

The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Intention among Sudanese University Students

Ilham Hassan F. Mansour ^{a,1}, Almosharaf Omer ^a

^a *School of Management Studies, University of Khartoum, Sudan*

Received 19 December 2019; revised 30 January 2020; accepted 30 January 2020

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to investigate the role of individual and societal attitudes perception in shaping the entrepreneurial behavioral intentions of the individual through the lenses of The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to find out whether the university students will have intentions to become entrepreneurs. The survey of 395 of graduate and undergraduate students across four colleges at the University of Khartoum was used for data collection. SPSS was used to analyze the data. The results indicate that entrepreneurial intention of the respondents can be predicted from the attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms. The findings revealed that TPB is a valuable tool in understanding the entrepreneurial intention of university students in Sudan. The majority of students intend to start a business in the future

Keywords: Entrepreneurial intentions; Theory of Planned Behaviour; University students; Societal attitudes; Sudan

1. Introduction

In a poor country such as Sudan, with fast population growth and a rising labor force participation rate, creating employment opportunities becomes the top priority for a strategy of economic restoration. The generation of new jobs is considered central for any future development for the Sudanese economy for two reasons: on one hand, the stagnant Sudanese economy which is resource-dependent is unable to absorb the young workers who enter the labor force each year. On the other hand, the potential for an increasing population is the human capital and an opportunity to create new industries and expand economies.

These realities and their consequences has been acknowledged by the Sudanese government in the form of vigorous efforts taken since the dawn of the 1990s, the most radical one was the Sudan's Structural Program (SAP) which aimed at, among other things, enhancing the role of the private sector to lead economic development through the removal of administrative and non-administrative obstacles and the liberalizing of the economic atmosphere by opening all sectors of the economy to private investment with the exception of oil production. Since then Sudanese policymakers continued to recognize the potentially beneficial role of the private sector in sustainable development by putting forward more stringent measures to ensure the promotion of entrepreneurial firms and new venture creation (Musa 2012; Gangi et al. 2015).

¹ Corresponding author. *Email addresses:* e.mansour@uofk.edu (I.H.F. Mansour); a.omer@uofk.edu (A. Omer)

The unanimously accepted theoretical proposition of the role entrepreneurship plays in the national economies has been empirically established through a series of recent studies; of particular importance here is the profound positive impact of entrepreneurship on the GDP per capita and the employment rate (Endeavor insight 2015). In order to rip these benefits, important measures have been taken by the Sudanese government in order to develop entrepreneurial capacity, especially in regard to ease of obtaining micro-finance. Central Bank of Sudan (CBOS) took the initiative of formulating a vision for developing and expanding the microfinance sector by the creation of a favorable legal environment, encouraging banks to allocate specific resources to microfinance, removal of collateral barriers, and allowing diversified Islamic modes of finance. These policies recognized Microentrepreneurs and micro-enterprises, including artisan, low-income productive families, manufacturing, mining, exports, and agriculture among the priority sectors to receive support. (Ahmed and Ammar, 2015)

Along with these legal and institutional efforts, governmental and non-governmental initiatives have been announced with the ultimate goal of promoting entrepreneurship among Sudanese youth. For instance, Workshops, associations, media campaigns, and outreach programs have been designed to increase awareness and develop entrepreneurial capacity.

Despite all these efforts, critical factors with a relatively bigger impact on fostering entrepreneurial initiatives in Sudan have been neglected by researchers and policymakers. Recent reports revealed an under-utilization of the available financial resources and a decelerating growth of SMEs establishment in the Sudanese economy, highlighting weak entrepreneurial culture, and the domination of the view of Micro Finance as a subsidy lending not business-oriented lending as the main reasons of those dismal outcomes.

The individual's attitude has been shown to affect the entrepreneurial propensity. This propensity is also contingent upon the social context in which actions are taken (Capelleras et al., 2013). The aim of the present paper is to investigate the role of societal perception and individual attitudes in shaping the entrepreneurial behavioral intentions of the individual through the lenses of The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

The value of this paper is threefold; first, it constitutes an original contribution to the rapidly evolving field of entrepreneurship literature in Sudan, secondly, it will provide policymakers with an invaluable insight on some of the factors affecting entrepreneurship orientation among Sudanese youth and aid them in designing appropriate interventions, and finally, it tries to shed light on the often-overlooked role of cultural norms and individual attitudes in shaping the entrepreneurial behavior of the Sudanese within the scope of a well-established theory.

