

Entrepreneurial intention as a predictor of anxiety in university students in northern Peru

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Abstract: The purpose of this research was to establish the extent to which the variable of entrepreneurial intention can predict anxiety levels among a group of university students in northern Peru. A quantitative approach was chosen, following a post-positivist paradigm, with a non-experimental and cross-sectional design, establishing a correlational-causal level. The sample consisted of 240 participants. The entrepreneurial intention questionnaire by Rueda et al. [1] and the Generalized Anxiety Scale GAD-7 by Spitzer et al. [2] were used. The results show a significant negative correlation between entrepreneurial intention and anxiety ($Rho = -0.421$, $p < 0.01$). The logistic regression model indicates that entrepreneurial intention explains 5.5% of the variability in anxiety (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.055$, $p < 0.01$), with a predictive effect confirmed by the Chi-square test (24.69, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, 87.9% of students exhibit high entrepreneurial intention, while 68.3% report anxiety, primarily mild (36.7%). It is concluded that entrepreneurial intention can act as a protective mechanism against anxiety in uncertain environments. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening entrepreneurial training programs, aligned with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), to improve mental health and youth employability.

Keywords: Anxiety, College students, Entrepreneurial intention, Entrepreneurial skills, Mental health.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a key element in fostering economic growth in South America, serving as a vital strategy for job creation and labor market diversification [3]. In this context, universities play a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurial skills in their students, preparing them to detect opportunities and propose innovations in a competitive environment [4]. This predisposition not only contributes to economic sustainability (SDG 8) but also helps create a business culture framework that addresses social issues, such as youth unemployment (SDG 4 and SDG 10) [5].

From a psychological perspective, entrepreneurship involves not only acquiring technical and social competencies but also considering personality factors that influence the willingness to undertake entrepreneurial ventures. Studies indicate that traits such as responsibility and self-control are determinants of success in self-employment [6]. Institutions must actively work to develop specific competencies that foster an entrepreneurial career, including offering entrepreneurship courses in their curricula [7]. Pisa-INEE considers unemployment rates in Spain (14.1%) and promotes the integration of entrepreneurial attitudes into university education. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 55% of Spanish university students do not start their own business due to fear of failure [8] highlighting the relevance of psychological factors in acquiring entrepreneurial skills.

In the university setting, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has become a useful framework for researching entrepreneurial intention, which can be affected by psychological barriers such as anxiety [9]. Evaluation anxiety, associated with assessment situations, negatively relates to self-regulation and

can affect risk-taking [10]. University life presents challenges that, if not properly managed, can generate anxiety and affect students' psychological well-being [11].

Oliver, et al. [12] have found that personality dimensions, such as conscientiousness, can predict entrepreneurial behaviors, depending on cultural context and gender. This suggests that educational interventions should focus on skills and psychological resilience. This study aims to determine the relationship between entrepreneurship and anxiety in university students at a private institution in northern Peru, evaluating how entrepreneurship can predict anxiety. This analysis will provide insights into the dynamics of developing entrepreneurial competencies and the influence of psychological factors in the university setting, proposing strategies that promote students' well-being and entrepreneurial capacity.

2. Method

This research study is quantitative in nature, with a correlational explanatory level, aimed at analyzing the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and anxiety in university students [13]. A non-experimental cross-sectional design was considered, as the variables were not manipulated and were observed as they naturally occurred at a single point in time [14]. This design was deemed appropriate for identifying associations and trends that did not rely on direct intervention, and was supported by the hypothetical-deductive method, which allows for formulating hypotheses derived from existing theories and testing them based on collected data [15].

The study population consisted of 240 students enrolled in an adult education program at a university in northern Peru during 2023. These students were distributed across the schools of administration (20.83%), psychology (39.16%), accounting (17.5%), and industrial engineering (22.5%). The population included 51.25% women and 48.75% men, with ages ranging from 19 to 52 years ($M=36$). The entire available student population was included, ensuring diversity in terms of gender and academic programs. Inclusion criteria considered students enrolled in the current academic semester, of legal age, and who agreed to participate by signing an informed consent form. Students on academic suspension and those who did not complete the evaluation instruments were excluded.

