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The importance of entrepreneurial culture in establishing small and medium-sized enterprises among university students: A Field Study in Khenchela Province

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Abstract:

This study explores the role of entrepreneurial culture in supporting the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) among university students. An in-depth analysis is conducted to examine the components of this culture and their relationship with personal variables such as gender, age, and educational level. The focus is on how these factors influence entrepreneurial awareness and drive entrepreneurship among this demographic, considering external influences such as the social environment, family, school, training, religious factors, and customs and traditions. The study also investigates how these components contribute to enhancing entrepreneurial culture and supporting the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises in the sports sector. Building on previous contributions and research in this area, the study employs a descriptive methodology using a questionnaire to collect data from a random sample of 37 entrepreneurs from Khenchela Province, all of whom are university graduates owning small and medium-sized sports enterprises. A descriptive methodology is employed, with a questionnaire used to collect data from a random sample of 37 entrepreneurs from

Khenchela Province who are all university students owning small to medium-sized sports enterprises. The questionnaire was designed to cover two main areas, each related to a partial hypothesis, to ensure the tool's validation, reliability, and validity before its final application. The study yielded several key findings, most notably affirming the critical role of entrepreneurial culture in establishing small and medium-sized sports enterprises at both the provincial and national levels.

Keywords: culture, entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises, universities youth.

Introduction:

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are among the most important drivers of economic growth and future planning. They serve as a fundamental pillar of development in various countries around the world. Entrepreneurship is one of the most important factors in nation building, generating increased academic and research interest. In this context, Algeria has adopted a strategy involving a range of financial incentives and support specifically targeting young people and university graduates due to their skills. However, the success of this strategy hinges on the maturity of entrepreneurial culture among this demographic.

Entrepreneurial culture is defined by an entrepreneur's ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. Having a wealth of recent information drawn from the latest research is insufficient to produce a businessman capable of managing a successful entrepreneurial project. It is essential for entrepreneurs to be informed about the realities of the economic and sports environments in order to explore available opportunities, anticipate potential challenges and risks, and take preventive measures to avoid them.

The importance of this study therefore lies in clarifying the fundamental concepts of entrepreneurial culture and the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in the sports sector, as this is a vital area for enhancing the national economy. This study aims to highlight the latest methods of instilling this culture and motivating young people to engage in sports entrepreneurship, while developing strategies to help them cope with challenges and mitigate risks. Furthermore, the study seeks to bridge the gap between entrepreneurial ideas and practical reality, paving the way for private investment in the Algerian sports sector.

Research problem:

The research problem can be formulated as follows:

Does entrepreneurial culture contribute to the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises in the sports sector among university students? Alternatively:

‘What impact does entrepreneurial culture have on the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the sports sector by university students?’

Sub-problems:

Two sub-issues can be formulated as follows:

1. What role do the social and familial environment, university, academic training, religion, and customs and traditions play in fostering entrepreneurial culture among university students?
2. Is there a relationship between the spread of entrepreneurial culture and the establishment of small and medium-sized sports enterprises?

To address these questions, we formulated a set of hypotheses as follows:

General hypothesis:

The social and familial environment, university and training, religion, and customs and traditions contribute to entrepreneurial culture and the establishment of small and medium-sized sports enterprises.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. Social and familial factors, as well as university and training, religion, and customs and traditions, significantly contribute to enhancing entrepreneurial culture among university students ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).
2. There is a statistically significant correlation between entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurship in the establishment of small and medium-sized sports enterprises.

I. Theoretical and conceptual framework

1. Importance of the study:

This study is of great significance due to its role in supporting the success and development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), helping them to achieve their objectives by improving financing mechanisms and promoting an entrepreneurial culture through clear strategies. Entrepreneurial culture has gained substantial importance as a means of fostering entrepreneurial thinking, particularly among young

people, and is a key entry point for SME development. While the components of entrepreneurial culture vary across economies and societies, they share the common goal of directing rare skills and high competencies towards leading the development process. Furthermore, entrepreneurial culture creates job opportunities for individuals and communities by establishing innovative projects in the sports sector that offer new goods and services. As entrepreneurship is based on creativity and innovation, it is important to activate it under the supervision of entrepreneurial institutions. This enables innovative ideas to be transformed into productive projects through an effective entrepreneurial approach.

