

The Perceptions of the Lebanese Students of Choosing their Career in Entrepreneurship*

Hassan A. Saleh**

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of business students, of the different Lebanese universities, of entrepreneurship. It focuses on students' career as entrepreneurs, their opinion as to entrepreneurial characteristics, and the external factors that influence such a choice. The main significance of this study is to fill the gap in the current literature about entrepreneurship in Lebanon, since few studies have been conducted based on the Lebanese culture. A questionnaire is given to a sample of 800 senior and graduate business students from six main universities. A Cronbach Alpha test is used to confirm the internal reliability of the questionnaire. The results of the implemented descriptive statistics and chi-square technique proved the formulated hypotheses, namely, 1) students perceive entrepreneurial career as a primary choice, and highly is preferred by male graduate and working students; 2) students prioritize the entrepreneurial characteristics in the following order: motivation to attain wealth, autonomy, achievement, locus of control and innovativeness, self-efficacy, risk-taking, and pro-activeness. Gender and parents' background proved to be similar among students in almost all characteristics, but not as to the level of education, working experience, and university type; 3) students perceive financial capital as the most important factor to entrepreneurship; and 4) they consider political and economic climate as barriers to entrepreneurship and business growth in Lebanon. This research ends with implications, including the significance of reformulating governmental policies to support new entrepreneurs' opening new ventures; and, universities' top administrators are to enhance curriculum by introducing courses in entrepreneurship and adopting training programs to stimulate entrepreneurial behavior.

Keywords: Career Choice, Perception, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Characteristics, Factors to Entrepreneurship, Students, Lebanese Universities.

INTRODUCTION

The number of students majoring in business at various Lebanese universities has increased over the years, since such enrollment has been considered as an opportunity to enhance career choices. However, these students are finding

real difficulty in securing a well-paid job due to many factors, be it economically, socially or even politically, to name a few. Furthermore, there are other factors that influence their career choices; they may include prior experiences, personal characteristics and aspirations for the future, expectations concerning their life while at university, and how their experience at university supports their future aspirations (Collin *et al.*, 2004). Most of these students attempt to find jobs in the private sector, except for a few who seek employment in the public sector. Hence, building entrepreneurial competencies is essential to enable people undertake and succeed in this venture, especially since entrepreneurship is considered an important career

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**Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Lebanese University.

dr.hsaleh@yahoo.com

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choice to university students and could be a solution to the said difficulties. Accordingly, universities strive to provide the highest quality of education to develop competent students and foster entrepreneurship; hence, widening the students' career choices.

Entrepreneurship has developed quickly (Hill, 2008), and has become an important topic worldwide due to its significance to economic development and growth, by enhancing employment and creating new markets and industries (Friedman, 2011; Scott and Twomey, 1988; and Thorpe, *et al.*, 2009). It is recognized as an important element of driving force in economic growth and job creation, by building generations' opportunities, initiation, creativity and innovation, and the ability to invest resources properly. Most research support the claim that entrepreneurial activities contribute to job creation, economic growth, and competitiveness (Thurik and Wennekers, 2004; Alam, 2009).

Public and private sectors have recognized the importance of finding financial instruments to support young graduates as self-employed in their new entrepreneurial ventures, since small businesses play a crucial role in boosting the economy. Meanwhile, the new economy, with Internet technology, has enormous impact on students' choices and decisions as to their careers. Students, at the present time, are more knowledgeable, and are cognizant of the realm of technology and globalization, and the role of the latter in opening more opportunities that would lead to innovation, customization, and adaptive conditions.

Due to these trends, it becomes more important to understand students' perceptions of entrepreneurship and their career choice. Research on these concepts has increased over the past two decades. However, these studies mainly focus on developed economies rather than on developing ones (Krueger, *et al.*, 2000). Accordingly, research on entrepreneurship in developing

countries, including Lebanon, is essential to investigate factors that influence entrepreneurial career choice.

Research objectives and its significance

Since exploratory research on Lebanese students' perceptions of entrepreneurship is scarce, this study aims to explore the perceptions of senior and graduate business students across different Lebanese universities of entrepreneurship. This research focuses on entrepreneurial career, entrepreneurial characteristics, and external factors that influence entrepreneurship. Accordingly, the objectives of this study include the following:

1. Introducing theoretical background on entrepreneurship.
2. Knowing the career options of Lebanese students and their perception as to entrepreneurial career.
3. Determining the outlook of the Lebanese students on entrepreneurship, and the impact of business environment and demographic characteristics on entrepreneurial activities.

This research is significant since it adds knowledge and insight to the perceptions of Lebanese students of entrepreneurship. It contributes to the current literature on entrepreneurship in Lebanon and the developing countries. It provides top administrators at universities a background of students' attitudes and perceptions of entrepreneurship; thus, encouraging them to introduce new policies to the universities' curriculum so as to enhance the said concept. Finally, this research helps researchers to understand students' perceptions in different context, and set directions for future research. This study has implications for policy makers, educators, and practitioners in the field of business as it provides new insights as to how to set new directions of entrepreneurial programs and university's curriculum.

Research Questions

Although small businesses play a significant role in the Lebanese economy, graduated business students pay

slight attention to entrepreneurial career. Many students go into the labor market yearly, and face difficulties in finding appropriate jobs related to their field of study. Thus, the issue of finding an appropriate job is highlighted. Traditionally, Lebanese students have been educated and instructed in social norms to enable them to enter the labor market as employees but not as entrepreneurs. Most of them compete for employment in both private and public sectors in order to have stable jobs with monthly pay checks. As graduated students are not enthusiastically into entrepreneurship, universities have introduced new programs and courses to enhance entrepreneurial career. These programs make students better in terms of their competencies, including knowledge, skills, and abilities. This research attempts to shed light on the importance for students to positively perceive entrepreneurial career as an essential option.

This research attempts to answer the following questions: What career options do Lebanese students have and how do they perceive entrepreneurial career? How do Lebanese students' individual characteristics affect their perception of entrepreneurship? Do students perceive entrepreneurship differently according to their demographic characteristics (gender, language, level of higher education, family background, employee's experience, and type of institution)? How do students perceive business environment and the influence of external factors on entrepreneurship? Answering these questions would provide insight into students' perception of entrepreneurship, which would lead to the identification of the existing challenges and to the provision of a framework to be implemented in order to enhance entrepreneurship within the university's context and, as a result, affect the students' behaviors and outlooks.

Literature Review

The term "career choice" is a student's decision of

professional occupation, whether entrepreneurial or organizational employment. Individuals have varied motivations when pursuing self-employment (Feldman and Bolino, 2000). Since entrepreneurship is a process of initiation, opportunity exploitation, venture creation, profit orientation, economic growth, and change (Ducker, 1985; Hisrich and Peters, 1989; and Misra and Kumar, 2009), then for a student to become an entrepreneur, means he has become the focal point in economic activities. Accordingly, he/she is viewed as initiator of action, a stimulant of socio-economic change and development. Kent (1989) defines an entrepreneur "as a person who introduces a new service or product, develops and implements a new technology, opens a new business, discovers a new or existing source of supply for a scarce resource, and reorganizes innovative management" (p.154). It is worth noting that there are many characteristics to entrepreneurship, including self-employment, creativity and innovations, exploit opportunities, risk-taking, initiation, financial gain, recognition for achievement and success, independence, responsibility, confidence, family tradition, economic growth, commitment to work, innovation, and ability to social networking (see Al-wadi, 2005; Drucker, 1985; Yalcin and Kapu, 2008; Fatoki, 2010; Aziz *et al.*, 2012; and Bird, 1989).

