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Entrepreneurial Properties and Tendency of Agricultural Advisory Personnel

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the influence of entrepreneurial characteristics of members of technical and engineering companies and agricultural advisory services on their willingness toward entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship development plays an important role in job creation process which can eventually lead to the achievement of sustainable development goals in agriculture. In Iran, a kind of rural advisory services named technical engineering companies and agricultural advisory services are legally accountable for agricultural extension and rural development issues. A survey methodology was utilized to collect data by using a questionnaire interview. The Target population of the study were all agricultural advisory personnel (N=50) currently working in Hamedan and Malayer townships. Results showed that there was no significant relationship between age, gender, educational level, and work experience of participants with their entrepreneurial tendency. However, self-confidence, work courage, teamwork spirit, motivation and creativity, competitiveness, self-help, law abiding character, risk-taking and job interest significantly affected the entrepreneurial tendency of participants.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial property, Entrepreneurial tendency, Advisory services, Iran

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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the third millennium is coincided with rapid change which is continuous shaping the human life. Entrepreneurship and creativity processes, as the foundation of change process, has the most fundamental and crucial role to play. In other words, economic growth and development can be possible only when some risk-takers perform innovative actions to replace inefficient methods. Entrepreneurship largely benefits the community, namely in terms of improving: employment, technology transfer, investment, new markets, prosperity, social justice, creativity, innovation, and so on. (Shahrokny, 2006). Scholhammer (1982) believed in entrepreneurship as the engine of economic development, and suggested that communities must increase the number of entrepreneurs in order to achieve faster economic growth.

For years scientists have looked for a way to replicate entrepreneurs in the society. These studies led to the emergence of entrepreneurial personality trait approach. In this approach, the personal characteristics of entrepreneurs were identified from a psychological perspective aimed at developing such characteristics amongst individuals, and hence propagating the future entrepreneurs. The identified features included: perseverance, tolerance to uncertainty and failure, self-confidence, motivation, innovation and creativity, problem solving, risk-taking, optimism, seeking independence and having internal controls, amongst them certain traits have been approved in most of the research works like: risk-taking, independence seeking, creativity and motivation (Scholhammer, 1982).

The modern age is the era of competition over resources and capital. The conquerors of this competition are major industrial countries whose first priority are making the most use of resources and capital. With the help of their professions, they have introduced a number of innovations creating development and prosperity, much of which is bestowed to entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is important because it can convert knowledge into new products and services (Shan *et al.*, 2003). Entrepreneurship not only causes job creation, but also can have

an important role in the enhancement of life quality, better distribution of income, reduction of social anxiety and utilization of national resources (Salazar, 2003). Since it is one of the most important topics in the field of humanities, conceptualization of entrepreneurship is not that concrete like those of science. Thus, the term's definition, to be widely acceptable, proves to be very difficult or even impossible. It is no exaggeration to say that there are as many definitions of entrepreneurship as the number of its experts (AhmadPour, 2002). The Oxford dictionary defines an entrepreneur as a person who uses initiative and risk-taking attempts to gain profits (Burns, 2003). Tefft (1993) explains it as 'the process of hunting opportunities regardless of available resources either individually or organizationally'. Entrepreneurship is a way of doing business in an innovative way, with a focus on the customer and consideration of available risks (Cart Write, 2004). So, prescriptive models of enhancing it would be in contrast with the true entrepreneurial activity (Brown, 2003).

Agricultural production is one of the main pillars of national development. Of the main factors of production, human resources play a crucial role. The extension organization, responsible for technology transfer and human resource development in agriculture, has its unique role in accelerating the pace of agricultural development. Nevertheless, public agricultural extension has been seriously criticized for its failure to cover a vast majority of farmers due to financial constraints (Asadi *et al.*, 2008). This has caused inefficiency in extension and it needs for some revisions in revitalizing public extension systems (Mahdjoubi, 2007). Hence, extension alternatives were introduced as a global solution to provide a more effective agricultural extension system. Advisory services in agricultural extension are a type of privatized companies which consider diffusion of new knowledge, and function to develop and expand farmers' skills (Chipeta, 2005). This approach has gained a special place in Iran's departments of agricultural extension, and persuaded the farmers to believe in visiting trained agents to solve their problems in agriculture (Imeni *et al.*, 2009). In this regard, the experience

of India (Kathleen, 1999) and Germany in employing agriculture graduates to provide advisory services to farmers are to be mentioned. Iran has developed a network of privatized technical and engineering advisory services in agriculture aimed at achieving a better agricultural extension system (Council of Agricultural Engineering and Natural Resources, 2007).

