

Exploring the impact of generational contrast on emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intentions among graduate students

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RIKA SWANZEN

The Independent Institute of Education, Varsity College, Waterfall Campus, South Africa

Email: rswanzen@varsitycollege.co.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3926-8579>

*corresponding author

CHANTÉ BOTHA

Johannesburg Business School, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Email: chanteb@uj.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1155-416X>

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study determines if the characteristics of different generations influence the interpersonal understanding, as part of emotional intelligence (EQ), of graduate students, and how this knowledge affects entrepreneurial intention (EI). EI plays a role in innovation and employability, with both being important drivers in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030.

Design/methodology/approach: Qualitative data were gathered using semi-structured interviews as the third part of the triangulated methodology on a small, convenient sample. As the third leg of a study, the qualitative part allowed a small number of graduates to share their voices on generational influences on their EI.

Findings: The results indicate that Generation X, Y, and Z do not have the same EI and approach entrepreneurship differently. While Gen X can provide mentorship from their experience, aspects like more opportunities available to all create unique challenges in terms of competitiveness to find a niche entrepreneurial endeavour.

Recommendations/value: This study contributes to the current understanding of the factors that affect the EI of graduate students by studying a less-explored area, i.e., the influence of generations. The results indicate that generational influences have shaped the interpersonal skills and EI of graduate students, offering another perspective for consideration for the field of entrepreneurship education. If generational influence on entrepreneurial intent can be harnessed, multi-generational contingency plans to enhance entrepreneurial success can be generated.

Managerial implications: This study's findings inform curriculum development for Entrepreneurial Education, since it will assist in developing approaches to accommodate students of different generations, and methods to increase their social intelligence about how their EI may be influenced by a multi-generational work environment. The findings also emphasise the need for educational curricula to accommodate the contemporary demands of the twenty-first century that prepare students to become entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education; entrepreneurial intention; generational influence; social intelligence; SDGs 8&9

JEL Classification: L26

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Welcome Address for the 15th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies, Antonio Garcia highlighted the global rise in skills-based hiring practices. With global school drop-out rates at 28% and unemployment at 32%, educational institutions and bodies must consider the following: the rising demand for global problem-solvers, the skills required from the future workforce, and the shift to a life-long learning mindset (Garcia, 2023). Entrepreneurship education can address each of these areas.

Entrepreneurship is acknowledged as the driving force of innovative thinking, job creation, and economic growth worldwide (Steenkamp *et al.*, 2011; Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2014). The United Nations Agenda 2030 highlights the contribution of entrepreneurship to inclusive sustainable economic growth and decent work, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, as well as fostering innovation, which is goal 9 (Koushik, nd). The call for universities to engage with industry through economic drivers that influence macro-level policy corresponds to the “entrepreneurial university”, which works with local actors to generate innovative solutions (Neary & Osborne, 2018). It is, therefore, essential to identify how entrepreneurship can be developed and fostered through education. Entrepreneurship education can take the form of a specific course that focuses on training young individuals to start businesses or teaching general skills to all students to prepare them for life in general (Fejes *et al.*, 2018). The purpose of entrepreneurship education is for students to acquire knowledge that will enable them to identify possible entrepreneurial endeavours and business start-ups, which may result in self-employment and the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), ultimately increasing their entrepreneurial intention (Johansen & Lundhaug, 2016; Winschiers-Theophilus *et al.*, 2017). Individuals with high social and emotional intelligence are more inclined to possess a higher entrepreneurial intention (EI), since their skills enable them to more effectively handle the challenges involved in launching and growing a business (Kong & Zhao, 2013; Nwibe & Ogbuanya, 2024). However, the EI of generations also differ (Setiobudi & Herdinata, 2018; Mawad & Freiha, 2024).

Despite the important role that EQ and generational influences play in the EI of students, previous studies have not sufficiently explored how the characteristics of different generations

