Entrepreneurial intentions among university students: the role of mentoring, self-efficacy and motivation

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Abstract
Purpose – This research examines whether mentoring is a predictor of entrepreneurial intentions. It also explores how intent translates into action through implementation intentions. The study tests if the mentoring-intentions association is mediated by self-efficacy. The potential moderating effect of achievement motivation on the relationship was also investigated.

Design/methodology/approach – PLS-SEM was used to test the hypotheses of the 242 valid responses collected from final-year students from Libyan public universities.

Findings – Results show that self-efficacy partially mediated the mentoring-intentions association, while motivation negatively moderated the relationship. Entrepreneurial intentions had a significantly strong effect on implementation intentions.

Research limitations/implications – The results verify mentoring as a practical socializing instructional approach. Therefore, universities should implement structured mentoring programs, offering emotional guidance, counsel and networking opportunities. Also, mentors should undergo training, and progress tracking is essential for improvement.

Originality/value – Examining entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a mediator and achievement motivation as a moderator in the mentoring-intentions association is unprecedented. The findings narrow the search for antecedents to entrepreneurial intentions and pinpoint intervention points.

Keywords Entrepreneurial intentions, Entrepreneurial mentoring, Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, Achievement motivation

Paper type Research paper

Mentoring is the bridge that connects generations, providing a legacy of wisdom that spans time.

(John C. Maxwell)

Introduction
The current crisis in Libya has resulted in alarmingly high unemployment, exceeding 19.39% in 2020, compared to the world average of 8.15% (The Global Economy, 2020). In addition, youth unemployment is higher than the world average for 15–24-year-olds. Therefore, studying entrepreneurship as a practical alternative to traditional employment is essential. Entrepreneurs significantly contribute to economic growth in developing countries, wanting to extend studies beyond Western contexts to the Middle East and North Africa region (Al Issa, 2020a; Aljuwaiber, 2021; Bruton et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurship examines discovering, evaluating and exploiting opportunities to create future goods and services (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). This emphasizes understanding how profitable opportunities are identified, assessed and utilized. In some countries, young adults exhibit lower entrepreneurship rates (Bosma et al., 2021). This study focuses on students under 25, exploring factors influencing entrepreneurial intention (EI) and reasons for graduates choosing entrepreneurial careers. Instruction significantly affects career choices in and out of university (Al Issa, 2020b, 2021). Socializing and mentoring are...
proposed methods to inspire and teach entrepreneurship, with mentoring having varied objectives (Crisp and Cruz, 2009; Nuis et al., 2023).

Recent research reveals that only a modest percentage of entrepreneurial intentions translate into actual behavior (Meoli et al., 2020; Rauch and Hulsink, 2015). This study explores predictors aligned with the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and entrepreneurial event theory (Shapero and Sokol, 1982), emphasizing the role of the tendency to act on opportunities, perceptions of feasibility and desirability, and social modeling in influencing behavior. Additionally, as Linan and Chen (2009) and Dheer (2017) stressed, national culture significantly impacts entrepreneurship.

BarNir et al. (2011) explored the mediating role of self-efficacy and the moderating role of gender in the relationship between role models and career intentions. The present study advances self-efficacy and achievement motivation as impactful constructs in the mentoring-intentions association. Mentoring enhances self-efficacy, a force behind the perseverance needed for entrepreneurial endeavors (Al Issa, 2021). Previous research links self-efficacy to intentions (Naktiyok et al., 2010). Entrepreneurial mentoring influences self-efficacy but reduces professional intention, prompting the exploration of introducing mentoring early in the entrepreneurial process (St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015).

Mentoring aids mentee success by influencing outcomes with achievement motivation (Fayram et al., 2018). Prior research links achievement motivation to mentoring (Fayram et al., 2018) and intentions (Popescu et al., 2016). We propose that intention antecedents address concerns over low implementation rates despite favorable views on entrepreneurship. Students with strong intentions and implementation intentions are less likely to retreat (Gollwitzer, 1999).

