

Received: April 2023
Accepted: September 2023
DOI: 10.7862/rz.2023.hss.35

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AN ASSESSMENT OF INTENTIONS AND ATTITUDES AMONG ENTREPRENEURS OF GENERATION ALPHA

This article presents the results of an analysis of entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes among children of Generation Alpha (born after 2010). The study is based on a diagnostic survey of 252 primary school students in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. The results show that even though students, as a rule, have business ideas and positively assess the creation of their own business, they do not often think about creating their own business in the future and are less likely to associate their future with entrepreneurship. The analysis shows that there is a connection between entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes and the socio-demographic profile of respondents. The results can be used to develop new approaches to the organization of entrepreneurial education in primary schools, and to raise children's awareness of the prospects of running their own businesses.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, intentions, attitudes, generation alpha, primary school

1. INTRODUCTION

The problems of entrepreneurial attitudes (EATT) and entrepreneurial intentions (EINT) are the subjects of scientific research by many authors. The assessment of these indicators allows policymakers to draw conclusions about the actual or planned entrepreneurial activity of the population and develop measures to increase the share of the private sector in the economy.

Authoritative international studies of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) on an ongoing basis evaluate such indicators as Entrepreneurial Intentions Rate (percentage of population who are latent entrepreneurs and who intend to start a business within three years) and Entrepreneurship as a Good Career Choice Rate (percentage of population who agree with the statement that in their country, most people consider starting a business as a desirable career choice) (GEM, 2022).

Traditionally, entrepreneurial activity is assessed for the age group (18–64 years). This is due to social rules and regulatory documents that assume full legal capacity in business only after 18 years. Studies of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions in children of primary school age (7–12 years) are not numerous and mostly have a regional or project nature. At the same time, today's primary school students are representatives of Generation

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Alpha (born after 2010). According to experts, a high level of knowledge in the field of digital technologies will allow representatives of Generation Alpha to start their own business as early as adolescence. (Nellis, 2018, Goyal, 2020, Winter, 2022, Michel Carter, 2022).

Given the anticipated decline in the age at which future generations will commence their first entrepreneurial activities, this article aims to scrutinize entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions among primary school students. This unique insight will facilitate adjustments to state policy on promoting entrepreneurship, fostering heightened entrepreneurial activity in new generations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial activity primarily depends on such basic factors as knowledge about entrepreneurship as a career choice, entrepreneurial education, and the intention to become an entrepreneur. And if the first two factors relate mainly to educational activities, then the third is directly related to psychology.

Intention is one's mental state as it relates to engaging oneself into performing a certain behavior (Ajzen, Driver, 1992). This factor cannot be omitted, because the intention to start a business is a necessary precursor to entrepreneurial behavior (Linan, Fayolle, 2015; Maheshwari, Kha, Arokiasamy, 2022). Thompson (2009) states that entrepreneurial intention may vary to the degree and intensity between individuals ranging from a very low, effectively zero, to a very high degree of personal, conscious conviction and planning to start a new.

Various theories and models are used in the scientific literature to evaluate and explain entrepreneurial intentions. Among the most famous are: The entrepreneurial event model (EEM) (Shapero, Sokol, 1982), Expectancy Theory (the Rational Intention Theory) (Barba-Sánchez, Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017), The theory of planned behavior model (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), The theory of planned behavior entrepreneurial model (TPBEM) (Krueger, Carsrud, 1993), The entrepreneurial intention model (EIM) (Boyd, Vozikis, 1994), The social cognitive career theory model (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, Hackett, 1994), Lüthje and Franke model (LFM) (Lüthje, Franke, 2003).

Our analysis has shown that the theory of planned behavior is most often used in practice to assess entrepreneurial intentions (TPB) (Maheshwari et al., 2022; Linan, Fayolle, 2015). TPB provides that three components determine intent: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2002). It is not by chance that the attitude to entrepreneurship occupies the first place in the structure of the theory of planned behavior. In his research, Kibler (2013) comes to the conclusion that the more positively a person perceives doing business, the stronger the entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial intention will be. The results of studies conducted by other authors (Miranda, Chamorro-Meraa, Rubio, 2017; Barba-Sánchez, Mitre-Aranda, Brío-González, 2022, Krueger, Reilly, Carsrud, 2000; Amofah, Saladríguez, 2022) also confirm that entrepreneurial attitude is the most important factor of entrepreneurial intention. And therefore, when conducting qualitative research, their methodology should provide for the assessment of both EATT and EINT with the possibility of determining the difference (gap) between them (Attitude-Intention Gap).