impact the EQ of graduate students and how such knowledge affects their EI. Most studies have either only studied the relationship between EQ and EI (Hassan & Oma, 2018; Wen *et al.*, 2020; Nwibe & Ogbuanya, 2024) or the generational influence on EI (Georgescu & Herman, 2020; Hahn *et al.*, 2021; Malebana & Mothib, 2023). This study will provide insights into how graduates who completed the Diploma in Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations (DESBO) perceive the effect of different generational characteristics on EI.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As part of the overall triangulated study, the literature review will define EI and EQ concepts related to the study, after which more specific theories related to the qualitative part of the study will be addressed. EI is defined as an individual's intentional behaviour and desire to act entrepreneurial by starting their own business(es) and being independent. Several factors influence EI, including family, social, environmental and psychological factors (Zellweger *et al.*, 2011; Laspita *et al.*, 2012; Sadeghi, Mohammadi *et al.*, 2013). Research shows that EQ and competencies (Mortan *et al.*, 2014; Miao *et al.*, 2018; Velástegui & Chacón, 2021), as well as the entrepreneurial backgrounds of parents, can influence and initiate entrepreneurial behaviour and intention in their children (Laspita *et al.*, 2012; Eesley & Wang, 2017). EQ received much attention from the 1920s to the mid-1990s. As early as 1939, Wechsler described the influence of non-intellective factors on intelligent behaviour, which started to shape the construct of social intelligence (Bar-On, 2006). With time, the construct evolved to be seen as the ability to understand the purpose of interpersonal behaviour (Bar-On, 2006). As the assessment of social intelligence was explored, its interrelatedness with EQ was highlighted, later separating it as interpersonal (social) and intrapersonal (emotional) intelligence (Bar-On, 2006). An emotionally intelligent person can be defined as one who "demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation" (Livesey, 2017:26). In a business context, the Emotional Capability theory postulates that partners', or a firm's, ability to recognise and attend to each other's expressed emotional states and the evoking of emotional states in others, can signal trustworthiness (Musarra *et al.*, 2022). Concepts of EI and EQ were conceptualised early in the previous century, but generational influences have not been highlighted, necessitating their exploration as an interpersonal influence in entrepreneurship curriculum development. Of relevance is the fact that, "[f]or the first time in human history, there is a multigenerational stack up as four generations are often in the workplace simultaneously. With longer, healthier lives and advances in medicine and technology, humans can work longer" (Cohen & Sharma, 2016:66). For the purpose of this study, only the social intelligence element of EQ will be

considered and related to the interpersonal understanding of the influence of other generations on one's entrepreneurial intent.

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour as an EI model

Bird (1988) defines entrepreneurial intention as the state of mind that purposively directs the attention of an individual towards the attainment of a goal, like starting a new business. Dohse and Walter (2010) agree, stating that it is the willingness of the individual to act entrepreneurially, start a business or be self-employed. Several entrepreneurial intention models exist, like the Entrepreneurial Event Model (Shapero & Sokol, 1982), Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation (Robinson *et al.*, 1991), Entrepreneurial Potential Model (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994), and Davidsson's model (Davidsson, 1985). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) can be used to measure an individual's EI (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). With the purpose of this study being the exploration of the impact of generational differences on EQ and EI among graduate students, the TPB is a suitable choice to measure the individual's EI. It functions on the premise that intention to act and behavioural control will predict the outcome of behavioural achievement. It also claims that resource availability and opportunities influence behavioural achievement (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). Measuring the EI of individuals will provide insight into new business formations, without needing to observe the intention, which enables more accurate predictions of entrepreneurial behaviours (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). The TPB consists of three determinants: personal attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control.

Personal attitude relates to an individual's behavioural or subjective belief that performing a particular task or activity will result in a certain outcome. This can form a positive or negative perception of a particular task or activity, which will determine an individual's reaction to a said task or activity (Dinc & Budic, 2016). Personal attitude can influence an individual's intent to start a business. Several studies have reported that personal attitude positively influences EI; thus, the more positive the personal attitude, the higher the intention to start a business (Dohse & Walter, 2010; Dinc & Budic, 2016; Krueger *et al.*, 2020; Al-Mamary & Alraja, 2022).

Subjective norm is based on normative beliefs, which inform an expectation or belief that a specific referent individual(s) or group(s), like friends, family and colleagues, will approve or disapprove of a particular behaviour (Dinc & Budic, 2016). It also informs the perception of pressure on an individual to behave in a certain manner, like to act entrepreneurially or not. The entrepreneurial backgrounds of parents can, for example, influence and initiate entrepreneurial behaviour and intention in their children (Laspita *et al.*, 2012; Eesley & Wang, 2017). Various authors (Shah *et al.*, 2020) have also reported a significant relationship between subjective norm and EI.

Perceived behavioural control is based on accessible control, with control factors like skills, abilities, knowledge, time, money and resource availability, which can facilitate or impede a behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). The individual's subjective belief determines whether a given control factor will facilitate or impede the task at hand (Liñán & Chen, 2009; Ajzen, 2002). Subjective belief is, for example, what determines the degree to which an individual finds a task, like starting a business, easy or difficult to perform (Dinc & Budic, 2016). The more resources and opportunities available, the stronger the belief that the individual has more control over starting a business. Aga (2023) found that perceived behavioural control only had a partial mediating effect between entrepreneurship education and EI. Vamvaka, *et al.* (2020) reported similar findings, where perceived behavioural control is the least significant predictor of EI.

