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Investigating the Limitations of Integrated Tasks on Youth Entrepreneurship in Kurdistan Region

Annotation: *The authors examined the importance of integrated tasks of entrepreneurship among young individuals in Kurdistan. The study aimed to evaluate the level of youth understanding of entrepreneurship. The data was collected from 242 youth and the frequencies have been used to measure the weights of the tasks from the youth perspective. The authors found ideas, training, knowledge, competencies, and skills are sufficiently important to youth entrepreneurship success. The study also indicated that young individuals in Kurdistan Region are not aware of the entrepreneurship dimensions as the tasks, but they still found it as an integrated part of entrepreneurship. The lack of creativity, initiative, and innovation among youth is found to be associated with poor quality of youth in identifying opportunities and risk-taking due to the lack of understanding and knowledge as pre-conditions to the business start-up.*

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, business startup, venture, innovation, Entrepreneurship skills*

Introduction. Transformation process that takes place in the business world inevitably results in market changes, makes new demands and led to a new obstacle. Governments all around the world appreciating the positive effects of new business creation which have a positive impact on the employment level. Besides, the governments the competitive advantage that entrepreneurs bring through SMEs to the marketplace (Cooney, 2012). In modern societies, the most important trends in business are adopting entrepreneurship and developing entrepreneurial skills, growth, creativity, and innovation (Boldureanu, Lonescu & Bercu, 2020). These changes in the marketplace demand certain behavior from individuals, characterized by entrepreneurial attributes, especially among the youth. Entrepreneurship as discussed by (Kerr, Kerr & Xu, 2017) is more inclined but not limited toward young people. These attributes comprise innovation, initiative, risk tolerance, creativity and self-confidence, proactivity and ability to recognize opportunities, implementation plan, and ability to make swift and rational decisions, take risks, communication, and lead (Kickul & Lyons, 2020, Hisrich, Peters & Shepherd, 2017). The entrepreneurship process is not limited to management only, but it has been studied by scholars for decades from different perspectives and used in a different contexts such as education (Cho & Lee, 2018; Cooney, 2012), politics (Johnson, Kaufmann & Shleifer, 1997), sociology (Mair, Robinson, & Hockerts, 2006; Corner & Ho, 2010; Ahasranamam, & Nandakumar, 2020, Gupta, P., Chauhan, Paul & Jaiswal, 2020) and psychology (Omorede, Thorgren & Wincent, 2015). Scholars have studied different aspects of entrepreneurship (Gorman et al., 1997; Hisrich, Peters, 1998; Timmons, Spinelli, 2003; Kirby, 2004; Turner, Nguyen, 2005), entrepreneurial abilities and attributes (Caird, 1991; Koh, 1996; Collins, Kunz, 2007), the content of abilities and characteristic of enterprising are also discussed (Raffo et al., 2000). They also examined the concept of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial skills, and discussed the conditions for developing entrepreneurial skills and models for entrepreneurship education in their research.

Many scholars and academic papers have analyzed and focused on youth entrepreneurship and the challenges they are facing (Fatoki & Chindoga, 2011). In the global sense, one of the major challenges that facing youth entrepreneurship is administrative routines and complicated regulations. Therefore, in Kurdistan Region (KR), several obstacles might stop entrepreneurs to further develop and implement their ideas. The major obstacles include infrastructure, mentorship, and difficulty to access capital from the government. In other words, the funds

that are provided by the government are not adequate to start a new business by the young entrepreneurs especially for the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which is a catalyst for economic development (Abdullah & Othman, 2019). Furthermore, other challenges prevent youth entrepreneurship in the region to initiate new venture includes the regulations and issues relating to the intellectual capital that seems to be very lenient. In many cases, entrepreneurs in Kurdistan Region do not feel security when they are initiating something new, as their ideas and plan could be taken by another person. The existing law in Kurdistan is not supportive in this issue to motivate youth entrepreneurship as their ideas could be risked and might not take a further step to implement.

Another challenge that youth entrepreneurs in the region are facing is financial obstacles. The government in recent years failed to provide employees with their salary starting from 2014 to this point, and that affected the country's economy which is important to do business as the purchasing power decreased. In such cases, entrepreneurs might not be willing to risk their capital. Thus, many young entrepreneurs either stopped their businesses or bankrupt. *This study will (RO1) examine the challenges of integrated tasks facing young entrepreneurs in the Kurdistan Region; and (RO2) measures the level of youth understanding on the dimensions of entrepreneurship which are essential for the development of youth entrepreneurship skills and competencies.*

