

NORMATIVE BELIEFS AS A FACTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL INITIATIVE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

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Abstract In order to find the real essence of youth entrepreneurial behaviour, the paper investigates those determinants that are part of social environment and have the greatest influence on the decision of young people to undertake an entrepreneurial venture. The paper is based on theoretical postulates of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The conclusions are drawn from the primary data obtained from empirical research conducted in the Republic of North Macedonia among young students aged 18 to 29 years. The findings show that young people recognize *the acceptance of the business community* as the most important factor for an entrepreneurial decision.

Key words: youth entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial behaviour, Theory of planned behaviour
JEL Classification: L26, A120

INTRODUCTION

Taking into account that young people according to their age and interests differ from others, it is the interest of each country to identify those factors that motivate them in order to have a positive impact on the economy. The importance of entrepreneurship for the development of the economy is enormous. That is why there are numerous attempts to define entrepreneurship and ways of developing it are constantly sought. Exactly in this context, there are numerous definitions about his essence, contributing factors etc., after all, in general it is usually associated with recognition of business opportunity in environment, risk taking, creativity and innovation, allocation of resources etc. (Agarwal, 2023; Fiti et al, 2007; Serafimovska and Popovski, 2017; Iversen et al., 2008; Casson, 2003)

It is known that entrepreneurship opens up the greatest opportunities for self-employment, which should be recognized by others, especially the youth of a country. It is one of the ways to reduce unemployment, which young people often face after completing their education. If we refer to the fact that unemployment rate among young people in Macedonia in 1-st quarter of 2023 was 25.7 percent for people aged 15-29 and 13.4 percent for people aged 15-64, than the reasons for this situation and the ways can be exceeded deserve attention. (State Statistic Office – Republic of North Macedonia, 2023)

Regarding self-employment, the situation is also alarming! The perception of young people about self-employment is disturbing given the fact that 70,1 percent of young people *against their will* are self-employed. In reality, only three out of ten young people are self-employed, and this decision is a result of their unsuccessful attempt to find a paid job (job for salary). As an essential problem for business owner is financial resources. 46,8 percent of self-employed people emphasized the financial resources at the start-up phase of business as a challenge. After that the market competition and the regulation follow. (Elder et al., 2013)

Table 1 - Unemployment at regional level compared to the EU

| | 2021 | 2011-2021 |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| | | High points |
| EU - 28 | 7,1% | 11,4% (2013) |
| Montenegro | 16,6% | 19,7% (2012) |
| North Macedonia | 15,7% | 31,4 (2011) |
| Albania | 11,6% | 17,5% (2014) |
| Serbia | 11,1% | 24,1 (2012) |
| Turkey | 12% | 13,7% (2019) |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 17,4% | 28,2% (2012) |
| Kosovo | 20.6 % | 35,3% (2014) |

Source: Eurostat statistics explained (2023). *Enlargement countries - labour market statistics*, accessed 15.08.2023, available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enlargement_countries_-_labour_market_statistics#Unemployment_rates

What is the meaning of the entrepreneurship for employment, especially for self-employment is well known. Table 1 shows the challenges faced by Macedonia in terms of unemployment a decade ago and how the efforts to improve the situation progressed compared to the surrounding countries. In fact, the entrepreneurship is the largest provider of employment, as the SME's sector absorbs most of the unemployed through the self-employment opportunities it opens up. On the other hand, the data above shows that it's possible that the young people in Macedonia have not enough awareness about the power of entrepreneurship, either courage, or motivation and the opportunity for self-employment is not the wanted one. It can be seen from the fact even that small part of self-employed are against their will. That's why the research about developing the entrepreneurial attitude among the youth in Macedonia is important. Considering the fact that the social environment, the factors of the environment in which we live play a big role on our attitudes, thoughts, decisions and behavior, it's crucial for state policy to know what are the main factors of social environment, that motivate or inhibit entrepreneurial behavior among young people and their attempts at self-employment. The paper is based on the theoretical postulates of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, especially on the set of determinants that are part of social standards, well known as *normative beliefs*. The remaining two pillars (Behavioral beliefs and Control beliefs) are the subject of separate research.

PLANNING AS A DIMENSION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR

Trying to understand the way and nature of entrepreneurial behaviour, it's natural to look first in the context of general behaviours and the reasons that provoke behavioural diversity in individuals, and then to find the factors that operate within entrepreneurship.

