

Identifying Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Social Sciences and Sociological Explanation of Factors Affecting the Exploitation of Opportunities in Iran

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Abstract -----

Introduction: Social Sciences is one of the majors of humanities in most universities in Iran with many students. According to the ruling discourse in Iran, graduates of the humanities expect to be recruited by the government after graduation. However, according to Article 65 of the Five-Year Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2011-2015), which emphasizes organizing and reduction of manpower and the slow down of the government size, this discourse is not feasible. Given the increasing unemployment of graduates of the social sciences, on the one hand, and the availability of acceptable capacities in the country, on the other hand, the areas for the expansion of employment among graduates of the social sciences can be created by identifying entrepreneurial opportunities and exploiting them. But this has been under less attention. Therefore, the fundamental question of the present research is that, firstly, what entrepreneurial opportunities can be identified in the social sciences of Iran? And secondly, what factors influence the exploitation of these entrepreneurial opportunities? Puhakka (2010) believes that, opportunity recognition is composed of components such as competitive environment for collecting and analyzing information; a pioneering search of opportunities of future values that relate to a brief image of the future and creation of an innovative strategy of opportunity strategy that are related to different economic activities. The exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities is the process of entrepreneurial decision-making, the creation of required entrepreneurial resources, policy and value creation. After finding entrepreneurial opportunities, entrepreneurs need to decide on development opportunities (Yefei, 2013). The exploitation of opportunities is influenced by several factors that some of them are as follows: Entrepreneurial spirit is a set of personality-psychological factors of entrepreneurs. In this regard, Parker (2004) and Davidsson (2006) argue that these features have a great influence on people's decision to start a business (Mueller, 2006). Therefore, the first hypothesis of the research is that, there seems to be a significant relationship between the entrepreneurial spirit and the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities in the social sciences. Cultural capital is defined as symbolic resources or goods that are passed from a generation to another generation among middle and upper classes in order to maintain the base of the class (Bourdieu, 1977; Farkas, 2003). According to Shane (2003), the education and experience of a person that is one of the aspects of cultural capital affects the decision to exploit opportunities. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the research is that, there seems to be a significant relationship between cultural capital and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities in the social sciences. Economic capital represents financial assets of any form that is directly convertible into money (Bourdieu, 1986; Jary & Jary, 1995), and Reynolds and White (1997) believe it to be significant in launching an enterprise. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the research is that, there seems to be a significant relationship between economic capital and the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities in the social sciences.

Material & Methods: In this research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies was used for the research. Accordingly, the qualitative research stage was first started to identify entrepreneurial opportunities in the social sciences. Population of the qualitative research stage was the relevant experts (including all university professors and entrepreneurs of the social sciences in different universities) who were selected using purposive sampling (Flick, 2006). The research tool for the qualitative section was a deep interview, whose validity was obtained through internal validity based on the selection of appropriate samples and its reliability was guaranteed through accurate guidance of the interview for information gathering (Rao & Perry, 2003). The data from the qualitative approach were analyzed according to Smith's (1995) method in three stages of data generation, information analysis and integration of the items. After extracting entrepreneurial opportunities, the quantitative part of the research began as a survey method. Population of the study was PhD students of sociology from all over

the country and 121 subjects were randomly selected as the sample. The research tool for assessing the independent variables of cultural capital, economic capital and entrepreneurial spirit are researcher-made questionnaires, whose validity was confirmed using content validity and construct validity and its reliability was confirmed through internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Discussion of Results & Conclusions: In order to identify entrepreneurial opportunities in the social sciences, after interviewing 10 experts and reaching the theoretical saturation, interviews were recorded. In the first stage, 45 (primary) sub-themes related to various areas of social sciences that were capable of becoming entrepreneurial opportunities were identified. After integrating and clustering the primary themes, 16 main (final) themes that represent entrepreneurial opportunities in the social sciences were extracted. According to descriptive results, the mean of entrepreneurial spirit and its dimensions, except for the tolerance of ambiguity, was higher than the average value of 3. The mean of the cultural capital and its dimensions, except for the visualized dimension, is below the average value of 3. The average economic capital of respondents including income, housing and real estate and amenities was about 75 million Tomans, and the average income of respondents alone was about 2 million Tomans. The greatest interest and ability of students to exploit the opportunities identified in the social sciences is teaching in schools (public and private) and in universities as a lecturer in social sciences with a mean of 4.35 and 4.36, respectively. Also, the students' least willingness and ability is carrying out studies and social advisers in the field of housing, petroleum industries (training people for exposure to the host society) and insurance with an average of 2.30 and 2.20, respectively. These results also apply to both men and women. In the present research, theoretical model of the research has been developed in the form of a structural equation model to explain the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities. According to this model, cultural capital and entrepreneurial spirit have a significant effect on employing entrepreneurial opportunities with a coefficient of .54 and .36, respectively; but economic capital has no significant effect. Also, the correlation coefficient of the structural equation model shows that independent variables can account for 33% of the changes in exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities.

Given the ruling discourse in Iran that graduates of the social sciences in the undergraduate and postgraduate degrees must be a teacher and they should be appointed as the university professor or in some government departments as administrative staff without the least relevance to the university's specialty at the Ph.D. level, it becomes clear that there are no jobs for graduates of the social sciences in the nongovernmental sector. Regarding the results of the qualitative section of this research and the identification of 16 entrepreneurial opportunities in the social sciences, it was found that, contrary to the general impression, there is a wide range of occupations and employment opportunities in the social sciences and nongovernmental sector that with support of Iranian Sociological Association and consultation with government as well, have the ability to become formal.

According to research findings, entrepreneurial spirit has a significant and positive effect on utilizing entrepreneurial opportunities. Existence of features such as success, internal control, risk-taking, creativity, and tolerance of ambiguity in students leads them toward more entrepreneurial work and activity in their field of study, and the expectation of individuals for government jobs is largely blurred. Also, cultural capital has a significant and positive effect on the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities. Accordingly, individuals who are skilled in the preservation and transmission of scientific concepts and who use modern and up-to-date research methods to respond to new scientific questions and easily provide material, are of more interest and academic ability to benefit from exploiting entrepreneurship opportunities in their field of study. Finally, economic capital has no significant effect on the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities in the social sciences. The result of this hypothesis can be explained due to the nature of the entrepreneurial opportunities identified in the social sciences, the allocation of facilities to the owners of the ideas, and the situation of the global economy. Based on the results of the research, it is suggested to all social sciences departments of the universities of the country, to identify and categorize the job and entrepreneurship opportunities of this field by the professors. After the aggregation of the views of all academic departments, the final identified opportunities that are the result of the expert opinions of all professors of the field of social sciences in the country can be published in the form of a pamphlet or book and taught as 1 or 2-units in the final semester. In such a way, each student is guided to one or several opportunities given his interest and academic ability and can manage his future job without any expectations of limited government

recruitment.

key word =====

Recognition of Opportunity, Exploitation of the Opportunities, Entrepreneurial Spirit, Cultural Capital, Economic Capital

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