

**THE FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
HOW ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AND DESIRABILITY INFLUENCE
INTENTION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL STUDENTS?**

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Abstract

Does entrepreneurship education really influence student's intention towards entrepreneurship? How entrepreneurial orientation and desirability influence intention of entrepreneurial students? Researchers and entrepreneurship stakeholders have been looking to validate this question for quite a while. The authors thus propose entrepreneurial intention model that attempts to address these issues. Guided by theory of planned behavior, we conceptualize and test hypothesis considering entrepreneurial education as mediator. Hierarchical regression analysis using structural equation modelling technique revealed that, female business students have high intention to become an entrepreneur, thus citing the importance of entrepreneurial orientation and desirability together with entrepreneurship education and skills. Accordingly, entrepreneurship education together with innovation, locus of control, propensity to take risk, personal attitude, self-efficacy and social norms influences entrepreneurial intention at 5% significant level. The study recommends that government should facilitate entrepreneurship program to change the mindset, attitude and intention of the students to pursue career in entrepreneurship in future.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education; entrepreneurship desirability; entrepreneurship orientation, entrepreneurship intention, Oman

1. Introduction

Women or female are viewed as a reservoir of entrepreneurial talent, as a growth engine (Westhead and Solesvik, 2016) and as a source of innovation and wealth creation (Brush and Cooper, 2012) by the practitioners and policymakers. At global level, entrepreneurship has been viewed as an alternative for changing economic scenario and for economic development. In today's competitive market and economy, it has been very difficult for students especially in Oman to secure their job after their graduation. Oman has been relying heavily on expatriates at 43.7 per cent as of February 2019. A relatively stable government and low taxes is making Oman a desired location for entrepreneurship venture. Thus realizing the importance of entrepreneurship for economic development of the nation is crucial. The main objective of this study is therefore, to investigate the willingness of the female university students to become an entrepreneur and engage in the nation's development activities. Next section will highlight on the critical literature in the context of entrepreneurship theory and concepts.

2. Literature review

In this section, authors have attempted to elucidate the conceptual model and draw literature support for hypotheses development. The conceptual model which has been used in the present study is an extended version of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with the addition of entrepreneurial characteristics namely; 1. risk-taking propensity, 2. innovativeness, and 3. locus of control. Rationale behind applying TPB might rest upon two arguments. Firstly, TPB has been applied by numerous researchers in their studies across the globe and it has been able to furnish significant empirical findings thus the robustness of this model has been validated (Lortie and Castogiovanni 2015; Peterman and Kennedy 2003; Kolvereid 1996; Tkachev and Kolvereid 1999; Roy et al. 2017). According to web electronic database 'Scopus' TPB has received more

than 28000 citations until the year 2019 which depicts the robustness of the model. Secondly, TPB model has been applied nearly in each and every other field of research namely; health sciences (Godin and Kok 1996), leisure studies (Hagger et al. 2003), psychology (Austin and Vancouver 1996), and marketing (Pavlou and Fygenson 2006) in order to measure behavioral intention and it has fetched remarkable outcomes, therefore, this model outshines any other models or approaches used for prediction of behavioral intention. Most of the scholars from the area of entrepreneurial intention research have used TPB (Liñán and Chen 2009; Anwar & Saleem, 2019; Bazan et al. 2019; Krueger et al. 2000; Kolvereid and Isaksen 2006; Krueger et al. 2000) hence the authors have also used the same in the present study with the view to measure entrepreneurial intention among the students of University of Buraimi, Sultanate of Oman.

Brief description of the theory of planned behavior

In the theory of planned behavior, there are three basic antecedents for the formation of behavioral intention namely; 1. Attitude towards behavior, 2. Subjective norm, and 3. Perceived behavioral control (Ajzen's, 1991). 'Attitude toward behavior' refers to the degree of positive or negative personal valuation possessed by one individual about a certain activity of behavior while 'Subjective norm' hints toward the positive or negative opinion of a reference group (family, friends, relatives, and peers) about making a certain decision. At last, 'Perceived behavioral control' points out one's own self-confidence in one's own skills and attributes from performing a particular behavioral action.

