

Investigating social entrepreneurial intentions of Generation Z: do gender and parental role models make a difference?

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Abstract

In this paper, the social entrepreneurial intentions and the three main constructs of the Theory of planned behavior were investigated concerning gender and the (non)existence of parental role models among Generation Z. Role models and gender are used variables in the research of (social) entrepreneurial intentions, but they were not examined in the context of Generation Z. This paper seeks to fill that gap in the literature with additional research into possible differences in three main constructs of the Theory of planned behavior regarding parental role models and gender. The research was conducted on a sample of 306 respondents of Generation Z. The respondents were third-year undergraduate business major students. Independent samples t-tests were used to test the hypotheses. The obtained results show that Generation Z students have statistically significant differences in social entrepreneurial intentions and the three main constructs of the theory of planned behavior with regard to the parental role models. Generation Z students whose at least one parent is an entrepreneur have higher social entrepreneurial intentions than students whose parents are not entrepreneurs. Regarding gender, there are no statistically significant differences in social entrepreneurship intentions and perceived behavior control, while there are statistically significant differences in attitude towards social entrepreneurship and subjective norms: women have a higher attitude towards social entrepreneurship and subjective norms than men. In the end, limitations of the conducted research and recommendations for future research are given.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship intentions, gender, role model, Generation Z, Theory of planned behavior

JEL Classification: L31, D91, L29, L26

1. Introduction

The research of social entrepreneurial intentions is an actual area of social entrepreneurship, but it is still insufficiently researched. It is extremely important to investigate social entrepreneurial intentions because intentions generally represent

the first step of a certain behavior, while in the context of social entrepreneurship they represent the first step of establishing a social enterprise. An individual's behavior could be predicted as a consequence of his intentions (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1970). The Theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) consists of three basic constructs of intention: an individual's attitude towards certain behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavior control. The intention is the best indicator of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and therefore it is "important to understand the systematic process of formation of social entrepreneurial intention in order to be able to determine the individual's desire to start a social enterprise" (Tan, Le and Xuan, 2019, p. 1). Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006) define social entrepreneurial intention as a state of mind that directs the actions of entrepreneurs to start a social enterprise.

A social enterprise (or social entrepreneurial venture) is defined as a hybrid organization (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014) founded around an explicitly social goal that seeks to create social value while generating profit in an entrepreneurial/innovative way (Certo and Miller, 2008; Chell, Nicolopoulou and Karataş-Özkan, 2010; McMullen and Warnick, 2016). According to a narrow definition, social entrepreneurship refers to the process of applying market skills and business expertise in the non-profit sector, as is the case when non-profit organizations develop innovative approaches to generating income (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006; Reis, 1999; Thompson, 2002; Kedmenec, 2015). According to a broader definition, social entrepreneurship refers to innovative activity with a social goal either in the non-profit sector; or in the profit sector, such as in corporate social entrepreneurship or in commercial ventures with a social purpose; or across sectors, such as hybrid organizations that mix non-profit and for-profit approaches (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern 2006; Dees, 1998, cited in Kedmenec, 2015).

Anh, Lan and Loan (2021) in their paper investigated which variables were used by researchers within social entrepreneurial intentions. The identified variables used in the formation of social entrepreneurial intentions were classified as follows: a) personality traits; b) perception, and cognitive approach; c) background factors. The background factors include demographic characteristics, education and work experience - social entrepreneurial intentions are also related to socio-demographic characteristics such as the role of education (Hockerts, 2018; Shahverdi, Ismail and Qureshi, 2018) and gender (Chipeta, Surujlal and Koloba, 2016; Lortie, Castrogiovanni and Cox, 2017; Notais and Tixier, 2017). Tan, Le and Xuan (2019) state that future research should focus on background factors that include role models and gender for the formation of social entrepreneurship intentions. New findings can clarify the formation of social entrepreneurial intentions.

According to the author's knowledge, there are no studies that investigated the differences in social entrepreneurial intentions and the three main constructs of the

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TPB (ATSE, SN and PBC) with regard to gender and parental role models among Generation Z. Therefore, the main research questions of this study are:

RC 1 Are there differences in social entrepreneurial intentions and the main constructs of TPB with regard to gender in Generation Z?

RC 2 Are there differences in social entrepreneurial intentions and the main constructs of TPB with regard to the existence of parental role models in Generation Z?

