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The Intersection of Sex-Based Differences and Entrepreneurial Propensity: Insights from Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

Various factors might have an impact on an entrepreneurial intention. Numerous research has looked at the potential influences on students' inclination for entrepreneurship of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which takes into account students' attitudes toward behavior, subjective standards, and perceived behavioural control. According to these standards, students could have varying inclinations toward entrepreneurship. In order to supplement and integrate previous findings about students' entrepreneurial purpose, our study employs the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). With regard to the independent factors looked at and gender, the study's goal was to look into any possible disparities in the chance of becoming an entrepreneur. Data from self-reports were gathered using a multiple-scale questionnaire. With the exception of the perceived behavioral control variable, the study's results indicated that there was a difference between the two genders' desires among UiTM Cawangan Terengganu (UiTMCT) students to become entrepreneurs. These results enhance our understanding of how gender influences entrepreneurial intentions and provide valuable insights for developing targeted strategies to support and encourage entrepreneurship among students. By highlighting the variations in entrepreneurial aspirations and integrating the TPB framework, this study contributes to a more nuanced perspective on the factors shaping students' entrepreneurial motivations.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Intention, Gender, Students, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Attitude Toward Behaviour, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a vital component of many economies worldwide and is necessary for a robust economy. The goal of entrepreneurship is to achieve both financial success and personal fulfilment through the process of seeing possibilities, developing new companies, and launching them—often in the face of uncertainty and risks. With the world becomes more technologically advanced and linked, entrepreneurship is changing and bringing with it both new possibilities and difficulties for aspirant business owners in a variety of sectors and domains. Entrepreneurship has played a major role in the economic expansion of the global market. The general economic progress of a country is aided by entrepreneurship (Navarro et al., 2009). It's a method of finding chances, distributing resources, and creating principles to help individuals manage businesses and promote growth and success. Identifying unmet needs or possibilities for change is a common approach to putting beliefs into practice.

Entrepreneurs are crucial to economic growth because of their enormous contributions to the development of new technologies and the creation of jobs. Moreover, business owners participate in entrepreneurial networks, generate jobs locally, do business locally, support nonprofit organizations, and fund local projects as ways of contributing to the development of their communities. The world's entrepreneur population is currently growing steadily as a result of various factors, including the lack of employment opportunities, the need for future safety measures, the benefits of entrepreneurship, and people's desire to launch their own companies or continue their family's successful business legacy. Innovation, employment creation, and economic growth are all significantly influenced by entrepreneurship. But there are still disparities in the entrepreneurial environment, including gender barriers that prevent economic progress from reaching its full potential. Despite making up about half of the world's population and becoming more and more influential in the workforce, women are still disproportionately underrepresented in entrepreneurship. The aforementioned discrepancy is not just attributable to personal decisions; rather, it stems from deeply established gender prejudices, institutional hurdles, and cultural standards. Thus, with the goal of reducing gender gaps in the entrepreneurial environment and fostering more inclusive economic growth, this research seeks to further understanding of how gender dynamics affect entrepreneurial activity.

Problem Statement

In the world of entrepreneurship, notable differences still exist despite progress made in gender equality. Studies reveal that women are still not as prevalent as males in the entrepreneurial field worldwide (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021). There are lost financial possibilities, less room for creativity, and less diverse corporate viewpoints as a result of this underrepresentation. To create an entrepreneurial environment that is more inclusive and fairer, it is imperative to recognize and solve the gender disparities in the field (Lim, 2019). As a result of previous research showing that gender influences entrepreneurial ambition, researchers feel that it is critical to give this topic due consideration as well (Hägg et al., 2022). As gender both shapes and is affected by context, Welter (2020) calls for scholars to take a closer look at how settings are gendered in studies that examine gender and entrepreneurship. Finding and comprehending the distinctions between male and female students has a significant impact on illuminating students' aspirations in entrepreneurial careers. As such, it will aid in the creation of successful educational programs that support students in realizing their own business potential and encourage entrepreneurial purpose.

