Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intentions among University Students: A Theoretical Framework

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Abstract
Entrepreneurial intention has emerged as a fundamental concept in entrepreneurship research, especially within the realm of higher education. To foster an entrepreneurial culture, promote innovation, and support economic development, it is essential to understand the factors that drive university students' entrepreneurial intent. This paper presents a thorough theoretical examination of the primary factors affecting EI among higher education students by integrating foundational theories with modern empirical findings. Utilizing the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Shapero's Model of the Entrepreneurial Event (SEE), and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), this paper delineates a variety of individual, contextual, and institutional elements that influence students' entrepreneurial intentions. By integrating key theoretical insights and empirical evidence, this paper enhances the understanding of the psychological and institutional factors that drive entrepreneurial intention, providing significant implications for both researchers and practitioners aiming to foster entrepreneurship among university students. In addition, the study incorporates a sustainability perspective by linking entrepreneurial intentions with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the role of green and social entrepreneurship in promoting environmentally and socially responsible ventures, particularly within Asian and emerging economies characterized by rapid economic transformation and sustainability challenges. The findings further highlight important policy implications, suggesting that fostering sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems through education, institutional support, and government initiatives is essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intentions, foundational theories

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is universally recognised as a growth force, source of employment and social transformation (Audretsch, 2007; Reynolds et al., 2005). Moreover, entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly accepted as one of the core means through which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be realised, specifically in ensuring inclusive economic development (SDG 8), innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), as well as sustainable communities (SDG 11) (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018). The sustainable and socially responsible entrepreneurship activities lead not only to economic progression but also to environmental safety and social welfare (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). In today's knowledge-based economy, universities play a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurial attitudes and providing students with the skills they need to launch and grow creative firms (Kuratko, 2005; Nabi et al., 2017). As a result, research and policy now place a high priority on comprehending the factors that influence higher education students' entrepreneurial ambitions (EI). Entrepreneurship is even more relevant in the Asian and emerging economies, where the economic transformation, demographic changes, and technological changes offer opportunities and challenges at the same time (Acs et al., 2018). Although Asia has recorded a lot of improvement in the entrepreneurial systems, the problems of environmental degradation, lack of resources, institutional flaws, and unequal opportunities remain relevant to the entrepreneurial conduct (Dote-Pardo et al., 2025). These contextual processes point to the necessity of comprehending entrepreneurial intents in the region-specific socio-economic and sustainability systems.

1.1 Defining Entrepreneurial Intention

According to Krueger and Carsrud (1993), entrepreneurial intention is a person's personal conviction that they want to start a new firm and are now making the necessary preparations to do so. There is a gap between intentions and actions, and thus, the EI analysis provides forecasting information on entrepreneurial behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), attitudes toward entrepreneurship, subjective standards, and perceived behavioural control all have an impact on intentions, which are direct antecedents of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).This means in the field of

entrepreneurship that the students are likely to pursue entrepreneurial paths when they believe that entrepreneurship is a good thing, socially acceptable and personally attainable (Krueger et al., 2000).

1.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Entrepreneurial Intentions

The TPB has been the most common theoretical framework that is used to explain how entrepreneurial intentions are formed. It assumes that the attitude is the assessment of entrepreneurship a person makes, subjective norms are perceived social pressure, and perceived behavioral control is confidence in the possibility of being able to do entrepreneurial activities (Ajzen, 1991; Linan and Chen, 2009). There is a great number of studies that affirm the applicability of TPB in entrepreneurship education, which indicates that it is capable of forecasting EI among students (Kolvereid, 1996; Liñan and Fayolle, 2015). Also, the Entrepreneurial Event Model (SEE) of Shapero and Sokol (1982) proposes that when displacement events, like unemployment, role models or exposure to entrepreneurship programs make an enterprise appear desirable, feasible and action-prone, then the entrepreneurial action occurs. Additionally, self-efficacy is highlighted as one of the factors influencing entrepreneurial behaviour by the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) has a role in persistence and risk-taking as well as conversion of attitudes to intentions (Zhao et al., 2005). The overlap of the perceived behavioral control of TPB with self-efficacy of SCT highlights the importance of confidence and perceived ability in influencing entrepreneurial intentions.

1.3 Importance of Studying Entrepreneurial Intentions in Higher Education

Colleges and universities (HEIs) are major sources of entrepreneurial talent. Universities promote an atmosphere that improves the interest of the students in entrepreneurship through education, mentoring, incubators, and exposure to entrepreneurial systems (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008; Nabi et al., 2017). Understanding what influences EI among students may help the universities to better design their curriculum, properly resource them, and develop interventions which encourage entrepreneurship. In the contemporary competitive world, many graduates are facing limited employment prospects, and the universities have decided to promote entrepreneurship as a viable career opportunity (Gibb, 2002). Also, globalisation, technology, and digitalisation have made creativity, adaptability, and opportunity recognition important entrepreneurial competencies to be employed (Rae, 2006; Fayolle, 2013). Therefore, the study of antecedents of EI in university students is not an academic but a social need. Higher education institutions are also important in encouraging environmentally and socially responsible entrepreneurial thinking with respect to sustainability, thus being in a position to be part of sustainable development via green innovation and inclusive business models(Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Vuorio et al., 2018).

1.4 Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Intentions

Scholars have identified three high-level groups of EI determinants in students: institutional, contextual, and individual levels.

- ***Individual-Level Factors:*** Attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceived behavioural control, and entrepreneurship self-efficacy are always psychological constructs that predict EI (Krueger et al., 2000; Liang and Fayolle, 2015). The EI has also been positively related to personality traits, such as proactiveness, risk-taking tendencies, and openness to experience (Zhao and Seibert, 2006; Brandstaetter, 2011). Besides, perceived feasibility and desire to become an entrepreneur are supported by the presence of experience in entrepreneurship (through a family business or past entrepreneurship experiences) (Hessels et al., 2008).
- ***Institutional-Level Factors:*** Universities play significant roles in entrepreneurship education (EE), perceived university support, and mentorship opportunities. According to research, properly implemented EE programs improve attitudes and self-efficacy, thereby boosting EI (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008; Martin et al., 2013). Nevertheless, EE will only be successful under the condition of pedagogical strategies, such as experiential, project-based, and mentorship-based models, that will generate a greater impact (Nabi et al., 2017). Incubators, funding programs, and innovation centres are university-level resources that enhance students in their perceived entrepreneurial viability (Guerrero et al., 2016).
- ***Contextual Factors:*** The socio-cultural norms, perceived social support, and national policies affect the social desirability of entrepreneurship (Liñan et al., 2011; Kelley et al., 2017). As an example, individualism and achievement-oriented cultures usually have a higher EI degree, and the one of uncertainty avoidance and risk aversion has a lower EI level (Hofstede, 2001; Stephan and Uhlaner, 2010). Besides, the external environment, such as economic conditions and accessibility to networks of entrepreneurs, is a major moderator in intention formation. These contextual factors are also influenced by rapid urbanisation, changing policy frameworks, and challenges of sustainability in the context of Asian economies (Ács et al., 2017; Dote-Pardo et al., 2025) that determine the desirability and reality of entrepreneurship.

