

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2018.041.018](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2018.041.018)

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GENERATION Y FEMALE STUDENTS PERCEIVED BARRIERS TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Abstract:

Entrepreneurship is a critical ingredient for stimulating economic growth and employment opportunities in all societies. Female participation in entrepreneurial venture creation, including Generation Y, in both developed and emerging economies are seen as a key contributor to economic growth. However, entrepreneurs face numerous barriers on the road to success, which may have significant influence on an individual's motivation to become entrepreneurs. Using a convenience sample of 328 South African and 250 Netherland's female students, this paper reports on study conducted to compare female generation Y students' perceived barriers towards entrepreneurship, in South African and the Netherland's. The collected data was analysed using reliability analysis and a two independent-samples t-test. The findings suggest that South African students perceived barriers towards' entrepreneurship is higher than those of their counterparts in the Netherlands.

Keywords:

Barriers, entrepreneurship, females, Generation Y, South Africa, Netherlands

JEL Classification: L26, M20, M29

1 Introduction

Worldwide, entrepreneurship continues to gain momentum as a significant and relevant field of research (Chmielecki & Seliga, 2015). Many researchers and economists consider entrepreneurship as the economic engine necessary for economic growth and employment opportunities in all societies (Doran *et al.*, 2018; Kritikos, 2014; Smith & Chimucheka, 2014). Hence, economic growth may be facilitated through more individuals considering self-employment and new venture creation as a career choice (Ogunlana, 2018). Furthermore, entrepreneurs are seen as the primary producers and drivers of entrepreneurial activity through new venture creation and employment creation, and also known as economic actors (Momani, 2017). Therefore, entrepreneurs creating new ventures is important to the overall long-term economic health of countries (Kritikos, 2014).

The literature implies that in order to ensure a healthy economy in a country, it is necessary to support young individuals, also referred to as Generation Y (individuals born between 1986 and 2005) (Markert, 2004) to be involved in entrepreneurial activity (Marinic *et al.*, 2014). Generation Y, compared to prior generations, is regarded as more confident, independent and team-orientated individuals. Moreover, Generation Y is also considered as the largest generation to date and individuals of this cohort are perceived as the upcoming leaders of the world (Pyöriä *et al.*, 2017). During 2017, the South African Generation Y cohort consisted of approximately 36 percent of the total South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Whilst in the Netherlands the Generation Y cohort comprised 16 percent of the total population (Statista, 2017). Pertaining to the size of this cohort in the corresponding countries, the members of this cohort are essential to the future of a country (Frey, 2018). Though, Generation Y is faced with unique challenges, such as high unemployment when entering the business environment (Pyöriä *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the promotion of entrepreneurial activity amongst Generation Y students is important, as the more conscious Generation Y is of entrepreneurship, the more employment opportunities and economic growth there will be in the economy of a country (Bux, 2016).

South Africa considered as an emerging economy (Mamabolo *et al.*, 2017), unemployment rate are amongst the highest in the world (Cloete, 2015), indicating a rate of 26.7 percent in 2018 (QLFS, 2018). Hence, the proliferation of entrepreneurship is encouraged and is considered essential to economic welfare in an emerging economy such as South Africa in that it contributes assuaging high unemployment and unacceptable levels of poverty (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). In the South African economy, entrepreneurs are the primary engines of employment opportunities and poverty reduction (Incentives SA, 2014). Female unemployment in this country, specifically has been greater than that of males during the period of 2001 to 2017, standing at 29.8

percent in 2017 (Statistics SA, 2017). As a result, the South African government initiated several initiatives to encourage individuals to become entrepreneurial, which is evident by the various supporting mechanisms and policies that occur for entrepreneurs in the country. It includes funding, physical infrastructure and business advisory programmes (HRDC, 2014).

