TIMER
Technology-Information-Management-Entrepreneurship – Review
E-ISSN: 2584-1602

Cross-Country Differences in Entrepreneurial Attitude Amongst Young Female Students – An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is considered as the backbone of an economy, wherein entrepreneurs steer the economic development by means of business start-ups. In this context, specifically female entrepreneurs are significantly contributing to global economies in terms of employment creation. However, there is a slow growth in the number of female entrepreneurs in developing countries. The literature suggests that student's attitude towards entrepreneurship has a significant impact on their entrepreneurial activity. The present intends compare the entrepreneurial attitude amongst South African (developing country) and Netherlands (developed country) female students. The results have suggested that female students in both countries display positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Also, it facilitates the government, researchers, and educators to understand how to promote entrepreneurship among young females.

Keywords: South Africa, Netherland, Entrepreneurial Attitude, Females.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been viewed as a key contributor to longstanding economic growth and development of any country. Entrepreneurs are regarded as the wheels for upbringing economic growth and development through their innovation and business start-ups that creates job opportunities of any nation. Moreover, nations depend on entrepreneurs to address major challenges, such as unemployment, political instability, and poverty through their business start-ups. The worldwide females are revealing a substantial interest in entrepreneurship. In furtherance, the female-owned innovations and businesses are currently one of the most essential and rapid growing aspects of entrepreneurship. However, in many countries and cultures females are underrepresented in entrepreneurship. The possible reasons for this include lack of funding, lack of entrepreneurial competencies and lack of entrepreneurial education and training. The present study attempts to compare entrepreneurial attitude amongst young females' students from developed and developing countries. Moreover, this study strives to provide insights for academics, researchers, and government in maintaining a positive entrepreneurial attitude amongst female students for the purpose of supporting economic growth and development in the countries.

Literature Review

Importance of Entrepreneurship

For centuries researchers and economists has taken an interest in the concept of entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934; Wennekers & Thurik, 1999; Neuman, 2021). Worldwide entrepreneurship is valued as a key factor in economic growth and development (Doran et al. 2018).

Entrepreneurship is viewed under three areas namely innovation, new business start-ups and the creation of jobs (Sabeena & Ayyapparajan, 2020). Entrepreneurs form a crucial element of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs are critical contributors of innovation, business start-ups and job creation (Sampene et al. 2021). Firstly, innovation allows entrepreneurs to act as agents of change by providing something new and unique (Lowe & Marriott, 2006). Secondly, new business start-ups by entrepreneurs are necessary for the economic growth and development of a country (Doran et al. 2018). Thirdly, jobs created by new business start-ups is important for the economic prosperity of a country (Szarek & Piecuch, 2018).

The female entrepreneurs are viewed globally as vital contributors to economic growth and development due to growing number of females who understood the importance of entrepreneurship as a source of employment (Meyer & Mostert, 2016). Moreover, female entrepreneurship is described by innovation, job creation and economic growth and development (Corrêa et al. 2022). Also, female entrepreneurship is increasing globally, and it signifies a key component of the business sectors worldwide (Ojediran & Anderson, 2020). Consequently, economic development may be supported by more female individuals selecting entrepreneurship as a profession (Darnihamedani & Terjesen, 2022).

Importance of Entrepreneurship – South African Context

South Africa is characterized as a developing country, whereas its economic path is unsustainable, whilst economic development has stagnated, and unemployment rate keeps rising (42.1 percent for individuals falling under the age group of 25-34 years). The females represent more than half of South African population and their participation in the business sector remains significantly low and their unemployment is recorded at 47.0 percent, which has been higher than that of males during the period of 2016 to 2022 as per Statistics of South Africa in 2022. However, gender differences in the country have always been a barrier to the career development of females. Moreover, research evidence through literature suggests an increase of female entrepreneurs worldwide, the entrepreneurial activity from South African males is still higher. The possible reasons may include lack of capital, lack business networks and lack of business and entrepreneurial skills of the female counterparts (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013).

