

The Relationship between Environmental Factors and Organizational Entrepreneurship in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Iran

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Abstract

All social organizations are in one way or another shaped by the set of social incentives that bring them into existence and sustain them in the course of time. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whether based in the global north or south, are not different. Unfortunately, numerous NGOs start up and then fail, because the passion of the founder is not supported by a sustainable organization. Volunteers in all sectors are working with NGOs. The NGOs are citizens' organizations with missions to improve people's lives.

This article is an attempt to examine NGOs challenges with their external environment. The findings of this research which are based on a field research in Iran's NGOs, shows the relationship between organizational entrepreneurship and NGOs external environment in form of environmental communications, relationship with government, and relationship with citizens. Giving an image of Iran's non-governmental organizations' environmental status, it suggests guidelines on the improvement of NGOs environmental communication in an entrepreneurship approach which has applicability to other communities' NGOs, especially in developing countries.

Key words:

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), organizational entrepreneurship, relationship with citizens, relationship with government, environmental communications

Introduction

Since the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, political, economic and social contribution of the people has been seriously considered and following the stabilization of the revolution, it has entered into a new stage. Through civil society discussions, dialogue among civilizations has reached its highest point. In the Third Five-Year Economical, Social and Cultural Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran which is considered as the most important strategic plan of the country, the significance of the Third Sector of NGOs is emphasized. Furthermore, the public sector is obliged to enhance NGOs and assign further roles to them in the development process. As a result, Paragraph 5, Article 1, Article 40, Paragraph B, Article 64, Article 100, Article 101, Paragraph B, Article 104, Paragraph C, Article 157, Article 158, Article 182, Paragraph 4, Article 192 and other Articles of the Third Five-Year Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan Law show the top situation of national contribution and the role of NGOs.

As mentioned in some Articles of the Law, before accepting these roles and active contribution in development process, NGOs should improve the necessary capabilities and capacities of their various organizational aspects in order to have the necessary efficiency in playing their assigned roles in the Third Development Plan.

Regarding the new concept of NGOs in Iran and the need to build their capacities to play more effective role in country's development as well as the importance of entrepreneurship in such organizations, the results of this study will provide a comprehensive model of organizational entrepreneurship proportionate with the Iranian local conditions by which non-governmental organizations will improve their own capabilities and will be prepared to play more effective roles.

Voluntary organizations perform a critical role in life providing a variety of programs and services that address people's individual and social needs. Voluntarism is a very well known phenomenon for everybody, but still far away from efforts to characterize it as an interesting and complex phenomenon for the society. A very strong and potential power which is ready to become active and give its human help, which characterizes it, with its instruments, methods and its special means.

Literature Review

Many countries recognize the importance of volunteers and the impact

that their unpaid service has (Atano, et al., 2001, p.25). Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the UN believes that "the 21st century will be an era of NGOs". (Boiko, 1999, p.1).

The term NGO (non – governmental organizations) is cited in the UN Charter as follow:

"A relatively limited universe of non–state actors, particularly international, but sometimes national, non-governmental organizations active in the fields of development, disarmament, women's equality and human rights." (Boiko, 1999, p.1)

The key management challenges faced by development NGOs, by focusing on both from the types of roles and strategies being undertaken by different kinds of NGOs in the struggle against poverty, these can be summarized in general terms as:

- a) the delivery of new or improved services to sections of communities which are in need,
- b) efforts to catalyze social, economic and political change processes at the level of group or individual action, and
- c) the attempt to create 'synergies' among different agencies and initiatives through the building of 'partnerships' (Lewis, 2001, p.3)

The research results indicates not only that today's NGOs should be treasured and involved in meaningful ways, but also that there is a challenge to involve more people in volunteering, so that they build trust in themselves and others, exercise their civic responsibility and learn that they can make a difference in their communities (Brander, 2001, p. 755).

While entrepreneurship is considered a viable career alternative for the private sector, NGOs have begun to see it as a viable means of support for this operation (Reynolds, 2001, p. 432).

