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Power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and students' entrepreneurial intentions

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The article's main aim was to verify the relationship between power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and entrepreneurial intentions among university students according to Hofstede's national culture dimensions.

Research Design & Methods: The study sample comprised 226 Polish students, whom we asked questions related to two of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, i.e. power distance and uncertainty avoidance. We developed binomial logistic regression models and tested the hypothesis based on the estimated parameters of these models in the subsequent step.

Findings: The study showed that individuals with weak uncertainty avoidance are more likely to start their own businesses compared to those with strong uncertainty avoidance.

Implications & Recommendations: The research findings indicated that traits associated with a culture of weak uncertainty avoidance promote the emergence and growth of entrepreneurial intentions. Therefore, in terms of education aimed at fostering entrepreneurial behaviour, we recommend cultivating these attributes within society by focusing the educational process on training creative leaders, individuals with strong mental resilience, and those willing to compete and enhance the world around them.

Contribution & Value Added: The article addresses the research gap concerning cultural factors influencing entrepreneurial development, emphasizing the necessity for further research using larger and internationally comparative samples.

Article type:	research article
Keywords:	entrepreneurial intentions; Hofstede; entrepreneurial determinants; power distance; uncertainty avoidance; entrepreneurship education
JEL codes:	I23, L26

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INTRODUCTION

National culture, including organizational culture, is an important aspect of countries' economic development. Values passed from father to son result in the formation of appropriate behaviours (Wach & Wojciechowski, 2016; Hayton & Cacciotti, 2013; Wardana *et al.*, 2021; Bigos *et al.* 2023). Research regarding cultural determinants of internationalization, innovativeness, and firms' networking is based on the concept of national culture dimensions by Geert Hofstede. Hofstede distinguished four basic dimensions of culture: power distance (PD), collectivism vs. individualism (IDV), masculinity vs. femininity (MSC), and uncertainty avoidance (UA). In further scientific works from 1991 and 2010, he added two more dimensions: the long-term orientation (LTO) and the indulgence vs restraint dimension (IND). Hofstede investigated the correlations between the above dimensions and indicated that in most cases, researchers should use two or three dimensions to describe the relationship between them (Hofstede, 2001; Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016).

In the literature of the course, we can find works related to the analysis of Hofstede's dimensions in relation to the organizational culture of companies or global corporations. In the article, we want to

verify how the dimensions of power distance and avoidance of uncertainty relate to the Gen-Z generation and their propensity to start businesses, so-called 'entrepreneurial intention,' which, in turn, is intensively studied topic within international business research (*e.g.* Bigos *et al.*, 2023; Ngoc Tuan & Pham, 2022; Widjaja *et al.*, 2022; Korpysa, & Waluyohadi, 2022; Gill *et al.*, 2021; Edigbo *et al.*, 2021).

We aimed to verify the relationship between power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and entrepreneurial intentions among university students according to Hofstede's national culture dimensions. We surveyed a sample of 226 students studying at Krakow University of Economics, trying to link the mentioned cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede with the declared entrepreneurial intentions of the students. The undertaken subject is part of current research on entrepreneurship education, which draws particular attention to the fact that a comprehensive educational process aims at shaping appropriate entrepreneurial attitudes.

The article consists of a theoretical part and an empirical part. In the theoretical part based on critical literature analysis, we will present a relationship between Hofstede's power distance, uncertainty avoidance and prospective entrepreneurial intentions. Finally, we will formulate a research hypothesis which was tested in the empirical part of the article. The results are based on the primary data obtained from the survey.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Entrepreneurship among young people is a very important phenomenon because of its economic and social dimensions (Holienka, 2014; Holienka *et al.*, 2016). The macroeconomic aspect of youth unemployment is a pressing and important topic across the EU. The increase in the unemployment rate among people under 30 can be slowed or stopped by the issue of youth self-employment. The increase in entrepreneurship among people under 30 can also result in the creation of new places – as a result of the increase in self-employment. An additional aspect is the change in young people's attitude to work. If a person under 30 becomes independent of an employer (self-employment instead of a full-time job) he or she will become self-sufficient. Such a decision at a young age will cause these individuals to follow self-sufficiency and self-employment throughout their working life and thus the development of the qualitative side of entrepreneurship (Holienka *et al.*, 2016).

