

Exploring Sport Professionals' Attitudes on Sport Entrepreneurship as a Career Path at a South African Football Team

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21136647>

Article History	Abstract
<p>Original Research Article</p> <p>Received: 06-05-2026</p> <p>Accepted: 11-06-2026</p> <p>Published: 02-07-2026</p> <p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p>Citation: Zwane, B. S. (2026). Exploring sport professionals' attitudes on sport entrepreneurship as a career path at a South African football team. <i>UKR Journal of Economics, Business and Management</i>, 2(7), 14-25.</p>	<p>Background: Sport entrepreneurship is progressively emerging as an extremely significant stream of research. Accordingly, scholars are increasingly assessing how sportspeople tend to have higher entrepreneurial orientation and intentions than the average.</p> <p>Purpose: This study aimed to determine sport professionals' attitudes towards sport entrepreneurship as a career path at a South African Football Team.</p> <p>Method: The qualitative study collected data from twelve high performance football athletes using semi-structured interviews. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Data was analysed using thematic analysis through the Atlas ti software.</p> <p>Findings: Sport professionals generally hold a positive attitude towards sport entrepreneurship, often linking personal traits like optimism, creativity, and strong communication skills to entrepreneurial potential. Factors influencing this positive attitude include family support, entrepreneurial education, motivation, access to resources, and perceived lack of entrepreneurial skills. Subjective norms highlighted the need for support systems (financial, moral, idea support), role models, and addressing gender inequality as crucial for aspiring entrepreneurs. Perceived behavioural control was influenced by personal drive, family background, mentorship, and capability, emphasizing that self-confidence and practical skills are key motivators for starting a business.</p> <p>Contribution: By examining the factors influencing sport professionals' entrepreneurial intent, this research will provide insights and actionable solutions to foster success and sustainability in this dynamic field, contributing to a more vibrant and impactful sports business ecosystem.</p> <p>Keywords: Sport entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Intent, TPB, Entrepreneurship.</p>

Introduction

The sporting sector has evolved to become one of the most globalised and economically significant sectors, with base line entrepreneurship pivotal for driving sustainability, competition and development (Ratten 2022). In addition to its leisure and social functions, sport has gained the world as one of the most important sectors that make a significant contribution to national and international economies in job creation, business formation, investment and innovation (Pellegrini et al., 2020). For instance, in the European Union (EU28), the sports industry accounts for over 1.7 million jobs and a growth rate of 2.1% between 2012–2017

period compared to the GDP growth per economic sector of 1.1% covering all sectors in EU28 (Eurostat, Rose & Simoes, 2018). This economic significance is reflected in an increasing scholarly interest towards sports entrepreneurship over the past decade (Escamilla-Fajardo, Ratten, & Núñez-Pomar, 2020; González-Serrano, Añó Sanz, & González-García, 2020). This growing body of research has examined the relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and organizational performance, positioning entrepreneurship as a strategic capability of sports organizations to increase their

competitiveness, innovation or sustainability (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2022; Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurship, innovation and creative industry have been increasingly recognised as vital means of recreating the sport industry through driving organisational renewal, technological development and employment creation. Despite the recognition that sports entrepreneurship is a relevant domain for research in sports business, this field is still somewhat fragmented and developing with regards to its theoretical and empirical foundations (Hammerschmidt et al., 2024). Fill in the gaps: existing evidence indicates that important questions remain about the entrepreneur of sport organizations and the forms and mechanisms in which sports entrepreneurship integrates with broader domains of entrepreneurship research even given the increased research interest (Hammerschmidt, Kraus, & Jones, 2022; Ratten, 2020). Therefore, we need to expand existing research agendas by integrating advanced digital technologies and new business innovations that are transforming entrepreneurship practices throughout the global economy. This type of approach will support a more integrated understanding of how digital transformation drives entrepreneurial potential, organization competitiveness and value creation in the sports sector.

Considering how rapidly both the sports industry as well as entrepreneurial ecosystems evolve, scholars have called for studies investigating new opportunities, untapped business models and trends of tomorrow in sports entrepreneurship (Norouzi Seyed Hossini, Roumiani & Roumiani 2024). Moreover, the academic importance of conducting research in this vein is even more pronounced by the magnitude of economic activity pertaining to sports and its drive for societal change (Zwane, 2025; Zwane & Ebewo, 2023; González-Serrano, Jones & Llanos-Contrera, 2020). Further research in this domain is likely to yield actionable findings that can not only bolster entrepreneurial practices and lead to better organizational outcomes but also contribute towards data-informed policy-making. Also, sports entrepreneurship goes beyond its economic outcomes due to its relevance in initiatives of public health promotion, social inclusion, economic growth, community development, and intercultural understanding making it a central multidisciplinary field with wide-ranging impacts on sustainable societal development (Cardella et al., 2021).

