

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT, BUSINESS INFORMATION SEMINARS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION

M.J. Malebana, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa

ABSTRACT

In this paper the role of entrepreneurial support and business information seminars in shaping the formation of entrepreneurial intention in South Africa is examined using the theory of planned behaviour as an evaluation framework.

The study was conducted based on a cross-sectional quantitative survey design and involved a convenient sample of 496 final year commerce students from two rural provinces in South Africa, namely Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire, and analysed using both descriptive statistics and hierarchical multiple regression. Findings indicate that knowledge of entrepreneurial support was significantly positively related to entrepreneurial intention, attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur and perceived behavioural control. Attendance of business information seminars had a significant positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention and perceived behavioural control. Results suggest that the theory of planned behaviour is a valuable framework for evaluating the effects of interventions such as entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminars on entrepreneurial intention in a South African context. This study is the first in South Africa to investigate the relationship between attendance of business information seminars and entrepreneurial intention.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Intention, Youth Entrepreneurship Development, Entrepreneurial Support, Business Information Seminars, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Rural Provinces, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

In recognition of the economic benefits of entrepreneurship, prior research has argued for the creation of the so-called ‘nutrient-rich’ or ‘munificent environment’ to stimulate entrepreneurial activity and promote entrepreneurship development (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994, Tang, 2008). The munificent environment comprises not only the conducive infrastructure and favourable entrepreneurship policies but various kinds of support programmes and interventions that could stimulate the entrepreneurial career choice and enhance the creation and growth of ventures (Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994; Krueger & Brazeal, 1994; Tang, 2008). Such kind of environment is vital to enable entrepreneurs to meet the resource requirements for creating new ventures and growing existing ones, and in addition, it positively impacts individuals’ propensity to enterprise, ability to enterprise and their entrepreneurial orientation (Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994; Sahoo & Panda, 2019). Considering the tough reality of many entrepreneurs who face numerous barriers which prevent the implementation of their intentions to create or grow their ventures (Doern, 2011), a nutrient-rich or munificent environment is therefore, crucial to facilitate the acquisition of resources and opportunity identification for these entrepreneurs and promotes

entrepreneurial alertness (Tang, 2008). As a result, policymakers around the world are directing their efforts towards the implementation of various policies and support programmes to enhance the economic potential of their countries (Bridge et al., 2009; Shane, 2009).

Extant literature emphasises the significance of entrepreneurial intentions and growth intentions in the emergence of new and growth of existing ventures (Delanoë, 2013; Douglas, 2013; Krueger et al., 2000; Darmanto & Yuliari, 2018; Yaseen et al., 2018). However, perceived barriers impede the translation of intentions into action (Doern, 2011, Ajzen, 2005), and negatively impacts entrepreneurs' control over the creation of new ventures and the formation of entrepreneurial intention (Karimi et al., 2017; Kebaili et al., 2017; Trivedi, 2017). Hence, there is a need for support programmes that can create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs to help them overcome these barriers (Malebana, 2017). Entrepreneurial support can be an enabler that facilitates the entrepreneurial career choice and implementation of intentions. Entrepreneurial support refers to the provision of information, finance, training and education programmes, infrastructural facilities, counseling and mentoring services needed by entrepreneurs to start, grow and manage their businesses effectively (Malebana, 2012).

In view of the high unemployment rate in the country, the South African government has launched various support programmes to promote entrepreneurship as a mechanism for job creation, especially among the youth (Department of Trade and Industry, 2013). With an official unemployment rate of 30.1%, the youth aged between 15 and 34 years are the mostly affected with rates between 37.3% and 59.0% (Statistics South Africa, 2020). As a result, entrepreneurship should be promoted as a viable career option among the youth so they can create jobs for themselves and improve entrepreneurial activity in the country.

In recent years, an increasing number of empirical studies have emerged showing that a supportive environment is vital not only for entrepreneurs in existing businesses but for the formation of entrepreneurial intention (Nambiar et al., 2020; Bazan et al., 2019; Kumar & Das, 2019; Ali et al., 2019; Farooq et al., 2018; Ndlovu, 2018; Gelaidan & Abdullateef, 2017; Lee, 2010). More specifically, entrepreneurial support can enhance entrepreneurial orientation (Shu et al., 2019) and facilitate the accumulation of resources, the creation of new ventures and their performance (Breivik-Meyer et al., 2019; Ndlovu, 2018; Delanoë, 2013). Findings of a recent study by Chinomona et al., (2020) show that some aspects of entrepreneurial support such as entrepreneurship training, access to finance, and an enabling environment which nurtures the capacity for entrepreneurship are positively related to youth entrepreneurship.

