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Exploring the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention on Turkish university students

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Abstract

Present study aims to explore the impact of contextual factors on entrepreneurial intention of university students. Theory of Planned Behavior Model (TPB) is used as a theoretical framework, since recent literature suggests that intentions can predict future entrepreneurship. Contextual factors which are relational, educational and structural support are considered as antecedents of personal attitude and perceived behavioral control, in return they are expected to have an impact on entrepreneurial intention. The model is tested on 425 university students. Our results provide useful implications for policy makers and educators.

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1. Introduction

Strategic entrepreneurship is a recent concept which refers to the integration of entrepreneurial (opportunity seeking behavior) and strategic (advantage seeking) perspectives in developing and taking actions designed to create wealth (Hitt et al., 2001). Thus, entrepreneurial mind-set is important for the strategic management field. Developing such a mind-set requires collective efforts of policy makers, educators, and strategists.

Entrepreneurship has been given a great interest since 1980s. It has been perceived as an engine of socioeconomic growth by providing job opportunities and diverse goods/services to the population (Reynolds et al., 2000) and cure for the problems such as high unemployment and stagflation (Wennekers and Thurik, 1999). Governments and NGOs have been offering support for the potential and actual

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entrepreneurs through variety of trainings and funds. Many universities started to open entrepreneurship departments or at least offer entrepreneurship courses to foster entrepreneurship spirit in the society. University students are potential candidates for future entrepreneurial activities if they have not become entrepreneurs yet during their educational lives. In the literature there are various studies on the impact of personality traits or contextual factors on entrepreneurial intention. For the policy makers, decision-makers and educators, contextual factors are easier to manipulate compared to personality. Many authors agree that entrepreneurship is a planned behavior (Shapero and Sokol, 1982; Bird, 1989; Krueger and Carsrud, 1993). Therefore, based on Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model, we will try to explore the contextual factors, which are supposed to have an impact on entrepreneurial intentions through affecting personal attitudes and perceived behavioral control.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Definition of Entrepreneurship

Schumpeter (1947) states the defining characteristic of an entrepreneur as “the doing of new things or the doing of things that are already being done in a new way”. Similarly Volkmann (2009) argues that entrepreneurship is not only about creating business plans and starting new ventures but it is also about creativity, innovation and growth, a way of thinking and acting relevant to all parts of the economy, society and the whole surrounding ecosystem. According to Kirzner (1973), entrepreneurship derives from the discovery of the existence of profitable discrepancies, gaps, mismatches of knowledge that others are not aware of. Schumpeterian entrepreneurship emphasizes fresh insights and creativity whereas Kirznerian perspective underlines the importance of stability, consistency and alert planning (Hoskisson et. al., 2011). Shane (2003, p.4) provides a general definition of entrepreneurship which is “an activity that involves the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services, ways of organizing, markets, processes, and raw materials through organizing efforts that previously had not existed”.

2.2. Theory of Planned Behavior and Entrepreneurial Intention

Intentions are still considered as the best single predictor of human behavior (Krueger, 2008). According Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model, intentions are determined by subjective norm (SN), and person’s attitudes (PA) (Ajzen, 1991). This model was first used for measuring entrepreneurial intentions by Krueger and Carsrud (1993). According to the model behavioral intention (BI) is defined as “a measure of the strength of one's intention to perform a specified behavior” (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, p. 288). For entrepreneurial studies, BI is replaced by entrepreneurial intention (EI) which refers to a conscious goal to become an entrepreneur (Wilson et al., 2007). Attitude is defined as “a disposition to respond favorably and unfavorably to an object, person, institution or event” (Ajzen, 2005, p.3) and attitude toward a behavior is defined as “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question” (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) is related with people’s confidence that they are capable of performing the behavior under investigation, and related with their beliefs that they have control over on that behavior (Ajzen, 2002). PBC is related to the behavior’s feasibility that individuals usually adopt behaviors they perceive as they will be able to control and master (Fayolle,2006) PBC is similar to self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1982) which refers an individual’s belief that he or she is capable of performing a task (Bandura, 1982). Thus, some scholars prefer to use self-efficacy scales instead of PBC scales in empirical studies. However, Ajzen (2002) considers that PBC is a broader concept than self-efficacy, since it also includes a measure of

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