However, according to Thompson (2009), entrepreneurial intent is a person's belief that he or she will set up a business venture and plans to do so. Young people who want to start a business must consider certain factors (*e.g*. the ability to make sacrifices and commitments) and, most importantly, personality traits such as feasibility or effectiveness (Byabashaija & Katono, 2011). These traits promote intentions and their transformation to concrete behaviour – *i.e.* to open one's own business (Wach & Wojciechowski, 2016). The aforementioned personality traits and attitudes toward entrepreneurship and self-employment result mainly from the cultural conditions in which these individuals grow up.

The theoretical background of our study focuses on the analysis of two dimensions of Hofstede's culture: power distance and uncertainty avoidance concerning the entrepreneurial intentions of students (representatives of the GEN-Z generation).

The first dimension of Hofstede's culture that the authors of this article will highlight is the dimension of power distance. In analyzing this dimension, Hofstede found that low power distance is characterized by the following values: the desire for decentralization, small differences in pay between low and high positions, subordinates wanting to be taken into account when making key decisions, reducing inequality in the company, the superior is a democrat, everyone should have equal rights.

The research result associated with high power distance is on the opposite side of the spectrum. It entails strong centralization, large differences in pay between positions of different levels, subordinates expect a list of tasks from superiors, the superior is an autocrat, and those with positions should have due privileges.

The second analysed dimension was the uncertainty avoidance dimension, a dimension that describes the extent to which a country's citizens are willing to accept the uncertainty of tomorrow. Hofstede divided this dimension in two ways. The features characterizing weak uncertainty are low-stress

levels, recognizing uncertainty as a natural part of life, acceptance of life as it is, acceptance of innovations in actions and ideas, minimal laws and regulations, and the statement that hard work is a necessity.

Uncertainty avoidance is in opposition to these traits. It involves high levels of stress, recognizing uncertainty as a threat that must be fought against, rejection of innovative activities and ideas, a high need to frame everything in a framework and laws, and the statement that hard work is an internal need (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016).

Boonghee *et al*. (2011) conclude that at the individual level, Hofstede's above dimensions of culture (power distance and uncertainty avoidance) do not yield realistic results for the overall global consumer level. They conclude that these measures of national culture do not perform as well as multidimensional measures and that additional work is needed in this area. Blodgett *et al.* (2008) also examined Hofstede's cultural framework at the individual consumer level. Their results were unsatisfactory and their factor analyses did not yield a consistent framework. They raised the need to develop a reliable and valid measure of Hofstede's cultural dimensions at the individual level. They indicated why individuals from different regions respond differently to different business strategies (Boonghee *et al.*, 2011).

Given that the results of previous scientific studies have not provided clear answers in the context of the influence of power distance and uncertainty avoidance on students' entrepreneurial intentions, we decided to verify the following hypotheses:

H1: Individuals who have a high-power distance manifest higher entrepreneurial intentions than those with a lower distance.

H2: Individuals who weakly avoid uncertainty manifest higher entrepreneurial intentions than those with strong uncertainty avoidance.

Based on the above considerations, we conducted an empirical study verifying the above hypothesis in the later stages of the work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

The study employs a post-positivist framework typical of quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Our analysis utilizes primary data collected from a survey of 226 students in Poland (Table 1). The majority of respondents were women, comprising 64.6% of the sample, while men made up 35.4%. We conducted the survey in January 2023 and included questions addressing Hofstede's cultural dimensions. For this article, we focused on two specific dimensions: power distance and uncertainty avoidance.

Table 1. Sample structure

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Per cent
Gender	Male	80	35.4%
	Female	146	64.6%
Family Entrepreneurial Experience	Yes	162	71.7%
	No	64	28.3%

Source: own study in PQStat.

