

Attitudes of Students towards Entrepreneurship in Higher Education Institutions of Chitwan District

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Abstract

This study aims to explore students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship education in Chitwan District, Nepal, focusing on their practical, cognitive, and affective perspectives. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from a sample of 200 students enrolled in entrepreneurship programs across several colleges. A structured questionnaire was administered to assess students' attitudes regarding entrepreneurship education, including their enthusiasm, knowledge, and emotional connection to self-employment. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns and trends. The findings reveal that while students show a strong interest in entrepreneurship, with high motivation to pursue self-employment, they feel underprepared for practical application. Despite a solid understanding of business planning and financing, students report low levels of support for applying their knowledge in real-world contexts. The study concludes that while entrepreneurship education is positively received, more hands-on experiences, such as guest speaker interactions and practical business activities, are essential to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Key Words: *Entrepreneurship education, student attitudes, practical application, self-employment, higher education*

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid changes in the global economy, coupled with the increasing uncertainty in the job market, have spurred a growing interest in entrepreneurship as a career path. The diminishing number of corporate recruitment opportunities, combined with organizational budget cuts and staff reductions, has led many individuals, particularly youth, to seek alternative career options. Entrepreneurship has emerged as a vital tool for economic transformation, offering a promising solution to address the increasing unemployment rate. As Teixeira and Davey (2008) highlight, entrepreneurship not only promotes economic growth and innovation but also serves as a critical mechanism for reducing unemployment in any nation. The growing dissatisfaction with corporate employment, especially among the younger generation, has therefore made self-employment and new venture creation increasingly attractive.

In response to this shift in career preferences, there has been a notable increase in the focus on entrepreneurship within higher education institutions (HEIs). In particular, universities and colleges have become key players in cultivating entrepreneurial

mindsets among students, recognizing that these young individuals represent the future of the economy. The importance of entrepreneurship education has been underscored by numerous studies, which emphasize its direct relationship with economic growth and development (Glinskiene & Petuskiene, 2011). As a powerful economic driver, entrepreneurship is seen not only as a means to generate wealth for individuals but also as an essential catalyst for fostering national economic growth. In this context, it is crucial to examine the attitudes of students toward entrepreneurship, as their perspectives can significantly influence their career decisions and, ultimately, the economic health of the nation.

The need for research on students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship is more pressing than ever, particularly in the face of the global challenges of economic instability and high youth unemployment rates. Iqbal, Melhem, and Kokash (2012) assert that in today's globalized and complex world, individuals with diverse and creative entrepreneurial skills are essential to addressing the challenges posed by shrinking economies and the scarcity of job opportunities. Despite the increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship, university graduates often find themselves struggling to secure employment in both public and private sectors, as noted by Teshome (2014). This reality highlights the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among students, enabling them to not only create their own job opportunities but also contribute to the broader economic stability.

This study aims to explore and evaluate the attitudes of students toward entrepreneurship within the context of higher education institutions in Chitwan District, Nepal. It seeks to understand how students perceive entrepreneurship, the factors that influence their attitudes, and the potential for entrepreneurship education to shape their career aspirations. By examining the demographic characteristics of students and their entrepreneurial intentions, this study will provide valuable insights into the role of higher education in promoting entrepreneurship as a viable career choice. The results of this research can inform the development of educational programs that encourage entrepreneurship and contribute to a more resilient and innovative economy.

The overarching aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of students toward entrepreneurship education and to identify the key factors that influence their entrepreneurial intentions. Specifically, the study will examine how demographic variables such as age, gender, and socio-economic background impact students' perceptions of entrepreneurship. Additionally, it will explore whether students view entrepreneurship as a viable future career and the role of their university education in shaping this perspective. By identifying the factors that influence students' entrepreneurial intentions, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on entrepreneurship education and its impact on youth employment and economic growth.

Furthermore, the study will address the need for a better understanding of how universities can cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit among students. As higher education institutions are critical in shaping the career trajectories of young people, it is essential that they create an environment that nurtures creativity, risk-taking, and innovation. This research will investigate how the current educational system supports or hinders the development of entrepreneurial attitudes and skills, and how it can be improved to better align with the needs of today's job market. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach to entrepreneurship education, this

study will provide recommendations for enhancing the educational framework to better support aspiring entrepreneurs.

