

The Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Intentions: Entrepreneurship Education of Undergraduate Students in Zhanjiang Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the factors influencing the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate students who have received entrepreneurship education at four universities in Zhanjiang. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, a survey was conducted among 400 samples of the undergraduate students taking Entrepreneurial Education courses. Descriptive analysis with Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency, and Percentage was performed followed by Multiple Regression. The results showed that Perceived Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavior Control were all significantly and positively correlated with Entrepreneurial Intentions with the most to the least significant of: 1) Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC); 2) Personal Attitude (PA) and 3) Subjective norms (SN). That the findings highlighted the crucial role of Perceived Behavioral Control, particularly, in driving students' Entrepreneurial Intentions into realistic ways of becoming effective business owners not only in Zhanjiang Universities but also in other regions of the country.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Intentions, Entrepreneurship Education, Undergraduate Students, Zhanjiang Universities

Introduction

While economic, educational, and social systems have been challenged, Entrepreneurship Education is considered one of the answers in lowering risk of unemployment by encouraging young people to become business owners (Ana Iolanda Vodă & Nelu Florea, 2019; Basuki, et al., 2021). In order to fulfill this, the research in Entrepreneurship Education, especially, in factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions is needed (Breznitz & Zhang, 2022; Xu, 2021). As entrepreneurial intentions refer to a potential entrepreneur's individual inclinations and expectations about engaging in entrepreneurial activities, which serves as a preliminary indicator of the likelihood of a future to be entrepreneur and is a key component in parsing the entrepreneurial process (Zelin, et al., 2021).

In this study, in order to understand of how entrepreneurship intentions have been developed among the undergraduate students, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; Forbes, 2020) was used to explain entrepreneurial intentions by its strong explanatory and predictive power of the three components -- personal attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Bergner, et al., 2021; Doanh, 2021; Ng, et al., 2021). According to the personal attitude, it is referred to an individual's overall disposition toward an object, concept, or environment (Jena, 2020), in the context of entrepreneurship, personal attitudes toward entrepreneurship

are considered to be the first and foremost component that shape entrepreneurial intentions (Amofah & Saladrignes, 2022). Next, subjective norms which are defined as the extent to which individuals believe that people or groups important to them believe they should or should not perform the behavior (Singh, et al., 2022). Most recent studies confirm that the greater an individual's motivation to comply with the opinions or advice of others, the higher the intention to become an entrepreneur (Shukla & Kumar, 2024; Ajzen, 2020). Finally, perceived behavioral control which is referred as to an individual's personal perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform a particular behavior, including an assessment of the availability of the resources and opportunities needed and the obstacles they may face (Aschwanden, et al., 2021; Lim & Weissmann, 2023). with confidence in their own ability, i.e., the extent to which they believe they can successfully perform the behavior (Sultan, et al., 2020). With the high levels of perceived behavioral control, individuals are believed to be more intentions and capability to perform their behavior, which may enhance their intentions to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 2020; Bosnjak, et al., 2020).

Overall, according to the research findings above, it seemed that entrepreneurial intentions of becoming a new business owner or doing things on their own appeared salience for the imperative development of students' opportunity in employment and ensuring social and economic stability. Taking this view, this study, thus, will focus on entrepreneurial intentions of the undergraduate students in China, especially in Zhanjiang as to respond to the policy of the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education (Mensah, et al., 2021) which specified that all college and university students must take Entrepreneurship Education (courses) as to be encouraged and promoted their entrepreneurial intentions.

Therefore, this study aimed to explore the factors influencing the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate students at universities in Zhanjiang. The four universities in Zhanjiang host a total of 109,787 undergraduates, making this study representative and meaningful. This research, thus, provide empirical analysis in supporting of the Theory of Planned Behavior, offering insights into promoting entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduates in order to enhance entrepreneurship education.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship Education

For two decades, Entrepreneurship Education is receiving increasing attention from the academic community (Nabi et al., 2017), as European Commission (2003) posits that in Entrepreneurship Education has involved with learning practices and activities that aims to enhance students' entrepreneurial attitudes, knowledge, and skills through entrepreneurship simulations, project-based learning, interaction with entrepreneurs, and even participation in actual entrepreneurial activities (Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2020).

