Managerial Skills Required by Entrepreneurs with Physical and Mobility Disabilities

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Abstract
Employment of disabled people in the past decades has been particularly important all over the world. Studies have introduced entrepreneurship as a worthy alternative for this marginalized group of people due to the different problems they encounter to get employment. The results of studies also suggested that entrepreneurial skills highly affect entrepreneurs’ success. Using qualitative research method, this study aims to identify the managerial skills that entrepreneurs with physically and mobility disabilities require to successfully establish and run a new business. Semi-structured interview was employed to collect the data from nine entrepreneurs with physical and mobility disabilities and two educational managers who were highly involved in developing and implementing educational and training programs for these people. The results suggest that people with disabilities need to have specific managerial skills that enable them to successfully run a new venture. Although we identified managerial skills such as marketing, planning and goal setting, decision making, growth and development management and efficient use of resources, we only presented the emerging managerial skills that have not yet been formally specified for managing a new business by disabled entrepreneurs. These skills are: networking skills, scanning the environment, awareness of the legal rights of disabled people, and persuasion skills.

Keywords: Managerial skills, Entrepreneurship, Disabilities, entrepreneurs with disabilities

1. Introduction
People with disabilities have been defined as those who have various physical and mobility impairments that highly affect their personal and social lives (Ahmadi and Hajian, 2012). According to the WHO statistics, ten percent of the population in the world suffers from a type of disability (UN, 1995). Statistics also showed that in developed countries, the unemployment rate of disable people is nearly twice that of the whole population (MajidiDorche, 2011). Specifically in Iran, disabled people include 13.5 percent of the whole population, 600,000 individuals have physical and mobility disabilities, and over 75% of disabled people are unemployed (Census of Population and Housing, 2011). Disability is a result of various reasons such as crashes, workplace accidents, violence, war, poverty or congenital causes. The number of disabled persons is growing because of the improvement in the quality of life and increasing life expectancy.

With a population of over 650 million, people with disabilities as the largest minority in the world and in order to survive in the society and have a normal life need an appropriate job that fits their talents and abilities (Abadi and Agah, 2012). The job not only provides financial independence for them but also creates a permanent barrier against their social exclusion (Hosseini and Safari, 2007). Today, training, employment,
and earning income have been considered as the indicators for people with disabilities’ achievements to gain equal opportunities, participate in the society, and develop their capabilities (Asadi, 2009).

Although barriers to the employment of disabled people have declined over the past few decades, they are still faced with many challenges such as physical barriers, physical or mental impairments and the attitude of other people toward their disabilities that prevent their presence in the society and organizations (Shier, Graham and Jones, 2009). These difficulties are not limited to the disabilities but people with disabilities should deal with the challenges stemmed from the employers such as the lack of their awareness of the problems related to disable people as well as their concerns about the high costs and legal responsibilities imposed to the organization by employing these people (Kaye, Jans and Jones, 2011). This leads to the ignorance of applicants with disabilities and their specific needs (Yeo and Moore, 2003).

Given the individual, social and economic importance of disabled employment and the role that it can play in advancing the community of the disabled people, incorporating disabled people and connecting them with other people in society has become an obligation in the labor rules and regulations of many countries and continuous attempts have been made to not only provide them with equal rights and equal access to resources and facilities but also empower them by developing their job related capacities (Dehkordi and Baghban, 2007). According to Note 2, Act 119 of the Labor Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the government is required to support people with disabilities by the provision of loans, lending facilites to do a job, training as well as elimination of architectural and organizational barriers in the companies and organizations that employ these people. However, the activities and funds devoted to improve employment of disabled people were not sufficient (Shafiabadi, 2003).

To encounter these problems and challenges, researchers believe that entrepreneurship is an adequate alternative for occupational rehabilitation of disabled people (Aronson, 1991; Parker, 2004; Martin, 2012; Heath and Reed, 2013).

While entrepreneurial skills have an influential impact on entrepreneurship performance (Wickham, 1998) and the critical importance of learning these skills have been emphasized by previous researchers (Solomon, 2007), there is little knowledge on the specific skills that individuals require for a new venture creation. Particularly for people with disabilities, few empirical studies have been conducted to identify the entrepreneurial skills that disabled people need to launch and manage a new business (McNaughton et al., 2006). Scarcity of our information on the entrepreneurial skills required by disabled people encounters their educators with serious challenges in tailoring the professional training for these people with their specific needs (Harris, Renko and Caldwell, 2013).

