



## Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Job Counseling on Students' Entrepreneurial Ability (Case Study of Students in Khash City)

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**ABSTRACT:** Unemployment is a pervasive issue and has devastating effects on the well-being of the unemployed people and their families. Therefore, the present study was conducted to determine the effect of job counseling on students' entrepreneurial ability. The design of the present study was a quasi-experimental method of pre-test and post-test with a control group. The statistical population included male and female high school students in the city of Khash, Iran, who were studying in the academic year 2019-2020. Sixty people were randomly selected from the accessible sample and assigned to two experimental and control groups (30 students in each group). In this study, Badri Entrepreneurship Capacity Scale (2005) was used as a pre-test-post-test and Strengths-Based Career Counseling intervention was performed in 7 sessions (one session per week) for them. Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance. The results of data analysis indicated that the job counseling approach was effective on entrepreneurship capability ( $\beta = 0.80$ ). Overall, potential-based job counseling intervention can enhance students' entrepreneurial ability.

**Keywords:** Potential-based job counseling, Self-efficacy in job decision making, Entrepreneurship capability, Students

### Introduction

Becoming an effective person requires a certain competitive advantage that others do not have, and this discriminate one from others. Theoretically, it seems interesting; but in reality, it's a little challenging. In order for a person to have added value on his / her own, he / she must adopt a unique feature such as entrepreneurial mentality that qualifies him / her for change and membership in the entrepreneurial world. Entrepreneurship has been defined as a term by many theorists ([Alshebami, Al-Jubari, Alyoussef, & Raza, 2020](#)); Some of them mention entrepreneurship as factors that positively affect the growth and development of the national economy and the welfare of communities. It is also defined as a multifaceted phenomenon due to participation in job creation, introduction of innovation, support of competition and improve of economic efficiency ([Iakovleva, Kolvereid, & Stephan, 2011](#)).

Entrepreneurship is more than just creating work. Although certainly one of the most important aspects of entrepreneurship is job creation, it does not provide a complete picture of entrepreneurship. Starting a new business requires more than just an idea, it requires an entrepreneur who uses risk-taking decision and planning to ensure his or her success. Entrepreneurs are often defined as the risk takers to job creation. Uniquely optimistic, hardworking and committed people who enjoy their independence to the

fullest. Entrepreneurs work hard with strong commitment and determination. They are optimists who see the half-full glass and strive for coherence ([Cairney, 2018](#)). According to the definition of the European Committee, entrepreneurship is a general approach that can be used usefully in all activities and in daily life. Based on this definition, three main goals for entrepreneurship education can be recognized:

- 1) Encourage and expand personal business
- 2) Increasing people's awareness and desire for self-employment as a career option.
- 3) Enlightening people about how to start and continue a business ([Fuchs, Werner, & Wallau, 2008](#)).

The literature on teaching entrepreneurial characteristics is diverse. Some people think that entrepreneurial attitude and behavior is completely inherent and cannot be cultivated in other people; But today, this view has changed and it is believed that although it is true to be inherent in a certain number of individuals, a proper learning environment can boost an entrepreneurial attitude in individuals ([Fuchs et al., 2008](#)).

One of the main infrastructures in entrepreneurship development is paying special attention to strengthening the educational system. Today, in almost all developed and developing countries, entrepreneurship education and promotion has a special place in all educational levels. Entrepreneurial education in Iran, which is the most practical and useful strategy to overcome the deadlocks and economic and social problems of the country, on the one hand requires modeling the programs, policies and experiences of developed countries, and on the other hand taking into account the country's indigenous conditions. One of the requirements of entrepreneurial education in schools is to pay attention to the initiative and creativity of students in educational environments. Most educational environments are content-oriented or in some cases teacher-centered. In this regard, [Lackéus \(2014\)](#) states that the cause of economic backwardness in developing countries is related to misinterpretation and ignoring the unique creations and skills of each person. In the field of entrepreneurship, first the nature of entrepreneurship and its basics should be taught and then the necessary training should be provided to entrepreneurs in order to acquire the required skills. In fact, the purpose of entrepreneurship education is to improve people's motivation and inclination and to such things as the desire for independence, taking advantage of opportunities, initiative, willingness to take risks, commitment to work, willingness to solve problems and enjoy uncertainty and ambiguity. The primary goal of entrepreneurship education is to train people who are self-reliant and aware of opportunities and in general people who are more willing to start independent businesses ([Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018](#)).

