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## Exploring the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention on Turkish university students

E. Serra Yurtkoru<sup>a</sup>, Zeynep Kabadayı Kuşcu<sup>b,\*</sup>, Ahmet Doğanay<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a,c</sup>Marmara University, İstanbul, 34180, Turkey

<sup>b</sup>İstanbul Bilgi University, İstanbul, 34060, Turkey

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### Abstract

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

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Keywords: Entrepreneurial intention; theory of planned behavior; subjective norm; perceived attitude; perceived behavioral control; educational support; structural support; relational support

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### 1. Introduction

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

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

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: 90-212-311-7735; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .  
E-mail address: [zeynep.kuscu@bilgi.edu.tr](mailto:zeynep.kuscu@bilgi.edu.tr)

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

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses**

### *2.1. Definition of Entrepreneurship*

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

### *2.2. Theory of Planned Behavior and Entrepreneurial Intention*

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

controllability. Subjective norm is defined as "the person's perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behavior in question"(Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). According to the results of meta-analysis study of Armitage and Conner (2001), subjective norm was found as weak predictor of intentions that was why several authors (e.g. Sparks et al., 1995) had removed subjective norm from their analyses. In our model subjective norm was not included as a direct predictor of entrepreneurial intention. Thus, following hypotheses are developed:

*H<sub>1</sub>*: Personal attitudes have impact on entrepreneurial intention.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: Perceived behavioral control have an impact on entrepreneurial intention.

### 2.3. Contextual Factors

In the literature, there are several studies, which explore the impact of contextual factors on entrepreneurial intention. Türker and Selçuk (2009) argue that contextual factors should not be ignored in entrepreneurial studies even though the majority of the research focuses on genetics or personality traits. According to the results of Lüthje and Franke (2003)'s study on MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) engineering students, personal characteristics and contextual factors were found to have similar effects on entrepreneurial intention. Research results of Lüthje and Franke (2003) provide evidence that the perceived contextual barriers and support factors play a significant role for the entrepreneurial behavior of MIT students. To explore the effect of contextual factors, Türker and Selçuk (2009) developed entrepreneurial support model (ESM) which suggest that entrepreneurial intention is a function of structural support, educational support and relational support.

*Structural Support*: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report (2012) underlines the importance of a supportive cultural and institutional environment for the development of entrepreneurial activity. According to Davis (2002) many governments seem to promote entrepreneurship while failing to offer a supportive environment to entrepreneurs. Policy recommendations are improving the flexibility of labor, communications and market openness while eliminating bureaucracy and red-tape in order to encourage entrepreneurship rate in a society (Kelley et al., 2012). It is argued that cultures that reward hard work and creativity, rather than political connections; and governments that tend to supersede economic concerns rather than political interests also encourage entrepreneurial development. According to results of Türker and Selçuk (2009)'s study, the private, public and non-governmental organizations may encourage people to engage in entrepreneurial activities since structural support was found to have positive impact on entrepreneurial intention.

*Educational Support*: Lüthje and Franke (2003) suggest that public policy and universities would intensify their activities to implement educational, research and resource programs on entrepreneurship. Türker and Selçuk (2009) argue that university education is an efficient way for obtaining necessary knowledge about entrepreneurship. According to results of their research, university education has a positive impact on entrepreneurial intention. Franke and Lüthje (2004) compared MIT with two German-speaking universities (the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration and the University of Munich). They have found very distinct patterns of entrepreneurial spirit in these universities. Students of the German speaking universities were low in their entrepreneurial intentions compared to MIT. Similarly, based on the findings of their cross-cultural study, Mariano et al. (2012) argues that education programs should pay particular attention to positively influencing students' attitudes towards entrepreneurial activity. According to Henderson and Robertson (2000), even though education is often criticized due to its theoretical emphasis divorced from reality, educationalist can still influence the

choice of entrepreneurship as a career. According to the result of empirical study of Autio et al. (1997) on technology students from four different countries, entrepreneurial intentions are shaped by the positive image of entrepreneurship and supportive environment provided by their university.

*Relational Support:* Relational support, which indicates the sentimental and monetary supports of family and friends, may encourage people to engage in entrepreneurial activities especially in collectivistic cultures. According to Türker and Selçuk (2009), a career selection decision of a young person might be influenced by family members and friends. However, they found no significant impact of relational support on entrepreneurial intention. By definition, relational support is similar to subjective norm, as it reflects the approval of family and friends. According to the results of some empirical studies, subjective norm is found to be insignificant in explaining entrepreneurial intention in TPD model, thus it may have an indirect effect on EI through affecting PA and PBC (Linan and Chen, 2009). Thus, following hypotheses are developed:

$H_3$ : Support has an impact on personal attitudes

$H_{3a}$ : Educational support has an impact on personal attitudes.

