Career Planning as a Catalyst for Entrepreneurship: Insights from University Students

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Abstract

The research investigates why young people avoid selecting entrepreneurship as their professional path. Research investigators surveyed 670 postgraduate students across three eastern Indian universities for evaluation of their entrepreneurial intentions and factors behind such intentions. The academic research demonstrates that entrepreneurial intentions relate positively to both career planning knowledge and competency development in entrepreneurship. The predictors which significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions include career planning with entrepreneurial capabilities according to regression results. The research categories respondents according to their planning behavior and entrepreneurial skills to reveal both variables as key factors affecting entrepreneurial intent development. The study delivers crucial knowledge which educationists should apply to transform teaching methods by integrating career planning activities and entrepreneurial training for curriculum development to boost entrepreneurship.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial Intentions, Career Planning, Entrepreneurial Capabilities, Youth Entrepreneurship, Pedagogical Reforms.*

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Introduction

Current research on entrepreneurship expands into complementary domains and particular environmental aspects which influence entrepreneurial behavior. Theoretical advances demonstrate the vital role context plays in entrepreneurship but researchers need to investigate this factor further in individual sectors and industries (Stam, 2016). The scholars outlined that operating entities and independent actors within specific sectors maintain continuous relationships with various stakeholders such as customers regulatory entities and market

competitors but existing research remains insufficient to explain how these dynamic elements impact entrepreneurial ventures (Shane, 2007; De Massis et al., 2016).

Addressing this gap, the current study investigates entrepreneurial intention among university students in eastern India, with a focus on the role of career planning and entrepreneurial capabilities. Entrepreneurship among youth is particularly critical, as it is not only a driver of economic growth but also a mechanism for innovation and job creation. However, a pervasive reluctance among students to view entrepreneurship as a viable career option raises questions about the underlying factors influencing their entrepreneurial intent.

This research builds upon existing literature by examining how career planning and entrepreneurial capabilities contribute to entrepreneurial intention. By studying 670 postgraduate students across three universities, the study aims to identify the predictors of entrepreneurial intent and provide actionable insights. Furthermore, it bridges the theoretical gap by categorizing students based on their career planning and entrepreneurial tendencies, offering a nuanced understanding of how these factors shape entrepreneurship among youth.

The findings of this research have practical implications for academia, particularly in designing curricula that foster entrepreneurial capacities. By integrating career planning programs and entrepreneurial training, educational institutions can play a pivotal role in promoting entrepreneurship as a professional choice. This study contributes to the broader discourse on entrepreneurship theory by contextualizing its findings within the Indian educational and socio-economic landscape, while addressing the sectoral gap identified in prior research.

Theoretical Framework

Entrepreneurship Intention

The entrepreneurial intention represents the seriousness of an individual in trying to make entrepreneurial behavior emerge (Linan et al., 2011). It provides the link, whereby a personal aspiration is connected with external realities (Bird & Jelinek, 1988). Entrepreneurship drivers are innovation, quality of the product, skilled human resources, access of money and adaptability (Ahmed & Julian, 2012). Additionally, like the Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), entrepreneurial intention (EI) is very responsible for shaping entrepreneurial aspiration (EA) among university students as supported by the meta analysis that is high positive correlation has been depicted amongst EO and EI, illustrating its contribution in triggering entrepreneurial aspiration among the students of university (Chakrabarti et al., 2025).

Entrepreneurial motivations are brought on by both positive and negative stimuli (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Positive, or ‘pull’ motivations include the desire for independence, the need for achievement as well as the opportunities to develop socially. On the other hand, ‘push’ motivations are negative, that is, they are based on the factor of unemployment, family pressure, or dissatisfaction with existing circumstances.

Interestingly, psychological factors also play a critical role in entrepreneurship. Potential competition is often perceived as more stressful than actual competition, impacting

entrepreneurial decision-making and mental well-being (Devi & Thangamuthu, 2006). Moreover, students' entrepreneurial intentions exhibit dynamic trends, with some studies reporting a decline over time (Varamäki et al., 2015), while others highlight instances of growth (Sánchez, 2013).