This paper examines, based on the theory of planned behavior, whether university students in Sudan have the intention to start their own businesses.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

1. To test whether the theory of planned behavior can help explain the entrepreneurial intention of Sudanese university students.
2. To determine whether university students will have the intention to start a business.
3. To find out the factors that affect students' intention to start a business?

2. Literature Review

The research on the question of why people choose entrepreneurship as a career option is mainly dominated by two disciplines: On one hand, the ideas adapted from social cognitive theory have widely impacted entrepreneurial research, especially the work in entrepreneurial intentions (Elfving, 2009), several studies using social psychological approaches concentrated on a dichotomy of factors related to society and individuals to identify those decisive factors which affects the behavioral intention to start a new business.

Entrepreneurship is a planned process of integrating opportunity, resources, and people (Timmons & Spinelli, 2009). This process starts with the opportunity identification which is an intentional process to create a new value driver (Krueger et al. 2000).

Entrepreneurship intention is defined as the growing conscious state of mind and broader personal orientations, dispositions, desires or interests that drive a person to start a new enterprise or create a new core value in an existing organization (Khuong and Huu, 2016; Küttima et al. 2014).

Psychological research claims that intentions are critical predictors of consequent planned behavior; the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely should be its performance (Ajzen, 1991), consequently, the entrepreneurial intention has been empirically proved to be the best and unbiased predictor of entrepreneurial behavior. (Wang et al. 2011)

Several studies on entrepreneurship intention used Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to identify the most influential intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting the behavioral intention related to entrepreneurship. Scholars have used the TPB extensively to demonstrate that social norms, self-efficacy, and attitude toward entrepreneurship positively influence individuals' Entrepreneurship Intentions (Engle et al., 2010; Krueger et al., 2000; Krueger and Carsrud, 1993; Liñán et al. 2011),

Astuti, et al. (2012) investigated the entrepreneurial intention of 600 undergraduate students in six state-universities in Indonesia to venture into entrepreneurship. According to the TPB Model adopted by this study, there are three main factors that can be used to predict entrepreneurial intention, they include personal attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceived self-control, and social norms. Based on the literature, the study also proposed a number of aspects under each one of the three main factors. For instance independence, challenge and accumulation of wealth are good determinants of personal attitudes, while perseverance, creativity, entrepreneurial alertness and entrepreneurial self-efficacy can be used to measure one's perceived self-control. The study found that there is a strong correlation between all the three factors and the entrepreneurial intention with social norms and attitude being more predictive of entrepreneurial intention than the perceived self-control.

Kim-Soon et al. (2016) successfully applied TPB to study the entrepreneurial intention of university students in Malaysia and reported a strong relationship between the intention and the three influences posited by the TPB while controlling for age, gender and religion.

Tsordia and Papadimitriou, (2015) measured the TPB components in Greece higher education students, they found a significant relation to the entrepreneurial intention and the attitude towards behavior and perceived behavioral control, while social norms are insignificant in the process of intention formation. (Pretheeba, 2014) found that the gender and the domain of specialty moderate the relationship between the factors of TPB and entrepreneurial intention, specifically perceived behavioral control is contingent upon gender, while the attitude is contingent upon the domain of specialty.

Dabic et al (2012), Using evidence from 3,420 university students in more than ten countries, used the Theory of Planned Behavior to explore gender differences in attitudes of university students towards entrepreneurship. It was found that compared to males, female students were less willing to start their own businesses in terms of entrepreneurial intention

Self-efficacy is an individual's innermost perception of personal ability; individuals seek to apply their skills to task requirements. Perceived self-efficacy motivates individuals throughout their lives (Markman et al., 2002) and is a key factor in determining human agency (Bandura, 1989) Studies have established the link between self-efficacy and EIs (Zhao et al., 2005; Boyd and Vozikis, 1994).