Our central thesis posits that achievement motivation is crucial in translating mentoring knowledge into entrepreneurial intentions. This paper contributes uniquely to the literature in four ways: Firstly, it introduces a model examining the impact of self-efficacy and achievement motivation on the mentoring-intentions association. Secondly, it extends intentions to include implementation research, addressing concerns about low implementation rates despite opportunities and positive views on entrepreneurship. Thirdly, it explores achievement motivation as a moderator between entrepreneurial mentoring and intentions, which is unprecedented. Lastly, it responds to the call for unified models explaining entrepreneurial intentions and behavior (Lián and Fayolle, 2015).

In short, our research adopts a comprehensive approach, recognizing the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurship. Filling a gap in developing country contexts, we integrate variables into a model based on the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Theory, emphasizing self-confidence, mentoring and achievement motivation. The study underscores the theoretical importance of collectively examining these factors. Findings advocate for universities to implement mentoring initiatives providing emotional support, counsel and networking opportunities, empowering aspiring entrepreneurs to gain the skills and confidence needed for venture initiation.

**Literature review**

**Theoretical foundation**

Ajzen’s theory of planned behavior (1991) posits that entrepreneurship is a deliberate, planned behavior influenced by attitudes shaped through self-efficacy and achievement motives, mainly through entrepreneurial mentoring. Intentions indicating readiness for behavior serve as a predictor for entrepreneurial startups. Attitudes, subjective norms and behavioral control, as outlined by Ajzen (1991), shape intentions via mentoring, a socialization mechanism influenced by students’ achievement motives and self-efficacy (Falck et al., 2012).
The entrepreneurial event (SEE) theory (Shapero and Sokol, 1982) posits that venture initiation intentions hinge on the tendency to act on opportunities and perceptions of feasibility and desirability shaped by social environments and cultural contexts. Entrepreneurial learning in education aids students in identifying needs and motivation (van Ewijk and Weber, 2021). Despite the role of moderators in influencing determinants of entrepreneurial intentions, there’s limited theoretical support and comprehensive study (Schlaegel and Koenig, 2014). Understanding antecedents enhances our comprehension of intended behavior, where attitudes impact behavior (Krueger et al., 2000).

Entrepreneurship education, fostering talents, creativity and independence, positively impacts entrepreneurial spirit (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008). It encourages considering new ventures, shaping positive attitudes and proposing novel career perspectives offering learning, partnerships, resources and coaching remains contentious, with mixed findings on its impact contingent on quality, context and individual characteristics. Studies like Edelman et al. (2008) and Hindle (2010) suggest positive influences on intention and startups, yet some hint at a potential gap between education and practical application.

Entrepreneurial mentoring and intentions
Entrepreneurship’s teachability is debated, with claims challenging certainty in other fields (Hahn et al., 2017). Socializing, proposed for teaching entrepreneurship, includes mentoring and guiding mentees in entrepreneurial careers (Crisp and Cruz, 2009). Sanchez-Burks et al. (2017) emphasize mentoring’s role in entrepreneurial success, overcoming setbacks and building ventures. The study assesses mentor impact, training and matching. The theory of planned behavior posits intention reflects readiness for behavior (Ajzen, 1991), with mentoring enhancing motivational cognitive factors for entrepreneurial intention.

Mentoring in entrepreneurship offers diverse, extensive forms of direct assistance, exceeding other settings. This variation underscores potential differences in advice levels. Mentoring’s acknowledged value in entrepreneurship positions mentors as leaders, role models, coaches, teachers, advisors, or even friends, contributing to successful outcomes for mentees (Gimmon, 2014).

Mentoring’s impact on entrepreneurial traits is pivotal but variable, with some cases even showing detrimental effects. Effective mentorship programs in U.K. business schools prioritize mentor credibility, business connections and mentee-perceived similarities. These programs offer professional and psychosocial support, serving as role models for university students venturing into entrepreneurship (Mouammer and Bazan, 2021).

Research indicates that business mentors, especially opportunity brokers and enablers, aid university students with entrepreneurial aspirations identify and exploit opportunities. Though not directly comparing mentoring forms, the studies highlight the importance of formal programs, especially for students lacking local business mentors (St-Jean et al., 2017).