Purpose of the study

This study aimed to determine sport professionals' attitudes towards sport entrepreneurship as a career path at a South African Football Team by answering the following research objectives:

- 1) To determine the importance of sport entrepreneurship.

- 2) To determine influence of attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on sport professionals' attitudes toward sport entrepreneurship.

After this introduction the paper will present a review of the literature followed by the theoretical framework upon which the research question hinges. This will be followed by the research methods that were used to collect and analyse the data. This will be followed by a presentation of the results followed by a discussion of the results and how they link to the literature. Finally the study shall present a conclusion drawn from the results and areas for further research.

Literature Review

Sport Entrepreneurship

The importance of sport in our daily life has led to the study of sport from many different perspectives (Hammerschmidt et al., 2024). However, the sport industry is not regarded as an economic entity by practitioners and scholars, and little is known about sport from an entrepreneurial perspective (Pellegrini, Rialti, Marzi & Caputo 2020). The increasing number of scholarly articles on sport entrepreneurship in recent years shows that scholars have been expecting this research gap (Zwane 2025; Ratten 2022; González-Serrano et al. 2020; Pellegrini et al. 2020).

Today it is well established that sport has a tremendous potential to influence the quality of life of the general population (da Costa & Miragaia 2024; Hammerschmidt, Kraus and Jones, 2022) due to its intervention in health, entertainment, leisure, competition, tourism and education. The sport industry is certainly very diversified and has become a very attractive context for the development of various types of entrepreneurial initiatives, being an area closely linked to innovation, change and evolution (da Costa & Miragaia 2024; Hindle, Viala, Hammerschmidt, Kraus, Jones & Calabuig 2021; Huertas Gonzalez-Serrano, Jones & Llanos-Contrera 2020).

Despite the fact that the sport context is very attractive for future entrepreneurs (Huertas Gonzalez-Serrano et al., 2020; Pellegrini, Rialti, Marzi, & Caputo, 2020), there is also a need to prepare professionals to undertake entrepreneurial initiatives, equipping them with the tools they need to feel confident in this field (da Costa & Miragaia 2024). Sport entrepreneurship refers to "any form of enterprise or entrepreneurship within a sport context" (Zwane 2025). However, despite the significance of sport entrepreneurs to the development of sport, "academicians have not focused as intently on sport entrepreneurs as they have other topics" (Nauright & Wiggins, 2020). Indeed, the literature on sport entrepreneurship is quite recent and restricted (Bagge & Oberhausen Krippner 2024; Pellegrini

2023; Cecere & Bernardi 2023; Pellegrini et al., 2020; Constantin, Stanescu & Stanescu 2020).

Ratten (2010a, 2011b) has written extensively on sport-based entrepreneurship which is defined as individuals or organisations innovatively acting in a business context such as professional sports leagues or teams (Hammerschmidt et al., 2021; Ratten and Jones, 2020), highly successful athletes developing or endorsing sport brands (Ratten, 2012a, 2014, 2015) and sport entrepreneurial brands (Miloch, Lee, Kraft & Ratten 2012;). However, there are still gaps in the understanding of what drives sport entrepreneurs and whether their motives to set up and grow their own business are different from what is commonly described in the literature on entrepreneurship (Winand, Bell & Zeimers 2023, Pellegrini et al., 2020).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour

Intention is mainly defined as a person's commitment to make an effort on the behaviour (Ajzen 2011). In the context of entrepreneurship literature, entrepreneurial intention is defined as a conscious state of mind that drives an individual to own and grow a new business venture. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) conceptual framework proposed by Ajzen (1991), entrepreneurial intention is the closest and most insightful predictor of entrepreneurial behaviour; hence, it is a vital

construct in understanding how to navigate the process of venture creation. Nonetheless, this conceptualisation of personality-style-derived aspects of the individual as a mechanism through which variables affect entrepreneurial intention has not been effective in adequately explaining entrepreneurship; rather, it is the result of multidimensional contextual and interpersonal interactions. Previous research confirmed that individual and contextual features on its own are not able to explain entrepreneurial behaviour with adequate explanatory and predictive power (Al-Qadasi, Zhang, Al-Awlaqi, Alshebami, & Aamer, 2023; Schlaegel et al., 2021; Krueger et al., 2000). Therefore, there have been calls for more mediating and explanatory variables to be integrated into the entrepreneurial intention framework (Steinbrink & Ströhle, 2024). The Theory of Planned Behaviour can be defined as one of the most validated and utilised entrepreneurial intention theory available [5]. The model states that an individual intention to start a venture is jointly determined by three primary determinants — attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). It provides a composite of frameworks that collectively explains how personal appraisals, other-oriented (External) perceived norms and the self-assessed perceived behavioral control result in an intent to start a new enterprise. An excerpt of the Theory of Planned Behaviour as postulated by Ajzen (1991) is shown in figure 1.

