Bridging Knowledge and Aspiration: The Role of Entrepreneurship Education on Students' Intention

Kallaivani P[1], Dr. Bhoopal M[2]

[1]Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Specialization in Entrepreneurship, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Email - kallaivani1215@gmail.com ORCID - 654-671-654-671

[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Specialization in Finance, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Email - bhoopalmsu@msuniv.ac.in

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ABSTRACT:

Purpose – The study investigates the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention among management students in Tirunelveli, an area known for its high level of academic interest, but less for entrepreneurship. The Theory of Planned Behaviour model is used in the current study to understand the cognitive processes behind entrepreneurial intention.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative methodology was adopted in this study, using a structured survey questionnaire for MBA students. Chi-square test, correlation analysis, and structural equation modelling using a partial least squares approach (PLS-SEM) were employed for data analysis.

Findings – EE had a significant effect on EI, primarily through its impact on attitudes and perceptions of behavioural control. Subjective norms demonstrated a weak and insignificant relationship.

Research limitations – The current study is limited by its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data.

Originality/value – The study contributes to the literature by extending TPB to include EE in a semi-urban environment in India.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Intention, Management Students, Attitude, Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norms.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is frequently regarded as an essential strategy to boost economic growth, innovation, and job creation, especially in markets that are unstable and have a lot of structural unemployment. Encouraging new ideas, making jobs available, and protecting the environment all play a big role in keeping a country's economy stable (Audretsch, 2023; Naudé, 2022). In this context, entrepreneurship education has gained particular importance as a method to cultivate entrepreneurial skills, enhance opportunities for entrepreneurs, and promote an entrepreneurial mindset (Fayolle & Gailly, 2023; Nabi et al., 2024). Research indicates that the success of entrepreneurs is affected by entrepreneurial education, not only through skill enhancement but also through its influence on motivational and cognitive factors, such as attitudes, feasibility, and self-efficacy (Ndofirepi & Rambe, 2023). Also, the global epidemic transformed higher education, and now

schools use hybrid, digital, or experiential teaching methods (Ratten, 2023; Bozkurt et al., 2022; Adnan & Anwar, 2023). Therefore, EE in the current environment tends to focus more on interactive and experiential learning methods that aid in behavioural readiness and decision-making in the entrepreneurial sphere. In the same way, experience-based learning as facilitated by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory helps develop self-efficacy, problem-solving, and risk-taking abilities, as well as other entrepreneurial skills (Kolb, 2022; Bux & Van, 2023). In addition, mentorship and networks in learning environments can help develop entrepreneurial thinking by establishing social norms and access to resources, as well as by building confidence in entrepreneurial decisions (Rae, 2022; Neck & Greene, 2023).

Theoretically, the TPB model is very significant in explaining the entrepreneurial intention. Under TPB, an individual's intention to engage in entrepreneurial activities is explained by three cognitive antecedents: attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and behavioral control (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024). Although many researchers have used TPB to understand entrepreneurial intention, few have focused on explaining the relationship between entrepreneurship education and the cognitive precursors of entrepreneurial intention.

There are several gaps in this research area despite the increasing number of prior research works. To begin with, most of the works focus on education without incorporating cognitive theories, such as the TPB model, that explain the link between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. Secondly, most previous research has been conducted in developed countries, leaving behind emerging regions such as South India. The third gap concerns comparing how the traditional classroom setting and experiential learning influence entrepreneurial cognition and intention, respectively. The gap is evident because no study has compared how the two different methods translate into entrepreneurial intention in South India.

In India, unemployment is rampant and few job avenues are available in a regulated form. Thus, there is great significance attached to bridging the gap through entrepreneurship as a substitute. The education sector in Tamil Nadu has undergone much progress, but the level of entrepreneurship remains relatively low, making it essential for region-based theoretical approaches to be analyzed (Vijayalakshmi et al., 2024; Paul & Shrivastava, 2022). The current research can make contributions to the existing body of knowledge in the following three aspects. To begin with, the study integrates entrepreneurship education with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a cognitively based model of entrepreneurial intentions. Second, it provides empirical data based on a specific region of South India. Finally, this study compares traditional and experiential learning methods.

2. Aim and Scope

The main purpose of this research paper is to investigate the effects of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention of MBA students in the Tirunelveli district based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour. In particular, this study aims to:

1. Examine how entrepreneurship education affects critical cognitive factors, such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

2. Evaluate which teaching methods, traditional classroom learning or experiential learning, improve entrepreneurial skills more effectively.

RQ1: How does entrepreneurship education influence entrepreneurial intention among MBA students?

RQ2: How do the components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour mediate this relationship?

RQ3: Does experiential learning have a stronger impact than traditional classroom-based learning on entrepreneurial intention?

3. Conceptual Foundation from the Literature

The latest research examines the influence of cognitive and socio-cultural factors, such as

gender stereotypes, prior experience, and learning strategies, on entrepreneurial intent. Gender stereotypes affect the perception of feasibility and desirability, while role modeling increases entrepreneurship self-confidence (Zhang et al., 2022; Dabić et al., 2023; Gupta et al., 2024). Additionally, previous experience improves self-efficacy and perceived behavioral control, but an overemphasis on theoretical training reduces entrepreneurial intentions (Frese & Gielnik, 2023; Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2022). For this reason, experiential learning is an important aspect for connecting entrepreneurship education to entrepreneurial intention (Shirokova et al., 2023; Nabi et al., 2024).

