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A comparative analysis on entrepreneurial intentions among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes of a state-aided university in West Bengal

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is intentional and planned human behavior. An individual with a positive entrepreneurial intention is more likely to become an entrepreneur since intention is the single best predictor and most direct antecedent of an individual's actual behavior. As a sample, 100 post-graduate students of MBA and M.Com programmes of a state-aided university in West Bengal have been considered in this study. The study primarily aims to identify and compare entrepreneurial intentions among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on the factors of EEM. Moreover, the study focuses on measuring the difference in responses among the students of both programmes based on gender and father's occupation. RWS has been undertaken to identify and compare the relevant items under PD and PF of EEM that influence the entrepreneurial intention of students, and to measure the difference in responses among the students based on their gender and fathers' occupation, the Mann-Whitney U test has been adopted. The result exhibits that MBA students are more desirable and feasible towards entrepreneurship compared to M.Com students. Furthermore, based on gender and father's occupation, female students and students whose fathers are engaged in other professions than business were found to have lower intentions towards entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial intention, students, MBA, M.com, gender, father's occupation

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is often regarded as the linchpin or pivotal driver of economic growth, innovation, and job creation (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Audretsch, 2018) ^[31, 4]. It is intentional and planned human behavior (Krueger *et al.*, 2000) ^[17]. An individual with a positive entrepreneurial intention is more likely to become an entrepreneur (Naim, 2018) ^[25], since intention is the single best predictor and most direct antecedent of an individual's actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Abraham and Sheeran, 2003) ^[2, 1]. Diverting individuals' intentions towards entrepreneurship is therefore a dire need for every economy (Soomro *et al.*, 2020) ^[34]. Entrepreneurial intention is a multi-dimensional construct, encompassing the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Bird, 1988; Krueger, 2009) ^[7, 19]. It represents an individual's mindset, exhibiting their thrust and devotion to pursue entrepreneurial activities (Liñán and Chen, 2009) ^[21]. Shapero and Sokol (1982) ^[32] introduced the concept of the "Entrepreneurial Event" and suggested that entrepreneurial intention is influenced by a person's perception of desirability and feasibility. They further added that entrepreneurial intention is influenced by an individual's perspective on the desirability of being an entrepreneur and the feasibility of executing an entrepreneurial career. Entrepreneurial intention has emerged as an important construct extensively used in studying students' entrepreneurial intention since today's students are considered potential entrepreneurs of tomorrow (Basu and Virick, 2008) ^[6], and especially the students in the final year of their post-graduation because they are on the verge of making a career choice between being self-employed or employed.

In this backdrop, the study purposively selects a state-aided university in West Bengal, considering the final year students of MBA and M.Com programme, and sets out to comprehensively identify the factors that influence their entrepreneurial intentions since understanding the factors that shape and influence these intentions is paramount in nurturing a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Moreover, the researchers examine whether individual and family characteristics like gender and father's occupation have any impact on the factors influencing their entrepreneurial intention.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 deals with literature review. Section 3 proposes the hypothesis of the study. Section 4 shows the objectives of the study. Section 5 explains the methodology of the study. Then, results and discussions are furnished in Section 6, and Section 7 concludes the paper with implications.

2. Literature review

2.1 Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM)

According to the EEM, where perceived desirability (PD) is one of the key components influencing entrepreneurial intention, individuals with a strong desire for entrepreneurship are more likely to develop the intention to start a business (Shapiro and Sokol, 1982) [32]. Previous studies confirmed PD as the best predictor of entrepreneurial intention (Krueger, 1993; Fitzsimmons and Douglas, 2005; Ali *et al.*, 2016) [16, 13, 3]. Liñán and Chen (2009) [21] conducted a study in which they highlighted the cross-cultural applicability of the link between PD and entrepreneurial intention and observed a significant positive relationship between them among Chinese university students. Later, several studies have observed that PD acts as a precursor to entrepreneurial intention, as individuals are more inclined to pursue entrepreneurial activities when they find them personally appealing (Fini *et al.*, 2012; Shirokova *et al.*, 2016) [12, 33]. Hence, PD is considered the "perceived attractiveness of entrepreneurship" (Liñán and Fayolle, 2015) [22] that encourages individuals to consider entrepreneurship as an attractive and desirable career choice (Kautonen *et al.*, 2015; Lackeus, 2019) [14, 20].

