
Factors Influencing Students' Self-Employment Intentions (SEIs): The Role of Education

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Abstract: Unemployment is a major social, political, and economic problem in the world. This problem negatively affects developed and developing economies. However, there is increasing scientific evidence that suggests most developing economies are severely affected by unemployment. While young people and adults are victims of unemployment, the body of literature suggests that unemployment is higher among the youth. Hence, the government and other relevant stakeholders are immensely challenged to explore alternative solutions to unemployment, particularly youth unemployment. One of the proposed solutions is self-employment. The practicality of self-employment is fundamentally dependent on the pursuit of intentions. This paper positions intention as the major driver towards self-employment. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this paper analyses the factors influencing students' self-employment intentions. In particular, the paper consolidates evidence on the extent to which level and type (general or specialised) of education influence self-employment intentions and entrepreneurial behavior among students. This study is qualitative as it relies on the corpus literature. Comprehensive literature evidence was gathered from various scholarly databases to address the purpose of this paper. The findings show that age, gender, prior entrepreneurial exposure, family, peers, personal traits, and education are factors influencing SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior among students. Specialised education is more influential on SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior than the level of education. These findings justify the need for entrepreneurship education, which can promote entrepreneurship as a solution to unemployment. Therefore, the education sector must work collaboratively with other relevant stakeholders to promote entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial intentions; self-employment intentions; students; unemployment

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Introduction

Unemployment is a devastating social, political, and economic problem that negatively affects the well-being of individuals. Unemployment is a threat to the social and economic development of nations. While both developed and developing countries are negatively affected by unemployment, the number of unemployed people is rising rapidly in many developing countries (Al-Habees

& Rumman, 2012; Cheema & Atta, 2014; Mahadea & Kaseeram, 2018). Although unemployment is evident across all age groups, it is more prevalent among youth than adults. Hence, more attention has recently been directed to youth unemployment (Awad, 2019; Choudhry et al., 2012). There are over 64 million unemployed young people worldwide, and 145 million young workers are living below the poverty line (International Labour Organization, 2021). This evidence indicates that youth unemployment is still a global problem. A corresponding policy concern exists because of the growing graduate unemployment in many countries (Adesola et al., 2017; Hossain et al., 2018; Hwang 2017; Kwofie et al., 2020). Research evidence demonstrates a steady increase in graduate unemployment. The increase in youth unemployment alongside graduate unemployment has been similarly observed in different parts of the world. In South Africa, for instance, the youth unemployment rate was 45.5% in the year 2024. Accordingly, graduate unemployment was 9.7% in the same reference year (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Recent evidence shows that youth and graduate unemployment in South Africa further increased in the year 2025. Therefore, unemployment is a major socio-economic problem, not only in South Africa, which is a developing country, but across the world.

Due to unemployment, the problems of poverty, income inequality, and lack of access to basic services such as health care and education are common in many countries (Priambodo, 2021). Unemployment in many countries is determined by the level of economic growth. In this regard, countries with poor economies are characterised by rapidly growing levels of unemployment (Hall, 2005; Njoku & Ihugba, 2011). While economic capacity is deemed as the main determinant of employment, Arslan and Zaman (2014) found foreign direct investment, GDP rate, and consumer price index-based inflation as influential to the unemployment rate. They also discovered that the population growth rate contributes to unemployment (Arslan & Zaman 2014). The corresponding results were also found in a study that investigated the determinants of unemployment in less developed countries (Riaz & Zafar, 2018). In Brazil, Russia, India, China (BRIC) countries, Betul (2015) found inflation and population growth as the key determinants of unemployment. In Tanzania, factors such as gender, geographical location, education, and skill levels significantly determine youth employment (Kipesha & Msigwa, 2013). Therefore, any solution to unemployment should consider the variety of unemployment determinants. While diverse strategies are implemented as a solution, more emphasis has been placed on promoting entrepreneurship education and training as a strategy to overcome unemployment (Awogbenle & Iwuamadi, 2010; Chigunta, 2017; Kwofie et al., 2020; Ojeifo, 2013; Okoye, 2017). It is worth noting that the pursuit, start-up, and success of self-employment are influenced by several factors. For instance, some studies (see, for example, Sofoluwe et al., 2013; Westhead & Solesvik, 2016) suggest that entrepreneurial education (EE) plays an important role in self-employment intention (SEI) and self-employment (SE) capacity development. The focus of this paper is not merely on the relationship between EE and SEIs, but it seeks to determine whether levels of education and type (general and specialised) influence SEIs and SE.