Sources of Entrepreneurial Behavior

Entrepreneurial behavior (the way people act) is based on what they believe. Thus, perception, attitude, and intention are key components of human behavior. Perception is "the process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment" (Robbins and Judge, 2011: 205), whereas attitude is an evaluative statement (favorable or unfavorable) of "entrepreneurs and

entrepreneurship" (Robbins and Judge, 2011). Intention, as immediate antecedents of actual behavior, is a function of perceptions to start a new business (Ajzen, 1991). Positive individual perception and attitude toward entrepreneurship may stimulate entrepreneurial intention— as a commitment to start a new business, since it directs individual's attention toward achieving some objectives (Vesalainen and Pihkala, 1999; and Krueger, 1993). Hence, entrepreneurial intention is considered as a base of entrepreneurial behavior (see Bird, 1988; Kolvereid, 1996; Krueger and Brazeal, 1994; and Krueger *et al.* 2000).

Approaches of Entrepreneurship

Three dominate factors can affect entrepreneurial intention, including: 1) demographic profile (includes age, sex, previous experience); 2) personality traits (include self-efficacy, confidence, autonomy, locus of control, risk- taking, and professional attraction); and, 3) contextual factors (include education and environment) (Wärneryd, 1988; and Bateman and Crant, 1993). After reviewing the literature, it became apparent that over the past years several interrelated approaches have emerged in an attempt to explain individuals' perceptions, attitudes, intentions, and behavior toward entrepreneurship. The most observed approaches are described in –depth in the following sections.

a. Demographic Characteristics Approach

This approach examines whether various demographic characteristics lead to successful entrepreneurship; it tests various variables, including age, gender, social class, role model or status, income, level of education, parents' education level and occupation, previous experience, occupation, religion, marital status, and family size. With these variables in mind, it is interesting to note that entrepreneurship has traditionally been a male-dominated field (Ahl, 2006),

with men owning more businesses than women (Marlow, 2002). This statement shows that gender stereotypes can influence evaluations of male- and female-typed venture ideas (Gupta and Turban, 2012). Though women may perceive the environment as a career choice that challenges entrepreneurship (Zhao, *et al.*, 2005), studies within the Arab context, found that there exist a variety of barriers that hinder women from becoming entrepreneurs, including traditional restrictions and norms (Al Gharaibeh, 2011; and Sadi *et al.*, 2011). However, numerous studies show that entrepreneurial men and women have similar personality dimensions (Buttner, 1993; Khan *et al.* 2011; Robinson, 1994; Caputo, 1998; and Al-Shaikkeh *et al.*, 2009).

b. Personal Characteristics Approach

This approach focuses on the influence of individual traits on entrepreneurial intentions, such as achievement, risk taking, tolerance of ambiguity, innovation, internal locus of control, and pro-activeness (Boyd and Vozikis, 1994). Many studies have found direct relationships between personality factors, namely, achievement, locus of control, motivation and that of entrepreneurship ((McClelland, 1961; Brockhaus, 1982; Gartner, 1985; Franke and Lüthje 2004; and Bonnett and Fuhrmann 1991). However, Robinson *et al* (1991) found that planned personal behavior can be changed, both across time and situations, when there is interaction with the environment.

c. Environmental Approach

This approach indicates that entrepreneurship, as career choice, varies among individuals and the situations they find themselves in, knowing that there are certain situations that may motivate people to become entrepreneurs (Shaver and Scott, 1991; and Bird, 1988). Culture consists of the underlying values that are specific to a group or society and which motivate individuals to behave in certain ways (Hofstede, 1998).

Culture can act as a catalyst that shapes societal gender's roles and stereotypes in terms of career choice (Shinnar *et al.* 2012). Specifically, cultural factors may influence "the individual career choice to be an entrepreneur and create a new business"(Ribeiro-Soriano, and Urbano, 2011; and Hopp and Stephan, 2012). Business environment is considered as a significant part that affects students' attitudes of deciding their "career choices." For example, political and economic stability could create supportive environment for promoting entrepreneurship. Market conditions ??/(favorable or unfavorable) might attract individuals (employed or unemployed) to start new business, because of the market's opportunities or the higher utility of new ventures (Storey, 1991; Hannu, 1994; and Watson, 1998). In the same manner, governmental assistance and other supportive public policies can produce positive environment to promote entrepreneurship (OECD, 1998; and Elnamaki, 1988).

d. The Planned Behavior Approach

Entrepreneurial behavior is determined by the attitudes and perceptions of the individuals, specifically, their personal characteristics and previous experience (Ajzen, 1991). This model considers favorable attitude, favorable social norms, and the perceived factors (anticipated positive and impediment factors) as determinants of entrepreneurial intention and behavior. As such, entrepreneurial behavior is influenced by the interaction of various factors, including the individual's characteristics, environment, goals, and business environment Ajzen (1985, 1987, and 1991); Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Bird, 1988; Davidsson, 1995; Autio, *et al.*, (1997 and 2001); and Franke and L uthje, 2004).

e. The Perceived Feasibility and Desirability Approach

This approach considers the traits of both individual and situational factors to determine the former's

intentions and behavior. Krueger (1993) assumes that perceived feasibility or "self-efficacy" determines the capability of individuals to start new business, whereas perceived desirability determines how attractive individuals find the prospects of starting a new business. The impacts on the perception of desirability and feasibility might be due to the individual's family background, education, financial and social support, and cultural values. These impacts have been examined in previous studies; it was found that family background plays a significant role in choosing entrepreneurship as career (see White, *et al.*, 2007; and Wang, 2011).

This study considers the factors in the above approaches when examining the perception and the attitudes of Lebanese students of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship in the Lebanese Context

Lebanon is a small country, located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea; it is the meeting point of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. The estimated population is three million living in Lebanon, and 15 million living around the world. Historically, Lebanon faced political and economic uncertainties, because of its strategic location. Over centuries, it has been observed that the unstable years are more than the stable ones.

Yet, Lebanon is a predominantly service oriented free-market economy. An enterprising population, with its high literacy rate and traditional mercantile culture, Lebanon has been an important commercial center for the Middle East. Lebanon's location and culture have pushed its people to act as entrepreneurs (Hourani, 2005). Entrepreneurship in Lebanon has been given great attention since 1960s. Sayigh (1962) considers Lebanese entrepreneurs as prime contributors to the economic development. Entrepreneurship relies heavily on the private sector for economic growth. Family business, which constitutes 85 percent of the private

sector, plays a crucial role in entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2009).

Despite the Lebanese economic problems, there are a variety of institutions that provide funds or supports, including a government- supported program called Kafalat, SME Unit of the Ministry of Economy and Trade, Ameen Microfinance, South Business Innovation Center (SouthBIC), Berytech, Young Arab Women Entrepreneurs, RootSpace, MIT Enterprise Forum of the Pan Arab, Center For Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the American University of Beirut, and several others.