The Netherlands is a country with a rich history in entrepreneurship and innovation (van Tielhof *et al.*, 2014). Through continuous innovation Dutch entrepreneurs have succeeded in making the Netherlands one of the most productive and competitive economies in the world. The country provides a promising environment for entrepreneurs (Landheer & Waasdorp, 2014). The most favourable aspects of the Dutch entrepreneurial climate are the availability of financial capital, the positive attitude among young individuals to labour mobility and the access of physical infrastructure and the diminished barriers for entrepreneurship (GEM, 2016). The result of this strong entrepreneurial climate is the country's low unemployment rate, standing at 4.8 percent in 2018 (Statista, 2018) in addition to the low female unemployment rate, standing at 4.7 percent in 2017 (Country economy, 2017). Concerning government support, the Dutch Government has introduced a number of programmes focusing on supporting entrepreneurs fund their ventures in the start-up phase (Valerio, 2017). Furthermore, the Dutch government started a programme that offers direct financial assistance to entrepreneurs, where the entrepreneur may apply to receive financial packages from the Dutch government (PWC, 2017).

Female entrepreneurship is characterised by innovation, employment creation and economic growth (Kalinic *et al.*, 2014). Female participation in entrepreneurial venture creation in both developed and emerging economies are seen as a key contributor to economic growth. However, female entrepreneurs in emerging economies, such as South Africa face greater constraints in becoming entrepreneurs than their counterparts in developed economies, various possible reasons for this are underlined in the literature, such as a lack of entrepreneurial competencies (Schneider, 2017), education and training (Agholor *et al.*, 2015), access to capital (Mamun *et al.*, 2016) and gender inequality, however, the South African government gave attention to these constraints (GEM, 2016). Moreover, evidence from the literature indicates that female entrepreneurs in developed countries are further ahead than their counterparts in emerging economies (Nsengimana, 2017). The difference may be due to the distinct economical differences between South Africa and the Netherlands (Broadberry & Garner, 2016). Although these countries are not on the same economy levels, female entrepreneurship is important in both these countries' to stimulate economic growth through entrepreneurial activity (GEM, 2016). Various researchers (Kritikos, 2014; Kanchana, *et al.*, 2013) opine that to encourage entrepreneurs to be active participants in entrepreneurial activity it is important to understand the barriers individuals faces in becoming entrepreneurs.

According to Sahinidis *et al.* (2014), an individual's decision to start a new venture is affected by numerous factors. The Oxford English dictionary defines the term barrier as an obstacle that prevents movement or access (Waite, 2013). Webster's Online Dictionary (2015) defines a barrier as a problem that makes something difficult or impossible. Baba (2013), opine that before an individual considers to be entrepreneurial, an individual should be conscious of barriers in the entrepreneurial process. Moreover, Kanchana *et al.* (2013), state that before an individual decides to take part in entrepreneurial activity, an individual should be at ease with change and uncertainty. However, entrepreneurs face numerous barriers on the road to success, which may have a substantial influence on the entrepreneur's motivation to engage in entrepreneurial activity (Samuel *et al.*, 2013). Prior research recognised two categories of entrepreneurial barriers, namely personal barriers (Stamboulis & Barlas, 2014; Sandhu *et al.*, 2011) and business environmental barriers (Kanchana *et al.*, 2013; Donatus, 2011).

Entrepreneurs are confronted with different personal barriers when engaging in entrepreneurial activity (Stamboulis & Barlas, 2014). According to Weda, (2017) these personal barriers comprise of aversion to risk, fear of failure, aversion to stress and hard work. In addition Uddin and Bose (2013), identified that during new venture start-up entrepreneurs are challenged with personal barriers such as lacking a viable venture idea, shortfall of skills and significant loss of free time. Business environmental barriers relates to factors in the entrepreneurial environment that influence and individuals willingness to undertake entrepreneurial activities (Stamboulis & Barlas, 2014). Kanchana *et al.*, (2013) opine that entrepreneurs face various business environmental barriers such as organisational barriers, economic- and financial barriers and entry barriers. Organisational barriers pertain to the difficulties entrepreneurs' face that hinder the business operations and growth, such as registering the business, gaining business licenses, copyright and patent regulations (Dzisi, 2014). Economic- and financial barriers are associated with the processes and limitations within the business environment related to adequate funding to start the venture and a lack of resources for production of goods and services. Entry barriers are the obstacles entrepreneurs face when entering a given market, such as finding the right business location and strong competition (Kanchana *et al.*, 2013). However, Cho (2015), reported that individuals in emerging economies often lack skills and access to sufficient capital to start a business.

