

Entrepreneurial Intentions: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive literature review of research on entrepreneurial intentions (EI), utilizing bibliometric analysis to examine the evolution of EI studies. Specifically, it provides an overview of key grounding theories, critical themes, and prevalent methodologies within the field, revealing trends across multiple disciplines. By consolidating common findings, this review offers valuable insights into the factors shaping EI and informs effective entrepreneurial support strategies. Critically, the paper highlights existing studies' limitations and identifies significant literature gaps, suggesting avenues for future research.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial intentions; literature review, entrepreneurial education, entrepreneurial behavior.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic development, fostering job creation, innovation, and improved well-being (Acs & Szerb, 2010). By introducing new products and services, entrepreneurship stimulates demand and supports economic growth (Kressel & Lento, 2012), resulting in more vibrant and dynamic societies. Understanding entrepreneurial intentions (EI) is essential because it lays the groundwork for establishing new ventures (Krueger, 1993b). As such, EI research has become a central theme in entrepreneurship studies, drawing significant interest from scholars across disciplines (García-Lillo et al., 2023).

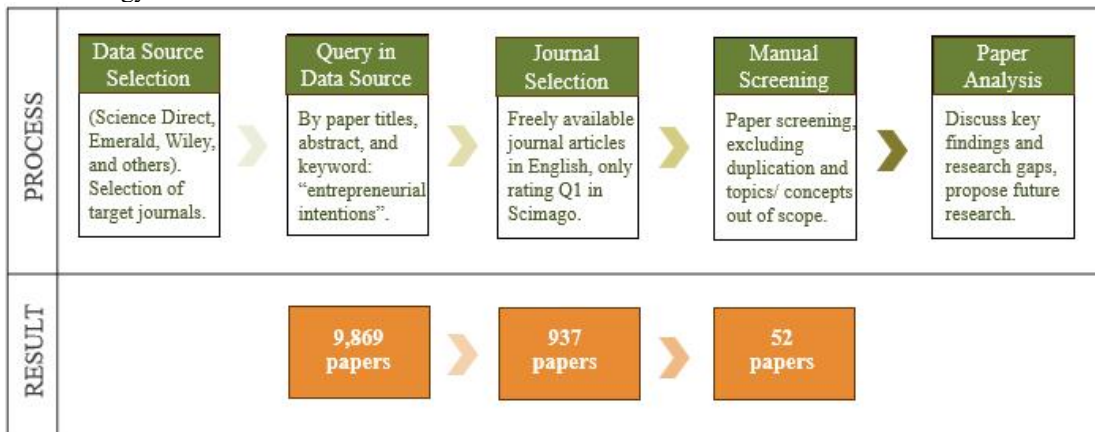
However, despite extensive research on EI, specific gaps remain in the literature. Existing literature has only covered short periods, limiting our understanding of EI's development and evolution over time (Batista-Canino et al., 2024). Moreover, the current body of research lacks a clear structure and classification, making it difficult to effectively organize and synthesize insights from EI studies (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015). Therefore, a thorough literature review of EI's evolution and research areas would be valuable, offering insights into EI's applications and guiding future studies.

This study seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the development of EI research over the past four decades. It aims to trace the origins and evolution of EI, discuss key research areas and theories, and identify practical applications and limitations. By offering a comprehensive review, this paper contributes to entrepreneurship literature by updating our knowledge of EI's evolution, revealing research gaps, and suggesting topics for future investigation.

2. Methodology

This literature review employs a systematic methodology to examine entrepreneurial intentions (EI) research. The initial search yielded 9,869 papers from academic databases such as ScienceDirect, Emerald, and Wiley, using the keywords "entrepreneurial intentions", "entrepreneurial intention", and "start-up intention". The scope was narrowed to include only English-language empirical and conceptual studies published in Q1 journals, reducing the sample to 937 papers. After thorough screening to eliminate duplicates and irrelevant content, a total of 52 English-language articles published in Q1-ranked journals were selected for further analysis. These articles were chosen because they directly address topics related to entrepreneurial intention (EI), such as its determinants, theoretical frameworks, and influencing factors. These selected studies were subjected to a comprehensive content analysis to uncover key findings, identify research gaps, and propose directions for future research. The literature review offers valuable insights into the development and scope of EI research.