2. Objectives of the study:

To present the concept of entrepreneurial culture and its impact on economic development in the sports sector.

- analyse the role of disseminating modern entrepreneurial culture as a tool to support the establishment and development of SMEs in Algeria, with a focus on the sports sector as a means of achieving growth and sustainability.
- To explore the extent to which the external environment influences young entrepreneurs' perceptions of the current state of entrepreneurship in the sports sector.

3. Reasons for choosing the topic: Reasons for choosing the topic:

Our choice of this topic is determined by three main reasons:

A: Our interest in studying entrepreneurship as a means of stimulating the economy and our decision to focus on the sports sector due to its untapped potential.

B. Our belief that fostering an entrepreneurial culture, including risk acceptance and creativity, is essential for the success of small businesses, including those in the sports sector.

C. The scarcity of studies linking entrepreneurship and institutional development in the sports sector gives this research a distinctive character.

4. Previous studies

First study:

A study by Hamed Ali Al-Joudi (2015) titled 'Towards the Development of Entrepreneurship through Entrepreneurial Education': This doctoral thesis aimed to

highlight the role of entrepreneurial education in fostering entrepreneurship among university students and to identify the elements that should be included in entrepreneurial education programmes to strengthen this spirit. The study revealed that the relationship between current entrepreneurial education and the entrepreneurial spirit among students is weak, emphasising the need to modify existing programmes to achieve the desired outcomes.

Second study:

A study by Sufyan Badrawi (2015) titled 'Entrepreneurial Culture among Algerian Youth': This doctoral thesis addresses entrepreneurship among young people as a sociological phenomenon, focusing on the cultural and social dimensions associated with it. The findings showed a clear deficiency in entrepreneurial culture among Algerian youth, whose inclination towards this field is influenced by social factors such as unemployment, low purchasing power and family influence. The study recommended incorporating a subject on entrepreneurship into educational curricula from an early stage to foster initiative and motivation towards entrepreneurial work among young people.

5. Concepts of the Study

Entrepreneurial Culture:

Entrepreneurial culture plays a pivotal role in solidifying and stimulating the entrepreneurial process in order to achieve economic growth objectives. Many economists and experts in entrepreneurial thought emphasise that wealth creation relies on enhancing this culture, which fosters individual initiative and prioritises the development of diverse entrepreneurial values. In this context, Batman (1997) observes that all economies which experienced progress and prosperity in the late twentieth century possessed a business culture that could also be described as entrepreneurial culture (Zidani, 2008, p. 127).

Definition of Entrepreneurial Culture:

Entrepreneurial culture is defined as the set of skills and knowledge acquired by an individual or group with the aim of putting them into practice through capital investment and the implementation of creative ideas. It encompasses various aspects, such as behaviours, motivation, and entrepreneurs' reactions, as well as planning, decision-making, organisational processes, and monitoring. It is reinforced through three main pillars: family, school and institutions (Din, 2008, p. 88).

E.H. Schein's definition of entrepreneurial culture is one of the most widely accepted. He defines it as follows: 'The framework consisting of fundamental assumptions that are invented, discovered, or developed by a particular group as they learn how to face the challenges of adapting to the external environment and maintaining internal cohesion.' These assumptions have proven so effective that they are regarded as a model, which is taught to members as the optimal way to perceive, think and feel when dealing with these challenges" (Schein, 1992, p. 10).

Moreover, Sami Fayyad Al-Azzawi defines it as a mechanism to enhance competitiveness, creativity and innovation, with the aim of achieving increased productivity and economic growth. It also enhances individuals' ability to adapt to rapid changes in the working world. Education, at all levels, is a fundamental pillar of entrepreneurial culture, developing the entrepreneurial spirit and associated skills and traits. Therefore, it is essential to invest in education's role in promoting this culture from an early stage, with the aim of discovering and developing the capabilities of individuals who are qualified to lead the entrepreneurial process (Zidani, 2008, p. 91).

