Examining Factors Influencing the Entrepreneurial Intentions of Youths in Lusaka, Zambia

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Abstract

This research analyses determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among university students in Lusaka, Zambia, using data from 319 participants to investigate how environmental and attitude factors influence entrepreneurship aspirations. The study focuses on formal networks, structural support, perceived behavioural control, and attitude. Survey data from Lusaka university students were analysed using correlation and regression analyses. Results show positive and significant correlations between formal networks, perceived behavioural control, attitude, and entrepreneurial intentions. However, structural support, while positively correlated, is not a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intentions. These findings emphasize the importance of strong formal networks, perceived behavioural control, and a positive entrepreneurial attitude. The non-significant role of structural support suggests a need for further exploration in promoting entrepreneurship in Lusaka. This research enhances understanding of factors influencing entrepreneurial mindset among young individuals in the region.

Keywords: Keywords: entrepreneurial intentions, university students, Lusaka, Zambia, formal networks, structural support, perceived behavioural control, attitude.

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1. Introduction and Background

1.0 Introduction

Entrepreneurship has long been positioned as a driver of innovation, job creation, and economic resilience, particularly in developing economies where formal employment opportunities remain limited. In Zambia, where over 61.4% of the population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2023), the urgency for alternative pathways to employment and livelihood generation cannot be overstated. Yet despite widespread recognition of entrepreneurship as a solution to unemployment, particularly among graduates, entrepreneurial activity among Zambian youth remains conspicuously low.

Graduate unemployment in Zambia is estimated to exceed 20% (CSO, 2012; Statista, 2022), highlighting a critical gap between the supply of skilled labour and the capacity of the formal economy to absorb it. Notably, only 26% of employers in Zambia are graduates (Mwiya et al., 2017), a statistic that not only signals structural inefficiencies in the labour market but also underscores the untapped potential for graduates to create employment through entrepreneurship.

If entrepreneurship is indeed a viable solution, the question remains: why are more young people not pursuing it? This study seeks to explore that question by examining the factors that shape entrepreneurial intentions among university students in Lusaka, Zambia.

Anchored on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that intention is the strongest predictor of action (Ajzen, 1991), this research investigates how structural support, formal networks, perceived behavioral control, and personal attitudes toward entrepreneurship influence the entrepreneurial aspirations of young Zambians. These factors, long established in global literature as determinants of entrepreneurial intent, require contextual validation within the Zambian environment, where systemic barriers such as limited access to finance, scarce mentorship opportunities, and fear of failure may uniquely shape entrepreneurial behavior.

1.1 Research Problem

There is a persistent disconnect between the recognised economic importance of entrepreneurship in Zambia and the actual rate of business creation by young people, particularly graduates. While entrepreneurship is widely promoted as a policy solution to youth unemployment, the low level of entrepreneurial activity suggests that critical psychosocial and structural barriers remain unaddressed.

Commonly cited obstacles including limited access to finance, inadequate entrepreneurial training, weak formal networks,

and negative societal attitudes toward risk-taking may suppress the entrepreneurial ambitions of young people before action is even initiated. However, there remains limited empirical evidence on how these factors specifically influence entrepreneurial intentions among university students in Lusaka, a key demographic for future economic leadership.

This research therefore addresses a crucial knowledge gap: what are the key determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among young people in Lusaka, and how might these inform more effective interventions to stimulate entrepreneurship?

1.2 Research Objectives

The study aims to assess the variables affecting young people's entrepreneurial intentions in Lusaka, Zambia.

Specifically, the study seeks;

i. To determine the impact of formal networks on young people's entrepreneurial intentions.
ii. To evaluate the impact of structural support on the youth's entrepreneurial intentions.
iii. To investigate how perceived behavioural control affects young people's entrepreneurial intent in Zambia; and
iv. To assess how a person's attitude towards entrepreneurship affects their goal to become an entrepreneur as a young person.