Figure 2.1
 Methodology of the Research.

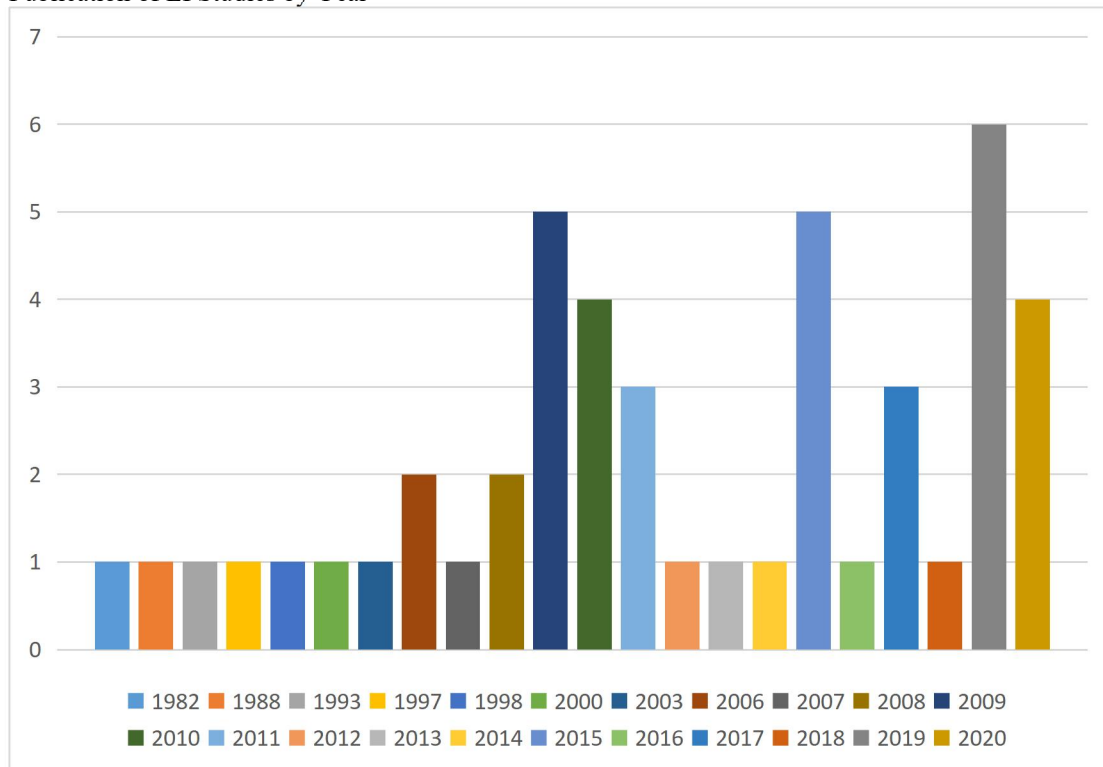


3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 The evolution of EI research and geographic distribution

The analysis reveals a significant increase in entrepreneurial intentions (EI) studies from 1982 to 2023. A notable surge in EI research occurred after 2009, reflecting growing academic interest.

