

Abstract

Purpose: The paper investigates how autonomy, moderated by cross-cultural differences and employment status, impact the relationship between entrepreneurial mentoring (EM) and entrepreneurial intentions (EI); as informed by both theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and self-determination theory (SDT). **** Methodology:** A sample of 1,509 youth from Germany, Kenya, and Uganda consisting of final year university students, wage-employed, and unemployed was identified and studied. A multi-group analysis was conducted to test for differences in the impact of EM and autonomy on EI. ****Results:** The findings indicate that mentoring and autonomy are positively correlated with entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial mentoring and intentions were lower among German participants than for the East African countries. The moderated moderation results revealed that entrepreneurial mentoring is related to higher entrepreneurial intentions among students and the unemployed, and when individuals have higher levels of autonomy. Country level analysis showed the effects of mentoring and autonomy are highest in Germany and lowest in Uganda. ****Research/Practical implications:** Mentoring and self-determination play an important role in development of entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurship mentors should specifically support their protégées to develop the ability to act autonomously as an important entrepreneurial competence. However, culture, and country's economic conditions also matter. These particularly indicate that EM resources should be applied to youth with high autonomy, who are not in secure wage employment and in an environment that has a supportive culture. Protégés with low levels of autonomy should be supported to appreciate autonomy and to develop the ability for autonomous action. Future entrepreneurial intentions research should also examine the impact of availability of attractive positions in wage-employment. ****Originality/ Value:** A major challenge in entrepreneurial intention research is the predominant focus on student populations. The present study demonstrates how intentions differ between students, unemployed, and those already in salaried employment. Similarly, the impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial intentions also differ in these groups. Moreover, cross-country analysis of variations in intentions between a developed individualistic country and less developed collectivistic country is made.