

## Assessment of Social confidence in Veteran Entrepreneurs in Zanjan Province in 2014

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### Abstract

**Background:** Social confidence is considered an important element in entrepreneurship.

**Objectives:** Given the importance of employment and entrepreneurship of veterans, the present research aimed to determine the status of social confidence in veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan Province.

**Methods:** In this survey, the statistical sample included all veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan Province with an entrepreneurship file in Zanjan Employment Department from November 2013 to January 2014. The required data were collected using a two part questionnaire including demographic characteristics and social confidence scale of Saffarnia. Social confidence scale of Saffarnia consists of 5 dimensions of trust-based behavior, cooperative tendencies, openness, honesty, and trust. Both questionnaires were filled out by the respondents in a self-reporting manner. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS-19.

**Results:** The mean age of respondents was  $38.7 \pm 8.5$ . The results showed that 95%, 65%, and 85% of respondents were male, had a high school diploma, and aged over 60, respectively. All respondents were living in urban areas, employed, and married. The mean score of total social confidence was  $86.05 \pm 5.81$  with a range of 74-99. Among the dimensions of social confidence, cooperative tendencies and honesty ranked first and last, respectively.

**Conclusion:** Although the findings of the present study showed that the level of social confidence in veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan Province is above the average, it seems that the development of entrepreneurial activities among this group of society needs more attention of officials to the provision of necessary conditions to promote social confidence.

**Key words:** *Entrepreneurship, Social confidence, Veterans*

### Introduction

Working is considered one of the important experiences of life that about one-third of our time every day is spent on. When working is satisfactory, healthy, and safe, it can lead to peace of mind, long life, and satisfaction and improves social relations [1]. Nowadays, employment is one of the main concerns of all communities. According to the latest statistics reported by the Statistical Center of Iran, the unemployment rate

in the fall of 2013 and 2015 was 10.4 and 11, respectively [2]. Many people believe that the development of entrepreneurial activities is the best solution to the problem of unemployment. Entrepreneurship is defined as an attempt to create new businesses or expand existing businesses by a group of people [3]. In other words, the process of innovation and exploitation of opportunities should be followed by effort and perseverance and taking financial, psychological,

and social risks with the motivation of achieving financial gain, satisfaction, and independence [4]. According to the operational definition of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), the rate of stable entrepreneurship (sustainable entrepreneurship) involves entrepreneurial activities of adults who are currently managing a business and personally own all or part of the business or firm with a history of more than 42 months. This rate in Iran was 9% in 2011, making for a rank of 13 among 67 countries [5].

Veterans are one of the social groups which have been taken into account in the laws of employment and entrepreneurship. Veteran refers to one who acts for the establishment and maintenance of the achievements of the Islamic Revolution, defending the honor of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the independence and territorial integrity of Iran, and dealing with threats and aggressions of internal and external enemies [6]. Although one chapter of the comprehensive law of servicing the veterans has been dedicated to employment and entrepreneurship and despite the emphasis on empowerment of veterans in the future perspective document of Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs [6], only 43 out of 10165 veterans covered in Zanjan Province are among the entrepreneurs. This is much less than the ratio declared by the GEM for entrepreneurs with a stable business in Iran.

Entrepreneurship is a socioeconomic process which depends on social conditions and context. Entrepreneurs are the products of their surrounding social environment and affect the nature of businesses through social connections based on the existence or non-existence of links [7]. Links and connections between members of a network, as a valuable resource, is called social capital, a new concept which is widely used in sociology, economics, and management [8]. Social capital leads to creativity, brainstorming, innovative behaviors, and risk-taking that are some of the components of entrepreneurship [9]. Social capital involves concepts such as unity, solidarity and trust among a group of the community [10]. Trust plays an important role in establishing and maintaining social order. Since trust allows people to easily communicate with

each other, it is considered one of the most important aspects of social capital [9]. Trust is the result of social interactions in groups, associations, and social activities that are considered a valuable capital if it is transferred from individual to social level [11]. Trust facilitates human growth and actualization of talents and abilities and underpins a creative and prosperous relationship between people and the world [12]. Without a sense of confidence in oneself, the future, and the world around, life will be intolerably anxious and struggling which may lead to individual disintegration and destruction [12]. Studies indicate declining social confidence in different strata of Iranian society [13]. The results of a study conducted in 2001 show that mistrust prevails relationships between people in Iranian society [9]. The results of a study in 2003 showed that the extent to which people trust in those who do not know (or generalized trust) is equal to 14.2% in Iran [14]. In a study in relation to the personality system in Iran, generalized trust was not at an acceptable level in any of the studied cities and the authors concluded that this potentially contributes to social isolation [15]. In another study conducted in Urmia, interpersonal social confidence was reported to be at an optimal level, while the generalized social confidence was at the average level or lower [10].

