
Factors Influencing Entrepreneurial Intentions Amongst Sport Management Students

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Given the size of the sports industry in relation to the global economy, more research is focusing on how to identify entrepreneurial opportunities in sports. This study aimed to investigate the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions amongst sport management students at a South African university.

Design/methodology/approach: Structured interviews were used to gather information from 10 undergraduate sport management students for the qualitative, explanatory study. Using ATLAS.ti and thematic analyses, the collected data were examined.

Findings: The following themes emerged from the study; namely, personality traits, attitudes towards entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, perceived university support, perceived structural support, and subjective norms. The results of this study indicate that sport management students have a favourable attitude towards entrepreneurship, which is influenced by their family and friends - and by their own sense of their own ability to succeed in business.

Practical implications: Universities should consider incorporating entrepreneurship into their sport management curriculum design and teaching methods to enhance students' entrepreneurial mindset and self-efficacy. This study contributes to the discussion around developing attitudes and intentions toward entrepreneurship as a livelihood option for sport management students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The number of students starting their own businesses has led to a gradual rise in entrepreneurial abilities (Ratten & Jones, 2018). Entrepreneurship is defined as a process where a person (legal or natural) identifies a potentially profitable opportunity and seizes it while exploring new options, or avenues linked to the person's awareness, aptitude, and experiences (Essel, Mia & Dumor, 2020). Young adults, particularly university students, make up the future labour force, making it important to research their entrepreneurial intentions, the causes of those intentions, the circumstances that produce entrepreneurial propensity, and the pressures that cause those attitudes to become behaviour (Yildiz, 2018:13).

The delivery of opportunities for sports and recreation by a mixed economy of providers from the public, not-for-profit and commercial sectors impacts the logic of entrepreneurship in sports (Nova, 2015:2918). Furthermore, in recent studies, researchers suggest entrepreneurship as a solution to sport management student careers, to help resolve the challenges they face (Ratten, 2011; Nova, 2015, Ratten & Jones, 2018; Gonzalez-Serrano *et al.*, 2018). Due to South Africa's high unemployment rate and the growth of the sports industry, it is essential to introduce strategies to promote entrepreneurship and thereby increase the employability of future graduates from the sports sector (Gonzalez-Serrano, Gonzalez-Garcia & Morena, 2019).

Developing character traits that prepare students for the job market or self-employment is the goal of entrepreneurship in sports (Gonzalez-Serrano, Morena & Hervás, 2018). Given the size of the sports industry

compared to the global economy, this necessitates ongoing attention from business owners and sport management researchers Dehghan & Peymanfar, 2021). It is also crucial that sports entrepreneurship continue to look to aspiring business owners (Ratten, 2012). Therefore, both policymakers and academics should concentrate their attention on the problem of why some people during such a learning process choose an entrepreneurial career while others do not (Turker & Serculo, 2009).

A. Purpose of the study

The study, therefore, investigates the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among sport management students at a South African University by answering the following questions:

1. What is the influence of internal factors such as personality traits, attitudes towards entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy towards sport management students?
2. What is the level of influence of external factors such as perceived institutional support, perceived structural support, and subjective norms towards sport management students' entrepreneurial intentions?

Following this introduction, the paper will present a review of the literature, followed by the theoretical framework upon which the research question hinges, this will be followed by the research methods that were used to collect and analyse the data, will be followed by a presentation of the results, followed by a discussion of the results and how they link to the literature, and finally, we shall present a conclusion drawn from the results and areas for further research.

B. Literature Review

1. Personality Traits

Personality traits are determined by an individual's propensity to act and are stable over time, they are relevant personal characteristics to entrepreneurship (Holienka *et al.*, 2018). Because intentions reflect a person's motivation to engage in a behaviour, evidence supporting the relationship between intentions and actions has been demonstrated regarding various behavioural types (Naia, Biscaia, Januario & Trigo, 2017). Therefore, there is a relationship between personality characteristics and entrepreneurial intention that separates those with entrepreneurial propensity from those who are not entrepreneurs (Khuong & Ana, 2016).

2. Attitude towards entrepreneurship

Attitudes are social rather than genetic traits, and they must be learnt in the home, at school, or at work (Su *et al.*, 2021). Students' entrepreneurial intentions were statistically influenced by their attitude towards entrepreneurship (Atrafu, 2016:395; Appiah-Nimo, Ofori & Arthur, 2018). Therefore, Attitudes towards entrepreneurship have a favourable effect on intentions to start a business (Voung *et al.*, 2020).

3. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is the degree to which a person has confidence in his or her ability to perform the various responsibilities and tasks associated with being an entrepreneur (Hu & Ye, 2017). It is critical to comprehend this theory in the context of entrepreneurial behaviour because self-efficacy is a component of perceived behavioural control (Johnmark & Manene, 2016). Therefore, students who have higher self-efficacy levels can work harder for longer periods, keep going when things get tough and produce plans and strategies to reach more ambitious entrepreneurial goals (Khuong & Ana, 2016).

4. Perceived university support

Perceived university support (PUS) offers resources in social networks and ties can introduce students studying entrepreneurship to specific professional knowledge (Su *et al.*, 2021). Gubik (2021) asserts that it is possible to create policies and university practices that can raise students' entrepreneurial intention and, consequently, entrepreneurial activity. Therefore, the educational environment for entrepreneurs includes classes, lecturers and extracurricular activities that provide students the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes they need to pursue careers in entrepreneurship (Vuong *et al.*, 2020).

5. Perceived structural support

Entrepreneurial support can come from both internal and external influential forces, such as social movements and opinions from friends, family, and co-workers (Vuong *et al.*, 2020). Studies by Wongnaa and Seyram (2014) and Haris *et al.* (2016) demonstrate how students' attitudes and intentions towards start-ups are influenced by the factor "financial accessibility". Students may find it difficult to raise money and attract capital for their business idea because this is a frequent problem in start-ups (Vuong *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, government initiatives only impact business formations if they change attitudes, entrepreneurial skills, and subjective norms,

which could inspire young people to launch a successful business. Policymakers need to be aware of this (Swapura & Goyal, 2020).

6. Subjective norms

Subjective norms are used to measure the social pressure that influences behaviour (Voung *et al.*, 2020). Parents, friends, and other significant people (mentors) who may support or disapprove of the idea of the people taking entrepreneurial action are the subject of subjective norms (Sahinidis *et al.*, 2012). Starting a business is a big decision; therefore, people frequently ask for advice and support from those around them, and as a result, a person's decision to engage in entrepreneurial behaviour is influenced by the opinions of those around them (Su *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, when parents, friends, and other significant people are supportive, they tend to encourage a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and can also boost self-efficacy (Sahinidis *et al.*, 2012).

C. Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurial Intention

Figure 1 illustrates how the study criteria to analyse entrepreneurial intent in the following order: internal factors (personality traits, attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial self-efficacy), and external factors (perceived university support, perceived structural support and subjective norms) (Franke & Luthje, 2004).

II. METHODS

Qualitative methods have been used to identify, for instance, potential issues with putting a proposed trial of elective single embryo transfer into practice (Hammarberg *et al.* 2016). For this study, the qualitative inquiry was aimed at describing the phenomena from the perspective of the informants, unearthing multiple realities and creates a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena within a specific context (Hilal and Alabri, 2013).

A. Research design

Additionally, according to Boru (2018), an explanatory research design seeks out causes and reasons as well as evidence that either supports or contradicts an explanation or prediction. This study, therefore adopted an explanatory research design to study a situation or issue to understand the relationship between the identified factors in influencing sport management students' entrepreneurial intention (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

B. Research approach

A case study approach was used in this study as it may be used when there may be a complex cause-and-effect relationship between real-life events, and their outcomes are unclear, or it may be used to assess an evaluation study (Handerson, 2016).

C. Sampling

To collect data from the 10-sport management undergraduate students a non-probability, purposive sampling strategy was used as the study only focused on seeking participants who could contribute to the subject area (Bajramovic, Emmerton & Tett, 2004). Structured interviews were conducted according to maintaining the interview's strict focus on the intended subject and for ensuring interviewee comparability (Alsaawi, 2014).

D. Data analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis through atlas ti version 8 software.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Personality Traits

The personality traits of people who choose entrepreneurship as a career are different from those of people who choose employment in an organisation (Farrukh *et al.*, 2017). Participants were asked to respond to the question "Do you think you have the skills to become an entrepreneur?" under this theme. They were also asked to list the skills they felt were relevant to the entrepreneurial journey. Seven of the participants said they possess the abilities needed to be entrepreneurs. Below are some of the inputs related to entrepreneurial skills:

PA: "Yes, I am patient, a hustler, good at networking, with strong decision-making skills."

