

Relationship between Culture and Gender and Its Effect on Entrepreneurial Perception of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

University graduates present a big proportion of youth with untapped job-creating potential, both in developed and developing countries. Various perspectives have emerged in the entrepreneurship literature in attempt to provide answers as to why there exist both gender and cultural differences in entrepreneurial perception. The study suggests that examining the factors that influence peoples' intentions towards entrepreneurship would best be tackled from a social-cultural perspective wherein attitudes, social norms, beliefs values and practices are nurtured in a particular direction that subsequently impacts on perceptions of career choices. The study specific objectives were to establish the effect of culture on entrepreneurial perception and to determine existence of differences between genders with regard to entrepreneurial perception of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya. In this study, a descriptive cross-sectional survey design was applied to investigate the effect of gender and culture on entrepreneurial perception of the public university students. The targeted population comprised all the 16,151 Kenyan Government sponsored undergraduate students in public universities in final year. A total of 2192 students were selected as the study sample size. Primary data was using a self-administered questionnaire. A variety of statistical procedures were employed in the analyses of the data starting with basic descriptive statistics to more complex procedures like Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression analysis and analysis of correlations between the variables. The result of findings shows that the relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perceptions is weak, positive and significant. The results of the regression indicated that Culture significantly predicted Entrepreneurial perceptions. However, there were no statistically significant differences on the reported measures of entrepreneurial Perception between males and females. Therefore, two conclusions were drawn that; there is no relationship between gender and entrepreneurial perception, and that there was a significant relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perception.

Key words: Culture, Gender, Entrepreneurial Perception, Undergraduate Students, Public Universities

1. Introduction

University graduates present a big proportion of youth with untapped job-creating potential, both in developed and developing countries. Various perspectives have emerged in the entrepreneurship literature in attempt to provide answers as to why there exist both gender and cultural differences in entrepreneurial perception. Starting a new venture is an individual's personal decision. Most research in entrepreneurship concentrates on analyzing the firm-creation process once the decision to create has already been taken, thereby completely overlooking the internal processes that lead people to that decision. Often, the decision to start a new venture is seen to be so obvious to warrant serious attention. From this point of view, it is important to move beyond the question of which particular individuals will create new firms, and look at reasons why differences in regional start-up rates exist. Nabi, Liñán, Fayolle, Krueger, & Walmsley (2017) argue that entrepreneurship is an emotional journey of the heart. The study suggests that examining the factors that influence peoples' inclinations or intentions towards entrepreneurship would best be tackled from a social-cultural perspective wherein attitudes, social norms, beliefs values and practices are nurtured in a particular direction that subsequently impacts on perceptions of career choices (Chadwick et al., 2004).

The differences in entrepreneurial activity across Kenya's cultural groups are certainly not a new concept. Some cultural groups such as the Kikuyu and recently the Somali have been described as being more entrepreneurial than others. A wide range of factors have also been advanced as playing a significant role in influencing

intentions to become entrepreneurs with mixed results. Given the socio-economic benefits generally attributed to entrepreneurship (Carree & Thurik, 2006), there is an urgent need to create a critical mass that is willing to go into self-employment beyond mere elimination of barriers that obstruct business development and growth, with the main goal being to encourage more people to become entrepreneurs. The decision to go into business is preceded by a perceived possibility for success which makes entrepreneurship both desirable and feasible in the eyes of a potential entrepreneur. Davidsson et al. (2006) argue that entrepreneurial behaviour is fundamentally influenced by perceived ability, need, and opportunity. Therefore, in predicting entrepreneurial intentions, the key question should be how cognition influences motivation and the entrepreneur's perception as well as how it validates entrepreneurial options compared with conventional employment alternatives (Katz, 2003).

This study looks at entrepreneurial perceptions from two dimensions: perceived desirability defined as the attractiveness of starting a business as perceived by the person; and perceived feasibility defined as the level or degree of personal competence to start a business as felt by the person. In essence, perceived desirability reflects one's affection towards entrepreneurship (Shapero 1982). Such perception affects the entrepreneurial event through individual value systems and is dependent on the social system the individual is part of (family, peer groups, ethnic groups, educational and professional contexts). Arguably, every individual has the potential to become an entrepreneur. Some of them will venture into entrepreneurship while others, for various reasons will not. It is therefore important to understand the influence of individual perception of abilities as well as the perception of societal attitudes towards entrepreneurship that together impact individuals' vocational choice. Research to date points to a positive relationship between self-efficacy and the choice of entrepreneurial activity (Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy differentiates entrepreneurs from managers, as well as individuals who have created their own ventures from those who have not decided to do so (Markman, et al., 2005).

