# ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY, EXPERIENCE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN FEMALE YOUTH

**Honest Muchabaiwa, Wits Business School**
**Jabulile Msimango-Galawe, Wits Business School**

## ABSTRACT

*Entrepreneurship is undoubtedly pivotal in the economic development of South Africa and is also a great contributor to the much-needed job creation. Research has shown that females, in general, have lower entrepreneurial intention compared to their male counterparts, worldwide. This however is rapidly changing with females making significant strides in venturing into entrepreneurship. This has, however, not been the case with black females in South Africa. There is a very low participation rate in entrepreneurship by South female, black South Africans despite the government allocating funding towards entrepreneurial training, grants, and advice-giving support structures. This low participation necessitated the need to study the determinates of entrepreneurial intention among black female youth. This quantitative study assessed the impact of prior entrepreneurial exposure, on the entrepreneurial intention of female, black South African youth. The possible moderating impact of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and intention was also assessed.*

*Data was collected among 278 female, black South African youth, using a questionnaire that was scripted on Qualtrics. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship among the variables.*

*The results revealed that prior entrepreneurial exposure had a direct significant positive impact on entrepreneurial intention. Although entrepreneurial self-efficacy moderated the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention, the moderation was not significant.*

*The key message from this study was that entrepreneurial intention is dependent on whether one had a positive prior entrepreneurial exposure or not. It was concluded that the impact of prior entrepreneurial exposure is not dependent on one's entrepreneurial self-efficacy.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Intention, Entrepreneurship Education, Prior Entrepreneurship Exposure, Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy, Entrepreneurship Experience.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Business Environment specialists (2013), female entrepreneurs constituted between 25% and 33% of the global formal business owners. A study by Lose & Kwahene (2021), found that males are more likely to venture into entrepreneurship than females. Worldwide, the proportion of female-owned businesses has been growing significantly in the past decade (Herman, 2018). In contrast to this global trend, there has been very slow growth in the number of black female-owned businesses in South Africa, while 24% of the formal



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businesses were owned by females in 2015, only 8.4% were owned by black females (Ndlovu & Makgetla, 2017). This is a very low level of participation considering that black females constitute 35.7% of the economically active people in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2018).

The very low participation rates in entrepreneurship by South African black females is despite the South African government allocating funding towards entrepreneurial training, grants and advice-giving support structures, to promote black female-owned businesses through the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI, 2007). Thus, the purpose of the study was to assess whether prior entrepreneurship exposure and entrepreneurial self-efficacy had a role to play in explaining entrepreneurial intention.

The primary research question was: "What is the impact of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure, and the intention to venture into entrepreneurship? The aims of the study were to:

1. Establish the impact of prior entrepreneurial exposure on entrepreneurial intention among female, black South African youth,
2. Investigate the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy-searching on the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention among female, black South African youth.

The relevance of the study was the fact that tomorrow's entrepreneurs will emerge from the current youth. A study of this nature helps to get a better understanding of what affects the decision to venture into entrepreneurship. The intention was to understand measures that can be taken to promote the take-up of entrepreneurship by black South African youth. Previous research was mainly about the direct impact of self-efficacy on intention (Soomro & Honglin, 2018) or the direct impact of prior entrepreneurial exposure on intention (Mueller et al. 2014). This research brought a different dimension where there was limited research done on whether self-efficacy has a moderating effect on the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intentions among female, black South African youths. The other contribution was the application of components of Ajzen's theory on planned behavior in a South African context, specifically among female, black South African youth. There was also limited research done on entrepreneurship intention among female, black South African youth. Most research was either done just among the youth only (Maziriri et al., 2019; Mothibi & Malebana, 2019; Wathanakom et al., 2020) or among females (Chhabra et al., 2020).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Entrepreneurship Intention

According to Tefula & Tefula (2017), entrepreneurship is defined as the multi-faceted concept that incorporates starting a new venture, leading and being innovative. It also involves recognising opportunities and exploiting the opportunities (Tefula & Tefula, 2017).

Every single entrepreneurship thought begins with an intention (Dinc & Hadzic, 2018; Bird, 1988). Intention can be defined as a rational state of mind centered on achieving some mission or attaining some goal (Dinc & Hadzic, 2018).