The study of students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship in higher education institutions in Chitwan district is both timely and relevant. As the global economy continues to evolve, it is crucial that universities play a central role in preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the future. By fostering a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship, institutions can equip students with the necessary skills and mindset to succeed in an increasingly uncertain world. This research, therefore, seeks to provide valuable insights that will not only contribute to the academic discourse on entrepreneurship education but also inform policy decisions aimed at promoting entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic growth and job creation in Nepal.

Review of Literature and Conceptual Framework

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a key focus globally due to its potential to address economic and social challenges. Particularly in emerging economies, the rising issue of graduate unemployment has highlighted the necessity of integrating entrepreneurship education within higher education institutions. This shift in educational priorities is vital, especially in countries like Nepal, where youth unemployment is high, and economic growth depends heavily on self-employment initiatives. By empowering graduates with entrepreneurial skills, higher education institutions can equip them to create their own jobs rather than relying on the limited availability of employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship, recognized as a crucial driver of economic development, fosters innovation, job creation, and social transformation, which are essential for the growth of nations, particularly in developing regions (Lekoko, 2011; Opoku-Antwi et al., 2012).

The growing recognition of entrepreneurship education within universities is in response to the challenges of unemployment and the evolving economic landscape. Education systems are being encouraged to foster entrepreneurial mindsets, focusing on skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and leadership, rather than solely preparing graduates for traditional employment roles. This approach aims to shift students' perceptions from seeking jobs to creating new ventures, thus encouraging self-reliance and innovation. In Nepal, where youth unemployment remains a significant issue, entrepreneurship education has become a strategic tool for economic empowerment. By providing students with practical knowledge and skills to identify and seize business opportunities, universities play a pivotal role in fostering an entrepreneurial culture that contributes to the country's economic advancement (Gerba, 2012; Emanuel et al., 2012).

Entrepreneurship is broadly understood as the ability to recognize and exploit opportunities to create and manage new business ventures. It combines risk-taking, innovation, and a keen ability to identify market gaps. In Nepal, entrepreneurship is not just about launching businesses but about driving economic change, particularly in rural areas where job creation is vital. Entrepreneurs are seen as catalysts for innovation, generating value in ways that positively impact the broader economy. The rise of entrepreneurship education has been instrumental in equipping students with the necessary skills to embark on entrepreneurial journeys. This education, which has evolved from early practices in Japan and the U.S., focuses on developing essential entrepreneurial competencies such as creativity, leadership, and the practical know-how to start and manage businesses. In Nepal, incorporating such educational

practices into university curricula is critical for shaping a generation of graduates capable of driving economic transformation through self-employment (Mokaya et al., 2012; Keat et al., 2011).

Moreover, the role of students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship is pivotal in determining their entrepreneurial intentions. These attitudes are shaped by cognitive, emotional, and practical components, all of which influence the likelihood of students pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. In Nepal, where cultural and social factors heavily influence career choices, fostering positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship is crucial. Research has shown that entrepreneurship education has a direct impact on students' confidence and their willingness to start their own businesses. By enhancing students' entrepreneurial mindset, higher education institutions in Nepal can address the challenges of youth unemployment and contribute significantly to the country's economic development. However, practical obstacles, such as limited access to capital and technical support, remain significant barriers to realizing entrepreneurial ambitions. Nevertheless, the continued integration of entrepreneurship education can inspire future generations to create businesses that contribute to national prosperity (Souitaris et al., 2007; Iqbal et al., 2012).

Research Methodology

This study followed a descriptive research design, utilizing a survey strategy for data collection. The main objective of using this approach was to gather insights from a broad cross-section of respondents. This allowed the researchers to capture a variety of perspectives, whether they agreed or conflict, regarding students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship education. By surveying a large group, the study aimed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of these views.

