




Article

The Influence of Economic and Entrepreneurial Education on Perception and Attitudes towards Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: The entrepreneurial behavior of individuals is a result of a complex assembly of factors, and education is one of them. The article is aiming to address the scientific gap in the relation between education and the intention and attitudes in entrepreneurship by focusing on the analysis of the economic and entrepreneurial background as a determinant factor. Besides that, the study looked for the factors that influence entrepreneurial intention and intended to find out if there are significant differences between economic and non-economic backgrounds and entrepreneurial intentions of individuals. A survey with 582 validated respondents was employed in the north-west and the west part of Romania to determine the entrepreneurial intention of the residents. For investigating the results, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, and principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to reduce the number of items used to analyze the entrepreneurial intention of the respondents. The study demonstrated the significance of entrepreneurial education for entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial process: the higher variance is given by entrepreneurial intention (58.75%) for those with economic studies and by entrepreneurial capacity (58.39%) for those without economic studies. It concludes that entrepreneurial education policies should concentrate on the increase of opportunities for entrepreneurs and on creating a culture of entrepreneurship. Regression analysis revealed that entrepreneurial capacity, personal attraction, social valuation, and entrepreneurial education/economic background significantly predict entrepreneurial intention.

Keywords: entrepreneur; entrepreneurial intention; entrepreneurship attitude; entrepreneurship education; entrepreneurial capacity; social valuation; professional attraction



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1. Introduction

The Romanian Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Index 2020 (REEI), elaborated in 2015 by the Executive Unit for the Financing of Higher Education, Research, Development, and Innovation (UEFISCDI 2022), shows the reliability of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania (Goschin et al. 2021). REEI was elaborated to provide a clear insight into the entrepreneurial landscape of Romania, being developed using the approach outlined by Endeavor Insight, a nonprofit organization focused on fostering impactful entrepreneurship. Based on REEI, it can assess the ecosystem's maturity and vitality. This is achieved through the generation of increased businesses and investments, as well as the ability to inspire others.

The trend is, nevertheless, positive, indicating a 30% greater potential of developing and sustaining new entrepreneurial initiatives in 2020, compared with 2015 (UEFISCDI 2022). However, if the trend is compared with the average of SMEs per 1000 inhabitants in the European Union, it can be observed, in relative numbers, that the entrepreneurial desire is relatively low in Romania (Nica et al. 2018), while it is concentrated on a limited number of sectors.

1.1. Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Yet, the business confidence—an indicator based on a survey that estimates the confidence of the managers in the manufacturing sector—was -0.2 in Romania in November 2022. This value is above the average of the European Union (-3.2), being in front of more powerful EU countries' economies (e.g., Finland: -7.0 , Austria: -7.4 , Spain: -7.7 , Denmark: -14 , Belgium: -16.6 , to mention a few) (Trading Economics 2022). As the effects of diverse major crises are still visible and the level of the predictability of both the economic and geo-political environment is relatively reduced, the entrepreneurs have to consider resilience, mostly graded by innovation (Ignat and Constantin 2020), as being one major key of their business plan (Drăgoi et al. 2017).

A study of the European Commission, carried out in 2016, aiming to investigate the background of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Romania (Radauer and Roman 2016), observed that the public sector was not able to become desirable for innovation and start-ups. Governmental institutions are perceived as being a factor blocking the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Grigore and Dragan 2020). Therefore, the private sector played a major role. However, since the private sector did not succeed enough in bringing together business with research and innovations, other forms of supporting networks (incubators, accelerators, clusters) have risen up mainly in the most important Romanian cities. Particularly, clusters have proved to be more effective in obtaining funds for collaborative projects (Radauer and Roman 2016; Muraru-Ionel et al. 2017).

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2022), the survey run in 2021 for observing the entrepreneurial behavior and attitudes in Romania, revealed promising and threatening data simultaneously: the business environment was attractive for new entrepreneurs, but only a limited number of them were able to survive to the early stage further becoming mature businesses. It was also observed that, in spite of an increasing number of new firms, they were unlikely to become significant in size (Cruz et al. 2022). Consequently, the fear of failure was high (more than 40%), while the self-perception of ability as entrepreneurs was only 50% (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2022).

Another study carried out in Romania, aiming to observe the entrepreneurial ecosystem from its point of sustainability and innovation, accentuated the state that higher education graduates are not interested enough in entrepreneurship. The experts consider that is the result of mix of economic factors (cleavages among the regions, a major economic gap face to the other countries in European Union), institutional factors (a weak and inconsistent institutional context, unpredictable economic, fiscal, and social policies) and cultural factors (the feeling that doing business based on local experience is a better way that copying other external models of business) (Curaj et al. 2021).

Fewer than half of entrepreneurs in Romania hold a high education diploma, and there are significant differences among genders—only 41% of male entrepreneurs are higher educated, compared with a share of 36% of female entrepreneurs, in an environment considered to still be dominated by gender-related stereotypes (Stefan et al. 2021).

1.2. Risk-Dealing Attitude

This is due to the fact that educated people are better at comprehending the inherent risks but, also, they are more likely to spot the financial opportunities of a start-up (Goschin et al. 2021). The system of positive factors of influence in stimulating entrepreneurial initiative of an individual includes self-motivation, family support, peer influence (Shahzad et al. 2021), family business experience, social entrepreneurship and networking opportunities (Küttima et al. 2014; Ferri et al. 2018), proactiveness, need for achievement (Mahmood et al. 2019), and entrepreneurial awareness (Tomy and Pardede 2020).

Consequently, the additional entrepreneurial education is essential to enhance the chances for success (Furdui et al. 2021), especially because formal education has not offered enough skills to properly run a business (Küttima et al. 2014; Păunescu et al. 2018; Nenzhelele 2014). Other studies (Hatos et al. 2022) have concluded that the more educated

a person is, the more their domain of expertise is becoming tighter, thus increasing the possibility of finding out a pertinent opportunity for becoming an entrepreneur.