South Africa has a severe problem of female youth unemployment (Cloete, 2015), which stands at 54.3 percent as per the information by World Bank in 2022. The youth is recognized as the Generation Y cohort, individuals born between 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004). In furtherance, their representation is 34 percent out of the total South African population since 2022 statistics. Moreover, great number of South African youth consists of university students, whose contribution to economic development is vital due to their implied potential for high

future earnings (Case et al. 2018). To the contrary, the high unemployment figures pose a substantial employment concern to young South African female graduates (Cloete, 2015). Hence, entrepreneurial activity is encouraged and considered as vital for economic development of the South African economy (Nakara et al. 2020).

Importance of Entrepreneurship within the Netherland Context

The Netherlands is one of Europe's strongest economies. The reason being entrepreneurship is recognized as a key driver of economic wealth of the country. Moreover, it is frequently ranked amongst the top economies worldwide as per the statistics (Department for International Trade, 2022). The Dutch government offers a promising environment for entrepreneurs to support unemployment and stimulate the economy of the country (Van der Zwan et al. 2016). The positive effect of strong entrepreneurial culture is evident by the country's unemployment rate that stands at 3.5 percent, female unemployment rate standing at 4 percent and youth unemployment rate recorded at 7.2 percent as per statistics.

Attitude towards Entrepreneurship Behaviour

Attitude is a set of feelings, beliefs and behaviour towards a specific situation, object or individual (Alport, 1935). Moreover, attitude is seen as a psychological paradigm that mentally or emotionally characterizes an individual and their attitude towards an object or situation and these attitudes can be classified as positive or negative (Altmann, 2008). The present research supports these findings, wherein modern researchers define attitude as the positive or negative assessment of an object and these assessments affect an individual's decision to perform a certain behaviour (Yao et al. 2016). Entrepreneurial attitude implies attitude or behaviour towards entrepreneurial activities (Anjum et al. 2021). A positive attitude is described as the favourable evaluation of a situation, object or individual (Tshikovhi & Shambane, 2015). Also, in entrepreneurship it is viewed as the positive evaluation an individual has on entrepreneurial activities. To the contrary, a negative attitude refers to unfavourable behaviour towards an activity (Vamvaka et al. 2020). In entrepreneurship entrepreneurs may have a negative attitude towards entrepreneurial activity owing to challenges during startup, entrepreneurs are labelled as dishonest, and entrepreneurs focus on money only (Baluku et al. 2021). Positive and negative entrepreneurial attitudes have specific consequences for entrepreneurs. A positive attitude includes the ability for greater innovation whereas a negative entrepreneurial attitude can keep an entrepreneur grounded (Trang & Mintardjo, 2018).

Need & Relevance

It is evident from the literature that various studies focused on entrepreneurial attitude. These studies concentrated on developing an entrepreneurial attitude in teaching and learning (Hörnqvist & Leffler, 2014; Dixit et al. 2022) and investigated businesses' entrepreneurial attitude (Indarti & Efni, 2018). A few studies researched youth and students' entrepreneurial attitude. These researchers explored entrepreneurial attitude from male and female students (Soomro et al. 2020) and determined the impact of the environment on students' entrepreneurial attitude (Hintikka et al. 2022; Viquez-Paniagua et al. 2022). This study shall provide a comparative insight of the young female cohort entrepreneurial attitude from a South African and Netherland context.

Objective

To compare the entrepreneurial attitude amongst young female students of South Africa and Netherland

Methodology

A descriptive research design and a single cross-sectional approach are adopted in this study.

Sampling Method

Young female students falling under 18-24 years age-group registered at South African and Netherlands Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) comprise the target population of this research study. The samples were drawn from South Africa (SA) and Netherlands (SA), which comprised of 26-registered South African HEIs, which consisted of 11 general academic universities, 6 comprehensive universities and 9 universities of technology from SA and 56-registered HEIs, comprising of 13 research universities and 43 universities of applied sciences from NL respectively. The judgement sample of two HEI campuses (one traditional university and one university of technology) in the Gauteng province of South Africa and two HEI campuses (one research university and one university of applied sciences) in the North-easternmost province of Netherlands have been included. A sample of 800 female students (400 per country; 200 per institution) has been drawn through non-probability sampling method.

