



CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES
DE TRABAJO SOCIAL

ISSN 2244-808X
DL pp 201002Z43506

PERSPECTIVA ACCIÓN Y

Revista de Trabajo Social

Vol. 15 No. 2

Abril - Junio

2025

Universidad del Zulia

Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Políticas
Centro de Investigaciones en Trabajo Social

INTERACCIÓN Y PERSPECTIVA

Revista de Trabajo Social

ISSN 2244-808X ~ Dep. Legal pp 201002Z43506

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15079968>

Vol. 15 (2): 421 - 430 pp, 2025

ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

El papel mediador de las habilidades comunicativas en la relación entre el emprendimiento multidimensional y las habilidades personales

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Resumen. Las habilidades de comunicación son factores cruciales e influyentes que impactan muchos problemas personales y sociales. Hoy en día, en varios países se enfatiza la mejora de estas habilidades entre individuos y empleados. El artículo tiene como objetivo mostrar el papel mediador de las habilidades comunicativas en la relación entre el emprendimiento multidimensional y las habilidades personales entre empleados de instituciones gubernamentales y públicas. Para ello, se utilizó un método de muestreo por conglomerados y se recopilaron 360 cuestionarios de empleados que trabajan en una organización gubernamental. Luego de evaluar la validez y confiabilidad del instrumento, se realizó un análisis de mediación. Los resultados indicaron una relación significativa entre las habilidades de comunicación, el emprendimiento multidimensional y las habilidades personales. El análisis de la mediación también reveló que las habilidades de comunicación median significativamente la relación entre las dimensiones de creatividad, confianza y resolución de problemas.

Palabras clave: habilidades comunicativas, emprendimiento multidimensional, habilidades personales, análisis de mediación, creatividad.

The mediating role of communication skills in the relationship between multidimensional entrepreneurship and personal skills

Abstract. Communication skills are crucial and influential factors that impact many personal and social issues. Today, in several countries, the improvement of these skills among individuals and employees is emphasized. The article aims to show the mediating role of communication skills in the relationship between multidimensional entrepreneurship and personal skills between employees of government and public institutions. To do this, a cluster sampling method was used and 360 questionnaires were collected from employees working in a government organization. After evaluating the validity and reliability of the instrument, a mediation analysis was performed. The results indicated a significant relationship between communication skills, multidimensional entrepreneurship and personal skills. The mediation analysis also revealed that communication skills significantly mediate the relationship between the dimensions of creativity, confidence, and problem-solving.

Keywords: communication skills, multidimensional entrepreneurship, personal skills, mediation analysis, creativity.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has evolved beyond its traditional, one-dimensional, and primarily economic definition. It is now discussed within a multidimensional framework encompassing organizational, social, cultural, and technological aspects. This raises the question: do governmental organizations, particularly their leaders, require multidimensional entrepreneurial skills to achieve economic, social, cultural, and technological productivity? Research in this area has demonstrated that multidimensional entrepreneurial skills are an integral part of organizations and human resource management (Yamada, 2004; Westlund, 2011; Valliere, 2017). Consequently, various classifications of entrepreneurial traits and characteristics are presented in the literature. Some scholars categorize entrepreneurial traits into personal and behavioral characteristics.

Among the personal characteristics highlighted in these studies are achievement orientation, self-confidence, determination, talent and intelligence, adaptability, influence over others, energy and perseverance, foresight, responsiveness to challenges, openness to suggestions and criticism, quick decision-making ability, responsibility, perfectionism, positive attitude, faith, adaptability and flexibility, ability to learn from mistakes, drive, pride, imagination, spontaneity, vision, pattern recognition, assertiveness, risk-taking, persistence, creativity, efficiency, tolerance for ambiguity, work commitment, independence, sensitivity to others, internal locus of control, honesty and integrity, altruism, skillfulness, positive mental states, self-esteem, an indomitable spirit, wealth-seeking, ambition, growth-mindedness, and more. These variables are drawn from the studies of Salehi Sadaghiani (2009), Cooper et al. (1994), Dees (2001), Brown et al. (2004), and Zahra et al. (2008).

Behavioral characteristics include innovation, perseverance and determination, risk management, balanced judgment, opportunity recognition and pursuit, behavioral balance, cooperative

spirit, goal orientation, and the need for achievement (Salehi Sadaghiani, 2009; Mort et al., 2002). Some studies do not provide a specific classification but instead broadly describe the characteristics of entrepreneurs. For example, McClelland (1961) identifies the need for achievement, risk-taking propensity, internal locus of control, creativity, and independence as the characteristics of entrepreneurs. Abdul (2018) categorizes entrepreneurial skills into four groups: personal skills (problem-solving, creative thinking); interpersonal skills (motivating others, managing conflicts); group skills (leading others, teamwork); and additional skills (communication).