As observed, there is a direct link between the skills, abilities and knowledge, and desire to take the risk of an entrepreneur and the level of success of his/her business initiative. Hence, numerous countries (Jardim et al. 2021) have created education programs, specific for their countries (Banha et al. 2022), for both future entrepreneurs and for developing entrepreneurial culture, not limited to students from business and economic backgrounds, but encompassing all fields of study, and tailored for various education stages (Furdui et al. 2021). In countries where an entrepreneurial education is offered since the primary and/or secondary schools at a general level, the entrepreneurial behavior intention is more consistent (Liñán et al. 2011).

Focusing on the young entrepreneurs, they have proved to have more environmental orientated (Aceleanu et al. 2015), digital (Nicolau et al. 2022), and theoretical skills, and not enough soft skills (Perez-Encinas et al. 2021) and self-discipline (Constantin et al. 2020), but they are compensating with more enthusiasm and optimism (Păunescu et al. 2018). That is why education, dedicated to continuous support and training for both digital (Grigore and Dragan 2020) and soft skills, must be developed for early-stage entrepreneurs. In this direction, the traits that have been identified as being important are the ability to communicate with the clients or efficient internal communication, generally the focus on people, not only on profit (Hapenciuc et al. 2015), but also adaptability, cooperation, authority, charisma, confidence, and motivation (Crăciun et al. 2015).

1.3. Educational Background Relevance for Entrepreneurs

Scholars (Ferreira et al. 2012) have also proved that soft skills like self-confidence and a personal positive attitude (do Paço et al. 2011) are factors that have a useful influence on entrepreneurial behavior. Given this perspective, it is necessary to assure the significant role of providing support to entrepreneurs (Ferri et al. 2018).

Therefore, the intent to undertake or any entrepreneurial behavior are generally not sufficient to take a step forward. This objective needs to be supported by a strong entrepreneurial education, which may involve the provision of a proper setting with a current curriculum to match the students' needs for becoming business owners. This is because exposing a person to entrepreneurial programs and courses will undoubtedly change their propensity for entrepreneurship (Keat et al. 2011; Shahverdi et al. 2018). In order to achieve this goal of fostering more entrepreneurs, universities and other research institutes around the world often offer more entrepreneurial education (Nabi et al. 2018). Even without entrepreneurial education, which is regarded as the foundation for entrepreneurs, education is crucial in general. It helps a person change their thinking and mentality about a particular activity. Many persons are thought to have had a significant impact on their schooling and launched successful businesses as a result (Robinson and Sexton 1994).

In any economy, entrepreneurs have a major role in ensuring economic, financial, and social balance, and this effort must be accompanied by effective public policies. In this sense, it is important to assess entrepreneurs' perception of the factors that support or hinder their priorities and interests. These priorities refer to financing facilities, the coherence of the legal system, society's perception of private initiative, bureaucracy, rigor, predictability, and transparency of fiscal measures, etc. (Moldovan 2015).

In developed countries, entrepreneurship education has developed rapidly, and at the European level, strategies have been developed to apply this type of discipline in schools. Entrepreneurship education has been applied in Great Britain and Norway since 2004. In Romania, entrepreneurship education has become a compulsory subject of study for high school students from the 10th grade only since 2010. This is now accompanied by courses in civic education and applied economics (Moldovan 2015).

In Romania, the general objectives of the policy to increase entrepreneurship include: strengthening entrepreneurial learning, securing funding sources, and promoting business creation and self-employment, which remain critical factors for the country's development.

In Romania, in addition to personality traits, an important barrier to starting a business, especially for women, is the lack of entrepreneurial skills. About 50% of women believe that they do not have the necessary skills to start and run a business (OECD 2017).

Promoting entrepreneurship through university education and training has recently become part of the national strategic agenda in many European countries (SEECEL 2015). In Romania, most entrepreneurship courses are accessible mainly within economic and business study programs (Vodă and Florea 2019).

Many institutions are currently changing their curricula to accommodate student demands and needs. Those with greater levels of knowledge, abilities, and perceived competence perform better than those with lower levels of knowledge (Martin et al. 2013). Through the mediating functions of attitude, self-efficacy, and social norms, entrepreneurial education toward entrepreneurship has a considerably beneficial impact on entrepreneurship intention. The aim of this study is to identify the entrepreneurial intention of the economic and entrepreneurial background. Furthermore, the following objectives were set up: (1) to determine which are the factors that influence the entrepreneurial intention; (2) to find out if there are any differences in terms of entrepreneurial intentions between respondents with economic and non-economic backgrounds.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Entrepreneurial Intention

More and more publications point out that intentions play a very important role in deciding whether to start a new business. The significance of cognitive variables for understanding this personal decision was highlighted by Baron (2004) or Shaver and Scott (1992), among other researchers. According to them, this cognitive focus provides a deeper understanding of the complex process of entrepreneurship, beyond what others offer.

Entrepreneurial literature has shown that entrepreneurship is a long and challenging process that begins with entrepreneurial intention. Without entrepreneurial purpose, further entrepreneurial steps will not be possible because it is thought that this behavior is the best predictor of entrepreneurial action (Akinwale et al. 2019; Liñán and Fayolle 2015; Santos and Liguori 2020). Thompson (2009) states that entrepreneurial intent can be defined as self-acknowledged conviction by a person who intends to set up a new business venture and consciously plan to do so at some point in the future. The level of a person's willingness, desire, and preparation to pursue entrepreneurship as a career and engage in entrepreneurial activities is indicated by their entrepreneurial intention (Santos and Liguori 2020; Alammari et al. 2019). As a result, academics have given a great deal of attention to the entrepreneurial intention in order to research the factors that may lead someone's wish to launch an entrepreneurial business (Ali et al. 2019; Farooq et al. 2018; Rodríguez Gutiérrez et al. 2019).