In this study, we attempted to identify the managerial skills that entrepreneurs with physical and mobility disabilities require to successfully establish and manage a new business. This paper is organized in four main sections. The first section presents the recent literature on entrepreneurial skills. Then, the method is described in details. The next section includes the findings. Finally, we conclude with presenting the implications of the findings for entrepreneurs with disabilities, educators and researchers.

2. Literature Review

The study of entrepreneurship for disabled people is a relatively new issue and started in 1990s in England. The potential contribution of entrepreneurship for people with disabilities figured out as 2.1 billion pounds (Bichard and Thomas, 2008). Prior research showed that over the past decade people with disabilities preferred entrepreneurship to being employed more than other people (Harris, Renko and Caldwell, 2013). Although the reason behind their selection into entrepreneurship is different and complex, entrepreneurship has been identified as a response to the discrimination they face against getting employment, losing their jobs or lack of dissatisfaction with their previous jobs (Yamamoto, 2011). Among other reasons are their high propensity to independence and work without the help of others, freedom and flexibility in the time and workplace (Cooney, 2008). Despite the many advantages of entrepreneurship for people with disabilities,
prior research indicates that entrepreneurs with disabilities are involved in less entrepreneurial activities and have lower entrepreneurial performance and business rates (NawazeshRoni, 2009).

Disabled people also encounter the lack of investment due to having no personal financial resources, enough information about the facilities, discrimination by some banks and venture capitalists and access to appropriate training and support as well as the fear of losing their regular income and negative attitudes of business consultants towards entrepreneurship of people with disabilities (Aghaei, 2011). In order to start or join an entrepreneurial team, people with disabilities should be highly motivated, willing to work hard and be able to work in groups (Niekerk, Lorenzo and Mdlokolo, 2007), therefore, they need to learn entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurial skills include those activities or operational knowledge required to establish or manage a successful business (Smilor, 1997). Wickham (1998) defines entrepreneurial skills as the skills that enhance entrepreneurship performance. GhulamPour and Kalij (2011) highlight team working and communication skills, business administration skill, the financial, legal and economic skills as to be essential for entrepreneurship.

The authors accentuated communication and organizational skills, self-confidence, perseverance, creativity, team working skills, negotiating skills and financial knowledge as the skills needed for entrepreneurs with disability. Scholars also categorized entrepreneurial skills into four groups including technical skills, social skills, tool skills, and management skills (Elsa Casimiro, 2003, P.3). Emphasizing technical and managerial skills, Lichtenstein and Lyons (1996) added entrepreneurial skills and personal maturity skills to the list of skills that entrepreneurs require throughout the process of a new venture creation (Lichtenstein and Lyons, 1996). Robert Hisrich and Michael Peters (2002) grouped entrepreneurial skills in three main categories including technical, personal and managerial skills.

Table 1 lists entrepreneurs’ managerial skills and its sub-concepts through three perspectives (Lichtenstein and Lyons, 1996; Casimiro, 2003; Hisrich and Peters, 2002). As the table indicates, previous researchers have looked at the managerial skills needed by entrepreneurs through different lenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Managerial Skills</th>
<th>Sub-concepts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Management, marketing, financial skills, legal skills, administrative skills, rating upgrade</td>
<td>Lichtenstein and Lyons (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and goal setting, decision - making, human relations, marketing, venture launch, financial and accounting skills, management, control, negotiation and growth management</td>
<td>Hisrich and Peters (2002)</td>
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Drawing on the entrepreneurial skills model proposed by Hisrich and Peters (2002), this study aimed to identify one of the dimensions of entrepreneurial skills (the managerial skills) required by people with physical and mobility disabilities to become entrepreneurs. The following paragraphs describe the components of the model in detail.

**Entrepreneurial Skills Model**

This study employed the entrepreneurial skills model proposed by Hisrich and Peters (2002). Based on the model entrepreneurial skills include technical, managerial and personal skills. The managerial skills reflects entrepreneurs’ capabilities related to planning and goal setting, decision making, human relations, marketing, launching the venture, accounting, management, control, negotiation and growth management as described in the followings.

**Planning and Goal Setting**

Planning refers to the managers’ capability in thinking about the desired goals and actions and act based on a method, program or logic (Stoner et al., 1995).
Decision Making

Decision making is the process of selecting a particular method to solve a specific problem (Hersi and Blanchard, 1999).

Human Relations

Work environment is a complex social context in which the manager can understand employees’ behavior by recognizing their attitudes, social relationships and informal communications. Mary Parker Follett believes that in every team work, the main concern is to create and maintain a dynamic and harmonious human relation (Alagheband, 2007).

Marketing

Marketing is the process of planning, pricing, promoting and implementing of ideas, goods and services to create interactions that satisfy individual and organizational goals (Islam, 2001).