While several studies have been conducted in the international market on student perceived barriers (Bobera *et al.*, 2014; Iakovleva *et al.*, 2014; Kvedaraite, 2014) a vast search of the literature revealed no similar comparative studies relating to perceived barriers conducted with female students as the target population, in South Africa. Gaining insights into what barriers are perceived by female Generation Y students towards entrepreneurship from both an emerging and developed economy perspective will contribute towards implementing initiatives to motivate young females in becoming active

individuals in economic growth. As such, the purpose of this study is to report on a study undertaken to determine the difference between South African and Dutch female Generation Y university students' perceived barriers towards entrepreneurship.

2 Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the descriptive research design, following the single cross-sectional approach was used.

2.1 Sampling method

The target population for this study were female full-time Generation Y undergraduate students, aged between 18 and 24 years, enrolled at South African and Netherlands public higher education institutions (HEIs). In this study, there were two samples, namely Sample South Africa (SA) and Sample Netherlands (NL). The sample frame for South Africa included 26-registered South African HEIs, as recorded by Higher Education South Africa, of which there are 11 traditional universities, 6 comprehensive universities and 9 universities of technology (Universities South Africa, 2015). For sample NL, the sample frame comprised of 56-registered public HEIs located in the Netherlands as listed by the Central Registration of Higher Education Programmes, entailing 13 research universities and 43 universities of applied sciences (Central Registration of Higher Education Programmes, 2015). From the sampling frame, a judgement sample of two HEI campuses in South Africa, one a traditional university and the other a university of technology, located in the Gauteng province, were selected. For sample NL once again a judgement sample of two HEI campuses, one a research university and the other a university of applied sciences, situated in the North-easternmost province, were selected. From these 800 questionnaires (400 per country) were distributed to a convenience sample of female students across the four university campuses. In both the South African and Netherlands samples, the questionnaires were divided equally between the two HEIs samples per country.

2.2 Research instrument and data collection

A structured self-administered questionnaire was used to measure undergraduate South African and Dutch female Generation Y students' perceived barriers towards entrepreneurship. The students were requested to complete a questionnaire comprising of two sections. The first section gathered the students' demographic information and the second section included the 21-item scale pertaining to perceived barriers that were adapted from a scale developed and validated by Karhunen and Ledyeva (2010). These

researchers adapted the scale from Tkachev and Kolvereid (1999). The scale consisted of five constructs, namely personal motivational barriers (6 items), personal competence barriers (4 items), organisational barriers (4 items), economic and financial barriers (3 items) and entry barriers (4 items). A five-point Likert scale, ranging from disagree (1) to agree (5) was used to measure the students' rate of agreement or disagreement with each item pertaining to the perceived barriers towards becoming entrepreneurs.

The questionnaire was piloted on a convenience sample of 49 full-time undergraduate students enrolled at a South African public HEI campus and did not form part of the sample frame. The five-point scale returned a Cronbach alpha value of 0.794 for the entire scale, which is above the recommended level of 0.70 (Pallant, 2016). After permission was requested from lecturers, the questionnaires were distributed to the two samples of the main study. Students from both sample groups were informed that participation was strictly voluntary. The gathered data was analysed using reliability and validity analysis and a two independent-samples t-test. The captured data were analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 25 for Windows.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Sample description of total sample

From the 800 questionnaires distributed to the sample, 578 completed and usable questionnaires were returned, and a 72 percent response rate was achieved. The sample comprised more participants from South Africa than from the Netherlands. The study intended to achieve an equal percentage of responses from the two HEIs in South Africa as well as the two HEIs in the Netherlands. Table 1 indicates a description of the total sample.

Table 1: Sample description - total sample

| Country | (%) | Institution | (%) |
|-----------|------|----------------------------------|------|
| Sample SA | 56.7 | Traditional university SA | 33.2 |
| | | University of Technology SA | 23.5 |
| Sample NL | 43.3 | Research university NL | 23.0 |
| | | University of applied science NL | 20.3 |

Source: Own

3.1.1 Sample SA description

From the 400 questionnaires distributed to Sample SA, 328 completed and usable questionnaires were returned, which interprets an 82 percent response rate. The sample included a greater number of participants from a traditional university (58.5%) than participants from a university of technology (41.5%). The largest portion of the sample indicated being 19 years of age (29.7%), followed by students being 18 years of age (21.4%) and 20 years of age (21.4%). Most of the participants indicated that their mother tongue language is SeSotho (26.9%). Table 2 presents a description of Sample SA.