3.1 Entrepreneurship Education

The idea of entrepreneurial education is currently viewed as an adaptively oriented, competency-focused learning process aimed at cultivating entrepreneurship skills, behaviours, and mindsets (Nabi et al., 2024; Ndofirepi & Rambe, 2023). The modern scientific literature emphasizes the importance of EE for the development of entrepreneurs' competences and attitudes, including entrepreneurial self-efficacy, perceptions of entrepreneurial opportunities, and risk orientation (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024; Rauch & Hulsink, 2024).

As demonstrated by recent research, there is a trend away from conventional educational techniques toward more innovative practices that include experiential learning through case-based, simulated, project-based, and mentor-based approaches (Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2022; Twum-Darko, 2023). This kind of learning process is claimed to significantly enhance perceptions of behavioral control and competence through direct exposure to reality and practical decision-making (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2024; Shirokova et al., 2023). Despite the effectiveness of this learning approach, some argue that EE decreases intentions to become an entrepreneur, as learners become more aware of entrepreneurial risks and uncertainties (Rauch & Hulsink, 2024; Nabi et al., 2024).

Finally, the notion of entrepreneurship education is becoming increasingly multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder-driven to drive innovation and sustainable development, which goes beyond the scope of conventional management studies (Passoni et al., 2022; Neck & Greene, 2023). Despite the growing number of academic articles addressing EE-related phenomena, the current body of knowledge remains rather fragmented, failing to integrate the field with such cognitive theories as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Karimi et al., 2023; Nowiński & Haddoud, 2024).

3.2 Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention refers to the mental state of an individual who is deeply involved in entrepreneurial activities and is regarded as the most dependable measure of venture development (Linan & Fayolle, 2024; Kautonen et al., 2023). Recent studies show that the relationship with EE and EI has become complicated and involves numerous factors that affect it, such as the teacher's teaching style, personality, and the situation of the event (Nabi et al., 2024; Rauch & Hulsink, 2024).It has been noted that both practical and experiential learning methodologies contribute to the enhancement of confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to recognize opportunities, thereby positively influencing the entrepreneurial mindset (Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2024; Twum-Darko, 2023). Nonetheless, research indicates that entrepreneurship education can enhance risk awareness, which may, in certain cases, result in diminished entrepreneurial motivation among students (Rauch & Hulsink, 2024; Ndofirepi & Rambe, 2023).

Socio-cultural and demographic factors continue to influence the entrepreneurial mindset. Recent studies show that gender stereotypes, having role models, and having been in an entrepreneurial setting before are all important for coming up with entrepreneurial ideas and EI (Gupta et al., 2024; Dabić et al., 2025). Additionally, previous workplace experience and mutually supportive networks are positively associated with perceived

feasibility and the aspiration for entrepreneurial ventures (Hsieh et al., 2022; Ridha et al., 2023). These results underscore the necessity of examining emotional intelligence from a theoretical standpoint.

3.3 *Theory of Planned Behavior*

TPB continues to represent one of the most extensively employed theoretical frameworks for explaining entrepreneurs' intentions. According to this theory, the intentions of an entrepreneur are developed based on three factors: individual attitudes toward behaviours and subjective norms as well as perceived behavioural control (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024; Kautonen et al., 2023). Empirical studies are still validating TPB's ability to predict entrepreneurial intentions in different cultural and educational contexts (Shirokova et al., 2023; Nowiński & Haddoud, 2024). Of the three variables, perceived behavioural control has remained highly consistent in influencing entrepreneurial intention (Canova et al., 2024; Karimi et al., 2023). It reflects people's level of confidence in engaging in entrepreneurial behaviour. Recent research, however, has revealed some shortcomings of TPB. There are conceptual overlaps among its theories (Karimi et al., 2023; Passaro et al., 2023), and it fails to account for the dynamic, context-specific elements that determine entrepreneurial cognition (Karimi et al., 2023; Passaro et al., 2023). This has led scholars to seek to connect TPB with other contextual variables, such as entrepreneurial education (Nabi et al., 2024; Liñán & Fayolle, 2024).

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Attitude

Attitude towards entrepreneurship is an overall assessment of the involvement in entrepreneurial undertakings and is influenced by cognitive perceptions and emotional reactions. The current literature views the attitude concept as multidimensional, comprising perceived desirability, personal value congruence, and expected outcomes of undertaking entrepreneurial actions (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024; Batz et al., 2024). A positive attitude towards entrepreneurship entails perceiving independence, innovation, and financial freedom, whereas a negative attitude is associated with perceived risks, uncertainty, and fear of failure (Ngah et al., 2023; Yifan et al., 2025).