The adoption of the TPB is based on the ability to predict and explain an individual, in this case, the students' attitude towards starting their own business. The model provides a solid theoretical foundation for entrepreneurship education and its impact on shaping and influencing students' EI. Several authors have used the TPB to study entrepreneurship education and how this can influence the EI of students (Dendup & Acharja, 2017; Mahmoud *et al.*, 2020; Aga, 2023). They found that entrepreneurship education can positively influence the EI of students.

2.2 Factors contributing to entrepreneurial intention

Several factors contribute to the EI of individuals, including family, background, social, environmental and psychological factors (Zellweger *et al.*, 2011). Parents and grandparents can play a critical role in the promotion and encouragement of entrepreneurial behaviour in younger family members, making it an attractive career option (Zellweger *et al.*, 2011; Laspita *et al.*, 2012). Hahn *et al.* (2021) conducted a study on university students. They found that the performance of a family business contributes to the next generation's decision to pursue an entrepreneurial career and follow in their family members' footsteps. Congruently, Georgescu and Herman (2020) found that an entrepreneurial family background can improve the student's entrepreneurship competence and increase the chance of pursuing an entrepreneurial career intention. Malebana and Mothib (2023) provided an opposing finding, arguing that entrepreneurial role models like family and friends have no impact on the EI of secondary school learners. Similarly, Mawad and Freiha (2024) also found that factors like family background, gender, and education do not impact EI.

Other environmental factors, like favourable government frameworks, policies and procedures, socio-economic conditions, and access to finance, play a key role, since they are conducive to entrepreneurship (Sadeghi *et al.*, 2013; Obaji & Olugu, 2014). These conditions are key in supporting and nurturing entrepreneurial behaviour (Sadeghi *et al.*, 2013).

Psychological factors, like social and emotional intelligence, also influence entrepreneurial behaviour in individuals (Bar-On, 2006; Pradhan & Nath, 2012; Karimi & Ataei, 2022). Kong and Zhao (2013) argue that individuals with high social and emotional intelligence are more likely to have an EI. This is due to their ability to better manage and cope with the various challenges inherent in starting and building a business. Congruently, Nwibe and Ogbuanya (2024) report that EQ has a significant effect on EI in isolation; however, when measuring EQ as a mediator, there was no significant impact. Literature also confirms that cognitive factors, like entrepreneurial desirability, feasibility and self-confidence, are common factors that influence an individual's decision to become an entrepreneur (Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011; Boukamcha, 2015). Perceived desirability is the degree to which an individual is attracted to creating and starting a business. Several authors also found that self-efficacy influences EI (Doanh & Bernat, 2019; Kostic-Bobanovic, 2020; Nwibe & Ogbuanya, 2024), claiming that students who believe they are competent are more inclined to start their own business (Nwibe & Ogbuanya, 2024).

2.3 Generational impact on entrepreneurial intention

Measuring the social intelligence required by EI can be approached from various angles, including social and intra-personal skills. A less-explored area that links well with the subjective norm dimension is understanding the influence of generations. Generations are defined as an age cohort that shares unique formative year experiences and teachings over the first twenty years or so of their lives, resulting in the development of uniquely shared values and attitudes that separate them from other generations (DelCampo *et al.*, 2011). “[A] generation is also defined by common tastes, attitudes, and experiences; a generational cohort is a product of its times and tastes” (Zemke *et al.*, 2013:16). Padayachee (2017) indicated that while the generational cohort theory suggests that individuals born at the same societal or historical time and space will be predisposed to characteristic thought patterns and actions, the theory does not account for differences in the cohort due to maturity and culture-specific factors. Singh and Weimar (2017:311) found that “there were generational differences in work values, which change over time due to changes in society and not so much because of age or maturity”. DelCampo *et al.* (2011) outline archetypes depicting how people evolved from events and challenges. Table 1 summarises these archetypes and indicates the generations they fall under. It includes defining moments from South Africa (SA) that likely influenced shared generational thoughts and behaviours, with the SA time periods in brackets. As demonstrated by Padayachee (2017), authors varied on the time periods for the different generations. As such, the widest periods were used in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of generational archetypes