Venture Launch

There are several influential factors in setting up a new business including government, available financial resources, role models and etc. In order to set up a business, entrepreneurs should have the necessary context. Also, formal education and prior experience in economic activities improve the necessary skills that prepare entrepreneurs to setup a new business. Although education plays a critical role in developing the skills needed to launch a new business in individuals, people are more successful in the areas where they have experience. As a whole, it should be considered that entrepreneurial capabilities are not in born but they can be trained and learned (Hisrich and Peters, 2002).

Accounting

Accounting is the capability of recording, classifying and summarizing financial activities of an organization in terms of the figures measurable to money and interpreting the results of the figures (Nabavi, 2002).

Management

Management is the process of efficient and effective use of human and material resources in planning, organizing, staffing, guidance and control in order to achieve organizational goals and in accordance with an accepted value system (Rezaeian, 2004).

Control

Control is to care about the results of the works performed by others (providing feedback to them) and compare the programs and activities carried out with the main programs and appropriate modifications in cases where there are deviation from the expectations (Alagheband, 2007).

Negotiation

A work relationship is defined in terms of a series of agreements and each agreement is resulted from a negotiation process (Haggai, 1999).

Growth Management

Growth management provides ways to the regularly changes and organization improvements. The goal of improving the organization is to achieve more effectiveness of organization and to increase opportunities for people to build their own potentials (Harvey and Brown, 2001).

Based on the Hisrich and Peters’ (2002) model, the main question of this research was “what are the managerial skills required by entrepreneurs with physical and mobility disabilities?”
3. Methods

This study employed qualitative research method to identify the managerial skills that entrepreneurs with physical and mobility disabilities required to successfully establish and manage a new business for two main reasons. First, qualitative method of research has been highlighted as to be effective in investigating the social phenomena (Cooper and Emory, 1995). Additionally, research on entrepreneurship of people with disabilities is still in the exploratory stage and there is little information on this area of inquiry (Nawazesh Roni, 2009). Previous researchers have also used qualitative method to examine entrepreneurship among people with disabilities (Harris, Renko and Caldwell, 2013; Heath and Reed, 2013; Theodorakopoulos, Shipton and Sarmento, 2011).

Previous researchers have used self-employment and entrepreneurship interchangeably (Aronson, 1991; Parker, 2004). According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring (GEM), entrepreneurship is launching a new business with less than 100 employees (Zali et al., 2012). Therefore, we included both physical and mobility disabled entrepreneurs (those who manage a new business) and the self-employed people with physical and mobility disabilities who had more than 42 months experience in successfully running their own business. We also involved the educational managers of vocational and rehabilitation centers for people with disabilities. We used snowball sampling method to choose the participants and continued the data collection process to the point of saturation.

In this research, the sample was taken from Raad Training and Charity Center, one of the main training and rehabilitation complexes for people with physical and mobility disabilities in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. The researchers selected the trainees in the center who had successfully launched an entrepreneurial business more than 42 months. After finding the first selected entrepreneur with disabilities, we set the time for an interview and he introduced us other disabled entrepreneurs. This procedure continued till the end of data collection process.

In this research, we conducted semi-structured interviews with nine entrepreneurs with physical and mobility disabilities and two interviews with the educational managers of the Raad Training and Charity Center. Though, we achieved the data saturation after we interviewed seven disabled entrepreneurs, we continued data collection with two more disabled entrepreneurs and confirmed our findings with interviewing two educational managers. We also used a combination of previous models including STAR (Kessler, 2006) and the 5W1H approach (Jane and Woo, 2005) to develop the interview protocol.

To examine validity and reliability of the research findings, the interview questions were reviewed by two researchers at our faculty. The following five important strategies were also used to improve the validity of the research findings (Danaeefard and Mozaffari, 2008):

1. The researcher’s sensitivity: Due to having a disabled member in the family and frequent attendance at Raad training Center, one of the researchers had high interactions and sensitivity to identify the entrepreneurial skills required for the people with disabilities.

2. The consistency of methodology: The alignment of research questions and the research method was constantly checked by the supervisor and advisor of the research project.

3. The appropriateness of the sample and using the most informant participants: Entrepreneurs with physical and mobility disabilities and educational and training managers had invaluable knowledge about the entrepreneurial skills needed for people with physical and mobility disabilities.

4. Concurrent gathering and analysis of the data: In this study, analysis of the data was performed immediately after each interview.

5. The theoretical framework: The data were analyzed using models of entrepreneurial skills (Hisrich and Peters, 2002).
To assess the validity of the findings in this study, two methods of internal and external validity were used. We ensured internal validity of the data by sending the interview transcripts, emerging codes and findings through email to the participants and asking them to check the accuracy of our findings.

