# Role of Entrepreneurship Education, Pragmatic Thinking, and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy on Triggering Students' Entrepreneurship Intention: Testing Moderation and Mediation Effects

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**Abstract.** The study aims to contextualize and examine the intervening role of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) beliefs in the relationship between entrepreneurship education (EE) and entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of Hospitality and Tourism (H&T) students. Based on extensive research in social cognitive and human capital theory, we argue that the relationship between EE and EI among students is mediated by their respective ESE and not directly but has a moderate effect on pragmatic Thinking (PT). We survey 165 students who have completed an entrepreneurship course at a prestigious and highly ranked H&T institute in India. The empirical study findings indicate that advocating for a rigorous entrepreneurship curriculum increases ESE and considerably increases EI among H&T students.

**Keywords**: Entrepreneurial SE, entrepreneurship education, pragmatic thinking, entrepreneurship intention

## 1. Introduction

Does EE foster student entrepreneurial intent? If so, how does it do so? This is since while existing scientific literature in entrepreneurship provides insights into the EE-EI relationship [1], [2], the indication radiates from previous studies on the nature and extent of the EE-EI correlation is still largely undefined. These topics have become more important for researchers.

As an antecedent to student EI, several researchers have found little evidential basis for EE [3], [4]. Other research demonstrates a favourable and statistically significant connection between EE and EI [5]–[7] The mixed findings of studies on the EE-EI relationship suggest that students need more

than a cursory understanding of EE to elicit positive EI. As a result, educational institutions must revisit fundamental foundations. However, research on the EE-EI relationship has yielded mixed results. Our study is based on an empirical meta-analysis by [1] that justified a positive significant EE-EI correlation and support that students' satisfaction with a well-designed and operationalized EE programme is high.

Furthermore, we investigate the 'underlying processes' that explain the EE–EI connections using the intervening variable of ESE and PT as a proxy for the relationship. There are various reasons why we choose to concentrate on H&T EE, EI, ESE and PT in our conceptual framework.

The systematic review of entrepreneurship studies in H&T [8] identifies several individuals and environmental variables that promote H&T entrepreneurship. It is considering that entrepreneurship has shown to be a powerful driver of new and original concepts, economic progress, and employment creation within the H&T sector [8], [9] few of the factors that have shown positive EI in H&T professionals are personal characteristics (e.g.,[10] socioeconomic variables [11] and Institutional environmental influences that directly impact H&T motivating factors [12], socio-cultural [13]. However, poorly planned, and operationalized EE programmes would negatively affect students' entrepreneurial and EI orientations [14].

This research aims to investigate the intervening function of ESE in the H&T, EE-EI connection. Specifically, despite the expected beneficial effects of high-tech education on students' emotional intelligence, scholars contend that the hypothesized positive correlation between these two concepts may not be direct but instead could be mediated by cognitive factors [15], [16]. Self-Efficacy (SE) is conceived as an individual's self-belief in their skills to do the job effectively [17]. It is heavily influenced by social cognitive theory [17]. ESE is defined as the extension of SE (i.e., innovative and acquiring knowledge) perceptions to the areas of establishing a business enterprise or other related entrepreneurial findings [9], [18], [19]. As a result, this research hypothesizes that positive student perceptions of the EE programme operationalized by their institution would promote ESE among students, which will, in turn, increase EI in students.

Lastly, we focus on Pragmatic Thinking (PT), as education occupies a fundamental place within a pragmatic paradigm. Because being Pragmatism seeks to translate relevant information about realworld problems into action, individuals must continually learn new knowledge and abilities to deal better with their circumstances. The purpose of education is to develop new competencies appropriate for everyday situations frequently, or "instead of repeating existing habits, better habits will be developed, and so the future adult society will be an improvement of its own" [20]. Education begins with determining why and what one should learn and the purpose of applying the knowledge [21].

The pragmatic approach to education is staunchly opposed to transmission-style instruction. Proper education occurs via growth and expansion from intellectual inquiries into the environment [22]. The instruction focused not on the subject itself but on training students to employ correct procedures and think and act independently in response to their uncovered discoveries.

#### 2. Literature Review

# **2.1 Entrepreneurial Education**

The word 'entrepreneur' sparsely came into existence in the 1980s in higher education [23]. Since then, entrepreneurship education has seen many transformations from simply learning through

classrooms to practising entrepreneurship as part of the course curriculum. As emphasized by [24], EE aims to make the students gain multiple skills, passion, values, and competencies that help them organize and establish their own business. Also, EE can assist students in handling problems with much ease [25]. In its broader perspective, EE synthesizes students' creativity, divergent thinking, and imagination, encouraging their conceptual skills and thinking abilities to foresee the change as an opportunity [23].