According to Ajzen and Fishbein's theory, human behaviour is guided by three basic determinants classified as: *behavioural beliefs* (which produce favourable/unfavourable attitudes toward behaviour), *normative beliefs* (which result with perceiving of social pressure from the established social standards) and *control beliefs* (which give perceived behavioural control).(Kolvereid & Espen, 2012) If these three segments together lead to the creating of intention for certain behaviour (Ajzen, 2005; Armitage & Christian, 2004; Yanamandra & Indiran, 2023), then in the area of entrepreneurship there are certainly specific elements within the proposed determinants that result exactly in the entrepreneurial type of behaviour.

From general point of view, the defined general determinants of planned behaviour in the area of entrepreneurship generally could be divided into groups that refer to (Weber, 2012):

1. **The first determiner of entrepreneurial behaviour (Behavioural beliefs)** would cover the conclusions and differences arising from subjective perceiving and evaluation of opportunities, or in other words, summarizing the benefits arising from the possibility of owning a business, i.e. self-employed entrepreneur or being employed in an organization.
2. **The second determiner of entrepreneurial behaviour (Normative beliefs)** related to social standards would be the pressure from other people on the entrepreneur on the road to start the entrepreneurial career, i.e. pressure of the environment on making an entrepreneurial decision.
3. **The third determiner of entrepreneurial behaviour (Control beliefs)** contains a subjective assessment of the so-called control factors for starting your own business and its successful realization such as: knowledge, resources etc.

Entrepreneurship can be viewed by different standpoints. The youth is especially interesting to be studied because of the future development of the entrepreneurship. Specifically, the problem we are investigating, i.e. the age group we treat, is covered in the Theory of Planned Behaviour by the additional variables that affect behaviour, among which, in addition to personal dispositions, demographic characteristics were predicted: age and gender of the respondents.

Trying to determinate those factors that affect youth as a group with special interests, lifestyle, worldviews etc. in our research we have singled out the following individual moments typical for young people, and yet within the established determinants of Normative beliefs as a part of Planned Behaviour Theory:

I – Normative beliefs

- Young entrepreneurs are accepted by the business community
- Young entrepreneurs are respected from social environment
- The opinion of parents and their approval is important for making an entrepreneurial decision for a new business
- The approval from friends is important for new business start
- Starting a business is considered a real opportunity for self-employment
- Risks taking and starting new ideas is considered justified and common
- Positive state's campaign to encourage business

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aim of this empirical research is to discover the key factors that affect youth entrepreneurial attitude, i.e. to discover those characteristics of social environment that are crucial for youth to make an entrepreneurial decision. Using quantitative research method we collected all required data to make the necessary conclusions. The survey, as a research technique, was applied face to face with respondents. 147 respondents were covered. The research was aimed exclusively at the young population aged 18 to 29 years.

The sample was defined according to the general categorization of young people, but was adapted to the needs of the research and the conditions in Macedonia. The most common definition of "youth" includes young people ages 15 to 24, but this research covers respondents aged 18 to 29 years. Young people over the age of 18 are full of age, can be found registered in the labour market and look appropriate for this research, instead of those under the age of 18. The upper limit was also moved from 24 to 29 years old people, because of the fact that the young people mostly remain in the educational process even after the age of 24. (Elder et al., 2013) The main reason for this is high unemployment rate (especially among young people) and the hope that in education they will get the necessary skills and

qualifications for easy employment. According to the data from State Statistic Office in Republic of Macedonia (State Statistic Office – Republic of North Macedonia, 2023), in 1-st quarter of 2023 the unemployment rate was 25,7 percent for people aged 15-29 and 13,4 percent for people aged 15-64.

The respondents were students from first and second cycle of studies at Goce Delcev University in the Republic of North Macedonia. Students from all over Macedonia gravitated to this University, but it predominantly covers the main part of this population from the central and eastern part of Macedonia. The respondents were from different faculties and different professional orientation in future.

In terms of demographic characteristics, the study included respondents of different genders and different socio-economic status (employed/unemployed).

It is a simple random sample, which allows evaluation of the characteristics of the entire population to which the sample belongs. The obtained data are analyzed by applying descriptive-analytical methodology which selects the relevant knowledge that gives answer of the essential issue posed in the research. The conclusions are drawn with both, induction and deduction.

Impact of social environment, (so called Normative beliefs as a part of Theory of planned behaviour), was represent as 7 determinates - features of social environment. They described the environment from different point of views, for example: impact of business community, friends, family etc.

