

# *The influence of entrepreneurial environment on college students' entrepreneurial intention: The mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy*

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**Abstract:** The objective of this study is to explore the correlation between the environment for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intentions among college students, while also examining the mediating role of self-efficacy. College students are representative of a burgeoning force within the domain of mass entrepreneurship, and enhancing their entrepreneurial intentions holds significant importance for the comprehensive implementation of an innovation-driven development strategy. A total of 476 college student took part in this study through the completion of survey instruments pertaining to desire to initiate a business, startup intention environment, and self-confidence in entrepreneurship. The findings indicate a positive relationship between entrepreneurship environment and the intention to start a business. Furthermore, self-confidence in entrepreneurship serves as a partial mediator between the entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial intention, accounting for 48.71% of the variance. In conclusion, it is determined that: (1) The environment for entrepreneurship is a positive predictor of students in college intentions for entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial environment positively predicts self-confidence in entrepreneurship, which in turn positively predicts college students' entrepreneurial intentions; (2) Entrepreneurial self-confidence partially mediates the relationship between the the entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial intentions of students in college.

## **1. Introduction**

Since the introduction of the college expansion policy in 1999, the issue of employment difficulties among college students has become a focal point in society. Official data indicates that in 2017, the cumulative count of college graduates reached 7.95 million. Representing an increase of 300,000 in comparison to the preceding year. This suggests that with the ongoing growth in the number of graduates, the societal pressure regarding employment has become more pronounced. Various research findings on college students' entrepreneurial intentions have revealed the following trends: Firstly, male college students tend to exhibit higher entrepreneurial intentions than their female counterparts, a trend consistent with studies conducted abroad <sup>[1]</sup>. Due to factors such as physical endurance, childbirth, and family responsibilities, women often prioritize career stability and ease

when selecting their career paths. The majority of female college students are less inclined towards entrepreneurial careers, which are associated with higher risks and greater challenges, although there are exceptions. Secondly, college students' entrepreneurial intentions also vary across different regions, with the local entrepreneurial environment influencing their aspirations. In the rapidly developing eastern regions of China, the entrepreneurial landscape has gradually taken shape, witnessing a surge in entrepreneurial activities driven by economic and technological advancements. In contrast, the entrepreneurial environment in western China differs significantly, with fewer development opportunities compared to the eastern regions, resulting in more abundant resources and reduced competition. However, the entrepreneurial sector in the west is relatively limited in scope, primarily focusing on basic livelihood ventures and may not be conducive to large-scale entrepreneurial endeavors. Therefore, enhancing college students' entrepreneurial intentions to expand the cohort of self-employed individuals could help alleviate the severe employment pressures in society to some extent.

### **1.1 Importance of entrepreneurial intention**

Research in psychology on entrepreneurial intentions primarily focuses on three main aspects. Firstly, it delves into individual psychological traits that influence entrepreneurial intentions, such as independence, optimism, internal control orientation, propensity for risk, motivation for success, and sense of responsibility. Secondly, it involves cross-cultural studies on factors affecting entrepreneurial intentions, with the most prominent being Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. This theory encompasses individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity-femininity. Numerous empirical studies conducted abroad have confirmed the relevance of these cultural dimensions to entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors. Thirdly, it involves constructing models of factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions, with notable models such as Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior and Shapero's Entrepreneurial Event Model. Entrepreneurial intention is a crucial concept that pertains to an individual's subjective attitude towards engaging in entrepreneurial behavior presently or in the future. College students represent a significant force in mass entrepreneurship, and boosting their entrepreneurial intentions holds crucial significance for the comprehensive implementation of the innovation-driven development strategy. Entrepreneurship education in higher institutions, as a vital means of enhancing college students' entrepreneurial motivation and capabilities, has been extensively studied to explore its impact strength and pathways on entrepreneurial intentions.

### **1.2 Relationship between environment for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention**

The environment for entrepreneurship encompasses social, cultural, economic, and political factors that influence individual entrepreneurial behavior and access to entrepreneurial assistance. It is a crucial blend of factors influencing entrepreneurial endeavors, shapes innovative mindset among aspiring entrepreneurs, and influences the practice of entrepreneurial activities. Perceived entrepreneurial environment pertains to the subjective of an individual perception of the environment for entrepreneurship. The environment for entrepreneurship has a significantly positive influence on the entrepreneurial intentions of college students. The educational, training, funding, and sociocultural environments have significant effects on college students' unconditional entrepreneurial intentions. Building on this, we put forward the following hypothesis H1: A positive predictor of entrepreneurial intentions is the entrepreneurial environment.

