businesses in this province, we need an integrated model under the title of the small businesses ecosystem. This ecosystem should be able to remove the challenges and obstacles, guide the workers and producers from the beginning of the path to the sale of the product. Further, it is necessary to provide them with specialized training and advice. In Figure 4, the proposed ecosystem model, which is the result of discussions between experts and business activists (independent and supporting) is presented.

### 5. Discussion

Nowadays, small businesses improved their knowledge development and the expansion of information and communication technology. They have occupied a wide economic area and are considered one of the most essential economic sectors of societies. In our country (Iran), reducing the unemployment rate and creating employment are among the goals and tasks specified in the country's five-year vision document and development laws. In this regard, developing small businesses have many positive consequences in the economic, cultural and social aspects which have been noticed by the

authorities. According to the investigations carried out during the current research, the business environment in the field of small businesses in the rural and peri-urban areas of Gilan province is facing many challenges and problems, most of which are the same, despite the diverse groups and occupations. In general, the results of the research showed that the business environment in the field of small businesses in Gilan province does not have enough coherence and integration. So, small businesses must be revised and guided towards creating a comprehensive and targeted ecosystem through various departments mentioned below:

As in the existing process between the registration of the license application and its issuance, there is no proper assessment of the possibility of the applicant's activity, in the first part of the ecosystem, the formation of a working group has been proposed for preliminary examination of the application.

To connect job seekers (with or without ideas) to supporters, mentors, and investors who are looking for labour, it was suggested to create a database of ideas and people in this section.

The long process of administrative bureaucracy and, in some cases, parallel work between organizations, is one of the challenges and problems facing businesses. To solve this challenge, it was proposed to form an integrated licensing system by creating access to relevant executive institutions.

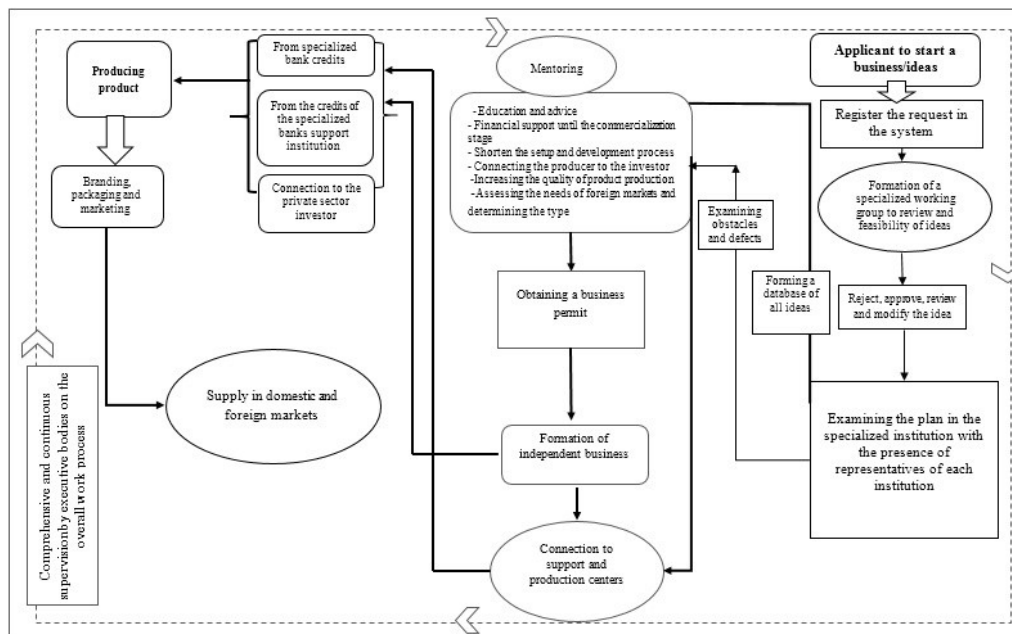


Figure 4. An ecosystem of small businesses proposed in Gilan province

the lack of rural activists benefiting from sufficient expertise in the field of issues such as the feasibility of product production and supply, proper training, knowing the target markets and their tastes, how to brand and commercialize the product, the inability to attract investors, etc is another challenge. It is possible to solve this challenge, in a part of the proposed ecosystem, using a group of experts in this field as accelerators

To create an integrated system of production and formation of employment centres in the rural areas of the province, the solution of connecting independent activists to supporters and investors through accelerators using the business information bank was proposed in this ecosystem.