Literature review. The concept of entrepreneurship has been defined by Naude (2010) as a process that helps individuals to grab and utilize the existing opportunities in the market. This process could be grasped by competent individuals who are creative and capable to see and comprehend opportunities. The policymakers in the developed world are looking for entrepreneurial opportunities to encourage their youth to start their business as the key driver of economic development. This could be achieved through technology adoption and innovation that leads to poverty and unemployment alleviation. Some countries starting to give more importance to the development of Entrepreneurship competencies for youth communities such as Estonia, Lithuania, and EU countries. In Lithuania, entrepreneurship is given more attention since it's considered to be a complicated phenomenon comprising several aspects of science as well as practical activities. Some authors (Ramanaus-Kiene et al., 2011; Zuperka, 2009; Stripeikis, 2008; Zuperka, 2009). The EU and Lithuanian policymakers emphasized on youth entrepreneurship for post-secondary students as they are seen to be more inclined towards creativity and innovation. Besides, they target students at

higher education institutions taking related programs as their focus groups. Such groups are believed to have more potential in new job creation and promises sustainable economic growth in long term.

One of the issues discussed by the scholars is relating to the lack of experience among young entrepreneurs. In contrast, scholars have demonstrated the significance of past experience which affects on the entrepreneurs' decision process to take action and initiate new business as well as pursue more performance for the organization (Dyke et al, 992). Other scholars investigated the motives that pushing individuals towards entrepreneurship (Taylor & Thorpe, 2004; Scott & Twomey, 1988). They have identified three main motives including the previous exposure to business, networking, and desire to become a role model which could be applied on youth intending to start-up new businesses.

Demographic factors including gender, age, and family background were found to be another element to the success of youth entrepreneurship. Sitoula (2015) highlighted that young entrepreneurs are more concentrating on taxation and regulation than adults to ensure a proper understanding of the business environment which is necessary to set-up new business. Gender as a demographic factor was also found to be effective in the success of young entrepreneurs. A study by Rose (2019) revealed that gender inequality is seen among youth entrepreneurs. The study identified that men entrepreneurs. The study identified that the number of male entrepreneurs running their business is almost triple compared to the female entrepreneurs with less chance for women to initiate new business in the market. The social class or family background is another demographic factor that determines the youth entrepreneurship attention. Collins and Moore (1970) revealed that individuals who have close friend entrepreneur or family members are probably more inclined towards business start-up comparing to those that do not have a close relationship with entrepreneurs. These findings indicate that personal relationship with entrepreneurs motivates the future exposure of individuals towards self-employment. In addition to the demographic factor of the entrepreneurship environment, other factors might also add value to youth entrepreneurship comprising family attitudes, positive community, entrepreneurship culture, skills, and motivation of entrepreneurs. These factors are significant in building youth entrepreneurship skills that contribute to in-country development (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994).

Karadzic, Drobnjak, and Reyhani (2015) identified three major operational hitches of business start-ups including paperwork, tax, and the market mechanism. These factors limit and demotivates youth entrepreneurs to start-up. For young entrepreneurs, it's not easy to understand the tax regulation and other routines that are pre-conditions to guarantee business support. These factors trouble young individuals to keep on, instead, they will demotivate them. Also, many countries have a small market mechanism that is not adequately developed; thus, creates a problem for the consumers once the product is developed.

In major studies on youth entrepreneurship, motivation is one of the key factors that determine the success of youth entrepreneurs. Motivation is a significant tool that needs to be there for youth entrepreneurs to encourage them to take a risk and avoid any negativity that seems to be idea-stoppers. In the business environment, usually, there are idea stoppers that discourage young entrepreneurs to develop their business. The common idea of stoppers listed by Kuratko and Hodgetts (2016) includes no, can't, are you kidding, yes but... that doesn't sound practical, let's talk about reality, we already tried but... we don't have time or budget. These idea stoppers stop young entrepreneurship to progress and prevent their creativity and rare talents reserved by them. The author also refers to the «killer phrases» that are widely spread in the community and trouble young entrepreneurs to generate any creative ideas. Such phrases easily make them discouraged especially when they are compared to others who are successful in their fields.

In their study about youth entrepreneurship in Montenegro, Karadzic, Drobnjak, and Reyhani (2015) asserted that the country has the potential to develop, but there are several obstacles that untapped the attempts due to the lack of encouragement program. Thus, youth entrepreneurship has been demotivated and their economic participation has been limited. Their finding indicated that finance and regulation are some of the key obstacles of youth entrepreneurship. The complexity of the rule's impacts on the youth to find their business start-up complicated. The same study indicated that marketing is somehow difficult for young entrepreneurs to expose their products to market and attract customers. The marketing difficulty relates to the fact that youth entrepreneurs are lack of experience to make an advertisement and show their products to the customers.

