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UNTANGLING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A GENDER DYNAMIC VIEW OF BUSINESS STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial desire, entrepreneurial orientation, and awareness of the business environment among students, with a particular emphasis on gender differences. Despite all entrepreneurial endeavors, not every student possesses an equal inclination to pursue entrepreneurship. Consequently, the level of desire and inclination towards entrepreneurship differs among students. For instance, certain students possess an inherent inclination for entrepreneurship, while others do not. The study seeks to gauge the level of entrepreneurial intention in higher education institutions. The study utilizes a survey approach, employing conventional pen and paper to collect data from students who are currently enrolled in public sector universities. The study reveals a notable disparity between genders in their entrepreneurial inclination, comprehension of the business environment, and desire for entrepreneurship. The results suggest that female students demonstrate higher entrepreneurial ambition and creativity, whereas male students display higher degrees of risk propensity and understanding of the business landscape. The study yields fascinating insights about gender disparities in entrepreneurial orientations and provides recommendations for higher education institutions.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Desire, Business Environment, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Higher Education.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has a substantial role in the economy. It facilitates economic expansion, societal change, technological advancement, job creation, and competitiveness, among other factors (Stoica et al., 2020). The significance of entrepreneurship should not be underestimated. Policymakers, economists, and educators all view it as a catalyst for economic activity that expedites growth. Pakistan, similar to other developing countries, encounters a lag in the progress of entrepreneurship (Ramadani et al., 2014). Emerging nations have significant issues in terms of unemployment and brain drain. While every developing country, including Pakistan, is making substantial endeavors to tackle increasing economic challenges, the situation is worsening.

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The governments in Southeast Asia are now experiencing a deteriorating state, especially in the aftermath of the epidemic. Amidst the current challenges, Pakistan, along with other emerging economies, is actively endeavoring to establish Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to stimulate economic growth and alleviate unemployment. Nevertheless, no political system has achieved significant success thus far. There are other justifications for this lack of success. Several significant issues include (1) a turbulent business environment, (2) neglecting the skill set of young individuals, (3) inadequate entrepreneurial objectives, and (4) a deficiency in entrepreneurial knowledge.

While governments worldwide develop educational initiatives to prevent such mistakes, this is not the situation in Pakistan. Nevertheless, Pakistani institutions, whether public or private, are implementing substantial initiatives to promote student entrepreneurship. Universities provide a variety of services such as courses, incubators, and support for students to establish their enterprises. These courses collaborate to enhance students' skills, cultivate their entrepreneurial ambitions, and nurture their entrepreneurial mindset, enabling them to establish their businesses (Henry et al., 2017).

Scope of Research

This study investigates the entrepreneurial mindset and perceptions of university students toward the business environment, aiming to address existing gaps in understanding. By exploring factors like entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial desire, and business environment viewpoint, it seeks to offer valuable insights into students' readiness for entrepreneurial activities.

Rationale of Research

Despite all entrepreneurial endeavors, not every student possesses an equal inclination to pursue entrepreneurship. Consequently, the level of desire and inclination towards entrepreneurship differs among students. For instance, certain students possess an inherent inclination for entrepreneurship, while others do not. The students' encounters with entrepreneurial curricula may vary according to their academic background, program, and level of exposure (Marques et al., 2018; Taatila & Down, 2012). In this view, this research aims to explore whether students' gender affects their interest in entrepreneurship and their approach to it.

Research Problem

While young individuals' desire to achieve financial independence by starting their businesses is growing, the academic topic of entrepreneurship is relatively lacking in representation. There is a shortage of material about the entrepreneurial orientation of university students in various aspects. Additionally, there is a scarcity of research that examines the business landscape and entrepreneurial intention among university students. This study aims to fill the gap by examining the entrepreneurial orientation, desire, and viewpoint of university students towards the business environment.

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Research Questions

The study draws the following research questions:

1. Are there variations in entrepreneurial desire among students of diverse genders?
2. Do students' gender differences influence their entrepreneurial orientation?
3. Do students' genders affect their comprehension of the commercial enterprise environment?

Research Objectives

This study has three primary objectives. First, it seeks to apprehend the entrepreneurial pursuits of college students. Second, it goals to research how well those college students realize the start-up environment. Third, the observer intends to assess their entrepreneurial mindset and traits.