The aim of this paper is to provide answers to the research questions and at the same time, it represents the contribution of this research. The paper consists of an introductory part where definitions of the most important terms are briefly described and research questions are stated. The second chapter presents a literature review based on which the hypotheses were formed. It is also explained why Generation Z was chosen for the examined population. The third chapter refers to the used methodology and sample. First, the characteristics of the used sample are described, then the instruments and measuring scales used are explained, and the methodology is described at the end of the chapter. The fourth chapter depicts an overview of the results, while the last chapter provides a conclusion with limitation and a proposal for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Generation Z

Representatives of Generation Z are born between 1995 and 2010 (Cilliers, 2017; Nagy and Kolcsay, 2017). The sample of the empirical research of this paper consists of students born after 1995. From the literature and conducted research (Bosma et al, 2016; Capella-Peris et al, 2019; Grail Research, 2011; Singh and Dangmei, 2016; Seemiller and Grace, 2016; 2019) the characteristics of Generation Z are in line with the main premises of the concept of social entrepreneurship. With a realistic outlook on life inherited from Generation X, as well as responsibility, determination and loyalty, Generation Z is motivated by making changes and is committed to the people around them (Seemiller and Grace, 2016).

Unlike Generation Y, Generation Z is more entrepreneurially oriented and less focused on money (Singh and Dangmei, 2016). Gaidhani, Aurora and Sarma (2019) state that Generation Z is very aware of threatening disasters and water shortages which indicates that this generation has a high sense of responsibility towards natural resources and is concerned about environmental issues, i.e. Generation Z is environmentally conscious. A term associated with social entrepreneurship, but also with Generation Z, is social innovation. Seemiller and Grace (2019) believe that Generation Z can develop social innovations that will transform and have an impact on the entire world. Generation Z will combine their way of thinking about social

change, values of social justice and commitment to social responsibility as they try to solve complex issues through social innovation. Accordingly, there is justification for choosing Generation Z as a population for research on social entrepreneurial intentions.

2.2. Gender and social entrepreneurial intentions

Traditionally, commercial entrepreneurship is associated primarily with the male gender, and entrepreneurial intentions are higher in men than in women (Chipeta, Kruse and Surujlal, 2020; Paray and Kumar, 2020; Zhao, Seibert and Hills, 2005). In contrast, it is interesting how social entrepreneurial intentions are more related to the female gender. Hechavarría et al (2012) believe that this is because social entrepreneurship is based on the principles of care and social issues, which are stereotypical characteristics of women.

Based on previous research (Chipeta, Kruse and Surujlal, 2020; Chipeta, Surujlal, and Koloba, 2016) social entrepreneurial intentions were statistically significantly higher in women than in men. Lortie, Castrogiovanni and Cox, (2017) refer to social identity theory and the theory from gender self-schemas to elucidate that women have a greater natural tendency toward social entrepreneurial intentions and the creation of entrepreneurial ventures whose main objective is social. Social role theory (Eagly, 1987) supports social entrepreneurship as a dominant female business.

According to the above, it is expected that this assumption will also be valid for Generation Z. In addition, it is expected that the main constructs that form the TPB will differ statistically significantly with regard to gender: female students of Generation Z will have statistically significantly higher ATSE, SN and PCB compared to male students. Thus, the hypotheses are as follows:

H1 There is a significant difference in Social entrepreneurship intention SEI between female and male students of Generation Z: female students will have higher SEI than male students.

H2 There is a significant difference in Attitude towards social entrepreneurship (ATSE) between female and male students of Generation Z: female students will have higher ATSE than male students.

H3 There is a significant difference in Subjective norms (SN) between female and male students of Generation Z: female students will have higher SN than male students.

H4 There is a significant difference in Perceived behavior control (PBC) between female and male students of Generation Z: female students will have higher PBC than male students.

2.3. Parental role models and (social) entrepreneurial intentions

Gibson (2004, p. 126) defines a role model “as a cognitive construction based on the attributes of people in social roles an individual perceives to be similar to him or herself to some extent and desires to increase perceived similarity by emulating those attributes” while McCullough describes (2013, p. 5) role model as “a person an individual identifies with in some way and may desire to emulate (or avoid)”.

Role modeling is a process in which an individual does not learn directly through experience but indirectly through example (Nguyen, 2018). A person adopts behavior based on unintentional and informal observation (Tkachev and Kolvereid, 1999). Müller (2006) states that the parental role model is the most important family factor of entrepreneurial intention. In their studies, Crant (1996), McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003) bring out that growing up in an entrepreneurial family significantly influences individuals' intentions to establish their own enterprise.

