



**Original Article**

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## Phenomenological Analysis of the Experiences of Successful Industrial Entrepreneurs in Iran

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**ABSTRACT:** Profiting from the entrepreneurial experiences of successful entrepreneurs can play a pivotal role in entrepreneurial activities as the driving force of economic development. Therefore, this study seeks to phenomenological analyze the experiences of successful industrial entrepreneurs in Iran. The participants of the present study were 20 Iranian entrepreneurs in the industrial sector. In the present study, for data collection, semi-structured interviews were held with the research participants. The findings indicate that the entrepreneurial experiences of successful Iranian entrepreneurs in the industrial sector can be categorized in the form of educational experiences consisting of "organizational, familial and spiritual factors", scientific experiences consisting of "psychological, educational, and research and development factors," cultural experiences including "cultural factors, revolutionary thinking, justice, and communication factors," and economic experiences consisting of "entrepreneurial literacy, business factors, and economic literacy. "

**KEYWORDS:** Phenomenological, Experiences of Successful, Industrial Entrepreneurs

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship researchers share the view that focusing on the lived experience of past entrepreneurs will strengthen current entrepreneurship (Berg, 2016). Entrepreneurship is not just a science, but a special way and art of living, and choosing for it can improve the quality of life. In recent years, this way of living has been of increasing interest to various countries, including Iran, and with the growth of entrepreneurial businesses, the study of entrepreneurial experiences in the world economy and Iran has been an increasing trend. On the other hand, the course of economic development in developed countries indicates the pivotal role of entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurs in the economic development of developed countries, while underdeveloped countries have ignored its importance for economic development (Lex, Gielnik, Spitzmuller, Jacob, & Frese, 2020).

Studies have shown that experienced entrepreneurs have better cognitive capacities and a richer mental framework than novice entrepreneurs who are more prone to blind spots when thinking and performing entrepreneurial tasks (Baron and Ansley, 2006). For instance, novice entrepreneurs seek active confrontation (i.e. dealing directly with a stressful investment-related situation) and do not accept avoiding confrontation (i.e. temporarily distancing themselves from a stressful investment-related situation), while experienced entrepreneurs tend to use both types of interactions effectively (Cardon, Grégoire, Stevens, & Patel, 2013). Studying the lived experiences of successful entrepreneurs is not an easy task so that some researchers talk about the difference between entrepreneurial roles and entrepreneurial experience. Recently, Kollmann, Stöckmann, and Kensbock (2019) proposed the 'advantages of role identity advantage' as an alternative explanation for how previous entrepreneurial experience benefits entrepreneurs. They argue that the interpretation of entrepreneurial roles seems to be different from the entrepreneurial experience (ibid.). This view is also consistent with the research of Murnieks, Mosakowski, and Cardon (2012). They showed that the advantages of previous entrepreneurial experience can be manifested through the way the identities of entrepreneurs are interpreted and implemented. Identity is the role of a key element in the mental framework of entrepreneurs and is related to how their knowledge is organized (Corbett & Hmieleski, 2007). On the other hand, the studies of the lived experiences of entrepreneurs indicate several roles that they take on, and these roles can be divided into two general categories of inventor and merchant. The role of the inventor refers to the novelty of a product or service, while the role of the merchant is focused on its commercial capabilities (i.e. do people buy it or not?) (Mollick, 2016). With this description, it can be said that in Iran, there is apparently no record of oral history, especially in the area of industry in Iran until after the revolution, and only after the revolution, conditions were provided enabling the scientific collection of interviews. It is important to note that without these conditions, the scientific collection of the interviews would not have been possible. The same was true of some other projects of oral history, such as the Russian oral history at Harvard University. The need to collect the oral history was due to the lack of historical documentation in Iran, especially for historical analyses that largely went back to Iran's closed political system. Studies of Iranian research indicate the absence of the mentioned accuracy in study of the lived experience of successful entrepreneurs and it seems that conducting research that reveals the drivers of the success of the industrial entrepreneurs with a phenomenological approach is of great importance and necessity for Iranian entrepreneurs and managers. Also the importance of this research becomes apparent when the entrepreneurial path is seen as starting a journey, since the entrepreneurial journey is full of challenging and instructive experiences and lessons, and if paid attention to, it will improve existing businesses and boost production (Stevenson & Josefy, 2019). In other words, entrepreneurship and the formation of new ideas and their transformation into new values in the field of business require inducement, inspiration, creativity, reinvention, complex and intensive changes in the learning process, and most beautifully, a journey to the unknown (Jeffrey and Baron, 2000) which can be derived from the lived experiences of successful Iranian entrepreneurs. Hence, this study, adopting a phenomenological analysis of the experiences of successful entrepreneurs in the industrial sector of Iran, seeks to find out how the top Iranian entrepreneurs in the field of industry describe their entrepreneurial experiences.



