

## **Gender Dimensions on Entrepreneurship Pursuit Stimuli: An Appraisal of Agricultural Final-Year Students Enrolled for An Entrepreneurship Module**

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### **Abstract**

With the growing thirst to investigate determinants of entrepreneurship intentions and pursuit among youth and students at institutions of higher learning in South Africa, the study sought to draw distinct differences in entrepreneurship pursuit stimulus influenced by gender dimensions. It further investigated students' views on the most challenging aspect of being an entrepreneur. The study was conducted at the University of Venda, Vhembe district of the Limpopo province. The study participants were final-year students in an entrepreneurship module pursuing various agricultural disciplines. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select its participants, while data was collected using an online survey. The study findings indicated that entrepreneurship stimuli relating to entrepreneurship perception, social affiliation, and academic dynamics shaped entrepreneurship pursuit with variations in gender dimensions. The study recommended championing young, established entrepreneurs for entrepreneurship promotion for enhanced entrepreneurial action among students.

**Keywords:** Gender, Pursuit, Stimulated, Students, Entrepreneurship

### **1 Introduction**

As we channel our efforts to achieve sustainable developmental goals around the globe, entrepreneurship is a vital mechanism in realizing specific goals through its epic contribution to economic development and growth through its prosperity to increase productivity, reduce unemployment rates, and enhance the standard of living (Ćoćkalo et al., 2019). Entrepreneurship is crucial for graduates to alter their mindset to become self-employed, and it is a multifaced mechanism for enhancing livelihoods through economic growth (Maheshwari et al., 2023). Youth entrepreneurship is essential for enhancing competitiveness and innovation within the business landscape and changing the narrative on conducting business within the framework of sustainable development (General, 2015).

Youth entrepreneurship has been identified as a critical driver in overcoming the economic crisis spurred by youth unemployment (Nungsari et al., 2023). In South Africa, youth entrepreneurship and its promotion are crucial to vitalizing an enterprise culture that supports self-employment aspirations due to insufficient employment creation within the formal and public sectors (Kew & Penfold, 2016). Also, failing to address youth unemployment and mitigating barriers to youth entrepreneurship would ultimately trigger the national socio-economic collapse (van der Westhuizen, 2024). A related study conducted in South Africa has indicated that the ratio of male to female entrepreneurs among youth is skewed in favor of males (Chauke & Obadire, 2020). In a related study, gender has been found to significantly influence the pursuit of types of entrepreneurial intentions, with social entrepreneurial intention levels being higher among women and commercial entrepreneurial intention levels being higher among men (Chipeta et al., 2020).

On the contrary, there are no significant gender differences in entrepreneurial intention levels (Contreras-Barraza et al., 2021). A study on understanding what improves entrepreneurial intentions among young graduates has found that predictors such as self-efficacy, peer support, institutional support, and family support positively impact entrepreneurial intention (Martins et al., 2023). Cultural dimensions, specifically family support, significantly influenced the desirability and feasibility among youth to start business ventures (Maleki et al., 2023). Meanwhile, it has been noted that some countries and regions have entrepreneurs who are more driven by social affiliations, more precisely the families and communities (Bosma et al., 2020). Moreover, youth and students with business backgrounds have shown more positive entrepreneurial intentions than their counterparts (Jena, 2020). Various factors have been identified as significant predictors of entrepreneurship pursuit among students, with findings pinpointing the entrepreneurial networking critical for entrepreneurship pursuit (Khamis, 2021). A literature review on entrepreneurial pursuits amongst students has revealed minimal research on its gender dimension, a factor that has prompted the present study.

## 2 Materials and Methods

The study was conducted at the University of Venda, Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo province. The purposive sampling technique was used to select students registered for an entrepreneurship module. The study participants were final-year agricultural students enrolled in an entrepreneurship module offered by the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness.

An online survey was conducted to gather data from 107 registered students. After data screening and cleaning, responses from 97 students were used for the analysis as they did not contain any defects that could have jeopardized the data's reliability and validity.

