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The Impact of Entrepreneurial Education on Entrepreneurial Intention During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Empirical Study from Pakistan

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Abstract

This study aimed to find the mediating impact of entrepreneurial education during COVID-19 on entrepreneurial intention among university students from major cities of Pakistan. Majority of businesses shifted to online from offline mode as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. This created a great opportunity for university students to become entrepreneurs without much investment during COVID-19. Primary data for this study was collected with the help of an adopted questionnaire from previous studies. An online survey was considered appropriate due to the COVID-19 situation in the country. The number of data samples collected from the major cities of Pakistan was 460. The research hypothesis was tested with the help of SmartPLS by using least square structural equation modeling. Findings revealed there is full mediation of entrepreneurial education during COVID-19 between the self-efficacy, subjective norms, and attitude towards entrepreneurship for entrepreneurial intention during COVID-19 among university students. Therefore, the research confirmed the application of the theory of planned behavior among university students in Pakistan with regards to factors such as self-efficacy, subjective norms, attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention. The present study also concludes that all students regardless of their area of study such as Business and Engineering look forward to become entrepreneurs during COVID-19. The students opting for entrepreneurship had either formal or informal entrepreneurial education during COVID-19.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Intention, Entrepreneurial Education, Subjective Norms, Self-efficacy

JEL Classification Code: D91, I23, J62, E13, M10

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is as an activity that is taken by an individual by taking risk in order to explore new

opportunities (Hisrich et al., 2005). It was a wrong perception in the past that only psychology students can be good entrepreneurs. But, an individual possesses the ability to develop the entrepreneurship qualities through rigorous training and development programs offered by formal or informal institutions (Barringer & Ireland, 2010). Furthermore, individuals who choose to be self-employed keep the intentions to be creative in their own ways without any obstacles that would block their creativity and they earn financial success through their entrepreneurial passion. This intention of an individual is called entrepreneurial intention (Barringer & Ireland, 2010). In addition, various studies have shown that potential is not enough to turn a passion into entrepreneurship until and unless one has a strong intention for it (Ismail et al., 2009). Previous studies has also suggested that the intentions may never be turned into actions (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norms refer to the reliance that any important person or any group of people which include friends, family, and colleagues who support and approve to perform a particular behavior and beliefs, also

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influence the subjective norms (Mohammed et al., 2017). Some studies have shown that the motivation, which comes from outsiders, always motivate individuals to open a new venture (Arroyo et al., 2017; Mudjijah et al., 2022). Hence, those who gain knowledge about entrepreneurship to be an entrepreneur through business related institutes or education are said to have attained entrepreneurship education (Kabir et al., 2017).

Entrepreneurship education has come up as a very demanding course to be mastered by the young students (Joseph, 2017). Entrepreneurship education supports students just to think out of the box and to nurture their unconventional talents and skill sets (Walter & Block, 2016). Furthermore, more positive the attitude towards entrepreneurship, more they want to become an entrepreneur (McStay, 2008). Moreover, Garaika and Margahana (2019), suggested to change the respondents from young entrepreneurs to those who do not own a (university students) and successful entrepreneurs to get a comprehensive view to predict their entrepreneurial behavior. The results of many studies have revealed that entrepreneurial intention have many factors such as personality factors and so on (Wang et al., 2021; Lopes et al., 2020 & Esfandiar et al., 2020). The research by Hong et al. (2020) had only 100 respondents, which resulted in many study limitations, therefore it was suggested to have more respondents in order to get more accurate results. In addition, the entrepreneurial education should be studied as a mediator because it may change with respect to cultural factors (Shah et al., 2020). In past many factors have been studied such as personal factors and environmental factors (Malebana, 2014), belief and attitude (Linan et al., 2011), and subjective norms (Yousaf et al., 2015; Schlaegel & Koeing, 2014).

This study contributes in existing literature in various ways. First, it is important to discuss the entrepreneurial intention among students during COVID-19, especially in the developing countries like Pakistan (Hernández-Sánchez et al., 2020). Second, the entrepreneurial intention is not studied in detail in the context of natural situations like a pandemic or an uncertain situation (Hernández-Sánchez et al., 2020). Third, based on limited knowledge of author no other study has been conducted during COVID-19 pandemic on entrepreneurial intention with a Pakistani perspective and students from various fields such as Business and Engineering were not considered as population to see the entrepreneurial intention during COVID-19. Fourth, in this study, the sample size has been extended up to 460 for a more accurate outcome and also to fill the gap of the methodology used in the mentioned previous study. Finally, this study will add to the existing knowledge in this field, existing literature and academic entrepreneurial intention during COVID-19.

