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Does Religious Affiliation Affect Students' Entrepreneurial Intention?

Ali verska pripadnost vpliva na podjetniško namero študentov?

Abstract: In the present research, we have analysed the differences between important global religious orientations in entrepreneurial intention, which the student population shows when making a career decision. Using quantitative approach, we investigated the influence of personal and environmental factors on students' entrepreneurial intention at a global level. 154,535 students from 52 countries participated in the survey. We examined and detected the different influences of individual factors on students' entrepreneurial intention in four observed groups: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and individuals who do not belong to any religion. Important differences were detected between the groups, which can help state and religious institutions create their programs and activities to fulfil their mission. Our findings show that members of Islam have the strongest entrepreneurial intention. The lowest level of entrepreneurial intention was detected among students who do not follow any religion. In all groups, men express a stronger entrepreneurial intention compared to women. Among the members of Islam, we detected significant differences compared to the other groups, namely in the influence of the university environment, locus of control and subjective norms. Similarly, we found that the perceived level of inequality in society significantly shapes the entrepreneurial intention among Muslims and individuals who do not follow any religion, while there is no such influence among Buddhists and Christians. In addition to the above, the research findings also opened up several new questions, which we want to be the motive for further in-depth research.

Keywords: religions, student's entrepreneurial intention, university environment, entrepreneurial skills, power distance, entrepreneurial attitude

Izvleček: *V raziskavi smo analizirali razlike med pomembnimi globalnimi verskimi usmeritvami na področju dejavnikov, ki oblikujejo podjetniško namero študentov. S kvantitativnim pristopom smo raziskovali vpliv osebnostnih in okoljskih dejavnikov na podjetniško namero študentov na globalni ravni. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 154.535 študentov iz 52 držav. Preverili in zaznali smo različne vplive posameznih dejavnikov na podjetniško namero študentov v štirih opazovanih skupinah: budizem, krščanstvo, islam in posamezniki, ki ne pripadajo nobeni veri. Med skupinami so zaznane značilne razlike, ki lahko pomagajo državnim in verskim ustanovam pri oblikovanju programov in aktivnosti za izpolnjevanje njihovega poslanstva. Naše ugotovitve kažejo, da imajo pripadniki islama najizrazitejšo podjetniško namero. Najnižjo stopnjo podjetniške namere smo zaznali pri študentih, ki ne pripadajo nobeni veroizpovedi. V vseh skupinah moški izražajo močnejšo podjetniško namero*

kot ženske. Med pripadniki islama smo zaznali pomembne razlike v primerjavi z drugimi skupinami, in sicer v vplivu univerzitetnega okolja, lokusu nadzora in subjektivnih normah. Podobno smo ugotovili, da zaznana stopnja neenakosti v družbi pomembno oblikuje podjetniško namero pri muslimanih in posameznikih, ki ne sledijo nobeni veri, medtem ko pri budistih in kristjanih tega vpliva ni zaznati. Poleg naštetega so izsledki raziskave odprli tudi nekaj novih vprašanj, za katera želimo, da so motiv za nadaljnje poglobljeno raziskovanje.

Ključne besede: *religije, podjetniška namera študentov, univerzitetno okolje, podjetniške sposobnosti, distanca moči, podjetniška naravnanost*

1 Introduction

Understanding students' career intentions is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers to design effective career development programs and interventions. The same can be said about other institutions that are important for humanity but rarely mentioned in entrepreneurial research, among which religious institutions are certainly in the first place. Researching students' career intentions provides valuable insights into their aspirations, motivations, and decision-making processes regarding their future careers. This paper discusses the importance of religious affiliation on students' career intentions, highlighting the various factors that influence these intentions and the potential implications for educational institutions, religious institutions and students themselves.

Existing evidence suggests that the period after study is essential for career decisions. Understanding the results and implications of career decision-making is important, and can be relevant to the post-study period (Ma 2018). Understanding the reasons for differences in career maturity levels is vital for career decision-making after study (Duru 2022). It is emphasised that students need to know why they need education, find and use information, look for alternatives, and make plans. This suggests that career decision-making is relevant to the post-study period (Abdullah 2019; Park et al. 2019). It is critically important that student gather knowledge through education to help them decide their future careers. Religious institutions have been one of the most important institutions offering this knowledge for thousands of years.

Career guidance programs for students have to be as effective as possible to decrease difficulties in career decision-making. This implies that career guidance programs can benefit individuals during the post-study period

when making career decisions (Monica 2018). Considering that religious institutions remain active in the students' lives even after the end of their studies, they ensure continuity over a more extended period. Besides that, religion significantly shapes the associations between career decision-making difficulties and negative emotional states since career decision-making difficulties can be associated with depression, anxiety, and stress (Anghel and Gati 2021).

Factors such as entrepreneurship personality, family environment and entrepreneurship education have been found to contribute to students' career planning (Adha et al. 2022). By identifying these factors, educational institutions can implement interventions and support systems that promote positive career intentions and outcomes. Researching students' career intentions helps educational institutions develop targeted and effective career development programs. By understanding students' career aspirations, institutions can tailor their curriculum, extracurricular activities, and support services to align with students' interests and goals (Adha et al. 2022). This alignment enhances students' engagement, motivation, and satisfaction, ultimately leading to better academic and career outcomes (Tuffley and Brent 2019).