Archetypes	Description	Born during	Generation
<i>Prophets</i>	Born after a large event or crisis in society. The children of this generation are often overindulged. Tend to be passionate about their moral beliefs. Most likely to accept roles as elders in the community. Tend to focus on creating a vision for the future and practising some type of religion. May be less open to change with rights orientation. Defined by the black resistance movement, the Sharpeville Massacre, the Soweto Uprising and the banning of the African National Congress.	1941 to 1969 (1945-1964)	Baby Boomers
<i>Nomads</i>	Often become adults during a time of crisis. Marked by Apartheid and economic and social instability. Raised to place great value on liberty, survival, prosperity and honour. Members exposed to technology are mostly 'digital immigrants'. Typically under-protected by their parents. Grew up aware of the industrial age and fully perceptive of the beginning of the Information Age. Tend to demonstrate no-nonsense attitudes and a proactive work ethic in the workplace. Shines in terms of adaptability, initiative, managing resources and problem-solving. The collective psyche was shaped by a survivor mentality. They have a non-traditional orientation about time and space and manage by objectives.	1961 to 1989 (1965-1976)	Gen X
<i>Heroes</i>	Born during a time of independence, when society had embraced a matter-of-fact outlook. Grew up in overprotective and praise-oriented environments, leading to an overload of confidence. Raised during a transitional period and responsible for bridging the gap caused by the prejudice of previous generations. More opportunities for education and employment are available. More open-minded, tolerant and flexible. Older members are 'digital natives'. Develop into energetic and motivated people who value teamwork, embrace technology and value diversity. Tend to emerge as leaders later in life.	1977 to 2007 (1977-1994)	Gen Y / Millennials
<i>Artists</i>	Come into the world during wartime or an economic depression, and live within their means. Sensitive to the effects of the crisis they endured. Tend to be indecisive as adults in mid-life and compassionate as elders.	(1945-1955) 1992 to 2012	GI Gen (parents of Boomers) or Post-War generation / Traditionalist

	High sense of duty. Grew up in a post-apartheid democracy and known as the Born Free Generation in SA. Adopters of social network technology.		& Gen Z / iGen
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Source: Own compilation compiled from DelCampo *et al.* (2011:6-8 & 12); Padayachee (2017); Singh & Weimar (2017), and Zemke *et al.* (1999; 2013)

Of interest in Table 1 is the suggestion that Gen Z shares some archetype traits with the generation preceding the Baby Boomers. While multiple generations were employed in the same organisation before, they were often separated by internal structures. Millennials, however, are expected to work much closer together (Zemke *et al.*, 2013). “Generational ‘mixing’ was rare and then significantly influenced by formality and protocol... In today’s post-industrial, info-centred work world, social and physical separations are no longer powerful barriers to generational mixing. Frequently, senior employees are older than senior employees were ‘back then’, and the younger boss/older worker configuration is the new normal” (Zemke, *et al.*, 2013:11-12). This study also explores how the graduates may perceive generational mixing and how it may impact their EI.

Different countries experience similar events at slightly different times, and therefore birth years for the generations vary somewhat, depending on country-specific political and economic events (Zemke *et al.*, 2013). The younger a person is, the more exposed they are to global media, and therefore the more likely they are to fit the profile of their generation (Zemke *et al.*, 2013). “Millennials have shared many formative experiences through Facebook, Twitter [now known as X], the Internet and global television news and, therefore, have some common characteristics regardless of the country in which they grew up” (Zemke *et al.*, 2013:157). A 2010 study of generational characteristics across eight major countries showed that ‘immediate’ is consistent for Gen Y in Brazil, China, Germany, India, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – only Saudi Arabia differs with the description of ‘conservative’ instead (Zemke *et al.*, 2013). Gen X and the Boomers do not have the same results, but share ‘self-reliant’ across four countries for Gen X, and ‘competitive’ across four countries for the Baby Boomers (Zemke *et al.*, 2013).

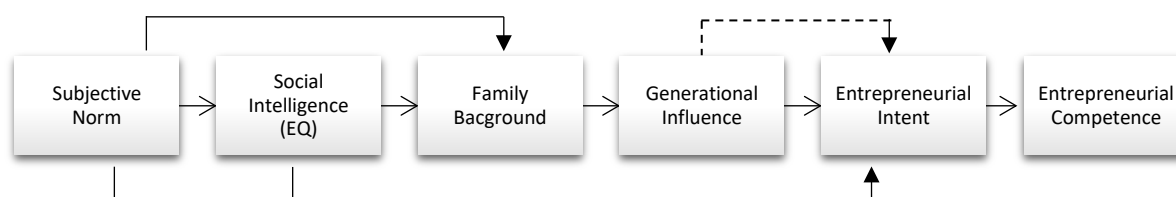
Some recent studies have reported differences between the EI of different generations (Setiobudi & Herdinata, 2018; Mawad & Freiha, 2024), with Mawad and Freiha (2024) reporting that younger individuals tend to have a higher EI than older individuals. An informative study was conducted by Azoulay *et al.* (2020) in the United States, which assessed the likelihood of being successful when starting a business based on the age of the individual. Concerningly, it found that individuals in their early 20s have the lowest chances of achieving success with a business start-up, but with a turning point at the age of 25 (Azoulay, *et al.*). One