Although there is no standard definition for the concept of self-employment intentions (SEIs), for this study, Hattab's (2014) definition is used. Self-employment intentions, which can also be termed "entrepreneurial intentions (EIs)", is defined as a mindset or behavior that directs and guides an individual's action toward establishing a business in the future (Hattab, 2014). This definition suggests that it is the mindset, behavior, or attitude that informs the desire and actions to start a business. Thus, this current study aims to unpack the underlying factors behind students' mindset to pursue self-employment. Although research has been conducted on self-employment intentions (see, for example, Turker & Sonmez Selcuk, 2009; Walter et al., 2013), there is a lack of research that critically analyses various factors contributing to self-employment intentions of students, drawing from the lens of a relevant behavioural theory. Amidst increasing youth and graduate unemployment, this study addresses this gap by contributing to a broader understanding of the challenges associated with self-employment as a solution to unemployment. It is expected that this study will better inform the government, policymakers, and the higher education community of self-employment potential and the role that education can play. The results of this study can further inform policies and programs for the development of SEIs among students.

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to analyse the factors influencing students' self-employment intentions (SEIs) and entrepreneurial behavior among students. In addition to influential factors, this study seeks to demonstrate whether the level and type (general and specialised) of education influence SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. The paper explains these influential factors using the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Following this introductory section, the rest of this paper is organised as follows: The next section provides a theoretical framework that underpins this study. The third section presents the literature review on the factors influencing self-employment intentions. The fourth section focuses on the methodological approach that was

followed to gather data, which informs this paper. The fifth section presents the findings and discussion drawing from secondary data. The last section presents the conclusion and recommendations.

Theoretical framework

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been used in various social fields, including Social Work, Sociology, Psychology, and Behavioral Sciences, just to name a few, to analyse human behavior. This theory has, accordingly, been applied in previous studies of intentions (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2018; Dabale & Masese, 2014; Nguyen, 2018). The TPB explains human behavior based on three constructs. The first one is the attitude towards the act or behavior, which refers to the individual's belief in a certain behavior or act that makes a positive or negative contribution to that person's life (Ajzen, 1991). The second construct, known as the subjective norm, focuses on the influence of everything around the individual, including social networks, cultural norms, group beliefs, and so on. It is based on what others believe of an individual's behavior or act, which influences an individual's behavior or decision (Ajzen, 1991). The third construct is perceived behavioral control, which expresses the individual's belief in how easy or hard it is to display a certain behavior or act in a certain way (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, the TPB can describe human behavior towards intention to action. In this study, the TPB is used to explain factors influencing SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. It argues that the positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, favorable social norms, and a high level of perceived behavioral control influence entrepreneurial intentions and behavior. This study demonstrates that, firstly, the action to start a business is based on an individual's negative or positive attitude toward the set goals. Secondly, the perceived social pressure from society, social groups, and their beliefs and opinions influence entrepreneurial intentions and behavior. Thirdly, the perceived ease or difficulty in performing entrepreneurial behavior determines entrepreneurial intentions and actual entrepreneurial behavior (Ajzen, 1991). It is further indicated that behavior, action, or achievement, to some degree, is influenced by the availability of resources and opportunities (Ajzen, 1991). To explain the factors influencing SEIs among students, this paper adopts the lens of TPB, namely attitude, social norm, and controlled behavior. In the context of SEIs, which is defined as a mindset that directs and guides an individual's action towards establishing a business in the future (Hattab, 2014), it is one's desire that predicts the actual behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), the attitudes towards the intended behavior, social norms concerning the behavior, and perceived control over the behavior are usually found to predict behavioral intentions with a high degree of accuracy. Therefore, the factors influencing students' or graduates' intentions to pursue self-employment, such as family and peers, are explained through the lens of the TPB. In particular, the relationship between levels and type of education, as influential factors, SE capacity development, and SEIs are explained through TPB in this paper. While other theories, such as behaviorism (Ulum & Fauzi, 2023), have been applied in some social studies to explain behavior, this study applies the TPB as an appropriate theory to explain the factors influencing students' self-employment intentions.