Combining the two definitions, the one for entrepreneurship and that for intention, entrepreneurial intention, is a pivotal first step in understanding the process of setting up another business (Olokundun et al., 2018; Nguyen, 2017; Nasip et al., 2017; Salamzadeh & Kirby, 2017;



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Zapkau et al., 2015). It is defined as the desire to start a business or participating in self-employment (Nguyen, 2017; Nasip et al., 2017).

According to Ajzen (1991) & Nguyen (2017) entrepreneurial intention is the best predictor of entrepreneurial behaviour. Herman (2018) asserts that entrepreneurial intention is the proportion of adults who do currently not own any business but with an intention to venture into business within a period of 3 years. The definition by Herman (2018) was used in this study.

Cardoso et al. (2018) indicated that the discussion about entrepreneurial intention will be incomplete without mentioning the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The TPB postulated that entrepreneurial intention is dependent on one's attitude towards their behaviour, their subjective norms, and their perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991; Barreira et al., 2011).

Niljinda (2017) found that there was a significant correlation between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention. Miralles, et al. (2016) went further and concluded in their study that it was not only about the attitude but also that the individual's perception of entrepreneurship has more influence on entrepreneurial intention than the influence of entrepreneurial knowledge.

Letsoalo & Rankhumise (2019) defined entrepreneurial intention as the intention to start a business rather than seeking employment for people who are currently not active entrepreneurs. This is the definition that was employed in this study. Thus, this study did not seek to establish whether the people who are currently entrepreneurs where at some point involved in some form of entrepreneurship.

## Prior Entrepreneurial exposure

Prior entrepreneurial exposure is a person's individual history associated with entrepreneurship such as entrepreneurial parents or previous work experience in a small or newly started firm (Krueger Jr, 1993; Johara, 2017). The components of prior entrepreneurial exposure are:

1. Having been exposed to entrepreneurial parents (Zapkau et al., 2015)
2. Having worked in a small business (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003)
3. Having started a new business Mcgee et al. (2009), and
4. Having relatives or friends who have started a new business (Mcgee et al., 2009).

The Entrepreneurial Cognitive theory argues that the heuristics-based is inspired by principles that come from everyday practices and exposure to entrepreneurial experience (Zhang, Duysters, & Cloodt, 2014). This theory explains the addition of prior entrepreneurial exposure to this study. The Social Learning theory suggests that a person's behaviour can be acquired by examining and imitating others, in this case it can be parents, relatives or friends (Zapkau et al., 2015). This theory suggests that entrepreneurial exposure is vital in shaping an individual's intention to start a business.

Israr & Saleem (2018); Malebana & Zindiye (2017); Zapkau et al. (2015); Mueller et al. (2014); and Peterman & Kennedy (2003) concluded in their studies that prior entrepreneurial exposure had a positive impact on an individual's entrepreneurial intention. Miralles et al. (2016) also found there to be a positive significant impact of Prior Entrepreneurial Exposure on entrepreneurial intention. Tarek (2016); Malebana & Swanepoel, 2014) did not find any relationships between Prior Entrepreneurial Exposure and entrepreneurial intention, in other words, the relationship was insignificant.



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Zhang, et al. (2014) on the other hand, concluded that Prior Entrepreneurial Exposure had a significant negative impact on entrepreneurial intention.
In this study, based on overwhelming evidence it was hypothesised that:

> ***$H_1$:*** *Prior entrepreneurial exposure has a significant positive impact on entrepreneurial intention among Female, black South African youths*

## Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Arafat et al. (2018) defined self-efficacy as a person's confidence in their own skill and ability to execute an activity or behaviour. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to go through the business start-up process without any problems (Tsai, et al., 2014).

According to Mcgee et al. (2009), entrepreneurial self-efficacy is made up of four dimensions namely; searching, planning, marshalling and implementation. The searching dimension assesses confidence in the development of unique ideas by the entrepreneur. The author continued and indicated that the planning phase is about confidence in converting the idea into a workable business plan while the marshalling component is about confidence in assembling resources to breathe life into the new venture, and the implementation measures confidence in growing the venture (Mcgee et al., 2009).

