Exploring the relationship between students' inclination to sports and their entrepreneurial intentions

Dr S. Pavan Kumar
Associate Professor & Head, School of Management,
National Institute of Technology Karnataka (NITK), Surathkal
pavankumar@nitk.ac.in

Abstract: It is logical to explore the university students' inclination to sports and its impact on their entrepreneurial intentions, as both sports and entrepreneurship share many similar characteristics. In the last one-decade, scholars in the area of entrepreneurship were trying to find out the factors that can predict the entrepreneurial intentions among the students of higher education. This interest is largely because entrepreneurship has an important role to play in this competitive global business environment. It develops market economy. Thus, the topic of entrepreneurship has created motivation among the research scholars to find its antecedents. To achieve this aim, data were collected from 255 students who are studying an undergraduate course in Indian Universities. The proposed causal relationship in the model were examined with the help SmartPLS 3.0 software. The research showed interesting patterns; the students who want to be better than others in sport, and strive hard to become the best in sports have demonstrated their readiness for entrepreneurship intent. Further, the result shows that entrepreneurial attitude acts as a mediator between students' inclination to sports and entrepreneurial intention. Findings emphasize the importance of motivating students to participate in sports activities, not just for upkeeping their mental and physical health, but they are the people who can start their own enterprise. They are the people who can contribute to the growth of the economy. Administrators and the people who are at the helm of responsibility of educational institutions should endorse the fact and make efforts to provide all the required facilities for the young students to participate in sports.
Keywords: Sports, entrepreneurial intentions, educational institutions, and undergraduate students

1. Introduction

The motivation behind to explore the relationship between students' inclination to sports and their entrepreneurial intentions stems out of the common characteristics they possess. Sports and entrepreneurship can be linked form both the contextual and the individual perspective (Steinbrink, Berger, & Kuckertz, 2020). Passion, vision, self-confidence, tenacity, flexibility and challenge seeking are seen as common characteristics between an entrepreneur and a sports person, though they are applied in different ways in both the domains**.** According to Steinbrink et al., (2020) people who are considering entrepreneurship as career option and those who undertake physical activity share certain personality traits. They are found to be emotionally stable, have a greater propensity for risk, and more conscientious (Hao Zhao, Seibert, & Lumpkin, 2010). In addition, entrepreneurship is about individuals interacting with his/her environment to exploit opportunities that exist (Heinonen & Poikkijoki, 2006), it holds true with sports as well. In the last one-decade scholars' in the area of entrepreneurship were trying to find the factors that can predict the entrepreneurial intentions among the students of higher education, as intentions have proven to be the best predictor of planned behavior (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000). Previously, studies have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, risk-taking propensity and entrepreneurial intention (Tiwari, Bhat, & Tikoria, 2017; Timuroğlu & Akpınar, 2017**;** Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). However, there exists a void in literature that explored the relationship between students' inclination towards sports and their entrepreneurial intentions. The premise to examine such a relationship is the study conducted by Feder & Niţu-Antonie (2017), who concluded that attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control are an essential indicators of entrepreneurial intention. Attitudes are part of individuals' personality and hence the relationship between students' inclination to sports and their entrepreneurial intentions needs an attention. Research in this domain has recognized theoretical relationship between top sports persons traits and personality traits of entrepreneurs; however, there exist no empirical research till date (Steinbrink et al., 2020).

There is another school of thought, which emphasizes on person-job-fit theory. Which says that people and their jobs are compatible when a job's demands and the persons' abilities, fit the individual's needs (Kristof, 1996). According to person-job-fit theory, assuming a person with sports inclination would likely to start his/her own enterprise is not an imaginary proposition. Ratten (2015) shows that the personality traits of athletes match with those of entrepreneurs. Linking sports and entrepreneurship is an emerging field of research (Hammerschmidt, Eggers, Kraus, Jones, & Filser, 2020).

The manuscript is organized as follows: First, a review of literature, gaps in research and hypotheses are presented. Second, methodology section describes the sample and measures used. Third, reliability analysis and descriptive statistics are presented. Fourth, hypotheses testing is conducted using SmartPLS 3.0 and results are presented. Finally, discuss, implications and limitations of the study are presented.