The study used a Discriminant Analysis method to draw the distinct differences between gender dimensions on entrepreneurship pursuit stimulus among students. The Discriminant Analysis method was preferred for its strength in comparing, separating, and drawing differences between categorical variables using their means. The Discriminant Analysis method was further useful in separating both groups for each explanatory variable. Discriminant Analysis is helpful in modelling differences in classes by splitting two or more classes (Tiwari et al., 2022). In its final fitting, the model is mathematically expressed as:

$$Di = b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3. . . . . b_nX_n..... (1)$$

The description of the explanatory variables used for the analysis is detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Description of explanatory variables used in the discriminate analysis.**

Variable	Name of description	Type of measure	Expected sign
X1	Suit specific profile	Dummy,0=No,1=Yes	-/+
X2	Entrepreneurs are born	Dummy,0=No,1=Yes	-/+
X3	Depends on luck	Dummy,0=No,1=Yes	-/+
X4	Sustainable career	Dummy,0=No,1=Yes	+
X5	Guarantees financial freedom	Dummy,0=No,1=Yes	+
X6	Field of study	0=Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness, 1=Animal Science, 2=Plant and Soil Science, 3=Horticulture, 4=Food Science and Technology, 5=Forestry	-/+
X7	Level of study	0=has other levels modules,1=4 <sup>th</sup> level modules only	-/+
X8	Academic progress	0=as per schedule, 1=slightly behind, 2=quite behind	-/+
X9	Academic workload	0=Under Control, 1=Neutral ,2= Overload	-/+
X10	Academic tours	Dummy,0=No,1=Yes	-/+
X11	Academic residency	0=3 years, 1=4 years, 2=5 years, 3= more than 5 years	-/+
X12	Political affiliation	Dummy,0=Not affiliated ,1=Affiliated	-/+
X13	Sport club member	Dummy,0=Has Membership,1= No membership	-/+

X14	Social student club	Dummy,0=Not affiliated ,1=Affiliated	-/+
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Source: Author's computation, 2024.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Discussion of socio-economic characteristics distribution among the participants

The study was conducted among undergraduate final-level students enrolled in an entrepreneurship module across the agricultural disciplines. From the study findings in Table 2, the study was dominated by female students accounting for 67%. Regarding the field of study, the most dominant group was those enrolled in agricultural economics and agribusiness discipline, followed by those registered for animal science. The lowest group was those pursuing horticultural sciences, at 8.2%. The even distribution of the field of study within the study sample is desirable for the unbiased prediction of analysis relating to entrepreneurship pursuit. From the study sample, most participants were aged between 21 and 25 years, accounting for 86.6%.

**Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the participants**

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	32	33
Female	65	67
<b>Field of study</b>		
Agricultural Eco. & Agribusiness	23	23.7
Animal Science	20	20.6
Plant and soil sciences	19	19.6
Horticulture	8	8.2
Food Science and Technology	15	15.5
Forestry	12	12.4
<b>Age group</b>		
Between 21 - 25	84	86.6
Between 26 - 30	13	13.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Survey results, 2023.

### 3.2 Discussion of discriminant analysis results

Table 3 below shows the study findings on gender dimensions on entrepreneurship pursuit stimuli. The study examined three forms of entrepreneurship pursuit stimuli: entrepreneurship perception, social affiliations, and academic dynamics among the study participants. From each set of stimuli, predictors were selected for analysis. Entrepreneurship perceptions essentially looked at how the study participants perceived entrepreneurship, while social affiliation investigated students' participation and affiliation with social activities on campus. Academic dynamics comprised a field of study and academic activities, including curriculum delivery.

**Table 3: Discriminant analysis on gender dimensions towards entrepreneurship pursuit**

Variable	Female	Male	All	P-value
Suit specific profile	2.08 (1.653)	2.30 (1.932)	2.15 (1.741)	0.067*
Entrepreneurs are born	0.15 (.355)	0.10 (.305)	0.13 (0.339)	0.075*
Depends on luck	0.81 (.398)	0.83 (.379)	0.82 (.390)	0.759
Sustainable career	0.85 (.355)	0.70 (.466)	0.80 (.399)	0.281
Guarantees financial freedom	0.10 (.298)	0.13 (.346)	0.11 (.313)	0.062*
Field of study	2.55 (1.989)	2.83 (2.036)	2.64 (1.998)	0.040**
Level of study	0.21 (1.198)	0.63 (.179)	0.62 (.190)	0.559
Academic progress	0.29 (.458)	0.13 (.346)	0.24 (.429)	0.100
Academic workload	0.03 (.178)	0.20 (.407)	0.09 (.283)	0.231
Academic tours	0.65 (.275)	0.75 (.316)	0.74 (.329)	0.481
Academic residency	1.44 (1.769)	1.33 (1.036)	1.64 (1.698)	0.008***
Political affiliations	0.17 (.355)	0.12 (.115)	0.15 (0.311)	0.542
Sport club membership	0.72 (.321)	0.63 (.311)	0.62 (.310)	0.349
Social student clubs	0.42 (.444)	0.54 (.349)	0.61 (.200)	0.003***
<b>Numbers (n)</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>97</b>	

Source: Survey results (2023). Significant levels: \*\*\* (1%), \*\* (5%) and \* (10%).