Similar to the study by Laviolette et al. (2012), only the searching dimension of entrepreneurial self-efficacy was used in this study since the instrument was administered among youths who may not comprehend the other four dimensions of entrepreneurial-self efficacy.

According to Arafat et al. (2018); Krueger et al. (2000); Segal et al. (2002); Odumosu (2014) there is a significant positive relationship between ESE and entrepreneurial intention. Piperopoulos & Dimov (2015) found in their study that entrepreneurial self - efficacy moderates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. Ahlin et al. (2014) indicated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy can also be used as a moderating variable, as the confidence in ones' abilities can go a long way in influencing the impact of other variables on entrepreneurial intention.

Based on literature reviewed in this section, it was hypothesised that:

> ***$H_2$:*** *Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy significantly moderates the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention among Female, black South African youths.*

# METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research approach, which is based upon deductive reasoning and used quantitative analysis. The positivist approach to quantitative research, which works on the premise of the existence of a social reality out there (Bryman, 2015), was applied.

Cross-sectional data, which involves the collection of data on several cases at a single point in time (Bryman, 2015), was used. A questionnaire was used for data collection. This was the most appropriate tool because there was a need to collect data from a large group of people, using the same standardised instrument for data to be analysed quantitatively.

The population for this study was made up of black female youth in South Africa who has not yet decided on their career path. Black female youth was defined, according to the Republic of South Africa (2004), where it included, the black African, coloured, and



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Indian/Asian. The only exclusion in terms of race was whites. According to Statistics South Africa (2019), the 2019 mid-year population estimates indicated that there were 8.80 million female youth aged between 18 – 34 years in South Africa. The study did not exclude potential respondents on the basis on locations, as long as they were black female South African citizens.

Entrepreneurial intention was measured using an instrument adopted from (Laviolette et al., 2012). Laviolette et al. (2012) applied this measurement scale among French students and it had a very high-reliability level (Cronbach's Alpha was 0.84).

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy was assessed using a scale that was developed by Mcgee et al. (2009). Similar to the study by Laviolette et al. (2012), only the searching dimension of entrepreneurial self-efficacy was used in this study since the instrument was administered among youths who may not comprehend the other four dimensions of entrepreneurial-self efficacy.

The Prior Entrepreneurial Exposure Scale (PEES) by Krueger (1993) was used to assess prior entrepreneurial exposure. The instrument measured facets such as having started a new business, having a family member or friend or person that they know who have started a business and also having worked for an entrepreneur. A typical question was to ask if ever they had started a business of any kind. If the response was yes, a follow-up question was asked to determine whether they have had a positive or a negative experience when they ran their own business. The negative or positive experience was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from extremely negative (1) to extremely positive (7). A person who had never had an experience was rated as neutral in terms of the experience. The overall PEES score was computed by adding up the four (4) scores for the four (4) items.

Qualtrics, an online data collection portal was used to send a structured questionnaire to the prospective respondents. The data was analysed using IBM SPSS statistical software and the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the sample demographics (Field, 2018)

Histograms with superimposed normal distribution curves were used to assess whether variables were normally distributed (Pintar et al., 2016). Inferential statistics such as correlation analysis were used to assess the relationships among the variables, while regression was applied to assess the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable (Field, 2018).

## RESULTS

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal axis factoring extraction and proMax rotation was conducted to assess the validity of the constructs. All items measuring Entrepreneurial Intention, Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and prior entrepreneurial exposure were included to assess for both convergent and divergent validity. The items EI2, EI4, and EI6 under the entrepreneurial intention had their scale reversed (that is 7=1, 6=2, 5=3, 4=4, 3=5, 2=6, 1=7) before conducting EFA. This was done because they were negatively worded in comparison to other items in the same constructs. The items with reversed scales were labelled EI2R*, EI4R*, and EI6R* respectively in Table 1.

Results in Table 1 show that 3 factors were extracted as had been hypothesised. The retained items all loaded highly on the initially hypothesised constructs and the factor loadings were all above the minimum required value of at least 0.4 (Field, 2018). These results confirmed that there was both convergent validity and divergent validity in the constructs. There was convergent validity because the items converged into the respective constructs, while divergent validity was established since items diverge from unrelated constructs.