Several studies have been conducted on social confidence status in different community groups of Iranian population such as students of Zanjan university [12], veteran students studying in university [16], female students of Ilam university [17], students of Payam Noor University of Golpayegan [18], and citizens of Sabzevar [19]. However, few studies have been conducted on the status of social confidence among the Iranian veteran entrepreneurs. Since paying attention to the health of vulnerable social groups is one of the responsibilities of nurses [1] and considering the importance of social confidence and entrepreneurship as the two key components of community health and small share of the veteran population in entrepreneurial activity, it seems that nurses can play a major role in directing the veterans towards entrepreneurial activities and reducing social harms caused by unemployment. Therefore, the present research aims to determine

social confidence status in veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan Province.

**Methods**

The present study was a survey in which the statistical population included all veteran entrepreneurs in Zanjan Province (N=43) with an entrepreneurship file in Zanjan-Iran Employment Department from November to January 2014. Given the limited size of the population, all members of the population were selected as the sample based on complete enumeration method. The required data and information were collected using a two part questionnaire: Part one included demographic characteristics (age, gender, educational attainment, and type of veteran) and part two included social confidence scale of Saffarnia and Sharif (2010) [20]. Social confidence scale was a self-reporting pencil-paper questionnaire consisting of 25 items in 5 subscales of trust-based behavior, cooperative tendencies, openness, honesty, and trust. Every 5 items measure one of these subscales. In this scale, items are scored based on a 5-point Likert scale (5: Strongly agree, 4: Agree, 3: No comment, 2: Disagree, and 1: Strongly disagree). It is noteworthy that items 2, 14, 24, 23, 20, 18, 17, and 15 are scored inversely. Therefore, the minimum and maximum scores obtained from this questionnaire are 25 and 125, respectively [20, 21]. The content and face validity of this scale have been confirmed by its developers and also other researchers [16-18].

Saffarinia and Sharif (2014) reported that Cronbach’s alpha for the whole questionnaire and its subscales is equal to 0.95, 0.97, 0.97, 0.96, 0.96, and 0.96, respectively [21]. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to

determine the reliability of the questionnaire. According to the results, Cronbach’s alpha for the whole questionnaire was obtained 0.811 and for subscales of trust-based behavior, cooperative tendencies, openness, honesty, and trust was determined to be 0.89, 0.795, 0.814, 0.817, and 0.824, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that developed questionnaire was acceptably reliable and valid.

For distribution of questionnaires, the population members were contacted via telephone call and they were asked to select one of the ways for sending the questionnaire to them (via fax, email or in person) if they were willing to participate in the study. In addition, the respondents were assured that their information will be kept confidential. Distribution and collection of questionnaires lasted from November 2013 to January 2014. Questionnaires were filled out in a self-reporting manner and returned in three days. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. In inferential statistics, independent t-test was used to compare the mean values and the theoretical mean of Likert scale (score 3) . Moreover, the research variables were ranked (the significance of hypotheses) using Friedman test.

**Results**

A total of 43 questionnaires distributed, 40 were returned completed questionnaires completely. The results of this study based on 40 completed questionnaires are provided. The average age of participants were 38.7± 8.5 years. 95 percent of participants were male, 65 percent have high school diplomas and 85 percent were over 30 years old. All respondents were living in urban areas, employed, and married. (Table 1).

*Table 1: Demographics characteristics of veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan Province in 2013*

	Variable	frequency	percent
sex	male	38	95
	female	2	5
Age (year)	<30	7	17.5
	31-50	27	67.5
	>50	6	15
Education	Lower level of high school diploma	14	35
	High school diploma and Associate degree	10	25
	bachelor’s degree	13	32
	Master’s degree and PhD	3	7.5

Statistical test results on the distribution of central dispersion indices of social confidence and its subscales are summarized in Table 2. Based on the minimum and maximum attainable score (120-25), a mean±SD total score of social confidence was 86.5± 5.81 with the range of 74-

99. The observed mean of total social confidence in the range of one to five equivalent 3.44±0.43. Based on the results, cooperative tendencies had the highest mean and to be honest had the lowest mean among different subscales of social trust (Table 2).

**Table 2: Distribution of central tendency and variability indices of social confidence and its subscales among the veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan Province in 2013**

Social trust components	Rating 25-120		Rating 1-5	
	mean±Sd	range	Mode	mean±Sd
<b>Trust-based behavior</b>	18.60(2.54)	14-25	17	3.73(0.50)
<b>Cooperative tendency</b>	19.95(2.02)	12-22	21	3.99(0.40)
<b>Openness</b>	16.10(1.86)	13-22	15	3.22(0.37)
<b>Honesty</b>	15.57(2.11)	11-21	17	3.11(0.42)
<b>Confidence</b>	15.77(2.34)	11-21	14	3.15(0.46)
<b>Total</b>	86.05(5.81)	74-99	83	3.44(0.43)

According to Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality assumption for data on social confidence and its subscale was confirmed. One sample t-test results for comparing social confidence subscales theoretical mean of Likert scale (=3) and observed mean showed that the

level of social confidence in veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan province is above the average. Notably, the difference was statistically significant in all aspects of social confidence. (Table 3).

