



Received: 29-12-2024
Accepted: 09-02-2025

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Does the presumed disadvantage of dyslexia offer advantages for entrepreneurship?

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2025.5.1.3762>

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to evaluate whether the presumed disadvantages of dyslexia offer advantages for entrepreneurship.

This study explores whether the presumed disadvantages of dyslexia offer advantages in entrepreneurship. It evaluates the impact of dyslexia on entrepreneurial success, distinguishes it from ADHD, and investigates how dyslexia specifically influences entrepreneurial experiences and outcomes.

The research identifies traits commonly associated with dyslexia—such as holistic thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities—that align and are recognized as beneficial for entrepreneurial success with criteria found in various entrepreneurial profiles. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of intuition in entrepreneurial decision-making, a trait often developed and enhanced by individuals with dyslexia due to their unique cognitive experiences. While dyslexia and ADHD frequently co-occur,

(comorbidity) this study specifically focuses on dyslexia to discern its unique impacts on entrepreneurship.

Despite challenges such as difficulties in reading, spelling, and organization, dyslexic individuals often exhibit strengths that can be advantageous in entrepreneurial settings. These strengths include a heightened ability to see the big picture, innovative problem-solving skills, and a strong intuitive approach to decision-making.

The research demonstrates how self-employment and thereby self-shaped environments enable individuals to leverage these strengths effectively by allowing entrepreneurs to tailor their work conditions to their cognitive profiles.

In conclusion, this study reframes dyslexia from a perceived disadvantage to a potential asset in entrepreneurship, demonstrating that individuals can transform these challenges into significant entrepreneurial advantages.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Success, Cognitive Strengths, Innovation, Self-Employment

Background

Entrepreneurs with conditions such as ADHD and dyslexia may experience both advantages and disadvantages. Research has explored these dynamics, focusing on how they influence entrepreneurship.

This research aims to specifically examine the effects of dyslexia on entrepreneurial experiences and outcomes, distinct from ADHD. The goal is to isolate the unique impact of dyslexia on entrepreneurship, addressing the notion that ADHD might not be the primary factor influencing entrepreneurial traits, particularly considering the comorbidity between the two.

Studies such as (1)Do Typical ADHD Traits Offer Advantages to Entrepreneurs? and (2)Clarification: ADHD Does Not Provide Special Conditions for Entrepreneurship, support this perspective, arguing that ADHD does not necessarily confer special conditions for entrepreneurship. The study will explore dyslexia by analyzing diagnostic criteria, self-perceived challenges, and distinguishing between learned skills and innate characteristics. It seeks to identify whether the traits associated with dyslexia align with skills beneficial for entrepreneurship, as indicated among many different archetypes in the ^[10] Entrepreneurial Profile Test. (EPT).

Are all presumed disadvantages, disadvantages?

Can any so-called presumed disadvantages transform into advantages in an entrepreneurial environment?

And could there be first-looked disadvantages that could become or *transform* into advantages?

The objective of this study is to evaluate whether any disadvantages of dyslexia offer advantages to entrepreneurs and/or for entrepreneurship.

If individuals with dyslexia experience any accompanying disadvantages, and if these could potentially translate into advantages, is this phenomenon a result of their chosen and self-shaped environment and surroundings?

Dyslexia and ADHD are separate conditions

Due to the *Swedish Dyslexia Organisation* ^[7]

-Neurological disabilities often overlap. Many people with dyslexia also have ADHD-like difficulties, such as problems with concentration and attention.

ADHD, ADD, Tourette's Syndrome, Asperger's Syndrome, and other conditions from autism spectrum disorders are related to each other, and there is also a link between dyslexia and dyscalculia. Neuropsychiatric difficulties are often hereditary. Within the same family, different individuals may experience varying types of difficulties.

The predominant disability is the focus of testing, investigation, and diagnosis, and there is a risk that less obvious difficulties are overlooked. – ^[7].

Dyslexia and ADHD are two distinct conditions often categorized within the realm of *neurobehavioral* disorders, and both can contribute to reading difficulties, but they can share overlapping challenges.

