The influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions: Perception of higher business education graduates

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions among the Tanzanian Higher Business Education graduates. The motivation for the study was because, despite the integration of entrepreneurship education in every degree programme, still many graduates had been unemployed. This cross-sectional study is based on primary data collected using in-depth interview guide questions physically done by the researcher. A sample of 21 Higher Business Education graduates from various Higher Business Education Institutions. Snowball and purposive sampling approaches were employed to identify respondents for this study. Content analysis method with the aid of NVivo version 11 software package was used to analyse the qualitative data. The study identifies five important antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions, namely, interpersonal traits, entrepreneurship education through competency-based training, planning and focus, successful groups which are close to a prospective entrepreneur and government support. The findings task entrepreneurship educators, role models, close groups, professional supporters and the government to concurrently foster the combinations of entrepreneurship education and other factors which were revealed to have the highest predictive power on entrepreneurial intention in the process of nurturing and psychologically developing the students’ entrepreneurial careers of self-reliance and self-employment. This research contributes to the body of knowledge in the existing antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions: given the emphasis on residual and new antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions essential for promoting the establishment, growing, managing entrepreneurial ventures by the Higher Business Education graduates.

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Introduction

The four main factors of production are land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is widely defined as a dynamic visionary, change, creative and innovative process in which an entrepreneur gathers resources to form an economic organization under conditions of risk and uncertainty (Dollinger, 2006; Guerrero, Rialp, & Urbano, 2008; Kuratko, 2009). According to Dollinger (2006), Guerrero, Rialp and Urbano (2008) and Schumpeter (1934), the outcomes of entrepreneurship is creating new products, forming an economic organization, and improving productivity and quality of products by the use of new methods of production. It also involves market creation and diversification, creating employment opportunities, profit and wealth creation, and improving individual, social welfare and creating employment opportunities. To reduce the unemployment rate in the country, governments globally have always been encouraging their citizens to explore alternative employment sources and wealth creation through engaging in entrepreneurship activities. Also, entrepreneurship education (EE) has been integrated into the higher business education (HBE) curricula to nurture and inculcate education for self-employment behaviours in students. Recent evidence suggests that if HBE students get the relevant and suitable EE, after graduating can be able to recognize new sources of opportunities and turn them into action and marketable products and consequently employ themselves (Mgarwa, 2021; Nganga, 2014; Otache, 2019).

EE is the process of creating an attitude of self-reliance and entrepreneurial culture to an individual to recognize and pursue opportunities (Garavan & O’Cinneide, 1994a); equipping an individual with the ability and competence to spot available business
opportunities and change them into marketable products (Jones & English, 2004); providing to an individual the skills, knowledge and ability to recognize sources of opportunities and the process of discovery in which an individual endeavour’s ability of creativity, innovation, risk-taking, self-confidence to turn ideas into action (EU, 2003). EE also means a process of teaching people entrepreneurship (Otache, 2019) and providing education for entrepreneurial attitudes and skills (Bae, Qian, Miao, & Fiet, 2014). EE is a function of an innovation (Kirby, 2004); fostering leadership (Kuratko, Ireland, Covi, & Hombsy, 2005), and organizational building function (Vesper & Gartner, 1997), high achievement (Vesper & Gartner, 1997), creation and operation of a business venture (Zahra, Kuratko, & Jennings, 1999), creating value for customers (McGrath, Ian, MacMillan, & Scheinberg, 1992), growth in wealth, knowledge and employment (Cole, 1998) and attitudinal and mindset change, risk-taking abilities and turning an idea into actions (Gundry & Kickul, 2002). Consequently, EE tends to change the individual’s mindset and fosters entrepreneurial culture, behaviour, attitude, skill, managerial capabilities and intentions for self-drive and self-reliance. EE essentially equips an individual with the ability to recognize the sources of opportunities, change them into marketable products and form an economic venture. The essence of EE discipline is thus to shape and inculcate entrepreneurial culture, behaviour, attitude and skills to an individual that plays an important role in entrepreneurial intentions (IE).