In South Africa, higher percentages of entrepreneurs operating in rural areas are evident in the least urbanised provinces such as the Eastern Cape (62%), Limpopo (75%) and Mpumalanga (53%) (Statistics South Africa, 2006; Turton & Herrington, 2013). In addition, rural areas experience low entrepreneurial activity rates (Herrington et al., 2010) and little or no awareness and reach of available entrepreneurial support programmes (Masumbe, 2018; Chimucheka & Mandipaka, 2015; Herrington & Kew, 2014; Finmark Trust, 2010; Molapo et al., 2008; Ladzani & Netswera, 2009; Rogerson, 2001). Therefore, intensive efforts directed at stimulating entrepreneurial intentions and growth intentions and increasing awareness of and access to support programmes could help improve the state of rural entrepreneurial activity.

Despite the disappointing findings of prior South African research on the low awareness and limited reach of entrepreneurial support programmes, the government's efforts to turn this situation around have not improved. Recent studies from different parts of the country continue to show that the majority of the youth, who bear the most brunt of unemployment, cannot access information about government entrepreneurship support programmes, lack knowledge about

institutions that provide these programmes, and cannot access entrepreneurial support to start their own businesses (Khumalo, 2020; Mothibi, 2018; Malebana, 2017). Thus, if the state of entrepreneurial activity among the youth is to be improved, intensive and coordinated support efforts by the government should be implemented involving collaboration with various stakeholders. A key stakeholder among collaborators with government support institutions as suggested by other researchers is the university (Dzomonda et al., 2015; Mostert, 2018). Universities should not only offer entrepreneurship education but should also promote entrepreneurship as a viable career option, equip students with relevant entrepreneurial skills and competencies, and create a supportive environment in which students can experiment with ideas through start-ups while still learning.

Previous research efforts concerning the effect of entrepreneurial support have produced mixed results (for example, Ndofirepi, 2020; Mothibi & Malebana, 2019; van Tonder, 2019; Al Mamun et al., 2017; Karimi et al., 2017; Ambad & Damit, 2016; Motha, 2015; Yurtkoru et al., 2014; Malebana, 2012, 2017; Walter et al., 2013; Lee, 2010; Turker & Selcuk, 2009; Lüthje & Franke, 2003). In view of these findings, further research is required to ascertain the role of entrepreneurial support in stimulating the entrepreneurial career choice. Thus, this study examines the role of knowledge of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminars in shaping the formation of entrepreneurial intention and the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Intention

The theory of planned behaviour has been designed as a model to predict and explain a wide variety of human behaviour (Tornikoski & Maalaoui, 2019) and has become an increasingly popular model for entrepreneurial intention research among scholars (Lortie & Castogiovanni, 2015; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). The theory suggests that the performance of a particular behaviour follows reasonably from an individual's intention to perform that behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). According to the theory of planned behaviour, intentions are determined by the attitude towards the behaviour, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms (Ajzen, 2011, 2005). The formation of entrepreneurial intention depends on how individuals evaluate the outcomes associated with the entrepreneurial behaviour, their judgement regarding the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour and whether individuals perceive the social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). The likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurship increases when individuals have a favourable attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceive the social pressure to start their own businesses and have confidence in their own ability to start a business (Ajzen, 2011; Tornikoski & Maalaoui, 2019). Empirical findings from both developed and developing countries support the theory of planned behaviour as a valuable model for understanding the determinants of entrepreneurial intention (Mothibi & Malebana, 2019).

The Role of Entrepreneurial Support and Business Information Seminars in Promoting Entrepreneurship

The creation of new business ventures and the expansion of existing businesses depend on the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of market opportunities by entrepreneurs (Ardichvili et al., 2003; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). These actions follow the formation of

entrepreneurial intention and growth intentions (Shook et al., 2003; Douglas, 2013), driven by perceived supportiveness of the environment (Shi et al., 2019). Thus, access to entrepreneurial support could enhance the ability of entrepreneurs to start, manage and grow their ventures (Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994; Bridge et al., 2009). Entrepreneurial support can also stimulate entrepreneurial intention and opportunity recognition among individuals by offering training programmes that are aimed at enhancing entrepreneurial knowledge and skills (Vidal-Suñé & López-Panisello, 2013), and by providing individuals with information about entrepreneurial opportunities and how to start a business and access to finance (Storey & Greene, 2010). Therefore, entrepreneurs' efforts to implement both intentions to create and grow their own ventures would be constrained without the knowledge of what kinds of support are available, where and how to access them or when it is difficult to access these support programmes.

