

Challenges Affecting Sport Management Students' Entrepreneurial Intention at A South African University

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates the challenges affecting sport management student entrepreneurial intentions at a South African University.

Methodology: A qualitative, explanatory research design was employed, utilising structured interviews with ten undergraduate sport management student. The data was analysed using thematic analysis through ATLAS.ti software.

Findings: The results indicate that a significant number of students perceive entrepreneurship as a viable solution to combat the high unemployment rate in the sports industry. Key challenges identified include a lack of entrepreneurial skills, insufficient support from family and peers, and limited access to resources. The study highlights the necessity for universities to integrate entrepreneurial education into their curricula to enhance entrepreneurial mindset and self-efficacy. The findings suggest that addressing these challenges through targeted educational strategies can empower sport management students to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, thereby contributing to their employability and the growth of the sports sector. This will provide room for improvement among tertiary education, government, and subjective norms, such as family, friends, and significant others. The primary focus will be on tertiary institutions to help them identify strategies for addressing sport management students' entrepreneurial intentions.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The uniqueness of sports, given the spread of entrepreneurship in industries and organizations, has provided dynamic opportunities for entrepreneurs (Dehghan & Mohamad, 2021:32). Entrepreneurship has been indicated as a fundamental approach to solve several social and economic problems (da Costa, Miragaia & Veiga, 2023:100433). Therefore, the importance of entrepreneurship in the sports sector has risen recently (Gonzalez-Serrano, Gonzalez-Garcia, Carvalho & Calabuig, 2021:100322).

Entrepreneurship is understood as an activity that generates innovation, employment and growth over a long period of time; therefore, it is considered by governments to be a solution and economic problems (Gonzalez-Serrano, Valentine, Harvas, Perez-Campos & Morena, 2018-389). Entrepreneurship is associated with a capacity for innovation, initiative and creativity currently receiving increasing attention in economic and societal policies (Naia, Baptista, Biscaia, Januario & Trigo, 2017:14).

However, the vast majority of studies have focused on analysing university business students' entrepreneurial intentions and have not focus their attention on other university student populations (Gonzalez-Serrano-Serrano, Valentine, Matic, Milovanic, Sushko & Calabuig, 2023:1000229). The sports industry is

constantly evolving and needs innovation to stay competitive (Peymanfar & Akbarian, 2023:90). Therefore, 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 (Zwane, 2023:1036).

The lack of diversity among sport management faculty, students and administrators is something that many upcoming researchers want to investigate (Jones, Brooks & Mak, 2008:20). Future studies that adopt this viewpoint can delve deeply into how innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking behaviour support sports entrepreneurship (Ratten & Ratten, 2011:67).

Furthermore, numerous scholars suggest that sports students require entrepreneurial skills (Barnes & Gannon, 2022:9; Ratten, 2020:1; Gonzalez, Jones & Linonos, 2019:2-3; Mondalizaheh, 2018). To determine challenges affecting sport management student's entrepreneurial intention, additional in-depth research needs to be conducted across more South African universities, including undergraduate students in the sample (Zogli, Lawa & Dlamini, 2020:8). As a result, qualitative studies are also required to investigate how context influences entrepreneurial intentions (Yurtkoru, Kuscü & Doganay, 2014:849).

A. Literature Review

A new but rapidly developing area of study, particularly recently, is the connection between sports and entrepreneurship (Cardella *et al.*, 2021:1). Creating jobs and reducing unemployment are two of the biggest and most pressing economic issues, particularly for the educated class, where it poses a threat but also a potential opportunity (Saffari, Tojari, Khodayari, Mohammadi & Khalifa, 2013:289). In the first quarter of 2022, there were 7.9 million unemployed people, 40.0% of whom had completed matric, only 2.8% of whom had graduated and 6.7% of whom had completed another tertiary education (Statistics South Africa, 2022:13).

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, 2019:147). According to Turker and Sercula (2009:145), 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. The researcher is interested in learning more about the challenges affecting sport management undergraduate students' desire to pursue entrepreneurship.