### 1.3 The relationship between self-belief in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention

An individual's entrepreneurial potential is largely determined by their self-assessment of abilities. People tend to prefer jobs with a high level of confidence in oneself and avoid those that make them feel less capable. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to engage in entrepreneurial activities and attain goals, reflecting a favorable assessment of their entrepreneurial abilities. Increased entrepreneurial self-confidence enhances an individual's belief in their entrepreneurial abilities, and people with elevated levels of confidence in entrepreneurship believe they are competent to fulfill the role of an entrepreneur, making them more inclined to make entrepreneurial decisions<sup>[2]</sup>. Entrepreneurial self-confidence strongly predicts entrepreneurial intentions. Therefore, the influence of the entrepreneurial environment on entrepreneurial intentions of college students may be realized via entrepreneurial self-efficacy<sup>[3]</sup>.

### 1.4 The correlation between entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Bandura's social cognitive theory proposes that individuals, when placed in a favorable entrepreneurial environment with a strong entrepreneurial atmosphere, tend to exhibit higher entrepreneurial self-confidence. Therefore, a conducive entrepreneurial context contributes to the improvement of entrepreneurial self-confidence. Chen argues that shaping a favorable entrepreneurial environment plays a supportive role for entrepreneurs. Research indicates that when aspiring entrepreneurs perceive that their entrepreneurial skills can be bolstered by the external surroundings, they exhibit higher levels of entrepreneurial self-assurance. In studying the correlation between the environment and entrepreneurial effectiveness Sequeira introduces the concepts of strong and weak relationships. Strong relationships include an individual's social connections and additional micro-environmental factors, while feeble connections encompass government policies, opportunities, and resources within the social environment where individuals are situated. The ultimate conclusion is that the improvement of entrepreneurial efficacy among potential entrepreneurs is positively influenced by the environment<sup>[4]</sup>. Building on this, this study suggests the research hypothesis: H2: Self-belief in entrepreneurship serves as a mediating factor in connecting the entrepreneurial environment and the entrepreneurial intentions of college students.

In summary, empirical research on the correlation among the entrepreneurial environment, entrepreneurial aspirations, and Self-belief in entrepreneurship is scarce. Building on existing research findings. This study utilizes literature review, questionnaire surveys, and statistical analysis methods to examine the correlation among the environment for entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intentions, and Self-belief in entrepreneurship. By understanding their current status and exploring their relationships, this study aims to provide relevant suggestions to boost the entrepreneurial aspirations of students in college and improve Self-belief in entrepreneurship.

Subjects and methodology of the study

## 2. Subjects of study

This study utilized a questionnaire survey to examine the correlation among the environment for entrepreneurship, aspirations in entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial self-confidence. The survey targeted college students and was conducted using Questionnaire Star, resulting in the collection of 500 questionnaires. After excluding invalid responses, 476 valid questionnaires remained, yielding a rate of effectiveness 95.2%. Among the respondents, 196 were male and 280 were female. Among them, 82 were majoring in literature, history, or philosophy, 95 in economics, 92 in management, and 40 in medicine, with the remaining 167 from other disciplines. In terms of academic year, there were 94 freshmen, 118 sophomores, 105 juniors, 99 seniors, and 60 graduate students. Furthermore, 176

participants had entrepreneurial experience, while 300 did not. Moreover, 238 respondents reported that their family members had business experience, and an equal number reported that their family members did not.

### 3. Research Methods

#### (1) Questionnaire survey method

##### a. Business intention questionnaire

The Entrepreneurial Intention Scale, developed by Hu Wen'an et al. <sup>[5]</sup>, was utilized in this study to measure the relevant variables using the Likert 5-point scale. The scale was adapted from Phan's design to accommodate the characteristics of college students by providing descriptive statements for four items. The scale exhibited excellent internal consistency, with all constructs showing Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.80, and the composite reliability (CR) values for each construct were above 0.84.