A thorough investigation of the entrepreneurs' personal characteristics shows that this particular group of people demonstrates some traits that, if identified properly, can be used to support and develop entrepreneurship amongst the community. Some of these traits are: risk tolerance and goal orientation (Shahrokny, 2005), opportunity orientation, dedication, desire for success and achievement, competition, tolerance (Sharifzade and Zamani, 2006), optimism and being prospective, having sense of control on the external environment, motivation, determination, confidence, results orientation, creativity and innovation, authoritarian and independence (Eftekhari *et al.*, 2009), self-regulation activities, belief in his ability to control life outcomes, risk tolerance, high ambiguity tolerance, high self-esteem and lack of adaptability (Saidi, 2002), need for achievement, internal locus of control, tendency toward risk taking, need for autonomy and creativity (Motiee Langeroudi, 2003), pressure to overcome the difficulties, hard work, quality raising, responsibility, reward orientation, and profit orientation, achievement motivation, independence, risk-taking and determination (Robinson *et al.*, 1991). However, many researchers and experts have mentioned particular behavioral and personality traits for entrepreneurs. Most common and important traits are observed in the comprehensive model of entrepreneurship. According to the proposed model by Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDI), entrepreneurs share 5 traits: success seeking, independence, risk taking, creativity and determination (Robinson *et al.*, 1991).

Howard (2004), in a study entitled 'the effect of entrepreneurial capability development in the formation of entrepreneurship' which was done on 450 students, found a direct relationship between so-called capabilities and entrepreneur-

ship. Druker (1985) and Postigo (2002) in their research found that creativity and innovation were interdependent with entrepreneurship, so that entrepreneurship does not produce any results without innovation and creativity. Thompson (2004), in their study regarding this feature, found that creativity and innovation are justified by differences in culture and civilization so that those cultures relying on individual autonomy have much more emphasis on this feature. In the case of independence and its nature in shaping entrepreneurial activity, Mitchell (2004) conducted a study on the role of students and found that there was a direct link between this feature and the ability of entrepreneurs. Wanger (2007) showed that risk-seeking and risk-taking played an important role in starting an entrepreneurial activity (Scott *et al.*, 2006). As cited in Alison, personal innovativeness, risk taking, identifying the production chain, market analysis etc. are considered as important factors; endorsing the economic approach of entrepreneurship. Alison reported that some social traits were also effective in entrepreneurial behavior namely: roles of the community, life experiences, family background, education and awareness level, social class and bureaucracy (Alison, 1990). Macke (2001) and Maia (2002) claimed that infrastructural and environmental factors affected the development of entrepreneurship.

Sharifzade and the colleagues (2003) investigated the following four features in the College of Agriculture, Shiraz University -i.e. need to success, need to power, competition and risk taking. He found no significant difference between students of various disciplines and educational levels. Riahi *et al.* (2004) concluded that sex, age and education could affect entrepreneurship. Khalili (2000) studied the characteristics of entrepreneurial managers of Isfahan food industry, and concluded that independence, perseverance, goal-orientedness, job experience, success seeking, competitiveness, innovation, education, initiative and creativity were higher than average. Considering the role of agriculture in the overall process of national development, and the importance of agricultural extension, rural advisory services in Iran named technical

and engineering companies and agricultural advisory services were selected as the focus of the study. The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of entrepreneurial characteristics of members of technical and engineering companies and agricultural advisory services on their levels of tendency toward entrepreneurial activities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is an applied research conducted using a survey method. The statistical populations of this research were 50 participants, all members of technical and engineering companies and agricultural advisory services of Hamedan and Malayer townships. The research instrument was a close-ended question questionnaire comprised of two parts with Likert scale. The first part included questions about respondents' individual characteristics such as gender, age, etc. aimed at demographics of the study. The second part contained a number of questions on entrepreneurial personalities of the members. To determine the validity of the questionnaire (based on the standard questionnaire of the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands), it was revised based on comments

from members of the faculty of Agriculture, University of Bu-Ali Sina, Iran. The reliability of the instrument by Cronbach's alpha (91 percent).