The importance of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions has led to the emergence of a large number of studies related to their assessment at all levels of education from primary

school to universities (Rodrigues, Silva, Franco, 2021; Aliedan, Elshaer, Alyahya, Sobaih, 2022; Fidan, Arıcı, 2022; Porfirio, Carrilho, Jardim, Wittberg, 2022).

In 2012–2014, the Danish Foundation for Entrepreneurship – Young Enterprise implemented the ASTEE project (Assessment Tools and Indicators for Entrepreneurship Education). The objective of the ASTEE project has been to develop a set of standard European tools for measuring the impact of Entrepreneurship Education on students' entrepreneurial competencies across all educational levels. The survey questionnaires are research-based and have been validated in two major surveys including 13 European countries and a total of 6488 respondents (Moberg et al., 2014).

Within the framework of the project, a comprehensive assessment of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions was carried out for three levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary). The research is the largest comprehensive research in Europe over the past 10 years devoted to entrepreneurial activity among young people. To evaluate the responses, respondents used a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from complete disagreement to absolute agreement with the questions asked.

The results of a survey conducted within the framework of the project (Moberg et al., 2014) show that in all groups entrepreneurial intentions are always lower than entrepreneurial attitudes. At the same time, boys had higher entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions than girls (Primary level: Attitudes 5.33/5.22, Intentions 4.66/4.38). Research have also shown that in groups studying entrepreneurship, the indicators of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions were higher than in groups without entrepreneurial components in the educational program (Secondary level: Attitudes 5.28/4.90, Intentions 4.15/3.34). In addition, children with experience of self-employment or their first entrepreneurial activity outside of school were characterized by higher indicators of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions.

Over the past five years, several regional studies have been conducted on the territory of Poland (2019, 2020), affecting the assessment of entrepreneurial activity (moods) of children of Generation Alpha (born after 2010).

Thus, according to research conducted in the Ternovsky Povet, 36% of the surveyed elementary school students (3rd grade) saw themselves as future entrepreneur, and 54% could not decide. The children did not notice important qualities and skills in themselves, such as the ability to lead a team, perseverance, and patience (Janas, 2020).

Studies of career plans conducted among high school students in Krakow show that 56% intended to get a job in the private sector, 25% – in public institutions and only 19% would like to manage their own company in the future (Borgiasz-Stepaniuk, 2019).

A focused group interview (FGI) conducted in the Lesser Poland Voivodeship of Poland shows that students in grades 1-7 of primary school for the most part said they would like to have their own company in the future. Despite the high intentions, the students could not determine exactly what their company would do. The students described running their business as a difficult task that requires a lot of commitment and money to start, but it was associated with making a big profit, so they would like to undertake these efforts in the future (Wojtun, Jaworska, Maj, 2022).

Our analysis shows that the methods and results of previous research in Poland do not allow us to fully assess the entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of Generation Alpha both at the country level and in a particular region.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was based on the results of a survey conducted in the form of a questionnaire among primary school students of Generation Alpha (born after 2010).

The research was conducted in 2022 on a representative group of schoolchildren who were consumers of entrepreneurial education services in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship of Poland.

At the time of the research, the respondents lived in the territory of the West Pomeranian voivodeship for at least 12 months and had the status of a basic school student for at least 12 months. The final sample included children aged 7 to 12 years attending grades 2–6 of basic schools.

The PAPI (Pen & Paper Personal Interview) technique was used to conduct the survey. The survey respondents were determined as a result of a simple random sample. To evaluate the responses, respondents used a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from complete disagreement to absolute agreement with the questions asked.

The questionnaire contained 24 questions, including 18 main questions related to various aspects of entrepreneurship, and 6 questions related to the socio-demographic profile of respondents. The main 18 questions of the questionnaire were divided into three parts: (1) assessment of respondents' level of satisfaction with the quality of entrepreneurial education, (2) assessment of entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes, (3) assessment of entrepreneurial competencies. The research results presented in this article relate to the second part of the questionnaire. This part of the questionnaire included 5 questions, 4 of which were taken from a questionnaire designed to evaluate the pan-European ASTEE project indicator system (Moberg et al., 2014):

1. I have business ideas that I want to implement;
2. My goal is to become an entrepreneur;
3. I often think about starting a business;
4. In general, starting a business is... (Negative – Positive), (Worthless - Worthwhile) (Boring - Fun).

These questions were specifically designed to assess the entrepreneurial mindset, attitude, and perceived skills acquired by students in the field of entrepreneurial education.

The purpose of our research was to assess the entrepreneurial intentions and of Generation Alpha schoolchildren (born after 2010) who took part in the survey.

