

# The Role of Subjective Norms in the Formation of Entrepreneurial Intention: The Case of a Matrilineal Society

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## Abstract

The consideration of intention holds significant importance within the entrepreneurial process for individuals who are contemplating the initiation of a new business venture. It is the pre-self-employment contemplative process. The primary aim of this study is to examine and substantiate Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour model, specifically exploring the predictive nature of personal attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control in relation to entrepreneurial intention. Another part of this article will investigate and analyse the specific role that subjective norms play in the formation of the entrepreneurial intention of the youth within the context of a matrilineal society. The study pertains to 929 undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in various colleges and universities of Meghalaya. Statistical techniques such as path analysis, ANOVA and regression analysis are employed in the study. The findings of the study show that personal attitude and subjective norms have a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention. Furthermore, it has been revealed that the kinship system has an impact on subjective norms.

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**Keywords**

Entrepreneurial intention, theory of planned behaviour, subjective norms, kinship system, matrilineal society

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**Introduction**

The field of entrepreneurship research is experiencing increased recognition and interest within a significant number of developing nations. The concept of entrepreneurship presents itself as a feasible strategy for attaining the objective of sustained economic growth in the majority of developing nations. Throughout the course of human history, it is evident that it has played a significant and indispensable role in the progression of contemporary society, spanning across various historical epochs (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). In a country like India, where the twin problems of poverty and unemployment coexist, the role of entrepreneurship is critical. However, in North-East India, particularly in Meghalaya, where the majority of youth prefer employment in the public sector, entrepreneurship is not a popular career option. For example, the public sector employed 55,707 people in 2011–2012, compared to 6,992 in the private sector in Meghalaya. Likewise, the total number of establishments engaged in economic activities other than crop production, plantation, public administration, defence and compulsory social services in the state stands at 1,06,758, which accounts for around 3.95% of the total number of establishments in the North-Eastern region and around 0.18% of the total number of establishments in the country (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2014).

**Literature Review*****Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)***

One of the primary areas of emphasis in these studies pertains to examining the aspirations of prospective entrepreneurs, particularly among young individuals enrolled in institutions of higher education. There is evidence to suggest that scholars have begun to acknowledge the significance of EI as a crucial element in society's pursuit of fostering entrepreneurship (Engle et al., 2010; Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011). The consideration of intention plays a crucial role in the entrepreneurial process for individuals contemplating the initiation of a new business venture (Israr & Hashim, 2015). It is the contemplative phase leading up to self-employment (Liñán & Chen, 2009; Vesalainen & Pihkala, 1999). According to Zampetakis et al. (2009), EI influences entrepreneurial behaviour in two ways. First, those with a high self-perceived EI may have a higher tolerance for stress and environmental stressors. Individuals with a high EI are also more proactive and inventive, thereby fostering entrepreneurial behaviour.

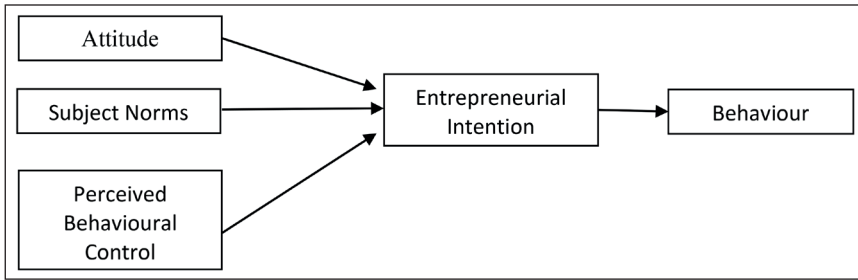
Despite the fact that EI is regarded as the most proximal and significant predictor of behaviour (Krueger et al., 2000), Schjoedt (2018) reports that intention has a limited impact on behaviour. The intention-based models of entrepreneurship place a heavy emphasis on perceptual attributes, such as perceived feasibility and perceived desirability, as a crucial precursor to the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). According to Ajzen (1991), the more likely someone is to desire to engage in a particular behaviour, the more favourable their attitude and subjective norm towards it are, and the more control they believe they have over their own behaviour. Therefore, it is expected that the relative importance of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control in predicting intention varies across behaviours and situations.