Throughout this paper the term IE will refer to motivational factors which influence people to pursue entrepreneurial outcomes such as a viable business idea, starting, growing, managing and owning a business for profit-making and socioemotional wealth. Previous research has established that EE changes the HBE students’ mindsets and significantly create to them the EIs behaviours and attitudes (Agolla, Monametsi, & Phera, 2019; Esfandiara, Sharifi-Tehrani, Pratt, & Altinayd, 2017; Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018). In a similar vein, to promote entrepreneurship in the country and reduce the unemployment rate among the youths, the government of Tanzania has introduced an agenda of inclusive national entrepreneurship strategy to propagate self-reliance education among its citizens including higher learning students (URT, 2017). The aim of the agenda has been broadening citizens’ mindsets and pioneering change towards starting, growing and managing the businesses. Also, over one decade ago, the government has always been integrating EE into each HBE degree programme to nurture and inculcate education for the self-reliance and self-employment behaviours and attitudes of students (Mgawi, 2021; Nganga, 2014). The government’s efforts have been preparing students who will eventually employ themselves through creating business ventures after graduating from HBE institutions.

More recent arguments, however, indicate that despite the integration of EE in the respective curricula of each degree programme by the government, 41% of youths including higher education graduates, experience long-term unemployment (NBS, 2014; Kakengi, 2019). NBS (2018a) also reports that although the overall employment rate in Tanzania has increased by 0.6% from 2014 to 2018, still there is a remarkably high unemployment rate among higher education graduates in the country (Mgawi, 2021; Nganga, 2014). The author, therefore, challenges the widely held view that EE is the best solution for reducing the youths’ unemployment rate in Tanzania. The three questions remain unanswered: What is the role of EE in boosting entrepreneurial intentions (IEs) by the higher business education (HBE) graduates? Is EE provided to HBE students enough to boost and enhance their entrepreneurial intention? What other factors apart from EE are necessary for entrepreneurial intention (IE)? The answers to the three asked questions are expected to contribute knowledge on the role and relevance of EE to EI and also reveal other factors which are necessary for EI among the business education graduates.

Theoretical Foundation

Researchers globally agree that entrepreneurship is a basic and crucial tool for creativity, innovation, job creation, wealth generation, poverty reduction and economic growth (Colette, Hill, & Leitch, 2005; Kuratko, 2009; Lingappa, Shah, & Mathew, 2020; Sánchez, 2015; Taatilla, 2010; Zahra, Kuratko, & Jennings, 1999; Taatilla, 2010). Since entrepreneurship has become an engine for economic growth and development, researchers and scholars have put a lot of effort to investigate and describe how and why start-ups originate. In that way, they have made valuable knowledge contributions to the understanding of entrepreneurial intentions and processes (Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). The recommendations have been emphasizing and encouraging the young generation to create the business and employ themselves rather than being employed. Studies have, therefore, tried to find out the ways of improving the young generation’s entrepreneurial intentions. Forming start-ups and owning the business venture requires careful thinking, planning and putting plans into action, which implicitly brands entrepreneurship as the planned intentional behaviour and therefore calls for the application of intention models (Bae, Qian, Miao, & Fiet, 2014; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) gives the theoretical foundation for entrepreneurial intentions (Agolla, Monametsi, & Phera, 2019; Ajzen, 1991; Bae, Qian, Miao, & Fiet, 2014; Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018; Esfandiara, Sharifi-Tehrani, Pratt, & Altinayd, 2017; Fenton & Barry, 2014; Garaika, 2020; Otache, 2019). Ajzen’s (1991) TPB proposes three contributing factors to entrepreneurial intentions, namely (1) attitude toward behaviour (attractiveness of the behaviour), (2) subjective norms (people’s perception of a particular behaviour), and degree of perceived behavioural control (self-efficacy) (Ajzen, 1991). The quantitative study by Agolla, Monametsi and Phera (2019) revealed that attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms and degree of perceived behavioural control explains 62.5% of variations in entrepreneurial intentions, which exceeds the percentage of the previously conducted studies. Other studies similarly emphasize that the three dimensions of TPB are one of the most important antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). Although extensive research has been carried out on IEs guided by TPB, most of them have been carried out in Europe and elsewhere with little attention to Sub-Saharan African countries (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018; Esfandiara, Sharifi-Tehrani, Pratt, & Altinayd, 2017; Guerrero, Rialp, & Urbano, 2008). The contextual and entrepreneurial intentions between the Western world and Sub-Saharan
African countries are significantly different (Aguila, Monametsi, & Phera, 2019; Otache, 2019). Moreover, the closest studies in Sub-Saharan African countries were conducted in Botswana and Nigeria but the former employed a purely quantitative research approach and also focused on the students who were still in higher education (Aguila, Monametsi, & Phera, 2019) while the latter was just a conceptual paper (Otache, 2019). Therefore, this study was expected to fill the gap by focusing on Tanzania, which is a sub-Saharan country, to explore the antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions among the Tanzanian HBE graduates. This study was not expected to establish the theoretical gap because it mostly applied the qualitative research approach to establish the comprehensive detailed and deep information behind antecedents of EIs amongst the HBE graduates through first-hand opinions, feelings, thoughts and experience.

