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Exploring Rural Youth Entrepreneurial Mindset and Intentions: Gender Differences and the Impact of Entrepreneurship Subject

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Abstract

Rural youth entrepreneurship is vital for harnessing the country's untapped potential, creating self-reliant individuals, and driving innovation in agriculture and small-scale industries, contributing to sustainable rural development and the overall economic growth of a nation. This study aims to assess the level of entrepreneurial mindset (EM) and entrepreneurial intention (EI) among rural youth while investigating the potential impact of gender and entrepreneurial education (Entrepreneurship subject, ES) on EM and EI. The data were collected using purposive sampling (N=129) from rural Assam, India, college students. A questionnaire consisting of a ten-item Likert scale adapted from Jung and Lee (2020) and Liñán and Chen (2009) was used for data collection. Descriptive analysis results indicate a high overall agreement with EM and EI, with mean scores of 4.22 and 4.12, respectively. A Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that both EM ($p < 0.05$) and EI ($p < 0.05$) data were not normally distributed, leading to the use of non-parametric tests to examine the hypotheses. For the null hypothesis (H0) that gender has no significant effect on EM and EI, an Independent Sample Kruskal-Wallis Test yielded p-values of (.175) for EM and (.897) for EI, both > 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Conversely, for the alternative hypothesis (Ha1) that ES has a significant effect on EM and EI, similar tests showed p-values of (.000) for EM and (.002) for EI, both < 0.05, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. The reliability of the EM scale stands at Cronbach's Alpha 0.702, and for EI, it stands at Cronbach's Alpha 0.606, both considered reliable. The study fills the lacuna of literature on entrepreneurship in the rural context that targets youth's entrepreneurial mindset and intentions intervened by entrepreneurship subject.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial mindset; Entrepreneurial intention; Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurial Subject; Rural Youth; Gender.*

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a critically relevant field of study (Venkataraman & Shane, 2000). In recent years, interest in entrepreneurship has surged, particularly within business schools. Students' growing interest in entrepreneurship drives this heightened interest as a course of study and an appealing alternative to uncertain corporate careers (Venkataraman, 2019). Educational institutions have responded to this trend by expanding their entrepreneurial education programs to nurture new entrepreneurs. Additionally, the allure of freedom, independence, and wealth has inspired many individuals to consider entrepreneurship a career path (Stevenson et al., 1983). These entrepreneurs create jobs and contribute to economic growth (Achtenhagen & Johannisson, 2013). Experts on a global scale emphasize the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial culture and mindset as a strategy crucial for regional economic development. However, one of the main

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challenges is to change the mindset of millions. Encouraging and nurturing entrepreneurial thinking among youth can lead to cultural shifts (Carter & Sanders, 2008). In light of this, entrepreneurship education must receive the same priority level as other subjects, particularly science and technology, in educational institutions. A well-designed approach to entrepreneurship education can profoundly impact youth by instilling confidence, self-efficacy, and adaptability needed for success in the evolving economy of the future. Consequently, an entrepreneurial mindset is fundamental, especially in a world of emerging opportunities (Gemino et al.).

The entrepreneurial mindset represents a way of thinking that involves recognizing available opportunities and pursuing them with commitment, decision, and action (Gillin & Hazelton, 2020). Such a mindset is crucial for fostering creative thinking and addressing challenges in new economic settings (Mukhtar et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial education plays a vital role in cultivating this mindset, positively influencing both the entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial intention. Previous studies have found a strong connection between an entrepreneurial mindset and the intention to pursue entrepreneurship, particularly among vocational students (Handayati et al., 2020). According to (Cui et al., 2021), the impact of entrepreneurial education on the entrepreneurial mindset is multifaceted. Their findings suggest that extracurricular activities can positively influence the entrepreneurial mindset by enhancing awareness of opportunities, risk-taking propensity, and tolerance for ambiguity. However, the impact of regular curriculum attendance on the entrepreneurial mindset is negative. The teaching methods and course content in entrepreneurial education explain this discrepancy.

Furthermore, Kuncoro and Rusdianto (2016) have shown that including entrepreneurial subjects in college curricula can significantly influence students' interest in entrepreneurship. In emerging economies, there is a widespread belief that empowering young people is essential for fostering entrepreneurial behaviour. However, there needs to be more data available on whether entrepreneurship education achieves this goal (Balakina, 2015). While numerous studies have explored the influence of entrepreneurial education on entrepreneurial mindset and intention, the mixed results highlighted in previous research, as discussed later in this study, along with the limited research on the impact of entrepreneurial education and gender on entrepreneurial mindset and intentions in rural settings, reveal a significant research gap. This study addresses this gap by examining entrepreneurial mindsets and intentions, explicitly focusing on rural contexts. We will assess rural youth's entrepreneurial mindset (EM) and entrepreneurial intention (EI), particularly examining how the inclusion of entrepreneurship in their college curriculum may influence these aspects. Additionally, we will explore whether gender significantly impacts entrepreneurial mindset and intentions. Our study will use innovativeness and risk-taking, two critical entrepreneurial characteristics (Hyrsky & Tuunanen, 1999), to assess EM.

Efforts by the Indian government and non-governmental bodies have consistently encouraged rural youth to engage in entrepreneurship. Government programs have been rolled out over the years to support rural entrepreneurship, aiming to equip young individuals in rural areas with the necessary skills and resources for entrepreneurial ventures. Despite these efforts, a fundamental question remains: To what extent are rural youth prepared for entrepreneurship, and how do they perceive it? Our study seeks to answer these fundamental questions on rural youth entrepreneurship. Understanding the entrepreneurial mindset and intentions of rural youth, who constitute 69.67 per cent of the nation's youth population, is crucial, given the unique challenges and opportunities in rural areas compared to urban regions. The insights gained from our research can inform policymaking and practical interventions to better support rural youth in pursuing entrepreneurship, ultimately fostering economic growth, reducing unemployment, and promoting sustainable development in rural communities. With statistically significant results expected between ES, EM, and EI, we recommend that government bodies and educators consider offering entrepreneurship subjects in all colleges nationwide. Such a move would allow students to pursue entrepreneurship subjects, irrespective of their primary field. This could be instrumental in promoting entrepreneurship within the country, particularly in rural contexts, by integrating entrepreneurial subjects into the curricula of schools and colleges, thereby influencing

youths' mindsets and intentions to embark on entrepreneurial ventures.

For this study, N=129 valid samples were collected from undergraduate college students across four districts in rural Assam, employing the purposive sampling technique. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS. The study reveals that respondents displayed a high overall agreement with the Entrepreneurial Mindset (EM) and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI), as indicated by mean scores of 4.22 and 4.12, respectively, on a five-point scale. This reflects a strong consensus among participants regarding statements related to EM and EI. Furthermore, our analysis indicates a significant difference among respondents concerning Entrepreneurial Subject (ES) concerning both EM and EI. However, no significant difference was observed with regard to gender. The study is limited to a sample of N=129 and primarily focuses on rural youths.

Consequently, the findings may be generalized primarily to the rural youth population. Despite these limitations, this research holds significant implications for both theoretical and practical aspects of entrepreneurship. The paper is structured as follows: the second part encompasses a discussion of relevant literature introduced in our study's introduction, followed by formulating hypotheses for statistical testing. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of our findings.

2. Review of Literature and Hypothesis development

Today's younger generation is marked by its passion, a readiness for change, and embracing progress. Compared to previous generations, many teenagers are more entrepreneurial, often striking out on their own at a younger age and entering college with a wealth of knowledge (Rumelt, 2005).

2.1 Entrepreneurial Education

The field of entrepreneurial education is still in its nascent stages. Much work is still needed to make effective entrepreneurial education accessible to a broader global population. Achieving this ambitious goal is a long and challenging journey (Martin, 2015). Entrepreneurial education equips individuals to overcome entrepreneurship's inherent risks and challenges. It provides valuable insights to help entrepreneurs navigate these uncertainties (Gautam et al., 2015). Through entrepreneurship education, young people learn the skills and mindset necessary to embark on the challenging path of entrepreneurship (Lubis, 2014).

2.2 Entrepreneurship Mindset

An entrepreneurial mindset is a specific way of thinking that involves embracing challenges and learning from mistakes. It entails developing the skills and resilience to persevere in facing obstacles (Shinghal & Saxena, 2017). This mindset revolves around leveraging uncertainties to one's advantage and recognising opportunities in and around an organisation (Manurung, 2015). Entrepreneurs can be broadly classified into innovators, risk-takers, and organisers, each contributing to creating something new, organising resources, and taking on economic uncertainty (Ilayaraja & Ganesh, 2014).

2.3 Innovativeness

Innovativeness and risk-taking are two distinct personal traits commonly associated with entrepreneurship (Hyrsky et al., 1999). Innovativeness involves the intention to introduce new products or services, often driven by creativity, experimentation, the latest technology, and problem-solving (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996, as cited in Wathanakom, Khlaisang & Songkram, 2020). Entrepreneurship and innovation are vital for economic success across industries (Schwarzkopf, 2016).

2.4 Risk-Taking

Risk-taking entails making decisions with determination in the face of uncertainties, such as investing in markets, loans, or new ventures (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996, as cited in Wathanakom et al., 2020). Self-confidence is closely linked to one's willingness and ability to take risks, a crucial trait in entrepreneurship (Herdjiono et al., 2017). Risk-taking is considered a fundamental factor in entrepreneurial success, as entrepreneurs must be willing to bear risks to bring their ideas to fruition (Allah & Nakhaie, 2011).

2.5 Entrepreneurship Intention

Entrepreneurial intention is a fundamental aspect of human behaviour and a widely researched

topic. It refers to the inclination to establish one's organisation, influenced by personal and contextual factors (Bird et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial intention is a cornerstone of entrepreneurship (Shirokova et al., 2016). According to Fini et al. (2009), entrepreneurial intention is "a cognitive representation of the actions individuals plan to undertake, either to establish new independent ventures or to create new value within existing companies." It involves individuals planning and assessing the risks and resources needed to start a business (Abou et al., 2020).

2.6 Gender, Entrepreneurial Mindset, and Entrepreneurship Intention

Gender differences in entrepreneurial mindset and intention have been extensively studied, yielding varying results. Some studies indicate significant differences between genders, with female students often exhibiting lower entrepreneurial intention (Njeru et al., 2012; Sitaridis & Kitsios, 2017). However, other research suggests that gender may not be a critical factor in entrepreneurial intention (Huezo-Ponce & Saiz-Álvarez, 2020), and findings regarding higher entrepreneurial intention among male students also exist (Mansour, 2018). In contrast, some studies find no significant gender differences in entrepreneurial intention (Díaz-García & Jiménez-Moreno, 2010), while others highlight regional disparities, such as lower entrepreneurial intention among female students in Turkey (Yıldırım et al., 2016). Similar disparities are observed in South African and Italian university students (Ndofirepi et al., 2018; Israr & Saleem, 2018). However, a study in Mexico found that women have similar entrepreneurial intentions as men, emphasising that gender may not be a critical factor (Huezo-Ponce & Saiz-Álvarez, 2020). Overall, these studies offer mixed results on the influence of gender on entrepreneurial mindset and intention, warranting further investigation, particularly in developing countries like India.

2.7 Entrepreneurial Education, Entrepreneurial Mindset, and Entrepreneurship Intention

In a study conducted in the US, Rodriguez and Lieber (2020) observed a statistically significant increase in students' entrepreneurial mindset, particularly in domains like opportunity recognition, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration following entrepreneurship education. Similarly, research in Oman by Shah, Amjed, and Jaboob (2020) found that entrepreneurial education positively contributed to developing entrepreneurial intention by enhancing entrepreneurial attitudes and perceived self-efficacy. Sampurnaningsih et al. (2020) reported that UNPAM Indonesia students exhibited high entrepreneurial characteristics, with 82.77% of students displaying such traits. Mukhtar et al. (2021) highlighted the mediating role of entrepreneurial alertness in the impact of entrepreneurial education on mindset, emphasising the importance of education and culture in fostering entrepreneurial thinking. Israr and Saleem (2018) established a strong connection between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions among Italian university students. Wahidmurni et al. (2020) found that entrepreneurial education, among other variables, had the most significant and direct impact on the entrepreneurial intentions of university students. Chipeta and Surujlal (2017) demonstrated that risk-taking propensity was distinctive in promoting social entrepreneurship intentions among graduates. Tu et al. (2021) found that innovativeness, risk-taking motive, and proactiveness significantly influenced social entrepreneurial intention.

Conversely, Sitaridis and Kitsios (2017) reported only a tiny, non-statistically significant effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention, suggesting possible inefficiencies in the course design. Ahmad and Buchanan (2015) noted that many students still preferred salaried jobs over entrepreneurship despite participating in entrepreneurship classes and programs. Given these mixed findings and a limited study in Asian countries, further research is essential to validate the relationship between entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial mindset, and intention, particularly in developing nations like India.

3. Objectives of the Study and Hypotheses

3.1 Objectives:

1. To assess the entrepreneurial mindset (EM) and entrepreneurial intention (EI) levels among rural youth.

2. To investigate the influence of gender and entrepreneurial subject on youth's entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial intention.

3.2 Hypotheses:

Based on the review of the literature, we formulate the below two hypotheses-

H0. There will be no significant difference between entrepreneurial mindset and intention based on gender.

Ha1. Entrepreneurship subject has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial intention

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design:

We adopted a ten-item scale for EM and EI from Jung and Lee (2020) and Liñán and Chen (2009). The EM scale comprises seven items, while the EI scale comprises three items. Additionally, one question related to entrepreneurship subject and three general questions about students' characteristics were included. The seven scale items for EM were further divided into two sub-factors, innovativeness and risk-taking, defined as follows: (a) Innovativeness: the propensity to seek new opportunities and solutions; (b) Risk-taking: the propensity to attempt something with unclear expectations or the possibility of failure. The scale demonstrated reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.702 for Entrepreneurial Mindset and 0.606 for Entrepreneurial Intention, which are considered reliable (Streiner, 2003).

4.2 Data Collection and Sample:

Data were collected from undergraduate students studying in colleges across four districts of rural Assam, i.e. Udalguri, Baksa, Chirang and Kokrajhar. We distributed an online survey using Google Forms through social media platforms like WhatsApp Messenger and Facebook Messenger, as well as physical copies to students. While 160 samples were initially collected, 129 were found usable for analysis.

4.3 Data Analysis:

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS. A Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to assess the normality of the data. The test results for both Entrepreneurship Mindset ($p < 0.05$) and Entrepreneurship Intention ($p < 0.05$) indicated non-normal distribution, as depicted in Figure I. Consequently, non-parametric tests were used to test the hypotheses. An independent sample test was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in gender and entrepreneurship subjects.

Figure: 1 Shapiro-Wilk

	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Entrepreneurial Mindset	.910	129	.000
Entrepreneurial Intention	.890	129	.000

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive statistics result:

Descriptive statistics provide an overview of our sample's characteristics, including gender, entrepreneurial subject, and field of study, as shown in Table 4. Tables 1 and 2 display respondents' agreement with entrepreneurial mindset (EM) and entrepreneurial intention (EI) using a Likert scale. These tables present an understanding of respondents' overall agreement with two dimensions of EM, namely Innovativeness and Risk-Taking, as well as EI, highlighting different scores among various sample groups. The mean scores for overall agreement with EM and EI are notably high, with values of 4.22 and 4.12 on a five-point scale, indicating substantial agreement. Within these scores, the mean for Risk-Taking (4.03) reflects slightly lower agreement than Innovativeness (4.29). Examining different sample groups, we find that males tend to have a slightly higher overall agreement score for EM (4.25) than females (4.19).

Similarly, among males and females, the mean scores for Innovation (4.31 for males and 4.26 for females) and Risk-Taking (4.08 for males and 3.96 for females) show a slight variation. Regarding EI, males also exhibit a slightly higher overall agreement score (4.16) than females (4.09). Notably, there is an overall difference in agreement scores between the sample with Entrepreneurship as a subject and those without it for both EM and EI. Regarding EM, those with Entrepreneurship as a subject have a higher mean score (4.46) than those without (4.08). Similarly, regarding EI, respondents with Entrepreneurship as

a subject have a higher mean score (4.39) than those without (3.97).

In summary, there is a high overall agreement on EM across various sample groups, and a notable mean difference exists between samples with and without Entrepreneurship as a subject for both EM and EI. However, there is a relatively lower mean score difference related to gender for EM and EI. Detailed data can be seen in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3

Table- 1 Indexes showing the mean score of agreement on Entrepreneurship mindset and Entrepreneurship Intention

Innovation	Risk-Taking	Entrepreneurship mindset	Entrepreneurship Intention
4.29	*4.03*	*4.22*	*4.12*

Source: Authors compilation

Table- 2 Indexes showing the mean score of agreement on Entrepreneurship mindset and Entrepreneurship Intention with Gender

Gender	Innovation	Risk-Taking	Entrepreneurship mindset	Entrepreneurship Intention
Male	*4.31*	*4.08*	*4.25*	*4.16*
Female	*4.31*	*4.08*	*4.25*	*4.16*

Source: Authors compilation

Table- 3 Indexes showing the mean score of agreement on Entrepreneurship mindset and Entrepreneurship Intention with Entrepreneurship Subject

Entrepreneurship Subject	Innovation	Risk-Taking	Entrepreneurship mindset	Entrepreneurship Intention
Yes	*4.49*	*4.25*	*4.46*	*4.39*
No	*4.17*	*3.90*	*4.08*	*3.97*

Source: Authors compilation

Table- 4 Participants characteristics

Statistical Indexes		Proportion (%)	Total (%)
Gender	*Male*	54.2	
	Female	45.7	100
Entrepreneurship Subject	*Yes*	36.4	
	No	63.5	100
Line of study	*Arts*	53.4	
	Commerce	36.4	
	Science	6.2	
	Engineering	3.8	100

Source: Authors compilation

5.2 Hypothesis Testing:

H0. *There will be no significant difference between entrepreneurial mindset and intention based on gender.*

An Independent Sample Kruskal-Wallis Test shows that the p-value for EM (.175) and EI (.897) is > 0.05; hence we accept the null hypothesis. There is no significant difference in gender in EM and EI.

Ha1. *Entrepreneurship subject has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial intention*.

An Independent Sample Kruskal-Wallis Test shows that the p-value for EM (.000) and EI (.002) is < 0.05; hence, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. There is a significant difference between ES on EM and EI.

5.3 EFA, CR and AVE

Items	Factor	CR	AVE
I1. I like to take on a new challenge	.649	.781	.475
I2. I try to work in a novel way	.482		
I3. I am likely to accept new ideas	.561		
I4. I try to look for new opportunities earlier than others	.512		
RT1. I tend to push forward something with high expected value even with high risk	.523	.718	.463
RT2. I tend to take risks for new opportunities	.632		

RT3. I tend to take challenges even when there is a risk of failure	.678		
EI1. My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur	.502	.724	.473
EI2. I will make every effort to start and run my own firm	.678		
EI3. I have the firm intention to start a firm someday	.436		

The composite reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are calculated using Excel. The result shows the CR of Innovation, Risk-Taking, and Entrepreneurial Intention.781, 718, and 724, respectively, which is sufficient according to (Malhotra, 2010). However, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of Innovation, Risk-Taking, and Entrepreneurial Intention is .475, .463, and .473 indicates questionable. AVE is a more conservative measure than CR; based on CR, we may conclude that the convergent validity of the construct is adequate, although more than 50% of the variance is due to error (Malhotra, 2010).