In a useful recently-published paper, Najam (1999) makes the case for seeing NCOs (or 'citizen organization' as he prefers to call them) as 'policy entrepreneurs' and sets out three stages of the 'policy process', which is the process of conceiving, designing and implementing public action. This process can be broken down into agenda setting (the agreement of priorities and issues), policy development (making choice among possible alternatives and options) and policy implementation (undertaking actions to).

It is clear therefore that innovation is not a prerequisite for success, and nor can it be regarded in any general sense as an innate characteristic of all NGOs (Lewis, 2001, p.132).

Wesbrod (1988) suggested that those choosing to work in the non-profit sector were not only motivated by income enhancement, but also public spiritedness manifested in work related to social justice issues. Dennis Young (1983) in "If not for profit, for what?" provides an interesting approach to different stereotypes of entrepreneurs in the non-profit sector. He classifies his entrepreneurs by their 'primary source of satisfaction' and suggests types of individuals who are more likely to occur in the for-profit and non-profit sectors.

Young (1983) suggests that the entrepreneur likely to be attracted to the type of NGO in our study will be the 'believer' whose principal source of satisfaction comes from the "pursuit of a cause or mission" or the 'professional' whose principal source of satisfaction comes from the "acclaim of disciplinary peers". Pilz (1995) finds that non-profit entrepreneurs are driven by personal experiences, perceptions of community needs and desire to provide services to others. Non-profit entrepreneurs are as likely as for-profit entrepreneurs in such characteristics as willingness to take risk, self-directedness, leadership and innovation; however their focus is on what they can do for others. (Handy and shree, 2000, pp. 10 – 11)

The issue for the entrepreneur is: what resources are necessary to pursue a given opportunity? (Stevenson, 1999, p.13). The challenge for the non-profit entrepreneur centers on how to assess whether the proposed venture is likely to be a net value creator, or even whether it is a particularly good use of the resource that it requires (oberfield and Dees, 1999, p.572).

Two compelling arguments support the need for NGOs to become more entrepreneurial: (1) social leadership, and (2) ethical responsibilities to society.

Leaders of NGOs must demonstrate the ability to solve important social problems. NGOs need to be able to respond effectively and efficiently to two types of needs. First are long-standing problems and needs, such as quality city services. Second, NGOs must be able to act quickly and ably in response to quickly emerging problems, such as the growing number of homeless or the growing negative effects of acid rain. To restore public confidence in their ability to perform well, NGOs must be able to act. A entrepreneurial organization with strong leadership may find new ways that are better. (Moghimi, 2004, p.25).

Many NGOs find their productivity and of service delivery under growing scrutiny. Legislative, political, constituency, and board demands for accountability are increasing. Eventually a failure in accountability can lead

to organizational missions and budgets being given to other non-profit or for-profit organizations. The growing number of incarcerated a search for alternatives to the state- run corrections institution is one such example. NGOs are accountable to their customers. entrepreneurial NGOs may be able to implement a culture of accountability. This culture would replace coercion, manipulation, and exploitation of citizens and customers with an "ethic of serving with integrity and respect". In other words, they would exist to be at the disposal of the public, not in positions of bureaucratic influence over the public (Cornwall and Perelman, 1990, pp 220 – 21).

Gregory Dees notes five reasons why entrepreneurial activities have become popular among nonprofit organizations:

1. a worldwide acceptance of capitalism. This acceptance of the "market-driven" society has made commercial ventures by nonprofit agencies more acceptable.
2. Many non-profit leaders are looking to deliver social goods and services in ways that do not create dependency in their constituencies.
3. Non-profits are seeking financial sustainability and stability by "self-funding."
4. The sources of funds available to non-profits are shifting to favor more commercial approaches.
5. Competition between sectors and within the non-profit sector is forcing agencies to find alternatives to traditional funding sources (Seel, 2001, p.444).

Recent research has defined organizational entrepreneurship as a process whereby an individual or a group of individuals, in association with an existing organization, creates a new organization or instigates renewal or innovation within the organization. (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 2001, p. 53).

