

Volume 22, Special Issue 2

Print ISSN: 1098-8394;

Online ISSN: 1528-2651

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DISABILITY: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS AND MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT<sup>1</sup>

Virginia Barba-Sánchez, University of Castilla-La Mancha

Pilar Ortíz-García, University of Murcia

Ángel Olaz-Capitán, University of Murcia

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this text is to introduce the following Special Issue on entrepreneurship among people with different abilities. Self-employment is a way of employment and social integration for such a collective which, moreover, has high unemployment rates. On the other hand, the greatest difficulty they face does not result from the limitations of disability itself, what might be considered to be the cause, but from the social barriers, they have to overcome.*

*Aiming at that, the research studies included in this Special Issue are in context with the perspective of competition and their focus lays on the identification of those competencies that promote or limit entrepreneurship of people with disabilities (hereafter PWD) from social sciences, management or economics.*

*In particular, this introductory text aims at presenting a detailed examination of those methodological aspects which are related to the research, whose focus is on the Spanish context, and of the measuring instrument developed and implemented in such research. Such research has been conducted out on a sample of 224 people with physical, sensory or organic disabilities and its results confirm both the lower propensity of this group to start a business and the validity of entrepreneurship as a form of inclusion, visibility, and normalization of people with different abilities.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Disability, Self-employment.

## INTRODUCTION

According to UN (2014, p.7), “*the modern concept of disability perceives disability as an interaction between an individual’s personal condition (such as being in a wheelchair or having a visual impairment) and environmental factors (such as negative attitudes or inaccessible buildings) which together lead to disability and affect an individual’s participation in society*”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Proyecto Discapacidad y Emprendimiento. Análisis Competencial. CSO2016–75818–R (AEI/FEDER, UE).

The consequence of such an understanding is that more than 15% of the world's population has a disability (UN, 2014), what is undoubtedly worrying.

In Spain, the government's concern for the complete social inclusion of people with disabilities (PWD) has materialized in actions such as the Action Plan of the Spanish Strategy on Disability 2014-2020 (Ministry of Health Social Services and Equality, 2014), in which paid employment is recognized as one of the most effective means to achieve it. In this vein, policies have been implemented through various kinds of incentives with the aim of encouraging the recruitment of these people (Muñoz et al. 2019). However, in the light of persistently high rates of unemployment among people with disabilities (ODISMET, 2018), the results of these policies have not been as effective as expected. This situation is similar to that of other countries, such as the United States, where the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has been applied for more than 25 years, but the employment rate of this group, even though, has not improved significantly either (Kalargyrou et al., 2018).

In this context, entrepreneurship in terms of self-employment becomes significant as a means of employment and, consequently, of social integration. Authors such as Doyel (2002) or Bruce & Schuetze (2004) consider it useful for this purpose and even, in the worst-case scenario, as a training program to improve employment. In addition, Pagán (2009) points out that the self-employment route provides flexibility, which results positively both in the adjustment between disability and working life, as well as in the satisfaction at work of people with disabilities.

Our main concern with this introductory text is to provide an instrument which allows us to measure the entrepreneurial competencies of people with disabilities paying special attention to both the methodology used to develop it and the survey conducted to validate it. Thus, the results presented in this Special Issue are based on the Research Project "*Disability and Entrepreneurship. Competence Analysis*" (CSO2016-75818-R), which has been conducted by the University of Murcia during 2016-2019 and financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, specifically by the State Research Agency (AEI), and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The other part of the document is organized as follows: after a brief review of the literature on entrepreneurship and disability, we will explain the research questions which will be addressed throughout the articles of this Special Issue; following that, in relation to the conducted research, we describe the research methodology as well as the designed measuring instrument. At the end, we will present the conclusions, recommendations, and limitations of the research study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Specialised literature is based on an analysis of PWD as employees (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Hashim & Wok, 2014). On the contrary, literature in which they are considered as self-employed people, or even as employers, i.e., generators of new jobs is relatively scarce (Doyel, 2002; Larsson, 2006; Maritz & Laferriere, 2016). On the other hand, Hashim and Wok (2014), after analysing the responses of 384 disabled employees and their 195 bosses and 206 co-workers, conclude that PWD usually are productive and reliable employees. However, authors such as Markel & Barclay (2009) consider that employing PWD should be part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy, no matter how competent they are to develop their jobs. There is no doubt that this debate on the labour competences of PWD is also present in today's society and, perhaps, explains the low employment rates of this group.

In this regard, PWD usually start up a business out of necessity, given that it is difficult for them to obtain another type of paid employment (Muñoz et al., 2019). However, following the application to entrepreneurship of the Theory of Expectations (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017), the motivation of this collective relies basically upon their own confidence in those competencies and skills which are necessary to be successful when carrying out the business project as well as on the belief that this achievement will provide them with full social inclusion. In this vein, Doyel (2002) indicates that those benefits obtained by PWD when creating a company largely compensate the assumed risks.

