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STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Abstract:

The fact that entrepreneurship plays a vital role in contributing to the promotion of economic. In recent decades, the South African government has highlighted that entrepreneurship training especially in Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), is of utmost importance. The decision to be an entrepreneur is determined by specific factors based on an individual's motivation and attitude. However, in order for HEI's to create and foster an entrepreneurial culture, it is important to determine the entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes of the students. Descriptive analysis and one-sample t-tests indicated that students at the HEI feel they can easily pursue a career in self-employment if they wished to do so, and that the most important reason for wanting to start their own business was to become an independent person.

Keywords:

Students, motivations, attitudes, entrepreneurship, South Africa, Higher Education Institution

JEL Classification: L26, I23, I29

1 Introduction

The fact that entrepreneurship plays a vital role in contributing to the promotion of economic, as well as social development is undeniable (West, 2012:1; Kaushik, 2013:6, Khosla, 2015:17; Mahendra *et al.*, 2017:61). Furthermore, entrepreneurship also holds the power to deal with challenges of great concern which includes unemployment, poverty and a low level of economic growth (Botha *et al.*, 2007:163; Mahendra *et al.*, 2017:61; Hessels *et al.*, 2008:323; Agholor, 2015:37). This is just a few of the reasons why research in the field of entrepreneurship has gain growing interest at a global level.

From the above-mentioned it is clear that the fact that entrepreneurship prove to be a critical instrument for economic growth and development is unquestionable (Brush & Cooper, 2012:2; Balaraman *et al.*, 2014:2). Furthermore, the continuous development of entrepreneurship is considered a key factor in enhancing the strategies that are developed to permit economies benefit from the potential it offers (Kelley *et al.*, 2015:11). Mamabobolo *et al.* (2017) state that South Africa is regarded a developing economy with its unemployment being one of the highest globally. With the current unemployment rate of 26.7%, low economic growth rate, as well as low TEA rates (the percentage of members of the adult population who are in the process of starting a new venture or have started one in the past three years) the South African government has highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship and the development of an entrepreneurial culture as a pressing matter, seeing that it is regarded a key component to the solution of the development issues South Africa is currently experiencing (Fatoki, 2010:87; Swanepoel *et al.*, 2010:58; Grant, 2013:86; Kelley *et al.*, 2015:17; STATSSA, 2017:1). In an emerging economy such as South Africa's, entrepreneurs are being considered a driving force for the creation of employment opportunities to ultimately contribute to poverty alleviation (Incentives SA, 2017). However, The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2016/17 edition (Herrington *et al.*, 2017:7) reported that even though entrepreneurship plays such a vital role in any economy and boasts numerous opportunities for the South African economy, South Africa is still struggling to compete with the rest of the world when it comes to entrepreneurial activity. What proves to be even more alarming is the fact that South African citizens have demonstrated a substantial decline in their perceptions of entrepreneurial opportunity as well as capability, which infer that just over half of South African surveyed believe that they are capable of becoming successful entrepreneurs (Herrington *et al.*, 2017:7). This is evident from Table 1 which indicates the decline in entrepreneurial intention is South Africa as reported in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor South Africa report (Herrington *et al.*, 2017:22):

Table 1: Entrepreneurial intentions in South Africa

	2003	2005	2008	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Entrepreneurial Intentions	12.2 %*	10.7 %	16.9 %	19.6%	14.0 %	15.4%	11.8%	10.9%	10.1%

* Read as the percentage of the population aged between 18-64 years

Over time entrepreneurship education has become progressively imperative (Arokiasamy, 2011:520; Isaacs *et al.*, 2007:626). Furthermore, it has also been highlighted that entrepreneurship training especially in Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), is of utmost importance, as it shapes the entrepreneurial attitudes of students whilst providing these students with the necessary skills and knowledge that are considered a key aspect in the development of an entrepreneurial culture in HEI's (Chimucheka, 2014:404; Aja-Okorie & Adali, 2013:113). As stated by Chimucheka (2014:412) individuals will be gradually more motivated to partake in entrepreneurial activity as they gain assistance through entrepreneurship education. This will unswervingly influence the number of novel business start-up activities that meaningfully affect the success of local and national economies (Nicolaidis, 2011:1043). It does, however, remain the obligation of a country's government to realize the significance of entrepreneurship education in order to assist HEI's in uninterruptedly developing entrepreneurship education prospects (Isaacs *et al.*, 2007:625).