1.5 The Role of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

ESE is one of the numerous determinants that has emerged as a critical mediating factor between education and experience and entrepreneurial intention (Zhao et al., 2005). The learners with high ESE scores are more likely to think about entrepreneurship as a possible alternative, solve problems, and transfer their studies into practice. Therefore, it is important to encourage EI by implementing programs that are geared towards increasing ESE (with the help of experiential learning, mentoring, and exposure to successful entrepreneurial stories). Within the framework of sustainable entrepreneurship, ESE also allows people to respond to environmental and social problems (Vuorio et al., 2018), which supports their ability to create innovative and responsible approaches to business. Finally, entrepreneurship intention among students of higher learning is determined by various cognitive, institutional, and contextual influences. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with the Entrepreneurial Event Model (SEE) by Shapero and the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) can provide a complete model of how these factors interact to influence the entrepreneurial attitudes of students. With the quest to become entrepreneurial ecosystems, there is a need to explore the antecedents of EI to establish evidence-based pedagogical approaches and nurture the next generation of entrepreneurs. Moreover, these endeavours should be aligned with sustainability and regional priorities in the Asian economies to enhance long-term, inclusive, and sustainable economic development (Urbano et al., 2019; Dote-Pardo et al., 2025).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview and Theoretical Framing

Entrepreneurial intention is a conscious psychological state that helps a person focus his attention on a new business venture (Krueger et al., 2000). It is based on cognitive-intentional theories, especially the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which proposes the explanations of intentions based on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the same way, the concept of EI as proposed by Shapero and Sokol (1982) in the Entrepreneurial Event Model (SEE) is viewed as the ability to act in a desired manner due to perceived desirability and feasibility. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986, 1997) also focuses on self-efficacy, which implies that entrepreneurial abilities-based confidence (ESE) is significant in intention formation. These are the frameworks that are highly used to explain the entrepreneurial intentions of students (Liñan and Chen, 2009; Zhao et al., 2005). Recent research combines these models to model multi-level effects on EI, such as cognitive, institutional, and socio-contextual (Liñan and Fayolle, 2015). Indicatively, Gonza-Zamayo et al. (2024) affirmed that there is a structural relationship that exists between the perceived university support, ESE, and EI. On the whole, these models emphasise that EI is a dynamic phenomenon that is determined by personal cognition, environmental facilitation, and situational standards. These theoretical approaches have been expanded in recent years to include sustainable entrepreneurship that focuses on the integration of economic, environmental, and social goals (Schaltegger et al., 2018). Sustainable entrepreneurial intention indicates that people are interested in starting businesses that help to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and thus, this is a way of integrating the traditional intention models with those of sustainability (Vuorio et al., 2018).

2.2 Entrepreneurship Education (EE)

EE is generally well known as one of the factors affecting entrepreneurial intention. In theory, it helps to develop human capital through increasing knowledge, skills, and attitudes of entrepreneurship (Kuratko, 2005; Fayolle and Gailly, 2015). Pedagogies based on experiential and competency learning, with reference to the theory of experiential learning of Kolb (Kolb, 1984), are especially useful in the creation of entrepreneurial attitudes and perceived practicability. The meta-analytic studies by Nabi et al. (2017) prove that EE has a positive impact on EI as it raises the perceived desirability and feasibility, but the effects depend on the program design and delivery. This is backed up by empirical research: Montes et al. (2023) mention the efficiency of the experiential and project-based learning process, and Sun et al. (2023) prove that EE increases mindset, motivation, and previous exposure. Nguyen et al. (2025) show that EE enhances the ESE and lessens the perceived obstacles to social entrepreneurial intention. All in all, EE is an initiator of EI as it leads to cognitive readiness and emotional involvement. Its efficacy, however, is related to content and pedagogic and contextual integration, and longitudinal and cross-cultural studies (e.g., Nabi et al., 2017) note the necessity of ongoing institutional support and mentorship. Recent research also suggests that entrepreneurship education is very important in enhancing sustainable and green entrepreneurship, by instilling the concept of environmental awareness, ethical decision-making and social responsibility in the students (Fellnhofer, 2019). Sustainability-driven entrepreneurship education has been observed to influence students in Asian and emerging economies to take part in green innovation and social enterprise development.

2.3 University Support and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Universities also begin to act as entrepreneurial ecosystems by availing structural, financial, and relational help to create EI (Etzkowitz, 2003; Guerrero et al., 2016). Perceived university support (PUS) is the institutional structures, institutions, and policies that facilitate entrepreneurial learning and venture formation, increasing the viability and validity of entrepreneurship in academia. Empirical research has shown that PUS and EI are always positively correlated. Galvão et al. (2024) also discovered that ESE is reinforced by university support and, therefore, improves EI, whereas Gonzalez-Tamayo et al. (2024) also defined ESE as an intermediary between institutional support and entrepreneurial intention in students. The incubators and innovation centres of the university also help in the development of EI due to the access to networks, mentorship, and funding (Ayad et al., 2022), and such policies as flexible curricula and entrepreneurial competitions help to cultivate an innovation-focused mentality. All in all, universities are drivers of entrepreneurial development due to the academic and ecosystem involvement. Universities are also encouraging green innovation hubs, social enterprise incubators, and sustainability-oriented startup programs in the context of sustainable entrepreneurship, especially in Asian universities, where institutional activities are responding to environmental issues and assisting in the development (Urbano et al., 2019; Dote-Pardo et al., 2025) of an inclusive economy.

2.4 Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE)

ESE, which is founded on the theory of self-efficacy of Bandura (1997), implies that the person possesses self-confidence regarding their ability to perform entrepreneurial tasks effectively. It is a verified predictor of emotional intelligence (EI) and conceptually connected to perceived behavioural control in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Zhao et al., 2005; Liñan and Chen, 2009). The most recent empirical research supports the knowledge of the mediating and moderating roles of ESE. To demonstrate that ESE is the mediator in the relationship between global competence and entrepreneurial intention, Zhang (2022) demonstrated the relationship between the two variables among university students. In the same manner, Galvão et al. (2024) confirmed the mediating role of ESE between perceived university support and EI. Taneja (2024) found that ESE also predicts entrepreneurial success beyond the intention stage, which adds to the fact that it is significant in the long run. Besides, ESE is multidimensional, that is, it involves opportunity recognition, mobilising resources, risk management, and leadership (McGee et al., 2009). Bergenholtz et al. (2021) argued that ESE is what can be developed and improved with the help of certain interventions. These findings support the assertion that ESE is a determinant of EI and one of the most critical mediating factors linking education, support, and social environment to entrepreneurial outcomes. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the sustainability approach also includes confidence in dealing with environmental and social problems that allow individuals to participate in green innovation, sustainability business, and socially responsible entrepreneurship.