The study's target population consisted of 100 undergraduate students who had completed the Management program at two selected campuses in Chitwan District. These students were all in their fourth year, as entrepreneurship education is offered only at this level in the institutions involved. The campuses were selected using convenience sampling, based on their longer history of offering the program compared to others in the area. Stratified random sampling was then applied to select 100 students, with the strata representing different institutions. This method ensured that the sample was proportional to the size of each institution, providing a diverse range of perspectives.

For data collection, a structured questionnaire was used. This questionnaire included closed-ended questions, enabling quantitative analysis of responses for patterns and trends. A 5-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a score of 0.74, which confirmed its internal consistency. The validity of the instrument was also checked through expert opinions, and suggestions were incorporated to refine the final version. Of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 96 were returned and analyzed.

Analysis of Quantitative Data and Interpretation of the Result

The analysis focuses on students' practical, cognitive, and affective attitudes toward entrepreneurship education in Chitwan District. It reveals that while students show strong interest and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship, especially in theory, there is a noticeable gap in their confidence and preparation for real-world entrepreneurial

activities. Students feel motivated by the subject but express concerns over the lack of hands-on opportunities and practical training, such as financing, risk management, and business plan development, limiting their ability to translate education into action.

Practical Attitude of Students

The table presents an analysis of students' practical attitudes toward entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions in Chitwan District. It assesses their perspectives on various aspects of entrepreneurship education, including its ability to spark interest, provide valuable skills, and encourage entrepreneurial ventures.

The mean scores of the statements suggest varying levels of enthusiasm and preparedness among students. For instance, Statement 1 ("The lessons on entrepreneurship have sparked my interest and enthusiasm...") has the highest mean score of 4.13, indicating a strong positive response, suggesting that students find the subject engaging and inspiring. Similarly, Statement 9 ("I am thoroughly satisfied with the entrepreneurship program...") also reflects a high level of satisfaction with a mean of 4.02.

Table 1 Practical Attitude of Students

S. N.	Statements	Mean	SD	Result
1	The lessons on entrepreneurship have sparked my interest and enthusiasm for pursuing an entrepreneurial career, making the subject enjoyable and inspiring.	4.13	1.21	Significance
2	I view entrepreneurship as equally valuable, if not more so, than other academic subjects, and I feel motivated to explore it further.	3.75	1.13	Significance
3	My campus and professors have actively encouraged me to consider entrepreneurial ventures by providing opportunities to engage with successful entrepreneurs and individuals with strong entrepreneurial ideas.	2.10	1.09	Significance
4	Entrepreneurship education has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to make informed career choices, spot new business opportunities, and create innovative solutions to customer needs.	3.89	1.23	Significance
5	I feel confident in my ability to develop products, services, and solid business plans that address market demands, thanks to the entrepreneurship education I've received.	3.55	0.89	Significance
6	My studies have provided me with the skills to establish my own business, secure financing, and navigate risks, uncertainties, and market challenges.	2.09	1.11	Significance

7	Entrepreneurship education has taught me how to conduct feasibility studies, allowing me to assess the viability of my business ideas and make well-informed decisions.	3.55	1.31	Significance
8	Learning from real-world examples and guest speakers has greatly enhanced my understanding of entrepreneurship and its practical application in the business world.	1.89	0.87	Significance
9	I am thoroughly satisfied with the entrepreneurship program, as it has significantly improved my knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.	4.02	1.17	Significance

However, other statements reveal more moderate attitudes. Statement 2 ("I view entrepreneurship as equally valuable...") has a mean of 3.75, showing that students recognize the value of entrepreneurship but may not prioritize it over other subjects. Meanwhile, Statements 3 and 6, with means of 2.10 and 2.09 respectively, indicate that students feel their campuses and professors are less active in promoting entrepreneurial ventures and providing practical tools like financing, risk management, and market navigation. Statement 8, with the lowest mean of 1.89, reflects a more critical view of real-world learning experiences, suggesting that students feel their exposure to practical applications of entrepreneurship could be further developed.

Overall, while students appreciate the theoretical and motivational aspects of entrepreneurship education, there is a gap in their confidence and preparation for real-world entrepreneurial activities.