PB: "Yes, the most traits as I am open. If you are not open people will not know what you have. Extroverts are good in business."

Additionally, the participants said they possess the necessary skills and highlighted related skills that they think are crucial for anyone who wants to start their own business. These qualities include: extroversion, or openness, creativity and self-confidence. Furthermore, below are some of the inputs from participants relating to entrepreneurial skills:

PB: "Yes, the most traits as I am open-minded. If you are not open-minded people will not know what you have. Extroverts are good in business."

PH: "Yes. I am an open-minded, have communication skills."

PD: "Yes, I do. I am creative. My expertise is in project management and event management and whenever I am in a group, I bring in creativity."

PJ: "Yes, I am optimistic, creative and able to work with people."

PI: If you believe in yourself and the business you can be an entrepreneur. It all starts with you."

The personality traits of people who choose entrepreneurship as a career are different from those of people who choose employment (Farrukh, Khan, & Soladoye, 2017). This is because entrepreneurs help businesses innovate and be creative so they can offer new products, services, and ways of thinking, giving them a competitive advantage in the global market (Al-Ali, 2022). This was discovered to be true among the participants in this study who expressed a desire to start their own business and who identified as creative, risk-takers, extroverts and social creatures who enjoy interacting with others.

In contrast, those who did not express an interest in becoming entrepreneurs said that they lacked the necessary skills. To become an entrepreneur, one must be self-driven, inventive, willing to take risks, self-reliant and proactive (Marini et al., 2020). Furthermore, this study found that as students are not trained, or taught how to become entrepreneurs, it is then hard for them to develop the necessary skills to become entrepreneurs. Because entrepreneurship education aims to improve employability and prepare students to start successful businesses, it is the development of entrepreneurial skills (Mohamed & Ali, 2021:646).

B. Attitudes Towards Entrepreneurship

An individual's self-acknowledged conviction that they intend to launch a new business venture and intentionally intend to do so in the future is known as their entrepreneurial intention (Bello *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, attitude towards entrepreneurship has a greater weight on the entrepreneur in influencing their intention to entrepreneurship (Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022). Participants were questioned regarding this theme to determine whether they identified as entrepreneurs and whether becoming an entrepreneur would be satisfying to them. Among sport management students' career options, entrepreneurship is not even among the top five (Hu & Ye, 2017). However, study participants showed a favourable attitude toward entrepreneurship and indicated that they would think about starting their own business. The following are some of the comments made by participants regarding their attitudes toward entrepreneurship:

PH: "Yes, being proud of hustle, achievement orientated, money independence."

PB: "Yes, because you set goals that you are working towards something. When having an achievement proving that you can withstand any challenges. Be proud of what is yours."

PC: "Yes, you have something to rely on as it is hard to get jobs, or internships, or learnerships."

PD: "Yes, right now the things I am trying to establish as I run a beauty and salon business. I ensure client satisfaction of which there I know if my client is happy then I am also satisfied. Doing what I love makes me happy."

A study conducted by Pollegriani, Rialti, Marzi and Caputo (2020) found that students enrolled in sport-related courses have positive attitude towards the entrepreneurial intention. After graduating, it is likely that the student will launch their own business if they have a favourable attitude towards entrepreneurship (Ayalew, 2021). This study found comparable results in terms of sport management students having a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, which was also highlighted by the advantages of doing something that they love, being able to address a certain gap in the industry and having the necessary skills to allow them to be entrepreneurs.

C. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

When analysing the actions of aspiring entrepreneurs, it is best to view entrepreneurial intention as a multidimensional construct (Sedlan-Konig, 2016). Participants in this theme were required to indicate what role they think self-confidence played towards them deciding on becoming entrepreneurs. Students who score highly on the entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale are confident in handling more entrepreneurship-related issues, pay more attention to information about entrepreneurship, take the initiative to learn about entrepreneurship, actively explore entrepreneurship, take the initiative to engage in entrepreneurship and develop their competence to increase entrepreneurial intention (Tesuati & Tiatri, 2021). All participants in this study indicated that self-confidence is important when one seeks to venture into entrepreneurship. Below are some inputs from the participants:

“PB: Believing in yourself gives you confidence. This will lead you to become something. If you are willing to learn you can then be an entrepreneur. As much as you believe in yourself, be willing to learn from other people. Ask other people questions, avoid pride and ask people, who know how things are done.”

