

ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION AMONG MALAYSIAN ENTREPRENEURS

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The present study examines the status of achievement motivation among Malaysian entrepreneurs. A total of 133 Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs from Selangor and Kuala Lumpur were surveyed. Achievement motivation was measured by Mehrabian Achievement Scale (1963), which indicate that the Malaysian entrepreneurs have moderately low achievement motivation. High scores were recorded on future orientation and their responsibility in undertaking a particular task individually. The findings also indicate that Malaysian entrepreneurs are not willing to undertake difficult and challenging task, and are dependent in nature. There was no significant difference in achievement motivation between the Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs. Both groups are strong in their future orientation and their responsibility in performing a particular task. The Malay entrepreneurs prefer to compete in a team rather than individually. The Chinese entrepreneurs on the other hand prefer to perform tasks which they find easy rather than doing a difficult and challenging one. The implication of the study is that the achievement motivation aspect of entrepreneurs should be included in entrepreneurial training programmes in schools and higher institutions. This personality trait should be given emphasis just like the other managerial skills.

Entrepreneurship as defined by Burch (1986) is the act of being an entrepreneur, which Ms to undertake; to pursue opportunities; to fulfil needs and wants through innovative ideas and starting business. Schumpeter (1947) made a significant contribution towards the understanding of the term 'entrepreneur'. The entrepreneur was seen as one who upsets the state of equilibrium in the market by introducing new products or services, new methods of production, new ways of marketing or new ways of organizing. The entrepreneur was also seen as one who made new combinations of the Ms of production.

Various studies, such as, Charlesworth (1974), Poponoe (1975), and Chee (1979) have put together the profile of entrepreneurs in Malaysia. The entrepreneurs in Malaysia are mainly males between the ages of 30-39 years. Despite the attempts of the Malaysian Government to develop more Malay entrepreneurs, most of the

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business sector is still dominated by Chinese entrepreneurs. Although the number of Malay entrepreneurs has increased significantly, especially in the last decade, it is estimated that the Chinese still account for at least 70% of all small business entrepreneurs.

A study by Nazar (1989) on personality profile of '*bumiputra*' (indigenous) and '*non-bumiputra*' (non-indigenous) entrepreneurs in three states in Malaysia, reported that there were significant differences between them. The *bumiputra* entrepreneurs were found to be reserved, less aggressive, less heedless, less spontaneous, timid, more self-reliant, practical, careful, natural, artless, placid, self-assured, apprehensive, and less innovative. On the other hand, the *non-bumiputra* entrepreneurs were found to be outgoing, aggressive, heedless, spontaneous, bold, less self-reliant, imaginative, less natural, artful, depressive, and innovative.

Asma (1992) reported that the different ethnic groups in the Malaysian workforce have different ethnic values. For instance, the Malays tend to display characteristics such as friendliness, politeness, accommodating, not aggressive, and good manners. The characteristics unique to the Chinese include hardwork, success, thrift, prosperity, gambling and risk taking, entrepreneurship and pragmatic.

It is generally agreed that entrepreneurial success in small business depend on a number of factors. These include management and business skills; managerial background and experience; and management competencies, such as, finance and marketing (Haswell & Homes, 1989; Michael & Olaf, 1988; Tropman, 1989).

Other than competencies in the management of business, studies have shown that certain personality characteristics are also important in the success of small business. Some of the common traits mentioned are as follows: Confidence, perseverance, energy, diligence, resourcefulness, creativity, foresight, initiative, versatility (knowledge of product and market), intelligence, and perceptiveness. However, such desirable characteristics seem to go with success in any line of work. The lists have been generated simply by asking experts what traits, in their opinion, characterize entrepreneurs or by asking entrepreneurs what is responsible for their success. As no measures of the traits were employed, therefore, this approach cannot give reliable results (McClelland, 1987).

Studies have shown that the success of a business does not depend on the person's position in life or the initial advantage that he has, but rather on certain personality characteristics or competencies

(McClelland, 1987). A study on entrepreneurs in Malawi shows that successful entrepreneurs had high scores on the competencies such as, initiative, assertiveness, efficiency orientation, systematic planning and commitment to work contract. The successful entrepreneur scored higher in the above mentioned competencies which is significant at 0.05 level in the expected direction. If achievement motivation is included in the overall score along with the five competency scores, the difference between the more and less successful business people becomes even more significant ($p < .03$).

