

# Will entrepreneurial intention directly lead to entrepreneurial behaviour?: a study based on the intermediary effect of entrepreneurial implementation plan

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## **Abstract**

The phenomenon of “strong intention but weak action” between entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behaviour attracted scholars’ widespread attention. This paper examines the mechanism of cognitive dissonance in the process of entrepreneurial intention to entrepreneurial behaviour. Based on the “intention-plan-behaviour” path, the paper introduces entrepreneurship implementation plan as the middle variable to represent the conversion process from entrepreneurial intention to entrepreneurial behaviour and build the research model. University students were selected as the research objects. Empirical study results show that entrepreneurial implementation plan plays a completely mediating role between entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behaviour, supporting the view that entrepreneurial intention affects entrepreneurial behaviour through the entrepreneurial implementation plan.

**Key words:** *entrepreneurial intention; entrepreneurial implementation plan; entrepreneurial behaviour; cognitive dissonance*

## **1 Introduction**

The flourishing of the entrepreneurial activity makes lots of people full of entrepreneurial passion and motivates strong entrepreneurial intention, however, what should not be ignored is that few people put their intentions into entrepreneurial behaviors, which causes the phenomenon of “strong intention and weak behavior”. Such phenomenon can be understood as the high entrepreneurial intention coexists with the low entrepreneurial behavior, and presents most typical in the group of university students. The Chinese scholar Sun Zhiming (2011) surveys 1000 students from five universities of five cities in the nation and find that the proportion of the students with the entrepreneurial intention is up to 74% while only 1%-2%

of them have entrepreneurial behaviors. According to the Statistical Bulletin on the *National Economy and Social Development of 2015* made by the National Statistics Bureau, the proportion of the entrepreneurship university students of 2015 session is only 3%, which is far less than the proportion of 20%-30% in developed countries. The exploration and research on the intermediate and token variables, which appeared in the transformation process from the entrepreneurial intention to the entrepreneurial behavior, not only enrich the theory of entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behavior, but also provide feasible suggestions and help for the entrepreneurs to transform the entrepreneurial intention to the entrepreneurial behavior.

As the representative of “strong intention but weak action”, university students were selected as the research objects. Empirical study results show that entrepreneurial implementation plan plays a completely mediating role between entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behavior, supporting the view that entrepreneurial intention affects entrepreneurial behavior through the entrepreneurial implementation plan. On the basis of the research, this paper raises some suggestions and advices for entrepreneurial management and education practice in the end.

## **2 Experimental**

The entrepreneurial intention is the production combined the research on intention with entrepreneurship. Bird (1988) points out that the entrepreneurial intention refers to a mental status guiding the attention, energy and even behavior of the entrepreneurs for establishing a new enterprise or creating new value for the existing enterprises, at the same time, the plan implementation is a mental variable which is more specific and explicit than an intention but presents no behaviors, its occurrence is after the intention but before the behavior, which is a representation of behavior. McMullen & Shepherd (2006) thinks, the entrepreneurial behavior usually refers to the series behaviors implemented by the entrepreneurs for finally realizing the entrepreneurial goal based on the existing entrepreneurial chances and intentions. The domestic scholar Chi Leidan (2010) thinks the entrepreneurial (prepared) behavior refers to the external activities generated under the subjective and objective factors of the entrepreneurship and the prepared behaviors of the in-school university students for entrepreneurship. The research objects of the research aim at the in-school university students who do not have practical entrepreneurial behaviors, therefore, the research emphasis is to discuss the entrepreneurial and prepared behaviors of university students, which refer to the

series of prepared behaviors of the university students for finally realizing the entrepreneurial goal based on the existing entrepreneurial chances and intentions.

According to the literature review related and the practical situation in the society, the research puts forward the following theoretical model: the plan of entrepreneurial implementation is the completely-mediating variable between the entrepreneurial intention and the entrepreneurial behavior, and based on which, the related research hypotheses are put forward.

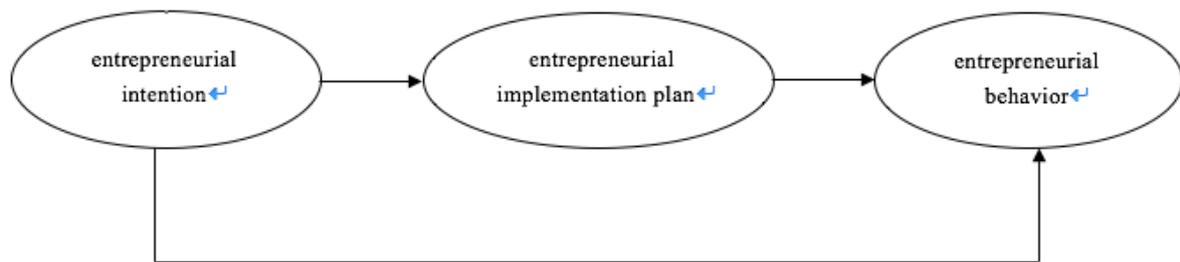


Fig. 1 – Research model

H1: The entrepreneurial intention has obviously-positive influence on the entrepreneurial behaviour.