The present study posits that mentoring fosters entrepreneurial intentions by guiding mentees in self-exploration, offering inspiration and emotional support for career maturity. Research supports the positive impact of mentoring and interactive learning on entrepreneurship outcomes (Eisenstein and Raz, 2021; Huq and Gilbert, 2017). Specialized mentoring significantly enhances students’ entrepreneurial projects, providing industry-specific advice and assistance with technical and legal issues (Ferrandiz et al., 2018). Studies suggest mentoring promotes entrepreneurial intentions and activity (Baluku et al., 2018, 2020, 2021; Shittu, 2017; Solesvik, 2013; Nabi et al., 2021). However, contrasting findings by St-Jean and Mathieu (2015) suggest a negative direct effect on intentions to stay in the entrepreneurial profession.

H1. Entrepreneurial mentoring (M) is positively and significantly related to entrepreneurial intentions (EI).
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediation

Mentoring and entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by distinct factors (BarNir et al., 2011). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, reflecting confidence in success, is linked to intentions and indirectly influences them (Jiatong et al., 2021; Naktiyok et al., 2010; Ruiz-Ruano and Puga, 2019). It combines goal and control beliefs, indicating confidence in performing business tasks and controlling entrepreneurial outcomes (Drnovšek et al., 2010).

Entrepreneurial mentoring contributes to self-efficacy through knowledge and reassurance (McGee et al., 2009). Limited studies explore mentoring’s indirect effects on self-efficacy and intentions (Newman et al., 2019; St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015), with potential hindrances noted in Ting et al.’s (2017) study. In China, young entrepreneurs value mentors but perceive insufficient mentoring intention, requiring promotion (Ting et al., 2017). Baluku et al. (2020) found self-efficacy-mediated mentoring effects in Uganda. Shinnar et al. (2014) reveal male students’ increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy, contrasting females, possibly due to perceived gender roles (Gupta et al., 2009). Sandler (2000) links higher self-efficacy to career success, highlighting challenges for those with lower levels. Santos and Liguori (2020) connect entrepreneurial self-efficacy to intentions through outcome expectations. This supports focusing on career decision-making, self-efficacy, financial support, counselling and flexible schedules for students.

H2. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) significantly mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial mentoring (M) and entrepreneurial intentions (EI)

Achievement motivation moderation

Achievement motivation, driven by the need for success and influenced by role models and mentors (Carsrud et al., 2017; Yang and Gao, 2019), attracts individuals to entrepreneurship by offering control, moderate risk and direct feedback (McClelland, 1965). Conscientiousness, associated with high achievement levels, correlates with entrepreneurial intentions (Zhao et al., 2010). Mentoring reinforces behavioral control and capability beliefs, enhancing entrepreneurship (Nabi et al., 2021), improving goal awareness and motives (Makesh et al., 2021). More apparent motivations are more accurate, specific and final (Nuttin et al., 1984). Kong and Choo (2022) find achievement motivation linked to stronger entrepreneurial intentions, with women having lower intentions due to external factors.

Entrepreneurial mentoring and achievement motivation impact entrepreneurial intentions (Baluku et al., 2020; Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018) with an implied relationship to motivation (Fayram et al., 2018; Hernandez et al., 2017). Popescu et al. (2016) found that the need for achievement and risk-taking determines entrepreneurial intention in Romania. Collins et al.’s (2004) meta-analysis confirms achievement motivation predicting entrepreneurial activity. Some studies, however, suggest mentoring may not affect student outcomes (Rodger and Tremblay, 2003; Strayhorn and Terrell, 2007). Answering calls to explore potential moderators (St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015), the study proposes achievement motivation as a viable moderator (Hirschfeld et al., 2004; Nonis and Wright, 2003).

H3. Achievement motivation (AM) significantly moderates the relationship between entrepreneurial mentoring (M) and entrepreneurial intentions (EI)

Entrepreneurial intentions and implementation

Entrepreneurial intention marks the initial phase in venture creation, but successful execution benefits from implementation intentions linking decisions to behaviors (Gollwitzer, 1999). A meta-analysis of 94 studies reveals that forming implementation intentions significantly impacts goal achievement across various domains (Gollwitzer and Sheeran, 2006). Recent
research confirms a positive association between intentions and implementation (Van Gelderen et al., 2018). While intentions’ direct causal effect on behavior is minimal (Webb et al., 2009), including implementation intentions in entrepreneurial intention research is recommended. Distinguishing between intentions and implementation contributes to understanding which implementation intentions drive social entrepreneurial outcomes, providing insights into why people act on their entrepreneurial intentions.

H4. Entrepreneurial intentions (EI) are positively and significantly related to implementation intentions (Imp).

