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# Cultural Differences and Entrepreneurial Needs

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*The purpose of this study was to investigate entrepreneurial intentions and cultural differences. The sample represents 1,110 business students from ten cultural clusters. The students completed a questionnaire that focussed on various dimensions of entrepreneurial intentions. Results indicated various statistically significant differences between the cultures. Country specific strategies related to enhancing entrepreneurship are discussed at the end of the paper.*

## Introduction

Entrepreneurs are regarded as inherently creative and innovative (Schumpeter; 1934). Consistent results show that a preference for innovation clearly differentiates entrepreneurs from managers (Carland & Carland, 1991; Stewart et al., 1999; Timmons, 1990). Managers tend to be more adaptive (Buttner & Gyskiewitz, 1993), and to be rewarded for their competence and efficiency (Schein, 1985) rather than for innovation and creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1934). More than eight decades later, Schumpeter's most of Schumpeter's insights are still relevant today. Recent studies have shown that unlike managers, the entrepreneurial mindset is characterized by a high propensity for risk, limited resources, and significant uncertainty that plays into their decision. On the other hand, innovation provides the means for entrepreneurial growth (Estrin et al., 2019)

Entrepreneurial career choices are impacted by entrepreneurial drive (Florin et al., 2007) and cultural values (Dahles, 2005). Culture has direct and indirect effects on different dimensions of entrepreneurship. Culture appears to play an important role in the business process, as cultural diversity can influence the predominant characteristics of entrepreneurship and thus moderate the effects of economic conditions on entrepreneurship (Jaén et al., 2017). Cultural values determine the degree to which a society views entrepreneurship as an attractive or unattractive professional outlet (Liñán et al., 2013). Thus, the level of entrepreneurship varies widely from country to country on the basis of culture (Hunt and Levie, 2003).

Studies on national culture have found interrelationships between national culture and entrepreneurship (Hofstede, 1980; 2000; House et al., 2004). The description of culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 5), implies that cultural norms are manifested in individuals' values, norms, cognitions, motivations, beliefs and behaviors. Scholars have identified culture as a moderating factor in career choice to be an entrepreneur and start a new business (Moriano et al., 2012; Thornton et al., 2011), theory of planned behavior constructs (Hagger et al., 2007), and entrepreneurial intentions (García et al., 2018). Multiple studies have shown that country's culture has impact on students' entrepreneurial intentions (Liñán et al., 2013; Pruett et al. 2009;

Sánchez, 2010; Varamäki et al., 2013).

## Background

### *Entrepreneurial orientation*

Psychological and personality characteristics have been shown to be predictors of innovativeness. While some believe it is possible for all individuals to be innovative, creating new ideas is just easier for some. In a business setting, a preference for innovation refers to a willingness and inclination towards experimentation and creativity when developing and introducing new products and services (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). Innovation is also enacted proactively. Proactive individuals scan the environment for opportunities, show initiative, and persevere until they bring about change (Bateman & Crant, 1993).

Studies indicate that innovative persons are persistent (Hurt et al., 1977; Sandberg et al., 2013), self-confident, open to experience, original, independent and have tolerance for ambiguity (Barron & Harrington, 1981; George & Zhou, 2001; Patterson, 1999; West and Wallace, 1991). Innovators are also willing to change (Hurt et al., 1977), eager to try new ideas (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971), and have a tendency to advance problem solving (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Additionally, they have the ability to inspire others and build networks (Akrich et al., 2002). Regarding personality, studies have found a positive correlation between openness, extraversion, and creativity (Bender et al., 2013; Hughes et al., 2013).

Entrepreneurial orientation includes innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. It has been shown to influence firm performance, profitability, growth and product innovation in entrepreneurial firms (Avlontis & Salavou, 2007; Johan & Dean, 2003; Moreno & Casillas, 2008; Tang et al., 2008). Harris and Gibson (2008) found that personal control, innovation, self-esteem and achievement with respect to business involvement were correlated with intentions to become an entrepreneur (Harris and Gibson, 2008). Additionally, several studies indicate that past experience with family business is linked to stronger entrepreneurial attitudes (Harris & Gibson, 2008; Roberts & Robinson, 2010; Zampetakis et al., 2009).