Before conducting the main study, we conducted preliminary pilot studies on a group of 26 students of Generation Alpha. Pilot studies have made it possible to improve the questionnaire in order to improve the quality of its filling, as well as the level of reliability and internal consistency of questions.

The actual sample of the survey was 259 respondents. Only 252 out of 259 surveys were selected for the study (response rate – 97.2%). The remaining 7 questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete or incorrect questionnaire replies.

To measure the level of reliability and internal consistency of the survey questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used, which is 0.80. This is a satisfactory value of Cronbach's alpha when evaluating the psychometric properties of surveys related to the measurement of respondents' motives, attitudes, and intentions in the future ($\alpha > 0.60$).

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The analysis of the demographic profile of respondents (Table 1) showed that the sample had gender parity between boys (51.98%) and girls (48.02). Taking into account

the research methodology used by us, the resulting sample was divided into four groups of schoolchildren according to class levels (grades 2–3, 4th grade, 5th grade, 6th grade) and according to age groups (7–9 years, 10 years, 11 years, 12 years). The age composition was distributed with a predominance in favor of the oldest groups (12 years – 33.33%, grade 6 – 37.3%). This is due to a decrease in demographic indicators in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship and Poland after 2010. The largest number of respondents in the sample lived in cities of up to 50 thousand inhabitants.

Table 1. Demographic profile (N=252)

No.	Indicator	Options	Structure, %
1	Gender	girl	51.98
		boy	48.02
2	Age	7–9 years	20.63
		10 years	19.05
		11 years	26.98
		12 years	33.33
3	Place of residence	village	22.62
		city of up to 50 th. inhabitants	30.95
		city of 51–300 th. inhabitants	23.41
		city of over 300 th. inhabitants	23.02
4	Grade	2–3 grade	16.27
		4th grade	24.21
		5th grade	22.22
		6th grade	37.30

Source: Own study.

To study entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes among primary school students of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, they were asked 4 questions (Table 2). The analysis of the results shows that children in general positively assess the creation of their own business (5.35). In addition, Generation Alpha considers the creation of their own business to be more worthwhile (5.7) than fun (4.67). Despite the fact that children highly appreciate the presence of their business ideas (4.94), their intentions decrease as they concretize issues related to starting their own business in the future. Children often think about starting their own business (4.08) and to a lesser extent want to become an entrepreneur in the future (3.90).

Table 2. Entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes

Attitudes / Intentions	Question	Mean
Entrepreneurial attitudes	In general, starting a business is...	
	Negative – Positive	5.35
	Worthless - Worthwhile	5.70
	Boring - Fun	4.67
Entrepreneurial intentions	I have business ideas that I want to implement	4.94
	I often think about starting a business	4.08
	My goal is to become an entrepreneur	3.90

Source: Own study.

For a deeper assessment of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of Generation Alpha children, we conducted additional studies depending on gender, period of study (grade), place of residence, availability of higher education, and entrepreneurial experience of parents (Table 3).

The analysis shows that boys have higher scores of entrepreneurial attitudes (5.26) and intentions (4.40) compared to girls. Girls are less likely than boys to want to be businessmen and less likely to have business ideas.

Children living in cities of up to 50 thousand people had the best attitudes (5.65) and intentions (4.51) in relation to entrepreneurship. Despite the leadership of this group, it should be noted that the children living in the village had the largest number of business ideas (5.07) that they would like to implement in the future.

The distribution of responses by school classes showed that the leaders are high school students. The highest level of entrepreneurial attitudes was recorded in children in the 5th grade (5.54), and the highest intentions were in children in the 6th grade (4.40). At the same time, it should be noted that the children of the youngest grades (grades 2-3) had the largest number of business ideas (5.33) that they would like to implement in the future.

The analysis shows that children whose parents had higher education had the best indicators of entrepreneurial attitudes (5.21–5.64) and intentions (4.18–4.36). Children whose both parents have higher education are more likely than others to think about starting their own business in the future and have more business ideas.

Our research included the analysis of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions in children whose parents already had the experience of entrepreneurial activity. Our results show that the attitudes (5.35) and intentions (4.69) of this group of children are the highest, which may indicate the influence of parents on the opinion of their children in relation to entrepreneurship.