Components of Entrepreneurial Culture:

This culture revolves around a set of elements that can be summarised as follows:

A. Social environment:

The social environment is a vital factor in stimulating enterprise creation due to its complex and rich nature.

B. Family:

A family can enhance its members' entrepreneurial skills and encourage them to pursue entrepreneurship as a future career, particularly if the parents own a private business. This can be achieved by encouraging children from a young age to participate in different activities and take on responsibilities.

C. School:

As well as their basic educational and pedagogical tasks, schools should work to bridge the gap between educational institutions and entrepreneurship. This will make them a driving force for development, instilling leadership values and an entrepreneurial culture among students.

D. Religion:

Religion is one of the most important social factors through which individuals derive their values and life standards. It plays a pivotal role in shaping values such as workmanship and self-reliance in earning a living, as well as other ethical principles.

E. Customs and Traditions:

Customs and traditions play a crucial role in determining the path of enterprise creation. For example, while nomadic tribes rely on agriculture and herding for income, handicrafts and commercial activities are passed down through generations as part of the community's heritage (Al-Sakran, 2008, p. 21).

F. Idea and Establishment of the Enterprise:

Sokol and Shapero presented a model for analysing entrepreneurial orientations and motivations for establishment, which they called the 'entrepreneurial event formation' model. The fundamental idea of this model is that a significant and radical life change, such as the decision to start a business, necessarily requires a preceding event that disrupts daily routine (B-E, 2006, p. 66).

This model, referenced in numerous entrepreneurship studies, provides an analytical framework that highlights three main factors:

Negative transitions (*déplacements négatifs*): These include circumstances that drive individuals towards entrepreneurship due to negative experiences such as job loss, migration, separation, job dissatisfaction and so on.

Positive transitions (*déplacements positifs*): These are motivating factors that encourage engagement in entrepreneurial activities, such as family influence, the availability of market opportunities, or the presence of potential investors.

- Intermediate Situations (*Situations intermédiaires*): These are cases where the transition to entrepreneurship results from neutral circumstances, such as completing military service, graduating from university, or being released from prison.

Small and Medium Enterprises:

Algeria's definition of small and medium-sized enterprises:

Algeria defines SMEs based on Law No. 01-18, issued on 12 December 2001, which promotes these enterprises. This classification relies on two criteria: the number of employees and turnover. Article 4 provides a comprehensive definition of SMEs, while Articles 5, 6 and 7 outline the distinguishing limits between small and medium

enterprises. Regardless of their legal nature, these texts define SMEs as entities that produce goods or provide services. This classification establishes the legal framework and support provided to these enterprises, enhancing their role in the national economy.

University Youth:

Numerous scientific studies have explored the realities of youth, emphasising the importance of this group in social change processes. However, scientific discourse, whether theoretical or based on field studies, continues to prompt discussion about the conceptual definition of the term ‘youth’. Consequently, multiple approaches confirm that the term ‘youth’ is problematic. Many sociologists, anthropologists and historians agree that defining age groups based on biological factors is illogical and that it is, in fact, a dynamic socio-historical construct. Even when based on the aforementioned foundations, ‘as we traverse time and space, we note that the terms “child”, “adolescent”, “youth”, and “elder” exist in all societies, though they may not mean the same thing’ (Arab Youth Culture, 2010, p. 112). Thus, age is considered a social construct, or a social outcome, whereby society determines the period of youth through its social, cultural, economic, political and legal components, according to the criteria it adopts to organise relationships among its members.

In the context of sociological analysis, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu asserts that there is a prevailing view in sociology which sees the boundaries between age groups as arbitrary. Just as it is difficult to designate where poverty ends and wealth begins, it is impossible to pinpoint where youth ends and old age begins (METABI, 1978, p. 222). However, Bourdieu adds that the term ‘youth’ is merely a linguistic label, refuting the idea of classifying youth as a unified social group or class. From a sociological perspective, there are no clear boundaries between age groups (METABI, 1978, p. 98). While the youth phase is theoretically considered a specific age period in an individual’s life, as noted by Olivier Galland, determining the age boundaries for this group remains ambiguous.