Florin, Karri and Rössiter (2007) have studied student attitudes which promote entrepreneurship and found that innovation, nonconformity, proactive disposition, self-efficacy and achievement motivation are crucial in this regard. Other researchers studying students used a variety of measures for entrepreneurial attitudes that included a mixture of attitude and trait measures, often including items referencing risk-taking and innovativeness (Domke-Damonte et al., 2008; Langkamp-Bolton & Lane, 2011; Levenburg & Schwarz, 2008; Macko & Tyszka, 2009; Zampetakis et al., 2009) as well as proactivity (Langkamp-

Bolton & Lane, 2011; Zampetakis et al., 2009). In addition to creativity and proactivity Zampetakis et al. (2009) found that the emotional intelligence is connected to entrepreneurial wishes.

## Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) is one of the models in the study of entrepreneurial intent in different countries (Autio et al., 2001; González-Serrano et al., 2016; Krueger et al., 2000; Liñán and Fayolle, 2015; Moriano et al., 2012). Ajzen (1991) postulates that behaviour is a function of beliefs that influence a certain behaviour. These beliefs are considered important premises that determine 1) personal attitude, 2) intention and 3) perceived behaviour control. Personal attitude is the favourable or unfavourable assessment that a person makes on the behaviour in question. The second predictor of perceived behaviour is a social factor referred to as subjective norms. Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a certain action from people in the immediate environment who exert that influence and pressure. The third antecedent of intention is the degree of perceived behaviour control (PBC) over behaviour, which is the perceived ease or difficulty of the subject in performing an action based on past experiences, as well as difficulties and obstacles perceived by the subject.

The more favourable the subjective norms and attitudes towards behaviour, the greater the perceived degree of control of the individual, leading to a stronger intention to perform a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). However, one of the current unresolved issues is the role of subjective norms. Some research findings support a direct influence of subjective norms on the intentions to undertake a behaviour, while others do not (Figueiredo and Liñán, 2017; Fayolle and Gailly, 2004; Krueger et al., 2000). Certain authors have found a direct influence of subjective norms through personal attitude and perceived control of behaviour (Meek et al., 2010; Moriano et al., 2012).

Previous studies have used TPB to predict certain variables that are related to entrepreneurship. These variables include entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial behavior and entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes are necessary antecedents in the process of effective entrepreneurship. Skills and attitudes are developed through learning, experience and environmental factors. Intention plays a central role in TPB by connecting norms, attitudes and behavioral control with enacted behaviors. Entrepreneurial intention is the “self-acknowledged conviction by a person that they intend to set up a new business venture and consciously plan to do so at some point in the future” (Thompson, 2009, p. 676). Entrepreneurial intention is the first step towards taking entrepreneurial action such as contemplating a startup. The second variable of interest is entrepreneurial behavior. Based on the TPB,

intentions are correlated with behavior and also linked to behavioral control. Entrepreneurial behavior refers to entrepreneurial actions such as recognizing and exploiting opportunities by reconfiguring existing and new resources in ways that create an advantage” (Zahra, 2005, p. 25).

## Culture

Previous studies have found associations between culture and entrepreneurship. Specific cultural dimensions are likely to strengthen or weaken the relationship between individual factors and entrepreneurial intent (Schlaegel and Engle, 2013). Looking at each of the relevant dimensions, we can identify theoretical and empirical support for this assertion. Commonly used cultural dimensions at research of entrepreneurship are four dimensions from Hofstede, which are power distance (PDI), individualism (IDV), masculinity (MAS) and uncertainty avoidance (UAI). Even Hofstede has defined six dimensions, these four have been noticed to play crucial role regarding entrepreneurship.

Power distance (PDI) dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Societies exhibiting a large degree of PDI accept a hierarchical order, control and obedience to those with power (Hofstede, 1980). Everybody has a place that needs no further justification. There are contradictory studies of power distance, some studies indicate that high PDI promotes entrepreneurial activity (Busenitz and Lau, 1996) whereas some that low PDI is connected to entrepreneurs (Mueller et al., 2002). Connection to risk-taking propensity in entrepreneurship is moderated by PDI according to Antoncic et al. (2018).

Individualism dimension (IDV) refers to societies that prefer a social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families. On the other hand, collectivist societies take care of the larger extended family in exchange for loyalty. According to Hofstede (1980), IDV culture that emphasize “I” rather than “we” are more likely to demonstrate entrepreneurship. This is supported Lee and Peterson (2000) who found that countries with high levels of individualism develop a greater entrepreneurial spirit. Interestingly, Pinillos Costa and Reyes Recio (2007) also note that the entrepreneurial activity rate of a nation is positively associated with individualism when the country’s income level is high; however, when the level of income is low, collectivist culture predicts a high ratio of business creation. Additionally, Mueller et al. (2002) study indicates that entrepreneurs tend to have high IDV. High IDV is also related to venture-capital investments (Gantenbein, et al., 2019).