Entrepreneurial intention is the first crucial stage in the process of entrepreneurship (Molino et al. 2018). Any additional entrepreneurial steps would not exist without it. As a result, academics have focused a lot of research on entrepreneurial intention to better understand how entrepreneurs are created and why people engage in venture formation (Delanoë-Gueguen and Liñán 2019; Al Saiqal et al. 2019). The persistence, preparedness, and desire to put out the necessary efforts and actions to engage in entrepreneurship can be summed up as entrepreneurial intention (Alammari et al. 2019; Farooq et al. 2018).

2.2. Factors Determining the Entrepreneurial Intention

The application of many models and theories that can forecast entrepreneurial behavior has been investigated in earlier research on entrepreneurship (Shapiro and Sokol 1982). The theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the entrepreneurial event model (EEM) are the models that are most frequently utilized. In the theory of planned behavior (TPB), Ajzen (1991) argued that behavior could be predicted via intention through three independent determinants, namely: personal attitudes (measuring person's recognition of attractiveness of entrepreneurial behavior); subjective norms (SN) (measuring the realized social stress

and acceptance of entrepreneurial behavior); and finally perceived behavioral control (PBC) (assessing person's competencies and capabilities to take entrepreneurial behavior) (Farooq et al. 2018; Liñán and Chen 2009).

2.2.1. Entrepreneurial Capacity

Entrepreneurial capacity represents one's ability to start and run a business or a project. Skills like creativity, innovation, communication, and problem solving are important in being an entrepreneur (Cho and Lee 2018). Individual cognitive values influence the entrepreneurial intention; for instance, individuals with higher entrepreneurial capacity present higher desirability to start up a business (Logaiswari et al. 2020; Kim and Dolfriandra Huruta 2022).

H1: *Entrepreneurial capacity has a significant influence on entrepreneurial intention.*

2.2.2. Professional Attraction

Professional attraction is represented by the external factors that determine individuals to embrace a career in entrepreneurship. Professional attraction is a significant element that enhances the entrepreneurial intention of an individual (Duong 2022).

H2: *Professional attraction has a significant influence on entrepreneurial intention.*

2.2.3. Social Valuation

Social norms play an important role in the entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial behavior of people in a positive or negative way, due to the beliefs of close friends, families, and colleagues (Lortie and Castogiovanni 2015; Fayolle 2005; Khurram et al. 2021). Family support is an important factor in entrepreneurship (Steier 2009), emotional support has positive impact on the entrepreneurial intention (Boldureanu et al. 2020), while financial family support may assure supplementary capital to start-up a business and to face unexpected situations (Manolova et al. 2019; Cetindamar et al. 2012).

H3: *Social valuation has significant influence on entrepreneurial intention.*

2.2.4. Entrepreneurial Education

Entrepreneurial education is necessary for one's entrepreneurial development and predicts the attitude towards entrepreneurial intention (Anwar et al. 2020; Shane 2004) by encouraging the graduates of entrepreneurial education to embrace an entrepreneurship career (Hassan et al. 2020). Entrepreneurship education enhances the entrepreneurial abilities, amplifying students' entrepreneurial attraction and intention (Mei et al. 2020; Zhang and Huang 2021), by improving graduates' chances to succeed in running a business (Shane 2004).

H4: *Entrepreneurial education has a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention.*

Although there is a vast amount of literature on the various entrepreneurial motivations that explain why people want to start their own business and how these motivations affect different performance metrics, so far it is not fully understood how varied motivational arrangements affect the kind of entrepreneur that particular people decide to be. Indeed, studies have typically concentrated on one primary motivating factor for starting a business while ignoring other, secondary motivating factors (Delanoë-Gueguen and Liñán 2019; Douglas and Prentice 2019; Douglas 2020; Meoli et al. 2020; Shinnar et al. 2018) that, when taken together, may offer insights into the various motivations of people to pursue a particular type of entrepreneurial career, the various types of an entrepreneurial career, and the various ways to follow the same career path.

Numerous studies have looked at how several elements, including personality, self-efficacy, self-fulfillment, prior experience, creativity, risk preferences, education, age, and gender, affect the development of entrepreneurial goals (Arshad et al. 2019; Ferri et al. 2018), while there is still room to examine how economic and entrepreneurial background is

influencing the perception and attitudes on entrepreneurship. This subject has a particular impact on higher educating policies, in terms of adapting the curricula so the graduates could deal with the prerequisites of involving themselves in entrepreneurship.

3. Results

3.1. Analysis of Entrepreneurship Intention

The analysis of the entrepreneurship intention revealed that there are significant statistical differences between the two groups ($p < 0.01$). The respondents from the group with economic studies are more willing to become entrepreneurs (4.69 ± 1.845), and they are willing to make any effort to start and run their own firm (4.97 ± 1.813), but of course, their willingness is depending on the available resources (5.85 ± 1.494) and the support mainly from their family (5.87 ± 1.572). The higher gap between the two groups was noticed in terms of knowledge about developing an entrepreneurial plan (3.51 ± 1.902 vs. 4.71 ± 1.786), about practical details to start a firm (3.64 ± 1.999 vs. 4.81 ± 1.794), and the control creation process of a new firm (3.83 ± 1.958 vs. 4.61 ± 1.763). Those with economic studies tend to agree more that the family will support them more in case of starting a business (5.87 ± 1.572), while for the respondents without an economic background, more support would come from colleagues and mates (5.28 ± 1.643). There are significant differences between the two groups ($p < 0.01$) (Table 1).

Table 1. Statements scores.

