Influence of Perceived Time and Entrepreneurial Skills Constraints on Entrepreneurship Interest among Final Year Undergraduate and Honours Students at the University of Fort Hare

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Abstract: Several scholarly efforts have been previously exerted in investigating student entrepreneurship interest in the developed countries, and several studies have contributed in this direction, yet little was achieved in South Africa. The main aim of this study was to empirically assess perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints as possible barriers to entrepreneurial interest among a sample of 366 (205 (56%) male and 161 (46%) female) final year undergraduate and postgraduate ‘honours’ students of a previously disadvantaged university in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, using the survey research design, and a structured validated questionnaire. Three hypotheses were stated and tested using Multiple Regression Analysis. The results revealed that perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints jointly influenced entrepreneurship interest, F (2, 363) = 25.887; R² = 0.120; p< .01. The results further revealed that perceived time constraint independently influenced entrepreneurship interest, (β = 0.226; t= 4.108; p< .01). Likewise, the results showed that entrepreneurial skills constraint independently influenced entrepreneurship interest, (β = 0.188; t= 3.415; p< .01). The findings are valuable to the policy makers and professionals in promoting the spirit of entrepreneurship among the youth, with the consequence decline rate of joblessness.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship interest, entrepreneurial skills constraint, perceived time constraint, university students, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has been recognised as a possible answer to the problem of youth unemployment, and government concerns on promotion of economic development within South Africa (Mmesi, 2015; Oosthuizen & Cassim, 2015). In other words, the major concerns of South African government and the people are the increasing rate of unemployment, and the slow economic development (Rogan & Reynolds, 2015). South Africa is recognised as one of the middle-income nations in the world that needs to advance the state of its economy, if the nation is to stay focused in the worldwide economy (Mmesi, 2015). Moreover, developing the economy South Africa is challenging, particularly, when unevenly one fourth of the workforce stays jobless because of absence of business openings.

Nevertheless, the believe of government of South Africa is that by encouraging the creation of new business ventures and organizations, whether formal or informal, small or medium enterprises, would generate the much needed employment opportunities. Hence, job creation would in turn, foster more working class among the South Africans, to become actively involved in contributing to the country’s economy (Mmesi, 2015; Oosthuizen & Cassim, 2015). The present study therefore, seeks to assess the influence of perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints on entrepreneurship interest.

The study defines entrepreneurial interest is a psychological concept that refers to the personal desire or intention of individuals to engage in profitable and legalised business activities in the future. It is motive-based, because interest is intrinsic. Though, there are scientific evidences, which demonstrated that the identified individuals’ interest, at the fundamental stage, could be nurtured by environmental and human capital factors, to grow into reality (Marire, Mafini & Dhurup, 2017). Perceived time constraint is defined in the study, as a situation of insufficient available time to carryout academic activities concurrently with engaging in entrepreneurship practices by the university students. The study focuses only the final year undergraduates, and honours postgraduate students.

Considering the academic pressure to meet the requirements for the award of the degrees in pursuit, coupled with the short period of less than 12 months available to attend lectures, conduct research project, write tests, assignments, project reports and examinations, the final year undergraduate and postgraduate honour levels students may find it easy to lose interest in any endeavors that has the potential to
jeopardise their chances of graduating at the set time. While entrepreneurial skills constraints are referred in the study as lack of business acumen, ability, capacities and the charisma to pursue, execute and sustain profitable business ideas. Possession of entrepreneurial skills be a significant factor to entrepreneurship success. In other words, probably, a perceived deficit of practical skills and abilities may be part of the significant barriers to entrepreneurship, just as perceived time constraint could pose a threat to the actualization of profitable business ideas. Perceived lack of entrepreneurial skills among university students could be a significant factor contributing to the economic decay and transformation of any society mostly in an underdeveloped province like the Eastern Cape of South Africa, where the level of unemployment is reaching its peak (Malebana, 2014).