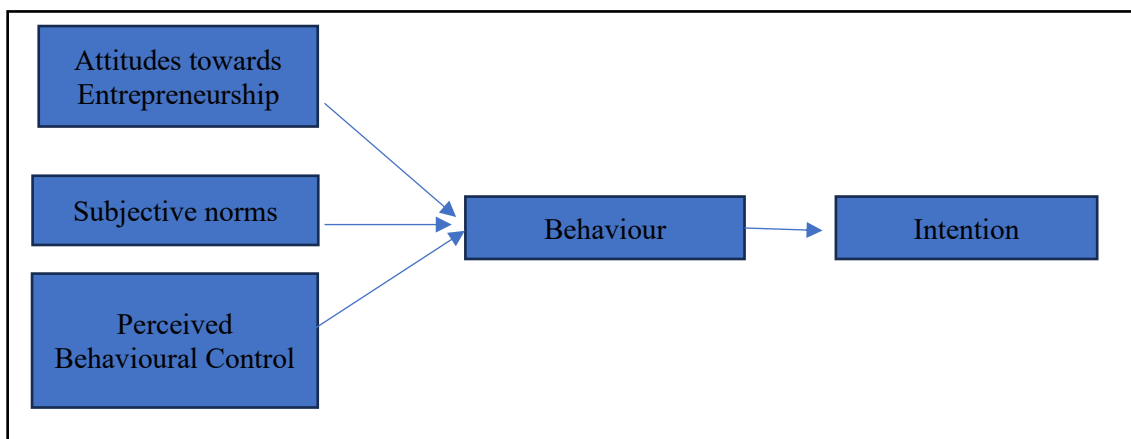


Figure 1 The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991)

Attitudes towards entrepreneurship

Attitudes toward entrepreneurship are the individual's (positive or negative) judgment of the behavior or of their own attitude toward entrepreneurship (Steinbrink & Ströhle 2024). As used in this study, attitude refers to a sport person's positive or negative feeling about entrepreneurship. The study by Zwane (2025) on the challenges affecting the entrepreneurial intention of sport professionals revealed that sport professionals have positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and indicated

that they would consider starting their own business. In addition, a study carried out by Pollegrini et al. (2020) showed that professionals enrolled in sport-related courses had a positive attitude towards the entrepreneurial intention. Thus, attitudes towards entrepreneurship are an important factor in the entrepreneurial aim of sport professionals.

Subjective norms

Subjective norms are used to measure the social pressure that influences behaviour (Zwane & Ebewo 2023).

According to Su, Zhu, Chen, Jin, Wang, Lin and Xu 2021 (2021), starting a business is a crucial decision, people are likely to ask those around them for advice and support. Therefore, the opinions of those around a person have an impact on that person's decision to engage in entrepreneurial behaviour.

Perceived Behavioural Control

Perceived behavioral control also known as self-efficacy is described by Ajzen (1991) as the “perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour”. It is about the confidence or competence of the person to deal with and control a problem (Aye, Bondzi-Simpson & Baah 2023). The more the individual feels in control of the behavior, the more willing the individual is to perform. Perceived behavioural control may have a direct effect on behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Methodology

As Creswell and Poth (2021) define, qualitative research is an analysis of participants’ comments about their experience and perception of phenomena in their natural context. Interviews and focus groups are research methodologies that include observations that produce data about how participants experience their behaviour in context (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The qualitative research methods allowed this study to gain a comprehensive grasp of elements influencing sport professionals’ entrepreneurial intention.

Study Design

This research employed phenomenological research design. The phenomenological research approach focuses on the exploration of personal observations and perceptions of human experiences of events (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research design was effective in that its major aim was to achieve an in-depth understanding of sport professionals’ views about sport entrepreneurship as a career alternative.

Research approach

This study employed a case study approach as it can be used when there could be a complex cause-and-effect relationship between real-life events and their results are unknown, or it could be used to evaluate an evaluation study (Zwane, 2025; Zwane & Ebewo, 2023).

Data Collection

The major method of data collection for this research was semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview method was useful to the researchers as it allowed them to stay focused on the aims of the research while allowing freedom in the discussion of participants’ experiences (Jamshed, 2022).

Sampling and sample size

Qualitative methodologies were used throughout the study and non-probability sampling methods were the research design. According to Jamshed (2022), the premise of postmodern non-probability sampling is researcher-dependent participation selection, which takes place owing to participant relevance for the study goals. The researcher used purposive sampling in selecting the subjects to get detailed information of high value (Denzin & Lincoln, 2020).

The method to establish the participation needs was research data saturation. It means that no new insights were generated from the data in the study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2021). The outcomes of the study were obtained by using a sample size of twelve sport persons.

Data Analysis

The qualitative research approach employed was thematic analysis since this technique identifies systematic patterns and repeating themes in the data for the study (Nowell et al., 2017). The thematic analytic nature enabled researchers to analyze participant views and behavioural tendencies (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Data were analyzed using Atlas Ti software.

