Liquid modernity and entrepreneurship orientation in university students

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Abstract

This study has explored the entrepreneurship orientation of university students. The future planning of the sample appears to be oriented to self-employment rather than entrepreneurship or employed work. Students have indicated the changing society, lack of business-knowledge, social support, and family time as equally important as the difficulties of entrepreneurship as a career. Students with a family entrepreneurship background were more oriented to create their own business and they give more importance to the fact that entrepreneurship career has a negative impact on family time. The strongest motivations for respondents in starting their own business were economic independence and self-government.

Keywords: Career orientation, Entrepreneurship determinants, Motivation, Gender;

1. Introduction

Bauman (2007) describes the metaphor of liquid modernity in terms of an ‘era of deregulation, individualization, frailty of human bonds, fluidity of solidarities and of seduction replacing normative regulation and action of men changing before this can become stable habits with time.

New technologies in work settings imply changed competence demands, a new division of local labor, and organizational change. The whole fabric of society is affected by this new flexibility (Wilpert, 2009).

Jobs have been seen to take on more flexibility in relation to unpredictable market forces where, in this contest, new workers have to be autonomous, informed, spontaneous, creative and able to adapt to different work tasks (Clegg, & Baumeler, 2010).

The new reality requires individuals to be flexible, adaptable and able to redefine their attitudes and behaviors in a complex and “self-creative” key (Arnett, 2002). Here comes out the need, especially for new generations, to develop a flexible identity that allows them to survive in today’s real working founded on the principles of change.

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In fact the changing nature of work suggests that young people may examine their attitudes to entrepreneurship as a career (Henderson, Robertson, 2000).

Several studies have observed some students’ entrepreneurial prospects and orientations (Schmitt-Rodermund, 2004; Zhao, 2010) and the impact of some factors (i.e. gender and higher levels of exposure to a prior family business on entrepreneurial intention) (Cubico, S., Bortolani, E., Cubico, A., & Favretto, G., 2008).

Among these several studies, the important impact of education on entrepreneurial choice has been shown: Turker & Selcuk (2008) have empirically tested and proposed a model on a sample of 300 university’ students. Results have confirmed that entrepreneurial intention of university students are positively related to perceived educational support. In the same study, it was emerged that one of the most important perceived difficulties for students is the lack of business knowledge. In conclusion, the study suggested that young people will choose more frequently entrepreneurial career if the university provides adequate knowledge.

Another study (Gelard, & Saleh, 2011) has confirmed the importance of structural support. This study was conducted by a sample of 200 university students in Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, showed that if a university provides adequate knowledge and inspiration for entrepreneurship, the possibility of choosing an entrepreneurial career might increase among students.

In addition, another study (Ahmed et al., 2011) conducted with a sample composed of 255 final semester students of various disciplines in different universities from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, reported that young students are more motivated towards new venture creation to start their own businesses where their most important entrepreneurship determinants and motivations are: attraction, networking support, entrepreneurial capabilities, self-independence and self-reliance influence that the young students initiate in their new businesses.

Several studies have also observed the impact of family background and gender on entrepreneurial intention (Wadhwa, Aggarwall, Holly, & Salkever, 2009; Zellweger, Sieger, & Halter, 2011; Sanchez, & Licciardello, 2012). Some authors (Carr, & Sequeira, 2007) hypothesized that higher levels of exposure to a prior family business are significantly and positively related to entrepreneurial intent, according to this suggested result that exposure to a prior family business serves as an important intergenerational influence on entrepreneurial intent. This was confirmed in a research (Ahmed, & Nawaz, 2010) that explored the impact of personal traits, demographic characteristics and entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions of 276 university students of Pakistan. The result confirmed that demographical characteristics (i.e. gender and age), were insignificant with the intentions of becoming entrepreneurs. But, upon prior experience, family exposure to business and level of exposure inclines students to become entrepreneurs.

Wilson, Kickul, and Marlino (2007) have investigated the relationships among gender, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intentions with two groups of students. The results suggested that differences between gender in entrepreneurial self-efficacy do persist. The young women’s career aspirations may be limiting because they feel that they do not have the requisite skills and abilities and because entrepreneurship may still be perceived as a “male” field. The authors believe that entrepreneurship education can reduce the limiting effects of low self-efficacy and ultimately increase the chances for successful venture creation by women.

2. Hypothesis

This study has explored the entrepreneurship orientation, determinants, perceived difficulties, and motivations of Sicilian university students. We have also assessed the impact of gender and father’s occupation. In particular we assumed that who had a family business background show a stronger entrepreneurial orientation than who had not a family business background.
3. Method

3.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 100 engineer students, out of which 50 are males and 50 are females from Catania with an average age of 24.35 years (SD 2.98) (range 20-34).

In particular, students’ fathers’ occupation was as follows: entrepreneur (27%); public servant (Government Employees) and private employees (73%).

3.2. Measures

Measures were adapted by a questionnaire of Ganesan and Sanchez (manuscript unpublished).

Career orientation was composed of 9 statements where students were rated upon a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “improbable” (1) to “very probable” (7).

Entrepreneurship determinants were composed of 21 statements where students’ responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In particular, it took into consideration four outstanding aspects: individual skills and competences (α=.72); social support (α=.70); favorable entrepreneurship factors (α=.63); and occupational needs (α=.60).

Entrepreneurship perceiving difficulty measures was composed of 13 statements where students’ responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In particular, it took into consideration four outstanding aspects: lack of business knowledge (α=.80), social support (α=.65), neglecting the family (α=.61), and change (α=.60).

Entrepreneurship motivations measure was composed of 7 statements where students’ responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

At least we propose socio-demographic questions about age, gender and father’s occupation.