1.3 Scope of Study

The study focuses on university students in Lusaka, Zambia. The study sheds light on how several environmental and attitude elements affect young people's desire to start businesses in Lusaka, Zambia. The study is also limited to examining the variables contained in the specific objectives only.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Prior research on entrepreneurial intention undertaken in other countries lacks generalisability. This is because emerging and industrialised nations have distinct environmental conditions; therefore, the entrepreneurial intention and background will differ. The lack of such a study on Zambian youths brings about a contextual gap that must be addressed. Additionally, there is inadequate research conducted in Zambia concerning entrepreneurship.

This research will help practitioners and policymakers. The findings could help them manage resources, devise strategies, and give everything needed to improve entrepreneurial abilities among young people. This information can be used by practitioners to raise the rate of business startups and improve the quality of firms created. The study also serves as a platform for developing policies that remove any impediments to entrepreneurship to assure the economic and social benefits of entrepreneurship. This study fills a contextual gap in previous investigations by being conducted in Zambia with Zambian respondents.

2. Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to assess the relevant literature for the focus of the study to have a better understanding of an individual's entrepreneurial ambition.

2.1 Empirical Review

Extensive internet searches are used to gather literature on factors influencing young entrepreneurial intention (EI). To acquire the literature, other computerised databases that have been evaluated by diverse scholars are also utilised. Among the databases visited were Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Science Direct, Springer, Sage, and Research Gate.

2.1.1 Formal Network

According to Amos et al. (2015), the formal network consists of banks, small-business consulting firms, legal offices, insurance companies, cooperatives, trade groups, and graduate student societies. In an economic setting where formal links are developed, formal networks are built on a wide variety of participants (Sperber and Linder, 2016). An element of a person's external environment that affects their emotional intelligence (EI) is a component referred to as formal network. Ferry (2019) uses a sample of 300 students to examine the impact of contextual variables on entrepreneurial desire in Indonesia. The data show that formal networks have no substantial influence on entrepreneurial orientation.

Furthermore, a study of 111 students in Bosnia and Herzegovina discovered that formal networks influence an individual's entrepreneurial intention (Turulja et al., 2020). Individuals who believe they have formal backing will be more confident in beginning a business. Also, formal support mitigates the negative relationship between failure fear and entrepreneurial ambition (Turulja et al., 2020).

2.1.2 Structural Support

People operate within a broader social, cultural, economic, political, and technical context. Economic and political mechanisms controlled by stakeholders in the public, private, and non-governmental sectors determine the current situation of entrepreneurship (Gelard and Saleh, 2011). Financial assistance, laws and restrictions imposed on businesses, and business prospects are all examples of structural support (Ambad and Damit, 2016). In their study, Turker and Selcuk (2009) of Turkey focused primarily on the impact of contextual variables on entrepreneurial intention. The findings

show that entrepreneurial ambition is significantly predicted by perceived structural support (Ambad and Damit, 2016). More investigation, however, is required to determine the connection between structural support and entrepreneurial intent.

2.1.3 Perceived Behavioural Control

According to planned behaviour theory, motivation to participate in a certain activity is influenced by subjective norms, attitudes towards entrepreneurship, and PBC. Ajzen (2002) defines perceived behavioural control as the perceived ease or complexity of an activity (Iya et al. 2017). PBC is interested in how technological needs, financial hazards, administrative demands, and readily available resources and skills are seen in the context of entrepreneurship (Mwiya et al., 2017). According to researchers who conducted empirical studies in Singapore (Trivedi, 2016a), Saudi Arabia (Aloulou, 2016), Vietnam (Duong, 2021), South Africa (Mahlaole, 2021), and Zambia (Mwiya et al., 2017), the greater one's perceived behavioural control over the launch of a new business, the greater one's motivation to launch a firm.

2.1.4 Attitude Towards Entrepreneurship

According to Ajzen, 1991; Mwiya et al., (2017), the level to which someone views an activity positively or negatively under assessment is defined as attitude towards a behavior. In terms of entrepreneurship, the conclusion to establish a new enterprise is mostly determined by how personal beliefs and attitudes have developed (Mwiya, 2014). According to the findings, people who possess a good attitude for entrepreneurship have a higher likelihood of having a high EI. University student samples from the United States (Cater et al., 2021), Turkey (Yurtkoru et al., 2014), and Saudi Arabia (Aloulou, 2016b) were used to generate the findings.

