

Does gender moderate the perceived support and entrepreneurship intention relationship? An empirical inquiry

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship promotion is a goal of most governments due to its various socio-economic benefits. Many models explain as what factors can encourage citizens of a country to engage in entrepreneurship activity. In this regard, various types of support which is available to individuals is important factor and evidence suggests that support can influence positively to engage in entrepreneurial activity. However, there is little literature available on how the support is perceived and influences entrepreneurship orientation differently by various demographic factors such as gender, age, and social background. In the present study, we investigate this issue by using the Perceived Support Model (PSM) along with three dimensions namely educational, relational, and structural, and their influence on entrepreneurship intention in the Oman context. The objective of the study was to test the effects of the three dimensions of the support model on the entrepreneurship intention of youth with gender as a moderator. The methodology of the study was a cross-sectional survey method of data collection with a convenience non-random sampling approach (n=662). The reliability and validity are tested using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis performed through AMOS. The path analysis indicates that perceived educational support ($\beta=.042, <.05$); and perceived structural support ($\beta=.088, P<.05$) positively and significantly influence entrepreneurship intention among the individuals. Furthermore, moderation results indicate that the influence of perceived educational support ($\Delta X^2= 2.96, P<.05$); and perceived structural support ($\Delta X^2= 3.24, P<.05$) on entrepreneurship intention is significantly different between males and females. The result shows that both genders perceive support differently and thus require more customized interventions. The study recommends support from the government, relevant institutions, educational institutions, and family as such support has a positive influence on entrepreneurship intentions.

Keywords: Gender, Perceived Support, Entrepreneurship, Intentions, Youth, Oman, Gulf.

1. Introduction

Oman Vision 2040 is an important guideline for Oman Government and society in general. The vision emphasizes developing the economy and a move away from oil and gas revenue to other sectors such as tourism, technology, manufacturing, and services. However, the vision and goals cannot be achieved if the youth population of Oman does not engage in entrepreneurial activity. This is because

entrepreneurship is an important factor in any country's development as it has the potential to contribute to socioeconomic development by creating jobs, reducing unemployment, raising government revenues, and solving social problems (Wu & Si, 2018). Thus, the Government of Oman is also emphasizing the promotion of entrepreneurship among its citizens with a special focus on the youth population. There are several models which are used for understanding why the youth of society take interest in entrepreneurship or what factors can promote such entrepreneurial behavior. However, in the present study, we focus on one particular aspect namely support which has the potential to influence the entrepreneurship intentions of individuals. To this end, Turker and Selcuk (2008) perceived support model and its influence on entrepreneurship intention is used. The model consists of three dimensions namely perceived educational support (PES), perceived relational support (PRS), and perceived structural support (PSS).

1.1 Research Gap

The relationship between perceived support and its three dimensions with entrepreneurship intention is tested in some previous studies such as Mahlaole and Malebana (2021); Tahir, Iqbal, Siddiq, and Jan (2018); and Fizza (2017). However, there are two important gaps that this study intends to fill. The first gap is the contextual gap as the perceived support model is mostly ignored by entrepreneurship researchers and there is no such study in Oman that utilize this model. Thus, the first gap is contextual which this study intends to fill. The second gap is theoretical as the relationship between perceived support and entrepreneurship intention is not investigated using demographic factors. In the present study, we exclusively used gender as a moderator to test if it moderates the relationship between perceived support dimensions and entrepreneurship intentions. This is because we believe gender is an important variable in this context since Oman is a Muslim country with its own tribal cultural traditions. There is a lot of progress in terms of female equality in various domains of life; however, still there is room for improvement in many areas. Furthermore, the extent of entrepreneurship as a career choice among Omani females is still very limited as it is seen as abnormal in many rural areas of Oman. Thus, Oman provides an interesting place to study entrepreneurship and its predictors from a gender perspective. Based on these two literature gaps, in the present study, we focus on perceived support and its dimensions and entrepreneurship intention with the moderating role of gender.

1.2 Research Question

The study focuses on the following research question;

1. Does gender moderate the effects of perceived educational, relational, and structural support on the entrepreneurship intentions of young Omanis?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The importance of the study is that it is one of the first studies to test the perceived support model and entrepreneurship intention in the Omani context. The study can shed light on how both genders perceive and differ in terms of perceived support and their influence on entrepreneurship intention. The findings can aid decision-making for the management of higher education, development agencies, and the government ministries of Oman to devise more suitable strategies and programs to promote entrepreneurship. The findings can also be used by students, academicians, and future researchers.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Perceived Support Model and Entrepreneurship Intentions