Results And Discussion

Sport Entrepreneurship

Sport entrepreneurship involves the identification and exploitation of opportunities within the sport industry through innovative and strategic business practices. It encompasses ventures such as sport event management, coaching services, fitness enterprises, and sport-related technologies. Entrepreneurs in this domain often combine their passion for sport with business acumen to address market gaps and create value.

According to Lacap, Mulyaningsih, and Ramadann (2018), individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset are more likely to develop and implement novel business ideas. This study found that sport professionals generally hold a positive attitude towards sport entrepreneurship, consistent with Pollegriani et al. (2020), who observed that professionals in sport-related courses tend to exhibit strong entrepreneurial intentions. Participants in this study demonstrated enthusiasm for sport entrepreneurship, often linking their personal traits to entrepreneurial potential. For instance,

PJ described themselves as “a positive and creative individual who enjoys working collaboratively,” reflecting key entrepreneurial traits such as optimism and teamwork.

PD emphasized their innovative capacity, stating, “I bring creativity to group settings, especially with my background in project and event management,” which aligns with the

entrepreneurial need for problem-solving and leadership in dynamic environments.

PI highlighted the importance of self-efficacy, noting, “Entrepreneurship begins with believing in yourself and your business idea,” echoing the foundational role of confidence in entrepreneurial success. Similarly,

PB remarked, “Being open-minded allows others to see your potential. I believe extroverted individuals are well-suited for business,” pointing to the value of openness and sociability in entrepreneurial engagement.

PH added, “I am open-minded and possess strong communication skills,” which are essential for networking and stakeholder engagement in sport entrepreneurship.

These reflections support Ayalew’s (2021) assertion that professionals with a favourable attitude toward entrepreneurship are more likely to pursue business ventures after graduation, particularly when they perceive alignment between their skills and industry needs. Another key finding was the impact of external support and experiential learning on professionals’ entrepreneurial attitudes. Muharana and Chadlury (2022) argue that the absence of support from family and friends can hinder entrepreneurial motivation. Participants in this study suggested that while interest in entrepreneurship exists, it is often constrained by limited resources and a lack of practical exposure. This reinforces the idea that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is shaped not only by personal traits but also by environmental factors and learning experiences. As noted by Muharana and Chadlury (2022), individuals with a favourable attitude toward entrepreneurship are more likely to follow entrepreneurial models and demonstrate high levels of self-efficacy.

Attitudes Towards Sport Entrepreneurship

Attitude towards entrepreneurship has a greater weight on the entrepreneur in influencing their intention to entrepreneurship (Lara-Bocanegra et al., 2022:7). Participants were asked if they consider themselves as entrepreneurs or intend to become entrepreneurs in the future. The study found that the participants have a positive attitude toward sport entrepreneurship. For example:

PH: “*I see myself as an entrepreneur. I always wanted to start my own business*”

PB: “*I would like to become an entrepreneur because I do not see myself reporting to someone else.*”

PD: “*Yes, because when I am an entrepreneur, I will not be limited to applying my skills*”

Although most of the participant have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, some feel that becoming an entrepreneur would not be a good fit for their personality.

These participants feel that it would be better for them to work for someone else and pursue their passions rather than money. Others, however, claim they lack the necessary abilities. Below are some inputs of participants towards entrepreneurship:

PF: “*No, I would be more about money not passion. I am for what I love than money. If it was not about getting profit, customer satisfaction then I was going to. I feel entrepreneurship is more about money than making customers happy.*”

PI: “*No, it requires skills. When you want to become an entrepreneur you require certain skills, such as leadership.*”

PG: “*I am not an entrepreneur. I cannot answer. I am employed.*”

Furthermore, the results from this study provided all the above results relating to attitudes towards entrepreneurship were influenced by themes, such as family support, entrepreneurial education, motivation, something to rely on, the lack of entrepreneurial skills and access to resources, as depicted in figure 2.

Theme 1: Entrepreneurial education

Under this theme, the results showed that professionals who receive support and motivation from universities see entrepreneurship as something that can satisfy their needs. This is evident through some of the input from participants, such as:

PB: “*Yes, they do have them. Before you reach your 3rd year. You are equipped with business skills. Academically they seek you to come with a business. Skills are taught.*”

PA: “*Yes, because when they are given the opportunity, they need more resources, they need managerial skills. The curriculum is not entrepreneurial.*”

The findings also demonstrate that entrepreneurial education inspires professionals to start their own businesses, which will give them a reliable source of income, as shown in figure 2. For example:

PC: “*Yes, you have something to rely on as it is hard to get jobs, or internships, or learnerships.*”

PE: “*Motivation from people and entrepreneurs, going to their business for knowledge where they tell you about their challenges.*”

Theme 2: Motivation

Under this theme, participants indicated that through motivation one can consider becoming an entrepreneur. That motivation can be from family and friends, the university and coaches/sports managers. Some of the inputs from the participants include:

PF: “I think they can motivate. It is about passion and having the motivation to start. Many are born with it. You do not need to be persuaded. The guidance and motivation would help but you also can do it.”