Research Findings

The individual Traits of Respondents

The data indicated that 71.4 % of the population were female and 28.6 % male, 30 years old on average. A majority of participants (about 90%)

Table 1: Demographics of the respondents (n=50)

Variables	Groups	Frequency
Gender	Female	35
	Male	14
	Total	49
Age	Fewer than 30	18
	Between 30 to 35	29
	More than 35	3
	Total	50
Education degree	Bachelor degree	44
	Mastering degree	5
	Total	49
Job experience	Fewer than 4	11
	Between 4 and 8	31
	More than 8	8
	Total	50

Table 2: prioritizing entrepreneurial characteristics (n=50)

Priority	Variable	Mean rank	SD	CV
1	Confidence	4.74	0.443	0.09
2	Decision making	4.66	0.557	0.11
3	Courage at work	4.56	0.577	0.12
4	Responsibility	4.74	0.664	0.13
5	High public relations	4.60	0.606	0.13
6	Teamwork spirit	4.60	0.638	0.13
7	Motivation and initiative	4.54	0.676	0.14
8	Competitiveness	4.50	0.646	0.14
9	Order and the law	4.60	0.699	0.15
10	Creativity and innovation	4.46	0.734	0.16
11	Managing power	4.48	0.788	0.17
12	Self-contribution	4.31	0.776	0.17
13	Optimism	4.30	0.762	0.17
14	Flexibility	4.44	0.884	0.19
15	Studying rate	4.20	0.847	0.20
16	Risk-taking	3.92	0.804	0.20
17	Work ethics	4.42	0.964	0.21
18	Specialization and knowledge	4.12	0.898	0.21
19	Job interest	4.22	0.957	0.22
	Total	4.44	-	-

Likert-type scale: very low (1), low (2), somehow (3), high (4), very high (5)

Table 3: Correlation coefficients and their level of significance of hypothesis test

Independent variable	Type of variable	Dependent variable	Type of variable	Test	Correlation coefficient	Significance
Gender	Interval	Entrepreneurial characteristics	Ordinal	Spearman	0.022	0.882
Age	Nominal	Entrepreneurial characteristics	Ordinal	Spearman	-0.115	0.440
Education degree	Ordinal	Entrepreneurial characteristics	Ordinal	Kendall	-0.158	0.206
Job experience	Interval	Entrepreneurial characteristics	Ordinal	Spearman	0.104*	0.049*

* P < 0.05

had a bachelor degree. Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the study.

To measure entrepreneurial characteristics, the respondents were asked to express their feelings on 19 traits associated with entrepreneurial characteristics in a Lykert-type ranking scale (from very high to very low). The results are shown in table 2. As it is indicated in the table, the main entrepreneurial traits, in the respondents' view, were level of confidence (mean rank = 4.74 and SD = 0.44), decision making (mean rank = 4.66 and SD = 0.55), courage at work (mean rank = 4.56 and SD = 0.57); and the least important ones: job interest (mean rank = 4.22 and SD = 0.95), specialization and knowledge

(mean rank = 4.12 and SD =0.89) and work ethics (mean rank = 4.42 and SD =0.96).

