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A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF ATTITUDINAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this paper was to understand the influence of attitudes and the external environmental factors on students entrepreneurial intentions. To study the attitudinal factors, students general attitude i.e. their (attitude towards money, attitude towards change, and attitude towards competitiveness) and the attitude toward entrepreneurship is taken in the study. To study the influence of external environmental factors the study employed variables like university environment, environment support and environment barriers of the students. A questionnaire form was developed with statements related to attitudes and external environment conditions. Convenience sampling method was used to collect the data. A total of 300 students were taken for the study. Factor analysis and regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study proved that in case of general attitude - attitude towards money had significant influence on student's entrepreneurial intention. But attitude towards competitiveness and attitude towards change did not show significant influence on entrepreneurial intention. Attitude of students towards entrepreneurship also had significant influence on entrepreneurial intention. Pertaining to the external environment conditions, university environment, environment support and environment barriers showed an impact on entrepreneurial intention among students in Kerala.

KEYWORDS

entrepreneurial intention, attitudes, external environment.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Today, the idea of entrepreneurship as an attractive alternative to wage employment among students in Kerala and all over India is escalating. There are a number of reasons for this tendency. Firstly, it is noticed that ventures started by well-educated entrepreneurs are growing quicker than the enterprises of their counterparts. Hence the importance of education for the successful performance of new ventures is well recognized by management practitioners and researchers. Second, due to the job stress, less job security and less opportunity, people are interested towards self-employment. Finally, the unemployment among graduates in Kerala has been growing during recent years.

Few universities in Kerala have responded to the changing framework conditions and new social demand on entrepreneurship education. Hence they offer a wide range of educational activities at graduation and post graduation level. Some of the affiliated private colleges are also offering entrepreneurial courses. Many good colleges in Kerala offer entrepreneurial training programs for engineering students and management students. Incubators are well functioning in some colleges as well. Kerala government is also taking number of initiatives like the start-up villages, TBI (incubator) in different parts of the state and making budgetary provisions in its annual budget for encouraging potential young entrepreneurs.

According to Krueger et al., (2000) entrepreneurial intention is one of the main predictor of future entrepreneurial behavior. Hence, investigating the factors determining entrepreneurial intention is an important issue in entrepreneurship research. In general, intention can be defined as "a state of mind directing a person's attention toward a specific object or a path in order to achieve something" (Vesalainen and Pihkala, 1999). Theory of planned behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) is one of the common theoretical frameworks which explain pre start up processes. According to this theory behavioural intention is an immediate determinant of planned behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). According to Krueger et al., (2000) theory of planned behaviour can be applied when once behaviour is rare, hard to observe, or involves unpredictable time lags (Krueger et al., 2000). According to Autio et al., (1997), Krueger et al., (2000), entrepreneurship can also be viewed as a type of planned behaviour, for which intention models are appropriate. Some of the previous researches conducted by Begley et al., 1997; Davidsson, 1995; Franke and Luthje, 2004; Robinson et al., 1991; discussed the influence of personal and environment-based determinants on entrepreneurial intent such as personality traits, attitudes toward entrepreneurship, or social environment. However, it is noticed that only limited studies are addressing students' entrepreneurial intention (Luthje and Franke, 2003; Wang and Wong, 2004). Hence, the main objective of this paper was to understand the influence of attitudes and the external environmental factors on students entrepreneurial intentions. To study the attitudinal factors, students general attitude i.e. their (attitude towards money, attitude towards change, and attitude towards competitiveness) and the attitude toward entrepreneurship is taken in the study. To study the influence of external environmental factors the study employed variables like university environment, environment support and environment barriers of the students. A questionnaire form was developed with statements related to attitudes and external environment conditions. Convenience sampling method was used to collect the data. A total of 300 students were taken for the study. Factor analysis and regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses.

2. ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION: LITERATURE REVIEW

In previous research regarding entrepreneurship and factors influencing the entrepreneurial intention personality characteristics of individuals were incorporated. A number of personality factors like need for achievement, risk taking propensity, internal locus of control, or innovativeness were considered for understanding entrepreneurial intention and success (Brockhaus and Horwitz, 1986). However, the personality approaches had drawbacks (Robinson et al., 1991). As an alternative to the personality theories, in 1990s the attitude approach become popular for predicting entrepreneurial intention (Douglas, 1999; Robinson et al., 1991). The present study continues along these lines.