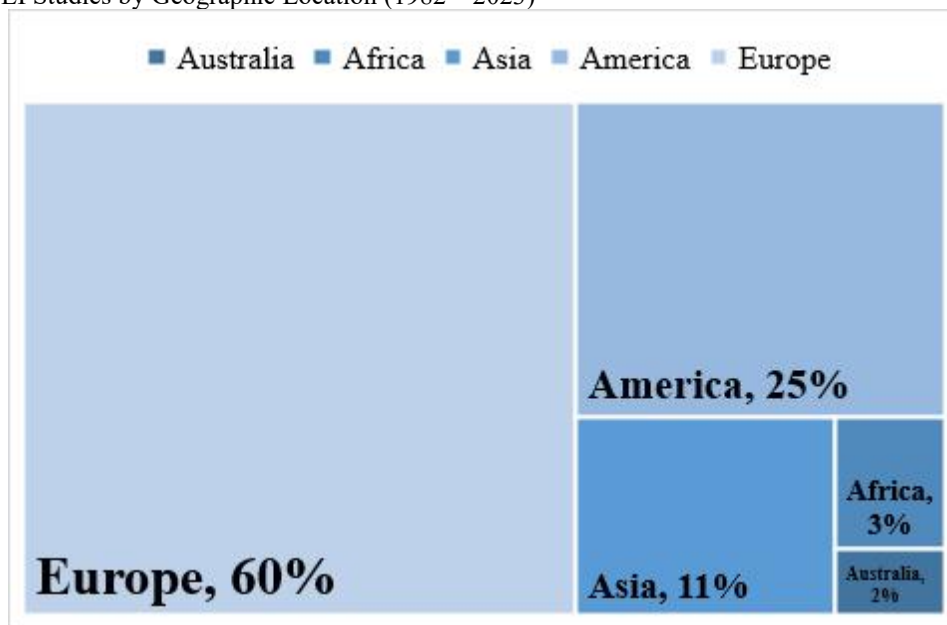
Figure 3.1
 Publication of EI Studies by Year



Geographically, the research spans five continents, with Europe and America dominating publications—accounting for 60% and 25%, respectively. The United States leads with 23% of total publications, followed by Spain, France (6% each), Russia, and Finland (5% each). This concentration in developed regions can be attributed to leading researchers, research institutions, and resources, such as financial and technological support, which foster an environment for advancing "scientific entrepreneurship" through the practical application of theoretical insights.

In contrast, Asia and Africa contribute only 11% and 3% of the total studies, respectively. Most research in Asia is concentrated in developed countries like China, Singapore, and Taiwan, while studies from developing nations such as Vietnam or Thailand remain scarce. The lack of data accessibility, financial support, and research infrastructure in these regions may explain this disparity. These findings highlight the need to expand EI research to underrepresented regions, particularly developing and emerging countries in Asia and Africa, to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial intentions across diverse contexts.

Figure 3.2
 Publication of EI Studies by Geographic Location (1982 – 2023)