However, preliminary literature emphasizes the role of personality and psychological characteristics to be an entrepreneur [26]. Still, the temporal flow of literature strongly reports the part EE plays in processing entrepreneurship-related facets required by an individual [27]. Activities to create PT [28], [29], industry ties [30], the concept of venture creation [31], course creativity [32] had been an area of focus in the latest field of knowledge in building intentions towards entrepreneurship but required deeper investigation and systematic approach to be included in the teaching methodology.

A recent body of literature that acknowledges EE significance in educational institutions emphasizes that the formal education system must be supplemented with institutional support [16], [33]–[35]. Following this, curricular and extracurricular activities to impart PT as components of EE became popular and remained focal in research after that. As mentioned by [35], curricular activities include courses enrolment, teaching pedagogy used, course curriculum and number of practical classes etc., to name a few. In contrast, extracurricular activities comprise all facilities extended at the institutional level, including entrepreneurship cells, incubators, industrial visits, business simulators, etc.

#### 2.2 Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurship Intention

A positive link between EE and EI is documented widely in the literature on entrepreneurship [1]. EE was proven to be a good precursor of entrepreneurship in a study [5] on Iranian individuals exposed to an entrepreneurship training course. It was discovered in this study that a variety of factors, including institutional (such as employee engagement and Training), societal (such as status and social norms), an individual (such as fears of being undesirable and SE beliefs), influences EI. As a result, robustly designed EE programmes are expected to expose students to the necessary entrepreneurial knowledge, skill sets, and proficiencies through conventional and creative educational practices [36]A similar vein of research was conducted by [6], who drew heavily on the theory of Planned Behaviour. Consequently, the following theory is put forth:

# Hypothesis 1: The H&T EE will have a positive and substantial impact on students' EI. 2.3 Entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship SE

ESE is formed when SE beliefs are extended to creating a new business endeavour or other relevant entrepreneurial objectives [18]. To the assertive, entrepreneurship is a voluntary endeavour. Due to their high-risk propensity, locus of control, creativity, inventiveness, and limited rationality, entrepreneurs oppose and try to invalidate the impacts of unpredictable and complex business settings. After all, ESE is anticipated to act as a significant influence in the success of entrepreneurs in implementing their concepts [37]. Therefore, it has been discovered that ESE has a substantial impact on a wide range of entrepreneurial intentions, including but not restricted to entrepreneurship-related emotions (EI), behaviour (entrepreneurial behaviour), effectiveness (entrepreneurial quality), and firm-level results [38]. Aware of the significance of ESE, available environmental fellowship in the realm of entrepreneurship situations variables such as work experience, development and skills, mentors, personality factors, innate knowledge, political and national environment, and ecosystem as key antecedents to ESE [38]. So, we purpose the following theory

# Hypothesis 2: Entrepreneurship education positively and significantly related to entrepreneurship SE

# 2.4 Entrepreneurial SE and Entrepreneurial intention

The concept of SE is understood regarding the social cognitive theory, which establishes links between SE and behaviour, especially with its feature of inducing perseverance among individuals under challenging times [17]. An individual having sufficient SE would possess sound decision-making capabilities [39]. Persons who possess high efficacy are ready to face challenges and should show more increased endurance during such times [40]. Besides, such individuals preferably take obstructions as learning steppingstones rather than mere failures [41].

One of the first attempts to assess EI was made by Shapero in 1982, with his Entrepreneurial Event (1982) and Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (TPB), (1987). These are two of the most influential attempts to evaluate entrepreneurship goals. Even though they are mostly consistent, the TPB model places a greater emphasis on the individual's environmental role to be an entrepreneur, whilst the former emphasizes the individual's proactiveness [42]. The TPB was founded on the premise that three aspects (a) a person's attitude (b) societal norms (c) and perceived behaviour control) are responsible for driving entrepreneurship ambitions to act eventually.