Researchers think it's crucial to identify the most significant factors that might affect graduating students' propensity for entrepreneurship, as UiTM is one of the public institutions that hopes to produce graduates who might employ entrepreneurial skills in their future professions. It is crucial to understand the importance of the variables, particularly for academic purposes. It makes it possible for them to provide the best setting and opportunities for encouraging students' interest in entrepreneurship and increasing their degree of care for it. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is used in this study to understand more about the relationship between gender and entrepreneurial intention and its antecedents. According to Arias, Restrepo, and Restrepo (2016), this hypothesis is the one that is most commonly employed to investigate entrepreneurial objectives.

Objectives of Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

i. To examine the differences in students' entrepreneurial intention based on gender.
ii. To examine the differences in students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship based on gender.
iii. To examine the differences in students' subjective norms based on gender.
iv. To examine the differences in students' perceived behavior control based on gender.

Scope of Study

The study's focus is restricted to UiTM Cawangan Terengganu undergraduate students (Campus Dungun, Bukit Besi, and Kuala Terengganu). The study focuses on how much entrepreneurial intention among students might be influenced by factors like gender and the TPB (attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms, perceived behavior control).

Literature Review

Reasoned action theories have been widely and thoroughly employed to anticipate planned conduct (Ajzen, 1988, 1991) as well as behavioral intention (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). The theory of planned behavior (TPB), which includes perceived behavioral control and control belief measures, was first developed from the theory of reasoned action (TRA). The idea of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) was proposed to explain and justify the process of people's decision-making and involvement in a given business plan. Kolvereid (1996) asserts that the Ajzen framework (1991) serves as a crucial paradigm for elucidating or forecasting individuals' aspirations to pursue entrepreneurship. Ajzen (1991) emphasized that an individual's intention shapes their behavior. The purpose to carry out an action may be accounted for by three factors, which are:

(1) Attitude toward the behavior – which denotes ones' level of perception of certain behavior attractiveness. Overall, those who believe that the performance of a given behavior will generate encouraging results will have a positive attitude toward that behavior.
(2) Subjective norm – which denotes the perception of the public sentiments and norms to execute certain behavior. This perception is the measurement of social norms and social support of the behavior of close friends, family members, mentors, and role models.
(3) Perceived behavioral control – which denotes a self-appraisal of one's own capability regarding the task or behavior; behavioral control can be measured by perceived feasibility, which is in accordance with Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy construct.

Attitude toward Entrepreneurship

The extent to which an individual's perception of entrepreneurship is positive or negative influences how they feel about certain behaviors or qualities. Ajzen (2005) asserts that people's attitudes are shaped by their understanding of the consequences of the behavior they engage in. Azjen (2012b) adds that, depending on whether the behavior is real or symbolic, people's attitudes; whether positive or negative, can be immediately triggered. Therefore, experiences and how individuals interpret the outcomes of their role models acting entrepreneurially influence people's opinions, whether they be favorable or unfavorable. According to Krueger (1993), people learn about the possible advantages and disadvantages of becoming an entrepreneur by directly experiencing the behavior and by seeing how their relatives who are also entrepreneurs behave. A person is more likely to be interested in pursuing entrepreneurship as a profession when they have a more favorable attitude regarding entrepreneurial experience.

The motivation to launch a business can come from both internal and external sources of satisfaction, including monetary gains, personal fulfillment, autonomy, and security for one's family (Choo & Wong 2006; Vanevenhoven & Liguori 2013). According to Asante and Affum-Osei (2019), entrepreneurs that possess entrepreneurial self-efficacy tend to be more proactive, which in turn increases the chance of venture success. Expectations of unfavorable or expensive outcomes, such as the idea of risky entrepreneurship, have a negative impact on the desire to launch a firm.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms are defined as people's knowledge of the standards, values, and ideas held by influential people as well as by friends, family, teachers, and other business associates. These norms are seen to be essential to an individual's desire to conform to them. Social norms, in addition to the intention to start a firm, have a significant impact on perceived behavioral control and the attitude toward becoming an entrepreneur (Linan & Krueger, 2013; Byabashaija & Katono, 2011; Linan et al., 2011; Linan & Chen, 2009). (Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). People will thus be more driven to launch their own businesses and will intend to do so more strongly if others recognize and value their efforts to be entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial activity that is supported by society norms boosts entrepreneurial motivation by encouraging positive entrepreneurial attitudes and improving perceived ability to start a firm. According to Hopp & Stephan (2012), start-up motivation will be increased by strong, encouraging social norms that exist in the surroundings and recognize an individual's accomplishments.