PI: “Motivation to start and resources”

PB: “Most professionals in sports are suppressing what they are going through. Universities do not give themselves time to find what may be affecting their professionals. For example, even me as an athlete our managers and coaches focus on our performance, but they do not get to care to know what we face. Universities and coaches need to be developed in background check.”

Theme 3: Family support

Under the theme, participants indicated that family support plays a role in them deciding to be entrepreneurs. They indicated that when one gets support from the family, he/she can consider being an entrepreneur. Below are some of the inputs from participants regarding family support:

PB: “As you grow up you need them in encouraging you. If you do not get encouragement you tend to doubt

yourself. No one is a failure; therefore, when you have people to support you, you will make it.”

PE: “Support you get from family to provide assistance, such as financial assistance, moral support and idea support.”

Theme 4: Access to resources

Under this theme, results showed that having access to resources to start the business determines whether the student will become an entrepreneur or not. The participants indicated that if they had the resources, they would be entrepreneurs by now. Some of the participant's inputs relating to this include:

PC: “I grew up in a sports world. I played sports. So that motivated me to want to venture into a sports business. Because most sporting codes were affected by Covid-19 and funds are not there, but I do not think right now I can venture into business.”

PD: “I do because I graduated with my diploma, and it is hard to get a job. If I had money I would venture into business.”

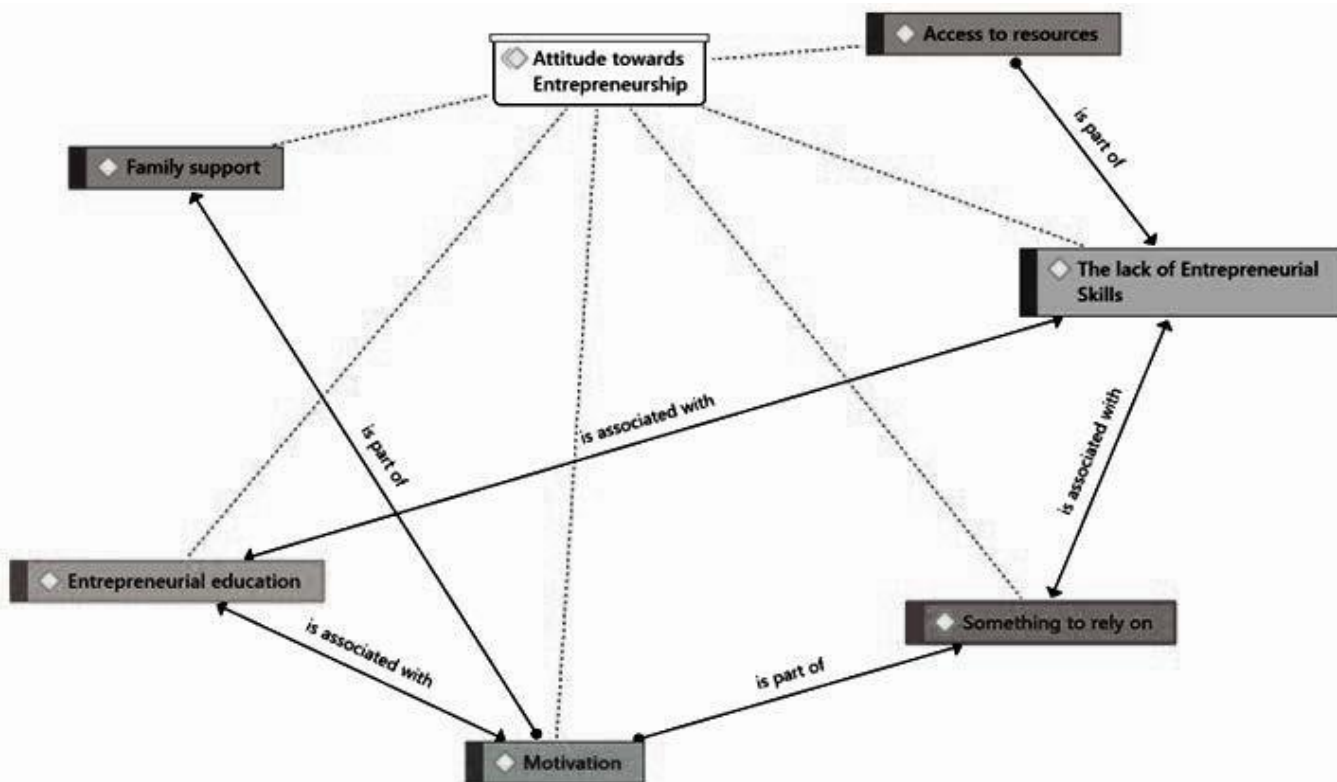


Figure 2 Attitude towards sport entrepreneurship themes (Atlas ti).