Methods
The population and sample
The study focused on business program students in two public universities in northwestern Libya, chosen due to logistical challenges in the country’s dispersed university landscape (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Concentrating on these institutions allowed for a detailed exploration aligned with the study’s exploratory objectives (Bryman, 2016). Future research can broaden the sample for diversity. The study targeted final-year students, aiming to reach a potential population of 3,640 using universities’ directories for sampling (Sekaran, 2003). While data availability concerns existed, prioritizing data availability over updating information was necessary (Sekaran, 2003). Practicality dictated convenience sampling to access as many participants as possible (Trochim and Donnelly, 2008). A G*Power analysis verified a minimum sample of 119 respondents for three predictors (McCrum-Gardner, 2010). Data collection occurred through online questionnaires distributed to students in the two Libyan public universities.

Online surveys offer accessibility, cost-effectiveness and honest responses but may yield a smaller sample due to dropouts and non-responses. Despite this, the study analyzed 247 questionnaires, presenting participant demographics in Table 1.

Measures
Adopted from existing instruments, measures utilized a standard five-point Likert-like scale (“strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). Implementation intentions (Imp) (Ziegelmann et al., 2007) had an internal consistency of 0.906. Entrepreneurial intentions (EI) (Linan and Chen, 2009) had an internal consistency of 0.938. Achievement motivation (AM) (Lang and Fries, 2006) had an internal consistency of 0.817. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) (Lucas et al., 2009) had an internal consistency of 0.896. Entrepreneurial mentoring (M) (Baluku et al., 2018) had an internal consistency of 0.841. Control variables included gender, family in-business background and business experience due to reported associations with intentions.

Results
Data analysis employed SPSS v20 and PLS-SEM due to their suitability for explaining variance and predictive models, particularly with non-normal data and complexity (Al Issa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Family business</th>
<th>Work/business experience</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male 81 (32.8%)</td>
<td>Positive: 87 (35.2%)</td>
<td>Was or still employed 59 (23.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 166 (67.2%)</td>
<td>Negative: 160 (64.8%)</td>
<td>Was or still self-employed 61 (24.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None 127 (51.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 1. Distribution of respondents
and Abdelsalam, 2021). While PLS-SEM and CB-SEM can provide similar results for complex models, the choice depends on research questions, sample size and data characteristics. PLS-SEM was preferred in this study due to data distribution and sample size. Despite potential biases, such as overestimating measurement model parameters and underestimating structural model parameters, PLS-SEM excels in predicting outcomes within theoretical frameworks, making it a robust choice for confirming theories in quantitative research contexts (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

Table 2 showed significant correlations among the examined variables. Common method variance effects were mitigated by ensuring anonymity, explaining items and conducting Harman’s single-factor test (explaining <50% variance) (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). Multicollinearity was not an issue, with VIF at 1.701 and tolerance at 0.588. Outliers were addressed using Mahalanobis distances (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Normality was confirmed through Q-Q plots and histograms. Internal consistency reliability used composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient tests; composite reliability is preferred for PLS due to unequal indicator loadings (Hair et al., 2017). After addressing these considerations, 242 cases remained for analysis.

Regression analysis explores the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2017). The model includes entrepreneurial intentions, mentoring, self-efficacy and achievement motivation, producing coefficients indicating the impact of a one-unit change in each independent variable on entrepreneurial intentions. Positive coefficients signify increased intentions, while negative coefficients suggest decreased intentions, indicating a negative relationship. Hypothesis testing assesses the statistical significance of relationships, with a low p-value indicating significance. Coefficients’ size means strength, while standardized coefficients (beta weights) compare variable importance. R-squared (EI 0.428) evaluates overall model fit, with higher values indicating better fit. Interpretation highlights significant positive effects of mentoring on entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = 0.142, p < 0.00$).