Perceived Behavioral Control

The term perceived behavioural control describes how individuals feel when engaging in behaviours that they can adopt, manage, and master (Ajzen, 1991; Scholten et al., 2004; Nabi & Holden, 2008). People are more likely to launch a firm when they believe they have the capacity to act entrepreneurially (Amorós & Bosma, 2014). Ajzen (2012a, 2011, 2005) contends that perceptions of behavioural control are based on control beliefs about the existence of factors that can facilitate or impair the performance of the behaviour. The capacity to identify, assess, and take advantage of market opportunities is crucial. This is due

to the fact that having the necessary skills will enable people to access possibilities in the market, resources, role models, social support from others, and entrepreneurial help. This can increase their ability to have better perceptions of control over the behaviours. According to Geissler & Zanger (2013) and Ramos-Rodrguez et al. (2010), those who have the knowledge and abilities necessary to launch a business and can identify other entrepreneurs are more likely to spot business possibilities.

Effects of Gender on Entrepreneurial Intentions

According to Tommy and Pardede (2020), an individual's entrepreneurial goal, which is undoubtedly a deliberate decision, can have a significant impact on their desire to start a new firm. Gupta et al. (2009) found that there is a significant influence of gender attitudes on entrepreneurship on individuals' propensity to launch their own enterprises. A number of studies have attempted to validate these disparities at the level of entrepreneurial intention, despite the fact that a great deal of data from real entrepreneurs has demonstrated gender differences in entrepreneurship (Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). In career models, gender is just a background element that influences employment-related processes indirectly through other associated factors (Abele, 2000). In light of this, entrepreneurship may be seen of as a type of planned behavior that can be examined through the use of entrepreneurial intention models (Mueller, 2011). The commercialization of research findings has long been believed to be influenced by characteristics such as gender, as stated by Miranda et al. (2017). Gender is significantly correlated with entrepreneurial intention and the TPB's components of entrepreneurial intention, according to past research (Karimi et al., 2014; Malebana & Swanepoel, 2015; Robledo et al., 2015; Feder & Niţu-Antonie, 2017; Palupi & Santoso, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

In order to examine how gender affects students' intentions to pursue entrepreneurship, the study makes use of three (3) main contributing factors: attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norm, and perceived behaviour control.