Moreover, research on active learning shows that entrepreneurial education promotes optimistic attitudes if students are exposed directly to entrepreneurial ventures (Dyer et al., 2020; Nabi & Liñán, 2011) as uncertainty decreases and positive perceptions of desirability improve (Nabi et al., 2024; Twum Darko, 2025). Further, the Vigor of dispositions is context dependent and hence needs validation for specific contexts in new markets.

4.2 Subjective Norms

The third predictor is subjective norms, which reflects the perceived social pressure of family and peers and virtually all other relevant social networks that are associated with entrepreneurial activities. Subjective norms are influenced by implicit norms (social approbation) and descriptive norms (social observation), which shape a person's decision-making process (Nowiński & Haddoud, 2024; Ridha et al., 2023).

Even though positive social settings in the form of family encouragement and presence of entrepreneur role models may affect the formation of entrepreneurial intentions, several recent research findings point out that the role of subjective norms has been found relatively lower as compared to attitudes and perceived behavioural controls especially for individuals having higher education levels (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024; Hsieh et al., 2022).

4.3 Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to carry out entrepreneurial activities and to overcome the related difficulties. Perceived behavioural control has been identified as the most effective determinant of entrepreneurship in recent literature, as it encompasses all internal and external factors such as resources, skills, and knowledge (Canova et al., 2024; Shirokova et al., 2023).

In addition, considerable attention has been devoted to the importance of entrepreneurship education in increasing perceived behavioural control, as it enhances practical skills, problem-solving techniques, and the ability to cope with uncertainty (Nabi et al., 2024; Karimi et al., 2023). Individuals who have high perceived behavioural control will convert their intentions into actions. However, it must be noted that perceived behavioural control is highly dependent on contextual variables and thus region-specific research is needed.

4.4Conceptual Linkage between EE and TPB

The applicability of EE to the Theory of Planned Behaviour to analyze the effect of education on the development of entrepreneurial intentions has been widely acknowledged as an extremely efficient approach (Nabi et al., 2024). As per Liñán and Fayolle (2024), the impact of EE on the entrepreneurial intentions may be attributed largely to its indirect effects on crucial cognitive variables such as attitudes, subjective norm, and behaviour control. Previous studies have found EE to boost self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitudes, and further improve behaviour control and entrepreneurial intentions (Barba- Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2024). Mentoring and simulations contribute to enhancing the learners' self-efficacy in entrepreneurship-related activities (Twum-Darko, 2023).

The effectiveness of entrepreneurship education, however, is subject to factors related to pedagogy and the specific circumstances under which the process occurs, among others, as well as socio-cultural and institutional settings (Ndofirepi & Rambe, 2023). Though significant gains have been made in research on the role of EE in entrepreneurial intention, little empirical evidence has emerged on EE and TPB in a regional context such as South India. Furthermore, the comparative effects of traditional and experiential entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions have not been adequately examined. Thus, this paper proposes a conceptual framework combining.

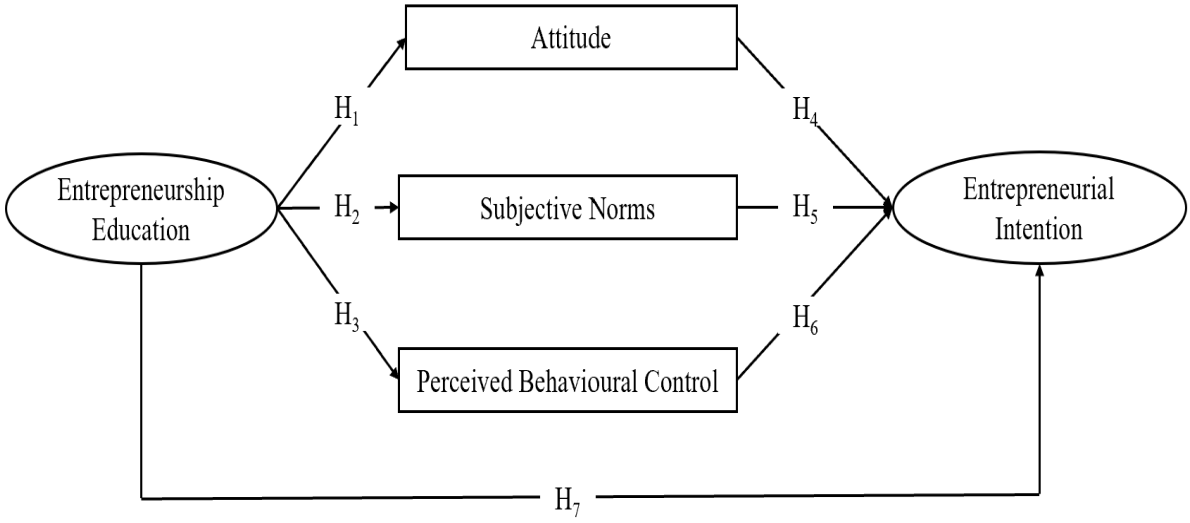

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model

Source: Author's own work

4.5Hypothesis Testing

The Theory of Planned Behaviour offers a well-supported theoretical model of entrepreneurial intentions by connecting individual cognitions to the desired behavioural outcome (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024; Kautonen et al., 2023). According to TPB, there are three main constructs: attitude towards behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, which contribute to the entrepreneurial intentions process (Nowiński & Haddoud, 2024; Shirokova et al., 2023). Regarding entrepreneurship education, it

is important to note that the cognitive determinants outlined above should be developed through EE and contribute to entrepreneurial intentions (Nabi et al., 2024; Karimi et al., 2023).