Cognitive Attitudes of Students

The table provides insights into students' cognitive attitudes toward entrepreneurship education in Chitwan District. It reflects how confident and capable students feel about applying entrepreneurial knowledge in various real-world scenarios.

Statements 3 ("I can now effectively design and implement business plans") and 5 ("I have developed a strong understanding of how to secure business financing") show high confidence, with mean scores of 4.01 and 3.75, respectively. These scores suggest that students feel well-prepared in critical areas like business planning and financing, which are essential for launching a successful business.

Table 2 Cognitive Attitudes of Students

S. N.	Statements	Mean	SD	Result
1	I feel confident that I can identify business opportunities due to my entrepreneurial education.	3.43	1.08	Significance

2	The skills I've acquired through entrepreneurship education have enabled me to create products and services that meet consumer demands.	2.67	1.24	Significance
3	Thanks to my entrepreneurship education, I can now effectively design and implement business plans.	4.01	1.31	Significance
4	I am now capable of launching a business successfully, thanks to the skills I've learned in entrepreneurship.	2.69	0.83	Significance
5	I have developed a strong understanding of how to secure business financing because of my entrepreneurship education.	3.75	1.19	Significance
6	I feel capable of managing market fluctuations and risks that may impact my business, thanks to entrepreneurship education.	3.43	1.22	Significance
7	I can now effectively conduct feasibility studies to evaluate whether my business ideas will work.	3.65	1.21	Significance
8	The entrepreneurial curriculum has deepened my interest in entrepreneurship and made me eager to learn more.	2.89	0.68	Significance
9	Interacting with guest speakers, especially successful entrepreneurs, has allowed me to gain deeper insights into the field of entrepreneurship.	2.07	0.77	Significance

On the other hand, Statement 4 ("I am now capable of launching a business successfully") and Statement 2 ("The skills I've acquired... have enabled me to create products and services that meet consumer demands") have lower mean scores (2.69 and 2.67), reflecting some uncertainty or lack of confidence among students in taking the final steps toward entrepreneurial ventures, like starting a business or creating market-ready products.

Additionally, Statement 9 ("Interacting with guest speakers...") received the lowest score of 2.07, suggesting that students feel their interactions with industry experts may not be as impactful as they hoped in providing real-world insights.

Overall, while students express a strong theoretical understanding of entrepreneurship, particularly in business planning and financing, there is a noticeable gap in their confidence when it comes to implementing these skills in practice. This indicates a need for more hands-on experiences to bridge the gap between education and actual entrepreneurial action.

Affective Attitudes of Students

The table highlights the affective attitudes of students toward self-employment and entrepreneurship after their education in Chitwan District. It reflects their emotional engagement with the idea of working for themselves and pursuing entrepreneurial careers.

Table 3 Affective Attitudes of Students

S. N.	Statements	Mean	SD	Result
1	After graduation, I am eager to work for myself.	4.13	1.19	Significance
2	The idea of becoming my own boss is something I find very attractive.	3.66	1.13	Significance
3	I regard self-employment as an extremely important career choice.	4.22	1.14	Significance
4	My level of personal satisfaction with the idea of self-employment is quite high.	3.89	1.12	Significance
5	The campus's entrepreneurship program has done a great job preparing me for a future in entrepreneurship.	1.75	0.69	Significance
6	I strongly desire to become self-employed once I finish school.	3.65	1.12	Significance
7	The thought of running my own business excites me.	3.87	1.16	Significance
8	I consider self-employment to be a highly valuable option for my future.	4.19	1.26	Significance
9	I take great pride in the concept of self-employment and am deeply satisfied with the idea.	3.75	1.16	Significance

Statements like "After graduation, I am eager to work for myself" (mean: 4.13) and "I regard self-employment as an extremely important career choice" (mean: 4.22) show a strong positive emotional connection to self-employment. These high scores suggest that students are not only excited about the idea of self-employment but also see it as a crucial career path. Additionally, the statement "I consider self-employment to be a highly valuable option for my future" (mean: 4.19) further reinforces this enthusiasm,

with students recognizing the importance of entrepreneurship as part of their long-term goals.