Researching students' career intentions allows examining potential cultural variations in career decision-making processes. A study using social cognitive career theory found that culturally diverse undergraduate students may have different sources of learning that contribute to their career intentions (Byars-Winston and Rogers 2018). Differences in religious affiliation are undoubtedly critical factors of intercultural differences. By understanding these variations, educational and religious institutions can develop inclusive career development programs that address the unique needs and experiences of diverse student populations (Walker et al. 2022).

Overall, the references provide evidence that suggests career decision-making is essential during the post-study period. They highlight the need for understanding career maturity and the effectiveness of different career guidance programs. Existing findings imply that the post-study period is critical for individuals to make informed career decisions and consider various factors that can impact their career paths. It is why researching students' career intentions is paramount for educational institutions,

policymakers, and researchers. It provides valuable insights into students' aspirations, motivations, and decision-making processes regarding their future careers. By understanding these intentions, institutions can develop targeted career development programs, identify factors influencing career decision-making, enhance career adaptability, promote diversity and inclusion, and support students' career intentions. Researching students' career intentions contributes to better educational outcomes, increased student satisfaction, and successful career transitions.

A critical decision when choosing a career is choosing between employment and entrepreneurship. For the latter, the entrepreneurial intention of the individual is fundamental (Kolvereid 1996). Religion has been found to have an essential influence on entrepreneurial intention. Several studies have explored the relationship between religion and entrepreneurial intentions, examining the impact of religious beliefs, religious affiliation, and religiosity on individuals' intentions to start their businesses. It is found that religious affiliation, compared to identifying as Agnostic/Atheist, had a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intentions. Additionally, the studies showed that religiosity, beyond religious affiliation, affected intentions differently across different religions (Giacomin et al. 2023). Religious beliefs have also been found to play a role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. The influence of religious beliefs, psychological and cognitive factors, and social influence on the entrepreneurial intentions of students in higher education institutions was analysed in the past. A recent study found that religious beliefs were one of the dimensions that directly influenced entrepreneurial intentions (Rodrigues, Silva, and Franco 2023). Furthermore, the influence of religion on entrepreneurial intentions has been examined from an Islamic perspective. Majid et al. (2018) conducted a study comparing the entrepreneurial intentions of religious and non-religious groups of students. The study found that religion affected entrepreneurial intention by influencing students' perceptions (Majid et al. 2018).

Religiosity, which refers to the intensity of religious beliefs and practices, has also been found to be a significant factor in entrepreneurial intentions. In a study by Paiva et al. (2020), the influence of religious beliefs on entrepreneurial intentions of university students was found to be a moderating variable in the relationship between personal values and entrepreneurial activity (Paiva et al. 2020).

The influence of religion on entrepreneurial intentions is not limited to specific regions or cultures since entrepreneurs consider their different religious beliefs as a stimulator of their entrepreneurial identity (Namatovu et al. 2018). The Research suggests that religion, religious beliefs, religious affiliation, and religiosity can impact individuals' entrepreneurial intentions. These factors can shape individuals' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours related to entrepreneurship. Understanding the influence of religion on entrepreneurial intentions can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and entrepreneurs in fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem that considers religious factors.

However, we note that there are still too few global studies that have focused on the influence of religion on career choices (Sigalow, Shain, and Bergey 2012). Limited studies have found aspects of Spirituality and religion to relate positively to career decision self-efficacy, career values, and job satisfaction (Duffy 2006). Rashad (2013) explored the relationship between religious commitment and career decision-making among students. The study found a positive correlation between confidence in career decisions and religious commitment (Mohamed Rashad 2013). Religious beliefs often emphasise concepts such as faith, determination, and perseverance, which can contribute to individuals' confidence in their abilities (Bird 1988). For example, religious teachings may instil a sense of purpose and provide individuals with the belief that they can overcome challenges and succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavours (Gary et al. 2009).

Furthermore, religion can also shape individuals' values and motivations, influencing their entrepreneurial intentions. Religious teachings often emphasise the importance of serving others, contributing to society, and ethical behaviour (Bird 1988). These values can align with the goals and motivations of entrepreneurship, such as creating innovative solutions, generating employment opportunities, and positively impacting society. Therefore, individuals with strong religious beliefs may be more inclined to pursue entrepreneurial ventures that align with their values and contribute to the greater good.

It is important to note that the influence of religion on entrepreneurial intention is likely to vary across different cultural and religious contexts. Different religious traditions may have distinct teachings and values that

shape individuals' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Additionally, cultural factors such as social norms and expectations may also shape individuals' entrepreneurial intentions within religious communities. On the other hand, the principle of separation of the state and religious communities is a more or less accepted civilisation achievement in Europe today (Trontelj 2022). In some environments, they still do not fully recognise the separation between the secular and spiritual spheres. In such an environment, religion shapes the entire public life, for example, in Hindu or primarily Islamic countries, where the religious legal system defines the way of life in all areas (Osredkar 2013).

Interestingly, there has been a recent advance of interest in religion and entrepreneurship as an important facet of broader issues (Audretsch, Boente, and Tamvada 2007). Researchers have evaluated and investigated these ideas along various methodological paths. Within the entrepreneurship field, qualitative methods have been used extensively. However, econometric studies using large-scale microdata are more scarce and limited in number, and an assessment of findings to date is mixed and not firmly conclusive (Audretsch, Boente, and Tamvada 2007).