2. Review of Literature

In the introduction part, we have seen that both sports person and the entrepreneur possess a common set of characteristics. To extent it further, 'need for achievement' is one another important characteristic that is common to

both the sports person and the entrepreneur. Someone's attention to an achievement is termed as 'need for achievement'. It enables someone to perform better than other people or better than his/her previous achievement (McClelland, 1961). In sports, achievement goal theory is very popular and also well-researched theory in sport psychology (Nicholls, 1989). Achievement goal theory suggests that the ability is demonstrated by surpassing the performance of others, or by performing equally well when compared with others with less effort (Cumming, Smith, Smoll, Standage, & Grossbard, 2008). Similarly, in the context of entrepreneurship, the need for achievement motivates someone to look for an entrepreneurial job to reach a higher achievement than another job (Kobia & Sikalieh, 2010). In a recent research, it was found that need for achievement correlates to entrepreneurial intention (Suan, Ai, Raman, Loon & Tanumihardja, 2011). In the present study need for achievement in sports is seen as inclination towards sports. Based on the above arguments, the following hypothesis is formulated.

H_1: *There is a positive relationship between students' inclination towards sports and entrepreneurial intention*

One needs to possess specific characteristics to float a new enterprise in future or to develop an existing enterprise and take it to newer heights. Among many characteristics, need for achievement (Kobia & Sikalieh, 2010) is a significant factor in motivating University students to prefer entrepreneurship as a career option. According to Luthje and Franke (2003) entrepreneur characteristics has a positive influence on entrepreneurial attitude. Thus, the need for achievement is one characteristic among the required entrepreneur characteristics, and it is expected to influence the entrepreneurial attitude. Thus, the following hypothesis has been developed.

H_2: *There is a positive relationship between students' inclination towards sports and entrepreneurial attitude*

According to Ajzen (1991, 2005), attitude refers to a tendency to which an individual like or dislike behavior in question, object, person or an event. Basically, an individual develops favorable or unfavorable attitude when they encounter with an object or event in question based on their own assessment. It is like, when an event is rated as good for me, one has a positive attitude and when the event is rated as bad for me, one has a negative attitude (Kusmintarti, Asdani, & Riwajanti, 2017; Winkel, 2012). Sprouting an intention to have an entrepreneurial career is often seen as the first step in venture creation (Gartner, Shaver, Gatewood, & Katz, 1994). Entrepreneurial intention talks about either creating a new business from start or developing an existing business (Bird, 1988). There exist several theories that predict entrepreneurial intention, to name a few, the maximization of expected utility model proposed by Douglas and Shepherd (2002), the model of implementing entrepreneurial idea (Bird, 1988) etc. However, theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991, 2005) has shown to predict entrepreneurial intention consistently (Moriano, Gorgievski, Laguna, Stephan, & Zarafshani, 2012). TPB suggests that intentions are determined by attitude towards the behavior. Entrepreneurial attitude can be understood as someone's tendency to like or dislike entrepreneurship. Luthje and Franke (2003) found that entrepreneurial attitude has positive and significant influence on entrepreneurial intention. It was also found that there is a dearth of research on entrepreneurial intentions in middle-income economies as classified by world bank (Iakovleva, Kolvereid, & Stephan, 2011; Nabi & Liñán, 2011). Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is framed:

H_3: *There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial intention among university students.*

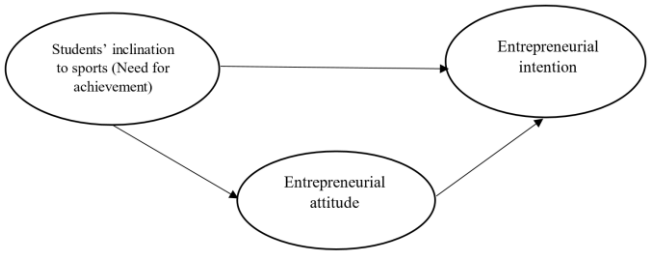


Figure1: Proposed Model

The above literature review suggests that there exists a positive relationship between need for achievement, entrepreneurial attitude, and entrepreneurial intention where need for achievement has a positive influence on both entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial intention. In turn, entrepreneurial attitude influences entrepreneurial intention. Thus, the below mention mediation hypothesis is formulated.