ADHD is classified as a *neurodevelopmental* disorder characterized by symptoms such as trouble focusing, difficulty remaining still, and impulsivity, which can affect an individual's overall functioning at work or school.

On the other hand, dyslexia is a specific learning disability that impacts a person's ability to read and decode language effectively. This condition leads to difficulties in reading, spelling, and understanding written text. Dyslexia impacts the brain regions responsible for language processing, making learning to read particularly challenging. While it often has a genetic component, this is not always the case.

Schultz, J.J. (2008) ^[8]. Dyslexia is regarded as a neurobiological condition that is genetic in origin. This means that individuals can inherit this condition from a parent and it affects the performance of the neurological system (specifically, the parts of the brain responsible for learning to read).

It's not uncommon for a child with dyslexia to have an immediate family member who also has this condition. Also, it's not unusual for two or more children in a family to have this type of learning disability ^[8].

The rates of ADHD and dyslexia, as well as the comorbidity between them, offer significant insights.

ADHD affects about 5-10% of the global population, with higher rates in children than in adults.

Dyslexia affects approximately 10% of the population, making it one of the most common neurodevelopmental conditions. Studies have shown considerable overlap between ADHD and dyslexia; roughly 18-45% of people with ADHD also have dyslexia, and 18-42% of those with dyslexia meet the criteria for ADHD.

^[17, 18, 19] *The overlap between dyspraxia, dyslexia and ADHD - ADHD and co-occurring.*

A brief clarification due to comorbidity

It can seem difficult to know which challenges are related to ADHD or dyslexia since both are neurobehavioral disorders.

^[3] Since ADHD involves attention and dyslexia affects

reading, the conditions can appear similar.

Distraction:

Both children with ADHD and dyslexia can appear distracted; however, the reason behind the distraction is different. A child with ADHD might appear distracted because it is difficult for them to pay attention, while a child with dyslexia might seem distracted because reading requires a great deal of effort and their energy has dwindled. 6) *Developmental dyslexia and vision.*

Although learning disorders occur in very young children, they are usually not recognized until the child reaches school age. About one-third of children who have learning disabilities also have ADHD, which makes it hard to focus. ^[3] *The Relationship Between ADHD and Learning Disabilities* (verywellmind.com)

Dyslexic perspective as an entrepreneur.

As a group, this study claims that dyslexic individuals often exhibit unique characteristics that can be advantageous in entrepreneurship. Studies suggest that dyslexics tend to demonstrate creativity, holistic thinking, and an ability to see the big picture. Additionally, they frequently exhibit persistence and a goal-oriented mindset in their pursuit of overcoming daily challenges.

Moreover, dyslexics frequently display stronger peripheral vision, ^[15]. Facilitating pattern recognition - a critical skill in identifying opportunities ^[8]. This heightened ability to perceive patterns aligns well with the entrepreneurial endeavour.

In decision-making, dyslexics often exhibit a higher degree of autonomy and independence, being less influenced by external opinions. This autonomy is not merely a product of circumstance but rather stems from a lifetime of navigating challenges and making decisions outside the norm. Such characteristics resonate with the entrepreneurial ethos, where autonomy is fundamental to success. – EPT test ^[10],

The author found that dyslexic individuals often develop a strong sense of self-reliance and confidence in their judgment, honed through their experiences of overcoming obstacles associated with their condition.

Furthermore, dyslexics and dyslexic entrepreneurs tend to approach decision-making with a pragmatic and resourceful mindset, drawing upon their innate problem-solving abilities. Their unique perspective and unconventional thinking style often lead them to consider alternative solutions and approaches that may elude others. Rather than adhering rigidly to conventional wisdom or societal norms, dyslexic individuals are adept at thinking outside the box and embracing unconventional paths to success.

Moreover, their experiences of persevering through difficulties in learning and communication instill in them resilience and determination in their decision-making process. Dyslexic individuals are often undeterred by setbacks or challenges, viewing them as opportunities for growth and innovation. This resilience enables them to make bold decisions and pursue their goals with unwavering determination, even in the face of adversity.