Statements	Without Economics Studies (n = 270)	With Economic Studies (n = 312)	p-Value
Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me	4.77 ± 1.570	5.20 ± 1.572	0.001 **
A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me	4.69 ± 1.904	5.40 ± 1.638	0.000 ***
If I had the opportunity and resources, I'd like to start a firm	5.09 ± 1.820	5.85 ± 1.494	0.000 ***
Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfaction for me	4.91 ± 1.800	5.65 ± 1.498	0.000 ***
Among various options, I'd rather be an entrepreneur	4.75 ± 1.838	5.54 ± 1.597	0.000 ***
Your close family	5.07 ± 1.797	5.87 ± 1.572	0.000 ***
Your friends	4.72 ± 1.661	5.39 ± 1.580	0.000 ***
Your colleagues and mates	5.28 ± 1.643	5.68 ± 1.588	0.003 **
Starting a firm and keeping it working would be easy for me	3.80 ± 1.695	4.51 ± 1.705	0.000 ***
I'm prepared to start a viable firm	3.94 ± 1.955	4.68 ± 1.774	0.000 ***
I can control the creation process of a new firm	3.83 ± 1.958	4.61 ± 1.763	0.000 ***
I know the necessary practical details to start a firm	3.64 ± 1.999	4.81 ± 1.794	0.000 ***
I know how to develop an entrepreneurial project	3.51 ± 1.902	4.71 ± 1.786	0.000 ***
If I tried to start a firm, I would have a high probability of succeeding	4.17 ± 1.800	4.75 ± 1.804	0.000 ***
I'm ready to do anything for becoming an entrepreneur	3.41 ± 1.882	4.42 ± 1.761	0.000 ***
My professional goal is becoming an entrepreneur	3.53 ± 2.029	4.69 ± 1.845	0.000 ***
I will make every effort to start and run my own firm	3.82 ± 2.022	4.97 ± 1.813	0.000 ***
I'm determined to create a firm in the future	4.00 ± 2.101	5.00 ± 1.975	0.000 ***
I have very seriously thought about starting a firm	4.12 ± 2.076	5.05 ± 1.891	0.000 ***
I've got the set intention to start a firm some day	4.17 ± 2.172	5.16 ± 1.952	0.000 ***

Significance level: ** 1%; *** 0.1%.

Being an entrepreneur seems to be more attractive for those with economic studies (5.54 ± 1.597 vs. 4.75 ± 1.838) compared with those without economic studies, bringing

higher satisfaction than other activities (5.85 ± 1.494 vs. 5.09 ± 1.820), as they have more knowledge about practical details to start a business. The differences are statistically significant between the two groups ($p < 0.01$).

3.2. Principal Component Analysis

Firstly, the principal component analysis was conducted to access the dimensionality of the 20 items. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) overall measure of sampling is 0.94 for the critical value and the Barlett test of sphericity is significant (Chi-square = 14,645.06, $p < 0.000$), indicating that data are suitable for the principal component analysis (Kaiser 1974; Ding and He 2004). The solution of principal component analysis emerged into four factor solutions.

- The first factor “Entrepreneurial intention” represents 59.96% of the variance, with an eigenvalue of 11.99. The first factor has a mean of 4.42 ± 1.88 , and the Cronbach’s alpha test ($\alpha = 0.967$) indicates a good internal consistency. The dimension “Entrepreneurial intention” is comprised of six factors related to the intention to start a firm one day (4.70 ± 2.113), efforts necessary to start and run one’s own firm (4.44 ± 1.996), professional goal (4.15 ± 2.015), and sacrifices necessary to be made for becoming an entrepreneur (3.95 ± 1.888) (Table 2).

Table 2. Principal component analysis results.

Eigenvalue	Variance %	Factor	Item	Factor Loading	Mean	SD
11.994	59.969	Entrepreneurial intention $\alpha = 0.967$ mean = 4.42 SD = 1.8897	I’m determined to create a firm in the future	0.893	4.54	2.093
			I’ve got the firm intention to start a firm some day	0.869	4.70	2.113
			I have very seriously thought in starting a firm	0.867	4.62	2.031
			I will make every effort to start and run my own firm	0.802	4.44	1.996
			My professional goal is becoming an entrepreneur	0.756	4.15	2.015
			I’m ready to do anything for becoming an entrepreneur	0.647	3.95	1.888
1.982	9.910	Entrepreneurial capacity $\alpha = 0.953$ mean = 4.23 SD = 1.7168	I know how to develop an entrepreneurial project	0.834	4.15	1.935
			I know the necessary practical details to start a firm	0.811	4.26	1.978
			I can control the creation process of a new firm	0.807	4.25	1.894
			I’m prepared to start a viable firm	0.721	4.33	1.895
			If I tried to start a firm, I would have a high probability of succeeding	0.718	4.48	1.824
			Starting a firm and keeping it working would be easy for me	0.702	4.18	1.736
1.366	6.831	Professional attraction $\alpha = 0.945$ mean = 5.21 SD = 1.5534	Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfaction for me	0.826	5.31	1.680
			Among various options, I’d rather be an entrepreneur	0.810	5.17	1.756
			A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me	0.785	5.07	1.800
			If I had the opportunity and resources, I’d like to start a firm	0.771	5.49	1.695
			Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me	0.686	5.00	1.584
1.127	5.636	Social valuation $\alpha = 0.809$ mean = 5.34 SD = 1.4224	Your friends will support you to create a firm	0.876	5.08	1.651
			Your colleagues and mates	0.861	5.49	1.625
			Your close family	0.700	5.49	1.725
Total variance %	82.346, $\alpha = 0.963$					

- The second factor “Entrepreneurial capacity” (4.23 ± 1.71) represents 9.91% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.982. The Cronbach’s alpha test ($\alpha = 0.953$) of the second dimension indicates a good internal consistency. Six items are related to practical details to start a firm (4.26 ± 1.978), knowledge to develop an entrepreneurial project (4.15 ± 1.935), creation process of a new firm (4.25 ± 1.894), and confidence in their own abilities to succeed as an entrepreneur (4.48 ± 1.824).
- The third factor “Professional attraction” has good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.945$), with an eigenvalue of 1.366 and a variance of 6.831%. This dimension consists of five items related to attractiveness of being an entrepreneur (5.07 ± 1.800), necessity of resources and opportunities for starting a firm (5.49 ± 1.695), satisfaction of being entrepreneur (5.31 ± 1.680), and the advantages of being entrepreneur (5.00 ± 1.584).
- The fourth factor “Social valuation” is comprised of three items with a good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.809$). The respondents agree that they will be supported by their family mainly if they decide to start up a firm (5.49 ± 1.725), as well as by colleagues (5.49 ± 1.625).