Theoretical Framework

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) Theory, from organizational and strategic control studies, shows that any enterprise, irrespective of its length or industry, can show entrepreneurial tendencies. These tendencies (Covin & Lumpkin, 2011) include (1) Innovation: The potential to create new products or services and adapt to market modifications. (2) Risk-taking: The willingness to take calculated dangers to discover new possibilities or markets. (three) Pro-activeness: The habit of searching ahead to seize rising trends. This idea can also be applied to people, including college students, to investigate how they show entrepreneurial attitudes. They can verify college students' entrepreneurial mindset by looking at how modern they are, their readiness to take dangers, and their proactive efforts to search for entrepreneurial opportunities.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study specializes in exploring how gender impacts university students' entrepreneurial mindset, goals, and views on the enterprise environment. It aims to investigate whether there are differences in those regions based totally on gender. By analyzing entrepreneurial orientation, goals, and viewpoints via a gender lens, they have investigated seeking to uncover capacity versions among college students.

Research Hypotheses

The observation draws the following hypotheses,

H_1: There is not any difference in entrepreneurial preference between men and women.

H_2: There is no distinction in innovativeness between men and women.

H_3: There is no distinction in proactiveness among men and women.

H_4: There is no distinction in chance-taking between women and men.

H_5: There is no difference in networking between men and women.

H_6: There is no distinction in the information of the commercial enterprise environment between women and men.

Significance of Research

These findings can inform the development of instructional programs and regulations that successfully foster the entrepreneurial spirit among college students. In addition, the study's consequences can contribute to creating an environment supportive of entrepreneurial endeavors, probably leading to improved innovation and monetary growth in society.

Limitations

The findings won't be generalizable past the unique context of the institution studied, and the pattern size and composition might not constitute the broader populace of business students. The reliance on self-said records introduces potential bias, and temporal factors and move-cultural variability may additionally affect the relevance and applicability of the outcomes. Additionally, the interpretation of qualitative information is subjective and can be prompted by using researcher biases. Lastly, the investigation presents a snapshot of entrepreneurial orientation at a single point in time, missing a longitudinal perspective to capture the evolution of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurial orientation refers to a company's attitude and technique closer to beginning a new business venture. It serves as a useful framework for studying the corporation's operations. Various researchers have used the period "Entrepreneurial Orientation" (EO) to indicate a multifaceted framework encompassing activities consisting of planning, evaluation, and choice-making along organizational factors like project, subculture, and values. EO is construed as a strategic manner deployed via corporations to comprehend organizational objectives and relaxed competitive blessings on the company stage (Wales et al., 2021).

The EO framework is mostly employed to research corporate-level matters. There is no justification for not using executive orders to examine start-up procedures on an individual basis, especially in smaller organizations where a sole founder often influences the corporate culture. Nevertheless, when it comes to analyzing EO, company-level scales are the predominant research instruments employed, and the majority of prior studies have concentrated on organizational analysis (Fan et al., 2021).

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According to Miller (1983), the initial definition of EO involves a commercial business that participates in product-market innovation, takes on risky endeavors, and functions as an investment firm. This definition emphasizes the company's proactive approach and ability to outperform competitors. Based on Miller's concept, scholars have identified and regularly utilized three characteristics: innovation, risk-taking, and initiative. The innovation brings out novel goods and services and pioneers technological advancements via research and development in innovative techniques. This activity entails significant risk and requires a great deal of resilience.

Multiple studies have been conducted on EO. Within this body of research, the majority of studies have concentrated on examining the correlation between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and a company's success. These studies indicate that EO is associated with exceptional overall performance. Nevertheless, the link between them is commonly influenced by external environmental and organizational variables. For instance, Covin and Slevin (1989) found that companies with strong entrepreneurial orientations (EOs) exhibit greater efficiency when they adopt an organic organizational structure and function in challenging conditions.