Studies by McClelland (1961), Yap (1980), Zaineah (1981), and Chan (1986) have shown that entrepreneurial success is related to achievement motivation. Achievement motivation is a need to achieve success in competition with a standard of excellence. Individuals with high achievement motivation tend to get involved in entrepreneurial activities such as business undertakings. A study by Morris and Fargher (1974) in Australia shows that among small businessmen, those with high achievement motivation have bigger business ventures than those with low achievement motivation. Wan Rafaei (1980) in Malaysia, found that there was a significant difference in achievement motivation among the three ethnic groups. The Chinese showed a higher achievement motivation compared to the Malays and Indians. In another study by Chan (1986) on Chinese and Malay entrepreneurs, it was found that the Chinese entrepreneurs showed higher achievement motivation than the Malay entrepreneurs.

The present study aims at determining the achievement motivation level of Malaysian entrepreneurs and to examine whether there are any differences between the achievement motivation of the Malay and the Chinese entrepreneurs.

METHOD

Sample

Two hundred male entrepreneurs (100 Malays, 100 Chinese) were randomly selected as the subjects. They were selected from members of the Malay Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce from the states of Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. All the 200 entrepreneurs were selected for a structured

interview but only 133 responded (72 Malays, 61 Chinese), giving a return rate of 66.5%.

Instrument

Mehrabian Achievement Scale

Achievement motivation was measured by using the Mehrabian Achievement Scale (1963). It consists of 26 items with equal number of positive and negative statements related to achievement motivation. The validity and suitability of the Mehrabian Achievement Scale in the Malaysian context were confirmed by researchers such as Wan Rafaei (1972), Chan (1986), and Habibah (1990).

RESULTS

The analysis of the scores on total sample indicate the level of achievement motivation of the entrepreneurs in this study is moderately low. The group mean for achievement motivation is 65.7 and the standard deviation is 19.35. The maximum possible score for the Mehrabian Achievement Scale is 154. Results show that 22% of the respondents are in the low category (Score: 25-50) of achievement motivation, 46% in the medium category (Score: 51-75), while only 31% are in the high category (Score: 76-112).

Table 1

Means and standard deviations on selected items (highest and lowest scores) of Mehrabian Achievement Scale on Malays group

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
I think more of the future than of the present and the past.	3.19	1.30
I would rather work on a task where I am alone responsible for the final product than one in which many people contribute to the final product.	2.35	2.18
If I am not good at something I would rather keep struggling to master it than move on to something I may be good at.	1.95	2.35
I would prefer a job which is important, difficult and involves a 50% chance of failure to a job which is somewhat important but not difficult.	0.06	2.73
I think that I hate losing more than I love winning.	-1.06	2.68
I would rather play in a team game than compete with just one other person.	-1.36	2.45

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations from selected items (highest and lowest scores) in the Mehrabian Achievement Scale. The Malaysian businessmen prefer to think of the future rather than the present or the past ($M= 3.19$). Secondly, they are responsible for undertaking a particular task ($M= 2.35$). Another positive characteristic of the Malaysian entrepreneurs is their willingness to work hard ($M= 1.95$).

In addition to the positive characteristics, Malaysian entrepreneurs also possess some negative characteristics which could have contributed to their moderately low level of achievement motivation. For instance, they are not willing to take intermediate risk in their businesses ($M= 0.06$). The data indicate that 47% of the respondents would rather not perform an important and difficult task which involves 50% chance of failure compared to a task which is important but not difficult. Another negative characteristic of Malaysian entrepreneurs is their strong motive to avoid failure ($M= -1.06$), which is an indication of low achievement motivation. The Malaysian entrepreneurs were also in favour of team work rather than competition ($M= -1.36$). This could also contribute to their low level of achievement motivation.

Comparison of the means for the two ethnic groups by using *t*-test shows no significant difference in their achievement motivation [$t(131)= 0.61, p>.05$].

Table 2 shows the comparison of the means and standard deviations for the Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs. Both the Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs were future oriented, showed a high degree of responsibility and willingness to work hard. On future orientation the Malay entrepreneurs were almost at the same level as the Chinese entrepreneurs.

The Chinese entrepreneurs showed a higher score ($M= 2.01$) on the willingness to work hard compared to the Malays ($M= 1.90$). The Malay entrepreneurs, on the other hand, showed a higher preference for teamwork versus competition ($M= -1.72$) compared to the Chinese entrepreneurs ($M= -0.93$). Finally, the Malay entrepreneurs showed a higher fear of failure ($M= -0.73$).