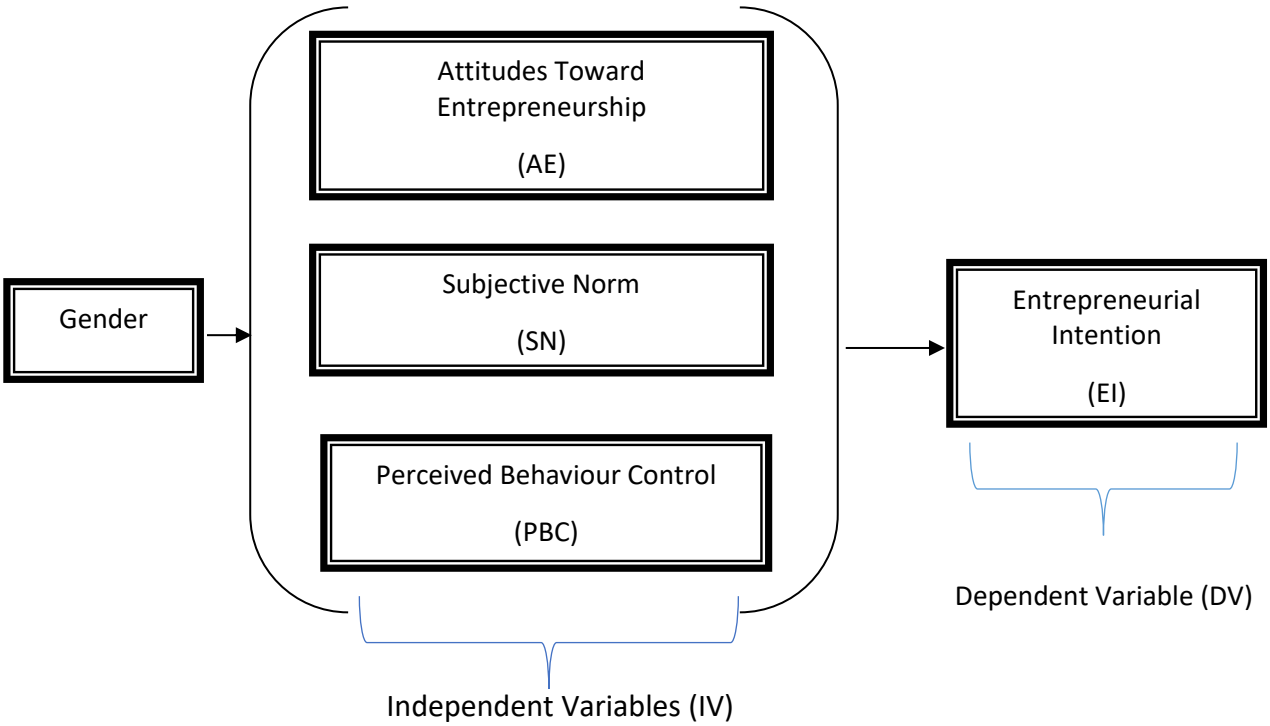

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses Development

Hypothesis 1: Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)

H1: There is a differences in students' entrepreneurial intention based on gender.
Ho: There is no differences in students' entrepreneurial intention based on gender.

Hypothesis 2: Attitudes Towards Entrepreneurship (AE)

H2: There is a differences in students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship based on gender.
Ho: There is no differences in students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship based on gender.

Hypothesis 3: Subjective Norms (SN)

H3: There is a difference in students' subjective norms based on gender.
Ho: There is no differences in students' subjective norms based on gender.

Hypothesis 4: Perceived Behavior Control (PBC)

H4: There is a difference in students' perceived behavior control based on gender.
Ho: There is no differences in students' perceived behavior control based on gender.

Research Methodology

Sample Size

A total of 1220 final-year diploma and degree students from the three (3) campuses of UiTM Cawangan Terengganu (Dungun, Bukit Besi, and Kuala Terengganu) comprised the sample. A sample of 350 respondents was chosen depending on the population. The sampling strategy proposed by Krejice and Morgan (1970) was applied to ensure that the sample size had sufficient statistical power.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a stratified random sampling strategy, utilizing a probability method. This approach was chosen to ensure that the sample accurately reflects the diversity within the population by dividing it into distinct strata before randomly selecting participants. By using this method, the study was able to obtain a larger and more representative sample, which enhances the generalizability of the results to the broader population.

Data Collection Procedure

The study's data was gathered using a series of questionnaires. The questionnaire statements were created and rated using a Likert scale (1 being strongly disagreed and 5 being strongly agreed). A measuring scale of five or more elements, according to Böckenholt (2017), would yield more accurate findings than one with fewer. Six (6) sections, labelled A, B, C, D, E, and F comprised the questionnaire. Following that, statistical analytic methods were used to assess the data. SPSS version 26 software was used to assist with the model construction and analysis in this study.

Findings

Validity and Reliability

Table 1
The Reliability Analysis

VARIABLE	ALPHA
Entrepreneurship Intention (EI)	0.971
Attitude toward Entrepreneurship (AE)	0.798
Subjective Norms (SN)	0.671

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	0.865

The reliability of each research variable was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with the results summarized in Table 1. According to Hair et al. (2003), a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.6 indicates that the variables are both excellent and reliable. Therefore, in this study, all variables with an Alpha above this threshold are considered to exhibit strong internal consistency and reliability.

Analysis of Respondents' Profile

Table 2

The Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

Items		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	190	54.3
	Female	160	45.7
Age	21-22	345	98.6
	23-24	5	1.4
Faculty	Business Management	66	18.9
	Accounting	30	8.6
	Hotel and Tourism Management	46	13.1
	College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics	60	17.1
	School of Electrical Engineering	48	13.7
	School of Chemical Engineering	49	14.0
	School of Mechanical Engineering	51	14.6

The responders' demographic data is summarized in Table 2. The table displays the age, gender, and faculty of the respondents together with the frequency and proportion of various factors in a data collection. There were 160 female participants and 190 male participants in the sample, or 45.7% and 54.3%, respectively. While the majority of the group (98.6%) was between the ages of 21 and 22, just 1.4% of the respondents were between the ages of 23 and 24. The data collection also contained information about the faculties of the responders. With 66 respondents (18.9%) the Faculty of Business Management had the biggest group, while the Faculty of Accounting had the lowest, with just 30 respondents (8.6%).