Furthermore, government institutions can raise awareness of entrepreneurial support through business information seminars. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary (McIntosh, 2015), a seminar is an event in which people meet to discuss certain issues. In this study business information seminar refers to an event in which providers of entrepreneurial support meet with entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs to share information about support programmes and services they provide for the establishment of new and growth of existing ventures. In South Africa, government institutions such as the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) conduct seminars which are aimed at empowering entrepreneurs with regard to how to start a business, access to finance, business opportunities and mentorship, public sector procurement and market access (NYDA, 2016; DSBD, 2015; Seda, 2016). These seminars can be valuable in educating entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs about what forms of support are available, where, and what are the requirements that should be met. These seminars can play a vital role lessening the effect of some of the barriers encountered by entrepreneurs, provided information that is shared is translated into tangible deliverables to meet the needs of entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs.

Theory of Planned Behaviour as an Evaluation Tool for Knowledge of Entrepreneurial Support and Effectiveness of Business Information Seminars

Interventions for changing intentions and behaviour can be designed and evaluated using the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2005, 2011; Tornikoski & Maalaoui, 2019). Thus, the effect of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminars, as interventions for changing entrepreneurial intention and the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention can be assessed by means of this theory. To succeed in their efforts of stimulating entrepreneurial activity and motivating people to engage in entrepreneurship, policymakers should ensure that their interventions impact positively on entrepreneurial intention and its antecedents and ultimately entrepreneurial behaviour. More importantly, business information seminars should be targeted at creating positive attitude towards the entrepreneurial career option, as attitudes have been shown by many studies as the main predictor of entrepreneurial intention followed by perceived behavioural control (Mothibi & Malebana, 2019). Prior research has shown that entrepreneurial support is positively related to entrepreneurial intention (Ali et al., 2019; Jeon, 2018; Salfiya Ummah, 2009; Turker & Selcuk, 2009; Lüthje & Franke, 2003) and the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention (Bazan et al., 2019; Kumar & Das, 2019; Tran &

Duong, 2019; Malebana, 2017; Al Mamun et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2017; Karimi et al., 2017). In contrast, other researchers found that entrepreneurial intention does not have a significant relationship with entrepreneurial support (Mothibi & Malebana, 2019; Ambad & Damit, 2016; Yurtkoru et al., 2014, Ismail et al., 2009).

Previous research indicates that the South African youth face numerous barriers, which negatively affect their entrepreneurial intentions and activity. Among the top barriers constraining youth entrepreneurial activity and intentions are lack of finance; difficulty in obtaining finance; lack of information about how to start a business; lack of government support and lack of knowledge about where to obtain support (Dzomonda & Fatoki, 2019; Khumalo, 2020; Malebana, 2015; Nengomasha, 2018; Fatoki, 2010). Therefore, to eliminate these barriers, business information seminars could be a platform for sharing information about the types of support that are available to assist the youth in starting businesses, the criteria to be met, where to obtain support and how to start a business. The government could optimize the effect of business support seminars by improving the reach and access to entrepreneurial support in order to promote youth entrepreneurial activity. As a result, entrepreneurial support and business support seminars could be interventions that contribute to a munificent or nutrient-rich environment for youth entrepreneurship.

RESEARCH METHODS

A quantitative survey research design was adopted for this study. Through this research design it was possible to collect the data from a large number of respondents, which could be analysed statistically and used to describe the individuals studied.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study was final year commerce students at two universities in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, eMalahleni. The appropriateness of these students in studying the effect of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminars on entrepreneurial intentions was based on the fact that they had to decide on their careers upon completion of their studies. Knowledge of entrepreneurial support programmes and attendance of business information seminars can have varying effects on these students' choice of the entrepreneurial career. A convenience sample of 496 students, who were willing to participate, completed questionnaires during lectures.