Despite the proliferation of entrepreneurship literature, research on the phenomenon remains inconclusive. Many previously conducted studies in the area of student entrepreneurship interest had focused on the developed countries such as the United States of America (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000); Spain (Guerrero, Rialp & Urbano, 2008); Singapore (Wang and Wong, 2004); Canada (Audet, 2002); New Zealand (Gnoth, 2006); United Kingdom (Robertson, 2001) and Puerto Rico and Catalonia (Sandhu, Sidique & Riaz, 2011). Only few entrepreneurship investigations were recently conducted in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (Ngorora & Mago, 2018; Kanonuhwa & Chimucheka, 2016). The few existing related studies conducted within the province did not focus on barriers to entrepreneurship interest.

Furthermore, barriers to entrepreneurship interest differs across different potential entrepreneurs in the developing countries. Their concerns may also differ from those in the developed countries, perhaps, because the developed countries have more institutional supports, and advanced education systems, thus, reducing possible barriers (Sandhu, Sidique & Riaz, 2011).

Besides, a review of literature of student entrepreneurship interest reveals that previously, scholarly attentions were mainly concentrated on investigating either undergraduate (Sakede, Lawanson & Sobowale, 2017; Looi & Khoo-Lattimore, 2015; Alsaaty, Abrahams & Carte, 2014) or postgraduate students (Hayter, Lubynsky & Maroulis, 2017; Mubarka, Yousaf & Ataf, 2012). However, the present study focused on bridging the identified gaps in the literature, by exploring the perceived barriers to entrepreneurial interest among the final year undergraduates, and the postgraduate ‘honours’ students of a university that is situated in the Eastern Cape Province of South-Africa. In view of the above, the present study seeks to achieve the following objectives.

The aim of the study is to empirically assess perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints as barriers to entrepreneurial interest among some final year undergraduate, and postgraduate ‘honours’ students of a university in the Eastern Cape Province of South-Africa. The study’s specific objectives, on the other hand, are stated below:

1. to investigate the independent prediction of entrepreneurial interest by perceived time constraint
2. to investigate the independent prediction of entrepreneurial interest by entrepreneurial skills constraint
3. to assess the joint and independent influence perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints on entrepreneurial interest.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Conceptual Literature
Entrepreneurial Interest
Entrepreneurial interest and intention are used interchangeably in the literature of entrepreneurship. According to Şen, Yilmaz and Ari (2018), entrepreneurship is a process by which a business opportunity can be perceived and evaluated. Youth Business International (2013) defines entrepreneurial intention as the willingness to create a new venture. Entrepreneurial intention refers to the determination and eagerness of a person to undertake a new business (Amanamah, Acheampong & Owusu, 2018).

Ndofirepi, Rambe and Dzansi (2018) describe entrepreneurial intention as a person's tendency to take an interest in new pursuit creation later on. Meanwhile, Sheikh, Monzurul, Sheikh and Baktiar (2015) explained in their view that entrepreneurial intentions may be defined, as a situation to owning a business or getting to be independently employed. Entrepreneurial intentions are likewise considered as individual orientations which may prompt endeavor manifestations (Sheikh, et al., 2015).
Perceived Time Constraint

Scholars have contended for progressively precise research on “time constraint” and “time pressure” are used conversely (Ordóñez, Benson & Pittarello, 2015). Ariely and Zakay (2001) have likewise noticed that one of the unsolved methodological issues underlying time-pressure research is the absence of a reasonable meaning of time pressure and time stress. As these authors have called attention to, time imperatives are frequently inside or remotely forced cut-off times. The most widely recognized technique for prompting time weight is to present a control that abbreviates the time accessible for decision making (Ordóñez, Benson & Pittarello, 2015).