**Research Methodology**

**Research design**

This study is typical cross-sectional because it involved data collection at one point of time of a specific study (Kothari, 2009). This study used an explanatory research design because it is appropriate for answering the research question for this study and also aims at building on a deep and sufficient understanding about a research object – influence of entrepreneurship education (EE) and other antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) among higher business education (HBE) graduates (Creswell, 2014; Shigemoto, 2017; Yin, 2014). This type of study gives answers to “what” and “why” questions, mostly when the current knowledge about the question is relatively insufficient. This study used an interview approach to collect the primary data to assist in exploring the perception of HBE graduates on the role of EE on entrepreneurial intention (IE) and other possible antecedents of EIs.

**Participants and study area**

For transparency and authenticity, permission and approval were requested from the HBE graduates before the commencement of the interview. Twenty-one HBE graduates agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. The sample included HBE graduates of different sex, ages and degree programmes who either had employed themselves or were still unemployed as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Demographic characteristics of the participants

| Participant | Sex  | Age (years) | Bachelor Degree programme | HBEIs   | Status of employment |
|-------------|------|-------------|----------------------------|---------|----------------------|
| 1           | Female | 27          | Business Administration    | SJUT    | Unemployed           |
| 2           | Male   | 33          | Information and Communication Technology | UDOM    | Self-employed       |
| 3           | Male   | 29          | Marketing Management       | CBE     | Unemployed           |
| 4           | Female | 36          | Accountancy                | CBE     | Self-employed       |
| 5           | Male   | 30          | Commerce in Tourism and Hospitality Management | UDOM    | Unemployed           |
| 6           | Male   | 35          | Procurement and management | CBE     | Unemployed           |
| 7           | Male   | 31          | Finance and Accountancy    | MU      | Self-employed       |
| 8           | Female | 34          | Science in Business Information Systems | UDOM    | Unemployed           |
| 9           | Male   | 33          | Computer Science           | RUCO    | Unemployed           |
| 10          | Male   | 34          | Business Administration    | SJUT    | Self-employed       |
| 11          | Male   | 30          | Human Resource Planning and Management | IRDP    | Unemployed           |
| 12          | Female | 28          | Procurement and Supplies Management | CBE     | Self-employed       |
| 13          | Male   | 32          | Arts in Tourism and Cultural Heritage | UDOM    | Unemployed           |
| 14          | Female | 28          | Development Finance and Investment Planning | IRDP    | Self-employed       |
| 15          | Male   | 35          | Marketing Management       | CBE     | Self-employed       |
| 16          | Male   | 37          | Commerce in Banking and Financial Services | UDSM    | Unemployed           |
| 17          | Female | 31          | Business Planning and Management | IRDP    | Unemployed           |
| 18          | Male   | 33          | Commerce in Entrepreneurship | UDSM    | Self-employed       |
| 19          | Female | 29          | Business Administration    | UDOM    | Unemployed           |
| 20          | Male   | 28          | Science in Electronic Science and Communication | UDSM    | Self-employed       |
| 21          | Female | 32          | Commerce in Entrepreneurship | UDOM    | Unemployed           |
Business education graduates living in the Dodoma region were interviewed because there are more than six higher education institutions (TEIs) in that region and some graduates from those institutions were unemployed and others are self-employed. However, students who studied in other universities outside the Dodoma region were also included in the sample as long as they graduated HBE. The sample consisted of 21 students where 13 (61.9%) were male students and 8 (38.1%) were female students. These 21 students graduated from St. John’s University of Tanzania (SJUT), University of Dodoma (UDOM), College of Business Education (CBE), Institute of Rural Development and Planning (IRDP), Mzumbe University (MU), Ruaha University College (RU CO) and University of Dar Es Salaam (UDSM). Self-employed HBE graduates were 9 (42.3%) while unemployed were 11 (52.7%). The interviewees were HBE graduates of at least five years ago since they graduated because they would be able to match and link the relationship between EE and real-life experience. Business education graduates who are self-employed are expected to give first-hand information on what made them be able to start and run the business ventures while unemployed ones gave fresh information on why they had not been able to employ themselves despite having the EE.