Research Instruments & Data Collection

A structured self-administered questionnaire comprised of two sections, wherein the first section collected the demographical profile of participants and second measured the students' entrepreneurial attitudes consisting of two constructs, namely positive attitudes, and negative attitudes. The students' entrepreneurial attitude was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) based on respondents' agreement or disagreement to the statements.

Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires have been coded and captured in Microsoft Excel thereafter, the captured data was processed and analysed using SPSS. The statistical analysis included reliability, validity and two independent samples t-test.

Results

Sample Description

Out of 800 questionnaires 578 questionnaires are returned and deemed usable, signifying accounts for 72.30 percent response rate. Table 1 indicated a majority of the participants were from South Africa and interpreted accordingly.

Table 1: Sample Description – Total Sample

Country	Percentage	Institution	Percentage
Sample SA	56.70	Traditional University	33.30
		University of Technology	23.50
Sample NL	43.30	Research University	23.00
		University of Applied Science	20.30

Sample Description – Sample SA

Interestingly, out of 400 questionnaires a vast majority of 328 questionnaires have been returned and deemed usable, connoting 82.00 percent response rate. As denoted in Table 2, samples from SA consisted of fewer participants from university of technology (41.50%) than participants from a traditional university (58.50%). Also, majority of SA participants were first year (34.70%) female students, followed by second year (30.40%), third year (28.20%) and fourth year (6.70%) female students. A greater number of sample SA participants revealed being 19 years (29.70%) of age followed by participants indicating being 18 years (21.40%) of age and 20 years (21.40%) of age.

Table 2: Sample Description – Sample SA

Institution	Percentage	Year of Study	Percentage	Age	Percentage
Traditional University	58.50	First	34.70	18	21.40
University of Technology	41.50	Second	30.40	19	29.70
		Third	28.20	20	21.40
		Fourth	6.70	21	14.40
				22	6.10
				23	3.00
				24	4.00

Sample Description – Sample NL

From the 400 questionnaires dispersed, a total of 250 completed and usable questionnaires have been received, which showed 62.50 percent response rate. It is quite evident from Table 3 that samples from NL comprised of more participants from an academic university (53.20%) than participants from a university of applied science (46.80%). A great number of sample NL participants were first year (56.30%) female students, followed by second year (21.90%), third year (21.10%) and fourth year (9.70%) female students. The sample included more NL participants indicating being 18 years (37.20%) of age, followed by participants indicating being 19 years (18.40%) of age and 21 years (12.80%) of age.

Table 3: Sample Description – Sample NL

Institution	Percentage	Year of Study	Percentage	Age	Percentage
Academic University	53.20	First	56.30	18	37.20
University of Applied Science	46.80	Second	21.90	19	18.40
		Third	12.10	20	11.20
		Fourth	9.70	21	12.80

				22 23 24	10.80 3.60 6.00

Reliability & Validity

The Cronbach alpha values for entire scale determining the attitude towards entrepreneurship is 0.755 and the two constructs positive attitudes and negative attitudes are 0.752 and 0.800, correspondingly, confirming internal-consistency reliability (Brace et al. 2012). Additionally, the average inter-item correlation for the two constructs was 0.380 (positive attitudes) and 0.446 (negative attitudes). Also, signifying convergent and discriminant validity values conformed within the suggested range of 0.15 to 0.50 (Clark & Watson, 1995).

Two Independent Sample T-Test

Independent sample t-test has been conducted to assess whether there is a statistically significant difference between South African and Netherland young female students' entrepreneurial attitude. The results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Country Differences in Young Females Students' Entrepreneurial Attitude

Entrepreneurial Attitude	SA Mean N=328	SA Std. Deviation	NL Mean N=250	NL Std. Deviation	't' Value	'p' Value	Cohen's D
Positive Attitudes	4.374	0.655	3.706	0.549	-13.011	0.000	0.15
Negative Attitudes	2.609	0.971	2.280	0.760	-4.424	0.000	0.13

p-Level of Significance

It is quite evident from Table 4 that significant p-values ($p < 0.01$) are calculated for the two constructs of entrepreneurial attitude. Also, it is inferred from the two constructs evaluated the young female students' attitude towards entrepreneurship differ between the responses gathered in the two sample groups, with sample SA scoring a higher mean on the positive attitude construct. This entails that young female students from the South African sample have a higher positive attitude towards entrepreneurship than their Netherland counterparts. In order to determine whether there is any practically significant difference between the two constructs of the two samples, Cohen's D calculations are calculated. In furtherance, small effect size of 0.15 (positive attitudes) and 0.13 (negative attitudes) are returned, which is practically non-significant.