Review of literature

In the context of this research, the term intention is very important as it indicates one's desire to pursue self-employment or seek paid employment. So, what is an intention? According to Uygun and Kasimoglu (2013), intention refers to the mindset that directs one's actions towards a particular behavior. In the context of TPB, intention is said to predict future behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Students (undergraduates and post-graduates) can either have self-employment intentions (SEIs) or paid-employment intentions (PEIs). It is very important to differentiate between the two. The SEIs refer to the mindset that directs one's actions towards establishing a business in the near future (Otache et al., 2020). Students may develop SEIs before or during tertiary education. It is the interest of this study to demonstrate the extent to which various factors, including the level and type of education, influence SEIs among students. The SEI's definition implies that the action to start a business depends on the individual's interests and plans for the future (Otache et al., 2020). Based on the TPB, engaging in entrepreneurial behavior is influenced by personal attitude towards entrepreneurship, the attitude and opinions of social groups such as parents, friends, and peers, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Contrarily, PEIs refer to the mindset that directs one's actions or behavior toward seeking paid employment in the future (Otache et al., 2020). Similarly, students may develop an intention for a paid job, and this type of inclination is influenced by various factors. While this behavioral choice is partially influenced by family, peers, and friends, the intention to pursue a paid employment career is largely dependent on an individual's interest in a particular profession and their capabilities to realise their career goals (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017; Otache et al., 2020). Both SEIs and PEIs are influenced by various factors, which are explained through the TPB in this paper.

Some studies have investigated whether the age factor influences individuals' SEIs. While it is evident that most people start businesses at a young age (25–34 years) (Choo & Wong, 2006), older adults were found to be more successful in establishing successful businesses (Halvorsen & Morrow-Howell, 2017). This is attributed to the advantages that older adults accumulated over time while working. Their experience, education, and social networks developed over time also add to their advantage in developing successful business ventures (Halvorsen & Morrow-Howell, 2017; Meyskens et al., 2011). Adults have better resources to start businesses. However, they are unlikely to capitalise on their advantage to act entrepreneurially (Kautonen, 2008). Therefore, this type of advantage for adults does not directly stimulate their SEIs. On the other hand, the study conducted by Zakaria et al. (2014) among agricultural students indicated that young students are more likely than older ones to intend to take up self-employed agricultural businesses after completing their studies. This literature evidence demonstrates that age matters in determining self-employment intentions. Research has been conducted on the influence of gender on entrepreneurial intentions (Daim et al., 2016; Maes et al., 2014; Nowiński et al., 2019; Robledo et al., 2015; van Ewijk & Belghiti-Mahut, 2019; Yordanova & Tarrazon, 2010). In the study of context, gender, and entrepreneurial intentions, van Ewijk and Belghiti-Mahut (2019) found that female university students had significantly lower SEIs compared to their male counterparts despite attending similar entrepreneurship courses. This gender difference is attributed to negative female gender stereotyping. Hence, SE becomes less desirable or achievable for female students due to gender stereotype that shapes their attitude and behavior towards entrepreneurship (Santos et al., 2016; van Ewijk & Belghiti-Mahut, 2019). This gender stereotype might also affect how females assess their capabilities to pursue successful entrepreneurial ventures. Correspondingly, Yordanova and Tarrazon (2010) discovered that women showed lower entrepreneurial intentions than men at the Bulgarian University. This result was attributed to the females' perceived behavioral control and subjective norms, and hence, lower SEIs. This evidence shows that men are more driven to establish their businesses than women, and females are ranked lower in terms of entrepreneurial dimensions than males.

It is argued that previous exposure to entrepreneurship influences entrepreneurial intentions. Individuals who previously had the opportunity to get involved in the establishment of businesses gain knowledge of the risks and problems associated with entrepreneurship. This type of knowledge or entrepreneurial experience constitutes intentions to venture into business in the future (Barringer et al., 2005). Similarly, Mcstay (2008) studied undergraduate students' SEIs and discovered that prior entrepreneurial exposure positively influences the desirability of self-employment. In turn, the students' perceived desirability contributes to the formulation of SEIs (Mcstay, 2008). In addition, individuals who have previously been involved in the firm's activities as employees have accumulated knowledge about the general operations of the business, customer problems, and market-related issues. This type of knowledge influences entrepreneurial attitude and behavior and thus stimulates SEIs (Mcstay, 2008). Surprisingly, Nguyen (2018) found no statistically significant evidence to suggest that prior entrepreneurial exposure contributes to a higher level of entrepreneurial intentions among students. Nevertheless, there is adequate evidence associating prior entrepreneurship exposure and self-employment intentions in general.