## **2. RESEARCH LITERATURE**

In entrepreneurship studies, the issue of lived experiences of entrepreneurs is of high importance. Various scholars throughout history have taken different approaches to entrepreneurship. The reason for this is the multifaceted nature of the subject under study and its close relationship with various areas of human sciences (Farahani, Jafari, & Sa-adat, 2020). Numerous researches are available on the path of the recording the experiences of successful entrepreneurs. For example, Saeedi (2015) in his book "Technocracy and Economic Policy in Iran in the Accounts of Reza Niazmand," he reviews the history of the foundation of important industries such as Isfahan Steel, Arak Aluminum, Sarcheshmeh Copper, Ghaemshahr Textile, and Tabriz Tractor Manufacturing, and examines the formation of technocracy in Iran between 1962 and 1969 (Saeedi, 1394). In a similar study, Sepahvand et al. (2016) reviewed the entrepreneurial successful and unsuccessful experiences in the research of the agricultural students at Bu Ali Sina University. It was a qualitative research conducted by in-depth interviews. The results of interviews with the subjects showed that factors such as high risk, support of family and relatives in all stages of work, high self-confidence, perseverance, and hard work were the reasons for success, while factors including lack of organizational support, the problem of identifying the sales market, the problem in consumer culture, lack of experience, lack of know-how and professional knowledge, and lack of trust in producers were identified as the causes of failure of the understudy subjects. Lee and Wang (2021) also, in a research in line with the research topic, referring to entrepreneurship as a journey addressed unsuccessful entrepreneurial experiences (UEEs). Relying on the behavioral decision theories, they argued that unsuccessful entrepreneurial experiences can increase entrepreneur's frustration with success and cause incurring higher risk tolerance, which in turn may result in inefficiencies and crises in manufacturing of product and subsequent investment. Truc and Sisilia (2019) maintain that the experiences of successful entrepreneurs have not only largely contributed to a country's economy, but have also brought many changes to people's lifestyles. In their study of Indonesian students, they concluded that creativity from entrepreneurial experiences strongly influences students in pursuing entrepreneurial activities and contributes to entrepreneurial intentions. They showed that students who took the entrepreneurship course and were influenced by the experiences of successful entrepreneurs were more likely to start a new investment.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The method used in this research is Husserlian descriptive phenomenology with a qualitative approach. Phenomenology is the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness. Central to this philosophy is that in every experience, there is a truth. Two main concepts underlying phenomenology are the 'return to Husserl's object' and 'perceived comprehension' with an emphasis on aboutness (or sympathetic observation) (Budlaei, 2016). The participants of the present study included a number of Iranian entrepreneurs. According to Creswell's (1998) research design in this study, 20 participants were selected for interview, and after interview with approximately 15 people, we reached theoretical saturation. Thus, In the present study, the required data were collected using semi-structured interviews with research participants. Credibility and trustability criteria were used for the research validation. For credibility analysis, in data collection, it was made use of multiple sources based on alignment method. The collected data were subsequently subjected to content analysis. In this process, the obtained data from the interview were ordered in a table as initial codes and then were analyzed.