$H_{3b}$ : Structural support has an impact on personal attitudes.

$H_{3c}$ : Relational Support/subjective norm has an impact on personal attitudes.

$H_4$ : Support has an impact on perceived behavioral control.

$H_{4a}$ : Educational support has an impact on perceived behavioral control.

$H_{4b}$ : Structural support has an impact on perceived behavioral control.

$H_{4c}$ : Relational Support/subjective norm has an impact on perceived behavioral control.

The aim this study is to explore the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention through contextual factors by using TPB model. The overall research model can be seen in Fig. 1.

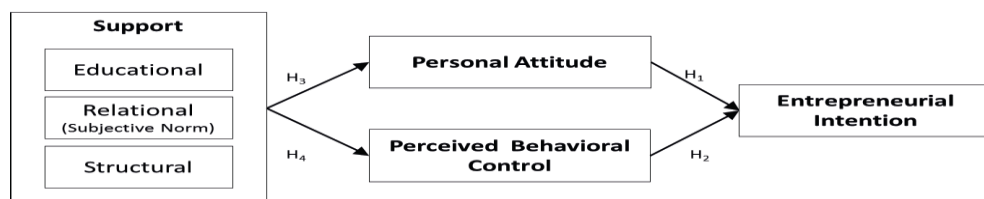


Fig. 1. Research Model

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Measures and research instrument

A multi item questionnaire measured on a five point interval scale was used in this study. The Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ) scale developed by Linan and Chen (2009) were used for measuring PA, PBC and EI. Contextual factors were measured by Entrepreneurship Support Model (ESM) scale developed by Türker and Selçuk (2009). Data obtained from questionnaires will be analyzed through the SPSS statistical packet program and the proposed relations were tested through regression analyses.

### 3.2. Sampling and data collection

The survey of this study was conducted on university students of both private and state universities in Istanbul. The survey was applied to the faculties of Management, Economics and Administrative Sciences of the corresponding universities. In total a sample of 425 respondents, students, filled the questionnaire. 197 were female (46.4 %) and 228 were male (53.6 %). 137 of the students are from state university (32.6 %) and 288 students (66.4 %) are from private university. 83.2 % of the students stated that entrepreneurship course was available in their department. 27.6 % of the students had an entrepreneurship course during their university education. However majority of them think that it is necessary to have such a course (90.4 %). 51 % of the respondents declared that at least there is one entrepreneur in their family. Mean of the ages of the respondents were 22.4.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Exploratory Factor Analyses

Prior to regression analyses Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) were conducted to test the underlying patterns of the measurement scales. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett test of sphericity tests indicated the appropriateness of data for conducting factor analyses. Principal component factoring and varimax rotation are employed to the data set. Then Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability analyses were applied to measure internal consistency of the constructs. As can be seen from Table 1. Entrepreneurial Support Model emerged into three factors as expected. The factors were named as educational support, relational support, and structural support in line with literature. Reliabilities for factors were .91, .78, and .75 respectively indicating internal consistency. EFA results of personal attitude, perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intention showed that all three scales were unidimensional as expected (See Table 1 – 4). Reliabilities were all high above the acceptable threshold .70 (.90, .89, and .91 respectively) therefore summated scores of the scales were calculated and new variables are formed used for further analyses.

Table 1. Factor analysis results of entrepreneurial support model

Factors	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Reliability
<b>Educational Support</b>		43.63	.91
The education in university encourages me to develop creative ideas for being an entrepreneur.	.90		
My university develops my entrepreneurial skills and abilities.	.89		
My university provides the necessary knowledge about entrepreneurship.	.87		
<b>Relational Support</b>		21.16	.78
If I decided to be an entrepreneur, my close network (from work, school, and neighborhood) supports me.	.88		
If I decided to be an entrepreneur, my friends support me.	.82		
If I decided to be an entrepreneur, my family members support me.	.78		
<b>Structural Support</b>		13.17	.75
Turkish economy provides many opportunities for entrepreneurs.	.89		
In Turkey, entrepreneurs are encouraged by a structural system including private, public, and non-governmental organizations.	.83		

(KMO=.77;  $\chi^2_{\text{Bartlett}}(28)1572.19$ ;  $p<.00$ ; Total variance explained =77.97)

Table 2. Factor analysis results of personal attitude

	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Reliability
<b>Personal Attitude</b>		70.41	.90
Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfactions for me.	.88		
A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me.	.87		
Among various options, I would rather be an entrepreneur.	.85		
Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me.	.81		
If I had the opportunity and resources, I'd like to start a firm.	.78		
(KMO=.87; $\chi^2_{\text{Bartlett}}(10)=1215.53$ ; $p<0.00$ ; Total variance explained =70.41)			