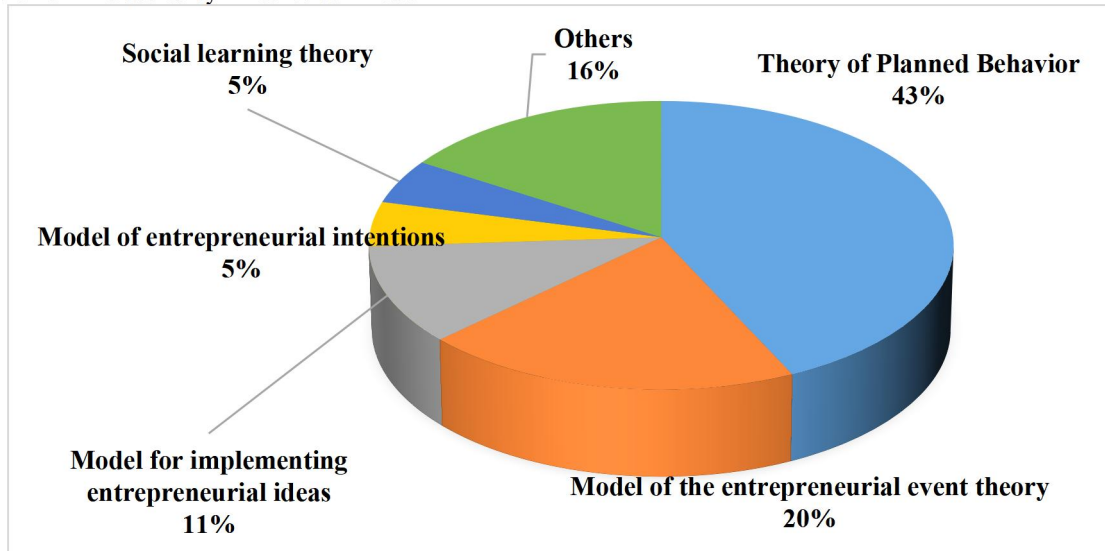
3.2 Dominant theories and frameworks

Entrepreneurial intentions (EI) research applies several theoretical models to examine factors shaping entrepreneurial action. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), appearing in 43% of studies, dominates the literature due to its comprehensive and measurable approach. Specifically, TPB theory proposes that an individual's intention, influenced by personal attitude and perceived social pressure, is the strongest predictor of their engagement in a behavior. Shapero's Entrepreneurial Event (SEE) model, used in 20% of studies, posits that entrepreneurial intentions are driven by perceived desirability, feasibility, and propensity to act. In contrast, Bird's Implementing Entrepreneurial Ideas (IEI) model and Krueger's Entrepreneurial Intention (KEI) model are less common, appearing in 11% and 5% of studies, respectively.

IEI model proposes that rational and intuitive thought processes and social and personal circumstances influence intention, suggesting that goals drive rational-analytical thinking, while intuitive-holistic thinking is oriented towards vision. These processes are crucial in developing formal business strategies, conducting opportunity assessments, and participating in other goal-oriented activities. On the other hand, the KEI model merged the TPB and SEE theories, which provided a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial behaviors. The new addition included in the KEI is "collective efficacy." In entrepreneurship, leveraging collective abilities is crucial for the success of potential entrepreneurs.

The complexity of the research designs could explain the scarcity of studies validating these theories. The KEI model, for example, necessitates both self-reported data and observational research design to measure its variables. This limited application of diverse models suggests a research gap, offering pathways for future EI studies.

Figure 3.3
Publication of EI Studies by Theoretical Model

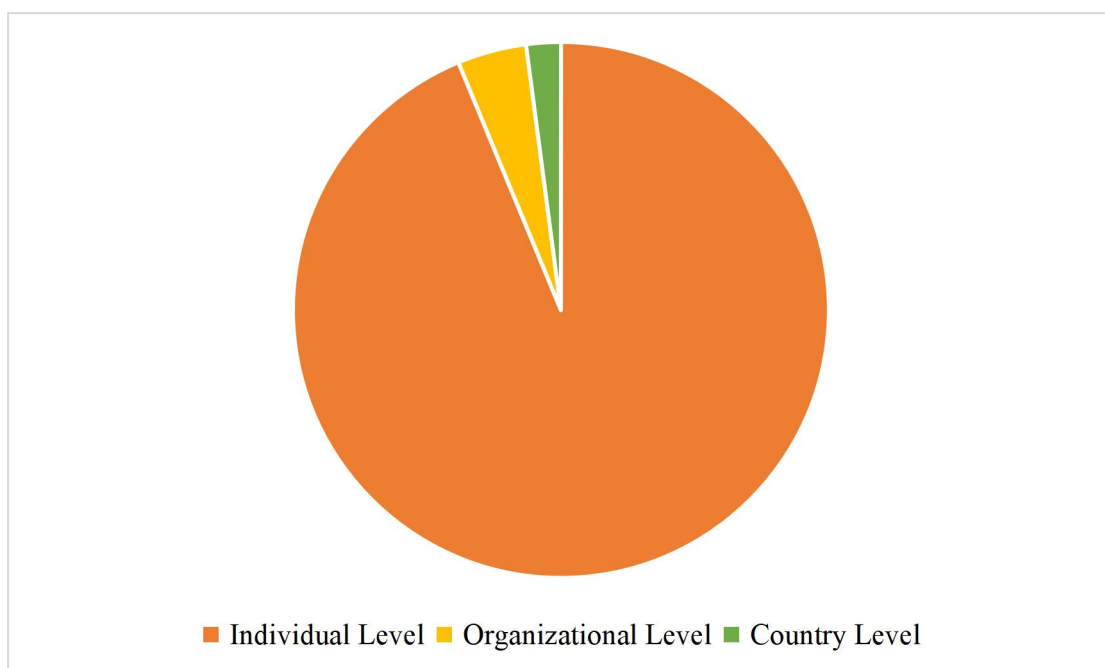


3.3 Research methodology employed in EI research

Quantitative methods dominate entrepreneurial intentions (EI) research. They are used in 93% of studies and primarily involve surveys, correlational, and experimental designs to yield measurable insights into EI factors. Nonetheless, multi-method approaches incorporating longitudinal data and diverse sources to enhance findings and establish causality are still lacking.