Research on entrepreneurship in Lebanon focuses on the behavior of the Lebanese entrepreneurs, and is based on three main themes: entrepreneurial factors, female entrepreneurs, and immigrant entrepreneurs. In Lebanon, education and family play a crucial role in entrepreneurship, with females and males as entrepreneurs. Based on a sample of Lebanese entrepreneurs, Pistrui *et al.* (2008) studied the effects of family and culture on the development of private SMEs in Lebanon. The study suggested that entrepreneurs are motivated by the need for independence and flexibility, and depend on family members' participation to establish successful businesses. In another research on the motives of Lebanese family businesses for entrepreneurship (Fahed-Sreih and Pistrui, 2012), found that Lebanese culture encourages family participation, and, in turn, has positive impact on the entrepreneurial development and expansion. The study also indicates that the Lebanese government needs to support the Lebanese companies with financial resources, services, and innovations.

Other researches examine factors that influence the Lebanese entrepreneurs. Mezher *et al.* (2008) found that success of Lebanese entrepreneurs is basically due to internal controllable factors. On the other hand, Bizri *et al.* (no date) found that the most significant barriers for

conducive entrepreneurship in Lebanon are the lack of social network, external stability, positive business environment, and risk aversion. Ahmed *et al.* (2004), examined the export barriers that Lebanese entrepreneurs face when engaging in international business. The results of the study show that most manufacturers perceive lack of government assistance, competition from firms in foreign markets, the need to modify pricing and promotion policies, high foreign tariffs in export markets, and the lack of capital to finance expansion into foreign markets, as the major barriers to export.

Under another theme, some researches focused on woman as entrepreneur. Hussein (1997) reported that Lebanese women entrepreneurs have smaller-sized businesses as compared to those owned by men, and are at a disadvantage in terms of securing external bank financing. Jamali (2009) found a variety of constraints that encounter the Lebanese women entrepreneurs, including, traditional male stereotypes, lack of government support, serious economic recession and stagnation, and legal constraints. In a study on the differences between the perceptions of male and female entrepreneurs in Lebanon, World Bank (2009) found that female entrepreneurs are more sensitive to financial and regulatory constraints.

Another research focuses on the Lebanese immigrants as entrepreneurs, and their significant impact on the economies of many countries in the world. (Zafar, *et al.*, 2012). In a study of the overseas Lebanese entrepreneurs (Zgheib and Kowatly, 2011), show that these entrepreneurs are highly oriented toward entrepreneurship. They are perseverant, innovative, risk-taking, and driven by autonomy.

Previous Studies

According to the approaches of entrepreneurship, many factors could influence the attitude and perception

of university students to entrepreneurial career choice. Students' attitudes and perceptions are influenced as stated by individual characteristics (gender, age, and experience), norms (influenced by family members, friends, teaching and learning, background), and business environment (political and economic) that lead to entrepreneurial behavior (new ventures). (Arenius and Minniti, 2005; and Shane, *et al.*, 2003).

Research considers gender as an important factor that affect student's attitude toward new venture. While studies found that males have a higher preference for entrepreneurial behavior than females (Brush, 1992; Bagheri *et al.*, 2010; Okay, *et al.*, 2002; Zhang *et al.*, 2009; Veciana *et al.*, 2005; and Ozyilmaz, 2011), others indicated that gender does not have significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions (Drost, 2010; Kakkonen, 2010; Farrington, *et al.*, 2012; Ahmed *et al.*, 2010; and Soetanto, *et al.*, 2010). Yet, Al-Wugayan and Alshimmiri (2010) found that female students in Kuwait have higher willingness to participate in small businesses than male students. In examining the entrepreneurial orientations and motivations of Egyptian students, Zedan (2010a) found similarities between male and female students in entrepreneurial orientations and factors affecting the preparation of entrepreneurs. Yet, he found significant differences between male and female students in terms of entrepreneurial motivations and the readiness to start-up business.

A large number of research evidenced that women face more difficulties in comparison with men in venturing processes, including financing new business or appropriate human and financial resources (Fay and Williams, 1993; Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007; and Brush *et al.* 2006); the alleged stereotyping against women (Marlow and Patton, 2005); and, the culture of the different nations (Zhang *et al.*, 2009; and Langowitz and Minniti, 2007).

Research states differences as to the influence of the years of academic study on students' entrepreneurial intentions. While some studies consider the years spent in study an important predictor of entrepreneurial intentions of students due to increased knowledge (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010; Al-Wugayan and Alshimmiri, 2010; and Farrington, *et al.*, 2012), others report that years of study are trivial predictor of an increase in entrepreneurial intentions (Ozyilmaz 2011; Degeorge and Fayolle, 2008; and Kakkonen, 2010). Furthermore, education is considered an important factor in developing countries to stimulate entrepreneurship (Jaafar and AbdulAziz, 2008). Research about entrepreneurial education at universities found that students increase their entrepreneurial efficacy and entrepreneurial intention to start-up a new venture (Keat *et al.*, 2011; Zain *et al.*, 2009; Autio *et al.*, 1997; Franke and Luthje, 2004; Dyer, 1994; Brijlal, 2012; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Schwarz *et al.*, 2009; Turker and Selcuk, 2009; Kumar and Abirami, 2012; Wilson *et al.*, 2009; Fiet, 2000; Segal, *et al.*, 2005; Zaidatol, 2009; Barbosa, *et al.*, 2007; Zhao, *et al.*, 2005; McGee *et al.*, 2009; and Roudaki, 2009). Education should increase knowledge of students, build confidence, promote self-efficacy, improve students' competencies in entrepreneurial leadership and areas related to starting a new venture (See Ian, *et al.*, 2012; Ramlan and Nagh, 2012; and Bagheri *et al.*, 2013).

Research also reveals a positive relationship between family members' experience as a role model and the emergence of entrepreneurs (Ozyilmaz 2011; Veciana *et al.*, 2005; Ariff *et al.*, 2010; Soetanto *et al.*, 2010; Wang and Wong, 2004; and Ahmed *et al.*, 2010). Family characteristics influence student's intention to become entrepreneurial and venture on a new business (Zain *et al.*, 2009; Carr and Sequeira, 2007; Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; and Krueger, 1993).

Personal characteristics are considered widely in literature. Studies measure achievement need, locus of control, competitiveness, autonomy, and monetary value to determine the attitude of graduate students towards choosing a career in entrepreneurship (Lee, 2006; Othman and Ishak, 2009; Kristiansen and Indorti, 2004; and Zain *et al.*, 2009).

Recent research focuses on variety of factors that influence entrepreneurial characteristics. Topics include intrinsic inclination, support seeking, fame seeking, self-doubt and income stability (Mgaya and Magembe, 2007), specialty as field of study (Smith, 2004; and Hosseini *et al.*, 2011), desirability and feasibility (Veciana, *et al.*, 2005), prior experience (Ramayah and Harun, 2005; and Krueger, 1993), personal traits/skills, the need for achievement, self-confidence, risk-taking aptitude, knowledge of the market, and creativity and innovation; all these are considered as factors that could be studied to identify the entrepreneurial profiles of university students (Aghazamani and Roozikhah, 2010).