To examine the relationship between the variables, or entrepreneurial characteristics of participants, the correlation coefficients were used. The results of the relationship between the variables are given in table 3. As it can be observed, there is no significant relationship between individual variables including gender, age and education, with entrepreneurial characteristics as the dependent variable. In other words, the entrepreneurial characteristics does not depend on gender, age and education of the members of technical and engineering companies and agricultural advisory services, while there is a

Table 4: prioritizing measuring tendency to entrepreneurial

Priority	Variable	Mean rank	SD	CV
1	I will do my best to set up and manage my commercial institution.	4.44	0.786	0.17
2	I do believe that I can set up a business.	4.02	0.714	0.17
3	I am able to control and manage the process of starting up a business.	4.08	0.778	0.18
4	My friends believe that I should start my own business.	3.50	0.646	0.18
5	My family members' ideas about starting up my own business are really important to me.	3.94	0.793	0.20
6	I seriously think of starting up a new business.	3.78	0.789	0.20
7	My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur.	4.00	0.889	0.22
8	My family believes that I should start my own business.	3.42	0.784	0.22
9	Developing a new business idea is a simple thing to me.	3.39	0.773	0.22
10	My friends' ideas about starting up my own business are really important to me.	3.62	0.854	0.23
11	If I try to start up a new business, my chance for success will be high.	3.64	0.942	0.25
12	To be the boss of 'yourself' is one of my goals.	3.70	1.035	0.27
13	I do everything to be an entrepreneurship.	3.87	1.092	0.28
14	Starting up or staying on the ex-business is such an easy work to me.	3.40	0.968	0.28
15	I know all the details for starting up a business.	3.18	1.063	0.33
		3.73	-	-

Likert-type scale: very low (1), low (2), somehow (3), high (4), very high (5)

Table 5: Entrepreneurial characteristics and tendency to entrepreneurship (N+=50)

Independent variable	Type of variable	Dependent variable	Type of variable	Test	Correlation coefficient	Significance
Confidence	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.021*	0.04
Decision making	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.218	0.21
Courage at work	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.105**	0.004
Responsibility	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.181	0.21
High public relations	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.035	0.65
Teamwork spirit	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.221*	0.03
Motivation and initiative	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.102**	0.001
Competitiveness	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.154**	0.000
Order and the law	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.098*	0.05
Creativity and innovation	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.106	0.07
Managing power	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.154	0.12
Self-contribution	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.102*	0.04
Optimism	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.124	0.06
Flexibility	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.103	0.12
Studying rate	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.068	0.36
Risk-taking	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.122*	0.04
Work ethics	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.165	0.18
Specialization and knowledge	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.024	0.16
Job interest	Ordinal	Tendency to entrepreneurship	Interval	Spearman	0.124*	0.03

* P < 0.05

** P < 0.01

positive and significant relationship between the job experience of participants with their entrepreneurial characteristics.

Tendency to entrepreneurship

To measure the tendency to entrepreneurship, the respondents were asked to express their feelings of 15 traits associated with a

tendency to entrepreneurship in a ranking scale (from very high to very low). The results are presented in table 4. As the table shows, the most important identified priorities, regarding tendency to entrepreneurship in the respondents' point of view, are: high effort and motivation to set up a private commercial company or institution (mean

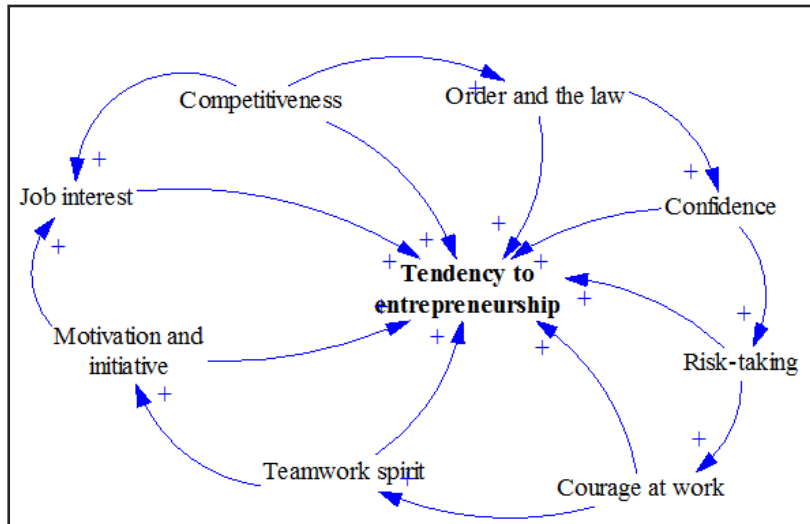


Figure 1: the relationship between tendency to entrepreneurship and traits of entrepreneurial characteristics