According to the Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (TPB), if people evaluate the suggested behaviour as positive and believe that those around them want them to perform the behaviour, this increases their intention to perform the behaviour, and they are more likely to do so (Brännback & Carsrud, 2018; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In addition, the TPB is founded on social psychology principles regarding how human behaviour is planned and preceded by intentions towards that behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen argues that intentions, in general, depend on perceptions of personal attractiveness, social norms and feasibility (Krueger et al., 2000). The TPB consists of three constructs: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

### *Subjective Norms and EI*

Subjective norms refer to the social pressure exerted by the environment on the individual to engage in or abstain from a particular behaviour; for example, parents who have had negative experiences with entrepreneurship may discourage their children from starting their own business (Ajzen, 1991). Several studies have examined the relationship between subjective norms and EI. For instance, Kolvereid (1996), Kolvereid and Isaksen (2006) and Tkachev and Kolvereid (1999) found subjective norms to be significant predictors of EI. However, contrasting findings were reported by Kolvereid (1996) and Kolvereid and Isaksen (2006), where subjective norms were found to be insignificant in predicting EI. According to the TPB, Autio et al. (2001) conducted a study that revealed a direct influence of subjective norms on EI. However, further empirical research is required to examine the impact of subjective norms on EI, as suggested by Krueger et al. (2000). The extant literature on the direct correlation between subjective norms and EI exhibits some degree of inconsistency (Tung, 2011).

Consequently, this study employs the TPB conceptual model (see Figure 1) to examine the empirical relationship between intention and subjective norms, while also considering the moderating influence of the kinship system on intention. However, Krueger et al. (2000) were unable to establish a relationship between EI and subjective norms. A study conducted among business students revealed that, of the three predictors, personal attitude and perceived behaviour



**Figure 1.** Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour.

**Source:** Adapted from Ajzen (1991).

control have a greater impact on the determination of EI than subjective norms. Likewise, studies conducted by Pruett et al. (2009) and Zovko et al. (2020) reveal that cultural and social norms are statistically insignificant and account for a relatively small proportion of the EI of the students. Numerous studies argue that additional research is required to substantiate the existing findings (Kolvereid, 1996). In addition, studies conducted in India have paid little or no attention to the North-Eastern region and Meghalaya in particular in order to comprehend the dynamics that influence entrepreneurship and future entrepreneurial development.

## Objectives of the Study

This article seeks primarily to investigate and comprehend the views of Meghalaya's youth regarding the possibility of pursuing entrepreneurship as a future career. The most important aspect of this article is to examine these issues through the lens of a matrilineal family structure in the Indian state of Meghalaya. Keeping this in mind, the objectives of this article are as follows:

1. To investigate if personal attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are predictors of EI within the context of the TPB.
2. To investigate if subjective norms have an impact on EI in the context of a matrilineal society.

## Hypotheses of the Study

This study examines two hypotheses in order to assess the applicability of the TPB in explaining EI within the matrilineal society of Meghalaya.

1. There is no effect of personal attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control on EI.
2. There is no significant effect of the kinship system on subjective norms.

## Research Methodology

This study has been designed as an empirical investigation into the propensity of youth in Meghalaya to pursue entrepreneurship as a viable long-term career choice. The target population for this study consists of undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in Commerce and Business Administration/Management programmes across a range of colleges, institutions and universities in Meghalaya. The rationale behind this assertion is that these students are more inclined to have been exposed to educational opportunities related to entrepreneurship. Additionally, they are at a critical juncture in their career trajectory where they may consider pursuing self-employment as a viable option (Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011). There exists a substantial body of literature that demonstrates the significance of business students as a crucial target audience for entrepreneurship research (Achchuthan & Nimalathan, 2012; Dissanayake, 2013; Gelderen et al., 2008; Mahendra et al., 2017; Trivedi, 2017).

The study's sample population was selected from colleges and universities in the three primary districts of Meghalaya, specifically East Khasi Hills, West Jaintia Hills and West Garo Hills, which offer commerce and management courses. The rationale behind this decision is that these districts serve as the primary hubs for commerce and economic activities within the state. As a result, there is a higher likelihood that students pursuing commerce and management education in institutions located in these districts will be inclined towards selecting entrepreneurship as their prospective career path.

The survey instrument employed for data collection underwent a pre-testing phase, during which necessary adjustments were made in response to the findings of the pilot study. The researchers adhered rigorously to research ethics protocols during the process of data collection. In order to address the potential issue of a diminished response rate, a total of 1,500 questionnaires were disseminated among the student population. Subsequently, a total of 1,227 students provided their responses, resulting in a response rate of 81.8%. Among the 1,227 completed questionnaires that were collected, a total of 298 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete responses and missing data in multiple sections. Therefore, the 929 responses that remained, representing a response rate of 61.9%, were utilised for data analysis and interpretation.

