

## Abstract 15

### INVESTIGATING THE DETERMINANTS OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY-SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ITALY

Academic paper

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#### Abstract text:

##### Purpose

This research study is geared to deepen the factors impacting on the environment-friendly entrepreneurial orientation of university students in Italy. The main aim of this work is providing academics and policy-makers with an insightful understanding of university context- and ecosystem-related factors as well as of family, social and behavioral ones. This way, the findings may help academics and policy-makers in the design and implementation of entrepreneurial universities in Italy, in order to address better and fill policy gaps through the introduction of ad hoc measures within the national academic system.

##### Originality

and

##### Value

This research study claims a threefold originality. First, it analyzes data of a unique dataset that covers a representative sample of university students in Italy. These real-world data from a country-level scenario are not affected by any local or region-related bias. Hence, the results stemming from this study are original and prove to be reliable and valid. Second, the adoption of a structural equation model ensures a more methodologically reliable study, if compared to those in extant literature. The model is composed of factors and variables that are thoroughly identified by building on an in-depth literature review. Third, to the best of authors' knowledge, the environmental-friendly entrepreneurial orientation is hitherto under-investigated, whilst the recent and current focus on sustainability and environment-friendly efforts in entrepreneurial activities are steadily growing globally, thus, proving the value and timeliness of the study itself.

##### Design

and

##### Methodology

Data come from the survey carried out under the Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey (GUESSS) in 2016. It is an international project involving more than 50 countries and more than 1,000 universities globally. The questionnaire is administered online and a multi-level coordination structure exists in order to ensure methodological homogeneity and data reliability during the data collection process. The survey conducted in Italy provides a unique dataset including 4,446 valid responses from students enrolled in 39 Italian universities. Therefore, the sample utilized in this study covers 3.6% of the total population interviewed globally. An overarching set of factors and variables is collected including (but not limited to): country- and cultural-level variables; legal aspects and norms; study and academic career; societal environment; readiness to start a new business; objectives and motivation for the new business; ownership level and commitment; co-founders solidarity with student-entrepreneurs; idea source; appeal of and interest in parental business; subjective norms; tolerance to (entrepreneurial) risk; soft skills etc.. Data are analyzed through a Structural Equation Model (SEM), after performing an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

##### Results

and

##### Findings

The main findings of this research study prove that the environmental-orientation of entrepreneurial

efforts of university students in Italy is predominantly and positively affected by individual characteristics and behavioral aspects. A minor, but still significant role, is played by the availability of resources to undertake environmentally-sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives. Finally, the social context as well as family's and friends' influence impact negatively on environmental-orientation of entrepreneurial efforts of university students in Italy.

#### Limitations and Implications

The items/constructs considered in the structural equation model of this study are much higher in number than in other contributions in extant literature. However, some factors or variables may remain uncovered as well as possible moderating/mediating effects may remain unexplored. An additional limitation applies to this study: despite findings stem from valid and reliable data – i.e. 4,446 valid responses at the country level –, they are not generalizable to other (non-Italian) national contexts. Hence, this work opens new research avenues on the sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial spirit of university students, widening the current knowledge domain in extant literature.

The main implications of this work are of interest for both academics and policy makers. People operating in the academia - especially in Italy - may exploit the findings of this study in order to design and implement better quality entrepreneurial programs for their students that are oriented towards environmental sustainability purposes. Policy makers may identify and also prioritize relevant areas of intervention and the corresponding reforms and/or investments. This way, the academic system could achieve higher performances related to the environment-friendly entrepreneurial initiatives of university students at the country-level.

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