Theory of planned behavior and entrepreneurship

Across the world of academia, TPB has predicted behavioral intention in various dimensions of researches and has successfully explained the entrepreneurial intention phenomenon ranging between 21% (Autio et al. 2001) to 55% (Liñán and Chen 2009). In many of the studies, basic antecedents of TPB; Entrepreneurial Attitude (ATE), Subjective Norm (SN), and Perceived Behavior Control (PBC) have shown significant statistical relationships with the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) (Anwar & Saleem, 2019; Souitaris et al., 2007).

The first variable 'Attitude toward entrepreneurship' explains one's attitudinal attraction towards entrepreneurial intention as a choice of career option. Findings from earlier studies have established that more is the attitude toward entrepreneurship stronger the intention to start own business (Anwar & Saleem, 2019; Krueger et al., 2000; Autio et al., 2001; Pruett et al., 2009; Segal et al., 2005; Van Gelderen & Jansen, 2008). Not only in the area of entrepreneurial intention research, but also in other fields of researches; consumer behavior, marketing, psychology, etc, attitude has emerged as a significant predictor of the outcome variable (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore citing the given evidence, it can be posited that someone's favorable attitude toward entrepreneurship makes him more inclined to start a business.

Second variable 'Social norm' compounds the positive or negative opinion of a reference group such as; family, relatives, and friends which might affect concerned persons' decision to start own business hence establishing the notion that positive opinion of the reference group might strengthen one's entrepreneurial spirit while negative opinion might weaken it (Anwar & Saleem, 2019; Roy et al., 2017; Bazan et al. 2019).

The third variable of TPB is **Perceived Behavior Control (PBC)** which refers to one's belief in one's own skills and attributes regarding performing a particular task or job. In other words, one's perceptual senses regarding easiness or difficulty in doing an act is termed as 'Perceived Behavior Control'. Thus, it can be posited that greater level of perceived behavior control leads to stronger Entrepreneurial Intention (Bandura, 1986; Swan et al., 2007). In many of the researches, PBC has been found as the strongest predicting factor or entrepreneurial intention which establishes the notion that greater level of PBC leads to higher self-confidence which in turn leads to higher entrepreneurial intention. Citing the abovementioned theoretical background findings from the literature, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Attitude toward entrepreneurship is positively related with entrepreneurial intention.

H2: Subjective norm is positively related with entrepreneurial intention.

H3: Perceived behavior control is positively related with entrepreneurial intention.

Personality characteristics and entrepreneurship

From the literature available on various approaches and models applied in the field of entrepreneurial research, it could be possible to discern those factors which affect entrepreneurial behavior which can be categorized into individual, social, and environmental factors. The essence of social factors model is to investigate into personal and family background of the concerned person along with considering their career stage (Robinson et al., 1991; Alstete, 2002; Green et al., 1996). Furthermore, Gibb (1993) was of the opinion that one's life experiences are also part of social factors approach. In addition, environmental factors comprise of such contextual and economic factors that might make an impact in shaping one's career option such as quantum of wealth, possibilities of career opportunities, economic conditions, societal stability or disarray, etc. (Alstete, 2002; Green et al., 1996).