2.2 Case Studies

In India, cross-sectional research using primary and secondary data was conducted (Gulzar and Fayaz, 2021). It focuses on young entrepreneurial intentions (EI), which are driven by a pattern of individual and environmental variables. The survey included 358 respondents between the ages of 21 and 25 from various institutions and colleges in Kashmir. According to the study, personal abilities, entrepreneurial exposure, contextual factors, and EI all have a substantial relationship.

Another Indian study found that situational determinants had a strong favorable influence on students' entrepreneurial preferences (Sahoo and Panda, 2019). As a result, it has a strong favorable impact on entrepreneurial intentions. The goal of this study is to look at entrepreneurial attitudes and ambitions of technical university students and the significance of contextual determinants. Primary data is acquired in the format of 510 authentic replies from Students of engineering from two Indian technical institutes. This study does not apply to nanoengineering students or other countries. Additional research in other countries is required.

Yousaf et al. (2015) analysed how entrepreneurial ambitions in Pakistan are affected by entrepreneurial traits, subjective norms, and perceived attractiveness. According to the research, students can start successful businesses even if they lack the necessary entrepreneurial knowledge and competencies (Yousaf et al., 2015). They can start successful firms if they are desirable, possess an entrepreneurial mindset, and have the backing of the community.

Mwiya and Chanda (2017) conducted an empirical study to investigate and confirm the institutional factors of entrepreneurial intention, including the requirement for strategic alliances. The conclusions of the primary research are based on 13 interviews. The study's findings demonstrate that people's views are influenced by both individual and institutional variables of whether starting a business is desirable and financially viable. Intentions to launch a business are then influenced by perceptions of viability and attractiveness. The results also show that institutional and individual characteristics indirectly affect entrepreneurial education's efficacy, which in turn influences EI. A sample size of 13 individuals creates an external validity issue and is thus a constraint.

2.3 Gap Analysis

While extensive research has been conducted internationally on entrepreneurial intentions, much of this work has been situated in developed economies whose institutional, cultural, and economic environments differ significantly from those of developing nations like Zambia. Empirical studies from African contexts remain limited, often concentrated in countries such as South Africa (Mahlaole, 2021; Ndofirepi et al., 2018a), Ghana (Adu et al., 2020), and Tunisia (Krichen & Chaabouni, 2022). Within Zambia, although some research has examined aspects of entrepreneurship among graduates (Mwiya et al., 2017; Mwiya et al., 2019), these studies have not comprehensively explored the combined influence of formal networks, structural support, perceived behavioral control, and attitudes on entrepreneurial intentions.

Moreover, the specific context of university students in Lusaka, a group with access to higher education but facing a constrained job market has been underexamined. This study therefore seeks to fill this

contextual and empirical gap by investigating how these factors interact to shape entrepreneurial intentions within this population.

By focusing on Zambian respondents and Lusaka-based institutions, this research contributes original insights that can inform policy, curriculum design, and support mechanisms aimed at unlocking the entrepreneurial potential of Zambia's youth.

2.4 Theoretical Review

This portion emphasises the relevant and supporting ideas and focuses on the theoretical backgrounds or foundations of the conceptualization of this study. Below is a discussion of the two hypotheses handled in this research.