of the main reasons for this is prior work experience and industry-specific knowledge obtained at a later age (Azoulay *et al.*). These findings are important to consider when designing and implementing entrepreneurship curriculums, since university students are predominantly from Gen Z.

The impact and contribution of Gen Z on the formal economy is becoming more visible (Irawanto & Novianti, 2021), and education plays a critical role in shaping the younger generations to become competitive role-players in the ever-changing global economy. Over the past few decades, there have been noticeable changes in the workforce due to technological, economic and political changes globally (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023). This forces individuals to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to identify unique opportunities in the market (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023). Entrepreneurship education must be aligned with these changes in order to create future-ready graduates. Additionally, it should suit the contemporary demands of the younger generations, like making provision for technology. These include, for example, developing the skills to navigate digital platforms, engage in e-commerce, conduct data analysis and master digital marketing to ultimately become interconnected in the digital world, which is a familiar world for the younger generations (Ausat & Peirisal, 2021). Entrepreneurship education should, therefore, provide the younger generation with the skills and knowledge to address real-world problems and become change makers in the global economy.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the various concepts discussed thus far are connected. Subjective norm is the social group's values that can lead to conforming to expectations. Literature indicates that the connection between subjective norm and social intelligence (as a form of EQ) impacts EI. Family is one of the social groups that models expected behaviour and in which different generations influence thoughts and actions. The tentative connection explored through this study is whether generations influence EI. The eventual influence on entrepreneurial competence is the learning outcome required for entrepreneurial education endeavours.

Figure 1: Interrelatedness of Generational Cohorts and Entrepreneurial Intent



3. METHODOLOGY

This study determines whether there is a generational impact on the interpersonal understanding (EQ) of graduate students and how such knowledge affects EI. The sample population included graduate students who had completed the DESBO, with the last cohort consisting of ten students. The sample included five graduate students who indicated initial interest, of whom only three consented to participate in the study. Only the graduates' perceptions were sought, limiting the generalisability of the findings. They may, however, be applicable to similar settings. The small sample size limitation was addressed through methodological triangulation, with the results reported on here forming part of a mixed-method study. The results of the quantitative part of the study, which included the analysis of EQ and EI assessments and member-checking, can be studied in Swanzen and Botha (2023). The semi-structured interviews focused on the partial exploration of social intelligence through evaluating the graduates' understanding of the generations' impact on their EI.

Beyond the overview of the generations provided as context for the literature on generational cohorts (see Table 1), a summarised table was included in one of the semi-structured interview questions to ensure the respondents had the same understanding of what was referred to with regard to the typical actions of generations in the workspace (see Annexure A). This table provides descriptions of the work-based behaviours that differ for generations X, Y and Z, from Swanzen (2018). This article combined various resources on the topic, with a more defined year period. It served as an initial guideline for extracting perceptions on generational influences that may account for potentially conflicting work-based behaviours, loosely shaping the coding structure for analysing the transcribed data.

The seven steps for qualitative content analysis, as described by Mayring (2014 in Assarroudi *et al.*, 2018:47), were used to transcribe, code and present the interview data:

- i. "determination of the research question and theoretical background,
- ii. definition of the category system, such as main categories and subcategories, based on the previous theory and research,
- iii. establishing a guideline for coding, considering definitions, anchor examples and coding rules,
- iv. reading the whole text, determining preliminary codes, adding anchor examples and coding rules,
- v. revision of the category and coding guideline after working through 10–50% of the data,
- vi. reworking data if needed, or listing the final category, and
- vii. analysing and interpreting based on the category frequencies and contingencies".