Entrepreneurship education has extended significantly over the past decade and is still changing dynamically ([Fiore, Sansone, & Paolucci, 2019](#)). Today, entrepreneurship is the driving force behind the economic development of countries that have recognized this need for many years. The experience of these countries shows that in the development of entrepreneurship, education, along with learning factors such as facilitating laws and regulations, creating support mechanisms, advertising and culture building, has an irreplaceable and undeniable place. According to many experts, entrepreneurship is one

of the main factors in creating economic value and plays an important role in the transformation and development of societies and job creation. Despite the importance of entrepreneurship in the world and especially the importance given to this issue in industrialized countries, this category still remains unknown in Iran. This has led to a decrease in employment and an increase in the unemployment rate ([Badri, 2005](#)). Entrepreneurs as the engine of economic development have different characteristics, each of which is of special importance.

According to [Richter, Kraus, Brem, Durst, and Giselbrecht \(2017\)](#), an entrepreneur is not necessarily someone who provides the initial capital or invents a new product, but someone who comes up with a business idea. [Boermans and Willebrands \(2017\)](#) also considered entrepreneurship to mean high risk and management of uncertainty, and outside of economics, [Drucker \(2014\)](#) went even further and equated entrepreneurship with self-management. According to him, entrepreneurial action, i.e. the act of economic risk-taking, is the most important part of the work of a business enterprise, and a business enterprise is an entrepreneurial enterprise. Cole (1959), who popularized the term "bold movement" to denote entrepreneurial action, divided entrepreneurs into four categories: 1) Computing Innovator, 2) Inspiring Innovator, 3) Excessive Promoter Optimistic, and 4) Build an efficient and strong company ([Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 2020](#)).

Today, people who are employed by a company or institution can also be entrepreneurial. This type of entrepreneurship is called intra-organizational entrepreneurship. Although this entrepreneurial genius is also an individual action, but the action and process is done under the supervision and support by an organization. So that the entrepreneur follows a process to achieve entrepreneurial activity in a traditional organization ([Shamaeizadeh, 2011](#)). That is, in the process of entrepreneurship within the organization, entrepreneurs try to make changes in organizations, which are usually traditional and bureaucratic, via entrepreneurial activities. One of the main differences between intra-organizational entrepreneurs and independent entrepreneurs is that entrepreneurs within the organization are less able to monitor business from the beginning of the innovation process (the creation of the idea) to the end (the business sector) than the independent entrepreneur. The main activities of entrepreneurs in the organization include developing new goods and services, introducing new production methods, identifying new markets, finding new sources of production, finding new sources of purchase and development, and improving the organization ([Kia, Nessaj, Ahmadzadeh, & Nora, 2007](#)).

Numerous studies have been conducted in this regard, including [Macko and Tyszka \(2009\)](#) in their research concluded that entrepreneurs are confident, optimistic, independent and risk-averse people and willing to be evaluated by others. In another study, [Van Ness and Seifert \(2016\)](#) considers some of the characteristics of entrepreneurial individuals as having the motivation to progress and the internal locus of control, the tendency to take risks and the spirit of tolerating ambiguity.

Identifying personal abilities and resources, as well as helping clients to plan and to manage a complete and enhanced life, has been the focus of career counseling since its inception. Two meta-analyzes have shown the positive effects of occupational interventions ([Masdonati, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2009](#)) on overall performance, such as interviewing ability, writing skills, problem-solving skills, self-esteem, and

cognitive complexity. A number of job-specific areas have also been significantly improved through job counseling. Also, specific strong improvements in "definitive career decision-making" and "job maturity" have been identified. Currently, job counseling is in a position where it can and should develop and implement knowledge and tools in the field of positive psychology instead of limiting itself to evaluating interests, work values and skills ([Rashidi, 2015](#)). Strengths-Based Career Counseling (SBCC), developed in Positive Psychology, aims to examine and promote optimal human performance in a complete set of life contexts through the development of daily personality skills ([Littman-Ovadia, Lazar-Butbul, & Benjamin, 2014](#)). Strengths are what they do well. In particular, competencies are a capacity for behavior, thinking, or feeling that grants optimal performance and efficiency in achieving evaluation results.