In any case, the nature of the capacity, which relates time imperative to time pressure, is not clear (Ariely & Zakay, 2001). While most time imperative examinations naturally accept that time pressure ought to relate to the time required to finish a task in respect to accessible time (Ordóñez, Benson & Pittarello, 2015), it is not clear what exact utilitarian structure this time-recognition development model takes. Time limitations are regularly internally or externally forced cut-off times. Time pressure, on the other hand, is the emotional inclination of having less time than is required (or perceived to be required) to finish an assignment and be spurred to finish the task in the accessible time (Chu & Spires, 2001).

Entrepreneurial Skills Constraint

According to Chell (2013), aptitudes are multidimensional constructs; they contain the subjective – knowledge and what is learnt; the feeling – enthusiastic articulation and what is experienced; the behaviour – activity at vital, strategic and individual levels; and the context – sectoral, word related, employment and assignment levels. Hayton (2015) defines entrepreneurship skills as distinguishing client needs, specialized or advertise openings, and seeking after opportunities. Hayton posits the aforementioned enterprise aptitudes as a feature of a more extensive arrangement of authority and the management abilities required.

According to Shabbir, Shariff and Shahzad (2016), entrepreneurial skill is the capability that requires the financial, psychic and risk bearing. This involves potential efforts and time in presenting any novel and significant thing which can be related to return as far as budgetary rewards, fulfilment and getting the subsequent rewards of money and individual fulfilment and autonomy”. Formal definitions describe innovative aptitudes as capacity to have self-conviction, strength, steadiness, energetic, sympathy, availability to take master counsel, want for prompt outcome, visionary, and capacity to perceive opportunity (Mohamad & Hussin, 2014). Putting into thought, the absence of individual characteristics referenced above is what is alluded as pioneering aptitudes constraints.

Empirical Literature

Perceived Time Constraint and Entrepreneurial Interest

Khuong and An (2016) investigated the factors influencing entrepreneurial intention with a sample 401 students aged from 18 to 24 years old at Vietnam National University (VNU), using applied quantitative approach. The researchers performed Multiple Regression and Path Analysis on the data collected. The findings of the study show that external environment had a direct positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.

Moreover, Okoro (2015) studied lecturers’ perception of constraints facing the teaching of entrepreneurship education in colleges of education in South-South Nigeria, with a sample of 206 Business Education lecturers. The findings of the study indicate that insufficient time is one of the constraints facing the teaching of entrepreneurial education in the colleges of education. Furthermore, Atare (2017), in his study of leisure utilization constraints among a sample of 278 undergraduates in Nigeria, report that lack of time was perceived by the research participants as one of the significant constraints to leisure utilisation for other non-academic activities.

Entrepreneurial Skills Constraint and Entrepreneurial Interest

In a study of barriers to entrepreneurial intention, Amanamah, Owusu and Acheampong (2018) used a survey-based methodology to the phenomena with a sample of 731 students from a public university in Ghana. The results of the study show that personal factors among others, was found a significant predictor of university students’ entrepreneurial intention. In another related study, Westhead and Solesvik (2016) explored the relationship between entrepreneurial education participation, alertness skill, risk-taking skill, and the intensity of entrepreneurial intention. The hierarchical regression analysis that was performed in the study revealed that the research participants that
expressed high alertness skill reported high intensity of intention than their counterparts with low level of alertness skill.

Moreover, the study found that women entrepreneurial education students cited a higher level of risk perception skill compared to male entrepreneurial education students. Similarly, Liñán (2008) examined skill, value perceptions and entrepreneurial intention with a sample of 249 university students. It was found in the study that perceived skills is positively and significantly related to entrepreneurial intention.

Perceived Time, Entrepreneurial Skills Constraints on Entrepreneurship Interest

Agbenyagah’s (2018) study determined the risk and effect of selected social capital elements and risk factors on rural entrepreneurship using a quantitative approach of data collection through a self-administered questionnaire, the snowball and convenience sampling techniques to sample a population of 282 respondents. The descriptive statistics, T-test and Pearson Correlation Analysis were performed to test the hypotheses. The research findings revealed that some social capital elements including risk factors, lack of skills, funding and lack of collateral are significantly interrelated, and have significant impact of entrepreneurship.

