



# A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION THEORIES AND RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to review and identify the existing theoretical framework in the area of entrepreneurial intention and understand the importance of encouraging and teaching entrepreneurial behaviours to youths by planting the seed of intention in their mind and also studying the key predictors that lead to having such an intention in the first place. This study may help various institutions, policymakers, practitioners and researchers understand the formation of entrepreneurial intentions so that they can inspire further research on such topics.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial intention, Entrepreneurial behaviour, Entrepreneurial intention theories.*

## INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship, the act of starting a new business and taking risks to generate financial gains, is increasingly important in the 21st century. It stimulates the economy, fosters competitive advantage, and helps address social disparities. Governments and policymakers are implementing entrepreneurship education programs in developing nations to cultivate entrepreneurial intentions and skills. Entrepreneurial behaviour involves actions and attitudes of individuals who establish new enterprises. Early studies focused on understanding entrepreneurs' characteristics and behaviours, but recent research has shifted to understanding factors that precede entrepreneurship.

### Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention is a conscious state of mind that leads to action and focuses on starting a new business (Bird, 1988). It is influenced by social, psychological, environmental, and cultural factors and includes motivational aspects. Government interventions and initiatives can target youth interested in starting a business (Kim-Soon et al., 2013). Entrepreneurial intentions also influence the actions of existing organizations, as individuals pursue opportunities in well-established firms (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1986). Entrepreneurship education correlates with entrepreneurial intention (Bae et al., 2014). Value, needs, wants, habits, and beliefs can affect the intention to carry out a behaviour (Bird, 1988; Lee & Wong, 2004). Antecedents (Ajzen, 1991; Liñán, 2004), situational factors (Ajzen, 1987; Boyd & Vozikis, 1994 and Lee & Wong, 2004), and exogenous factors (Krueger, 1993) also play a role in influencing entrepreneurial intention. The proactive personality concept reflects stable behavioural tendencies, separate from self-consciousness (Crant, 1993), the need for achievement, dominance, and a locus of control. People with proactive behaviour seek out desirable environments to capitalize on their strengths and needs (Crant, 1996).

### Entrepreneurial Intention Behaviour Theories

Researchers use various theories, models, and research on students and individuals to understand factors affecting entrepreneurial intention (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). Intention-based process models can capture the complexities of entrepreneurship and provide a framework for building robust, testable models (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000; MacMillan & Katz, 1992). Some models can explain the entire entrepreneurial process even before an individual establishes a firm (Bird, 1992; Carsrud & Krueger, 1995; Katz & Gartner, 1988; Krueger & Brazeal, 1994; Krueger, 2005; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). Some commonly used theories include the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), McClelland Achievement Theory, and Structural Intention Models. These models highlight in-depth phenomena like personality factors, family background factors, and social and environmental factors (Mwange, 2018). This study discusses several selected approaches and theories frequently used by researchers in their diverse fields of study.

### Vroom's Expectancy Model (1964)

In 1964, Victor Vroom introduced the Expectancy theory, which posits that individuals have different goals and can be motivated by specific expectations. This theory explains an individual's processes of making choices based on a two-stage sequence of expectations: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Vroom, 1964). Ajzen (1991) explained that motivational factors influence behaviour and shape an individual's behavioural intention.

Renko et al. (2012) observed that various types of valence were related to different behavioural intent and outcomes, suggesting that this theory can help determine motivation factors for nascent entrepreneurs. However, the Expectancy



theory is incomplete and comprehensive, involving many variables. Human nature, behaviour, attitudes, and motivations are more subjective than objective, making it difficult to test and implement. Critics argue that the model does not provide specific solutions to motivational problems and assumes that individuals are rational and logically calculating. The theory also assumes that individuals make conscious decisions at the start of their efforts. However, it has been observed that individuals make decisions only after performing their activities and try to rationalise them later (Aswathappa, 2005).

### Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling, and imitating individuals' behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions. It considers how environmental and cognitive factors influence human learning and behaviour (McLeod, 2016), and states that human behaviour is the continuous reciprocal intention between influences of one's actions and environment (Bandura, 1977; Mwange, 2018). Bandura expanded the theory and renamed it the social cognitive theory (SCLT), providing a framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human behaviour (Green & Peil, 2009). SCLT explains socialization broadly, including processes where individuals acquire society's norms of thought and action. Self-efficacy in Bandura's theory introduces an explanatory model of human behaviour, causally influencing expected behaviour outcomes but not vice versa (Bandura, 1982, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2006). The entrepreneurial process depends on human capital (Brinckmann & Kim, 2015) and team structure (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003), which affect entrepreneurs when there is interaction between individuals concerning roles taken (Cope & Watts, 2000). Self-efficacy beliefs exert diverse effects through cognitive, motivational, emotional, and decisional processes. Effective self-regulation involves actively monitoring the performance environment, developing task strategies, skillfully implementing them, and monitoring results (Locke & Latham, 1990).

### Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a key factor in understanding entrepreneurial behaviour, as it refers to an individual's belief in their ability to achieve a certain level of performance or desired outcome (Bandura, 1994). It is formed through the development of complex cognitive, social, linguistic, and physical skills acquired through education and experience (Bandura, 1982; Gist, 1987). Acquiring skills through past achievements strengthens self-efficacy and contributes to higher aspirations and expectations of positive future performance (Herron & Sapienza, 1992). Research has found that pre-training self-efficacy measures positively predict a person's learning performance (Gist, Schwoerer, & Rosen, 1989; Martocchio & Weber, 1992). Self-efficacy is considered the explanatory variable of entrepreneurial intention (McGee et al., 2009) and positively influences it (BarNir et al., 2011; Mortan et al., 2014). It is a strong predictor of individual outcomes and helps understand why some individuals avoid becoming entrepreneurs and identify areas of strength or weakness for developing entrepreneurial potential and improving the performance of existing entrepreneurs (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994).

### The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Relativity (TRA) was developed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975 to study individual attitudes and behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). It combines two sets of belief variables: behavioural attitudes and subjective norms. TRA aims to predict and explain human behaviour in specific contexts, excluding non-volitional behaviours like impulses (Langer, 1989) or those requiring skills, unique opportunities, resources, or cooperation (Liska, 1984). An individual's behavioural intention predicts their behaviour, determined by their attitude and subjective norm. Attitude is determined by behavioural beliefs about the likely consequences of performing the behaviour, while subjective norm is determined by normative beliefs about the likelihood of important referents encouraging or discouraging the behaviour.

### The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is a widely used behaviour model in social science that focuses on the intention to perform a specific behaviour. It is built on the Theory of Relativity (TRA) framework and is differentiated by the dimension of perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1985, 1988, 1991). Intention is crucial in entrepreneurial decision-making, as it requires an intentional cognitive process. The TPB represents attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, which predict the intention to perform the behaviour (Moriano et al., 2011). Attitudes towards behaviour are determined by an individual's behavioural beliefs (Ajzen, 1988, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), while subjective norms are a significant determinant of intentions (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Perceived behavioural control involves how much a person controls the behaviour and how confident they feel about their ability to perform it. However, the TPB theory is weak as it exclusively focuses on rational reasoning and excludes unconscious influences on behaviour (Sheeran et al., 2013).

### McClelland Achievement Theory

McClelland's achievement theory suggests that a high need for achievement drives young individuals to pursue entrepreneurial positions (Entrialgo et al., 2000), leading to increased satisfaction and success. This drive often leads to problem-solving, setting targets, and innovation in improving performance (Littunen, 2000; Utsch & Rauch, 2000). McClelland (1987) identified a correlation between people's behaviours and high achievement motives, indicating that entrepreneurial behaviour is influenced by successful individuals exemplifying successful individuals in the same field. Comparative studies show that the need for achievement is more significantly related to entrepreneurship and personality than other characteristics (Littunen, 2000). However, researchers criticize the theory for its lack of predictive power and validity of the Thematic Apperception Test projection used to determine individual needs.

### Davidsson Economic-Psychological Model

Davidsson's (1995) economic-psychological model suggests that conviction is the primary determinant of intention based on general and domain attitudes. Factors influencing intention



include situation, general attitudes, domain attitudes, and personal background. Intention is good predictors of planned behaviour, especially if it is exceptional, complex, or irregular (Krueger et al., 2000). Education in entrepreneurship also influences intention (Idehen & Akhator, 2021). Entrepreneurial behaviour occurs when there is a connection between entrepreneurial intention and business opportunity (Kautonen, Gelderen, and Fink, 2015), but the moment for that applicability may not occur. Studies show that starting a new venture is common when people can access financial capital (Blanchflower et al., 2001), which allows them to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities and set up a firm effectively. However, some studies have observed that an individual may start a new venture without much capital, but Davidsson's theory does not rule out the possibility of starting a firm without much capital.

### Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation

Robinson and colleagues developed the Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation scale, which suggests that multiple personality types and demographic characteristics influence an entrepreneur's attitude (Robinson et al., 1991). They argue that attitudes predict entrepreneurial intentions more profitably than personality traits and can be changed deliberately to promote entrepreneurship. The scale measures attitude prediction through four sub-scales: achievement, self-esteem, personal control, and innovation, and three reactions: affective, cognitive, or conative. However, it has limitations compared to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in measuring attitudes. The attitude model of entrepreneurship has implications for entrepreneurship education programs, as attitudes are subject to change and can be easily influenced by educators and practitioners (Souitaris et al., 2007).