3.3. Entrepreneurial Intention among Respondents with Economic Studies

The principal component analysis conducted among the respondents with economic studies resulted in a four-component solution. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) overall measure of sampling is 0.922 for the critical value and the Barlett test of sphericity is significant (Chi-square = 8175.151, $p < 0.000$), indicating that the data are suitable for the principal component analysis.

- The first component, “Entrepreneurial intention”, explains 58.75% of the variance and consists of six items with a value of Cronbach’s alpha test of 0.970 (Table 3), indicating a good internal consistency. It was noticed that the respondents with economy studies are ready to do anything to become an entrepreneur (4.42 ± 1.761), possess a set intention to start a firm someday (5.16 ± 1.952), or are determined to make any effort to start and run a firm someday (5.05 ± 1.891).
- The second component, “Professional attraction”, is comprised of five items and explains 12.97% of the variance. Being an entrepreneur brings high satisfaction for the respondents with economic studies (5.65 ± 1.489). A career as an entrepreneur is perceived as being attractive (5.40 ± 1.638) and in case of opportunity and resources the respondents with economic studies agree that they would embrace this career (5.85 ± 1.494).
- The third component, “Entrepreneurial capacity”, groups the items related to the knowledge necessary to start up a business. This component explains 7.36% of the variance. However, for participants who have economic studies, the trust in their capacities is lower compared with their intention and desire. It was noticed that the respondents agree that they have knowledge about the practical details to start up a firm (4.81 ± 1.794) and about developing an entrepreneurial project (4.71 ± 1.786).
- The fourth component, “Social valuation”, explains 5.12% of the variance and has a good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.861$). The respondents with economic studies consider that their close family and colleagues would support them in the process of becoming entrepreneurs (5.87 ± 1.572 ; 5.62 ± 1.588).

Table 3. Principal component analysis—with economic studies.

Eigenvalue	Variance %	Factor	Item	Factor Loading	Mean	SD
11.750	58.751	Entrepreneurial intention $\alpha = 0.970$ mean = 4.89 SD = 1.755	I'm determined to create a firm in the future	0.905	5.00	1.975
			I will make any effort to start and run my own firm	0.869	4.97	1.813
			I have very seriously thought in starting a firm	0.869	5.05	1.891
			I've got the set intention to start a firm some day	0.868	5.16	1.952
			My professional goal is becoming an entrepreneur	0.838	4.69	1.845
			I'm ready to do anything for becoming an entrepreneur	0.747	4.42	1.761
2.595	12.977	Professional attraction $\alpha = 0.955$ mean = 5.57 SD = 1.446	Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfactions for me	0.874	5.65	1.489
			Among various options, I'd rather be an entrepreneur	0.839	5.54	1.597
			A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me	0.824	5.40	1.638
			If I had the opportunity and resources, I'd like to start a firm	0.809	5.85	1.494
			Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me	0.785	5.20	1.572
1.474	7.369	Entrepreneurial capacity $\alpha = 0.951$ mean = 4.68 SD = 1.592	I know how to develop an entrepreneurial project	0.840	4.71	1.786
			I know the necessary practical details to start a firm	0.829	4.81	1.794
			I can control the creation process of a new firm	0.800	4.61	1.763
			I'm prepared to start a viable firm	0.696	4.68	1.774
			If I tried to start a firm, I would have a high probability of succeeding	0.682	4.75	1.804
			Starting a firm and keeping it working would be easy for me	0.654	4.51	1.705
1.025	5.126	Social valuation $\alpha = 0.861$ mean = 5.62 SD = 1.414	Your colleagues and mates	0.903	5.68	1.588
			Your friends	0.855	5.39	1.580
			Your close family	0.605	5.87	1.572
Total variance %	84.223 $\alpha = 0.962$					

3.4. Entrepreneurial Intention among Respondents without Economic Studies

The PCA run on the data from the respondents without economic studies resulted in four component solutions, which has explained 80.05% of the variance (Table 4). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) overall measure of sampling is 0.91 about the critical value and the Barlett test of sphericity is significant (Chi-square = 6655.682, $p < 0.000$), indicating that the data are suitable for the principal component analysis.

- The first component that explains more of the variance is “Entrepreneurial capacity” (58.39%) with an average of 3.80 ± 1.6914 , with a good internal consistency $\alpha = 0.950$ (Table 4). It was observed that the self-efficacy plays a higher role in the entrepreneurial attitude of the respondents. One can notice that the respondents without economic studies are less confident in their knowledge about developing an entrepreneurial project (3.51 ± 1.902) and the practical details to start a firm (3.64 ± 1.999), the fact that the future would influence their capability to control the creation process of a new firm (3.83 ± 1.958), and their availability to start a viable firm (3.94 ± 1.955).

Table 4. Principal component analysis—without economic studies.

