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THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN PROMOTING DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN JORDAN

Case Study

Keywords
Digital Entrepreneurship Intention;
Entrepreneurship Education;
Business Incubation;
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy;

JEL Classification
L26; I20

Abstract

In today's world, technology has taken a place so drastically that everything is being digitalized. Universities play a critical role in promoting entrepreneurship, providing the right entrepreneurial education, and contributing to economic and social development. However, few studies have examined the role of business incubators in universities. Therefore, the study explores the status of entrepreneurship education and incubation services and the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on supporting digital entrepreneurship intention among the students at public and private universities in Jordan. Eighty-one students' responses were received from three universities through an online questionnaire. The result of multiple linear regression confirmed that there is a significant and positive relationship between digital entrepreneurship intention and each of the following factors: entrepreneurship education, business incubation, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The study findings contribute to the current literature of digital entrepreneurship, by representing the significance of universities supporting systems in stimulating the students to start their own online businesses.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is one of the most important subjects for countries worldwide, and it has a strong academic presence as well. Entrepreneurs are important for countries not only because they promote creativity and innovation, but also because they generate more employment and contribute to economic development. Nowadays, the use of emerging digital technology is viewed as a key factor in promoting entrepreneurship in the region (Hejazinia, 2015). Furthermore, the internet and technology have significantly altered the process of starting a company and reshaped the business world, resulting in the rise of a new type of entrepreneurship known as Digital Entrepreneurship (Nambisan, Lyytinen, Majchrzak, & Song, 2017). With the advancement of internet technology, choosing digital entrepreneurship as a career becomes much easier. Hence, the internet technology is eliminating entry barriers, lowering the cost of starting a new venture, reducing the risk associated with the firm formation process, and opening up new opportunities for entrepreneurs (Ben Youssef, Boubaker, Dedaj, & Carabregu-Vokshi, 2020).

Universities play an important role in promoting entrepreneurship, providing the right entrepreneurial education, and contributing to economic and social development (Ahmed, Chandran, & Klobas, 2017). However, a large body of research supports the importance of entrepreneurship education in the evolution of entrepreneurship, but only a small body of research highlights the role of business incubators in promoting entrepreneurship, especially in developing countries (Li, Ur Rehman, & Asim, 2019). Practitioners agree that entrepreneurship education alone is not enough to improve students' entrepreneurial skills and intentions. However, business incubators play a unique role in revealing and exposing the latent capacities of potential entrepreneurs. Therefore, this study examines the effect of education and incubation services as well as the effect of self-efficacy on university students' intention in digital business in Jordan.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents a review of the literature and theoretical framework; section 3 describes the methodology; section 4 contains data collection and measurement issues; section 5 presents the model analysis, results, and discussion, section 6 contains the conclusions.

LITRERATURE REVIEW

Digital Entrepreneurship Intention (DEI) in universities

Several studies about fostering the students' entrepreneurship intentions have been conducted thoroughly (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; Liñán, Urbano, & Guerrero, 2011). Intentions are considered as reliable predictions of entrepreneurial behavior; thus, it is important to understand what factors affect the entrepreneurial intentions between university students (Krueger et al., 2000). Numerous scholars have suggested definitions of entrepreneurship intention. For example, Krueger & Carsrud (1993) defined it as a personal commitment to start a new venture. Entrepreneurial intention is being considered a vital outcome of entrepreneurial activities, as it has a direct connection to entrepreneurial action (Krueger et al., 2000). Digital entrepreneurial intention is defined as the level of an individual's motivation and readiness to create a business on the internet (Liñán & Chen, 2009).

The widespread of digital technologies affect students' entrepreneurship intention in two ways. First, the feasibility of becoming entrepreneur. New digital startups enter the market using the power of technology without facing the entry barriers in traditional businesses such as bureaucratic entry rules (Ben Youssef, Boubaker, & Omri, 2018) or huge investment amount (Geroski & Schwalbach, 1991).

Digitalization is removing entry barriers, unnecessary sunk costs, reducing the cost of creating a new business, minimizing the risk involved in the firm establishment process, and providing new opportunities to entrepreneurs (Ben Youssef et al., 2020). Also, digital technologies create new market needs and desire a new type of businesses and entrepreneurs. Consequently, it become more feasible for many people to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The second way is that digital technologies ease the educational support for entrepreneurship which accordingly help the students to stimulate their innovation, creativity, cognitive skills, and other relevant skills essential for potential entrepreneurs (Sousa, Carmo, Gonçalves, Cruz, & Martins, 2019). Digital technologies are making the education process more problem-solving oriented and practical (Ben Youssef & Dahmani, 2008). Additionally, digital technologies offer new opportunities for students to exploit their period of education to set up their businesses successfully.