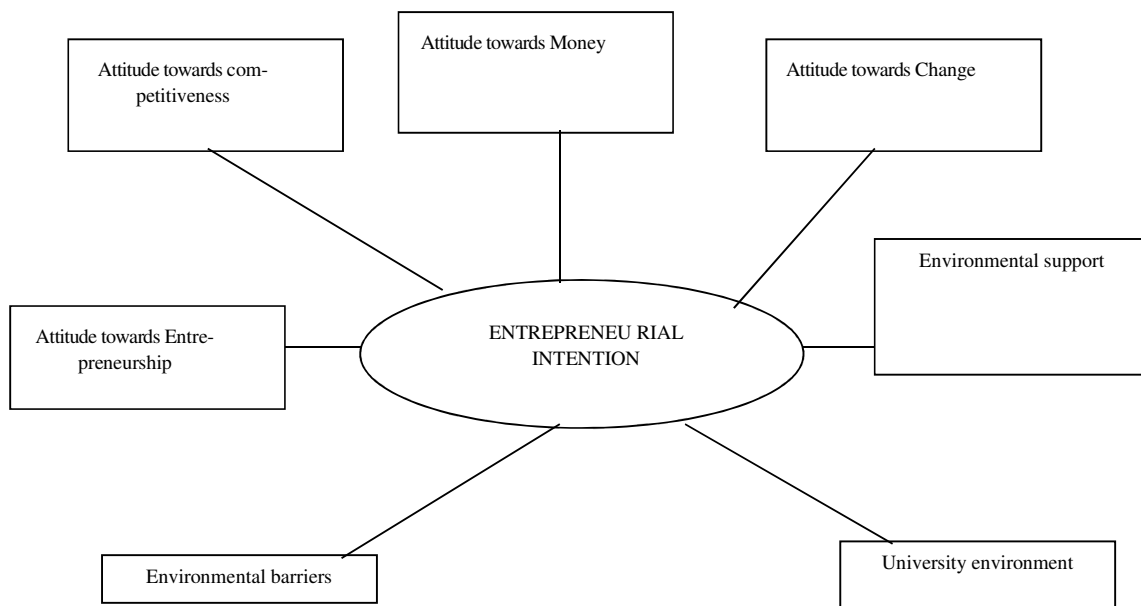
Theory of planned behaviour, explains the impact of individual's attitudes on behaviour via intention. According to this theory, attitude has three fundamental antecedents of intention mainly personal attitude toward outcomes of the behaviour, perceived social norm, and perceived behavioural control. These three antecedents have proven to account variance in intentions (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). In general, attitudes can be defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Attitudes are relatively less stable than personality traits and hence can be changed both across time and situations in benefit of the individual's interaction with the environment (Robinson et al., 1991). For this good reason, entrepreneurial attitudes are influenced by educators and practitioners. The previous studies conducted by Autio et al., (1997); Douglas, (1999); Krueger et al., (2000); Robinson et al., (1991) empirically confirmed the importance of attitudes, both in general and toward entrepreneurship, in explaining people's aspiration to create a new venture.

Douglas in (1999) conducted a study to find out the relationship between the intention to start one's own business and individual's attitudes toward income, independence, risk, and work effort. The results of his empirical study suggested that individuals with a more positive attitude toward independence and risk are more likely to become entrepreneurs. But people's attitudes to work efforts and attitude toward income (money) correlated negatively with the entrepreneurial intention. The results of Wang and Wong (2004) study contradicted to the findings of Douglas's study i.e. the study reported that risk-averse attitude do not influence entrepreneurial intention. Autio et al. (1997) examined the influence of attitudes toward achievement, autonomy, money, change, and competitiveness upon entrepreneurial intention and viewed it as the primary factors of entrepreneurial intention. Krueger et al. (2000) study found out attitude towards entrepreneurship and self-efficiency, are significant predictors of entrepreneurial intention. But they reported a non-significant impact of the remaining attitudinal variable, i.e. perceived social norm, on entrepreneurial intent. Study conducted by Franke and Luthje (2004) found a strong positive relationship between the attitude toward self-employment and the intention to become an entrepreneur. Luthje and Franke (2003) conducted another study among students of technical disciplines at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and they examined the impact of personal dispositions and of perceived environmental conditions for founding a new venture on entrepreneurial intention. The results of their study revealed that the attitude toward entrepreneurship is the most important determinant of entrepreneurial intention. Some few studies in the entrepreneurship discipline focused on environmental conditions as determinants of people's aspiration to start a company. According to Aldrich and Zimmer (1986) individuals cannot be viewed as atomized decision-makers who operate as autonomous entities and according to Robinson et al., (1991) the attitudes do not exist "in isolation". Therefore, it is important to focus on the entrepreneurial process as an embedded process in a social, cultural and economic context which are considered as external environmental factors. Previous studies conducted by Autio et al., (1997); Begley et al., (1997) and Luthje and Franke, (2003) have also recognized the influence of external factors on an individual's interest to become an entrepreneur. Luthje and Franke (2003) study revealed that the student's entrepreneurial intention is also affected by perceived entrepreneurship-related barriers and support factors. Their study revealed that when students realized an unfriendly environment for new business start ups, e.g. credit conditions as being too restrictive, they were less likely to become entrepreneurs irrespective of their positive attitude towards self-employment. In another study conducted by Franke and Luthje (2004), they examined the influence of university environment on entrepreneurial intent. Results of their study revealed that the lower level of student's entrepreneurial intention is due to the negative approach of the university's to provide students with the knowledge required to start a business and to support the process of new venture creation actively. But studies conducted by Franke and Lethje (2004) and Autio et al. (1997) founded that the positive support provided by the university environment had a negative impact on entrepreneurial intention. The inconsistency in the findings of previous research indicates that there is still a necessity to improve our understanding of the preconditions of entrepreneurial intention and moreover such kind of studies is not conducted among students of Kerala. Hence a study is being developed in this direction.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE STUDY