##### b. Entrepreneurial environment questionnaire

In the investigation of student entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial intention, the survey questionnaire developed by Zhao Yuting <sup>[6]</sup> was utilized, employing the Likert five-point scale uniformly. The scores, ranging from low to high, indicate the degree of approval. The Entrepreneurial Environment Scale consists of 7 factors, with Cronbach's alpha values for each factor exceeding 0.8. The reliability of entrepreneurial intention was found to be 0.863.

##### c. Self-confidence in entrepreneurship questionnaire

The questionnaire on entrepreneurial self-confidence, developed by Tang Ming <sup>[7]</sup>, comprises two main aspects: entrepreneurship-related self-efficacy content and self-confidence associated with the entrepreneurial behavioral process. The questionnaire includes 22 items distributed across five subscales: innovative efficacy (items 1-6), risk-taking (items 7-10), opportunity recognition (items 11-14), relational coordination (items 15-18), and organizational commitment (items 19-22). The scale encompasses five sub-dimensions: efficacy in innovation, willingness to take risks, ability to identify opportunities, coordination in relationships, and commitment to the organization, totaling 22 items. Additionally, several reverse-scored items were included. The internal consistency coefficients, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha, for the five factors of personal Self-belief in entrepreneurship were 0.86, 0.71, 0.76, 0.76, and 0.73, respectively, all reaching acceptable levels.

#### (2) Mathematical and statistical method

Simple screening and processing of data were performed using Excel, descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson's correlation analysis and regression analysis were performed using SPSS, and mediation effect analysis was performed using Model 4 with the PROCESSV4.2 Plugin.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Common method bias test

The average entrepreneurial intention among college students is 13.60, indicating a moderately strong inclination toward entrepreneurship, having a standard deviation of 3.387. The average rating for the entrepreneurial environment is 71.10, having a standard deviation of 15.805, and the mean rating for Self-belief in entrepreneurship is 77.53, having a standard deviation of 16.335.

## 4.2 The general characteristics of college students' entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Table 1: The overall characteristics of college students' intention for entrepreneurship, environment for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial self-efficacy

	Mean M	Standard deviation SD
Entrepreneurial intention of college students	13.60	3.387
Entrepreneurial environment	71.10	15.805
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy	77.53	15.805

As depicted in Table 1. The average entrepreneurial intention among students in college is 13.60, which is above the medium entrepreneurial intention, and the standard deviation is 3.387. The mean value of entrepreneurial environment is 71.10, and the standard deviation is 15.805. The mean value of entrepreneurial self-efficacy was 77.53, and the standard deviation was 16.335.

## 4.3 Relevant analysis of college students' entrepreneurial environment, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention

Table 2: Pearson's correlation analysis

	Entrepreneurial environment	Entrepreneurial self-efficacy	Entrepreneurial intention
Entrepreneurial environment	1		
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy	0.765**	1	
Entrepreneurial intention	0.775**	0.828**	1

Note: \*\* means p less than 0.01, \* means p less than 0.05.

As shown in Table 2, a Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship. Examine the relationships among entrepreneurial environment, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength of these relationships. The specific analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.765 between entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which was significant at the 0.01 significance level, there is a significant positive correlation between the two variables. Additionally, the correlation coefficient between entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial intention was 0.775, also significant at the 0.01 significance threshold, suggesting a significant positive correlation exists between these two variables.

## 4.4 Regression analysis of college students' entrepreneurial environment, entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial self-efficacy

### 4.4.1 The predictive impact of the entrepreneurial environment on college students on entrepreneurial intention

Table 3: Regression analysis of entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial intention

	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>
	B	standard error	Beta				
a constant (math.)	1.946	0.462	-	4.213	0.001**		
Entrepreneurial environment	0.164	0.006	0.765	25.847	0.001**	0.585	0.584

Dependent variable: Entrepreneurial intention

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

As indicated in Table 3, a linear regression analysis was conducted, with entrepreneurial environment as the independent variable and entrepreneurial intention as the dependent variable. The table indicates that the model equation is: Entrepreneurial Intention = 0.164 \* Entrepreneurial Environment + 1.946. The model's R-squared value is 0.585, suggesting that the entrepreneurial environment accounts for 58.5% of the variation in entrepreneurial intention. In summary, the analysis indicates that the environment for entrepreneurship exerts a significant positive prediction impact on intention for entrepreneurship.