Perceived feasibility (PF) is one of the key determinants of entrepreneurial intention, and individuals are more likely to become entrepreneurs when they believe that the creation and operation of a new business are feasible given their skills, resources, and the opportunities they perceive in the environment (Krueger, 1993) [16]. Shirokova *et al.* (2016) [33] observed that the relationship between PF and entrepreneurial intention was consistent across various cultural contexts, highlighting the universal relevance of this relationship. Similarly, several other studies also confirmed that there is a significant and positive relationship between PF and entrepreneurial intention (Segal *et al.*, 2002; Fitzsimmons and Douglas, 2005; Ali *et al.*, 2016; Soomro *et al.*, 2020) [30, 13, 3, 34].

2.2 Entrepreneurial intention and gender

Previous research has shown that men and women often have varying levels of interest and motivation when it comes to entrepreneurship (Marlow and McAdam, 2013) [23]. Several studies have found that there are gender differences in entrepreneurial intention, where male students tend to express a higher intention to become entrepreneurs compared to female students (Liñán and Chen, 2009; Rauch and Hulsink, 2015) [21, 29]. However, a research study observed that the gender gap in entrepreneurial intention is narrowing and argued that changes in social norms and increasing support for female entrepreneurs have led to a more balanced distribution of entrepreneurial intentions among students of different genders (Brush *et al.*, 2018) [8].

2.3 Entrepreneurial intention and father's occupation

Students whose fathers are entrepreneurs are more likely to have higher entrepreneurial intentions themselves. This could be due to the exposure and knowledge they gain from their fathers' experiences in business, and they may have access to valuable resources and networks that can facilitate the realization of their entrepreneurial intentions, such as funding, business advice, and industry connections (Davidsson, 1995; Kourilsky and Walstad, 1998) [10, 15]. Moreover, entrepreneurial fathers often serve as role models for their children, inspiring them to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. These students may have a greater understanding of entrepreneurship and be more motivated to follow in their fathers' footsteps (Shirokova *et al.*, 2016) [33]. Later, several studies have observed that entrepreneurial intention is higher among the students whose fathers are entrepreneurs compared to those students whose fathers are engaged in other professions (Naim, 2018; Dragin *et al.*, 2022) [25, 11]. On the other hand, students whose fathers have non-entrepreneurial occupations may still have entrepreneurial intentions but they perceive entrepreneurship as a riskier path due to the lack of a family safety net or the absence of a familiar entrepreneurial environment (Krueger Jr, 2003; Minniti and Nardone, 2007) [18, 24].

From the prevailing literature discussed above, it can be observed that previous studies mainly focused on identifying the entrepreneurial intentions of students of various programmes at different universities worldwide by undertaking various models. However, limited studies have been observed comparing entrepreneurial intentions among students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on EEM, especially considering their genders and father's occupation. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore those areas in this study.

3. Hypotheses development

H₁: There are significant differences between the entrepreneurial intentions of students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on the relevant factors of EEM.

H₂: There are significant differences in entrepreneurial intentions among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on gender.

H₃: There are significant differences in entrepreneurial intentions among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on father's occupation.

4. Objectives of the study

In this scenario, the present study aims at attaining the following objectives:

1. To identify and compare the entrepreneurial intentions among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on the factors of EEM.
2. To measure the difference in responses among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on gender and father's occupation.

5. Methodology of the study

5.1 Type of study

This study is mainly exploratory in nature and based on intensive investigation and meticulous analysis.

5.2 Sources of data

The study is predominantly based on primary data which have been collected through questionnaire [extracted from previous literature (Ramayah *et al.*, (2019))^[28]. Furthermore, data from secondary sources, such as prevailing literature and articles, has also been cited for this study. The primary field survey has been carried out on the respective samples from April 2023 to June 2023.

5.3 Sample and sampling

In this study, only final year students of MBA and M.Com programmes of a state-aided university in West Bengal has been considered as sample respondents. A sample of 100 respondents has been randomly selected from 153 students for this study, which represents a return rate of 65% of the entire population and satisfies the relevancy of the sample size examined in this study (Paiva *et al.*, 2020)^[26].

5.4 Tools for data collection

The questionnaire used for data collection was divided into two sections. The first part contains individual and family characteristics like gender and father's occupation. The second part has been designed to contained 8 items under PD and PF of EEM, arranged on a five-point Likert Scale with attributes ranging from '1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree'. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha has been applied to ensure

internal uniformity among the items of the questionnaire, and the resultant alpha value was observed to be 0.827, which is significantly desirable.

5.5 Statistical tools and data analysis

Based on the responses of the respondents on the items under PD and PF of EEM, values have been assigned to the factors depending on the level of agreement, that is, 4 for 'Strongly Agreed', 3 for 'Agreed', 2 for 'Neutral', 1 for 'Disagreed', and 0 for 'Strongly Disagreed' (Prabu and Esakkimuihu, 2017; Bandyopadhyay *et al.*, 2021; DasGupta and Sarkar, 2020)^[27, 5, 9]. This method would thus eliminate the point 'Strongly Disagreed' from further computation of the research after multiplication with '0', illuminating the lowest degree of agreement or no agreement of the factors falling on that scale.