Uncertainty avoidance (UA) dimension expresses the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. High uncertainty avoidance implies that the society exhibits strong beliefs and norms of

behavior and is uncomfortable with new ideas and the unknown. Studies have found a negative relationship between UA and different attributes of entrepreneurship such as innovation (Shane, 1993), risk-taking (Kreiser et al., 2010) and early-stage entrepreneurship (Arrak et al., 2020). Accordingly, Mueller et al. (2002) find out that low UA was related to entrepreneurs.

Masculinity (MAS) represents a preference for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. MAS has also been associated with traditional male values such as compensation, recognition and career advancement (Hofstede et al., 2005). These traits are somewhat perceived to be necessary in entrepreneurship. Numerous studies found support for this perception (Heilman, 2001). However, recent studies have pointed to sociocultural biases (Pecis, 2016) and gender blindness in research may conceal the gendered nature of innovation processes (Dheer et al., 2019).

Thomas and Mueller (2000) conclude that cultural values such as individualism and uncertainty avoidance are significantly related to traits such as internal locus of control, risk taking, and innovativeness, which are associated with entrepreneurship. Some authors (Del Junco and Brás-dos-Santos, 2009) have emphasised that a country’s cultural and social values impact personal values of entrepreneurs. However, Hofstede et al. (2004) add a psychological perspective, stating that when individuals are dissatisfied, they tend to become self-employed even when the country’s culture of entrepreneurship is not favourable.

Triandis (2004) postulates that collectivists conceive behaviour to be a result of external factors, such as norms and roles, while individualists relate it to leadership, high educational attainment and mobility on the social scale. According to Soares et al. (2007), this theory is useful for formulating hypotheses in comparative studies at an intercultural level. Based on previous studies between cultural dimensions and entrepreneurial activity, we are able to develop specific propositions. High individualism and high masculinity appear to be highly correlated to entrepreneurship. Power distance promotes certain aspects of entrepreneurial activity such as risk-taking. Low uncertainty avoidance is likely to be associated with entrepreneurship. Altogether, related to entrepreneurship are high masculinity, low uncertainty avoidance and high individualism.

## Entrepreneurship and culture

Gonzales-Serrano et al. (2018) compared entrepreneurial attitudes of eastern and western parts of Europe comparing Lithuanian and Spanish students. Lithuanian students had higher predictor variables for entrepreneurship having higher entrepreneurial intentions and perceived behavior control as well as personal attitude compared to Spanish students.

Earlier studies indicate that Danish and Finnish people

have very positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Amway Global Entrepreneurship Report, 2013), and the attribute is common among adults under 30 years. Generally, most Europeans tend to have more positive attitude towards entrepreneurship than US nationals, but interestingly the entrepreneurial rate is higher in the US. Additionally, contrary to positive attitudes, the Finnish and Danish are among the least likely to become entrepreneurs. A possible speculation for this phenomenon is that only 37% of US nationals indicate fear of failure as an obstacle to becoming entrepreneurs, while in Europe the fear of failure factor is 73% (Amway Global Entrepreneurship Report, 2013).

In the US, small businesses and startups play an instrumental role in economic and cultural environments, and account for two-thirds of net employment (Dilger, 2018). A significant part of the US cultural heritage that has been linked to entrepreneurship includes the protestant work ethic, freedom and independence (Morris et al., 1994). Lee and Peterson (2000) found that weak uncertainty avoidance, low power-distance, masculinity, individualism, achievement orientation and universalism were conducive to entrepreneurship. Based on a US sample, Mueller and Thomas (2000) found evidence of high individualism and high uncertainty avoidance as being supportive to entrepreneurship. Finally, while comparing the US culture to nine other countries, McGrawth et al. (1992) concluded that regardless of culture, individualism, high power-distance, low uncertainty avoidance and masculinity were common attributes among entrepreneurs.