In the first stage, the recurrent data containing important and key themes were selected as basic themes based on similarities during the continuous comparison process. Next, in the second stage, the basic themes were divided into more general and abstract categories based on the similarities during the continuous comparison process, and in doing so, the first organizing themes were formed. In the third stage, the model design was conducted using exploratory method. That is, that group of the second organizing themes that were put next to each other based on the similarity of the concept were placed at the level of second organizing themes as much as possible and the rest of the themes that did not have thematic similarity remained at the level of the first organizer (Creswell, 2019). Au and Yew (2021) in a study analyzed the job reports of the top 18 social entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Their findings provide a delicate perspective on



the career success framework and explain career success for social entrepreneurs as a multifaceted concept of personal and social objectives. The findings of this study indicate how the four broad dimensions of the career success framework (material concerns, social relationships, learning and pursuing one's projects) are experienced and understood in social entrepreneurship.

#### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The creation of initial codes began when the researcher studied the data and became familiar with them. Also, an initial list of the ideas present in the data and their interesting points was prepared from which the initial codes were derived. In the table below, it is shown how the coding was conducted based on the instances in the obtained data set.

**Table 1.** Generating the initial codes

Row	Instances	Initial codes
1	One of my activities, in addition to management of Behkesht Company, was working as secretary beside Mehdi Bushehry, the husband of Ashraf Pahlavi.	Relationship with high ranking officials and politicians
2	At the time, my cousin was one of the officials of Water & Electricity Organization, who made preparations for transfer to the position of financial manager and controller of Planning Organization in Sefidrood Dam.	Profiting from relationship with officials
3	Four years working as financial manager and controller in Water & Electricity Organization were among the golden periods of my life in the field of public management.	Skill learning
4	When I was commissioned as controller of development projects to Khorasan province, I made a deal with the subcontractors that if they finish the work on time, they will receive their check in half an hour.	Risk taking
5	After retirement from the Education, I dedicated all my salary to orphans and homeless children.	Social responsibility
6	One of my relatives, who had a scholarship in the United States and was an intern at Kraft Food Industries, suggested that I start a sauce production factory, which I accepted after some research and resolving doubts.	Consultability
7	Every production job has its problems, but I never lost hope.	Hope
8	I went to the Execution Square and bought twenty or forty kilogram metal vessels and brought them by three-wheeler, while sitting next to the driver.	Perseverance
9	In the beginning, I poured the grease into small containers and sold them to road construction companies.	Starting in small volume



10	The first principle in Iran Grease Company was paying attention to the continuation in good quality of the products.	Focus on quality
11	We had a meeting with the CEO of the German company Magrus in Karaj, the result of which was the purchase of our engine oil.	Relationship with reputable foreign companies
12	In times of crisis, I am calm and look for a solution.	Crisis management
13	I believe we should not be afraid of hardship, but we should fight it and use it as an exceptional situation in our favor and transform the threat into opportunity.	Hope (positivity) - turning threat into opportunity
14	I did not fare well. My wife talked to me a lot. When I was alone with myself, I saw that in this situation, this could be the best idea for income generation, because I needed capital and facilities to start anything.	Hope (positivity) - good spouse
15	In the factory, I formed the research center unit.	Importance of research & development

The next step started when all the data had been collected and received initial coding and a long list of different codes in the data set was identified. In this step, which focused on analysis on a larger scale than codes, different codes were sorted into themes, and all the coded data related to each of the themes were identified and collected. In other words, at this stage, the categorization basic and organizing themes were introduced in the following tables. Based on the findings, the entrepreneurial experiences of the top Iranian industrial entrepreneurs are identified and put into four main categories of educational experiences, scientific experiences, cultural experiences and economic experiences, as presented in the following table.