A survey was used for data collection, allowing for the acquisition of precise information through two validated instruments. The first was the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire created in 2015 by Rueda, et al. [1] which measures four key dimensions using a 5-point Likert scale. Its validation in Peru by Cáceres-Cayllahua, et al. [16] showed high reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha ranging from 0.73 to 0.93, and a global coefficient of 0.952. The second instrument was the GAD-7 (Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale), created by Spitzer et al. in 2006. It evaluates anxiety symptoms through seven items, using a 4-point Likert scale. Its original validation showed internal consistency of 0.92, and in Peru, it reached 0.89, demonstrating its validity in educational contexts. Both instruments were chosen for their robustness and adaptability to the study.

Data collection began following coordination with university authorities to ensure the feasibility of the study. It was necessary to explain the objective and scope of the research to students, ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected, and obtain informed consent. The instruments were administered in selected classroom spaces, with an average time of 20 minutes per student and a controlled environment to reduce distractions. The collected data were reviewed and cleaned to ensure quality and consistency. The procedures followed allowed for reliable information to be obtained while adhering to the ethical and methodological principles of the study.

Data analysis was conducted using the IBM SPSS Statistics software version 28 (IBM, 2021). Descriptive analyses were performed to calculate frequencies, measures of central tendency, and dispersion of the variables. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test confirmed that the data did not follow a normal distribution, so the Spearman correlation coefficient was used to detect significant associations between the dimensions of entrepreneurial intention and anxiety levels. Additionally, an ordinal logistic regression model was conducted to verify the predictive power of these dimensions,

considering Nagelkerke's Pseudo R-square as a statistical indicator. This procedure ensured a rigorous and reliable analysis.

4. Results

Table 1 shows a 30.4% relationship between INEM (high level) and ANS (no anxiety level); furthermore, a higher crossover ratio of 33.3% is observed, resulting in a high INEM level and no anxiety level (ANS). With a Spearman correlation coefficient of $r = -0.421$, $p < 0.01$, this demonstrates a significant negative inverse correlation between ANS and INEM, indicating that as INEM increases, ANS decreases. According to the model fit test, with a likelihood test $X^2 = 12.406$, sig. $p < 0.01$, it shows that the model is not feasible with just a single constant, so a global regression model is accepted. This means that the entrepreneurial intention variable is included, and with a Nagelkerke's Pseudo R-square value of 0.055, it is demonstrated that entrepreneurial intention influences anxiety as a predictor by 5.5%.

Table 1.

Causal relationship between entrepreneurial intention as a global construct and anxiety levels in university students, 2023

Entrepreneurial Intention (INEM)	Anxiety (ANS)									
	No Anxiety		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N°	%	N	%	N	%
Low	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	3	1.3	8	3.3	14	5.8	4	1.7	29	12.1
High	73	30.4	80	33.3	40	16.7	18	7.5	211	87.9
Total	76	31.7	88	36.7	54	22.5	22	9.2	240	100

Table 2.

Coefficiente Rho Spearman

Coeficiente Rho Spearman $r = -0.421$ ($p < 0.01$)					
Model	Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Gl	Sig.	Nagelkerke Pseudo R-squared
Only Intercept	40.266				0.055
Final	27.860	12.406	1	0.000	

The levels of entrepreneurial intention (INME) and its dimensions were analyzed in university students, showing a predominance of high levels across all categories. 87.9% ($n=211$) of the students are at the high level of INME, while no cases are recorded at the low level. This pattern is reflected in the dimensions: ACE and NS present high levels in 86.7% ($n=208$) and 73.3% ($n=176$), respectively. CE and UAT also stand out with 81.7% ($n=196$) and 79.6% ($n=191$) at high levels. Medium levels are more representative in UAT (24.6%) and CE (18.8%), while low levels are minimal, not exceeding 2.1% in any dimension. This distribution suggests strong entrepreneurial potential in the students, although a small proportion is identified that requires attention to strengthen their abilities.

Table 3.