People who view entrepreneurship as a viable career option may have entrepreneurial ideas and launch their own businesses (Su, Zhu, Chen, Jin, Wang, Lin & Xu, 2021:5). The findings of this study indicate that college professionals who find starting their own businesses fulfilling are motivated to do so. Furthermore, the results show that having support from family, entrepreneurial

education, having something to rely on, access to resources and the lack of entrepreneurial skill determines one's attitude towards entrepreneurs. Additionally, the study also found that if one has a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, one will become an entrepreneur or would consider becoming an entrepreneur.

Subjective Norms

The participants in this theme were questioned regarding the type of support they need from their family, friends, and significant others in order for them to become entrepreneurs. The following theme emerged from the study, namely the need for professionals to have certain resources, industry experience, motivation, entrepreneurial education, awareness of gender inequality, and networking.

Theme 5: Skills

Under this theme, the study found that participants believe that they require more training concerning developing entrepreneurial skills. To them, the theory is not enough to help develop their skills and the institutions need to ensure that they give them the necessary skills. The reason behind them requiring such support from the institution is that universities are the source of knowledge and they must nurture their skills. Below are some of the inputs concerning university support:

PA: "Practicals we are fed more theory for two years. We need to at least have Work Integrated Learning (WIL) every two months of our study. There is more theory and less application."

PE: "Educational support because you get all the information on how to start and examples of how entrepreneurship occurs."

Theme 6: Industry background

Under this theme, participants indicated that most sport professionals lack industry background and requirements to venture into business. The participants also indicated that sport professionals do not even understand the course; therefore, it is rare for them to think of starting a sports business. Below are some of the inputs related to industry background:

PC: "Not all of them. mostly choose the course because it is the only one available to them. So, they do not know what they are studying meaning it is even hard for them to even think of opening a business."

PF: "They need to get in the environment and see things, hence there is a difference between the academic world and the industry."

Theme 7: Creating programme

Participants in this theme indicated that universities should develop programmes to help professionals better develop the knowledge and skills needed to become entrepreneurs. Below are some of the inputs from participants relating to the creation of programmes:

PC: "Having more programmes that will support sport professionals and to have experience."

PH: "Yes, because lecturers can have workshops and seminars to give out information about such things."

Theme 8: Support

Under this theme, participants indicated that support plays a huge role in them becoming entrepreneurs. They mentioned that through support one can be confident to start a business and can acquire new knowledge and skills. Below are some inputs that speak to support:

PH: "Support system that you have in your life."

PJ: "Support them, encourage them, give the knowledge and build them, though also the context of sport needs to be built."

PA: "Surroundings within what you are doing such as physiological support- venue, people and things around to make your project succeed."

However, the type of support that participants highlighted include resources, motivation and networking. For instance, these are some inputs that the participants specifically mentioned in terms of the support they require:

PC: "Motivation as it is not easy to become an entrepreneur and knowing your goals needs passion. For example, if you want to be a coach you need to be passionate about it."

PD: "Yes, I would, it something that I am considering. Getting a job requires connection. I always wanted to have an academy, but I lack facilities and family support."

PE: "Support you get from family to provide assistance, such as financial assistance, moral support and idea support."

PF: "I think they can motivate. It about passion and having the motivation to start. Many are born with it. You do not need to be persuaded. The guidance and motivation would help but you also can do it."

Furthermore, participants highlighted they need women to support sessions to motivate them to become entrepreneurs. Below are some of the inputs from participants relating to gender inequalities:

PB: "Yes, I want to work in the sport industry more especially the inequalities in sport. For example, I am an athlete, males get much support than us females; therefore, getting to change the situation and the market. There is a gap that makes me want to be in the industry,"

PB: "Equality in sports; there is no equality especially when you are a woman. We females are not included in everything. Women in sports sometime need women to succeed in sports. Gender limits the success in sports. We need exposure as women."

PC: *No, I lack motivation. I feel like we are not encouraged and supported or given resources to help us venture into business especially us females. Thanks to the Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSETTA) for helping, we get to develop all these skills.*

Perceived Behavioural Control

Under this factor, participants were asked what would motivate them to want to start their own business. Several themes were identified, namely having the drive, family background, having a role model, support from others, entrepreneurial education, capability, believing in yourself and the lack of practicality, as shown in figure 4.