Table 3. Factor analysis results of perceived behavioral control

	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Reliability
<b>Perceived Behavioral Control</b>		65.45	.89
I am prepared to start a viable firm.	.85		
I can control the creation process of a new firm	.83		
I know the necessary practical details to start a firm.	.81		
I know how to develop an entrepreneurial project.	.80		
If I tried to start a firm, I would have a high probability of succeeding.	.79		
To start a firm and keep it working would be easy for me	.76		
(KMO=.864; $\chi^2_{\text{Bartlett}}(15)=1436.30$ ; $p<0.00$ ; Total variance explained=65.45)			

Table 4. Factor analysis results of entrepreneurial intention

	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Reliability
<b>Entrepreneurial Intention</b>		83.84	.94
I am determined to create a firm in the future.	.94		
I have very seriously thought of starting a firm.	.92		
I am determined to create a firm in the future.	.92		
I will make every effort to start and run my own firm.	.88		
(KMO=.85; $\chi^2_{\text{Bartlett}}(6)=1495.94$ ; $p<0.00$ ; Total variance explained=83.84)			

#### 4.2. Regression analyses

After the prior tests and calculation of summated scored to test the research model a series of regression analyses were performed.

First, effect of personal attitudes and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intention was tested. Personal attitudes and perceived behavioral control were found to have a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention at  $p<0.00$  level. As can be seen from Table. 5 personal attitude and perceived behavioral control explains the 64 % change in entrepreneurial intention, both variables has positive effect. Personal attitude has strong effect on entrepreneurial intention (standardized  $\beta =.71$ ) whereas perceived behavioral control significant yet weak effect (standardized  $\beta =.14$ ). However we can conclude that  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  were supported.

Table 5. Multiple regression analysis results among personal attitudes, perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intention

Independent Variables	B	Std. Beta	t	p	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
Personal Attitude	0.86	0.71	19.69	0.00	0.80	0.64	369.42	0.00
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.18	0.14	3.86	0.00				

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention

In order to test  $H_3$ , regression analysis was conducted for analyzing the relationship between entrepreneurial support factors and personal attitude. It was found that only relational support had a significant effect on personal attitude toward entrepreneurial intention. The results can be seen in Table 6. The effect of relational support on personal attitude was weak positive effect (standardized  $\beta = .27$ ). Thus we can conclude  $H_{3a}$  and  $H_{3b}$  were not supported but  $H_{3c}$  was supported. Therefore  $H_3$  was partially supported.

Table 6. Multiple regression analysis results between entrepreneurial support factors personal and personal attitude

Independent Variables	B	Std. Beta	t	p	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
Relational Support	.27	.27	5.56	.00	.32	.10	16.08	.00
Educational Support	.08	.09	1.61	.11				
Structural Support	.04	.05	.86	.39				

Dependent Variable: Personal Attitude

Regression analysis was conducted between entrepreneurial support factors and perceived behavioral control to test  $H_4$ . It was found that educational and relational support had a significant effect on perceived behavioral control whereas structural support had not. The results can be seen in Table 7. Both variables, educational support and relational support had weak positive effects on perceived behavioral control (standardized  $\beta = .28$ , standardized  $\beta = .28$ , respectively). Thus  $H_{4a}$  and  $H_{4c}$  were supported but  $H_{4b}$  was not supported. Therefore  $H_4$  was partially supported.

Table 7. Multiple regression analysis results between entrepreneurial support factors and perceived behavioral control

Independent Variables	B	Std. Beta	t	p	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
Educational Support	.24	.28	5.81	.00	.48	.23	16.08	.00
Relational Support	.25	.28	6.15	.00				
Structural Support	.07	.07	1.51	.13				

Dependent Variable: Perceived Behavioral Control

If we summarize our findings we can say  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  were supported and  $H_3$  and  $H_4$  were partially supported. Our research model also indicates mediator effect of personal attitude and personal behavioral control on the relation between support and entrepreneurial intention. As the last analysis these mediation effects were tested using Baron and Kenny’s (1986) approach.

As the first step effect of support on entrepreneurial intention was tested by regression analysis. The result is given in Table 8. Of all three dimensions of entrepreneurial support factor only relational support explained the entrepreneurial intention significantly (standardized  $\beta = .29$ ). Therefore in the following step only relational support was analyzed.

