



# **CULTURAL AND GENDER FACTORS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL DISPOSITION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

**Mungai Esther Nyambura**

School of Business and Management Studies,  
The Technical University of Kenya  
estherthuku@gmail.com

**Kahando David Maina** 

School of Business and Management Studies,  
The Technical University of Kenya  
davidkahando@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

*Entrepreneurship is regarded as a crucial driver for economic well-being with most policy makers recognizing the critical role it plays towards national development. However, given the persistent unemployment problem among the Kenyan youth, it is important for us to understand factors that influence entrepreneurship activities and attitudes in Kenya. The objective of this study was to determine the effect of Cultural and Gender Factors on Entrepreneurial Disposition of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to: Establish the effect of culture on entrepreneurial disposition of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya and determine existence of differences between genders with regard to entrepreneurial disposition of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya. Thus, in this study, a descriptive cross-sectional survey design was applied to investigate the effect of gender and cultural factors on entrepreneurial disposition of the public university students. The population comprised all the Kenyan Government sponsored undergraduate students in public universities. The sampling unit for the study was the fourth year students. Primary data were gathered from 2192 fourth year undergraduate students across all public*

*university students in Kenya using a self-administered questionnaire. Statistical procedures for data analyses included basic descriptive statistics followed by correlation analysis and multiple regression analyses. The findings showed that the relationship between culture and entrepreneurial disposition is weak, positive but not significant. The results of the regression indicated that Culture failed to significantly predict Entrepreneurial disposition. Results also revealed no significant differences between male and female students in relation to their entrepreneurial disposition. The two independent variables (gender and cultural factors) were found not to be significantly associated with entrepreneurial disposition among fourth year undergraduate students across all public university students in Kenya. Therefore, conclusions were drawn that, there is no relationship between; a) gender and entrepreneurial disposition, and b) culture and entrepreneurial disposition.*

*Keywords: Culture, Gender Factors, Entrepreneurial Disposition, Undergraduate Students*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Entrepreneurship is regarded as a crucial driver for economic well-being with most policy makers recognizing the critical role it plays towards national development. However, according to data from the Kenya Youth Empowerment Project (KYEP), youth unemployment/inactivity in Kenya is twice the national average at 38 per cent in 2018. Given the persistent unemployment problem among the Kenyan youth, it is important for us to understand factors that influence entrepreneurship activities and attitudes in Kenya. Further, given that entrepreneurship offers many opportunities for revitalization and development of both local and national economies, the objective of this study was to determine the effect of Cultural and Gender Factors on Entrepreneurial Disposition of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya. Researchers offer a wide range of definitions of entrepreneurial personality that may predict broad categories of behavior. Among them is the traits school (Brauckmann *et al.*, 2008) which argues that behavior is not solely based on learned reactions but on stable traits of the acting individual. These traits form dispositions to act in a certain way and can be understood as propensities to act (Rauch & Frese, 2007). Together they make up personalities (Barkhuus & Csank, 1999). Schneider (1987) observes that people are more attracted to activities that match their personalities and find such jobs more satisfying than other occupational categories.

Hofstede (2001) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. According to Hofstede, culture encompasses all the norms and beliefs of a society, that is, the total way of life in a society. Freytag & Thurik (2007) asserts that the relative stability of differences in

entrepreneurial activity across countries suggests that factors other than economic ones are at play. The idea that culture could be associated with entrepreneurship and thus be a driver of economic growth has a long tradition. In his theory of entrepreneurship, Weber (1904) argued that at the society level, differences in entrepreneurial activity can be explained by cultural and religious factors, especially a society's acceptance of the protestant work ethic. The assertion in the literature that there is a greater predisposition or propensity towards entrepreneurship in some societies than in others, also points to the implicit role of culture. A variety of studies lend support to the argument that cultural values influence entrepreneurial behavior (McGrath, MacMillan & Scheinberg, 1992). Review of a series of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reports, confirms that cultural and social norms are emphasized as the major strength of entrepreneurial orientation as well as the differentiating factor for high levels of entrepreneurial activity in different countries (Minni & Bygrave, 2003). McClelland (1961), predicted that societies with cultures that emphasize achievement would exhibit greater levels of entrepreneurship than societies that do not. However, results of empirical research have been mixed. Some studies suggest entrepreneurs share a common set of values regardless of culture (McGrath et al., 1992), while other studies support the notion that culture will affect entrepreneurship (Busenitz & Lau, 1996; Shane, 1994). None of these studies look at cultural issues from an ethnic grouping perspective. Studies with a focus on of entrepreneurial disposition for new venture formations that arise from the attributes of these cultural variations are also lacking.