Each respondent had an opportunity to choose three most influential determinants, according his own belief. These characteristics are the ones that would have the greatest impact on making decisions about a new entrepreneurial venture.

Figure 1 – Descriptive statistics

| Descriptive Statistics | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | N | Mean | | Std. Deviation | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
| | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| bizaed21 | 147 | .65986 | .039208 | .475374 | -.682 | .200 | -1.556 | .397 |
| opkruz22 | 147 | .25170 | .035917 | .435474 | 1.156 | .200 | -.673 | .397 |
| roditeli23 | 147 | .45578 | .041218 | .499744 | .179 | .200 | -1.995 | .397 |
| prijatel24 | 147 | .17007 | .031093 | .376977 | 1.775 | .200 | 1.165 | .397 |
| samvrab25 | 147 | .57823 | .040871 | .495530 | -.320 | .200 | -1.924 | .397 |
| voobica26 | 147 | .36735 | .039897 | .483730 | .556 | .200 | -1.714 | .397 |
| kampawa27 | 147 | .51020 | .041372 | .501605 | -.041 | .200 | -2.026 | .397 |

Source: Analysis of data from own research

From Figure 1, that contains data of Descriptive statistics, it can be seen that of all offered options, the highest value of the mean (0.65986) has the determinant *Acceptance by the business community*, thereupon is *Opportunity for self-employment* (0.57823), *Positive campaign* (0.51020) and so on. Opposite them, the lowest value of mean has *Approval from friends* (0.17007).

Regarding the diversity of answers, the highest value of standard deviation (0.501605) was observed in the determinants *Positive campaign*, and (0.499744) *Parental approval*. The lowest value of the standard deviation was observed in the determinant *Approval from friends* (0.376977).

Data of normal distribution testing can be seen from Figure 2 (Normal distribution data) and Skewness and Kurtosis values Figure 1 (Descriptive statistics). A Skewness/Kurtosis values and values for Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$), for both males and females show that distribution of data is non-normal. Precisely because of the lack of normal distribution, we were

limited to use non-parametrical tests to determine the relationships and connection between individual determinants. (Newbold et al., 2007)

Figure 2 – Normal distribution data

| | | Tests of Normality | | | | | |
|-------------|------|---------------------------------|----|------|--------------|----|------|
| | pol | Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
| | | Statistic | df | Sig. | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| bizaed21 | maz | .396 | 54 | .000 | .619 | 54 | .000 |
| | zena | .437 | 93 | .000 | .583 | 93 | .000 |
| opkruz22 | maz | .471 | 54 | .000 | .531 | 54 | .000 |
| | zena | .463 | 93 | .000 | .545 | 93 | .000 |
| roditeli23 | maz | .358 | 54 | .000 | .635 | 54 | .000 |
| | zena | .365 | 93 | .000 | .633 | 93 | .000 |
| prijeteli24 | maz | .462 | 54 | .000 | .546 | 54 | .000 |
| | zena | .524 | 93 | .000 | .376 | 93 | .000 |
| samvrab25 | maz | .368 | 54 | .000 | .632 | 54 | .000 |
| | zena | .387 | 93 | .000 | .624 | 93 | .000 |
| voobica26 | maz | .406 | 54 | .000 | .612 | 54 | .000 |
| | zena | .409 | 93 | .000 | .610 | 93 | .000 |
| kampawa27 | maz | .339 | 54 | .000 | .637 | 54 | .000 |
| | zena | .348 | 93 | .000 | .636 | 93 | .000 |

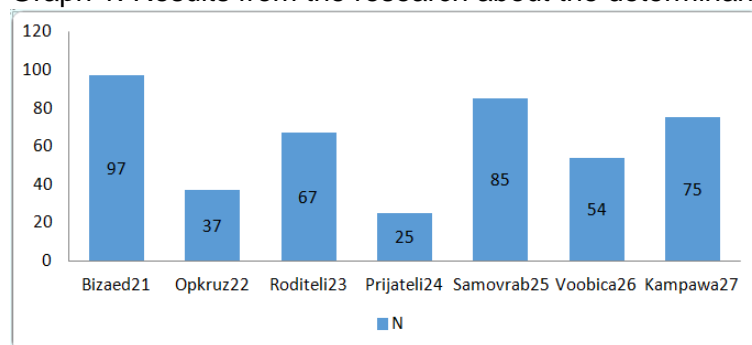
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Source: Analysis of data from own research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The processing of the data from the survey showed that the respondents decided mostly on the following determinants: *Acceptance by the business community*, *Possibility of self-employment* and *Positive campaign*. (Graph 1). These features show highest frequencies, they stand out from the rest, and they appear to be key in area of normative beliefs.