**Sampling technique and data collection tools**

An in-depth interview and observation tools were employed to collect qualitative data by using the snowball and purposive sampling technique from graduates at their natural settings until the data saturation point was reached with 21 respondents. The purposive sampling technique was used because it best assists the researcher understand the problem since respondents have deep knowledge about the interview subject (Creswell, 2014). Interview guide questions were employed to collect data because it often explores detailed information and deep understanding of a phenomenon under the study that has not been explored or difficult to be practically explained by existing theories (Creswell, 2014; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013; Yin, 2014). The interview approach method accesses in-depth understanding and detailed information of an object of a study and also generates fresh ideas. The researcher used interpretive and holistic account approaches in the interview and had a list of interview guide questions to be covered to ensure consistency of interview to all respondents (Creswell, 2014; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Each one of the 21 respondents was asked the following three interview guide questions: (1) What is the role of entrepreneurship education (EE) in boosting entrepreneurial intentions by the higher business education (HBE) graduates? (2) Do you think EE provided to HBE students is enough to boost and enhance their entrepreneurial intention? (3) What other factors apart from EE do you think are necessary for entrepreneurial intention (IE)? The interview lasted for 20.40 hours done in one month. The researcher used the notebook and Techno CAMON 18 smartphone to capture data from the respondents depending on each respondent’s preference.

**Data analysis**

This study used descriptive and rigorous content analysis methods. During thematic analysis, themes were carefully developed from the bottom depending on the research questions and relevant literature regarding those themes. The NVivo version 11 computer software package was used to transcribe the qualitative data into the textual form and organise them into relevant themes relating to ways of fostering business education graduate employability and suggest a new credible research agenda. Thematic analysis is usually used in qualitative research to identify, analyze and report patterns or themes from different sources of data and information and builds a coherent justification for those themes to assist in drawing the conclusion (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014).

**Findings and Discussion**

This part comprehensively presents the qualitative findings of the four questions previously asked in the introduction section: The three questions, therefore, remain unanswered: What is the role of EE in boosting entrepreneurial intentions (IEs) by the higher business education (HBE) graduates? Is EE provided to HBE students enough to boost and enhance their entrepreneurial intention? What other factors apart from EE are necessary for entrepreneurial intention (IE)? The findings are based on the respondents’ feelings, opinions and arguments regarding the antecedents of IEs by the HBE graduates.

**The role of entrepreneurship education on graduates’ entrepreneurial intentions**

There were varying graduates’ perceptions on the question: What is the role of entrepreneurship education (EE) in boosting entrepreneurial intentions (IEs) by the higher business education (HBE) graduates? Three (14.3%) out of 21 respondents did not answer this question. Five (23.8%) out of 21 respondents had the opinion that teaching entrepreneurship education (EE) to HBE students can practically change their mindsets, behaviours and attitudes towards entrepreneurial intentions if there is competency-based teaching against the traditional knowledge-based teaching as indicated in Table 2.

| No response (%) | Undecided responses (%) | Supportive responses (%) |
|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 14.3            | 61.9                    | 23.8                     |

One of the participants belonging to the category of supportive responses (23.8%) said:

*I believe that entrepreneurship education strengthens students’ competence in terms of knowledge, exposure, business skills, attitudes, change in mindset and readiness to self-employment […]* (respondent No. 10).
The aforementioned competencies are possible if there is practical knowledge transfer, many fields of work, case studies, campus business incubators, visitations and exposure to successful entrepreneurs, guest speakers, internships programmes and both academic spin-offs and ins. The implication is that competency-based teaching can foster creativity and innovation among the HBE students which are essential factors for creating, running and managing business ventures. Several rigorous empirical researches have also found EE to be the most effective strategy of embedding sound entrepreneurial culture in HBEIs by fostering the learners’ entrepreneurial mindset and significantly developing and supplying future graduate entrepreneurs (Fenton & Barry, 2014). EE is arguably agreed to be the most viable option to address unemployment among the HBE graduates and is essential in reducing crimes emanating from unemployed people (Agolla, Monametsi, & Phera, 2019). Also, several studies have validated the positive contribution of EE on the learners such as improving their knowledge, analytical skills, exposure and better entrepreneurial behaviour and attitude (Mueller, 2011; Packham, Jones, Miller, Pickernell, & Thomas, 2010).