The significance of education as an instrument for shaping entrepreneurial cognitions cannot be underestimated since education assists people in gaining new knowledge, developing useful skills, and acquiring practical experience (Nabi et al., 2024; Ndofirepi & Rambe, 2023). The empirical analysis proves that EE can have a positive effect on the cognitive functions of people because EE creates positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship characterized by the reduction of uncertainty and improved perception of the entrepreneurs' capabilities (Linan & Fayolle, 2024; Barba- Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2024). Strategies aimed at learning through experience ensure positive evaluation of entrepreneurial activities (Twum-Darko, 2023; Rauch & Hulsink, 2024).

H_1: Entrepreneurship education positively influences entrepreneurial attitude.

Educational interventions in entrepreneurship can influence the development of normative values among individuals through exposure to role models of entrepreneurship, social networks, and a learning-friendly environment (Nowiński & Haddoud, 2024; Ridha et al., 2023). The effect is that there will be modifications to the perception and attitude of social approval of entrepreneurship, thus making it more probable for normative beliefs to be developed (Gupta et al., 2024; Dabić et al., 2025). However, the influence of subjective norms varies depending on the context, particularly within higher education, in which cognition is the main factor (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024; Hsieh et al., 2022).

H_2: Entrepreneurship education positively influences subjective norms.

In addition, EE boosts perceived behavioural control through the development of self-efficacy, problem-solving abilities, and competence in handling entrepreneurial problems (Karimi et al., 2023; Canova et al., 2024). The application of practical and experiential approaches positively influences students' confidence and perceived ability to participate in entrepreneurship (Shirokova et al., 2023; Twum-Darko, 2023). Consequently, students who have undergone EE tend to perceive greater control over entrepreneurial behaviour (Nabi et al., 2024; Rauch & Hulsink, 2024).

H_3: Entrepreneurship education positively influences perceived behavioural control.

In the theory of planned behaviour, attitude toward entrepreneurship refers to an individual's assessment of the appeal of engaging in entrepreneurial behaviour and is considered a critical factor that influences intention (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024; Batz et al., 2024). Those who have a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship tend to form stronger intentions to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours (Ngah et al., 2023; Yifan et al., 2025).

H_4: Entrepreneurial attitude positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

Subjective norms refer to the pressures that others in society exert on us, which can influence one's decision to become an entrepreneur (Nowiński & Haddoud, 2024; Ridha et al., 2023). While the influence of subjective norms is lower than in other TPB models, favourable social environments and positive role models can positively influence entrepreneurial intent (Gupta et al., 2024; Dabić et al., 2025).

H_5: Subjective norms positively influence entrepreneurial intention.

Individuals perceived behavioural control refers to the belief in their capabilities to undertake entrepreneurship-related activities and is generally recognized as the most powerful determinant of entrepreneurial intent (Canova et al., 2024; Shirokova et al., 2023). Persons with high perceived behavioural control are likely to translate their intent into entrepreneurial actions (Karimi et al., 2023; Kautonen et al., 2023).

H_6: Perceived behavioural control positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

While there has been considerable acknowledgment of the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention through cognitive factors, some empirical literature has demonstrated its potential influence on entrepreneurial intention without the mediating role of cognition. Research has shown that the process of entrepreneurship education may directly impact students' motivation, opportunities, and entrepreneurial skills, and, as a result, their determination to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors (Nabi et al., 2024; Barba- Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2024). In addition, the methods of practice used in entrepreneurship education have been shown to directly influence entrepreneurs' motivation by focusing on action-oriented education and removing obstacles (Rauch & Hulsink, 2024; Ndofirepi & Rambe, 2023).

H_7: Entrepreneurship education positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Methods

The study employs a quantitative descriptive research methodology to identify the link between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention among MBA students in the Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu. The intended study population comprises first and second-year MBA students, as they are at a crucial point in their career choices. Stratified random sampling is the chosen method based on probability sampling. In this regard, the total population of 524 was selected proportionally from each stratum. The selected sample is sufficiently large to undertake multivariate analysis. Primary data were collected using a questionnaire.

5.2 Measurement of Variables

The survey comprised four parts: socio-economic background; entrepreneurship education (5 questions); TPB components - attitudes (5 questions); subjective norm (3 questions); perceived behavioral control (7 questions); and entrepreneurial intentions (4 questions). All questions used a five-point Likert scale where 1 indicated strongly disagree, and 5 indicated strongly agree. The questionnaires were modified versions of validated questionnaires designed by Liñán and Chen (2006) and Solesvik et al. (2012).