In studying the influence of attitude of Malaysian students on choosing a career in entrepreneurship, Othman *et al.* (2009) found that personal characteristics based on an internal locus of control, monetary value, and autonomy have a significant impact on such a choice. Entrepreneurial students, in different context, seem to have greater innovativeness, highly risk-taking, independent, internal locus of control, higher need for achievement, and education (Zain *et al.*, 2009, Gürol and Atsan, 2006; Hosseini *et al.*, 2011; and Uden and Bose, 2012). In this respect, Zedan (2010b) found that demographic characteristics of Egyptian students (students' entrepreneurial background, and environmental variables in university) influence entrepreneurial traits (general entrepreneurial readiness, independence, locus of control, need for achievement, concern for wealth accumulation, self-confidence, and

risk taking propensity), except of family background. Finally, Iqbal *et al.* (2012) found that social norms play a significant role in directing the intention and behavior of Saudi university students.

Studies had also focused on the perceived barriers to entrepreneurship, including lack of funds and social networking, aversion to risk, fear of failure, aversion to stress and hard work (Sandhu, *et al.*, 2011). These barriers are actually discussed worldwide in many researches in developed nations (Robertson *et al.*, 2003; Henderson and Robertson, 1999; Scott and Twomey, 1988; Kwong *et al.*, 2012; and Matlay and Carey, 2007), and in developing ones (Al-Sadi *et al.*, 2011; Nabi and Linan, 2011; Jamali, 2009; Ahmad and Xavier, 2012; Al-Ariss, 2010; Sandhu *et al.*, 2011; Lan and Wu, 2010; and Gorji and Rahimian, 2011).

In sum, previous researches have examined individual characteristics and variety of factors that influence students' perceptions of entrepreneurship. Accordingly, it is essential to test Lebanese students' perceptions of entrepreneurial career, individual characteristics and factors that influence entrepreneurial career choice.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the literature review:

1. Lebanese students highly perceive entrepreneurial career in comparison to other career choices.
2. Lebanese students have significant differences as to their entrepreneurial careers based on gender, level of higher education, family background, student's work, and type of institution.
3. Lebanese students' outlook to entrepreneurship is highly affected by their individual characteristics.
4. Lebanese students have significant differences as to their perception of entrepreneurial characteristics based on gender, level of higher education, family

background, student's work, and type of institution.

5. Lebanese students are highly affected by the factors that influence entrepreneurship.
6. Testing the above hypotheses has led the author to determine the perceptions of Lebanese students of their career choices, of characteristics of entrepreneurship, of impact of external factors on entrepreneurship, and of differences among students as per demographic variables.

Methods of data collection

Based on different sources gleaned from the literature, a questionnaire based on five-point Likert scale with responses from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) was designed. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section includes 47 questions to measure students' perceptions of their career choices, their perception as to the characteristic of entrepreneurship, and the factors that influence entrepreneurship. The second section includes the students' personal demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education, language, parents' own business, work while at university, ownership of business, years of experience, specialty in business, and name of the university studying at. A pilot study was conducted with 30 students to ensure clarity of the questionnaire. The internal reliability of the questionnaire was tested based on Cronbach's Alpha (0.856), which is considered good. The questionnaire was also tested for content validity by colleagues from different universities who possess strong research and academic background.

The population and sample of the study

The population of this study comprises of all graduate and senior business students enrolled in all universities whose main campuses are located in Beirut. The study took

place during the academic year 2011-2012.

Lebanon has one public university and several other private universities that offer a business major as a field of study. However, since the researcher in this study was unable to access the full lists of students' names in the different campuses, it was difficult to select a random and stratified sample. Therefore, the researcher selected a large convenient sample pertaining to the six main universities which were willing that the researcher distribute his survey questionnaire. The researcher believes that the selected sample represents a large percentage of the target students (knowing that they come from different geographical regions). The final sample for this study consists of 800 respondents.

The questionnaire was administered during the spring semester within regular classes. The researcher and his research assistants were personally involved in administering the questionnaire with the help of instructors of the target classes. Respondents were from different business major areas, including management, marketing, accounting, finance, information systems, and economics. The distributions of respondents according to each university were as follows: Lebanese University (27%); St. Joseph University (15 %); Islamic University (14%); Lebanese American University (14%); American University of Science and Technology (15%); and Beirut Arab University (15%).

Measuring variables

The variables selected in this study are the following:

- Career choice: is the student who determines type of work and sector to follow in life as entrepreneurial or organizational employment. (Working in private or public sectors, or abroad).
- Individual characteristics: There are several characteristics related to entrepreneurship, including:

- Efficacy: is the individual's belief in personal capability.
 - Pro-activeness: is the intention to think of the future.
 - Achievement: is the act of successful accomplishments.
 - Locus of control: is about the student who controls his/her own career.
 - Autonomy: is self-directing freedom and independence.
 - Risk-taking: is taking risks in order to start a new venture or increase profits.
 - Innovativeness: Is the skill of creating and implementing new ideas related to business.
 - Motive to wealth: Is the motive to accumulate valuable resources from owned business.
- Factors that influence entrepreneurship:
 - Student's values: Is about core beliefs and preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes.
 - Money: It means having enough money to start a new venture.
 - University support: includes entrepreneurial centers and entrepreneurial networks with industries and financial institutions.
 - Adequate courses: Is the program that includes adequate courses related to entrepreneurship.
 - Government support: provides fund programs and builds business incubation centers to provide training and advice to entrepreneurs.
 - Financial sources: indicates the availability of financial support from banks and other sources.
- Political condition: includes the political climate, stability, internal conflict, and security that foster the creation of new ventures.
 - Economic condition: includes economic growth and fiscal and monetary stability that encourage the creation of new ventures.
 - Legal condition: includes present laws, regulations, and bureaucratic structure that enhance entrepreneurship.
- Demographic variables: These variables are gender, level of education, university type (public or private), job experience, and parents' own business.

Statistical Methods

In order to do the analysis, SPSS program (version 19) is used, applying descriptive statistics and chi-square method. Descriptive statistics is used to present the data in a meaningful way, particularly frequencies, percentages, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation. Chi-square statistic is also used to test hypotheses and determine whether there is a significant difference between dependent and independent variables, and to build contingency tables.