Because of the above, in the present Research, we analysed to what extent the selected factors influence students' entrepreneurial intention. We were interested in the relationships between individual factors and entrepreneurial intention. In the career selection part, we focused on the entrepreneurial intention. We analysed the above relations separately in the four most numerous global religious populations, which are always listed in alphabetical order (Atheism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam).

The study aims to investigate the differences between the studied relations. In the following, we first give the theoretical starting points of the individual influencing factors on which our hypotheses are based. For transparency, we also present the hypotheses in the same chapter. We continue the article with the methodological work, where all hypotheses are tested for each religion target group, and conclude it with findings and a discussion.

2 Theoretical background with hypotheses development

2.1 Educational environment

There is evidence from multiple studies that support the claim that a university's supportive entrepreneurial environment influences students' entrepreneurial intentions. Fayolle and Gailly researched the impact of entrepreneurship education programs (EEPs) on participants' attitudes and intentions toward entrepreneurship. They found that the positive effects of an EEP are more pronounced when previous entrepreneurial exposure has been weak or nonexistent (Fayolle and Gailly 2015). Other researchers found that cultural values modify how individuals perceive entrepreneurship, indicating the influence of the environment on entrepreneurial intention (Liñán and Chen 2009). Additionally, Trif et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of universities creating compelling environments for developing entrepreneurial capacities in their staff and students, highlighting the role of entrepreneurial academic education in nurturing entrepreneurial intentions. These studies provide evidence that support the claim that a university's supportive entrepreneurial environment influences students' entrepreneurial intention.

H1: The more positive the university is towards entrepreneurship, the more pronounced the student's entrepreneurial intention is.

2.2 Entrepreneurial education

Entrepreneurial education plays a significant role in influencing entrepreneurial intention among individuals, particularly college students. Several studies have examined the effects of entrepreneurial education on entrepreneurial intention and have found positive associations (McMillan and Woodruff 2002; Zellweger, Sieger, and Halter 2011). A study by Liu et al. (2019) investigated the effects of entrepreneurial education and self-efficacy on college students' entrepreneurial intention. The findings revealed that entrepreneurial education significantly positively affects entrepreneurial intention (Liu et al. 2019). It suggests that through entrepreneurial education, college students can develop the necessary knowledge and skills to pursue entrepreneurship and increase their chances of success in starting a business.

Furthermore, entrepreneurial education has been found to stimulate the ideas and behaviour necessary for entrepreneurship (Liu et al. 2019). It implies that by providing individuals with the required knowledge and exposure to entrepreneurial concepts, entrepreneurial education can inspire and motivate them to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours.

It is important to note that other factors may influence the effects of entrepreneurial education on entrepreneurial intention. For example, Asimakopoulos et al. (2019) examined the contingent impact of social norms on the relationship between entrepreneurial education and intention to undertake entrepreneurial activity (Asimakopoulos, Hernández, and Miguel 2019). They found that social norms can moderate the association between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention. The finding implies that the influence of entrepreneurial education on entrepreneurial intention may vary depending on the social norms and expectations surrounding entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial education positively influences entrepreneurial intention by providing individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and inspiration to pursue entrepreneurship. However, social norms may affect the effects and may differ across religions. Understanding these factors can help design effective entrepreneurial education programs that foster entrepreneurial intention among individuals.

H2: A richer range of entrepreneurship study content leads to a higher level of entrepreneurial intention of the student.

2.3 Entrepreneurial attitude

Evidence from multiple studies supports the claim that entrepreneurial attitude influences entrepreneurial intention. Liñán & Chen (2009) developed an entrepreneurial intention questionnaire based on Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and found strong support for the model in a sample from Spain and Taiwan. They concluded that personal attitude is one of the most relevant factors explaining entrepreneurial intentions (Liñán and Chen 2009). Some recent research also found that entrepreneurial education, entrepreneurial mindset, and creativity

positively influence entrepreneurial intention, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy partially mediates this relationship (Jiatong et al. 2021).

Furthermore, Maghfiroh et al. (2022) found that attitude, subjective norms, and achievement needs all affect entrepreneurial intention, and these variables collectively influence the intention to start a venture (Maghfiroh, Achsa, and Ikhwan 2022). A study conducted in 2022 showed that social capital positively predicts entrepreneurial attitude and intention, and entrepreneurial attitude significantly affects entrepreneurial intention (Yuan 2022). The same year, another study examined the effect of entrepreneurial attitude and knowledge on entrepreneurial intention and found that entrepreneurial attitudes and knowledge influence entrepreneurial intentions (Harfandi, Zulhelmi, and Sonita 2022). However, while there is evidence supporting the claim that entrepreneurial attitude influences entrepreneurial intention, there are also studies that present competing evidence. Harfandi et al. (2022) found that entrepreneurial attitudes did not significantly affect certain students' entrepreneurial intentions. This suggests that the relationship between entrepreneurial attitude and intention may vary depending on the context or population being studied. Kolvereids' study applied the theory of planned behaviour to predict employment status choice intentions, which can be seen as a proxy for entrepreneurial intention. The findings of this study suggest that demographic characteristics, such as family background and prior self-employment experience, indirectly influence employment status choice intentions through their effect on attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control (Kolvereid 1996). It implies that entrepreneurial attitude may not be entrepreneurial intention's sole or primary determinant.