Overall, dyslexic individuals possess a unique set of attributes and strengths that shape their approach to decision-making. Their autonomy, resilience, and unconventional thinking style empower them to make bold and innovative decisions, contributing to their success in various endeavours.

Such characteristics resonate with the entrepreneurial ethos, where autonomy is fundamental - EPT ^[10].

Study Methodology

This study involves comparing the traits and behaviors of individuals with dyslexia to assess their potential implications for entrepreneurial skills and behaviors. The primary aim is to explore whether these characteristics contribute to the perceived disadvantages of dyslexia or, conversely, if they serve as advantages within entrepreneurial contexts. The study employs a comparative approach to analyze how traits commonly associated with dyslexia influence entrepreneurial behaviors and outcomes.

By transcending dyslexic diagnostic criteria against symptoms and self-perceived "problems," the research contrasts these characteristics against traits and skills (with skills defined as learned and traits as innate, as noted below). The entrepreneurial criteria identified^[1], on entrepreneurship overlap with a co-occurrence distribution of learned compensatory skills that match and thus can be seen as favorable for entrepreneurship and the daily realities entrepreneurs face. This research will examine how entrepreneurial traits align with those found among dyslexics and how these correlations might influence entrepreneurial success.

Skills = Abilities that can be learned or developed through practice and experience. "Ability, a personal ability by the help of knowledge, experience, and or properties to perform a certain action. When it comes to entrepreneurship we also talk about intuition as a skill. Skills can also be divided into domain-general, i.e. – leadership, and self-motivation. And domain-specific – used only for a certain job^[10]."

For example, problem-solving and delegation are skills that dyslexic individuals may acquire and excel at due to their unique perspectives and experiences.

Characteristics: This term is broader and can encompass both innate and acquired attributes. "Characteristics may include physical attributes, like eye color or height^[10]", as well as behavioural or psychological attributes, such as intelligence or creativity. These characteristics can be influenced by genetic factors and environmental factors, like upbringing and life experiences.

Qualities or attributes that are typical of a person or group. Traits like a holistic point of view can be considered characteristics that dyslexic individuals may naturally possess or develop due to their cognitive profile.

Traits: Similar to characteristics, traits refer to distinctive qualities or features of a person's behavior, personality, or abilities. Traits such as strong problem-solving abilities can be notable aspects of dyslexic individuals' cognitive strengths. "Traits can be seen as opposite to states that are more temporary conditions. I.e., consistent patterns of behavior that determine how a person will respond to a particular situation. Consistency in one's behavior across different situations^[10]." In personality psychology, "traits" refer to stable and consistent patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion that define an individual's personality. These traits are often considered to have a strong genetic component and tend to remain relatively stable over time. Examples of personality traits include openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism. (Big Five) For example, research has shown that certain personality traits linked to creativity, such as openness to new experiences, can be inherited^[20].

Patterns: Refers to recurring behaviors, abilities, or thought processes that are observed consistently over time. Dyslexic

individuals may exhibit certain patterns of thinking or problem-solving approaches that reflect their cognitive style. In summary, the abilities and strengths exhibited by dyslexic individuals, such as holistic thinking, problem-solving, and delegation, can be described using a combination of these terms, depending on the specific context and nature of the discussion. Each term emphasizes different aspects of these capabilities, from learned skills to inherent traits.

The author compares below the same 3 components for *creativity to lead to new business* - as in research^[10] EPT, and^[13] DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.21521.30561. *The Swede whose research found the 6th entrepreneurial archetype*, and also from research^[1] *Do Typical ADHD Traits Offer Advantages to Entrepreneurs?*

Some components for creativity to lead to new business:

1. Formulation and management of a good business idea. A good business idea provides the conditions for the business and its development. A business concept that is not adequate gives rise to uncertainty and causes energy losses in various respects. It does not have to be 100 percent ready but should be able to offer a focus that provides conditions for stakeholders to describe business logic and future development. New circumstances often arise that cause a change in plans and strategy. (The overall and holistic perspective is here of most importance)
2. Starting ability and ability to understand the need for the service or product. The ability to perceive that the described needs can be satisfied through the new business. It is in this respect where the ability to find out wholes and patterns that others may not see comes into expression. This aspect often contains an intuitive ability or "silent" knowledge that is difficult to describe in any other way than that it is invisible and difficult to comprehend rationally.
3. The ability to organize the new business and see what is needed to develop the company. This houses what is usually called "management ability". It is about *leading* and giving the organization conditions for the future and succeeding in the business idea offering conditions for business and interaction between the production systems.