The present paper has been organized as: First part has the Abstract and the introduction. Second part of paper describes

the theoretical background and hypothesis development. Third, part of paper is about the adopted methodology. Fourth, part of paper is about results and discussion. Lastly, conclusion and managerial implications has been given.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior

In this study theory of planned behavior has been used as a theoretical framework. According to the theory of planned behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991), the behavioral intention is composed of attitude, subjective norms and behavioral control. All these variable leads to the behavioral intention and formal education play an important role in this regard. This theory dominates among all researches which has been done in the area of entrepreneurship in past including by (Tsai et al., 2016). Furthermore, theory of planned behavior is based from theory of reasoned action and it was suggested by Ajzen (1985,1991). This theory explains that the how an individual's behavior vary with respect to change in situation. Many past studies also explored the human behavior in various aspects including instant messaging (Lu et al., 2009), gambling behavior (Martin et al., 2010), screening behavior (Conner & Noman, 1994) and consumption related behavior (Povey et al., 2000).

2.2. Hypothesis Development

2.2.1. Subjective Norms and Entrepreneurial Intention

The past studies found mix results relationship between subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention. One of the study suggested that the subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention have positive and significant relationship among university students in Indonesia (Nurhayati & Mayasari 2021). Moreover, another study in Malaysia used the same questionnaire for their research. Findings, of this study again confirmed a positive and significant impact of subjective norms on entrepreneurial intention (Hong et al., 2020). A related previous study on the subject of subjective norms and entrepreneurial ambitions in Indonesia among university students supported and confirmed the positive and significant impact between subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention (Usman & Novianawati, 2020).

However, another study on a similar subject in the same year conducted in Indonesia among university students had a surprising finding. Results were opposite to the previous one and there was no significant impact found between subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention (Mawardi & Baihaqi, 2020). Similarly, the results of another study in Vietnam confirmed no significant impact of subjective norms

and entrepreneurial inclination. The study was conducted among 1844 business students only. Therefore, in the light of above mentioned, we see that there are mix results from previous studies conducted in various countries of world. The following alternative hypothesis have been proposed:

H1a: Subjective norms positively relate to Entrepreneurial intention.

H1b: Subjective norms positively relate to Entrepreneurial Education.

2.2.2. Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention

The relationship between self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial intention was studied in Indonesia. For this study young entrepreneurs between ages 20–30 who had just started their businesses were considered as a sample. Results revealed a positive and significant impact of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention (Garaika & Margahana, 2019). Furthermore, another study carried in China among 1039 university students by using the theory of planned behavior confirmed positive and significant impact of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention (Qiao & Huang, 2019). In addition, research conducted in Spain among 208 Engineering University students used primary data collected with the help of adopted questionnaire”. Results revealed in this study showed a positive and significant impact of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention (Asimakopoulos et al., 2019).

Another, study using SmartPLS and Bandura’s Social Learning Theory on engineering students in Malaysia showed a confirmed role of self-efficacy for entrepreneurial intention among engineering students of Malaysia (Saraih et al., 2018). Lastly, research done in Indonesia among university students by using adopted questionnaire and survey method revealed a positive and significant impact of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention. Based on above literature review the following hypothesis has been proposed.

H2a: Self-efficacy positively relate to Entrepreneurial intention.

H2b: Self-efficacy positively relate to Entrepreneurial education.

2.2.3. Attitude towards Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Intention

The previous studies confirmed there is no visible difference in entrepreneurial intention between business and non-business students. Entrepreneurship education and mindset were also discovered to be important predictors of entrepreneurial goals among students. The findings also show that attitude plays a role between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention in Uganda

(Kisubi et al., 2021). Similar to this study, the result of another research conducted in India suggested a significant impact attitude towards entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial intention (Jena, 2020). Moreover, study is to determine attitude towards entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial intention among undergraduate students in Vietnam. Findings of this study revealed positive and significant impact of attitude towards entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial intention (Phuc et al., 2020)”. Lastly, a similar study to above conducted in Portugal and Brazil suggested a significant impact attitude towards entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial intention (Fragoso et al., 2019). Based on above literature review the following hypothesis has been proposed.

