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The Entrepreneurial Environment as a Catalyst for Green Entrepreneurship: Examining Intentions and Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study integrates the concept of the theory of planned behaviour as an underpinning theory and the social cognitive career theory as a supporting theory. It aims to reduce the global environmental crisis by promoting green entrepreneurial behaviour in developing countries. It examines the effect of entrepreneurial environment on development of green entrepreneurial behaviour amongst university students by fostering green entrepreneurial intentions with the support of Entrepreneurial Self Efficacy as it positively influences this relationship.

Methodology/Design: A total of 250 University students in Pakistan filled the online survey. The sector of academia is being chosen due to its appropriateness to the study as the research proves that if students are given right environment vis-à-vis the entrepreneurship it leads to the development of green entrepreneurial intentions which in-turn causes green entrepreneurial behaviour. University students are taken as a sample to assess the impact of educational information given to them in causing green entrepreneurial intentions which will help develop green entrepreneurial behaviour.

Findings: We developed five hypotheses based on the model. After the analysis we found that all hypotheses are being supported. While limited research exists on subject; this study explores entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a moderator in Pakistan's context therefore adds novelty in this research work which will prove helpful to academicians to formalize the awareness and informational sessions with respect. Further to improve the understating of the detrimental consequences of the Global environmental crisis and thus will help establish new norms and practices to promote green entrepreneurial behaviour.

Keywords: (Entrepreneurial Environment), **ESE** (Entrepreneurial Self Efficacy), **GEB** (Green Entrepreneurial behaviour), **GEI** (Green Entrepreneurial intentions)

Introduction

Environmental challenges have gained much attention. WHO (2018) explicated the impact of global warming and carbon emissions as precarious to human health; thus, serious reforms are required to address these issues. Due to this perilous situation, the United Nations (UN) in 2019 developed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the world to work collaboratively in protecting the planet. Business practices having a negative effect on the environment were coined as the “*business-as-usual model*” by researchers (Mrkajic, Murtinu & Scalera, 2019; Demirel, Cher Li, Rentocchini & Tamvada, 2019). Nordhaus (2019) and Al-Ghusaain (2019) linked climate change and global warming with human misconduct; therefore, organizations are giving much attention to promoting green behaviour to achieve SDGs (Longoni et al., 2018). Consequently, to make people aware of the significance of ecological sustainability through sustainable business practices, several awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits of green entrepreneurship and sustainability start-ups have gained popularity (Liguori et al., 2020). Green entrepreneurial behaviour emerges through green entrepreneurial intentions as explained by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Gribbs and O'Neill (2012) explained the subtle motivation of governments and policymakers of developed countries towards green economies as a solution to ecological depletion. However, scrutiny towards green entrepreneurship is still lacking in developing countries (Tien et al., 2020). The environment needs to be preserved by raising awareness of the concept and its importance for the cause.

Researchers have found a link between behaviour and intentions, which can be

explained by the Theory of Planned Behaviour. This theory explicates the intention to become an entrepreneur as planned behaviour (Bui et al., 2020), which can be shaped towards green behaviour through the environment created by entrepreneurial education. Shi et al. (2019) and Hoang et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of entrepreneurial education for creating entrepreneurial intentions among students. Several studies have linked students' institutional experiences and exposure to their choice of an entrepreneurial career in the future (Zhang et al., 2019).

Many studies have shown that people's perception of what other think about them has a significant effect on Green Entrepreneurial Intentions (Sargani et al., 2020; Londono et al., 2020; Yasir et al., 2021; Peng et al., 2021). On the contrary, quite a few studies have proved it otherwise (Ranasinghe & Ajward, 2019; Nordin, 2020; Thelken & de Jong, 2020). Contradicting results of previous studies direct towards research gaps on the influence of Subjective Norms on GEI.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is the ones confidence in own ability to perform tasks related to entrepreneurship (Mauer et al., 2017). According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, if the individual is not given the required circumstances to work in and is not comfortable with the surrounding environment, this can affect the capacity to perform entrepreneurial tasks. Thus, entrepreneurial self-efficacy moderates the relationship between Green Entrepreneurial Intentions and Green Entrepreneurial Behaviour. This study will help academicians raise awareness of the global environmental crisis and encourage new norms and practices to promote green entrepreneurial behaviour.

Problem Statement

The environmental quality serves as a fundamental basis for the sustainable growth of any nation. As per WHO (2023), Pakistan experiences approximately 200 deaths per 100,000 people owing to environmental causes. Consumer behaviour is being influenced due to detrimental effects of unsustainable consumption. Access to relevant sustainability information on products is essential to encourage sustainable purchasing decisions (Siraj et al., 2022). Promoting green purchases is crucial for achieving global sustainable development (Ghaffar & Islam, 2023). A significant obstacle is insufficient consumer knowledge and education. Many Pakistani consumers are unaware of the benefits of environmentally friendly products and the ecological consequences of their purchasing choices.