EI research overwhelmingly focuses on individual-level analysis, with 94% of studies centered here, especially on students (70%) due to accessibility. Only 4% examine organizational contexts, and 2% address national-level factors, reflecting the complexities in studying these broader frameworks. Expanding EI research to include community and national perspectives could provide valuable insights into underexplored dimensions.

Figure 3.4
Publication of EI Studies by Analysis Level

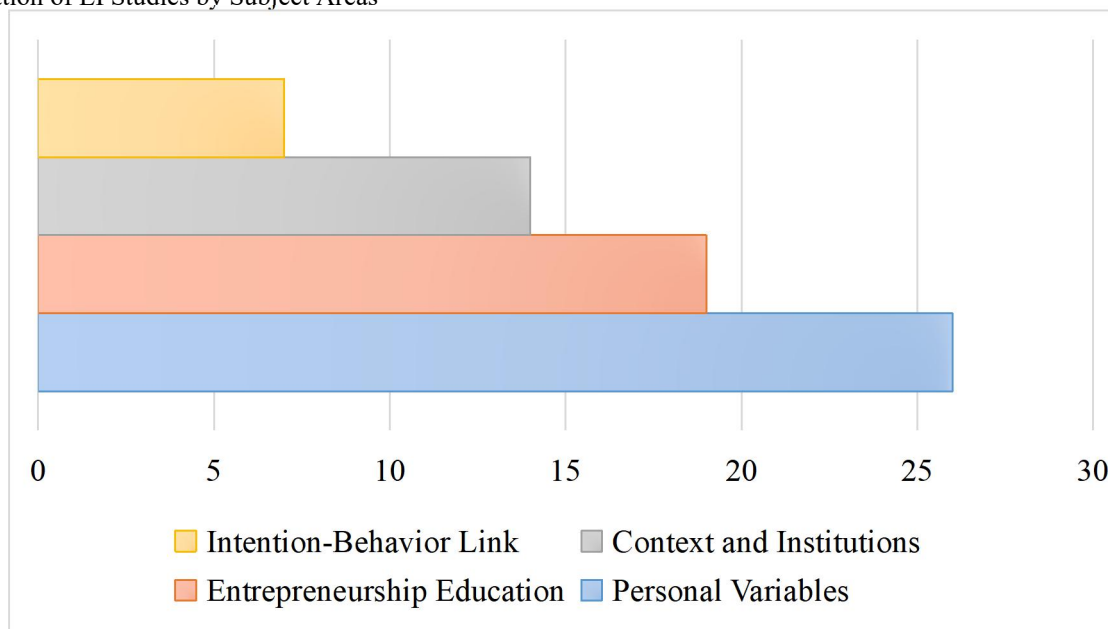


3.4 Key subject areas in EI research

Four main subjects are primarily investigated in EI studies, including personal-level variables, context and institutions, entrepreneurship education, and the link between EI and entrepreneurial behavior (EB). “Personal-level variables” are the most interesting subject for researchers, with 39% of published papers on this topic. “Entrepreneurship education” and “Context and Institutions” follow, with 29% and 21%, respectively. Research on the “EI-entrepreneurial behavior link” is scarce, accounting for only 11% of the chosen papers (See Figure 3.4). The complex nature of research designs leads to a few studies focusing on the correlation between EI and behavior.

Figure 3.5

Publication of EI Studies by Subject Areas



3.5 Key findings in the literature

The extensive literature on EI has documented several determining factors of EI, from the individual to the organizational and the country levels.

The role of personal-level variables

Personal-level variables are crucial factors that play essential roles in forming entrepreneurial intentions (Prabhu et al., 2012). Personal-level variables in EI studies fall into four main categories: cognitive variables, psychological traits and personal values, socio-demographics, and personal motivators and deterrents to entrepreneurship (Pérez-Macías et al., 2022).