H3a: Attitude towards entrepreneurship positively relate to Entrepreneurial intention.

H3b: Attitude towards entrepreneurship positively relate to Entrepreneurial education.

2.2.4. Mediating Role of Entrepreneurship Education During COVID-19

According to a study conducted by Cera et al. (2020), confirmed the effects of entrepreneurship education on people’s entrepreneurial intentions in the Balkans. Moreover, similar to this study by Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine the key characteristics that influence entrepreneurial intention among diploma students at Kolej Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismail Petra. The findings of this study confirmed entrepreneurial education to be relevant for entrepreneurial intention (Hong et al., (2020). In addition, another study found that Vietnamese youth’s entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations are influenced by factors such as the desire for success, challenge, and perceived behavioral control and education (Tuan et al., 2019; Adlah, et al., 2021). Furthermore, a study aims to develop all of an entrepreneur’s strategic resources and competencies for detecting and developing new business opportunities”.

Role of entrepreneurial education is suggested for intention to become entrepreneur among students (Liu et al., 2019). Similar to above-mentioned studies a study was conducted in Nigeria to know how entrepreneurship education influences the entrepreneurial intents of students from four Nigerian institutions. Entrepreneurship education has a large and positive impact on the desire to start a business. Furthermore, study conducted on how motivation and entrepreneurship education affect entrepreneurial intention and results confirmed entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention (Purwana & Suhud, 2017). Lastly, the findings of the hypotheses test clearly show that the hypothesis is accepted, indicating that entrepreneurial education has a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention (Buana et al., 2017).

In addition, the entrepreneurship can help to reduce unemployment in the context of developing countries (Awogbenle et al., 2010; Ramsey et al., 2011; Syaifulah, et al., 2021). Recently existing research studies also explored the role of entrepreneurship education for enhancing entrepreneurship (Debarliev et al., 2020; Mahfud et al., 2020). Moreover, the entrepreneurship education developed the entrepreneurial skills and knowledge helped to develop entrepreneurship intention and finally to become future entrepreneurs. Based on above past studies following alternatives are proposed.

H4a: Entrepreneurship education mediates the relationship between subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention.

H4b: Entrepreneurship education mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.

H4c: Entrepreneurship education mediates the relationship between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention.

3. Research Methods and Materials

3.1. Procedure and Population of study

Explanatory research purpose is done because it is suitable when problem is not studied well in a particular area (Yordanova et al., 2010). Data was gathered using google form because of COVID-19 situation in country. The primary data helped to address the special purpose (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). The questionnaire used was taken from the previous past studies. Polit and Hungler (1999) define a population as “the entire community of people who are important to the researcher and to whom the researcher’s results can be summarized,” encompassing all subjects who meet certain basic requirements. Since the study is about university students’ entrepreneurial intentions, the population of our study is comprised of all students attending universities in both fields, Business and Engineering in major cities of Pakistan such as Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Quetta.

3.2. Instrument and Measurements

Convenience sampling technique also called the non-probability sampling, has been used in this research analysis. According to De Vos (1998) convenience sampling is the rational option when studying all of the individuals in a population is difficult. Questionnaire was adopted from previous studies. Entrepreneurial Attitude had 4 items and Entrepreneurial Education had 4 items from the study by Tuan et al. (2019). Lastly, Self-efficacy had 4 items,

Subjective norms had 3 items and Entrepreneurial Intention had 4 items from the study by Dao et al. (2021). Scale was developed from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Data was collected from 460 respondents and collected from October 2020 to March 2021.

4. Results and Discussion

The current research has employed the partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) data analysis techniques with the help of SmartPLS 3.20 package (Hair et al., 2019). The results of data analysis are presented in following section.

4.1. Measurement Model

In present study reflective items values are considered those factors whose loading is greater or equal to threshold suggested by (Hair et al., 2006). Table 1 shows all the indicators having factor loading greater than 0.70. Furthermore, the Cronbach’s alpha and CR value is greater than recommended value 0.70 and internal consistency average variance extracted is also greater than 0.50.