Questionnaire Design and Administration

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire which was based on validated entrepreneurial intention questionnaires (Liñán et al., 2011; Liñán & Chen, 2009). Questions on entrepreneurial support were adopted from Malebana (2012; 2017). A seven-point Likert scale was used for measuring entrepreneurial intention and its antecedents and entrepreneurial support (1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree) while data on demographic variables were collected using nominal scales. Demographic questions included gender, age, and prior entrepreneurial exposure (whether the respondents currently own a business or have tried to start a business before or were from an entrepreneurial family background, or have attended entrepreneurship education modules ([1=Yes and 0=No; 1=Male and 0=Female])). These demographic questions were used as control variables. Findings of previous research have shown that demographic

factors play a significant role in understanding the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and its antecedents (Malebana, 2012; Rauch & Hulsink, 2015; Aloulou, 2016; Ndofirepi & Rambe, 2017; Mothibi & Malebana, 2019; Khumalo, 2020). Prior to data collection the researcher was granted permission and ethical clearance to conduct the study at the two selected universities. The completion of questionnaires took place during lectures.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 26, an IBM software since 2009 (Hejase & Hejase, 2013). Descriptive statistics were used for the sample characteristics while hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to test the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that from a total of 496 respondents, 61.3% were female and 38.7% were male. In terms of age, 25.6% were in the age category between 18 and 21 years, 62.7% of the respondents were between 22 and 25 years, 7.5% were between 26 and 30 years, 2.4% were between 31 and 35 years, while 1.8% were over the age of 35 years. In terms of prior exposure to entrepreneurship, 6.3% were running their own businesses, 33.7% had tried to start a business before, while 32.3% had an entrepreneurial family background. About 36.7% of the respondents had attended some kind of business information seminar while 32.9% were attending entrepreneurship education modules. Just above 67% of the respondents did not have exposure to entrepreneurship education while 28.6% attended a one year module in entrepreneurship and 4.2% were enrolled for a three year entrepreneurship diploma?

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	192	38.7
	Female	304	61.3
	Total	496	100
Age	18-21 years	127	25.6
	22-25 years	311	62.7
	26-30 years	37	7.5
	31-35 years	12	2.4
	Above 35 years	9	1.8
	Total	496	100
Entrepreneurial Family Background	Yes	160	32.3
	No	336	67.7
	Total	496	100
Runs Own Business	Yes	31	6.3
	No	465	93.7
	Total	496	100
Tried to Start a Business Before	Yes	167	33.7
	No	329	66.3
	Total	496	100
Duration of Entrepreneurship Education	Three years	21	4.2
	One year	142	28.6
	No exposure	333	67

	Total	496	100
Attended Business Information Seminar	Yes	182	36.7
	No	314	63.3
	Total	496	100

Reliability and Validity of the Results

Prior to testing relationships between the independent variable and the dependent variables, tests for the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument, independence of errors and multicollinearity were conducted. The reliability of the measuring instrument, as shown in Table 2, was tested by means of Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha scores were 0.777 for entrepreneurial intention (four items), 0.782 for the attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur (five items), 0.880 for perceived behavioural control (seven items), 0.674 for subjective norms (three items), and 0.717 for entrepreneurial support (five items). Given these Cronbach's alpha scores, the questionnaire was considered a reliable instrument for use in this study (Field, 2013). "An alpha value of 0.8 or above is regarded as highly acceptable for assuming homogeneity of items, while an alpha value that is greater than 0.7 is considered appropriate even though this value could be as low as 0.6 for exploratory research (Hejase & Hejase, 2013)".

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Entrepreneurial Intention	2.18	0.962	0.777
Attitude towards Becoming an Entrepreneur	2.13	0.962	0.782
Subjective Norms	2.73	1.760	0.674
Perceived Behavioural Control	2.06	0.968	0.880
Entrepreneurial Support	2.00	0.968	0.717

The construct validity of the data collection instrument was assessed by conducting exploratory factor analysis (Lehmann, 1988). Factors were extracted with the principal component analysis using the Varimax rotation method. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the independent variables was 0.890. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Principal component analysis extracted a five factor solution with eigenvalues greater than one, which accounted for 69.9% of the variance. These results indicate that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

The values of the Durbin-Watson statistic for entrepreneurial intention, attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur and perceived behavioural control ranged from 1.805 to 2.289 which were well within the acceptable range from 1 to 3, as suggested by Field (2013). Therefore, the data did not violate the assumption of independence of errors. The tolerance values ranged from 0.647 to 0.977, and since they were larger than 0.2, this means that multi-collinearity was not a problem. Variance inflation factors (VIF) were also highly satisfactory below 10, ranging from 1.023 to 1.545 (Field, 2013).

