

Veterinary Students' Perceptions of Entrepreneurship Education [†]

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[†] Presented at the 17th International Conference of the Hellenic Association of Agricultural Economists, Thessaloniki, Greece, 2–3 November 2023.

Abstract: In this study, the opinions and perceptions of students at a school of veterinary medicine regarding the importance of entrepreneurship education in modern higher education are investigated. A Likert-scale questionnaire design was used to record veterinary students' responses on issues related to entrepreneurship education and its impact on their entrepreneurial mindset, as well as on the students' carrier aspirations and on the factors that influence their carrier choices. The survey was conducted in 2022, and in total, 105 graduates completed the questionnaire. The responses were analyzed through a descriptive statistical analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics 28. The present study confirms that there is a significant need for entrepreneurship education in order to start, develop, and successfully realize business ideas.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; education; university; start-up business



Citation: Koutouzidou, G.; Samathrakis, V.; Batzios, A.; Theodoridis, A. Veterinary Students' Perceptions of Entrepreneurship Education. *Proceedings* **2024**, *94*, 40. <https://doi.org/10.3390/proceedings2024094040>

Academic Editor: Theodoropoulou

Published: 2 February 2024



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1. Introduction

University entrepreneurship education refers to courses or programs that educate students on various aspects of planning, starting, and managing a modern business. Entrepreneurship education provides students with the skills and tools needed to identify and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities in the market [1] and stimulates them to have greater information, knowledge, and encouragement in supporting their creativity to become entrepreneurs and start their own business [2,3]. Gradually, courses of entrepreneurship have been embedded in the curricula of many universities and higher education institutions, developing novel pedagogies to cultivate students' entrepreneurial mindsets [4].

In line with high modern international standards and considering entrepreneurship as part of its strategic mission, in 2017, the School of Veterinary Medicine of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki introduced a mandatory entrepreneurship course, meaning that the course constitutes an integral part of the institution's educational curriculum. The course, entitled "Entrepreneurship and management of veterinary and animal enterprises", teaches the fundamental principles of entrepreneurship and the basic elements of commercial and tax law and provides the knowledge and skills graduate students need in order to start, develop, and successfully realize business ideas in the field of veterinary medicine and animal production. The aim of this study was to explore the views and the opinions of veterinary students on the role and the need of entrepreneurship courses in modern education programs. Through an empirical analysis, the impact of the provided education

on the entrepreneurial mindsets of the students was assessed, and their perceptions concerning the educational modules and topics that should be integrated into the curriculum are discussed in this paper.

Studies related to the topic of this one have been carried out previously, mainly dealing with the development of entrepreneurial skills and competencies in secondary and higher education. Arrighetti et al. [5] conducted one of the first studies on the entrepreneurial orientation of university students by using a large sample of students from the University of Parma (Italy) and Sousa [6–8], identifying which skills and competencies the students required to develop through entrepreneurship education.

2. Methodology

A primary survey was conducted in 2022 by disseminating a Likert-scale questionnaire to graduate students at a school of veterinary medicine in Greece. The questionnaire was hosted online through a Google Form and completed by 105 graduate students that attended the course of entrepreneurship education. The questionnaire was structured in three sections: the first recorded the socio-demographic profile of the students, the second recorded their opinions regarding the quality of the provided education on entrepreneurship, and the third section covered issues related to their carrier aspirations and choices. The responses were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet file, and a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 28 software.

3. Results and Discussion

Our results show that a large percentage of students (from 55.2% to 59%) do not know the individual educational objectives of the course and believe that it is a module mainly related to economic and financial education. However, 62.9% of the students believe that prospective veterinarians should be informed about the basic principles of marketing and financial management, while 85% believe that having a knowledge of the legal frameworks related to the commercial sector, employment, and tax is a prerequisite for a successful business in the field of veterinary medicine.

Regarding the problems that a veterinarian faces as a new professional and entrepreneur, 93% of the respondents stated that the main problem is related to financial issues, which include insufficient funds, limited access to sources of finance, and the absence of financial programs. This was followed by the problems related to the lack of the appropriate knowledge and skills for planning their future business occupation (77.1%).

The opinions of the students regarding the development of an entrepreneurial spirit and culture of entrepreneurship (develop new business ideas, give advice on these issues and provide incentives for initiating business activities) in higher education in general were particularly negative, with percentages greater than 88%. Despite the high percentage of negative views on the development of entrepreneurial culture, the content of the course of entrepreneurial education provided were considered significant in improving students' knowledge on issues related to business attitudes, values and incentives, on the actions that could potentially be required to start a business and also on strengthening of their understanding of the creation of networks and the recognition of business opportunities. Contrary to the level of knowledge they believe that they possess, they are particularly cautious about starting, operating, and managing a business (percentages greater than 74%), even though their family and friends would support any decisions related to creating a business (rate greater than 91%).

Figure 1 presents the main factors of the internal environment that prevent students from starting a business. These include (i) a lack of capital, (ii) the risk of losing invested capital, (iii) a lack of knowledge/skills, (iv) a lack of contacts with future customers–suppliers, (v) a fear of failure, (vi) a lack of business skills, and (vi) a lack of a business idea.