However, thirteen (61.9%) out of 21 respondents argued that HBEIs in Tanzania, hardly practice competency-based education training (CBET) because the dominant teaching methodologies are lectures, seminars and questions with answers as indicated in Table 3.

| Table 3: Descriptive statistics use of CBET in HBEIs

| Undecided responses (%) | CBET not applied HBEIs (%) | CBET is applied HBEIs (%) |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 36.0                    | 61.9                       | 2.1%                     |

One of the participants belonging to the category of CBET is not applied in HBEIs response:

I agree with most of the literature that entrepreneurship education can change somebody’s life through self-employment and self-reliance […] However, teaching entrepreneurship solely based on lectures and questions and answers…which is a true case in Tanzania […] will never and ever help the students to create their enterprises after graduating unless one has an individual natural talent […] we see many graduates remaining unemployed for a long period since they graduated (respondent No. 6).

Employers claim that reasons which cause long-term unemployment among graduates include skills mismatch, skills irrelevance, long school-to-work transition, and lack of experience (Kakengi, 2019; Mgaawa, 2021; NBS, 2014; Nganga, 2014). Based on the findings, entrepreneurial intentions among graduates misses because there is no practical EE teaching and learning methods that engage students in the learning process and also skills taught are irrelevant and mismatch the real-world of the work. The notable most practical teaching methodologies which engage students in the learning process include case study, poster plan and presentation, team-based learning, entrepreneurship survey, small business formation and awards, entrepreneur presentations and one business idea for each class and success and failure stories telling (Balan & Metcalfe, 2012). A systematic and meta-analytic literature review gives evidence that EE has either little or no influence on HBE students’ entrepreneurial intentions (Bae, Qian, Miao, Bazan, et al., 2020 & Fiet, 2014; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). Also, Fenton and Barry (2014) argue that higher learning institutions in Ireland are largely preparing students for being employed elsewhere rather than teaching them to employ themselves through creating business ventures. Similarly, education mostly teaches students more on risk aversion - a fear of self-employment - because it focuses much on transmitting academic knowledge to students while ignoring their psychological growth and development (Taatilla, 2010). Also, Lingappa, Shah and Mathew (2020) cement that although the antecedents of TPB, namely, attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms (SN) and perceived (PBC) behavioural control have a significant influence on attitude toward entrepreneurship, academic support and curriculum have no significant impact on both PBC and SN.

Is entrepreneurship education alone enough to boost entrepreneurial intentions?

There were almost similar perceptions of HBE graduates on the questions: Is EE provided to HBE students enough to boost and enhance their entrepreneurial intention? 19 (90%) out of 21 respondents argued that EE alone cannot boost enough entrepreneurial intentions. Building an individual’s capacity through EE is indeed important to make that individual move from intentions to action. EE is essential for providing a desire and passion for starting entrepreneurial ventures and also developing one’s communication skills, problem-solving skills and a chance to broaden networking and recognizing business opportunities. However, EE alone is not satisfactory enough for entrepreneurial intentions because does not determine an individual’s entrepreneurial capability and ability to identify viable business ideas, change those ideas into marketable products or services (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahauquillo, 2018; Colette, Hill, & Leitch, 2005; Matlay, 2005). It is practically difficult to evaluate the extent to which teaching EE is important to boost and enhance graduates’ entrepreneurial intentions (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahauquillo, 2018) and no clear empirical evidence which confirms that EE alone is enough to form entrepreneurial initiatives and business ventures (Colette, Hill, & Leitch, 2005; Matlay, 2005). Thus, it is not necessary that a person who possesses an HBE degree can be an entrepreneur because entrepreneurial ability sometimes goes beyond the degree as illustrated here:
Entrepreneurial capability goes beyond the formal EE [...]. It needs ones to sacrifice the time and efforts tirelessly, always thinking strategically and analytically, planning, choosing the best ideas and options, changing ideas into actions, mobilizing and managing resources, searching for quality human resources, building a strong team, being committed all the time and building the profitable network. (respondent No. 18).