5.5.1 Identification of the relevant factors

The weightage of agreement of each item have been measured by taking a ratio between the summed-up value of actual responses of the respondents on different points of the scale and the maximum possible score for a factor, that is, the possible value when total respondents responded on 'Strongly Agreed' scale. Therefore, the Relevance Weightage Score (RWS) of agreement of factors influencing the students' entrepreneurial intention have been analyzed by using the formula:

$$RWS = \frac{[\text{Stongly Agreed} \times 4 + \text{Agreed} \times 3 + \text{Neutral} \times 2 + \text{Disagreed} \times 1 + \text{Strongly Disagreed} \times 0]}{\text{Maximum Possible Score}}$$

Which recommended at least 0.75 as a qualifying score to accept a factor (Prabu and Esakkimuihu, 2017; Bandyopadhyay *et al.*, 2021; DasGupta and Sarkar, 2020)^[27, 5, 9].

5.5.2 Measurement of the difference in participants' responses on the basis of their individual and family characteristics

To measure the difference in participants' responses on the relevant items based on individual and family characteristics, non-parametric tests like Mann-Whitney *U* (M.W. *U*) test (for two groups, such as gender) and Kruskal-Wallis *H* (K.W.*H*) test (for more than two groups, such as father's occupation) have been adopted by using SPSS version 20 in this study.

6. Results and Discussions

6.1 Profile of the surveyed respondents

This study has been conducted on 100 students, out of which 58 students were from MBA programme and 42 students from M.Com programme. Under MBA programme, male students contained maximum responses (62.07%) than female students (37.93%). Based on father's occupation, the majority of students have responded toward business category (46.55%).

Under M.Com programme, male students have been accounted for maximum responses (64.29%). In respect to father's occupation, the majority of students have responded toward service / job category (47.62%). Table 1 portrays the profile of the surveyed respondents.

Table 1: Profile of the surveyed respondents.

Individual and family characteristics	Category	Number of respondents	
		MBA	M.Com
Gender	Male (Gr. I)	36	27
	Female (Gr. II)	22	15
Father's occupation	Self-employed (Gr. I)	14	11
	Service / Job (Gr. II)	15	20
	Business (Gr. III)	27	10
	Others (Gr. IV)	02	01

Source: Primary survey

6.2 RWS of the factors of EEM

RWS was computed considering each item of PD and PF under EEM, since relevancy weightage aids in identifying the level of relevance of factors of EEM influencing the students' entrepreneurial intention. Based on the responses of the students of MBA programme, 2 items under PD and 3 items under PF have been found relevant. On the contrary, as per the responses of the students of M.Com programme, 1

item under PD and 2 items under PF have been found relevant. Hence, MBA students are more desirable and feasible towards entrepreneurship compared to M.Com students, which denotes the acceptance of H_1 . Table 2 represents the Relevance Weightage Score (RWS) of the factors of EEM that influences the entrepreneurial intention among students of MBA and M.Com programmes.

Table 2: RWS of the factors of EEM that influences the entrepreneurial intention among students of MBA and M.Com programmes.

Factors influencing entrepreneurial intention of students under EEM	RWS	
	MBA	M.Com
Perceived desirability		
I would love to be an entrepreneur (Pd. I)	0.81	0.77
I will not be tensed to pursue entrepreneurship (Pd. II)	0.54	0.49
I am enthusiastic to become an entrepreneur (Pd. III)	0.77	0.66
Perceived feasibility		
It will be very easy for me to become an entrepreneur (Pf. I)	0.58	0.49
If I try to start a business, I will have a certainty of succeeding (Pf. II)	0.83	0.76
I don't need to overwork to be an entrepreneur (Pf. III)	0.55	0.47
I am having enough knowledge to start a business (Pf. IV)	0.86	0.76
I am sure of myself to start a business in future (Pf. V)	0.79	0.73

Source: Authors' computation

6.3 Difference in students' responses on the relevant factors of EEM based on gender

Based on gender, considering the responses of the MBA students, 4 out of 5 relevant items have been observed to be statistically significant. The mean rank indicates that males have responded more for all of these 4 items, which are 'Pd. I' and 'Pd. III', under PD, and 'Pf. II' and 'Pf.V', under PF of EEM. Hence, male students have been found to have a higher inclination towards entrepreneurship than female students. However, considering the responses of the M.Com

students, all the relevant items have been observed to be statistically significant. Here, the mean rank also reveals that males have responded more towards the relevant items, which are 'Pd. I' under PD, and 'Pf. II' and 'Pf. IV', under PF of EEM. So, like MBA students, male students of M.Com also have higher entrepreneurial intentions than female students, which confirm the acceptance of H₂. Table 3 highlights the difference in responses among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on gender.