“PA: Without belief in yourself, you can never do or become an entrepreneur. You have to believe that you can to be.”

The findings did, however, also show that there are some things that can boost confidence, which can then affect someone's decision to start their own business or not. These include having the drive, family background, role model, support from others, entrepreneurial education, capability, believing in yourself and the lack of practicality. The main factor in the identification of opportunities is entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Yasir et al., 2020). Bello, Mattana, and Lo's (2017) study revealed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is regarded as important for entrepreneurs because they must have faith in their ability to carry out various and frequently unexpected tasks in uncertain circumstances. The participants in this study shared a similar finding, demonstrating a favourable attitude toward entrepreneurship. The importance of entrepreneurship and its relevance must also be ingrained, and student's attitudes and sense of self-efficacy must be positively influenced through education, for them to become more aware of and interested in starting their own businesses.

D. Perceived University Support

Universities are crucial in fostering students' entrepreneurial aspirations (Muharana & Chaudhury, 2022). In this theme, participants were required to determine how their university impacted their entrepreneurial intentions and if there are programmes that are held to influence their decision to become entrepreneurs. The results from this study highlighted various themes related to perceived university support, such as ignorance, the university does not care, the lack of entrepreneurial programmes and lack of visibility. Below are some inputs from the participants:

PA: “They play a crucial role but they need to at least make students draft reports or proposals for their business idea. This will motivate students to start a business.”

PF: “Support, such as financial support and entrepreneurial lessons. Many sports students need practical work than the books. We are fed books with no skills.”

PC: They do not contribute in any way. They do not care. The qualification discourages them to be become entrepreneurs. The qualification must influence students to be entrepreneurs. It must start from basic education.”

PH: “No, institutions do not care. They never motivate students to take the entrepreneurial journey.”

PB: “Yes, it does. I always see emails about business seminars and CV writing and workshops but the truth is that students do not pay attention. I have attended these workshops and they are helpful.”

Higher education institutions now play a crucial role in society because they are seen as change agents for fostering an entrepreneurial culture (Nguyen et al., 2022). Because it fosters self-control, self-confidence, and the capacity to explore and take different paths. Education is an essential component in motivating people to become entrepreneurs (Adiguzel & Musluhittinoglu, 2021). Even though the university has various entrepreneurial initiatives, participants claimed that a lack of entrepreneurial programmes, a lack of awareness of the programmes and a lack of relevance give them the impression that the university does not care. Other participants, however, pointed out that although the university does help, students are unaware of it because of their ignorance.

Considering these findings, the study draws the conclusion that while the university may have entrepreneurship-based initiatives, they are not effectively promoted, which in turn limits students' entrepreneurial intention.

E. Perceived Structural Support

The participants in this theme were questioned regarding the type of support they thought was necessary for them to launch their own businesses. The participants in this study indicated that there is a need for them to have certain resources, industry experience, support from lecturers, and workshops. Below are some of the inputs from the participants:

PA: "Practicals we are fed more theory for two years. We need to at least have Work Integrated Learning (WIL) every two months of our study. There is more theory and less application."

PE: "Educational support because you get all the information on how to start and examples of how entrepreneurship occurs."

PF: "They need to get in the environment and see things, hence there is a difference between the academic world and the industry."

PC: "Having more programmes that will support sport management students and to have experience."

PH: "Yes, because lecturers can have workshops and seminars to give out information about such things."

Universities may equip athletes with the knowledge and abilities necessary to secure funding, carry out a business plan, and preserve economic and financial equilibrium (Pollegri, Riati, Marzi & Caputo, 2020). This is so that universities can alter how students think about innovation and taking risks in entrepreneurship (Sampene, Li, Khan, Agyeman & Opoku, 2022). Universities should therefore prioritise exposing students to entrepreneurship and encouraging self-innovation among students so that they can become more innovative, critical, motivated, and skilled in entrepreneurship (Al-Ali, 2022). Participants in this study believed that because universities did not expose them to enough practical work, they were unable to develop the skills necessary to succeed as entrepreneurs.