Variables in the Analysis

The study included a single dependent variable related to entrepreneurial intentions, specifically students' declarations regarding their plans to start a business in the near future (*e.g.* 'Are you considering starting your own business during or after your studies?'). This variable aligns with the frameworks established by Liñán and Chen (2009) and Amofah *et al.* (2024). The dependent variable was dichotomous. We coded a 'yes' response to the question as 1, while a 'no' – as 0.

In the study, we included four independent variables in total, with the first two relating to power distance: (1) low power distance and (2) high power distance. The remaining two pertain to the level of uncertainty avoidance: (3) weak uncertainty avoidance, and (4) strong uncertainty avoidance. We calculated the value of the independent variable describing low power as the arithmetic mean of

three 5-level Likert scale questions: (1a) 'I believe that at work, the boss, and employee should treat each other as partners – without a clear division between superior and subordinate,' (1b) 'I believe that everyone should have an equal share in decision-making at work, regardless of their job position,' (1c) 'I believe that a supervisors should not have special privileges due to their position.' Conversely, high power distance was determined based on the arithmetic mean of three questions: (2a) 'I believe that hierarchy at work is important, so subordinates should be dependent on superiors and show them absolute respect,' (2b) 'I believe that decisions at work should be made by superiors, and employees should be supervised while performing assigned tasks,' (2c) 'I believe that supervisors should have special privileges due to their position.' Similarly, the values of the variables related to uncertainty avoidance were calculated as the arithmetic mean of 5-level Likert scale questions: for weak uncertainty avoidance: (3a) 'When working in a group/at work, I usually feel confident – I do not feel negative emotions,' (3b) 'Competing among colleagues at university/work is highly motivating and builds character,' (3c) 'Rules are meant to be broken – without this, breakthrough solutions would not emerge;' and for strong uncertainty avoidance: (4a) 'When working in a group/at work, I usually feel nervous/stressed,' (4b) 'Competing among colleagues at university/work usually does more harm than good,' (4c) 'Rules should not be broken in a company/university, even if the student/employee believes it is in the best interest of the company/university.'

The study also included two control variables, *i.e. gender* and *family entrepreneurial experience*. We measured gender dichotomously, with a value of 1 assigned to male respondents and 0 to female respondents. This choice reflects findings from previous research, *e.g.* Zhang *et al.* (2014), who suggest that men generally exhibit a higher propensity to start businesses than women. The final control variable pertained to *family entrepreneurial experience*, specifically regarding the business activities of relatives. If the surveyed student indicated that any of their relatives currently or previously conducted business, we assigned a value of 1; otherwise, a value of 0. This approach aligns with the studies by Gubik (2021) and Bigos and Michalik (2020).

Research Model and Statistical Tests

The inferences in this study are derived from the estimated parameters of a binomial logistic regression model, which is suitable for variables on a weak scale. We assessed the reliability of these models using two statistical tests:

1. the likelihood ratio test, which seeks statistical significance, and
2. the Hosmer-Lemeshow test, which aims for a lack of statistical significance.

Moreover, we computed pseudo-*R*-squared coefficients using the Cox-Snell and Nagelkerke methods. Given the weak scale of the variables, we also calculated *V*-Cramer coefficients to examine the interdependence among the analysed variables. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research model.

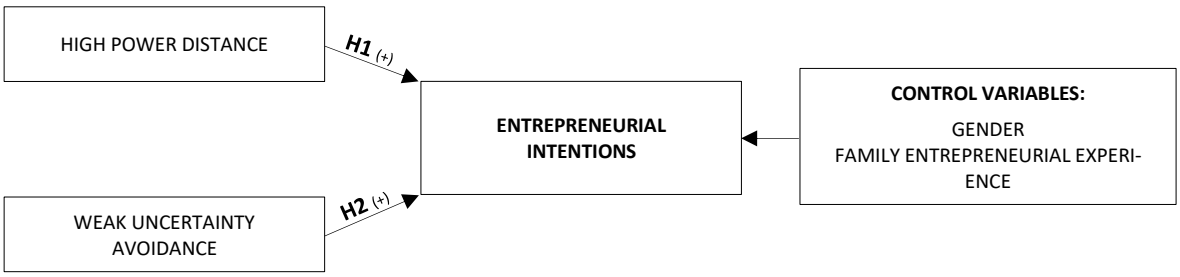

Figure 1. Proposed research model
Source: own elaboration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Given that the variables in the analysis are expressed on a weak scale, we calculated the *V*-Cramer coefficient (refer to Table 2). We can observe that the variables *WEAK UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE* and *STRONG UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE* exhibit relatively the highest degree of association (v=0.385, p<0.001). This is