The Effect of Entrepreneurial Support and Attendance of Business Information Seminars on Entrepreneurial Intention

The results for the base model (Model 1) which tested the relationship between demographic factors and entrepreneurial intention in Table 3 were significant ($F(7, 488) = 6.037$; $p < 0.001$), $R^2 = 0.080$. This means that about 8% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention was explained by demographic factors. Of these factors, having tried to start a business before ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.000$) and exposure to entrepreneurship education ($\beta = 0.152$, $p = 0.001$) were significantly positively related to entrepreneurial intention. The antecedents of entrepreneurial intention, knowledge of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminar were entered in Model 2 together with demographic factors. The results for the model were significant ($F(12, 482) = 33.444$; $p < 0.001$), $R^2 = 0.454$. The model explained over 45% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. Attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur ($\beta = 0.458$, $p = 0.000$), followed by perceived behavioural control ($\beta = 0.249$, $p = 0.000$) and having tried to start a business before ($\beta = 0.077$, $p = 0.039$) had a significantly positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention. Of the control variables, only prior start-up experience had a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention. Furthermore, knowledge of entrepreneurial support, attendance of business information seminar and subjective norms had no significant effect on entrepreneurial intention.

The relationship between knowledge of entrepreneurial support, attendance of business information seminar, entrepreneurial intention and the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention was tested in Models 3, 4, 5 and 6. The results for Model 3 show that knowledge of entrepreneurial support ($\beta = 0.200$, $p = 0.000$) and attendance of business information seminar ($\beta = 0.102$, $p = 0.021$) were significantly positively related to entrepreneurial intention ($F(2, 493) = 14.626$; $p < 0.001$). The model explained 5.65% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. The results for the model of relationship between knowledge of entrepreneurial support, attendance of business information seminar and attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur (Model 4) were significant ($F(2, 493) = 16.124$; $p < 0.001$), $R^2 = 0.061$. However, only knowledge of entrepreneurial support ($\beta = 0.228$, $p = 0.000$) had a significantly positive relationship with attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur. In terms of perceived behavioural control (Model 5), the results for the model were also significant ($F(2, 493) = 27.159$; $p < 0.001$), $R^2 = 0.099$. Both knowledge of entrepreneurial support ($\beta = 0.263$, $p = 0.000$) and attendance of business information seminar ($\beta = 0.142$, $p = 0.001$) were significantly positively related to perceived behavioural control. No significant relationship was found between knowledge of entrepreneurial support, attendance of business information seminar and subjective norms (Model 6). These findings suggest that knowledge of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminar have a minimal effect in the formation of entrepreneurial intention compared to attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur and perceived behavioural control. As the results show in Model 2, the significance of the knowledge of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminar diminishes when the theoretical antecedents were added into the model.

	Entrepreneurial Intention			Attitude Towards Becoming an Entrepreneur	Perceived Behavioural Control	Subjective norms
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables:						
What is your gender?	0.07	0.008				
Which of the following age categories best describes you?	-0.03	-0.022				
Are you currently employed?	0.006	0.012				
Are you currently running a business?	0.012	0.009				
Are any of your family members running a business?	0.06	0.023				
Have you ever tried to start a business before?	0.171***	0.077*				
Entrepreneurship module	0.152**	0.026				
Independent Variables:						
Attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur		0.458***				
Perceived behavioural control		0.249***				
Subjective norms		0.04				
Knowledge of entrepreneurial support		0.022	0.200***	0.228***	0.263***	-0.044
Attendance of business information seminar		0.016	0.102*	0.070	0.142**	0.054
Multiple R	0.282	0.674	0.237	0.248	0.315	0.065
R Square (R ²)	0.08	0.454	0.056	0.061	0.099	0.004
Δ Adjusted R ²	0.066	0.441	0.052	0.058	0.096	0
Δ F-Ratio	6.037	33.444	14.626	16.124	27.159	1.047
Significance of F	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	n.s

* $P < 0.05$ ** $P < 0.01$ *** $P < 0.001$

Furthermore, given the limited reach and awareness of entrepreneurial support which have not improved for many years especially in the rural areas of South Africa, it became necessary to test whether entrepreneurship education and attendance of business information seminars can be tools that could help to turn the situation around. As a result, regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between entrepreneurship education, attendance of business information seminars and knowledge of entrepreneurial support. The results (Table 4) revealed that entrepreneurship education and attendance of business information seminars have a significant positive effect on the knowledge of entrepreneurial support ($F(2, 493) = 21.686$; $p < 0.001$), $R^2 = 0.081$. These results suggest that entrepreneurship education and attendance of business information seminars account for 8.1% of the variance in the knowledge of

entrepreneurial support. Entrepreneurship education exerted a greater effect ($\beta=0.252$, $p=0.000$) on the knowledge of entrepreneurial support than attendance of business information seminars ($\beta=0.108$, $p=0.013$). Findings indicate that entrepreneurship education and attendance of business information seminars can help in creating awareness of entrepreneurial support in the rural areas.