Entrepreneurial Intentions

The concept of "intention" has its origins in social psychology and represents an individual's beliefs about the future adoption of a particular behavior, while directing the individual's attention to a specific goal and pathway to carry out that behavior (Bird, 1988). Entrepreneurial intention refers to an individual's expectations, plans, and desires to engage in entrepreneurial activities in the future (Bandura, 2001). Entrepreneurial intention is more than just a decision; it also involves the perception of entrepreneurial opportunities, the assessment of entrepreneurial risks, the assessment of the resources needed to start a business, and the expectation of entrepreneurial outcomes (Fayolle & Liñán, 2014). In the study of students' entrepreneurial intentions, the theory of planned behavior is superior to other models because it provides more detailed information about the formation of entrepreneurial intentions and is empirically supported by a wide range of concerns (Maheshwari & Kha, 2022; Doanh & Bernat, 2019).

Personal Attitude

Attitudes reflect an individual's overall judgment of a behavior, including positive or negative perceptions, and this assessment usually precedes the formation of specific intentions (Ajzen, 1985). Entrepreneurial attitudes, i.e., individuals' positive evaluations and dispositions toward entrepreneurial activities, reflect their personal preferences for engaging in entrepreneurial behaviors (Cui, Sun & Bell, 2021). For example, positive expected outcomes such as high financial rewards, independence, or autonomy may promote individuals' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial behavior; whereas negative expectations of behavioral outcomes may inhibit entrepreneurial intentions (Sampedro, Fernández-Laviada & Herrero Crespo, 2014). There is a positive correlation between personal attitudes and entrepreneurial intentions of university students (Shah, Amjed & Jaboo, 2020; Su, Zhu, Chen, Jin, Wang, Lin & Xu, 2021; Taneja, Kiran & Bose, 2024). Personal attitudes of

university students towards entrepreneurship as a career plan are overall positive and significantly correlated with entrepreneurial intentions (Nowiński, Haddoud, Lančarič, Egerová & Czegeledi, 2019; Shah, Amjed & Jaboo, 2020). Based on existing research, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Personal Attitude has a significant positive impact on entrepreneurial intentions.

Subjective Norms

Subjectivity can be viewed as a collective phenomenon, i.e., a collection of global and domain-neutral psychological assessments of behaviors, norms, and attributes of a particular phenomenon (Casson, 2010). Subjective Norms are understood to be an individual's perceptions of what other people think about a proposed behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Numerous studies have shown that subjective norms have a direct effect on behavioral intentions (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000; Shapero & Sokol, 1982; Fayolle & Liñán, 2014; Siu & Lo, 2013). Subjective norms are key influencers of entrepreneurial intention and are positively associated with entrepreneurial intention (Pham, Nguyen, Nguyen, Tran & Nguyen, 2023; Utami, 2017; Afiat, Rijal, Koesoemasari, Furqan & Abdullah, 2023). Based on existing research, we propose the following hypothesis in this paper:

H2: Subjective Norms has a significant positive impact on entrepreneurial intentions.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) reflects an individual's subjective perception of the ease or difficulty of performing a specific behavior, which is influenced by prior experience and anticipatory barriers (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived Behavioral Control describes an individual's beliefs about his or her ability to perform a specific behavior (Engle, Dimitriadi, Gavidia, Schlaegel, Delanoe, Alvarado & Wolff, 2010; Utami, 2017). In exploring the genesis of entrepreneurial intentions, Karali (2013) and Naia, Baptista, Biscaia, Januário & Trigo (2017) found that Perceived Behavioral Control positively and significantly influenced individuals involved in entrepreneurial programs. Several studies from different universities in different countries have shown a significant positive effect between perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intentions (Bağış, Kryeziu, Kurutkan, Krasniqi, Hernik, Karagüzel & Ateş, 2023; Malebana & Mahlaole, 2023; Ledian, Perdana, Deliana & Sendjaja, 2023; Dabbous & Boustani, 2023; Doanh, 2021; Mahmoud, Garba, Abdullah & Ali, 2020). Based on existing research, we propose the following hypothesis in this paper:

H3: Perceived Behavioral Control has a significant positive impact on entrepreneurial intentions.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the levels of factors affecting entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate students receiving Entrepreneurship Education in the universities in Zhanjiang; and
2. To determine the influences of factors affecting entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate students receiving Entrepreneurship Education in the universities Zhanjiang.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables:

Dependent Variable:

Personal Attitudes,
Subjective Norms, and
Perceived Behavioral Control

Entrepreneurial Intentions

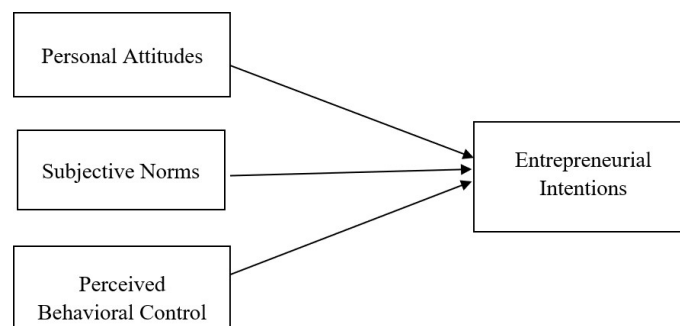


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

These populations were the 109787 undergraduate students who receive Entrepreneurship Education from four universities which were University of Science and Technology, Zhanjiang Preschool Normal School, ZLingnan Normal University and Guangdong Ocean University. The samples were calculated and determined by using calculator.net and sample size of 384 was gained. However, to increase a statistical power, the sample size was round up to 400 (Kumar, 2018) with all of the 400 questionnaires distributed were back. To ensure validity of the questionnaire, IOC of 5 experts in the field of Education and professionals in the teaching of Entrepreneurial Education in universities were included and gained the result of 1. Moreover, a pilot study was conducted with 40 non-sampled undergraduate students to test the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (1990) with the result of 0.97. Also, back Translation was performed, from English to Chinese and Chinese back to English by the two language experts.

Instruments

The survey was conducted by distributing electronic questionnaires with the questionnaire adapted from: 1) the Entrepreneurship Education (EE) Questionnaire by Forbes (2020); 2) the Personal Attitude (PA) Questionnaire by Mensah et al. (2021); 3) the Subjective Norms (SN) Questionnaire by Lu, Song & Pan (2021); 4) the Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) Questionnaire by Mensah et al. (2021); and 5) the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) Questionnaire by Wang, Sun & Wu (2021). A five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932) ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5) was used to measure the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among university students in Zhanjiang.

Results

Data analysis

Table 1 described the statistical information of 400 undergraduate student who have received entrepreneurship education from four universities in Zhanjiang. In terms of gender distribution of the respondents, the majority of the respondents were females with 66.25% while males accounted for 33.75%. In terms of age distribution of respondents, the largest age group of respondents was 20-21 years (51.75%), followed by 18-19 years (36.75%) and the smallest was 24-25 years with only 7 respondents (1.75%). In terms of the distribution of respondents by grade level, sophomores accounted for almost half of the total (49.50%), juniors for 38.25% and seniors for 12.25%.

Table1 Frequency and Percentage of Respondents

(n = 400)

Demographics of Respondents		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	135	33.75%
	Female	265	66.25%
Age	18-19	147	36.75%
	20-21	207	51.75%
	22-23	39	9.75%
	24-25	7	1.75%
	Sophomore	198	49.50%
Grade	Junior	153	38.25%
	Senior	14	12.25%
Total		400	100 %

In table 2, in terms of the statistics of survey variables, it can be seen that the mean values of EE, PA, SN, PBC and EI are all above 3. PA has the highest mean value of 3.585 with a standard deviation of 0.730. PBC has the lowest mean value of 3.118 with a standard deviation of 0.845. EE has a mean value of 3.465 with a standard deviation of 0.757; SN has a mean value of 3.347 with a standard deviation of 0.693; EI has a mean of 3.554 and a standard deviation of 0.705.

With the correlation analysis, of EI, PA, SN, PBC, it is indicated that the value between EI and PA was 0.734 with a significance of a positive correlation at 0.01. The correlation coefficient value between EI and SN was 0.721 with a positive significance at the level of 0.01. The correlation coefficient value between EI and PBC was 0.770, with a positive significance at the 0.01 level.

Table 2 The Descriptive Statistics of Survey Variables and Correlation Analysis
Pearson Correlation of PA, SN, and PBC

	\bar{X}	S.D.	EI	PA	SN	PBC
EI	3.554	0.705	1			
PA	3.585	0.730	0.734**	1		
SN	3.347	0.693	0.721**	0.697**	1	
PBC	3.118	0.845	0.770**	0.695**	0.727**	1

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Multiple Regression Analysis

According to the results of Table 3, 4, and 5 the R-square value was 0.688, which means that PA, SN, and PBC can explained 68.8% of the causes of change in EI. According to the results of the Table 9, the model passed the F-test ($F=291.607$, $p = 0.000<0.05$), which means that at least one of PA, SN, and PBC had an impact on EI. In addition, the test for multicollinearity of the model found that all the VIF values in the model were less than 5, which means that there was no problem of covariance. And the D-W value was around the number 2, thus indicating that there was no autocorrelation in the model, there was no correlation between the sample data, and the model was better.

According to the results of Table 5, the value of regression coefficient of PBC is 0.333 ($t=9.036$, $p=0.000<0.01$) which means that PBC will have a significant positive influence relationship on EI. The value of regression coefficient of SN is 0.222 ($t=4.919$, $p=0.000<0.01$) which means that SN will have a significant positive influence relationship on EI. The value of regression coefficient of PA is 0.294 ($t=7.191$, $p=0.000<0.01$), implying that PA will have a significant positive influence on EI.