In addition, Peng, Lu and Kang’s (2012) study on entrepreneurial intentions and its influencing factors among 2,010 senior university students in China using a survey instrument to elicit research information from the participants. The results of the study revealed that attitude, self-efficacy, family background factors and social environment factors influenced entrepreneurial intention.

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were stated:

1. There would be a significant independent prediction of entrepreneurship interest by perceived time constraint.
2. There would be a significant independent prediction of entrepreneurship interest entrepreneurial skills constraint.
3. Perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints would jointly and independently influence entrepreneurship interest.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design, Sample and Procedure

The study adopted the Ex-post facto research design to examine the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The Ex-post facto research design was considered adequately relevant to the study, because it is a survey design that enables the researchers to investigate the relative influence of perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints on entrepreneurship interest, without any active manipulations of the variables. The variables had already occurred before the study, and the research’s participants were conscious of the existence of the variables. Thus, the researchers only sought the opinions of the respondents using a structured validated questionnaire. Hence, the study’s methodology was built on the principle of the positivist approach, by means of quantitative data generation, and hypotheses testing (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The dependent variable of the study, therefore, is entrepreneur interest. While perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints are considered to be the study’s independent variables.

Moreover, the Raosoft software was used in calculating the sample size. The Raosoft software was considered appropriate in the study, because it is survey software that is mostly applicable in determining how many people to engage in survey research so as to get results that mirror the target population as unequivocally as required. Again, the Raosoft software was chosen in the study, because it also makes provisions for confidence interval (margin of error) and confidence level of the calculated and recommended sample size, based on the available population size. The available population of the study was approximately 4000. In view of this, Raosoft, however, calculated and recommended 351 (confidence interval = 5%, confidence level = 95%) as the appropriate sample size of the study. Hence, the researchers were 95% confident of the population sampled being a true representation of the study’s targeted population. Eventually, a total of 366 male and female final year undergraduate and honours level postgraduate university students constituted the sample size of the study.

Furthermore, the study adopted the purposive and convenience types of non-probability sampling method to select participants for the study. At the first stage of selection process, the convenience sampling method
was used in selecting University of Fort Hare out of the three universities in the Eastern Cape Province of South-Africa, as the site of the fieldwork. University of Fort Hare was chosen, because the institution is categorised by the Department of Higher Education, as one of the historically disadvantaged institutions in the nation. Though, the University of Fort Hare’s student population comprises of international and national students, yet the institution is regarded as the less economically privileged institution. Hence, it was presumed that the institutional curricula would have been negatively affected by related situational factors, which could predispose students to barriers to entrepreneurship interest.

Another reason for applying the convenience sampling technique is the fact that, it made the process easier for the researchers to reach the research participants at University of Fort Hare than engaging those in the other universities in the country. This is because the researchers are more familiar with University of Fort Hare’s campuses. The fieldwork was scheduled for the end of the academic year, and at that time it was difficult to obtain the ethical approval of management of other universities during the said busy schedule. Besides, the fieldwork became easier when the convenience sampling technique was applied as a strategy to meet the research participants in the lecture-rooms, student centre, campus student residences and other relaxation places like the sport pavilion, and under the shields around the campus premises.

Moreover, since the investigation was planned distinctly for the final year undergraduate and postgraduate honours students, the purposive sampling technique was likewise presented and applied, to guarantee that the research participants were in the aforementioned academic/study level during the period of the fieldwork, and that they were registered students of University of Fort Hare. The sample comprised of 205 (56%) male and 161 (46%) female university students. 99 (27%) were final year undergraduate and 267 (73%) were postgraduate honours students. The research participants’ ages ranged from 18 years old – minimum (0.8%) to 55 years old - maximum (0.3%), mean (27.01) and standard deviation (5.73). The majority of the participants were 22 years old (18.8%). Among the 366 participants, 150 (40.9%) were unfamiliar with the knowledge entrepreneurship, while the 217 (59.1%) claimed to have the knowledge of entrepreneurship.