To supplement the content analyses steps, the guidelines captured in Mishra and Dey (2022) were followed, which involved screening the following during the analysis process: (a) duplication of words or phrases throughout the data set, (b) native words or expressions that are associated with the participant's culture, (c) figure of speech used to explain a scenario or experience, (d) conjunctions like "but", "so", "if", "because", and (e) transitions in the data set that indicates a change in the interview topic. While the sample was not big enough to meaningfully review the coding guidelines, it was sufficient to stimulate a targeted discussion to answer the research question. The link to EI relied more on indirect inferences, shaped by theory on subjective norm. An independent transcriber was used to convert the recorded interviews into texts, which were then summarised per question and respondent. The table in Annexure A provided a guideline for coding of generational differences, while open coding was used for answers from the other open-ended questions from the semi-structured interview schedule. Anchor examples captured in quotes support the findings and are provided in this paper.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents who were able to participate in the interviews, after their graduation, included a twenty-one-year-old African male from SA (KwaZulu-Natal), a twenty-one-year-old white male from SA (Gauteng) and a twenty-six-year-old African male from Congo. Category frequencies and contingencies were centred around the perception that generations differ mainly in terms of their level of technical prowess and views on the importance of long-held values, like the necessity of formal education.

When asked about their understanding of the concept 'generations', the graduates described it as (a) the way of doing things or the way of thinking about things, (b) a phase of life influenced by age, and (c) being about the use of technology. All participants acknowledged that one's generation impacts behaviour and agreed with the attributes (as captured in Annexure A). Applying the concept to their studies, the graduates acknowledged the differences between their peers, lecturers and parents. They described their understanding of the differences between the generations as follows:

- For Gen Z, things seem to be easier, faster, and automated – they are open to systems that simplify tasks.
- Gen X seems to believe you have to do things in person or manually, which is slower and results in delayed gratification.
- Younger generations want to use their devices, while the older generation tends to believe that formal education is needed for success.

- Gen Z may believe that they can be a successful entrepreneur just by reading books and watching some videos on YouTube, but school could give them more tools to succeed and avoid some mistakes.

One graduate said the following about the generational difference experienced with his peers and lecturers in this course:

“If I'm a good entrepreneur, I can be successful, and we sometimes add some debate with some lecturers where we're explaining how some entrepreneurs actually succeed in life without going to school, and they told the class, No, you have to go to school, without school you are going to be a failure.” – Graduate 3.

To contextualise further questions on generation, the interviewer shared with them that generations are considered ‘all the people born and living at about the same time, who similar societal and environmental events have influenced’. When asked to indicate how generational characteristics in the workplace influenced their entrepreneurial endeavours, one of the participants stated that it is more difficult to work with Gen X because of their different way of thinking. Since this generation knows the business, it makes it necessary for the participant to adjust to them, which, in turn, makes it difficult for them to work with their own generation as well. Perceived challenges stemming from the difference between generations were described by the participants as follows:

“So now they'll ask you for a business plan, but now we believe in like instant things, not writing 45 pages or something. So in that sense, it can make it a little bit challenging, you know, to get funding and opportunities because of I'd say stubbornness or just our way of living now.” – Graduate 1.

“You want to go, and you pay someone to do something physical for you. That's how the old mediocre business model used to be.” – Graduate 2.

“Gen Z communicates more by image... I think it's more insightful, and it's something that actually also impress me to make things clear because I feel like Gen X was a, it was not very clear what they always try to explain; it's not always as clear as now.” – Graduate 3.

Other perceptions include that Gen Z may be considered stubborn if they insist on approaching business differently, Gen X can be very determined, and Gen Z prefers to learn through visual images which can give more insight into the concept they are trying to explain.

The participants were asked if they think that some generations find pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours easier than others. All participants agreed that Gen Z may find it easier due to the numerous opportunities offered by technology. However, they also face more challenges, like increased competition, which can lead to higher failure rates with business start-ups. Graduate

2 indicated that *"it's the same task, it's just the need stayed the same, yet it differed as the targeted audience and people evolved into the new generations and time periods"*, highlighting that the same client needs are being addressed, but in different ways due to changes over time.

When asked if they think some generations are more inclined to act entrepreneurial than others, the respondents shared that you now need to find a niche of a niche; if you have a business idea, you need to make sure it does not already exist. *"Generation Z needs to work in between the lines and step very carefully to not plagiarise or steal something or copyright something that already existed"*– Graduate 2. In contrast, for older generations, opportunities for new endeavours skyrocketed after the world wars. According to Graduate 3, *"[g]eneration Y think that it's easier because they just continued with what their generation X was doing"*. This respondent felt that Gen Z may find it the most difficult, as they have to face more failed ventures.