While there are many needs NGOs meet, and many reasons for them to be entrepreneurial, there are few entrepreneurial NGOs. Why is this? The reason is that many of the major influences and characteristics of NGOs make it difficult for upper level managers to seriously consider an entrepreneurial strategy. The characteristics that can prevent adoption of an entrepreneurial strategy can be classified into three domains: (1) environmental factors, (2) factors internal to the NGOs, and (3) factors that

are the results of both the external environment and the organization's structures and processes (Cornwall and Perelman, 1990, pp. 220-21).

The essence of entrepreneurial success is found in the strategies that linked the organization and its environments (Osborn, 1995, p.4). Building external relations is critical for social entrepreneurial leaders to establish legitimacy with multiple constituencies. Apart from the almost internal client group, other important constituencies are the funding agencies, the government and other social entrepreneurial leaders. Networking with other organizations within their geographical operating area as well as with similar organizations operating elsewhere is crucial for social entrepreneurial leaders for receiving relevant information causes.

The family and close networks can provide the much-needed emotional support for social entrepreneurial leaders often write highly supportive and encouraging letters to each other and have meetings to discuss and share their experiences and provide a boost to each other's work. (Prabhu, 1999, p. 144).

One of the important matters in environmental elements is the undesirable effects of cultural-social issues on corporate entrepreneurship. Moghimi, 2001, p.116). The NGOs play an important role in private enterprise development thanks to their closeness responsiveness to the needs and the aspirations of the people: they provide a link between the private sector and government in transmitting the opinions and needs of their members to the legislator on the setting up of the private sector development policies.

Managerial and technical training, credit and self – help initiatives are three factors that guide the enterprise development through NGOs .Concerning the first issue, the NGOs need to put emphasis on entrepreneurship development and on managerial skills and adapt this to the needs of their clients. On the second issue the problem is the access to credit delivery for small and medium enterprises thought formal financial institutions. The successful credit scheme needs to be accompanied with an emphasis on the capacity of reinvestment in the enterprise.

Finally, concerning self/help initiatives, in some countries, the NGOs have organized group solutions such as purchases. NGOs should actively participate in the formulation of training policies to better adapt programs to clients' need and should be more focused and offer more professional service within their area of activity in order to offer better service and programs to SMEs. (Boiko, 1999, p. 2).

Culture is important in any discussion of entrepreneurship because it determines the attitudes of individuals towards the initiation of entrepreneurship (Morrison, 2000, p.61). It appears that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship and cultural specificity, combined with an intuitive response by individual members of society, albeit part innate and part cultural conditioning. Certainly, the cultural context in which persons are rooted and socially developed plays an influencing role in shaping and making entrepreneurs, and the degree to which they consider entrepreneurial behavior to be desirable.

Cultural dimensions: these are significant to the extent to which entrepreneurial behavior is supported by a society have been identified as: communal versus individual; conformist versus divergent; and equal versus elitist: furthermore, the role of the family, immediate and extended is recognized as having through the provision of inter-generational role models, and as tangible and intangible support providers.

Finally, the profile of an entrepreneur which emerges through the study is one who: is intelligent and analytical; is an effective risk manager and net worker; possesses a strong set of moral, social and business ethics; exhibits a basic trader's instinct; and is dedicated to life-long learning in its many forms (Morrison, 2000, p.65).

The political climate is an important environmental variable for the organizations performance. Political and religious refugees have been highly identified with entrepreneurship (Shapiro and Sokol, 1982). This level of extreme displacement often precedes the formation of a company (Derossi, 1971). Because of external forces, these individuals must make a major change in their life. There are less extreme forces levels of displacement which also lead to individuals making changes in their life. Negative firms have been documented to be related to increased organizational founding rates (Carroll, 1965). Individuals faced [with] displacement in their lives must make a change and this change is often to from an organization (Shapiro and Sokol, 1982). This decision to from an organization will be greatly influenced by the culture and value system of the individual (Hurley, 1999, p.57).

Political unrest is believed to lead to an increase in organizational founding (Stinchcombe, 1965). Studies on newspaper founding have supported theirs (Carroll and Huo, 1986; Delacroix and Carroll, 1983). Governmental policies may have a negative or positive effect on the organization performance. Policies which increase legitimacy, stimulate

demand, or grant subsidies to entrepreneurs will increase the organizational founding rate (Singh et al., 1989).