### Krueger's Integrated Model

Krueger and Carsrud (1993) established the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as the reference model in entrepreneurial intention research. They suggested that attitude in the TPB encompasses perceived desirability in the SEE model, and subjective norms overlap with desirability and feasibility. Attitudes can translate into desires, leading to intentions to act and direct action (Bagozzi, 1992). However, they argued for further research to test the causal relationship between desires, intentions, and self-predictions.

### Entrepreneurial Potential Model

The Entrepreneurial Potential Model, which combines the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) (Shapero, 1982), identifies three key constructs: perceived desirability (attitude and social norms), perceived feasibility (self-efficacy), and credibility. These constructs define the potential to start a business. Entrepreneurship education should enhance students' perceived feasibility by increasing their knowledge, building confidence, and encouraging self-efficacy (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994). Additionally, promoting students' perceived desirability for entrepreneurship is crucial. Schlaegel and Koenig (2014) compared these theoretical studies and their applicability in the entrepreneurial field. The TPB and EEM

support research demonstrating that conscious and deliberate behaviour can be predicted through intention.

### Shapero's Model of the 'Entrepreneurial Event' (SEE)

Shapero and Sokol's model explains how cultural and social factors influence an individual's perceptions of entrepreneurship (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). It focuses on the perception of an individual's desirability, propensity to act, and feasibility. Perceived desirability refers to the personal attractiveness of starting a new venture, while perceived feasibility is how one feels capable of starting a business (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Propensity to act is an individual's disposition to act on their decisions, reflecting the volitional aspects of intentions. The decision to initiate a new venture requires intentions, a reasonable opportunity, and a precipitating event. Credibility and propensity to act are essential for entrepreneurs to start a business. Krueger (1993) argues that perceived desirability in the SEE model corresponds to the TPB model's attitude and subjective norms elements, considering desirability as a result of social and cultural influence. Perceptions are critical and can precipitate a significant increase in entrepreneurial activity.

### Bird's Model of Intention

Barbara Bird developed Bird's intention model, highlighting the importance of intentions for organisational development and implementing entrepreneurial ideas (Bird, 1988). Intentions are assumed to be a blend of factors like rational, analytic, cause-effect thinking and intuitive, holistic, and contextual thinking (Doan et al., 2013). The model was further developed by Bird & Jelinek (1988), and Boyd & Vozikis (1994); however, Fayolle et al. (2006) needed more empirical evidence.

### Krueger's structural model

Krueger's model (1993) suggests that the interaction between perceived support and barriers influences the intention to become an entrepreneur. This concept is adapted from Shapero's model and is crucial in understanding the impact of personality factors on attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Social norms, which can vary across cultures, can also influence entrepreneurial intentions. In some countries, social norms may provide more support for entrepreneurial activities than in others (McGrath & MacMillan, 1992; Davidsson & Wiklund, 1997; Krueger & Kickul, 2006). Additionally, studies have been conducted on the roles of universities in entrepreneurial intentions using the structural model in entrepreneurship (Crant, 1996; Autio et al., 2001; Lüthje & Franke, 2003).

### Cognitive Experiential Self Theory (CEST)

The Shapero model measures student demographics to understand intentions of experiential cognitive styles (Krueger, 2017), which impact human judgments differently. Individuals can shift among these styles based on work difficulty, environment, and individual contrasts (Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). Cognitive styles are separate elements of mindfulness that predict different sides of people (Ornstein, 1972). Seymour Epstein developed the Cognitive Experiential Self Theory (CEST) in 1998, incorporating self, learning, cognitive,



psychoanalytic, and emotions theory (Epstein, 1998). CEST explains that people process information using rational and experiential information-processing systems, with experiential systems adapted empirically through experience and rational systems through verbal reasoning. CEST theory suggests that cognitive style may have important implications for intentions (Kickul & Krueger, 2004).

### Summary of Entrepreneurial Intention Theories

The researcher concludes that an individual's entrepreneurial intentions cannot be explained using just one theory and model. Besides personality traits, there are many internal, external, pull and push motivational factors. These environmental, social, cultural, political, and economic factors can lead individuals towards entrepreneurship and show entrepreneurial behaviour. Entrepreneurial intention theories can guide and help researchers build a conceptual framework about how intentions are formed, as these theories discuss different determinants and factors which can predict and influence intentions. Determinants of entrepreneurial behaviour can be studied for conducting future research; the findings can be analysed, and the results can be made available to different policymakers, institutions and practitioners to make them aware of the factors which play an important role in enhancing the entrepreneurial intention of youths so that they can incorporate the findings in their policies or update the entrepreneurship education curriculum.

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