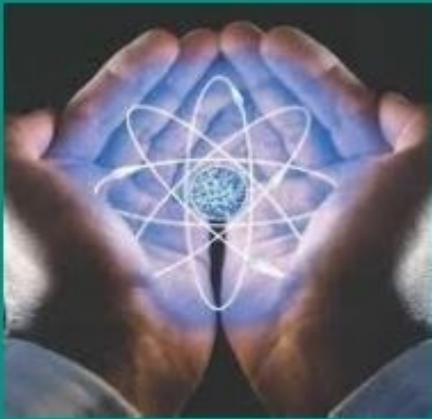

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Academia Open

Vol. 10 No. 2 (2025): December
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.13057

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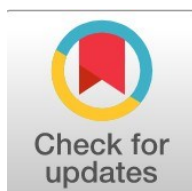
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Sociological Assessment Of The Entrepreneurial Activity Of The Population In The Service Sector

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Abstract

Background: The service sector serves as a critical driver for enhancing entrepreneurial activity and addressing socio-economic challenges such as unemployment and poverty in developing economies. **Knowledge Gap:** While Uzbekistan has established comprehensive legal and institutional frameworks to support entrepreneurship, limited empirical research exists on the actual entrepreneurial activity levels and barriers faced by populations at the community (mahalla) level in the service sector. **Aims:** This study conducts a sociological assessment of entrepreneurial activity in Samarkand region's service sector, evaluating socio-economic factors, existing barriers, and opportunities through quantitative and qualitative methods. **Results:** Survey data from 496 respondents revealed that although 74.8% expressed desire to start businesses, only 25.1% possessed adequate family assets for entrepreneurial ventures. Key obstacles identified included insufficient capital-property resources (42.2% needed machinery/equipment, 47.1% required production buildings), limited financial literacy, and weak institutional support at the neighborhood level, with 80.7% reporting no practical assistance from local government programs. **Novelty:** This research employs a mahalla-based methodological approach to assess entrepreneurial readiness, providing granular insights into community-level barriers previously overlooked in regional development studies. **Implications:** Findings underscore the necessity for targeted interventions including enhanced financial literacy programs, improved neighborhood-level institutional support mechanisms, and comprehensive capital-property assistance schemes to effectively stimulate entrepreneurial activity among Uzbekistan's population.

Highlight :

- ♦ The study reveals that 74.8% of respondents desire to start businesses, but only 25.1% have adequate opportunities to utilize family assets as initial capital.
- ♦ Major barriers include lack of machinery and equipment (42.2%), production facilities (47.1%), and reliance on mixed financing sources combining bank loans and personal funds (39.6%).
- ♦ Institutional support remains inadequate, with 80.7% of respondents receiving no practical assistance from neighborhood-level government programs, indicating gaps in community-based entrepreneurship development mechanisms.

Keywords : Service Sector, Entrepreneurial Activity, Sociological Analysis, Economic Activity, Social Factors

Published date: 2025-12-11

Introduction

Today, the effective use of resources aimed at increasing the entrepreneurial activity of the population in the service sector is of great importance. In the context of rapid socialization of service sectors, increasing the entrepreneurial activity of the population helps to solve a number of socio-economic problems. Therefore, the service sector is considered an important driver of enhancing entrepreneurial activity among the population, as well as a key factor in reducing unemployment and poverty. The reforms being implemented to develop this sector are aimed precisely at these goals[1]. In this process, the entrepreneurial activity of the population plays a crucial role and is essential for achieving the desired outcomes.

With these goals in mind, in recent years, the legal and institutional frameworks for supporting the involvement of the population in entrepreneurship have been improved. In particular, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PD-60 of January 28, 2022 “On the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026,” the Resolution of January 31, 2023 “On Additional Measures to Bring Support for the Population’s Business Initiatives within Family Entrepreneurship Development Programs to a New Stage,” the Resolution No. PR-4862 of October 13, 2020 “On Improving the System of Involving the Population in Entrepreneurship and Additional Measures for the Development of Entrepreneurship,” the Resolution No. PR-5113 of May 11, 2021 “On Measures for Rapid Development of the Service Sector,” and the Decree No. PD-5087 of June 19, 2017 “On Measures to Fundamentally Improve the System of Protecting the Legitimate Interests of Businesses by the State and Further Development of Entrepreneurial Activity,” as well as other regulatory documents related to this sector, play an important role in implementing the tasks set forth in them.