The availability of the resources is also considered to be an issue for some young individuals to start their own business. In the other words, young

individuals find it difficult to reach financial services. This has been identified as an obstacle in Montenegro. The study found that young entrepreneurs are not well aware of the conditions to access financial services to fund their projects (Montenegro, Karadzic, Drobniak & Reyhani, 2015). Besides, the youth are lack of training programs to assist them in start-up new businesses; also, there is a lack of bank credit availability in the case where there is a credit line. Training and development program is essential in preparing youth entrepreneurs to come up with innovative ideas and implementing them.

Methods and data analysis. This study has adopted the quantitative method. The data was collected through administered questionnaire. The questionnaire has been adopted from European Network on Youth Employment on integrating approaches to youth entrepreneurship in Kurdistan. The first part of the questionnaire encompasses 3 items, the second part includes 12 tasks that effects on youth entrepreneurship. The sample size of this study was 275, but 33 questionnaires were excluded as participants were above 30 years old and due to a large number of missing values. The questionnaire was distributed among young people who are aged below 30 years. As shown in Table 1. The female participants dominated the study with a total of 62% while only 38% of the participants were male. Two age categories were given to the respondents. Out of 342 participants, 186 participants were ranged between 20–25 years. As shown in the bellow table, only 10% of the participants were entrepreneurs, the rests were educators/trainers and 65% had a different occupation.

Table 1

Demographic distribution of the respondents

List of tasks	How important is it to you?		
	Not at all	little	Sufficient
Being aware, from school, of entrepreneurship as a choice	56.1	28.9	14.9
Having the idea	12.3	49.4	38.3
Identify and evaluate entrepreneurial opportunities	26	41.5	32.5
Setting realistic and measurable objectives	25.7	39.5	34.8
Market analysis and research	23.7	41.2	35.1
Assess personal characteristics	28.9	41.8	29.2
Knowledge, Competences & Skills	21.1	35.1	43.9
Taking risks	28.7	32.7	38.6
Training	31.6	24.6	43.9
Provision of entrepreneurial tools	38.6	41.5	19.9
Financial support & financial means	33.6	49.4	17
Networking	41.2	41.2	17.5

Findings and Discussions. The following table shows the integrated path to youth entrepreneurship in Kurdistan. The respondents weighted the list of tasks according to their importance in the entrepreneurial process among young people.

Table 2. Displays that most of the participants are not aware or have insufficient awareness and information about entrepreneurship. Most of the participants find it little or not important at all to gain information about entrepreneurship as a choice in their school and academic institutions. That shows entrepreneurship is not given enough importance by the academic institution and excluded from the secondary education curriculum. However, around 62 percent of the participants believe that having an idea is very important to start a new business. That shows young people find it important to generate a creative idea to be successful in their operation. These findings are in line with Kerr, Kerr, and Xu (2017) who believe that young entrepreneurs are creators of the so-called «Main Street» of SMEs especially those attending entrepreneur class. The author highlights that such groups behave differently as they have remarkable information on entrepreneurship activities.

Identifying and tackling opportunities is a key element of entrepreneurial development. In other words, to start a new business or develop a business idea, there must be an existing opportunity. However, this study shows that most of the participants find it little important to identify and evaluate entrepreneurial opportunities. The results indicate a misunderstanding of entrepreneurship as youth find it less or not important at all to identify opportunities which is a kind of demotivation. These findings are opposed to other findings that suggest young entrepreneurship seek opportunities and see constraints to successfully run their business and implementing business approaches. In the real sense, entrepreneurial skills require one to identify opportunities and effectively exploit them (Cooney, 2012). Thus, the current findings indicate the misinterpreting or lack of deep entrepreneurial understanding among young people which could be seen as an obstacle towards entrepreneurship development in the region. To stimulate better entrepreneurial practice, young individuals require to seek and grasp opportunities and making intuitive decisions accordingly. The absence of such understanding causes the absence of youth initiatives. This point is also confirmed by Cooper and Dunkelberg (1984) who find opportunity identification and exploitation as pre-condition to the self-employment. The authors believe that individuals can not set-up new business without having the willingness to seek for business opportunities in the market and could be gained through experience.