Local, state, and federal taxation levels will also influence the founding rate (Galvin, 1978). Researches on governmental policies have found that locations with favorable taxation and licensing policies will be more attractive to entrepreneurs than other locations (Hurley, 1999, p.57).

Methodology

Choosing research methodology is one of the most important and technical stages which demands the special attention of the researcher. In the present research, we have tried to provide a practical format and design research steps and find an appropriate tool for data collection. So, the necessary data are collected via statistical samples through sampling formula, identical data, attitude and demography. Also, we have used various descriptive and inferential statistical methods in order to analyze the data. Meanwhile, LISREL¹ software is applied to establish a scientific relationship between independent and dependent variables

Research Objective: The main aim of this research is to study the capabilities and characteristics of organizational entrepreneurship in Iranian NGOs, so that a comprehensive model would be designed in which all NGOs will improve their environmental capabilities in line with the objectives of the Fourth Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran and will be prepared to assume effective social and cultural roles in society.

Research assumptions

1. There is a meaningful relationship between environmental factors and organizational entrepreneurship in NGOs.

1-1. there is a meaningful relationship between environmental links and organizational entrepreneurship in NGOs.

1-2. there is a meaningful relationship between governmental links and organizational entrepreneurship in NGOs.

1-3. there is a meaningful relationship between interacts with citizens and organizational entrepreneurship in NGOs.

1. Linear Structural Relation (LISREL)

Society and statistical sample

Statistical community of this research includes all NGOs with following characteristics:

1. NGOs with non-governmental, voluntary and non-profit organizational structure that responding to social needs.
2. NGOs whose headquarters are in Tehran.
3. NGOs with organizational entrepreneurship characteristics.

In order to identify NGOs in Tehran, by referring to NGOs Book published in collaboration with the UNESCO and The Iranian Family Adjusting Society as well as referring to NGOs Networks in Iran (female network, the youth network and environment network), a list of these NGOs and also a list of all NGOs whose headquarters are located in Tehran were prepared.

To identify NGOs whose conditions are compatible with the third characteristic (organizational entrepreneurship), while counseling with female, the youth and environmental networks, Family Adjusting Society, the Interior Ministry and some governmental and non-governmental agencies, a list of all NGOs with organizational entrepreneurship was prepared.

In this research, stratified random sampling is applied and NGOs are divided into two groups:

Cultural NGOs and Social NGOs. The number of samples was calculated via the following formula:

By considering 0.06 as standard error (by applying similar researches), 0.50 as success probability, 3.84 as standard statistic and 68 as target group, the number of needed samples which consists of entrepreneurial NGOs is 54.

To distribute the samples, the proportion of each category (social and cultural NGOs) was determined. Owing to the fact that 60 percent of the society belonged to social NGOs and 40 percent to cultural NGOs, this proportion was applied in samples ,so 32 social NGOs and 23 cultural NGOs were included.

Research tools

Present research is a descriptive study which has used Field Survey.

In this research, the data are collected by using tools like questionnaires and techniques such as interview, observation and studying the documents.

Regarding the content of surveyed questions, they are divided into three groups: demographic questions, factual questions and attitudinal questions.

Reliability test

In order to have a pre-test, 24 pilot questionnaire were distributed which its reliability rate through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Cronbach's Alpha was calculated 0.81 that shows a relative high reliability of the research. The researcher made some changes in his tool based on the results of pre-test to improve its reliability and validity. After gathering the final questionnaires, the reliability of the research was recalculated 0.92 by using Cronbach's alpha which shows excellent reliability of the questionnaire.

Data analysis methods

In this research, various descriptive and inferential methods are applied to analyze the data and testing the assumptions. In addition to these methods, LISREL software is also used to determine the rate of impact of independent variables on dependent variable in order to clarify the relations among variables.