Family is very influential in the formation and development of SEIs. Research indicates that prior exposure to business stimulates SEIs among students. Students who come from families with entrepreneurial backgrounds were found to have high SEIs (Lingappa et al., 2020; Valliere, 2016). While the family's entrepreneurial background had a positive impact on students' SEIs in Pakistan (Farrukh et al., 2017), the opposite results were found among Portuguese students. In the latter case, the negative correlation was attributed to a lack of time with children by parents involved in family businesses. Hence, children did not wish to pursue entrepreneurship themselves for their careers (Marques et al., 2012). Nevertheless, family influence is evident as a strong factor in the development of SEIs. For example, students whose parents are entrepreneurs were more likely to have a desire to pursue SE than PE (Naim, 2018). One can conclude that parents serve as role models to their children who, at a later stage, wish to become entrepreneurs. Therefore, parents' involvement in business as owners or managers may invoke feelings of business interest in their children (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Pant, 2015). Parents set norms and values that they pass to their children that stimulate interest in pursuing business careers (Willie et al., 2009, cited in Abebe, 2015). When parents are entrepreneurs, children can learn skills and develop knowledge to run a business, which in turn develops their SEIs (Nguyen, 2018). However, there seems to be a lack of evidence to indicate that the parents' level of education contributes to students' SEIs. Rather, one study indicates that students whose parents have no formal educational background were more likely to intend to take up agribusiness enterprises as a source of future self-employment than those whose parents have some level of

formal educational background (Zakaria et al., 2014). Overall, family, particularly parents, play a significant role in the formation of SEIs among students.

It is also essential to critically analyse the extent to which social life or socialisation influences SEIs. The notion of social identity refers to the sense of belonging to a particular social group, such as family and social class (Islam, 2014). This sense of belonging to a social group has a potential influence on SEIs (Islam, 2014). According to Falck et al. (2012), the development of SEIs is influenced by an individual's socialisation; that is, the social group individuals associate with. While this study (Falck et al., 2012) recognises the role of parents in influencing SEIs, it argues that peer groups are very influential in the formation of an individual's SEIs. The views and attitudes of social groups, such as family and friends, do influence how individuals feel about career choice and their abilities to actualise their goals (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). While some individuals make their own career choices, others are influenced by their social groups (Nwobu et al., 2015). Similarly, student peers play a positive critical role in entrepreneurial behavior and the desire to start a business. In this regard, the formation of SEIs occurs during the ongoing interaction between student peer groups at academic and personal levels (Lingappa et al., 2020). This literature on the influence of social groups on SEIs is supported by the argument by Zahra and George (2002). They argued that entrepreneurial behavior and actions are informed by commonly and socially shared values and beliefs (Zahra & George, 2002). Therefore, socialisation directly affects entrepreneurial desirability.

There is a relationship between personal attributes and SEIs. Studies indicate that self-efficacy is an important personal attribute that constitutes SEIs and entrepreneurial action (Owoseni & Olakitan, 2014). Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in themselves and their ability to achieve their goals. Self-efficacy reflects confidence in one's ability to execute an action (Bandura, 1992). This positive belief is correlated with a positive attitude toward taking risks, such as starting a business. People with certain personality traits, such as risk tolerance, self-confidence, and self-efficacy, are generally able to identify business opportunities and implement them (Bonnett & Furnham, 1991; Sandhu et al., 2011; Taatila, 2010; Turker & Sonmez Selcuk, 2009). Their confidence in their abilities undoubtedly contributes to their SEIs. Contrarily, a study conducted among post-graduate students in Thailand by Ali et al. (2016) found no significant relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention. This negative correlation was attributed to a lack of confidence, knowledge, or awareness regarding entrepreneurship. This is a possible reason that may undermine the development of SEIs (Ali et al., 2016). Risk tolerance is an important characteristic of successful entrepreneurs, and risk-tolerant people have a high intent to take risks to start a business. For instance, Zakaria et al. (2014) compared the risk-averse, or risk-loving students and found that students (53.2%) who ranked their risk tolerance level as 'risk-loving' had an intent to start an agribusiness enterprise as a source of a future SE avenue. This evidence demonstrates that risk tolerance is an important driver for the intentions to start a business among students. Furthermore, students' positive attitudes and perceived behavioral control contribute to high SEIs (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2018). Attitude, behavior, and knowledge play a significant role in the formulation of students' entrepreneurial intentions (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2018). So far, the literature evidence indicates that personal traits such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, and risk tolerance are influenced by the social environment of students, which in turn boosts SEIs.