Table 3

The t-test of students' entrepreneurial intention, attitudes of entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavior control based on gender

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	sig.
Entrepreneurship Intention (EI)	Male	190	3.714	0.626	-5.836	.000
	Female	160	4.126	0.694		
Attitude toward Entrepreneurship (AE)	Male	190	3.758	0.149	-5.791	.000
	Female	160	3.855	0.165		
Subjective Norms (SN)	Male	190	3.689	0.196	3.274	.001
	Female	160	3.611	0.250		
	Male	190	4.139	0.267	-.558	.577
	Female	160	4.156	0.295		

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	Female	160	4.738	0.292		

The table presents the means and standard deviations for four variables related to entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate students: Entrepreneurship Intention (EI), Attitude toward Entrepreneurship (AE), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC). The data is disaggregated by gender, with N representing the sample size for each group. The t-test results indicate whether there are statistically significant differences between male and female students across these variables.

Discussion

Objective 1: To examine the differences in students' entrepreneurial intention based on gender.

Table 4

The T-Test of Students' Entrepreneurial Intention Base on Gender

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	sig.
Entrepreneurship Intention (EI)	Male	190	3.714	0.626	-5.836	.000
	Female	160	4.126	0.694		

The table presents the means and standard deviations for gender differences in entrepreneurial variables. The t-values were reported as -5.836, with p-values indicating that these gender differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Malebana and Swanepoel (2015), which also documented notable variations between male and female students in terms of their entrepreneurial intentions.

The survey results revealed that female students were more inclined to start their own businesses compared to their male counterparts. This observation aligns with Abele's (2000) assertion that while gender is often considered a background variable influencing career-related processes through other associated factors, it also plays a significant role in determining entrepreneurial intentions. In this study, gender emerged as a crucial factor influencing entrepreneurial intent.

Furthermore, this finding is supported by Wilson et al. (2004), who identified that social and relational incentives—such as gaining respect, helping others, and creating job opportunities—had a more profound impact on female participants' entrepreneurial motivations. These factors appear to resonate more strongly with female students, contributing to their higher propensity to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This highlights the importance of considering gender-specific motivations and incentives when examining entrepreneurial intentions and underscores the role of social and relational factors in shaping career choices.

Objective 2: To examine the differences in students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship based on gender.

Table 5

The T-Test of Students' Attitudes of Entrepreneurship Based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	sig.
Attitude towards Entrepreneurship (AE)	Male	190	3.758	0.149	-5.791	.000
	Female	160	3.855	0.165		

Significant gender variations were observed in attitudes toward entrepreneurship, with the differences being statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), as indicated by a t-value of -5.791. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Malebana and Swanepoel (2015), which also reported notable gender differences in entrepreneurial attitudes among students.

In this study, female respondents exhibited significantly higher mean scores (3.855) compared to male respondents (3.758) on measures of attitude toward entrepreneurship. This result corroborates earlier research by Botha and Bignotti (2017) and Ephrem et al. (2013), which similarly highlighted higher positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship among female participants.

The higher mean scores among female respondents suggest that they generally hold more favorable views regarding entrepreneurship. Female participants identified aspirations for independence, self-discovery, and intrinsic motivation as key drivers for their entrepreneurial pursuits. This indicates that, for female students, the perceived benefits of entrepreneurship such as greater autonomy, personal fulfillment, and the potential for financial rewards are highly valued compared to the advantages offered by traditional employment.

Consequently, these findings illustrate why female respondents might prefer entrepreneurship over conventional employment options. They perceive entrepreneurship as providing more substantial utilities in terms of financial gain, personal independence, risk-taking opportunities, and effort. This shift in attitude reflects a broader inclination towards self-employment as a viable and attractive career path, aligning with the motivational factors identified in previous studies.

Objective 3: To examine the differences in students' subjective norms based on gender.