**Table 2.** Secondary coding and the extracted main categories and themes

<b>Educational experiences</b>	Organizational factors	Relationship with great people
		Profiting from organizational capacity
		Teamwork and consult ability
	Family factors	Religious beliefs
		Family-owned enterprise
		Spirit of working in family - Father's care and attention for work
		Working in childhood
		Hope - Good wife/husband
		Family cooperation with big companies



		turning threat into opportunity
	Spiritual factors	Attention to temptations - religious beliefs
		Religious & revolutionary thought
		Cooperation of the clergy - relationship with great people
		Trustful, perseverant, rational - development-oriented mindset
		Honesty & justice
		Religious beliefs
		Belief in God's grace and help
<b>Scientific experiences</b>	Psychological factors	Risk taking
		Perseverance
		Risk taking - Courage
		Emotional connection with workers
		Authority - Honesty - The power to get employees accompanied
		Effort and endurance - Hope
		Avoiding overconfidence
		Sense of belonging in employees and employee loyalty
		Honesty & perseverance
		Interest in work and production
		Hope
		Sense of self-fulfillment
		Self-confidence
		Trust building
		Consultability
Creating sense of belonging in employees		



	Educational factors	Management training
		Management experience
		Importance of foreign language
		Scientific work
		Learning from experiences
		Consult ability
		Teamwork
		Crisis management
		Homeland love
		Attention to scientific work - Up-to-datedness
		Skill learning
	Research & Development	Importance of research & development
		Science commercialization
		Importance of wealth generation next to science
Use of management science and new technology		
<b>Cultural experiences</b>	Cultural factors	Importance of cultural issues
		Cultural view to production
		Avoiding pure materialism
		Social responsibility
		Effect of economy on culture building
		Self-sufficiency
		Development-oriented mindset
	Revolutionary mindset	Self-belief - local adaptation
		Political & revolutionary thoughts
		Belief in self-sufficiency - self-belief
Social responsibility		



		Use of domestic abilities, local adaptation, non-dependence
		Crisis management
		Hope, fighting spirit
		Courage
		Using opportunity
		Government policies in support of domestic production
	Justice seeking	Attention to welfare of workers - Fair view
		Human view to workers
		Sabotage of officials
		Irresponsibility of officials - social responsibility
		Lack of trust in Iranian universities
	Communicational factors	Communication with reputable foreign companies
		Communication with university
		Investment in advertising
		Respect for employees
		Attention to employee morale
		Use of slogan - Emotional connection with customers
		Anthropology
		Asking support of government & populace





		Customer orientation
		Producer's zeal for product
		Consumer's support of product
		Relationship with officials and politicians
		Emotional connection with vendors
		Relationship with institutions & organizations
<b>Economic experiences</b>	Enterprneurial literacy	Social responsibility
		Risk taking
		Effort
		Transfer of scientific experiences
		Professionalism (specialization)
		Hope - turning threat into opportunity
		Risk taking - Wise move
		Quality
		Responsibility, accepting mistakes
		Teamwork
	Quality control	
	Starting in small volume	
	Commercial factors	Attention to export



		Avoiding self-interest
		Attention to quality and product promotion
		Investment in technology transfer
		Relationship with large foreign companies
		Available raw material
		Domestic supply chain
		Market making
		Product diversity
		Export orientation
		Crisis management
	Economic literacy	Supply chain completion
		Thinking on macro-economiv scale
		Social responsibility
		Resolving legal constraints
		Standardization and quality
		Standard production
		Practical advertising (test)
		Thinking in line with globalization



#### **4.1. Organizational factors**

One of the aspects found in this study in the lived experience of top Iranian entrepreneurs is the focus on organizational factors. This category is supported by concepts such as communication with great men, use of organizational capacity and teamwork, and consultation. In fact, entrepreneurship will be achieved through purposeful and organizational communication with experts and great men in the area of entrepreneurship. "Ayatollah Taleghani asked me to do more research in this field Ayatollah Taleghani helped a lot in founding Airfo," said one participant. On the other hand, there seems to be a close relationship between entrepreneurship and consultability. "One of my relatives, who had a scholarship in the United States and was an intern at Kraft Food Industries, offered me to start a sauce factory," he said in an interview. "I accepted after researching and resolving my doubts."