The role of entrepreneurial education in this dynamic remains complex. While some studies have highlighted its limited impact on skill development, leading to negative long-term effects (Oosterbeek et al., 2010), others have found that quality entrepreneurial education enhances self-efficacy and fosters entrepreneurial intentions among university students (Achary et al., 2023). These conflicting findings may be attributed to differences in research methodologies and statistical approaches (Martin et al., 2013). Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial intentions requires a nuanced approach that considers personal motivations, external influences, and the effectiveness of educational initiatives.

Career Planning

Students in university participate to career planning (CP) activities to assess his inclination toward entrepreneurship as a possible career path as (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Previous research has also found that entrepreneurial education does without limit the impact on the individual development and career decisions, beyond just the intention to start a business (Rae & Harris, 2013). Others studies suggest that the role of faculty members in entrepreneurship education contributes to give students relevant insights about what he will be doing in the job market (Matlay, 2008). However, other research show low influence of teachers and career counseling in relation to the choice of career by postgraduate students (Henderson & Robertson, 2000). Consequently, the biggest factors influencing career planning for students is their personal experiences as well as family background.

Entrepreneurial Capabilities

Capability is what an individual is competent to do, as leveraging of this is to the benefit of important work outcomes (Alkire, 2002). The individual capabilities and skills affect entrepreneurial intention as expressed by Angelica's (2014). In Spain, researchers (Marzo-Navarro et al., 2009) found that students with higher levels of initiative taking, such as risk taking and self-confidence, in fact, were more willing to undertake the challenges of entrepreneurship because they were more capable of initiating actions, implementing and taking some risks.

It is common for many youth to pursue the birthed entrepreneurship out of necessity ('push') rather than opportunity ('pull'), to compensate for educational gaps, relying on their talent, and hard work (Slack, 2005). Well-structured pedagogical approaches can foster the development of skills, attributes and competencies necessary in setting up a business (Gibb & Hannon, 2006). By creating path for students to perform entrepreneurial activities within higher education

institutions, such institutions can counter the fear of failure and strong confidence to venture into entrepreneurial path for them (Ho et al., 2014).

Methodology

Established theoretical frameworks along with widely recognized concepts were followed while developing items for the three constructs. These constructs were adapted from previous studies that have employed these constructs (Block & Wagner, 2010; Bommes & Kolb, 2004; Farashah, 2013; Fossen & Büttner, 2013; Jančíková, 2004; Olowa & Olowa, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2005; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). The Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) is measured by 5 items, the Career Planning (CP) by 7 items, and the Entrepreneurial Capacities (ECs) by 5 items, respectively. These were responses recorded using these 5 point Likert scales from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree.

The sample for the study was drawn from three state universities in Odisha, comprising postgraduate students enrolled in management courses. The survey questionnaire was distributed by the research team following workshops attended by 798 postgraduate students. Out of the 721 responses received, 51 were incomplete and excluded, leaving 670 valid responses for coding and analysis.

Bivariate correlation was performed to analyze the relationship between the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) and Career Planning (CP) as well as the EI and the Entrepreneurial Capacities (EC). Linear regression was performed in order to evaluate predictive ability of CP and EC in predicting EI and to examine unique contributions of each as predictor. For this purpose, the study used linear regression model.

Analysis and Discussion

Descriptive Analyses

The analysis from the tables highlights key insights. Table 1 shows strong entrepreneurial intent among participants, though it emphasizes the need for confidence-building initiatives through education and skill development. Table 2 reflects a proactive entrepreneurial mindset, with participants focusing on financial empowerment and leveraging existing business knowledge. However, Table 3 points to a need for further development of specific entrepreneurial capabilities, particularly self-employment skills and innovation, to better equip participants for entrepreneurial success.