Research findings

In this research, dependent variable is "organizational entrepreneurship". Two sets of data are applied in order to measure the organizational entrepreneurship of NGOs: factual and attitudinal data. The following issues are considered in order to study the organizational entrepreneurship of NGOs: studying the entrepreneurial businesses in NGOs, studying the situation of NGOs' branches, evaluating the growth in annual voluntary membership in NGOs, NGOs' opportunistic manner, resolving social problems deeply, innovation in NGOs, attracting financial resources via different resources, compatibility of services and goods with citizens' requirements and priorities.

NGOs use all types of entrepreneurial businesses. Of course, these businesses are funding less than 10 percent of their budget and NGOs' budget are funded via other resources. However, among entrepreneurial businesses, more than 40 percent of studied NGOs' income is provided by training section followed by income of counseling services, art and handicraft fairs and selling the technology of research and development.

Totally, entrepreneurial businesses allocate a small amount on NGOs'

income and most NGOs do not have necessary capacity to use these opportunities and to do such businesses. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of branch numbers in studied NGOs.

Table 1: the descriptive statistics of branch numbers in studied NGOs

Statistical description	frequency	percent
Branch number		
Between 1 to 3	10	18
Between 3 to 5	3	5/4
Between 5 to 7	1	2
Further 7	4	7
No branch	36	64
No response	2	3/6
Total	56	100

The results of collected data show that about 72 percent of NGOs are looking for new situation and opportunities rather than maintaining the present situation; about 67 percent of NGOs active in resolving citizens' social problems are addressing the reasons and roots rather than eliminating them; and about 67 percent of respondents believe that NGOs create new ideas by establishing research and development units and designing regulations and policies.

Collected data regarding funding resources show that only 20 percent of respondents believe that goods and services of NGOs are compatible with citizens' requirements and needs.

Table 2 shows the growth rate of voluntarily membership in 33 studied NGOs (other studied NGOs either lacked voluntarily growth rate or had not reported this rate).

Table 2: descriptive statistics of the membership growth rate in NGOs

Statistical description	frequency	percent
voluntarily membership growth rate		
Growth between 0 to 10 percent	12	36
Growth between 10 to 30 percent	12	36
Growth between 30 to 50 percent	4	12
Growth between 50 to 70 percent	1	3
Growth up to 70 percent	4	12
Total	33	100

As observed, the growth rate in about 73 percent of NGOs is less than 30 percent and less than 10 percent in about 36 of NGOs. It shows a low voluntarily rate.

The results of Sign test show that the 39% as meaningful level is bigger than 0.05 as standard deviation. Therefore, H0 assumption is disapproved and H1 assumption is approved. It means that the score of organizational entrepreneurship in studied NGOs does not have a meaningful difference as compared with the score average and we can almost say that entrepreneurship in studied NGOs is in average level.

The assumptions of this research are adjusted in a three-branch model and they are explained by using statistical tests and causal relation test software.

Environmental communications

Connoisseurs argue that NGOs are not closed systems with certain boundaries but they are a part of an open system that relies on the resources of their environment and we can not consider them as entities independent

from their environment (Louis, 2001: 140). Competition on non-profit activities is decreasing. NGOs challenge each other not only for obtaining volunteers from society but also to attract volunteer members of each other (Yavas & Riecken, 1997: 1). To review the relationship and impact of NGOs' environmental communications, correlation test shows a meaningful relation with direct + 0/30 correlation coefficient. More environmental communications and interactions in human, financial and social sections, more NGOs' organizational entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, to review the rate of the impact of environmental interactions on organizational entrepreneurship, the LISREL software shows 0/22 consistency coefficient which indicates the direct impact of environmental interactions on organizational entrepreneurship?

Relationship with government

Studies indicate that governmental sponsored plans in the fields such as financial, social and human affairs are important for entrepreneurs (Jensen and Havanese, 2002, p.9). The government supports NGOs through rule, regulations, financial helps and assigning more social and public roles for NGOs. The results of correlation test show a meaningful relation between the rate of relationship with government and organizational entrepreneurship in NGOs. Meanwhile, 0/28 correlation test shows a direct correlation between these two variables. More relationship between government and NGOs, more NGOs' organizational entrepreneurship. The results of causal relations through LISREL software with 0/15 consistency coefficient shows the positive and direct relationship between government NGOs' organizational entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, relationship with government influences indirectly the NGOs' organizational entrepreneurship through relationship with citizens with 0/10 consistency coefficient.

