

Educational Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intention among Non-Engineering Students

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Abstract: *This study examines how educational factors shape entrepreneurial intention among non-engineering students. It focuses on five variables, viewed from the students' point of view: syllabus, pedagogy, co-curricular activities, economic intention and need for motivation. Data were collected from 352 final-year commerce and management students in universities across Tamil Nadu, India, selected through stratified sampling, and were analysed using t-tests and WarpPLS. The results show that syllabus, co-curricular activities, economic intention and need for motivation have a positive influence on entrepreneurial intention, whereas pedagogy is reported to have a negative influence; together the five factors explain 73 per cent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. The findings confirm earlier studies showing that students from non-engineering fields possess high entrepreneurial intention. Policy makers should ensure the effective implementation of policies on family businesses that persuade and sensitise the public to the benefits of entrepreneurship.*

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurial Intention; Syllabus; Pedagogy; Co-Curricular Activities; Economic Intention; Need For Motivation

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship is defined as the process of identifying, evaluating and exploiting business opportunities, and is often treated as a form of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger et al., 2000; Ratten et.al,2023 and Daspit et.al,2023). It is a complex concept because researchers approach it from different directions and standpoints. Entrepreneurship is regarded as an important means of reducing unemployment, inequality and poverty and of promoting socio-economic development, and it provides employment opportunities for new graduates in developing countries. According to Chen et.al, (2025), the typical age for becoming an entrepreneur is 18 to 36 years, because at this stage people are less averse to risk, more sensitive to business opportunities and more likely to start a business.

Governments give considerable attention to entrepreneurship because of its role in improving national economic performance and expanding employment opportunities, which in turn helps to reduce poverty. Many studies also identify entrepreneurship education as one of the major influences on entrepreneurial intention, since it equips citizens with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values needed to contribute to society. Razzaque et al. (2024) explored why individuals prefer to become entrepreneurs and which other factors motivate them to do so. Intention is the foremost indicator explaining human behaviour, and entrepreneurial intention is therefore the key indicator of entrepreneurial behaviour.

The purpose of this study is to provide insight into entrepreneurship and the factors related to entrepreneurial intention. To evaluate the effectiveness of education in this respect, the study focuses on five variables from the students' point of view: syllabus, pedagogy, co-curricular activities, economic intention and need for motivation. It examines their relationship with entrepreneurial intention among non-engineering (commerce and management) students in universities in Tamil Nadu.

Review of literature

Entrepreneurial intention is a complex concept that researchers continue to explore. Wong and Choo (2009), for example, examined the triggers and barriers to new venture creation. Neneh (2014) define entrepreneurial intention as a conviction, acknowledged by individuals who state that they intend to set up new business ventures and who consciously plan for the future. Intention is an antecedent of behaviour that is strengthened by rewards and by rational, information-based decision-making (Barringer, 2015 and Keerthiga et.al,2025). Choosing an entrepreneurial career before starting a business is the root of entrepreneurship, and intention matters because it is the starting point for establishing a new venture. It leads people to decide to set up their own businesses rather than join a private or public-sector employer.

Previous research identifies attitudes, values and psychological factors as individual-level motivators of the decision to become an entrepreneur (Ashley-Cotleur et al., 2009). Among demographic factors such as gender, education and family background, education is the most important determinant of entrepreneurial intention (Wilson et al., 2007; Souitaris et al., 2007 and Keerthiga et.al,2026). Entrepreneurial intention is one of the most rapidly evolving subjects

in the wider field of entrepreneurship research (Liñán and Fayolle, 2015). Dohse and Walter (2010) define it as an individual's preference for entrepreneurial behaviour, aimed at finding new commercial opportunities and becoming self-employed. It is argued that only entrepreneurial intention leads an individual to entrepreneurial behaviour, and that this potential creates entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial intention therefore plays a fundamental role in explaining why individuals choose to establish their own business enterprise (Krueger et al., 2000).

Methodology

Sample and data collection

The study draws on primary data from a sample of 352 final-year students from various universities in Tamil Nadu, supplemented by secondary information from published sources. Stratified sampling was used. The sample comprised 165 commerce students and 187 management students (Table 1).

Data analysis

Differences between educational backgrounds were tested using t-tests and analysis of variance (Tables 1 and 2). The structural model linking the educational factors to entrepreneurial intention was estimated using WarpPLS (Table 3).