Table 2: Sample SA description

| Institution | (%) | Age | (%) | Year of study | (%) | Mother tongue language | (%) |
|--------------------------|------|-----|------|-----------------|------|------------------------|------|
| Traditional university | 58.5 | 18 | 21.4 | 1 st | 34.7 | Afrikaans | 18.9 |
| University of technology | 41.5 | 19 | 29.7 | 2 nd | 30.4 | English | 3.4 |
| | | 20 | 21.4 | 3 rd | 28.2 | French | 0.6 |
| | | 21 | 14.4 | 4 th | 6.7 | IsiNdebele | 0.9 |
| | | 22 | 6.1 | | | Sepedi | 10.1 |
| | | 23 | 3.0 | | | Polish | 0.3 |
| | | 24 | 4.0 | | | Portuguese | 0.3 |
| | | | | | | Shona | 0.3 |
| | | | | Sesotho | 26.9 | | |
| | | | | SiSwati | 4.3 | | |
| | | | | Tsonga | 7.6 | | |
| | | | | Setswana | 7.0 | | |
| | | | | Venda | 2.7 | | |
| | | | | IsiXhosa | 6.1 | | |
| | | | | IsiZulu | 10.7 | | |

Source: Own

3.1.2 Sample NL description

From the 400 questionnaires distributed to Sample NL, 250 completed and usable questionnaires were returned, which shows a 63 percent response rate. The sample included more participants from an academic university (53.2%) than participants from a

university of applied science (46.8%). The majority of participants indicated being 18 years of age (37.2%), followed by students being 19 years of age (18.4%) and 21 years of age (12.8%). A greater number of the students specified their mother-tongue language as Dutch (94%). Table 3 indicates a description of Sample NL.

Table 3: Sample NL description

| Institution | (%) | Age | (%) | Year of study | (%) | Mother tongue language | (%) |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----------------|------|------------------------|------|
| Academic university | 53.2 | 18 | 37.2 | 1 st | 56.3 | Aruban | 0.8 |
| University of applied science | 46.8 | 19 | 18.4 | 2 nd | 21.9 | Chinese | 2.8 |
| | | 20 | 11.2 | 3 rd | 12.1 | Dutch | 94.0 |
| | | 21 | 12.8 | 4 th | 9.7 | German | 0.8 |
| | | 22 | 10.8 | | | Greek | 0.4 |
| | | 23 | 3.6 | | | Spanish | 0.4 |
| | | 24 | 6.0 | | | Thai | 0.4 |
| | | | | | | Turkish | 0.4 |

Source: Own

3.2 Reliability and validity

A Cronbach alpha value of 0.902 was computed for the entire scale measuring the perceived barriers towards entrepreneurship. The Cronbach alpha values for the five constructs, namely personal motivational barriers, personal competence barriers, organisational barriers, economic-and financial barriers and entry barriers ranged from 0.789 to 0.836. Thus, providing evidence of internal-consistency reliability (Brace *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, the average inter-item correlation values for the five constructs were also computed and these ranged from 0.385 to 0.554, which were within the proposed range of 0.15 to 0.50 (Clark & Watson, 1995). Therefore, providing further proof of reliability, as well as suggesting convergent and discriminant validity.

3.3 Two independent-samples t-test

Two independent-samples t-test were applied to determine whether there is a significant divergence between the two sample groups pertaining the five constructs, namely personal motivational barriers, personal competence barriers, organisational barriers, economic- and financial barriers and entry barriers as perceived barriers towards entrepreneurship. The predictable mean was set at 3 (that is, in the agreement area of

the scale) and the significance level at the conventional 0.05 level. Table 4 states the calculated means, standard deviations, t-values, p-values and Cohen's D.