Poczwardowski et al. (2002) argue that since specific behaviors are contingent on particular situations, successful managers, in their pursuit of organizational goals, aim to anticipate, guide, control, and modify employee behavior. This process requires extensive research given individual differences, the expansion of human communications in the modern world, and cultural variances across societies. Establishing communication evokes a sense of social belonging in individuals, and through this interaction, they acquire new skills and perspectives. This extends to the point where organizations expand and grow. Communication involves the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver in a manner that is clear and comprehensible to both. If any of the essential components (sender, receiver, or message) are missing, communication does not occur (Sullivan et al., 2004).

Numerous studies have shown that training in communication skills positively impacts mental and physical health, boosts self-confidence and self-respect, strengthens interpersonal relationships, prevents psychological, behavioral, and social problems, and reduces anxiety, depression, and academic decline (Taremian et al., 1999, p. 28). Communication skills are those capabilities that enable individuals to engage in interpersonal interactions and the communication process; this process involves individuals sharing their information, thoughts, and emotions through verbal and non-verbal exchanges (Hargie & Dickson, 2004, p. 66). These skills are so significant that lacking them has been linked to feelings of loneliness, social anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and failure in academic and professional settings (Williamson & X, 2001). Shabbir et al. (2016) categorize entrepreneurial skills into four main areas: recognizing and generating new ideas, utilizing these ideas, creative traits and behaviors, and managerial and leadership skills.

Garalis and Strazdiene (2007) divide entrepreneurial skills into three main categories: social skills, professional skills, and technological skills. Horensby et al. (1993) identify personal traits such as extraversion, adaptability, openness, sensitivity, and conscientiousness, alongside process-related variables like managerial support, job autonomy, reinforcement and rewards, time accessibility, and organizational boundaries, as key to successful entrepreneurship. In theory, each type of entrepreneurial skill (economic, organizational, social, etc.) can independently have a positive impact on organizational efficiency, as demonstrated in various studies (e.g., Yamada, 2004; Westlund, 2011; Vallier, 2017). However, in practice, multidimensional entrepreneurial skills can either neutralize or reinforce each other. For instance, some skills may have a positive effect on one another, while others might have negative interactions (Westlund, 2011).

To our knowledge, prior research has not examined the mediating role of communication skills in the relationship between multidimensional entrepreneurship and personal skills. Therefore, conducting such a study appears essential to fill this research and knowledge gap. The present research aims to address the question: how does multidimensional entrepreneurship impact personal skills, with communication skills acting as a mediator?

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

Value creation is the essence of entrepreneurship, and an entrepreneur is someone capable of generating value, whether material or intangible. To achieve this, an entrepreneur must adopt a different lifestyle and mindset. Hence, entrepreneurship is not merely a job or profession; it is a way of life, a mindset, or a cultural framework encompassing specific beliefs, values, and practices (Samadaghahi, 1999). Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004) described entrepreneurship as a dynamic process involving vision, transformation, and creativity. This process relies on the utilization of individuals' energy and motivation to generate and implement new ideas and practical solutions.

Westlund (2011) explored multidimensional entrepreneurship and argued that existing definitions are often oversimplified. He views multidimensional entrepreneurship as a chain of activities, including the discovery of opportunities, their evaluation, and resource mobilization to exploit these opportunities across different entrepreneurial contexts—organizational, economic, social, cultural, political, and technological. These six forms of entrepreneurship may influence each other, though the direction of these effects can vary.

Ples (1996) found that researchers often possess the ability to work simultaneously across various research activities, absorb strong ideas, and acquire skills in multiple areas. Individual factors and personal traits also play significant roles. Murphy (1991) defined personality as a set of characteristics that determine a person's consistent response patterns to situations. Conscientious individuals can focus on multiple goals and work hard to achieve them. Personal traits such as creativity, risk-taking, perseverance, patience, and self-efficacy facilitate innovation. Five personality traits—differentiating creative individuals—along with intrinsic motivation (needs, interests, curiosity, and the feeling of joy) are more influential in fostering creativity than extrinsic motivation (rewards, external approval) (Barani & Rezaei, 2021).

Several researchers have confirmed the relationship between these variables. For example, Dehmardeh Ghalehno et al. (2015) studied entrepreneurial training models and highlighted that personal skills can impact entrepreneurship. Similarly, Samandar Habashi et al. (2016) investigated the effects of entrepreneurial education on the ability to recognize entrepreneurial opportunities, showing that such education influences six factors: active search, alertness, prior knowledge, social capital, environmental factors, and cognitive and individual characteristics.