The measurement model assessed internal consistency, item reliability and convergent and discriminant validity. To maintain reliability, five indicators (AM6, AM7, AM8, AM9 and AM10) with loadings below 0.70 were excluded. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion (Henseler et al., 2015) confirmed discriminant validity with all construct ratios below 0.85 (Table 3). PLS-SEM bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) confirmed acceptance of all hypotheses (Table 4). Predictive power assessment yielded $R^2$ values of 0.428 ($R^2$ adjusted 0.424) for EI, 0.376 ($R^2$ corrected 0.375) for Imp and 0.199 ($R^2$ corrected 0.198) for ESE. Effect sizes ($f^2$) were evaluated, indicating a minor impact for mentoring on EI ($f^2 = 0.025$) and a medium impact for ESE on intentions ($f^2 = 0.162$), with a negligible impact for AM on EI ($f^2 = 0.084$) per Hair et al. (2017).

Discussion
The study assessed the achievement motive’s impact on the mentoring-intentions relationship among experienced and inexperienced Libyan students. The first hypothesis, examining the mentoring-intentions relationship (Table 4), aligns with SEE theory, suggesting that venture intentions depend on acting on opportunities influenced by mentors’ effects on feasibility and desirability. Findings support prior research on the mentoring-intentions association (Baluku et al., 2018; Nabi et al., 2021) and uniquely analyze students’ business experience and family background.

Intentions and implementation explained 42 and 37% of mentoring, indicating its significant influence. Additionally, mentoring correlated with self-efficacy, explaining 19.9% of its variance (Table 4). The second hypothesis aligns with the theory of planned behavior, confirming the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between entrepreneurial mentoring and intentions (Ajzen, 1991).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family Business</td>
<td>1.672</td>
<td>0.470</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>2.253</td>
<td>0.856</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>3.372</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.069</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial Intentions</td>
<td>3.677</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
<td>-0.210</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>0.397</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Achievement Motivation</td>
<td>3.722</td>
<td>0.573</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>-0.157</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy</td>
<td>3.607</td>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>-0.110</td>
<td>-0.185</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Implementation Intentions</td>
<td>3.389</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
<td>-0.136</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.411</td>
<td>0.614</td>
<td>0.334</td>
<td>0.642</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note(s):** N = 242 *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

**Source(s):** Table by authors
The third hypothesis, confirming achievement motivation’s moderating role in the mentoring-intentions relationship, aligns with the view that individuals with a high need for achievement are drawn to entrepreneurship (McClelland, 1965), connecting mentoring and achievement motivation. The upper line in Figure 1 indicates a flatter slope with higher achievement motivation as a moderator, resulting in a weaker association between mentoring and intentions. Critical values (2.33, 1.65, 1.28) for one-tailed tests were used to assess directional hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017), with a more lenient 10% significance level for exploratory studies, as recommended by Hair et al.

The negative moderating effect of achievement motivation suggests that mentoring may interfere with intrinsically motivated individuals pursuing excellence (Yang and Gao, 2019). Achievement indicators may conflict with mentor advice, as mentors may inadvertently demand actions contrary to achievement needs. Mentors’ limited impact on project outcomes for achievement-driven mentees may decrease the desire to start a business. Alternative mentoring programs like peer or group mentoring might better suit ambitious mentees (Rauch and Frese, 2007).

The fourth hypothesis distinguishes between goal and implementation intentions, aligning with the close relationship between intentions and implementation (Van Gelderen et al., 2018). This response to calls for incorporating implementation intentions into intentions research to address conflicting results on the direct causal link between intentions and behavior (Webb et al., 2009).

In the parametric multi-group analysis with SmartPLS, no significance was found in gender and family in-business background. The only significant difference was in business experience between the employed and never employed ($p = 0.045$), indicating that the impact of mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Standard beta</th>
<th>$t$-statistics</th>
<th>$p$-values</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1. M → EI</td>
<td>0.142***</td>
<td>3.773</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4. EI → Imp</td>
<td>0.613***</td>
<td>19.090</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect effects</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2. M → ESE → EI</td>
<td>0.171***</td>
<td>6.707</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction effects</td>
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<tr>
<td>H3. M*AM → EI</td>
<td>−0.049*</td>
<td>1.899</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>Accept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience (employed vs none) EI → Imp</td>
<td>0.257</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>Significant</td>
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</table>

**Note(s):** ***Significant at 0.01 (2-tailed), **significant at 0.05 (2-tailed), *significant at 0.10 (2-tailed)**

M, mentoring; EI, entrepreneurial intentions; ESE, entrepreneurial self-efficacy; AM, achievement motivation; Imp, implementation intentions; none, not employed nor self-employed