#### 3.2.1 Discussion of entrepreneurship perception stimuli on entrepreneurship pursuit

Relating to the entrepreneurship perception stimuli, the study findings revealed that a belief that entrepreneurship is suitable for a specific profile, entrepreneurs being born, and

entrepreneurship guaranteeing financial freedom primarily stimulates entrepreneurship pursuit amongst them. All the stimuli were statistically significant at a 10% significance level. The study findings revealed that male students would persuade entrepreneurship on their belief that entrepreneurship only suits specific profiles compared to their counterparts. The study findings imply that male students' pursuit of entrepreneurship would be stimulated if they feel their profile suits an entrepreneur. The study's focus could be primarily influenced by the fact that male students were also stimulated to pursue entrepreneurship on their belief that entrepreneurship is not for everyone but for individuals who pursue it for its benefits, such as financial freedom. The findings of the current study are supported by the results of Martínez-Martínez & Ventura (2020), who indicated that there are specific profiles that suit student entrepreneurs with networking, consistency, and professional social skills being linked to grit profile. The findings were also supported by the belief that a specific personal profile, such as that of a great networker, is essential to achieving entrepreneurial goals and advantages regarding business competitiveness (Anjum et al., 2020). The study implicates the importance of entrepreneurship perception as a critical stimulus for its pursuit among students, particularly males.

The study findings also revealed that female students would pursue entrepreneurship only if they believed that they were born to be entrepreneurs. The study findings are supported by the ongoing debate about entrepreneurs being born and possessing entrepreneurial genes, which are considered a special breed as they significantly contribute to their success compared to any other person (Daley, 2013). The results imply that female students only consider entrepreneurship when convinced they are born for it. The study results could be supplemented by the belief that female students pursue qualifications more closely associated with their qualities than their counterparts, primarily influenced by passion. Furthermore, the study findings revealed that male students' pursuit of entrepreneurship is stimulated based on their beliefs that entrepreneurship guarantees financial freedom. This is alluded to by a similar study that pointed out that entrepreneurs perceive economic freedom as closely related to entrepreneurial activities (Carlos Díaz-Casero et al., 2012). The study findings imply that male students who perceived entrepreneurship as a means of financial freedom are easily stimulated to pursue it. With a male figure being associated as a provider, the results could implicate that male students pursue entrepreneurship to enhance their livelihoods and provide for their immediate families. The study findings could be primarily influenced by males' desire to satisfy

some needs that parents may not cater to on their monthly allowance during their study period at an institution of higher learning.

### **3.2.2 Discussion of social affiliation stimuli on entrepreneurship pursuit**

The study also reveals that being associated with any student's social club significantly influences entrepreneurship pursuit among students. The results show that belonging to students' social clubs was statistically significant at a 1% significance level. The study findings further revealed that belonging to students' social clubs primarily stimulates entrepreneurship pursuit among male students. The findings contradict the findings about South African female entrepreneurs being more socially motivated and less profit-driven (Meyer & Krüger, 2021). The study findings could be influenced mainly by the fact that male students are more involved in extracurricular activities than their counterparts. The findings contradict a similar study that discovered that social support and affiliation had a negative predictive association with social entrepreneurial intentions (Rambe & Ndofirepi, 2021). The study implies that male students could pursue entrepreneurship if their group has entrepreneurship intentions. This is supplemented by the findings of Yasir et al. (2021), who noted that social norms and attitudes significantly influence sustainable entrepreneurial intentions. Furthermore, social affiliation, including religiosity, supports the notion that such affiliations boost students' entrepreneurial intentions (Giacomin et al., 2023).

### **3.2.3 Discussion of academic dynamics stimuli on entrepreneurship pursuit**

Relating to the academic dynamics, the study results show that the field of study and academic residency among students were statistically significant in stimulating entrepreneurship pursuit among students. The study results show that the field of study was statistically significant at a 5% significance level, while the academic residency was statistically significant at a 1% significance level. The study findings indicate that the field of study significantly stimulated male students to pursue entrepreneurship. With the sample study dominated by students pursuing agricultural economics and agribusiness qualifications, male students were found to consider entrepreneurship pursuits based on their field of study. There is a distinct difference in entrepreneurship pursuit among students enrolled in business-related courses compared to their counterparts, with those enrolled in business-related courses taking the lead (Rahim & Mukhtar, 2021).

The study results could be influenced mainly by the general perception that male studies' qualifications aligned with their passion compared to their counterparts' studies' qualifications aligned with their capabilities.