Hornsby (1993) presented an interactive model of the corporate entrepreneurial process, incorporating individual characteristics such as risk-taking propensity, desire for autonomy, need for achievement, goal orientation, and internal locus of control alongside organizational characteristics such as management support, work discretion, reinforcement/rewards, time availability, and organizational boundaries. Abdul (2018) conducted a comparative analysis of entrepreneurial skills and SME growth in Nigeria and the UK, identifying four categories of entrepreneurial skills: personal skills (problem-solving, creative thinking); interpersonal skills (motivating others, managing conflicts); group skills (leading others, teamwork); and additional skills (communication).

Based on these explanations, the first hypothesis can be stated as follows:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between multidimensional entrepreneurship and personal skills.

Communication skills refer to the ability to establish effective and healthy interactions with others, which includes clear verbal communication, active listening, understanding the other person's perspective, and providing appropriate feedback (Moore et al., 2018). Scholars have elaborated on communication skills in various ways. One perspective sees empathy as understanding another's emotions and having an internal connection to them. In communication, empathy means sharing a sense of unity where both the sender and receiver of a message reach a common understanding. Empathy allows an individual to adapt to their social environment, become self-aware of their actions, and develop effective communication based on understanding.

Truax (1961) highlighted the importance of communication skills, stating that a person's communication capability is linked to their definition of empathy. Communication skills are largely learned, and the primary reason for communication failures is the lack of proper understanding of messages and challenges stemming from misunderstandings (Vahabi et al., 2016). Communication skills involve a set of actions and interactions that fulfill individuals' needs and appear as a human necessity in communal life. Establishing interpersonal connections provides motivation, growth, a sense of usefulness, satisfaction, mutual understanding, and trust (Rahmanipour et al., 2020).

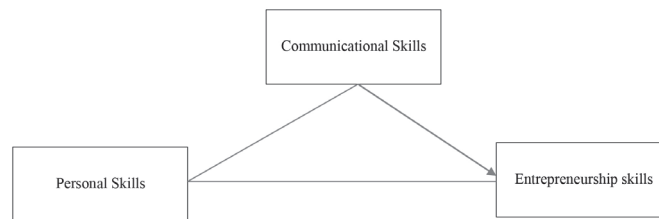
Zare and Safari (2019) designed a paradigm model of social entrepreneurship with a focus on empowering female-headed households. Shabbir et al. (2016) explored factors determining entrepreneurial skills in Pakistan, categorizing these skills into four areas: recognizing and generating new ideas, utilizing these ideas, creative traits and behaviors, and managerial and leadership skills. Sousa (2018) identified entrepreneurial skills in higher education as follows: capacity to be innovative and creative; capacity to diversify the business area; capability to identify and exploit new business opportunities; project management skills; ability and willingness to take risk; ability to organize resources to respond to opportunities; and capability to create and develop national and international networks.

Westlund (2011) examined multidimensional entrepreneurship, critiquing simplistic definitions and describing entrepreneurship as a chain of activities such as identifying opportunities, evaluating them, and mobilizing resources to leverage these opportunities across different domains, including organizational, economic, social, cultural, political, and technological entrepreneurship. These six dimensions of entrepreneurship interact, potentially influencing each other in varied directions. Finally, Dees (2001) explored strategic factors critical to social entrepreneurs, emphasizing continuous opportunity identification, ongoing innovation, flexibility, learning, acting beyond available resources, and accountability as key traits.

Accordingly, the second research hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H₂: Communication skills mediate the relationship between multidimensional entrepreneurship and personal skills.

Based on the discussed theoretical framework, the present research proposes the following conceptual model:

Figure 1. The proposed conceptual model.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The statistical population for this study included all employees and managers of the Iranian Customs, totaling 5,738 individuals. Using cluster sampling, questionnaires were sent to 10% of the population (574 individuals) via email. The recipients were informed that their names and responses would remain confidential and would only be used for the analysis. Out of these, 393 questionnaires were returned. After discarding incomplete or invalid responses, 358 valid questionnaires were used in the analysis. The respondents comprised a mix of men and women, with most falling within the 31-40 age group. The highest percentage of respondents held MSc while individuals with 11-15 years of experience made up 31.4 % of the total. Detailed information on respondents' demographic characteristics is provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Te profile of respondants

Age	%	Gender:	%
20-30	1.1	Male	78.9
31-40	43.7	Female	20.6
41-50	34.1		
51-60	20.3		
		Education	
		HS Diploma	2.00
		BSc	45.6
		MSc	49.4
		PhD	2.8
		No answer	.02
Experiences			
5-10	18.9		
11-15	31.4		
16-20	19.4		
21 and more	30.3		

Data Collection Instrument

The first section of the questionnaire included demographic questions such as gender, education level, age, field of study, work experience, and type of employment. The second section focused on measuring the variables. A custom questionnaire was used to assess the characteristics of multidimensional entrepreneurs. This questionnaire consisted of 45 closed-ended items rated on a Likert scale (ranging from "very high" to "very low"), based on Valliere's (2017) definition and with 'multidimensional entrepreneurship intent', 'creativity', 'trust', and 'problem-solving' as the main components.