On the other hand, gender is a multi-dimensional concept which is best viewed as a social construction which lays the basis in account of form and function through which gender can be understood within different environments and cultures. Gender is widely accepted as an important socio-economic factor related to venture success (Ahl, 2006; Hellmann, 2007) which makes gender an important category for analyzing entrepreneurial disposition. Matthews and Moser (1996) show the influence of gender on interest in business ownership. One striking feature in the literature is the entrepreneurial activity variations between males and females. Of interest in this study is whether entrepreneurial intentions vary between genders within Kenya's public universities' population. An earlier study indicated significant differences in the manifestation of entrepreneurial traits between males and females (Mungai & Ogot 2011).

However, entrepreneurial disposition was not considered, which is the focus of this study. Cultural norms present gender differences with regard to participation in different economic activities. Earlier studies observed that female role in relation to the male was differently evaluated by the society and the female status regarded as inferior and subordinate to the male status. Character traits such as high self-concept, managerial competence, and high

commitment to work, favorable perception of work stress, aggressiveness, emotional stability, vigor and self-reliance necessary for entrepreneurial success (Akeredolu-Ale, 1975; Carland et al., 1984; Meredith *et al.*, 1982; Olakanpo, 1968; Omololu, 1990; Onah, 1990; Schumpeter, 1954) were assigned by the society to males. The situation has not changed much particularly in our African society which is presumed in this study to have significant influence on entrepreneurial disposition between male and female students. This study suggests a cultural dimension to gender differences within the student population, and undertakes to empirically test the impact of both culture and gender on entrepreneurial disposition in an African context, Kenya.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Culture is emphasized in the literature as a differentiating factor for entrepreneurial activities across countries (Minniti & Bygrave, 2003). Hofstede's seminal contributions on culture is applied in this study to investigate the inclination for university students' entrepreneurial disposition by hypothesizing that cultural determinants (cultural values) may have a significant impact on students' entrepreneurial disposition. Gender related constraints are also considered from a cultural perspective because such constraints tend to shape women's entrepreneurial behavior (Rutashboya & Nchimbi, 1999). Propensity to act in an entrepreneurial manner (entrepreneurial disposition) conceptually depend on perceptions which find their grounding in the gender-cultural environment. The study therefore examines the role of students' gender-cultural context in predicting entrepreneurial disposition from the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior. However, empirical studies in support of this link are still lacking. Hayton *et al.*, (2002), observe that empirical investigations into entrepreneurial disposition formation have given limited attention to gender-cultural variables. Thus the major focus of the study was to determine the effect of gender and cultural factors on Entrepreneurial Disposition of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya.

### **The objectives of the study**

- 1) To establish the effect of culture on entrepreneurial disposition of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya.
- 2) To determine existence of differences between gender with regard to entrepreneurial disposition of Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya.

### **Research hypotheses**

**H<sub>0</sub>1.** There is significant relationship between culture and entrepreneurial disposition among Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya

**H<sub>0</sub>2.** There is significant relationship between gender and entrepreneurial disposition among Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research follows the philosophical paradigms of positivism and phenomenology. According to Collies & Hussey (2003) there are two main philosophies: positivism (quantitative) and phenomenological (qualitative). A quantitative paradigm is concerned with phenomena that can be observed, measured and validated (Collies & Hussey, 2003). Consequently, a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional survey was adopted in this study. According to the author, survey study provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample. Further, a survey is also useful to investigate the underlying relationships between variables (Babbie, 1990). Thus, in this study, a descriptive cross-sectional survey design was applied to investigate the effect of gender and cultural factors on entrepreneurial disposition of the public university students.

The population comprised all the 16,151 Kenyan Government sponsored undergraduate students in public universities enrolled in the fourth year as per the Joint Admissions Board (JAB) list. They comprised a culturally diverse group selected from all over the country with due consideration of affirmative action in regard to gender composition. The sampling unit for the study was the fourth year students. Quota sampling was used to determine the sub-samples per university. Judgmental sampling was then applied to select the respondents for each university. Applying Hair's approach to the current study gives 120 respondents ( $6 * 20$ ). For this study, a typical figure of 2.5 per cent oversampling was used, yielding a final sample size of 2192. The total number of students in Kenya's public universities during this study was 14,863. Primary data were gathered from fourth year undergraduate students across all public university students in Kenya using a self-administered questionnaire which was distributed in the classrooms during lecture period. Prior trained research assistants were engaged during the data collection process.

The reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient which is used to assess the internal consistence or homogeneity among the research instrument items. This study used face validity where a panel of experts gave their input as to whether the instrument met the criterion. Other techniques of validating data are construct validity and content validity (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A variety of statistical procedures were employed in the analyses of the data starting with basic descriptive statistics to more complex procedures like Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression analysis and analysis of correlations between the variables. The descriptive statistics encompassed frequency distributions,

measures of central tendency (means) and measures of dispersion (standard deviation). These were employed to develop a thorough understanding of the nature of the data and to provide summary descriptions of the respondents in the sample. Analysis of the correlations between the variables was therefore carried out to assess the existence of associations between the dimensions of culture and entrepreneurial disposition and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients represented by  $r$ , was computed. Finally, multiple regression analyses were conducted. Multiple regression analysis allows for the examination of relationships between several independent variables and one dependent variable. A generic equation of this multiple regression model is given as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_n X_n + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y is the outcome variable.

## FINDINGS

The study targeted 2,192 respondents from the seven public universities in Kenya as of July 2019. However, the field data was obtained from 1,658 respondents. The data set was then screened for code violations and missing data, using SPSS 20 descriptive statistics and visual inspection by the researcher, yielding an effective response rate of 69.8 per cent. The study established that 37 per cent of the respondents were pursuing Bachelor of Science (BSc) or Bachelor of Education, Science, (BSc Ed) while those with courses that could not be clearly categorized within defined categories were simply classified as others representing 5.7 per cent of the respondents. The study established that more than 87 per cent of the respondents are between the ages of 20-24 years. The age group of 25-28 years represented 7.8 per cent of the respondents. Below 19 years comprised 3.7 per cent of the respondents while 0.7 per cent represented the age group of 29 years and above at 0.7 per cent. The number of respondents who failed to respond to that item was minimal at 0.1 per cent.

The first objective was to determine the effect of culture on entrepreneurial disposition. Literature reviewed indicated that culture defines personality disposition which can be described as entrepreneurial or non-entrepreneurial. Among the traits commonly associated with entrepreneurial behavior are namely; risk-taking, need for achievement motivation and autonomy. The three traits were operationalized to make up for entrepreneurial disposition variable.

A Hypothesis was thus developed with the aim of determining the effect of culture on entrepreneurial disposition, and it stated: ***H<sub>0</sub>1: There is significant relationship between culture and entrepreneurial disposition***

The linear regression model results are presented in Table 1. As indicated in Table 1, the correlation for the relationship between culture and entrepreneurial disposition is weak, positive but not significant ( $r = 0.030$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Simple linear regression was run to indicate cause and effect between the two variables. The results of the regression indicated that Culture failed to significantly predict Entrepreneurial disposition ( $\beta_1 = 0.027$ ,  $t = 1.172$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). The R squared value shows that Culture explained less than 1 percent of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.001$ ,  $F = 1.375$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). ***The Hypothesis that; There is a significant relationship between culture and entrepreneurial disposition was therefore not confirmed.***

Table 1: Model Summary for Regression Analysis for Culture and Entrepreneurial Disposition

Variables	No. of observations	Beta	S.E	t-statistic	p-value
Culture	1535	3.192	.075	42.707	.000
Entrepreneurial Disposition	1535	0.027	.023	1.172	.241

$r = .030$ ,  $R^2 = .001$ ,  $F = 1.375$ , **Durbin Watson** = 1.390

The second objective was to determine the effect of gender on entrepreneurial disposition. Using evidence from the theoretical literature on gender differences in entrepreneurship behavior and entrepreneurial traits, it was pre-supposed that male respondents would score high on entrepreneurial disposition compared to their female counterparts. A Hypothesis was thus developed with the aim of determining the effect of gender on entrepreneurial disposition, and it stated: ***H<sub>02</sub>, There was a significant relationship between gender and entrepreneurial disposition.***

Results revealed no significant differences between male and female students in relation to their entrepreneurial disposition ( $F = 0.7530$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). There were no significant differences on the reported measures of Entrepreneurial Disposition between males ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = .41$ ) and females ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .43$ ) as shown in Table 2. Therefore, hypotheses  $H_{02}$  was not supported.