The decision to be an entrepreneur is determined by specific factors based on an individual's motivation and attitude, rather than for the individual to unintentionally engage in entrepreneurial activity (Fatoki, 2010:88; Acar, 2014:14). Motivation can be defined as the inherent aspect that starts at visualising the factual and thereafter moving individuals towards the positive whilst avoiding the negative (Botha *et al.*, 2013). It can also include the individual's inclination to apply to high levels of determination to accomplish a specific and desired goal (Bergström & Martinez, 2016). Having this said, it is clear that entrepreneurial motivation can then be viewed as the vital determination that inspires entrepreneurial behaviour (Thom, 2015). In order for HEI's to create and foster an entrepreneurial culture, it is important to determine the entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes of the students. Branco *et al.* (2012:227) identified higher income, to become famous, to redeem own ideas, to test self in order to become better, to have a flexible schedule, to have decision, to avoid unemployment, to take risks, to valorise their potential, an to repeat success models that the individual admires as motivating factors for students to become entrepreneurs. Furthermore, Lynch *et al.* (2017:84) identified the fact that students can learn more as entrepreneurs, that they are responsible for their own efforts and results, the fact that being an entrepreneur is a bigger challenge, they have a larger amount of freedom and that being their own boss was prove to be the primary motivations for students to become entrepreneurs. In a study conducted by Nhemachena

et al. (2018:124) it was clear that internal satisfaction through achieving social and environmental goals, income security and financial independence, getting financial rewards from the business and the fact that their circumstances would force them to become entrepreneurs as the main motivating factors. In addition to the motivating factors to become an entrepreneur, a students' decision is also influenced by their attitude toward entrepreneurship.

Having this said, there is still a lack of research regarding the entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes of students at South African higher education institutions. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the motivations and attitudes of students at a South African higher education institution regarding entrepreneurship

2 Methodology

The purpose of this study was to provide an analysis of students' motivations and attitudes toward entrepreneurship at a South African HEI. A descriptive research design was used, which was followed by a single cross-sectional approach.

2.1 Sampling method

The target population for this study was defined as students, enrolled full-time at a South African public higher education institution (HEI). For the sampling frame, one HEI campus located in the Gauteng province was selected. Thereafter, a non-probability convenience sample of 328 undergraduate students was used to conduct the main study. The research design followed a quantitative approach. Furthermore, for the purpose of this study a positivist approach was adopted, to ensure that the researchers remained objective toward the study, data collection and actual research (Remenyi, Williams, Money & Swartz, 1998:32; Collins, 2010:38). For the empirical portion of this study, a descriptive research design is followed.

2.2 Research instrument and data collection

For data collection purposes of this study a semi-structured, self-administered questionnaire were distributed in order to determine the motivations and attitudes of students toward entrepreneurship. The questionnaire comprised of two sections where the first section gathered the students' demographic information and the second section included the 28-item scale concerning entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes. Two constructs were derived from the scale, namely motivations (14 items) and attitudes (14 items). The students' entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes were determined on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (4). This was based on the students' agreement or disagreement to the statements relating to the entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes. Furthermore, confidentiality concerning the

participants' information was assured by providing a cover letter that was included in the questionnaire. In order to establish reliability, the questionnaire was piloted on a convenience sample of 56 students that did not form part of the main sample. A Cronbach alpha value of 0.997 was computed for the entire scale, which is above the suggested level of 0.70 (Pallant, 2016). The questionnaires were distributed to students after the necessary permission was pertained from the lecturers. Reliability and validity analysis, descriptive statistical analysis and a one-sample t-test were used for the statistical analysis of the gathered data. The data was capture in Microsoft Excel and were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS), Version 25 for Windows.