Findings and Analysis

Demographic Characteristics

Table (1) lists respondents' characteristics with regard to gender, level of education, languages, work while at university, parents' own business, own business while at university, years of experience, and type of university (public or private). Forty five percent of respondents are male, while 55% are females. Thirty one percent are graduate students, and all respondents know either English

or French, or both languages, with the majority to English language. While 47.5% of respondents are working while at university; only 14% of all respondents have their own business. Respondents are distributed among all business departments, particularly the management department

which counts about 39.0%. Finally, 27% of the respondents are from the Lebanese University, the only public university in Lebanon, whereas 73% of respondents are from private universities.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Characteristics.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	358	44.8%
	Female	442	55.2
Level of Education	Undergraduate	550	68.8
	Graduate	250	31.2
Language	English	398	49.8
	French	226	28.3
	English and French	117	14.6
	More than two languages	59	07.4
Work while at University	Yes	380	47.5
	No	420	52.5
Parents own Business	Yes	355	44.5
	No	445	55.5
Have Own Business while at University	Yes	110	14.0
	No	690	86.0
Years of Experience	No experience	373	46.5
	5-1 years	311	39.0
	10-6 years	65	08.0
	Above 10 years	51	06.5
Type of University	Public	216	27.0
	Private	584	73.0

Students' perception of their careers' and jobs' preferences

Table (2) shows respondents' perceptions of their careers' and jobs' preferences. Students agree that "working in one's own business" is the most preferable career choice (77.5 %), and are willing to become

entrepreneurs (78%), with a mean value of 4.1. Yet, more than half of the students agree to work in the private sector (57.5%), in well-known organizations (62%), and an attractive pay (74%), with job security (81%), and fixed working hours (57%). As other career choices, some Lebanese business students agree to work

outside Lebanon for a period of time (47.5%), or to even work in the public sector (48.5%). It should be noted, as Table 2 shows, that a big portion of the respondents are

not sure (indifferent) of their career choices between the private sector and the public sector (about 25%), or even working in one's own business (15%).

Table 2. Students' perceptions to their careers (in %).

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Indifference	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	Working in one's own business	01.5%	06.0%	15.0%	41.0%	36.5%	4.1	0.93
47	Willingness to become an entrepreneur	02.0	03.0	17.0	42.0	36.0	4.1	0.90
19	Working in the private sector	05.0	11.0	26.0	37.5	20.0	3.6	1.08
20	Working in the public sector	12.0	14.0	25.5	30.5	18.0	3.3	1.25
21	Working outside Lebanon	18.0	15.0	19.5	26.0	21.5	3.2	1.39
9	Prefer fixed working hours	04.5	14.5	24.0	36.5	20.5	3.5	1.09
18	Intend to receive attractive pay	01.5	03.5	21.0	42.5	31.5	4.0	0.88
7	Intend to have job security	1.0	3.0	15.0	39.5	41.5	4.2	0.85
31	Working for well-known organization	03.0	08.0	27.0	41.0	21.0	3.7	0.98

This research utilizes chi-square technique to determine statistical significant differences among students as to their career choice, focusing on gender, level of education (undergraduate or graduate), parents' own business, work while at university, and university type (public or private). Table (3) shows that significant differences exist among respondents based on "gender" in all items related to career choice, except working in private and public sectors, and their willingness to become entrepreneurs. Male students have higher

preferences to work in their own business than female students. Although respondents have no significant differences to work in the private or public sectors, higher proportions of female students prefer to work in well-known organizations, with fixed working hours, and job security. However, male students have higher proportion as to working outside Lebanon as an alternative to getting a job with attractive salary for a period of time.

Table 3. Chi-square results (career choices and demographic characteristics).

	Item	Gender	Educational level	Parents own business	Have own business	Work while at university	Years of experience	University type
2	Working in own business	0.015**	0.015**	0.075	0.046**	0.000*	0.005*	0.005*
47	Willingness to become an entrepreneur	0.294	0.015**	0.120	0.038**	0.017**	0.001*	0.033**
19	Working in the private sector	0.294	0.294	0.298	0.000*	0.397	0.056	0.176
20	Working in public sector	0.180	0.180	0.254	0.207	0.008*	0.001*	0.000*
21	Working outside Lebanon	0.004*	0.004*	0.066	0.380	0.225	0.483	0.000*
9	Prefer fixed working hours	0.000*	0.000*	0.922	0.000*	0.006*	0.001*	0.013**
18	Intend to receive attractive pay	0.039**	0.039**	0.378	0.000*	0.469	0.237	0.020**
7	Intend to have job security	0.013**	0.378	0.041*	0.191	0.961	0.189	0.023**
31	Working for well-known organization	0.015**	0.315	0.986	0.000*	0.015**	0.000*	0.163

*= significant at 0.01 **= significant at 0.05

In terms of "level of education," Table (3) indicates statistical differences among students "working in own business" and in "willingness to become an entrepreneur". Graduate students are more asserted to become entrepreneurs and to work in their own businesses. However, undergraduate students are more concerned to get a job in the private sector, with fixed working hours, and attractive payment, even outside Lebanon. Table (3) shows graduate and undergraduate students having similar willingness to work in the private sector and secure jobs in private or public sectors

for well-known organization, even working abroad.

As we look to "parents' own business" in Table (3), we notice similar students' perceptions toward career choices, and no real influence of the parents' background. Yet, Table (3) shows that students, who "work while studying," have significant differences in terms of working in their own business and willingness to become entrepreneurs, working as employees in well-known organizations for fixed working hours. Working students have higher inclination to run their own businesses and willingness to become entrepreneurs than

non-working students. On the other hand, non-working students have higher preferences to work as employees in well-known organizations in the public sector, with fixed hours. Along the same theme, students who "own business" have higher inclination to have their own business and willingness to become entrepreneurs. Respondents, who do not have businesses, have higher motive to work in the private sector in well-known organizations, with fixed working hours, and attractive payment. Since teaching business courses, at the two level of education, are primarily in English and French, it was found that "language" does not lead to real significant differences among respondents in choosing a career. Table 3 also shows significant differences among respondents based on "years of experience," the same as "work while studying." Hence, the more years of experience, the higher the tendency to work in one's own business and willingness to become entrepreneurs. On the contrary, inexperienced students are more willing to work in public sector, with well-known organizations, and fixed working hours.

Finally, Table (3) indicates that "university type" (public or private) leads to significant differences among respondents in their career choices, except in the question pertaining to working in private well-known organizations. Business students primarily focus on getting jobs in the private sector, as one of their career choices. Although respondents have little differences as to their willingness to become entrepreneurs, students at the Lebanese University have higher incentive to work in their own businesses, or outside Lebanon, with attractive payment than the students in the private universities.

Individual characteristics and entrepreneurship

Generally speaking, as Table (4) indicates, a big portion of respondents are in favor of entrepreneurship, since 63.5% of the students agree to having traits that

will enable them to start a new venture; 66.5% have the appropriate skills to be entrepreneurs; 83.5% have the intention to use their skills to the maximum; 70% have the capability to capitalize on resources; and, only 57.5% of the respondents agree to having adequate knowledge needed to start a new venture, with a mean value of 3.8. Yet, there are reasonable portion of undecided (neutral) respondents to some item of efficacy, including having adequate knowledge to start a new venture and the capability to capitalize resources (25%). This means that a reasonable number of students are not sure of their knowledge and capability to become entrepreneurs.

Students are mainly proactive, since 71.5% are determined to create a firm in the future, and 55% agree to start their business in the next 5 years, with a mean value of 3.6. Yet, an average of 26% is not sure of the possibility to own a business in the future. The motive to wealth is considered a very important factor to entrepreneurship, since 82% of respondents agree to gain profit, with a mean value of 4.2. Autonomy characterizes the respondents' outlook, because 72.5% of them want to be the bosses of their businesses, with a mean value of 4.1. Table (4) also indicates that respondents have the motive to achieve: 76.5% of respondents have the motive to achieve what they intend as entrepreneurs, 82.5% have the desire to achieve opportunities, 71% are with being very energetic (working long hours) to become entrepreneurs, with an average mean value of 4.0. In terms of locus of control, 77.5 of respondents have high commitment towards achieving their careers' objectives as entrepreneurs, and 78% are confident in their ability to succeed as entrepreneurs, with a mean value about 3.9. Table 4 also indicates that the Lebanese students are primarily innovative ones, since 75% have the intention to be innovators, about 80% strive for new ideas to own business, and 74% adapt changing demands as

entrepreneurs, with a mean value of 3.9. Yet, 64.5% of respondents agree to take a moderate risk, and 28% are undecided respondents. Finally, students show high

respect and positive image to entrepreneurs (above 80%), with a mean value of 4.2.