To check the external validity, other experts than interviewer and interviewees (the supervisor and advisor of the research project and two PhD candidates) were asked to check the codings, and ensure the accuracy of our interpretations (Danaeeefard, Alvani and Azar, 2011). The collected data were analyzed using open coding, axial coding and selective coding. In this study, the coding process included identification of basic concepts, categories and sub-categories related to the managerial skills of disabled entrepreneurs. Therefore, after each interview, the audio was typed and the researchers read the transcripts over and over to identify the managerial skills that disabled entrepreneurs highlighted as to be influential in running their business. Specifically, each line or paragraph of the manuscript was read asking "What is the participant talking about? which managerial skills does she/he consider as impactful in running their business". Having these questions in mind and focusing on each participants, the key words or phrases that indicated a specific managerial skill and enabled the entrepreneurs with disabilities to successfully run their new business were highlighted. Then, using the constant comparative method, the data were organized in similar phrases and events and were categorized in a group. Finally, we identified the themes and sub-themes related to the managerial skills of the disabled entrepreneurs.

4. Findings

This section presents our findings related to the managerial skills required by disabled entrepreneurs. The findings of this study revealed four specific managerial skills that the disabled entrepreneurs highlighted as to be influential in successfully running their business (Table 2). Although we also identified other managerial skills such as marketing, planning and goal setting, decision making, growth and development management and efficient use of resources, we focused only on the emerging managerial skills that have not yet formally specified for managing a new business by disabled entrepreneurs (Table 2). These skills are described in details in the following sections.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Finding customer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Selling products</td>
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<td>Planning and goal setting</td>
<td>Planning for achieving the goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Goal setting</td>
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<td>Decision making</td>
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<td>Growth management</td>
<td>Developing business</td>
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<td>Negotiation and networking skills</td>
<td>Expansion of social networks</td>
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<td>The ability to exploit social networks</td>
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<td>Social capital</td>
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<td>Organizing communications</td>
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<td>Environment scanning</td>
<td>Identifying market gaps</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exploiting market opportunities</td>
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<td>Legal rights</td>
<td>Awareness of their own rights</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understanding rules and regulations related to disabled people</td>
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<td>Efficient use of resources</td>
<td>Getting help from others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Using acquired skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Using available resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persuading others</td>
<td>Ability to attract the support of others</td>
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Networking Skills

The results of this study suggested that social capital and social networks are important and influential in starting and managing a new business by disabled entrepreneurs. All of the participants highlighted their social interactions and networking as influential factors that not only affect the quality of the lives so that they live longer, happier and healthier, but also help them in creating new business ideas and recognizing entrepreneurial opportunities (I1, I3). Networking also affects disabled entrepreneurs’ success in running their business by providing them the chance of using various capabilities that different people bring to the group (I4).

I1: A single person has just one idea, but when there is a circle of friends and acquaintances around you, you feel your environment is full of windows, sight, ideas, methods, and ...

I3: As a person I need to say I am curious to all of the things and this eagerness to knowing causes people jump into the conversation to you. New people give you new attitudes, new attitudes include new facilities and new opportunities.

I4: Having enough information gives you a very high chance of success. When there is individual independence, people will not be different in terms of abilities. To cope with this problem, I tried to have relationship to active and successful people, I also communicated with the existed associations in this area.

Environment Scanning

Several disabled entrepreneurs in this study stated that one of the most important steps in the entrepreneurship process is to identify market needs and gaps, recognize available entrepreneurial opportunities in the environment and exploit them. The disabilities of the entrepreneurs and their special needs have derived them to scan the environment for entrepreneurial opportunities as described by I1 and I4. By the skill to search the environment, the disabled entrepreneurs can open various opportunities that change their lives entirely (I3). Scanning the environment also assisted the disabled entrepreneurs to find learning opportunities and improve the skills that empowered them in managing their business (I7).

I1: At first, my personal need made me to think about the matter, the need arising from my disability.

I3: These new opportunities can each open a door to you, behind that door you can find a financial opportunity, the opportunity to be married, a chance of having a family and many other things.

I4: After a short time, since I had faced problem in learning English due to the lack of adequate educational facilities, I launched the Waffle website.

I7: They said there are three courses including automobile electricity, mobile reparation, and computer. At that time, computer was very hard to learn, but it was a new course and I got it and I thought this is a promising course.

Awareness of Legal Rights of People with Disabilities (legal skills)

Majority of the participants emphasized the importance of improving disabled persons’ and specifically disabled entrepreneurs’ awareness of their legal rights.