Hypotheses based on the TPB classified role models as exogenous factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions indirectly through the antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions: role models influence the individual's attitudes, but also the perceived ability to start a business (Krueger and Carsrud, 1993; Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000) i.e. via attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Kolvereid, 1996). Additionally, Carsrud and Johnson (1989) believe that role models can shift perceptions of feasibility and self-efficacy and attitudes, which can lead to entrepreneurial thinking. Cooper and Park (2008) cited in (Tran and Von Korfflesch, 2016) believe that role models will improve the intentions of a certain person in such a way that observing how certain behavior is performed will lead to a positive attitude towards such behavior, especially if there are similarities between the observed person and the observer (which is especially evident in parental role models). Pablo - Lerchundi, Morales - Alonso and Vargas - Pérez (2014) determined that there are statistically significant differences in entrepreneurial intention, attitudes toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived control behavior with respect to parental role models.

Although these theses were confirmed for entrepreneurial intentions, it is expected that they will also be valid for the social entrepreneurial intentions of Generation Z. Thus, the hypotheses are proposed as:

H5 There is a significant difference in Social entrepreneurship intention SEI between students of Generation Z regarding parental role model (RM): students who have parental RM will have higher SEI than students who do not have parental RM.

H6 There is a significant difference in Attitude towards social entrepreneurship (ATSE) between students of Generation Z regarding parental role models (RM): students who have parental RM will have higher ATSE than students who do not have parental RM.

H7 There is a significant difference in Subjective norms (SN) between students of Generation Z regarding parental role models (RM): students who have parental RM will have higher SN than students who do not have parental RM.

H8 There is a significant difference in Perceived behavior control (PBC) between students of Generation Z regarding parental role models (RM): students who have parental RM will have higher PBC than students who do not have parental RM.

3. Methodology and Data

3.1. Sample size and characteristics of the sample

The total size of the sample consisted of 306 respondents representing students of Generation Z. The sampled students were in the third year of undergraduate study program in a business major. On the group level of all respondents, the average respondent is female, born in 1999, is a full-time student, her parents are not entrepreneurs, she has no work nor entrepreneurship experiences, she plans to work for a large company or corporation and the social standard of her household is at the average level of the Republic of Croatia.

Table 1. Frequencies of sociodemographic characteristics of respondents in the final sample

Variable	Category	N	Percent
Gender	Female	239	72,7
	Male	67	27,3
Year of birth	1996	3	1,0
	1997	12	3,9
	1998	35	11,4
	1999	194	63,4
	2000	62	20,3
Student status	Full-time student	273	89,2
	Part-time student	33	10,8
Existence of family entrepreneurship background – role models	Yes, one or both parents are owners of an enterprise	83	27,1
	No	223	72,9
Working/entrepreneurship experience	Yes, I worked in a family business	0	0
	Yes, I worked for an entrepreneur	0	0
	Yes, I worked in an association	0	0
	Yes, I started my own company	0	0
	Yes, I started an association	0	0
	More than one of the listed experiences	0	0
Plan for future employment	No, I have no such work experience	306	100
	Work for a large company or corporation	171	55,9

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	Work for someone else in a small enterprise	20	6,5
	Work in the public sector	34	11,1
	Work in a family enterprise	10	3,3
	Start a business with a partner	21	6,9
	Start your own business	94	18,2
Social standard of the household	Below the average of the Republic of Croatia	8	2,6
	At the level of the Croatian average	198	64,7
	Above the average of the Republic of Croatia	100	32,7

All analyzed respondents in the sample were born in 1995 or later. 27.1% of respondents have at least one parent in their family who is an entrepreneur, i.e. they have a role model from their environment in the field of entrepreneurship. As for the planned employment in the future, after completing their study, the greatest preferences of members of Generation Z are working in a large enterprise or corporation (over 55%), while over 25% of respondents want to start their own company either independently (18.2%) or with a partner (6.9%). The third most common response was work in the public sector, which was answered by 10.3% of the respondents. The lowest response was work in a family enterprise with 3.3%. Ten respondents believe that in the future they will work in their family enterprise, and if the above-mentioned is put in context with the answers that for 83 respondents at least one parent is the owner of a family enterprise, the data shows that only 12% of them want to choose for career to work in a family enterprise. Detailed sociodemographic characteristics of respondents can be found in Table 1.

3.2. Measuring instruments

The measuring scales used in the research were taken from the relevant literature:

- Social entrepreneurship intention scale (Chipeta, 2019; Kruse et al, 2019; Kruse, 2020)
- EIQ – Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire from Liñán and Chen (2009) for three main predictors of the Theory of planned behavior adapted for social entrepreneurship (Ernst, 2011; Chipeta, 2019; Kruse, 2020).

