

Factors affecting academic entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes among Emirati students

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Summary

Recent global events have put increasing pressure on world markets, especially with regards to global oil prices, a cause of concern most notably for Middle Eastern countries. To counter the growing concern over the dependence on oil, several nations are seeking to develop their private sectors (Antoncic, 2006; Evren, 2018; Turkama, 2019) using Entrepreneurial endeavors to diversify their economies. However, in the UAE context one of the impediments to achieving a diversification strategy is the lack of Emirati participation in the private sector (Antwi-Boateng & Al Jaberi, 2022) warranting a comprehensive study of Emirati intention and attitudes toward Entrepreneurship that could lead to more Emirati participation in new business creation.

Using previous studies as a starting point (Kruger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000; Krueger & Carsrud, 2010; Smail et. al, 2022) we tested and extended the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by incorporating university and country supports and obstacle factors to ascertain levels of entrepreneurial intentions of Emirati university students to better understand how to increase their

participation in Entrepreneurship and boost the country's economic diversification strategy. The factors that were considered falls within the Theory of Planned Behavior and were analyzed using a structural equilibrium model.

A cross-sectional study was conducted among a random sample of 324 Emirati University students where they were asked to fill out the survey instrument that was developed for the study. Before using structural equations modeling, we tested our model using factor analysis (FA) so as to ascertain the reliability and validity of the scales used in the model. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is in all cases above 0.8 indicating a satisfactory factor analysis and therefore accepted. Bartlett's test of Sphericity was also significant at $p < 0.01$ showing that there is a minimum of two of the variables which are intercorrelated.

Our findings suggest a more wholistic approach to Entrepreneurship is needed within the economic diversification strategy of the UAE. This includes practical training efforts coupled with institutional and national support for starting a business, constituting a multi-pronged approach to increasing intentions. Interestingly enough, the findings also suggest that perceived social pressure does not provide significant influence on a student's intention, thus leading to a possible theory that UAE students are interested in starting a business regardless of social pressure and in fact only seek practical opportunities and confidence to undertake such ventures. Future research is required to confirm this.