4.2. Discriminant Validity

For the discriminant validity values are verified in accordance with the Fornell larker criterion (Table 2). The relationship between diagonal square of AVE and constructs are greater than its own factors with respect to AVE. Hence, based on these value author of this study confirmed the discriminant validity of collected data.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 indicates the hypothesis testing in present study. Findings confirmed that there is a direct relationship among entrepreneurship attitude, social norms and self-efficacy and its role with regard to entrepreneurial intention. Social norms beta and p -value (0.157), and (p -value = 0.000), which is less than the suggested value 0.05, self-efficacy (0.243), and (p -value = 0.000), which is less than suggested value 0.05 and Entrepreneurial Attitude (0.422), and (p -value = 0.000), which is less than the suggested value 0.05.

Also, results showed the direct relationship among social norms, self-efficacy and entrepreneurship attitude and revealed their positive and significant relationship with Entrepreneurial education. Social norms beta and p -value (0.228), and (p -value = 0.000), which is less than suggested value 0.05, self-efficacy (0.225), and (p -value = 0.000), which is less than the suggested value 0.05 and Entrepreneurial Attitude (0.396), and (p -value = 0.000), which is less than the suggested value 0.05. However, the

Table 1: Measurement Model

Construct	Item	VIF	Loading	Average	CR	Alpha
AE	AE1	1.556	0.745	0.685	0.897	0.779
	AE2	1.747	0.803			
	AE3	1.565	0.877			
	AE4	2.113	0.879			
EE	EE1	1.535	0.766	0.601	0.857	0.779
	EE2	1.638	0.783			
	EE3	1.552	0.793			
	EE4	1.414	0.759			
SE	SE1	1.475	0.755	0.590	0.852	0.769
	SE2	1.415	0.757			
	SE3	1.615	0.792			
	SE4	1.507	0.769			
SN	SN1	1.676	0.846	0.722	0.886	0.808
	SN2	1.949	0.870			
	SN3	1.723	0.833			
EI	EI1	2.030	0.794	0.672	0.891	0.837
	EI2	1.978	0.810			
	EI3	1.725	0.837			
	EI4	1.843	0.837			

Table 2: Fornell Larker Criterion

Factor	EE	EI	EA	SE	SN
EE	0.775				
EI	0.496	0.820			
EA	0.617	0.627	0.828		
SE	0.578	0.577	0.605	0.768	
SN	0.488	0.435	0.374	0.496	0.850

direct relationship between social norms and entrepreneurial intention is significant, the indirect relationship between social norms and entrepreneurial intention showed a positive insignificant (0.009), and (p -value = 0.454) in presence of mediator entrepreneurial education; fully mediates impact (social norms and entrepreneurial education) on entrepreneurial intention.

Similarly, the direct relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention is significant, the indirect relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention showed a positive insignificant (0.009), and

(p -value = 0.463) in presence of mediator entrepreneurial education; fully mediates impact (self-efficacy and entrepreneurial education) on entrepreneurial intention.

Lastly, the role of entrepreneurship attitude in context of entrepreneurial intention is significant. However, the indirect relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention showed a positive insignificant (0.015), and (p -value = 0.440) in presence of mediator entrepreneurial education; fully mediates impact (entrepreneurship attitude and entrepreneurial education) on entrepreneurial intention.

4.4. Discussion

The proposed hypothesis H1a and H1b are supported subjective norms, confirmed a positive impact on entrepreneurial education during COVID-19 and entrepreneurial intention during COVID-19 because p -value is less than 0.05 and beta value = 0.157 and 0.228 respectively. A previous scholar conducted a study with students from the Faculty of Economics, University of Mercu Buana in Indonesia on factors that have a relationship and impact on their intention to become entrepreneurs.