A questionnaire was translated into Croatian using the double translation method. For items of main constructs - Social entrepreneurial intentions (SEI), Attitude toward social entrepreneurship (ATSE), Subjective norm (SN) and Perceived behavioral control (PBC) were used seven-points Likert-scale (from 1 - Strongly disagree to 7 - Strongly agree).

Table 2. Reliability analysis (source: Author own calculation)

Construct	No of Items	Cronbach's α
Social entrepreneurial intentions	9	0.95
Attitude toward social entrepreneurship	5	0.92
Subjective norm	4	0.83
Perceived behavioral control	6	0.91

Reliability analysis was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the used questionnaire. Results in table 2 point out that all constructs in the study are valued above than 0.70 which is suitable for further statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Obtained Cronbach's α can be categorized as excellent for SEI, ATSE and PBC, and good for SN (George and Mallery, 2003).

Gender (coded 0 – female, 1 – male), existence of family entrepreneurship background – parents role models (coded 0 – no, 1 – yes) and working / entrepreneurship experience (coded 0 – no, 1 - all other answers) were controlled variables of this research. Year of birth, student status, plan for future employment and social standard of the household were sociodemographic characteristics asked in the questionnaire.

3.3. Methodology

A convenience sampling technique was employed. Survey questionnaires were collected via Google's online Form due to the epidemiological situation caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the impossibility of conducting the survey in physical form. The collection of responses via a survey questionnaire was carried out in February 2021 at the beginning of the summer semester for students in the third year of undergraduate study, a business major at the Faculty of Economics and Business University of Zagreb, Republic of Croatia. In order to control: entrepreneurship education - students were asked to fill out a survey at the beginning of the semester before taking an obligatory course Entrepreneurship; the influence of work and entrepreneurship experience of respondents - all respondents who declared any kind of work/entrepreneurship experience were excluded from the sample.

After completing the collection of respondents' answers, data was entered into the database and consolidated. It is important to note that, due to conducting the survey online and the settings of the survey questionnaire, it was impossible to complete the survey and submit the results without answering all the questions. Accordingly, none of the received answered forms of the survey questionnaire contained deficiencies in

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the form of missing answers to certain questions. The IBM SPSS Statistics program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 21, was used for statistical analysis.

4. Results

To test the mentioned hypotheses, independent samples t-test was employed. Before proceeding to the results, it was checked whether all necessary assumptions were met. All observations are independent and there were no detected outliers in the sample. The dependent variable must follow a normal distribution in each subsample. Skewness and kurtosis are adequate for each dependent variable divided by gender (male/female) and role models (yes/no) subsamples. In addition, normal QQ plots indicate that data in each group are normally distributed. Thus, the data of the sample is normally distributed.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of variables (source: Author own calculation)

Variable	MIN	MAX	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
SEI	1	7	4,3715	1,44405	-0,444	-0,397
ATSE	1	7	4,6948	1,323	-0,505	-0,357
SN	2,75	7	5,8194	0,99727	-0,783	0,113
PBC	1	6,67	3,6383	1,17817	-0,105	-0,635

Table 4. Correlation matrix (source: Author own calculation)

	SEI	ATSE	SN	PBC	RM	GENDER
SEI	-					
ATSE	0.536**	-				
SN	0.113*	0.286**	-			
PBC	0.443**	0.508**	0.142*	-		
RM	0.121*	0.151**	0.181**	0.131*	-	
GENDER	-0.083	-0.134*	-0.204**	-0.025	-0.021	-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Since sample sizes for gender ($N_{\text{Female}} = 239$ vs $N_{\text{Male}} = 67$) and role models ($N_{\text{Yes}} = 83$ vs $N_{\text{No}} = 223$) are not roughly equal, the data set must meet the assumption of homogeneity of variances (both subsamples must have equal variances on the dependent variable). Levene’s test was conducted to test if homogeneity is met. It was significant for variables ATSE ($p = .004$) and SN ($p = .006$) by gender. This means that mentioned variables do not have equal variance and was conducted Welch test to test their differences. All other dependent variables by gender and all variables by role models met the assumption of homogeneity of variances. The descriptive statistics of variables are displayed in Table 3 and the correlation matrix is in Table 4.