Entrepreneurial perception is defined by two factors; namely gender and culture. The biological and psychological perspectives emphasize inherent differences, which range from genetic selection to biological tendencies that favour the nurturing qualities of women and the more aggressive and instrumental temperament of men. Studies have also noted gender differences in terms of levels of entrepreneurial self - efficacy Chowdhury & Endres, (2005) and interest in starting a business (Gatewood et al., 2002).

One striking feature in the literature is the entrepreneurial activity variations between males and females. Studies of Shirokova et al. (2016); Sitaridis & Kitsios (2019) noted that Females face increased barriers to entrepreneurship compared to males mainly due to gender stereotypes and social roles. as a result, females tend to display lower levels of perceived behavioral control.

Of interest in this study is whether entrepreneurial perception vary between genders within Kenya's public universities' population. On the other hand, studies have established a relationship between certain aspects of culture and economic growth (Hofstede 1991; Lynn 1991). In his theory of entrepreneurship, Weber (1904) argued that at the society level, differences in entrepreneurial activity can be explained by cultural and religious factors, especially a society's acceptance of the protestant work ethic. The assertion in the literature that there is a greater predisposition or propensity towards entrepreneurship in some societies than in others, also points to the implicit role of culture. A variety of studies lend support to the argument that cultural values influence entrepreneurial behaviour (McGrath, MacMillan & Scheinberg, 1992). Review of a series of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reports, confirms that cultural and social norms are emphasized as the major strength of entrepreneurial orientation as well as the differentiating factor for high levels of entrepreneurial activity in different countries (Minniti & Bygrave, 2003). Taking ethnicity as a proxy for culture in this study, three of Hofstede 's (1991) cultural dimensions, namely; individual-collectivism, uncertainty-avoidance and masculinity femininity will be used in examining the effect of cultural dimensions on entrepreneurial perceptions of university students in Kenyan context.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In the current study, gender and culture are operationalized as social-cultural factors and their impact on entrepreneurial perception are investigated against the cultural diversity of public university students where ethnicity serves as a cultural unit. The social-cultural factors serve as a seedbed for socializing members of the particular groups. Such socialization ranges from cultural norms about appropriate behaviour to perceptions on entrepreneurship versus paid jobs upon university graduation (Mayer *et al.*, 2007). Individuals will base their evaluations of desirability and feasibility of an entrepreneurial career on perceptions conveyed by their social and cultural context. Culture and gender are separately yet closely linked to entrepreneurial perception. However, empirical studies in support of this link are still lacking. Zahra & George (2002) observe that the influence of cultural and gender factors on venture start-ups remains under studied. Wilson (2007) note that little is known about gender differences in entrepreneurial perception and attitudes among university students belonging to different cultures. This study attempted to address the following broad research question: How does gender and cultural factors influence entrepreneurial perception of public universities' undergraduate students in Kenya? The major focus of the current study was to determine the effect of gender and cultural factors on entrepreneurial perception among undergraduate university students in Kenya.

1.2 The Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were:

- a) To establish the effect of culture on entrepreneurial perception of Undergraduate Students in Kenya
- b) To determine existence of differences between gender with regard to entrepreneurial perception of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The research tested the following hypotheses:

H₀1. There is significant relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perception among Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya.

H₀2. There is significant relationship between gender and entrepreneurial perception among Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya.

2. Methodology

The philosophical paradigms of positivism that guides social science research provided guidance on the most appropriate paradigm for the study. The positivist paradigm is a research orientation which assumes that a useful research is based on theory, hypotheses and quantitative data. The quantitative approach involves data collection and the analysis of numerical data (Veal, 2005). Thus, the researcher is an objective analyst who makes interpretations about the collected data in a value-free Manner (Bryman, 2001). Because this research's objectives are to establish causal relationships between culture, gender and perceptions on entrepreneurship, quantitative analysis is most appropriate to establish the relationship. This research therefore, adopts a quantitative or positivism paradigm. In addition, quantitative research design and in particular a cross-sectional survey is adopted in this study. In a cross-sectional survey, data is collected at one point in time from a sample to depict a population (Babbie, 1990). The cross-sectional survey design is most suitable for achieving the objectives of this study. This design approach provides a consistent benchmark for the research.