2.5 Social Support and Role Models

The social support and role models who become entrepreneurs are important in developing the motivation of students using the normative and observational learning mechanisms. According to SCT, the desire and perceived attractiveness of being an entrepreneur are increased when one notices successful entrepreneurs (Bandura, 1997). This positive correlation between role models and entrepreneurial intention (EI) was first determined by Bosma et al. (2012), which was subsequently supported by other studies. According to Mothibi and Malebana (2025), students' EI and entrepreneurial behaviour are significantly predicted by the availability of role models and their tendency to take risks, whereas Gonzalez-Tamayo et al. (2024) signified the parental entrepreneurial background as an essential predecessor to ESE and EI. Similar gender-specific results are also observed, as Passavanti et al. (2024) reveal a greater EI in female students receiving female role models, which can be useful in overcoming gender stereotypes. Also, peers, alumni groups, and mentorship are relevant sources of social capital, enhancing the attitudes of entrepreneurs (Mothibi and Malebana, 2025). In summary, social support contributes to the desirability and feasibility of entrepreneurship, which supplements the efforts of universities and the government. The exposure to role models engaging in social businesses and sustainable projects also helps in the growth of inclusive entrepreneurship, especially in developing and Asian economies, where there is the rise of community-based and impact-oriented entrepreneurship (Valencia-Arias et al., 2024).

2.6 Government Support and Policy Environment

The policy environment is a key factor in the entrepreneurship ecosystem and, therefore, in students' entrepreneurial intentions. Fiscal incentives, grants, incubation programs, and educational policies are some of the various Government policies that support entrepreneurship (Audretsch & Belitski, 2021). According to Prasannath (2024), these policies can significantly determine entrepreneurial orientation and small business performance, affecting students' perceptions of entrepreneurship as a possible career. Additional policies that make entrepreneurship

appealing and feasible are national programs such as startups, innovation hubs, and young entrepreneurship initiatives (Huang et al., 2024). As Nguyen et al. (2025) highlighted, the education institutional-policy frameworks ensure that the economic education on entrepreneurship is carried out effectively through the regulation of sufficient financial funding of the educational system. Nonetheless, these policies have a different effect on the local ecosystems depending on how they are applied and their maturity. In general, government policies are macro-level facilitators that support micro-level factors, including the education of entrepreneurship and the support of the university to develop a holistic entrepreneurial ecosystem. In the recent past, the governments in the Asian economies have been focusing more on the policies favouring green entrepreneurship, social enterprises and inclusive innovations, which are intended to make the entrepreneurial efforts aligned with the goals of sustainable development and in relation to the environmental concerns (Urbano et al., 2019; Valencia-Arias et al., 2024).

2.7 Cultural and Contextual Influences

The cognitive precursors of EI are highly affected by cultural values and contextual factors in the determinants of attitudes, norms, and risk perceptions. Liñan et al. (2011) confirmed that culture moderates the predictive TPB constructs, which are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control in EI. This can be explained by the recent cross-national evidence that subjective norms play a stronger role in collectivist cultures and personal attitudes, and ESE prevail in individualistic environments (Galvão et al., 2024). Also, opportunity structures are influenced by economic development rates and the level of maturation of entrepreneurial ecosystems. In the developing world, institutional voids may prevent the conversion of EI into a real entrepreneurial action (Liñan and Fayolle, 2015). So, a cultural and contextual approach is obliged in developing the entrepreneurship teaching and support programs. In general, educational, psychological, social, institutional, and policy factors interact in a complex way to determine the entrepreneurial intentions of students. Cultural values, sustainability, and socio-economic conditions also shape sustainable entrepreneurial intent, especially in supporting green innovation, inclusive entrepreneurship, and social responsibility, especially in Asia and the emerging economies (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Vuorio et al., 2018).

3. Methodology

3.1Research Design

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Social Cognitive Theory, and Shapero and Sokol's (1982) Entrepreneurial Event Model serve as the foundation for this study's theoretical-conceptual design. This design focuses on the concept synthesis as opposed to empirical validation and seeks to explain the combination of diverse contextual and cognitive influences to determine the impact of intentions to entrepreneurship among students of institutions of higher learning. Since it has been observed that the study of entrepreneurship is a complex construct, which is molded by individual cognition, institutional settings, and broader socio-political systems, a theoretical approach is considered to be the best to outline these complex interrelationships (Fayolle & Liñan, 2014). As a result, the study proceeds with the logical argument and conceptual synthesis in order to develop empirically testable propositions to be investigated further. It is also in the research design that a sustainability-oriented perspective is included because entrepreneurial intention is also extended to Sustainable Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI), where ventures are geared towards economic, environmental, and social value creation (particularly in the emerging Asian economies).

3.2 Conceptual Foundation

Entrepreneurial intention refers to the intention of an individual to establish a new business or venture that is new (Krueger et al., 2000). In this paper, this idea is furthered to the notion of Sustainable Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI), which is considered as those ventures that are compatible with both economic, environmental, and social goals. According to the TPB, attitude toward entrepreneurship (ATE), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PBC) modulate the intention, which is a proximal antecedent of entrepreneurial behaviour.

The current research expands the Theory of Planned Behaviour by integrating institutional and social-environmental factors, specifically:

- Entrepreneurship Education (EE)
- University Support (US)
- Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE)
- Social Support (SS)
- Government Support (GS)
- Cultural Context (CC)

It is hypothesized that these are the elements that contribute to or mediate the elements of TPB, hence contributing to or impairing the development of EI in students. Sustainability-related variables like environmental awareness and sustainability orientation contribute to sustainability by influencing perceptions of green innovation and responsible entrepreneurship ((Valencia-Arias et al., 2024) towards society. Social Cognitive Theory goes further to provide the relationship between the external supports and the internal motivation through self-efficacy and social learning (Bandura, 1997). A combination of TPB, SCT and SEE leads to a multilevel conceptual framework. Moreover,

regional moderators applicable to the Asian economies are also integrated, in which the institutional environment, sustainability issues, and cultural values are factors that shape SEI formation.

3.3Conceptual Model and Theoretical Propositions

3.3.1 Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention: Entrepreneurship education (EE) promotes entrepreneurial knowledge, attitudes, and skills in students through formal and experiential learning (Kuratko, 2005). Under TPB, EE increases the attitude towards entrepreneurship through creating more perceived desirability and self-efficacy, whereas in SCT, it is used as both a vicarious and an enactive learning environment. Numerous empirical studies suggest that EE positively impacts EI because it enhances the awareness, perceived feasibility, and entrepreneurial self-confidence levels (Fayolle and Gailly, 2015; Nabi et al., 2017; Montes et al., 2023).