The literature review presented allowed the formulation of the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant positive influence of attitude towards entrepreneurship on entrepreneurship intention

H2: There is a significant positive influence of subjective norm on entrepreneurship intention

H3: There is a significant positive influence of perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurship intention

The conceptual model of the factors affects the entrepreneurial intent is presented in Figure 1.

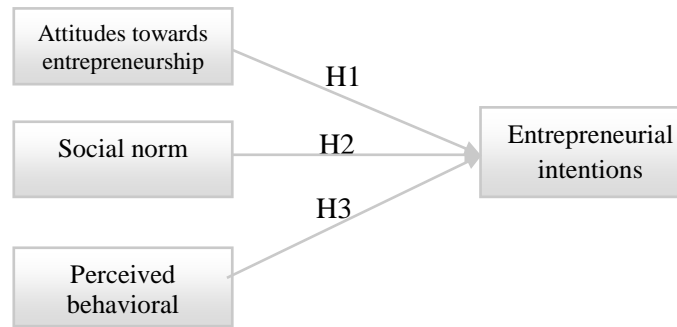


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Entrepreneurship Intention

1. Research Method

This study was carried out by means of self-administered survey research given to the students during class sessions. The empirical analysis has been carried out on a sample of graduate and undergraduate students across four colleges at the University of Khartoum: college of engineering, college of art, the school of business administration and graduate college. Students sample consider as the primary resource of future entrepreneurs. The stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample size because the population consisted of a number of subgroups that differed in their characteristics. A descriptive, quantitative method was applied and the same questionnaire was used in all three colleges. A total of 500 questionnaires were thus collected. After removing questionnaires with missing data, 395 questionnaires were finally taken into analysis.

To collect data, the research used part of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) survey, to measure the societal entrepreneurial perceptions, entrepreneurial attitudes and “entrepreneurial intentions with additional demographic questions (age, gender, and education level). The measures for the model constructs, variables, and demographic related questions are presented in Table 1. Attitude towards entrepreneurship, Social norm, perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intention adapted from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) survey.

2. Results and Analysis

Descriptive statistics of the sample characteristics

The descriptive data in Table 1 show that the Sample includes 224 (57 percent) females and 171 (43 percent) males. In terms of age, 11 % were under 20 years, 75 % were in the age category between 20 and 24 years, 10 % of the respondents were in the age category between 25 and 29 years, and only .4 % was above 30 years. These statistics mean that most of the respondents were falling in the youth category. In terms of education, we found that about 255(65%) of respondents studied for a bachelor's degree, 140(35%) studied for masters.

| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Male | 171 | 43.3 |
| Female | 224 | 56.7 |
| Total | 395 | 100.0 |
| Age | | |
| Less than 20 | 42 | 10.6 |
| 20-24 | 297 | 75.2 |
| 25-29 | 39 | 9.9 |
| 30-34 | 14 | 3.5 |
| 35+ | 3 | .8 |
| Total | 395 | 100.0 |
| Education | | |
| Bsc. | 255 | 64.6 |
| MBA | 140 | 35.4 |
| Total | 395 | 100.0 |
| College | | |
| College of Engineering | 127 | 32.2 |
| School of Management Studies | 68 | 17.2 |
| College of Arts | 60 | 15.5 |
| Graduate College- MBA | 140 | 35.4 |
| Total | 395 | 100.0 |

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Descriptive Findings on Students' Entrepreneurial Attitudes and Intentions

Data in Table 2, shows the descriptive statistics for the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial intention measures. The results show that all the three antecedents of entrepreneurial intention have a high mean (>3) which indicates that in general, the respondents possess a high attitude towards entrepreneurship (Mean= 3.21, SD=1.243). They believe that Sudanese have positive societal attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Mean= 3.26, SD= .057) and most of the respondents believe that they have the knowledge, skills, and experience to launch a business (Mean= 3.35, SD= 1.819). The results also indicate that the respondents possess high intentions to become an entrepreneur (Mean= 3.35, SD= 1.125).