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| Table 1<br>VALIDITY TEST | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Construct** | **Items/Statements** | **Factor** | | |
| | | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| Entrepreneurial Intention | EI7: I spend time learning about starting a firm | 0.847 | | |
| | EI5: I search for information on how to set up a firm | 0.800 | | |
| | EI1: I intend to set up a company in the future | 0.798 | | |
| | EI6R*: I have no plans to launch my own business | 0.690 | | |
| | EI3: I am saving money to start a business | 0.639 | | |
| | EI4R*: I do not read any books on how to set up a firm | 0.626 | | |
| | EI2R*: I have never searched for business start-up opportunities | 0.588 | | |
| Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy | ESE2: Identify the need for a new product or service | | 0.867 | |
| | ESE1: Brainstorm and come up with a new idea of product or service | | 0.817 | |
| | ESE3: Design a new product or service that would satisfy the customers' wants or needs | | 0.719 | |
| Prior Entrepreneurial Exposure | PEE2: Parent(s) have a business or were self-employed | | | 0.751 |
| | PEE4: Other relatives or friends started a business | | | 0.612 |
| | PEE3: Worked for an entrepreneur | | | 0.581 |
| | PEE1: Started a business before | | | 0.553 |
| | "Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.<br>Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization."<br>Rotation converged in 4 iterations.<br>Total variance explained = 61.265%<br>R*: indicates that the scale was reversed | | | |

Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each of the retained 3 factors/constructs to assess the reliability of the scale (Field, 2018). The results are presented in Table 2. The results revealed that there was a very good level of reliability for Entrepreneurial Intention (7 items, $\alpha = 0.877$), and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (3 items, $\alpha = 0.837$) because the Cronbach's Alpha values were greater than 0.8 (Field, 2018). There was an acceptable level of reliability for Prior Entrepreneurial Exposure (4 items, $\alpha = 0.708$). Since all 3 constructs had Cronbach's Alpha values greater than the minimum acceptable level of at least 0.7, this means that the items within each scale could be aggregated to form a composite scale per construct (Field, 2018). The composite scale per construct was computed by calculating the average of the items within each construct.

| Table 2<br>RELIABILITY TEST | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Construct** | **Items in Construct** | **Cronbach's Alpha** | **Reliability level** |
| Entrepreneurial Intention | 7 | 0,877 | Very good |
| Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy | 3 | 0,837 | Very good |
| Prior Entrepreneurial Exposure | 4 | 0,708 | Acceptable |

A multiple regression model with Entrepreneurial intention as the dependent variable, Prior entrepreneurial exposure as the independent variable and entrepreneurial self-efficacy as the moderating variable was fitted. The moderation regression models are summarised in Table 3.



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The model with PEE, ESE, and EE x ESE explained 17% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention (R-Square = 0.17).
The regression the model was given by:

$$EI = 4.565 + 0.383\ \text{PEE} + 0.409\ \text{ESE} - 0.186\ (\text{PEExESE})$$

**Table 3**
**MODERATION REGRESSIONS**

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **B** | **β** | **B** | **β** | **B** | **β** |
| **Intercept** | 4.52*** | 0.00 | 4.52*** | 0.00 | 4.57*** | 0.00 |
| **PEE** | 0.45*** | 0.25 | 0.3*** | 0.17 | 0.38*** | 0.21 |
| **ESE** | | | 0.45*** | 0.33 | 0.41*** | 0.30 |
| **PEE x ESE** | | | | | -0.19* | -0.11 |
| **R2** | 0.06 | | 0.16 | | 0.17 | |

*** = $p < .01$, ** = $p < .05$, * = $p < .10$
*Dependent variable = Entrepreneurial intention*

The results in the final model (Model 3,) shows that prior entrepreneurial exposure (B = 0.38, β = 0.21, p-value < 0.001) had a positive and significant impact on entrepreneurial intention. The impact was positive since the coefficient for PEE was greater than zero and was significant because the p-value was less than 0.05. This means that hypothesis 1 was supported and significant.

The results show that although entrepreneurial self-efficacy moderated the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention, the moderation was not significant. There was moderation because the interaction term (PEE x ESE) (B = -0.19, β = -0.11, p-value = 0.0750 > 0.05) was not zero but the moderation was not significant since the p-value was greater than 0.05. This means that hypothesis 2 is supported but the result is not significant.