In scope of this framework, academia figures out as a key stakeholder. University students are often studied as a sample group because of the need to develop their knowledge and abilities to promote a sustainable lifestyle through green entrepreneurial behaviour (Anghel G.A. et al., 2022). Therefore, identifying and empirically analysing the factors influencing green and sustainable purchasing behaviour in the context of Pakistan is vital. Universities as institutions of information are important in equipping the students with the entrepreneurial spirit to deal with such issues through green enterprises, even though consumer culture is centered on the necessity to make environmentally friendly decisions.

Research Gap

Environmental crisis is a major issue at a global level and rightfully so; receiving an increasing attention owing to its impact on the ecosystem (Earth.Org, 2020). In order to address this issue, researchers have formulated various strategies. One of these is promoting green entrepreneurship (Hall et al., 2010; Demirel et al., 2019). Shephard and Patzelt (2011) argue that fostering green entrepreneurial behaviour among

employees can help protect the ecosystem by improving environmental practices and reducing deforestation.

Many organizations in developed countries are actively promoting green entrepreneurship; however, limited literature exists on the implementation of this approach in developing nations. Enhancing the environment provided to university students and organizational employees is essential to underscore its importance, as discussed by Bogatyreva et al. (2019) and Grinevich et al. (2019). In this scenario it can be said that green entrepreneurial intentions can be cultivated and probably transformed into green entrepreneurial behaviours as per context and other extraneous factors.

From a practical perspective, literature indicates that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a key determinant of entrepreneurial intention (Thuy et al., 2024). This study will examine the moderating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between green entrepreneurial intentions and green entrepreneurial behaviour.

Hypothesis

Green entrepreneurial intention is described as a state in which an individual's behaviour is oriented toward entrepreneurial action involving environmentally sustainable practices (Meoli et al., 2020; Neneh, 2019; Rauch & Hulsink, 2015). Entrepreneurship research suggests that behaviour is shaped by the surrounding environment; when economic, social, political, and cultural factors—such as business conditions, institutional and legal systems, the global economic climate, and access to capital—support entrepreneurial activities, the intention to become an entrepreneur is strengthened (Schwarz et al., 2009). Nguyen (2020) similarly notes that favourable general conditions enhance entrepreneurial intent. Soomro et al. (2020) also emphasized the importance of creating an entrepreneurial culture among university students by offering courses that highlight the significance of green entrepreneurship and allied environmental benefits.

H1: Entrepreneurial environment is positively related to Green Entrepreneurial intentions.

Green entrepreneurial intentions mean that individual's inclination toward entrepreneurial behaviour related to environmental protection and sustainable economic growth. Entrepreneurs who develop solutions for environmental issues can be termed as green entrepreneurs which by extension involves inculcating and promotion of environmentally friendly practices (Gerlach, 2003; Keogh & Polonsky, 1998; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). Researchers believe that green entrepreneurial behaviour as an intentional and planned act which involving multiple steps; reflecting strong intention to engage in green entrepreneurship as outlined by Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Broadly speaking green entrepreneurial behaviour is an innovative, market oriented and personality-driven type of growth (Domańska & Zajkowski, 2018).

H2: Green entrepreneurial intention is positively related to Green Entrepreneurial behaviour:

Timmons (1999) refers to resource-based theory stating that growth of entrepreneurial ventures depends on available resources. Education regarding entrepreneurial is an important platform based on research findings. Entrepreneurial activity flourishes when environment correspondingly supports programs, courses and fundings (Schwarz et al., 2009; Nguyen, 2020).

H3: Entrepreneurial environment is positively related to Green Entrepreneurial behaviour.

Many of the environmental problems we face today can be traced back to human activity. A growing number of studies point out that what people do in their everyday lives directly contributes to environmental decline, which means that changing behaviour is not optional but necessary (Onel et al., 2015; Peschel et al., 2016). When people base their actions on responsibility towards environment due to emotions; their actions can be termed as pro-environmental (Twenge et al., 2010). Interestingly, this discussion is not limited to ordinary lifestyle choices; entrepreneurship also plays a role. Douglas and Shepherd (2021) have equated risk taking nature of entrepreneurs beneficial in undertaking ventures which are environment friendly in nature. Their intentions can be nurtured through the right support systems in education—such as awareness-building activities, dedicated green courses, or even small grants that allow students to test eco-friendly ideas (Schwarz et al., 2009; Nguyen, 2020).

It has been observed that discipline is important factor such that the entrepreneurs more likely commit to and follow pro-environmental steps if they take organizational goals seriously (Abedinia et al., 2019). Perceived behavioural control is the confidence in their ability to act can nudge them towards actually adopting environmental values through concrete practices (Vuorio et al., 2018). When such behaviour becomes consistent, it gradually shapes how organisations operate. This might mean avoiding harmful materials, cutting down waste, conserving scarce resources, or designing products that respond to ecological challenges in new ways (Yasir et al., 2023).