Literature review

Many foreign scholars have studied the fundamental issues of increasing the entrepreneurial activity of the population in the service sector. In particular, R. S. Shukurullayev, in his research, attempts to scientifically and theoretically substantiate that entrepreneurial activity is the foundation of the economy and public welfare [2].

Similarly, F. Rakhmatullayeva examines the issues of adapting international experiences in the development of youth entrepreneurship to national conditions [3]. In another study [4], the economic activity of young people—expressed through their participation in the consumer market, the formation of labor resources, the manifestation of entrepreneurial potential, and their involvement in investment processes—is theoretically substantiated. The study provides an in-depth analysis of the four main roles of youth in the economy: consumer, labor force, entrepreneur, and investor.

Recently, an increasing number of studies have focused on examining the role of family entrepreneurship in improving living standards and supporting self-employment [5]. These studies explore the significance of family entrepreneurship in enhancing the quality of life, increasing employment levels, and ensuring social protection and economic stability. Research findings devoted to examining the role of small business and family entrepreneurship in the socio-economic development of regions are also noteworthy. These include studies evaluating opportunities for regional self-development and ensuring comprehensive and sustainable socio-economic growth [6, 7, 8]; the role of small business in innovative regional development [9, 10, 11]; and analyses based on integrated indices, rating indicators, and others [12, 13, 14]. These studies demonstrate that various methodological approaches to regional development exist, and among them, increasing the entrepreneurial activity of the population is scientifically proven to be one of the most important directions [15].

Researcher Isakova [16], based on the purpose of her study, examines the socio-economic characteristics of entrepreneurship and identifies the specific features of its manifestation in the service sector. Based on these findings, she identifies the reasons and factors hindering the development of entrepreneurial activity.

Furthermore, Kamolov [17], in his research, acknowledges that the intensive reforms carried out in Uzbekistan to improve the business environment have created favorable conditions for the development of all sectors of the economy, including entrepreneurial structures. He substantiates the necessity of improving mechanisms for developing the activities of entrepreneurial entities, emphasizing that there are still several unresolved issues in studying ways to enhance the efficiency of entrepreneurial activities in the service sector.

Materials and Methods

A comprehensive approach was used in this study to sociologically assess the entrepreneurial activity of the population in the service sector. The main objective of the research is to determine the entrepreneurial activity of the population in the service sector, evaluate the socio-economic factors influencing it, and analyze existing barriers and opportunities. For this purpose, quantitative and qualitative sociological analysis methods were combined.

The research data consisted of primary data—responses collected from a specially designed sociological questionnaire—and secondary sources, including data from the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, scientific articles, analytical reports, and official legal documents. Respondents included citizens interested in engaging in potential entrepreneurial activities in the service sector, as well as those currently operating in this field. Respondents were grouped based on age, gender, education level, and place of residence. The survey, comparative analysis, and statistical methods were the main sociological tools used. The reliability of the research findings was ensured through scientifically grounded methods and statistical processing of the results.

Results and Discussion

In our research, we conducted a sociological assessment of the entrepreneurial activity of the population in the service sector. Through a questionnaire survey carried out among residents in the mahallas of Samarkand region who expressed interest in engaging in entrepreneurial activities, it became possible to identify several problems.

According to the demographic characteristics of the respondents participating in the survey:

1. Male – 58.4%
2. Female – 41.6%
3. Urban residents – 31.2%
4. Rural residents – 68.8%
5. Education level:
6. General secondary – 16%
7. Secondary special – 31.6%
8. Higher education – 52%

According to the results of the survey assessing the entrepreneurial activity of the population, 74.8% of respondents stated that they wish to start their own business (Figure 1). However, when asked, “How would you assess your ability to use family-owned property (vehicles, residential real

estate, vacant land, tools, etc.) for business purposes?” 59.4% responded that they could partially use such resources, 15.5% answered that it was completely impossible, and 25.1% stated that they had very good opportunities to use family assets for business (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Do you have a desire to start a business?