Setting and measuring goals are also considered to be a pathway toward youth entrepreneurship. The study indicated that participants find it less important or not important at all to set realistic and measurable objectives, but there are still people who find it sufficiently important with a percentage of 35%. The study also analyzed the importance of market analysis and research. Market research and analysis which are the initial stage of the business start-up are found to be less important for the participants with 41%, while 35.1% find it important and around 24% don't even believe in research and market analysis to start their business. Assessing personal characteristics on the other hand is found to be little important for the respondents, while participants equally weighted the item sufficiently important or not important at all with 29% for each. The personal characteristics and quality of entrepreneurs are measured through entrepreneurial dimensions such as individual courage, risk-taking, self-reliance, perseverance, reactivity, and responsibility, innovation, and intellectual capital (Othman & Saud 2015; Othman, Saud, Isa & Abdullah, 2015; Deáková, Drážovská, Grznárik & Kondášová). Evaluating such characteristics is important along with risk-taking to take action and make the decision as discussed by Kvietok (2013). In this regard, evaluating the personal characteristics of young entrepreneurs is motivational towards business start-up and indicates whether the person is an entrepreneur as the concept can not be applied to every individual without assessing and understanding personal characteristics.

Usually, human capital in the sense of knowledge and competencies is important for the youth entrepreneurs to conceptualize their ideas and take actions accordingly (Akoi & Yesiltas, 2020). Creativity requires knowledge, competencies, and skills, otherwise, it might lead to business failure. This study found that 44% of the participants consider knowledge, competencies, and skills as an essential pathway to youth entrepreneurship while 35% believe it's not so much important. The findings are in line with Frese and Gielnik (2014) who found that having knowledge and skills helps entrepreneurs to demonstrate their capacity in a better way. Accumulating knowledge on the business sector operating is highly important to success and performance of the firms which has been verified by Kozubíková, Belás, Bilan & Bartoš (2015) in the banking sector indicating knowledge supports management decision and expansion of financial options

Taking risks is another task as the main dimension of entrepreneurship orientation among youth people. The study found out that most of the participants find it important to take a risk. Therefore, 28.7% of the participants

Table 2

Integrated tasks of youth entrepreneurship

Items	Values	Percentage
Gender	Male	38
	Female	62
Age	20–25	54.4
	26–30	26.30
Occupation	Educator/Trainer	24
	Youth Entrepreneur	10
	Other	65

believe that taking the risk is not important at all to start a business. However, more participants weighted training as an important factor to youth entrepreneurship with almost 44% of the participants. Young people who limited resources may find it difficult to risk their capital in business without having much experience. However, risk-taking is a must in the entrepreneurship process. Knorr, Alvarez, and Urbano (2013) clearly explained that individuals to become entrepreneurs require to take a risk and have some sort of autonomy, otherwise they may end up as employees working under the director of other entrepreneurs. The significance of risk-taking in youth entrepreneurship is discussed by most of scholars discussing the topic. Concerning this finding, Coony (2012) set a list of entrepreneurial skills based on the review of literature includes inner discipline, risk-taking, innovation, change orientation, and persistence. Other scholars classified risk in terms of risk preference, risk eversion, risk tolerance, and risk propensity (Kerr, Kerr & Xu, 2017). Overall, risk-taking is the core of youth entrepreneurship and risks are higher among young people due to the limitation of their capital resources and lack of knowledge and experience.

Entrepreneurs to be successful in their business does not only require human capital, knowledge, and skills, but there are entrepreneurial tools and capital that are needed to maintain business operation. However, fewer participants found the two as an important factor of youth entrepreneurship. Around 20 percent found it important to access entrepreneurial tools while 80% either found it a little important or not important at all. These findings contradict Coony (2012) who has indicated financial resources as entre motivation which limited more young entrepreneurs to shift their ideas into action. Similarly, only 17% of the respondents found financial support as an important means of youth entrepreneurship. Finally, networking is sometimes

important to deal with customers and other businesses. It will raise the chance to be successful in the business operations. However, in this study, 82 percent of the participants found it not important to have networking as an integrated entrepreneurial task to youth entrepreneurship.

Conclusion. Entrepreneurship among young people could be an important tool to eliminate the unemployment issue in Kurdistan. As the government is not capable to find opportunities for young people to work in public sector organizations, the young citizens have to find an alternative solution in the labor market to work independently. This study has evaluated and examined a list of integrated tasks that are seen to be the pathway to youth entrepreneurship. The study concluded that youth entrepreneurs in Kurdistan are still not aware of the importance of all entrepreneur tasks. The lack of knowledge and information on starting or developing business by young individuals becomes a national issue that makes people not to be able to work independently. Instead, they are obliged to look for others to provide job opportunities to them. Young people still not aware of the importance of financial support, entrepreneur tools, mentoring, counseling, and capacity building. These factors are usually important for youth entrepreneurship, but this study has concluded other factors as knowledge, skills, training, and risk-taking as important conditions for business start-up. The study recommends developing motivational factors, business support, and widespread understanding of the entrepreneurship process among youth people to develop their creative idea and implement their business plans. The current environment of Kurdistan includes a large number of opportunities as an emerging economy that increases the chance of success.

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