Additionally, Liñán & Chen (2009) acknowledge the role of culture in shaping individuals' perceptions of entrepreneurship. They found that cultural values can modify how individuals perceive entrepreneurship, suggesting that the influence of entrepreneurial attitude on entrepreneurial intention may vary across different cultural contexts (Liñán and Chen 2009). This indicates that the relationship between entrepreneurial attitude and intention may not be universally applicable and may be influenced by cultural factors.

These findings highlight the complexity of the relationship between entrepreneurial attitude and intention. While some studies support the influence of entrepreneurial attitude on entrepreneurial intention, others suggest that demographic characteristics and cultural values may play a significant role. It is essential to consider these factors when examining the relationship between entrepreneurial attitude and intention and to conduct further research to understand better the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that influence this relationship.

H3: A more pronounced positive attitude towards entrepreneurship leads to a higher entrepreneurial intention.

2.4 Entrepreneurial skills

The model suggesting that entrepreneurial skills positively influence entrepreneurial intention is strongly supported (Liñán and Chen 2009). Ibrahim and Mas'Ud (2016) conducted a study using a PLS approach and found that entrepreneurial skills positively influence entrepreneurial intentions (Ibrahim and Mas'ud 2016). They also cited previous studies that reported a significant relationship between entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial intention. Kusumawijaya & Astuti (2021) found that entrepreneurial competency significantly affects entrepreneurial intention and mediates the relationship between personality traits and entrepreneurial intention (Kusumawijaya and Astuti 2021). They concluded that entrepreneurial competency partially mediates the relationship between personality traits and entrepreneurial intention.

Majid et al. (2018) conducted a study from an Islamic perspective and found that entrepreneurial knowledge positively correlates with entrepreneurial intention (Majid et al., 2018). They also mentioned that entrepreneurial knowledge increases positive perception towards entrepreneurial intention.

These studies prove that entrepreneurial skills, competency, and knowledge positively influence entrepreneurial intention. This suggests that individuals with strong entrepreneurial skills are more likely to have the intention to become entrepreneurs.

H4: Stronger entrepreneurial skills lead to stronger entrepreneurial intention.

2.5 Locus of control

Locus of control refers to an individual's belief about the extent to which they have control over their lives and the outcomes they experience. It can be categorised as either internal or external. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they have control over their own actions and outcomes, while those with an external locus of control believe that external forces or luck play a more significant role in determining their outcomes (Fishbein and Hall 2002).

Several studies have examined the influence of locus of control on entrepreneurial intentions. It has been found that individuals with a higher internal locus of control are more likely to have entrepreneurial intentions and exhibit entrepreneurial behaviour (Gurel, Altinay, and Daniele 2010; Arkorful and Hilton 2022; Annisa, Tentama, and Bashori 2021). Individuals with an internal locus of control tend to have a higher need for achievement, are more willing to take risks, and are more likely to persist at tasks and take responsibility for their actions (Arkorful and Hilton 2022). They believe that their actions can directly influence the desired outcomes, which aligns with entrepreneurship's proactive and self-determined nature. On the other hand, individuals with an external locus of control are less likely to have entrepreneurial intentions. They may feel that external factors such as luck or influential people influence their outcomes more, leading to a lower sense of personal agency and self-efficacy (Arkorful and Hilton 2022). Such a perception can decrease motivation to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities and take risks.

Locus of control has been consistently identified as a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour. Individuals with an internal locus of control are more likely to have entrepreneurial intentions and exhibit entrepreneurial behaviour due to their belief in personal agency and control over outcomes. On the other hand, individuals with an external locus of control may have lower entrepreneurial intentions due to a decreased sense of personal agency and reliance on external factors. Understanding the influence of locus of control across different cultures

and religions can help identify individuals with a higher propensity for entrepreneurship and design interventions to foster entrepreneurial intentions.

H5: The more pronounced the internal locus of control, the stronger the students' entrepreneurial intention.

2.6 Power distance

Hofstede (1985) defines power distance as »the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally« (Hofstede 1985). Liñán and Chen (2009) suggest that power distance can influence students' entrepreneurial intention. Power distance can modify individuals' perceptions of entrepreneurship. Students from societies with high power distance may have different perceptions of entrepreneurship compared to those from cultures with low power distance.

Hofstede also discussed the influence of cultural dimensions, including power distance, on work-related values. While his study focused on interlocking in the corporate world, it provides insights into how power distance can affect individuals' behaviour and decision-making (Hofstede 1985). This suggests that students from societies with high power distance may be more inclined to seek external support and resources for their entrepreneurial endeavours.

The relationship between power distance and entrepreneurial intention is complex and can be influenced by various factors. Liñán and Fayolle (2015) highlighted the need for further research and categorisation in entrepreneurial intention. They emphasised the importance of cultural factors, such as power distance, in understanding and explaining entrepreneurial intentions (Liñán and Fayolle 2015). Consequently, further research is needed to fully understand the relationship between power distance and entrepreneurial intention, especially across different cultural surroundings.

H6: A higher level of power distance leads to a lower level of entrepreneurial intentions among students.

2.7 Subjective norms

Subjective norms have been identified as one of the three motivational factors in the theory of planned behaviour that influence entrepreneurial intention (Icek Ajzen 2012). Subjective norms and other cultural values modify individuals' perceptions of entrepreneurship (Liñán and Chen 2009). Shi, Yuan, Bell, and Wang conducted a survey on business school students' entrepreneurial intention in China using the theory of planned behaviour and found that subjective norms had a significant influence on entrepreneurial intention, along with attitude and perceived behavioural control (Shi et al. 2020). Other studies examining the link between subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention gave mixed results, suggesting that the correlation between the two variables is inconsistent (Duong 2022). Recent research found that subjective norms played a major role in influencing entrepreneurial intention among engineering students (Saraih et al. 2018).