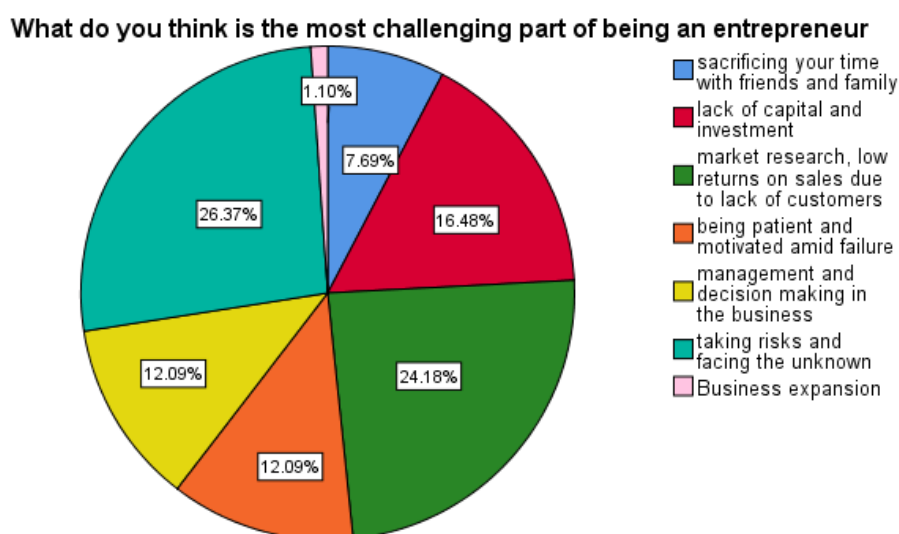
The study findings show that academic residence also influences entrepreneurship pursuit among students. The results indicate that the period in which students are enrolled at the university stimulates entrepreneurial pursuit among female students. The study findings imply that the lengthy academic residence among female students contributes to their pursuit of entrepreneurship. Although exceeding a stipulated minimum academic residence is undesirable at an institution of higher learning, such overstaying has various implications, such as students securing a sense of belonging and establishing themselves due to the familiarity of the environment. The study findings also suggest that as female students stay longer at the university, their entrepreneurship pursuit gets stimulated. The study findings are supplemented by the findings of Elshaer & Sobaih (2023), who noted that academic exposure among female students improves their moderating influence on entrepreneurship intention more than their counterparts. Moreover, the findings align with those who indicated that the curriculum and its delivery methods seem less significant in stimulating entrepreneurship pursuit among students (Duong, 2023).

### **3.3 Discussion on most perceived challenging aspect about being an entrepreneur**

The study further sought to investigate participants' views on the aspect of being an entrepreneur that is perceived to be the most challenging. From the study findings, participants perceived facing risks and the unknown as the most challenging part of being an entrepreneur, accounting for 26.37%. This could be primarily influenced by the risks and uncertainty of establishing a business. From the study findings, achieving low returns due to limited market share, particularly during the short-term existence of the business, came out as the second most challenging aspect of being an entrepreneur, at 24.18%. Similar observations were noted by Masango and Lassalle (2020), who indicated that poor market responsiveness significantly influences the intentions that shape the critical outcomes of entrepreneurial action. As potential emerging entrepreneurs, students within the study sample also pointed to a lack of start-up capital and investment as another challenging aspect of entrepreneurship, accounting for 16.48%.



Another aspect perceived to be challenging about being an entrepreneur was being patient despite business failure and making tough decisions, accounting for 12.09%. The findings are supported by the study Al Halbusi et al. (2023), which noted that fear of failure is a harmful intrigue for entrepreneurship and is primarily influenced by past business experience and limited financial means. Meanwhile, sacrificing family and social time is also considered to be challenging in the pursuit of entrepreneurship.



**Figure 1:** Most perceived challenging aspects of being an entrepreneur among the participants.

Source: (survey results, 2023).

## 4 Conclusion and Recommendations

With a continuous search for the determinants of entrepreneurship pursuit among South African youth, the study investigated gender dimensions on entrepreneurship pursuit stimulus among students. The study findings have revealed that stimuli associated with entrepreneurship perceptions, social affiliations, and academic dynamics significantly stimulate male students' pursuit of entrepreneurship. It can be concluded that entrepreneurship perception stimuli essentially stimulate male students more than their counterparts, while social affiliations largely influence female students. With positive entrepreneurship perceptions influential in stimulating action, the study recommends using young, established entrepreneurs to champion entrepreneurship promotion, particularly among male students.

With the chances of female students being stimulated to pursue entrepreneurship while staying longer at the university, the study recommends social initiatives that could assist them in settling swiftly after registration, as early settling could boost chances of self-discovery and self-confidence. The study also supports the infusion of entrepreneurship in various fields, stimulating students' entrepreneurial pursuits and self-employment after graduation.

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