H_4: *Entrepreneurial attitude act as mediator between students' inclination towards sports and entrepreneurial intention.*

3. Method

The study is based on a sample of 255 students pursuing undergraduate program in engineering from the institutions located in India. Judgement sampling method was adopted to collect the data. The median age of the respondents was 21 years. Students inclination towards sports was conceptualized as someone's need for achievement' in sports by demonstrating the ability to surpass the performance of others. It was measured by Achievement Goal scale for youth sports (Cumming et al., 2008). It has 12-items measuring two dimensions, six items measuring mastery and another six items measuring to ego involvement. For the present study, six items measuring ego was considered, as they were more suitable with the context of the study. Ego involved individuals strive to become the best sports person, who wins the most times in competing against others (Nicholls, 1984). Entrepreneurial attitudes was measured using five items which were adopted from

Kickul and Krueger (2004), and Liñán and Chen (2009). Entrepreneurial intentions were measured using four items taken from Douglas and Fitzsimmons (2013). Response categories against each of the question for all the scales included in the study were on a seven-point Likert level. The proposed hypotheses were examined with SmartPLS 3.0 software.

4. Results

A. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability coefficients, Correlations among latent variables, Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Diagonal values shown in italics are AVEs and Square root of AVE values are shown in parenthesis.

Variable	Mean	SD	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	CR	SIS_NfA	Ent_Attribute	Ent_Intention
SIS_NfA	4.46	1.31	0.85	0.88	*.57(.75)*		
Ent_Attribute	5.88	.98	0.86	0.90	.28**	*.65(.80)*	
Ent_Intention	5.71	.99	0.76	0.84	.26**	.71**	*.58(.76)*

Note: All correlations are significant at ** p<.001 level (2-tailed); SD - Standard Deviation, CR - Composite Reliability, SIS_NfA – Students Inclination to Sports (Need for Achievement), Ent_Attribute – Entrepreneurial Attitude, Ent_Intention – Entrepreneurial intention.

Reliability and validity should be tested to ensure proper psychometric properties of the scales (Kumar, 2020). As the values for Cronbach's alpha are well above the recommended threshold of .70, the reliability of the measurements is considered to be acceptable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Validity of the scale can be assessed by convergent and discriminant validity. In convergent validity indicators of a specific construct will converge towards a large portion of the variance that is in common. One way to verify this is to check AVE values greater than .5 (Hair et al., 1998). The AVE values are ranging from .57 to .65 for all the scales used in this study, they meet the criteria. Discriminant validity is said to be established when indicators within a construct are strongly associated with each other, but are different from other constructs indicators. To determine discriminant validity, square roots of AVEs should be higher than the correlations between the constructs. The square root of AVE values was ranging from .75 to .80 for all the scales used in this study, they were much higher than the correlations between the constructs. Hence, discriminant validity is also achieved (see table 1). Apart from the having proper validity and reliability, multi-collinearity problem should be avoided. High collinearity between two or more indicators can seriously bias the results. Methodological research suggests Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 3.3 or less to avoid the issues of multi-collinearity (Kock & Lynn, 2012). The VIF values for the present study were within the threshold limit of 3.3, and they were ranging from 1.30 – 3.3.