| Construct | Formulation of items | Mean | SD |
|-----------------------|---|-------------|-----------|
| Individual attributes | (1)Will be there good opportunities for starting a business in the area where you will live in the near future? | 3.21 | 1.243 |
| | (2)Would fear of failure prevent you from starting a business | | |
| | (3) know someone personally who started a business in the past 2 years | | |
| Societal values | (4) In your country, do most people consider starting a new business a desirable career choice? | | |
| | (5) In your country, have those successful at starting a new business a high level of status and respect? | | |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--|------|-------|
| | (6) In Sudan, most people would prefer that everyone had a similar standard of living | 3.26 | .957 |
| | (7) In Sudan, you will often see stories in the public media about successful new businesses | | |
| Perceived behavioral control | (8) Have you the knowledge, skill and experience required to start a new business? | 3.35 | 1.819 |
| Entrepreneurial intent | (9) Are you, expecting to start a new business, including any type of self-employment, alone or with others, within the next three years | | |
| | (10) Are you, alone or with others, currently trying to start a new business, including any self-employment or selling any goods or services to others | 3.35 | 1.325 |

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial intention

The Relationship between the Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Intention and Entrepreneurial Intention

For the purpose of testing the presented hypothesis regression analysis was performed using SPSS 25. The results reported in Figure 2 revealed that the perceived behavioral control emerges as the most important antecedent of the intention to become entrepreneur followed by the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. The perceived behavioral control has a strong and highly significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = .644$, $p < 0.000$) and the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship ($\beta = .066$, $p < 0.10$). Furthermore, the model is statistically significant ($F = 92.089$, $p < 0.000$) and predict 42% of variance in entrepreneurial intention. Hypothesis one and three is therefore confirmed by the analysis. On the other hand, no support was found for the influence of subjective norm on entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 were accepted, while Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

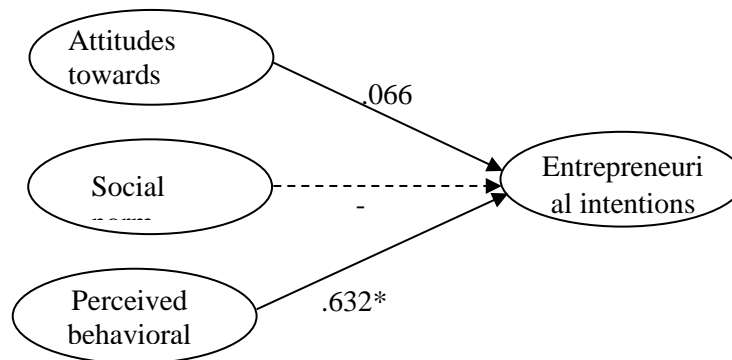


Figure 2. Final model with Standardized regression weights.

Notes: Solid lines show the significant relationships; dashed lines represent the non-significant relationships among the independent and dependent variables. The values are standardized regression weights.. *Significant at 0.10, **Significant at 0.001

3. Discussion

This study adopts the TPB model proposed by Ajzen (1991) moderated to investigate how subjective norms, attitudes and perceived behavioral control influence Sudanese university students' entrepreneurial intentions. The empirical results showed that students' attitudes towards becoming an entrepreneur and

perceived behavioral control have positive influences on entrepreneurial intentions. These results are consistent with those yielded by previous studies (Tsordia and Papadimitriou, (2015); Hao et al., 2005; Boyd and Vozikis, (1994)). On the other hand, subjective norms do not seem to influence entrepreneurial intentions. This is not a surprising finding, previously several studies demonstrate that subjective norms often fail to predict intentions (Armitage and Conner, 2001; Liñán 2004; Liñán and Chen, 2009).

4. Conclusion

The significant impact of perceived behavioral control as the most important antecedent of the intention to become entrepreneur revealed by this study will help Sudanese policymakers in designing more effective education and training policies that enhance the positive impact of the accumulation of knowledge and skills needed for entrepreneurship.