Table 2: ANOVA Results Showing Male and Female Differences

VARIABLE	Males		Females		ANOVA		comment
	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	F value	P value	
Entrepreneurial Disposition	3.31	.41	3.23	.43	0.753	.3856	No significant difference

## DISCUSSIONS

Both gender and cultural factors have been found not to be a significant predictor of entrepreneurial disposition. The independent variables of this study are gender and cultural factors. Contrary to expectations and to the result of findings from previous studies, the study empirical findings did not support the relationship between culture and entrepreneurial disposition ( $\beta=0.027$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). The findings revealed none or almost zero effect of culture on Entrepreneurial disposition ( $R^2=0.001$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). These findings were inconsistent with previous studies (Hayton *et al.*, 2002) and existing literature on the influence of culture on entrepreneurship behavior (Hofstede, 1980- 2005; GEM, 2007, 2010) at individual level. The findings also suggest that culture does not exert an influence on entrepreneurial disposition. These findings may however only be generalized to undergraduate students as opposed to the rest of Kenyan population because measures such as risk-taking, need for achievement and autonomy (entrepreneurial disposition) may not mean much to young people who have not worked under anybody to experience limitations and hence the need to express themselves in the said traits-related manner.

Also, they may not have a complete picture of risks involved in running own business since they have no experience. Empirical results indicated that 88% of the respondents ranged between ages 20-24 years, confirming their unlikelihood of prior business experience. In the contrary, several studies indicated that the level and the rate of company creations differ from one country to another (Shane, 1992 & 1993) or from one region to another Davidsson & Wiklund, (1997). These researchers explain that the entrepreneurial vitality is correlated with certain cultural characteristics measured in the grid of Hofstede (1980). For instance, Lee and Peterson (2000) concluded that a culture conducive to entrepreneurship exhibits a low power distance, a weak level of uncertainty avoidance, a masculine orientation and follows individualism. This observation conforms to earlier research by McGrath *et al.* (1992, as cited in Hayton *et al.*, 2002). Morrison (2000) additionally states that entrepreneurial cultures show low long-term orientation.

The focus of this study's attention is on the first approach. Research on the relationship between values and cognition provides an important window into understanding how values affect the development of new ventures (Louis, 1980). In their review of the cross-cultural management literature, Adler, Doktor, & Redding (1986) noted that national culture mediated through cognitive maps is an important prediction of behavior. Furthermore, they argued that the relationship between cognition and culture is an important cornerstone in cross-cultural research. There is a growing consensus that ethnic cultural values, cognition, and the social environment are important factors for understanding differences in individual behavior



(Schneider, 1989; Shaw, 1990). This logic is extended in this study to the context of new venture creation by suggesting that the founding of new ventures and other related decisions is a function of cognition. Furthermore, most decisions to start a new venture are affected by how founders perceive and interpret the environment (Bird, 1988; 1992). This is consistent with the concept of integrating founders as individuals within the environment in which they operate (Bouchikhi, 1993). In addition, ethnic culture (and the underlying cultural values) influences the structure and process of a person's cognition, making it an antecedent of entrepreneurial cognition (Abramson et al., 1993; Redding, 1980).

As concern gender and entrepreneurial disposition, Results revealed no significant differences between male and female students in relation to their entrepreneurial disposition ( $F=0.7530$ :  $p > 0.05$ ). The finding failed to confirm past studies which have observed that males are more inclined towards an entrepreneurial personality than women. Indeed, one striking feature in the gender-based literature within the field of entrepreneurship is the entrepreneurial activity variations between males and females. A study by Mungai & Ogot (2012), indicated significant differences in the manifestation of entrepreneurial traits between males and females. However, the findings of this study suggest that the implied gender differences that have shown men to be more entrepreneurially predisposed do not seem to apply among the university students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the summary of the findings, the two independent variables (gender and cultural factors) were found not to be significantly associated with entrepreneurial disposition among fourth year undergraduate students across all public university students in Kenya. As opposed to the mainstream literature, the study could not detect any influence of gender and culture on entrepreneurial disposition. Therefore, for the sample population, there was no confirmation that men exhibit a stronger preference for self-employment than women. Interestingly, there was no variability in the students' dispositional rating. Meaning, that both males and females were equal to tasks requiring expression of the stated traits of risk-taking, need for achievement and autonomy. Of particular interest was the confirmation that entrepreneurial traits (risk-taking, need for achievement and autonomy) are not determined by culture. This revelation provided support for the contention that under similar situational circumstances certain people will set up business while others will not. It however disputed the general claim that some groups of people are more culturally endowed to become entrepreneurs than others. This points out to possible support for other factors besides culture in influencing an entrepreneurial personality. Therefore, conclusions were drawn that, there is

no relationship between; a) gender and entrepreneurial disposition, and b) culture and entrepreneurial disposition.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research has achieved its aim of providing a general view of Kenya's social-cultural context by exposing some of the significant associations between the context variables and entrepreneurial intentions which may be indicative of a causal (non-causal) effect of the said context. Beyond some of the limitations highlighted in the preceding sections of this research, there are some other potential limitations that should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings of this research.