On the contrary, authors such as Caldwell et al. (2016) or Dhar & Farzana (2017) analyse the challenges faced by employers with disabilities (EWD), and conclude that the most decisive one is to maintain self-confidence, due to the fact that they are used in their environment to being told that they are not capable enough.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given the fact that employers are reluctant to employ PWD (Hashim & Wok, 2014; Beisland et al., 2016), in many cases self-employment is resorted to obtain paid employment. However, authors such as Muñoz et al. (2019) argue that there is a gap both in the specialized literature on entrepreneurship and in those public policies that encourage it, which is to be considered concerning this collective. In this regard, this Special Issue tries to fill this gap. In response to this, following specific research questions are proposed:

*RQ1: Does the type of disability influence the entrepreneurial competencies of people with disabilities?*

*RQ2: Does gender determine the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and the entrepreneurial intention of people with disabilities?*

*RQ3: Does age condition entrepreneurial behaviour of people with disabilities?*

*RQ4: Is training on entrepreneurship a decisive variable of entrepreneurial intention among people with disabilities?*

*RQ5: Does labour and professional situation condition the entrepreneurial behaviour of people with disabilities? What type of entrepreneurship predominates among PWD: entrepreneurship out of need or out of the opportunity?*

*RQ6: Is the social competence of people with disabilities a precedent or a consequence of entrepreneurial behaviour?*

*RQ7: What are the key factors which determine the entrepreneurial behaviour of people with disabilities and what are the moderating elements?*

*RQ8: Once the company is launched, do people with disabilities have distinctive competencies?*

## METHODOLOGY

As the studied population are PWD and no public database is accessible, we have contacted the main national disability supporting associations, particularly such associations as the ONCE. As a matter of fact, it was according to them that the sample has been designed. Thus, out of a total population of 986,600 PWD (ODISMET, 2018), 224 valid answers were obtained, representing a sampling error of 6.7%. Furthermore, Table 1 provides the technical sheet of the research regarding other most relevant technical characteristics.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>RESEARCH TECHNICAL SHEET</b>	
<b>Research population</b>	<b>PWD between the ages of 18 and 64 with physical, sensory and organic disability who are Spanish residents</b>
Data collection method	Personal interview
Sample size/selection	224 PWD/Discretionary
Sample error	+/- 6.7%
Reliability level	95.5% (p=q=0.05)
Time of data collection	November-December 2018

## Questionnaire Design

Before having designed the questionnaire used in this research study, qualitative research had been conducted through 15 in-depth surveys (Avilés, 2018). In order to have a broad view of the problem, representatives of the five identified groups were interviewed: PWD who have started up business, relatives of PWD who have launched a business, PWD who do not have entrepreneurial experience, political representatives involved in entrepreneurship and disability, representatives of PWD associations and professionals working in the field of disability.

Taking as a reference the results obtained from the analysis of the transcripts of the in-depth interviews using the software ATLAS.TI (version 8), the proposed measuring instrument was developed. This consists of 18 questions structured in 4 Subsections, as shown in Table 2.

<b>Table 2</b> <b>PROPOSED MEASURING INSTRUMENT</b>	
Subsection disability	Disability type and degree; benefit and amount that result from the disability; and participation in a PWD association as a member.
Subsection entrepreneurship	Previous and current entrepreneurial experience; hindrances to entrepreneurship; business sector; ownership and types of partners; seniority of the company; the number of employees; entrepreneurship out of necessity or out of opportunity; main motivation for entrepreneurship; and main factor to abandon the business.
Subsection competencies	I am conscious of my own emotions and the consequences they can have; I know my personal strengths and limitations; I am a self-confident person; I control my emotions and negative impulses; I take my values into account when taking action; I adapt to changes; I set myself high/demanding goals; I have the initiative to seize the opportunities that present themselves; I consider myself an optimistic person; I have the ability to put myself in someone else's shoes; I have the ability to be sensitive to the emotions of others; In my work, I anticipate and recognize the needs that satisfy my clients; I am able to detect the personal development needs of others; I promote personal growth of others; I encourage change in my organization/company; I am persuasive when proposing activities; I achieve to manage conflicts by finding a negotiated way to reach an agreement; Teamwork determines my work.
Subsection identification	Autonomous Community of residence; gender; age; the level of studies; households' situation regarding those who share housing with PWD; main labour activity; PWD's perception of the environment for entrepreneurship within one year; and adaptation of telework in the entrepreneurial field.