#### 4.4.2 The predictive impact of college students' entrepreneurial environment on entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Table 4: Regression analysis of college students' entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial self-efficacy

	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>
	B	standard error	Beta				
a constant (math.)	16.688	1.939	-	8.607	0.001**		
Entrepreneurial environment	0.856	0.027	0.828	32.148	0.001**	0.686	0.685

Dependent variable: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

As shown in Table 4, a linear regression analysis was performed, where environment for entrepreneurship served as the independent variable and Self-belief in entrepreneurship as the dependent variable. The model equation is formulated as follows: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy = 0.856 \* entrepreneurial environment + 16.688, and the R-squared value of the model is 0.686, indicating that the entrepreneurial environment accounts for 68.6% of the variability in entrepreneurial self-efficacy. In conclusion, the analysis implies that the entrepreneurial environment shows a significant positive predictive impact on Self-belief in entrepreneurship.

#### 4.4.3 The predictive effect of entrepreneurial environment on entrepreneurial intention

Table 5: Regression analysis of college students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention

	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>
	B	standard error	Beta				
a constant (math.)	1.144	0.477	-	11.330	0.017**		
MZ	0.161	0.006	0.775	6.531	0.001**	0.600	0.599

Dependent variable: Entrepreneurial intention

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

As demonstrated in Table 5, a conducted linear regression performed, with Self-belief in entrepreneurship with the independent variable being entrepreneurial intention. The model equation is expressed as follows: Entrepreneurial intention = 0.161 \* entrepreneurial self-efficacy + 1.144. The R-squared value of the model is 0.600, indicating that entrepreneurial self-efficacy accounts for 60% of the variability in entrepreneurial intention. In conclusion, the analysis suggests that entrepreneurial self-efficacy exhibits significant effects and positively predicts entrepreneurial intention.



#### 4.5 Testing the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Table 6: Mediated effects model test

	Entrepreneurial intention	Entrepreneurial self-efficacy	Entrepreneurial intention
a constant (math.)	1.946**(4.213)	16.688**(8.607)	0.389(0.850)
Entrepreneurial environment	0.164**(25.847)	0.856**(32.148)	0.084**(8.071)
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy			0.093** (9.257)
sample size	476	476	476
R <sup>2</sup>	0.585	0.686	0.649
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.584	0.685	0.647
F-value	F(1,474)=668.091,p<0.001	F(1,474)=1033.497,p<0.001	F(2,497)=22.406,p<0.001

Note: \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, t-values in parentheses

As shown in Table 6, the mediation analysis involves three models, as follows:

Model 1: Entrepreneurial intention = 1.946 + 0.164 \* entrepreneurial environment

Model 2: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy = 16.688 + 0.856 \* entrepreneurial environment

Model 3: Entrepreneurial intention = 0.389 + 0.084 \* entrepreneurial environment + 0.093 \* Self-belief in entrepreneurship

Table 7: The effect of mediating Self-belief in entrepreneurship

item	Effect	95% CI lower limit	95% CI upper limit	reach a verdict	Efficacy as a percentage of
Entrepreneurial environment => Entrepreneurial self-efficacy => Entrepreneurial intention	0.08	0.268	0.481	Partial intermed iation	48.71 per cent
Entrepreneurial environment => Entrepreneurial intention	0.084	0.064	0.104		
aggregate effect	0.164	0.151	0.176		

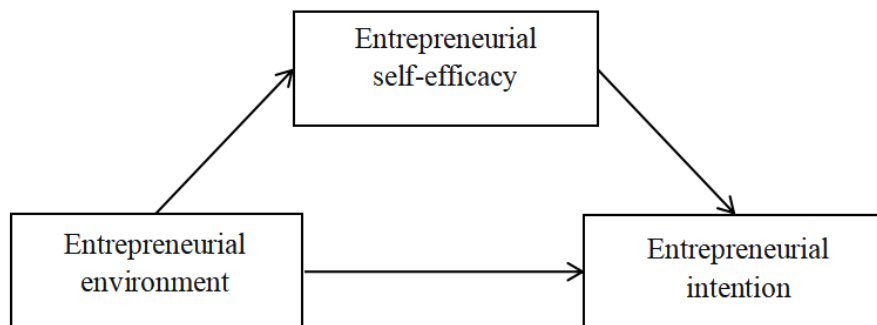


Figure 1: Model of mediating effect

To further validate the mediating effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the Bootstrap method was employed with a 95% confidence interval (CI) and 5000 repeated samples. The 95% CI did not include 0. Based on Table 7 and Figure 1, it is observed that the mediating effect value is 0.08, with a 95% CI of [0.268, 0.481]. The effect accounts for 48.71% of the total variance. Consequently, it can be inferred that Self-belief in entrepreneurship partially serves as a mediator in the relationship between entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial intention among college students.