Following the administration of appropriate reliability and validity assessments on the dataset, descriptive statistics, path analysis, ANOVA and regression models are employed to derive significant findings that align with the study's objectives and to evaluate the proposed hypotheses.

## Data Analyses and Results

### *Background Profile of the Respondents*

This section presents a background profile of the respondents. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of the age and gender. According to Table 2 both male and female respondents are equally represented.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the Respondents in Terms of the Age Group and Gender.

Age Group	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
18–20	95	95	190
21–23	307	323	630
24–26	59	43	102
27–29	4	3	7
Total	465	464	929

**Source:** Primary data.

**Table 2.** Distribution of the Respondents in Terms of the Kinship System and Gender.

Gender	Kinship System		Total
	Matrilineal	Patrilineal	
Male	278	187	465
Female	260	204	464
Total	538	391	929

**Source:** Primary data.

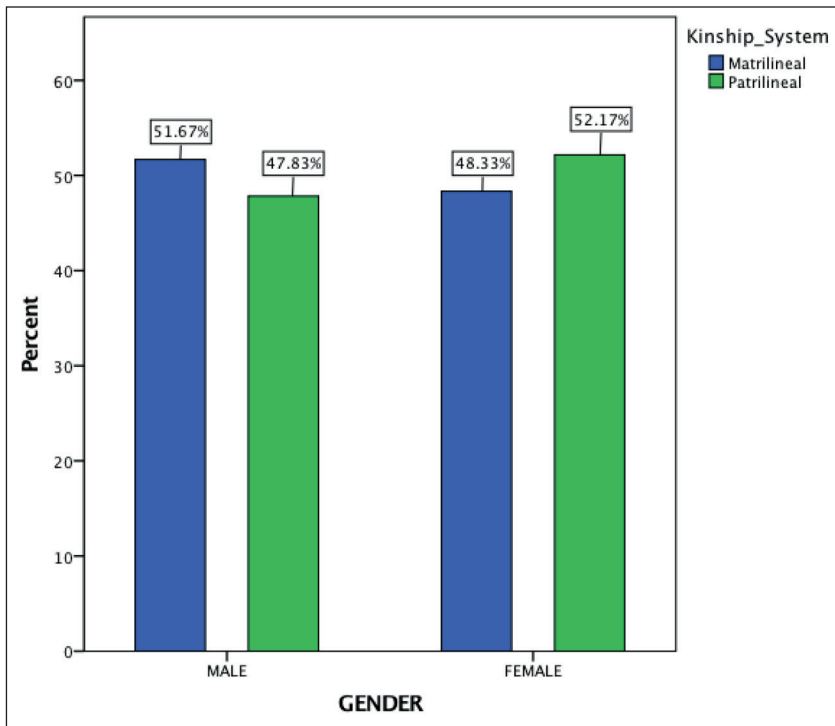
As evident from Figure 2, the majority of the respondents (57.91%) belong to the matrilineal form of society, while the remaining (42.09%) belong to a patrilineal form of society. Furthermore, amongst the matrilineal society, 51.67% of the respondents were males and the remaining 48.33% were females. The respective percentages for males and females in the patrilineal society were 47.83% and 52.17%.

### *Reliability of the Data*

Cronbach's alpha is employed in this study to evaluate the internal consistency, or reliability, of the data. According to Hair et al. (2010), a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.7 signifies a satisfactory level of reliability and consistency within the system. According to George and Mallery (2019), a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.9 signifies exceptional quality, whereas a Cronbach's alpha value below 0.5 indicates substandard quality. Given that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the various dimensions examined in this study exceed 0.7, it can be concluded that the data collected are deemed to be adequately reliable and consistent (see Table 3).

### *Validity of the Model Based on TPB*

Attempts are being made to determine the validity of the entrepreneurial intention model (see Figure 3) based on TPB using the root mean square error approximation (RMSEA), goodness-of-fit index, composite fit index Comparative Fit Index (CFI),



**Figure 2.** Kinship System vs Gender.

**Table 3.** The Reliability Coefficients of Subscale of EI.

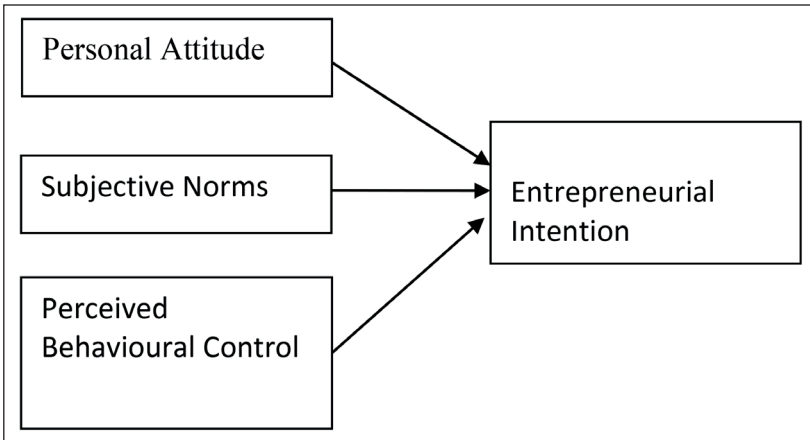
Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha
Over all	0.92
Entrepreneurial intention	0.89
Personal attitude	0.89
Subjective norms	0.80
Perceived behavioural control	0.70

**Source:** Primary data.

Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and standardised root mean square residual (SRMSR). The fit of a model is evaluated to determine the extent to which it is consistent with the empirical data under consideration.

Table 4 shows that the likelihood ratio computed as Chi-square or CMIN/df is 280.343, suggesting poor fit of the model to the data. However, the RMSEA, CFI, TLI and SRMSR indices satisfy the acceptable threshold level. This indicates that the construct model has sufficient sample size and demonstrates that the model has a good fit to prove the validity of the model.

Figure 4 depicts the influence of personal attitude (path coefficient = 0.99), subjective norms (path coefficient = 0.19) and perceived behavioural control

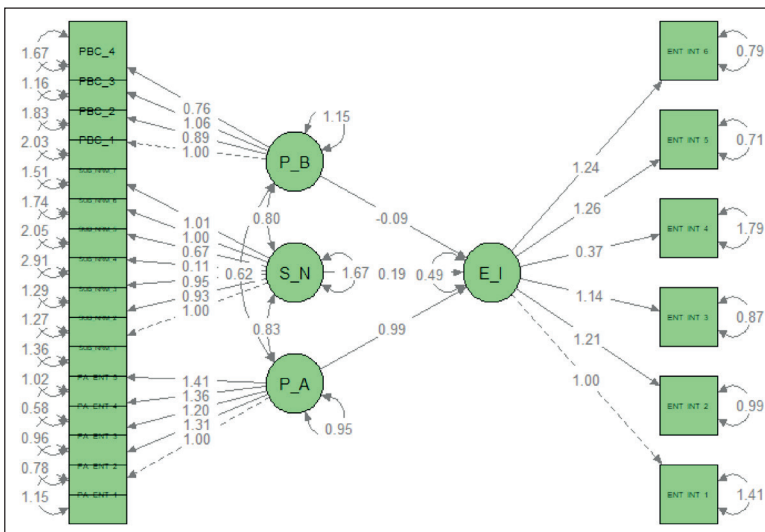


**Figure 3.** Hypothesised Model.

**Table 4.** Fit Statistics.

Fit Index	Estimated Value
Chi-square/degrees of freedom (CMIN/df)	280.343
RMSEA	0.000
Comparative fit index (CFI)	1.000
Tucker–Lewis index (TLI)	1.000
SRMSR	0.000

**Source:** Primary data.



**Figure 4.** Path Analysis of Model.



(path coefficient =  $-0.09$ ) on EI. It explains that the covariance between personal attitude and subjective norms is 0.83, the covariance between personal attitude and perceived behavioural control is 0.62, and the covariance between subjective norms and perceived behavioural control is 0.80. The residual variances of EI are 0.49, personal attitude is 0.95, subjective norms is 1.67 and perceived behavioural control is 1.15.

### Testing of the Hypotheses

$H_1$ : There is no effect of personal attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control on EI.

Table 5 shows the regression analysis of the model and Table 6 shows the coefficients (slopes) for the regression of personal attitude (0.0698), subjective norms (0.251) and perceived behavioural control ( $-0.17$ ) on EI. It has been observed that perceived behavioural control is very small and the  $p$ -value is greater than 0.05. So, perceived behavioural control is not found to have a significant effect on EI. Therefore, it is evident that personal attitude and subjective norms are the two antecedents of the willingness to start a business. This finding is consistent with many previous studies which have revealed that having favourable subjective norms and personal attitude towards starting a business increases EI (Bergmann, 2002; Veciana et al., 2005).