Theoretical background and hypothesis development

Social Cognitive theory looks at people as instruments and diverse providers to change the circumstances that impact their lives (Bandura,

1999). Whilst, goals could be achieved if individuals assume that their own skills and behaviors are eligible to achieve the preferred results (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli, 2003). Academic entrepreneurship activities enable and improve the students' cognition, constantly modifies their ideas and practices, and establish their entrepreneurial capabilities to be more valuable, and reliable (Krueger, 2009). However, another theory that is applicable to this study is the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which highlights that entrepreneurial behavior is planned and intentional. The theory suggests that perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions are acquired within the setting of a given environment and thus predicting entrepreneurial intentions. Therefore, by connecting this theory to what is presented in this study, the author argues that since perception, beliefs, and assumptions can be shaped and developed by educational information that is circulated among university students then university entrepreneurship activities might predict the entrepreneurship intention.

Entrepreneurship Education (EE)

Entrepreneurship education has taken place in business schools since the 1970s. Lately, it has been developing very quickly (Sun, Lo, Liang, & Wong, 2017). Entrepreneurship education is commonly perceived as an educational initiative designed to enhance the knowledge, perceptions, and skills either as a possible career option or as a positive influence on an individual's understanding of its role in society (Mwasalwiba, 2010). Recently, It has been evidenced that education's role in promoting entrepreneurial activity is effective among university students (Aboobaker & Renjini, 2020; Vodă, Covatariu, & Ghiuță, 2019). Education could be vital for offering the necessary entrepreneurial skills and knowledge as well as to inspire the students to initiate their own venture. It also develops the entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes that are compatible with the economy's needs (Sun et al., 2017). It has been confirmed that the four components of entrepreneurial education (Know-what, know-how, know-who, know-why) do influence the attitude toward entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship intention (Sun et al., 2017). Moreover, education is considered as one of the main factors that distinguish entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs and significantly influence the entrepreneurial intentions of the students (Vodă et al., 2019). Besides that, education not only has a positive impact on entrepreneurial intention but also on nurturing entrepreneurial competencies (Wang, Yueh, & Wen, 2019). Ashourizadeh, Nasiri, & Schøtt (2014) found that education largely develops competencies such as self-efficacy, which accordingly benefit the entrepreneurial intention to create a business. Therefore, entrepreneurship education equips an individual with the necessary knowledge and entrepreneurial skills which eventually forming the entrepreneurial intention, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Entrepreneurship Education courses have a positive and direct impact on digital entrepreneurship intention.

Business Incubation (BI)

Building a fruitful university entrepreneurship ecosystem and technology commercialization needs more than just classroom-teaching support, and by linking the main factors including business, technology, science, and other key players is essential to achieve this mission (Nelson & Monsen, 2014). University-based incubators effectively combine resources, capital, assets, know-how, and technology to maximize the entrepreneurial talent, quicken the growth of new digital startups, and accelerate the commercialization of technology (Bathula, Karia, & Abbott, 2011).

Specifically, incubators deliver a range of services aimed at fostering the growth and sustainability of startups across four main services: 1- flexible and subsidized physical spaces, 2 - facilitation of financial services 3 - business advising, and 4 - networking services (Rubens, A., Jackson, G., & Andrews, 2011; Vanderstraeten, J., & Matthyssens, 2012). Several scholars (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993; Stephens & Onofrei, 2012) confirmed that entrepreneurial experience and training have a significant impact on an individual's beliefs and attitudes towards starting a new business. Therefore, incubating services will significantly affect the students' intentions and perceptions because of the experiences and learning impact offered in the business incubators.

Al-edenat & Al hawamdeh (2020) highlighted the importance of the adoption of the concept of "Business incubators" in universities in Jordan as they trigger the venture creation and develop the marketing competencies within small startups and business entrepreneurship (Abu-Jalil, 2017). The study of Ikebuaku & Dinbabo (2018) found that business incubation services have increased potential entrepreneurs to access to more resources and infrastructures which are necessary for entrepreneurial success. Similarly, Ahmed, Chandran, Klobas, Liñán, & Kokkalis (2020) found that access to incubation services had the strongest impact on entrepreneurial intention among university students. Moreover, Li, Ur Rehman, & Asim (2019) found that business incubation has a direct and positive impact on the entrepreneurial intention among the students. Therefore, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: The business incubation services have a positive and direct impact on digital entrepreneurship intention.

Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE)

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his/her ability to accomplish a certain task (Bandura, 1999). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has been described as the degree to which a person believes in his or her ability to create a new venture successfully (Sánchez, 2011). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is considered the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention and to the plan to start a new business (Tiwari, Bhat, Tikoria, & Saha, 2019; Tran & Von Korflesch, 2016). People with a high level of ESE are considered to have a higher degree of capabilities and are also shown to be entrepreneurial, and because they demand more on their internal factors, they are becoming more able to achieve better outcomes (Pérez-López, González-López, & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019). ESE also explains not only the prediction in entrepreneurial intentions but also increases the probability that these intentions will lead to real behaviors (Mauer, Neergaard, & Linstad, 2017). Surprisingly, self-efficacy failed to produce a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention among Croatian students (Zovko, Bilić, & Dulčić, 2020). Moreover, Oyugi (2015) found that self-efficacy had partially mediated the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has a positive and direct impact on digital entrepreneurship intention.

Based on the literature reviewed, a conceptual framework for the study is displayed in Figure 1.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Sampling, procedure, and data collection

The primary data source researcher did use in obtaining this research's data is from the questionnaire instrument. Respondents were asked to score 39 statements, grouped into 6 sections (Digital entrepreneurship intention, entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship training, business incubation, self-efficacy, general data). The respondents scored the statements ranging from" strongly disagree" to" strongly agree" in all other sections. The questionnaire items were translated into Arabic before the collecting data phase. The author purposively targeted three Jordanian universities namely, the University of Jordan, Al Al–bayt University, and Petra university because they provided education and incubation services (Alakaleek, 2019), and were accessible online. The survey was distributed to three official student groups on social network platforms. The collecting data phase lasted for two weeks in December 2020. Only 81 completed survey responses were received from students. All the students covered by the sample were active students at those three universities. The sample included non-business students and business students to fill the gap addressed by researchers (Fauzy, Yusof, & Nasurdin, 2020).

Measurement

All the variables were measured using five Likert scales developed and verified by different scholars, the author modified the scales in accordance with the Jordanian environmental settings. Six items to measure digital entrepreneurial intention (EI) were adopted from (Liñán & Chen, 2009). Six items to measure entrepreneurship education (EE) were adopted from (Ben Youssef et al., 2020). Five items to measure business incubation (BI) were adopted from (Giordano Martínez, Fernández-Laviada, & Herrero Crespo, 2018). Six items to measure Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) were adopted from (Liñán & Chen, 2009).

The result of descriptive statistics of demographic variables as following, the author found that 55.6% of the total sample (21-24 years old), 39.9% (17-20 years old), and 4.9% (25 years old or more). 63% (Female) and 37% (Male). Regarding the marital status 76.5% (single), 21% (Married), and 2.5% (Other). The education level shows 76.8 % (Bachelor), 24.7 % (Master), and 2.5% (Ph.D.). 42% of the respondents from (Petra university), 39.5% (University of Jordan), and 18.5% (Al-Albayt university). 56.8% of respondents do not belong to (business and economics faculty), while 43.2% of the respondents belong to (Business and economics faculty). 67.9% (Don't have a job), while 32.1% (Have a job). 82.7% of the respondents (Don't have entrepreneurial experience), while 17.30 % (Had entrepreneurial experience). 74.1 % (None of the family members have a business), while 25.90 % (One of the family members have a business).

The research did use SPSS 23 to analyze the data. The descriptive statistics conducted to label the demographics features of the respondents. For sake of reliability, Cronbach's alpha was conducted across all subscales. The overall Cronbach alpha for all variables was 0.796 which is above the minimum acceptable value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1994). Moreover, multiple regression analysis was applied to obtain the results of the study. Pearson correlation test was conducted to measure the inter-item reliability of the constructs, all the values show significance at 99% level of significance which indicated that all the items contributed significantly to the suggested measurement constructs of the study.

MODEL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section presents the findings obtained after running the suitable statistical tests based on proposed hypotheses. The four variables of the study show positively correlated with DEI within the range 0.524 for BI and 0.556 for ESE at significance at 0.01 level as shown in Table 1 below.

The multiple linear regression analysis showed a significant correlation between the DEI and, EE, ET, BI, and ESE as described in table 2, therefore, the author supports H1, H2, and H3.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between the dependent variable (DEI) and the four independent variables (EE, ET, BI, ESE) equal to 0.813 showed positive and strong relationships, and the value of R square (0.660), which means that the independent variables explain 66.00 % of the variance occurred in DEI.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to find the status of Jordanian universities in promoting digital entrepreneurship intention among the students through evaluating the education, training, incubation services, and level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy between the students.