However, some responses reflect mixed feelings. The statement "The campus's entrepreneurship program has done a great job preparing me for a future in entrepreneurship" has a significantly lower mean of 1.75, indicating that students may feel the program has not adequately prepared them for actual entrepreneurial ventures. This suggests a disconnect between their aspirations and the preparation provided.

Despite this, other statements, such as "The thought of running my own business excites me" (mean: 3.87), show that students are still passionate about entrepreneurship, even if they feel the practical preparation may need improvement.

Overall, while students are highly motivated toward self-employment, they seem to feel a gap in the practical training that could help them confidently transition from education to entrepreneurial action.

Findings and Discussion

The findings from this research on students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship education in Chitwan District reveal interesting insights into their practical, cognitive, and affective perspectives on self-employment and entrepreneurship.

The students displayed strong enthusiasm and interest in entrepreneurship education, with the highest mean score of 4.13 for the statement, "The lessons on entrepreneurship have sparked my interest and enthusiasm for pursuing an entrepreneurial career." This reflects a high level of engagement with the subject and a strong motivational impact from their education. Additionally, the statement "I am thoroughly satisfied with the entrepreneurship program" scored well (mean: 4.02), indicating that students appreciate the value and inspiration the program offers.

However, there is a noticeable gap in the practical application of the knowledge they acquire. Statements like "My campus and professors have actively encouraged me to consider entrepreneurial ventures" (mean: 2.10) and "My studies have provided me with the skills to establish my own business, secure financing, and navigate risks" (mean: 2.09) suggest that students feel there is insufficient support and exposure to practical entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, the statement on learning from real-world examples and guest speakers received the lowest mean (1.89), showing that students believe the program lacks significant real-world exposure, a crucial aspect of entrepreneurship education. This disconnect highlights the need for more hands-on, practical learning opportunities to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The cognitive attitudes toward entrepreneurship education were largely positive in terms of business planning and financing. The statement "I can now effectively design and implement business plans" scored highly (mean: 4.01), suggesting students feel confident in creating comprehensive business strategies. Similarly, students showed a good understanding of securing business financing (mean: 3.75), a key skill for any aspiring entrepreneur.

However, other areas reflected lower confidence. For example, "I am now capable of launching a business successfully" (mean: 2.69) and "The skills I've acquired have enabled me to create products and services that meet consumer demands" (mean: 2.67) indicate that while students grasp the foundational knowledge, they are uncertain about applying this knowledge to start and sustain a business. The relatively low score for interactions with guest speakers (mean: 2.07) further suggests that

students did not find these interactions as valuable in providing real-world insights, signaling a need for better practical exposure from industry professionals.

Affective attitudes towards self-employment were notably positive, as students expressed a strong emotional connection to entrepreneurship. High scores for statements like "After graduation, I am eager to work for myself" (mean: 4.13) and "I regard self-employment as an extremely important career choice" (mean: 4.22) reflect a deep-rooted desire to pursue self-employment as a viable career path. Students are not only excited about the prospect of being their own boss but also view it as a crucial part of their future.

Despite this enthusiasm, students were less satisfied with their program's preparation for real-world entrepreneurial ventures. The statement "The campus's entrepreneurship program has done a great job preparing me for a future in entrepreneurship" scored significantly lower (mean: 1.75), indicating that students feel their practical preparation is lacking. This suggests a gap between students' aspirations and the support they receive from the academic program.

Conclusions

The analysis of students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship education in Chitwan District reveals both strong enthusiasm and significant challenges. While students show a deep emotional connection to the idea of self-employment and entrepreneurial careers, with high scores reflecting their eagerness to work for themselves, there is a notable gap in their practical readiness. Although students feel inspired and knowledgeable about entrepreneurship, they express concerns about their ability to translate this theoretical knowledge into real-world ventures. The lack of exposure to hands-on experiences, such as engaging with successful entrepreneurs and gaining practical tools for business creation, is particularly evident. While students recognize the value of entrepreneurship education, they appear to be seeking more active support from their institutions to bridge the gap between classroom learning and actual entrepreneurial activities. Addressing this disconnect could greatly enhance students' confidence and readiness to embark on entrepreneurial ventures after graduation.

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