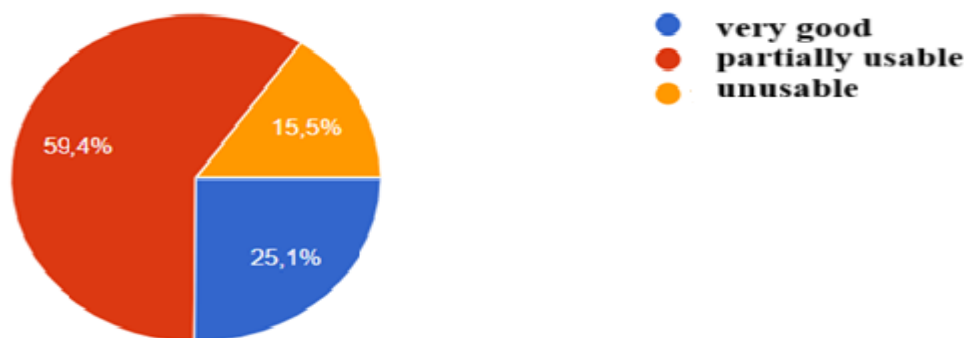


Figure 2. Assess your ability to use family property (vehicles, housing, vacant land, equipment, etc.) for business?

In response to the question, “What type of property support do you need to start your business?” 42.2% of respondents stated they needed machinery and equipment, 47.1% — a building intended for production, 28.3% — a land plot, 1.1% — cash, 6.1% — modern technology, investment, a vacant shop building, computer technologies, or a low-interest loan, and 1.6% reported needing other types of support (Figure 3).

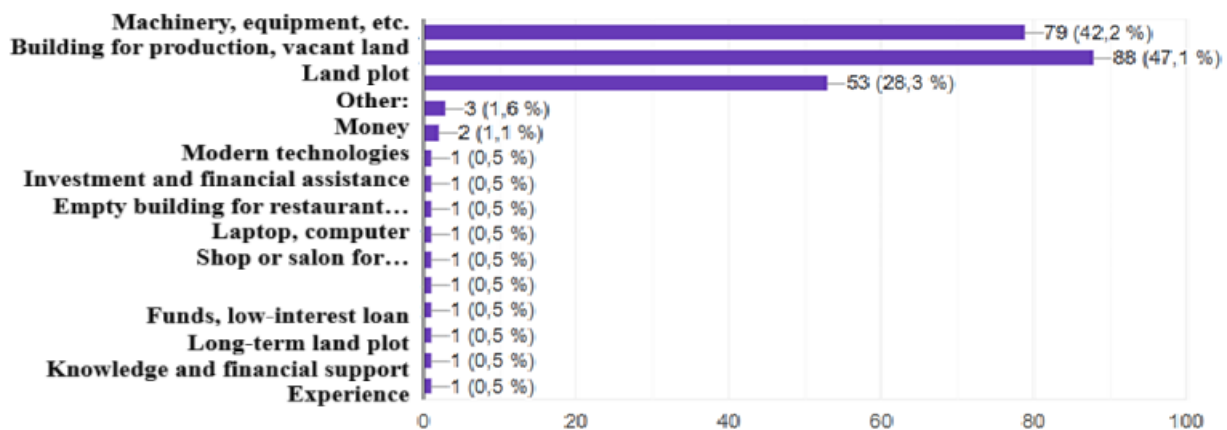


Figure 3. What kind of financial support do you need to start your business?

In response to the question “What are the sources of financing for your business activities?”, the majority of respondents indicated that they would finance their business through mixed sources—bank loans and their own funds (39.6%). Additionally, 26.7% said they would rely solely on their own funds, 19.3% — bank credit, 12.8% — investors, and 1.6% — other sources (Figure 4).

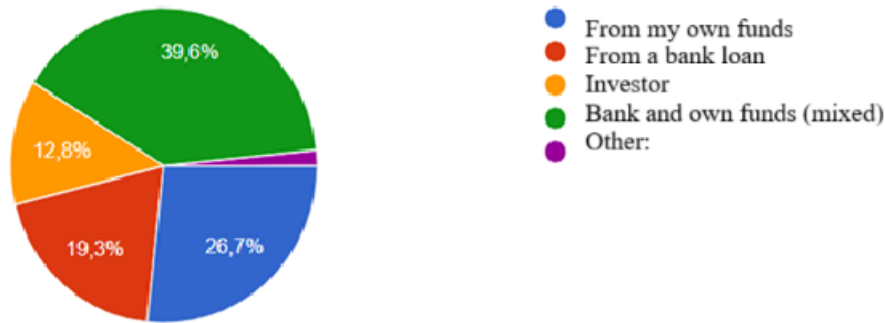


Figure 4. Please indicate the sources of financing for your business activities?