Proposition 1 (P1): Entrepreneurship education has a positive effect on students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Proposition 1a (P1a): EE has a positive impact on SEI as it promotes environmental awareness and sustainability competencies.

Proposition 1b (P1b): Entrepreneurial self-efficacy acts as a mediator in the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention.

3.3.2 University Support and Entrepreneurial Intention:

University support is the institutional framework, culture, and resources that support entrepreneurial activities in higher education (Guerrero et al., 2016). It encompasses physical (e.g., funding, incubators, and mentorship) and non-physical (e.g., institutional climate, academic flexibility, and the legitimacy of entrepreneurship within the community) elements. Perceived university support in TPB increases perceived behavioral control and positive attitudes by reducing structural and psychological barriers to entrepreneurship (Liñan and Chen, 2009). According to recent studies, the US is one of the significant predictors of entrepreneurial intention (EI), both directly and indirectly via ESE (Galvão et al., 2024; González-Tamayo et al., 2024).

Proposition 2 (P2): Perceived university support has a positive effect on students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Proposition 2a (P2a): University support enhances SEI through green innovation, social entrepreneurship, and sustainability-driven incubation, especially in Asian contexts.

Proposition 2b (P2b): Entrepreneurial self-efficacy acts as a mediator in the relationship between perceived university support and entrepreneurial intention.

3.3.3 Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE):

ESE is the level of trust that a person has in their potential of being able to effectively perform entrepreneurial functions and activities (Zhao et al., 2005; McGee et al., 2009). It was based on Social Cognitive Theory and represents the cognitive and motivational nature of entrepreneurial behaviour that affects persistence and resilience to uncertainty. ESE on the conceptual level replicates the perceived behavioral control of TPB and the feasibility dimension of the Entrepreneurial Event Model. It has a direct contribution to changing positive attitudes into intentions and further acts (Liñan and Fayolle, 2015). Proposition 3 (P3): Entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively affects entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, ESE functions as a crucial mediator that connects external support systems (education, university, social, and government) with entrepreneurial intention by enhancing confidence and behavioral readiness.

3.3.4 Social Support and Role Models:

Social support (SS) comprises family, peer, and community support, which provides emotional, informational, and instrumental support to entrepreneurship (Bosma et al., 2012). Social support increases subjective norms in the context of TPB and vicarious learning in the context of SCT in the role of role modelling (Bandura, 1997). As a result of being exposed to entrepreneurial role models, self-efficacy and entrepreneurship as a good career choice are enhanced and legitimized (Mothibi and Malebana, 2025). Positive social circles also reduce the perceptions of risk and uncertainty, thus enhancing determination towards the entrepreneurial goals.

Proposition 4 (P4): Social support positively influences students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Proposition 4a (P4a): Social support enhances SEI by promoting social enterprises and inclusive entrepreneurship, particularly in Asian contexts.

Proposition 4b (P4b): Entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the relationship between social support and entrepreneurial intention.

3.3.5 Government Support and Policy Environment:

Government support (GS) is defined as policies and institutional provisions that create favourable opportunities in the area of entrepreneurship (tax incentives, startup grants, incubator funding, policies to support the youth in entrepreneurship) at the macro level (Audretsch and Belitski, 2021). Such policies impact perceived behavioral control and subjective norms that influence the measures individuals can make to determine the viability and legitimacy of entrepreneurship as a career choice (Prasannath, 2024; Huang et al., 2024). The available empirical data suggest that the favourable

business climates introduced by the government enhance how students perceive the sustainability and attractiveness of the entrepreneurship field (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Proposition 5 (P5): Government support positively influences students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Proposition 5a (P5a): Government support enhances SEI through policies promoting green entrepreneurship, sustainable innovation, and inclusive development in Asian economies.

Proposition 5b (P5b): The association between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial ambition is mediated by government support, and it is more prominent when perceived government support is stronger.

Proposition 5c (P5c): Government support moderates the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions, such that the relationship is stronger when perceived government support is high.

Proposition 5d (P5d): Government support moderates the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and sustainable entrepreneurial intentions, such that the relationship is stronger when perceived government support is high.

3.3.6 Cultural Context and Entrepreneurial Intention:

Culture is also important in the field of entrepreneurship since it determines the beliefs and values and norms of behaviour, which determine risk tolerance, achievement motives, and innovation attitudes (Hofstede, 2001; Liñan et al., 2011). The cultural context will moderate the level of attitudes and subjective norms in TPB and will have an impact on the perceived desirability and legitimacy of entrepreneurial actions in the Entrepreneurial Event Model. In a comparison study, it has been shown in more recent research (Galvão et al., 2024) that in collectivist societies, social approval and family expectations have a stronger influence, whereas in individualist societies, individual attitudes and self-efficacy are more dominant.

Proposition 6 (P6): The cultural context moderates the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention, indicating that this relationship is more robust in cultures characterized by high individualism and low uncertainty avoidance.

Proposition 6a (P6a): In Asian contexts, cultural and institutional factors moderate the ESE and SEI relationship, particularly through sustainability awareness and social value orientation.

3.4Operationalization of Constructs

Also, the construct of Sustainable Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI) could be operationalized as the intention to start businesses that will combine economic, environmental, and social goals and sustainability-related attitudes and competencies.

Construct	Definition	Representative Sources
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	The conscious state of mind of an individual that directs their attention and actions towards starting a business venture.	Krueger et al. (2000); Liñán & Chen (2009)
Entrepreneurship Education (EE)	The organized curricular and co-curricular programs are designed to cultivate entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and mindsets.	Fayolle & Gailly (2015); Nabi et al. (2017)
University Support (US)	The institutional framework and policies that encourage entrepreneurial activities and mindsets among students.	Guerrero et al. (2016); Galvão et al. (2024)
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE)	An individual's confidence in their capability to successfully execute entrepreneurial tasks.	Bandura (1997); Zhao et al. (2005)
Social Support (SS)	The emotional, informational, and practical assistance provided by family, peers, and mentors.	Bosma et al. (2012); Mothibi & Malebana (2025)
Government Support (GS)	The public policy initiatives, incentives, and programs that foster favourable conditions for entrepreneurship.	Audretsch & Belitski (2021); Prasannath (2024)
Cultural Context (CC)	It refers to the collective beliefs and values that influence how individuals perceive entrepreneurship.	Hofstede (2001); Liñán et al. (2011)
Sustainable Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI)	The intention to start entrepreneurial ventures that simultaneously pursue economic viability, environmental sustainability, and social value creation, aligning with sustainable development goals.	Muñoz & Cohen (2018); Vuorio et al. (2018); Valencia-Arias et al. (2024)

3.5Proposed Conceptual Framework

The model proposed (Figures 1,2, and 3) conceptualizes the entrepreneurial intention as the outcome of numerous multi-level factors which merge cognitive, institutional and policy aspects.