H2: The entrepreneurial intention has obviously-positive influence on the entrepreneurial implementation plan.

H3: The plan of entrepreneurial implementation has obviously-positive influence on the entrepreneurial behaviour.

H4: The plan of entrepreneurial implementation plays an intermediate role between the entrepreneurial intention and the entrepreneurial behaviour.

### 3 Results and discussion

The research selects the university students as the research objects for questionnaire, the sample aims at the undergraduates of the universities (including Universities of 985 Project, Universities of 211 Project and ordinary universities) in Nanjing. The questionnaires is released for 800 pieces and collected for 659 pieces with the 610 pieces of effective questionnaires.

*Table 1 – entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial intention*

	EB		EIP	EB
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4
Gender	-0.231***	-0.18***	-0.047	-0.159***
Age	0.12*	0.097	0.164**	0.026
University	0.091*	0.103**	0.282***	-0.019
Specaility	0.05	0.062	0.1**	0.019
Grade	-0.047	-0.033	-0.111*	0.015
Family background	0.07	0.066	-0.017	0.073*
Entrepreneurship example (family members)	-0.09*	-0.085*	-0.054	-0.062
Entrepreneurship example (friends)	-0.078	-0.077	-0.066	-0.048
Educational status of father	-0.066	-0.089	-0.018	-0.082
Educational status of mother	0.161**	0.178**	0.067	0.149**
Work type of father	0.05	0.042	-0.064	0.07
Work type of mother	-0.013	-0.031	-0.006	-0.029
Entrepreneurial intention		0.215***	0.332***	0.071
Entrepreneurial implementation plan				0.433***
R2	0.106	0.148	0.238	0.291
Adjusted R2	0.079	0.12	0.213	0.266
F value	3.84	5.184	9.312	11.337

Note: \*p < 0.1; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\*p < 0.01

It can be seen from the model 1, that the entrepreneurial intentions of university students have obviously-positive influence on their entrepreneurial behaviours ( $\beta=0.215$ , adjusted  $R^2=0.120$ ), and the regression coefficient reaches to the significance level (Sig.=0.000<0.001,  $F=5.184$ ), besides, the conclusion can be got that the matching situation and the explanation

degree of the entrepreneurial intention-entrepreneurial behaviour model is good. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 is supported.

It can be seen from the model 2, that the entrepreneurial intentions of university students have obviously-positive influence on the plan of entrepreneurial implementation ( $\beta=0.332$ , adjusted  $R^2=0.238$ ), and the regression coefficient reaches to the significance level ( $\text{Sig.}=0.000<0.001$ ,  $F=9.312$ ), besides, the conclusion can be got that the matching situation and the explanation degree of the entrepreneurial intention-entrepreneurial implementation plan model is well. Therefore, the hypothesis 2 is supported.

It can be seen from the model 3, that the plan of entrepreneurial implementation has obviously-positive influence on the entrepreneurial behaviour ( $\beta=0.458$ , adjusted  $R^2=0.263$ ), and the regression coefficient reaches to the significance level ( $\text{Sig.}=0.000<0.001$ ,  $F=11.999$ ), besides, the conclusion can be got that the matching situation and the explanation degree of the entrepreneurial implementation plan- entrepreneurial behaviour model is good. Therefore, the hypothesis 3 is established.

The common method to test the intermediate effect is suggested by Baron & Kenny. It can be seen from the model 4, that the influence coefficient of the entrepreneurial intentions of university students on the entrepreneurial behaviour has obviously declined owing to the effect of the entrepreneurial implementation plan (the regression coefficient declines from 0.215 to 0.071) , and the significance level declines from 0.000 to 0.136 (insignificant). Besides, the conclusion can be got that the intermediate effect is significant, namely the entrepreneurial implementation plan plays the role of intermediate effect between the entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial behaviour. Therefore, the hypothesis 4 is supported.

#### **4 Conclusions**

First of all, the research further demonstrates the position influence of the entrepreneurial intention on the entrepreneurial behavior. The stronger the entrepreneurial intention one has, the more actions of entrepreneurial behavior he will take, however, the transformation process is established based on the plan of entrepreneurial implementation.

Secondly, the research finds, that the stronger the entrepreneurial intention is, the more specific plan of entrepreneurial implementation will be formed. And the stronger the plan of entrepreneurial implementation is, the more the entrepreneurial intention of individuals is, which is helpful to form the entrepreneurial behavior finally.

In the end, the research result supports the theoretical logic of “intention-plan-behavior” and the validness of the process model of “entrepreneurial intention-entrepreneurial implementation plan-entrepreneurial behavior, which meanwhile presents that the transformation of the entrepreneurial intention to the entrepreneurial behavior is not completed instantly, and the plan of entrepreneurial implementation is the representation for the transformation process from the entrepreneurial intention to entrepreneurial behavior.

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