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Self-efficacy and its effect on entrepreneurial attitude among university students: An exploratory study

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship has generally been seen as a means of fostering economic growth, creativity, and invention, it is a crucial component for any country aiming to compete in the knowledge-based global market. At the same time, youths are the backbone of a country in all the facets. The youths who have the zeal to shape their ideas and skills into something productive are often seen to be the one venturing towards entrepreneurship. Youth and entrepreneurship are two important elements for an overall development and prosperity of a country. University students are the youth who will look for suitable job opportunities soon after completion of their graduation and more often it is seen that they have the tendency to focus on the job sector rather than channelizing their talents and ideas towards entrepreneurship. The lack of suitable employment opportunities forces young people to look for alternative livelihoods and only then they start considering the prospects for establishing their own enterprise. The present study was conducted in Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat to analyse whether there exist any effect of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial attitude among the University students. A total of 158 number of respondents were selected from the four colleges of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat campus. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents were found to have an average level of self-efficacy. It was also found that a large number of the respondents reported a high level of attitude towards entrepreneurship. Further, there is no significant relationship between the two variables i.e., self-efficacy and attitude towards entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, self-efficacy, attitude towards entrepreneurship, university student

1. Introduction

Youth is defined as the stage of life between childhood and adulthood. According to the United Nations, 'youth' refers to those between the ages of 15 years to 24 years. A transition from childhood dependence to adulthood independence occurs throughout this time. Youth are sometimes defined as people who are between the ages of finishing their compulsory education and finding adequate work possibilities in terms of both education and employment. They serve as a country's main support mechanism for overall development (United Nations, 2014). Moreover, University students are the youth who will start looking for suitable employment opportunities soon after they graduate, and more often than not, it is observed that they have a propensity to concentrate on the job sector rather than channelizing their skills and ideas toward entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, the lack of suitable employment opportunities forces young people to look for alternative livelihoods and only then they start considering the prospects for establishing their own enterprise. Therefore, it is important for an individual to identify and develop their potentials, ideas and interests and should start considering entrepreneurship as an equally important source of livelihood as compared to government and private sector jobs. In addition to that, Lezer *et al.* (2019) [19] stated that youth participation in entrepreneurial activities has a significant socioeconomic impact. Apart from contributing significantly to a strong economy, entrepreneurs endeavour to enhance technology (Barik and Barik, 2019) [6]. Moreover, entrepreneurship, according to Fauchart and Gruber (2011) [11], provides people with the flexibility to pursue their ideas and aspirations through the establishment of new enterprises. Further, as a result of its beneficial influence on worldwide economic development, entrepreneurship is increasingly becoming a global phenomenon (Doanh and Bemat, 2019) [10]. Entrepreneurship has significant potential to boost economic growth, economic recovery, employment, community upliftment, social progress, and innovation (Garaika *et al.*, 2019) [13]. Entrepreneurship is a phenomenal activity for promoting economic mobility, innovation, the creation of new jobs, industry growth, and expansion of the entrepreneurial sector.

The idea of entrepreneurship has served as the foundation for many common characteristics including opportunity recognition, taking calculated risks, and originality (Anderson and Bushman, 2002; Souitaris *et al.*, 2007) [4, 24].

Further, developing self-efficacy is proposed to be a useful construct to increase the entrepreneurial intentions and competencies of students. The concept of Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977) [5] and self-efficacy when incorporated together helps the students to learn from observation and interaction with previous entrepreneurs and can reinforce their entrepreneurial behavior. The observation and imitation of former entrepreneurs will intervene upon the cognitive factors of the students and can help them to decide if the observed behaviors should be imitated or not. According to Pihie and Bagheri (2013) [21], self-efficacy has been proven to be one of the most significant and relevant factors influencing a university student's inclination to pursue entrepreneurship. It is claimed that the influence is significantly positive. Apart from all these, agriculture and allied sectors are gaining importance over the past few years and they have been the mainstay of the economy since decades and the recent advancement in these sectors, as well as the shift of focus of the government and policymakers towards the same, makes it important for one to concentrate and consider the opportunities and options available for entrepreneurship.

In current times, there is a great urgency for developing and nurturing an entrepreneurial eco-system in order to promote enterprises and start-ups in these sectors and create more jobs in the years ahead, keeping this in mind, the Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat, has established the best-in-class innovation hub- North East Agriculture Technology Entrepreneurs Hub (NEATEHUB) to facilitate absorption and commercialization of various Agri and allied Agri technology to promote ventures and business in the North-Eastern region. Moreover, certain courses in AAU have been planned in such a way that students learn and are encouraged to take up entrepreneurship as a career. Experiential Learning Programme (ELP) is one such entrepreneurship-oriented course where students gain first-hand experience of entrepreneurship.