[43] found that increasing students' EI also increased their level of EE, thereby fully mediating the relationship between formalized EE perceived learning outcomes and EI. Furthermore, [44]investigated the impacts of EE on students' EI in visegrád countries and concluded that the program's impact was limited to the one country included out of four. Furthermore, the findings from this study imply that there is an indirect association between the constructs of EE and EI. In other words, the results indicate that ESE is partially responsible for bridging the link between two. Therefore, it is proposed that:

#### Hypothesis 3: Students' ESE positively impacts EI.

# Hypothesis 4: ESE mediate positively in relationship between EE and' EI.

# 2.5 Entrepreneurship education and Pragmatic Thinking

Education is becoming increasingly important in today's world. The university education system is being stretched to meet the growing demand for entrepreneur students with a college diploma or equivalent are more likely to be innovative, use modern business practices, and build businesses around cutting-edge technology [45]. Academic education provides students with the opportunity to observe the most recent advancements in their chosen area, enabling them to understand better how to integrate these developments into a company in the future [46].

Several studies emphasize the critical nature of involving students in real-world business initiatives to instil the necessary job skills and attitudes. The interpretative and functionalist paradigms of social sciences discussed by [47] answer EE's issues with PT.

Peirce (1939–1914), James (1842–1910), and Dewey (1859–1914) founded the American Pragmatist philosophy. Their pragmatism theory is often regarded as the most significant contribution of American Thinking to contemporary philosophy [48]. As Mounce puts it, the founders of Pragmatism were "against those kinds of scientism that emerged in the nineteenth

century and were variously characterized as Scientific Rationalism, Materialism, or Positivism" (1997, 2). Nonetheless, in the latter half of the twentieth century, scientism and positivism started to control present study in general, as business education institutions sought "academic legitimacy" through "the acceptance of current theories based on experimentalism and data analysis" [49], [50]. Given scientism's prevalence in current management and entrepreneurship studies, it's intriguing that we should discover reasons to doubt scientism's supremacy inside philosophical thinking.

Pragmatism assumes that not fully developed or 'correct' theory of any aspect of life exists. The complexity of reality prevents complete comprehension of any part of it. As a result, knowledge about entrepreneurship, or any other aspect of the social realm, must be developed to guide characters as they face the reality of the universe. According to [51], Pragmatism's guiding premise is that truth is a growth in the capacity to act concerning an environment, not an accurate "picture of reality in cognition." James describes theories as "mental adaptations to reality, rather than discoveries about the universe." quoted by [52]). Dewey stated plainly that "the purpose of knowledge is not to reflect the world but to deal with it" ([48], 177).

A pragmatic realism focuses on neither deep-level generating mechanisms nor surface-level narratives. The organization promotes social ideas to improve human behaviour. According to pragmatic social science, scientific research into the social world produces narratives about how "institutional logics" work. These accounts are not meant to lead to a scientific conclusion. A group's goal is to help people "gain experience" in social situations to handle challenges better. The experiences define the situation. To learn about any human influence requires immersion in the world where it occurs. We urgently need more ethnography until we better grasp "how things work" in reality. [29].

Therefore, we proposed the following:

# Hypothesis 5: PT positively moderate relationship between EE and ESE

# **3. Method and Data Analysis**

Once the research concept and hypothesis have been clearly defined, the research design is the first stage in organizing and arranging the research process. Concerning research design, the best research strategy is required to achieve the most accurate possible outcomes [53]. The study employs a descriptive design to understand participants' perceptions of the current state of EE on HT undergraduates' EI. This method seeks to pinpoint specific events, people, and situations. Moreover, the researcher does not manipulate or control the variables in this study; they are only observed.

Secondly, a paradigm can be defined as a cluster of shared convictions and assumptions which include several issues like methods, methodology, epistemology, and ontology within a community of research [54]. There are two types of research paradigms: positivism and interpretivism. The current study adopts a positivism research paradigm since a questionnaire approach is employed to collect the data relevant to the study. Moreover, this paradigm is more suitable for the study because the researcher works on observable reality and develops generalizations. Also, positivism is associated with the facts and deals with the pure data rather than being influenced by manipulations and biases [55].

The current study involves the collection of primary data using a questionnaire approach. Moreover, since a questionnaire is engaged in data collection, a quantitative research approach is adopted. The path to quantitative analysis is connected to the empirical principles [56] The relation between variables is defined by several scientific techniques within this research process. In addition, the

elements are combined, listed, and translated into measurable aspects in the quantitative analysis method.

Moreover, a questionnaire survey is conducted among Hospitality-Tourism Undergraduates to understand their perception of the impact of EE on PT, SE, and finally, entrepreneurial intention. The current study used purposive non-probability sampling to understand 165 HT undergraduates' perceptions of the study context. Purposive sampling selects units based on the researcher's judgement. Thus, this sampling technique is suitable for the current study because it helps the researcher draw generalizations from the sample [57].