[Toghrāyi, Mirvāhedī, and hashemi \(2019\)](#) indicated in a research that value-based education is a central category of entrepreneurial education, which is influenced by the factors that cause the entrepreneurial attitude of teachers, officials and decision-makers in the field of school and parent education. They also stated that the most important underlying factors are the entrepreneurial climate, the design of a playful environment, the design of attractive spaces in the school along with the necessary environmental conditions such as entrepreneurial consciousness, educational planning and entrepreneurial awareness. These factors help to implement and adopt the necessary strategies and measures for education with entrepreneurial learning, entrepreneurial assignments, entrepreneurial teams, entrepreneurial enthusiasm, school interaction with the real world, flexible and multifaceted evaluation and emphasis on cognition and metacognition. Finally, the creation of new value, the training of creative, innovative and multidimensional students and capable students with skills are the main outcomes and outputs of entrepreneurial education in schools, during which students are placed on the path of proper academic and professional education. Some studies have shown that the weakness of entrepreneurship of graduates indicates the need for planning and more attention to strengthening the components affecting entrepreneurship in educational programs and educational assistance in the universities ([Zeithaml & Rice Jr, 1987](#)). In another study, a significant positive relationship was revealed between managers' roles and strengthening students' entrepreneurial characteristics; So that as the performance of managers' roles increases, the entrepreneurial characteristics of students also increase and as these roles decrease, the entrepreneurial characteristics of students decrease as well ([Zhang, Duysters, & Cloudt, 2014](#)). [Amiri, Fathi, Naderi, and Delangizan \(2014\)](#) in his research showed that the entrepreneurial spirit of students who have received entrepreneurship education is higher than students who have not been trained.

[Boldureanu, Ionescu, Bercu, Bedrule-Grigoruță, and Boldureanu \(2020\)](#) indicated that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and people's attitudes toward the labor market and job self-concept. The results of some studies also showed an increase in job search behavior with job counseling in the process of vocational training and entrepreneurship training and showed that entrepreneurship training increases job self-efficacy and positive job beliefs ([Pihie & Akmaliah, 2009](#)). [Alshebami et al. \(2020\)](#) concluded in their research that the educational structure based on entrepreneurship has a significant effect on attitudes toward entrepreneurship. In addition, a positive

attitude and self-efficacy also affect entrepreneurship. [D'Intino, Goldsby, Houghton, and Neck \(2007\)](#) in their study measured the relationship between entrepreneurship and self-leadership with a series of motivational structures such as hope and happiness, personality models, self-monitoring, the need for independence, emotional intelligence, age, gender and cultural differences. They showed that people with internal control and high self-control and need for independence were more likely to engage in entrepreneurial behaviors than those with lower levels of these characteristics. [Fuchs et al. \(2008\)](#) stated that German schools have not been very successful in offering self-employment as a career option, but that Swedish students have generally shown a greater tendency towards self-employment. In addition, the results of the research show that German schools not only do not strengthen students' desire for self-employment when they grow up, but also reduce it. [Littunen \(2000\)](#) has revealed in their research that except for the ambiguity tolerance and self-confidence characteristics, all the entrepreneurial characteristics of students who have entrepreneurial talent; were greater than students who do not have entrepreneurial talent; This means that these students had high scores in the characteristics of risk-taking, internal control, need for progress and innovation.

Students enter the career decision-making process after completing their primary education, where choices affect their career path, and even their life path. The education system will be able to train self-sufficient and capable people if it identifies and removes as many obstacles as possible with a purposeful program. One of the obstacles in this path is the difficulty in choosing a job, because of the existing problems of the student in choosing Jobs will reduce self-efficacy and self-esteem and increase anxiety, depression, indecision, ignoring principles and ethics. Making the right career decision is very important according to the needs of the individual and society, and if we want to be a developed country, we must pay attention to equipping people with decision-making skills. Learning these skills is more important at the age of job selection and after that. In general, when people believe that they have the necessary skills and abilities to do a task or activity, they spend more time doing the task and eventually achieve better results. Efforts to increase self-efficacy and reduce self-awareness may be effective as part of counseling. Given that a negative experience of unemployment or a positive experience in finding a job can have causal effects on the entrepreneur. Occupational psychologists support studies on career counseling processes. Therefore, this study aimed to research on the effect of career counseling on entrepreneurship in students.

## Material and Methods

The design of the present study was a quasi-experimental method of pre-test and post-test with a control group. The statistical population of the present study includes male and female high school students studying in the city of Khash in 2020, the number of male students is 711 and the number of female students is 482. The sample in this study consists of two groups of 30 people whom were selected via the accessible sampling method and were assigned randomly into experimental groups (30 people) and control (30 people).

### Measuring tools

Badri Entrepreneurship Ability Questionnaire ([Badri, 2005](#)), was applied to assess the entrepreneurial abilities of students at the University of Isfahan. The questionnaire was designed using the Torrance Creativity Questionnaire, Hermans achievement Motivation, willingness to take risk Hisrich and Peters' Questionnaire ([Hisrich & Peters, 1986](#)). The initial questionnaire consisted of 130 questions, which after calculating the correlation of each question with the total score and making the necessary corrections, the number of questions was reduced to 30 questions. It used a Likert scale to measure entrepreneurship ability. This questionnaire includes the components of independence, risk-taking, internal control, motivation for achievement and creativity. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the independence subscale is 0.87, for the risk subscale is 0.90, for the motivation of achievement is 0.91 and for the creativity subscale is 0.85.