5.3 Data Analysis and Model Estimation

Before analysis, a test for missing values is performed on the dataset. In addition, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated on the data. Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis values, and the results indicate the values are within accepted ranges; therefore, the normality assumption holds. To test for common-method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, and the results indicate that no single factor dominates the data. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data; the chi-square test was used to explore associations between categorical variables, and correlation analysis was used to measure correlations between constructs. Structural Equation Modelling is used to test hypotheses because it enables the researcher to examine relationships among several latent constructs simultaneously. A variance-based approach, namely PLS-SEM, was chosen because it best suits exploratory research. Moreover, it is suitable for complex models with moderate sample sizes. Analysis was performed using SmartPLS. To assess the model's adequacy against PLS-SEM requirements, the measurement and structural models will be analyzed separately. Furthermore, Global Model Fit was measured using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Table 1. Items used to measure research constructs

Variables	Items	Number of Dimensions
Entrepreneurship Education	EE1	Better understanding of business.
	EE2	Develop entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.
	EE3	Provide an opportunity to learn by doing.
	EE4	Help me a lot with entrepreneurship.
	EE5	Help me develop my problem-solving skills.
Attitude	A1	Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages and disadvantages for me.
	A2	A career as an entrepreneur is totally attractive to me.
	A3	If I had the opportunity and resources, I would like to start a business.
	A4	Amongst various options, I would rather be an entrepreneur.
	A5	Being an entrepreneur would give me great satisfaction.
Subjective Norms	S1	My friends would approve of starting a business.
	S2	My immediate family would approve of starting a business.
	S3	My colleagues would approve of starting a business.
Perceived Behavioral Control	P1	Starting a business and keeping it running would be easy for me.
	P2	I can control the creation process of a new business.
	P3	I would have complete control over the situation if I started and ran a business.
	P4	I am prepared to do whatever it takes to become an entrepreneur.
	P5	I know all about the necessary practical details needed to start a business.
	P6	If I wanted to, I could easily start and run a business.
	P7	If I tried to start a business, I would have a high chance of being successful.
Entrepreneurial Intention	EI1	I am determined to create a business venture in the future.
	EI2	My professional goal is to be an entrepreneur.
	EI3	I will make every effort to start and run my own business.
	EI4	I am ready to do whatever it takes to become an entrepreneur.

Source: Keat et al. (2011), Solesvik et al. (2012, Linan and Chen (2006)

6. Results

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis

Variables		Mean	SD
Gender	Female	3.87	0.896
	Male	4.18	0.913
Age	21 – 23 years	3.93	0.947
	24 – 26 years	4.27	0.748
	More than 26 years	4.50	0.289
Place of Residence	Urban	4.03	0.936
	Rural	3.92	0.928
	Semi - Urban	4.17	0.726
Level of Study	First Year	4.05	0.952
	Second Year	3.94	0.859
Previous work experience	Yes	4.27	0.737
	No	3.86	0.970
Parents Occupation	Private Sector Employee	3.83	0.981
	Public Sector Employee	4.06	0.751
	Entrepreneur	4.22	0.881
Planning to start your own business in the future?	Yes	4.17	0.855
	No	3.37	0.865

Source: Author's own work

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of respondents using descriptive statistics. Results show moderate differences in responses among various groups. For the gender variable, male respondents have shown a slightly higher mean score (M = 4.18, SD = 0.913) than female respondents (M = 3.87, SD = 0.896). In the case of the age variable, respondents aged above 26 years have demonstrated a higher mean score (M = 4.50, SD = 0.289) than respondents between 654-671 years old, who showed a comparatively lower score (M = 3.93, SD = 0.947). When considering the place of residence variable, respondents with semi-urban residences scored higher means (M = 4.17, SD = 0.726) than respondents with rural residence backgrounds (M = 3.92, SD = 0.928). In the case of the year of study variable, the first-year respondents scored higher means (M = 4.05, SD = 0.952) than respondents studying in the second year (M = 3.94, SD = 0.859). When considering the respondents' work experience variable, respondents with work experience have a higher mean score (M = 4.27, SD = 0.737) than those without (M = 3.86, SD = 0.970). A similar trend is observed in the parental occupation variable, in which respondents with parents who are entrepreneurs reported a higher mean score (M = 4.22, SD = 0.881) than those with parents who are private-sector employees (M = 3.83, SD = 0.981). Finally, respondents who expressed an intention to start a business reported higher mean scores (M = 4.17, SD = 0.855), whereas those without such intentions reported lower mean scores (M = 3.37, SD = 0.865).

Table 3. Chi - Square Test

Sl. No.	Socio – Economic Variable	Chi – square value	Significant value	Significant or not	Impact Value
1.	Gender	36.52	0.000	Significant	0.199
2.	Age	33.82	0.025	Significant	0.153
3.	Place of Residence	32.28	0.000	Significant	0.150
4.	Level of Study	13.95	0.274	Not Significant	0.119
5.	Previous work experience	46.18	0.000	Significant	0.260
6.	Parents Occupation	37.33	0.000	Significant	0.157
7.	Planning to start your own business	118.5	0.000	Significant	0.384