Prabhu and colleagues (2012) propose that these variables must be identified within the context of forming entrepreneurial intentions. To address this issue, future research could explore the knowledge gaps to understand better the personal-level variables that influence entrepreneurial intentions. Conducting a literature review to outline these variables would be a crucial step in this direction.

The role of context and institutions

Entrepreneurial intentions are shaped by an individual's perception of feasibility and desirability, influenced by social and cultural contexts. Social context examines a country's culture, societal context, and economic and political environment (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). The impact of institutional and contextual factors on entrepreneurial intentions is limitedly researched at the country level, and there is a clear need to study sub-dimension levels (Liñán et al., 2011).

Relationship between EI and entrepreneurial behavior

Research also shows a strong correlation between a person's intentions and behavior (Bagozzi et al., 1989). One key challenge in the link EI-EB research is understanding the timing of venture creation (Krueger et al., 2000) due to various interconnected events and processes (Bird, 1992). Commitment is a decision that can directly impact future behaviors yet is frequently overlooked in research (Fayolle et al., 2011).

The role of entrepreneurship education on EI

Empirical research has shown significant differences in EI levels between students who participate in entrepreneurship education programs and those who do not. Furthermore, these results can be generalized to various settings (Zhao et al., 2005).

There is a lack of research on the potential causal link between educational variables (such as participant selection, previous exposure to entrepreneurship, course content, teaching methods, teachers' professional backgrounds, available resources, attitudes toward entrepreneurship education, and the role of study programs) and the impact of entrepreneurship education programs on the antecedents of EI (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015).

4. Literature gaps, directions for future studies

The literature review highlights various research gaps for future exploration, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Summary of Research Gaps and Recommendations for the Future Studies

Research Gaps	Recommendations for Future Research
<u>In Bibliometric Analysis</u>	
A significant lack of research is being conducted in Asia and Africa, particularly in developing countries.	Expand EI research to underrepresented regions, particularly developing countries in Asia and Africa.
Bird is Implementing the Entrepreneurial Ideas model (IEI), and Krueger's model of entrepreneurial intentions (KEI) is under-investigated	The researchers must validate the IEI and KEI models in EI studies.
Research on EI is insufficient at the levels of organizations and countries.	More research is needed at the organizational and country levels.
A few studies employ a mixed methodology.	EI studies must incorporate multi-method studies, longitudinal data, and triangulation for more comprehensive findings in EI research.
The lack of study on the EI and entrepreneurial behavior link	Studies should focus on understanding the mechanisms and temporal factors influencing the link between EI and behaviors.
<u>In Literature Review and Discussion</u>	
There is a need to systematically review personal-level variables in forming entrepreneurial intentions (Prabhu et al., 2012)	Conducting a systematic literature review to identify personal-level variables
Limited exploration of the influence of institutional and contextual variables on EI at the country level and its sub-dimensions (Liñán et al., 2011).	Investigating various aspects of the context, encompassing national, regional, professional, and corporate culture and institutions such as regulatory systems, public initiatives, incentives, and policies.
It is unclear whether the role of entrepreneurship education can be generalized to various settings (Zhao et al., 2005).	Studying EI in nationally developed countries versus emerging countries or among different educational levels and sub-dimensions.
There is a lack of research examining the link between intention and behavior (Krueger et al., 2000).	Studies should focus on understanding the

The	Commitment is frequently neglected in research (Fayolle et al., 2011).	mechanisms and temporal factors influencing the link between EI and behaviors. For example, applying commitment concepts and theories to investigate this connection empirically
	There is little knowledge about the potential causal link between educational variables and the impact of entrepreneurship education programs on the antecedents of EI (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015).	Studying a causal relationship between educational variables (i.e., participant selection, previous exposure to entrepreneurship, course content, teaching methods, teachers' professional backgrounds, available resources, attitudes toward entrepreneurship education) and a new venture starting.

literature review highlights the need to validate alternative entrepreneurial intention (EI) models beyond the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Entrepreneurial Event (SEE) models, such as the Integrated Entrepreneurial Intention (IEI) and Knowledge-based Entrepreneurial Intention (KEI) models. It also underscores the importance of diversifying research methodologies by incorporating multi-method approaches with longitudinal data to achieve more robust and comprehensive findings in EI research. Moreover, the analysis reveals a notable scarcity of studies examining entrepreneurial intentions at the country and family levels. This gap calls for a broader scope of analysis that includes various dimensions of entrepreneurship, such as national, sub-regional, community, corporate, and familial contexts, to enrich the understanding of EI dynamics.