Table 3: Path Analysis Coefficient, *t*-value and *p*-value

Proposed Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Remarks
H1a	SN → EI	0.157	3.716	0.000	Supported
H1b	SN → EE	0.228	5.138	0.000	Supported
H2a	SE → EI	0.243	5.274	0.000	Supported
H2b	SE → EE	0.225	4.461	0.000	Supported
H3a	EA → EI	0.422	8.280	0.000	Supported
H3b	EA → EE	0.396	8.554	0.000	Supported
H4a	SN → EE → EI	0.009	0.749	0.454	Not supported Full Mediation
H4b	SE → EE → EI	0.009	0.734	0.463	Not supported Full Mediation
H4c	EA → EE → EI	0.015	0.773	0.440	Not supported Full Mediation

According to the results of this paper, subjective norms have a significant influence on students' entrepreneurial intentions (Mayasari & Nurhayati, 2021). Thus, this study is about the factors that forms Entrepreneurial Intention and the findings reveal that subjective norms has a positive and significant impact on Entrepreneurial Intention (Santoso, 2021). Moreover, a study was concluded to have a significant impact of Subjective norms on Entrepreneurial intention (Muhammed et al., 2017). A similar result was found in a study on entrepreneurial intention among college students of Shan Dong province, China" (Qiao & Huang, 2019).

The proposed hypothesis H2a and H2b are supported self-efficacy confirmed a positive impact on entrepreneurial education during COVID-19 and entrepreneurial intention during COVID-19 because *p*-value is less than 0.05 and beta value = 0.243 and 0.225 respectively. In addition, how entrepreneurship education, self-efficacy, and the need for achievement affect the entrepreneurial intentions of college students at IAIN Surakarta's Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, Indonesia and its results showed that self-efficacy has a positive and significant impact on entrepreneurship intention (Baidi & Suyatno, 2018). "Furthermore, other researches (Saraih et al. 2018; Santoso & Oetomo, 2018) reveal that self-efficacy have significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention. The impact of the entrepreneurship education was found on the attitude on entrepreneurial intentions of the undergraduate students of final year students of Makerere and Kyambogo Universities in Uganda. The results show that attitude was found to be a significant predictors of students' entrepreneurial intentions (Kisubi et al., 2021).

The proposed hypothesis H3a and H3b are supported attitude towards entrepreneurship confirmed positive

impact on entrepreneurial education during COVID-19 and entrepreneurial intention during COVID-19 because *p*-value is less than 0.05 and beta value = 0.422 and 0.396 respectively. Moreover, research examines the importance of the factors that influence the entrepreneurial intention among the tourism undergraduate students in Vietnam and it reveals that attitude toward entrepreneurship has direct effect on the entrepreneurial intention and the hypothesis is positive and significant (Phuc et al., 2020). Lastly, studies indicate that entrepreneurial attitude has a positive and significant impact on Entrepreneurial Intention (Jena, 2020; Fragooso et al., 2019; Kusmintarti, 2017; Law & Breznik, 2017)".

Lastly, the mediation analysis presented in this research shows the mediating effect of entrepreneurial education during COVID-19 in between self-efficacy, subject norms, attitude towards entrepreneurship on Entrepreneurial intention during COVID-19. The data analysis from structural models suggest that, the proposed hypothesis H4a and H4b, H4c does not support the mediating effect of entrepreneurial education on entrepreneurial intention during COVID-19 because *p*-value is more than 0.05 and beta value = 0.009, 0.009 and 0.015 respectively. Therefore, full mediation has been revealed for all proposed hypotheses.

5. Conclusion and Limitations

This study gives insights of entrepreneurial education during COVID-19 for entrepreneurial intention during-19 among university students from major cities of Pakistan. Firstly, the mediating role of entrepreneurial education during COVID-19 is achieved through independent variables including subjective, self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitude and as dependent variable entrepreneurial Intention

during COVID-19. Thus, the intention among students for to be entrepreneur will increase if, through lectures and developing technical skills will lead to better outcome in forming new business ventures after formal education from universities during COVID-19.

Moreover, entrepreneurial trainings can boost confidence of the students which will strengthen their perception about their own efficacy of having an enterprise. Motivation sessions from successful entrepreneurs will also change the attitude of people about entrepreneurship which will induce more entrepreneurial intentions during COVID-19 in the youth. This in turn, would help the local economy of the city.

First, this study was limited to a developing country like Pakistan only. In future both developed and developing countries can be included so that a comparative study can be performed. Second, sample size is limited to 460 due to COVID-19 situation in country, it was difficult for authors to carry face-to-face survey. The stratify random sampling strategy should be adopted in future research. Lastly, moderating variable such as age and gender can be developed for new model and analysis can be verified.

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