Again it was impossible to ascertain whether or not all the respondents answered the questions with frankness. Thus, if the respondents failed to answer the questions honestly as envisaged, then the results may not be a true reflection of the population.

Given that the focus of the empirical aspects of this research was entirely on public university students in Kenya, and given the micro-cultural influences implied in the research, it is entirely plausible that there may be significant differences in the findings if this study is replicated in another jurisdiction such as inclusion of universities across a number of African countries.

In summary, the limitations noted here do not however undermine the validity of the research undertaken and its main findings.

## REFERENCES

- Abraham Pizam, (1997). What happens to hospitality enterprises when minimum wages are continuously raised? *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 24(3), 309-310.
- Adler, N. J. Doktor; Redding (1986). *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, 3rd Ed. Cincinnati, OH: Shout-Western College Publishing.
- Babbie, E.R. (1990). *Survey Research Methods* (vo1.2). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Bird B.J. (1989). *Entrepreneurial Behaviour*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman. Bird, B.J (1988). Implementing Entrepreneurial Ideas: The Case of Intention. *Academy of Management Review*, 13(3), 442-453.
- Bouchikhi, H. (1993). A constructivist framework for understanding entrepreneurship performance *Organization Studies*, 14(4), 549-570.
- Busenitz, L.W. (1996) Research on entrepreneurial alertness, *Journal of Small Business Management*, 34, 35–44.
- Collie, R. J.and hussey (2003). Social and emotional learning and school climate: Predictors of teacher stress, job satisfaction, and sense of efficacy (Unpublished master's thesis). University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.
- Davidsson, P., Wiklund, J. (1997). Values, beliefs and regional variations in new firm formation rates. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 18(2), 179-199. 150
- Freytag & Thurik, (2007). Entrepreneurship and its determinants in a cross-country setting, *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, 17(2), 117-113
- Hayton, J.C., George G. and Zahra S.A. (2002). National Culture and Entrepreneurship: A Review of Behavioral Research. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*.153

- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills CA: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, and Institutions and Organizations across Nations*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.
- Matthews, C.H., Moser, S.B. (1996). A longitudinal investigation of the impact of family background and gender on interest in small business ownership. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 34(2), 29-43.
- McClelland, D. C. (1961). *The Achieving Society*. The Free Press. London.
- Mccrae, R. R. (2004). Human Nature and Culture: A Trait Perspective. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 38, 3-14.
- McGrath, R., MacMillan, I., & Scheinberg, S. (1992). Elitists, risk-takers, and rugged individualists? An exploratory analysis of cultural differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 7, 115-135.
- Minniti, M. & Bygrave, W.D. (2003). National entrepreneurship assessment United States of America. *GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*, Babson College.
- Mugenda, O.M & Mugenda, A.G. (2003). *Research methods: Qualitative and Quantitative approaches*. African centre for Technology Studies, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Mungai, E. and M. Ogot (2012). Gender, Culture and Entrepreneurship' *International Business Research*. 5 (5), 175-183.
- Rauch, A., & Frese, M. (2007). Let's put the person back into entrepreneurship research: A meta- analysis on the relationship between business owner's personality traits, business creation, and success. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 16(4), 353 - 385.
- Rutashobya, L.K. and Nchimbi, M.I. (1999). The African Female Entrepreneur Knowledge Gaps and Priority Areas for Future Research. In Rutashobya, L.K. and D.R.
- Schneider, N, J, (1987). Strategy formulation: The impact of national culture. *Organization Studies*, 10(1), 149-168.
- Schumpeter, J. (1934). *The Theory of Economic Development*. Cambridge. M. A. Harvard University
- Shane, Oviatt & McDougall, (1994). The Promise Of Entrepreneurship As A Field Of Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 217-226.
- Weber, M. (1904). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated from the German by Talcott Parsons.