In addition to the existing framework, the sustainability-oriented relationships (P1a, P2a, P4a,

P5a, P5d, and P6c) are incorporated through the inclusion of Sustainable Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI) as an extended outcome variable. Accordingly, direct relationships are established between Entrepreneurship Education, University Support, Social Support, Government Support, and SEI. Furthermore, cultural and policy contexts act as moderating factors in shaping SEI within Asian economies. This extended framework ensures that sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial pathways are explicitly represented in the conceptual model.

The framework conceptualizes the entrepreneurial intention as a multi-level process of multi-dimensional integration of cognitive, institutional, and policy processes. It is also expanded to contain SEI, constructs of sustainability,
and moderators of sustainability that exist in the Asian context, which provide a holistic sustainability model.

Figure 1: The following figure depicts direct pathways: EE, PUS, SS, GS → EI (Propositions 1, 2, 4, 5) and SEI (Propositions 1a, 2a, 4a, 5a).

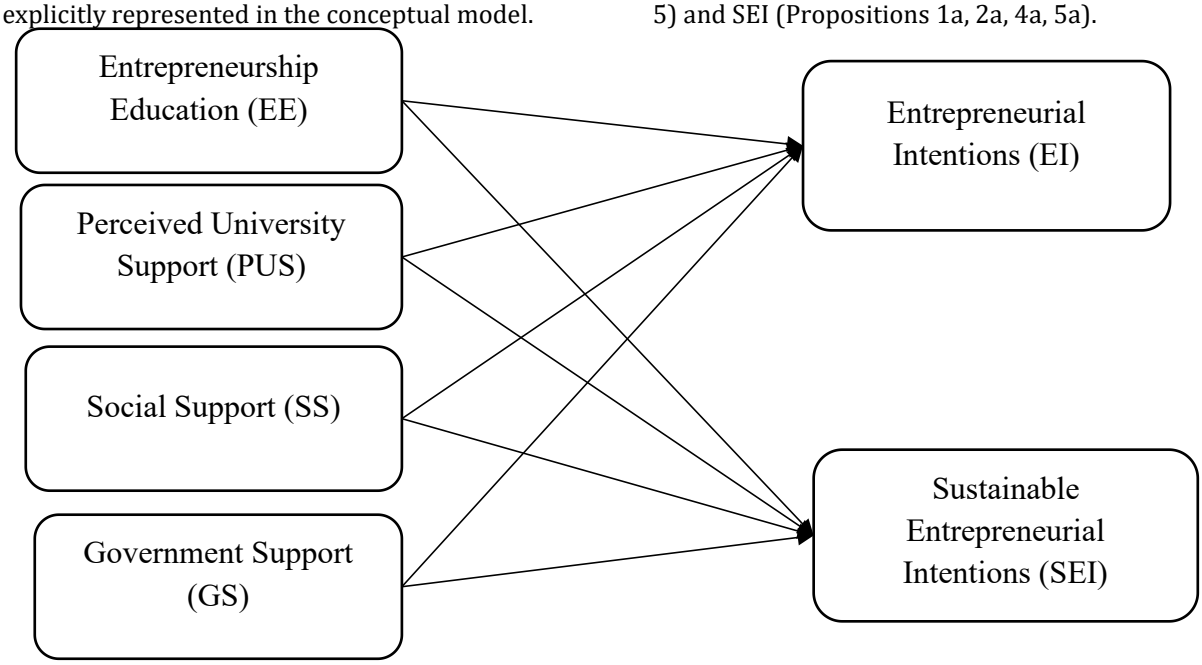

Figure 2: The following figure depicts mediation pathways: EE, PUS, SS, GS → ESE → EI (Propositions 1b, 2b, 4b, 5b) and ESE→ EI (Proposition 3)

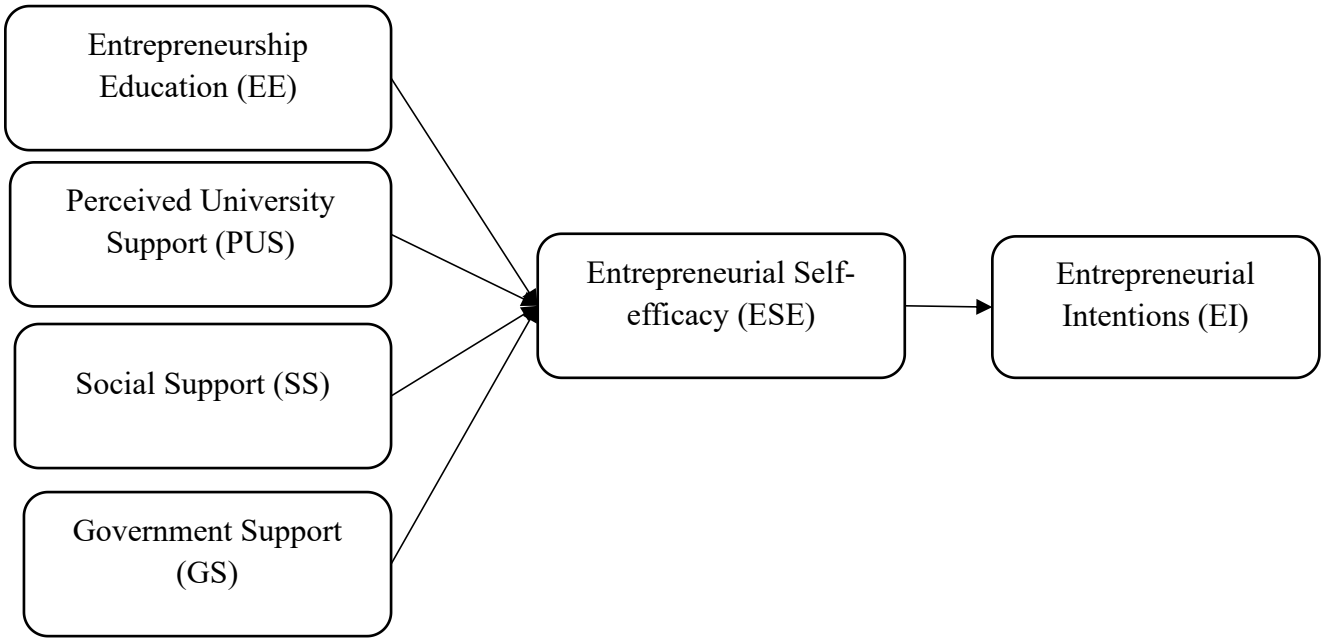

Figure 3: The following figure depicts moderation pathways: GS and CC moderate the relationship between ESE → EI (Propositions 5c, 6) and SEI (Propositions 5d, 6c).