The interviewees also pointed to the necessity of providing disabled people who have set up a business with a system of public affairs, because they believe a business owner must know how to use the supports and the organizations that offer the supports such as Social Security and Welfare and the available resources that can assist them in setting up their business (I2, I10 and I11).

I2: Say at first to the people with disabilities that they should defend your rights, if somebody would tell them that the Welfare Organization has a set of responsibilities to do for you, the Municipalities is responsible to do something for you, the Social Security Organization should do something for you, he/she would follow his/her rights. Some organizations are miss- using the lack of informations of people with disabilities.
I10: Many disabled people are not aware of their social rights, so they don’t follow them, we have good laws about people with disabilities, though most of them are not enforced, but most of the times they don’t follow them since they don’t know….

I11: If people with disabilities knew their right, for example, they knew what facilities Welfare or Social Security Organization consider for them, they could solve their problems better or easier, or even some associations provide some services.

Persuasion Skills

The participants have also highlighted the skills to communicate with others and persuading them as influential in their success to manage a new business by disabled people. More specifically, the disabled entrepreneurs postulated that communication skills affects their business success (I1), taking loans (I2) and finding a suitable place for running their business (I7).

I1: The way people with disabilities speak is very important in their business success. To be success, you should speak well, explain your task, and persuade others.

I2: I'd collected some money but it was not enough, I wanted to take loan, but it was very troublesome and took time, so I consulted with my family and asked them to help me. Not too happy at first, but then I talked to them and persuade them that I will be successful, and then they granted me financial aid.

I7: When I wanted to speak about preparing suitable situations, I had to present examples so that don’t think that this is just the problem of people with disabilities or veterans, for example I would say “Do you have a pregnant woman in your house who has problem with these curbs, what about aged parents?....

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this paper revealed that entrepreneurs with physical and mobility disabilities need specific managerial skills that enabled them to successfully launch and manage a new business. These skills include marketing, planning and goal setting, decision making, growth and development management and efficient use of resources that have been identified as the managerial skills required by entrepreneurs (Hisrich and Peters, 2002). Furthermore, we contributed networking skills, scanning the environment, awareness of the legal rights of disabled people, and persuasion skills as the managerial skills of the disabled entrepreneurs. These skills have not yet been formally specified for managing a new business by disabled entrepreneurs. In order to successfully establish and run a new business, therefore, entrepreneurs with physical and mobility disabilities require managerial skills beyond the managerial skills that empower other people to create a new venture. Although Hisruch and Peters’ (2002) model does not include these skills, previous researchers have explored them as the skills of entrepreneurs. More specifically, Van Vuuren and Nieman (1999) highlighted marketing, financial skills, decision making and problem solving as the essential entrepreneurial skills. In Casimiro’s (2003) classification, managerial skills include human resources and financial and business skills. Emphasizing that people with disabilities have less financial, human and social capitals, Pagan (2009) specified these three types of capitals as to be critical for entrepreneurs with disabilities. Heathand Reed (2013) also explored social capital and social networks as significant factors affecting the creation and survival of a business. This confirms the findings of the present research and suggests communication and social networks as the fundamental managerial skills that people with physical and mobility disabilities need for a new venture creation and management.

6. Recommendations

• Developing A Social Network for People with Disabilities

Currently there are two websites, “Flying Wing” and “Special”, which have been developed for people with disability and provide them with the social networks. Although the networks have connected disabled people together, they do not address the increasing needs of social communication and networking for them.
In addition, holding specific conferences for people with disabilities, disabled entrepreneurs, managers and industrialists and creating a friendly atmosphere that they can communicate directly highly improves disabled peoples’ communication and networking skills.

Providing people with disabilities with the entrepreneurial and management education and training tailored to their disabilities in order to develop managerial and entrepreneurial skills in these people. Furthermore, offering disabled people with workshops, seminars and webinars (online seminars) on entrepreneurial management skills can highly improve their requisite management skills for running a new business. Formal education at the undergraduate and master's levels in the field of business (not necessarily entrepreneurship), and also taking part in workshops, seminars and webinars (online seminars) will be very useful for the preparation of this target group.

- **Improving People With Disabilities’ Awareness of their Legal Rights**
  Enhancing disabled people’s awareness of their legal rights and the supports that different organizations such as Social Security and Welfare provide them is essential in successfully running a new business.

**Future Research Areas**
- This research has identified the managerial skills needed by entrepreneurs with physical and mobile disability. Future studies can explore the personal and technical skills entrepreneurs with disabilities.
- Future studies can also identify the methods for teaching entrepreneurship managerial skills emerging from this study to people with disabilities.

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