2.4.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour

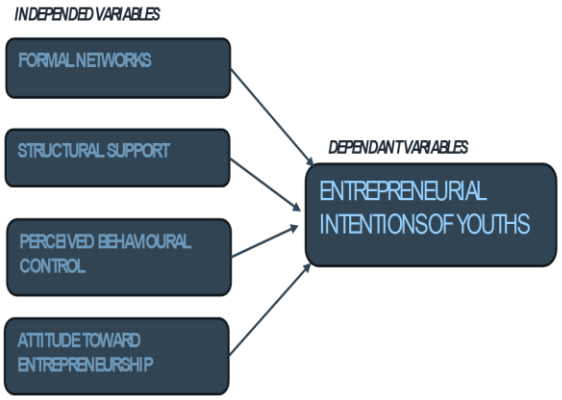
The theory of planned behavior posits that an individual's intention is the strongest predictor of their behavior, as it reflects their level of effort and willingness to work hard (Ajzen, 1991; Mwiya et al., 2017). This theory suggests that the likelihood of someone engaging in a behavior increases with the intensity of their intention. Several factors influence entrepreneurial intentions, including perceived behavioral control, individual attitudes, and perceived social norms (Ajzen, 2002; Mwiya et al., 2017).
Attitude, according to the theory, refers to how positively or negatively an individual perceives a behavior, such as starting a new business. The decision to start a business depends on how an individual's beliefs and attitudes have evolved over time. Subjective norm, on the other hand, refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a particular behavior. This can be influenced by how friends, relatives, or coworkers view the behavior. Perceived behavioral control (PBC) reflects how easy or challenging it is perceived to carry out the intended behavior (Mwiya et al., 2019). Higher levels of PBC are associated with greater entrepreneurial intent (Sabah, 2016).

In earlier research, scholars provided several psychological theories of entrepreneurship to explain an individual's entrepreneurial motivation and behaviour. The most important of these frameworks is the idea of planned conduct (Bird, 1988; Ajzen, 1991; Liu et al., 2019). Prior research has utilised the idea of planned behaviour to analyse the entrepreneurial ambitions of university students and adolescents in general both in developed and underdeveloped nations.

2.4.2 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory asserts that there is a common environment separate from the entrepreneur's consciousness. The universal environment establishes rules and conventions that shape an economy's culture and policy (Shinnar et al., 2014). Institutions are both official and informal aspects of the environment that produce laws and customs that either limit or support personal behaviour (Gangi and Kebaili, 2020). Kumar and Borbora (2016) divide the institutional environment into four subcategories: opportunity, security, efficiency, and the social and political environment.

Institutional theory has been shown to be incredibly effective in entrepreneurship and is frequently utilised to study the impact of the environment on entrepreneurial activity (Bruton et al., 2010; Kostova, 2017). In past publications, several scholars used institutional theory. Lin et al. (2020) explores the effect of institutional demands on e-business transformation goals in China, for example. The influence of family business experience on entrepreneurial aspiration among 377 Pakistani students is investigated using an institutional theory approach (Zaman et al., 2021).



2.5 Conceptual Framework

To clarify how the variables under examination relate to one another, the conceptual model shown below was developed.

Figure 1: Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Intention

Source*: Adapted from Gelard and Saleh, (2013), and Mwiya* et al.*, (2019).*

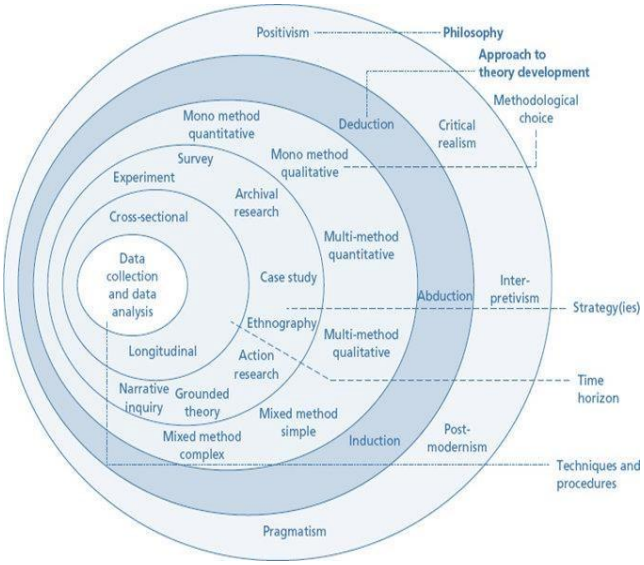
3. Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The validations for research design, choice, and comprehension of analysis are explained in this section. Additionally, an examination of the method utilised to obtain primary data for the study, as well as the methodological perspective that underpins the research approach is discussed. The diagram below is a research onion by Saunders et al.