followed by the relationship between *LOW POWER DISTANCE* and *HIGH POWER DISTANCE* (*v*=0.317, p<0.001), and between *GENDER* and *STRONG UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE* (*v*=0.316, *p*<0.05). The association between *GENDER* and *FAMILY ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPERIENCE* was relatively the weakest (*v*=0.096).

Table 2. V-Cramer coefficient

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. GENDER	**0.155***	1	–	–	–	–	–
3. FAMILY ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPERIENCE	**0.178****	0.096	1	–	–	–	–
4. LOW POWER DISTANCE	0.275	**0.300+**	0.147	1	–	–	–
5. HIGH POWER DISTANCE	0.215	0.231	0.201	**0.317*****	1	–	–
6. WEAK UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	0.255	0.238	0.270	0.232	0.221	1	–
7. STRONG UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	**0.304+**	**0.316***	0.180	0.220	**0.285*****	**0.385*****	1

Note: Significant codes: + p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001.
Source: own study in PQStat.

We verified the hypothesis using the parameter estimation results in the econometric models presented in Table 3. We measured their reliability using the likelihood ratio test and the Hosmer-Lemeshow test. In all models, the likelihood ratio test showed statistical significance (model 1: chi-square=17.885, *p*<0.01; model 2: chi-square=17.193, *p*<0.001; model 3: chi-square=13.829, *p*<0.01; model 4: chi-square=17.554, *p*<0.01; model 5: chi-square=17.448, *p*<0.001; model 6: chi-square=12.047, *p*<0.01), while the Hosmer-Lemeshow test indicated statistical insignificance (model 1: chi-square=5.584, *p*=0.694; model 2: chi-square=7.335, *p*=0.501; model 3: chi-square=6.841, *p*=0.554; model 4: chi-square=6.112, *p*=0.635; model 5: chi-square=9.738, *p*<0.284; model 6: chi-square=13.059, *p*<0.110).

In terms of the Akaike Information Criterion, model 5 demonstrated a better fit, while model 6 showed a relatively poorer fit. Moreover, we determined pseudo *R*-square values, calculated using the Nagelkerke and Cox-Snell methods, for the created binomial logistic regression models (Smith & McKenna, 2013). For the first econometric model, Nagelkerke's pseudo *R*-square (NPRsq) was 0.105, and Cox-Snell's Pseudo *R*-square (CSsq) was 0.076. We observed higher values for models 2, 4, and 5, with Nagelkerke's Pseudo *R*-square at 0.101, 0.103, and 0.102, respectively, and Cox-Snell's pseudo *R*-square at 0.073, 0.075, and 0.074, respectively (see Table 3). We observed relatively poorer results for models 3 and 6 (model 3: NPRsq=0.082, CSsq=0.059; model 6: NPRsq=0.072, CSsq=0.052).

Based on the estimated parameters in all econometric models, we could observe that both variables *FAMILY* ENTREPRENEURIAL *EXPERIENCE* and *GENDER* were statistically significant among the control variables. Based on this, we can conclude that conducting business activity in the past and currently by relatives promotes higher entrepreneurial intentions (slightly twice as often). However, in the context of *GENDER*, men manifest slightly less than twice the propensity to start a business than women. Nevertheless, in the following regression models, the estimated parameter demonstrates statistical significance at the level of *p*<0.1.