### Research implementation process

Before the initiating of the counseling sessions, the subjects in the experimental and control groups answered the Entrepreneurship Ability Questionnaire as a pre-test. Students in the experimental group are then offered seven sessions of Strengths-Based Career Counseling intervention. The counseling sessions were not provided to participants in the control group. The sessions are held twice a week and the duration of each session was between 90 minutes. After the last counseling session, post-test was performed for both groups.

### Data analysis

In this study, descriptive statistical indices including mean and standard deviation were used. Also, in order to analyze the data, inferential statistical indices including analysis of covariance were used. The SPSS software, version 24, was used to analyze the data.



**Table 1.** Summary of the Strengths-Based Career Counseling Intervention

Session	Description
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Welcome to the participants</li> <li>2- Familiarity of members with the group leader and research objectives</li> <li>3- Familiarity with the rules of the meeting</li> <li>4- -Taking action to acquaint members with each other</li> <li>5- .Explain the goals of employment counseling clearly and positively</li> <li>6- Ask members what job they are pursuing and what is important to them in the job.</li> <li>7- Assignment: Introducing the members to each other, the intimacy of the members with each other to examine the goals and rules of the meetings</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Examining the participants</li> <li>2- Getting to know and introducing the people under study</li> <li>3- Examining the criteria desired by individuals</li> <li>4- Evaluate their motivation and desires</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere</li> <li>2- Welcoming members and receiving feedback from the previous meeting</li> <li>3- Advancing the counseling process to the stage of connecting strengths with achieving personal goals and employment</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Identifying suitable job fields and the question arises in which roles and occupations can your abilities and strengths be used?</li> <li>2- Finally, members are asked to apply for top rankings for next week with three to five strengths and at least three job searches. Also report on three job-related activities that were successfully completed that week to identify the top strengths in achieving success.</li> <li>3- Presenting homework</li> <li>4- Feedback: Each member of the group is asked what do you think this meeting was like and how do you feel about this meeting?</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Welcoming the members and receiving feedback from the previous meeting</li> <li>2- Reviewing the tasks assigned in the previous meeting and discussing the progress of the members. The counselor uses a technique in which members are asked to select an image that represents different degrees of personality development. At the end of the session, members receive a two-week intersection for the week. Members are asked to: 1. Use targeted strengths in job search at least three times during the next week. 2. Report three job-related activities successfully that week and identify strengths that contribute to those successes.</li> <li>3- Presenting homework</li> <li>4- Feedback: Each member of the group is asked what do you think this meeting was like and how do you feel about this meeting?</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Welcoming the members and receiving feedback from the previous meeting</li> <li>2- Using the technique of sending metaphorical signs in order for members to be able to reflect on their progress in developing the desired strengths.</li> <li>3- Identify fundamental changes in the development of strengths</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- How to use existing personal resources to cope with future challenges</li> <li>2- Emphasis on the importance of developing and empowering strengths in obtaining a job</li> <li>3- Feedback: Each member of the group is asked what do you think this meeting was like and how do you feel about this meeting? They will also receive feedback on the entire period.</li> <li>4- Running the post-test</li> <li>5- At the end, he thanked the participants for attending the meetings</li> </ul>

## Results

Table 2 shows the descriptive findings related to the entrepreneurship variable and its components.

**Table 2.** Mean and standard deviation of entrepreneurship variable and its components in pre-test and post-test of the two groups

Groups	Phase	Statistic	Entrepreneurship	Independence	Risk taking	Achievement motivation	Creativity
Experimental	Pretest	Mean	84.73	21.93	25.73	21.73	22.33
		SD	29.04	7.31	4.73	2.81	3.19
	Post test	Mean	97.20	28.45	32.73	26.06	28.80
		SD	22.41	6.18	6.19	3.82	3.74
Control	Pretest	Mean	82.40	22.73	21.60	19.13	20.93
		SD	15.77	7.61	3.61	3.73	3.34
	Post test	Mean	84.25	21.80	23.14	20.46	19.60
		SD	17.39	8.97	5.88	2.61	2.06

According to Table 2, the mean of the experimental group in the post-test increased compared to the pre-test and also to the post-test of the control group. Table 3 shows the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to examine the normality of data related to the entrepreneurship capability variable. As Table 3 shows, the assumption of normality in the entrepreneurship capability variable was confirmed in two groups with a significance level greater than .05.

