

# **EXAMINING INDIVIDUAL TRAITS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOR: FOCUSING ON CHARACTER STRENGTHS, ADHD, AND HSP**

**Aim of the Study:** Although entrepreneurship education has attracted much attention, there is a lack of knowledge on effective intervention methods. Individual characteristics related to entrepreneurship should first be clarified. This study focused on character strengths that emerged in positive psychology, defined as "positive attributes that are stable, but not fixed and can be developed with conscious effort." In previous studies, some character strengths were reported to contribute to entrepreneurial behavior. Besides, ADHD and HSP traits, which are often viewed negatively, are also thought to have positive effects on entrepreneurship. This study would expand the possibilities for entrepreneurship education by focusing on character strengths that have educational potential due to their changeability and interactions between character strengths and relatively fixed traits, such as ADHD and HSP.

**Methods:** Two internet surveys (Study 1 and 2) were conducted on independent samples through a data collecting agency (Macromill, Inc.) to identify the specific factor(s) that drive entrepreneurial behavior. We measured character strengths, ADHD, and HSP traits via the Character Strength Test 24 (CST24), Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS), and Highly Sensitive Person Scale Japanese 10-item version (HSP-J10), respectively on Study 1. Study 2 used the same questionnaires, but the evaluation of ADHD based on a medical diagnosis. The participants included entrepreneurs who

started their own companies and are still in business and non-entrepreneurs who are currently employed but have never started a business. Logistic regression analysis was conducted with age and gender as covariates, all factors of each questionnaire and their interaction terms as independent variables, and entrepreneurial behavior as the dependent variable.

**Results:** Two independent surveys have shown consistent results that character strengths and ADHD significantly promoted entrepreneurial behavior while HSP significantly suppressed entrepreneurial behavior. No interaction between them was significant. Regarding ADHD, psychological scale and medical diagnosis resulted in the same results. Additionally, we found that factor analysis confirmed the original model in ASRS (two factors: inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity) and HSP-J10 (three factors: Ease of excitation, Low sensory threshold, and Esthetic sensitivity) but not with CST24. The following exploratory factor analysis identified three factors: Drive, Harmony, and Compassion. Only the Drive factor significantly influences entrepreneurial behavior.

**Conclusions:** Character strengths are considered changeable individual characteristics. The eight character strengths in the Drive factor identified in this study (Creativity/Originality, Curiosity, Bravery, Leadership, Zest/Vitality, Love of learning, Persistence/Perseverance, and perspective) could be important individual elements to be nurtured in entrepreneurship education. ADHD and HSP significantly facilitated and inhibited entrepreneurial behavior, respectively. It should be noted that this study achieved a self-replication by using two independent samples. The contribution of ADHD (hyperactivity/impulsivity) to entrepreneurial behavior was similar across a questionnaire and a diagnosis, demonstrating its robustness as also shown in previous

studies. An inhibitory effect of HSP (Ease of excitation) on entrepreneurial behavior is a novel finding, as it is inconsistent with previous studies showing that HSPs have a positive influence on entrepreneurship only through interactions with other factors. We propose that entrepreneurship education should focus on nurturing character strengths and understanding the role of trait-like factors such as ADHD and HSP.