Eigenvalue	Variance %	Factor	Item	Factor Loading	Mean	SD
11.679	58.397	Entrepreneurial capacity $\alpha = 0.950$ mean = 3.80 SD = 1.691	I know how to develop an entrepreneurial project	0.855	3.51	1.902
			I can control the creation process of a new firm	0.824	3.83	1.958
			I know the necessary practical details to start a firm	0.819	3.64	1.999
			If I tried to start a firm, I would have a high probability of succeeding	0.758	4.17	1.800
			I'm prepared to start a viable firm	0.753	3.94	1.955
			Starting a firm and keeping it working would be easy for me	0.738	3.80	1.695
1.923	9.613	Entrepreneurial intention $\alpha = 0.959$ mean = 3.89 SD = 1.901	I've got the set intention to start a firm some day	0.897	4.17	2.172
			I have very seriously thought in starting a firm	0.891	4.12	2.076
			I'm determined to create a firm in the future	0.890	4.00	2.101
			I will make any effort to start and run my own firm	0.740	3.82	2.022
			My professional goal is becoming an entrepreneur	0.642	3.53	2.029
			I'm ready to do anything for becoming an entrepreneur	0.490	3.41	1.882
1.442	7.212	Professional attraction $\alpha = 0.931$ mean = 5.01 SD = 1.370	Among various options, I'd rather be an entrepreneur	0.743	4.75	1.838
			Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfaction for me	0.721	4.91	1.800
			Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me	0.689	4.77	1.570
			A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me	0.679	4.69	1.904
			If I had the opportunity and resources, I'd like to start a firm	0.665	5.09	1.820
0.966	4.831	Social valuation $\alpha = 0.729$ mean = 4.84 SD = 1.586	Your friends	0.849	4.72	1.661
			Your colleagues and mates	0.804	5.28	1.643
			Your close family	0.722	5.07	1.797
Total variance %	80.053 $\alpha = 0.958$					

- The second component, “Entrepreneurial intention”, is comprised of six items and represents 9.61% of the variance, with an average of 3.89 ± 1.9017 . It was found that respondents without economic studies are quite neutral in terms of starting a firm someday (4.17 ± 2.172); additionally, their goal does not necessarily involve becoming an entrepreneur (3.53 ± 2.029), and they do not have the intention to do everything to become entrepreneurs (3.41 ± 1.882).
- The third component, “Professional attraction”, explains 7.21% of the variance, and has an average of 5.01 ± 1.3705 . Even in their case, it was observed that being an entrepreneur was attractive, and if they had the financial resources they would start a business one day (5.09 ± 1.820), and it would bring high satisfaction to them (4.91 ± 1.800). They tend to agree that it brings more advantages than disadvantages (4.77 ± 1.570).
- The fourth component, “Social valuation”, is comprised of three items and represents 4.83% of the variance with an average of 4.84 ± 1.5869 . Even in this case, the respondents consider that their colleagues and mates will assure them the higher support (5.28 ± 1.643).

3.5. Comparison between Participants with Economic Background and Participants without Economic Background

Furthermore, *t*-test was employed to determine if there were any statistical differences among the two analyzed groups in terms of entrepreneurial attitude.

The following hypotheses were stated in order to test if there are any differences regarding the entrepreneurial intention between the participants with economic background/entrepreneurship training and those without economic background/entrepreneurship training:

H5: *There is no significant difference between the entrepreneurial intention of the participants with economic background/entrepreneurship training and those without economic background/entrepreneurship training.*

H6: *There is no significant difference between the entrepreneurial capacity of the participants with economic background/entrepreneurship training and those without economic background/entrepreneurship training.*

H7: *There is no significant difference between the entrepreneurial attraction of the participants with economic background/entrepreneurship training and those without economic background/entrepreneurship training.*

H8: *There is no significant difference between the social valuation of the participants with economic background/entrepreneurship training and those without economic background/entrepreneurship training.*

It was noticed that in the case of the group without economic studies, the entrepreneurial intention is lower (3.89 ± 1.901) compared with the group with economic studies (4.89 ± 1.755), the difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), so the null hypothesis Ho5 was rejected (Table 5). The null hypothesis Ho6 was rejected ($p < 0.05$). The entrepreneurial capacity for participants with economic backgrounds (4.68 ± 1.592) was higher than the one for the participants with no economic background. Furthermore, the professional attraction for the group with economic studies (5.57 ± 1.446) is statistically different from the group with no economic background (5.07 ± 1.370) ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. Comparative means.

Component	Without Economics Studies (n = 270)	With Economic Studies (n = 312)	p-Value
Entrepreneurial intention	3.89 ± 1.901	4.89 ± 1.755	0.000 ***
Entrepreneurial capacity	3.80 ± 1.691	4.68 ± 1.592	0.000 ***
Professional attraction	5.01 ± 1.370	5.57 ± 1.446	0.000 ***
Social valuation	4.84 ± 1.586	5.62 ± 1.414	0.000 ***

Significance level: *** 0.1%.

3.6. Entrepreneurial Intention Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to explore whether the economic background/entrepreneurial education of the respondents, entrepreneurial capacity, professional attraction, social valuation have any significant effects on the entrepreneurial intention. The results of the regression analysis indicated that the independent variables significantly predict the entrepreneurial intention $F(4, 577) = 235.58$, $p < 0.05$. Entrepreneurial intention is significantly positive influenced by the economic background/entrepreneurial education ($\beta = 0.280$, $p < 0.05$), entrepreneurial capacity ($\beta = 0.527$, $p < 0.05$), and professional attraction ($\beta = 0.476$, $p < 0.05$) and is significantly negatively influenced by the social valuation ($\beta = -0.102$, $p < 0.05$); the results support the stated hypotheses (H1–H4) (Table 6).

Table 6. Regression analysis.

	Model
Dependent variable	
Entrepreneurial intention	
Independent variable	
(Constant)	0.110 ***
Economic background/entrepreneurial education ¹	0.280 ***
Entrepreneurial capacity	0.527 ***
Professional attraction	0.476 ***
Social valuation	−0.102 ***
R-square	0.620 ***

Significance level: *** 0.1%; ¹ economic background/entrepreneurial education dummy variable: 1 yes, 0 no.