Sociological definitions focus on identifying common characteristics among youth groups, while also highlighting social differences associated with class (e.g. educational level) and social origins. From this perspective, the group of ‘university graduates’ can be described as a distinctive category within broader society, according to George Balandier’s concept. The most significant reason for sociologists’ interest in youth is perhaps linked to the youth revolution of 1968 in America and later Europe, when they began to be regarded as social actors (Musette, 1978, p. 155).

II. A Practical Framework

Statistical Analysis of Survey Data:

We will analyse the field study through three main axes: first, we will present the methodological framework of the study; second, we will provide an analytical description of the survey data; and third, we will conduct inferential analysis.

Methodology of the study:

In light of the problem posed, the research adopted a methodology combining descriptive analytical methods for studying and analysing theoretical aspects in relation to reality, and standard statistical methods for defining the model and its criteria through a field survey based on a sample. Statistical data analysis was performed using the SPSS program.

Analysis of the study tool:

The survey form was developed based on theoretical references and previous studies, specifically using the “Perser & Hisirich” model designed to measure the attitudes of university students. The survey is divided into three sections. The first section asks about the personal characteristics of the study sample, including gender, age and educational level. The other two sections are dedicated to the main axes of the study. The survey was designed using a seven-point Likert scale, where each statement included the following response options: ‘Strongly Agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Somewhat Agree’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Somewhat Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, and ‘Strongly Disagree’. Points were assigned to each option to enable them to be processed later.

Time frame:

This study was conducted during the 2024/25 academic year.

Spatial and Human Boundaries:

This study focuses on entrepreneurial culture and its role in establishing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the sports sector among university students. The study sample was limited to 37 individuals who are university graduates with projects or enterprises in this field.

Community and study sample:

The study aimed to survey the community comprehensively. The study population consisted of all university graduates who owned projects or enterprises in the sports

sector in Khenchela Province, totalling 52 sports enterprise owners. A sample of 37 individuals was surveyed to represent this study.

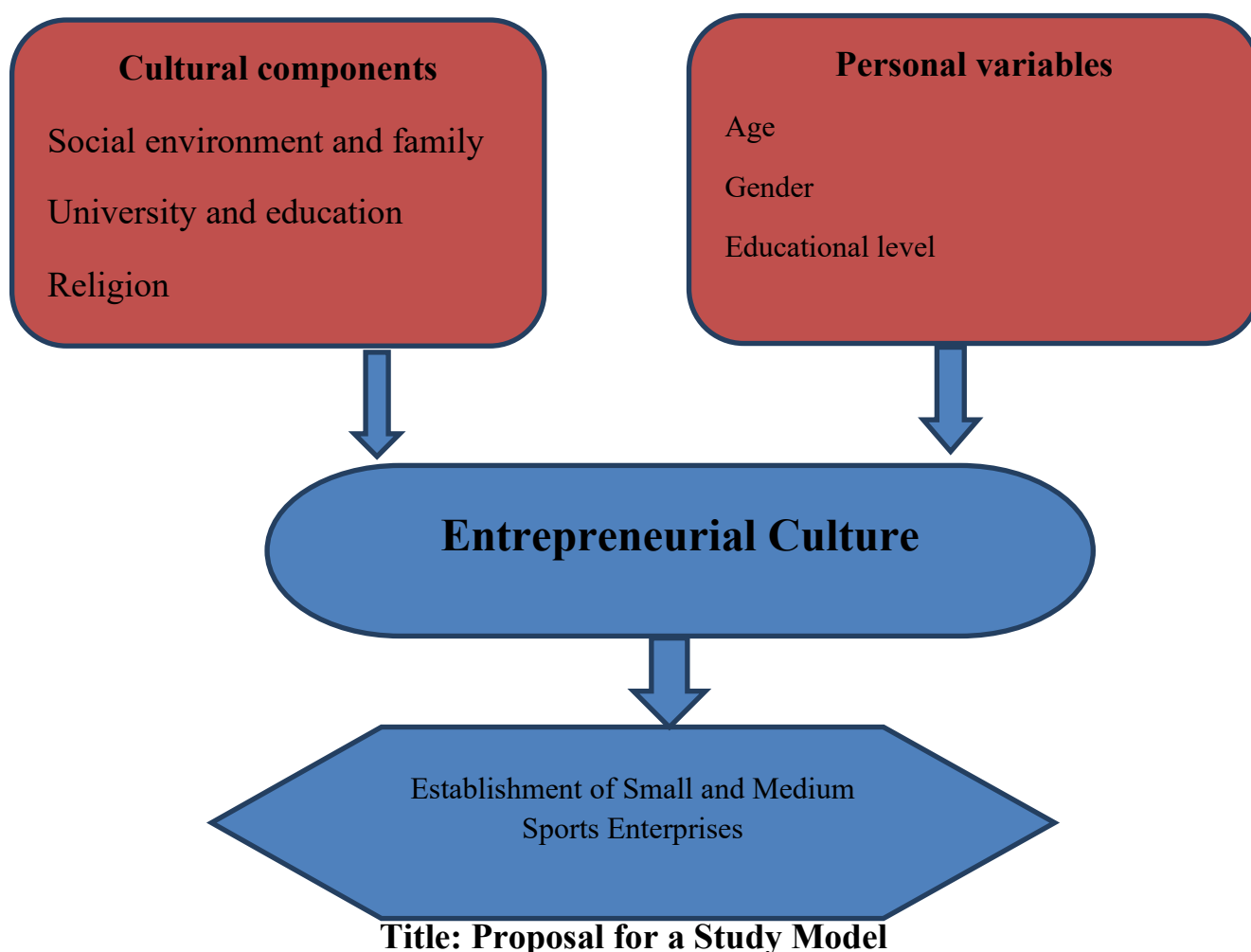
Statistical Treatment Methods Used:

To address the study hypotheses, data were processed using a range of statistical methods derived from the SPSS programme. The results are as follows:

- Frequency distribution tables and percentages were used to represent the personal data of the individuals in the sample.

Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to study the internal consistency of each statement with its respective axis, while Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the study tool for each axis and the overall reliability of the survey. Weighted averages were calculated to determine the overall agreement on the study axes, and Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the correlation between variables.

Figure 1



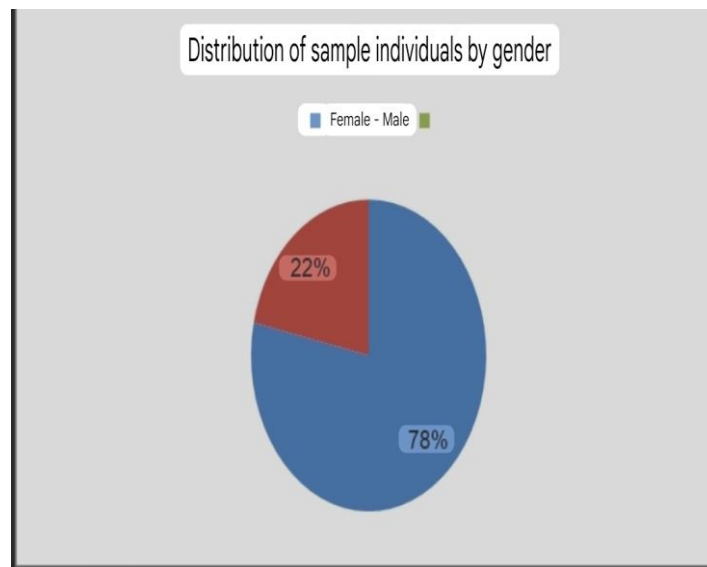
Source: prepared by the student

Survey Results and Descriptive Analysis

Personal data (gender)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	29	78.37%
Female	08	21.62%
Total	37	100%