(2012) that shows how one can go about the research methodology for a study.

Figure 2: Research Onion



3.1 Research Philosophy, Approach and Design

This study adopts a positivist research philosophy, a quantitative approach, and a correlational research design. Positivism asserts that the social world operates according to identifiable patterns and laws that can be systematically observed, measured, and analyzed (Boucher, 2014). This philosophy aligns with the quantitative nature of the study, where numerical data will be collected and statistically analyzed to draw empirical conclusions. The positivist approach assumes an objective reality that exists independently of individual perceptions, aiming to identify and quantify the impact of formal networks, structural support, perceived behavioral control, and attitudes toward entrepreneurship on the entrepreneurial intentions of university students in Lusaka, Zambia. This philosophy underscores the importance of empirical evidence, replicable methods, and systematic inquiry into the factors influencing entrepreneurial intent (Park et al., 2019). By grounding the study in a positivist research philosophy, the aim is to establish generalizable insights into the relationships between variables, contributing to the broader understanding of the determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among the youth in Lusaka (Park et al., 2019).

3.2 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study comprises approximately 20,000 university students in Lusaka, Zambia, reflecting the diverse demographic of youths in the city. To ensure statistical validity, a sample size of 377 students was determined using Raosoft's calculator, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level (Raosoft, Inc., 2022).

A random systematic sampling method was employed to select participants, ensuring each student has an equal chance of being included. This approach, recommended by Guetterman (2015), balances statistical robustness with practical considerations, capturing a diverse range of perspectives within the university student population.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

The data collected from structured questionnaires underwent meticulous organization, coding, and cleaning to rectify inconsistencies or errors. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data entry and analysis. Descriptive statistics provided insights into central tendencies and variations, while hierarchical regression analysis explored the relationships between formal networks, structural support, perceived behavioral control, attitudes toward entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial intentions.

Validity was ensured through a pre-testing phase of the questionnaire, enhancing its internal validity. External validity was strengthened by employing a random systematic sampling method. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all coefficients exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the survey instrument. As shown in table 1.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical principles by ensuring participants' integrity, confidentiality, and well-being (Barrow et al., 2022). Participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data is securely stored and accessible only to the research team. Respect for participants' autonomy and dignity was prioritized, with information about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits provided. Participants had the freedom to ask questions and withdraw without repercussion. The study commits to presenting findings truthfully and transparently, contributing responsibly to the academic community and society.

Table 1:Research Instrument Reliability Test

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Structural Support	In Zambia, the government encourages entrepreneurs to establish a firm State laws in zambia (rules and regulations) are good for running a business. Tax regulation gives facilities to entrepreneurs. The Zambian economy provides many opportunities for entrepreneurs.	0.925
Attitude	Being an entrepreneur has more advantages than disadvantages. Entrepreneurship is interesting. I will become an entrepreneur if I possess enough resources. I prefer being an entrepreneur to being an employee.	0.785
Formal Network	To start entrepreneurship activities, I will get benefit from an experienced consultant. To start entrepreneurship activities, I will get benefit from the country's entrepreneurs' network. To establish a business plan, I will get benefit from agencies related to entrepreneurship activities. To start entrepreneurship activities, I will get benefit from customer and supplier networks.	0.790
Perceived Behavioral Control	To start a firm and keep it working would be easy for me. I am prepared to start a viable firm. I can control the creation process of a new firm. I know the necessary practical details to start a firm. I know how to develop an entrepreneurial project. If I try to start a firm, I would have a high probability of succeeding.	0.820
Entrepreneurial Intentions	I am ready to do anything to be an entrepreneur. My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur. I will make every effort to start and run my own firm. I am determined to create a firm in the future. I have seriously thought about starting a firm. I have got the firm intention to start a firm someday.	0.762

4. Results and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This section presents and analyses the data acquired by prudently following through with the study's research methodology. It also delves into the discussions of the findings once presented and analysed.