Therefore, by considering all these facilities that are available in and around the surroundings of the students of Assam Agricultural University, it becomes necessary for one to identify and understand the student's attitude towards entrepreneurship and the effect of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial attitude.

2. Materials and Method

2.1. Study site

The study was carried out during the calendar year 2020-2022 to assess the effect of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial attitude among the students of Assam Agricultural University. The study site was selected purposively because the institute offers entrepreneurship-oriented courses to the students during their undergraduate studies as well as they get an exposure to the North East Agriculture Technology Entrepreneurs Hub

(NEATEHUB). These prospects aided in selecting Assam Agricultural University as the location for the current study. The 4th year undergraduate students from all the four colleges of AAU Jorhat campus were selected purposively. They were purposively selected because these students were likely to explore various career options after completing graduation, such as pursuing higher education, becoming entrepreneurs, seeking a job, preparing for competitive examinations, etc. Further, the researcher chose this group of students for the present study due to their tendency to be career-oriented during this stage. A total sample of 158 respondents were selected out of the four colleges within the Jorhat campus with the help of the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) method. Both genders were included in the sample frame. Before finalizing the respondents, due permission from the higher authorities was taken and the selection criteria were properly addressed. The required sample was drawn considering the following criteria:

- The sample was 4th year undergraduate students from the four colleges of AAU, Jorhat campus
- The willingness of the students to respond

2.2 Method of Data collection

A self-constructed questionnaire was prepared to collect data for the research with regards to the student's attitude towards entrepreneurship. Moreover, the self-constructed questionnaire was sent to a panel of experts for their opinions and suggestions. The experts were requested to evaluate and validate each statement by marking them as either "Relevant," "Ambiguous," or "Not relevant." Further, necessary corrections and modifications were made as per the suggestions provided by the experts. Likewise, the General Self-Efficacy Scale, originally developed in Germany by Matthias Jerusalem and Ralf Schwarzer in 1981, is a 10-item psychometric scale that is designed to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy with the aim of predicting coping with daily hassles as well as adaptation after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted on 30 non-sample respondents from Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, to assess the tools' reliability. The raw data were coded, tabulated and the scoring was done with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

2.3. Statistical procedure

Median was used to assess the level of entrepreneurial attitude among the university students, Mean and Standard Deviation was used to assess the level of self-efficacy of the university students and the correlation between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitude was determined using the Karl Pearson's correlation co-efficient. The statistical procedures were carried out using SPSS.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Opinion about entrepreneurship courses provided by Assam Agricultural University

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their opinion about entrepreneurship courses

Statements	Total number of respondents (n=158)			
	Yes		No	
	F	P	F	P
Entrepreneurship course and Experiential Learning Programme (ELP) motivate the students to take up entrepreneurship as a career	152	96.2	6	3.8
These course provide the students with adequate knowledge required to start an entrepreneurship	139	88	19	12
AAU actively encourages to pursue own ideas for entrepreneurship	127	80.4	31	19.6

F= Frequency P= Percentage

Results (Table 1) revealed that a majority (96.2%) of the respondents think that entrepreneurship course and Experiential Learning Programme (ELP) motivate students to take up entrepreneurship as a career. This may be because the curriculum of these courses are well structured and are planned in such a manner that they adequately inculcate the right amount of knowledge that one needs in terms of entrepreneurship and other activities associated with entrepreneurship. Studies have shown that entrepreneurial education can elevate entrepreneurial activities in society as it helps in developing a positive entrepreneurial intention and motivate the students to get involved in entrepreneurship-oriented activities. Furthermore, student's participation in entrepreneurial education programmes can inspire them to become entrepreneurs (Karimi *et al.*, 2016; Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Yousaf *et al.*, 2021) [18, 3, 25].

Results show that a majority (88%) of the respondents think that entrepreneurship courses provide students with adequate knowledge required to start an entrepreneurship. This solidifies the fact that these courses are strategically planned and this in turn helps in disseminating adequate knowledge among the students. Hussain *et al.* (2018) [15] found that entrepreneurship-oriented courses, when strategically planned and implemented, can successfully disseminate adequate entrepreneurial knowledge and help in promoting entrepreneurial awareness among the students.