One of the most common challenges from the point of view of independent activists and supporters is the lack of sufficient government support in the field of granting facilities (inconsistency of costs with received financial facilities and the issue of inflation). To facilitate this, the presence of representatives from the banks granting facilities in the working groups related to the issuance of activity licenses was suggested to announce the support of the bank concerning the desired activity and to measure the feasibility of establishing a business in the initial stages of the issuance of the license. Also, creating a platform and benefiting from the financial support of private sector investment by guiding applicants to link with their production centres and being placed in the cycle of packaging, branding, marketing, advertising, and distribution in domestic and foreign markets is the final part of the small businesses ecosystem. Also, the small works of Guilan province have been suggested.

The present study was compared with the study of [Al Bulushi and Bagum \(2017\)](#) who expressed the challenges and problems of businesses in their work process and stated that the most important factor of success is moving towards international markets. This research also with preliminary investigations and an understanding of the existing situation and obstacles proposed a comprehensive ecosystem of the work process for the business owners to facilitate small businesses. Also, researchers such as [Abeh \(2017\)](#), [Romeo and Shalendra \(2014\)](#), and [Lindstrand et al.](#), have considered financial, managerial, educational, responsiveness, and strategic agility as the most important factors to improve the situation. In this research, as mentioned before, the most important influencing factors for improving the business situation of rural and peri-urban areas were presented in the form of a comprehensive ecosystem, and all factors mentioned by the researchers are included above.

## Acknowledgements

This article is taken from a project titled “Evaluation of obstacles and challenges of production centers and small workshops” which was carried out with the financial support of the General Directorate of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare of Gilan Province. Based on this, the authors consider it necessary to express their sincere gratitude to the chairmanship and respected staff of that organization.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

## References

- Abeh, O. (2017). The problems and prospects of small and medium scale enterprises Growth and development in Nigeria: A study of selected SMEs in delta state. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 10(3), 278-294.
- Al Bulushi, B. H. S., Bagum, S. (2017). Growth strategies of SME in Oman- Issue and challenges. *International Journal of small business and entrepreneurship Research*, 5(2), 26-61.
- Askari, M., Vali Beigi, H., Barghi Oskoie, M., Rasti, M., Asna Ashari, F. (2007). How to make small and medium enterprises competitive in the direction of export development, Tehran: Aria Publications.
- Atkinson, G. (2010). Measuring corporate sustainability. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 43(2): 235- 252.
- Barclays. (2012). If at first, you don't succeed. *Wealth Insights: Barclays Banking Company*.
- Benzazoua, B. 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*, A (2): 101-115.
- Christina, B., Neelufar, A., & AlAmri, S. (2014). Challenges and barriers encountered by the SMEs owners in Muscat. *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Research*, 12(3): 1-13.
- Davidsson, P., Gordon, S.R. (2016). Much ado about nothing? The surprising persistence of Girotra, K.; Netessine, S. *OM Forum – Business Model Innovation for Sustainability*. *Manuf. Serv. Oper. Manag.*, 15: 537-544.
- Ensari, M., Karaby, M. (2014). What helps to Make SMEs Successful in Global Markets? *Proceed-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 150:192-201.
- Giesen, E., Berman, S.J., Bell, R., Blitz, A. (2007). Three ways to successfully innovate your business model. *Strateg. Leadersh.*, 35: 27-33.