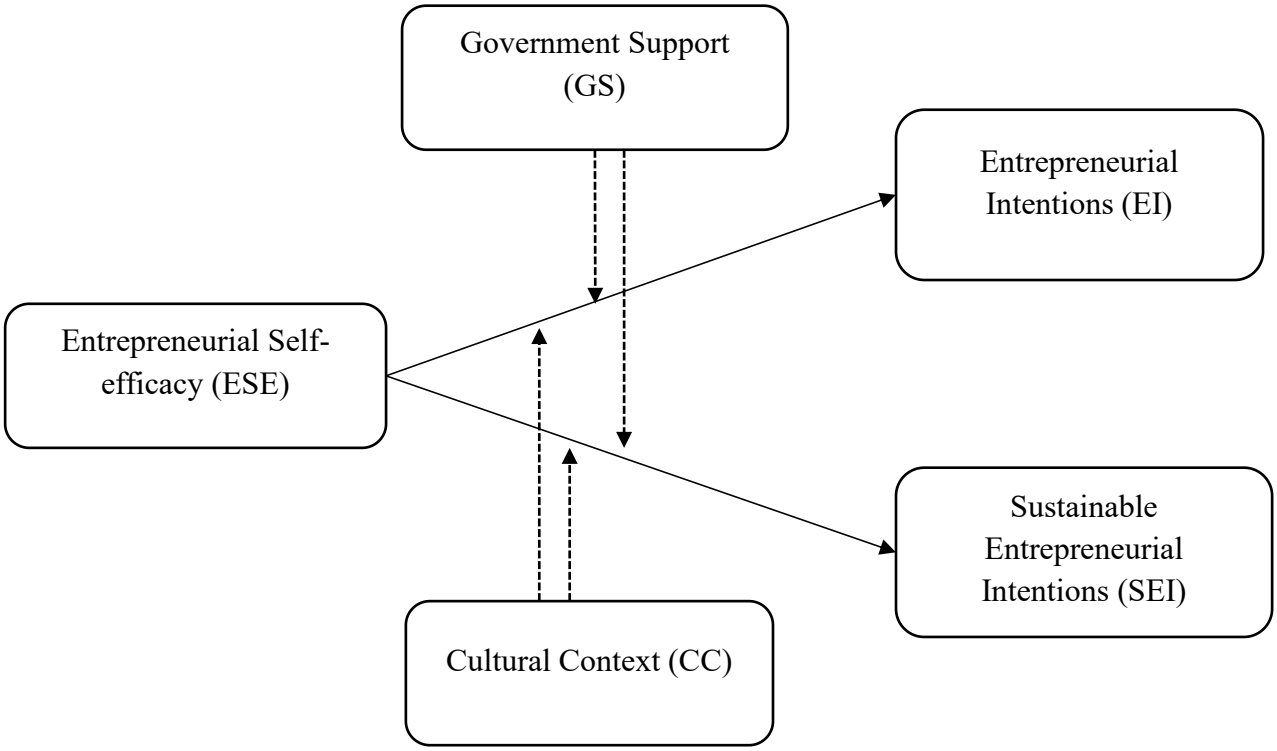

Figure 1,2, and 3: Conceptual Models of Factors Influencing Entrepreneurial Intention among Higher Education Students

This multivariate structure captures both traditional and sustainability-oriented pathways, illustrating how cognitive, institutional, and contextual factors jointly influence entrepreneurial intention (EI) and sustainable entrepreneurial intention (SEI), along with moderating effects of cultural and policy environments.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1Conceptual Analysis of Relationships

The theoretical framework proposed in this study is a cognitive, institutional, social, and policy framework that brings together the aspects to explain the development of entrepreneurial intention (EI) among higher learning students. Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model developed by Shapero (1982), the framework provides an elaborate explanation of the interaction between internal beliefs and external supports to determine entrepreneurial ambitions. Viewed through the lens of sustainability, these interdependent elements, as noted in this integrated framework, are central to Sustainable Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI), allowing students to seek business opportunities that would go in tandem with environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the emerging Asian economies (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Vuorio et al., 2018; Valencia-Arias et al.,2024).

4.1.1 Entrepreneurship Education as a Foundational Enabler:

Combining empirical and theoretical studies makes it possible to state that Entrepreneurship Education (EE) is one of the main predictors of entrepreneurial intention. In line with the attitude component of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), EE enhances students' cognitive awareness, attitude, and perception of the viability of self-employment (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015; Nabi et al., 2017). It also empowers the entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), thus generating the influenced behavioral control. Such concepts as simulations, startup programs, and mentorship also offer mastery experiences that contribute to ESE greatly (Sun et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025). As a result, the effects of EE on entrepreneurial intention (EI) are quite indirect, which is mediated through self-efficacy and affected by cultural and institutional conditions. In general, EE is a cognitive trigger and an institutional cue, which converts education into long-term entrepreneurial will. Nevertheless, its effectiveness in the long-term will rely on the reinforcement due to the university and the policy backing (Kuratko, 2005; Liñan and Fayolle, 2015). With the sustainability context, EE is also important in developing environmentally and socially responsible mindsets among the students to promote green innovation and sustainable entrepreneurial activities, which are particularly useful in responding to environmental issues in the Asian economies (Fellnhofer, 2019; Vuorio et al., 2018).

4.1.2 University Support as an Ecosystemic Enabler:

Universities are important in the formation of favourable entrepreneurship ecosystems (Etzkowitz, 2003; Guerrero et al., 2016). Perceived University Support (PUS) increases the viability and desirability of entrepreneurship through the empowerment of perceived control (TPB) and promotion of learning and experimentation (SCT). This is supported by empirical data, as Galvão et al. (2024) and Gonzalo-Tamayo et al. (2024) demonstrated that incubators, mentorship, and financial support have a positive effect on EI as a result of ESE. These results bring to light the power of enabling conditions that empowered cognitive and motivational drives that turned education into entrepreneurship intentions. Moreover, the model of an entrepreneurial university supports entrepreneurship as a valid career choice by implementing it into the institutional culture (Guerrero et al., 2016). All in all, university support can be viewed as an ecosystemic facilitator, which strengthens the role of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and multiplies the influence of individual-level conditions, including ESE and entrepreneurial attitudes. With the perspective of sustainability, Asian-based universities are becoming the centers of green entrepreneurship and social enterprise creation and, by extension, enhancing sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems and promoting the long-term sustainable development agenda (Urbano et al., 2019; Dote-Pardo et al., 2025).