Nevertheless, the outcomes have always lacked coherence. Researchers argue that the primary factor contributing to contradictory findings is the delicate and responsive characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation dimensions. Internal elements, such as company structure and features of strategic management, as well as external ones, such as the business and industry environment, have an impact on entrepreneurial orientation (Ferreira et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurship is often linked to psychological traits such as a propensity for risk-taking, a strong drive for success, and a sense of personal control. These persons are regarded as catalysts or innovators who ignite economic development and progress. Likewise, entrepreneurship is linked to several human characteristics or qualities. Researchers claim that there exists a disparity in the entrepreneurial attitude between the eldest kid and their younger siblings. Additionally, the entrepreneurial attitude of an immigrant differs from that of a citizen. These attributes have been linked to possessing an entrepreneurial attitude in various ways. Entrepreneurship is commonly defined as the systematic undertaking of establishing and managing a business. According to Wales, Covin, and Monsen (2020), entrepreneurs who actively engage with new technology, take advantage of possibilities, and display initiative and effective decision-making skills are more likely to achieve success compared to those who do not.

Entrepreneurship can commence without the immediate initiation of a product or service transaction. The origin of everything lies in fortunate circumstances, and our surroundings deeply influence these circumstances. Moreover, environmental influences have the greatest likelihood of impacting the formation of a new organization, molding it in certain ways. The cultivation of a robust entrepreneurial mindset (EO) among aspiring entrepreneurs or within organizations is influenced by contextual factors present in their surroundings. These external factors comprise economic, political/legal, and social dimensions, which shape the operational context of the organization (Pulka et al., 2021).

Innovation significantly influences the presence or absence of entrepreneurship. Culture is strongly associated with entrepreneurs' capacity to innovate. For instance, a culture that fosters innovation, exploration, and inventive approaches to challenges is more likely to generate entrepreneurs. Countries with highly inventive cultures are more inclined to produce novel technology, commodities, services, or processes (Jiménez-Jiménez et al., 2020).

The propensity for risk-taking is perhaps one of the most frequently employed attributes of entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs can be distinguished by their vigilance, capacity to endure uncertainty, and skill in environmental scanning. These attributes enable entrepreneurs to assume the risks linked to self-employment. The ability to take risks is a requirement for pursuing entrepreneurial chances. (Putniņš & Sauka, 2020). Environments that foster the development of risk-taking talents in individuals are more likely to generate entrepreneurs and reap the benefits of their expertise.

EO encompasses proactiveness as one of its key aspects. Proactive cultures foster an environment that motivates entrepreneurs to actively investigate and forecast potential outcomes, as well as participate in emerging markets, by urging them to actively seek and foresee opportunities. Proactiveness is crucial in entrepreneurship since an EO is responsible for the execution stage. Individuals with proactive talents exhaust all efforts to turn ideas into reality. This talent allows them to be the trailblazers in seizing new chances and being the first to act (Sam et al., 2020).

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employs primary quantitative research methods.

2. Data Collection Methods

In this study, the data were collected from public sector universities. The data were only collected from Karachi University (KU). This study has used a survey method to collect data. Data was collected using a traditional method of pen and paper questionnaire from the Department of Business Administration at KU.

3. Sampling Strategy

The data were collected employing research assistants. The research assistants were final-year students of the computer science department at KU. They performed their duties voluntarily.

The volunteers disseminated a total of 730 questionnaires. However, only 221 were collected, resulting in a response rate of 30.27%. Each questionnaire included a confidentiality declaration, a statement of voluntary participation, a description of the study goal, and the research items.

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A total of 730 questionnaires were distributed using three research assistants. Each questionnaire incorporated the purpose of the research, confidentiality statement, statement of anonymity, participation consent at free will declaration, and research items. Out of the distributed questionnaires, only 221 were returned.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

We employed descriptive analysis and a t-test to determine the difference in means to arrive at the findings. Initially, we conducted a thorough examination of our data in order to identify any possible inaccuracies or mistakes. After the screening procedure, a total of 209 surveys were deemed usable. We have excluded incomplete questions, questionnaires with consistent patterns, altered choices, and respondents' questionnaires from their first year from further research.

5. Ethical Considerations

All concerned departmental heads and course instructors were intimated, and verbal permission was obtained before the research was conducted. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Each respondent participated at free will and gave written consent to participate in the research.