Table 3 Entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes by socio-demographic groups

No.	Indicator	Options	Entrepreneurial attitudes	Entrepreneurial intentions
1	Gender	girl	5.13	4.16
		boy	5.26	4.40
2	Place of residence	village	5.09	4.09
		city of up to 50 th. inhabitants	5.65	4.51
		city of 51–300 th. inhabitants	5.10	4.20
		city of over 300 th. inhabitants	4.73	4.21
3	Grade	2–3 grade	4.90	4.17
		4th grade	4.92	4.29
		5th grade	5.54	4.14
		6th grade	5.28	4.40
4	Have any of your parents started a company?	No.	5.24	4.12
		I don't know.	4.74	4.10
		Yes.	5.35	4.69
5	My parents have a higher education	No.	5.35	4.12
		I don't know.	5.00	4.24
		Yes, one	5.64	4.18
		Yes, both.	5.21	4.36
Average			5.19	4.28

Source: Own study.

In addition to the 4 main questions from Assessment Tools and indicators for Entrepreneurship Education (ASTE), our research included the question "How would you describe an entrepreneur?". Students could choose a maximum of 5 answers out of 10 possible (Rich, Ecological, Smart, Wise, Responsible, Bold, Economical, Hardworking, Manager, Resourceful).

The analysis shows that most often schoolchildren considered an entrepreneur to be "rich" – 15.46%, "responsible" – 14.38%, "hardworking" – 13.29%, "wise" – 12.03%, and "smart" – 11.30%.



Drawing 1. Answers to the question "How would you describe an entrepreneur?"

Source: Own study.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the results of our research shows the difference between entrepreneurial attitudes and entrepreneurial intentions. Despite the fact that students, as a rule, have business ideas and positively assess the creation of their own business, they do not often think about creating their own business in the future and to a lesser extent associate their future with entrepreneurship.

The results obtained confirm the results of similar studies conducted in other countries (Moberg et al., 2014). The gap between entrepreneurial attitudes and entrepreneurial intentions (Attitude-Intention Gap) ranges from 14.2 to 46.3%, depending on the level of education and the category of schoolchildren.

Research shows that this gap increases as a person grows up. The analysis of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor – 2021 (GEM, 2022) data shows that the high prestige of an entrepreneurial career of 54.7% (Entrepreneurship as a Good Career Choice Rate) among the population aged 18–64 in Poland is accompanied by a low indicator of entrepreneurial intentions to open a business in the next 3 years of 2.85% (Entrepreneurial Intention Rate).

If experts' forecasts come true and Generation Alpha is characterized by high entrepreneurial activity at an early age, this may cause an "entrepreneurial boom" in the future.

Young people do not have such restraining factors of entrepreneurship development as "fear of losing a stable job", "responsibility for their children", or "overestimation of risks

based on rich life experience". This, as a rule, allows young people to more easily make attempts to realize their life ambitions through the implementation of entrepreneurial activities.

The results of our assessment of entrepreneurial attitudes and entrepreneurial intentions in different socio-demographic groups (gender, place of residence, education, and entrepreneurial experience of parents) confirm the available studies of other authors (Yan, Huang, Xiao, 2023; Li, Wang, Chi, 2022; Amofah, Saladrignes, 2022), who claim that boys have a higher level of entrepreneurial attitudes and entrepreneurial intentions than girls, and the entrepreneurial experience of parents increases the chances of starting their own business in the future.

Our results describing the characteristics of an entrepreneur (Rich, Responsible, Hardworking, Wyse, Smart) partially correlate with the results obtained by other authors. As a result of studies conducted in Lesser Poland Voivodeship (Wojtun et al., 2022). The leaders were such characteristics as "Responsible", "Creative" and "Wise". At the same time, studies conducted by Janas (2020) show that schoolchildren believed that entrepreneurs have such characteristics as "Rich", "Clever" and "Resourceful". A distinctive feature of our research is the fact that the children of Generation Alpha we interviewed additionally highlight such a characteristic as "Hardworking".

The obtained results create prerequisites for further research involving a deep factor analysis of the entrepreneurial behavior of Generation Alpha schoolchildren. So far, there have been few studies in this area.

As for the recommendations and policy conclusions, it can be stated that in order to prepare Generation Alpha for independent entrepreneurship in a timely manner and not allow the gap between EATT and EINT to increase, adjustments must be made to the educational programs of primary and secondary schools. First of all, they should provide for the introduction of practice-oriented educational modules in the field of financial literacy, marketing, business planning, and law, which will be implemented in the form of computer games and interactive applications.

The limitations of this study are related to the fact that the survey is of a regional nature and was conducted among primary school students who were consumers of entrepreneurial education services. Therefore, its results cannot be generalized to other territories and groups. Despite the regional nature of the research, as well as the existing limitations, their results can be used to continue such studies in order to identify patterns and trends of the entrepreneurial activity of Generation Alpha.

This project has been financed by the National Centre for Research and Development within the project "Entrepreneurship education of children of Generation Alpha and the model of business knowledge transfer in primary education in Poland" within the framework of the competition "Solidarity with Scientists".

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