**Table 3.** Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality of entrepreneurship capability variable

Variable	Groups	Phase	Statistic	DF	<i>p</i>
Entrepreneurship capability	Control	Pretest	.184	15	.47
		Post test	.238	15	.394
	Experimental	Pretest	.241	15	.352
		Post test	.354	15	.211

Also, the results of *Box's M* for Equivalence of Covariance Matrices, Levin test for homogeneity of variance and analyze of variance test for the regression slope in the entrepreneurship capability variable and its components showed that these assumptions were confirmed. Tables 4 and 5 present the results of analysis of covariance for the entrepreneurship capability variable and its components.

**Table 4.** Results of univariate analysis of covariance for the entrepreneurship capability variable

Source	SS	DF	F	P	Eta
Pretest	157.08	1	52.40	0.02	0.17
Group	4400.13	1	47.34	0.011	0.53



Error	1096.24	27			
Total	291010	30			

According to Table 4, ( $F = 47.34$ ,  $P < .05$ ), After adjusting the pre-test scores, the difference between the experimental and control groups in the entrepreneurship capability variable was significant; The mean of the experimental group in this variable was 97.20 and the mean of the control group was 84.25, which the mean of the experimental group was greater than the control group mean, so it is concluded that SBCC was effective on entrepreneurship.

**Table 5.** Results of analysis of covariance of entrepreneurship capability components

	Components	SS	DF	F	P	Eta
Group	Independence	83.54	1	21.45	.012	0.67
	Risk taking	43.91	1	24.26	.022	0.57
	Achievement motivation	33.96	1	26.18	.019	0.36
	Creativity	21.18	1	31.75	.013	0.32

As shown in Table 5, the F ratio of analysis of covariance after pretest control in the components of independence ( $F = 21.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ), risk-taking ( $F = 24.26$ ,  $p < .05$ ), achievement motivation ( $F = 26.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and creativity ( $F = 31.75$ ,  $p < .05$ ) indicate that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the post-test scores of the entrepreneurial capability components. In other words, these findings indicate that SBCC has been effective in improving the entrepreneurial ability of students in the experimental group.

## Discussion

Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of gradual production of wealth. Those who generate this wealth take great financial, time, or job commitments and add value to certain products and services. The product or service may be new or unique, but the important thing is the value that the entrepreneur attaches to it. An entrepreneur can create added value by properly understanding and using skills and resources ([Hisrich, Peters, & Shepherd, 2017](#)). Entrepreneurship and risky businesses fuel the engine of the modern economy. Entrepreneurs who are at the forefront of risky jobs are looking for opportunities and creativity as a tool for success ([Shamaeizadeh, 2011](#)). The focus of career counseling since its inception has been to identify personal abilities and resources, as well as to help an individual to plan and to manage a worthy and enhanced life. Strength-based counseling, which has its origins in positive psychology, aims to explore and enhance human activity in the full range of areas of life through the daily application of personality strengths ([Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006](#)). Strengths-Based Counseling Psychology provides counseling with a new language of strengths and positive human characteristics. The definition of personality strengths is provided by [King and Trent \(2012\)](#): 'The

psychological process by which a person was developed in such a way that he thinks that a particular action he performs is beneficial to both him and society.

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of SBCC on entrepreneurship in students. The results showed that after adjusting the pre-test scores, the difference between the experimental and control groups in the entrepreneurship capability variable was significant. The results showed that SBCC was effective on entrepreneurship. In explaining this finding, it can be said that members should identify and expand their strengths based on the classification method, and after defining their goals, the counseling process goes to the stage of linking strengths with achieving personal goals and employment. Counselor and members discuss the contribution of strengths to members' lives, while focusing on employment, ways in which members can build strengths to achieve and achieve goals. Two types of barriers to entrepreneurship were explained to members; Mental and real obstacles. Mental barriers, are wrong beliefs and misconceptions and the real barriers are the environmental conditions that prevent entrepreneurial action. In the sessions, five skills related to entrepreneurship related to optimism, curiosity, perseverance, flexibility and risk-taking were explained to participants. According to the research findings, it can be concluded that the presentation of topics related to entrepreneurship has been effective in increasing the entrepreneurial capabilities of members. In general, the results of the present study revealed that SBCC has been effective in students' career decision-making and this approach can be used to solve problems related to self-efficacy in student decision-making. This approach can also affect and enhance students' entrepreneurial abilities. Therefore, this method can be used to change some habits, behaviors and misconceptions and remove mental barriers. The present study indicated the effect of SBCC on increasing entrepreneurial ability, which can be widely used in counseling centers and schools due to its low cost and time savings.

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