Table 3: Difference in responses among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on gender

MBA						M.Com					
Factors under EEM	Gr.	Mean rank	M.W. U	d.f.	p-value	Factors under EEM	Gr.	Mean rank	M.W. U	d.f.	p-value
Pd. I	I	57.12	436.600	1	0.031	Pd. I	I	53.13	407.00	1	0.038
	II	42.52					II	44.64			
Pd. III	I	65.60	224.800	1	0.000	Pf. II	I	56.64	457.500	1	0.079
	II	33.87					II	42.22			
Pf. II	I	59.57	348.800	1	0.001	Pf. IV	I	66.56	284.000	1	0.000
	II	44.89					II	36.88			
Pf. V	I	68.55	100.700	1	0.000						
	II	34.47									

Source: Authors' computation

6.4 Difference in students' responses on the relevant factors of EEM based on fathers' occupation

Based on father's occupation, 4 out of 5 relevant items have been observed to be statistically significant in case of MBA students. The mean rank shows that students whose fathers are engaged in businesses have been holding maximum responses in favor of 'Pd. I' and 'Pd. III', under PD, and 'Pf. II' and 'Pf.V', under PF of EEM. Therefore, children of fathers engaged in business professions are more interested in adopting entrepreneurship as their career choice. However, based on the responses of the M.Com students, 2 out of 3 relevant items have been found to be statistically

significant. The mean rank indicates that students whose fathers are engaged in services or jobs have responded more for 'Pd. I' under PD while students whose fathers are businessmen have been holding maximum responses in favor of 'Pf. II' under PF of EEM. So, M.Com students whose fathers are engaged in service or job would love to be entrepreneurs, but they don't believe that they will become successful if they try to start businesses. Hence, H₃ is accepted. Table 3 highlights the difference in responses among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on father's occupation.

Table 4: Difference in responses among the students of MBA and M.Com programmes based on father's occupation

MBA						M.Com					
Factors under EEM	Gr.	Mean rank	K.W. H	d.f.	p-value	Factors under EEM	Gr.	Mean rank	K.W. H	d.f.	p-value
Pd. I	I	35.42	7.648	3	0.045	Pd. I	I	27.74	8.986	3	0.059
	II	29.88					II	45.63			
	III	43.55					III	40.67			
	IV	24.16					IV	22.14			
Pd. III	I	30.09	11.768	3	0.016	Pf. II	I	28.88	17.868	3	0.001
	II	28.33					II	24.81			
	III	44.46					III	43.76			
	IV	22.17					IV	10.50			
Pf. II	I	36.33	9.235	3	0.030						
	II	35.71									
	III	49.55									
	IV	29.11									
Pf. V	I	37.32	12.864	3	0.007						
	II	29.92									
	III	43.54									
	IV	20.91									

Source: Authors' computation

7. Conclusions and Implications

Students of MBA programme are more interested in undertaking entrepreneurship as a career choice compared to students of M.Com programme since the difference lays in the fact that MBA students possess a higher level of enthusiasm towards entrepreneurship and are more likely to become entrepreneurs in the future, while M.Com students have more interest in organizational employment.

Based on gender, male students of MBA programme are more inclined towards entrepreneurship than female students in respect to their higher level of passion, enthusiasm, confidence, and sureness about pursuing entrepreneurship. However, female students have adequate entrepreneurial knowledge like male students but may prefer other career options due to lack of risk-taking ability, confidence, and social support. Similarly, male students of M.Com programme have higher entrepreneurial intentions than female students in respect to their higher level of love and passion, confidence, and entrepreneurial knowledge.

As per father's occupation, students of MBA programme whose fathers are entrepreneurs tend to have higher entrepreneurial intentions. They are more desirable and feasible for entrepreneurship than students whose fathers are engaged in other professions. However, students of M.Com programme whose fathers are entrepreneurs have more love for entrepreneurship, while students whose fathers are engaged in services or jobs are more confident of being successful in business.

The findings of the study show that several items under PD and PF of EEM are not identified as relevant as per the responses of the students, especially the students of M.Com programme, female students, and students whose fathers are engaged in other professions than business. Thus, it would definitely serve the academicians, programme coordinators, and policy makers of the university in formulating plans and implementing effective strategies to bridge the gaps in the course curricula, such as undertaking various entrepreneurship development programmes and initiatives to create entrepreneurial awareness among students that may strengthen students' entrepreneurial intentions and motivate them to undertake entrepreneurship as a career choice.

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