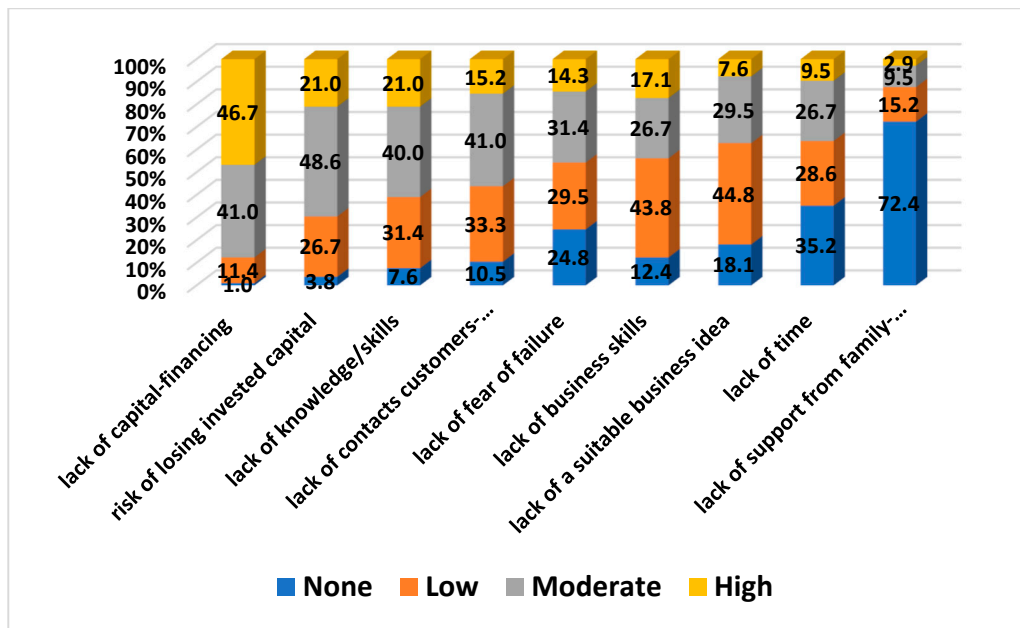


Figure 1. Internal factors that prevent students from starting a business.

Figure 2 presents the external factors that prevent students from starting their own business. The financial crisis and the uncertain economic environment, the volatile tax system, insufficient external financing, the lack of government support for entrepreneurs and of infrastructure, and the lack of knowledge on the legislative and tax framework were indicated by the students as the main problems.

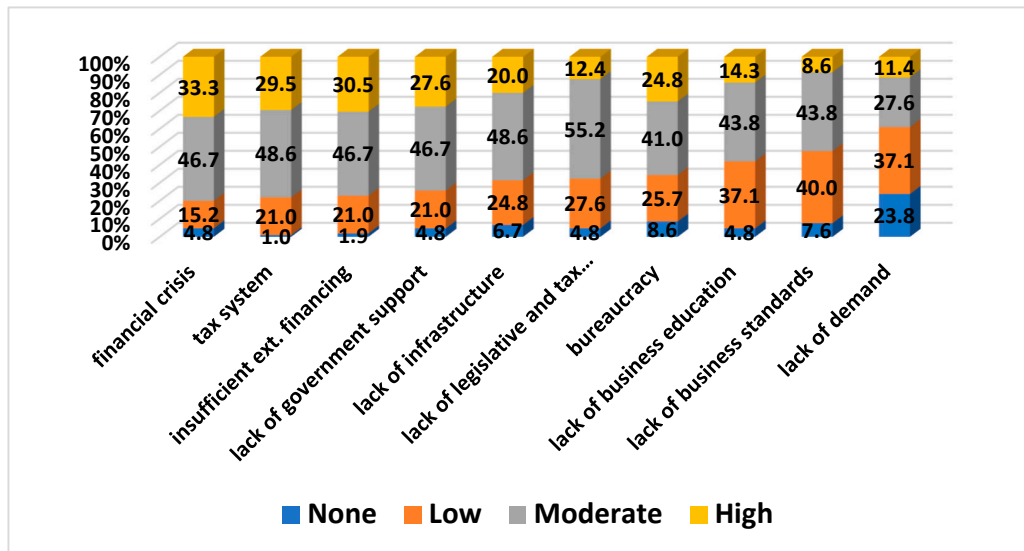


Figure 2. External factors that prevent students from starting a business.

4. Conclusions

This study presents the preliminary results of an empirical survey which was completed by veterinary graduate students in Greece and aimed to investigate and record their perceptions and attitudes concerning entrepreneurship education in universities. The veterinary students believe that, through partaking in the entrepreneurship education course, they could acquire important skills to organize and manage a business, and they are in favor of there being a direct link between their studies and the business environment and the market. Overall, the findings of this study confirm that entrepreneurship education instills entrepreneurial values into university students, benefitting them as they enter the

workforce and/or start their own business; hence, entrepreneurship education must be an integral part of modern curricula in higher education.

Author Contributions: All authors (G.K., A.T., V.S. and A.B.) were involved in the analysis of the data and contributed to the final manuscript. V.S. and A.T. designed the survey and collected the data. G.K., A.T. and V.S.: writing—original draft preparation. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This study received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data sharing not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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