4.1 Demographic Profile

This section presents the demographic profile of the study, which is crucial for understanding the characteristics of the population. It helps in contextualizing the findings and ensuring their generalizability (Hancock et al., 2021; Stuart et al., 2015). The demographic information shows a balanced gender representation, with 71 females (22.3%) and 248 males (77.7%). Most participants fall within the 16-25 years age range (49.2%), followed by the 26-35 years group (40.1%). Smaller percentages are represented by the 36-45-year group (9.4%) and those aged 46 years and above (1.3%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Sample Variable	Description	Frequency(n)	Percent(%)	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	71	22.3	22.3
	Male	248	77.7	100
Age Group	16-25 Years	157	49.2	49.2
	26-35 Years	128	40.1	89.3
	36-45 Years	30	9.4	98.7
	46 + Years	4	1.3	100
Mother's Education	Primary	125	39.2	39.2
	Secondary	8	2.5	41.7
	College	177	55.5	97.2
	University	9	2.8	100
Father's Education	Primary	145	45.5	45.5
	Secondary	9	2.8	48.3
	College	146	45.8	94
	University	19	6	100
Mother's Occupation	Private Sector	10	3.1	3.1
	Public Sector	81	25.4	28.5
	Retired	182	57.1	85.6
	Self-employed/entrepreneur	14	4.4	90
	Unemployed	32	10	100
Father's Occupation	Private Sector	11	3.4	3.4
	Public Sector	182	57.1	60.5
	Retired	71	22.3	82.8
	Self-employed/entrepreneur	38	11.9	94.7
	Unemployed	17	5.3	100

4.2 Correlation and Regression Analyses

Among the demographic variables, only parental occupations (both mother's and father's occupation) show statistically significant correlations with entrepreneurial intentions. The positive correlation between mother's occupation and entrepreneurial intentions ($r = 0.189$, $p < 0.01$) suggests that a mother's professional background may influence entrepreneurial aspirations. Similarly, there is a positive correlation between father's occupation and entrepreneurial intentions ($r = 0.120$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that specific occupational categories of fathers may be associated with higher entrepreneurial intentions. Gender, age group, and parental education levels do not show statistically significant correlations with entrepreneurial intentions.

Transitioning to the independent variables, structural support displays a significant positive correlation with entrepreneurial intentions ($r = 0.189$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals perceiving a higher level of structural support may have elevated entrepreneurial intentions. Formal networks exhibit the strongest positive correlation with entrepreneurial intentions ($r = 0.277$, $p < 0.01$), emphasizing the role of formal networks in shaping entrepreneurial aspirations. Attitude demonstrates a positive correlation with entrepreneurial intentions ($r = 0.242$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that a positive attitude may be conducive to higher entrepreneurial intentions. Finally, perceived behavioral control exhibits the strongest positive correlation with entrepreneurial intentions ($r = 0.345$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting the significance of perceived control in predicting entrepreneurial aspirations. These findings contribute to the understanding of the factors that may shape or inhibit entrepreneurial aspirations among the study participants.

4.3 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses

The regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between entrepreneurial intentions and various demographic variables to address the research objectives.