Title: Distribution of Sample Individuals by Gender in Percentage



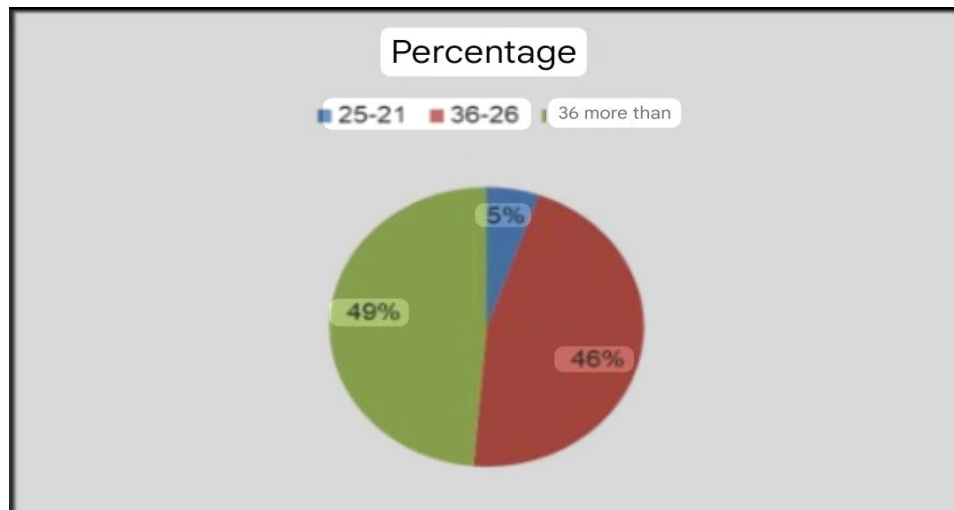
The data presented in Table 1 indicate that 78.87% of the study sample are male, reflecting the male dominance in sports compared to females.

Table 2: Distribution of sample individuals by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
From 21 to 25 years	02	05.40%
From 26 to 36 years	17	45.95%
More than 36 years	18	48.64%
Total	37	100%

Source: prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

Figure 3: Distribution of sample individuals by age as a percentage



As can be seen in Table 2, the vast majority of participants are over 36 years old, accounting for 48.64% of this age group. Meanwhile, approximately 45.94% of respondents are aged 26–35, while only 5.40% are under 26.

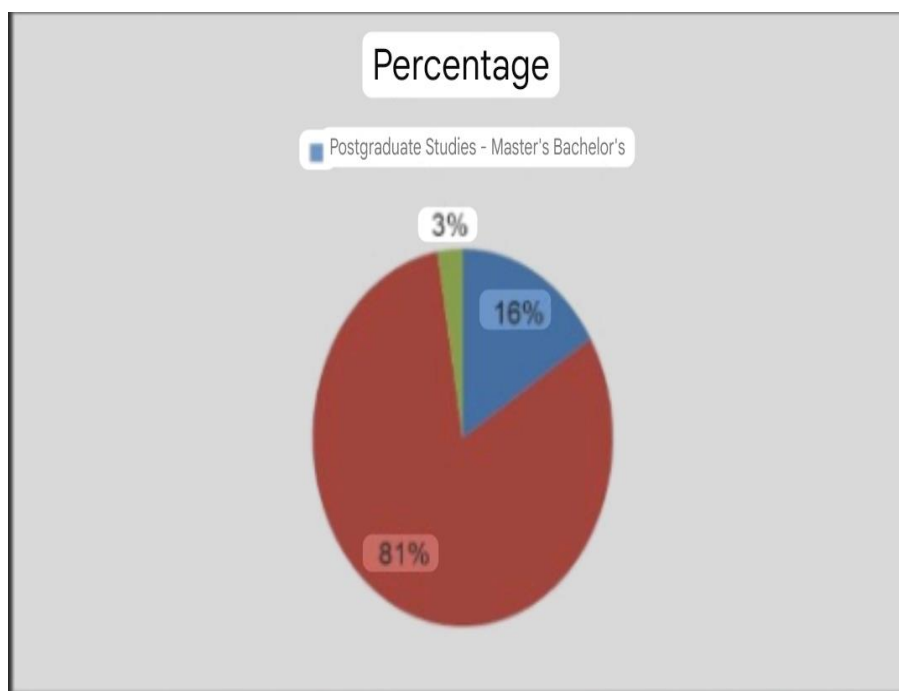
Educational level:

Table 3: Distribution of Sample Individuals by Educational Level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	06	16.21%
Master's Degree	30	81.08%
Graduate Studies	01	02.70%
Total	37	100%

Source: prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

Figure 4: Distribution of sample individuals by educational level as a percentage



Source: prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

The table above shows that 81.08% of survey participants hold a Master's degree, while 16.21% hold a Bachelor's degree. Only 2.70% hold a postgraduate diploma. Thus, the sample included three different educational levels to reveal variations in entrepreneurial culture among these groups.