rank = 4.44 and SD = 0.78), to believe to have the ability to start a business (mean rank = 4.02 and SD = 0.71) and the ability to manage a company. And the least important priorities, which respondents have fewer tendencies are in the following areas: the practical details of starting a business (mean rank = 3.18 and SD = 1.06), the ease of starting a business or profession (mean rank = 3.40 and SD = 0.96) and readiness to do something (mean rank = 3.87 and SD = 1.09).

Relationship between ‘tendency for entrepreneurship’ and entrepreneurial traits

To investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial characteristics and the ‘tendency to entrepreneurship’ of the members of technical and engineering companies and agricultural advisory services, a correlation coefficient analysis was employed. The results are presented in table 5. As it can be concluded, there is a significant relationship between tendency to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial traits in the followings: confidence (at the level of 5%), courage at work (at the level of 1%), the teamwork spirit (at the level of 5%), motivation and initiatives (at the level of 1%), competitiveness (at the level of 1%), law abiding character (at the level of 5%), self-contribution (at the level of 5%) and risk-taking (at the level of 5%) and job interest (at the level of 5%).

DISCUSSION

Education is considered an important issue in all of the fields especially entrepreneurship; and, the present research confirms this point. Since some of the problems in higher education system are highest rate of unemployment, lack of enough skillful experts and graduates and also lack of correlation between the subject matters and their occupations, the following items are recommended to solve the above problems:

- Holding courses about entrepreneurial skills;
- Meeting entrepreneurs;
- Visiting successful entrepreneurial department;
- Holding entrepreneurship seminars and meetings.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important requirements in Agricultural Engineering Consulting Firms is to investigate the elements influencing the entrepreneurial development in these firms which must be recognized, reinforced and used in the best possible way. The entrepreneurial development process is of utmost importance for any kind of development.

These firms are almost made of just-graduated students that are usually inexperienced and they need the government support financially, economically and politically. Otherwise, these newborn firms would encounter numerous problems.

The government can support these firms in the following ways:

- Low-interest bank facility;
- Eliminating or reducing bureaucratic hurdles

in getting these facilities;

- Tax cuts in the early years of founding these firms;
- Policies and practices regarding the disposal of diverse economic activities to these firms;
- Support of Agriculture and Natural Resources Engineering Organizations.

ICT (Information and communication Technology) dominated an important positive effect on different layers and aspects of the society particularly in entrepreneurship. Developing ICT structures is the priority in the influencing elements of entrepreneurship in the respondents' view. Therefore, it is recommended to:

- Provide necessary infrastructures and the possibility of accessibility of these technologies for the companies;
- Provide distance education courses in business;
- Promote ICT related skills and business skills in entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSION

The approach of personality traits is considered as the dominant school of entrepreneurship studies. The personality traits are structures for describing behavioral characteristics of entrepreneurs. Although in numerous entrepreneurship researches, very different personality traits have been provided Based on the model of Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDI), personality traits can be summarized in five main characteristics: seeking success, independence seeking, risk-taking, creativity and determination. These characteristics constitute the entrepreneurship profile of individuals.

The results of this study showed that all the members of technical and engineering companies and agricultural advisory services had high entrepreneurial spirit. Therefore, it can be used as a context for implementing and conducting related programs to boost entrepreneurship spirit in the area.

The results showed that there was no significant relationship between age, gender, education level and work experience of patients, and the respondents' entrepreneurial spirit. Finally, since the respondents had more determination, the most important point that can be gained from

the analysis of the results was that the creative spirit, success seeking motivation, risk-taking and independence could be strengthened by making the best use of behavioral entrepreneurial trainings. It is clear that the goal of entrepreneurship education and training is to transfer knowledge and skill to the individuals, to finally develop their entrepreneurial attitudes.

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