**Table 1:** Areas Represented

Area	N	%
USA	100	9,0
West Europe	53	4,8
South Europe	149	13,4
Baltic	112	10,1
Caucasus	51	4,6
Nordic	51	4,6
India	74	6,7
East Asia	320	28,8
Southeast Asia	24	2,2
East Europe	138	12,4
Middle East	38	3,4
Total	1110	100,0

## Method

### *Questionnaire of entrepreneurial needs*

The respondents were asked to estimate; how much they would need certain qualities to become as entrepreneur. There were 13 items which they were rating at Likert-scale: Courage, Taking Risks, Motivation, Self-esteem, Optimism, Resilience, Persistence, Decisiveness, Innovativeness, Mentor to Help Me, Team to Build up the Business, More Knowledge about Entrepreneurship, Good Business Idea. Factor analyses (Varimax) indicated that 9 first qualities belong to inner needs and last four outer needs.

## Results

### *Entrepreneurial intentions*

At Table 2 can be seen that there are statistically significant differences between the areas. The Table 3 represents post-hoc differences and it shows that the areas like: Middle East, Caucasus, East Europe, India, Baltic and SouthEast Asia are mostly having entrepreneurial intentions. The lowest intentions were having East Asia, Nordic, South Europe and USA.

**Table 2.** Anova about the question “How likely it is that you will become an entrepreneur at next 5 years?”

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	230,416	10	23,042	20,6	<,001
Within Groups	1216,972	1093	1,113		
Total	1447,388	1103			

### *Qualities needed*

From Table 4 can be seen that there were statistically significant differences about the cultural areas and both inner and outer qualities needed for starting the entrepreneurship.

The Tables 5 and 6 present the post-hoc tests to see the qualities more specifically. Inner qualities were most needed in the South Europe, East Asia and Southeast Asia. Lowest needs were in Nordic, Caucasus and India. Help from outside was mostly needed Southeast and East Asia, Baltic and Caucasus. Least help was needed by West Europe, Nordic, Middle East and South Europe.

**Table 3.** Post-hoc (Duncan) of areas and entrepreneurial intentions

Area	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
East Asia	320	2,66		
Nordic	51	2,98	2,98	
South Europe	149	3,04	3,04	
USA	100		3,19	
West Europe	52		3,25	
Southeast Asia	24			3,63
Baltic	110			3,67
India	72			3,74
East Europe	138			3,74
Caucasus	50			3,86
Middle East	38			3,92
Sig.		,056	,198	,177

**Table 4.** Anova of qualities and areas

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Inner Qualities	Between Groups	45,033	10	4,503	3,679	<,001
	Within Groups	1322,061	1080	1,224		
	Total	1367,094	1090			
Help From Outside	Between Groups	45,978	10	4,598	4,034	<,001
	Within Groups	1244,504	1092	1,140		
	Total	1290,482	1102			

**Table 5.** Post-hoc test (Duncan) of inner qualities and areas

Area	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05			
		1	2	3	4
Nordic	49	5,3016			
Caucasus	49	5,3447	5,3447		
India	74	5,5000	5,5000	5,5000	
Middle East	38	5,5263	5,5263	5,5263	5,5263
East Europe	137	5,5499	5,5499	5,5499	5,5499
West Europe	50	5,5844	5,5844	5,5844	5,5844
Baltic	110	5,7131	5,7131	5,7131	5,7131
USA	98	5,7426	5,7426	5,7426	5,7426
Southeast Asia	23		5,7971	5,7971	5,7971
East Asia	317			5,8924	5,8924
South Europe	146				5,9825
Sig.		,060	,053	,097	,051

**Table 6.** Post-hoc test (Duncan) of help outside and areas

Area	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05			
		1	2	3	4
West Europe	53	5,2547			
Nordic	49	5,2704			
Middle East	38	5,4211	5,4211		
South Europe	148	5,4882	5,4882	5,4882	
East Europe	138	5,5091	5,5091	5,5091	
USA	100	5,5200	5,5200	5,5200	
India	74	5,5304	5,5304	5,5304	
Caucasus	50	5,6100	5,6100	5,6100	5,6100
Baltic	110		5,7341	5,7341	5,7341
East Asia	319			5,8770	5,8770
Southeast Asia	24				5,9792
Sig.		,117	,164	,081	,078

## Conclusions

Students from South Europe needed inner qualities the most but did not need outside help as much as others. So, it seems they would need to cultivate their own entrepreneurial qualities. It is possible that South European respondents think that entrepreneurship is a mentally very demanding job, and thus they think that they would need so much mental qualities like persistence, optimism and resilience.

Nordic people (Finnish) thought that they would not need so much inner or outer qualities. Finnish society gives the all the information what is needed about entrepreneurship, and they feel having also necessary inner qualities for entrepreneurship. Basing on the low needs it was surprising that Finnish people were among the lowest with entrepreneurial intentions.

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