On other hand, individual factors affecting entrepreneurial behavior of individuals, known as trait model of entrepreneurship, focuses on personality characteristics of the individuals (Koh, 1996). This model emphasizes that entrepreneurs are different from other non-entrepreneur people and possess some unique traits and characteristics which lead to distinguished attitudinal values in order to make them entrepreneurially inclined (Thomas and Mueller, 2000; Koh, 1996). Many studies have been conducted applying trait approach with an endeavor to answer the following questions; who becomes entrepreneur and why, what makes people a successful entrepreneur, do successful entrepreneurs differ from unsuccessful entrepreneurs characteristically? (Bygrave and Hofer, 1991; Littunen, 2000) and up to some extent, this trait approach has been successfully able to predict entrepreneurial behavior significantly. Entrialgo et al. (2000) in their study found that locus of control, need for achievement, and tolerance of ambiguity are determinants of entrepreneurial tendency. In one another pioneering study, Stewart et al. (1998) concluded that need for achievement, risk-taking propensity, and innovativeness are differentiating factors between entrepreneurs and corporate managers. In a recent study, Anwar and Saleem (2019) also empirically testified that levels of innovativeness, locus of control, and risk-taking propensity along with tolerance of ambiguity and need for achievement are significantly higher in entrepreneurially inclined students than non-

inclined students. Thus keeping the literature in mind, authors have taken three characteristics namely; risk-taking propensity, innovativeness, and locus of control into the present study.

Risk- taking propensity

Risk-taking propensity compounds on the capability of a person to either take or avoid risk in a perilous or odd situation. Propensity to take risk can be called closely related with the entrepreneurship citing the earlier example from Chantilon (1755), which demonstrates that the basic difference between employees and the owner of the business is the ability to take up the risk and uncertainty by the latter (Entrialgo et al., 2000; Thomas and Mueller, 2000). Risk-taking ability also differentiates entrepreneurs from the managers basing on the fact that they undertake the risks related to financial and other concerns under an unpredictable and uncertain business environment (Erdem, 2001; Brockhaus, 1980; Littunen, 2000). Plenty of entrepreneurial literature is also in support that entrepreneurs possess higher risk-taking ability when compared to others (Anwar and Saleem, 2019; Cho and Lee, 2018; Cromie, 2000; and Thomas and Mueller, 2000; Teoh and Foo, 1997).

Innovativeness

Among the various characteristics, innovativeness is considered as a must-have characteristic for the entrepreneurs so they can look for further entrepreneurial opportunities through different new ways and techniques of production, entering into new markets, managing the business and competing with business rivals Zacharakis, 1997; Entrialgo et al., 2000; Hansemark, 1998). Drucker also claimed that entrepreneurs always look for further innovation for tapping entrepreneurial opportunities which enables an entrepreneur in identifying required changes within the enterprise to keep up with the changing markets with the help of new ideas and products (Cromie, 2000). Stewart et al. (2003) also contended that innovativeness is an integrated part of entrepreneurship and cannot be detached from it thus, distinguishes entrepreneurs from managers. Utsch and Rauch (2000) claimed that there is a close relationship between innovativeness and performance of a business. Furthermore, Anwar and Saleem (2019) in their study also stated that innovativeness was found higher in entrepreneurially inclined students than others.

Locus of control

Locus of control is another personality trait that has been widely tested and proven as a vital characteristic to be possessed by an entrepreneur. Locus of control refers to one's own belief in one's own inner capabilities regarding controlling a situation (Leone and Burns, 2000) or other way round, people who have internal locus of control think that whatever happens in their lives, be it positive or negative, is only because of their own acts and they have the control over the outcomes of their doings (Koh, 1996; Riipinen, 1994; Hansemark, 1998). It is considered that those who look to start their own business should possess internal locus of control and this assumption has been confirmed by many studies (Mueller and Thomas, 2000; Hansemark, 1998; Koh, 1996; Utsch and Rauch, 2000). Gilad (1982) successfully testified that locus of control is higher among successful small business owners when compared with unsuccessful small business owners. In another study, Thomas and Mueller (2000) also confirmed that entrepreneurs are highly equipped with locus of control than others. Recently, Anwar and Saleem (2019) also contended that students who are inclined towards entrepreneurship are possessing higher level of locus of control than the students not inclined toward entrepreneurship. After going above literature support, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: Risk-taking propensity is positively related with entrepreneurial intention.