H4: Green Entrepreneurial intention mediates the relationship between Entrepreneurial Environment and Green Entrepreneurial behaviour.

Self-efficacy influences human behaviour and has been examined in various research domains, including health psychology (Linde et al., 2006), personality (Miller et al., 2005), social psychology (Locke et al., 1987; Gecas et al., 1989), and work psychology (Bandura et al., 2009; Bakker, 2008). It can be understood as a mechanism that regulates behaviour and directs actions toward specific goals (Makara et al., 2019). This study focuses on university students, considering socioeconomic indicators and the psychological characteristics of self-efficacy as a potential moderator between green entrepreneurial intention and green entrepreneurial behaviour.

Green entrepreneurial intention is defined as a psychological state that drives an individual's interest and tendency to act in a particular way (Bird, 1988; Meoli, Fini, Sobrero, & Wiklund, 2020; Liguori, 2019), a concept also explained by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Using this framework, the present study examines the moderating role of self-efficacy between green entrepreneurial intention and green entrepreneurial behaviour. Here, self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in addressing challenges. It is proposed that students who receive institutional support through awareness sessions, information on green start-ups and innovation, and initial funding—are more likely to develop the self-efficacy required to transform green entrepreneurial intentions into actual green entrepreneurial behaviour.

H5: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively moderates the relationship between green entrepreneurial intention and green entrepreneurial behaviour.

Methodology Sample and Procedure:

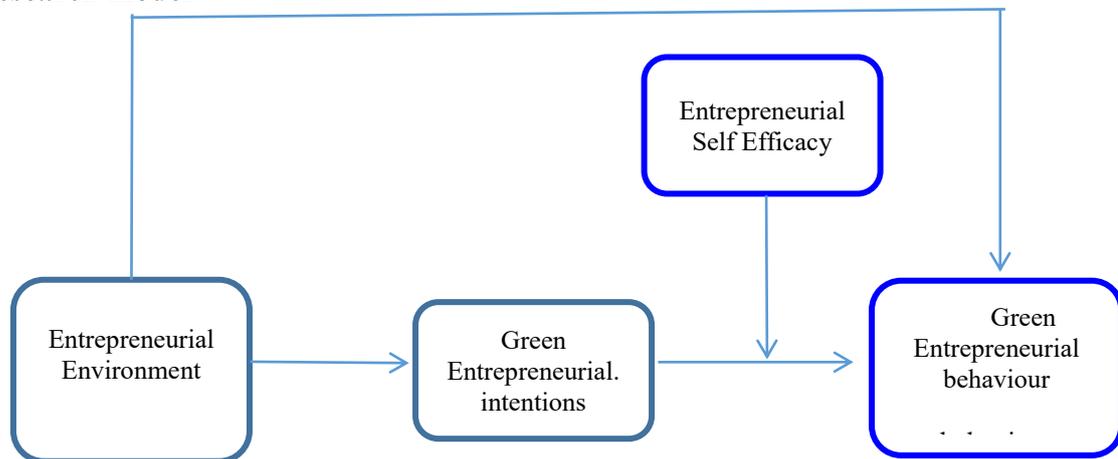
Participants in the study included final-year bachelor’s and master’s students enrolled in entrepreneurship courses within Management and Business Administration departments. These also included students from business incubation centers and ones working on their final year projects.

Data was collected using a convenience sampling method. Since final-year students often face academic and field-related obligations, the data collection was completed in a single round. As the total number of eligible students was unknown, the sample size was calculated using Memon et al.'s item-to-response ratio, which recommends at least five responses per questionnaire item.

50% respondents were between 18 and 22 year whereas 48% belonged to 23 to 27 year age bracket. 48% respondents were graduates, 38% under graduates and 14% had master’s degrees.

21 items required at least 115 responses. 250 questionnaires were distributed and 195 were returned and found to be useable, providing a response rate of 78%. The questionnaires were in plain language for easy understanding.

Research model



One way ANOVA highlighted that all demographic variables were insignificant having p value more than 0.05. “Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient” was used. The range of correlation in values is from +1.00 to -1.00. Positive values exhibit a positive association whereas negative values show negative association among the studied variables. However, if correlation analysis found 0 values between two variables, it means there is not any correlation existing between the variables.

Correlation Analysis

Moderated Mediation Regression Analysis

	β	SE	T	p
Entrepreneurial Environment (EE)	0.48	0.09	5.33	< .001
Green Entrepreneurial Intention (GEI)	0.29	0.07	4.14	< .001

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE)	0.22	0.08	2.75	.006
GEI × ESE (Interaction Term)	0.18	0.08	2.40	.012
Constant	1.02	0.21	4.86	< .001

This research tested a moderated mediation model in which Green Entrepreneurial Intention (GEI) serves as the mediator of the relationship between Entrepreneurial Environment (EE) and Green Entrepreneurial Behaviour (GEB) and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) as the moderator of the relationship between GEI and GEB.