References

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Process*, 50(2), 179–121.
- Ahmed, E. M., & Ammar, A. (2015). Islamic Microfinance in Sudanese Perspective. *Journal of Business & Financial Affairs*, 4(149), 2167-0234.
- Armitage, C. J., & Conner, M. (2001). Efficacy of the theory of planned behaviour: A meta-analytic review. *British journal of social psychology*, 40(4), 471-499.
- Astuti, R. D., & Martdianty, F. (2012). Students' Perception and Intention toward Entrepreneurship: Development of Planned Behavior Entrepreneurial Model on Six State Universities in Indonesia. In *International Conference on Enterprise Marketing and Globalization (EMG). Proceedings* (p. 131). Global Science and Technology Forum.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American psychologist*, 44(9), 1175.
- Boyd, N. G., & Vozikis, G. S. (1994). The influence of self-efficacy on the development of entrepreneurial intentions and actions. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 18(4), 63-77.
- Capelleras, J. L., Contín Pilart, I., Martín Sánchez, V., & Larraza Kintana, M. (2013). The influence of individual perceptions and the urban/rural environment on nascent entrepreneurship. *Investigaciones Regionales*, 26 (2013), 97-113.
- Dabic, M., Daim, T., Bayraktaroglu, E., Novak, I., & Basic, M. (2012). Exploring gender differences in attitudes of university students towards entrepreneurship: an international survey. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 4(3), 316-336.
- Elfving, J., Brännback, M., & Carsrud, A. (2009). Toward a contextual model of entrepreneurial intentions. In *Understanding the entrepreneurial mind*. 23-33). Springer, New York, NY.
- Gangi, Y. A. & Timan, E., (2015). Entrepreneurship education in Sudan. *Journal for International Business and Entrepreneurship Development*, 8(3), 231-247.
- Khuong, M. N., & An, N. H. (2016). The factors affecting entrepreneurial intention of the students of Vietnam national university—a mediation analysis of perception toward entrepreneurship. *Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 4(2), 104-111.
- Kim-Soon, N., Ahmad, A. R., & Ibrahim, N. N. (2016). Theory of planned behavior: undergraduates' entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurship career intention at a public university. *Journal of Entrepreneurship: Research & Practice*, 2016, 1-14.
- Krueger, N. F., & Carsrud, A. L. (1993). Entrepreneurial intentions: applying the theory of planned behaviour. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 5(4), 315-330.
- Krueger Jr, N. F., Reilly, M. D., & Carsrud, A. L. (2000). Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of business venturing*, 15(5-6), 411-432.
- Küttim, M., Kallaste, M., Venesaar, U., & Kiis, A. (2014). Entrepreneurship education at university level and students' entrepreneurial intentions. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 110, 658-668.
- Markman, G. D., Balkin, D. B., & Baron, R. A. (2002). Inventors and new venture formation: The effects of general self-efficacy and regretful thinking. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 27(2), 149-165.
- Liñán, F. (2004). Intention-based models of entrepreneurship education. *Piccola Impresa/Small Business*, 3(1), 11-35.

- Liñán, F., & Chen, Y. W. (2009). Development and cross-cultural application of a specific instrument to measure entrepreneurial intentions. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 33(3), 593-617.
- Musa, E. A. (2012). Emerging Women Entrepreneurs in Sudan: Individual Characteristics, Obstacles and Empowerment.
- Pretheeba, P. (2014). Predicting entrepreneurial intention among business and engineering students in Sri Lanka. *Ruhuna Journal of Management and Finance*, 1(1), 25-36.
- Timmons J.A., Spinelli S., (2009), New Venture Creation – Entrepreneurship for the 21st Century, McGraw Hill International, USA
- Tsordia, C., & Papadimitriou, D. (2015). The role of theory of planned behavior on entrepreneurial intention of Greek business students. *International Journal of Synergy and Research*, 4(1), 23.
- Wang, W., Lu, W., & Millington, J. K. (2011). Determinants of entrepreneurial intention among college students in China and USA. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 1(1), 35-44.
- Zhao, H., Seibert, S. E., & Hills, G. E. (2005). The mediating role of self-efficacy in the development of entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of applied psychology*, 90(6), 1265.