Table 4: Country difference on female Generation Y students' entrepreneurial motivations

| Constructs | South African | | Netherlands | | t-value | p-value | Cohen's D |
|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | Mean N=328 | Std. Dev. | Mean N=250 | Std. Dev. | | | |
| Personal motivational barriers | 3.237 | 0.894 | 3.011 | 0.693 | -3.310 | 0.001* | 0.25** |
| Personal competence barriers | 2.697 | 1.118 | 2.497 | 0.724 | -2.467 | 0.009* | 0.18** |
| Organisational barriers | 3.205 | 1.012 | 2.712 | 0.828 | -6.268 | 0.000* | 0.49**** |
| Economic- and financial barriers | 3.427 | 1.102 | 3.307 | 0.814 | -1.448 | 0.132 | ***** |
| Entry barriers | 3.679 | 1.037 | 2.401 | 0.790 | -16.226 | 0.000* | 0.35** |

* Significant at $p < 0.05$
** Small effect, practically non-significant
*** Medium effect and moving toward practical significance
**** Large effect, practical significant
***** Cohen's d-statistic not calculated as the variable was not statistically significant

Source: Own

From Table 4 it is evident that significant p-values ($p=0.000 < 0.05$) were calculated on all the perceived barrier constructs, namely personal motivational barriers, personal competence barriers and organisational barriers, except for perceived economic- and financial barriers. This infers that South African and Dutch participants did not vary much in their perceptions towards the impact of economic- and financial barriers towards entrepreneurship. Therefore, with the exception of economic- and financial barriers, at a 95 percent confident interval, it may be inferred that there is a statistical significant difference between the participants of the two sample group's perceived entrepreneurial barriers. Furthermore, the South African sample scored higher means on all the perceived barriers. These findings imply that potential South African female

entrepreneurs have significant higher perceived barriers towards becoming entrepreneurs than their Dutch counterparts. Cohen's D calculations were computed for determining the practical significant difference found between the two sample groups' perceived barriers towards entrepreneurship. The organisational barriers construct returned the largest effect size, with a value of 0.49. As illustrated by Table 4, personal motivational barriers, personal competence barriers and entry barriers returned small effect sizes, which is practically non-significant. For this reason, the findings of this study suggest that South African female Generation Y students, perceive personal motivational barriers, personal competence barriers, organisational barriers and entry barriers to be greater barriers in becoming an entrepreneur than their Dutch counterparts. A possible reason why females in an emerging economy seem to perceive greater barriers to become an entrepreneur than their Netherland's counterparts, may be due to South Africa, as an emerging economy, facing unique challenges with regard to gender, education and training, unemployment and poverty.

4 Conclusion

Entrepreneurship is considered as the economic engine necessary for economic growth and employment opportunities in all societies. Female participation in entrepreneurial venture creation in both developed and emerging economies are seen as a key contributor to such growth. The findings of this study infer that potential South African female entrepreneurs' faces greater perceived barriers to the road of self-employment and new venture creation than their Dutch counterparts.

Generation Y students' perceived barriers amongst emerging and developing economies, makes an important contribution to government, industry professionals and academics. Through gaining insights into what barriers females from both emerging and developed countries perceive to impede them from becoming entrepreneurial, can contribute towards the implementation of initiatives to support, encourage and promote the concept to young females in becoming actively involved in entrepreneurial growth.

Although the South African government has introduced numerous initiatives to support female entrepreneurs, government can decrease the barriers these females encounter by avoiding complicated business registering and avoid corruption. For South Africa to enhance female entrepreneurship the infrastructure of the country should be adapted to give females easy access to business capital. This study further recommends the value lies in the likely success of the venture start-up and their possible contribution to the country's economic wealth, therefore, HEIs and industry professionals from emerging

economies need to focus on informing and educating young individuals not only about the importance of entrepreneurship ventures but also on the necessary tools to succeed.

Certain limitations of this study have been identified that can create future research opportunities, such as, the study undertook a single cross-sectional research design. Future research may use a longitudinal research design which may provide valuable information regarding any changes in South African and Netherlands' Generation Y female students' perceived barriers towards entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the sample characteristics of this study were limited to only two universities from two countries, namely South Africa and the Netherlands. Future research can study perceived barriers across more universities in these countries.

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