The remaining sections of the structured questionnaire examined skill-related dimensions, including leadership skills, human relations skills, technical skills, and innate ability, derived from previous studies. Leadership was adapted from Jong and Hartog (2007), human relations from Adejimola (2008), technical skills from Chandler and Jansen (1992), and innate ability from Silva (2006). Respondents rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (“very low”) to 5 (“very high”).

The dependent variable, “multidimensional entrepreneurship skills,” comprising constructs such as ‘critical thinking’, ‘creativity’, and ‘problem-solving’, was adapted from Prüfer and Prüfer (2020). The validity of the questionnaire, assessed by experts using the CVR formula, was 0.89. The reliability, determined by Cronbach’s alpha, was 0.81.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed in two phases: descriptive and inferential statistics. Given the normal distribution of the data, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed, which requires normality in the observations.

The study utilized advanced statistical techniques, including correlation analysis and the Hayes’ PROCESS macro for SPSS (2017), calculated using SPSS version 24.0.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of the variables. In alignment with the hypotheses, personal skills related to communication showed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$), as did the relationships between communication skills and the constructs of multidimensional entrepreneurship skills: creativity ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$), critical thinking ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$), and problem-solving ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$).

The mean and standard deviation for personal skills were 3.92 and 0.83, respectively. Communication skills had a mean of 4.02 and a standard deviation of 0.809. Problem-solving had the lowest mean at 3.25, with a standard deviation of 0.66. Table 2 provides comprehensive information on correlation coefficients, means, and variances of the variables.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the mediating role of leadership styles, Model 4 was applied, controlling for demographic variables (age, education). The results generated using Hayes’ PROCESS macro for SPSS (2017) are shown in Table 2. Communication skills significantly predicted creativity ($\beta = 1.41$, $t = 1.442$; see Table 2). However, the mediation analysis did not yield significant results for critical thinking ($\beta = 1.77$, $t = 0.362$) or problem-solving ($\beta = 1.42$, $t = 0.11$), leading to the rejection of Hypotheses H21 and H22. Thus, the mediating path between communication skills and multidimensional entrepreneurship skills is significant.

TABLE 2. Correlations between the variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	M	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Personal skills	--				3.92	.838	.88
Communication skills	.73**	--			4.02	.809	.91
Creativity	.63**	.59**	--		3.99	.881	.90
Critical thinking	.08	.36**	.43**	--	4.12	.793	.76
Problem-solving	.46**	.44**	-.21**	.35**	3.25	.660	.84

TABLE 3. Mediating result

	Creativity $R^2=.04$			Critical thinking $R^2=.02$			Problem-solving $R^2=.05$		
	B	SE	95% CI LLCI, ULCI	B	SE	95% CI LLCI, ULCI	B	SE	95% CI LLCI, ULCI
Constant	2.17	.33	1.41, 2.68	2.33	.42	1.01, 2.08	1.97	.29	1.61, 2.88
Age	-.09	.07	.09, .05	.05	.06	.09, .05	.10	.05	.09, .05
Education	-.09	.056	-.08, .19	.07	.041	.11, 1.42	.13	.055	.04, .25
Communication skills	1.41	.16	.13, .18	1.77	.19	.14, .28	1.42	.11	.08, .21

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to examine the role of communication skills in mediating the relationship between employees' personal skills and their entrepreneurial skills. Among various entrepreneurial skills, the results showed that communication skills can mediate the effect of personal skills on problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking. Essentially, individuals with strong communication skills can leverage their ability to transfer and share knowledge effectively for problem-solving. Such individuals can better receive information and share it appropriately with others, using problem-solving skills to manage conflicts and increase their influence within the workplace.

Moreover, people with high communication skills can easily connect with others holding different viewpoints, helping them to understand and engage with diverse perspectives. This ability allows them to approach issues from multiple angles, fostering creativity and generating new ideas in various situations. Additionally, effective communication helps individuals listen to differing opinions, demonstrating greater openness and adaptability, and ultimately enhancing their critical evaluation of various situations.

This research highlights that communication skills play a crucial role in harnessing personal skills to develop entrepreneurial abilities. Therefore, individuals with strong personal capabilities can achieve better outcomes by strengthening their communication skills.

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