H5: Innovativeness is positively related with entrepreneurial intention.

H5: Locus of control is positively related with entrepreneurial intention.

Mediating role of entrepreneurial education

Compounding on the notions established by two theoretical concepts; (1) human capital theory (Becker, 1993) and (2) self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1994), it is found that entrepreneurial education is a strong predictor of entrepreneurial intention (Bae et al., 2014; Chen et al., 1998). Becker (1964) in his theory of human capital that knowledge or skill set gained by either

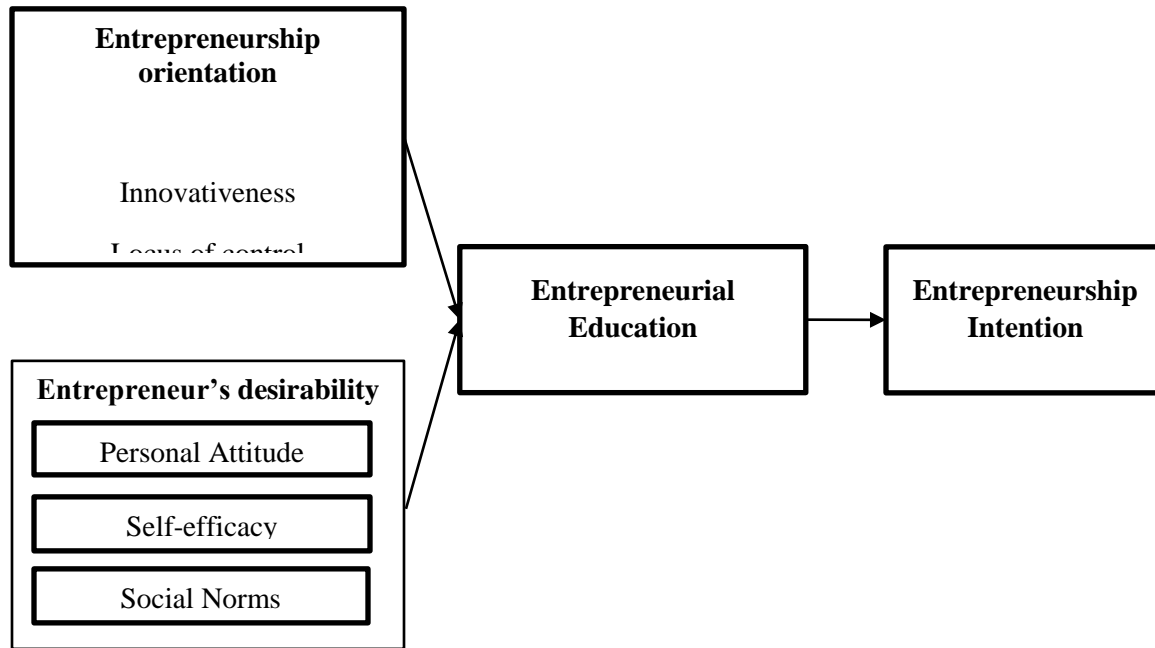
classroom teaching, training or any other method of learning can be termed as human capital while on the other hand, theory of self-efficacy refers to volume of one's belief in one's capability of doing or performing a particular task successfully (Bandura, 1994). In a Meta-analysis study, Martin et al., (2013) confirmed that entrepreneurial education is directly linked with entrepreneurial intention as it not only strengthens entrepreneurial intention but also enhances one's entrepreneurial self-efficacy which accounts for the belief one possesses for successfully performing entrepreneurial activities (Chen et al., 1998). In another study, entrepreneurial education has been found as a moderating factor on the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention Yun (2010).