- Hajari, M., Haji Hosseyni, H., Hamidi, M. (2015). Presentation of technology intelligence process model in small and medium companies. *Industry and University*, 8(27, 28): 1-22.
- Hamilton, R., Dana, L. (2003). An Increasing Role for Small Business in New Zealand. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 41(4): 402-408.
- Hisrich, R., Peters, M.P., Shepherd, D. A. (2005). *Entrepreneurship*, Sixth Edition. New York, America: Mc Graw- Hill / Irwin.
- Honjo, Y., Harada, N. (2006). SME policy, financial structure and firm growth: Evidence from Japan. *Small Business Economics*, 27(4-5): 289-300.
- Imani Rad, M. (1995). Study project on the role of small and medium industries in the development of the country's exports, Proposing the method and policy of the degree of expansion of export management of small industries, Tehran: Ministry of Industries.
- Karimi, A., Bozarjomehri, S.H. (2014). Phenomenology of experiences and entrepreneurs' perceptions of entrepreneurship phenomenon; a qualitative study. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Development*, 7: 486-467.
- Landstrom, H. (2005). *Pioneers in Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research*: Springer.
- Lindstrand, A., Melen, S., Nordman, E. R. (2011). Turning Social capital into business: A study of the international of biotech SMEs. *International Business Review*, 20(2): 194-212.
- López-Ortega, E., Canales-Sanchez, D., Bautista-Godínez, T., & Macías-Herrera, S. (2016). "Classification of micro, small and medium enterprises (M-SME) based on their available levels of knowledge." *Technovation* 47: 59-69.
- Low, M.B. (2009). The adolescence of entrepreneurship research: specification of purpose. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 25(4): 17-25.
- Moriggi, A. (2019). Exploring enabling resources for place-based social entrepreneurship: A participatory study of Green Care practices in Finland. *Sustain*, 15: 437-453.
- Murphy, J.Patrick, Liao, Jianwen, & Welsch, P.Harold. (2006). 'A conceptual history of entrepreneurial thought', *Journal of management history*. Vol. 12, No. 1. PP. 12-35.
- Noori, S., Golchinpour, M., Hozouri, A. (2006). Entrepreneurial growth through small business development centers. *Proceedings of the Second National Conference on Venture Capital*, Faculty of Management, University of Tehran: 83-104.
- Olusegun, A. I. (2012). Is small and medium enterprises (SMEs) entrepreneurship? *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2(1): 487.
- Regasa, D.G. (2015). External factors affecting firm growth: Evidence from small scale manufacturing firms in Tigray regional state of Ethiopia. *International Journal of management and business Research*, 5(4): 279-286.
- Rezaei, R., Safa, L. (2016). Study on Development Barriers of Agricultural Early Return and Entrepreneurship Small and Medium Enterprises in Zanjan Province. *Iranian Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development Research*, 2(1): 67-79.
- Rizos, V., Behrens, A., van der Gaast, W., Hofman, E., Ioannou, A., Kafyeke, T., Flamos, A., Rinaldi, R., Papadelis, S., Hirschnitz-Garbers, M. (2016). Implementation of Circular Economy Business Models by Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Barriers and Enablers. *Sustainability*, 8: 1212.
- Romeo Asa, A., Shalendra Prasad, N. (2014). Analysis of the factors that determine sustainable growth of small firms in Namibia. *International Journal of Management Science and Business Administration*, 1(1):5-11.
- Sahin, T.K., Asunakutlu, T. (2014). Entrepreneurship in a Cultural Context: A Research on Turks in Bulgaria. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 150: 851- 861.
- Shane, S. A., Edwin, A. L., Christopher, J. C. (2003). Entrepreneurship motivation. *Human Resource Management Review*, 13: 257-279.
- Sharma, M. CH., Bala, R., Chauhan, R. (2013). Rural Entrepreneurship in Developing Countries: Challenges, Problems and Performance Appraisal. *Global Journal of Management and Business Studies*, 3(9): 1035-1040.
- Subrahmanya, M.B. (2015). Innovation and growth of engineering SMEs in Bangalore: why only some innovate and only some grow faster? *J. Eng. Technol. Manag*, 36: 24-40.
- Svetlicic, M., Gilmore, A., Cummins, D. (2007). Internationalization of Small and Medium - size Enterprises from selected central European economies. *Eastern European Economics*. 45 (4): 36-65.
- Teece, D.J. (2010). Business Models, Business Strategy and Innovation. *Long Range Plann*, 43:172-194.
- Thai, M. T. T., Turkina, E. (2014). Macro-level determinants of formal entrepreneurship versus informal entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 29(4), 490-510. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2013.07.005>.
- Tommaso, M., Sabrina, D. (2000). *Towards a Theory of the Small Firm: Theoretical Aspects and Policy Implications*. Series Desarrollo Productivo, Santiago, Chile: 87, CEPAL.
- Ucbasaran, D., Westhead, P., Wright, M., Flores, M. (2010). The nature of entrepreneurial experience, business failure and comparative optimism. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(6): 541-555.
- 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.
- Zhao, W., Ritchie, J. R., Echtner, C. M. (2011). Social capital and tourism entrepreneurship. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4): 1570-1593.
- Zimmerman, J. (2008). Phenomenology in Entrepreneurship studies. *Pro Quest Iranian journal of management sciences*, 5(19): 33-62.