Table 4 Hypotheses Testing Summary of Results from Regression

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		
	Beta	SE(1)	Beta	SE(2)	Beta	SE(3)	Beta	SE(4)	Beta	SE(5)	VIF
Control Variables											
Gender	0.084	0.074	0.079	0.073	0.09	0.072	0.093	0.071	0.068	0.07	1.029
Age Group	0.094	0.044	0.079	0.044	0.08	0.043	0.07	0.043	0.075	0.042	1.053
Mother's Education	0.025	0.039	0.017	0.039	0.03	0.038	0.034	0.037	0.064	0.037	1.678
Father's Education	-0.084	0.038	-0.068	0.037	-0.047	0.037	-0.009	0.037	0.034	0.036	1.841
Mother's Occupation	0.167**	0.037	0.167**	0.036	0.141*	0.036	0.127*	0.036	0.105	0.035	1.226
Father's Occupation	0.091	0.037	0.069	0.037	0.068	0.036	0.071	0.035	0.029	0.035	1.308
Independent Variables											
Structural Support			0.156**	0.05	0.117*	0.05	0.069	0.051	0.066	0.05	1.168
Attitude					0.198***	0.048	0.155**	0.048	0.121*	0.048	1.16
Formal Network							0.187**	0.051	0.127*	0.051	1.347
Perceived Behavioural Control									0.234***	0.056	1.246
F	3.568**		4.233***		5.431***		6.061***		7.380***		
F Change	3.568**		7.749**		12.674***		9.829***		16.456**		
R	0.256		0.298		0.355		0.392		0.444		
R Squared	0.066		0.089		0.126		0.153		0.197		
R Squared Adjusted	0.047		0.068		0.103		0.128		0.171		
R Squared Change	0.066		0.023		0.037		0.028		0.044		

*Significant at 5% ** Significant at 1% ***Significant at 0.1%

In the initial model (Model 1), only demographic variables such as gender, age group, mother's education, father's education, mother's occupation, and father's occupation were included. The overall model was statistically significant ($F = 3.568$, $p = 0.002$), explaining 6.6% of the variance in entrepreneurial intentions. Among these variables, only father's occupation was individually significant ($\beta = 0.091$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that specific paternal occupations may be associated with higher entrepreneurial intentions.

Expanding the model to include structural support (Model 2) increased the adjusted R-square to 8.9%, with a more significant overall model ($F = 4.233$, $p < 0.001$). Structural support emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.156$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals perceiving higher structural support may have increased entrepreneurial intentions.

Adding attitude as an independent variable (Model 3) resulted in an adjusted R-square of 10.3%, with a statistically significant overall model ($F = 5.431$, $p < 0.001$). Both structural support ($\beta = 0.117$, $p < 0.05$) and attitude ($\beta = 0.198$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrated significant positive associations with entrepreneurial intentions.

Including formal network in the model (Model 4) increased the adjusted R-square to 12.8%, with a highly significant overall model ($F = 6.061$, $p < 0.001$). Apart from structural support ($\beta = 0.069$, $p > 0.05$), attitude ($\beta = 0.155$, $p < 0.01$), and formal network ($\beta = 0.187$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as significant predictors of entrepreneurial intentions.

In the final regression model (Model 5), which includes demographic variables and psychosocial factors (structural support, attitude, formal network, and perceived behavioural control), none of the demographic variables reached statistical significance. However, attitude ($\beta = 0.121$, $p < 0.05$) and formal network ($\beta = 0.127$, $p < 0.05$) demonstrated statistically significant positive associations with entrepreneurial intentions. Most notably, perceived behavioural control emerged as a highly significant predictor ($\beta = 0.234$, $p < 0.001$), implying that individuals who perceive greater control over their actions are more likely to harbor entrepreneurial intentions. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions, encompassing both demographic and psychosocial dimensions.

4.4 Discussion

The final regression model indicates that perceived behavioural control, personal attitude, and formal network significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions. Comparisons with relevant studies show consistency with findings regarding the importance of these factors. However, results regarding the effect of structural support align more with Shah et al. (2021), who found it to be insignificant. Li et al. (2020) and Anjum et al. (2021) support these results by emphasizing the importance of attitude toward entrepreneurship as a significant predictor.
Zhang et al. (2015) highlighted the influence of short-term risk-taking preference and psychological well-being on entrepreneurial intentions, complementing the model's incorporation of perceived behavioural control. Yurtkoru et al. (2014) emphasized the mediating role of perceived behavioural control and personal attitude in the relationship between support aspects and entrepreneurial intention, supporting the importance of psychosocial factors. Koe et al. (2012) found that perceived behavioural control and personal attitude projected intentions, with a stronger effect from personal attitude, aligning with these findings. This study contributes to existing literature by reaffirming the importance of psychosocial factors in predicting entrepreneurial intentions, with findings aligned with various studies, supporting the robustness and generalizability of these findings.