Theme 9: Having the drive

Under this theme, participants indicated that if one does not have something that drives them, such as believing in themselves, they will not achieve their goal. For example, some of the inputs relating to having the drive include:

PA: *“No, I do not think so. You can have the knowledge but without the drive and striving for what you want, you will not make it.”*

Theme 10: Role Model

Under this theme, participants indicated that having someone to look up to builds their confidence, which will motivate them to become an entrepreneur. This person can be a mentor, lecturer, member of the community, or family member. Below are some of the inputs from participants:

PB: *“They play a huge role. They teach you. You have mentors, teachers and lecturers. They are trying everything; they give you all resources, but we do not use them as professionals. Even lecturers go beyond their role to help us. It is always about communication. Try to speak to someone.”*

PI: *“Mentors to guide professionals on what to expect and what to do to survive in the industry.”*

Theme 11: Support from others

Under this theme, the participants indicated getting support from others builds confidence to do something. Below are some of the inputs from the participants relating to support from others:

PC: *“Self-confidence boosts you as person. Support from others makes you think you have backup.”*

PD: *“I have learned that family and friends do not support with money but only offer moral support. They are*

reluctant to support. Self-belief and money will bear fruits.”

PF: *“When you get support from other people, it boosts your confidence. People believe in your product, and you boost your organisation and product image. You just feel like you can do it. Also, children give the most support.”*

Theme 12: Capability

Under this theme, participants indicated that knowing one's capability boosts one's confidence and through being confident one can decide to become an entrepreneur. Below are some of the inputs relating to capability:

PF: *“Yes, definitely because you need to know what you are capable of or overcompensating on. You need to know when it comes to business whether one is good or not.”*

PH: *“Yes, knowing your skills can help you, enable you and give you the desire to start a business.”*

Furthermore, this study found an association between knowing one's capability and having a role model. The findings suggest that having someone to look up to, or who can serve as a guide can help someone determine whether they can do something, which in turn helps them gain confidence. For example, one of the participants supported this view through this input:

PI: *“If you know your abilities and you are also able to build networks, then you can survive as an entrepreneur.”*

Theme 13: The Lack of practicality

Under this theme, participants mentioned that because of the lack of practical within their course offerings they end up lacking the skills of becoming entrepreneurs, which then affects their confidence to become entrepreneurs. Participants believe that through having the necessary skills their confidence will increase leading them to consider becoming entrepreneurs. Below are some of the inputs from participants relating to the lack of practicality:

PG: *“Yes, one strong point. If you lack certain skills, it will influence you.”*

PE: *“Educational support: every student who wants to start a business, needs support and guidance to start a business. They need information.”*

PF: *“I think they can motivate. It is about passion and having the motivation to start. Many are born with it. You do not need to be persuaded. The guidance and motivation would help but you also can do it.”*

PH: *“Yes, knowing your skills can help you, enable you and give you the desire to start business.”*