Moreover, it has been shown that the development of an entrepreneur is directly correlated with the encouragement and support of family, friends, and relatives as well as with the guidance and coaching provided by lecturers (Al-Ali, 2022). Therefore, students that acquire support from friends, family, community and the university have more chances of being entrepreneurs than those who do not.

F. Subjective Norms

Because starting a business is a crucial decision, people are likely to ask those around them for advice and support. Therefore, the opinions of those around a person have an impact on that person's decision to engage in entrepreneurial behaviour (Su, Zhu, Chen, Jin, Wang, Lin & Xu, 2021). In this theme, participants were asked to consider the roles that their community, university and family and friends play in their ability to become entrepreneurs. The participant's results are categorised through family, community and universities.

G. Family and Friends

The study found that family plays a huge role in motivating one to become an entrepreneur. This can be through family support, where one is given moral support, or resources to ensure that one's dream becomes a reality. This is associated with access to resources as families can provide the student with money to start the business. Below are some inputs relating to family support:

PA: "Friends and family play a huge role. If your family does not support you, that does not mean that you must not venture into business. You need money to start the business not moral support."

PF: "Play a significant role. The business route is challenging. They being there and supporting you, will give you motivation to start."

Furthermore, the participants also indicated that their family background does play a role in them becoming entrepreneurs. This is about having someone to look at and encourage one to continue and believe in one's goals.

PE: “Negative and positive as some will not even support you. The family background is a contributing factor to becoming an entrepreneur. Registering a business and collecting data about what they need to be entrepreneurs.

PJ: “They are the biggest influence, actually their approval can lead to one becoming an entrepreneur.”

H. Community

According to the study's participants, the community can play various roles in helping people succeed as entrepreneurs, including providing role models who can encourage an idea and show people how to succeed in a particular setting. Below are some of the inputs relating to community support:

PB: “It takes a village to raise a child. Your surroundings pave a direction of where you may end up. The environment will have an impact on your life. If people always complain, you will end up not making it. No one is responsible for your life. We need to create a conducive environment for our children to benefit from.”

PD: “Copy see, copy act - if I see that someone did something and it works, I would consider doing it.”

However, the results also showed that communities have less understanding of the sports business, which then makes it hard for them to support sports entrepreneurs. Some of the inputs include:

PH: “Yes, rural places normally do not have resources and few people even take entrepreneurship as an important thing to do. Additionally, most people in rural areas can start a business to feed their families, not to make profit. Meaning the type of place, you stay at determines if what you want to do will be successful or not.”

PJ: “They must be your first place of context as they have all the influence in your business success.”

I. University

According to the study's findings, universities should be a major factor in inspiring students to start their own businesses. However, it is clear from the findings that the participants believe the university is not doing much and is instead concentrating on teaching students. The participants, particularly under sport management find the curriculum not to be entrepreneurial and lacks practicality. Below are some of the inputs relating to university support:

“PC: I do not know because most students do not even understand what the course is about.”

“PD: They do not contribute in any way. They do not care. The qualification discourages them to become entrepreneurs. The qualification must influence students to be entrepreneurs. It must start from basic education.”

PH: They do not play any role. They do not care. They just teach you what is on the book then life goes on.”

However, other participants indicated that the university, particularly under investigation does provide programme but the students are ignorant, which then limits them from becoming entrepreneurs. Below are some of the inputs relating to university support:

PE: “Positive because you get guidance from the university lecturers.”

PB: “They play a huge role. They teach you. You have mentors, teachers and lecturers. They are trying everything; they give all you the resources, but we do not use them as students. Even lecturers go beyond their role to help us. It always about communication. Try to speak to someone.”

This study found that family and friends, community and university approval, or support contribute to one's decision to become an entrepreneur. However, it was evident that due to limited support from universities, students' entrepreneurial intentions is then affected. The support from family and family background was found to contribute to the participant's decision to become entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the community was also found to contribute to participants' entrepreneurial intentions. However, the lack of industry background was found to impact the lack of support from family and friends and the community. Therefore, this study concludes that students that have support from their family and friends, community and university can become entrepreneurs.

V. CONCLUSION

Universities need to them consider innovative ways to build sport management students' entrepreneurial intention, to better ensure that students are well-equipped with the necessary training for them to venture into business. This does not only allow them to start businesses but also set an opportunity for those who are athletes in them facing having a sustainable career off-field. As evident, that most athletes run in a risk of not having any form of income should they get injured or stop participation.

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