Table 4. Individual characteristics to entrepreneurship (in %)

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Indifference	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average	Standard Deviation
Efficacy								
1	Have traits to start new venture.	4.1	14.9	17.5	43.4	20.1	3.6	1.09
5	Have knowledge to start a new venture.	3.0	14.5	25.0	43.5	14.0	3.5	0.99
24	Have the skills to be an entrepreneur.	1.0	3.5	29.0	49.0	17.5	3.8	0.80
28	Intention to use skills to the maximum.	2.0	3.0	11.5	40.0	43.5	4.2	0.87
16	Have the capability to capitalize resources.	1.0	4.0	25.0	52.0	18.0	3.8	0.80
							3.8	
Pro-activeness								
3	Starting business in the next 5 years	4.5	11.5	28.5	35.5	20.0	3.5	1.07
4	Determined to create a firm in the future	2.5	12.5	23.5	42.5	19.0	3.6	1.00
							3.6	
Motive to wealth								
13	Have the desire to gain profit.	1.0	2.0	15.0	43.0	39.0	4.2	0.83
Autonomy								
6	Want to be my own boss.	2.5	5.5	13.5	34.0	38.5	4.1	0.98
Achievement								
12	Have the motive for achievement	0.5	3.5	19.0	54.5	22.0	4.0	0.76
15	Have the desire to achieve opportunities.	0.5	2.0	15.0	50.0	32.5	4.1	0.76
							4.05	

Locus of control								
26	Working long hours	2.0	5.5	21.5	46.5	24.5	3.9	0.92
29	High commitment to achieve career objectives	1.0	3.0	18.5	56.5	21.0	3.9	0.78
8	Confident in the ability to succeed	1.00	3.0	18.0	50.0	28.0	4.0	0.81
							3.9	
Innovativeness								
22	Intention to be an innovator person.	1.5	4.5	19.0	44.5	30.5	4.0	0.90
17	Strive for new ideas to own business.	0.5	3.5	16.5	49.5	30.0	4.0	0.79
30	Adapt changing demands as an entrepreneur.	1.0	5.5	19.5	56.0	18.0	3.8	0.82
							3.9	
Risk-taking								
11	Take a moderate risk.	1.5	6.5	28.0	51.0	13.5	3.7	0.82
Respecting entrepreneurs								
45	Respect entrepreneurs.	1.0	1.0	13.0	46.0	39.0	4.2	0.77
46	Positive image of entrepreneurs.	1.0	3.0	15.0	42.0	39.0	4.2	0.84
							4.2	

Although students show positive perception of entrepreneurship, it is essential to determine whether there are significant differences based on demographic variables. Table (5) indicates that respondents have significant differences in some of entrepreneurial characteristics pertaining to gender, including efficacy, pro-activeness, motive to wealth, innovativeness, and respecting entrepreneurs. Male students highly perceive their traits and knowledge to start their new ventures in comparison to female students. Yet, female students have higher intention to use their skills, be innovators, adapt change, and have deeper motives to accumulate

wealth. Finally, female students have higher respect of entrepreneurs than male students. Other individual characteristics show similarities based on gender, particularly variables related to achievement, autonomy, locus of control, and risk-taking.

The educational level also leads to significant differences among respondents in some of the characteristics pertaining to entrepreneurship. While graduate students agree to have higher traits and capability to use resources, undergraduates have higher intention to use skills to the maximum. They have more motives to gain wealth, autonomy, achievement, locus of control,

moderate risk, and positive image of entrepreneurs. Contrary to literature, parents' background does not lead to real differences among respondents as to how they perceive the characteristics of entrepreneurship. Students, whose parents own business, have higher intention to use skills, more desire to achieve opportunities, higher confident in the ability to succeed as entrepreneur, and higher positive image of entrepreneurs. Other students, whose parents do not own business, are more determined to have businesses in the future. In the same manner, respondents, who work while studying, have higher perceptions as to their traits and knowledge, and are more assertive to capitalize resources. They are also more proactive, energetic, and committed to

achieve career objectives as entrepreneurs. Focusing only on students owning businesses, the analysis shows differences among students only in efficacy (traits and knowledge), but and are more determined to have business in the future. Finally, university type (public or private) leads to significant differences among respondents to many characteristics of entrepreneurship. Students at the Lebanese University, as public institution, have higher positive perceptions of their efficacy, pro-activeness, achievement, autonomy, locus of control, moderate risk, motive to wealth, innovativeness, and respecting entrepreneurs.

Table 5. Chi-square results (personal characteristics to entrepreneurship and demographic variables).

No.	Item	Gender	Educational level	Parents own business	Work while at university	Own business	University type
	Efficacy						
1	Have traits to start new venture.	0.000*	0.000*	0.074	0.000*	0.000*	0.001*
5	Have knowledge to start a new venture.	0.000*	0.218	0.083	0.002*	0.005*	0.003*
24	Have the skills to be an entrepreneur.	0.013**	0.146	0.257	0.055	0.140	0.014**
28	Intention to use skills to the maximum.	0.000*	0.001*	0.022**	0.357	0.176	0.571
16	Have the capability to capitalize resources.	0.071	0.089	0.158	0.243	0.189	0.978
	Pro-activeness						
3	Starting business in the next 5 years	0.005*	0.337	0.430	0.001*	0.083	0.774
4	Determined to create a firm in the future	0.000*	0.039**	0.003*	0.002*	0.002*	0.004*
	Motive to wealth						
13	Have the desire to gain profit.	0.000*	0.104	0.530	0.007*	0.193	0.000*

No.	Item	Gender	Educational level	Parents own business	Work while at university	Own business	University type
	Autonomy						
6	Want to be my own boss.	0.067	0.028**	0.916	0.113	0.384	0.046**
	Achievement						
12	Have the motive for achievement	1.080	0.001*	0.089	0.294	0.163	0.027**
15	Have the desire to achieve opportunities.	0.992	0.017**	0.046**	0.253	0.685	0.000*
	Locus of control						
26	Working long hours	1.060	0.022**	0.202	0.002*	0.690	0.010*
29	High commitment to achieve career objectives	0.068	0.002*	0.071	0.001*	0.053	0.000*
8	Confident in the ability to succeed	0.313	0.000*	0.041**	0.476	0.394	0.514
	Innovativeness						
22	Intention to be an innovator person.	0.010**	0.123	0.233	0.435	0.233	0.770
17	Strive for new ideas to own business.	0.403	0.129	0.418	0.000*	0.414	0.720
30	Adapt changing demands as an entrepreneur.	.021**	0.168	0.001*	0.006	0.290	0.000*
	Risk-taking						
11	Have the intention take a moderate risk.	0.341	0.003*	0.543	0.690	0.137	0.039**
	Respecting entrepreneurs						
45	Respect entrepreneurs.	0.001*	0.110	0.097	0.318	0.411	0.043**
46	Positive image of entrepreneurs.	0.054*	0.015**	0.022**	0.221	0.054	0.494