Hence, our refined path model is as given in Figure 5.

$H_2$ : There is no significant effect of the kinship system on subjective norms.

Table 7 shows that the  $p$ -value is less than 0.05, which means we fail to accept the null hypothesis, and so the effect of the kinship system on subjective norms is

**Table 5.** Regression Analysis of the Model.

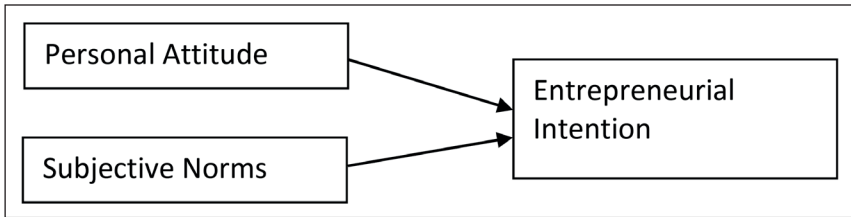
	Estimate	Std. Error	t Value	P
Intercept	0.01413	0.14593	0.097	0.923
Personal attitude	0.69759	0.02883	24.199	< 0.01
Subjective norm	0.25103	0.03174	7.909	< 0.01
Perceived behavioural control	-0.01719	0.02879	-0.597	0.551

Source: Primary data.

**Table 6.** Residuals Statistics.

Min	IQ	Median	3Q	Max
-4.2803	-0.4994	0.0837	0.5382	3.9986
Residual standard error: 0.8958 on 925 degrees of freedom				
Multiple R-squared: 0.5956		Adjusted R-squared: 0.5943		
F-statistic: 454.1 on 3 and 925 DF		P value: < 2.2e-16		

Source: Primary data.



**Figure 5.** Refined Path Model.

**Table 7.** One-way ANOVA Between Kinship System and Subjective Norms.

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F Value	P
Kinship system	15.7	1	15.651	11.74	0.000639
Residuals	1,235.9	927	1.333		

**Source** Primary data.

statistically significant. The mean and standard deviation of the subjective norms for matrilineal forms of society is  $4.274 \pm 1.165$ , while the mean and standard deviation of subjective norms for patrilineal forms of society is  $4.011 \pm 1.140$ . It can, hence, be inferred that students belonging to matrilineal society have higher subjective norms when compared with students belonging to patrilineal society. In other words, students belonging to a matrilineal society are more concerned with what their family members and other kith and kin feel about their career choice.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The decision to embark on a career in entrepreneurship can be perceived as a conscious and intentional decision. However, it is justifiable to scrutinise the decision-making process that culminates in such a conclusion. This study aims to empirically examine the EI of youth in Meghalaya and explore the potential factors that can predict their intention to pursue an entrepreneurial career.

The findings indicate that not all of the factors examined exhibit a direct influence on the EI of young individuals. This study reveals that the sole factors that exert a significant influence on EI are personal attitude towards the behaviour and subjective norms. In contrast, it can be observed that perceived behavioural control does not exert any influence on EI. Additionally, the kinship system exerts influence on subjective norms, thereby contributing to the development of EI.

As a result, policymakers and academics could potentially enhance their ability to develop strategies for establishing a favourable entrepreneurial environment within college and university campuses, as well as in society as a whole. This would contribute to the facilitation and encouragement of both emerging and aspiring entrepreneurs.

## Limitations of the Study

First and foremost, this study is based on cross-sectional data, as is the case with the majority of studies in the entrepreneurial literature. Therefore, caution should be exercised when applying the findings to other contexts and when comparing them to the findings of related longitudinal research.

This study may also be impacted by self-reporting bias. The subjective norms, in particular, may be skewed because respondents may not know what their significant others think about their attitude towards entrepreneurship or how well they think they can be an entrepreneur.

## Suggestions for Future Research

This study examined only a subset of the factors discussed in the literature as being associated with EIs, including the kinship system. Future research may employ other factors such as comprehensive socio-economic and demographic profiles of the respondents within the context of other relevant models such as Shapero's entrepreneurial event and Bandura's social cognitive theory.

The future course of research may also include the examination of significant factors identified in this study in other socio-cultural contexts in other parts of India, specifically in North-East India, which is so diverse and complex in its social constructs.

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## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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