Table 2

Means and standard deviations of Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs on selected items (highest and lowest scores) in Mehrabian Achievement Scale

Items	Malay		Chinese	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I think more of the future than of the present and the past.	3.20	1.31	3.18	1.29
I would rather work on a task where I am alone responsible for the final product than one in which many people contribute to the final product.	2.26	2.25	2.49	2.11
If I am not good at something I would rather keep struggling to master it than move on to something I may be good at.	1.90	2.49	2.01	2.18
I would prefer a job which is important, difficult and involves a 50% chance of failure to a job which is somewhat important but not difficult.	0.06	2.71	0.08	2.78
I think that I hate losing more than I love winning.	0.04	2.75	1.45	2.57
I would rather play in a team game than compete with just one other person.	-0.73	2.18	-0.93	2.69

DISCUSSION

To be successful, businessmen have to think more of the future, especially, in relation to their goals. They have to set specific and realistic goals. Goal setting has been cited by many experts as an important factor in achieving success (McClelland, 1984; Yunckura, 1984). Psychologists often define happiness as striving towards Mingful goals. Entrepreneurs are usually happiest with goals in front and not behind them. According to McClelland (1961), entrepreneurs find it rejuvenating merely by choosing a new Mingful goal. Planning and carrying out the steps needed to reach the goal is stimulating. New

goals are challenging to entrepreneurs and will keep them going. By being future oriented, Malaysian businessmen are in line with the basic requirements to achieve success.

Another characteristic found to be strong among Malaysian businessmen is their responsibility for undertaking a particular task. Responsibility is one of the qualities necessary for entrepreneurs to be successful (Burch, 1986; McClelland, 1984; Yunekura, 1984). Entrepreneurs generally want full credit or discredit for their success or failure. Steady feedback on their performance enable entrepreneurs to remain accountable. Our results show that the Malaysian businessmen prefer to work on a task where they alone are responsible for the final product than one in which many people are responsible. This finding supports the qualities listed by Burch (1986), and McClelland (1987) as important to successful entrepreneurs.

Another important characteristic for successful entrepreneurs as cited by McClelland (1987) is hard work. Driven by their desire to excel, most entrepreneurs are willing to work very hard and put in longer hours in their respective business. The results show that 70% of the Malaysian businessmen are willing to work hard especially when they are not good at something in order to master it, rather than move on to something which they are already good at. The presence of this particular trait facilitates their future success.

On the other hand, the respondents also showed certain negative characteristics which contribute to their low level of achievement motivation. For example, they were not willing to take an intermediate risk. Risk taking is another characteristic of the highly motivated entrepreneurs. The data indicate that 47% of the respondents would rather not perform an important and difficult task which involves 50% chance of failure compared to a task which is important but not difficult. This shows that almost one half of them are not willing to take an intermediate risk with equal chance of success and failure.

The strong motive to avoid failure is another negative characteristic which contributes to the low motivation. For instance, they have more negative feelings associated with failure or losing. According to Atkinson (1964) individuals with high achievement motivation have stronger desire to achieve success while those with low achievement motivation are inclined to avoid failure. High achievement motivation tends to arouse positive feelings of success, whereas low achievement motivation is related to negative feelings of failure. Those with high achievement motivation prefer tasks which are related to

skills and competition unlike those with low achievement motivation who have preference for chance and cooperation.

The highly motivated individuals have vision, prefer achievement related activities rather than fun related activities. The entrepreneurs in our study have stronger motive to avoid failure, dislike competitive situations and try to avoid activities which are challenging or difficult. The Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs did not differ in achievement motivation. This could be due to the fact that they are in the same field and they may have acquired the behaviour traits that are important for their survival. For instance, the Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs are future oriented, showed a high degree of responsibility and were willing to work hard. However, there were slight differences in the traits studied between the Malay and the Chinese entrepreneurs. For example, the Malay entrepreneurs tend to be more cooperative whereas the Chinese entrepreneurs tend to be more competitive. On the fear of failure the results indicated that the Malay entrepreneurs showed a greater fear of failure compared to the Chinese entrepreneurs.

As a personality factor, achievement motivation has been shown by past studies as related to entrepreneurial success (Durand, 1983; McClelland, 1984; Yap, 1980). The findings have shown that some of the components of achievement motivation are present among the businessmen and these need to be enhanced through appropriate training and exposure. However, they are still lacking in certain traits, such as, the motive to achieve success, the willingness to take intermediate risk and being competitive. These are the areas which need further research so that appropriate steps can be taken in order to provide assistance for businessmen in Malaysia to achieve success.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study indicated that there is plenty of room for improvement as far as the personality traits of entrepreneurs are concerned. At present, many courses and training are offered by organizations in the public and private sectors for entrepreneurs to acquire skills in management and business. Such courses or training programmes should include the development of personality traits relevant in entrepreneurship success, particularly achievement motivation. Specific training such as achievement motivation training should be conducted by trained personnel in order to produce effective

results in our future entrepreneurs. Another way of helping new entrepreneurs is by way of interactions with the more experienced and successful entrepreneurs who can give useful guidance in achieving success in the various fields of business.

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