* = significant at 0.01

** = significant at 0.05

Factors that Influence Entrepreneurship

Considering the pull factors, as Table (6) shows, 85% of the students agree with the significance of having enough money to start a new business, and about 59% agree with

students' values to enhance new ventures. University support is quite vague to respondents, since only 38% agree of the university's support, while 31% percent disagree. Also, half of the respondents believe that universities offer

adequate courses to enhance entrepreneurship, whereas 27% are not sure. Only 28% of the respondents agree that the government supports the creation and the enhancement of new ventures. As to the financial sources, only 32% of students agree to have access to a capital, 52% believe that banks are ready to give credits to start-up business, and 60.5% consider other financial sources to start a new venture. Again, a reasonable number of students are not aware that entrepreneurs have many avenues to finance new venture in Lebanon. Finally, students have different

perceptions as to external barriers. Only 26% of the respondents disagree that the law is a barrier to “starting” a new venture, with a mean value of 3.1. Almost two-third of the respondents considers political and economic climates as barriers to starting a new venture, with a mean value of 3.8. Since the undecided category is high for these factors (about 33%), one can say that a reasonable number of students are not sure of the influence of these factors on creating new businesses.

Table 6. Students' perceptions to factors that influence entrepreneurship (in %)

	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Indifference	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average	Standard Deviation
	Influential factors							
42	Having enough money to start new venture.	1.0	1.0	13.0	46.0	39.0	3.44	1.09
40	Own values to enhance new venture.	1.5	7.0	33.0	47.5	11.0	3.59	0.83
39	University support	12.0	19.0	31.0	28.0	10.0	3.0	1.16
41	University offers adequate courses.	8.0	15.0	27.0	39.5	10.5	3.3	1.09
38	Government support	19.0	24.0	29.0	20.5	7.5	2.7	1.19
	Financial sources							
43	Banks credit	3.0	13.0	32.0	40.0	12.0	3.4	0.96
44	Other sources	4.0	10.5	25.0	47.0	13.5	3.4	0.98
25	Own capital	10.0	24.0	34.0	22.0	10.0	3.0	1.12
	Barriers to new venture							
32	The law	6.0	20.0	42.0	23.0	9.0	3.1	1.01
34	The political climate	2.5	8.0	27.0	34.5	28.0	3.8	1.02
36	The economic climate	3.0	8.0	21.5	42.5	25.0	3.8	1.01

Discussions and Implications

According to the findings, we can say that the results of this study are consistent with previous studies about

students' perceptions of entrepreneurial career, individual characteristics of entrepreneurship, and the external factors that affect entrepreneurship. The

analysis supports Hypothesis 1, indicating that Lebanese students highly perceive entrepreneurial career in comparison to other career choices. Lebanese students have high entrepreneurial orientations through focusing on working in their own businesses and willingness to become entrepreneurs. In addition, students choose, as another career choice, to work in the private sector, in well-known organizations, with fixed working hours, an attractive payment, and job security. Hence, students prioritize their perception as to their career choices as follows: owning business as entrepreneur, working in the private sector, the public sector, or abroad. Although students have positive perception of becoming entrepreneurs and run their own business, a reasonable portion prefers stable jobs and income in either the private or public sectors; thus, considering the immediate benefits of having a job rather than thinking of developing new ventures in the near future.

The findings also primarily support Hypothesis 2, indicating that Lebanese students have significant differences as to their entrepreneurial careers based on demographic variables, particularly, gender, level of education, working experience, and university type. Male students have higher preferences to work in their own business, or to work outside Lebanon as another choice, whereas female students prefer to work in well-known organizations, with job security, and fixed working hours. It is not surprising that female students have the perception of working as employees; the cultural barriers they face may be the reason that they don't focus on working to own their businesses.

In terms of level of education, graduate students are more asserted to work in their own businesses, whereas undergraduate students are more concerned to get jobs in any sector or to work abroad. Graduate students are more inclined towards creating new businesses; this might be because of their increased knowledge and

practical experience in the business market. Undergraduates, on the other hand, are anxious to immediately find a job.

Contrary to many studies, family background, whether parents' own business or not, seem to play trivial role in affecting students' perception of entrepreneurial career choice. Hence, the Lebanese people, as part of their culture, are oriented towards businesses and free market, with a high degree of acceptance of entrepreneurship. On the other hand, while students, who have experience working as employees or self-employed, have higher inclination to start their own businesses and are more willing to become entrepreneurs, non-working students have more preferences to work as employees in well-known organizations, with fixed working hours, and attractive payment. Working experience, while studying or during summer vacation, including the internship, may help build up the inclination to entrepreneurial career. Finally, students of the Lebanese University, as public institution, have higher incentive to work in their own businesses, or to work outside Lebanon, as another alternative. Their motive is primarily related to enhancing their career choices, and having better opportunities, as self-employed or employee, since they primarily belong to low-income class.

The analysis also supports Hypothesis 3, indicating that Lebanese students' outlook to entrepreneurship is highly affected by their individual characteristics. Research supports students' inclination to entrepreneurship by indicating their high respect of entrepreneurs. Hence, our free market and the advanced "openness" in our society, due to technology and globalization, might lead students to move in this direction. Students also show high positive perceptions of entrepreneurial characteristics in the following priority: motivation to wealth, autonomy, achievement,

locus of control and innovativeness, self-efficacy, risk-taking, and the pro-activeness. Since all individual characteristics of entrepreneurship are high, the motivation to wealth is a prime factor of students' inclination. Students' focus on wealth might be associated with the notion that "business success is relevant to making money." On the other side, a group of students are not proactive people, as they focus on getting a job immediately after graduation. In addition, a portion of students are cautious risk takers, due to their lack of experience and knowledge of "no one can do business without risk-taking." Relevant to this notion, it is essential to enhance students' efficacy by focusing on building up their knowledge and skills in all subjects related to entrepreneurship.

Nevertheless, the analysis showed slight support to Hypothesis 4, showing significant differences among students between entrepreneurial characteristics and demographic characteristics (level of education, working experience, and university type). The analysis proved the high efficacy of graduate students, in their traits and capability to use resources. Undergraduates have higher motives to wealth, autonomy, achievement, locus of control, moderate risk, and positive image of entrepreneurs. Age and lack of experience might lead undergraduates to be enthusiastic and have higher positive perception of the characteristics of entrepreneurship. Hence, reality might describe graduates' perceptions of the characteristics of entrepreneurship. In addition, working experience leads to higher positive perceptions of their efficacy, pro-activeness, and innovativeness. These findings are consistent with previous studies, in terms of the importance of experience while studying, particularly, working in own business, which influence the development of entrepreneurial competencies and act on long-term.