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity (HTMT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Intentions</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Self-efficacy</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Intentions</td>
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<td>Mentoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>0.503</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>0.697</td>
<td>0.641</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0.617</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source(s):** Table by authors

**Table 4.** Structural estimates

<table>
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M, mentoring; EI, entrepreneurial intentions; ESE, entrepreneurial self-efficacy; AM, achievement motivation; Imp, implementation intentions; none, not employed nor self-employed

**Source(s):** Table by authors
on implementation was less pronounced for those who were used in the past or were never utilized. This study highlights mentoring’s role in fostering entrepreneurial intentions among students in developing nations, providing valuable insights for educational institutions, policymakers and researchers supporting entrepreneurship and economic growth.

Social implications
The study underlines the significance of new ventures as engines for economic and community development, with substantial social implications. Encouraging entrepreneurial intentions through mentoring can stimulate economic growth and job creation, which is crucial for advancing developing nations. Educational institutions can contribute to promoting entrepreneurship and equipping students with the skills for starting businesses. Despite no significant gender difference, the study implies potential implications for gender equality in entrepreneurship. Ensuring equal access to mentoring opportunities may help bridge gender gaps in entrepreneurial endeavors (Al Issa and Abdelsalam, 2021; Nabi et al., 2021; St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015).

Theoretical implications
The study enriches management research by elucidating intention-behavior relationships and enhancing our understanding of entrepreneurial intentions. Its insights contribute to strategic decision-making by integrating will and discretion. The study offers a comprehensive view of factors influencing entrepreneurial behavior by exploring the interplay between mentoring, self-efficacy, achievement motivation and entrepreneurial intentions. The mediating role of self-efficacy and the moderating effect of achievement motivation provide depth and underscore the importance of individual differences in mentoring’s impact on entrepreneurial intentions. These contributions advance our understanding of the intricate nature of entrepreneurship (Al Issa and Abdelsalam, 2021; Baluku et al., 2020; Nabi et al., 2021; St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015).
Practical implications
Universities are pivotal in supporting aspiring entrepreneurs through structured mentoring programs, emphasizing guidance, emotional support and networking opportunities. Practical implications underscore the importance of mentor training to enhance knowledge and skills. Evaluation through feedback and interviews helps tailor programs to students’ needs. Promoting new ventures, driven by improved perceptions of viability and desirability, is crucial for economic and community development. Policy initiatives fostering positive attitudes and intentions toward entrepreneurship can spur increased business formation in developing nations (Al Issa and Abdelsalam, 2021; Baluku et al., 2020; Nabi et al., 2021; St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015).

Conclusion
The current study fills a gap in the scarce literature exploring predictors of entrepreneurial intentions and implementation among students in developing countries. The findings revealed that mentoring strongly influences entrepreneurial intentions and behavior. However, this does not discount the importance of perceived feasibility and desirability as factors at play. While various antecedents of EI have been studied in multiple contexts, examining EI with mentoring, self-efficacy and achievement motivation as predictors is unprecedented. We discover that self-efficacy mediates, achievement motivation moderates the mentoring-intentions association and entrepreneurial intentions strongly affect implementation intentions.

Focusing on two universities in Libya, although limiting international generalizability, provides valuable insights into the unique context and challenges of the MENA region. Despite resource constraints, examining Libya in-depth allows for a nuanced understanding of its cultural, economic and political nuances, making it a practical preliminary study. The findings contribute to the global entrepreneurship ecosystem by offering regional insights that can inform international comparisons and strategies. Acknowledging the importance of Libyan experiences in entrepreneurship education and policy development, this study emphasizes the significance of incorporating diverse perspectives for a comprehensive understanding (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Hair et al., 2017).

A limitation of this study is the use of self-rating scales, potentially contributing to response bias. The cross-sectional design restricts generalizability, with findings primarily applicable to the surveyed Libyan universities. Future research should include a more diverse range of institutions to enhance external validity. Using intentions as a dependent variable may oversimplify, as predictive ability varies. Longitudinal studies could provide a more nuanced understanding of changes over time. Exploring cultural motivations and deeper-rooted values in the Arab world would offer valuable insights into how traditional family roles may influence students’ entrepreneurial intentions (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Delmar and Davidsson, 2000; Fisher and Koch, 2008; Hofstede, 2001).

References


Further reading


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