Previously, studies were conducted taking entrepreneurial education merely as a predictor of entrepreneurial intention (Autio et al., 2001; Liñán, 2004; Lüthje and Franke, 2003) but in recent times it has been used in many different ways while integrating it with theory of planned behavior and trait approach as well (Anwar & Saleem, 2018; Martin et al., 2013). In their study, Rauch &Hulsink, (2015) also confirmed that entrepreneurial education does not only affect entrepreneurial intention directly but the relationships between attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control are also partially mediated by entrepreneurial education. Henceforth, we propose the following hypotheses:

H7: Entrepreneurial education mediates the relationships between Risk-taking propensity, Innovativeness, Locus of control and Entrepreneurial intention.

H8: Entrepreneurial education mediates the relationships between Attitude toward entrepreneurship, Subjective norm, Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial intention.

Based on the previous studies on entrepreneurship orientation and desirability towards entrepreneurial education and intention, the study presents the theoretical framework as shown in Figure.1.



Methodology

In order to test the research framework and hypotheses, we considered female university students in Oman who have undergone with entrepreneurship subject in their syllabus. The questionnaire used five points Likert scale adapted by (Nemati et al., 2010; Panigrahi, Zainuddin, & Azizan, 2014) ranging from 1 as (strongly disagree) to 5 as (strongly agree). To test the research hypotheses, we conducted a survey with university students. We considered university students as an appropriate sample, given that entrepreneurship has rapidly changed innovativeness and skills of the students. To ensure the selection of appropriate participants and their intention level, data were collected in Oman and participants were recruited online via Google Docs as per the convenience sampling method to collect primary data. Survey through Google Docs was conducted in the months of April – May 2019, where a total of 300 questionnaires were send and 269 sets were returned of which 225 responses were useful for data analysis. Sample size was computed based on G power analysis as recommended by (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). The response rate was 75% which was considered as adequate (Fosnacht, Sarraf, Howe, & Peck, 2017; Tabachnick, Fidell, Tabachnick, & Fidell, 2012).

3.2. Pretest

Card sorting method as suggested by [Moore and Benbasat \(1991\)](#) including all the question tHE in separate index cards were printed out. The cards were shuffled and presented to two experts from the marketing field and were asked individually to sort the measurement items. This method is also known as Q-sort method that helps the researchers to assess reliability and validity of the questionnaire ([Nahm, Rao, Solis-Galvan, & Ragu-Nathan, 2002](#)).

Results

The demographic profile of the respondents is provided in **Error! Reference source not found..** In total 47.7% (92) were male and 52.3% (101) were female; 50.25% (97) respondents were under the age of 25 years; 18.65% (36) were 25 to 30 years of age; 26.94% (52) respondents were in the range of 31 to 40 years and finally only 4.14% (8) respondents were above the age of 40 years.

Table.1 Demographic profile

No.	Demographic profile	Categories	Frequency	%
1	Gender	1. Male	92	47.7
		2. Female	133	52.3
2	Age	1. Less than 25 years	143	50.2
		2. 25 to 30 years	56	18.6
		3. 31 to 40 years	22	26.9
		4. Above 40 years	4	4.14
3	Interest to setup of own business	1. Yes	162	8.29

	2. No	63	68.3	
4	Family members as an business owner	1. Yes	97	100.0
		2. No	128	0

N = 225

In terms of the interest of the students to setup their own business, it was revealed that 162 participants agreed to possess their own business whereas 62 of them were not interested to have their own business. Finally, 97 respondents confirmed that their family members are business owner and 128 student's family members were not having any business.

Data collected through online mode were analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) 21 and AMOS 21. Analysis was initiated first with the reliability and validity assessment followed by the measurement model for validity and reliability test. This study prioritized confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) over exploratory factor analysis (EFA), for hypotheses testing as suggested by Kline (2011) of there is no need to conduct both the analysis. However, final structural model provided in **Error! Reference source not found.** already highlighted the outer loadings for the measured items.