Source: Author's own work

The results from the Chi-square test of the associations between socio-economic factors and EI are presented in Table 3 below. The Chi-square test was used because the independent and dependent variables are categorical, and Cramér's V was used to assess the magnitude of these associations. Most socio-economic variables have a statistically significant association with entrepreneurial intention. These include gender ($x^2 = 36.52$, $p < 0.001$), age ($x^2 = 33.82$, $p = 0.025$), place of residence ($x^2 = 32.28$, $p < 0.001$), previous work experience ($x^2 = 46.18$, $p < 0.001$), parental occupation ($x^2 = 37.33$, $p < 0.001$), and intention to start a business in the future ($x^2 = 118.50$, $p < 0.001$). However, the level of study did not have a statistically significant association ($x^2 = 13.95$, $p = 0.274$). The magnitude of the association between these socio-economic factors and EI varied according to the Cramér's V values. The level of age ($V = 0.153$), place of residence ($V = 0.150$), and parental occupation ($V = 0.157$) revealed weak associations. The level of gender had a weak-to-moderate association ($V = 0.199$). The magnitude of the association between previous work experience was moderate ($V = 0.260$). On the other hand, intention to start a business in the future showed a strong association with entrepreneurial intention ($V = 0.384$).

Table 4. Correlation Analysis

Factors	EE	A	S	P	EI
Entrepreneurship Education	1	-	-	-	-
Attitude	0.729**	1	-	-	-
Subjective Norms	0.564**	0.629**	1	-	-
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.669**	0.734**	0.662**	1	-
Entrepreneurial Intention	0.641**	0.743**	0.600**	0.678**	1

**Significant level at 0.01

Source: Author's own work

The table above shows the correlation matrix for all constructs that affect entrepreneurial intentions. From the results above, it can be seen that all variables show positive, significant correlations, with coefficients ranging from 0.60 to 0.74. Among the variables, attitude is most strongly positively correlated with entrepreneurial intention (r = 0.743), followed by PBC (r = 0.678), EE (r = 0.641), and SNs (r = 0.600). This shows the close relationship between cognitive and educational constructs and EI.

Table 5. Partial Correlation Analysis

Analysis	EE	EI
Partial Correlation (controlling A, S, P)		
Pearson's r	-	0.132
P value	-	0.053
Correlation (without control variable)		
Pearson's r	-	0.641
P value	-	0.000

Source: Author's own work

The results of the partial correlation analysis examining the relationship between EE and EI, while controlling for attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, are shown in Table 5 below. From the results, it is evident that once these variables are taken into consideration, the relationship between EE and EI becomes insignificant, even weaker (r = 0.132, p = 0.053). On the contrary, the zero-order correlation indicates a highly significant positive relationship between EE and EI (r = 0.641, p < 0.001), since no other variables have been considered.

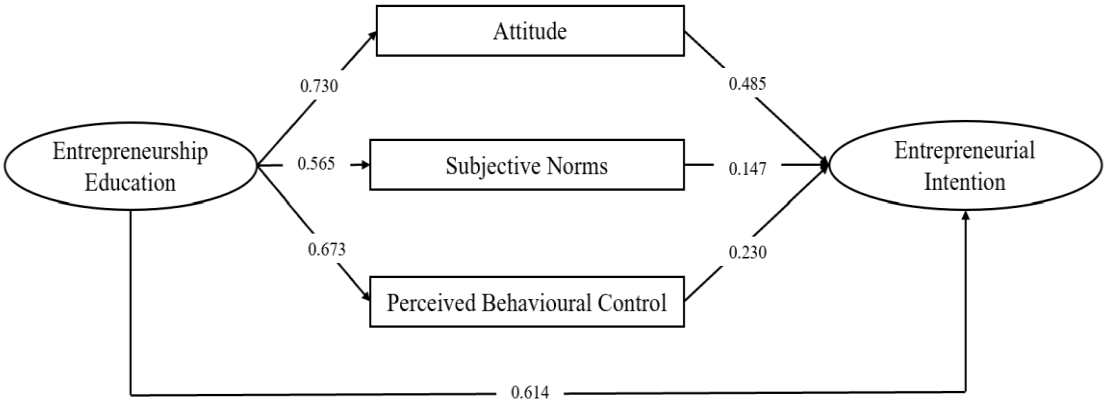

Figure 2. Result of Research Framework

Source: Author's own work

Table 6. Path Coefficient Analysis

Path	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Value	Supported or not
Direct Effect				
EE ->A	0.040	18.282	0.000	Supported
EE -> SN	0.048	11.735	0.000	Supported
EE ->PBC	0.044	15.226	0.000	Supported
A->EI	0.092	5.262	0.000	Supported
SN ->EI	0.076	1.919	0.055	Not Supported
PBC->EI	0.094	2.432	0.015	Supported
Indirect Effect				

EE ->A->EI	0.070	5.045	0.000	Supported
EE -> SN->EI	0.045	1.826	0.068	Not Supported
EE ->PBC->EI	0.068	2.286	0.022	Supported
Total Effect				
EE -> EI	0.040	14.628	0.000	Supported