*Entrepreneurship Education*: For this study, the questions on EE are inspired and contextualized from the work of [58], [59]. We included seven items to measure student perceptions on the institutional dimensions of EE

*Entrepreneurial SE*: For this study, the questions on ESE are inspired and contextualized from the work of [18], [19], [60]. We included twelve items to measure student perceptions on ESE.

*Entrepreneurial Intentions* – The construct of EI was assessed using four items. For this study, the questions on EI were inspired and contextualized from the work of [19], [61]

*Pragmatic Thinking* -The construct of PT was assessed using seven items. For this study, the questions for PT were contextualized from the studies of [62], [63]

## Data analysis

The data was analyzed for testing the outliers, and the data were found normal; and therefore, parametric tests could be employed to assess the study hypotheses—skewness and Kurtosis values for all items varied between -2 and +2. [64] This study's multicollinearity is not a problem because no bivariate correlation between two constructs was more than 0.80. [65] Additionally, considering the likelihood of response bias, we implemented various procedural safeguards to successfully limit the risk of standard method bias [66]. One component (i.e., the first factor) originating from the unrotated factor solution explained around 28% of the variation, indicating that common-method bias was not an issue in this study. Three items from SE construct were dropped from the analysis due to their cross-loadings on other factors.

Firstly, demographic characteristics of the respondents were checked. Specifically, 89 (53.9%) of the respondents were males while the rest 76 (46.1%) were females. The median age of the respondents was 20 years. Only 24 (14.54%) of the respondents have some prior work experience. To assess the proposed model's psychometric qualities, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using maximum likelihood estimation was used. In general, the CFA results indicate that the measurement model is well fitted (Cmin/df=1.766; GFI=0.903; AGFI=0.906; CFI=0.911; IFI=0.918; and RMSEA=0.068).

Consistent to [67] guidelines, all items loaded significantly on their respective constructs with factor loadings larger than 0.7. Additionally, all constructs' composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.910 to 0.934, exceeding the cutoff value of 0.7, showing that the constructs are internally consistent [68] The average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct above the 0.5 cutoff value [68] indicating convergent validity. Table 1 reveals that each construct's AVE value exceeds the squared multiple correlations of all other constructs, showing discriminant validity [67]).

| Table 1: Discriminant validity and Re | eliability indicators |  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|

| CR AVE EE SE PT EI | 10010 1 |     | ie vanaiej and | Hemaching | mareacons |    |
|--------------------|---------|-----|----------------|-----------|-----------|----|
|                    | CR      | AVE | EE             | SE        | РТ        | EI |

| EE | 0.934 | 0.671 | 0.819 |       |       |       |
|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| SE | 0.954 | 0.698 | 0.457 | 0.836 |       |       |
| РТ | 0.953 | 0.745 | 0.597 | 0.389 | 0.863 |       |
| EI | 0.910 | 0.720 | 0.504 | 0.323 | 0.360 | 0.849 |

To analyze the data and test the study's propositions, we used Andrew F. Hayes' Process 3.3 and SPSS 24.0 [69]). We used a 5000-sample bootstrapping procedure to examine the role of ESE on the relationship between EE and students' EI.

First, we identified a positive and statistically significant path coefficient for 'c' ( $\beta = 0.473$  at p <0.001) between the EE and EI without the mediator. In the direct effect model, EE explained 29.2 percent of the variation in students' EI. These findings confirm hypothesis H1. Additionally, the path coefficient between the EE and ESI constructs was found to be positive and statistically significant. EE accounted for 23.1 percent of the variance in ESE in the direct effect model ( $\beta = 0.481$  at p<0.001), supporting hypothesis H2. In addition, the path coefficient 'b' between the constructs of ESE and EI was shown to be positive and statistically significant (i.e.,  $\beta = 0.398$  at p<0.001), thereby confirming H3.

