



## ADHD, impulsivity and entrepreneurship☆

Johan Wiklund<sup>a,\*</sup>, Wei Yu<sup>a</sup>, Reginald Tucker<sup>b</sup>, Louis D. Marino<sup>c</sup><sup>a</sup> Department of Entrepreneurship & Emerging Enterprises, Whitman School of Management, Syracuse University, 721 University Ave., Syracuse, NY 13244, United States<sup>b</sup> Department of Management, College of Business, East Carolina University, 308 Slay Hall, Greenville, NC 27858-4353, United States<sup>c</sup> Department of Management, Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration, 361 Stadium Drive, Box 870225 Tuscaloosa AL 35487, United States

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 28 October 2016

Received in revised form 11 July 2017

Accepted 25 July 2017

Available online xxxx

## ABSTRACT

Recently, entrepreneurship scholars have started to show interest in how “negative” traits associated with mental disorders such as ADHD may have positive implications in entrepreneurship. While this research has the potential of producing important and counter-intuitive results, it is still in its infancy and the causal mechanisms that drive those individuals to be attracted to entrepreneurship have received limited attention. Consequently, we draw on the person-environment fit literature and propose that individuals are attracted to, and engage in, entrepreneurship because the task environment of entrepreneurship which favors speed of action is aligned with the traits of those individuals. We develop and test a model which suggests that ADHD influences entrepreneurship through the multifaceted trait of impulsivity. We find that inattention is negatively but hyperactivity is positively associated with entrepreneurship. We also find that sensation seeking and lack of premeditation generally positively influences entrepreneurship, whereas urgency has the opposite influence. Taken together, this suggests complex, multifaceted implications of ADHD and impulsivity in entrepreneurship. Theoretical implications of these findings are discussed.

Research on entrepreneur personality has been mostly associated with positive traits, such as self-efficacy and achievement motivation. However, most traits are not universally positive or negative and what is functional or dysfunctional depends on context (Judge et al., 2009). Entrepreneurship is characterized by uncertainty, which induces anxiety, worry, procrastination and inaction among most people (McMullen and Shepherd, 2006; Paulus, 2007). However, it is also a vocation that grants more autonomy in terms of job design and task allocation, which may be attractive to individuals who need more leeway in designing their own tasks. Acknowledging the high uncertainty and autonomy in entrepreneurship, we argue that ADHD symptoms, which are associated with negative consequences in many areas of life, may have positive implications in the context of entrepreneurship because ADHD is characterized by traits such as sensation seeking, a focus on action with little premeditation, and a desire for autonomy.

We employ person-environment fit theory (e.g., Holland, 1997) to argue that ADHD symptoms influence entrepreneurial preferences and behavior through the multi-dimensional traits of impulsivity. Specifically, ADHD symptoms are related to higher levels of sensation seeking, lack of premeditation, lack of perseverance and urgency. These traits in turn influence the perceived attractiveness of entrepreneurship and the probability of starting a business. We conducted surveys on a sample of MBA alumni from a school that is consistently ranked as one of the top fifty public MBA programs, who by virtue of their degree tend to have viable job opportunities and were thus less likely to be pushed into entrepreneurship. We find that ADHD

☆ The comments of participants at seminars at: Research Institute of Industrial Economics, Stockholm; Erasmus University, Rotterdam; Twente University, Enschede; Bath University; Carlos III University, Madrid; Bologna University; Nord University, Bodo; and Lund University helped improve the quality of this paper. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 2016 Babson College Entrepreneurship Research Conference and the 2016 Academy of Management Annual Meeting.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [jwiklund@syr.edu](mailto:jwiklund@syr.edu) (J. Wiklund), [wyu04@syr.edu](mailto:wyu04@syr.edu) (W. Yu), [TUCKERR16@ecu.edu](mailto:TUCKERR16@ecu.edu) (R. Tucker), [Imarino@cba.ua.edu](mailto:Imarino@cba.ua.edu) (L.D. Marino).

symptoms have a complicated relationship with entrepreneurial preferences and action, with the pathway through sensation seeking and lack of premeditation being mostly positive while the pathway through urgency being negative. Further, hyperactive symptoms seem to mainly result in positive outcomes while inattention symptoms lead to negative ones.