Reliability and validity assessment

In order to perform reliability and validity assessment, we followed two stage analytical process as suggested by well-known scholars like ([Anderson & Gerbing, 1988](#); [F. Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & G. Kuppelwieser, 2014](#); [Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016](#)). First stage of analysis tested reliability and validity whereas in the second stage of analysis, structural model was examined for testing the hypothesized relationship. In order to test the significance of the loadings ([F. Hair Jr et al., 2014](#)). Reliability was measured using Cronbach alpha ([Cronbach, 1951](#)), $\rho_{\theta A}$ ([Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015](#)) and composite reliability ([Bacon, Sauer, & Young, 1995](#)) whereas the convergent validity of the measurement was examined using average variance

extracted (AVE) . The reliability and AVE for validity was higher than the threshold value of 0.70 and 0.50 significantly (see. **Error! Reference source not found.**

Table.2: Reliability and validity assessment

Construct	Dimensions	Items	Factor loadings	C.R	AVE
ENT_OR	Innovativeness	IN1	0.850	0.890	0.562
		IN2	0.769		
		IN3	0.772		
		IN4	0.718		
		IN5	0.788		
		IN6	0.812		
	Locus of control	LC1	0.807	0.885	0.667
		LC2	0.865		
		LC3	0.811		
		LC4	0.779		
		LC5	0.740		
	Risk taking propensity	RT1	0.816	0.813	0.613
		RT2	0.885		
		RT3	0.816		
RT4		0.787			
ENT_DES	Personal attitude	PA1	0.793	0.799	0.598

	PA2	0.776		
	PA3	0.749		
	PA4	0.831		
	PA5	0.827		
Self-efficacy	SE1	0.866	0.788	0.594
	SE2	0.801		
	SE3	0.795		
	SE4	0.785		
	SE5	0.833		
	SE6	0.915		
social norms	SN1	0.829	0.824	0.636
	SN2	0.884		
	SN3	0.905		
	SN4	0.856		
	SN5	0.882		
	SN6	0.846		
ENT_EDU	EE1	0.705	0.859	0.557
	EE2	0.744		
	EE3	0.795		
	EE4	0.800		
	EE5	0.866		

ENT_INT	EI1	0.820	0.808	0.605
	EI2	0.837		
	EI3	0.944		
	EI4	0.915		
	EI5	0.899		

Note: IN – innovativeness; LC-Locus of control; RT-Risk taking propensity; PA-Personal attitude; SE-Self-efficacy; SN-Social Norms; EE-Entrepreneurship education; EI-Entrepreneurship intention

Structural Equation Modelling

In order to confirm the structural model, we looked at the results of R-square (R^2), beta coefficients (β), factor loadings and corresponding t-values through the structural equation modelling technique (Hair Jr et al., 2016). First, we looked at the three dimensions of entrepreneurship desirability. Innovativeness ($\beta = 0.365$, $t = 3.708$, $p < 0.01$), locus of control ($\beta = 0.06$, $t = 0.554$, $p > 0.01$), risk taking propensity ($\beta = -0.146$, $t = -1.595$, $p > 0.01$), personal attitude ($\beta = 0.225$, $t = 2.412$, $p < 0.01$), self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.123$, $t = 1.033$, $p > 0.01$), social norms ($\beta = 0.311$, $t = 1.954$, $p < 0.01$) was positively related to entrepreneurship education explaining 0.50 (50%) of variance on entrepreneurship education (Table 3). Next we found that Innovativeness ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 2.016$, $p < 0.01$), locus of control ($\beta = 0.222$, $t = 0.554$, $p > 0.01$), risk taking propensity ($\beta = -0.146$, $t = -1.595$, $p > 0.01$), personal attitude ($\beta = 0.225$, $t = 1.963$, $p < 0.01$), self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.044$, $t = 0.353$, $p > 0.01$), social norms ($\beta = 0.396$, $t = 2.257$, $p < 0.01$) towards entrepreneurial intention. Finally, we found that entrepreneurial education was having ($\beta = 0.266$, $t = 2.419$, $p < 0.01$) influence on entrepreneurship intention. The loadings of all the items were above the minimum cut off value of 0.50 level (Hair et al., 2010). All the loadings were greater than 0.70 on their respective constructs with the t-statistics above 1.96. This result of factor loading provided evidence of the convergent validity.