#### **4.2. Family factors**

Among the factors discovered in the interviews are the so-called family factors. From this perspective, the entrepreneurial spirit and family culture will begin. On this path, concepts such as "family business, family work spirit, father's attention to work, work experience in childhood, hope, a good spouse, family cooperation with large companies and turning threats into opportunities" are significant. According to this study, unless the spirit of working at home is taken seriously, the output of that family will not be entrepreneurial human. One of the interviewees says in this regard: "my father encouraged me to work in summers and sometimes he gave money to masters to pay it to me as salary in order for them to allow me to get acquainted with their work for a while." Another key concept in this section is the hope of the family, especially the spouse in the entrepreneurial path: "I did not fare well. My wife talked to me a lot. When I was alone with myself, I saw that in this situation, this could be the best idea to generate income, because I needed capital and facilities in order to start anything." In fact, the family with an entrepreneurial spirit will be able to turn any threat into an opportunity. "During the war, I produced brake fluid for the first time in Iran and named it after my sons so that they would be interested in production and work to improve the products that bore their names," said one interviewee. Thus, the family in the words of this entrepreneur, could cleverly create a sense of belonging and a kind of loyalty in the children of the family in order to pursue its development in later years as adults.

#### **4.3. Spiritual factors**

The category of spirituality is a common category in the entrepreneurial culture of successful people. In this study, findings such as "attention to temptations, religious beliefs, religious and revolutionary thinking, cooperation of the clergy, communication with great men, trustworthiness, hardworking, being rational, thinking, honesty and justice, religious beliefs and belief in God's grace and help" are among the main spiritual factors affecting entrepreneurship. The issue of trust through the ups and downs of entrepreneurship is one of the spiritual factors frequently referred to by the research participants: "A successful person must have trust (in God), be perseverant and rational and should catch up with advanced sciences in the path towards prosperity." Trust in God, was present as an umbrella on the entrepreneurial process of the participants on which one can contemplate regardless of the technical and professional competencies of an entrepreneur: "I had no money in my account." But he went to the bank and the money was received. This approach reflects a kind of belief based on religion in the entrepreneur which is present in all stages of entrepreneurship: "I had a strong belief in Quranic divination, but I do not touch the Quran before the necessary studies." These beliefs are especially evident in the failures and misfortunes of the entrepreneur: "After the company's crisis, I had to pay the shareholders' money. I went to Mashhad. I said in the shrine, I did this for the sake of God." Another important point is that among the research participants, religious beliefs are not superstitions and metaphysical issues, but, on the contrary, are a matter of objective, rational and diligent thinking and behaving: "a successful person should have trust in God, be perseverant and rational, and move in the path of development and prosperity, while keeping pace with advanced sciences."



#### **4.4. Psychological factors**

As the schools of human relations in management and entrepreneurship have already emphasized, psychological factors and attention to the psychological aspects of the entrepreneurial human being are an integral part of successful management and entrepreneurship. Everywhere in the words of top Iranian entrepreneurs there is evidence of their focus on psychological factors, including risk-taking, perseverance, courage, emotional connection with workers, authority, honesty, power to get employees accompanied, effort and perseverance, hope, avoiding overconfidence, sense of belonging in employees, employee loyalty, honesty and diligence, interest in work and production, hope, sense of self-fulfillment, self-confidence, trust building, consultability and creating a sense of belonging in employees. Emotional connection with workers and subordinate employees are significant factors that have played a significant role in the success of the research participants: "I liked the workers as my own family and never considered myself different from them. It was my disposition from childhood." This psychological care will encourage the employee to accompany you in the matters ahead: "When I went for revival of Karoun Agro-Industry Company, being commissioned with full authority, I went to a speech for twelve thousand people: "I came to close down or reopen this place. "If you stop the strike, we together resume our operation, otherwise the duty is clear." "All the workers declared that they will put aside the strike and cooperate."

#### **4.5. Educational factors**

This study showed that education has been one of the pillars of success of Iranian entrepreneurs. This category can be explained in terms of "management training, management experience, the importance of foreign language, scientific work, learning from experiences, counseling, teamwork, crisis management, homeland love, attention to scientific work, up-to-dateness and skills training." In fact, an entrepreneurial system from the participants' point of view requires that the inhabitants of the system be armed with scientific work and up-to-dateness based on effective training: "In building each production unit, we and the company's experts tried to work in a modern way." In their view, the transfer of experience will take place as a form of training in the entrepreneurial system: "I did not attach much importance to financial issues and I preferred to share my scientific experiences with students." The entrepreneur also needs serious training in relation to his basic needs on the entrepreneurial path. For example, carpentry relations with specific countries made the understudy entrepreneurs give importance to language learning: "I knew English and French." On the other hand, system managers need effective and continuous training in order to achieve the intended goals: "We held training courses to increase the skills of managers."