1. Sport management student attitude towards entrepreneurial intention

Entrepreneurship is a crucial component of sport management and gives athletes and sports organisations a competitive edge (Ratten, 2011:58). In the fields of sports and entrepreneurship, athletes and sports professionals (such as coaches, physiotherapists and managers) have a lot in common with businesspeople. Sport students, in particular, frequently choose their fields of study because of their aptitude for and future career orientation in sports (Holienka *et al.*, 2018:1485). In sports, these entrepreneurial traits emerge from various dimensions. Sports has an educational component and serves social, cultural and recreational purposes in addition to aiming to improve health, according to the growing social and economic phenomenon of sports (Nova, 2015:3917).

An entrepreneurial mindset in sports can give people a way to survive a financial crisis (Ratten, 2011:58). Sport entrepreneurship is the term for creative sports-related activities enhanced with a proactive and risk-taking quality beneficial for both established and emerging organisations (Naia *et al.*, 2017:15). Ratten (2011:63) asserts that sport entrepreneurship is dynamic and impacts several management domains, including no-nonsense strategy, crisis management, the emergence of new sports, performance management, product innovation, promotional tactics, social issues, sustainability issues and technological advancements. The dynamic features of sport-based entrepreneurship are depicted in figure 2.1. Thus, a primary exploratory study to examine the personality traits, enterprising tendencies and entrepreneurial propensity of sports students is necessary to better understand whether and how sports serve as a potential stepping-stone to the entrepreneurial path among university sports students (Holienka *et al.*, 2018:1486).

2. Challenges Affecting Sport Management Student entrepreneurial intentions

According to Bajcinca-Brestovci, Zhushi, Krasniqi, Kryeziu, Bagis, Lajqi and Dedaj (2023:210), entrepreneurial intentions differ also based on the academic programs where students are enrolled. In addition, there is an evident gap in the studies that provide a systematic process of designing sport entrepreneurship (Ansari, Khoo & Ismail, 2020 :1). Therefore, sport graduates face the same challenge, as the graduates are unable to find employment in the industry is high (Zwane, 2023).

The lack of suitable space for entrepreneurship, the lack of necessary infrastructure facilities and the lack of access to appropriate technology prevent the rapid development of entrepreneurship in the country (Zarei Mahmudabadi, Peymanfar & Aghaei, 2024:1). Understanding the cognitive infrastructure supporting

entrepreneurial activities can provide a richer perspective on how to cultivate entrepreneurship (Liu, Lipowski, Xue, Xiao, Liu, Xu, Liu & Zhao, 2021:3).

The lack of entrepreneurial consulting service and ineffectiveness of these centers was introduced as the problems of entrepreneurship in the sport colleges (Mondalizadeh, 2018:20). This show that graduated students need consulting services in sport business and private firms. Since even emerging entrepreneurs may lack the knowledge to implement their ideas and society may be the lack of infrastructure to help them to achieve success, a plan that provides knowledge to the emerging entrepreneurs to start and run business can provide a determination about the need for entrepreneurs to function (Zwane, 2023).

When considering the person-job fit theory, with a positive assessment of a job environment being a fit between a person's abilities and a job's demands (Steinbrink & Strohle, 2024:608), an entrepreneurial career for former athletes seems even more likely. However, failure within the startup ecosystem can be attributed to factors like insufficient funding, ineffective resource allocation, an inadequate grasp of market dynamics or customer demands, and fierce market competition (Ștefănică, Munteanu, Roșu, Groza & Dragoș, 2024:119). Therefore, it is important that the curricula are not being developed without proper attention to the needs and specific problems of society or to their role in preparing experts of the future (Ansari & Husin, 2015:63).

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 ten 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

1. Sport management students' 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.

2. Challenges affecting sport management students entrepreneurial intention

participants were asked questions to identify what may lead them to consider being entrepreneurs or what influenced them to want to become entrepreneurs. From the results received, eight themes were the main reasons why students consider becoming entrepreneurs. These themes include unemployment, having a great network, entrepreneurial education, family background, family support, the lack of entrepreneurial skills, the ability to see an opportunity and gender inequality, as depicted in figure 2.