The results indicate that older generations, like Gen X, influence the EI of younger generations, as these older generations are more inclined to act entrepreneurial, focus on problem-solving solving and carry on the entrepreneurial spirit. Yet, one of the participants argued that younger generations, like Gen Z, take more risks than Gen Y, and may focus instead on making things easier. Lessons learned from the older generation include, as mentioned by Graduate 2, to *"[d]o what makes you happy and the money will come later. Just focus on what you want to become and who you want to be. And be that person"*. Graduate 1, however, notes that in terms of *"let's say, financial security, like I know I need to start a business, not a passion business, a business that will generate income and financial security for myself and my family"*. While it may seem to be opposing views on the importance of money in entrepreneurial endeavours, it does show that the lessons shared by both relate to finance.

Analysis of the transcribed content found that, despite the respondents not being asked about it, family also influences EI. The importance of family in the subjective norm dimension of EI has been recognised, but literature also acknowledges the importance of developing entrepreneurial families. Family economist and Nobel laureate, Gary Becker, states that *"families persist because they are highly efficient at adapting to societal needs"* (Cohen & Sharma, 2016: 66). The link between family enterprises, generational influence and EI revolves around the time when the senior generations are willing to give up their charge, leaving the next generation to (for a decade or more) take over – possibly leaving the family enterprise without members who are willing or available to take over after such a long wait (Cohen & Sharma, 2016). A global assessment of family functioning, to determine when to

address the family system first in business, is the AGPAR scale, representing elements as provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2: AGPAR scale for assessing families in business.

Adaptation	•Use of intra and extra-familial resources for problem solving
Growth	•Physical and emotional maturity, and mutual support and guidance
Partnership	•Sharing of decision making and nurturing responsibilities
Affection	•Caring, loving relationships
Resolve	•Commitment to devote time to other members and sharing of wealth and space

Source: Cohen & Sharma, 2016

Families that do not communicate and lack a clear shared goal will struggle in business, while those who openly discuss issues, make independent decisions, and are close but not enmeshed are adaptable and cope more effectively with shared entrepreneurial endeavours (Cohen & Sharma, 2016).

One of the graduates indicated that he is working on a business with an acquaintance in another country. This is also known as transnational entrepreneurship since the entrepreneurs move between the home and host countries. These entrepreneurial activities include remittances, international trade, cross-border travelling, tourism, technology and knowledge transfer, and establishing a business using the home and host country (Njoku & Cooney, 2020). Transnational entrepreneurship positively influences both the home and host countries through economic growth and development. These entrepreneurs connect business markets, and they use cultural competencies in networking that aid social bonding (Njoku & Cooney, 2020). This is an important area for further study to understand EI in SA.

The insights gained from the graduates who were so intentional about becoming entrepreneurs that they completed a specialised qualification provided pointers to consider in curriculum design for business qualifications. From a review of studies Ahmad *et al.*, (2023) suggest that the educational curriculum should (1) develop entrepreneurial skills and ethical values; (2) provide the relevant training to academics; (3) collaborate with local entrepreneurs and industry experts; (4) include technology in the classroom to develop the necessary skills; (5) promote social entrepreneurship to serve the community and its needs; (6) create a cohesive and supportive community of academics, students and entrepreneurs; (7) conduct continuous research to stay abreast of changes; and (8) provide equal education to all. It is telling that studies conducted around the same time confirm the importance of incorporating

values, being involved with entrepreneurs while studying, and being considerate of the technological differences in entrepreneurship. It was found that considering generations' influence on each other in entrepreneurial endeavours is important in ensuring success.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study offers several potential implications for policymakers and educational institutions for curriculum design. Firstly, considering the inclusion of entrepreneurship training in business qualifications, the influence of generational differences should be considered, even in the training approach and especially through exposure to role models. This can include preparing students to work across generations to improve their adaptability and teamwork to better navigate the workplace, especially where different generations' methods may differ. Secondly, considering Gen Z's preference for digital and visual formats, the curriculum can incorporate, for example, interactive simulations and digital technology to enhance the learning experience. Furthermore, considering younger generations' resistance to manual and time-intensive processes, the curriculum and teaching resources should enable the use of faster and online systems. Thirdly, since the influence of family on EI has been noted across several studies, the curriculum should better prepare students to assess their family readiness through the use of various tools, like the AGPAR scale. Moreover, in terms of subjective norm, it is clear that the different generations influence the pressures linked to entrepreneurial endeavours. Acknowledging the likelihood of the current generations facing more competition because of opportunities provided through technological advancements creates a need for a responsive curriculum that prepares entrepreneurs with contingency plans that consider current realities. This is important to consider in training on EI, as there are more generations working together now than ever before. Lastly, recognising the importance of cultural competency to South Africa's diversity, it will also be worthwhile to further consider the role of transnational entrepreneurship. Educational institutions and governmental bodies can develop a networking platform to facilitate international collaborations between SA graduates and international partners and markets.