Table 1. Entrepreneurship Intention

ID	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
EI1	I am ready to do anything to become an entrepreneur	4.00	1.040	0.869

EI2	I make every effort to start and run my own business	3.77	0.984	
EI3	Given the opportunity and resources, I would love to start a business	3.69	1.022	
EI4	I am determined to create a business venture in the future	3.59	1.042	
EI5	If I tried to start a business, I would have a high chance of being successful	3.42	0.991	
Average		3.69	1.02	
Source : Author				

Table 2. Career Planning

ID	Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
CP1	I have decided to venture into the field of entrepreneurship immediately after this course	4.04	0.845	0.874
CP2	I have a well-thought-out business plan in the field of entrepreneurship	3.84	0.880	
CP3	If I were to choose between running my own business and being employed by someone, I would prefer running my own business	4.17	0.879	
CP4	I want to start/have started an enterprise because I want/have wanted to strengthen my financial position	4.04	0.858	
CP5	I want to start/have started an enterprise because I want to empower myself	3.90	0.871	
CP6	I want to start/have started an enterprise because I have some knowledge/background of business	3.97	0.877	
CP7	I expect to start a new business including any type of selfemployment, alone or with others, after a few years	3.96	0.899	
Average		3.99	0.87	
Source: Author				

Table 3. Entrepreneurial Capability

ID	Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
EC1	Enthusiasm to achieve great things	3.71	1.060	0.907
EC2	Self-confidence and reliance	3.77	0.990	
EC3	Knack for self-employment	3.06	1.029	

EC4	Initiatives to finding new solutions to problems	3.38	0.931	
EC5	Personal creativity and innovation	3.26	1.010	
Average		3.44	1.00	
Source: Author				

Bivariate Correlation

The relationships between entrepreneurial intention and career planning, as well as between entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial capabilities were examined by conducting bivariate correlation analysis.

- **Entrepreneurship Intent Factors and Career Planning Factors:** The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.393** indicates a **moderate positive relationship** between career planning (CP) and entrepreneurial intention (EI). This suggests that as individuals engage in more structured and thoughtful career planning, their entrepreneurial intentions tend to increase. Career planning involves setting goals, identifying opportunities, and creating strategies to achieve those goals, which are crucial in shaping an entrepreneurial mindset. For instance, individuals who actively plan their careers may have a clearer vision of their entrepreneurial aspirations, understand the necessary steps to start a business, and possess the motivation to pursue their goals. The **statistical significance at the 0.01 level** further confirms the reliability of this relationship, implying that this association is not due to chance. This finding underscores the importance of integrating career planning activities, such as business-oriented workshops, mentorship programs, and entrepreneurial education, into educational and professional environments to foster entrepreneurial intent among individuals.

Table 4: Pearson Correlations

	CP	**EC**	**EI**
CP	1		
EC	.376**	1	
EI	.393**	.508**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Author

- **Entrepreneurship Intent Factors and Entrepreneurial Capability Factors:** The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.508** between entrepreneurial capabilities (EC) and entrepreneurial intention (EI) indicates a **moderate-to-strong positive relationship**. This suggests that individuals with greater entrepreneurial capabilities—such as creativity, risk-taking, self-confidence, and problem-solving—are more likely to have stronger entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial capabilities reflect an individual's skills, attributes, and mindset necessary for starting and running a business. These include personal traits like initiative, innovation, and resilience, as well as practical skills like business planning and financial management. When individuals possess these

capabilities, they are more confident in their ability to successfully start and manage a business, which in turn strengthens their intention to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. The **statistical significance at the 0.01 level** confirms that this relationship is reliable and unlikely to have occurred by chance. This underscores the importance of developing and nurturing entrepreneurial capabilities in individuals, as enhancing these factors significantly increases their entrepreneurial intention.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of career planning and entrepreneurial capabilities in shaping entrepreneurial intentions among postgraduate students. The findings demonstrate that individuals who engage in thoughtful career planning and possess strong entrepreneurial capabilities are more likely to develop a strong intention to pursue entrepreneurship. These results underscore the importance of integrating career development and entrepreneurial skill-building programs into educational curricula. By fostering both strategic career planning and essential entrepreneurial traits, educational institutions can better prepare students to take entrepreneurial risks and contribute to economic growth.

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