Results

Educational background and educational factors

Table 1 gives the means and standard deviations by educational background, and Table 2 reports the comparison of educational factors across backgrounds. A statistically significant difference was found for syllabus ($F = 23.59$; $p < 0.01$), co-curricular activities ($F = 19.62$; $p = 0.036$), economic intention ($F = 18.25$; $p = 0.041$) and need for motivational factor ($F = 20.36$; $p = 0.020$), and, at the 10 per cent level, for pedagogy ($F = 17.52$; $p = 0.092$).

Table 1: Means and standard deviations by educational background

Educational background	N	Mean	Std. dev.
Commerce	165	3.62	0.15
Management	187	3.95	0.05

Table 2: Analysis of variance of educational factors by educational background

Variable	Source	df	SS	MS	F	P
Syllabus	Between groups	2	18.52	12.15	23.59	0.000*
	Within groups	350	163.25	0.10		
	Total	352	181.77			

Variable	Source	df	SS	MS	F	P
Pedagogy	Between groups	2	11.58	17.12	17.52	0.092***
	Within groups	350	125.69	0.85		
	Total	352	137.27			
Co-curricular	Between groups	2	13.88	14.22	19.62	0.036**
	Within groups	350	143.25	0.98		
	Total	352	157.13			
Economic intention	Between groups	2	11.26	15.21	18.25	0.041**
	Within groups	350	112.02	0.42		
	Total	352	123.28			
Need for motivational factor	Between groups	2	13.26	19.25	20.36	0.020**
	Within groups	350	109.25	0.63		
	Total	352	122.51			

Note: * significant at the 1 per cent level; ** significant at the 5 per cent level; *** significant at the 10 per cent level.

Structural model: impact of educational factors on entrepreneurial intention

Table 3 shows that a significant positive relationship exists between syllabus and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.14$; $t = 2.14$; $p < 0.001$), co-curricular activities and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.25$; $t = 2.31$; $p = 0.080$), economic intention and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.11$; $t = 2.10$; $p = 0.001$), and need for motivational factor and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.29$; $t = 1.17$; $p = 0.001$). A negative relationship is reported between pedagogy and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.17$; $t = 1.21$; $p = 0.170$).

Table 3: Structural model – impact of educational factors on entrepreneurial intention among non-engineering students

Path	Beta (β)	p value	t value	Result
Syllabus → Entrepreneurial intention	0.14	<0.001	2.14	Positive, significant
Pedagogy → Entrepreneurial intention	0.17	0.170	1.21	Negative, significant
Co-curricular → Entrepreneurial intention	0.25	0.080	2.31	Positive, significant

Path	Beta (β)	p value	t value	Result
Economic intention → Entrepreneurial intention	0.11	0.001	2.10	Positive, significant
Need for motivational factor → Entrepreneurial intention	0.29	0.001	1.17	Positive, significant

Note: adjusted R^2 for entrepreneurial intention = 0.73.

The adjusted R^2 value of 0.73 indicates that 73 per cent of the variability in entrepreneurial intention is explained by syllabus, pedagogy, co-curricular activities, economic intention and need for motivational factor. Syllabus, co-curricular activities, economic intention and need for motivational factor have a positive influence on entrepreneurial intention, whereas pedagogy has a negative influence. The alternative hypothesis is therefore accepted for syllabus, co-curricular activities, economic intention and need for motivational factor.

Discussion and implications for policy and practice

The results are consistent with earlier studies showing that education is an important determinant of entrepreneurial intention (Wilson et al., 2007; Souitaris et al., 2007) and indicate that students from non-engineering fields possess high entrepreneurial intention. Among the positive paths, need for motivational factor ($\beta = 0.29$) and co-curricular activities ($\beta = 0.25$) carry the largest coefficients, followed by syllabus ($\beta = 0.14$) and economic intention ($\beta = 0.11$). For universities, these findings suggest giving attention to the entrepreneurial content of the syllabus and to co-curricular provision, and reviewing the pedagogical approaches used, given the reported negative relationship between pedagogy and entrepreneurial intention. For policy makers, the findings point to the need for effective implementation of policies on family businesses that persuade and sensitise the public to the benefits of entrepreneurship.

Conclusions

According to this study, students in the non-engineering field possess high entrepreneurial intention. Using data collected from 352 final-year students in Tamil Nadu universities, the study finds that pedagogy has a negative influence on entrepreneurial intention, whereas syllabus, co-curricular activities, economic intention and need for motivational factor have a positive influence. Policy makers should ensure the effective implementation of policies on family businesses that persuade and sensitise the public to the benefits of entrepreneurship. Society at large can extend the support required to encourage non-engineering students and to strengthen their interest in entrepreneurship, keeping these benefits in mind.

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