Our findings demonstrate that entrepreneurship is indeed a unique area where negative traits, such as ADHD, may represent valuable assets. Previous research has mostly associated ADHD with negative job-related outcomes (Barkley et al., 2006). Our research indicates that certain aspects of ADHD symptoms, such as sensation seeking and lack of premeditation, could lead individuals to be attracted to entrepreneurship and to start their own businesses. This suggests a contextualized view of personality traits, as well as boundary conditions to existing theories. Second, we develop and empirically test a model that links ADHD symptoms to entrepreneurship through the multi-dimensional traits of impulsivity, which provides a more nuanced and theoretically interesting understanding of the ADHD–entrepreneurship relationship. The same can be said about our findings of the differential influences of inattention and hyperactivity symptoms. Thus, this paper contributes to previous research on ADHD and entrepreneurship that has mostly examined the bivariate relationship between the two (e.g., Verheul et al., 2015; Thurik et al., 2016). Finally, our post-hoc analyses showed that the effects of ADHD symptoms on entrepreneurship are more pronounced under highly uncertain environments. This is consistent with our theorizing, suggesting that individuals with ADHD symptoms are more likely to harness advantages associated with ADHD rather than suffer from associated disadvantages in highly uncertain and dynamic environments such as entrepreneurship.

There are at least two important practice implications of our results. First, our results imply that individuals with ADHD symptoms may be empowered to craft their own jobs to fit their special needs. Second, our findings suggest that people with ADHD symptoms and impulsivity will tend to prefer action speed over action accuracy and that this may be functional in the context of entrepreneurship.

© 2017 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

---

## Executive summary

### 1. Introduction

Mental disorders are, by definition, dysfunctional. Otherwise they wouldn't be classified as disorders which are assessed and treated by medical doctors. At the same time, most traits are not universally positive or negative and what is functional or dysfunctional depends on context (Judge et al., 2009). In his famous novel "The Country of the Blind" H.G. Wells (1904) tells the story of the seeing man who accidentally enters a secluded valley where everybody is blind. As a seeing man, he initially believes he will be able to rule the blind, but soon realizes that the valley has been adapted to those who are blind and that he is actually at a disadvantage. Using logic similar to Wells's, people have started exploring whether certain mental disorders are potentially less dysfunctional or could even be advantageous in various walks of life, including entrepreneurship. It may be that the very traits that make it difficult to fit into most regular vocations could provide a good fit with the high uncertainty environment and lack of established routines associated with entrepreneurship. In particular, there is reason to believe that entrepreneurship exerts a pull on people who exhibit symptoms consistent with the neurodevelopmental disorder Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (e.g., Archer, 2015; Verheul et al., 2015, 2016; Wiklund et al., 2016).

Invoking person-environment (P-E) fit theory, we develop a model to propose that ADHD symptoms manifest in trait impulsivity and that the dimensions of impulsivity influence entrepreneurial preferences and behavior. We believe that this research makes several important contributions. First, the premise that the specific demands placed on entrepreneurship may make it particularly suitable for people with certain personal qualities has been researched extensively. For over 50 years, scholars have associated entrepreneurship with positive traits such as need for achievement, need for independence, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy, suggesting that these traits enhance people's willingness to assume risk and uncertainty, and to persevere despite the many challenges entrepreneurs face (see Miller, 2015, 2016 for recent reviews of this literature). More recently, scholars have started discussing the destructive implications of entrepreneurs' negative traits including traits such as narcissism, psychopathy, deviance, and ruthlessness (e.g., Klotz and Neubaum, 2016). What is lacking, however, is theorizing and empirical evidence pointing to entrepreneurship as a distinctive arena that may be fitting for people who display characteristics that otherwise have negative implications. Our conceptual model and empirical findings support such a notion and provide support for the contention that entrepreneurship is a distinctive context which is in need of unique theoretical arguments that take into account the potential boundary conditions that entrepreneurship presents for extant theories and findings. For example, there is extensive evidence of the negative implications of ADHD symptoms and impulsivity across contexts and situations (e.g., Barkley, 1997). Our findings concerning fit with entrepreneurship suggest boundaries to existing theories, and should stimulate new theoretical developments. As such, this research is consistent with the notion of entrepreneurship as a unique domain and a field of research (e.g., Wiklund et al., 2011). Specifically, our results suggest a 'logic of action' characterized by speed rather than accuracy (cf. the Carnegie School [e.g., Cyert and March, 1963] for logics of consequences vs. appropriateness), which may be useful in the

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات