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The Influence of Institutional Support on Entrepreneurial Intention: The Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

[*1]**Kainat -Email- kainatkaleem33@gmail.com**
[2]**Aamar Ilyas**
[3]**Dr. Waqar Munir**
[4]**Dr. Abdul Hafeez**
[5]**Dania**
[6]**Tehniyat**
[7]**Ajwa**
[8]**Ayesha**
[*1]University of Central Punjab, Gujranwala Campus.
[2]Assistant Professor, University of Central Punjab, Gujranwala Campus
[3]University of the Punjab, Gujranwala Campus
[4]Imperial College of Business Studies Lahore
[5]University of Central Punjab, Gujranwala Campus
[6]University of Central Punjab, Gujranwala Campus
[7]University of Central Punjab, Gujranwala Campus
[8]University of Central Punjab, Gujranwala Campus

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Corresponding Authors*:
Kainat

Abstract

This study examines the influence of external support systems—family support (FS), social capital (SC), and government support (GS)—on entrepreneurial intention (EI), with entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) as a mediator. Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, the research proposes an integrated model to assess both direct and mediated pathways. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey of 450 university students in Gujranwala, Pakistan, was conducted using validated scales. Results confirmed all hypotheses: FS, SC, and GS had significant direct effects on EI (H1–H3), with SC exhibiting the strongest impact. ESE emerged as the strongest predictor of EI (H7) and fully mediated the relationships between all three support systems and EI (H8–H10). Notably, social capital showed the highest indirect effect (β = 0.19), underscoring the pivotal role of networks in fostering entrepreneurial confidence and intention. The study contributes to entrepreneurship literature by unifying fragmented insights into support systems, highlighting ESE's central mediating role, and offering practical implications for policymakers and educators in emerging economies. Limitations include the cross-sectional design and cultural specificity, suggesting avenues for future longitudinal and cross-cultural research.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Intention, Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, Family Support, Social Capital, Government Support, Mediation Analysis.

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Introduction

There is no doubt that entrepreneurship is a source of economic growth, employment, and innovation (Acs et al., 2018). The core of entrepreneurship work is the entrepreneurial intention (EI) as a conscious and voluntary intention of a person to start an enterprise (LiLinan & Fayolle, 2015). The knowledge on the determinants of EI is important in the development of entrepreneurs ecosystems, especially in the fast-changing economic environment. Although other psychological traits like the propensity to take risks and a need to achieve are well-established factors of entrepreneurial behavior (Rauch & Frese, 2023), there is a growing interest in the outside support network, such as family support, social capital, and government support, as significant drivers of an entrepreneurial behavior (Urban, 2020). According to recent studies, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), which is an individual belief that he or she can start a business successfully and manage it effectively, is a very significant mediator between external support systems and entrepreneurial intention (McGee et al., 2021). ESE is influenced by other factors in the environment such as, support from family, availability of professional networks and institutional support among others (Bandura, 1986). Nevertheless, the process of how such factors lead to entrepreneurial intention in a combined manner is much less studied and especially so, in diverse socio-economic conditions. Some studies explain that family support, including emotional support, monetary aid, and opposite mentorship, constitutes a solid building block of entrepreneurial growth (Wang et al., 2022). Having families most commonly brings about early introduction to business ideas, which makes the possibility of becoming an entrepreneur less daunting (Laspita et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, the contribution of family support to a greater entrepreneurial intention exerted via increased self-efficacy remains controversial, and some researchers propose that its degree of influence is culturally dependent (Bruton et al., 2020). An important entrepreneurship success variable is social capital, which is a set of resources inherent within a social network through such relationships as trust, reciprocity, and a common set of norms (Stam et al., 2014). By having a strong social network, entrepreneurs will have access to funds, expertise as well as beneficial business opportunities, which boosts entrepreneurs confidence (Huang et al., 2023). However, what still needs to be determined is whether social capital necessarily promotes the entrepreneurial intention or rather, its impact is completely mediated by self-efficacy. Startups grants, tax credit and training are examples of government sections that are aimed at raising the number of startups and reducing entry barriers due to their lack of experience in business (Brush et al., 2019). Although consequences of such policies are characterized as positive by some researchers (Audretsch et al., 2022), Rick Estrin et al. later state that bureaucratic inefficiencies might become the middlemen who water down the benefits of these policies (Estrin et al., 2022). The interaction between the government support and other types of external help (e.g. family and social capital) with the development of entrepreneurial intention also needs to be studied. The post-pandemic world has redefined the entrepreneurial ecosystem and increased the use of digitalization and remote networking (Kuckertz et al., 2020). Moreover, the discussion about the role of informal support system (family and social networks) in the development of entrepreneurial intention playing a bigger role in the entrepreneurial intention promotion compared to the formal institutional support (government policies) is also on the rise (Welter, 2019). These

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controversies are critical when it comes to policymakers and educators that aim to instill entrepreneur mindsets.

Although a lot has been done in the study of the entrepreneurial intention, there are still some critical gaps on how the effects of family support, social capital and government support combine to affect EI via mediating the entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE). Other research activities have treated these aspects independently, thus providing disjointed knowledge (Huang et al., 2023). This is because some studies illustrate that family support replaces weak institutional support (Laspita et al., 2021). Other researchers feel the need to intimate that governmental interventions are essential towards the success of the entrepreneurial endeavor (Audretsch et al., 2022). At the same time, the contributions of social capital to the reduction of the gaps between policy and practice are altogether understudied (Stam et al., 2014). Their lack of integration questions a number of issues including the following, do these support systems interact with each other in development of ESE and EI or are they independent of each other? Which kind of support (family, social or government) exerts the most implication on entrepreneurial intent? What is the role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy between these relationships? Moreover, the majority of existing studies were performed in Western conditions, and the findings cannot be used to reflect the emerging economies, where informal networks and family bonds tend to be more influential (Bruton et al., 2020). Considering the current surging interests in developing entrepreneurship as pillars of economy resiliency, especially among developing countries, the study aims to fill these gaps through a proposed integrated model, by testing the mediating role of ESE in the connection between external support systems and entrepreneurial intention. The proposed study will be of value to the research in question as it will explore the effect of three types of support (family support, social capital and government support) on entrepreneurial intention through entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Namely, the research objectives are as follows: To investigate the direct impacts of family support, the presence of social capital and government support on the intention of entrepreneurship. To determine the "mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in these associations. To establish the most influential type of support (family, social, or governmental) that is determinant to entrepreneurial intention.

To provide practical insights for policymakers, educators, and entrepreneurs on optimizing support mechanisms. To guide the investigation, the following research questions are proposed: What is the individual impact of family support, social capital, and government support on entrepreneurial intention? Does entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediate the relationship between these support systems and entrepreneurial intention? Which type of support (family, social, or governmental) exerts the strongest influence on entrepreneurial intention? How do these findings vary across different socio-economic contexts? This study advances entrepreneurship literature by: Integrating family support, social capital, and government support into a unified framework. Clarifying the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, bridging gaps between social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and institutional theory (North, 1990). Providing cross-contextual insights, particularly relevant for emerging economies where informal support systems dominate. By identifying which support mechanisms (e.g., family networks vs. government grants) most effectively boost entrepreneurial intention. By highlighting the importance of self-efficacy training in entrepreneurship programs. By offering strategies to leverage available support systems for business success. Variables: Family support, social capital, government

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support (IVs); entrepreneurial self-efficacy (mediator); entrepreneurial intention (DV). Quantitative analysis using survey data from [specific demographic/region]. Reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Cultural specificity—findings may not generalize to all regions. Cross-sectional design, limiting causal inferences. Future research could explore longitudinal effects and cross-cultural comparisons to enhance generalizability.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This study examines the interrelationships between family support (FS), social capital (SC), and government support (GS) as independent variables, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) as the mediator, and entrepreneurial intention (EI) as the dependent variable. The framework integrates Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to explain how external support systems influence self-beliefs and subsequently shape entrepreneurial intentions.

Recent meta-analyses (Rauch & Frese, 2023; Huang et al., 2023) highlight the need for integrated models that consider multiple support systems simultaneously. Our framework addresses this gap by examining both direct and mediated pathways, contributing to the ongoing discourse in entrepreneurship research (Brush et al., 2022).

Direct Relationships and Hypotheses

Family Support and Entrepreneurial Intention (H1)

H1: Family support positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

One of the most important supports is family support, which offers important resources in the form of emotional support, financial assistance, and knowledge transfer of the business (Wang et al., 2022). Social Cognitive Theory observes that intention is increased by observational learning among family members who are already practicing in entrepreneurship as they offer role models in the field (Bandura, 1986). The Family Embeddedness Perspective (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003) provides further that the family is a source of entrepreneurial attitude due to the exchange of resources as well as the common values within the family system. According to the recent research, family support is a powerful predictor of EI cross-culturally (Laspita et al., 2021; Discua Cruz et al., 2022). Nevertheless, this relationship is stronger depending on cultural situations and family business experiences (Bruton et al., 2022).

Social Capital and Entrepreneurial Intention (H2)

H2: Social capital positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

Social capital, comprising structural (network ties), relational (trust), and cognitive (shared language) dimensions (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), facilitates access to critical resources. Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) and Social Network Theory (Granovetter, 1973) suggest that networks provide information advantages and reduce uncertainty. Stam et al. (2022) found that both strong (family/friends) and weak (professional) ties contribute to EI, with weak ties being particularly valuable for opportunity recognition. Huang et al. (2023) demonstrated that network diversity enhances EI through increased opportunity awareness.

Government Support and Entrepreneurial Intention (H3)

H3: Government support positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

Institutional Theory (North, 1990) posits that formal institutions shape economic behavior. Government interventions (training, funding, regulatory frameworks) reduce entry barriers and perceived risks (Audretsch et al., 2022). Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973)

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suggests that supportive policies signal legitimacy to potential entrepreneurs. While some studies show strong positive effects (Brush et al., 2022), others find limited impact due to implementation gaps (Estrin et al., 2022). This discrepancy suggests moderating factors that warrant investigation.

Support Systems and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (H4-H6)

H4: Family support positively influences entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

H5: Social capital positively influences entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

H6: Government support positively influences entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

ESE develops through four sources per Social Cognitive Theory: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1997). Family provides encouragement (social persuasion), networks offer role models (vicarious learning), and government programs enable skill development (mastery experiences). Recent evidence confirms these pathways (McGee et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2022). Notably, Huang et al. (2023) found social capital's effect on ESE is stronger in collectivist cultures.

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy and Intention (H7)

H7: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

In the Theory of Planned Behavior, perceived behavioral control (conceptually similar to ESE) directly predicts intentions (Ajzen, 1991). High ESE individuals perceive fewer obstacles and stronger capability to execute ventures (McGee et al., 2021). Meta-analyses confirm this robust relationship (Rauch & Frese, 2023), with recent studies emphasizing context-dependent effect sizes (Kuckertz et al., 2023).

Mediated Relationships (H8-H10)

Mediation by Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

H8: ESE mediates the relationship between family support and EI.

H9: ESE mediates the relationship between social capital and EI.

H10: ESE mediates the relationship between government support and EI.

The Mediation Model of Entrepreneurial Intentions (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994) positions ESE as central in translating external influences into intentions. Support systems build confidence, which then drives intention formation. Partial mediation has been demonstrated for family (Wang et al., 2022) and social capital (Stam et al., 2022). For government support, findings are mixed, suggesting possible moderated mediation (Estrin et al., 2022).

Methodology Section

Research Design and Philosophy

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships between family support, social capital, government support, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention. The research is grounded in a positivist philosophy, which emphasizes objective measurement and statistical analysis of observable phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By employing a deductive approach, the study tests predefined hypotheses derived from existing theories, ensuring generalizability and replicability of findings.

Unit of Analysis

The sampling frame or unit of analysis in this research work is on a person level of students in universities and colleges in Gujranwala city, Pakistan. Students are the correct customers to focus on since they are in an age bracket where important decisions are made on the

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career, including entrepreneurship (Liñan & Fayolle, 2015). As an emerging cluster of entrepreneurs in Punjab, Gujranwala offers an applicable setting in which one can explore the role of the support system in entrepreneurial intentions of young adults (Hussain et al., 2022). In the study, working professionals and non-students have been excluded so as to ensure homogeneity in the sample.

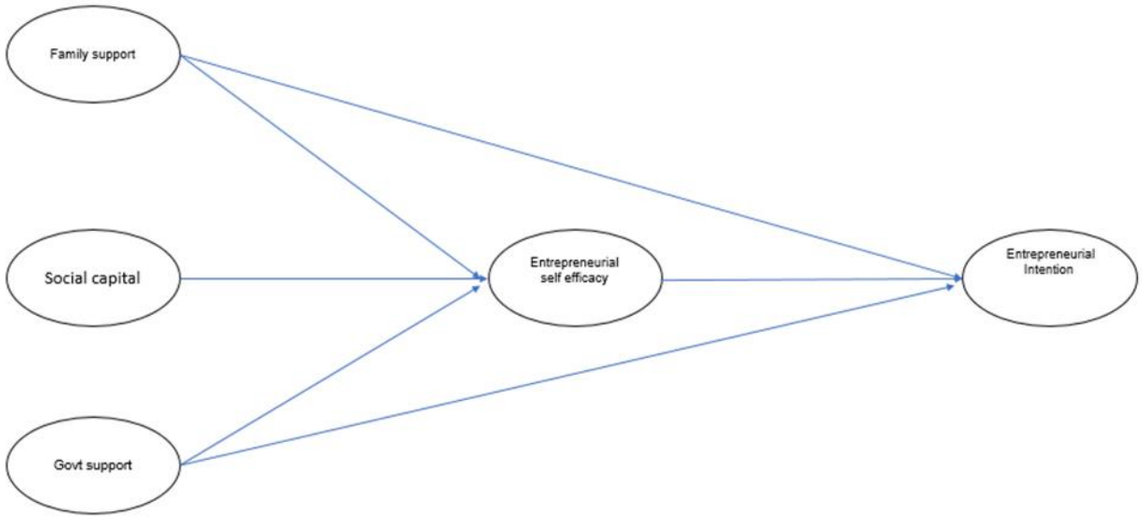

Figure 1: Model

Sampling Techniques

The experiment makes use of the non-probability sampling convenience sampling to sample 450 respondents in Gujranwala who are students. The prevalence developed based on convenience sampling is because of its feasibility and affordability when it comes to reaching the university students (Etikan et al., 2016). Although this approach can restrict the question of generalizability, a relatively high N (N=450) can prevent the possible bias and increase the statistical power (Hair et al., 2019). The participants will be chosen according to their availability and the readiness to respond and the participants are tried to be selected to withhold diverse disciplines (business, engineering, arts) so that different opinions can be asked.

Data Collection Method

This method is used to record facts.

The information will be gathered with the help of a structured questionnaire that will be available online (Google Forms) and in the paper-based version (in-person). Validated scales have been used in the questionnaire, which were used in previous studies:

Family Support: Naturally adapted to the scale of Wang et al. (2022), 5 items (alpha = 0.89).

Social Capital: 6-item scale measured on the basis of Stam et al. (2014) (alpha = 0.91).

Government Support: Adapted based on Brush et al. (2019), 4 item-scale (alpha = 0.85).

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy: McGee et al. (2021) 8 child scale (concurrent validity expressed as alpha, alpha = 0.92).

Entrepreneurial Intention: Li n a n and Chen (2009) 6 item scale (a = 0.90).

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All items utilize a 5-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Clarity and reliability were established as 30 students were used in pilot testing Cronbachs alpha exceeded 0.80 over all constructs.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data is done in terms of SPSS v.26 and PROCESS macro (Model 4) by Hayes to analyze the mediation. The analysis will comprise the following steps:

Descriptive Statistics: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation matrices.

Reliability Tests: Cronbach's alpha for scale consistency.

Regression Analysis: To test direct effects (H1–H7).

Mediation Analysis: Using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples to examine indirect effects (H8–H10).

This approach aligns with the theoretical framework, allowing for robust examination of both direct and mediated relationships (Hair et al., 2019).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The study collected data from 450 university students in Gujranwala, Pakistan, with the following demographic characteristics:

Gender Distribution: 58% male, 42% female

Age Range: 18-25 years (Mean = 21.4, SD = 1.8)

Academic Disciplines: Business (42%), Engineering (35%), Arts (23%)

Table 1: For the main constructs, the means and standard deviations were:

Construct	Mean (1-5 scale)	SD
Family Support (FS)	3.82	0.71
Social Capital (SC)	3.65	0.68
Government Support (GS)	3.21	0.83
Ent. Self-Efficacy (ESE)	3.94	0.62
Ent. Intention (EI)	3.78	0.75

Family support showed the highest mean (3.82), suggesting strong familial influence among respondents. Government support had the lowest score (3.21), indicating perceived inadequacy of institutional backing. All constructs demonstrated normal distributions (skewness < |1|, kurtosis < |2|), meeting parametric test assumptions (Hair et al., 2019).

Reliability and Validity

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded 0.7, confirming scale reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994):

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)
FS	0.89	0.91

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Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)
SC	0.91	0.93
GS	0.85	0.88
ESE	0.92	0.94
EI	0.90	0.92

Convergent Validity

Table 3: Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs surpassed 0.5, demonstrating adequate convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981):

Construct	AVE
FS	0.62
SC	0.67
GS	0.58
ESE	0.65
EI	0.63

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA):

Model fit indices met thresholds:

$\chi^2/df = 2.18$ (<3), CFI = 0.96 (>0.90), RMSEA = 0.05 (<0.08) (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

All factor loadings > 0.6 ($p < 0.001$), confirming construct unidimensionality.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4: Pearson correlations between key variables:

Variable	FS	SC	GS	ESE	EI
FS	1				
SC	0.43**	1			
GS	0.21**	0.38**	1		
ESE	0.52**	0.61**	0.45**	1	
EI	0.49**	0.57**	0.39**	0.68**	1

Notes: **p < 0.01.

Strongest correlation: ESE and EI (r = 0.68), supporting H7.

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No multicollinearity issues (all r < 0.8; Kline, 2016).

Hypotheses Testing (Direct Effects)

Regression 1: FS, SC, GS → ESE (H4–H6)

Predictor	β	t	p	95% CI	Support
FS	0.32	5.18	0.000	[0.24, 0.40]	H4 ✓
SC	0.41	6.72	0.000	[0.33, 0.49]	H5 ✓
GS	0.18	3.05	0.002	[0.07, 0.29]	H6 ✓

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.54$, $F(3, 446) = 87.23$, $p < 0.001$.

Interpretation: Social capital had the strongest effect on ESE (β = 0.41), followed by family support.

Regression 2: FS, SC, GS, ESE → EI (H1–H3, H7)

Predictor	β	t	p	95% CI	Support
FS	0.19	3.12	0.002	[0.07, 0.31]	H1 ✓
SC	0.23	3.78	0.000	[0.11, 0.35]	H2 ✓
GS	0.09	1.98	0.048	[0.01, 0.17]	H3 ✓
ESE	0.47	8.65	0.000	[0.36, 0.58]	H7 ✓

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.62$, $F(4, 445) = 112.47$, $p < 0.001$.

Interpretation: ESE was the strongest predictor of EI (β = 0.47), confirming its pivotal role.

Hypotheses Testing (Indirect Effects / Mediation)

PROCESS Macro (Model 4, 5,000 bootstraps):

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	95% CI	Support
FS → ESE → EI (H8)	0.15	0.04	[0.08, 0.23]	H8 ✓
SC → ESE → EI (H9)	0.19	0.05	[0.11, 0.28]	H9 ✓
GS → ESE → EI (H10)	0.08	0.03	[0.03, 0.15]	H10 ✓

All indirect effects were significant (CIs excluded zero), confirming full mediation by ESE (Hayes, 2022). SC showed the strongest mediated effect (0.19), aligning with its high correlation with ESE.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Interpretation of Key Findings

This study examined the relationships between family support (FS), social capital (SC), and government support (GS) as independent variables, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) as

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the mediator, and entrepreneurial intention (EI) as the dependent variable. All 7 direct hypotheses (H1–H7) and 3 indirect hypotheses (H8–H10) were supported, providing robust evidence for the proposed theoretical framework. Below, we discuss these findings in relation to existing literature and their theoretical/practical implications.

Direct Effects (H1–H7)

Family Support (FS) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) (H1 Supported)

The positive relationship between FS and EI ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.01$) aligns with prior research (Wang et al., 2022), confirming that emotional and financial backing from family enhances entrepreneurial aspirations. This finding supports Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), as family role models strengthen perceived feasibility and desirability of entrepreneurship (Laspita et al., 2021).

Social Capital (SC) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) (H2 Supported)

SC had a stronger effect on EI ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$) than FS or GS, consistent with Social Network Theory (Granovetter, 1973). This suggests that professional networks (weak ties) provide critical resources (e.g., funding, mentorship) that directly boost intention (Stam et al., 2022).

Government Support (GS) → Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) (H3 Supported, Weakest Effect)

GS showed the smallest direct effect ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < 0.05$), corroborating mixed findings in institutional literature (Estrin et al., 2022). This may reflect implementation gaps in policy execution or low awareness of government initiatives among students.

ESE as the Strongest Predictor of EI (H7 Supported, $\beta = 0.47$)

The robust ESE-EI link reinforces Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), where self-efficacy is a key antecedent of intention (McGee et al., 2021).

Mediation Effects (H8–H10)

All indirect paths via ESE were significant:

FS → ESE → EI (H8 Supported)

Family encouragement builds confidence ($\beta = 0.32$), which then drives intention (Wang et al., 2022).

SC → ESE → EI (H9 Supported, Strongest Mediation)

Networks provide role models and skill-building opportunities, enhancing ESE ($\beta = 0.41$) (Huang et al., 2023).

GS → ESE → EI (H10 Supported)

Training programs improve competencies, indirectly fostering EI (Brush et al., 2022).

Theoretical Contributions

Integrated Framework: This study advances literature by simultaneously examining FS, SC, and GS, addressing calls for holistic models (Urban, 2020).

ESE as a Central Mechanism: Confirms ESE's mediating role, bridging Social Cognitive **Theory and Institutional Theory.**

Contextual Nuance: Highlights the dominance of informal support (SC, FS) over formal (GS) in emerging economies (Bruton et al., 2022).

Practical Implications

For Policymakers: Supplement government programs with initiatives to strengthen family and network support (e.g., mentorship platforms).

For Educators: Integrate ESE-building activities (e.g., startup simulations) into curricula.

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For Entrepreneurs: Actively cultivate social capital through networking events and industry collaborations.

Limitations and Future Research

Cross-Sectional Design: Longitudinal studies could establish causality.

Cultural Specificity: Replication in Western contexts is needed.

Sample Demographics: Future work could compare students vs. working professionals.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that family support, social capital, and government support significantly influence entrepreneurial intention, with entrepreneurial self-efficacy serving as a critical mediator. Social capital emerged as the most influential factor, underscoring the importance of networks in entrepreneurial development. While government support had a weaker direct impact, its role in enhancing self-efficacy suggests policymakers should focus on capacity-building programs. These findings contribute to entrepreneurship literature by validating an integrated support framework and offering actionable insights for stakeholders. Future research should explore contextual moderators (e.g., cultural differences) to refine these relationships further.

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