Educational support is the first dimension of the model and previous studies indicate that its availability in various forms such as suitable courses in educational institutes positively influences an individual's entrepreneurship intention (e.g. Diaz-Casero, Hernandez-Mogollón, & Roldán, 2012; Fizza, 2017; Liu, Gorgievski, Qi, & Paas, 2022; Su, Zhu, Chen, Jin, Wang, Lin, & Xu, 2021). Similarly, support from various relational sources such as family and friends can also positively influence entrepreneurship intention (Ambad and Damit, 2016; Ernawati, Sinambela, Cici, Silviana, Azizah, & Naudalia, 2022; Tahir et al., 2018). Finally, structural support such as support from the government and its relevant departments or ministries and financial institutions can also influence entrepreneurship intention positively (Turker & Selcuk, 2008; Wei, 2022). Based on the previous studies and the perceived support

model, we propose that three types of perceived support can influence entrepreneurship intentions. Our specific hypotheses are as follows;

H1: PES significantly effect the entrepreneurship intentions of young Omanis.

H2: PRS significantly effect the entrepreneurship intentions of young Omanis.

H3: PSS significantly effect the entrepreneurship intentions of young Omanis.

2.2 Gender as Moderator

Gender is considered an important variable in entrepreneurship-related studies. This is because there is increasing interest in examining female entrepreneurship due to the fact that female welfare can be significantly increased since entrepreneurship is related to economic and social independence (Brush, De Bruin, & Welter, 2009). Furthermore, the current study which is based on the Oman context has its own socio-cultural situation and it needs to be kept in mind while studying women as an entrepreneur in this context.

Based on the perceived support model, the first main support is educational. There is empirical support that entrepreneurship education is found to be more effective for females compared to males for promoting entrepreneurship among individuals (e.g. Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Ramadani, Rahman, Salamzadeh, Rahaman, & Abazi-Alili, 2022). There are other studies that show that educational support is important for the promotion of entrepreneurship among individuals (e.g. Alexandre & Kharabsheh, 2019; Tahir & Kutpudeen, 2022). It means that both males and females perceive educational support differently and thus outcomes also vary.

The second factor is relational and the result of previous studies shows that both males and females also perceive support differently. For example, a study showed that if women belong to a family background which is supporting entrepreneurship, it can motivate females to engage in entrepreneurship activity (Moreno-Gómez, Gómez-Araujo, Ferrer-Ortíz, & Pena-Ruiz, 2022; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008). Other studies also reported that reasonable relational support can influence the entrepreneurship intention of an individual (e.g. Ambad & Damit, 2016; Ibrahim, Daveshe, and Ubaidullah, 2017; Kebaili, Al-Subyae, Al-Qahtani, and Belkhamza, 2015) In other words, if reasonable relational support is available, results will be a higher entrepreneurship intention among female.

The third factor is structural support and a study by Ahl and Nelson (2015) shows that female entrepreneurship potential can be enhanced by providing institutional support. Similarly, a study by Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, & Al Sadoon (2014) shows that if females perceive greater institutional support, it can promote entrepreneurship. There are other studies that also reported similar results (e.g. Kazumi & Kawai, 2017; Munoz & Kibler, 2016). Thus, overall, we can say that support is an important characteristic and play an important role in the promotion of entrepreneurship. Based on the previous studies and consistent with the literature, we propose gender as a moderator in the relationship between perceived support and entrepreneurship intention. The study thus proposes;

H4: There is a significant difference between males and females for the influence of PES on the entrepreneurship intentions of young Omanis.

H5: There is a significant difference between males and females for the influence of PRS on the entrepreneurship intentions of young Omanis.

H6: There is a significant difference between males and females for the influence of PSS on the entrepreneurship intentions of young Omanis.

2.3 Theoretical Model and the Hypotheses

The theoretical foundation of the study is based on the perceived support model (Turker & Selcuk, 2008) to develop the proposed model. On the basis of it, we hypothesize that entrepreneurship intentions among young Omanis are influenced by perceived support including educational, relational, and structural support, and is moderated by gender. Our theoretical model is as follows;