The hypotheses of this study are developed based on theoretical supports in psychological and entrepreneurial research. Thus, a descriptive cross-sectional survey design is applied to investigate the effect of gender and culture on entrepreneurial perception of the public university students. The targeted population comprised all the 16,151 Kenyan Government sponsored fourth year undergraduate students in public universities enrolled in the 2012/ 2013 academic year of study as per the Joint Admissions Board (JAB) list. In addition, population comprise a culturally diverse group selected from all over the country. The sampling unit for the study was the fourth year students. Proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to determine the sub- samples per

university. Judgmental sampling was then applied to select the respondents for each university. Thus, Slovin's formula was used to determine the sample size as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2).$$

Where n , is the sample size

N , is the total population, and

e , is the error tolerance.

For this study, a typical figure of 2.5% oversampling was used, yielding a final sample size of 2192. The total number of students in Kenya's public universities in year 2009 was 14,863. A total of 2192 students were selected as the study sample size. Primary data were gathered from fourth year undergraduate students across all public university students in Kenya using a self-administered questionnaire which was distributed in the classrooms during lecture period. Perception variables were measured by eight item questions.

The reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient which is used to assess the internal consistence or homogeneity among the research instrument items. This study used content validity where a panel of experts gave their input as to whether the instrument met the criterion. A variety of statistical procedures were employed in the analyses of the data starting with basic descriptive statistics to more complex procedures like Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression analysis and analysis of correlations between the variables. Another statistical procedure applied to assess the existence of relationships between variables was the test of correlation. The correlation coefficient (r) lies between -1 and $+1$. If the r is close to -1 or $+1$, the two variables are close to a perfect linear relationship. Multiple regression seeks to study the effects and the magnitude of the effects of more than one independent variable on one dependent variable. A generic equation of this multiple regression model is given as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_n X_n + \epsilon$$

Where: Y is the outcome variable,

β_1 is the coefficient of the first predictor X_1 ,

β_2 is the coefficient of the second predictor X_2

β_n is the coefficient of the n th predictor X_n

ϵ_i is the difference between the predicted and observed value of Y for the i th subject.

3. Findings

Descriptive statistics were used to deduce the basic features of data into simple summaries while inferential statistics were used to make inferences about the population. Descriptive statistics generated frequencies; minimum and maximum values of the non-contiguous variables, means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, item-total correlations and coefficient alphas for the measures. The results in general indicated that the data collected were normally distributed. The field data was obtained from 1,658 respondents. The data set was then screened for code violations and missing data, using SPSS descriptive statistics and visual inspection by the researcher, yielding an effective response rate of 69.8%.

This study was a descriptive survey in design, and the response rate registered is interpreted using this simple rule of response rate that is higher than 50% of the targeted sample size for the study. The overall response rate of 70.8 % was distributed per university. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents (37%) were pursuing Bachelor of Science (BSc) or Bachelor of Education, Science, (BSc Ed). Following at a distance were ChBMB, BSc Maths, BSc Eng. (20%); Bcom and BBA (19.5%), and BA, BEd Arts (17.6%). Less than 1% of the respondents failed to indicate the courses they were pursuing while those with courses that could not be clearly categorized within defined categories were simply classified as others representing 5.7% of the respondents.

In addition, the study showed that more than 87% of the respondents are between the ages of 20-24 years. The age group of 25-28 years represented 7.8% of the respondents. Below 19 years comprised of 3.7% of the respondents while 0.7% represented the age group of 29 years and above at 0.7%. Finally, the study showed that that majority 64.8% of the respondents were male while 35.2% were female. The proportions as presented in the findings revealed the true picture of gender composition within the universities as per the sampling frame that

was used by the researcher. Thus, it provides a step towards internal validity for generalizability of the study findings.

The first objective was to determine the effect of culture on entrepreneurial perception. The general wisdom that culture is the seedbed for perceptions presupposed that pro-entrepreneurial cultures would exhibit positive or favourable perceptions for entrepreneurial behaviour. Hypothesis H_{01} was thus stated: *There is a significant relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perceptions*

The hypothesis was tested using linear regression and results presented in Table 1.

Tables 1: Model Summary for Regression Analysis for Culture and Entrepreneurial Perceptions

Variables	No. of observations	Beta	S.E	t-statistic	p-value
Culture	1535	4.274	.118	36.184	.000
Entrepreneurial Perception	1535	-.251*	.036	-6.972	.000

$r=.174$, $R^2=.030$, $F=48.613$, Durbin Watson=1.086

The correlation for the relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perceptions is weak, positive and significant ($r = 0.174$, $p<0.05$). Regression analysis was used to test if culture significantly predicted entrepreneurial perceptions. The results of the regression indicated that Culture significantly predicted Entrepreneurial perceptions ($\beta_1 = -0.251$, $t = -6.972$; $p<0.05$), which means that a unit increase in culture yielded a 0.251 change in Entrepreneurial perceptions. The R squared value showed that culture explained 3 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.030$, $F = 48.613$; $p<0.05$). This means that the larger proportion of variation in entrepreneurial perceptions (97%) is explained by other factors not captured in the model. The Hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perceptions is therefore supported.