Entrepreneurial Intention Levels and Their Dimensions in University Students, 2023

Entrepreneurial Intention (INME)			Dimensions of INEM							
			Attitude towards Entrepreneurial Behavior (ACE)		Subjective Norm (NS)		Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (UAT)		Entrepreneurial Behavior (CE)	
Levels	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
Low	0	0	0	0	5	2.1	3	1.3	4	1.7
Medium	29	12.1	32	13.3	59	24.6	41	17.1	45	18.8
High	211	87.9	208	86.7	176	73.3	196	81.7	191	79.6
Total	240	100	240	100	240	100	240	100	240	100

Table 3 shows that, of the 240 students evaluated, 31.7% (n=76) do not experience anxiety, while 36.7% (n=88) have mild anxiety, the most prevalent category. 22.5% (n=54) report moderate anxiety, indicating concerning levels, and 9.2% (n=22) suffer from severe anxiety, the most critical. In total, 68.4% of the students experience some degree of anxiety, highlighting the importance of educational interventions to mitigate this issue. The table underscores the urgent need for attention to ensure emotional well-being in this group.

Table 4.

Anxiety Levels in University Students, 2023

Anxiety	No Anxiety		Low		Medium		High		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	76	31.7	88	36.7	54	22.5	22	9.2	240	100

Table 4 provides a detailed analysis of the influence of the dimensions of entrepreneurial intention on anxiety in students. In this analysis, it is evident that the dimensions examined have an opposite effect on anxiety, implying that the absence of these dimensions is important for reducing anxiety levels. The Attitude towards Entrepreneurial Behavior (ACE) shows a significant negative correlation (Spearman's Rho = -0.410, $p < 0.01$), indicating that it helps reduce anxiety by 3.3% (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.033$). Its standard coefficient ($\beta = 0.42$) reinforces its relevance in this analysis.

The Subjective Norm (NS) is also negatively correlated with anxiety (Spearman's Rho = -0.331, $p < 0.01$), with a greater impact than ACE, explaining 6.4% of the variability in anxiety (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.064$). The standard coefficient ($\beta = -0.35$) confirms this inverse relationship.

Meanwhile, Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (UAT) has an impact of 4.4% (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.044$), with a moderate negative correlation (Spearman's Rho = -0.306, $p < 0.01$) and a standard coefficient ($\beta = 0.25$), suggesting a protective relationship against anxiety.

Finally, Entrepreneurial Behavior (CE) stands out as the dimension with the greatest individual impact, reducing anxiety by 7.3% (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.073$). The negative correlation (Spearman's Rho = -0.330, $p < 0.01$) and its standard coefficient ($\beta = -0.38$) position it as a critical variable in this analysis.

The statistical model is supported by strong fit metrics: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.96, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) reached a value of 0.94, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.05, validating the analysis and confirming the consistency of the results.

Table 5.

Analysis of the Impact of Specific Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Intention on Anxiety in University Students, 2023

Entrepreneurial Intention Dimension (INME)	Rho de Spearman	Nagelkerke R^2	Impacto (%)	p-valor	Standard Coefficient (β)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Attitude towards Entrepreneurial Behavior (ACE)	-0.410	0.033	3.3%	< 0.01	0.42	0.96	0.94	0.05
Subjective Norm (NS)	-0.331	0.064	6.4%	< 0.01	-0.35	0.96	0.94	0.05
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (UAT)	-0.306	0.044	4.4%	< 0.01	0.25	0.96	0.94	0.05
Entrepreneurial Behavior (CE)	-0.330	0.073	7.3%	< 0.01	-0.38	0.96	0.94	0.05

Table 5 is presented as an analysis of the joint interactions of the dimensions of entrepreneurial intention, as well as the cumulative effect of these dimensions on anxiety levels. The results support what was already obtained in the previous table, showing that the analyzed dimensions, when worked

together, explain how anxiety arises, although there are significant differences in terms of the impact each one has on anxiety. In this combination, once again, Attitude towards Entrepreneurial Behavior (ACE) (Spearman's $Rho = -0.410$, $p < 0.01$) is evident, showing a standard coefficient ($\beta = 0.42$), indicating that it appears as an important dimension. Although its individual effect is moderate (3.3%), it is considered that, together, it forms part of the adopted model.