4.1.3 Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy as a Central Mediator:

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) is popularly discussed as one of the psychological predictors of Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) (Zhao et al., 2005; Liñan and Chen, 2009). In the Theory of Planned Behaviour, ESE is perceived as behavioral control, whereas in the Social Cognitive Theory, it is a belief system that is founded upon the mastery and vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1997). In theory, ESE interrelates external enablers, including education, institutional, social, and policy support, and internal motivation to help an individual transform positive attitudes into intentions and action. Its mediating effect is proven by empirical studies that Zhang (2022) and Taneja (2024) confirm that ESE mediates between learning experiences and environmental support and EI. Moreover, ESE is a psychological enhancer of EI to EI that facilitates the effect of institutional and government support. Being an active and formative variable, it embodies the cognitive heart of the entrepreneurial intention in which the external factors are internalized. ESE is also used in sustainability-based contexts to reflect how people have confidence in solving environmental and social problems and therefore paves the way to the realization of the traditional entrepreneurial intentions into the sustainable entrepreneurial intentions (SEI) (Vuorio et al., 2018).

4.1.4 Social Support and Role Models as Normative Catalysts:

Through subjective norms and vicarious learning, Social Support (SS), such as family support, peer pressure, and exposure to entrepreneurial role models, has a great impact on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI). Based on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997), social cognitive theory shows that perceived success of business people boosts self-efficacy through modelling, whereas the Shapero model focuses on how social acceptance contributes to perceived desirability. The EI of entrepreneurial students raised by entrepreneurial parents, or having entrepreneurial mentors, has been empirically indicated (Bosma et al., 2012; Mothibi and Malebana, 2025). Under such circumstances, role models can be both motivating and knowledgeable and ensure that psychological barriers are minimized. Gender-specific results also point to female role models contributing to a higher level of ESE and EI in female students (Passavanti et al., 2024). Altogether, social support should be seen as a normative and emotional resource that is justified in entrepreneurship and reinforces ESE using vicarious learning, which complements formal education. Social support networks also encourage inclusive and socially responsible entrepreneurship in Asian and emerging economies, where these networks can stimulate ventures that respond to the needs of the communities and lead to sustainable development (Valencia-Arias et al., 2024).

4.1.5 Government Support as a Policy-Level Moderator:

Government Support (GS) is a macro-enabling tool that has an indirect impact on entrepreneurial intention through the creation of opportunity-based structures and systemic uncertainty reduction (Audretsch and Belitski, 2021). In terms of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), supportive policy environments increase perceived behavioural control; in terms of the Social Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (SEE), they increase feasibility and desirability, and in terms of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), they provide environmental support to entrepreneurial actions. Prasannath (2024) and Huang et al. (2024) found that the financial incentives, the youth entrepreneurship programs, and clear policies are notable predictors of EI, and ESE is a mediator; institutional quality is a moderator. When students feel that the policies are more supportive, they will be more likely to consider entrepreneurship as a viable and legitimate option. However, as the available literature suggests, policy awareness and

accessibility are critical. Educational and institutional systems should be in line with government efforts in order to create a unified entrepreneurial pipeline (Nguyen et al., 2025). Thus, GS mediates ESE and EI, increasing the transformation of self-efficacy into intention in favourable conditions. Government policy in Asian economies is placing more and more focus on green entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, and sustainable innovation in the context of sustainable development, thus enhancing the connection between entrepreneurial intention and more sustainability-related outcomes (Urbano et al., 2019; Valencia-Arias et al., 2024).

4.1.6. Cultural Context as a Moderating Influence:

The influence of the Cultural Context (CC) on EI is subtle but extensive because it affects cognitive frameworks and expectations of the society (Hofstede, 2001; Liñan et al., 2011). Individualism-based cultures, which are characterized by emphasis on individual autonomy and success, generally enable closer relationships between Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) and EI. Conversely, entrepreneurial motivation may be inhibited in collectivist cultures that prioritize social cohesion and are more risk-averse (Galvão et al., 2024). Cultural support of entrepreneurship not only makes it more attractive but also justifies risk-taking and innovation. Conversely, cultural dislike of failure may discourage people from engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Thus, culture moderately influences the attitudinal and normative levels of intention. Cultural diversity is crucial to understand in terms of theoretical frameworks as well as practical uses, since the strategies created in the Western setting might not fit Asian, African, or Latin American settings. Therefore, it is crucial to be able to adjust to the particular situation in both research and policymaking. Cultural norms, sustainability consciousness, and social expectations are other factors that influence sustainable entrepreneurial intentions in Asian settings, which affect the adoption of environmentally friendly and socially inclusive business models (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Vuorio et al., 2018).

4.2 Sustainable Entrepreneurial Intention

In addition to traditional entrepreneurial intention, the framework also explains the formation of sustainable entrepreneurial intention (SEI), reflecting the increasing importance of sustainability-driven entrepreneurship (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Vuorio et al., 2018). The analysis indicates that entrepreneurship education contributes to SEI by fostering environmental awareness and sustainability-oriented competencies, encouraging engagement in green innovation and socially responsible ventures (Nabi et al., 2017; Fellnhofer, 2019). Similarly, university support strengthens SEI through sustainability-focused incubation, green innovation initiatives, and social enterprise development, particularly within Asian higher education ecosystems. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy further enhances SEI by enabling individuals to confidently address environmental and social challenges. Social support plays a complementary role by promoting inclusive and community-oriented entrepreneurship, while government support facilitates SEI through policies encouraging sustainable innovation and green entrepreneurship (Valencia-Aria et al., 2024). Cultural context also shapes SEI by influencing sustainability awareness, social values, and environmental responsibility, especially in Asian economies (Urbano et al., 2019). Overall, the findings indicate that sustainable entrepreneurial intention emerges from the interaction of cognitive, institutional, and contextual factors, reinforcing the integration of sustainability within entrepreneurial intention models.

4.3. Theoretical Contributions

4.3.1 Integration of Multi-Level Theories:

In fact, this paper contributes to entrepreneurial intention theory by integrating the three major theoretical frameworks, i.e., TPB, SCT, and SEE, into a single multilayer model. The model makes self-efficacy the main mediator that links the aspects of cognition and institutional policy, thereby tackling the problem of previous fragmentation in the research on entrepreneurship (Lin & Fayolle, 2015). This combination denotes that intention is not merely a solo cognitive function; it is also an eco-cognitive occurrence, the product of both psychological readiness and environmental facilitative conditions. Due to this, the TPB's explanatory scope was not only strengthened through the integration of systemic supports and contextual moderators, but its extension also led to the sustainability aspects being embedded in these theories. Consequently, not only were entrepreneurial intention models realigned with sustainable development, but also policy-oriented results, which go hand in hand with the ways entrepreneurship activities have a positive impact on the environment and society at large.