The data from Table 1 also reveals that 80.4 percent of respondents think that their institute (Assam Agricultural University) actively encourages them to pursue their own ideas for entrepreneurship. This proves that the combined efforts of the teachers, the entrepreneurship-oriented courses, and NEATEHUB are effective enough to encourage the students to choose entrepreneurship as a career and to pursue their ideas. This may be because the students get a huge sense of motivation from the knowledge provided by the courses and the support provided by NEATEHUB. In the year 2021, it was found that NEATEHUB has awarded Rs 135 lakhs to 11 budding entrepreneurs. The awardees were chosen for the idea and start-up stages from the Isanya and Saranya incubation programmes that were operating under NEATEHUB. These entrepreneurial role models set examples for the students to pursue entrepreneurship as a career.

3.2. Self-efficacy of the students

This section deals with the level of the self-efficacy among the students. The total score with regard to the self-efficacy of the individual respondents was calculated. Furthermore, the Mean score and Standard Deviation (SD) were calculated using SPSS to categorize the level of self-efficacy among the students of Assam Agricultural University. Hereafter, the respondents with a total score greater than the Mean + SD were categorised as high, those having a total score less than

the Mean - SD were categorised as low, and those with a total score that lies in between high and low were categorised as average.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their self-efficacy

Level of self-efficacy	Total number of respondents (n=158)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	33	20.9
Average	101	64
Low	24	15.1

Table 2 depicts the results regarding the responses of the self-efficacy of the students. The data reveals that a large portion (64%) of the respondents have an average level of self-efficacy, followed by 20.9 percent of the respondents having a high level of self-efficacy and 15.1 percent of the respondents having a low level of self-efficacy. Since a large number of respondents (64%) have an average level of self-efficacy, it could be because these students lack the high levels of confidence needed to cope with uncertainties and perceive that they have a moderate amount of ability to handle challenging situations. When faced with difficult problems, they have the ability to come up with solutions; however, in some instances, they have a tendency to become anxious and withdraw from such events out of a sense of insecurity or fear of failure. Students with average levels of self-efficacy can often handle anything that comes their way and figure out solution, but occasionally they become disappointed when they are unable to handle the problem. These students might not have high levels of confidence on their own capacities to carry out entrepreneurial activities and take risks. They may often gather the courage and confidence to move forward in the field of entrepreneurship, but when confronted with the risk involved and the fear of failing, they tend to walk away. The findings can be substantiated by the study carried out by Gielnik *et al.* (2020) [14] who found that respondents demonstrated average levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy

3.3. Attitude towards entrepreneurship

This section deals with the results of the student's attitude towards entrepreneurship. The median score was used to determine the student's attitude towards entrepreneurship, as the median value is seen to remain unaffected by outliers and skewed data. Additionally, the median is considered to be one of the best measures of central tendency when there are extremely large or small values in the data set. The total score in terms of attitude towards entrepreneurship of the individual respondents was calculated. Further, the median score was calculated and then the individual total score of the respondents were categorised as high and low based on the median.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to the attitude towards entrepreneurship

Attitude	Total number of respondents (n=158)				Median
	Levels of attitude				
	High		Low		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Towards entrepreneurship	88	55.7	70	44.3	59.000

Table 3 depict the results with regards to the responses of the students in terms of their attitude towards entrepreneurship. The data reveals that 55.7 percent of the respondents were found to have a high level of attitude towards entrepreneurship, whereas 44.3 percent of the respondents were found to have a lower level of attitude towards entrepreneurship. Since a majority (55.7%) of the respondents reported a high level of attitude towards entrepreneurship, this means that the respondents think that entrepreneurship can be considered as a career option in today's globalized world, entrepreneurs generate job opportunities for others in the society as well as entrepreneurs are responsible for innovations, technologies and product development. Moreover, it can be seen that in today's social media-driven world, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are becoming more and more popular as a profession. People also consider entrepreneurship as an honourable profession. Further, the success stories of different entrepreneurs have become one of the many reasons why the conventionally perceived idea of entrepreneurship is rapidly changing. Additionally, the government these days is shifting their focus more and more on improving the status of entrepreneurs and providing them with knowledge, skills and funding as they have been seen to set a number of entrepreneurial institutions. For the betterment and development of the entrepreneurs, the government is formulating policies as well. These governmental initiatives are also shaping a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among the students. Ibrahim *et al.* (2017) [16] have stated that higher authorities and governmental organizations' efforts to promote the holistic development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs indirectly helps in forming favourable attitude towards entrepreneurship. Results of various studies conducted in the field of attitude towards entrepreneurship have depicted that the youths of different countries irrespective of their culture, geographical region and gender show positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and are inclined to get involved in different entrepreneurial activities (Adebayo *et al.*, 2016; Jain and Arora, 2020; Soomro *et al.*, 2020) [1, 17, 23]. Further, it was also found that as a result of exposure to entrepreneurship-oriented workshops, training programmes and educational courses is proven to improve the attitude of students towards entrepreneurship. These exposures also help in increasing the willingness of the students to get involved in entrepreneurial activities (Bhattacharjee, 2020; Boldureanu, 2020) [7, 8]. Studies suggest that the educational institutions should pay attention towards proper planning and implementation of adequate entrepreneurship-oriented courses and should focus on organising quality workshops, seminars, webinars, training programs and other educational pursuits related to entrepreneurship because these kind of approaches are beneficial in inculcating entrepreneurial knowledge and shaping the right kind of attitude among the students (Pulka *et al.*, 2014; Hussain *et al.*, 2018) [22, 15].