8-1: Verification of the reliability and validity of the survey (reliability of the study tool).

To ensure the reliability of the study tool, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. This formula was applied to the study sample to evaluate construct validity. The following table presents the reliability coefficients for the different axes of the study.

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha coefficient for measuring the reliability of the study tool.

Study Axes(Components of Entrepreneurial Culture + Establishment of Startups	Reliability Coefficient
Social Environment and Family	0.781
University and Training	0.810
Religion, Customs, and Traditions	0.889
General Stability of the Questionnaire Axes	0.882
Establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises	0.930

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

The table shows that Cronbach's alpha coefficient recorded high values for all axes, ranging from 0.781 to 0.889. The survey's overall reliability reached 0.930, indicating a high level of reliability. These results confirm that all axes in the study possess a sufficient degree of reliability, making them dependable for field research.

Internal validity refers to the extent to which the survey accurately measures what it was designed to measure. This is verified through internal consistency validity, which is calculated using the Spearman correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between each statement's score and the total score of the axis to which that statement belongs. The following tables illustrate this process.

Table 5 shows the correlation coefficient for each statement in the social environment axis (family) with the total score of the axis.

Statement Number	Significance Level (sig)	Correlation	Statement Number	Significance Level (sig)	Correlation
1	0.000	0.474	7	0.000	0.525
2	0.000	0.587	8	0.000	0.679
3	0.000	0.430	9	0.000	0.434
4	0.000	0.593	10	0.000	0.581
5	0.000	0.632	11	0.000	0.517
6	0.000	0.492	12	0.000	0.593

The correlation is statistically significant at a level of 0.01 or lower.

Source: prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

Table 6 shows the correlation coefficient between each statement in the school and training axis and the total score of the axis.

Statement Number	Significance Level (sig)	Correlation	Statement Number	Significance Level (sig)	Correlation
13	0.000	0.474	18	0.000	0.706
14	0.000	0.587	19	0.000	0.620
15	0.000	0.430	20	0.000	0.417
16	0.000	0.593	21	0.000	0.618
17	0.000	0.632			

The correlation is statistically significant at a level of 0.01 or lower.

Source: prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

Table 7 shows the correlation coefficient for each item in the ‘Religion, Customs, and Traditions’ axis with the total scores of the axis.

Statement Number	Significance Level (sig)	Correlation	Statement Number	Significance Level (sig)	Correlation
22	0.000	0.474	28	0.000	0.683
23	0.000	0.587	29	0.000	0.702
24	0.000	0.430	30	0.000	0.699
25	0.000	0.593	31	0.000	0.609
26	0.000	0.632	32	0.000	0.668
27	0.000	0.492			

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

Table 8 shows the correlation coefficients for items in the Sports Institutions Establishment axis (S.P.) with the total score for the axis.

Statement Number	Significance Level (sig)	Correlation	Statement Number	Significance Level (sig)	Correlation
33	0.000	0.744	37	0.000	0.695
34	0.000	0.614	38	0.000	0.626
35	0.000	0.706	39	0.000	0.652
36	0.000	0.575			

The correlation is statistically significant at a level of 0.01 or below.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

As can be seen from the tables, all the correlation coefficients between the statements and their axes were positive and statistically significant at a level of ≤ 0.01 . This confirms the consistency of the statements with their axes and demonstrates the tool’s internal consistency validity.

Hypothesis testing:

The aim of the hypothesis tests was to explore whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the establishment of sports institutions and the components of entrepreneurial culture, and between the establishment of small and medium-sized sports

institutions and entrepreneurial culture in general. To achieve this, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used as a statistical tool for data analysis.