THEME 1: UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment was the main reason most participants consider becoming entrepreneurs. Participants highlighted that because of the lack of employment opportunities, they see becoming an entrepreneur as a solution. This is because unemployment has increased to a rate of 32.6% in South Africa, a problem that affects all age groups in the labour force and that youth unemployment will be particularly high in 2021, ranging from 41.3% to 63.3%. (Mahlaole & Malebana, 2021:2). When it comes to the lack of employment opportunities in the sector, sport management graduates face similar difficulties as graduates of other disciplines (Ansari, Khoo & Ismail, 2021:412). Below are some insights from the participants relating to unemployment:

PB: "It is difficult to get jobs. It is frustrating to send emails and not getting jobs. It is good to work for yourself, is better than to stress yourself to find a job. We were taught to own our business."

PF: "I would say lack of jobs after they complete their qualifications. Money hungry decision making rather than passion. Opportunity that lead you to want to fill the gap. Aiming for profit."

Furthermore, participants associated unemployment with access to money to start a business. The participants acknowledged that it is challenging for them to even start a business because they are unemployed. This may be because, if they had a source of income, they would use it to start a business. This is because having access to capital is essential to entrepreneurship because it influences entrepreneurial cognitions like willingness, confidence and visions (Svotwa et al., 2022:5). Below are some of the inputs relating unemployment:

PD: "I do because I graduated with my diploma and it is hard to get a job. If I had money I would venture into a business."

PH: "No, because I do not have the resources I need to start the business. If I have funding maybe I would have started my business"

THEME 2: HAVING A GREAT NETWORK

Under this theme, participants indicated that knowing someone in the industry, or surrounding areas would lead one to become an entrepreneur. Participants said that knowing someone in a position of authority would help one learn more about the industry and establish their reputation. Below are some of the inputs that speak to having a great network:

PA: "You get to network with the right people; your name will grow and be impactful in the community"

Participants also connected this theme to unemployment because they feel that having a strong network is still necessary to even land a job that will pay well enough to start a business. An example of those inputs is as follows:

PD: "Yes, I would, it is something that I am considering. Getting a job needs connection. I always wanted to have an academy but I lack facilities and family support."

THEME 3: THE LACK OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

Under this theme, participants indicated that not having the necessary skills to become entrepreneurs limits them from becoming entrepreneurs. Different skill sets are required for each stage of an entrepreneurial life phase, which are crucial in both self-employment and in established organisations (Deberliev, Janeska-live, Stripeikis & Zupan, 2022:222). Participants in the study stated that they are prevented from starting their own businesses because they lack the necessary skills. For example, participants raised the following inputs relating to the lack of entrepreneurial skills:

PF: “No, I am not a business minded person. I do not see myself starting the business as I do not have the capabilities to be an entrepreneur.”

PJ: “No, because I do not have the skills, sports needs you to be more trained and informed about the sport. It requires a lot of work. Sports is only understood as coaching.”

THEME 4: LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

Under this theme, participants highlighted lack of family support affects their decision to become entrepreneurs. Family is an entrepreneur's closest social environment because of the parental guidance, compassion, support and socioeconomic situation that they provide as well as other learning resources (Mukson, Subagia, Riona, Indriyani & Syaifulloh, 2022:307). They indicated that the reason behind their families not supporting them is that they still do not understand what sports is. Below are some of the inputs from the participants relating to family support:

PC: “Yes, I would. If they could. Most Black females do not understand sports. Therefore, if they can be taught about sports, they would be motivated to start business. Families need to give financial support and the friends can only give moral support.”

PB: “As you grow up you need them to encourage you. If you do not get encouragement you tend to doubt yourself. No one is a failure; therefore, when you have people to support you, you will make it.”

The participants also demonstrate that, to succeed as an entrepreneur, one needs the assistance of strangers rather than family and, particularly, financial resources because one needs them to start the business. An example of some inputs is as follows:

PE: “In most cases none, more especially in Black communities, if you want to be successful you must connect more with strangers as people close to you will never support you.

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”.

Lastly, it has also been clear that the type of support that participants believe families must provide them to motivate them to become entrepreneurs includes financial support rather than moral support. In addition to encouraging their children, family members also offer financial and psychological support when starting a new business (Muharana & Chaudhury, 2022:5). Below are some of the participants' input relating to family support needed:

PF: “Support you get from family to provide assistance, such as financial assistance, moral support and idea support.”