Discussion

The present study compared young South African and Netherland female students' entrepreneurial attitude. Statistical means for both constructs comparing the two samples were verified, and the highest mean was noted for positive attitudes, suggesting that young female students from South Africa and the Netherlands present positive entrepreneurial attitudes. However, the South African sample scored a slightly higher mean on positive attitudes, suggesting that young female students in South Africa see the advantages of entrepreneurship.

This finding is in line with the following research studies. The study by Polin and Golla has discovered that developing countries are associated with higher levels of entrepreneurial activity owing to the greater tolerances for uncertainty they might face (Polin & Golla, 2017). Moreover, the study conducted by Nieuwenhuizen and Swanepoel revealed that students demonstrate positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and there is a significant difference between student attitudes amongst developed and developing countries (Nieuwenhuizen & Swanepoel, 2015). Also, Strydom et al. in their study found that the South African university students, specifically the youth (Generation Y cohort) display positive attitudes towards becoming entrepreneurs (Strydom et al. 2020).

The present study highlighted that the lowest mean for negative attitudes, proposing young female students from South Africa and Netherlands do not perceive entrepreneurs as being dishonourable and guilty of behaving unethically. The South African sample indicated a marginally higher mean on negative attitudes. Moreover, the study conducted by Hardie et al. found that students that do not exhibit any entrepreneurial education have negative attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Hardie et al. 2020). Also, Doran et al. revealed that differences in the importance of entrepreneurship for developed and developing countries exist (Doran et al. 2018). Accordingly, findings of the study proposed positive attitudes and negative attitudes do have a significant impact on South African and Netherland young female students' entrepreneurial attitude. This finding is in resonance with the study conducted by Phuong et al., which indicated that attitudes directly and indirectly impact an individual's entrepreneurial behaviour (Phuong et al. 2020). The findings of this study contribute to the dearth literature available on young female students' comparative studies and limited research on entrepreneurial attitude in the South African and Netherland context.

Suggestions

The present study compared young South African and Netherland female students' entrepreneurial attitude and suggested the following:

- Young females in developing countries have to be educated by institutions and industry professionals not only about benefits of entrepreneurial activity but also on necessary tools to succeed.
- Institutions should also provide young females with networking opportunities and workshops, to assist them to create new businesses or expand existing ventures.
- Government from developed and developing countries should support young, aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Government should encourage an entrepreneurial culture in the countries especially amongst female students by means of more initiatives and programmes. Also, the government's initiatives could include mentoring programmes giving support on the development of entrepreneurial skills or obtaining finance.
- Female motivation should be a continuous effort in these countries.

The opportunities for future research include the analysis of entrepreneurial attitude across more universities in developed and developing countries. Also, the determination of entrepreneurship of young male students.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship is necessary for the economy of a country for several reasons, including economic growth and development. Furthermore, entrepreneurs act as catalysts for bringing in the socio-economic development through innovation and job creation. Particularly, female entrepreneurs' participation is quite indispensable and a contributing factor for economic growth and development of any nation. The findings of this study suggested that South African and Netherland young female students have positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship. However, evidence from the literature have indicated a sluggish growth of entrepreneurial activity amongst South African female entrepreneurs, wherein the possible reasons for dawdling growth include lack of funding and entrepreneurial education. The Netherlands case is different as it is the Dutch place having a high value on entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship skills and promotion of financing instruments for business start-ups. Importantly, South Africa is bombarded with high levels of poverty and unemployment than their Dutch counterparts, therefore entrepreneurship is crucial for country's economy. Furthermore, young female university students retain higher future earnings that are necessary for growth and prosperity of a country's economy. Moreover, the understanding of young female students' entrepreneurial attitude in the South African and Netherland context will support the government and researchers to determine effective processes to promote entrepreneurship as an occupation to young female students.

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