Planning, experience, vision and focus are also considered important antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions, such as:

I started to think about creating an enterprise like this when I was sixteen years old. During the school holiday, I used to assist my uncle who had a hardware shop and I was very much inspired to own a business like him. In that way, I learned what is the business, how to interact with and serve customers and also prepare the books of accounts [...]. At the College, I also studied entrepreneurship as one of the core subjects [...]. It a bit theoretically introduced a lot of business management knowledge and skills to me. However, most of the learning methods were lectures and discussions. After graduating college at 26 years old, I decided to focus on my dream, the dream of owning my business. At the age of 30, I created this enterprise, 14 years ago since I planned to own a business like this [...]. (Respondent No. 4).

Regarding planning, the followers of TPB believe that opting to start and own the entrepreneurial venture is not a spontaneous decision but a planned response that needs a clear focus and planning (Lingappa, Shah, & Mathew, 2020). Planning and focus can be optimized by experience and total involvement in business management. Concerning experience, Garaika (2020) argues that prior experience by graduates is likely to increase their intentions towards entrepreneurial intentions. About the age, Miralles, Giones and Gozun (2016) assert that engagement and involvement in entrepreneurship activities modify entrepreneurial intention to start a new venture and that the impact is contingent on the age of an individual.

The need for achievement and self-efficacy should not be ignored if one wants to enhance the entrepreneurial intentions as validated by one of the respondents:

The passion to own an entrepreneurial venture is something that comes from an individual’s feelings, emotions and attitude to achieve higher [...]. Since I planned to be an entrepreneur, I used to pay much attention when learning EE in my college, from lecturers, students, books and visitations to successful people. I sang and felt the entrepreneurship course [...]. Before graduating, I came to realize that my future success will come from my thinking, efforts and hands [...]. I got employed for two years to search for capital, and after realizing my dream, I quit the job and started to plan to own the business. So far, I have not done much but yes one day it will become true (respondent No.14).

Likewise, the literature indicates that an individual’s perceptions of his or her ability and capability to plan, formulate and execute business programmes and actions need a self-belief that achieving the dreamed outcomes is possible through individual efforts and struggle, known as entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Nowińska & Haddoud, 2019). The entrepreneurial self-efficacy can be searching for new opportunities (searching self-efficacy), estimating the market needs, capital required and planning for marketing mix (planning self-efficacy) and searching for a reputable vision, strong network and effective strategies to communicate the business idea to stakeholders (marshalling self-efficacy) (McGee, Peterson, Mueller, & Sequeira, 2009). Also, research findings indicate that recognition of an opportunity and self-efficacy both have a significant positive effect on students’ entrepreneurial intentions (Hassan, Saleem, Anwar, & Hussain, 2020).

Twelve (57.1%) out of 21 respondents argued that personal in-built qualities such as creativity and innovativeness, internal locus of control, need for achievement, need for power, risk-taking, affiliation, independence, decision-making ability, self-confidence, initiative, self-drive, persuasive ability, perseverance and communication skills ability are the most important antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions. However, creativity, internal locus of control and risk-taking propensity were given priority as supported by this illustration:

I advise the higher learning institutions to continue teaching EE because it gives a lot of exposure to a student. However, in a real sense, EE hardly teaches the learner to be creative. Although smart hardworking and good financial management are important for an entrepreneur, creativity outweighs all other entrepreneurial skills. [...]. Creative people are likely to be more successful than their counterparts. An entrepreneur needs to have an ability to think about an existing problem from different angles and in divergent ways, produce new valuable ideas and believe that what he or she tries to do is possible under the sun(respondent No. 7).

In a similar vein, the literature supports that psychological trait such as creativeness, innovativeness, locus of control, self-efficacy, risk-taking propensity, passion, need for resilience, passion and tolerance for ambiguity, predict well the entrepreneurial orientations (Baron, 2000; (Bygrave, 1989; Sánchez, 2015). Similarly, Magasi (2021) asserts that creating new ideas, imagination, creativity, independent thinking and changing own ideas into products and reality are the foremost factors for competition-winning, organization’s superior performance, and business sustainability. Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahquillo’s (2018) findings also show that a strong need for independence is one of the most important factors for entrepreneurial intention.