## 5. Discussion and analysis

### 5.1 The influence of the environment for entrepreneurship on entrepreneurial intention of college students

This study investigated the correlation between the environment for entrepreneurship and intention to start a business among students in college. The results revealed that the entrepreneurial environment positively predicted intention to start a business, thus validating research hypothesis H1, which is consistent with prior research. After controlling for individual factors that may influence entrepreneurial intention, such as gender, region, major, entrepreneurial education, and parental business experience, the study demonstrated that the three dimensions of the environment all positively influenced entrepreneurial intention among college students. In other words, the more standardized and efficient the institutional environment that college students face, the more it can stimulate their entrepreneurial intention. The influence of the environment on college students' entrepreneurial intention varied depending on their individual entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The research indicated Self-efficacy positively influenced the correlation between the institutional environment and entrepreneurial intention among college students. Specifically, when college students possessed high entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the positive impact of the institutional environment on their entrepreneurial intention was more pronounced. Conversely, when college students had low self-efficacy in entrepreneurship the impact of the institutional environment on their entrepreneurial intention was weaker. These findings are consistent with theory of social cognition, which indicates that an individual's self-efficacy can either enhance or weaken the strength of the correlation between the environment and behavior. Fundamentally, the impact of the entrepreneurial environment on entrepreneurial intention can be understood as the relationship between society and individuals. Entrepreneurial intention is the subjective consciousness inherent in individuals, while the entrepreneurial environment represents the external objective that individuals exist in. Intention to start a business is based on the interaction between individuals and society, and the weighing judgments of the external world. college students' entrepreneurial willingness is significant, ranging from social policies and regulations to school educational support and parental attitudes, as well as the work environment, tools, equipment, and funding required for entrepreneurship<sup>[8][9]</sup>.

### 5.2 The role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a mediator

This study reveals that entrepreneurial self-efficacy partially mediates the link between the entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial intention among college students. It suggests that the environment for entrepreneurship can influence entrepreneurial intention both directly and indirectly through self-efficacy in entrepreneurship, supporting Hypothesis H2, which is consistent with previous research. From the perspective of self-efficacy, the study uncovers the underlying mechanisms through which the entrepreneurial environment impacts entrepreneurial intention through a combination of direct and mediated effects. This implies that enhancing entrepreneurial intention not only involves creating a favorable entrepreneurial environment but also leveraging self-efficacy theory by providing alternative experiences through successful case studies and verbal encouragement. The enhancement of self-efficacy in entrepreneurship promotes an increase in intention to start a business<sup>[10]</sup>.

Bandura argues that self-efficacy can effectively predict individual behavior, and Individuals who possess high levels levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy are more likely to possess a strong intention to participate in entrepreneurial activities<sup>[11]</sup>. Moreover, this study discovered that entrepreneurial self-efficacy serves as a mediator in the relationship between the entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial intention, where individuals with a high entrepreneurial environment also exhibit



elevated levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, thereby strengthening their intention to start a business. Therefore, to enhance college students' entrepreneurial intention, it is essential to specifically increase their levels of achievement motivation, leading to higher zdd<sup>[12]</sup>.

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that the entrepreneurial environment can the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in influencing college students' entrepreneurial intention. By promoting college students' acquisition of entrepreneurial self-efficacy from the entrepreneurial environment. It becomes possible to efficiently enhance their entrepreneurial willingness<sup>[13]</sup>.

## 6. Conclusions

This study yields the following conclusions: (1) The environment for entrepreneurship significantly predicts entrepreneurial intention and self-belief in entrepreneurship. Additionally, self-belief in entrepreneurship significantly predicts entrepreneurial intention. (2) Self-belief in entrepreneurship partially mediates the connection involving the entrepreneurial environment and college students' entrepreneurial intention. This suggests that the entrepreneurial environment not only directly influences college students' it not just directly influences entrepreneurial intention but also indirectly influences it through Self-belief in entrepreneurship.

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