Source: Author's own work

Table 6 below depicts the findings from the structural model analysis using the SEM approach. The results demonstrate that entrepreneurship education positively and significantly affects all three constructs of the theory of planned behaviour. These include attitude (t=18.282, p<0.001), subjective norms (t=11.735, p<0.001), and perceived behavioural control (t=15.226, p<0.001). Regarding the associations between the TPB constructs and entrepreneurial intentions, it is revealed that attitude exerts a significant positive impact on EI (t=5.262, p<0.001). In contrast, perceived behavioural control exerts a significant positive influence (t=2.432, p=0.015). It is important to note that subjective norms fail to exert a statistically significant effect on EI (t=1.919, p>0.05). Indirect effects estimated via bootstrapping indicate that attitude positively and significantly mediates the EE-EI link (t=5.045, p<0.001). Moreover, perceived behavioural control significantly mediates the relationship between the two variables under consideration (t=2.286, p=0.022). Conversely, subjective norms do not significantly mediate EE-EI associations (t=1.826, p>0.05). Thus, the overall total effect of EE on EI is positive and statistically significant (t=14.628, p<0.001).

Table 7. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Constructs and Their Measures	Alpha	Standardized Loadings	Reliability	Variance	Average Variance Extracted
Entrepreneurship Education (Keat et al., 2011)	0.882				0.663
Helps to have a better understanding of business.		0.81	0.66	0.34	
Develop entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.		0.83	0.69	0.31	
Provide an opportunity to learn by doing.		0.85	0.73	0.27	
Help me a lot with entrepreneurship.		0.81	0.65	0.35	
Help me develop my problem-solving skills.		0.81	0.66	0.34	
Attitude towards Entrepreneurship (Solesvik et al., 2012; Liñán and Chen, 2006)	0.870				0.679
Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me.		0.67	0.46	0.54	
A career as an entrepreneur is totally attractive to me.		0.84	0.71	0.29	

If I had the opportunity and resources, I would like to start a business.		0.85	0.72	0.28	
Amongst various options, I would rather be an entrepreneur.		0.84	0.70	0.30	
Being an entrepreneur would give me great satisfaction.		0.86	0.73	0.27	
Subjective Norms (Solesvik et al., 2012; Liñán and Chen, 2006)	0.780				0.769
My friends would approve of starting a business.		0.87	0.76	0.24	
My immediate family would approve of starting a business.		0.78	0.61	0.39	
My colleagues would approve of starting a business.		0.84	0.71	0.29	
Perceived Behavioral Control (Solesvik et al., 2012; Liñán and Chen, 2006)	0.881				0.584
Starting a business and keeping it running would be easy for me.		0.71	0.51	0.49	
I can control the creation process of a new business.		0.75	0.57	0.43	
I would have complete control over the situation if I started and ran a business.		0.75	0.57	0.43	
I am prepared to do whatever it takes to become an entrepreneur.		0.76	0.58	0.42	
I know all about the necessary practical details needed to start a business.		0.78	0.61	0.39	
If I wanted to, I could easily start and run a business.		0.80	0.63	0.37	
If I tried to start a business, I would have a high chance of being successful.		0.79	0.62	0.38	
Entrepreneurial Intention (Solesvik et al., 2012; Liñán and Chen, 2006)	0.900				0.695
I am determined to create a business venture in the future.		0.86	0.74	0.26	
My professional goal is to be an entrepreneur.		0.89	0.79	0.21	
I will make every effort to start and run my own business.		0.89	0.79	0.21	
I am ready to do whatever it takes to become an entrepreneur.		0.87	0.76	0.24	

Source: Author's own work

The assessment of reliability and convergent validity of the constructs employed in this research is presented in Table 7. The results show that all constructs have satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas above the

recommended threshold of 0.70 (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). As for convergent validity, all constructs have Average Variance Extracted values above the threshold of 0.50, indicating that their respective latent constructs explain a substantial portion of the observed item variance. Also, all standardized factor loadings exceed 0.60, confirming their reliability and meaningful contribution to the constructs. Overall, the results show that the developed measurement model meets all requirements for reliability and convergent validity.

7. Discussion of Results

In this section, the research findings will be discussed in relation to the objectives and literature. First and foremost, the main research objective of this project was to evaluate the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention according to the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The findings reveal that TPB is applicable in predicting entrepreneurial intentions in the higher education sector in Tirunelveli district. The study's findings show that entrepreneurship education is important for enhancing attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behaviour control. H1, H2, and H3 were accepted because the variables were statistically significant. The results support previous studies in that EE develops an entrepreneur's cognition through raising awareness, competence, and experience (Nabi et al., 2024; Rauch & Hulsink, 2024). Most importantly, the findings on EE influencing attitudes and perceived behavioral control prove that practical learning is more beneficial than theoretical learning.

While all the constructs of the TPB were tested for their potential influence on entrepreneurial intention, only attitudes and perceived behavioural control proved significant, thus supporting H4 and H6. Such findings confirm the existing literature, where it is stated that these two variables play an essential part in forming entrepreneurial intention (Liñán & Fayolle, 2024; Shirokova et al., 2023). Contrary to what was hypothesized, subjective norms were found to be insignificant predictors of entrepreneurial intention, thus disconfirming H5. Such findings correspond to other scholarly works, where it is confirmed that subjective norms have a minimal influence on making entrepreneurial decisions of university students because cognitive reasoning surpasses it (Nowiński & Haddoud, 2024). In the case of Tirunelveli, this means that no such pressure exists and therefore entrepreneurship has not been recognized as an acceptable career path socially.