This study has developed a conceptual frame work of entrepreneurial intention by incorporating both attitudes and external environmental factors based on prior research. The general attitudes (attitude towards money, attitude towards change, and attitude towards competitiveness), the attitude toward entrepreneurship, and the external environment conditions were the main factors used in the study to predict the entrepreneurial intention (Figure 1).

FIG. 1



On the basis of the above figure-1, the following hypotheses were developed:

- H1: Positive attitude towards change in individuals can influence their intention to become entrepreneurs.
- H2: Positive attitude towards money in individuals can influence their intention to become entrepreneurs.
- H3: Positive attitude towards competitiveness in individuals can influence their intention to become entrepreneurs.
- H4: Positive attitude towards entrepreneurship in individuals can influence their intention to become entrepreneurs.
- H5: Individuals who perceive entrepreneurship-related support positively can have stronger intention to become entrepreneurs.
- H6: Individuals who perceive entrepreneurship-related barriers negatively can have weaker intention to become entrepreneur
- H7: Individuals who perceive university environment as entrepreneurship supportive can have stronger intention to become entrepreneurs.

4. RESULTS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Engineering and business students from ten colleges from state of Kerala were taken as samples. Convenience sampling method was used to collect the data. A total of 300 students were considered in the study. Factor analysis and regression analysis is used in the study. The sample consists of 78 business students between the age group of 18-21 years and 72 business students between the age group of 21-23 years, were as 64 engineering students were between the age group of 18-21 years and 86 engineering students were between the age group of 21-23 years. A total 142 students (from both engineering and business studies) were between the age group of 18-21 and 158 students (from both engineering and business studies) were between the age group of 21-23. Among business students 78 were males and 72 were females were as 82 students among engineering students were males and 68 students were females. A total of 160 students in the study were males and 140 students were females (Table- 1).

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

	Business	Engineering	Total
Age 18 – 21	78	64	142
21- 23	72	86	158
Total	150	150	300
Male	78	82	160
Female	72	68	140
Total	150	150	300

Source: survey data

4.1 METHOD AND MEASUREMENT USED IN THE STUDY

The dependent variable of the study is entrepreneurial intention and independent variables of the study are general attitudes, attitude toward entrepreneurship, and perception of the external environment conditions. Few statements are taken from Autio et al. (1997) scale and it is modified according to the study. Five point Likert scale is used in the study were 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". A total of 25 statements were incorporated in the questionnaire. All items used in the study are listed in Table -2.

4.2 RESULTS OF FACTOR ANALYSIS AND RELIABILITY

Principal component factor analysis was performed on independent variables (i.e. general attitudes (towards money, change, and competitiveness), the attitude toward entrepreneurship and perception of the external environment condition) and on dependent variable (i.e. entrepreneurial intention) to define the underlying structure among the variables in the analysis (Table 3). Table 2 shows the finalized number of items included for each variable. For the purpose of the hypothesis testing only statements with factor loadings more than 0.60 were taken (Table 3). The reliability tests based on Cronbach’s alpha measurements were conducted. The Cronbach Alpha for all measures is above 0.7. Thus, the results of the reliability of constructs can be considered to be satisfying (Table 3). In conclusion this study measured entrepreneurial intention with three items. General attitudes comprise three constructs, i.e. attitude toward competitiveness (two items), attitude toward money (two items), and attitude toward change (two items). The attitude toward entrepreneurship was also measured using two items. The perception of the college environment refers to the degree to which the college the students are studying is perceived as a supporting organization to start a new venture. The construct was measured by a set of four items. The perception of entrepreneurship-related support relates to the degree to which external conditions to start a business, particularly financing factors, are perceived positively. This construct includes two items and the perception of entrepreneurship-related barriers consists of three items.