Table 6

The T-Test of Students' Subjective Norms Based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	sig.
Subjective Norms (SN)	Male	190	3.689	0.196	3.274	.001
	Female	160	3.611	0.250		

Table 4 reveals significant gender differences in the study, particularly concerning subjective norms related to entrepreneurial intentions. The t-test analysis produced a t-value of 3.274, with p-values less than 0.05, indicating that the observed differences between male and female students are statistically significant. Specifically, male respondents reported

significantly higher mean scores (3.689) for subjective norms compared to their female counterparts, who had a mean score of 3.611.

This finding aligns with the results of previous research by Malebana and Swanepoel (2015), which similarly highlighted the influence of social pressures on entrepreneurial intentions among males. The higher mean score for males suggests that male respondents in this study are more likely to agree that external pressures such as those from family, friends, and society play a significant role in shaping their preferences and decisions to pursue entrepreneurship. In essence, this result implies that male students feel a stronger social expectation or support from their immediate social circles to engage in entrepreneurial activities, which could influence their entrepreneurial intentions more than it does for female students. The alignment with prior studies further strengthens the validity of these findings, indicating a consistent pattern in how subjective norms impact male and female students differently in the context of entrepreneurship.

Objective 4: To examine the differences in student's perceived behavioural control based on gender.

Table 7

The T-Test of Students' Perceived Behavioural Control Based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	sig.
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	Male	190	4.139	0.267	-.558	.577
	Female	160	4.156	0.295		

The analysis of perceived behavioral control (PBC) did not reveal any statistically significant gender differences, as evidenced by a t-value of -0.558 and a p-value of 0.577. These results indicate that there is no significant disparity in how male and female respondents perceive their control over entrepreneurial activities. This finding contrasts with previous studies, such as those by Farrington et al. (2012) and Malebana and Swanepoel (2015), which reported different outcomes regarding gender and perceived behavioral control.

The lack of significant difference suggests that both male and female respondents, on average, hold similar views about their ability to exert control over their entrepreneurial endeavors. This implies that both genders perceive their capabilities in a similar manner when it comes to initiating and sustaining a business.

All respondents, irrespective of gender, indicated that having a track record of successful experiences would enhance their confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities. This shared perspective underscores the notion that entrepreneurial success is closely tied to individuals' self-efficacy and their belief in their capability to act entrepreneurially. Therefore, irrespective of gender, as respondents strengthen their entrepreneurial goals and gain more successful experiences, their perceived ability to create and manage a business effectively will likely increase. This enhanced perception of control, in turn, boosts their intention to pursue entrepreneurship, reflecting a common understanding of the role that self-efficacy plays in entrepreneurial aspirations.

Conclusion

The primary objective of the research is to determine whether there are any notable differences between the respondents' mean scores on entrepreneurial desires and associated factors. Determining gender disparities in entrepreneurial aspirations is essential for a number of reasons, particularly when trying to build a more diverse and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. This study examined the differences in the mean scores for the variables of perceived behavioral control, attitude toward entrepreneurship, and subjective norms according to gender. The t-test results indicate significant gender differences in three out of the four variables: entrepreneurship intention, attitude toward entrepreneurship, and subjective norms. Female students exhibit higher entrepreneurship intentions and a more positive attitude toward entrepreneurship, while male students perceive more supportive subjective norms. However, there is no significant gender difference in perceived behavioral control, suggesting that both genders feel similarly about their ability to pursue entrepreneurship. With the exception of perceived behavioral control, it can be said that there was a significant variation in the respondents' gender category assessments of each of the stated criteria. According to this research, initiatives for undergraduate students' entrepreneurial growth and support must be developed and implemented using gender-sensitive approaches. It is crucial to take into account the potential benefits and drawbacks that may arise from societal standards, cultural expectations, and personal experiences when analyzing gender differences in undergraduate entrepreneurship. According to Ratten (2023), closing disparities may be achieved by emphasizing the development of skills for both genders and expanding notions of entrepreneurship. In order to support and develop both male and female undergraduate entrepreneurs, educators, institutions, and related organizations should ensure that all students, regardless of gender, have equal access to resources, funding, mentoring, and networking opportunities. This could help create a friendly environment that encourages and helps all aspiring company owners.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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