The findings, moreover, show that entrepreneurship education can have both direct and indirect impacts on entrepreneurial intention. Although the impact of EE on EI is quite significant, the partial correlation and mediation analyses indicate that EE's impact on EI primarily operates via attitude and perceived behavioural control. As mentioned in the theory of planned behaviour, this study assumes that the cognitive process serves as a mediator in transforming educational impact to entrepreneurial intention (Karimi et al., 2023; Nabi et al., 2024). Notably, the mediating role of attitude and perceived behavioural control indicates that entrepreneurship education will be more effective if it can boost students' positive assessments and confidence in entrepreneurial activities. On the other hand, the lack of mediation by subjective norms in this case further underscores their insignificance in fostering entrepreneurial intentions. However, this contrasts with findings from some studies, which found that subjective norms played an influential mediating role.

Furthermore, the findings reveal the influence of socio-economic determinants on entrepreneurial intention. Variables such as gender, prior work experience, and having parents who were entrepreneurs show a correlation with EI, as noted in previous research, which identified exposure to and learning from experience as important factors in determining entrepreneurial cognition (Gupta et al., 2024; Dabić et al., 2023). The strong connection between prior work experience and entrepreneurial family history suggests that hands-on exposure plays an essential role in developing entrepreneurial intention. Such a conclusion calls for hands-on

entrepreneurship education. From an educational perspective, the findings emphasize that entrepreneurship education should focus on enhancing experiential learning, self-efficacy, and problem-solving skills. Even though entrepreneurship education has a positive effect on entrepreneurial intention, it is necessary to develop learners' behavioural and cognitive readiness. From this perspective, entrepreneurship education is more impactful when it includes proper mentorship, internships, and engagement with the entrepreneurial environment. This is even more important for areas like Tirunelveli.

Overall, the results confirm the significant impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention, whether directly or indirectly, via the theoretical concepts of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Attitude and perceived behavioral control dominate entrepreneurial intentions, while subjective norm plays a negligible role, suggesting that psychological factors take precedence over social factors in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, the study achieves its research objectives by showing that entrepreneurship education primarily fosters entrepreneurial intention by improving individuals' perceptions, preparedness, and ability to engage in entrepreneurship. In addition, the study shows that attitude and perceived behavioral control mediate the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention, thereby reinforcing TPB's theoretical assumptions.

8. Limitations and Future Research

While the research contributes to understanding the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intent, some limitations must be considered.

First, in terms of methodology, this study employs a cross-sectional research design, in which entrepreneurial intentions were examined only once. However, since entrepreneurial intentions are dynamic and change as entrepreneurs gain more experience, future research would benefit from using longitudinal designs.

The second limitation of the present study is that it mainly considered the cognitive determinants based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour. This theoretical framework can offer a solid foundation for studying the topic under investigation; however, some variables have been overlooked, including personality traits, risk-taking willingness, attitudes towards uncertainty, and the impact of the environment on entrepreneurial intentions.

Thirdly, data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire, which may have introduced bias through self-reporting, leading respondents to report higher entrepreneurial intentions and perceived capability. Another potential weakness is that, because the data collection method used an online questionnaire, respondents were only those active on institutional communication channels. Future research should try to overcome these weaknesses by incorporating mixed-method approaches such as interviews and behavioural methods.

Fourthly, although the study considers the effects of family entrepreneurial background, the mechanism underlying this influence remains unknown. Future research could examine the learning process and mentoring techniques used by the family members who make up the entrepreneurial network.

Lastly, the study is based on one particular regional environment and, therefore, the results might not apply to other settings. In the future, research could focus on applying the concept across other geographical regions and institutions. Also, ecosystem-level interventions such as business incubation, co-working spaces, and policy-driven initiatives could be considered.

9. Conclusion

This research reveals the positive impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions among MBA students from the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

According to the findings, entrepreneurship education positively influences entrepreneurial intentions. More precisely, there is evidence that entrepreneurship education helps students develop a positive attitude and a strong sense of their ability to perform certain entrepreneurial actions. Thus, these two factors have become key predictors of MBA students' entrepreneurship intention. At the same time, the subjective norm was found to be less important and not significant, suggesting that entrepreneurial intentions depend more on individual cognitive factors.

In addition, this study's findings indicate that the positive effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions among MBA students can be explained by attitude and perceived behavioural control. This implies that the positive effect is mediated by self-efficacy and confidence. Moreover, the findings demonstrate the validity and applicability of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in explaining entrepreneurship intention in higher education settings, particularly in specific regions.

Given these findings, it should be noted that entrepreneurial intention depends mainly on practical activities aimed at the development of individual competences, the increase of self-confidence, and self-efficacy. Therefore, in semi-urban education settings, entrepreneurship education should be accompanied by strengthening support systems for students and young entrepreneurs, including improvements to mentoring programs and the establishment of startup incubators. In this way, TPB proved useful for analysing entrepreneurship intentions in the Tirunelveli region.

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