2.3 Sample description

A total number of 338 questionnaires were distributed, of which 319 completed and usable questionnaires were returned. This signifies a 94 percent response rate. The sample included both female participants (62.0%) and male participants (38.0%) of which the greater number indicated that they were female. The majority of participants were 20 years (28.3%) of age, followed by 20.6% of participants specifying that they were 19 years of age. A greater number of the participants indicated that they were of African race (83.5%), followed by participants 12.9% indicated that they were white and 3.0% indicated that they were colored. The majority of participants indicated their mother-tongue language as Sesotho (36.4%). Concerning the participants' current year of study the majority of the participants were students in the first year of study (77.4%), followed by students in their second year of study (11.3%) and those in their third year of study (8.5%). Table 1 indicates a description of the above-mentioned sample.

Table 2: Sample description

Gender	(%)	Age	(%)	Race	(%)	Mother tongue language	(%)	Year of study	(%)
Males	38.0	18	4.8	African	83.5	Afrikaans	11.1	1 st	77.4
Females	62.0	19	20.6	Coloured	3.0	English	8.4	2 nd	11.3
		20	28.1	Asian	0.6	IsiNdebele	1.2	3 rd	8.5
		21	20.3	White	12.9	IsiXhosa	7.2	4 th	0.9
		22	12.6			IsiZulu	20.5	Hons	1.9
		23	4.5			Sesotho	36.6		
		24	4.2			Setswana	8.4		
		25	1.5			SiSwati	3.3		
		26	0.9			Tshivenda	1.2		
		28	0.3			Xitsonga	2.1		
		29	0.6						

33	0.3
36	1.0
41	0.3

Source: Authors' own compilation

2.4 Reliability and validity

A Cronbach alpha value of 0.905 was computed for the entire scale measuring entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes. This provided evidence of internal-consistency reliability, seeing that it exceeded the recommended value of 0.70 (Brace *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, the average inter-item correlation were also calculated and were, 0.284, which was within the recommended range of 0.15 to 0.50 (Clark & Watson, 1995), therefore providing further proof of reliability. The afore-mentioned also suggests convergent and discriminant validity of the scale measuring students' motivations and attitudes.

2.5 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for students' entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes were calculated after the reliability and validity of the scale had been determined. Table 3 and Table 4 report on the means and standard deviations concerning entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes of the respondents.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics regarding students' entrepreneurial motivations

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Items Motivations			
I want to become an independant person	3.50	4.0	0.754
I want to be the creator of new ideas and innovation	3.35	3.0	0.744
I want to act out the capability and skills I was taught in university	3.33	3.0	0.683
I potentially want to earn a large salary	3.45	4.0	0.728
I want to make my parents proud	3.45	4.0	0.790
I want to be my own boss	3.49	4.0	0.731
I cannot find another job	1.73	2.0	0.776
I possibly want to explore new market opportunities	3.27	3.0	0.732
I want to control my own destiny	3.40	4.0	0.722
I am afraid of being unemployed	2.81	3.0	1.085

I have identified a gap in the market	2.73	3.0	0.902
I already have clients that will support my business	2.34	2.0	0.911
I have a serious interest in the subject of entrepreneurship	3.03	3.0	0.868
I want to fulfill a social need in the community	3.24	3.0	0.782

Source: Authors' own compilation

As presented in Table 3, the highest mean across entrepreneurial motivations items was recorded for item 1 (mean=3.50), followed by item 6 (mean=3.49). The lowest mean was recorded for item 7 (mean=1.73). This suggests that South African students are mainly motivated to pursue a career as an entrepreneur because they want to become an independent persons and they want to be their own boss. The fact that they might struggle to find another job has almost no influence on their motivation to become an entrepreneur.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics regarding students' entrepreneurial attitudes