The Prediction Model, the linear regression analysis with PA, SN, and PBC as independent variables and EI as dependent variable can be derived as the regression equation:

$$Y = 0.721 + 0.333(X_1) + 0.222(X_2) + 0.294(X_3)$$

Where $X_1 = \text{PBC}$ $X_2 = \text{SN}$ $X_3 = \text{PA}$ $Y = \text{EI}$

β_0 is the intercept

$\beta_{1..3}$ is the coefficient

ϵ is the error aka residual

Table 3 Model Summary for Regression Examining the Effects of PA, SN, PBC on EI

R	R ²	Adj. R ²	RMSE	D-W	AIC	BIC
0.830	0.688	0.686	0.393	1.899	395.645	411.611
a. Dependent Variable: EI						
b. Predictors: (Constant), PA, SN, PBC						

Table 4 ANOVA Summary for Regression Model Examining the Effects of PA, SN, PBC on EI

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	136.361	3	45.454	291.607***	0.000
Residual	61.726	396	0.156		
Total	198.087	399			
a. Dependent Variable: EI					
b. Predictors: (Constant), PA, SN, PBC					
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001					

Table 5 Coefficients of Undergraduate Entrepreneurial Intention Prediction Regression Model Based on PA, SN and PBC

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Diagnostics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
Constant	0.721	0.107	-	6.737***	0.000	-	-
PBC	0.333	0.037	0.400	9.036***	0.000	2.488	0.402
SN	0.222	0.045	0.218	4.919***	0.000	2.498	0.400
PA	0.294	0.041	0.304	7.191***	0.000	2.275	0.440
R²				0.688			
Adj R²				0.686			
F				F (3,396) = 291.607, p = 0.000			
D-W				1.899			

a. Dependent Variable: EI

D-W=1.899 * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the research objective, this study investigated the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate students with Personal Attitude (PA), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC). The study found that the influences from most to least significant were as followed: Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC); Personal Attitude (PA); and Subjective Norms (SN), respectively.

First, for Perceived Behavioral Control, it was the most significant on Entrepreneurial Intentions which was in accordance with the views of Taneja, Kiran & Bose (2024), who assert that focusing on entrepreneurial attitudes is essential, as it significantly influences students' entrepreneurial intentions. Vargas-Martínez, Tavarez-De Henríquez, Colón-Flores & Domínguez-Valerio (2023) emphasized the importance of entrepreneurial education interventions in fostering positive attitudes, as they significantly enhance entrepreneurial intentions as a career path (establishing a business) are positive and significantly correlated with entrepreneurial intentions (Nowiński, et al., 2019).

Second, for Personal Attitude, the findings with other research revealed that personal attitudes are one of the determinants of entrepreneurial intentions (Barba-Sánchez, et al., 2022; Hueso, et al., 2021; Karimi, 2020), especially with university graduates (Shah, Amjed & Jaboo, 2020). Moreover, Su, Zhu, Chen, Jin, Wang, Lin & Xu (2021) noted that individuals with more positive attitudes exhibit greater enthusiasm for entrepreneurial activities, which in turn apparently strengthens their entrepreneurial intentions.

Finally, Subjective norms as the least important predictor of entrepreneurial intention in this study, it could be explained that while it had a significant positive impact on an individual's entrepreneurial intention (Pham, et al., 2023), it might need some supports and approval by close environment, such as family, friends, and colleagues, to elevate their entrepreneurial decisions (i.e., higher subjective norms), to exhibit a higher entrepreneurial intention (Farooq, et al., 2018).

Recommendations

Academic Recommendation

This study broadened perspectives about factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions of the undergraduate students in universities in Zhanjiang. That the findings highlight the crucial role of Perceived Behavioral Control, in driving entrepreneurial intentions suggesting that the students are highly recommended to encourage students to be proactive, while taking courses, in pre-planning themselves for being future business owners. can enhance their Tai Chi teaching to be effectiveness for their students as to be more active and independent in their learning at the same time.

Policy Recommendation

The universities should enhance Entrepreneurial Education through different levels of education in various majors and different provinces to increase the results, of making realistic entrepreneurial intentions. Finally, the study could also be extended to examine the long-term effects of entrepreneurship education to assess its actual impact on the probability of entrepreneurial success for graduates.

Action Recommendation

Additionally, in terms of practice, the students should be promoted to put Entrepreneurial Intentions into practices by joining activities, trainings, and competitions both on- and off-campus in order to effectively prepare themselves to be future business owners.

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