Table 4
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION, BUSINESS INFORMATION SEMINARS AND KNOWLEDGE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT

	β	Multiple R	R Square (R^2)	Δ Adjusted R^2	Δ F-Ratio	Significance of F
Independent Variables: Entrepreneurship module Attendance of business information seminar	0.252*** 0.108**	0.284	.081	0.077	21.686	0.000***
* $P < 0.05$ ** $P < 0.01$ *** $P < 0.001$						

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether knowledge of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminars have a positive effect on entrepreneurial intention and its antecedents. As the findings have shown, knowledge of entrepreneurial support was significantly positively related to entrepreneurial intention, attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur and perceived behavioural control. Attendance of business information seminars had a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention and perceived behavioural control. The results for the effect of knowledge of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminar on subjective norms were not significant. However, it is worth noting that knowledge of entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminars positively impact entrepreneurial intention when the antecedents of intention are excluded in the analysis. In addition, it was found that attendance of business information seminars and entrepreneurship education has a significant positive relationship with knowledge of entrepreneurial support. These findings support Ajzen's (2011) view about the effectiveness of the theory of planned behaviour as an evaluation tool for interventions that are aimed at changing entrepreneurial intention and its antecedents, with the exception of subjective norms.

The results contradict those of Mothibi and Malebana (2019); van Tonder (2019); Karimi et al. (2017); Ambad & Damit (2016) and Yurtkoru et al., (2014) which could not find a significant relationship between entrepreneurial support and entrepreneurial intention. However, the findings corroborate previous research that reported a positive relationship between entrepreneurial support and entrepreneurial intention and the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention (Lüthje & Franke, 2003; Turker & Selcuk, 2009; Malebana, 2017; Shen et al., 2017; Al Mamun et al., 2017; Ali et al., 2019). Findings indicate that increased knowledge of entrepreneurial support can contribute to positive perceptions about the supportiveness of the environment, which ultimately influences the formation of entrepreneurial intention. Furthermore, this supportive environment could help stimulate entrepreneurial activity and enhance the entrepreneurial potential (Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994; Krueger & Brazeal, 1994).

In order to alleviate the negative effect of perceived barriers influencing entrepreneurial intention and behaviour, the results have shown that entrepreneurship education and business

information seminars can play a vital role in increasing the knowledge about government entrepreneurial support programmes. This implies that higher education institutions and the government should form partnerships for holding joint business information seminars that are targeted at the youth. Such partnerships should not only focus on creating awareness of available support programmes but also provide access to the necessary support services so students with viable business ideas can experiment with those ideas while still learning.

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Entrepreneurial support and attendance of business information seminars can be valuable interventions for improving low entrepreneurial intention in South Africa. However, the current short-term and once-off nature of business information seminars can be a limitation to the effectiveness of these interventions. Therefore, regular business information seminars should be conducted to improve the knowledge of entrepreneurial support programmes. The government should intensify efforts to promote knowledge about and access to entrepreneurial support programmes in rural areas in order to enable the rural youth to start businesses and create jobs for themselves. More knowledge about available support programmes and improved access to these programmes would increase rural entrepreneurial activity. As shown by the results of this study, exposing all students to some kind of entrepreneurship education could help increase the knowledge of entrepreneurial support programmes offered by the government. This approach would counteract the negative effects of little to non-existent awareness and reach of support programmes offered by the government in rural areas.

More business information seminars should be conducted in rural schools to prepare learners for the entrepreneurial career from a young age. There is a need to distribute printed materials about support programmes to school libraries in rural areas, as it is difficult for these learners to access their own learning materials online. These efforts will help equip these learners with knowledge of the available support programmes and the associated requirements. While entrepreneurship education has shown to be a source for learning about support programmes, entrepreneurship educators should regularly invite government institutions that provide these programmes to lectures. This would afford students the opportunity to engage with officials that are offering these programmes, and in turn, these officials would be able to elaborate more on what is offered than what students learn from their prescribed textbooks.

The limitations which impact the generalizability of the results include the use of convenience sampling and the cross-sectional nature of the study. The study did not test the effect of knowledge of and access to entrepreneurial support on new venture creation, survival and the performance of existing businesses. Future studies in this direction would contribute to a better understanding of the effect of entrepreneurial support on entrepreneurial behaviour, particularly in terms of new venture creation and growth.

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