4.1. Analysis of the differences in SEI, ATSE, SN and PBC by gender

Findings of independent samples t-test indicate that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of SEI regarding gender, ($t(304) = 1.449$, $p = .148$), despite female students ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.43$) attaining higher level of SEI than male students of Generation Z ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.48$). Thus, the H1 hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5. Differences between female versus male students on SEI and TPB dimensions (source: Author own calculation)

Variable	Female (239)		Male (67)		df	t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD				
SEI	4.43	1.43	4.15	1.48	304	1.449	.148	0.200
ATSE ^a	4.79	1.24	4.36	1.55	91	2.076	.041	0,325
SN ^a	5.93	0.93	5.45	1.14	92	3.241	.002	0,501
PBC	3.65	1.15	3.58	1.27	304	0.442	.659	0,061

^aWelch test is reported because Levene's test indicated that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met for this variable.

According to Levene's Test, variables ATSE and SN do not have equal variance over two groups divided by criteria of gender. It was violated the assumption of homogeneity and was conducted Welch test for ATSE and SN variables. Both variables indicate that there are significant difference in the mean scores of ATSE, ($t(91) = 2.076$, $p = .041$), and SN, ($t(92) = 3.241$, $p = .002$), regarding gender. Female students of Generation Z have significantly higher ATSE and SN than male students. These findings confirmed the H2 and H3 hypotheses. Cohen’s d effect size for the difference in SN is medium while for ATSE can be labeled as small to medium (Cohen, 1988).

Hypothesis H4 is rejected since the difference in the mean score of PBC regarding gender ($t(304) = 0.442$, $p = .659$) is not significant despite there is higher level of females PCB ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.15$) vs males PBC ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.27$).

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It can be concluded that statistically significant differences in ATSE and SN were found among students of Generation Z with regard to gender: women have higher ATSE and SN than men, while no statistically significant differences were obtained in the other examined variables.

4.2. Analysis of the differences in SEI, ATSE, SN and PBC by parental role models

The results show that there are statistically significant differences in all observed variables based on the (non)existence of parental role models. It was shown that those students of Generation Z whose at least one parent is an entrepreneur and thus represents a parental role model, have higher SE, ATSE, SN and PBC than students who do not have parental role models. Cohen's *d* effect size for the differences in SEI and PBC can be classified as a small effect, while for ATSE it can be labeled as small to medium. A medium effect was obtained for SN (Cohen, 1988).

Table 6. Differences between the existence of parental role models versus no parental role models on SEI and TPB dimensions (source: Author own calculation)

Variable	No RM (223)		Yes RM (83)		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
SEI	4.26	1.49	4.66	1.28	304	-2.125	.034	-0.273
ATSE	4.57	1.31	5.02	1.55	304	-2.663	.008	-0.342
SN	5.71	1.01	6.11	1.14	304	-3.205	.001	-0.412
PBC	3.54	1.14	3.89	1.27	304	-2.310	.022	-0.297

It can be concluded that these findings confirm hypotheses H5, H6, H7 and H8. It has been proven that there are statistically significant differences with regard to parental role models. Generation Z students whose parents are entrepreneurs are more likely to engage in social entrepreneurship than those whose parents are not entrepreneurs, have a higher attitude towards social entrepreneurship, perceived support from the environment and perceived ability to start a social enterprise. This confirms that the theses that were valid for commercial intentions are valid for social entrepreneurial intentions of Generation Z.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to determine whether the theses established in the case of commercial entrepreneurial intentions for parental role models (but not tested in the case of social entrepreneurial intentions) and the difference in social entrepreneurial intentions with regard to gender are valid for Generation Z. Additionally, possible gender and parental role models' differences were tested for

the three dimensions that construct TPB. This would fill the existing gap in the literature on social entrepreneurial intentions.

An independent t-test was conducted to test the hypotheses, which determined that female students have statistically significant differences in SN and ATSE compared to male students; ATSE and SN are higher in female students than in male students. The differences in SEI and PBC are not statistically significant. Hypotheses related to intentions and three TPB constructs among Generation Z students whose at least one parent is an entrepreneur compared to students whose parents are not entrepreneurs - all differences are statistically significant. It has been empirically proven that the existence of parent role models among Generation Z students makes such students have a higher attitude towards social entrepreneurship, perceive that they have more support from their environment if they want to establish a social entrepreneurial venture, and at the same time perceive that they are more capable of starting a social enterprise.

The limitation of this research is manifested in the fact that it was conducted only on a sample of students of Generation Z with a business major in Croatia. The first suggestion for future research is given from the stated research limitation - although the sample size is satisfactory, the future sample should also include non-business major students of Generation Z. Additional suggestions for future research are also: to investigate more deeply the role models based on mother parental role models and father parental role models, to test used variables as moderators or mediators and to compare the SEI of Generation Z with Generation Y, which precedes Generation Z.

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