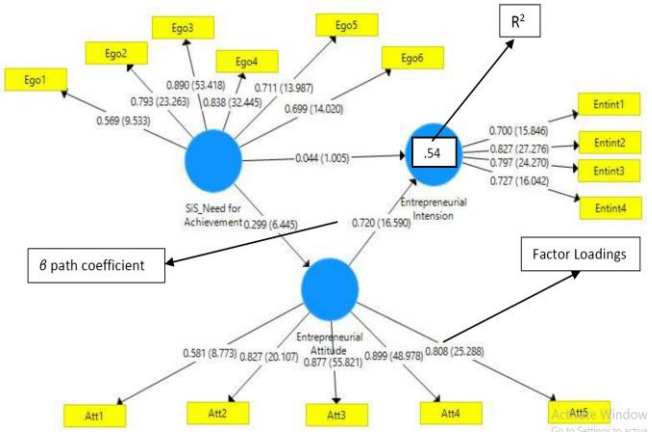
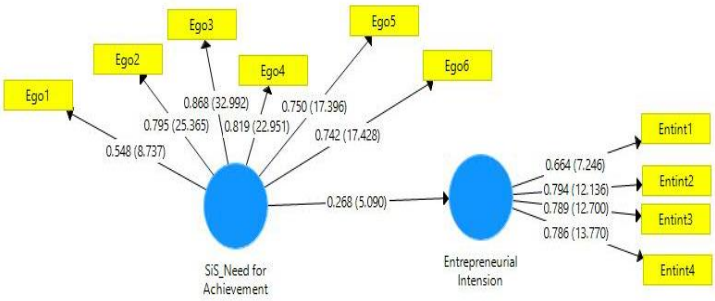


Figure 2: Entrepreneurial attitude as mediator between students' inclination to sports and entrepreneurial intention.

Figure 2 shows outer Loadings of Indicators, Inner values i.e., β path coefficients, and R^2 values. All the loadings are significant at P<.001, β path coefficient between students inclination to sports and entrepreneurial intention is non-significant at p<.001. All the item loadings on their respective constructs were measured above .50. and all were significant. t-statistics is shown in parenthesis for all the indicator variables and for the paths of the model. Any value for t-statistic above 1.96 is considered to be having significant level (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016).

Figure 3: Showing influence of students' inclination to sports on their



entrepreneurial intention

5. Model Quality

Model quality can be evaluated based on the ability of its exogenous constructs to predict the endogenous constructs. Coefficient of determination (R^2) is a measure of the model's predictive accuracy. For the proposed model, the R^2 value is .54, which tells us that the exogenous constructs of the model have achieved moderate prediction accuracy. However, Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and G. Kuppelwieser (2014) suggests considering adjusted R^2, which penalises increasing model complexity by reducing the adjusted R^2 when additional construct/(s) are added to the model. For the present proposed model, the adjusted R^2 value is at .53, which says that the exogenous constructs such as students' inclination to sports and students' entrepreneurial attitude of the model together explains 53 percentage of variance in students' entrepreneurial intention. The remaining 47 percentage is explained by other construct/(s) which is

basically beyond the scope of the proposed model. Hence, the structural model is validated.

Figure 2 shows the results of β coefficients for each link, and they represent the standardised regression path coefficients associated with statistically significant effects.

Table 2. Summary of hypothesised causal relationship and mediation results

Sl. No.	Hypothesised Relations	Path Coefficients (β)	t-statistic	Result
H_1	SIS_NfA→ Ent_Intention	0.268**	05.09	Accepted
H_2	SIS_NfA → Ent_Attribute	0.30**	06.50	Accepted
H_3	Ent_Attribute → Ent_Intention	0.80**	16.59	Accepted
H_4	SIS_NfA→ Ent_Attribute → Ent_Intention	0.04	01.05	Accepted (Full Mediation)

Note: ** significant at p<.001, SIS_NfA – Students Inclination to Sports (Need for Achievement), Ent_Attribute − Entrepreneurial Attitude, Ent_Intention – Entrepreneurial intention.

See table 2, students' inclination to sports has a significant positive impact on students' entrepreneurial intention and students' entrepreneurial attitude with (β=.268, p<.001, t=5.09) and (β=.30, p<.001, t=6.50) respectively. Hence, both hypotheses H_1 and H_2 were accepted. Similarly, students' entrepreneurial attitude was having a significant positive impact on students' entrepreneurial intention with (β=.80, p<.001, t=16.59); hence H_3 is accepted. The result shows that the students' inclination to sports has a positive and significant influence with a beta coefficient of 0.268 on students' entrepreneurial intention, when the model is with no mediator, i.e., students' entrepreneurial attitude (see figure 3). However, upon introducing the mediator construct 'entrepreneurial attitude' in the model, the relationship between exogenous construct 'students' inclination to sports' and endogenous construct 'students' entrepreneurial intention' becomes insignificant and beta coefficient drops to 0.044, indicating a full mediation (Barron, & Kenny, 1986). This essentially means the relationship between students' inclination to sports and students' entrepreneurial intention exists through the mediator construct students' entrepreneurial attitude. In other words, full mediation means, the influence of students' inclination to sports on students' entrepreneurial intention' is completely transmitted with the help of 'students' entrepreneurial attitude'. Hence, H_4 is accepted.