4.3.2 Positioning Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy as the Cognitive Core:

One more theoretical advancement is the spotlight on ESE as the cognitive core of entrepreneurial intention. Seeing ESE as a separate, direct predecessor of EI has been deeply analysed. However, we take a step further to understand it as a mediating variable that unites different sources of influence, 'educational institutional social, and governmental', with entrepreneurial intention. That way of looking at it enhances the theoretical framework by showing how external supports are

internally turned into belief systems, leading to actions. It also bridges the conceptual gap between SCT and TPB, giving a more psychological and dynamic perspective of intention development. Additionally, this view highlights the function of ESE in facilitating entrepreneurial behaviour that is both sustainable and oriented towards impact.

4.3.3 Reconceptualizing Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Higher Education:
Expanding the concept of an entrepreneurial university (Etzkowitz, 2003; Guerrero et al., 2016) to a higher education entrepreneurial ecosystem, this paper describes it as a network of educational inputs, institutional supports, and social influences that together determine student intentions. This new framing changes the point of analysis from looking at isolated program effects (such as entrepreneurship courses) to focusing on interaction effects within the system, thus illustrating that entrepreneurship education, when fully integrated with supportive institutional and policy frameworks, can be very effective. Considering Asian contexts, the ecosystem perspective is doubly important as it can lead to the creation of sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems combining education, policy, and innovation for future development.

4.3.4 Bridging Micro and Macro Levels of Analysis:
The model's integration of Government Support and Cultural Context brings to light the economic-level elements that are often ignored in studies focused only on the individual's intentions. Through the proposal that policy and culture could be the factors that affect the ESE-EI relationship, the article very nicely links the two levels (micro and macro) that are usually very far from one another in entrepreneurship research (Audretsch & Belitski, 2021). This feature supports theoretical pluralism since it recognizes entrepreneurial intention not only as a personal thing but also as a structural one, which is a combination of one's own belief, the availability of opportunities, and the norms of the society and culture. The point is that the better we can determine the interplay of policy frameworks and sustainability goals, the more likely it is that the integration of these considerations will lead to a better understanding of entrepreneurial outcomes in the emerging Asian economies.

5. Implications

5.1 Practical Implications for Higher Education Institutions

Universities need to develop integrated entrepreneurship ecosystems blending formal education, mentoring, incubation, and networking opportunities. To strengthen ESE through mastery experiences, the entrepreneurship curriculum ought to be centred on experiential learning. Institutional policies that promote interdisciplinary teamwork, allow flexible degree paths, and provide seed funding could significantly enhance perceptions of both the feasibility and the desirability of entrepreneurship. Besides that, educational institutions ought to incorporate green entrepreneurship education programs that highlight sustainability, environmental consciousness, and social responsibility, which will provide students with the capability to create start-ups that are in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in Asian and emerging economies.

5.2. Policy Implications

National governments should effectively integrate higher education and entrepreneurship policies in their national strategies that provide financial incentives, simplified regulatory frameworks, and youth startup programs. Favourable policy contexts boost the impact of education and institutions, helping the conversion of intentions into entrepreneurial activities. In addition, Asian economy policymakers should roll out special measures that encourage sustainable startups, such as financing green innovation, giving social enterprise incentives, and letting environmentally responsible companies operate through the support of regulations, thus harmonizing entrepreneurship with the goals of sustainable development.

5.3 Social and Cultural Implications

Community and social networks should be tapped to provide mentorship and role models, especially for underrepresented groups. Programs that encourage cultural acceptance of entrepreneurship and that lessen the stigma of failure can help in producing a more innovation-oriented mindset among the youth. Besides, advocating inclusive and socially responsible entrepreneurship is a must, especially in Asian contexts where community-led enterprises and social innovation can be instrumental in tackling socio-economic inequalities while contributing to sustainable and equitable development.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although theoretical in nature, this paper lays a thorough groundwork for subsequent empirical investigations. However, several limitations are present:

- Absence of Empirical Validation: The conceptual assertions necessitate examination through longitudinal or multi-country datasets.
- Possible Exclusion of Emerging Variables: Digital entrepreneurship, sustainability orientation, and social innovation were not explicitly incorporated but may impact EI in contemporary settings.

- Cultural Generalization: Although the model considers cultural moderation, cross-cultural operationalization demands a detailed measurement of values and norms.
- **Limited Regional Focus:** The model has not been empirically validated in particular countries of Asia, where the institutional and sustainability factors can play a critical role in the entrepreneurial intentions.

This model has to be empirically tested in future studies through structural equation modelling (SEM) or multi-level modelling (MLM) models. Causal mechanisms can also be further supported by mixed-method designs that comprise surveys, interviews, and experimental simulations. It would be useful to have longitudinal data on entrepreneurial motivation, sustainability, and how educational and policy initiatives can sustain it. The proposed framework also needs to be tested in various economies of Asia in the future as a way to identify the regional differences in sustainable entrepreneurial intention. Also, the inclusion of the variables related to sustainability, e.g., green entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, and environmental awareness, would add the explanatory strength of the model. It is suggested to carry out cross-cultural and sustainability-oriented comparative studies to learn more about the impact of the contextual differences on sustainable entrepreneurial behaviour.

Conclusion

This paper proposes an all-purpose theoretical framework of entrepreneurial intention formation among students of higher education by integrating personal cognition, institutional support, and policy environment. TPB, SCT, and SEE integration provide a multidimensional insight into the influence of entrepreneurship education, university and social support, governmental policy, and cultural environment on intentions to become an entrepreneur, all combined to create a significant impact on intentions. The entrepreneurial self-efficacy is the core of the model and the cognitive connection that turns educational and environmental facilitators into behavioral commitment. The suggested framework reiterates the fact that developing entrepreneurship would require not only personal training but also structural support at the university, government, and social levels. Moreover, this paper builds upon the conventional entrepreneurial intention model and adds a sustainability angle, thus making it a part of the emerging discipline of sustainable entrepreneurship, especially in Asian and emerging markets. The model also puts into focus the aspect of entrepreneurship as a driver of sustainable and inclusive economic development through alignment of entrepreneurial intention with environmental responsibility, social value creation, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By conceptualizing intention as an eco-cognitive construct, this theoretical paper contributes to the field of discussion as well as policy implementation by making it easier to conduct future empirical studies to strictly assess and broaden such conceptual relationships in different cultural and institutional settings. The results also highlight the practicality of considering sustainability in education on entrepreneurship, institutional support systems, and policy frameworks, particularly in Asia, where the challenges and opportunities of sustainable development are closely interrelated. All in all, the study confirms that sustainability and entrepreneurial intention models should be combined, as it is a comprehensive study that not only helps to develop a venture, but also a long-term, sustainable development and social-economic transformation.

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