3.3. Preliminary Data Processing

We have carried out the following statistical analysis: Analysis of Variance (with n. factors within) related to the comparison of the results regarding the Likert scales; Students’ t-test for Independent Samples to verify the incidence of independent variables; Cronbach’s alpha to check the reliability of assessment inventory scales used.

The data analysis has been performed through the software SPSS, 15.5 for Windows.

4. Results

4.1. Career orientation

The sample generally has shown positive attitudes to self employed but the entrepreneurial aptitude was not emerged ($F(8,792)=27.55 p<.001$).

In particular, the respondents prefer to have a self profession (“What are the odds that I would prefer to be self employed rather than employed”, $M=5.71; SD 1.73$; “What are the odds that I would prefer to be self employer”, $M=5.70; SD 1.64$). At least, they admitted that they wouldn’t like to work as an employee (“What are the odds that I would prefer to be an employee in an organization”, $M=3.55; SD 1.55$).

Concerning the enterprise creation, the medium lower scores have considered the following statements: “I would make any effort to start developing my own business” ($M=4.60; SD 1.83$); “I am determined to make up my own enterprise in the future” ($M=4.53; SD 1.82$).

At last, students assigned scores that can overlap mid-point of the statements: “I have the strong intention to create an enterprise one day” ($M=4.22; SD 2.04$); “My professional goal is to be an entrepreneur” ($M=4.18$);
“I thought very seriously to establish an enterprise” ($M=4.13$; $SD=2.00$); “I am preparing to do something to become an entrepreneur” ($M=4.11$; $SD=1.97$).

The group of respondents who affirmed their father is an entrepreneur attributed higher scores than those who belong to the group whose father is not an entrepreneur to the statement “I thought very seriously to establish an enterprise” (father entrepreneur, $M=4.78$ vs. father employed, $M=3.83$) $t=2.08$, $p=.040$; “I have the strong intention to create an enterprise one day” (father entrepreneur, $M=5.19$ vs. father employed, $M=3.80$) $t=3.11$, $p=.003$.

We did not notice a significant difference between male and female career orientation.

### 4.2. Entrepreneurship determinants, perceived difficulties and motivations

Regarding to the factors determinant entrepreneurship career, our students have attributed the following scores ($F(3,297)=148.87$, $p<.001$): medium-high to “individual skills and competences” ($M=4.04$ $SD= .60$); medium-low to “social support” ($M=3.63$; $SD=.79$), “favourable entrepreneurship factors” ($M=3.42$; $SD=.56$); low to “occupational needs” ($M=2.25$; $SD=.83$).

We did not find any noticeable difference in entrepreneurship perceived difficulties where the scores are all superimposable to the mid-point: lack of business knowledge ($M=3.22$, $SD=1.07$), change ($M=3.14$, $SD= .99$), social support ($M=3.02$, $SD=.76$), and neglecting the family ($M=2.95$, $SD=1.05$).

The male students have marked higher scores to the lack of business knowledge (male, $M=3.51$ vs. female, $M=2.93$) $t=2.78$, $p=.006$.

The group of respondents who affirmed that their fathers are entrepreneurs assigned higher score than those whose their fathers are not entrepreneurs to the statement “lack of time for the family” (father entrepreneur, $M=3.48$ vs. father employed $M=2.83$) $t=2.58$, $p=.011$.

Concerning the entrepreneurship motivations, future projections of economic independence and self-government have been emerged ($F(5,594)=30.16$, $p<.001$).

The sample in fact assigned medium-high scores to the statements: “attain economic independence” ($M=4.42$; $SD=.79$), and “being your own boss” ($M=4.17$; $SD=1.02$).

The students have assigned medium-low scores to the statements: “get regional/territorial recognition through business networking” ($M=3.69$; $SD= .98$), “reduce role conflict between family and business” ($M=3.40$; $SD=1.15$), “gaining respect among family, friends and peer groups” ($M=3.30$; $SD=1.36$).

The students have also assigned superimposable scores to the mid-point for the desire to increase the popularity in the social life ($M=3.15$; $SD=1.30$).

At last, the sample has assigned scores under the mid-point to the statement “being richer than others” ($M=2.85$; $SD=1.43$). The female students had a hope of a superior income more than male students (male, $M=2.56$ vs. female, $M=3.14$) $t=-.2049$, $p=.043$.

### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The future planning of the sample appears to be oriented to self-employment rather than entrepreneurship or employed work.

Students wouldn’t like entrepreneurship career as an occupational choice. In fact, their aspirations are not oriented in relation to entrepreneurship and they spent scarce resources to create their own business.

The results of the present research have confirmed our hypothesis.

Students who admitted that their fathers are entrepreneurs, were more oriented to create their own business since they have entrepreneurship background and are more familiar with this context.

Students affirmed that they could achieve success by appropriate entrepreneurship competent skills and not by randomness and contingencies. This fact has probably showed that they had internal locus of control.
Students have indicated the changing society, lack of business knowledge (gained male importance more than females), social support, and time for the family somehow as equally important as the difficulties of entrepreneurship as a career.

The sons of entrepreneurs give more importance to the fact that entrepreneurship as a career has a negative impact on family time.

The strongest motivations for respondents in starting their own business according with what literature affirms were economic independence and self-government. The superior income was a strong motivation for female students than male ones.

This study emphasizes that young persons want to achieve self-government by self-employment and not by the foundation of their own business.

Nowadays, the entrepreneurship orientation appears to appertain only to young people with an entrepreneurship family background.

We hope that educational institutions will promote business trainings in order to prepare new generations to the enterprise culture so the entrepreneurship career will become for both genders (boys and girls) a possibility and not a limit.

References