Table 8. Step one regression analysis between entrepreneurial support factors and entrepreneurial intention

Independent Variables	B	Std. Beta	t	p	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
Educational Support	.10	.09	1.64	.10	.31	.10	15.02	.00
Relational Support	.35	.29	5.92	.00				
Structural Support	-.05	-.04	-.78	.43				

Dependent Variable: entrepreneurial intention

Independent Variables	B	Std. Beta	t	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
Relational Support	.36	.30	6.50	.00	.30	.09	42.27	.00

Dependent Variable: entrepreneurial intention

Second step according to Baron and Kenny is to regress independent variable on mediating variable. This step was already done and it was found relational support had effect on both personal attitude and perceived behavioral control (See Table 6 and Table 7). The last step is to regress independent variable and mediator together with dependent variable. The result can be seen in Table 9.

Since the relationship between relational support and entrepreneurial intention dropped to zero with the inclusion of personal attitude and perceived behavioral control there was full mediation. Entrepreneurial intention was explained by personal attitude and perceived behavioral control where personal attitude had higher contribution. Relational support has positive effect on personal attitude; and relational support and educational support together has positive effect on perceived behavioral control. However when we analyzed the effect of entrepreneurial support factors on entrepreneurial intention, only relational support had a significant effect which was fully mediated by personal attitude and perceived behavioral control.

Table 9. Step three regression analysis between relational support, mediating variables and entrepreneurial intention

Independent Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Relational Support	.05	.04	1.33	.18	.80	.64	247.32	.00
Personal Attitude	.85	.70	19.42	.00				
Perceived Behavioral Control	.17	.13	3.41	.00				

Dependent Variable: entrepreneurial intention

## 5. Discussion

This study used modified Theory of Planned Behavior model in explaining entrepreneurial intention by eliminating subjective norm as a direct effect on entrepreneurial intention. According to our results, personal attitude and perceived behavioral control predicted the entrepreneurial intention; however attitude had a much stronger effect. Lüthje and Franke (2003) found the similar result in their research on entrepreneurial intention of MIT students, attitudes constituted the strongest explanation in their model among other factors.

Our study focused on the contextual factors that were assumed to have an impact on entrepreneurial intention through personal attitude and perceived behavioral control. Thus, according to present model, personal attitude and perceived behavioral control mediates the relationship between contextual support factors and entrepreneurial intention. Among other support factors (structural and educational), relational support was found significant in explaining both personal attitude and perceived behavioral control. This result contradicts to the previous study of Türker and Selcuk (2009), in which relational support was found as insignificant. Since their findings were surprising as a fact that support of the family and friends was expected to be significant in a collectivist country as Turkey, authors had recommended other researchers to test this relationship again. Therefore our result is in parallel with the theoretical framework and expectations.

Educational support was only found significant in relation with perceived behavioral control. Educational support is considered important in the recent literature, since empirical data shows its importance on entrepreneurial development. In our study, direct relationship between educational support and entrepreneurial intention was not found. Educational support indicates general supportive entrepreneurial environment in the universities. Therefore, it can be argued that students in our sample did not perceived universities as supportive as their families or friends. However, current university environment contribute them to perceive themselves to have control on their entrepreneurial intention. Entrepreneurship courses offered by the universities may be helpful in that sense. In contrast to our



findings, Türker and Selçuk (2009) found a direct relationship between educational support and entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, there is need for further studies to analyze the relationship between education and entrepreneurship.

Structural support was not found significant in any relationship suggested in our model. In recent years, government has developed incentive and educational programs for encouraging entrepreneurship in the society; however these programs mainly end-up with small businesses without innovational aspect. Again, Türker and Selçuk (2009) found a positive relationship between structural support and entrepreneurial intention in contrast to our study. There is need for further studies on that area as well.

Our study has some implications to policy makers and educators. Even though universities provide entrepreneurship courses, they may not be sufficient to foster the entrepreneurship spirit among university students. Therefore, educators may focus to create a more supportive environment for entrepreneurship. Educational content in the universities may be revised to foster creativity besides imposing theoretical and operational information. For the policy makers, we may suggest to develop special entrepreneurial programs targeting creative and dynamic university students or graduates which would encourage them to carry out their innovative business ideas. Also, since fund raising is one of the main obstacles against becoming entrepreneurs for the university students, Romero et al. (2011) suggest that universities should inform students about financial possibilities or developing intermediating functions.

Present study has some limitations as well. First one is related with our sample. Our sample consisted of undergraduate university students. Even intentions can predict future behavior, perceptions of the individuals may change after they have professional experience or entrepreneurial attempts. Therefore, future studies can be conducted on real entrepreneurs or professionals in the work life as well. Also, similar studies should be applied on more universities throughout the country. Second, present study has focused only on contextual factors. Other factors such as personality can be explored to find out the major determinants of personal attitude toward entrepreneurship. What is more, cross-cultural studies can be conducted to distinguish the importance of different contextual and personality factors for different countries. Last, there is a need for qualitative studies as well for exploring the impact of contextual factors on entrepreneurial intention.

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