Table.3 Standardized path for hypothesis testing

Endogenous	Path	Exogenous	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Entrepreneur_Education	<---	Innovative	0.365	0.099	3.708	***
Entrepreneur_Education	<---	Locus_Control	-0.060	0.108	-0.554	0.579
Entrepreneur_Education	<---	Risk_Taking	-0.146	0.091	-1.595	0.111
Entrepreneur_Education	<---	Personal_Attitude	0.225	0.093	2.412	0.016
Entrepreneur_Education	<---	Self_Efficacy	0.123	0.119	1.033	0.302
Entrepreneur_Education	<---	Social_Norms	0.311	0.158	1.954	0.051
Entrepreneur_Intention	<---	Entrepreneur_Education	0.266	0.11	2.419	0.016
Entrepreneur_Intention	<---	Innovative	0.223	0.11	2.016	0.044
Entrepreneur_Intention	<---	Locus_Control	0.222	0.113	1.963	0.051
Entrepreneur_Intention	<---	Risk_Taking	-0.067	0.099	-0.675	0.5
Entrepreneur_Intention	<---	Personal_Attitude	-0.091	0.101	-0.909	0.363
Entrepreneur_Intention	<---	Self_Efficacy	0.044	0.126	0.353	0.724
Entrepreneur_Intention	<---	Social_Norms	0.396	0.176	2.257	0.024