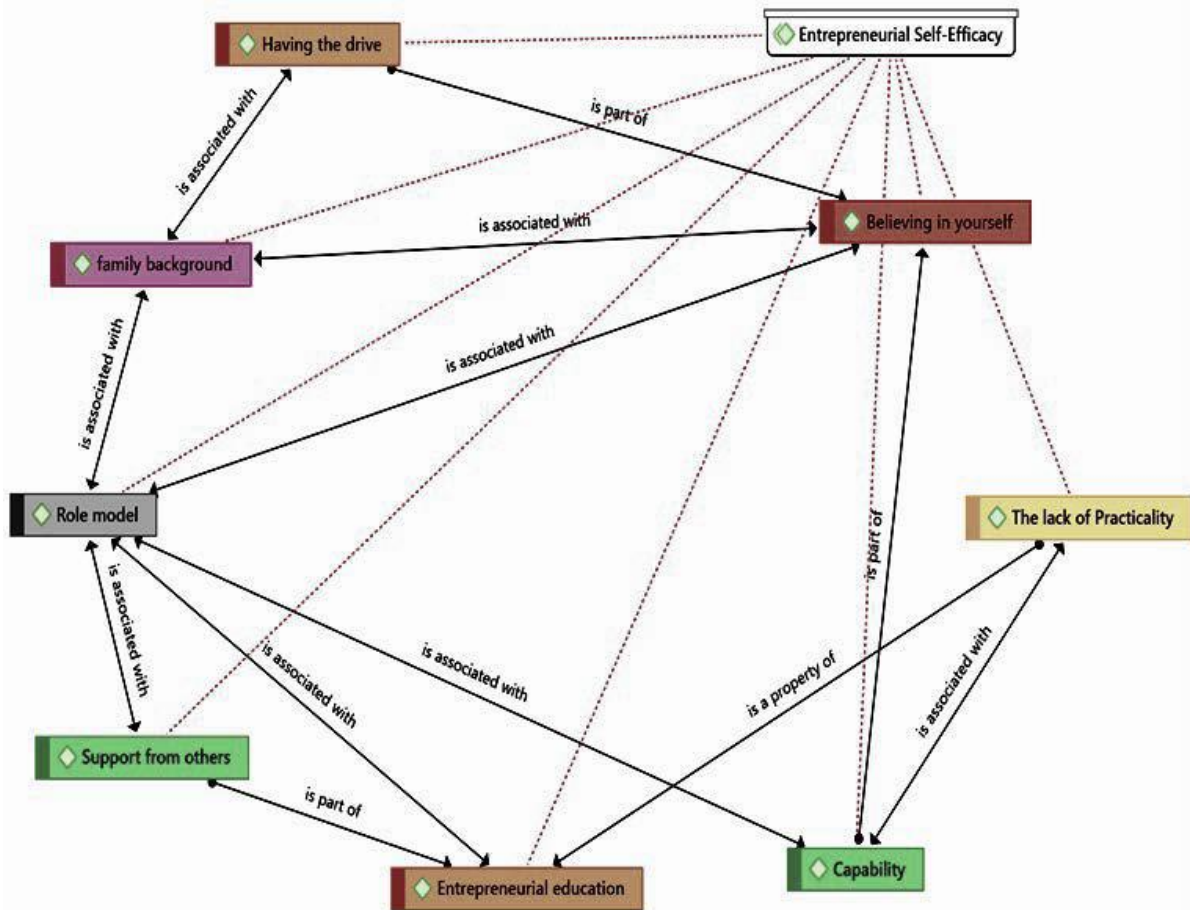


Figure 4 Perceived behavioural control themes (Atlas ti).

People who are confident in themselves are driven to try new things and constantly strive to improve to accomplish their goals (Nguyen et al., 2022:386). According to this study, professionals who exhibit high levels of self-confidence are driven to launch their own businesses. However, the study also discovered that professionals who are motivated, come from a particular family, have a role model, receive support from others, receive entrepreneurial education, are aware of their capabilities, have self-confidence and are given access to practical skills are more likely to believe they can succeed as entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the factors influencing sport professionals' entrepreneurial intent, drawing upon the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The findings indicate that sport professionals exhibit a generally positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, often envisioning themselves as business owners and connecting their personal attributes to entrepreneurial success. However, this intent is significantly shaped by a complex interplay of factors including family support, the nature of entrepreneurial education received, personal motivation, and access to vital resources.

The importance of practical skills and industry exposure cannot be overstated, as participants highlighted a gap

between academic theory and real-world application, which impacts their confidence to venture into business. Furthermore, subjective norms, particularly the support received from family and mentors, alongside the perceived need for specific entrepreneurial skills and industry background, play a critical role. The study also shed light on the pervasive issue of gender inequality within sports, noting that female professionals perceive less encouragement and resource access, which directly affects their entrepreneurial aspirations.

Finally, perceived behavioural control, linked to an individual's self-efficacy, is heavily influenced by having personal drive, supportive role models, and belief in one's capabilities. Addressing these multifaceted factors, from enhancing educational curricula to providing targeted support and resources, is crucial for nurturing and fostering entrepreneurial ventures among sport professionals. Ultimately, empowering sport professionals with the right tools, knowledge, and supportive environment is key to developing a robust and innovative sport business ecosystem.

Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding the factors influencing sport professionals' entrepreneurial intent, the following recommendations are proposed:

• Enhance Entrepreneurial Education with Practicality:

- Universities and educational institutions should reform curricula to include more practical training, workshops, and seminars focused on entrepreneurial skills, rather than solely theory.
- Implement Work Integrated Learning (WIL) or similar experiential learning opportunities more frequently to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry demands.
- Equip professionals with business skills earlier in their studies to foster entrepreneurial thinking.

• Strengthen Support Systems:

- Promote and facilitate diverse forms of support, including financial assistance, moral encouragement, and idea-sharing, from family, friends, and institutional bodies.
- Universities, coaches, and sport managers should provide holistic support, moving beyond just performance to understand and address personal challenges faced by sport professionals.
- Encourage mentorship and role model programmes where successful entrepreneurs or experienced individuals guide aspiring sport professionals, boosting their confidence and capability awareness.

• Improve Access to Resources:

- Address the significant barrier of limited resources and funding for starting businesses, especially in sports, by facilitating access to financial support and business development grants.

• Foster Motivation and Self-Efficacy:

- Create environments that inspire and motivate sport professionals to pursue entrepreneurial paths, emphasizing passion and perseverance.
- Help individuals identify and build upon their inherent capabilities and foster self-belief, as confidence directly influences their willingness to act entrepreneurially.

• Address Gender Inequality:

- Develop and implement specific programmes and support sessions for women in sports to address the perceived lack of encouragement, resources, and exposure they face. This will help promote greater equality and inclusion in sport entrepreneurship.

• Develop Industry-Relevant Programmes:

- Design educational and training programmes that provide sport professionals with a clear understanding of the sport industry's background and practical requirements for business ventures, ensuring they are not just choosing courses for lack of other options.

• Facilitate Networking:

- Create opportunities for sport professionals to build strong networks within the industry, as connections are crucial for securing jobs, support, and business opportunities

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