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to identify the entrepreneurial intention of economic and non-economic background. The results indicated that economic or entrepreneurial background respondents are more attracted to becoming entrepreneurs compared to those without economic studies. It was also noticed that respondents with economic studies are younger with lower income, compared with the group without economic studies, the differences being statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The results of the principal component analysis revealed that the higher variance is given by the entrepreneurial intention (58.75%), for those with economic studies and by entrepreneurial capacity (58.39%) for those without economic studies and indicated the importance of the entrepreneurial education for entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial process. Previous research has highlighted that motivation as well as domain knowledge and skills (sales, leadership, planning, decision making, communication) are factors that influence success in entrepreneurship (Shane et al. 2003). Information, innovation, and creativity can have a stimulating or inhibiting effect on entrepreneurship (Hashimoto and Nassif 2014). Sociodemographic characteristics (age, gender, background) have a major influence on the intention to become entrepreneurs (Haus et al. 2013; Raman et al. 2008; Charles and Gherman 2013; Mureşan et al. 2016). Additionally, the need for additional income and the desire for self-realization have been identified as motivating factors in starting businesses in rural areas (Mureşan et al. 2016).

The respondents who had taken part in entrepreneurship education had more entrepreneurial inclinations than the respondents who had not. The study's findings are corroborated by research that shows how significant entrepreneurship education is in fostering one's desire to launch his own business (Tung 2011; Souitaris et al. 2007). Participants in entrepreneurship courses had more favorable attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioral control regarding their plans to start their own business. It demonstrates the influence of entrepreneurship education on a person's desire to start a business. This result is consistent with earlier studies that have found that a higher level of education increases a person's desire to launch a business (Souitaris et al. 2007; Levie and Autio 2008). Studies confirmed that higher education is an important factor for entrepreneurship intention (Kerrin et al. 2017; Morales and Marquina Feldman 2013) and higher desirability was encountered in students after following entrepreneurial courses (Díaz-García et al. 2015).

Significant differences were found regarding self-efficacy between the two groups. Hence, the necessity of following specialized courses/professional training for future entrepreneurs was emphasized. Due to the significance of the factors influencing the development of intentions for starting and managing one's own business, it is likely that education, along with behavioral antecedents, also play substantial parts in developing intentions to pursue entrepreneurship as a vocation.

An entrepreneur needs to have a clear goal, to be self-reliant, to develop himself, to explore his potential, and to be able to build positive relationships (Andersson 2008; Muryani et al. 2018). Not all entrepreneurs are able to achieve a level of psychological

well-being because running a business is like a lottery; no one can predict whether it will succeed or fail.

The results of the regression analysis revealed that the entrepreneurial intention is positively significantly influenced by the entrepreneurial education, entrepreneurial capacity, and professional attraction, while they are negatively significantly influenced by the social validation. The findings of this study are different from those derived from the studies of [Lindquist et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Fatoki \(2014\)](#), which have found that parental support for entrepreneurial activities could influence the interest in engaging in entrepreneurship. This study is consistent with those who come to the same conclusion on the influence of family on entrepreneurial intention ([Ozaralli and Rivenburgh 2016](#); [Liñán et al. 2005](#); [Mueller 2006](#)).

A positive self-concept is one of the elements that may influence a person's desire in entrepreneurship. This is because the entrepreneurs will have a strong belief that they can perceive the opportunities around them, to acquire the chance that is advantageous since they will be able to recognize themselves—in terms of attitude, ability, disability, feelings, and emotions—if they have a positive self-concept.

According to [Simanjuntak et al. \(2016\)](#), [Mueller and Thomas \(2001\)](#), [Koe Hwee Nga and Shamuganathan \(2010\)](#), and the findings of this study, self-concept has a positive impact on entrepreneurship. It also helps entrepreneurs to recognize their environment, to see opportunities, and to use resources to take advantage of those opportunities.

Entrepreneurship may grow, if they identify opportunities in their surroundings, if environmental factors encourage them to take advantage of these chances, and if environmental factors improve their capacity to launch and run a company.

All the factors that influence entrepreneurship are important, but also public policy should focus on the following common issues: expanding opportunities for entrepreneurs and developing an entrepreneurial culture generally; encouraging the establishment of institutions that support entrepreneurs; and offering financial and non-financial assistance after the entrepreneurs' likelihood to start their own businesses has been increased.

5. Materials and Methods

5.1. Research Area

The research was conducted on inhabitants from the north-west and the west part of Romania to determine the entrepreneurial intention of the residents.

The survey was implemented in 2 of the 8 Romanian NUTS 2 level areas, called development regions ([Statistical Regions in the European Union and Partner Countries 2022](#)) (Figure 1). Each of these regions has its own Regional Program approved by the European Commission and Regional Operational Programs 2021–2027, also approved by the European Commission, which can be consulted on the web page of the [Ministry of Public Finance in Romania \(2022\)](#). Inside these programs, the development regions had the liberty to design the actions according to their needs and their specific circumstances.

Among the 8 development regions of Romania, one is created around Bucharest, the capital city of Romania, and because of the strong influence of the proximity of the major city in the country, it was not selected as being suitable for implementing the survey. From the rest of the 7 development regions, 2 are selected as being the most active on entrepreneurial behavior, measured as the number of newly created SMEs by thousands of inhabitants.

For estimating the entrepreneurial behavior, the number of new enterprises on thousands of active populations created during one year was computed. The value was generated by dividing the number of new created enterprises by the number of active populations.

The number of new created companies was computed for each development region based on data of NUTS 3 level available on the statistical database of National Trade Registry Office (<https://www.onrc.ro/index.php/ro/statistici>, accessed on 2 December 2022). It was included here all types of companies that were created according to the Romanian law, including agricultural cooperative, group of economic interest, family company, individual company, sole proprietorship, public limited company, cooperative

society, limited partnership, general partnership, and, the most common, one limited liability company.

The active population was obtained from the statistical database of National Institute of Statistics in Romania (<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, accessed on 2 December 2022). It includes the economically active population, meaning all persons who furnish the labor available for the production of goods and services during the reference period, including the employed population and the unemployed ones (<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, accessed on 2 December 2022).