## Measurement

The main endogenous variable of this research has been the entrepreneurial behaviour of PWD, distinguishing past, present and potential EWDs from those who are not interested in or cannot start their own business. The entrepreneurial competence, which has been measured through the ECI (Hay Group, 2005) stands out from all used exogenous variables. It is a complex

construct comprising four dimensions: personal self-knowledge (3 items), self-management (6 items), alterity (6 items) and social competence (3 items). Finally, control variables have been included, among others, the type and disability degree, the age and the gender of PWD, as well as the sector of activity and business size.

## CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The main conclusion is that the mentioned competencies influence the entrepreneurial intention/behaviour both among PWD and among people without disabilities (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017). However, there is a difference concerning to those types of competencies, motivations, and challenges which face the collective of EWDs, whose entrepreneurship rates are much lower. In consonance with the recommendations of Doyel (2002) or Muñoz et al. (2019), we suggest that specific training programs on entrepreneurship should be carried out, not only to encourage the creation of companies among this collective but also to achieve its full social integration.

Finally, one of the limitations of this research study is the fact that it is based on a discrete and non-random sample, which represents an obstacle for the generalization of the obtained conclusions. Moreover, the limitation of data collection to a single country, Spain, also hinders the generalisation of such conclusions.

## REFERENCES

- Avilés, M. (2018). Methodological aspects of the qualitative study on entrepreneurship and disability. In: Olaz, A., Ortiz, P., & Avilés, M. (Eds.). *Discapacidad y emprendimiento. Dimensiones y contextos interpretativos en clave cualitativa* (pp. 25-37). Pamplona: Thomson Reuters Aranzadi.
- Barba-Sánchez, V., & Atienza-Sahuquillo, C. (2017). Entrepreneurial motivation and self-employment: Evidence from expectancy theory. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 13(4), 1097-1115.
- Barnes, C., & Mercer, G. (2005). Disability, work, and welfare: Challenging the social exclusion of disabled people. *Work, employment and society*, 19(3), 527-545.
- Beisland, L.A., Mersland, R., & Zamore, S. (2016). Motivations for business start-up: Are there any differences between disabled and non-disabled microfinance clients? *Journal of International Development*, 28(1), 147-149.
- Bruce, D., & Schuetze, H.J. (2004). The labor market consequences of experience in self-employment. *Labour Economics*, 11(5), 575-598.
- Caldwell, K., Harris, S.P., & Renko, M. (2016). Social entrepreneurs with disabilities: exploring motivational and attitudinal factors. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 5(1), 211-244.
- Dhar, S., & Farzana, T. (2017). Entrepreneurs with disabilities in Bangladesh: An exploratory study on their entrepreneurial motivation and challenges. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 9(36), 103-114.
- Doyel, A.W. (2002). A realistic perspective of risk in self-employment for people with disabilities. *Journal of vocational rehabilitation*, 17(2), 115-124.
- Hashim, J., & Wok, S. (2014). Predictors to employees with disabilities' organisational behaviour and involvement in employment. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 33(2), 193-209.
- Hay Group. (2005). *Emotional competence inventory (ECI) technical manual*. Retrieved from [http://www.eiconsortium.org/pdf/ECI\\_2\\_0\\_Technical\\_Manual\\_v2.pdf](http://www.eiconsortium.org/pdf/ECI_2_0_Technical_Manual_v2.pdf)
- Kalargyrou, V., Kalargiros, E., & Kutz, D. (2018). Social entrepreneurship and disability inclusion in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 1-27.
- Larsson, S. (2006). Disability management and entrepreneurship: Results from a nationwide study in Sweden. *International Journal of Disability Management*, 1(1), 159-168.
- Maritz, A., & Laferrriere, R. (2016). Entrepreneurship and self-employment for people with disabilities. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 25(2), 45-54.

- Markel, K.S., & Barclay, L.A. (2009). Addressing the underemployment of persons with disabilities: Recommendations for expanding organizational social responsibility. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 21(4), 305.
- Ministry of Health Social Services and Equality. (2014). *Plan of action of the Spanish strategy on disability 2014-2020*. Madrid: Dirección General de Políticas de Apoyo a la Discapacidad.
- Muñoz, R.M., Salinero, Y., Peña, I., de Pablo, S., & David, J. (2019). Entrepreneurship education and disability: An experience at a Spanish University. *Administrative Sciences*, 9(2), 34.
- ODISMET. (2018). Observatory on disability and labor market in Spain. Retrieved from <http://www.odismet.es/>
- Pagán, R. (2009). Self-employment among people with disabilities: Evidence for Europe. *Disability & Society*, 24(2), 217-229.
- UN. (2014). *The convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Training guide*. New York and Geneva: United Nations Publications.