Relationship with citizens

Some connoisseurs believe that a mission of social and entrepreneurial businesses should have three aspects: what group of customers should be considered? What kind of customers' need should be met? How customers' needs should be met? (Wickham 1997, p.4)

Close contact with citizens can develop systems and responding strategies and resolve social problems deeply (Prubhu, 1999: 7). The correlation test in this research shows that the type of NGOs' relations with citizens has a meaningful relation with NGOs' organizational

entrepreneurship. 0/53 correlation coefficient shows a direct and positive relationship between the rate of increase in relation with citizens and NGOs' organizational entrepreneurship. The results of causal relations through LISREL software with relative high 0/33 consistency coefficient shows the direct relationship between citizens and NGOs' organizational entrepreneurship. Besides, relation with citizens influences indirectly the NGOs' organizational entrepreneurship with 0/10 consistency coefficient.

Conclusion and recommendations

According to the results of field studies and conducted tests about collected data, some suggestions are provided to improve entrepreneurship in NGOS as follow:

NGOs have close contacts with their environment more than any other organization and as an open system are regularly in contact with their environment. Entrepreneurial NGOs should develop their activities from local level to other levels and even international levels and contact with a variety of environmental organizations such as government and market as their interactive party. They should facilitate the ground for volunteers' contribution in NGOs to enhance their capabilities to accept developmental activities and circulating volunteerism in the society. The results of this research show that the relation of NGOs with their environment is not entrepreneurial and even is anti-entrepreneurship.

The results of statistical and LISREL tests indicate the importance of environmental relation in increasing organizational entrepreneurship in NGOs. So, NGOs should identify new environmental opportunities, make possible the environmental changes through constructing communications based on cooperation and competition with other NGOs, public section and private section and even facilitate their participation in international communities as advisory member in United Nations and other inter-governmental agencies. Establishing NGOs networks can increase the ability of such organizations in environmental contacts. Now, women, youth and environmental networks are active of which women NGO network is the only NGO in Iran which has achieved UN advisory body.

The role of government in enhancing NGOs in all countries is considered as a fundamental principle and a new wave in running governmental affairs and assigning governmental positions to second section (private section) and third section (civil society and NGOs), has caused government's sensitivity to these entities.

The results of this research indicate that not only the government has no positive role in entrepreneurship of NGOs, but also operates as a barrier of NGOs' entrepreneurship, so that most of the NGOs believe that governmental rules are barriers of the NGOs performance and the government has not been successful in assigning social role to NGOs and its supports to NGOs are highly limited. Besides, public organizations and agencies do not use NGOs' services and goods.

Although non-governmental aspect is one of the main characteristics of NGOs, it does not mean that the government should deprive them from its supports. The evidences and statistics of other countries show that the development of NGOs is only possible through governmental helps and undertaking the social and public roles which were performed by the government in the past will improve NGOs' success.

In order to enhance the entrepreneurship of NGOs in Iran and to facilitate their respective development, the government should establish supportive entities and agencies, provide financial helps and assign new roles to them. Of course, these helps should not be in a way that damages their independency from the government.

NGOs are self-motivated entities which have been created to provide the people with their services, so they must consider citizens' needs and priorities regularly. The results of this research show that the role of NGO's contact with citizens is in average level not entrepreneurial. It indicates the fact that NGOs have failed in performing their main mission and have not been able to communicate with people well. People have a mean contribution in NGOs' activities; do not highly support them and their attention to NGOs' services is less than normal level.

However, NGOs should consider more interacts with people. Public awareness and publishing NGOs' reports of activities, spreading contribution culture, charity efforts, determining NGOs' situation in development process, acknowledging national active NGOs and introducing them to the public opinion, moving in line with main mission and free membership are among the efforts which NGOs as well as public entities should prioritize them to increase the amount of their contacts with people who are the target group of all NGOs.

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