6. Data Presentation

Our sample consists of pupils between the ages of 18 and 30, according to the initial analysis. Nevertheless, a significant proportion (specifically, 75.11%) of the participants (n=157) belong to the age range of 20 to 26. The gender distribution in our sample (n=107) is about equal, with males accounting for 51.19 percent. Furthermore, out of the total sample size, undergraduate students (n= 178) make up 85.16 percent. Out of the undergraduate students, 71.34% (n=127) are in their final year, while 16.85% (n=30) are in their third year. Similarly, 64.51 percent of master's students are in their first year. Provide a clear explanation of how you organized and presented your data.

We have provided the average values for entrepreneurial desire, business environment, and entrepreneurial orientation. The mean values per dimension are shown for the four aspects that make up entrepreneurial orientation: creativity, proactiveness, risk-taking, and networking.

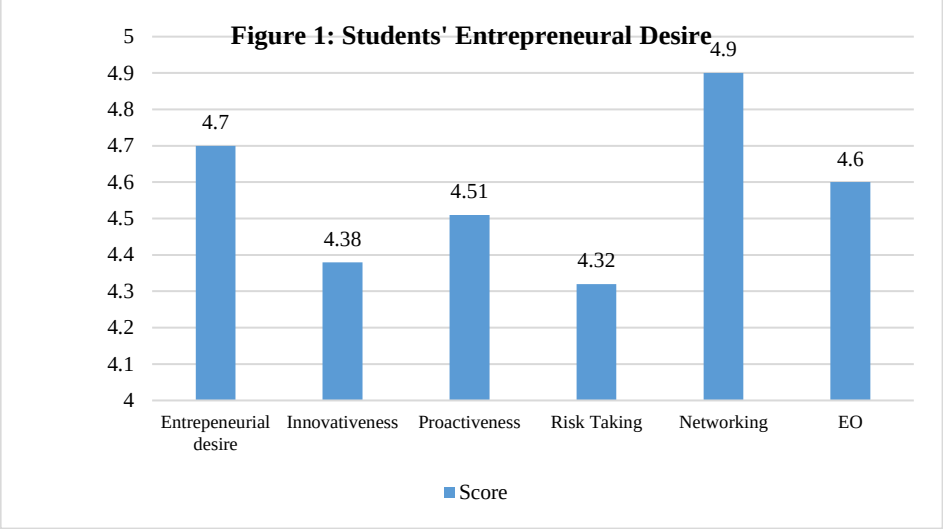


Figure 1 demonstrates that the students' entrepreneurial desires are greater than the average. Thus, it may be inferred that these pupils have a preference for becoming entrepreneurs and initiating their firms. Similarly, the findings indicate that students exhibit a relatively low level of risk-taking behavior, while their engagement in networking activities is higher compared to other characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation.

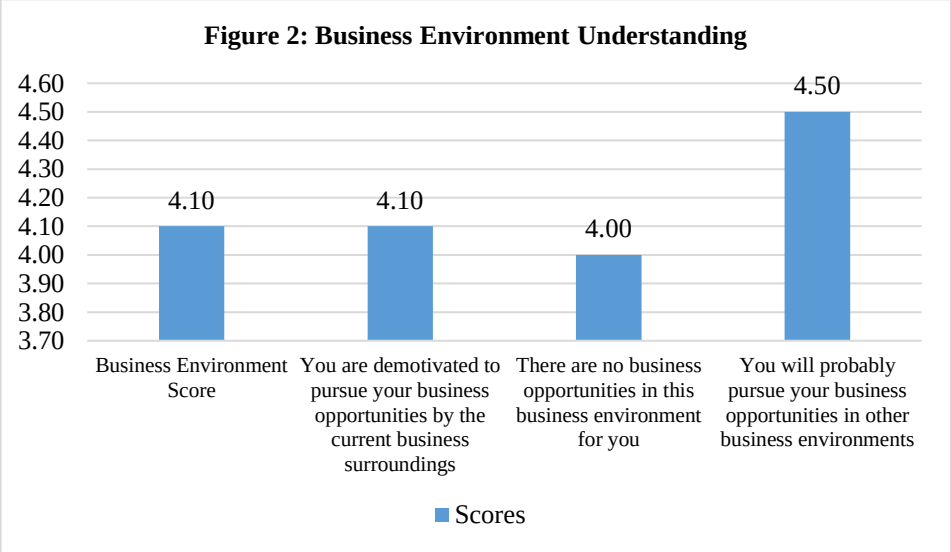


Figure 2 depicts the level of comprehension that students possess regarding the business environment. The findings indicate that the general understanding of the business