Mediation Analysis

Hayes PROCESS Model 4 was utilized for the mediation analysis. Significant direct effect of EE on GEB ($\beta = 0.48, p < .001$) was found. EE also significantly predicted GEI ($\beta = 0.67, p < .001$) as well as GEI significantly predicted GEB ($\beta = 0.29, p < .001$). The indirect effect of EE on GEB through GEI was also statistically significant indicating partial mediation. The findings propose that people exposed to a supportive entrepreneurial environment are more likely to exhibit GEI which leads to GEB.

Moderation Analysis

The moderating role of ESE on the relationship between GEI and GEB was analyzed using PROCESS Model 1. The interaction term (GEI × ESE) was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.18, p = .012$) signifying that ESE moderates the effect of GEI on GEB.

Implications

This research extends entrepreneurial intention theory in three meaningful ways. First, by integrating TPB with SCCT, it demonstrates how individual psychological factors (self-efficacy) interact with contextual conditions (entrepreneurial environment) to shape sustainable behaviour. Second, it empirically confirms GEI as a mediating mechanism between the entrepreneurial environment and GEB, reinforcing the view that intentions remain the most proximal predictor of behaviour. Finally, the study provides one of the first empirical tests of ESE as a moderator in the Pakistani higher education context, thereby advancing cross-cultural scholarship on green entrepreneurship and expanding its relevance to underexplored emerging economies. From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the responsibility of universities, policymakers, and business incubation centres to actively design environments that foster not only entrepreneurial awareness but also confidence to act sustainably. Universities should embed green entrepreneurship modules into curricula, provide seed funding for eco-innovation projects, and facilitate mentoring schemes that enhance students' self-efficacy. Policymakers, in turn, can complement these efforts by creating enabling ecosystems—through incentives, regulatory support, and recognition programs—that make sustainable entrepreneurship both viable and desirable.

For educators and practitioners, the key insight is that raising awareness alone is insufficient. Students must believe in their own ability to transform ideas into action. Building this sense of efficacy, coupled with a supportive institutional environment, can turn green entrepreneurial intentions into the everyday behaviours needed to

address the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

Limitations and Future Research

Like any empirical research, there are certain limitations of the current study that must be kept in mind when interpreting the findings. First of all, the study relied on cross-sectional survey data on a convenience sample of students at a university. Although the group is a significant group of potential entrepreneurs, the findings cannot be inferred to any other groups including mature entrepreneurs, workers in green firms, or consumers that practice sustainable consumption. Longitudinal designs would be useful to enable causality and track how entrepreneurial intentions translate into persistent green conduct in the long term.

Secondly, this research was based in Pakistan's higher education environment with peculiar socio-economic and cultural factors. While this contributes to novelty for the research, it constrains comparability across nations. A replication of the study across various cultures and institutions both in other developing countries as well as in developed nations—would add greater external validity and insights into how entrepreneurial ecosystems influence sustainable behaviour worldwide. Third, the research used self-reported surveys to measure variables such as GEI, GEB, and ESE, which can be a source of common method bias or social desirability. Despite efforts to control such risks, future studies could benefit from the use of multi-source data, behaviour experiments, or objective entrepreneurship activity measures (e.g., start-up formation, amounts raised, or green certificates). Lastly, entrepreneurial self-efficacy was the only moderator isolated in this study. Important as it is, other environmental and psychological factors—e.g., environmental values, resilience, institutional trust, or green access finance—may also influence intentions to explain action. Future work could further develop the model by adding these other moderators or compare alternative theoretical models, i.e., institutional theory or value-belief-norm theory, to better understand driving green entrepreneurship.

By alleviating these limitations, future research can construct on the findings of this research to achieve a qualitative and richer perspective regarding how policymakers, universities, and ecosystems can facilitate sustainable entrepreneurial conduct across various settings.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how the entrepreneurial environment influences the development of green entrepreneurial behaviour (GEB) among university students in Pakistan, with green entrepreneurial intentions (GEI) acting as a mediator and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) as a moderator. Drawing on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), the findings provide empirical support for all hypothesized relationships. It was found that GEB emanates from GEI which more likely when entrepreneurial environment is supportive. Furthermore, students with high ESE are more likely to transform their green intentions into actionable steps even with modest effect size.

The study highlights that although environmental awareness is growing; behavioural transformation with respect to environment requires more efforts. Supportive environment and confidence building measures are necessary elements. This study will prove helpful in furthering understanding of entrepreneurial ecosystems in developing countries by testing this model in the context of Pakistan especially among future business leaders.

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