The moderating effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention is illustrated in Figure 1. The results indicate that the relationship between Prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention was stronger at low levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and weakens with increasing self-efficacy.

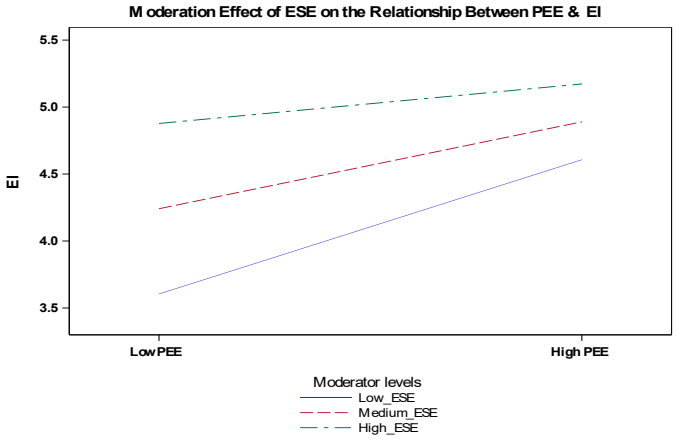


**FIGURE 1**
**MODERATION EFFECT OF ESE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEE&EI**



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In summary, prior entrepreneurial exposure was found to have a direct significant and positive impact on entrepreneurial intention. It was noted that Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy moderated the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention in a negative way. That is, the relationship weakens with an increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy, although the moderating effect was insignificant.

## DISCUSSION

The first objective was to assess whether prior entrepreneurial exposure had a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention. The prior entrepreneurial exposure, and entrepreneurial intention constructs were both valid and reliable. This indicates that the results for the above-mentioned objective were based on a statistically valid construct.

It was concluded in this study that prior entrepreneurial exposure has a significant positive impact on entrepreneurial intention. This result was also not surprising considering a plethora of previous evidence such as the conclusion by (Muelleret al., 2014; Peterman & Kennedy (2003); Israr & Saleem (2018); and Zapkau et al., 2015) where they concluded in their studies that prior entrepreneurial exposure had a positive impact on an individual's entrepreneurial intention.

This result was, however, not in congruence with findings by Zhanget al. (2014) where they argued that prior entrepreneurial exposure had a significant negative impact on entrepreneurial intention.

The second objective was to examine the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention among female, black South African youth. The results indicated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy moderated the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention in a negative way, but the moderation was insignificant. This implies that the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention weakens with an increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy, although the moderating effect was insignificant.

This contradicts the findings by Liu et al. (2019) who indicated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy plays a significant and vital role in the effect of role models on entrepreneurial intention. In most cases, the youth find parents, family and friends to be role models.

Thus, it is concluded in this study that, although entrepreneurial self-efficacy moderated the relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention, the moderation is not significant. The relationship between prior entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention is not significantly impacted by the level of self-efficacy of the female, black South African youth.

## CONCLUSION

The use of role model entrepreneurs who are visible and can engage with female, black South African youth can positively influence their entrepreneurial intentions as it was noted that prior entrepreneurial exposure has a significant and positive impact on entrepreneurship intention. The government can be guided accordingly in drafting relevant policies that ensure that youths are exposed to entrepreneurship at an early stage and are also exposed to role models who have made a difference in the country through entrepreneurship.



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It is therefore recommended that future research be done among all black female South African youth including the ones without access to the internet. This means that data collection methods should not be limited to online portals only. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research should be done to make sure that the reasoning behind the quantitative figures is explained. A larger sample should be collected for future research on this topic.

This study was delimited to the assessment of the impact of prior entrepreneurship exposure to entrepreneurial intention and the moderating effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on this relationship. It is recommended that future research should also explore other possible determinants of entrepreneurial intention. There are five dimensions to the Mcgee et al., (2009) entrepreneurial self-efficacy instrument, but only one dimension, searching, was used in this research. It is recommended that future research can be conducted to assess whether the impact of self-efficacy varies significantly depending on the dimension (s) used.

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