Figure 1. The development regions in Romania. Source: Eurostat (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/345175/7451602/2021-NUTS-2-map-RO.pdf>, accessed on 2 December 2022).

Resulted data pointed out 2 development regions where the number of new enterprises on thousands of active populations is high: north-west (22.11 new companies created to 1000 active population) and, respectively, west (18.82 new companies created to 1000 active population). Consequently, the survey of the research was applied on the North-West Development Region and the West Development Region (Table 7).

Table 7. Number of new enterprises per thousand active populations in Romania (2021).

Region	Number of New Enterprises in Romania (2021)											AP (2021)	NE/1000
	CA	GIE	IF	II	PFA	SA	SC	SCS	SNC	SRL	Total		
Bucharest-Ilfov	5	0	23	124	4088	69	0	1	1	26,786	31,097	1431.4	21.72
Center	147	0	489	1455	4680	7	3	2	0	10,498	17,281	990.8	17.44
North-East	59	0	135	2127	3141	4	0	0	0	11,861	17,327	1009.2	17.17
North-West	134	0	809	2156	6330	10	2	0	0	14,656	24,097	1090.1	22.11
South	99	0	870	2504	2895	5	0	0	0	11,312	17,685	981.4	18.02
South-East	128	0	301	1073	2825	3	0	1	0	10,445	14,776	873.7	16.91
South-West	87	0	510	1382	1993	2	0	0	0	7690	11,664	695.5	16.77
West	78	1	138	1343	3028	5	1	2	0	9771	14,367	763.5	18.82
Total	737	1	3275	12,164	28,980	105	6	6	1	103,019	148,294	7835.6	18.93

Note: AP = active population (thousands); NE/1000 = Number of new enterprises on thousands of active populations; Types of companies: CA = Agricultural cooperative, GIE = Group of economic interest, IF = family company, II = Individual company, PFA = Sole proprietorship, SA = Public limited company, SC = Cooperative society, SCS = Limited partnership, SNC = General partnership, SRL = Limited liability company.

5.2. Questionnaire Design

For the purpose of the research, an online survey was employed. Each of the participants before starting the survey was informed about the aim of the research and the protection of the GDPR data. The questionnaire used for this research was developed based on the entrepreneurial intention questionnaire proposed by Liñán et al. (2011). The analyzed data for the current paper are represented by a set of 20 items evaluated on a Likert type scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means totally disagree and 7 means totally agree, used to evaluate the entrepreneurial intention. The items are related to behavioral intention, personal attraction, entrepreneurial intention, and perceived social norms. A pilot test was run in order to check the reliability of the 7-point scale items.

5.3. Sample Size

A total number of 582 were validated in the end. The respondents were distributed in two groups: the first group consisted of 312 respondents with economic backgrounds (university degree in economics or entrepreneurial courses) and 270 respondents without economic backgrounds (Table 8). Chi-square test was employed to see if there were any significant differences regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents of the two groups, and the *p*-value was reported. The majority of the respondents were female (68%), less than 30 years (47.1%), with a monthly house income higher than RON 5600. In the case of the group with economic studies, it was noticed that compared with the group without economic studies was comprised of younger respondents (65.1% are less than 30 years vs. 26.3%) with lower income (45.2% have a monthly income higher than RON 5600 vs. 55.0%).

Table 8. Socio-demographic profile of the respondents.

Socio Demographic Characteristics	Variable	Total	Without Economic Studies (n = 270)	With Economic Studies (n = 312)	<i>p</i> -Value
Gender	Female	396 (68%)	180 (66.7%)	216 (69.2%)	n.s.
	Male	186 (32%)	90 (33.3%)	96 (30.8%)	
Age	<30 years	274 (47.1%)	71 (26.3%)	203 (65.1%)	0.000 ***
	>30 years	308 (42.9%)	199 (73.7%)	109 (34.9%)	
Monthly household income	<2800 RON	52 (8.9%)	7 (2.6%)	45 (14.4%)	0.000 ***
	2801–5600 RON	210 (36.1%)	84 (31.1%)	126 (40.4%)	
	>5600 RON	320 (55.0%)	179 (66.3%)	141 (45.2%)	

Note: n.s.—not significant, *** significant at 0.1% level.

5.4. Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0 IBM. The descriptive statistics were used to analyze the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to reduce the number of items used to analyze the entrepreneurial intention of the respondents. Principal component analysis was first conducted for the entire sample, and secondly for each of the two groups. Principal component analysis (PCA) is comprised of a data set reduction in which the components are calculated using all of the variance of the manifest variables (Costello and Osborne 2005), resulting in a new set of uncorrelated variables (Jolliffe 2014). The Cronbach's alpha test ($\alpha = 0.962$) exceeded the significance level of 0.6, indicating a good internal consistency of the 20 items. Furthermore, a *t*-test was run in order to determine if there are any significant differences among the two groups. A simple linear regression was run to evaluate the prediction of entrepreneurial capacity, professional attraction, social valuation, and entrepreneurial/economical education on entrepreneurial intention.

6. Conclusions

Unlike previous studies that focused on the entrepreneurial intention of various cultures, these studies examined the disparities in entrepreneurial intention between individuals with an economic background and those without.

The current study revealed important information regarding the entrepreneurial intention of the inhabitants from both North-West and West Development Regions of Romania, highlighting the need for entrepreneurial education for individuals who intend to become entrepreneurs.

As the study was limited to North-West and West Development Regions of Romania, future research should focus on extending the research area to other parts of Romania and should analyze the interaction between socio-demographic and environmental factors. Additionally, as the results show the situation at a moment in time; other future research could repeat using similar conditions to observe the trend of the phenomena.

Moreover, the results are valuable for education policy makers in order to develop future curricula requirements for economics and entrepreneurial courses. At the same time, it offers worthwhile information for the designers of the long-life entrepreneurial education programs, funding projects and grants. Last, but not least, the results of the study are to be used for carrier orientation by future high education students interested in becoming entrepreneurs.

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