The results of the sociological survey indicate that although almost all respondents expressed a desire to engage in entrepreneurial activity, they rated their own material and financial capabilities as low for starting a business. The main reason for this is that personal assets of the population are typically directed toward satisfying basic needs, making it impossible to use them as capital. Therefore, most respondents stated that they needed machinery and equipment, production-oriented buildings, land plots, cash, modern technologies, investment, vacant commercial buildings, computer technologies, and low-interest loans. For this reason, when asked, "What are the entrepreneurial conditions in your neighborhood?" 26.5% responded that conditions are insufficient, 53.0% — average, 5.2% — completely absent, and only 15.3% — very good (Figure 5).

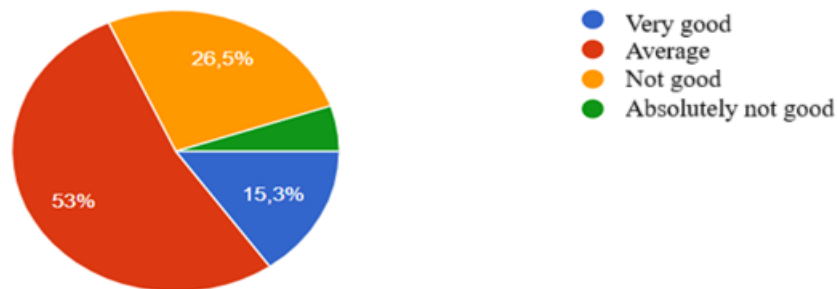


Figure 5. What do you think are the conditions for entrepreneurship in your neighborhood?

Additionally, respondents' views were studied regarding the economic sectors in which they wish to start a business (Figure 6), the difficulties they may face when starting a business (Figure 7), which areas of entrepreneurship should be supported by the state under current conditions (Figure 8), the most promising business areas (Figure 9), and their preferences regarding organizational-legal forms of business activity (Figure 10).

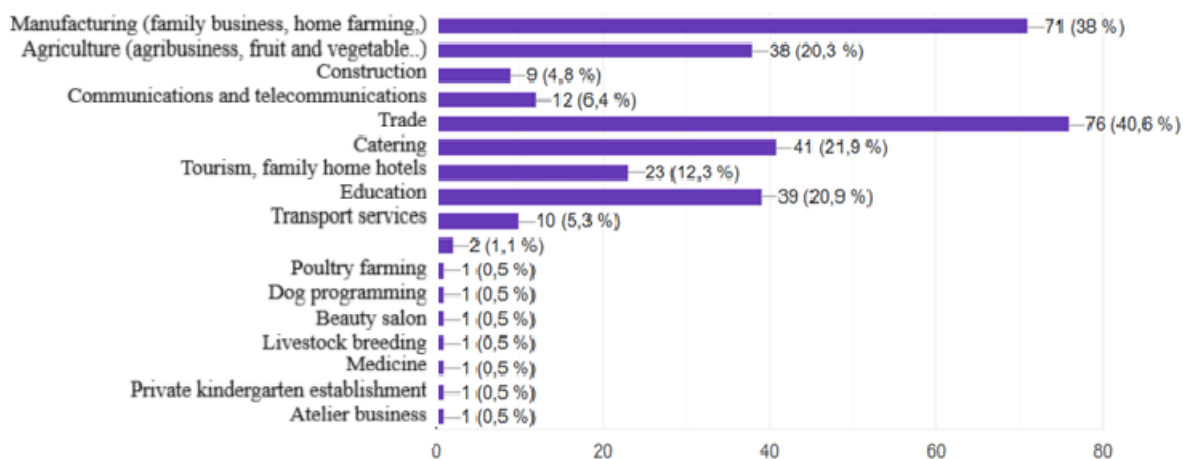


Figure 6. What type of business activity would you choose?