#### **4.6. Research and development**

Today, research and development is one of the pillars of entrepreneurship. This category also had a significant share in this research. "The importance of research and development, commercialization of science, the importance of wealth creation next to science and the use of management science and new technology" are among the key concepts that support the importance of research and development. Realizing this, one of the entrepreneurs has set up a separate unit for this specific purpose: "I set up a research center unit in the factory. The unit sought to use new technologies and management styles to advance entrepreneurial goals." "The use of new management methods and the use of new technology in business plans is the most important factor in a company's progress."

#### **4.7. Cultural factors**

Entrepreneurship culture was one of the topics that was implicitly present in the interviews of this research. Participants mentioned several aspects under this category, such as "the importance of cultural issues, cultural view on production, avoidance of mere materialism, social responsibility, the impact of the economy on culture, self-sufficiency and development-oriented thinking." One of the highlights of the interviews was the primacy of culture over economics and business in the eyes of entrepreneurs: "He looked at everything commercially, but I could not ignore my cultural and social views on production." From this perspective, the entrepreneur is actually a cultural figure and a teacher before being a tradesmen or



industrialist: "I, before being an industrialist, was and will be a teacher." This view will prevent the entrepreneur from being subjugated by consumption capitalist system by considering production and product as a cultural element and not allowing all kinds of exchange with any product and will figure out a cultural trade: "when foreign commodities come to our markets and thrive, they also bring the culture and attitudes of foreigners into our country which dominate our culture over time, and for this we must be accountable to future generations."

#### **4.8. Revolutionary thinking**

Among the points of interest in the interviews was a special idea called "revolutionary thinking" which showed the attachment of entrepreneurs to and their influence on the Iranian revolution. Concepts such as "self-belief, local adaptation, revolutionary political thinking, belief in self-sufficiency, self-belief, social responsibility, use of domestic abilities, independence, crisis management, hope, fighting spirit, courage, using opportunities, and government policies in support of domestic production are the aspects found in support of this category. The political thinking resulting from the Islamic Revolution shaped the goals for local adaptation and self-sufficiency in Iranian entrepreneurs: "in the wake of the Islamic revolution in 1979, when many capitalists and factory owners left the county, I didn't think about this even for moment, because under any condition and under the rule of any government, I think of Iran's pride and its industrial development, without being fascinated by the soil of any country." They used revolutionary thinking to mobilize the facilities and people's talents and valued work and production as high as serving God: "When the revolution took place, all my attention was focused on the development of the country and government service." "I quit my managerial job at Airfo because I thought Mecca of all the manufacturing units of the country was like Airfo."

#### **4.9. Justice seeking**

This study showed that following revolutionary thinking as the driving force of entrepreneurial thinking, the category of seeking justice laid the basis of many entrepreneurial decisions. Attention to workers' welfare, fair view, humane view of workers, sabotage of officials, irresponsibility of officials, social responsibility, and lack of trust in Iranian universities were issues that played a role in the revolutionary entrepreneurs' vision of justice. One of the serious issues that strengthened the justice-seeking spirit of the entrepreneurs was the presence of some officials and unnecessary and cumbersome administrative formalities: "I started rearing fish, but after the visit of the officials, the work got into trouble." The negligence of the saboteur officials made the entrepreneur decide to do something himself from a justice-seeking perspective: "I wrote more than ten thousand pages about the problems of the villagers and employment, but the authorities did not pay attention and I decided to do something myself." This distrust caused entrepreneurs to think about meeting the basic needs of their employees instead of the government and the rulers: "Ninety percent of Mahram employees became homeowners and did not worry about housing."