6. Discussion

We have seen that there are many characteristics that are required to be demonstrated by both the sports person and the entrepreneur. The results have empirically shown that the one who is inclined to the sports are the one who is going to venture into entrepreneurship in the near future. The possible explanation for such a relationship is the commonality that exists between the sports person and the entrepreneur. Both of them have the propensity to take risk and attain desired goal. The findings of the present study reinforce the findings published by Bird (1988) and Mazzarol, Volery, Doss, and Thein (1999) which stated that the individual's personality could govern the entrepreneurial intention. The results also state that the person who has an urge to become best in sports among the competitors can have significant influence on entrepreneurial attitude. The explanation for such a relationship can be had from the point, the one who derives satisfaction being a good sports person also derives satisfaction on becoming a successful entrepreneur. Both of them find value in what they feel important for them to be. Previous studies such as Luthje and Franke (2003) identified the positive relationship between risk-taking propensity and entrepreneurial attitude.

Students' who possess an attitude of becoming owner of his/her own businesses tend to comprehend their entrepreneurial ideas in a couple of years down the lane. This finding is matching with Ajzen's theory (2005), which states that the attitude is the predictor of intention. To comprehend further, the present results are in line with the findings by Fini, Grimaldi, Marzocchi, and Sobrero (2009, 2012) which says that entrepreneurial attitude has positive influence on entrepreneurial intention.

The interesting part of the present study is to identify entrepreneurial attitude as a mediator between students' inclination to sports and their entrepreneurial intentions. It essentially means, the total influence of students' inclination to sports on entrepreneurial intentions is not just by itself, but it is explained through entrepreneurial attitude as well. Thus, we can say that students' entrepreneurial attitude acts as a mediator between students' inclination to sports on entrepreneurial intention.

The present research findings are important to the people who are at the helm of responsibility, who participate actively in decision-making process and also to the administrators of undergraduate programs. They need to ensure that adequate resources are made available to young students to actively participate in sports-related activities. Such participation will inculcate them to take challenges and still emerge as a winner, and it can make them realise how important it is to stay as a winner. All necessary steps should be taken to alter their attitude towards entrepreneurship as it plays a vital in propagating entrepreneurial intentions directly and also indirectly.

7. Limitations

The findings of this research paper have certain limitations. Firstly, the analysis was done on cross-sectional data, result may be better with longitudinal data analysis. Since the

study used judgemental sampling method, generalisation of the findings may be considered with caution.

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Appendix – A (Survey Instruments)

S.No.	Item Code	Item Description
1	Att1	Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages for me
2	Att2	Being an entrepreneur would give me great satisfaction
3	Att3	It is desirable for me to become an entrepreneur
4	Att4	It is interesting for me to become an entrepreneur
5	Att5	It is attractive for me to become an entrepreneur
6	Entint1	How likely is it that you would want to be self-employed within 2 years after graduation, assuming you had a good new business opportunity and you could raise the funding necessary to start your own business?
7	Entint2	How likely is it that you would want to be self-employed at some later point in the future, assuming you had a good opportunity and could raise the funding necessary?
8	Entint3	How likely is it that you would want to start your own business to exploit a radical innovation?
9	Entint4	How likely is it that you would want to start your own business to introduce a new variant of an existing product or service?
10	Ego1	The most important thing is to be the best athlete
11	Ego2	My goal is to improve so I am better than others
12	Ego3	My goal is to be better than others in my sport
13	Ego4	I want to be better than others at my sport
14	Ego5	To me, success means being better than others
15	Ego6	I want to show that I am better than others