Surveys about successful entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship

According to previous reports and studies, there is an overrepresentation among entrepreneurs with dyslexia.

Research and analysis e.g.,^[9] and^[11] indicate that entrepreneurs with dyslexia are disproportionately represented in the business world. A study^[9] titled "*Analysis of the Incidence of Dyslexia in Entrepreneurs and Its Implications*" explored the prevalence of dyslexia among entrepreneurs in the United States. The findings revealed a significantly higher incidence of dyslexia among entrepreneurs compared to the general population and corporate managers.

In the sample studied, 35% of entrepreneurs were found to be dyslexic, whereas only 1% of corporate managers were identified as dyslexic. This contrasts with the national incidence rate of up to 15%. Additionally, 23% of dyslexic entrepreneurs reported experiencing high or extreme levels of dyslexia.

Furthermore, dyslexic entrepreneurs were found to be more likely to own multiple companies, employ a larger number of staff, and demonstrate strong delegation skills."

According to *The Dali report* ^[11] **THE POTENTIAL TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS?**

Due to this research Entrepreneurs are mentioned among many things such as e.g., well-developed intuition, problem-solving, holistic perspective, and flexibility.

This is congruent with the research within and behind the research of EPT ^[10] EntrepreneurProfileTest.com, among all 6 entrepreneurial archetypes. And these traits rim with traits among dyslexics as this research will point out here below.

The group in The Dali Report is strongest in more complex thinking and problem-solving. These entrepreneurs have strong cognitive ideation and a holistic perspective, they are logical, and they have an outlook that helps them navigate a complex environment and look beyond the horizon. The group also exhibited good self-awareness in terms of their capacity, about as many matchings as complementary abilities are identified.

Cognitive flexibility – the ability to switch tracks without losing focus on the essentials – is an interesting example in this Dali report due to Entrepreneurs tend to have less need for structure and rules and are often perceived as flexible in their way of approaching a goal or a task combined with a well-developed intuition.

Well-developed intuition, problem-solving, holistic perspectives, and flexibility are congruent with the research within and behind the research of EPT ^[10] EntrepreneurProfileTest.com, among all the 6th entrepreneurial archetypes.

And these entrepreneurial traits rim with traits among dyslexics as this research will point out here below.

Complementary abilities.

Furthermore, as to mentioned complementary abilities ^[11] – dyslectic compensates for a lack of skills or self-perceived capacity. – I.e., entrepreneurs can easily hire others (compensate) so they can focus on what they do best. This can also be seen as -shaping a working environment that suits and works for those with dyslexia.

As the title of this research – Does the presumed disadvantage of dyslexia offer advantages for entrepreneurship?

If the dyslectic part has any cooperating disadvantages, and or if these can be advantages, and if, is this due to a chosen and self-shaping environment and situations, -surroundings? Besides self-shaping, another thing that occurred in this research was - not being affected to the same extent by what others think and feel, and therefore dares to take decisions. One could here see, e.g., - dyslectic people's whole life has been like that; *one has always felt outside so what is new?* quote!

That said, previous research has shown that autonomy has a ground role within entrepreneurship – EPT ^[10b, 10].

Based on these frameworks and the description as well as the above perception of entrepreneurship: An entrepreneur can be described as - a person, who acquires an idea for a product or service, reflects on the risk or rather the opportunity, identifies the possibilities, gathers resources, plans, and implements the idea ^[10, 11]. Regarding research about the 6th entrepreneurial archetype this is also what is common among all six different archetypes within Entrepreneurial behaviors ^[10]. EPT.

By comparing traits and behaviors among dyslexics and, lastly, by interviewing people who have taken the Entrepreneurial Profile Test (EPT) ^[10] and those diagnosed with dyslexia, the question was asked: What is life like for someone with dyslexia? These answers stood out.

