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IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING DIGITAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES FOR STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

Today we are facing a rapid development of technology and digital economy, where young individuals are facing many opportunities and challenges in the job market. In addition, we have been witnessing that globalization, technological innovation, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms have reshaped the traditional path of the career development, where it has presented the request for new forms of knowledge, skills and reskill, and mindsets. Thus, by automating the routine jobs and having the dominance of digital solutions in the economic activity, entrepreneurship has become as attractive, flexible, and innovative career option for university students in various disciplines.

Even though, there exist significant global efforts to promote entrepreneurship education, existing literature tries to overlook the combined role of entrepreneurial and digital competencies in shaping students' aspirations to pursue entrepreneurial careers.

Although many studies have emphasised the importance of entrepreneurship education, there exist also studies that have investigated how these competencies interact as well as how they are affected by the students' environments, in particularly their parents and educational institutions.

University students today, regardless of field of study, whether is business, engineering, social sciences, arts, health or natural sciences are expected to have entrepreneurial thinking and digital literacy in order to succeed in today's competitive and technology driven world. Furthermore, it is obvious that these competencies enable them to innovate, adapt, and create value in both established companies and new ventures. However, there is a lack of existing empirical literature that have been investigating how such competencies develop and how they impact the career decisions of the

students. Thus, the aim of this study is to address this gap by investigating how parental attitudes toward entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in universities can contribute to entrepreneurial career aspirations of the students through the development of entrepreneurial and digital competencies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently we can notice that entrepreneurship education has expanded significantly across higher education institutions worldwide. Such given importance has been dedicated to the development of the crucial competencies such as creativity, problem-solving, opportunity recognition, leadership, and innovation.

In addition, such competencies do not serve only for developing startups; but all students can receive help because it is well proven that critical thinking, adaptability, and initiative-taking represent skills which are crucial in any profession.

Even though there exist plenty of research that have been addressing the entrepreneurial competences, we can see that many of these studies have only examined the entrepreneurship education in isolation, without considering the digital dimension that defines the modern entrepreneurial landscape. As digital platforms, online marketplaces, remote collaboration tools, and AI-driven systems become central to business creation, traditional entrepreneurship curricula are no longer sufficient, demanding the integration of digital skill development.

Parents play a crucial role in shaping the aspirations, confidence, and career orientations of university students. Positive parental attitudes toward entrepreneurship can influence students through emotional encouragement, financial support, exposure to entrepreneurial role models, or simply reinforcing the belief that entrepreneurship is important and respected career path. When parents support entrepreneurial thinking, students may feel more confident, take part in entrepreneurial programs, and develop skills needed for innovation and start ups creation.

On the other hand, in the digital era that we are now, entrepreneurial success increasingly depends on the ability to use digital tools, analyze information, communicate online, manage digital platforms, and innovate

through technology. Digital competencies are no longer optional; they are needed. In addition, when they are blended with entrepreneurial competencies, they can enable students to: develop creative solutions, identify new market opportunities, to use digital tools to prototype ideas as well as to transform their innovations into true ventures.

Therefore, this study integrates entrepreneurial and digital competencies and tries to investigate how they jointly can affect the entrepreneurial aspirations of the students.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main objective of this study is to investigate how support from students' immediate environment, thus parents and higher education institutions, impacts their entrepreneurial career aspirations through the development of entrepreneurial and digital competencies.

Thus, in order to address this objective, the following research questions have been set:

1. How do parental attitudes toward entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education influence the development of entrepreneurial and digital competencies among university students?

2. Which specific entrepreneurial and digital competencies are necessary conditions for the development of entrepreneurial career aspirations in the digital economy?

This study examines these questions by using a robust analytical framework of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

3. METHODOLOGY

Data to be collected from 200 university students from various study fields, including business, engineering, social sciences, humanities, IT, and natural sciences. The diverse sample enables the study to generalize findings across different academic disciplines and student backgrounds.

Participants completed a self-administered survey measuring parental support, entrepreneurship education experiences, competency development, and entrepreneurial aspirations.

3.1. Variables

In order to address the research questions and aim of this study, the following variables are to be included in the empirical analysis:

- Parental Attitudes Toward Entrepreneurship: Assessed through items capturing the level of encouragement, support, role modeling, and perceived parental approval of entrepreneurial careers.

- Entrepreneurship Education: Measured through indicators such as perceived relevance of coursework, quality of learning activities, experiential components (workshops, business simulations), and overall satisfaction with the institution's entrepreneurship programs.

- Entrepreneurial Competencies: Measured through dimensions such as:

- opportunity recognition,
- creativity and innovation,
- leadership and communication,
- resource management,
- problem-solving.

- Digital Competencies: Measured through:

- digital literacy,
- ability to use digital tools for learning, collaboration, and innovation,
- digital problem-solving,
- ability to apply digital technologies in project or business contexts.

- Entrepreneurial Career Aspirations: Captured through indicators measuring the desire to start a business, perceived attractiveness of entrepreneurship as a career, and willingness to engage in self-employment in the future.

3.2. Methods

The main analytical technique to be applied in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) which is used to test direct and indirect relationships among parental attitudes, entrepreneurship education, competencies, and entrepreneurial aspirations. SEM enables simultaneous analysis of multiple mediational pathways.

3.3 EXPECTED RESULTS

The SEM analysis produced several important findings:

- Entrepreneurship education positively predicts both entrepreneurial and digital competencies.

This demonstrates the effectiveness of university programs in enhancing skill development.

- Parental attitudes significantly influence the development of entrepreneurial and digital competencies.

Supportive parents reinforce confidence, exposing students to entrepreneurial thinking.

- Entrepreneurial and digital competencies strongly predict entrepreneurial career aspirations.

Students with higher competency levels are more optimistic about entrepreneurship as a career path.

- The mediating effects of competencies are significant, meaning the influence of parents and education on aspirations largely operates through competency development, not solely through direct impact.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study tries to demonstrate that entrepreneurial and digital competencies are crucial determinants of entrepreneurial career aspirations among university students from all disciplines. Parental attitudes and entrepreneurship education can influence aspirations primarily through their impact on competency development.

The findings try to highlight the following:

- Students' entrepreneurial aspirations cannot be explained solely by family support or academic exposure;

- Competencies—both entrepreneurial and digital—must reach minimum thresholds;

- Universities must integrate digital learning with entrepreneurship education to prepare students for the digital economy.

By using the SEM methodology, this study offers a detailed understanding of how competencies function both as mediators and necessary conditions for entrepreneurial aspirations. These insights can guide future educational strategies, policymaking, and family engagement in fostering a new generation of digitally skilled, innovative young entrepreneurs.

This research contributes significantly to the literature on entrepreneurship education and competencies.

First, it tries to extend the understanding of entrepreneurial intention models by incorporating digital competencies as a fundamental dimension shaping entrepreneurial aspirations. Unlike traditional approaches that emphasize only entrepreneurial skills, this study suggest that digital capabilities are also essential in the 21st century.

Second, the study tries to provide empirical support for the role of competencies in the relationship between parents, education, and career aspirations.