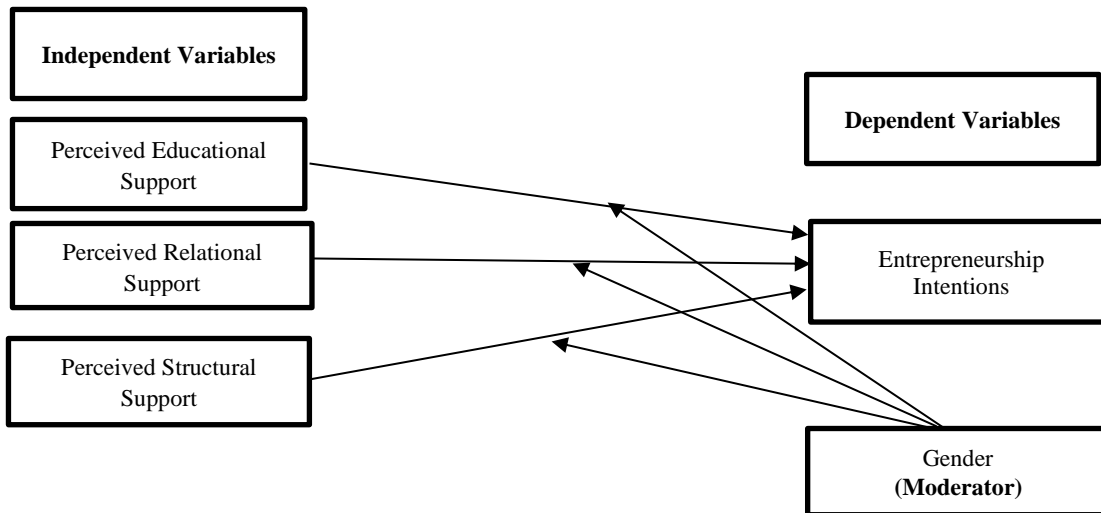


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Study

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study is guided by the positivism research paradigm means considering reality and researchers as separate along with the use of logic and human senses to establish reality. Based on the positivism paradigm, the design of the study is set as cross-sectional and explanatory as data is collected single time from the participants. Explanatory means the nature of the study is testing the predictor and outcome variable.

3.2 Population and Sampling

All young Omanis make up the population of the study. Based on the National Centre for Statistics & Information, Government of Oman (2020), there are 219552 young Omanis in the age bracket of 18 to 30 years. Because of the large population, we used the sampling approach and selected participants from the population conveniently. Furthermore, we used Krejice and Morgan's (1970) formula for calculating the sample size and the 662 is required sample.

3.3 Data Collection

For data collection, we used local research assistants who circulated the survey questionnaire online. The survey was made available in both English and Arabic language.

3.4 Measurement of Variables

Mainly the study used the measure developed by Turker and Seluck (2008). It consists of 3, 2, and 4 items for educational, relational, and structural dimensions respectively. The entrepreneurship measure consists of 6 items and is based on Linan and Chen (2009).

3.5 Data Analysis

The data is analyzed using SPSS version 26 and CB SEM analysis is performed using AMOS. The analysis consists of 2 stages including the measurement model for testing reliability and validity; and path analysis and moderation analysis for hypotheses testing purposes.

3.6 Ethical Issues

No personal information is obtained from the survey participants. All participation is voluntary and no one is forced to take part in the survey. Participants are clearly informed about the purpose of the survey. Data collected is kept confidential and used only for academic purposes and is not handed over to any other organization.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Information

Following are the survey participants key demographic details.

Table 1 *Demographic Details*

	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	426	64.4%
Female	236	35.6%
Qualification		
Diploma	208	31.4%
Advanced Diploma	188	28.4%
Bachelor	120	18.1%
Others	146	22.1%
Fathers Profession		
Self-Business	365	55.1%
Job Holder	243	36.7%
Others	54	8.2%

Source: Author's Survey 2022

Based on table 1 above, the number of respondents was 662 youngsters which include 426 males (64.4%); and 236 females (35.6%). 208 participants had the qualification of Diploma level (31.4%); 188 were Advanced Diploma students (28.4%); 120 were Bachelor students (18.1%), and 146 belonged to the others category (22.1%). In terms of fathers' profession, 365 participants stated that their fathers had self-business (55.1%); 243 stated that their fathers are job holders (36.7%); and 54 responded 'others' as their reply (8.2%).

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

	Min Statistic	Max Statistic	Mean Statistic	S.D. Statistic
PES	1.13	4.97	3.4564	1.03630
PRS	1.33	5.00	3.9772	.86558
PSS	1.01	4.83	3.3119	.99316
Entrepreneurship Intention	1.39	5.00	4.0644	.93934

The result shown in Table 2 above indicates that according to the participants, there is a reasonable level of support including PES (M=3.45, SD=1.03); PRS (M=3.97, SD=.86); and PSS (M=3.31, SD=.99). Furthermore, there is a favorable level of entrepreneurship intention in the sample (M=4.06, SD=.93).

4.3 CFA and Hypotheses Testing

The first step of analysis included testing for reliability and validity using the CFA. The convergent validity is established by checking the standardized factor loadings which were greater than 0.70 and Average Variance Extraction which was above 0.50 for all constructs thus ensuring validity. Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha and Composite Reliability for all constructs were above 0.70 so it indicated satisfactory reliability. After testing the validity and reliability, we performed the main analysis of hypotheses testing, and the results are as follows;

Table 3 *Hypotheses Testing- Path Analysis*

H. No.	Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Remarks
H1	PES>EI	.042	.016	2.62	**	Accepted
H2	PRS>EI	-.013	.045	-.285	.776	Rejected
H3	PSS>EI	.088	.026	3.340	***	Accepted

*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001

Our results in Table 3 show that PES ($\beta=.042$ P<.05) and PSS ($\beta=.088$, <.05) positively and significantly influence entrepreneurship intention; whereas, PRS ($\beta=-.013$, P>.05) negatively and insignificantly

influence entrepreneurship intention.