The second objective was to determine the effect of gender on entrepreneurial perception.

To establish the effect of gender on entrepreneurial perceptions, hypothesis H_{02} was developed. This hypothesis was informed by the literature which suggests that perceptions differ between males and females and that women often perceive themselves as being deficient of entrepreneurial capabilities.

Thus, the H_{02} hypothesis was stated: *There is a significant relationship between gender and entrepreneurial perceptions*.

As tabulated in Table 1 no significant differences were revealed between male and female students with regard to entrepreneurial perceptions ($F=0.0745$; $p> 0.05$).

Table 2 ANOVA Results Showing Male and Female Differences in Perceptions

VARIABLE	Males		Females		ANOVA		comment
	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	F value	P value	
Entrepreneurial Perception	3.47	.68	3.23	.66	0.0745	.7848	No significant difference

There were no statistically significant differences on the reported measures of entrepreneurial Perception between; males ($M=3.47$, $SD=.68$) and females ($M=3.44$, $SD=.66$) Therefore hypotheses H_{02} is not supported.

4. Discussions

Cultural factors have been found to be a significant predictor of entrepreneurial perception. The study analysed entrepreneurial perceptions of desirability and feasibility as an outcome of culture. The objective was to determine the effect of culture on entrepreneurial perceptions. The study found support for a positive relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perceptions ($\beta=-0.251$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, the study finds justification for the link between culture and entrepreneurial perceptions as alluded to in the literature. These findings are consistent with the findings from previous studies that contend that entrepreneurial perceptions are dependent on the social context and in particular on what can be regarded as personally desirable and feasible.

To the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has been undertaken on the effect of culture (as measured by Hofstede's values) on entrepreneurial perceptions using TPB. However, the findings do not contradict previous studies on the effect of culture on entrepreneurship behaviour. For example, there are studies that included social norms as a major ingredient of culture, implying that differences in social norms can directly be translated to differences in cultures. Therefore, the study did not find support for the contention by Krueger et al., (2000) that social norms are not significant in determining entrepreneurial perceptions. Support is however found of McGrath & MacMillan, (1992) and a later study by Krueger & Kickul, (2006) who concluded that social norms are more supportive of entrepreneurial activity in some countries than in others. It can thus be said that Kenya is one such country where culture positively influences entrepreneurial perceptions.

As indicated in the study, gender was found not to be a significant predictor of entrepreneurial perception. The Objective was to determine the effect of gender on entrepreneurial perceptions.

These findings were in contrast to expectations and past research that have noted gender differences (Chowdhury & Endres, 2005) in terms of levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and in expectancies of self-efficacy for traditional and non-traditional occupations, thereby confirming the role of gender in shaping perceptions and in taking up certain tasks. However, the studies by Shirokova et al. (2016) and Nowiński et al. (2019) confirmed that there was no significant differences in the impact of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on the entrepreneurial intentions of female and male students. A possible explanation to these results is that the study population comprised of fourth year university students. Their stay at the university may have given rise to stronger influences from exposure to both university education as well as entrepreneurship education. It is also possible that this group of students have already overcome the strong cultural and gender biases likely to be at play against their counterparts in the rural areas who did not pursue education beyond secondary school level.

5. Conclusion

This study examined public university undergraduate students in Kenya who were in their fourth year of study. Specifically, the influence of cultural values on entrepreneurial intentions among the public undergraduate university students was investigated using the constructs developed by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005). Cultural factors have been found to be a significant predictor of entrepreneurial perception. The study found support for a positive relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perceptions ($\beta = -0.251$, $p < 0.05$). As opposed to the mainstream literature, the study could not detect any influence of gender on entrepreneurial perception. Therefore, there was no evidence that men exhibit a stronger preference for self-employment than women, nor were any differences exhibited between males and females with regard to entrepreneurial perceptions. Meaning, that both males and females were equal to tasks requiring expression of the stated traits of risk-taking, need for achievement and autonomy.

Based on the findings, it can be inferred that culture can entrepreneurially discriminate a particular group of people from others, by influencing perceptions of what is considered appropriate, or not appropriate, for individuals within that group. The critical question therefore remains: how can a society's values, norms and beliefs be changed in order to induce entrepreneurial intentions?

Therefore, two conclusions were drawn that, there is no relationship between; a) Gender and entrepreneurial perception, and b) There was a significant relationship between culture and entrepreneurial perception.

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