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Items Motivations			
I am willing to work 50 hours or more per week	3.09	3.0	0.883
I am willing to accept both financial and career risks when necessary	3.36	3.0	0.662
I would take full responsibility for the successes and failures of my business	3.43	4.0	0.627
I will demonstrate a strong desire to achieve positive results even when it requires a great deal of additional effort	3.50	4.0	0.611
I am willing to start my business even if other people will laugh or belittle me	3.50	4.0	0.635
I am willing to make decisions quickly	2.95	3.0	0.761
I will believe in my business even when other people might not	3.51	4.0	0.626
I will constantly learn more about my business, the market and customers in order to better myself as an entrepreneur and grow my business	3.52	4.0	0.616
I am willing to adapt to changes in the environment and make the necessary changes to my business accordingly	3.42	3.0	0.620
I am willing to admit if my business might not be successful	3.07	3.0	0.767
I will constantly scan the business environment to	3.41	3.0	0.664

identify more business opportunities

I am willing to break rules in order to be successful 2.19 2.0 1.032

I am willing to become a shameless self-promoter in order to succeed and gain competitive advantage 2.73 3.0 1.013

I am willing to search for mentorship and advice to be successful 3.60 4.0 0.582

Source: Authors' own compilation

From Table 4 it is evident that the highest mean for items pertaining to entrepreneurial attitudes was recorded for item 28 (mean=3.60), followed by item 22 (mean=3.52). The lowest mean was recorded for item 26 (mean=2.19). This implies that even though South African students are not willing to break the rules in order to be a successful entrepreneur, they are willing to search for mentorship and advice to be successful, and will constantly learn more about their business, the market and customers in order to be able to grow their business.

2.6 One-sample t-test

In order to determine whether any significant differences existed between the entrepreneurial motivations and attitudes of male and female students, an independent-sample t-test was computed. Table 5 and Table 6 reports on the calculated means, standard deviations, t-values and p-values.

Table 5: One sample t-test Entrepreneurial Motivations

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard error	t-values	P- values
Items Entrepreneurial Motivations					
I want to become an independant person	3.50	0.754	0.042	8.413	0.000*
I want to be the creator of new ideas and innovation	3.35	0.744	0.041	8.123	0.000*
I want to act out the capability and skills I was taught in university	3.33	0.683	0.038	8.792	0.000*
I potentially want to earn a large salary	3.45	0.728	0.040	8.559	0.000*
I want to make my parents proud	3.45	0.790	0.044	7.894	0.000*
I want to be my own boss	3.49	0.731	0.040	8.620	0.000*
I cannot find another job	1.73	0.776	0.043	3.998	0.000*
I possibly want to explore new market opportunities	3.27	0.732	0.041	8.027	0.000*
I want to control my own destiny	3.40	0.722	0.040	8.521	0.000*
I am afraid of being unemployed	2.81	1.085	0.060	4.687	0.000*
I have identified a gap in the market	2.73	0.902	0.050	5.466	0.000*

I already have clients that will support my business	2.34	0.911	0.051	4.628	0.000*
I have a serious interest in the subject of entrepreneurship	3.03	0.868	0.048	6.326	0.000*
I want to fulfill a social need in the community	3.24	0.782	0.043	7.488	0.000*

* Significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Source: Authors' own compilation

From Table 5 it is evident that significant p-values ($p=0.000 < 0.05$) were computed for all the entrepreneurial motivations items. This concludes that South African students are very much motivated to become entrepreneurs, with the fact that they want to become an independent person being the main motivating factor. These results agree with the result from the studies conducted by Branco et al. (2012:227), Lynch et al. (2017:84), as well as Nhemachena et al. (2018:124). The need to become an independent person who is their own boss with a larger amount of freedom, and the potential to earn a large salary with the prospect to become financially independent prove to be the main motivating factors amongst students who want to pursue a career as an entrepreneur, regardless of their geographical context. Table 6 indicates the entrepreneurial attitudes conferred in the one-sample t-test that stems from the entrepreneurial motivations as signified in Table 5.