Graph 1: Results from the research about the determinants of Normative beliefs



Source: Analysis of data from own research

Analysis of the impact of demographic characteristics on preferences

Based on the statistical progressing of the survey data, it was concluded that from all offered determinants *Acceptance by the business community* is considered the most important factor for young people to start a business. Figure 3 shows that with 95% probability, from 65% to 79% of the population consider this determinant as a factor for starting one's own business.

Figure 3 - Confidence interval

| One-Sample Test | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|--------|
| | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| bizaed21 | 16.830 | 146 | .000 | .659864 | .58237 | .73735 |
| opkruz22 | 7.008 | 146 | .000 | .251701 | .18072 | .32269 |
| roditeli23 | 11.058 | 146 | .000 | .455782 | .37432 | .53724 |
| prijatel24 | 5.470 | 146 | .000 | .170068 | .10862 | .23152 |
| samvrab25 | 14.148 | 146 | .000 | .578231 | .49746 | .65901 |
| voobica26 | 9.207 | 146 | .000 | .367347 | .28850 | .44620 |
| kampawa27 | 12.332 | 146 | .000 | .510204 | .42844 | .59197 |

Source: Analysis of data from own research

Concerning the link between demographic characteristics of the respondents and their thinking, i.e. to determine how much the gender as a demographic factor has an impact on the selection of determinants by respondents, was used Chi-square test for independence. We decided to apply this independence test precisely because of the results of the data obtained from empirical research didn't show normal distribution. (Grubisic, 2004)

Further, we will try to determine the relationship between the determinants selected as the most influential on the one hand, and gender of the respondents on the other. The assertion is set in the form of hypotheses, while the correlation is tested by applying Chi-Square test of independence.

Figure 4 - Chi square test for independence for H₁
bizaed21 * pol

| Crosstab | | | | |
|----------|----|-----|------|-------|
| Count | | | | |
| | | pol | | Total |
| | | maz | zena | |
| bizaed21 | ne | 21 | 29 | 50 |
| | da | 33 | 64 | 97 |
| Total | | 54 | 93 | 147 |

| Chi-Square Tests | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | .904 ^a | 1 | .342 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | .593 | 1 | .441 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | .897 | 1 | .344 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .370 | .220 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .898 | 1 | .343 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 147 | | | | |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.37.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Analysis of data from own research

H₁ - There is no dependence between the gender of the respondents and the opinion that *the acceptance of young entrepreneurs by the business community* is important for starting own business.

From the conducted Chi-square test of independence (Figure 4) is obtained the value $X^2=0.904$ at level of 1 degree of freedom and the value of $p=0.342$ (probability level 0.900-0.100)

Because $0.904 < 3.85$ the hypothesis H_1 is accepted. It can be concluded that there is no dependence between the gender of the respondents and the opinion that *the acceptance of young entrepreneurs by the business community* is important for starting own business.

Figure 5 - Chi square test for independence for H_2

samvrab25 * pol

| Crosstab | | | | |
|-----------|----|-----|------|-------|
| Count | | pol | | Total |
| | | maz | zena | |
| samvrab25 | ne | 24 | 38 | 62 |
| | da | 30 | 55 | 85 |
| Total | | 54 | 93 | 147 |

| Chi-Square Tests | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | .180 ^a | 1 | .671 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | .063 | 1 | .802 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | .180 | 1 | .672 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .730 | .400 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .179 | 1 | .672 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 147 | | | | |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.78.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Analysis of data from own research

H_2 - There is no dependence between the gender of the respondents and the opinion that *the Opportunity for self-employment* is a motivator for starting own business.

From the conducted Chi-square test of independence (Figure 5) is obtained the value $X^2=0.180$ at level of 1 degree of freedom and the value of $p=0.671$ (probability level 0.900-0.100)

Because $0.180 < 3.85$ the hypothesis H_2 is accepted. It can be concluded that there is no dependence between the gender of the respondents and the opinion that *the Opportunity for self-employment* is a motivator for starting own business.