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environment is higher than the average level. Nevertheless, when distributing it evenly across each item, the average score is comparatively greater for engaging in business inside a different business setting. The scores of the initial item also corroborate the idea of discontentment with the present business milieu. The results indicate that the students possess a strong desire to pursue entrepreneurship, but the current business climate is not conducive to their aspirations. Despite the prevailing business environment, students exhibit a strong entrepreneurial desire, maybe due to their awareness of the challenges that start-ups encounter.

Figure 3: Entrepreneurial Experience Outlook

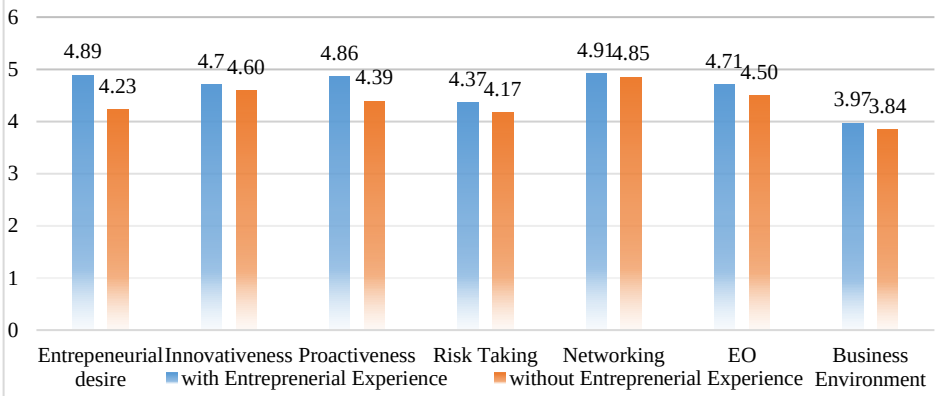
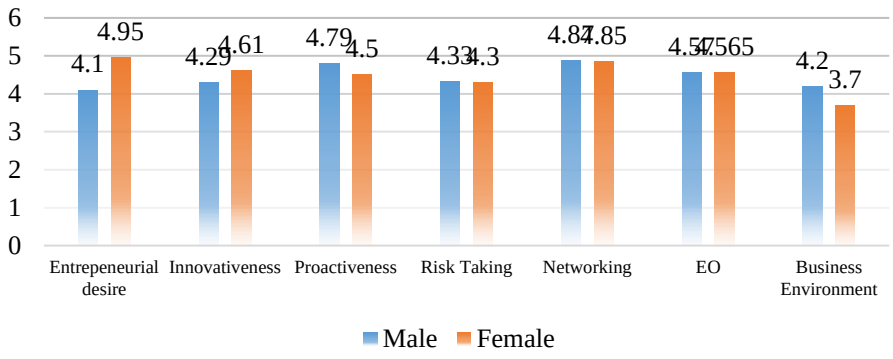


Figure 3 depicts the outlook on entrepreneurial experience between students who have previous entrepreneurial experience and students who lack such experience. The findings indicate that students with past entrepreneurial experiences possess a higher level of entrepreneurial desire compared to those without any previous experience. Furthermore, those with prior entrepreneurial experience have better average scores in both entrepreneurial orientation and business environment. Upon detailed examination of each aspect of entrepreneurial orientation, it is evident that individuals with past entrepreneurial experience exhibit much greater levels of proactiveness and risk-taking behaviors. However, the levels of innovativeness and networking were marginally greater among students who had prior entrepreneurial experience. The results, which show high scores in proactiveness, suggest that students with prior experience are quick to take action, seize opportunities, and are ambitious. In addition, students who have past entrepreneurial experience are more likely to take calculated risks. Consequently, those with experience possess superior motivation, aspirations, and comprehension of the business environment compared to those without any previous experience. Furthermore, it demonstrates that when students lack motivation due to the business environment or have limited comprehension of the business environment, their inclination towards starting a business, understanding of related risks, ability to take initiative, and socializing skills are diminished, and vice versa.