6. CONCLUSION

The researchers were aware of the generational context in which the study was conducted. One of the researchers is from Gen X and the other from Gen Y, so while one of the interviewers represented Gen Y, little mention of this generation was specifically made by the respondents, who referred to their generation as Gen Z, and their parents and lecturers as Gen X. It is, however, likely that Gen Y shaped much of the trends that Gen Z will know and understand, more than Gen Xers will. A possible reason for this could be that the graduates

related the attributes from Annexure A to the adults impacting their EI. Future research could further examine the impact of Gen Y as perceived by Gen Z.

There is some evidence that the different generations do not have the same EI and that individuals from each generation approach entrepreneurship differently. The influence of older generations on younger generations is clear. Results show that Gen Z faces more challenges, like more competition, since many members of their generation have access to the same opportunities. This creates a bigger challenge to present truly unique ideas, which may increase entrepreneurial failure rates. However, compared to Gen X's access and openness to technology, younger generations can solve problems faster. This study also highlights key managerial implications for policymakers and educational institutions in designing the entrepreneurship curriculum to accommodate generational differences. For example, digital tools should be incorporated, adaptability across generations should be fostered, and family influences on EI must be acknowledged. Additionally, the curriculum should address the cultural diversity of SA by promoting transnational entrepreneurship through platforms that connect SA graduates with international markets. Investment in Entrepreneurship Education contributes to goals 8 and 9 of the SDGs.

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ANNEXURE A: Semi-structured interview schedule for the qualitative part of the triangulated study

1. How would you explain what is meant by generations?
2. A generation can be explained as all the people born and living at about the same time, who have been influenced by similar societal and environmental events. What have you noted during your studies and through work exposure, how generations differ?
3. The table below summarise some of the characteristics related to work of the different generations. In which ways have you experienced these to affect your entrepreneurial endeavours?

Gen X (born 1965–1985)	Gen Y (born 1978–2000)	Gen Z (born 1995–2012)
• First to feel the impact of technological development • Sceptical about established institutions & traditions • Don't put much faith in future job security • Started trend to focus on family & scheduled structured lives • Self-reliant • Can be cliquish • Work needs involve: ○ Communicate by voicemail or email ○ Reward with free time & opportunities ○ Support training & growth ○ Give them freedom ○ Think globally ○ Don't micromanage ○ Give timely, specific feedback ○ Provide the latest technology ○ Make work fun	• Information is shared and streamed in real time • Civil uprisings organised via social media • See self as inclusive & tolerant • Creative – asks why • Believe business must be lubricated by conscience • Tech savvy: 2 screens • Communicate with text • Now focused • Want to be discovered • Daily lives are about being digital • Risk averse • Most used platforms are Facebook & Twitter • Entitled & empowered partly due to being involved in decisions during childhood • Work needs involve: ○ Use instant messaging or text ○ Give awards & certificates ○ Coach and support them ○ Be collaborative ○ Provide flexibility ○ Be motivational ○ Value their technical savvy ○ Care about their personal goals	• Exposure to different cultural perspectives makes them more accepting and open-minded to differences • Independence encouraged by Gen X parents • Growing into adulthood earlier than Gen Y • Expects to be involved in service to society • Tech savvy: 5 screens • Think in 4 D • Pragmatic & cautious • Active volunteers • Blended instead of just multi-cultural • Communicate with images • Future focused • Want to work for success • Most used platforms are Snapchat (moving to Instagram) & YouTube • Understands interconnectivity in the worldwide market • Increased propensity to multi-task • Learn by observation & practice, not reading & listening • Appreciate collaborative projects & active participation • Expect immediate answers

	• Unwilling to take intellectual risks – sees problem-solving as series of choices on a monitor.	
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Source: Summarised from Swanzen (2018)

4. Do you think some generations perceive entrepreneurial endeavours as easier than others? How so?
5. Do you think some generations are more inclined to act entrepreneurial than other generations?
 - a. If so, which generation and why?
 - b. If you don't see a link, please share your thoughts on the reason
6. Do you think any of the generations would have a greater influence on your decision to act entrepreneurially or not? Please motivate your answer.
7. Please share what insights you have gained through your participation in this study.
8. In summary, how do you suggest an Entrepreneurial course can be improved?