As shown in Table 2, the author confirms that there is a significant positive correlation between DEI and EE, BI, and ESE. Notably, the result of the study align with the previous studies, for instance, Aboobaker & Renjini (2020) study on Indian student reported that entrepreneurship education was effective in predicting the entrepreneurial intention. In addition, the findings of this study are similar to the study conducted on Pakistani students that found the access to incubation was the strongest factor that affected entrepreneurial intention (Ahmed et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019). Finally, the findings of this study also similar to the results of the study conducted on 346 students in China that found entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively and significantly affected entrepreneurial intention (Li et al., 2020).

From the results of the hypothesis tests, it is clear that EE, BI, and ESE affect digital entrepreneurship intention. From the descriptive results, it is already obvious that the mean of DEI is above the average (2.722 on a five-point scale) which indicates that universities need to stimulate DEI more effectively through enhancing entrepreneurship education, training, and incubation services. Students showed a promising level of self-efficacy (2.833) which is a good indicator that they have a possibility to do entrepreneurial tasks, universities need to exploit those capabilities and help the students in creating digital startups.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This research study contributes in various ways to the digital entrepreneurship literature by investigating students' intentions in Jordanian universities to involve in digital entrepreneurship. This study revealed that entrepreneurship education, business incubation, and self-efficacy have a strong and positive effect on the digital entrepreneurial intentions of Jordanian universities' students. On the basis of this knowledge, Jordanian universities could improve their policy lists to include entrepreneurship education and incubation services which will eventually stimulate a DEI for the students and inspire them to involve in this form of entrepreneurial activity. Thus, instructors and policymakers should consider integrating disciplines about digital entrepreneurship into university courses, providing seminars, workshops, internship opportunities, specialized training, and valuable incubation services to develop the students' competencies and their knowledge about digital entrepreneurship. The limitations of the study are represented by the small sample size, if the sample size was larger, then the findings of the study could be more accurate. Therefore, the author could not generalize the results to the total population. Future studies need to deploy a larger sample size and include a larger number of universities. Also, the independent variables explain 66.00 % of the variance that occurred in DEI, so future research needs to include other factors, such as motivational factors, personality traits, and competencies.

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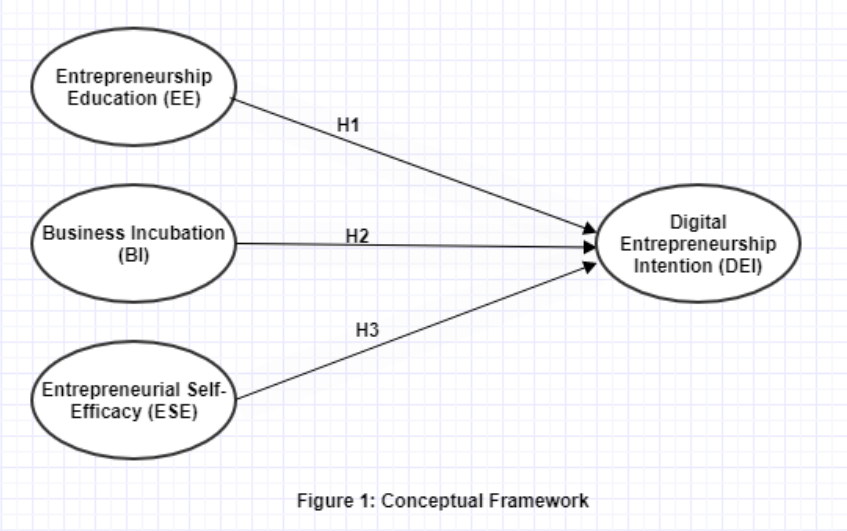

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework
Source: The author

Table 1
Pearson correlation table

Variable	Mean	SD	DEI	EE	BI	ESE
DEI	2.7222	0.64226	1			
EE	2.7037	0.55777	0.552**	1		
BI	2.7333	0.36742	0.524**	-.006	1	
ESE	2.8333	0.30619	0.556**	0.256**	0.267*	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**
Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
Source: The author

Table 2
Regression table

Dependent variable	**Independent variables**	**R**	**R^2**	**β**	**T**	**sign.**
DEI	EE	0.813	0.660	0.474	6.980	0.000
	BI			0.443	6.501	0.000
	ESE			0.317	4.494	0.000

Source: The author