

Entrepreneurial Intention in University Students: The Influence of Exposure, Support and Network

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Abstract

The **main objective** of the study is to notice the effect of specific educational and social context variables on the entrepreneurial intention. The research on a group of 462 Italian university students puts in evidence the effects of some contextual variables on entrepreneurial intention (in particular, family support and entrepreneurial exposure and education were found to have an important effect on intention to become an entrepreneur/self-employed).

Keywords: *entrepreneurial intention, education, network, exposure, role model, student*

The specific objectives:

- measure the entrepreneurial intention of university students
- identify how much and in what way the entrepreneurial intention of these students is correlated with specific education and entrepreneurial training
- detect the influence of the students' entrepreneurial network on their entrepreneurial intention
- note the effect of gender on the variables

The research hypotheses:

- H1: The degree of entrepreneurial intention is related to the educational field
H2: Being involved in entrepreneurial training is associated with entrepreneurial intention
H3: Exposure to entrepreneurial role models is associated with entrepreneurial intention
H4: Perceived support from family and friends is associated with entrepreneurial intention
H5: Gender has an influence on entrepreneurial intention

QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

paper-and-pencil **Questionnaire on Entrepreneurial and Self-Employment Orientation (QuORI2016)**; Cubico et al., 2017) + **Entrepreneurial Intention Scale** (Liñán and Chen, 2011)

PARTICIPANTS:

462 university Italian students
(average age = 22.83; SD 5.296; 83.84% females);
two macro areas of education
(business administration 12.6%, and social sciences 87.4%).

Their:

- level of **entrepreneurial training** experience during their university course was 'not at all' (52.6%); 'little' (30.3%), 'more or less' (11.5%) 'much' (3.1%); 'very much' (0.2%);
- **entrepreneurial exposure**: entrepreneurs in network (family: 35.5%; friends: 10.2%);
- **perceived financial support** from family was mean 2.94/5.00 (SD 1.090) and from friends was mean 2.06/5.00 (SD 1.019).

RESULTS

Entrepreneurial Intention Scale: mean 2.3; SD 0.913 (Cronbach's alpha 0.932)

Significant differences emerged (ANOVA; $p = 0.000$):

- business administration **students** (mean 2.71; SD 1.049) v. social science students (mean 1.94; SD 0.848)
- at least one entrepreneur in the **family** (mean 2.31; SD .940) v. no entrepreneur in the family (mean 1.88; SD 0.859)
- at least one **friend** who is an entrepreneur (mean 2.68; SD 1.147) v. no friends who are entrepreneurs (mean 1.959; SD 0.853)
- **male** (mean 2.58; SD 1.051) v. **female** (mean 1.93; SD 0.847).

Positive correlation (Rho Spearman) with:

- entrepreneurial training during university courses ($r = 0.215$; $p = 0.000$)
- perceived financial support from family ($r = 0.263$; $p = 0.000$)
- perceived financial support from friends ($r = 0.131$; $p = 0.006$)

Significantly associated

- perceived financial support from family ($p = 0.000$)
- gender ($p = 0.000$)
- presence of at least one entrepreneur friend ($p = 0.001$)
- presence of at least one entrepreneur family member ($p = 0.001$)
- education ($p = 0.001$)
- entrepreneurial training ($p = 0.018$)

in the Step-wise Regression Analysis

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the total variance explained by the accepted model is 25.6%
(R-square 0.256; F 24.945; Sig. 0.000;
good collinearity diagnostics).

The full model shows full support for hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H5, and partial support for H4.

Considerations

The results emerging from the study demonstrate the effects of the **contextual variables** on entrepreneurial intention, in particular family support and entrepreneurial exposure and education (field of study and entrepreneurial training) were found to have an important effect on intention to become an entrepreneur/self-employed. The model synthesizing university students' entrepreneurial intention demonstrates that having an **entrepreneurial role model** (either in the friend or family network) is important in fostering entrepreneurial intention, but having perceived support from family and friends seems not to affect entrepreneurial intention. Being a **business or management student** and having participated in **entrepreneurial training** also foster entrepreneurial intention. In line with previous literature, we found that **gender** affects entrepreneurial intention in that women have less entrepreneurial intention than do men.

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