3.4. Effect of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial attitude

The correlation between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitude was determined using the Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Table 4: Co-relation between self-efficacy and attitude towards entrepreneurship

Variable	Correlation co-efficient (r)	Sig.
Self-efficacy vs Attitude towards entrepreneurship	.048 ^{NS}	0.552

NS= Non significant

Findings (Table 4) show that the correlation between the variables, self-efficacy and attitude towards entrepreneurship, was not established. From the data, it can be seen that $r = 0.048$ at 0.05 level of significance. The self-efficacy did not have a significant relationship with the student's attitude towards entrepreneurship since it indicates a non-significant p-value ($p > 0.05$).

The results revealed that the co-relation was found to be non-significant which implies that the two variables i.e., self-efficacy and attitude towards entrepreneurship may not have the cause and effect relationship with each other. In simple terms, self-efficacy is not the only factor that is responsible to elicit desirable attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intentions. There may be many other factors that play an influential role in shaping the attitude towards entrepreneurship, furthermore, in this study the researcher has considered only one variable to determine the effect on entrepreneurial attitude as it was desired to find out whether or not self-efficacy imparts any effect on entrepreneurial attitude. This result can be substantiated by the findings of the study conducted by Fenech *et al.* (2019) [12] who found in their study that self-efficacy is not significantly influencing the entrepreneurial intentions of the respondents. Moreover, studies also show that there are many underlying factors that impart a remarkable influence on the students attitude towards entrepreneurship such as personality traits, learnings from entrepreneurship-oriented courses, experiences, social and cultural influence, family background, family support, educational status of the person, creativity, desire to be successful, financial background (Zeffane, 2013; Agarwal and Upadhyay, 2009; Colakoglua and Gozukara, 2016; Mahmood *et al.*, 2020) [26, 2, 9, 20].

Further, the findings of the present study indicated that majority (64%) of the students have average levels of self-efficacy, which may also be the reason for the non-establishment of correlation between the two variables.

4. Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that the students generate a strong interest in starting their own entrepreneurial ventures as well as develop a favourable

predisposition toward entrepreneurship as a career when they are exposed to adequate knowledge and support from the educational institutions and parents. Moreover, it can be stated that entrepreneurship-oriented courses can help develop favourable attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Furthermore, teachers and educational institutions should take the initiative to offer seminars, workshops, training programmes, and use various other techniques to instil entrepreneurial knowledge and skills in order to increase the students' awareness and understanding of entrepreneurship. The introduction of courses focused on entrepreneurship from the early stage of educational life can also be helpful in developing favourable attitudes towards entrepreneurship and delivering the necessary information and fostering entrepreneurial consciousness. In addition to pursuing their usual study curriculum, encouraging university students to engage in small-scale entrepreneurial ventures can help them get first-hand experience as well as develop a suitable level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

5. Future research

- Similar studies can be carried out in other colleges and universities of different districts.
- Parents should encourage and support their children in identifying and attaining their true potentials.
- Entrepreneurship-oriented workshops, webinars, training programmes, talk shows by successful entrepreneurs, seminars and awareness programmes can be organized by educational institutes.
- Exposure visits to successful entrepreneurial pursuits can be arranged by the educational institutes.
- Skill based vocational courses should be included in the school curriculum for creating a motivating environment towards entrepreneurship.

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