However, some studies have found conflicting evidence regarding the influence of subjective norms on entrepreneurial intention. Liñán and Fayolle (2015) identified research gaps in the field of entrepreneurial intention and noted that there were studies that did not easily fit into the main areas of specialisation, suggesting that subjective norms may not always be a significant factor (Liñán and Fayolle 2015). A study in 2019 observed inconclusive evidence regarding the impact of subjective norms on entrepreneurial intentions (Ranga et al. 2019). Similarly, a meta-analytic path analysis found that subjective norms did not directly influence entrepreneurial intention, but had an indirect effect through factors such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and attitude toward entrepreneurship (Doanh and van Munawar 2019).

Therefore, we conclude that further research is needed to better understand the complex relationship between subjective norms and entrepreneurial intentions, especially considering cultural and religious differences.

H7: A higher level of subjective norms leads to higher entrepreneurial intentions of students.

3 Methodology

3.1 Sample

Religion plays a significant role in shaping economic behaviour, national consciousness, and collective identities, highlighting its importance compared to nationality. Existing research argues that religion is a higher and more important category than nationality. According to Grosby (2019), the distinctiveness of religion as a category of human thought and action sets it apart from nationality and makes it a variable in comparative analysis (S. E. Grosby 2019). Additionally, Mättö and Niskanen (2019) found that religion and national culture are important determinants of trade credit management, indicating the significance of religion in shaping economic behaviour (Mättö and Niskanen 2019).

Moreover, Grosby suggests that the relationship between nationality and religion is variable over time and across different nations and religions, indicating the complexity and significance of this relationship (S. Grosby 2018). Grosby further argues that the nation is invested with sacred qualities drawn from older religious beliefs and that national attachments have their sources in the sphere of religion. These findings suggest that religion holds a higher and more important position than nationality in shaping collective identities and attachments.

Based on these findings, we divided the participating students into four groups based on their religious definition and regardless of nationality. Our sample consisted of 154,535 students from 52 countries. The data was collected from the GUESSS 2019 Global Student Career Intent Survey. The entire database includes more than 210,000 valid surveys. For our study, we excluded from the database unidentified students and those individuals who have already established their own companies. That way, we allowed a prospective view and avoided survivor bias from which retrospective studies might suffer while interviewing entrepreneurs about their motives after starting a business (Gartner 1989). We also excluded from the database all individuals who did not define themselves in terms of religious affiliation. We tested all our hypotheses separately in all four observed religious groups of respondents.

Gender	Percent	Parent entrep.	Percent	Career (%)	after study	after 5 years
Male	42,7	No	65,1	Employee	90,4	58,1
Female	57,3	Yes	34,9	Entrep.	9,6	41,9

Table 1: Sample descriptives

Table 1 summarises the structure of our sample. Men represent 42.7% of the sample, while women make up 57.3%. In the sample, 34.9% of students come from entrepreneurial families. We asked the respondents whether at least one parent is an entrepreneur. We asked respondents about their career goals immediately after graduation and five years after graduation. The five-year interval is chosen based on existing studies, which find that the typical entrepreneur works elsewhere for five years before starting his own business (Brockhaus 1987). Our results also show that as much as 90.4% of surveyed students will find employment elsewhere immediately after completing their studies. Only 9.6% of them will immediately go down the entrepreneurial path. After five years, the percentage of students employed elsewhere drops to 58.1%.

Religion	Percent
Buddhism	2,4
Christianity	49,4
Islam	9,2
No religion	39,0

Table 2: Sample frequencies: religion affiliation

Table 2 shows the structure of the sample according to religious definition. At the same time, it should be noted that this structure naturally depends on the geographical coverage of the research. It is an informative presentation of the sample composition, with which we only want to show that

a sufficient sample size is ensured in all four groups, which are compared with each other in the research. Table 3 shows the sample structure by field of study of the respondents.

Study	Percent
Arts / Humanities (e.g., cultural studies, history, linguistics, philosophy, religion)	7,4
Business / Management	23,7
Computer sciences / IT	7,2
Economics	5,6
Engineering (incl. architecture)	16,6
Human medicine / health sciences	9,5
Law	4,0
Mathematics	1,3
Natural sciences	5,8
Science of art (e.g., art, design, dramatics, music)	1,5
Social sciences (e.g., psychology, politics, education)	9,5
Other	8,0

Table 3: Sample frequencies: field of study

3.2 Variables

Scientifically validated seven-point Likert scales are used to capture all survey data. Our dependent variable is the entrepreneurial intention of the respondent. To capture the independent variable (6 items) as well as the entrepreneurial attitude (5 items) and subjective norms (3 items), we employed the measuring instruments according to a high-profile study of measurement tools for measuring students entrepreneurial intentions from 2009 (Liñán and Chen 2009). The impact of the university environment is calculated using a 3-item scale, previously used in similar studies (Franke and Lüthje 2004). We captured the level of mastery of entrepreneurial skills following the 7-item model of the study of innovation and entrepreneurial intentions (Zhao 2005). The influence of entrepreneurial content in the course of the study was measured with five Likert items taken from the 2007 students' career intention study (Souitaris, Zerbinati, and Al-Laham 2007). Locus of control was captured with the 3-item scale used in the psychiatric patient locus of control study (Levenson 1973). The mentioned scale is also often used in economic sciences and entrepreneurship (Zellweger, Sieger, and Halter 2011). The power distance scale consists of three items used in the GLOBE study of 62 countries (House et al. 2004). We also included two control variables in the regression models, namely gender and information on the family's entrepreneurial background. We asked the respondents if at least one of their parents (or both) is an entrepreneur.