Research has been conducted on the contribution of education to SEIs. Noticeably, most previous studies have focused specifically on the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions (Faloye & Olatunji, 2018; Otache, 2019; Otache et al., 2020; Quan, 2012). Education plays an important role in human capital development, particularly in skills and knowledge acquisition (Westhead & Solesvik, 2016). Similarly, entrepreneurial education equips students with the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to start a business (Mamabolo et al. 2017). Some studies (see, for example, Matlay & Storey 2003; Stokes et al., 2010) do suggest the role of education in entrepreneurial behavior and choices to pursue entrepreneurship careers. These studies indicate that, to some degree, entrepreneurial education stimulates SEIs (Matlay & Storey 2003; Stokes et al., 2010). This relationship is also evident in the study conducted by Dabale and Masese (2014) among Africa University alumni. This study (Dabale & Masese, 2014) discovered that there is a positive correlation between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions. In this study, alumni who studied entrepreneurship had higher entrepreneurial intentions than those who did not study entrepreneurship. In this instance, the desire and confidence to establish a business is attributed to entrepreneurial education. While education generally contributes to entrepreneurial skills, students who negatively perceive the role of the university in entrepreneurship showed lower entrepreneurial intentions than those who perceive it positively (Franke & Luthje, 2004). This evidence suggests the role of an individual's attitude towards entrepreneurship in relation to SEIs. Undoubtedly, education can empower youth to identify business opportunities, but negative attitudes may hinder entrepreneurial action.

While successful entrepreneurs require skills and knowledge that can be acquired through education, Nguyen (2018) found no statistically significant differences between the education levels of business students in their influence on SEIs. These results are consistent with the results of other studies, which did not demonstrate the relationship between levels of university education and entrepreneurial intentions (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Pittaway & Cope, 2007). The lack of a strong correlation between education levels and SEIs can also be attributed to individuals' assessment of their capabilities and fitness for entrepreneurship. Although some research indicates that the higher the level of education, the higher the probability of acting on entrepreneurial intention (Bates, 1995), formal education generally does not promote entrepreneurship. Instead, it is specialised or entrepreneurial education and training that promotes entrepreneurial behavior (Adekiya & Ibrahim, 2016; Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). Similar evidence was found in the study conducted among university students in Brazil and Portugal. In this study, Fragoso et al. (2020) argue that it is specialised training and education gained beyond formal university studies that contributes to entrepreneurial knowledge. However, this does not automatically translate to entrepreneurial action.

There is also a debate about whether an entrepreneurship course should be made compulsory for all undergraduate studies. The premise of this proposal is associated with the need to boost entrepreneurship and the economy to overcome unemployment. Countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States, have already responded to this proposal by making entrepreneurship a compulsory subject for undergraduate studies (Ojebiyi & Amos, 2013). Compulsory entrepreneurship courses are believed to help tertiary education institutions produce entrepreneurship-ready graduates. In Nigeria, where entrepreneurship education was made compulsory, it was found that entrepreneurship education contributes to students' motivation for entrepreneurship (Muhammad et al., 2015; Oguntimehin, 2018). However, in the study that was conducted among Norwegian graduates, Støren (2014) found that graduates who studied entrepreneurship-related courses lacked entrepreneurial desire just like those who did not study entrepreneurship-related courses. Similar results were found in the study conducted with Spanish engineering students (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018). This evidence may justify the argument that the impact of entrepreneurial education on SEIs remains unclear (Pittaway & Cope, 2007).

Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the factors influencing students' self-employment intentions (SEIs), in particular, to demonstrate whether the level and type of education influence SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. This study is qualitative because it is based on literature available in secondary data sources. The study relied on the corpus literature, and a comprehensive literature search was conducted across scientific databases including Google Scholar, EBSCOHost, Science Direct, Web of Science, Jstor, Science Online, Sabinet, Scopus, Academic Search Complete, and SAGE Journals. The combination of search terms such as entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intentions, self-employment, self-employment intentions, students, and unemployment were used to generate relevant documents or publications. The search was restricted (search filter) to the last 24 years, from the year 2000 to the year 2024. The reference lists of publications identified from the primary search were used to retrieve additional relevant publications on the topic. The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) online library was used to locate relevant databases for this comprehensive literature search. Accordingly, the commonly used qualitative data analysis method, called thematic analysis, was used to analyse data where several literature themes emerged. To facilitate analysis, the NVivo 12 software for qualitative research data analysis was used to thematically analyse data (in the form of electronic articles) gathered through desktop research. Although this study generated comprehensive literature on this topic, its exclusive reliance on secondary data is a major limitation. Therefore, further primary research on a relevant topic is highly recommended.

Findings and discussion

The literature shows various factors influencing SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior among students. It has been found that age, gender, prior entrepreneurial exposure, family, peers, personal traits, and education are factors that influence SEIs. It was found that due to advantages that are accumulated over time in years of experience, education, and social networks, adults are more inclined to SE and are more likely to succeed in entrepreneurial behavior than young people (Halvorsen & Morrow-Howell, 2017; Meyskens et al., 2011). As described in the TPB, this advantage for adults may stimulate a positive attitude towards entrepreneurial intention and behavior. Contrarily, young students are likely to have negative entrepreneurial attitudes as they lack the advantage that adults have. Research evidence also indicates that female students tend to have significantly lower SEIs compared to their male counterparts (Nowiński et al., 2019; Robledo et al., 2015; van Ewijk & Belghiti-Mahut,

2019). In the literature evidence, this outcome is attributed to gender stereotypes that consider women incapable of entrepreneurship (Santos et al., 2016). Thus, this stereotyping discourages female students from pursuing entrepreneurship. This result can be explained by the three constructs of the TPB. While women may develop negative attitudes toward their abilities for self-employment, their SEIs may shrink as people around them think negatively about their abilities, given the gender stereotype. Also, women may perceive entrepreneurial action as difficult. All three TPB constructs are unfavorable to female students about entrepreneurial behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This may explain why men have higher SEIs than women. Students with prior entrepreneurial exposure are likely to have higher SEIs than those without entrepreneurial exposure (Barringer et al., 2005; Mcstay 2008). This outcome is attributed to the knowledge developed through business exposure. Thus, this contributes to a positive entrepreneurial attitude and behavior. Also, due to business exposure, students may assess the entrepreneurial risks positively and perceive an entrepreneurial career as feasible, as justified by the perceived behavioral control construct in the TPB.

Furthermore, a large body of literature suggests that students from entrepreneurial family backgrounds and whose parents are entrepreneurs are likely to show higher SEIs (Farrukh et al., 2017; Lingappa et al., 2020; Valliere, 2016). In this regard, children tend to draw inspiration from their parents, whom they consider role models. Also, parents tend to share norms and values with their children. Hence, SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior are built within the family structure. This evidence is in line with the postulation of the second construct of the TPB, which states that social networks, cultural norms, and group beliefs can influence individuals' attitudes and behavior (Ajzen, 1991). As this evidence suggests, students' SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior are shaped within their families. This study, however, failed to generate concrete evidence on the influence of parents' level of education, level of income, and employment status on students' SEIs. It has also been discovered that socialisation or social life influences SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. The views and attitudes of social groups such as peers and friends contribute to the formation of SEIs (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017; Nwobu et al., 2015). In the second construct of the TPB, it is postulated that what others think influences an individual's behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Correspondingly, in the context of this study, it appears that students' SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior are influenced by the attitudes and opinions of their peers and friends regarding entrepreneurial careers. Based on this evidence, it can be deduced that while becoming an entrepreneur is an individual's choice, this choice is socially influenced. Research also reveals that personal traits, such as risk tolerance, self-confidence, and self-efficacy, positively contribute to the SEIs of students (Bonnett & Furnham, 1991; Sandhu et al., 2011; Taatila, 2010; Turker & Sonmez Selcuk, 2009). These traits are influenced by TPB constructs. For instance, students' positive attitude towards entrepreneurship is positively influenced by the social environment, which in turn builds students' belief regarding the feasibility of entrepreneurship as a future career.