Calculate of AVE and CR

AVE = $\Sigma\lambda^2/n$ *where λ stands for factor value of item n stands for the number of items*

CR = $(\Sigma\lambda)^2/(\Sigma\lambda)^2 + (\Sigma\varepsilon)$ *where ε stands for 1- λ²*

6. Discussions

We began the study to enrich the entrepreneurship literature by examining rural youth's Entrepreneurial Mindset (EM) and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI). We assessed EM by focusing on two pivotal factors: Innovation and Risk-taking. EI was measured using a three-item scale adapted from (Liñán & Chen, 2009). We then compared mean scores based on gender and the presence of Entrepreneurship Subject (ES) in the curriculum, followed by an analysis to determine if these groups had significant differences. Our findings indicate a high overall agreement with EM and EI, with mean scores of 4.22 and 4.12 on a five-point scale reflecting a solid agreement. Within the two dimensions of EM, Innovativeness received a mean score of 4.29, while Risk-taking had a lower mean score of 4.03. When analyzing gender differences, we observed that female respondents scored lower on all the measured factors (Innovativeness, Risk-taking in EM, and EI) than their male counterparts. This outcome aligns with prior research by Mansour (2018) and Jung and Lee (2020). However, results from an independent Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed no significant difference between male and female respondents in terms of EM and EI, consistent with studies by Huezo-Ponce and Saiz-Álvarez (2020), Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno (2009), and Mansour (2018). The mean score of respondents without ES is less on all the factors measured than those with ES.

Contrary to our previous gender-based findings, we found a significant difference between respondents with ES and those without ES regarding EM and EI. This finding is corroborated by Kuncoro and Rusdianto (2016). While numerous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) on EM and EI, our focus on ES as an influencing factor is relatively unique and warrants further investigation.

7. Conclusions

Our study reveals that rural youth exhibit commendable Entrepreneurial Mindset and Entrepreneurial Intention levels. These young individuals display a high degree of innovativeness and a willingness to take risks, demonstrating their readiness to embark on entrepreneurial ventures. On testing the differences based on gender group, our study found insignificant differences between male and female counterparts; hence, we conclude that gender orientation does not affect youth's entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial intention. The analysis also further confirms previous findings of the literature on entrepreneurship. Furthermore, our study underscores the importance of Entrepreneurship Subject (ES) within educational curricula. Policymakers and educators should consider revising current educational programs to incorporate ES into schools, colleges, and universities. The curriculum should be designed to offer ES across various fields of study, encouraging confidence-building, fostering innovativeness, promoting opportunity-seeking behaviour, and cultivating risk-taking abilities. This initiative can empower and motivate rural youth to explore entrepreneurial opportunities and contribute to rural development, economic growth, and job creation. Entrepreneurial Mindset (EM) and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) are vital factors in nurturing future

prospective entrepreneurs (Wahidmurni et al., 2020). The study is limited to a sample of 129 participants, focusing mainly on rural youth. While our findings have implications for this demographic, further research with more extensive and diverse samples should consider additional variables to yield more vital conclusions and a more comprehensive understanding of how entrepreneurial mindsets are cultivated among youth.

In summary, our study underscores the potential impact of ES in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets among rural youth. Encouraging entrepreneurial thinking from an early stage can ultimately lead to economic development and increased employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas. Entrepreneurial education remains a powerful tool for nurturing the next generation of entrepreneurs and driving economic growth.

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