As to the university type (public or private), students at the Lebanese University have higher positive perceptions of their efficacy, pro-activeness, achievement, autonomy, locus of control, moderate risk, innovativeness, motive to wealth, and respecting entrepreneurs. There are two main explanations to these findings: 1) The faculty has adopted new curriculum, including required courses to entrepreneurship; and, 2) most students at the Lebanese University come from low-income class. Therefore, they are enthusiastic to build successful careers in entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, male and female students have similar perceptions as to their entrepreneurial characteristics related to achievement, autonomy, locus of control, and risk-taking. These findings are interesting since female students are determined to show their entrepreneurial characteristics, as male students, and try to bypass the historical domination of masculine culture by focusing on business majors, as a field of study, and build a better career. Yet, male and female students have significant differences only in their efficacy of entrepreneurship. Because male students have higher experience of working, they are mainly more confident in displaying their efficacy and pro-activeness. Conversely, female students attempt to ascertain their ability to use skills, innovate, and gain profit. As results found about career choice, students primarily have similar characteristics of entrepreneurship as to parents' own business, except some items in the analysis. Students are oriented to entrepreneurship based on norms, other than the parents' work. Students' interactions based on work experience and university setting could enhance desirability to entrepreneurship.

Finally, the analysis slightly supports Hypothesis 5, indicating that Lebanese students highly perceive the factors that influence entrepreneurship. As to pull

factors, the financial capital is the most important, followed by student's values, adequate courses, university's support, and then the government's support. Students are not determined as to whether university's support and the existence of adequate courses enhance entrepreneurship. This leads the researcher to say that universities' policy makers should assess the present universities' curriculums and determine the adequate modifications to cover multi-entrepreneurial coursework, and to offer new programs, including incubators, to foster and enhance entrepreneurship. In addition, the Lebanese government assists new ventures through Kafalat program, and students, in general, are not aware of its role in supporting new businesses. Considering financial sources, students are not determined as to the availability of access to capitals to start-up businesses, including banks, and other sources. In addition, students are not knowledgeable of the variety of institutions that provide capital and other assistance to new ventures.

As to the external barriers, students' variations to the law as barrier to new venture indicate their doubt with respect to the legal issues associated with creating a new venture. This result is not surprising, given the need to focus in the curriculum on legal issues related to creating and developing new ventures. Yet, the majority of students are aware of the instability of political and economic climate in Lebanon and their negative impacts on business growth.

Implications

The results of this study specify the importance of understanding students' perceptions of their career, their perception of the characteristics of entrepreneurship and external factors to enhance the entrepreneurial behavior. Students, who perceive the feasibility of entrepreneurial characteristics and desirability of external factors, might be able to increase their

entrepreneurial intention and behavior. Therefore, the findings on entrepreneurship stimulate policy makers to reformulate their governmental policies in order to increase the desire of entrepreneurs to open new ventures. Along the same theme, understanding students' characteristics encourage university top administrators to enhance students' feasibility by focusing on entrepreneurial education, through curriculum advancement to include undergraduate and graduate courses that cover variety of topics, including entrepreneurial career enhancement, characteristics of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial culture, process of business plan and its action. In addition, universities may also adopt required training programs, such as "internship", which students undergo prior to graduation; this venture is apt to encourage them to work, as part timers, because of its impacts on developing entrepreneurial characteristics.

The findings also lead the government to enhance new ventures, through alleviating legal requirements, stabilizing the economy, creating positive political climate, and financing larger number of new projects. In addition, since a variety of public and private organizations, including universities, ministries, financial institutions, and international agencies, attempt to enhance and support small businesses, separately and without coordination with others, the government must initiate the establishment of some kind of partnership between public and private institutions, formulate a strategy to enhance entrepreneurial career, and develop new ventures. Finally, orienting students, via family members and community activities, in addition to the university's role, lead to build positive social norms that enhance entrepreneurial mindset.

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation of this study was the selection of the sample from different campuses based on students'

attendance in the selected classes. Although this approach helped the researcher to collect large sample in the specified time period, the key limitation was not being able to collect stratified random sample, giving all students the same opportunity to be part of the sample. Therefore, caution is required in generalizing the results.

This study is considered as one of the exploratory studies on entrepreneurship in Lebanon. It covers gaps between students' perceptions in general and their choices of careers, their perception of the characteristics of entrepreneurship, and the factors that influence entrepreneurship. In this respect, future research might analyze the explanatory power of the approaches of entrepreneurship to explain the entrepreneurial attitude of the Lebanese students. Another research might focus

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إدراك الطلبة اللبنانيين لريادة الأعمال كخيار مهني

حسن عباس صالح*

ملخص

إن الغاية من هذا البحث هي دراسة ادراك طلبة ادارة الاعمال في الجامعات اللبنانية لمفهوم "ريادة الاعمال" كخيار مهني، وميزاتهم كرواد للأعمال، والعوامل الخارجية المؤثرة في هذا الخيار. وتكمن اهمية الدراسة في ملء الفجوة القائمة في الأدبيات الحالية حول ريادة الأعمال في لبنان، بسبب قلة الدراسات التي تستند الى البيئة اللبنانية. تضمنت منهجية الدراسة استخدام استبانة تم توزيعها على عينة مؤلفة من 800 طالب وطالبة في مرحلتَي الماجستير والاجازة في ست جامعات خاصة وحكومية بعد التأكد من تناسقها وثباتها. وظهر تحليل الإحصاء الوصفي وتقنية "كاي تربيع" عدداً من النتائج، اهمها: ادراك عام عند الطلبة اللبنانيين عن أولوية ريادة الاعمال كخيار مهني، خاصة لدى طلاب الماجستير النكور؛ وادراك عام عند الطلبة اللبنانيين لميزاتهم في ريادة الاعمال وفق الاولويات التالية: الدافع نحو الثروة، الاستقلالية، الانجاز، القدرة على التكيف، الابتكار، الثقة بالنفس، المخاطرة والتوجه الاستباقي في العمل. كما اظهرت نتائج الدراسة التشابه بين الطلبة في الخصائص كلها تقريباً من ناحية الجنس وخلفية الوالدين، بخلاف التباينات على مستوى التعليم والخبرة في العمل، ونوع الجامعة؛ وكذلك ادراك عام عند الطلبة أن رأس المال المالي هو العامل الاهم للمشاريع الجديدة وريادة الاعمال، وعدم تأكدهم من دعم ادارة الجامعة لفكرة المشاريع الجديدة؛ كما عدت عينة الدراسة أن المناخ السياسي والاقتصادي هما المعوقان الاساسيان في تعزيز مفهوم ريادة الاعمال ونموها في لبنان. واختتمت الدراسة بمجموعة من التوصيات، اهمها إعادة صياغة السياسات الحكومية لدعم رواد الاعمال، وذلك بفتح مشاريع جديدة لهم، وتعزيز ادارة الجامعات للمناهج الدراسية من خلال ادخال مقررات جديدة تتعلق بريادة الاعمال وتبني برامج تدريبية تسهم في تعزيز السلوك الريادي.

الكلمات الدالة: الخيار المهني، الإدراك، ريادة الأعمال، الخصائص الريادية، العوامل لريادة الأعمال، الطلبة، الجامعات اللبنانية.

* كلية العلوم الاقتصادية وادارة الاعمال، الجامعة اللبنانية.

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