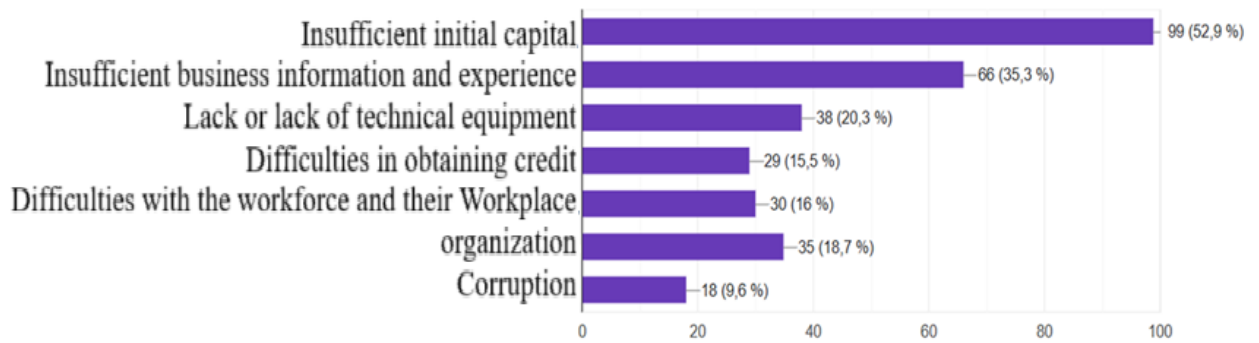


Figure 7. What challenges do you think you might face in starting your business?

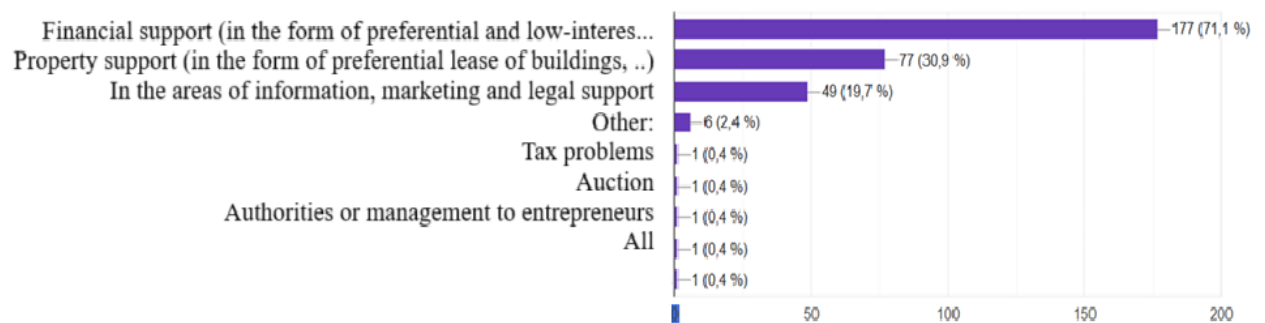


Figure 8. In your opinion, in what areas is it important for the state to support entrepreneurial activity in the current circumstances?

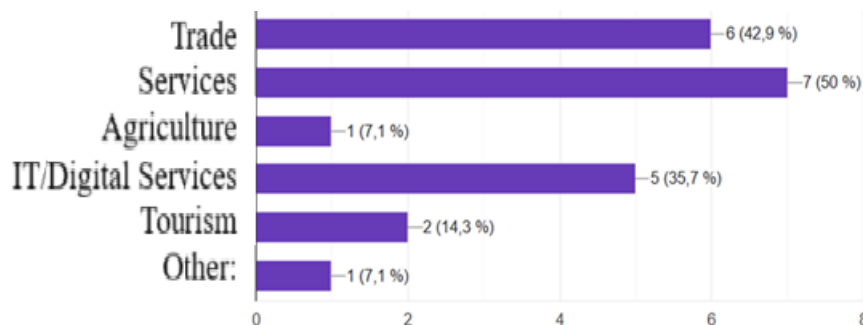


Figure 9. What do you think are the most promising areas of entrepreneurship?