Table 6: One sample t-test Entrepreneurial Attitudes

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard error	t-values	P- values
Items Entrepreneurial Motivations					
I am willing to work 50 hours or more per week	3.09	0.883	0.049	6.338	0.000*
I am willing to accept both financial and career risks when necessary	3.36	0.662	0.037	9.204	0.000*
I would take full responsibility for the successes and failures of my business	3.43	0.627	0.035	9.939	0.000*
I will demonstrate a strong desire to achieve positive results even when it requires a great deal of additional effort	3.50	0.611	0.034	10.368	0.000*
I am willing to start my business even if other people will laugh or belittle me	3.50	0.635	0.035	9.993	0.000*
I am willing to make decisions quickly	2.95	0.761	0.042	6.995	0.000*
I will believe in my business even when other people might not	3.51	0.626	0.035	10.149	0.000*
I will constantly learn more about my business, the market and customers in order to better myself as an entrepreneur and grow my business	3.52	0.616	0.034	10.347	0.000*
I am willing to adapt to changes in the	3.42	0.620	0.034	9.958	0.000*

environment and make the necessary changes to my business accordingly					
I am willing to admit if my business might not be successful	3.07	0.767	0.042	7.258	0.000*
I will constantly scan the business environment to identify more business opportunities	3.41	0.664	0.037	9.267	0.000*
I am willing to break rules in order to be successful	2.19	1.032	0.057	3.841	0.000*
I am willing to become a shameless self-promoter in order to succeed and gain competitive advantage	2.73	1.013	0.056	4.876	0.000*
I am willing to search for mentorship and advice to be successful	3.60	0.582	0.032	11.208	0.000*

* Significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Source: Authors' own compilation

As indicated in Table 6, significant p-values ($p=0.000 < 0.05$) were also computed for all the entrepreneurial attitude items. This suggests that South African students have a positive attitude when it comes to entrepreneurship and the prospect of becoming an entrepreneur and what this specific career choice might ask of them. It is also clear that students at this specific HEI are not willing to break rules to be successful. These students mainly demonstrate the willingness to be guided on their entrepreneurial journey in order to reach ultimate success, as well as the desire to achieve their desired results with a great deal of effort.

3 Conclusion

From the literature review it is clear that entrepreneurial activity remains imperative for any economy, whether in a factor-driven, efficiency-driven or innovation-driven context. South Africa demonstrates an alarming decrease in total entrepreneurial activity amongst the adult population (Von Broembsen *et al.*, 2005:36; Swanepoel *et al.*, 2010:58; Grant, 2013:86; Kelly *et al.*, 2016:4). It is also evident that entrepreneurship education has become increasingly significant (Arokiasamy, 2011:520; Isaacs *et al.*, 2007:626). Entrepreneurship education is of utmost importance, as it shapes the entrepreneurial attitudes of students whilst providing these students with the necessary skills and knowledge that are considered a key aspect in the development of an entrepreneurial culture in HEI's (Chimucheka, 2014:404; Aja-Okorie & Adali, 2013:113). Furthermore, in order to harness the power of entrepreneurship in decreasing unemployment, increasing economic growth and alleviating poverty, it is of utmost importance for governments to assist higher education institutions in continuously creating more and more opportunities for entrepreneurship education. Accordingly, it was reasoned that research regarding the motivations and attitudes regarding entrepreneurship have to gain more attention,

especially regarding the motivations and attitudes of students at higher education institutions. This study ultimately concluded that students at this HEI ultimately would pursue a career in entrepreneurship because they want to become an independent person with the prospect of financial freedom. In addition it also revealed that students demonstrate a highly positive attitude regarding becoming an entrepreneur. This infer that the HEI already have student who are motivated to become entrepreneurs and by focussing on this extreme positive result, it can assist the institution in their ongoing strategies to develop and foster an entrepreneurial culture. By doing so, it can motivate these students to become active entrepreneurs in the South African economy after graduating, or even more so while still studying, which will contribute to economic and social development in South Africa. Ultimately this creates the opportunity to increase the total entrepreneurial activity in the factor-driven South African economy. Additional future research can be conducted regarding students' needs in terms of support and opportunities actively integrated and offered by the institution. Furthermore, research can also be conducted regarding the HEI's current strategies to support student entrepreneurs after the business start-up phase. The sample size of the study can also be increased to ensure that the study is more generalizable.

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