Data were collected by means of paper-pencil inventories (structured validated questionnaires), which were distributed to research participants in the lecture-rooms during the week and in the halls of residence, student centre and sport pavilion during the weekend, within the Alice Campus of University of Fort Hare.

**Ethical Consideration**

The participants’ voluntary participation was sought through the informed consent, which was endorsed by each of the participants. The research participants were notified about the significance of the investigation as the discoveries from the study may emphatically impact the government policy helping in reviewing South-African higher education curriculum to cater for innovative and practical entrepreneurship education in the universities. Also, affirmation was given to the respondents with regard to privacy of all data provided.

Besides, the respondents were told not to write their identities such as name and student identification number. With the most sense of genuineness, data concerning the investigation and its results were precisely submitted to the academic institution. Thus, it was guaranteed that no occurrence of misdirecting activities was exhibited over the span of the investigation. The researchers additionally guaranteed that the research investigation was directed in a favourable environment that would not open the participants to any physical or mental peril. The Research Ethics Committee of the University of Fort Hare likewise granted approval for ethical clearance of the study (Certificate reference number: MC-2018-0209).

**Measuring Instrument**

Three validated scales of measurement were used to assess entrepreneurship interest, perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints.

**Entrepreneurship Interest**

A 6-item scale of entrepreneurial intention that was developed and validated by Liñán and Chen (2009) was adapted to measure entrepreneurship interest. The construct consisted of three different kinds of intention measures – desire, self-prediction and behavioural intention, with a 5-point Likert-type of response format ranging from 1(Strongly disagree) to 5(Strongly agree). Liñán and Chen (2009) reported a Cronbach Alpha coefficient score of 0.94 for the scale. While the present study yielded a Cronbach Alpha
Influence of Perceived Time and Entrepreneurial Skills Constraints

**Coefficient score of 0.95 for the scale of entrepreneurship interest.**

**Perceived Time Constraint**

A 2-item scale of time constraint that was developed and validated by Weiss (2015) was applied to measure perceived time constraint. The scale was designed with a 5-point Likert-type response format ranging from 1(Strongly disagree) to 5(Strongly agree). Weiss (2015) reported a Cronbach Alpha coefficient score of 0.81 for the scale. While the present study yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient score of 0.90 for the scale of time constraint.

**Entrepreneurial Skills Constraint**

A 2-item scale of entrepreneurial skills constraint that was developed and validated by Weiss (2015) was applied to measure entrepreneurial skills constraint. The scale was designed with a 5-point Likert-type response format ranging from 1(Strongly disagree) to 5(Strongly agree). Weiss (2015) reported a Cronbach Alpha coefficient score of 0.70 for the scale. While the present study yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient score of 0.84 for the scale of entrepreneurial skills constraint.

**Statistical Analysis of Data**

The data collected from 366 screened questionnaires were analyzed based on the stated hypotheses, using version 25 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). All hypotheses stated were tested using Multiple Regression Analysis.

**RESULTS**

**The Presentation of the Results of Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 Results**

The results in the Table 1 below show that perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints are significant joint predictors of entrepreneurship interest, F (2,363) = 25.877; R²= 0.120; p <.01. This implies that the combined barrier factors of perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints have a significant influence on entrepreneurship interest, such that the two factors jointly accounted for 12% (R² = 0.120) of the variations observed in entrepreneurship interest.

Moreover, the results indicate that perceived time constraint independently influenced entrepreneurship interest, (β = 0.226; t=4.108; p < .01). This means that perceived time constraint is a significant barrier factor to entrepreneurship interest. Similarly, the results indicate that entrepreneurial skills constraint independently influenced entrepreneurship interest, (β = 0.188; t=3.415; p < .01). This means that entrepreneurial skills constraint is a significant barrier factor to entrepreneurship interest. In view of the above results, and its interpretations, the three stated hypotheses are accepted.

**DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Discussions**

The above presented and interpreted results confirmed the hypothesized joint and independent predictions of entrepreneurship interest by perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints. Specifically, the results of hypothesis 1 show that there is a significant independent prediction of entrepreneurship interest by perceived time constraint. The results implies that perceived time constraint is significantly positively related to entrepreneurship interest. One important knowledge that was derived from the results is the fact that university students are willing and desired to become entrepreneurs in the future. However, despite their interest, students considered their desires of becoming entrepreneurs as not realistic, because of the obtainable university education system does not give the required time to effectively impart entrepreneurial knowledge on students. Consequently, as students progress yearly in their university education, they become more focus on

| Variable                              | R   | R²  | B    | t    | F    | P    |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|
| Perceived Time Constraint             | 0.353 | 0.120 | 0.226 | 4.108 | 25.877 | 0.000 |
| Entrepreneurial Skills Constraint     |     |      | 0.188 | 3.415 |      | 0.001 |

a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurship Interest.
b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Time Constraint, Entrepreneurial Skills Constraint.
higher level of risk perception skill compared to male entrepreneurial education students. Similarly, Liñán (2008) examined skill, value perceptions and entrepreneurial intention with a sample of 249 university students. It was found in the study that perceived skills is positively and significantly related to entrepreneurial intention.

Lastly, the results of hypothesis 3 show that there is a significant joint influence of perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints on entrepreneurship interest. The results suggest that the collective influence of perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints is significant enough to cause discouragements from engaging in entrepreneurship, since the two identified independent variables are yoked together to account for a whole 12% impact on entrepreneurship interest, even in the presence of numerous other factors that also contribute, but were not considered in the study. The present findings is supported with the findings of Agbenyagah (2018), which revealed that some social capital elements including risk factors, lack of skills, funding and lack of collateral are significantly interrelated, and have significant impact of entrepreneurship. In addition, Peng, Lu and Kang’s (2012) study revealed that attitude, self-efficacy, family background factors and social environment factors influenced entrepreneurial intention.

Conclusions

The Study Makes the Following Conclusions

- Perceived time and entrepreneurial skills constraints are significant joint predictors of entrepreneurship interest.
- Perceived time constraint is a significant independent predictor of entrepreneurship interest.
- Entrepreneurial skills constraint is a significant independent predictor of entrepreneurship interest.

Recommendations

In view of the above discussion and conclusions, the researchers offer the following practical recommendations:

The tertiary education system of South-Africa should consider and provide a holistic education to the higher institution students, such that will realistically groom the youth, shape their personality and modify
their psyche towards thinking ‘outside the box’. This is necessary, because it will assist in producing business-minded graduates who are economically driven and self-reliance, as the era of mainly theoretical-based education is rounding off while the global education is now designed for innovation, creativity, and problem-solving.

Moreover, the present study’s findings have revealed that South-African socio-cultural environment is not business inclined. Consequently, not many South-African graduates have business mentors, advisors, role-model or supporters in their immediate socio-environment that could attract their admiration and create a strong and lasting impression of “I Can Also Become a CEO of my Private Legitimate Business”. The few available influential people of such calibre are the foreigners among whom many are already victims or potential victims of Xenophobic attacks, and therefore, afraid of forming an intimate relationship with the locals. In view of the above, the present study strongly recommends that the government should by all means create a more conducive, enabling and supportive business-friendly environment to the youth especially, the university students.

Furthermore, the tertiary institution students should rather consider themselves as agents of economic transformation, and wake-up from their slumbering and irrational thought that every graduate must be provided a job. The university students should start to think of themselves as potential job givers, job creators and employers, not job seekers.

Lastly, all stake-holders including the NGOs, government, educators, parents and students should collaborate efforts in ensuring that the economic potentials of the youth population of South-Africa are gainfully concerted to actual entrepreneurial practices.

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