Understanding the influence of education level and type (general or specialised) on SE capacity development, SEIs, and entrepreneurial behavior is the central concern in this study. Some studies unpacked the role of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions (Faloye & Olatunji, 2018; Otache, 2019; Otache et al., 2020; Quan, 2012). It is evident that entrepreneurship education equips students with skills and knowledge, which, to some degree, contributes to their SEIs. However, no statistically significant effect of entrepreneurship education on SEIs was found for students who negatively perceived entrepreneurial education. These results are influenced by two TPB constructs, which are attitude and perceived behavioral control. Through the provision of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, including knowledge of entrepreneurship-associated risks and opportunities, entrepreneurial education creates a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship careers among students. As education contributes to the capacity development of students, this builds their self-confidence and belief in their abilities in business careers. This study also attempted to address the effect of education type (general or specialised) on SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. Evidence indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the levels of education' effect on SEIs (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Nguyen, 2018; Pittaway & Cope, 2007). Alumni who studied entrepreneurship were found to have higher SEIs (Dabale & Masese, 2014). This result can be attributed to age, years of experience, and social networks rather than the level of education itself. In this regard, it is experience and wider social networks that seem to stimulate SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. It appears that specialised education or entrepreneurial education has a major influence on SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. Evidence shows that students who are studying specialised education in entrepreneurship have higher SEIs than those in general education (Adekiya & Ibrahim, 2016; Fragoso et al., 2020; Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). Knowledge and skills stimulate a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship and an individual's belief that an entrepreneurial career is actionable as understood through

TPB (Ajzen, 1991). This is the reason why countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, the United States, and Nigeria made entrepreneurship a compulsory subject in the curriculum.

While conducting desktop research was cost-effective in achieving the aim of this study, this research approach limited the scope of the results. Therefore, future empirical research is recommended on relevant topics. Future qualitative studies could deeply explore the experiences of youth graduate entrepreneurs, and future quantitative studies could correlate education and entrepreneurial intention.

Conclusion

Unemployment is a serious social, political, and economic problem. The increase in youth unemployment, particularly graduate unemployment, challenged policymakers, governments, and other relevant stakeholders to devise solutions. One of which is the support for or promotion of entrepreneurship. The purpose of this paper was to synthesise literature evidence on the factors influencing students' SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. In particular, this paper unpacked the extent to which education type (general and specialised) and level influence SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. Ajzen's TPB constructs have been used to explain these factors. Age, gender, prior entrepreneurial exposure, family, peers, personal traits, and education are deemed factors influencing SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior among students. While specialised education is very influential to SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior in general, there are no significant differences in the levels of education on the effect on SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. This study failed to consolidate evidence on the influence of study level on SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. More research is needed to understand the SEIs of students at different levels of education. This study also failed to address the influence of parents' level of education, level of income, and employment status on students' SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. More research is needed to address these gaps.

This study found various factors influencing students' self-employment intentions. It was demonstrated that although self-employment or entrepreneurship has the potential to solve the problem of unemployment, particularly amongst the youth, the strategy is facing numerous challenges. In light of this study's results, more support for entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial vocational training programmes is recommended to promote entrepreneurship as a solution to unemployment. The study also recommends that curriculum development and entrepreneurship courses should be integrated into all academic programmes at basic and higher education levels. It is further recommended that support for entrepreneurship should take into consideration the key factors influencing SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior to ensure the effectiveness of entrepreneurship as a strategy for economic growth and job creation. Also, entrepreneurial education should consider the role of SEIs and the influence of various factors on SEIs and entrepreneurial behavior. Since the results of this study showed the role of prior business exposure in stimulating entrepreneurial intention, it is recommended that tertiary education institutions expose their students to businesses and promote networking between students and industry stakeholders.

Declarations

Interdisciplinary Scope: This paper integrates evidence from multiple disciplines such as education, economics, entrepreneurship, sociology, and psychology in analysing multi-dimensional factors influencing students' self-employment intentions. Its interdisciplinarity scope is also established through the deployment of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explain entrepreneurial behaviour among students.

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