Regarding the first research hypothesis, which posited that individuals with a higher power distance exhibit a greater tendency to establish firms than those with a lower power distance, we tested the hypothesis based on the interpretation of estimated logistic regression parameters in models 1, 2, and 3. The results show a negative relationship between low power distance and entrepreneurial intentions (model 1: odds ratio=0.676, *p*<0.05; model 2: odds ratio=0.643, *p*<0.05). However, for high power distance, the parameter was statistically insignificant in both model 1 and model 3. Therefore, there was no basis to either reject or accept H1.

The situation differs for the second hypothesis, where model 4 shows that the estimated logistic regression parameter for WEAK UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE is statistically significant (*p*<0.05), with an odds ratio of 1.703. This indicates that individuals characterized by weak uncertainty avoidance have a higher tendency to start a business compared to those with strong uncertainty avoidance.

The results of model 5 confirmed it, as the tendency was 1.653 times higher than for other individuals (model 5: odds ratio=1.653, $p<0.05$). Thus, we accepted hypothesis 2.

Table 3. The list of estimated models (odd ratios)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
const.	1.609 (0.967)	**3.054+ (0.590)**	0.376 (0.632)	**0.149+ (1.137)**	**0.200* (0.683)**	1.329 (0.634)
GENDER	**1.752+ (0.319)**	**1.776+ (0.318)**	**1.849+ (0.315)**	**1.793+ (0.326)**	**1.751+ (0.318)**	**1.822+ (0.323)**
FAMILY ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPERIENCE	**2.160* (0.314)**	**2.086* (0.311)**	**2.251** (0.312)**	**1.976* (0.313)**	**1.975* (0.312)**	**2.101* (0.308)**
LOW POWER DISTANCE	**0.676* (0.197)**	**0.643* (0.188)**	–	–	–	–
HIGH POWER DISTANCE	1.178 (0.197)	–	1.322 (0.186)	–	–	–
WEAK UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	–	–	–	**1.703* (0.229)**	**1.653* (0.210)**	-
STRONG UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	–	–	–	1.073 (0.217)	–	0.872 (0.195)
Likelihood ratio test	17.885**	17.193***	13.829**	17.554**	17.448***	12.047**
Hosmer-Lemeshow test	5.584 (p=0.694)	7.335 (p=0.501)	6.841 (p=0.554)	6.112 (p=0.635)	9.738 (p=0.284)	13.059 (p=0.110)
Akaike Information Criterion	282.637	281.329	284.693	282.968	281.074	286.475
Pseudo R-square (Negelkerke)	0.105	0.101	0.082	0.103	0.102	0.072
Pseudo R-square (Cox-Snell)	0.076	0.073	0.059	0.075	0.074	0.052
N	226	226	226	226	226	226

Note: Significant codes: + p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001. Standard errors in parentheses.
Source: own study in PQStat.

We observed that our research findings regarding power distance are indirectly consistent with the findings of other researchers, such as Miao *et al.* (2018). The study by Samydevan *et al.* (2021) showed that power distance had an insignificant relationship with entrepreneurial intentions. On the other hand, regarding weak uncertainty avoidance, Jung *et al.* (2001) and Beliaeva *et al.* (2017) reached similar conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS

From an economic perspective, supporting business activities is particularly important. The presented research results support the hypothesis that in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, entrepreneurial intentions are higher than in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance. We neither confirmed nor rejected the hypothesis related to the degree of power distance. Therefore, it is advisable to extend research to a larger sample in various countries. This finding is consistent with previously cited research by other authors.

We must also note the research limitations concerning the obtained results. First of all, the sample was relatively small and limited to students from one university, which may not necessarily translate to the studies' replicability as it pertains to a narrow cultural context. Future research should also focus on other countries and cultural contexts. In the context of studies on entrepreneurial intentions, there remains a profound need for further research in this area. Therefore, entrepreneurial education policies need to consider the cultural contexts of the young generation's personality traits, which differ from the behaviour models of the elder generations. Moreover, it is necessary to recognize the implications for promoting traits oriented towards risk-taking from the early stages of education, as risk

aversion can effectively discourage the business establishment. Policymakers also play a crucial role in this regard. They should support the development of entrepreneurship in their country by designing programs and promoting the idea of entrepreneurship among young citizens.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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