Figure 4: Gender Difference in ED, EO, and Business Environment



The analysis of entrepreneurship prospects across genders yields intriguing findings. Figure 4 demonstrates that females have a higher level of entrepreneurial desire compared to males. However, women have a limited comprehension of the corporate landscape. However, there is a modest variation in entrepreneurial potential ratings across genders when considering the overall scores. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that females exhibit a higher level of innovativeness, while males have a larger degree of proactiveness. The levels of risk-taking and networking are comparable across genders. The findings indicate that women exhibit more motivation to establish new start-ups in emerging markets, although they may have a deficiency in commercial acumen. However, the male counterparts possess a superior comprehension of the business landscape, have a mentality focused on taking initiative, and demonstrate proactive behavior. However, males tend to have a more adaptable attitude, whereas females are more inclined towards innovation and introducing new ideas.

Analyses and Interpretations

Table 01: T-test Difference of Means

Items	Group mean (standard deviation)		
	Male	Female	t-value
Entrepreneurial Desires	4.10 (0.991)	4.95 (0.951)	0.648***
Innovativeness	4.29 (0.881)	4.61 (0.808)	0.420**
Proactiveness	4.79 (0.880)	4.5 (0.931)	0.017***
Risk-taking	4.33 (0.928)	4.3 (0.729)	0.675*
Networking	4.87 (0.995)	4.85 (0.922)	0.389*
Business environment	4.20 (0.839)	3.70 (0.771)	0.317***

Note. ***p<0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

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The analysis of two-tailed t-tests (table 1) examining mean scores across various entrepreneurial traits among male and female groups illustrate noteworthy variations. Females exhibit significantly higher mean scores in Entrepreneurial Desires and Innovativeness compared to males, suggesting a greater inclination towards entrepreneurial desires and innovative thinking among women. Moreover, females also demonstrate slightly higher mean scores in Risk-taking and Networking, with these differences reaching statistical significance. Notably, while there is a significant disparity in mean scores for Proactiveness and Business Environment between genders, the extent of the difference appears relatively smaller. These results highlight gender discrepancies in entrepreneurial characteristics, with females showing stronger tendencies towards specific aspects of entrepreneurship compared to males.

Discussion

The research sought to investigate the differences in entrepreneurial aspirations, mindset, and understanding of the business environment between men and women. Analysis, including comparing means and descriptive statistics, uncovered notable disparities in entrepreneurial ambitions, approach, and comprehension of the business landscape across genders.

The survey revealed that, as a whole, students had a preference for pursuing careers as entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, females have a greater inclination for start-ups compared to males. The outcome is unexpected in Southeast Asian nations. Prior research has indicated that women's inclination to become entrepreneurs is diminished in societies that adhere to male-dominated norms, such as Pakistan. The research examined several factors contributing to this irony, such as risk aversion, possessing a patient disposition, inadequate capital-raising abilities, and obtaining loans— to name a few (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014).

Contrary to expectations, our findings indicated a different outcome. An essential determinant of female motivation for entrepreneurship is the heightened comprehension of their crucial role in both society and the economy. Academicians have recently shown a growing interest in female entrepreneurship (Elam et al., 2019).

Various scholarly research has found that women contribute to the decline of social exclusion, promote the significance of inclusion, and improve the balance of variety in society. Similarly, the research has also examined the fact that a rise in female entrepreneurs contributes to the generation of new employment opportunities, an augmentation in gross domestic product, and a reduction in poverty (Hechavarria et al., 2019). However, the level of enthusiasm among females to become entrepreneurs is notably higher in industrialized nations compared to developing countries. Nevertheless, the extent of education and economic downturn significantly influences the extent to which females engage in entrepreneurship (Cardella et al., 2020). The COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on enterprises and households, leading to an increase in female enthusiasm to become entrepreneurs.