TABLE 2: CONSTRUCTS USED IN ANALYSIS

Items	Construct
Are you interested in setting up your own business? Are you planning to set up a business during the next two years? I am prepared to do anything to be an entrepreneur	Entrepreneurial intention
In my college, people are encouraged to pursue their own ideas The courses offered students with the knowledge required to start a new company The incubator in our college supports the start-up of new firms The creative atmosphere in our college inspires us to develop ideas for new businesses	College environment
Banks do not readily give credit to start up companies It is hard to find capital providers in our place	Environment support
The sufficient subsidies are not available for new companies Qualified consultants as well as service support for new companies are not available in our place.	Environment barriers
I work harder in circumstances where my performance is compared with others It annoys me when others perform better than I do	General attitude toward competitiveness
Do you believe having high income is an indicator of success in your life Is it important for you to make a lot of money	General attitude toward money
Are you bored working in a stable environment I need constant change to remain stimulated, even if this would mean higher uncertainty	General attitude toward change
I'd rather be my own boss than have a secure job I'd rather found a new company than be the manager of an existing one	Attitude toward entrepreneurship

TABLE 3: FACTOR LOADINGS AND RELIABILITY OF SCALES

Constructs	No of items	Factor loading	Indicator reliability	Cronbach Alpha	Factor reliability	Average variance explained
Entrepreneurial intent	3	0.764	0.593	0.746	0.860	0.673
		0.745	0.642			
		0.897	0.825			
University environment	4	0.897	0.665	0.811	0.873	0.633
		0.884	0.625			
		0.843	0.641			
		0.888	0.652			
Environmental support	2	0.834	0.629	0.703	0.805	0.674
		0.818	0.620			
Environmental barriers	3	0.873	0.463	0.774	0.802	0.577
		0.824	0.690			
		0.873	0.588			
General attitude toward Competitiveness	2	0.887	0.708	0.738	0.792	0.656
		0.780	0.504			
General attitude toward money	2	0.877	0.762	0.760	0.877	0.781
		0.878	0.779			
General attitude toward change	2	0.875	0.763	0.736	0.866	0.763
		0.852	0.754			
Attitude toward entrepreneurship	2	0.847	0.725	0.799	0.850	0.739
		0.852	0.713			

Source: survey data

4.3 RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table -5, presents the regression estimation for entrepreneurial intention. From the table, it is understood that R^2 (=0.230) which implies that 23.0 percent of entrepreneurial intention can be explained by the seven independent variables. The proposed model was adequate as the F-statistic (= 62.630) was significant at the 5 percent level. This indicated that the overall model provides a statistically significant relationship between attitudes, perceived environment conditions and entrepreneurial intention. From Table-4 attitude towards money and attitude towards entrepreneurship were found to have a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, hypothesis H2 and H4 is accepted. However, attitude toward change and attitude towards competitiveness was found to have no significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention. Hence, H1 and H3 were not statistically supported. But all the environmental factors i.e. university environment, environmental support and environmental barrier were found to have a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention. Hence H5, H6 and H7 were accepted.

TABLE 4: REGRESSION RESULTS

Model	coefficient	t-statistic
(Constant)	3.666	
Attitude toward Competitiveness	0.079	0.959
Attitude toward money	0.103	1.246*
Attitude toward change	0.051	0.534
Attitude toward entrepreneurship	0.113	1.981*
University environment	0.152	2.327*
Environmental support	0.119	2.227*
Environmental barriers	0.226	4.051*

TABLE 5

R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig F
0.230	0.226	62.630	0.00

Note: *significant at 5 per cent level/ Dependent Variable: entrepreneurial intention Source: SPSS generated result out of authors' data

5. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The result of the study indicates that student's attitude towards money and attitude towards entrepreneurship have a significant relationship with their entrepreneurial intention. However, student's attitude toward change and attitude towards competitiveness was found to have no significant relationship with their entrepreneurial intention. But all the environmental factors i.e. students college environment, environmental support and environmental barrier were found to have a significant relationship with their entrepreneurial intention. Hence this study concludes by recommending universities and colleges in Kerala to start more entrepreneurial educational programs for students. Apart from theoretical subjects entrepreneurial education should give importance to practical sessions. It is also recommended to have interactive sessions with entrepreneurs, which will help the students to clear their queries regarding small start ups. Incubators in colleges can play an important role in developing student's interest in venture ownership. Students with innovative ideas should be encouraged at school level itself. Autonomy should be given to students for free thinking and for decision making. Schools in Kerala should promote role models and should organize business idea competitions with attractive awards. This can develop entrepreneurial intention and competitiveness attitude in young people. Attitude towards money also showed a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention; this finding shows that students are motivated by having good standard of living. Environmental support and environmental barriers also have a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention, this findings shows the importance of environmental factors on entrepreneurial intention. This finding clearly mentions that if environmental support is less and environmental barriers are more than it will be very difficult for students to start an enterprise of their own.

Future career of students is a complex process. Most of the entrepreneurial intention studies addresses personal related perspectives but neglects various external circumstances that might influence students' career choice to start-up a business. Hence it is recommended that future research should place more emphasis on both human and environmental factors.

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