Different groups which are close to a potential entrepreneur such as family, friends, relatives and role models are important ingredients for entrepreneurial intentions as one of the respondents said:
Having cheering, sound and successful close individuals such as family members, friends, peers and role models who motivate you and provide honest advice and psychological, material and moral support, can leverage your passion to be a big entrepreneur (respondent No. 9).

Likewise, the literature supports that those who happen to live with, work with, be trained and mentored by the role models and read extensively stories about the successful people, are also more likely to be inspired by them and win life in the future (Nowińska & Haddoud, 2019). However, the effect of the role models on entrepreneurial intentions will depend on the type of role models (by whom), the context in which the exposure to role models occurs and at which stage of prospective entrepreneur’s life the exposure occurs (when) (Abbasianchavari & Moritz, 2021).

Professional supporters such as business advisory centres, technical training institutions, technological transfer institutions, business associates, mentors, network builders, and trade associations, are considered very important in supporting the young generation with novel and workable ideas and advisories on how to start, run and manage the business ventures as one of the respondents argued:

On different occasions, I have been attending seminars and workshops in different institutions such as Business Incubation Centres, Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC), Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO), Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA), Tanzania Engineering and Manufacturing Design Organization (TEMDO) and Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (TCCIA) […]. The training offered by these institutions is very practical oriented and touch real-life situations. The training they offer is quite different from what is being offered by higher learning institutions (respondent No. 12).

The government is also considered important in supporting the young entrepreneurs such as HBE graduates in terms of setting good policies, establishing business development services, financial support, improving infrastructures and creating a conducive environment for investment as one of the interviewees responded:

Our government should come up with the proper ways of helping us the young entrepreneurs. [...] the government policies and regulations are not friendly to most of the graduates. Just consider these examples: Once you start the business you immediately start to pay the tax, no grace period; if you want to borrow money from the bank, collateral is needed and also banks charge a very high-interest rate; only a few young women and men get the grants and soft loans from the government. In some areas, our government helps its citizens. It also makes and practically implements its investment and trade policies which favour the young generation to grow and develop entrepreneurially (respondent No. 3).

The Tanzanian Ministry of Finance and planning agrees that the banking sector has limited outreach and a high-interest rate spread (MFP, 2020). The report emphasizes that rural areas face financial access problems because most of the banks are concentrated in urban areas. Besides, banking is typically characterized by high lending rates which a normal citizen cannot afford to pay. Public policies may encourage or discourage individuals to pursue entrepreneurship. For example, western countries’ policies hardly solve marketing problems (Acs, Astebro, Audretsch, & Robinson, 2016). Western world policies, however, effectively support start-ups and existing businesses (Acs, Astebro, Audretsch, & Robinson, 2016).

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship is a basic and crucial tool for creativity, innovation, job creation, wealth generation, poverty reduction and economic growth and development. Through literature review, the researcher agrees with Ajzen (1991) that to a large extent TPB three factors, namely (1) attitude toward behaviour (attractiveness of the behaviour), (2) subjective norms (people’s perception of a particular behaviour), and degree of perceived behavioural control (self-efficacy) are good predictors of entrepreneurial intentions (Ajzen, 1991). However, contrary to this study which employed a qualitative approach, most of the empirical studies on entrepreneurial intentions used a quantitative approach and TPB model. The study also revealed that EE is worth studying because it is one of the important predictors of students’ entrepreneurial intentions as other researchers also support. It is also important for social, technological and economic development (Colette, Hill, & Leitch, 2005; Kuratko, 2009; Lingappa, Shah, & Mathew, 2020; Sánchez, 2015; Taatilla, 2010; Zahra, Kuratko, & Jennings, 1999; Taatilla, 2010). Nevertheless, 90% of the respondents argued that EE alone cannot boost enough entrepreneurial intentions because most of the lecturers capitalize much on knowledge-based education training (KBET) and largely ignore competency-based education training (CBET). The findings are in harmony with other studies that EE alone is not enough for entrepreneurial intentions because it does not determine an individual’s entrepreneurial capability and ability (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahaguillo, 2018; Colette, Hill, & Leitch, 2005; Matlay, 2005) and also it is practically difficult to evaluate to the extent to which teaching EE is important to boost and enhance graduates’ entrepreneurial intentions (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahaguillo, 2018). The aforementioned findings attracted the researcher to go far in investigating other factors apart from EE that can determine HBE graduates’ entrepreneurial intentions.