**Table 3: Comparison of theoretical and observed mean values of social confidence subscales of veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan Province in 2013**

Components of social trust	Theoretical Mean	Observed Mean (Sd)	P value*
<b>Trust-based behavior</b>	3	3.73(0.50)	0.0001
<b>Cooperative tendency</b>	3	3.99(0.40)	0.0001
<b>Openness</b>	3	3.22(0.37)	0.001
<b>Honesty</b>	3	3.11(0.42)	0.093
<b>Confidence</b>	3	3.15(0.46)	0.043

Also, Friedman test for ranking dimensions of social confidence from the perspective of veteran entrepreneurs showed these aspects have not

equal value. Based on this test results, cooperative tendencies ranked first and honesty ranked last. (Table 4).

**Table 4: Mean ranking of social confidence subscales from the perspective of the veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan Province in 2013**

Components of social trust	Mean of Ranks	Rank
<b>Cooperative tendency</b>	1	4.54
<b>Trust-based behavior</b>	2	3.76
<b>Openness</b>	3	2.38
<b>Confidence</b>	4	2.17
<b>Honesty</b>	5	2.15

## Discussion

The results suggest that social confidence of veteran entrepreneurs of Zanjan province are

above average. The results of the present study are consistent with results of Zahedi & et.al (2006) on the status of social confidence of Zanjanian

community [21] and Hyderabad (2011) on the situation of social confidence of 20-29 years old youth is Mazandaran province [22]. In this study, the mean of social confidence based on Likert rating was  $3.44 \pm 0.43$ . In Heydarabadi study the mean of generalized social confidence representing face to face or interpersonal trust was reported  $3.42 \pm 1.79$  that means higher than average [22].

However, results of this study with the results of Ghadimi (2007) [12] and Vosoughi & et al (2013) [17] did not match. In Ghadimi's research study sample consisted of National, Azad-Islamic and Payam Nour universities of Zanzan. Social confidence in the Ghadimi study reported lower than average [12]. The study sample of Vosoughi was female students of Ialam University which social confidence was estimated lower than average [17] It seems that the difference between the two mentioned studies arose from the diverse nature of the communities studied. Results of Ghadimi study showed that social confidence in those under 35 years old, male, married, employed and living in rural areas and housing were more. In both studies, the majority of students surveyed were single, lack of housing, jobs, were living in urban areas, and the sex distribution were similar. In this study, 95% of those surveyed were male, over 30, married, with housing and employment, and over 30 years. Therefore, we can say that different results may be due to inherent differences related populations.

In this study, the relationship between age, gender and education with social confidence was not significant. In Zahedi (2006) and Hyderabad (2011) studies no significant relationship between age and gender and social confidence has been observed [21,22]. But in both studies [21,22] and the study of Ghadimi (2007) [12] direct and positive relationship between social confidence and level of education have been reported. The observed difference is likely due to the low number of postgraduate and higher in this study.

In the current study, Friedman test for ranking the importance of social confidence from the perspective of veteran entrepreneurs showed that these components are not of equal importance. In this study the most important components were cooperative tendencies, behavior based on trust,

openness, confidence and honesty. In Kavooosi & et al (2009) study Friedman test was used for ranking social trust components from the view point of scarifying students of National and Azad-Islamic Universities of Iran [16]. Based on Kavooosi & et al study results, scarifying students of public universities explicitness, optimism and altruism were respectively ranked first, second and third where as scarifying students of Azad Isalmic University ranked altruism, democratic sence and sharing respectively [16]. Three first ranked of social components from the view point of veteram entrepreneurs were cooperation, trust-based behavior and openness respectively. The observed difference is likely due to differences in the instruments used in the studies. The instrument for measurement of social trust in Kavooosi study was derived from the self-made model consisting of 39 items. It seems to veteran entrepreneurs elements of cooperation, trust-based behavior and openness in the creation of social confidence outweighs the universities scaryfing students.

It should be noted this study had imitations. The limited number of veteran entrepreneurs which records were entrepreneurs in the Zanzan province was one of the limitations of this study. Also in this study, we used the Dr. Saffarinia tool which is used purely social confidence based on five main components. Therefore, it is suggested that the role of social confidence and its different components in entrepreneurship entrepreneurial veterans investigate in a case-control study.

Although the findings of the present study showed that the level of social confidence in veteran entrepreneurs of Zanzan Province is above the average, it seems that that the development of entrepreneurial activities among this group of society need more attention of officials to the provision of necessary conditions to promote social confidence.

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