Solve daily problems –

one's whole growing up and life is and has been a constant daily problem!

- One compensates for shortened commands – so one both needs and learns to delegate.
- One cannot read and write so well - so you have to be a good oral communicator.

In other words, you have to be or become your own leader. (Entrepreneur).

Summarises:

- Entrepreneurial skills or assets combined with mentioned typical dyslectic skills are e.g.
- Delegate, the ability or trust to delegate, where, when, and what.
- Ability to solve problems.
- Communicate with others, e.g., customers, staff, investors, banks, etc.
- Be your own leader, you have to guide yourself through different situations/problems, daily.
- Stronger peripheral vision seems to be more common in people with dyslexia. This means advantages when recognizing patterns.

Dyslexia, a learning disorder affecting reading and spelling, can present challenges. However, it's important to note that many individuals with dyslexia have been successful in entrepreneurship. Here's why:

Advantages of Dyslexia for Entrepreneurs

Dyslexic entrepreneurs often excel in seeing the big picture, combining this holistic perspective with innovative thinking. Their unique ability to visualize and conceptualize ideas enables them to focus on broader strategies rather than getting lost in details. This outside-the-box thinking is a significant asset in business, where innovation and creativity are paramount. Due to the way their brains process information differently, dyslexic individuals bring fresh perspectives to problem-solving, often identifying opportunities that others might overlook. Collectively, they demonstrate strengths in creative thinking, problem-solving, oral communication, and complementary team-building—all of which are crucial skills in entrepreneurial environments.

Conclusion

This research reveals that dyslexia, while presenting certain challenges, often confers unique advantages in entrepreneurship. The research shows why dyslexic individuals are overrepresented among entrepreneurs by examining distinctive traits such as holistic thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities that are highly valued in entrepreneurial endeavors and align with competencies highlighted in tools like the *Entrepreneurial Profile Test (EPT)*, which assess psychological and personality traits relevant to entrepreneurial success. These traits, including holistic thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, enable dyslexic entrepreneurs to

navigate complexities, innovate, and lead with a unique vision.

The findings underscore that dyslexic entrepreneurs frequently develop resilience, autonomy, and a strong intuitive approach to decision-making. These qualities are crucial for overcoming obstacles and achieving success in business ventures. Despite difficulties in areas like reading, spelling, and organization, dyslexic individuals leverage their strengths and adaptive coping strategies to thrive in entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the significant role of the environment and personal coping strategies in shaping entrepreneurial success. Dyslexic individuals often benefit from self-employment and entrepreneurial contexts, where they can create and shape their own environment, enhancing their ability to capitalize on their unique cognitive profiles.

In summary, this research reframes dyslexia as an asset rather than a liability in entrepreneurship. By recognizing and harnessing the inherent strengths associated with dyslexia, individuals can transform perceived disadvantages into valuable advantages, achieving notable success in their entrepreneurial pursuits. These traits overlap with some of the criteria identified in entrepreneurial profiles and can be seen as favorable for entrepreneurial achievement.

Summary of Key Findings

This research reveals that dyslexia, despite presenting certain challenges, offers unique advantages in entrepreneurship. Dyslexic individuals often demonstrate traits such as holistic thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, which are highly valued in business ventures. These characteristics enable them to navigate complexities and innovate effectively. The research also clarifies how dyslexia's perceived disadvantages can be transformed into advantages, particularly in environments that allow individuals to shape their own conditions, such as in self-employment and entrepreneurial settings.

Implications

The research suggests a need for a paradigm shift in how dyslexia is perceived in entrepreneurial contexts. By acknowledging dyslexia as a potential asset, stakeholders can create more supportive environments that leverage the unique strengths of dyslexic individuals. This could lead to enhanced support systems and strategies tailored to the needs of dyslexic entrepreneurs.

Limitations

The research acknowledges several limitations, including a small sample size and a focus on specific geographic regions. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings. Further research with a larger and more diverse sample is needed to confirm these results and explore the implications in different contexts.

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