Variance inflation factor is calculated for all variables in all four models. We found that in no case does it exceed the value of 4.2, which is well below the defined upper limit of 10, which means that multicollinearity does not appear to be a problem (Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J. and Anderson 2010). Harman's single-factor test confirmed the variables were empirically distinct. One factor solution accounted for 35,673% of the total variance.

3.3 Results

In the phase of analysing the collected data, we first looked at the mutual correlations between our variables. Only these are shown in Table 4.

		Parent entrepreneur	Environment	Ent. program	Intention	Attitude	Skill	Locus	Power dist.	Subj. norm	Gender	
Parent entrep.	Corr.	1,000										
	Sig.											
Environment	Corr.	0,073	1,000									
	Sig.	0,000										
Ent. prog	Corr.	0,077	0,731	1,000								
	Sig.	0,000	0,000									
Intention	Corr.	0,130	0,370	0,428	1,000							
	Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000								
Attitude	Corr.	0,110	0,339	0,393	0,856	1,000						
	Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000							
Skill	Corr.	0,112	0,426	0,521	0,643	0,631	1,000					
	Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000						
Locus	Corr.	0,079	0,286	0,329	0,356	0,357	0,520	1,000				
	Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000					
Power dist.	Corr.	-0,026	-0,073	-0,059	0,014	0,016	-0,011	-0,013	1,000			
	Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000				
Subj. norm	Corr.	0,100	0,276	0,275	0,370	0,410	0,370	0,336	-0,046	1,000		
	Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000			
Gender	Corr.	-0,012	-0,045	-0,063	-0,117	-0,108	-0,103	-0,013	-0,027	0,009	1,000	
	Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,001		

Table 4: Correlations

The comparison of the four observed religious groups was carried out using the analysis of variance, which showed highly statistically significant differences between the observed groups in all observed factors. Results are displayed in Table 5.

Between Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Environment	26897,918	3	8965,973	370,285	0,000
Entrepreneurial prog.	165189,038	3	55063,013	856,199	0,000
Intention	276960,214	3	92320,071	722,983	0,000
Attitude	136676,835	3	45558,945	633,494	0,000
Skill	141516,894	3	47172,298	471,452	0,000
Locus	18188,199	3	6062,733	460,475	0,000
Power distance	21216,480	3	7072,160	293,251	0,000
Subjective norms	21788,000	3	7262,667	552,054	0,000

Table 5: Results of the ANOVA test

Table 6 shows the results of Turkey's post hoc test for our independent variable, entrepreneurial intention. It turns out that entrepreneurial intent differs between all four groups with a high degree of statistical significance ($p = 0.000$). The most pronounced entrepreneurial intention was detected in the Islam group, while students who do not belong to any religion have the lowest level of entrepreneurial intention.

Entrepreneurial intention		Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.
i	j			
Buddhism	Christianity	1,051*	,204	,000
	Islam	-2,384*	,235	,000
	None	3,185*	,205	,000
Christianity	Buddhism	-1,051*	,204	,000
	Islam	-3,435*	,135	,000
	None	2,133*	,069	,000
Islam	Buddhism	2,384*	,235	,000
	Christianity	3,435*	,135	,000
	None	5,568*	,137	,000
None	Buddhism	-3,185*	,205	,000
	Christianity	-2,133*	,069	,000
	Islam	-5,568*	,137	,000

Table 6: Turkey's Post Hoc test for independent variable (Entrepreneurial intention)

With the desire to gain a more detailed insight into the differences between the observed groups of students, we continued the analysis by creating a linear regression model for all four groups. The model contains all observed factors and enables the comparison of regression coefficients between groups. Like previously mentioned, we tested all our hypotheses separately in all four religious groups of respondents.

The regression coefficients are summarised in Table 7. First of all, it is worth mentioning the difference between the groups in the value of the coefficient of determination (r2). The Islam group shows the lowest value of the coefficient of determination. The selected factors of entrepreneurial intention in this group explain the smallest part of variance of the independent variable. It means that in this group, additional factors shape the entrepreneurial intention of students and are either not present at all or are less pronounced in the other groups. Selected variables explained

the highest portion of the independent variable variance in the Buddhism group (81,3%). Perceived differences in the coefficients of determination between regression models should be researched more closely in the future.