Following a three-step approach, we tested the mediation model. First, the indirect effect of EE on students' EI was evaluated as the product of path coefficients relating EE-ESE and ESE-EI ( $ab = (0.481 \times 0.398) = 0.191$ ), the result of which was found positively statistically significant. Second, ESE was also found to have a positive influence on EI. Third, a favourable direct effect of EE on EI was reported in the presence of mediator (c'= 0.3104, p<0.001, LLCI = 0.2416; ULCI = 0.4426), accounting for 38.31% of the variation in EI. These statistics, in particular, demonstrate ESE partially mediates the positive association between EE and the EI of students. Consequently, H4 is partially supported. The empirical findings from the mediation analysis used in this study are summarized in Table 2.

| Hypothesis<br>sign | Hypothesized<br>path  | Direct effects | Direct effects<br>with the<br>mediator | Indirect<br>effects | Result                              |
|--------------------|---|----------------|--|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| H4                 | Entrepreneurial<br>education><br>Entrepreneurial<br>SE><br>Entrepreneurial<br>intention | .473***(.051)  | .310**** (.058)                        | .191***             | Partial<br>Mediation<br>(Supported) |

 Table 2:
 Mediation Analysis

Note: Bootstrapping of 5000 samples at 95% C.I. Entries are standardized estimates (standard errors). \*\*\*=p<.001

#### Moderation analyses

Multigroup analysis was employed to examine the moderating effect of PT on the relationship between EE and ESE ([70]). A median split method was used to divide the respondents into two groups: one with high pragmatic thinking and the other low. Following [71] guidelines to carry out

multi-group analysis, firstly, the study stated an unrestricted baseline model for freely estimated parameters to evaluate the configural invariance. The results displayed an appropriate model fit:  $\chi^2$  (154) = 202.114, CFI = 0.921, IFI = 0.902, TLI = 0.911, RMSEA = 0.062. To assess metric invariance, all factor loadings were made equal across groups with higher and lower PT groups. The chi-square difference between both models was reported to be statistically significant ( $\Delta\chi^2$  = 28.341 ( $\Delta$ df = 18), p > 0.05), thereby indicating full metric invariance.

| Paths                   |                   |            |                       |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------|-----------------------|
|                         | Standard estimate |            | Chi-square difference |
|                         | High (n=94)       | Low (n=71) |                       |
| H5 EE $\rightarrow$ ESE | 0.33*             | 0.12**     | 16.158**              |
| *<0.001, **P<0.05       |                   |            |                       |

 Table 3: Comparison of two groups' parameter estimates

The chi-square difference ( $\Delta \chi 2 = 19.593$  ( $\Delta df = 12$ ), p < 0.05) between the unconstrained ( $\chi 2 = 172.832$ , df = 140) and restricted ( $\chi 2 = 192.425$ , df = 152) models was significant. This study showed that the relationships between variables differed significantly between the low and high pragmatic thinking groups. The standardized path coefficient for the group with a high level of PT scores ( $\beta = 0.33$ , p < 0.01) was substantially greater than that for the group with a low level of PT ( $\beta = 0.12$ , p < 0.05), thereby supporting H5. Table 3 provides the information on the moderating effects.

## 4. Research Result and Discussions

The study's findings indicate that EE is critical for the development of PT in HT students and affects the ESE among H&T students. Additionally, it was discovered that ESE increases EI in students studying H&T, whereas PT does not increase EI among students.

 $\rightarrow$  According to the study, by increasing ESE through EE approaches, EI and motivation can be improved.

 $\rightarrow$ Course components such as role models, business planning methods, feedback systems, and student-centred instruction can increase entrepreneurial inclinations among hospitality and tourism students.

Higher education institutions should focus on transforming students' individual attitudes through entrepreneurial and business incubation programmes to foster entrepreneurial innovation and economic development.

#### 5. Implication and Future research

This research topic contributes to understanding the effect of EE in the development of ESE on H&T students moderately affected by PT. Additionally, the study sought to determine the extent to which PT and ESE will ultimately induce EI in H&T pupils. This research is significant for curriculum developers, entrepreneurs, teachers, undergraduates, and the economy, as it strives to improve H&T students' performance. It will lay a solid foundation for influencing comparative research that must be conducted to advance and address numerous concerns and challenges linked with the incorporation of the domain of EE. It will highlight inconsistencies in present methods and techniques that must be reconsidered. The product of this extensive investigation will make a significant contribution to scientific understanding and will also be of tremendous benefit to future scholars.

In terms of future research, the study's findings can be evaluated in other contexts. Numerous combinations of numerous characteristics, including personality, family history, demographics, and perceived impediments, could be investigated to predict EI. Additionally, the EI of upper secondary students can be measured, which can bring significant benefits, particularly at the state or regional level. The role and influence of regulatory agencies, policy execution, and incentive structures may also be examined in the context of EI.

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