Our next set of analyses included treating gender as a moderator for all three proposed relationships. Before performing the analysis, we performed the measurement model invariance (that means the measurement of constructs are same for both groups). For ensuring measurement model invariance, we tested three types including configure, metric, and scalar, and found satisfactory results and then proceeded to actual multigroup analysis.

Table 4 *Moderation Analysis*

H. No.	Path	Beta for Male	Beta for Female	Chi-Square Difference (ΔX^2)	Remarks
H4	PES>EI	.033*	.049*	2.96	Accepted
H5	PRS>EI	-.014	-.039	2.143	Rejected
H6	PSS>EI	.068*	.091**	3.24	Accepted

*<.05, **<.01, ***<.001

The key finding is that the effects of PES on entrepreneurship intention between male ($\beta=.033$, $P<.05$) and female ($\beta=.049$, $P<.05$) is statistically significantly different (Chi-Square=2.96, $P<.05$). The result also shows that the effects of PRS on entrepreneurship intention between male ($\beta=-.014$, $P>.05$) and female ($\beta=-.039$, $P>.05$) are statistically insignificantly different (Chi-Square=2.143, $P>.05$). Finally, the effects of PSS on entrepreneurship intention between male ($\beta=.068$, $P<.05$) and female ($\beta=.091$, $P<.05$) is statistically significantly different (Chi-Square=3.24, $P<.05$). The result shows that gender is an important moderator as we found significantly different values for male and female. In other words, it shows that females, if receive more educational and structural support, it will bring a more positive influence in terms of entrepreneurship intentions. The result also highlights the importance of a more tailored approach for male and females for promoting entrepreneurship.

4.4 Discussion

The finding suggests that gender moderates the entrepreneurship intention while predicted by the dimensions of the perceived support model as we found significant differences between males and females for the PES and structural support on entrepreneurship intention. The results are consistent with the literature that suggest that support can be perceived differently by female compared to male and have varying level of influence on entrepreneurship creation (e.g. Ahl & Nelson, 2015; Langowitz, et al., 2022; Munoz & Kibler, 2016; Welsh et al., 2014). For example, a study by Kazumi and Kawai (2017) reported that if female considers various type of support as more important and such support has a higher level of influence on the entrepreneurship intention of the women. Other studies also reported similar results including Moreno-Gómez et al., (2022); Goltz, Buche, and Pathak (2015); and Lee and Marvel (2014). Thus, we can say that our results are consistent with the literature. The findings have implications for the management of higher educational institutes to design more gender-specific interventions to promote entrepreneurship among the youth. Similarly, government and its relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Commerce and Industry need to design gender-specific programs to enhance entrepreneurship motivation among the youth. Similarly, financial institutions such as banks need to design gender-specific financial products to meet the need of both genders.

5. Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study is based on entrepreneurship intentions predicted by the perceived support model among young Omanis. The objective was to measure the perceived support (educational, relational, and structural) and their influence on entrepreneurship intention with the moderating role of gender. Based on the findings, we can conclude that support is an important factor in this context especially the educational and structural support can have a more significant influence on the entrepreneurship intentions of individuals. Based on the findings of gender as moderator, we can conclude that gender is an important demographic variable in this context and can influence entrepreneurship intentions. We can also conclude that both genders do not perceive support from educational institutions and institutions

similarly and thus need a more customized approach. The main contribution of the study to the literature is that it fills the literature gap about perceived support and entrepreneurship intentions among the Omani youth thus enhancing our understanding of the issue. Furthermore, the contribution of the study is that it tested gender as a moderator in this relationship which shows that gender is an important moderator in this context and needs to be taken into consideration before planning any interventions.

5.2 Limitations

The study limitations are the small sample size and the selection of samples from a specific age group. A future researcher can address these issues by including more robust data collection methods along with a focus on demographic factors other than gender.

5.3 Recommendations

The first recommendation is for the government as it can promote entrepreneurship by providing various types of support such as low-interest-based loans, arrangement of entrepreneurship skills development program, a professional mentoring program, and support in documentation while starting a new business. The Ministry of Commerce & Industry of Oman can contribute significantly to entrepreneurship promotion in the Sultanate. Government can also provide incentives such as subsidized machinery, reduced-price land plots, and tax breaks for youngsters to engage in entrepreneurship activities. The second recommendation is for Higher educational institutions which can focus on students in terms of developing their entrepreneurship-related knowledge and skills. Support can be provided by various initiatives such as business incubation centers, guest lectures, and more suitable entrepreneurship courses. A more tailored approach is required for males and females separately as the needs and motivation for engaging in entrepreneurship activity differ.

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