Regression models	Buddhism		Christianity		Islam		No religion	
	B	**Sig.**	**B**	**Sig.**	**B**	**Sig.**	**B**	**Sig.**
(Constant)	–8,525	0,000	–5,286	0,000	–1,332	0,005	–5,571	0,000
University env.	0,233	0,000	0,066	0,000	0,013	0,508	0,065	0,000
Entrepren. prog	0,047	0,036	0,054	0,000	0,060	0,000	0,071	0,000
Attitude	0,778	0,000	1,017	0,000	0,824	0,000	0,977	0,000
Skill	0,290	0,000	0,152	0,000	0,221	0,000	0,149	0,000
Locus	–0,045	0,190	–0,028	0,001	–0,013	0,591	0,007	0,390
Power_ distance	0,146	0,000	0,004	0,486	–0,035	0,023	0,025	0,000
Subj_norm	0,051	0,085	–0,021	0,009	0,012	0,580	–0,015	0,048
Gender	–1,103	0,000	–0,293	0,000	–0,794	0,000	–0,603	0,000
Parent entrep.	0,509	0,011	0,807	0,000	0,681	0,000	0,560	0,000
r^2	0,813		0,751		0,629		0,767	

Table 7: Regression coefficients

The university environment with a high level of support for entrepreneurs influences students' entrepreneurial intentions in three groups. The exception is the Islam group, where we did not detect a statistically significant influence of the university environment. The noticeably highest coefficient in the model was detected in the Buddhists group (b = 0,233). Hypothesis H1 is thus confirmed in three groups. In the Islam group, our data do not contradict the null hypothesis (b = 0).

The implementation of richer entrepreneurial content in the curricula has an expected effect on students' entrepreneurial intention in all four observed groups. The results in this segment are highly statistically significant in all groups. Thus, our hypothesis H2 is confirmed in all four models.

In the case of entrepreneurial attitude, we confirmed our third hypothesis H3 in all four groups, as we recorded a high level of statistically significant influence on entrepreneurial intention. As expected, the impact of this factor is the highest in all four groups. The standardised beta regression coefficients vary between the values of 0,575 and 0,744, while they do not exceed the value of 0,271 for the other factors.

Hypothesis H4 is also confirmed in all four observed groups. Stronger entrepreneurial skills are the second most influential factor shaping the entrepreneurial intention of students. It is given the most importance in the group of Buddhists and the least in the group of students who do not follow the teachings of any religion.

We detected a noticeable difference between the groups in the internal locus of control level. We did not record statistically significant results in the three groups, based on which we rejected our hypothesis H5. On the other hand, hypothesis H5 was confirmed with a highly statistically significant effect in the Christian group ($p = 0.001$).

With hypothesis H6, the picture is just the opposite. Statistically significant results were detected in three groups. Even in this case, the exception is the group of Christians, where we did not find statistically significant results and thus rejected hypothesis H6. However, we confirmed hypothesis H6 only in the Islam group. It is only for this group that the more they perceive inequality in society as students, the lower the level of their entrepreneurial intention. We note a distinctive but opposite effect in the groups of Buddhists and those who do not belong to any religion. Thus, the higher the perceived level of inequality in society, the higher the level of entrepreneurial intention among students in these two groups.

Hypothesis H7 can also be confirmed only in one group, namely among members of Buddhism, where a higher level of subjective norms leads to a higher level of entrepreneurial intention. The more important the opinion

of their loved ones is to students, the stronger their entrepreneurial intention. Statistically significant but opposite results were observed in the groups of Christians and students who do not follow any religion. In these two groups, the greater importance of the opinion of those close to the student lowers the level of entrepreneurial intention. We did not detect any statistically significant dependence among members of Islam in this part.

In all four groups, the level of entrepreneurial intention is higher among men compared to women. The highest regression coefficient was recorded in the group of Buddhists, while the lowest perceived difference between the sexes was found in Christians. Likewise, in all groups, we detected a highly statistically significant influence of parents of entrepreneurs. Students from entrepreneurial families show a higher level of entrepreneurial intention compared to their colleagues whose parents are not entrepreneurs.

4 Discussion

In this paper, we assumed that understanding students' career intentions is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers in designing effective programs and interventions for career development. Our research provides valuable insight into their desires, motivations and decision-making processes regarding their future careers. We focused on the importance of religious affiliation on students' career intentions, intending to enable institutions to better adapt their activities to the needs of young individuals and societies.

The idea that religious values may impact economic behaviour can be traced back at least as far as the work of Max Weber (Henley 2020). Some religions may encourage specific values or practices that can be beneficial for developing entrepreneurial behaviour. For example, in Islam, there is a concept called »Halal entrepreneurship« or »Halalpreneurship«, which refers to entrepreneurs in the Halal industry who integrate Islamic values into their businesses (M. A. Abdullah and Azam 2020). Similarly, some Christian denominations emphasise the importance of hard work and financial responsibility (Audretsch, Boente, and Tamvada 2007).

The results of our research show how important the university environment is for the development of entrepreneurship (H1). Universities and religious institutions must encourage students to an entrepreneurial way of thinking and perhaps even enable them to open businesses more efficiently in a controlled environment. Activities in this direction can be carried out by students themselves or under mentorship. In any case, it is necessary to provide entrepreneurial subjects related to practice (H2). Today, religious institutions mostly do not have this function, but that is not the rule. The important role of Muslim cultural centres in the Muslim world in this context is worth mentioning. There are several ways in which Islamic cultural centres provide support to entrepreneurs, like networking platforms, mentorship, training, funding and information dissemination (Ashraf 2021; Salaheldeen 2022). Perhaps precisely because of the already existing robust business support infrastructure in the Islamic world, in our research, we did not detect a statistically significant significance of the business support of the university environment in the group of members of Islam. Students receive this support within the framework of religious institutions. It is a finding that can be useful for all religions in future.