5. Conclusions, Contributions and Implications

5.0 Introduction

This section presents the closing remarks of the study. It begins by providing a summary of the research findings, then it moves to the presentation of the recommendations that policy makers could use in light of the study findings. Following the recommendations, the study acknowledges limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting

the findings, and finally, the study provides recommendations that future research could take.

5.1 Summary of Research Conclusions

The section on Data Presentation and Analysis provides a detailed examination of the study's findings, focusing on the demographic profile of respondents, correlation analysis, and hypothesis testing using hierarchical regression analysis.

1. **Demographic Profile of Respondents:** The study's demographic profile reveals a diverse sample in terms of gender, age, education, and occupation. This diversity is crucial for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the study's subject matter.
2. **Correlation Analysis:** The correlation matrix highlights significant relationships between various variables, with parental occupations, structural support, attitude, and perceived behavioral control showing positive correlations with entrepreneurial intentions.
3. **Hypothesis Testing Using Hierarchical Regression Analysis:** The regression analysis confirms the influence of certain demographic variables, such as father's occupation, on entrepreneurial intentions. Additionally, psychosocial factors like structural support, attitude, formal network, and perceived behavioral control significantly enhance the predictive capacity of the model.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, recommendations for fostering entrepreneurial intentions include enhancing psychosocial support programs, tailoring support for different demographics, integrating formal networks into educational curricula, fostering a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, promoting self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control, continuous research and adaptation, encouraging cross disciplinary collaboration, fostering diversity and inclusion, providing accessible entrepreneurial resources, promoting experiential learning, fostering a culture of innovation, and fostering a supportive ecosystem. These recommendations aim to create an environment that nurtures and supports entrepreneurial intentions, contributing to the development of innovative and resilient individuals ready to embark on entrepreneurial ventures.

5.3 Research Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations of the study include the reliance on a cross-sectional design, which limits causal inference, and the potential for self-report bias in data collection. The sample's composition may not fully represent all aspiring entrepreneurs, impacting generalizability. Future studies could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to capture dynamic changes in entrepreneurial intentions over time. Additionally, incorporating more diverse samples and data sources, such as qualitative interviews or observations, could provide a richer understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions.

5.4 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among university students in Lusaka, Zambia, with particular focus on formal networks, structural support, perceived behavioral control, and personal attitude toward entrepreneurship. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, the research explored how these variables shape the decision-making process of young people considering entrepreneurship as a career path.

The findings reveal that psychosocial factors — especially perceived behavioral control, attitude, and formal networks — play a decisive role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. Among these, perceived behavioral control emerged as the strongest predictor, underscoring the importance of self-belief and confidence in one’s ability to start and manage a business. A positive attitude toward entrepreneurship and access to formal networks also demonstrated significant positive effects, while structural support, though beneficial, was found to have a weaker influence than initially hypothesised.

These results suggest that the challenge in fostering entrepreneurship among youth in Zambia is not solely structural or financial. Rather, it is equally — if not more — about empowering young people to believe they can succeed, changing mindsets around entrepreneurship, and strengthening access to supportive networks that provide knowledge, mentorship, and connection to opportunities.

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing context-specific insights into the entrepreneurial intentions of Zambian youth — a group often spoken of in policy circles but underexplored in empirical research. By focusing on university students in Lusaka, this research bridges a critical gap and offers evidence that can guide more effective interventions aimed at nurturing entrepreneurship among graduates.

Ultimately, if entrepreneurship is to serve as a genuine pathway out of unemployment and poverty in Zambia, strategies must go beyond funding and regulatory reforms. They must address the softer, but equally critical, dimensions of mindset, confidence, social capital, and entrepreneurial education. Only then can Zambia unlock the full potential of its young population as drivers of innovation, job creation, and economic resilience.

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