This study also demonstrated that students with previous involvement in start-ups have stronger entrepreneurial aspirations (as well as an increased propensity for risk-taking). Furthermore, other investigations conducted in various countries corroborate this claim. The findings can be elucidated through the concept of planned behavior, indicating that the motivation and capability of individuals who have prior experience with a task vary significantly from those who do not (Lortie & Castogiovanni, 2015). Consequently, their disposition towards an event, perceived assistance, and belief in their abilities are at a distinct level compared to others. Therefore, they possess a distinct advantage that sustains their ambitious drive and enables them to undertake entrepreneurial ventures.

Furthermore, our findings indicated that male students possess a superior comprehension of the business environment compared to female students. One of the main factors contributing to these outcomes is the influence of gender norms and stereotypes. In Southeast Asian society, males are commonly linked with attributes such as dominance, independence, and ambition. Females are commonly connected with several attributes, including sensitivity, understanding, and a focus on family. The presence of stereotypes in society and culture restricts one's perspective.

As a result, women are less likely to demonstrate technical expertise, leadership abilities, prestige, and decision-making capabilities, to name a few (Zampetakis et al., 2016). Our findings indicate that female students have a preference for innovativeness when it comes to start-ups. This is mostly due to the amount of emotional intelligence. Research indicates a strong positive association between emotional intelligence and creativity. Individuals with high emotional intelligence exhibit more creativity compared to those with poor emotional intelligence (Xu et al., 2019). Additionally, research indicates that males tend to have lower levels of emotional intelligence compared to girls (McNulty et al., 2016). While the findings vary in different research, this may provide insight into the reasons why female students tend to have greater levels of innovativeness.

Limitations of the study and future directions

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the significant limitations of this study when analyzing the findings. The study exclusively targeted students enrolled in a single Public Sector University. The data was only obtained from the business administration department. Some pupils may have experienced difficulties comprehending some questions. The difficulties in comprehension may have arisen due to the linguistic nature of the questionnaire. The questionnaire remained unaltered and unchanged in terms of wording. The results may raise potential bias concerns because it utilizes convenience sampling and lacks common method bias analysis. In future research, it is possible to incorporate additional factors, such as entrepreneurial intention, in order to investigate correlations and causal linkages. Additionally, a comparison analysis may have been undertaken to examine the entrepreneurial orientation and aspirations of students from public and private institutions, as well as across other academic departments.

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Conclusion

The study's results reveal considerable differences between genders in their entrepreneurial mindset, knowledge of the enterprise environment, and interest in entrepreneurship. These consequences are treasured for growing entrepreneurial abilities among university students. They spotlight the complicated relationship between gender and entrepreneurship and recommend more research into the reasons behind those differences. Understanding these elements is vital for creating a more inclusive and truthful entrepreneurial environment that makes the most of everybody's capabilities and strengths, irrespective of gender.

Recommendations

The study shows that students with earlier entrepreneurial revel have a more potent entrepreneurial mindset and a better draw close to the commercial enterprise environment. Therefore, it recommends supplying sensible entrepreneurship packages and internships to provide students with real-world experiences. It additionally reveals that female college students have higher entrepreneurial ambition and creativity. In contrast, male students are more willing to take risks and feature more information about the commercial enterprise environment. To cope with those differences, the study suggests growing centered applications, together with risk control workshops for female students and creativity enhancement workshops for male students.

The findings display that students show off incredibly low levels of hazard-taking behavior. Accordingly, the study recommends incorporating threat-taking modules into the curriculum and creating a safe environment for college students to engage in calculated risks via simulated business scenarios.

While college students engage in networking sports, there is room for improvement. Therefore, this study recommends encouraging participation in industry activities, networking periods, and mentorship programs to enhance college students' networking abilities.

Despite a strong entrepreneurial choice, college students' understanding of the business environment desires improvement. Therefore, integrating complete studies of the business environment into the curriculum and involving industry experts in lectures and seminars will suffice. Improved entrepreneurial education is needed, especially considering gender differences in entrepreneurial orientation. Therefore, this study recommends revising the curriculum to include gender-sensitive entrepreneurial education, focusing on both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

The study highlights an unexpectedly higher inclination for entrepreneurship among females in a traditionally male-dominated society. In this view, this study recommends providing additional support and resources for female entrepreneurs, such as dedicated funding opportunities, female mentorship programs, and women-focused entrepreneurial networks.

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