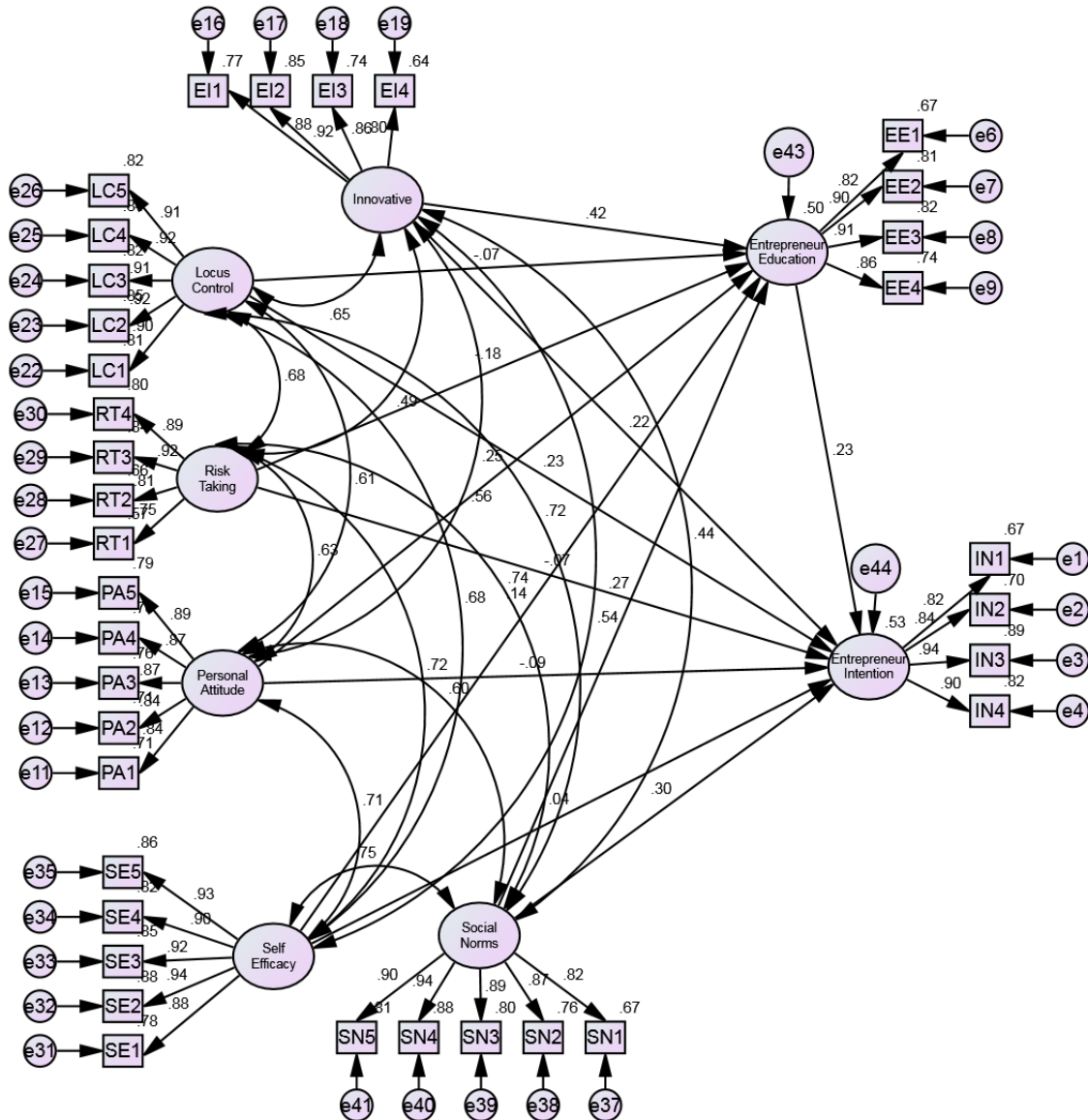


Figure. 2 Final Structural Model

As depicted in 2, R-square (R^2) value for entrepreneurial intention is 0.530 and for entrepreneurial education and R^2 value is 0.500 with adequate explanatory significance. However, only R^2 is not enough for supporting the model (Radović-Marković, Shoib Farooq, & Marković, 2017). Therefore, Q-square (Q^2) test was performed in order to assess the relevance of the structural model (Hair Jr et al., 2016).

Conclusions

This study was conducted with an aim of determining the level of intention of the university undergraduate students in Oman and identify the influence of entrepreneurship orientation, desirability and education on intention. From the findings of the study it was revealed that entrepreneurship education plays an important role for the female students to become an entrepreneur as their career goal. The study also found that personal attitude and innovativeness comes from the entrepreneurship education. Unfortunately, the study found no influence of risk-taking propensity towards intention. This shows that the entrepreneurs are not willing to take risk or are unable to face the loss or worst circumstances if any, from the entrepreneurship ventures they perform.

On the top, the entrepreneurship education must focus on motivating the needs of individuals. For instance, business students have different risk-taking propensity as compared to that of the non-business students. Thus, developing a common entrepreneurship education that caters all the students from various fields will be a good and innovative strategy. Students must be engaged with real businesses as a case in order to make their innovativeness and improve their risk-taking abilities. Universities should involve entrepreneurship incubators or hubs to make the students proactive and make them realize the real business scenarios.

In terms of theoretical implication, this study highlighted the importance of TPB supported by the entrepreneurship orientation model at an individual level. Practically it shed light on the willingness of the students and their intention to be an entrepreneur. This paper thus suggests to polish the student's entrepreneurship skills, knowledge and competencies to increase their entrepreneurship intention.

Finally, this study has several limitations. For instance, it engaged theory of planned behavior to develop the entrepreneurship model. Future studies are need to expand the model by integrating it with other entrepreneurship models. Furthermore, the sample was selected from private

universities and colleges in Oman. Future research should include students from public universities. In addition, both female and male students were considered as respondents for this study however, the main focus was on female entrepreneurs. This was done to understand the mindset or differences of the male students towards female to be an entrepreneur. It is recommended that, future research study is conducted with only female students as respondent. The sample can also be expanded by assimilating working adults or individuals other than students to be an entrepreneur in future.

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