Can belonging to a religion influence an individual's decision to become an entrepreneur? Our findings suggest that members of the Buddhist faith are most inclined towards entrepreneurship. The existence of a direct connection between Buddhism and entrepreneurship cannot be confirmed. However, some Buddhist values and practices can benefit entrepreneurs. For example, Buddhism encourages self-reflection and contemplation of life, which can help entrepreneurs shape the vision and goals for their business. Additionally, some Buddhist practices such as meditation and yoga can help manage stress and improve productivity (Xu, Liu, and Wu 2022).

Our findings confirm that embarking on an entrepreneurial career without mastering the relevant skills is more challenging. In this context, religion can play an essential role as an institution that offers the infrastructure and overall framework for developing the necessary skills. For instance, self-reflection and contemplation of life, which are encouraged in Buddhism, can help entrepreneurs shape the vision and goals for their business. Additionally, religious practices, such as meditation and yoga, can help relieve stress and increase productivity (Henley 2020). At the

same time, it should be emphasised that religion is not a prerequisite for entrepreneurial behaviour. It can only help shape and strengthen it (Xu, Liu, and Wu 2022). Many successful entrepreneurs do not follow any religion or spiritual practice. However, we must not forget that in the present research, we analysed the point of view of a young student before making a career decision. The finding that all four groups recognise the great importance of mastering entrepreneurial skills should not be ignored. It can be very useful for institutions in creating a youth-friendly creative environment.

Judging by the results of many existing researches, locus of control (both internal and external) has a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention (Arkorful and Hilton 2022). Internal locus of control positively affects entrepreneurial intention among university students (Zellweger, Sieger, and Halter 2011). Internal locus of control is associated with higher levels of need for achievement, innovativeness, and risk-taking, which are important personality traits for entrepreneurs (Icek Ajzen, Brown, and Carvajal 2004; Kolvereid 1996; Arkorful and Hilton 2022). In our research, we find conflicting results. A statistically significant influence of the internal locus of control on entrepreneurial intention was detected only in the group of Christians. Even in this case, the influence is negative. The more self-confident an individual is and the more he believes that he alone influences what happens to him, the less he will be inclined towards entrepreneurial behaviour. All the remaining three groups showed no significant association. These exciting findings require further, more detailed research aiming to find the reasons for the perceived differences.

When examining the influence of power distance on students' entrepreneurial intention, our findings largely confirm the previous findings in this field. We detected a statistically significant effect in three groups. Among the Muslims, we noticed a significant negative relationship. For these students, a higher level of perceived inequality leads to a lower level of entrepreneurial intention, just as expected. In the case of Buddhists and the group that follows no religion, we perceive a positive correlation. A higher level of perceived inequality leads to higher entrepreneurial intention. We did not detect a statistically significant effect among the Christians. Our research cannot provide answers to the questions of why these differences occur. In any case, this can be the basis for a call for further

research of a qualitative nature, which should investigate the mentioned reasons. In any case, it is worth noting that we can confirm with a high degree of certainty the different influences of individual religions on an individual's entrepreneurial intention. The finding is consistent with the literature since we already know religion can influence power distance by providing a framework of values, ethics, and culture that may encourage or discourage hierarchical structures and authority relations (Mättö and Niskanen 2019). The same studies have found that Catholicism and Islam are associated with higher levels of power distance than Protestantism and Buddhism. However, the relationship between religion and power distance may also depend on other factors, such as a country's level of economic development, political freedom, and social diversity (Mättö and Niskanen 2019; Nickerson 2023).

In the analysis of subjective norms, our findings generally confirm that subjective norms can significantly impact entrepreneurial intention (Phamn et al. 2023). Buddhism encourages self-reflection and reflection on life, which can help entrepreneurs form a vision and goals for their company. However, we can't find any direct evidence that a higher level of subjective norms leads to higher entrepreneurial intention in Buddhism. Nonetheless, the study of Phamn suggests that subjective norms can be influenced by individual religiosity, including participation in religious activities. We can agree with the statement, considering that we recorded different results in our four groups. In the group of Christians and individuals who do not belong to any religion, we confirmed the significant influence of subjective norms on entrepreneurial intention. The more important the opinion of their close ones is to these individuals, the lower their entrepreneurial intention is. We can speculate that they do not want to risk their decision to become an entrepreneur and thus spoil the opinion of their loved ones about them. In the Muslim group, we did not perceive a typical connection between the opinion of those close to the individual and his entrepreneurial intention. We may conclude that religion plays such a decisive role that the individual does not need the approval of close ones. In any case, this is also a speculative assumption that requires further research.

Conclusion

Religions are an essential factor in values, ethics and culture. As such, they can promote or negate entrepreneurial intentions and activities (Audretsch, Boente, and Tamvada 2007). Individual religious affiliation, including participation in religious activities, can condition the extent to which such broader societal values influence personal entrepreneurial decisions. Religions can play an essential role in creating social capital, which provides networking and trust-building among co-religionists, contributing to entrepreneurial success (Audretsch, Boente, and Tamvada 2007). Finally, although not directly related to the issue of religion as a source of entrepreneurial values, culture and social capital, religious organisations can act entrepreneurially themselves. They may seek to attract businesses to gain new followers or charitable giving for social programs.

Our research detects differences between important world religions, which have consequences for the entrepreneurial intention of young people. The present research findings can help state and religious institutions formulate their approaches and programs for working with young people. The present research aimed to detect possible differences between religions. The task of future research is an in-depth qualitative analysis of the reasons for the described differences.

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