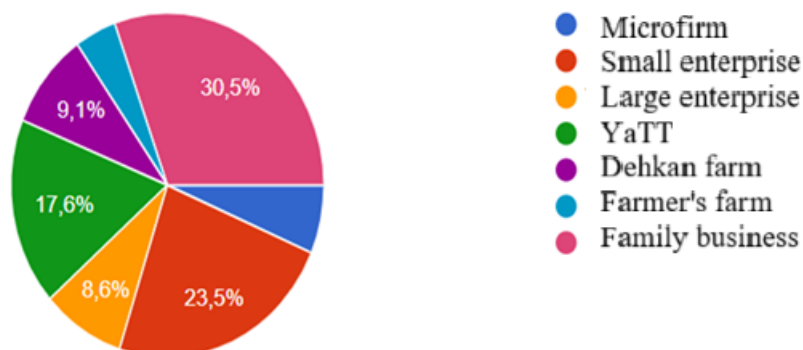


Figure 10. Which organizational and legal form of business activity suits you best?

The reasons why some participants do not wish to start a business were also examined (Figure 11). Based on this, their motivations that could encourage them to start a business (Figure 12) and their views on what measures are necessary to involve the population in entrepreneurship (Figure 13) were identified.

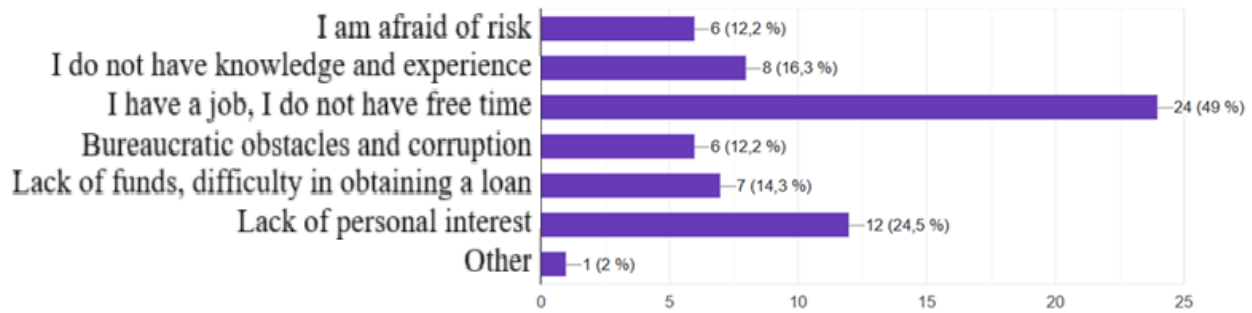


Figure 11. Why do you not want to engage in entrepreneurial activity?

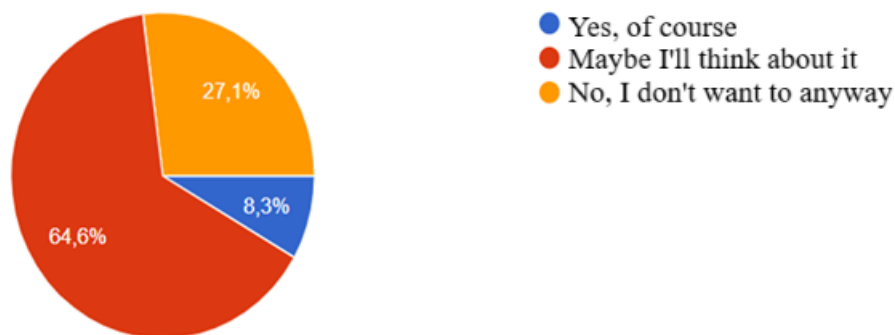


Figure 12. Would your opinion change if the government offered assistance (loans, subsidies, places)?

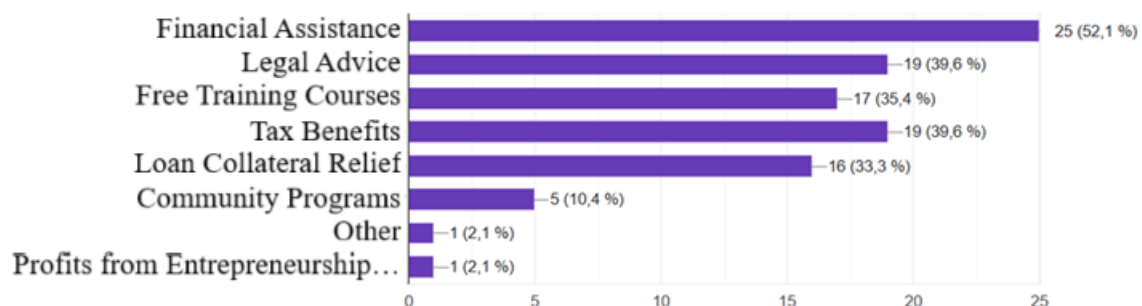


Figure 13. What measures do you think are needed to attract the population to entrepreneurship