Figure 6 - Chi square test for independence for H_3

kampawa27 * pol

| Crosstab | | | | |
|-----------|----|-----|------|-------|
| Count | | pol | | Total |
| | | maz | zena | |
| kampawa27 | ne | 27 | 45 | 72 |
| | da | 27 | 48 | 75 |
| Total | | 54 | 93 | 147 |

| Chi-Square Tests | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | .036 ^a | 1 | .850 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | .000 | 1 | .986 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | .036 | 1 | .850 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .866 | .493 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .035 | 1 | .851 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 147 | | | | |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 26.45.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Analysis of data from own research

H₃ - There is no dependence between the gender of the respondents and the opinion that *the Positive state's campaign for business encouraging* is a motivator for starting own business.

From the conducted Chi-square test of independence (Figure 6) is obtained the value $X^2=0.036$ at level of 1 degree of freedom and the value of $p=0.850$ (probability level 0.900-0.100)

Because $0.036 < 3.85$ the hypothesis H₃ is accepted. It can be concluded that there is no dependence between the gender of the respondents and the opinion that *the Positive state's campaign for business encouraging* is a motivator for starting own business.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In an attempt to determine the basic factors that influence the formation of the intention for youth entrepreneurial behaviour, we referred to Theory of Planned Behaviour. According this theory, people usually behave in accordance with conclusions drawn from the available information. Thus, the intentions and behaviour are function of three basic determinants, i.e. information that is extracted firstly from *the personal nature* of individual, then reflection of *the social impact* and *the control issue*. In the aim of this research, we identify only those determinants that are part of the social environment and according to the respondents' responses, have the greatest impact on building an entrepreneurial attitude. This includes the attitudes, opinion and acceptance of young entrepreneurs by friends, family, the business community, the attitudes of the general environment on certain issues related to business, etc.

The results of the research showed that the determinant *Acceptance of new entrepreneurs by the business community* has a higher frequency in the answers of all offered determinants.

This influence of the wider environment, social norms and pressures, in the research were covered by the determinants categorized as normative beliefs. From them it can be noticed that the *business community and its relation* are important factor that can discourage or encourage young entrepreneurs to start their own business. The perception that entrepreneurship is an excellent *opportunity for self-employment* is one more reason that contributes to the strengthening the entrepreneurial attitude which is further developed with the help of positive business campaigns. *A positive business campaign* is recognized as a relevant and important factor that can contribute to changing of young people's awareness and it should be used to stimulate entrepreneurial mood in society.

The results of the research showed that when it comes to making a business decision, influence of the immediate environment (relatives, friends), their attitudes and thoughts are less important. What stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit of young people are general conditions in society, the opportunities it provides and the business community.

What is also important and is part of additional variables that can have an impact on the selection of answers and result of research is gender of the respondents. Gender as a demographic characteristic can have an impact on respondent's preferences precisely because of the differences in thoughts, ambitions and necessities that may arise from the two different sexes. We considered it important to check the connection of the prominent priorities with the gender of respondents. The analysis of the data showed that there is generally no connection between these two categories. Specifically, the preferences regarding the motives for doing business are experienced equally by both, men and women.

The results obtained from the research have significant social implications, because the priorities selected by young people are part of the social environment. In order to achieve significant progress in the field of youth entrepreneurship this knowledge should be

implemented in the field of economics and public policies. Exactly perceptions of the certain categories of people (business environment, wider environment, friends, etc.) participate in building of general mood that influences the entrepreneurial attitude of young people. In this, great part takes mechanisms for building of public opinion which must be aimed at encouraging young people to think independently, creatively and entrepreneurially, to build their own vision and to realize it.

Certainly, the initiative of the youth should be supported by a set of quality economic measures, permanent improvement of the economic policy of the country and provision of necessary resources for successful realization of the entrepreneurial ideas.

There is also the issue of the unemployment rate in the country. If we take into account the youth unemployment rate (as we have seen before the rate is quite high), the reasons for unemployment, the attitude of young people towards self-employment as a form of employment and their willingness to start up their own business, etc. the results of this research are significant in many ways. They can be used in a way to raise awareness among young people about the importance of entrepreneurship, the opportunities it opens up and the solutions it can provide.

The paper is significant not only for the results presented in the conclusion, but also for the opportunities it opens for future research. How much does the state meet the expectation of the youth in terms of the priorities set by this research, what are the relationships in the business communities, what forms of association, communication and support are applied, how can they be improved, what is the perception of their current quality, the conditions for doing business in the country, etc. are just some of the questions that may be part of the future researches. There is also an opportunity for comparative research on how the priorities set by youth in role of entrepreneurs in developing economy differ from the priorities of the young people in developed country. All this leave enough space for revealing the weaknesses of the economic policies in the Republic of North Macedonia and an opportunity for their improvement.

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