‘Study of the correlational relationships at a statistical significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) based on the main axes.’

The previous tables show a highly statistically significant positive correlation ($\alpha \leq 0.01$) between various elements of entrepreneurial culture and the process of establishing small and medium-sized sports institutions.

The study reveals a strong positive correlation between social and family support and university students’ inclination to establish institutions, with a correlation coefficient of 0.579 at a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$, confirming very high significance at the 0.01 level. These results suggest that fostering entrepreneurial culture among university students can effectively encourage their inclination to establish sports institutions, emphasising the crucial role of a supportive environment in promoting innovation and economic initiatives within this demographic.

The results demonstrate a statistically significant positive correlation at the 0.05 significance level between higher education and training, and the establishment of sports institutions by university students, with a correlation coefficient of 0.539 which is highly significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that a higher level of entrepreneurial awareness (i.e. entrepreneurial culture) among university students is closely related to increased dynamism in setting up sports institutions. This confirms that promoting entrepreneurial culture is a motivating factor in the institutional development of the sports sector.

The study also shows a positive correlation between cultural factors, such as religion, customs and traditions, and students’ desire to establish small and medium-sized sports institutions. The results revealed a statistically significant correlation at the $\alpha \leq 0.05$ significance level between entrepreneurial culture and the establishment of these institutions, with a correlation coefficient of 0.549 which is highly significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that a higher level of entrepreneurial culture among university students directly increases their inclination to establish small and medium-sized sports institutions.

The results also confirm strong, positive, statistically significant correlations between institution establishment (the dependent variable) and components of entrepreneurial culture (the independent variables), highlighting this culture’s role in stimulating sports entrepreneurship among young people. The correlation matrix illustrates the strength of

the relationship between entrepreneurial culture and indicators of institution establishment, thus providing evidence for these relationships.

General conclusion:

After analysing and statistically processing the results, the study confirmed the validity of the general hypothesis that the social environment, family, university and academic training, as well as religion, customs and traditions, are essential components of entrepreneurial culture in the establishment of small and medium-sized sports institutions. The extracted results aligned with this hypothesis, thereby validating it empirically.

Regarding the specific hypotheses, the first, which posits a statistically significant relationship between the aforementioned factors and the enhancement of entrepreneurial culture among university youth, was confirmed. Objective analyses showed the role of these components in promoting entrepreneurial tendencies from the perspective of the studied sample. Regarding the second specific hypothesis, the results indicated a statistically significant correlation ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between possessing entrepreneurial culture and establishing small and medium-sized sports institutions. This reinforces the idea that entrepreneurial culture stimulates economic initiatives in the sports sector. Therefore, it can be concluded that 'entrepreneurial culture is one of the most significant factors affecting the establishment of small and medium-sized sports institutions, both locally in Khenchela and nationally'.

Conclusion:

Entrepreneurial culture is fundamental to establishing small and medium-sized enterprises in the sports sector. The results of this study indicate that this culture, based on factors such as the social environment, family, university and training, as well as religion, customs and traditions, can support the creation of sports enterprises and the realisation of private projects, despite the practical challenges faced by young entrepreneurs when setting up their institutions. These challenges range from outdated legal frameworks related to private sports investment to traditional financing difficulties through banks, which sometimes conflict with the religious beliefs of young people. This confirms the genuine motivation among university students to pursue entrepreneurial experiences, yet obstacles in the sports sector hinder this.

Based on these findings, we propose a series of practical solutions:

- Establish specialised programmes for sports entrepreneurship under the supervision of youth and sports directorates, in collaboration with academic entities (such as

entrepreneurship centres at universities), to provide university students with entrepreneurial training.

- Enhance the culture of self-employment among young people through field visits and studying successful cases of independent sports projects.

Integrate entrepreneurship courses into sports science curricula from an early stage to cultivate a spirit of initiative and drive towards entrepreneurship.

Review laws governing sports investment, such as Executive Decree No. 215-91 dated 23 July 1991, to attract investors and facilitate youth engagement in the business world.

Develop financing mechanisms that align with religious and social values rather than relying solely on traditional bank loans, which may raise ethical concerns.

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