#### **4.10. Communication factors**

Among the factors discovered in this research are communication factors. The issue of communication has been doubly important for Iranian entrepreneurs. Instances such as "communication with reputable foreign companies, communication with the university, investing in advertising, respect for employees, paying attention to employee morale, using slogans, emotional connection with customers, anthropology, seeking support of government and People, customer orientation, producer's ziel for the product, consumer support for production, communication with officials and politicians, emotional connection with vendors, and relationship with institutions and organizations" supported the role of communication in entrepreneurship. Iranian entrepreneurs sought the kind of communication between producers, people, and the government in order to maximize support for domestic production: "The government and the people must support producers." On this path, the producer needs to give an identify to his product in order to strengthen the mentioned connections: "Manufacturers must know their product as their identity". The Iranian



entrepreneurs in these interviews showed that they have studied the type of the Iranian customer anthropologically in order to form genuine connections: "Iranians care a lot about the quality and brand of the product when buying a product." This communication did not end only inland and also included international communication: "I met with the CEO of the German company Magross in Karaj, which resulted in the purchase of our engine oil."

#### **4.11. Entrepreneurial literacy**

The study showed that successful entrepreneurship among Iranian entrepreneurs required entrepreneurial literacy. Entrepreneurial literacy includes the following aspects: "Social responsibility, risk-taking, effort, transfer of scientific experience, professionalism, hope, turning threat into opportunity, risk-taking, deliberate and wise movement, quality, responsibility and accepting mistakes." For the research participants, entrepreneurial literacy has the potential to turn a threat into an opportunity, without considering entrepreneurial success a result of chance and accident, but as something that requires effort and perseverance based on a certain logic: "I think luck has no place in success has and I know the secret of success in honesty, resilience, perseverance, creativity and risk-taking." In their view, entrepreneurial literacy provides an understanding of how to make the best use of expertise: "At this time, we set up a well-equipped laboratory at the Mahram factory so that educated and specialized people could do research work so that the factory could expand its products in the future."

#### **4.12. Commercial factors**

One of the most important categories extracted from this research is the category of commercial factors. For Iranian entrepreneurs, paying attention to commercial factors will bring special success to the entrepreneurship system. "Attention to exports, avoiding self-gain, attention to product quality and promotion, investment in technology transfer, relationship with large foreign companies, available raw materials, domestic supply chain, marketing, product diversity, export orientation, and crisis management" are found as the drivers of commercial success in this study. Accurate understanding of commercial factors among these entrepreneurs made their products well received in the area of export: "We also export our products to Canada and Europe. And our products were well received in Sweden and the Arab world." Participants did not limit commercial factors to the export and import of goods, but also technology transfer and paid a certain cost for it: "We paid money and invited a German company to come and provide us with technical knowledge." In the meantime, professional decisions in the field of business are quite obvious. For example, one entrepreneur gave the priority to production success over personal gain, and speaks of a different view of business habits: They combined the focus on not importing and strengthening production with a precise understanding of commercial factors in connection with cultural factors, and perhaps this approach can be considered one of their success factors: "We were able to launch a spray can manufacturing unit with the best quality so that we would not have to import."

#### **4.13. Economic literacy**

Economic literacy is one of the categories that emerged in this research. The understudy entrepreneurs implicitly referred to another type of literacy that is supported by the following features: "Supply chain completion, thinking on macroeconomic scale, social responsibility, resolving legal constraints, standardization and quality, standard production, advertising, practice (testing), and globalization mindset." One of the aspects of economic literacy was the compliance of Iranian entrepreneurs with the requirements of the global economy and acquiring its conditions. In other words, if the entrepreneur does not grasp the requirements of the world economic and commercial standards, there will be no success in entrepreneurship: "Most of our companies have succeeded in obtaining ISO 9002 and ISO TS certifications." The same literacy will cause the Iranian entrepreneurs operating in the national territory to focus their outlook on international activities and expand the scope of their economic activity: "Our plan and vision was globalization." It seems that the same economic literacy of the studied entrepreneurs led to



a proper understanding of local production and the need to strengthen the supply chain to reduce dependence on the outside: "We supplied the raw materials for the production of grease from the Abadan oil refinery."