Regarding Subjective Norm (NS), it remains important ($\beta = -0.35$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.064$), as its effect on reducing anxiety is significant, with a 6.4% effect, highlighting the interaction it produces with the other dimensions as parameters that reinforce the model. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (UAT), although it has a very low individual effect (4.4%, $\beta = 0.25$), the joint analysis maximizes the explanation of anxiety levels.

Entrepreneurial Behavior (CE), while having the highest individual impact (7.3%, $\beta = -0.38$), also becomes a key dimension in the joint analysis, being considered an important dimension for reducing anxiety.

As in the previous table, the fit metrics of this table are very good (CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05), confirming the validity of the model and the results obtained.

Therefore, the joint analysis shows how the increase in the dimensions of entrepreneurial intention has an even greater protective effect on anxiety. This analysis of dimensions provides a better understanding of the phenomenon, concluding how the interaction of dimensions can have a cumulative effect in reducing anxiety among university students.

Table 6.

Relación combinada de las dimensiones de la intención empresarial sobre los niveles de ansiedad en estudiantes universitarios, 2023

Entrepreneurial Intention Dimension (INME)	Rho de Spearman	Nagelkerke R^2	Impacto (%)	p-valor	Standard Coefficient (β)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Attitude towards Entrepreneurial Behavior (ACE)	-0.410	0.033	3.3%	<0.01	0.42	0.96	0.94	0.05
Subjective Norm (NS)	-0.331	0.064	6.4%	0.01	-0.35	0.96	0.94	0.05
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (UAT)	-0.306	0.044	4.4%	0.01	0.25	0.96	0.94	.05
Entrepreneurial Behavior (CE)	-0.330	0.073	7.3%	0.01	-0.38	0.96	0.94	0.05

Note: The combined model shows how ACE ($\beta = 0.42$) and CE ($\beta = -0.38$) stand out in predicting anxiety. The fit metrics confirm their validity. This comprehensive approach better explains the interactions between dimensions and their cumulative effect.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which entrepreneurial intention predicts anxiety levels in university students from northern Peru. The results presented in Table 1 show that high levels of entrepreneurial intention were expected to be associated with low levels of severe anxiety. In the sample, 87.9% of students with high entrepreneurial intention, 30.4% had no anxiety, 33.3% had mild anxiety, 16.7% had moderate anxiety, and, in the worst case, 7.5% exhibited high levels of severe anxiety. With medium levels of entrepreneurial intention, the percentages of severe anxiety (1.7%) and moderate anxiety (5.8%) increased, while low entrepreneurial intention was not represented. In line with this, the statistical analysis was consistent with the findings, showing a negative correlation between entrepreneurial intention and anxiety of $Rho = -0.421$, $p < 0.01$.

Additionally, the adjusted model shows that entrepreneurial intention explains 5.5% of the variance in anxiety levels, reinforcing its relevance as a predictor. At an international level, Lin [8] reported that

Chinese students with higher entrepreneurial intention experienced less stress and greater well-being. Zhang, et al. [17] concluded that entrepreneurship education promotes entrepreneurial intention while reducing anxiety. In Brazil, Zampier and Takahashi [18] indicated that developing entrepreneurial skills improves emotional well-being. In Peru, Cáceres [19] demonstrated that entrepreneurial attitude and subjective norms positively influence entrepreneurial intention. However, Muhammad, et al. [20] cautioned that, in Nigeria, the impact of entrepreneurial intention on anxiety depends on contextual factors such as educational support and opportunities. This highlights the crucial role that the cultural and socio-economic context plays in the effectiveness of this relationship.