The respondents emphasized other factors which they believe are the primary antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions and they outweigh EE on that importance. These factors were the ability to plan, experience, vision, focus, role models, interpersonal traits, moral support from close groups, professional support and government support. Planning, vision and focus are considered as important factors for entrepreneurial intentions since they guide an individual’s direction and concentration. Regarding the age is that those who engage in other entrepreneurial activities are also more likely to start their ventures and the effect becomes significant if that engagement starts when the prospective entrepreneur is young as Miralles, Giones and Gozun (2016) also support. On the side
of role models, those who happen to live with, work with, be trained and mentored by the role models and read extensively stories about the successful people, are also more likely to be successful people as Nowińskia and Haddoud (2019) also agree. However, the effect of the role models on entrepreneurial intentions will depend on the type of role models, the context in which the exposure happens and at which stage of the prospective entrepreneur’s life the exposure occurs (Abbasianchavari & Moritz, 2021). Regarding interpersonal traits, 57.1% of the respondents argued personal in-built qualities such as creativity and innovativeness, initiative, analytical thinking, self-efficacy, need for achievement, risk-taking, independence, self-confidence, self-drive, perseverance and communication skills and others are the primary predictors of entrepreneurial intentions and hardly learnt in the class. The study findings also imply that personal entrepreneurial traits are the most important antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on the fundamental antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions. Likewise, Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo (2018) revealed that creativity, innovation, risk-taking propensity and a strong need for independence are one of the most important factors for entrepreneurial intention and are difficult to learn in the class.

The study revealed that people who are close to a potential entrepreneur such as family, friends, relatives and role models and if they provide honest advice and psychological, material and moral support, are important in leveraging an individual’s entrepreneurial intention as also agreed by Abbasianchavari and Moritz (2021). Professional supporters such as business incubation centres, TIC, SIDO, VETA, TCCIA and TEMDO were also revealed to enhance young generation entrepreneurial intentions. The government policies, laws and regulations were also found to significantly affect entrepreneurial intentions as respondents cemented: “the government policies and regulations are not friendly to most of the graduates in different areas such as money lending and nurturing young entrepreneurs”. This research is novel and contributes to the body of knowledge in the existing antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions: given the emphasis on residual and new antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions essential for promoting the start-ups by the HBE graduates and enabling them to employ themselves.

Implications, recommendations and areas for future study

About EE, the findings imply that institutions offering entrepreneurship programmes must capitalize on CBET, engage students in the learning process and use highly competent lecturers who can kindle students' entrepreneurial intentions. In addition, HBEIs are advised to establish business acceleration programmes and centres to help HE students with training and materials to come up with novel and viable business ideas, turn business ideas into plans and minimum viable products, establish and launch start-ups and also manage and grow the business. Besides, HBEIs, are advised to establish apprenticeship programmes (work-based learning programmes) where the learners will be having both on-the-job and off-the-job training throughout the programme and thus get the required competencies for a particular profession. The findings provide the policymakers with important and useful insights into how to nurture HBE students through educational programs and capitalize on their natural interpersonal traits and talents such as creativity, innovation and risk-taking propensity. In nutshell, findings task entrepreneurship educators, role models, close groups, professional supporters and the government to concurrently foster the combinations of EE and other factors which were revealed to have the highest predictive power on entrepreneurial intention in the process of nurturing and psychologically developing the students’ entrepreneurial careers of self-reliance and self-employment. This study employed exclusively a purely qualitative research approach to get in-depth information on the major antecedents of HBE graduates’ entrepreneurial intentions (EI’s). Future research can use the mixed methods research approach to expand data analysis and conclusion. Besides, the study covered a single country setting and cultural aspects limiting the transferability of the results to other countries and cultural settings. Thus, future research may cover more than one country to allow the transferability of the results to other countries and cultural settings.

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