PG: “Play a significant role. The business route is challenging. They being there and their support will give you motivation to start.”

THEME 5: FAMILY BACKGROUND

Under this theme, participants mentioned that a person's family background tends to motivate one to consider becoming an entrepreneur. One's attitude and intentions towards entrepreneurship are influenced by one's family background, particularly if they experienced a difficult childhood (Farrukh, Khan & Soladoye, 2017:304). Below is some input around family background:

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

THEME 6: ABILITY TO SEE AN OPPORTUNITY

Under this theme, participants indicated that when one sees an opportunity or gap, he/she can then be motivated to close that gap. Being able to identify a gap is related to one seeing a certain thing lacking within the organisation or society and wishing to address it, which is part of being an entrepreneur. Below are some of the inputs relating to the ability to see an opportunity:

PA: “Depends on the opportunity that are offered for instance is the industry open.”

PF: “I would say lack of jobs after they complete their qualifications. Money hungry decision making rather than passion. Opportunity that lead you to want to fill the gap. Aiming for profit.”

Theme 7: Entrepreneurial Education

Participants in this theme said that although most universities give students more theoretical than practical education, they should still support students by teaching them entrepreneurship. Therefore, entrepreneurship education may give athletes the abilities they need to secure funding, actualise a business plan and maintain a balance between their financial and economic well-being (Pollegrini, Rialti, Marzi & Caputo, 2020:814). Below are some of the inputs that participants raised concerning entrepreneurial intention:

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."

PD: "It can but I do not see that in South African universities or educational system pushing students to become entrepreneurs. Modules should be designed to push students to be entrepreneurs because most of the academic structure is just aimed at employment not independence."

PE: "Educational support: every student who wants to start a business, needs support and guidance to start a business. They need information."

Theme 8: Gender Inequality

Several earlier studies that found that men have higher levels of interest than women in starting new businesses demonstrate the influence of gender on entrepreneur choices (Ayalow, 2022:372). Women believe that entrepreneurship is an unsuitable career choice for them because men are more encouraged in society to start businesses (Rajkovic et al., 2021:109). Participants in this study, however, stated that as women, they believe that there is a need for equality and that having female mentors or role models can inspire them to start their own business. Below are some inputs relating to gender equality:

"PB: Equality. In sport there is no equality especially when you are a woman. We female are not included in everything, women in sports sometimes need women to succeed in sports. Gender limits the success in sports. We need exposure as women."

IV. CONCLUSION**A. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study has explored the challenges affecting the entrepreneurial intentions of sport management students at a South African university. The findings reveal that while students recognize entrepreneurship as a viable pathway to combat high unemployment rates in the sports industry, several barriers hinder their entrepreneurial aspirations. Key challenges identified include a lack of entrepreneurial skills, insufficient family and peer support, and limited access to resources and networks.

To foster a more entrepreneurial mindset among students, it is imperative for universities to integrate comprehensive entrepreneurial education into their sport management curricula. This integration should not only focus on theoretical knowledge but also emphasize practical skills and real-world applications.

B. Recommendations

Universities should revise their sport management curricula to include dedicated modules on entrepreneurship. These modules should cover essential topics such as business planning, financial management, and marketing strategies tailored to the sports industry.

Institutions should offer workshops and training sessions aimed at developing specific entrepreneurial skills among students. This could include mentorship programs, guest lectures from successful entrepreneurs, and hands-on projects that encourage innovation.

Universities should facilitate networking events that connect students with industry professionals, potential investors, and alumni who can provide guidance and support. Building a robust network is crucial for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Establishing dedicated entrepreneurial support services within universities can help students navigate the challenges of starting their own businesses. These services could include access to funding, business incubators, and consulting services.

Universities should engage with families and communities to raise awareness about the importance of entrepreneurship in the sports sector. Providing resources and information can help garner support for students' entrepreneurial endeavours.

By implementing these recommendations, universities can play a pivotal role in enhancing the entrepreneurial intentions of sport management students, ultimately contributing to their success and the growth of the sports industry in South Africa.

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