Table 2 presents results regarding entrepreneurial intention and its dimensions in university students from northern Peru, fulfilling the second objective of the study. The data indicate that 87.9% of students have high levels of entrepreneurial intention, with significant percentages in the dimensions: 86.7% in attitude towards entrepreneurial behavior (ACE), 81.7% in entrepreneurial behavior (CE), and 79.6% in entrepreneurial self-efficacy (UAT). Low levels are minimal, under 2.5% in all dimensions. These results suggest a favorable educational environment for entrepreneurship, possibly driven by programs that develop entrepreneurial competencies. Previous studies support this idea; Lin [8] found that entrepreneurship training improves positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship. In Peru, Cáceres [19] highlighted the influence of entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention. On the other hand, Nwibe and Ogbuanyia [21] pointed out in Nigeria that the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and self-efficacy depends on access to opportunities and institutional support. This study highlights how the environment affects entrepreneurial intention, demonstrating that most students have high entrepreneurial intention and related dimensions, in line with previous research.

Table 3 identifies the anxiety levels in university students from northern Peru, showing that 68.3% present some level of anxiety, with mild anxiety being the most frequent (36.7%), followed by moderate anxiety (22.5%) and severe anxiety (9.2%). Only 31.7% of the population did not report anxiety-related symptoms. These data corroborate the extent of anxiety in the university community, indicating the need for this issue to receive prioritized attention. Academic demands combined with social needs may be possible explanations for these results. Franco-Jimenez and Nuñez-Magallanes [22] point out that university students are more susceptible to anxiety due to academic demands. Similarly, Saravia-Bartra, et al. [23] state that 75.4% of first-year medical students in Peru experience high levels of anxiety. In another context, Nwibe and Ogbuanyia [21] found that university students with higher emotional intelligence and self-efficacy experience less anxiety, highlighting the importance of strengthening emotional skills. This suggests that emotional and social skills are likely key factors in reducing anxiety among university students.

Table 4 shows the effects of specific dimensions of entrepreneurial intention on anxiety manifestations in students from institutions in northern Peru. In this context, it is concluded that entrepreneurial behavior (CE) is the dimension that produces the most anxiety (7.3%, Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.073$, $\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.01$), followed by subjective norms (NS) at 6.4%, with entrepreneurial self-efficacy (UAT) at 4.4% and attitude towards entrepreneurial behavior (ACE) at 3.3%. All of these dimensions contribute to fostering a sense of control and support against anxiety in students, as shown by the model fit test indices: CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05.

Table 5 evaluates the impact of the mentioned dimensions, highlighting that entrepreneurial behavior (CE) is the most significant, followed by subjective norms (NS). This is because both reinforce competencies such as planning, leadership, and problem-solving, which are important for managing anxiety in academic contexts. According to Lin [8] positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship promote resilience and reduce academic distress. Galleguillos-Cortés, et al. [7] indicate that NS and self-efficacy are key to developing control over uncertainty, explaining their inverse relationship with anxiety. Internationally, Zhang, et al. [17] found that educational programs based on entrepreneurial competencies not only promote entrepreneurship but also reduce distress by increasing self-efficacy. In the regional context, Valencia et al. (2022) in Colombia found that CE improves the emotional well-being of students. Research such as that by Precious, et al. [24] in Nigeria suggests that the impact of

entrepreneurship on distress depends on access to resources and educational support, which moderate its effect in limited economies.

6. Conclusions

Entrepreneurial intention is established as an important determinant of anxiety levels in university students from northern Peru, as evidenced by the moderate negative correlation found ($\rho = -0.421$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, the adjusted model explains 5.5% of the variance, highlighting its role as a protective factor against anxiety. Most students presented high entrepreneurial intentions (87.9%), with attitude towards entrepreneurial behavior (86.7%) and entrepreneurial behavior (81.7%) being the predominant dimensions. These results indicate that the studied population has a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. Regarding anxiety, 68.3% of students experienced some level of anxiety, with mild anxiety being the most common (36.7%), followed by moderate anxiety (22.5%) and severe anxiety (9.2%). The dimensions of entrepreneurial intention have a greater effect in reducing anxiety, especially entrepreneurial behavior (7.3%) and subjective norms (6.4%), which help manage and prevent anxiety by focusing on control and social support. The findings emphasize the need to develop educational programs that enhance entrepreneurial competencies, not only for promoting entrepreneurship but also for improving the emotional well-being of university students.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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