Prabhu and colleagues (2012) suggest that personal-level variables remain unexplored and should be identified when forming entrepreneurial intentions. Future research could also delve into the knowledge gaps and better understand the personal-level variables that impact entrepreneurial intentions. Conducting a literature review to identify these variables would be a crucial step in this direction. By accomplishing this, we can improve our grasp of how cognitive prototypes, mental scripts, and cognitive schemas shape entrepreneurial inclinations. This understanding can be utilized to support and guide future entrepreneurship endeavors.

Despite extensive research in this field, limited exploration has been done of how institutions and context impact EI nationally. Numerous elements of the context, encompassing national and regional environment, professional and corporate culture, and institutions like regulatory frameworks, public efforts, rewards, and regulations, need additional research with sufficient empirical studies (Liñán et al., 2011). Future research should explain entrepreneurial intentions within both contextual and institutional aspects. Furthermore, studies should investigate various aspects of the context, encompassing national, regional, professional, and corporate culture and institutions, such as regulatory systems, public initiatives, incentives, and policies. This approach will enable policymakers to develop targeted interventions that support entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.

One of the critical challenges in entrepreneurial intention research involves comprehending the time point to start a new venture (Krueger et al., 2000). The research gap in this area can be attributed to the time-consuming nature of establishing entrepreneurial ventures involving various interconnected events and processes, each with distinct time requirements (Bird, 1992). Commitment is a crucial decision that directly influences future behavior, creating a strong link between commitment, decision-making, and action; however, it is often overlooked in research. Fayolle et al. (2015) have highlighted the underappreciation of commitment concepts and theories in entrepreneurship research. To fill these gaps, entrepreneurship research should thoroughly explore the link between intention and behavior empirically and theoretically. Specifically, future studies should focus on understanding the mechanisms and temporal variables that influence the relationship, i.e., applying commitment concepts and theories to investigate this connection empirically. On the other hand, longitudinal studies that incorporate control and treatment groups are essential to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of the long-term impact of entrepreneurship education and training.

Finally, there is still a limited understanding of the possible causal connection between educational elements like participant selection, previous exposure to entrepreneurship, course content, teaching methods, teachers' professional backgrounds, available resources, attitudes toward entrepreneurship education, and the role of study programs impacting the antecedents of EI. Furthermore, exploring the causal correlation between attitudes toward entrepreneurship education and new venture establishment is recommended, as different causal connections will have different implications to encourage entrepreneurship (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). Therefore, delving deeper into the cause-and-effect relationships among education variables and the antecedents of EI is essential. Researchers can compare different definitions of entrepreneurship to validate entrepreneurship teachability and the influence of entrepreneurship

education in various settings, such as developed countries versus emerging countries or among different educational levels.

5. Conclusion

This literature review comprehensively examines entrepreneurial intention (EI) research, highlighting its evolution, key findings, and areas for future exploration. While significant progress has been made in understanding EI's antecedents, processes, and outcomes, the field remains dominated by frameworks like the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Entrepreneurial Event (SEE) models, with emerging models such as the Integrated Entrepreneurial Intention (IEI) and Knowledge-based Entrepreneurial Intention (KEI) offering potential for further validation. The review also underscores the need for methodological diversification and a greater focus on contextual factors, including country-level, community-level, and family-level entrepreneurial intentions, to address critical gaps. By synthesizing existing knowledge and proposing future research directions, this review is a foundation for advancing the study of EI and encourages scholars to adopt innovative approaches for a deeper understanding of the field.

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