In line with the neighborhood-based methodological approach used in the study, the survey also included the question: “Have you received practical assistance from the assistant to the district mayor within the framework of state programs?” To this question, 8.8% of respondents answered “yes,” 10.5% – “partially,” and 80.7% – “no” (Figure 14).

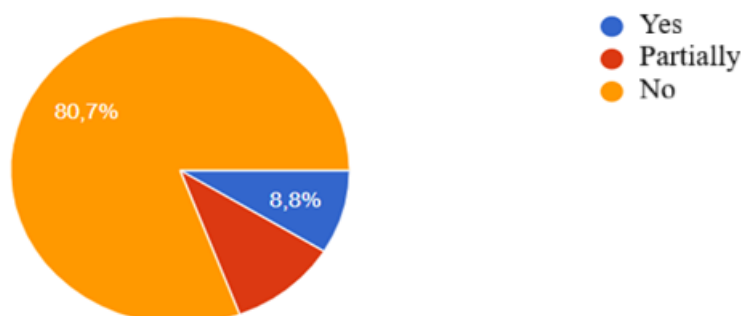


Figure 14. Have you received practical assistance from the neighborhood mayor's assistant under government programs?

In accordance with the Development Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the task of rapidly developing the service sector in the regions has also been set. Target parameters for reforms in this area have been defined, including:

1. Increasing the volume of services threefold by developing service and maintenance sectors in the regions.

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), <https://acopen.umsida.ac.id>, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo

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2. Developing modern market services, IT, education, healthcare, legal services, arts, tourism, hotel services, catering, and transport services in medium and large cities and districts with a population of more than 300,000.
3. Developing trade, household, recreational, and entertainment services by putting 233,000 vacant land plots—located in densely populated streets with necessary urban infrastructure—up for auction.
4. Establishing 36,000 trade and service facilities by forming central streets specialized in service provision in medium and large urban centers.
5. Constructing 6,000 trade and service facilities in the “New Uzbekistan” residential areas and along international highways.
6. Transforming existing marketplaces into modern, convenient, and safe commercial complexes by involving leading project organizations.

According to the existing legislation, the directions for state support of the population's entrepreneurial activity in Uzbekistan have been defined [5]. However, relying solely on state support is not sufficient to involve the population in entrepreneurship and develop entrepreneurial activity. Therefore, in order to increase entrepreneurial activity among the population, it is essential to not only utilize state-created benefits and programs but also to comprehensively develop social, infrastructural, and educational factors.

To achieve this, it is crucial to improve the business environment at the neighborhood (mahalla) level, enhance the population's financial literacy, support the implementation of innovative ideas, and develop continuous education and consulting services aimed at fostering an entrepreneurial culture.

Additionally, establishing effective cooperation between the private sector and state institutions, creating new jobs in the service sector through cluster systems, and supporting youth startups via digital platforms and incubation centers are among the main directions for sustainable entrepreneurial development.

As seen from the above, Uzbekistan has established an important system of measures to improve the business environment. According to these conditions and their efficiency indicators, various methodological approaches exist for assessing the economic—and particularly entrepreneurial—activity of the population. In this regard, the World Bank's “Doing Business 2020” report [6] is formed based on indicators such as business registration, obtaining construction permits, connecting to electricity networks, registering property, accessing credit, and tax procedures.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the problems related to the population's entrepreneurial activity mainly arise from factors of capital-property, financial, and institutional (cognitive) nature. These problems were found to be common among the majority of individuals who are in the initial stage of starting a business. Accordingly, in our view, solving the issues of increasing entrepreneurial activity among the population requires, first and foremost, the creation of an effective institutional environment aimed at supporting and developing entrepreneurial activity.

Based on these conclusions, the study set the task of developing proposals for additional measures to support youth employment and women's entrepreneurship at the neighborhood (mahalla) level

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