## **5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was a phenomenological analysis of the experiences of successful entrepreneurs in the industrial sector in Iran. The findings from the interviews with entrepreneurs showed that their entrepreneurial experiences can be categorized into educational experiences, scientific experiences, cultural experiences, and economic experiences. Educational experiences include organizational factors, family factors, spiritual factors, psychological factors, education, research and development, and cultural factors. Successful Iranian entrepreneurs in their organizational path have taken actions such as communication with elders, using organizational capacity, teamwork, and consultability, and support. On the other hand, the family as the center of entrepreneurial activities moves towards programs such as "family business, family work spirit, father's attention to work, childhood work, hope, a good spouse, family cooperation with large companies, and turning threats into opportunities." Focusing on spiritual factors had a special place among the interviewed entrepreneurs. Recommendations for successful entrepreneurs in this field include "Paying attention to temptations, religious beliefs, religious and revolutionary thinking, clergy cooperation, consultation with elders, trust, hardworking, rational thinking, honesty and justice, religious beliefs and belief in God's grace and help."

Scientific experiences include concepts such as psychological factors, education, research and development. Psychological factors include concepts such as "risk-taking, perseverance, courage, emotional connection with workers, authority, honesty, power to get employees accompanied, effort and perseverance, hope, overconfidence, sense of belonging in employees, employee loyalty, honesty and perseverance, interest in work and production, hope, sense of self-fulfillment, self-confidence, trust building, consultability and creating a sense of belonging in employees." And by educational factors in successful entrepreneurs, such aspects as "management training, management experience, importance of foreign language, scientific work, lessons from experiences, counseling, teamwork, crisis management, localism, attention to scientific work, up-to-dateness, and skill training" are meant. "The importance of research and development, commercialization of science, the importance of wealth creation next to science and the use of management science and new technology" are among the key concepts that support the role of the factors related to research and development.

For successful Iranian entrepreneurs in the industrial sector, factors such as "cultural factors, revolutionary thinking, justice, and communication factors" have shaped cultural experiences. Finally, the economic experiences of successful Iranian entrepreneurs consisted of factors such as "entrepreneurial literacy, business factors, and economic literacy." Under the category of cultural factors, we find concepts such as "importance of cultural issues, cultural view on production, avoiding mere materialism, social responsibility, the impact of economics on culture-building, self-sufficiency and development thinking" and the concepts extracted under the category of revolutionary thinking include "self-belief, localization, revolutionary political thinking, belief in self-sufficiency, self-confidence, social responsibility, the use of domestic abilities, local adaptation, independence, crisis management, hope, fighting spirit, courage, using opportunity, and government policies to support domestic production." The understudy participants in the justice category referred to concepts such as "attention to workers' welfare, fair view, humane view of workers, sabotage of officials, and irresponsibility of officials, social responsibility, and lack of trust in Iranian universities." And the Communicational factors emphasized by the top Iranian entrepreneurs in the industrial sector included such dimensions as "communication with reputable foreign companies, communication with the university, investment in advertising, respect for employees, paying attention to employee morale, using slogans, emotional connection with customers. anthropology, government and people support, customer orientation, producer's zeal for products, consumer support for production, communication with officials and politicians, emotional connection with vendors, and communication with institutions and organizations.



In the field of economic experiences, the first concept mentioned was the concept of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial literacy requires focusing on such aspects as "social responsibility, risk-taking, effort, transfer of scientific experience, specialization, hope, threat-opportunity transformation, risk-taking, deliberate (wise) move, quality, responsibility and acceptance of error." The commercial factors emphasized by the successful entrepreneurs included such instances as "attention to exports, avoiding mere self-gain, attention to quality and product promotion, investment in technology transfer, communication with large foreign companies, available raw materials, domestic supply chain, Market making, product diversity, export orientation, and crisis management." Finally, from the perspective of the research participants, economic literacy required "supply chain completion, thinking on macroeconomic scale, social responsibility, resolving legal constraints, standardization and quality, standard production, practical advertising (testing), and global thinking.





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#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Author/s confirmed no conflict of interest.