
**ENTREPRENEURIAL ASPIRATIONS AMONG INDIAN YOUTH: AN
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF ECONOMIC MOTIVATION AND
CULTURAL NARRATIVES**

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ABSTRACT

Career-based **entrepreneurship** has emerged as a significant alternative for Indian youth, primarily driven by the lack of formal employment prospects and the dynamic economic scenario. However, the motivation for entrepreneurship is not solely dependent on economic aspects, such as the need for income and job scarcity, but is also profoundly influenced by **socio-cultural factors** like family background, social norms, and educational environment. This paper adopts an **interdisciplinary approach**, drawing on insights from economics, psychology, and cultural studies, to investigate the development of entrepreneurial desires in Indian youth, mediated by both economic motivation and cultural discourses. By synthesizing evidence from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reports and reputable research studies, the paper elucidates the interplay between material conditions and social meanings in shaping youth entrepreneurial intentions. Finally, it discusses policy implications aimed at encouraging inclusive and sustainable youth entrepreneurship in India.

KEYWORDS: youth entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial motivation, economic motivation, cultural narratives, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), India.

INTRODUCTION

India possesses one of the world's largest youth populations, with the 15–29 age group constituting a considerable portion of the overall demographic. This young cohort is often termed a potential **demographic dividend**, capable of contributing significantly to economic growth and innovation. Nonetheless, persistent issues related to unemployment, underemployment, and a lack of stable formal jobs present major barriers to the successful economic integration of this youth. As conventional employment sectors struggle to absorb the surging workforce, entrepreneurship has emerged as a substitute career alternative, particularly for young individuals seeking economic independence, income security, and social mobility [1].

Empirical data from the **Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) India Reports** indicates that the motivation of Indian youth towards entrepreneurship is influenced by a combination of **necessity** and **opportunity** [1]. While joblessness drives many into entrepreneurship out of necessity, others are attracted by opportunities such as the introduction of new business ideas, wealth creation, and the desire to maintain a family business heritage. GEM data also suggests that young people view entrepreneurship as a pathway to achieving personal success and social visibility in a competitive labour market.

Crucially, a purely economic incentive is insufficient to explain the entrepreneurial desires among young Indians. **Socio-cultural forces**, including family influence, cultural values, education, and media narratives, are instrumental in defining the understanding and undertaking of entrepreneurship [2]. Studies reveal that entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions are significantly affected by **human capital** (education and skills) and **social capital** (family support and networks) [3]. The combination of these economic and cultural influences creates a complex interplay, forming the entrepreneurial mindset among Indian youth, where entrepreneurship is viewed as both an economic decision and a social construction of desire.

Literature Review

The study of youth entrepreneurship has grown tremendously, especially in developing economies like India, where young people face rising employment challenges. Current literature is broad, analyzing entrepreneurial ambitions from economic, psychological, and socio-cultural viewpoints. This section presents the main research streams that inform the current study and highlights the research gaps that justify an interdisciplinary approach.

Economic Approaches to Youth Entrepreneurship

A substantial body of literature in economics views entrepreneurship as a reaction to prevailing labour market conditions. Studies from developing economies indicate that high unemployment rates, informality, and job insecurity often push youth toward self-employment and the establishment of small businesses [1]. Scholars in the Indian context often argue that youth entrepreneurship is frequently a **necessity-driven response** to the unavailability of formal jobs rather than a purely opportunity-driven innovation [4].

This argument is supported by GEM India Reports, which consistently show that a significant percentage of young entrepreneurs cite "making a living because jobs are hard to find" as a primary reason for starting a business. Concurrently, opportunity-based motives, such as wealth creation, independence, and long-term career advancement, are also reported. This suggests that the situation in India is characterized by economic stress in conjunction with perceived opportunity, rather than a one-dimensional factor. Economic research also emphasizes the role of access to finance, institutional support, and policy programs like *Startup India* and *Mudra Yojana* as key enablers [5].

Behavioural and Psychological Studies of Entrepreneurial Intentions

Beyond economic determinants, psychological studies focus on personal characteristics and intentions that influence entrepreneurial behaviour. The **Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)** is a widely used framework, explaining entrepreneurial intention through three major components: attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioural control [6]. Empirical research on Indian students and young professionals highlights that positive perceptions towards risk-taking, innovation, and self-employment are major determinants of entrepreneurial intention [7].

Studies also emphasize the importance of **self-efficacy**, achievement motivation, and belief in one's own capabilities. Young people who perceive themselves to possess the required skills and knowledge are more likely to harbor entrepreneurial desires. Training programs, educational exposure, and mentoring are identified as crucial for enhancing this sense of capability, particularly for first-generation entrepreneurs.

Socio-Cultural and Family Background

Socio-cultural aspects form a key theme in youth entrepreneurship literature. Research consistently demonstrates that **family background** has a tremendous impact on

entrepreneurial desires [2]. Young people from business families are more likely to view entrepreneurship as a natural and acceptable career choice due to early exposure, role models, and family support. Conversely, those from non-business families often face social pressure to pursue secure, salaried jobs, particularly in government or large corporations.

Entrepreneurial attitudes are also shaped by cultural values regarding **risk and failure** and **social status**. In many Indian communities, the fear of failure and the potential loss of social standing can deter young people from taking entrepreneurial risks. However, a shift in cultural narratives, driven by media and the success stories of digital startups, is slowly altering the perception of entrepreneurship as a respectable and desirable career path.

Role of Education and Media

Recent research highlights the significant role of educational institutions and media in developing an entrepreneurial culture. Universities that offer entrepreneurship courses, incubation centres, and startup support systems are more likely to foster entrepreneurial intentions among students [7]. Exposure to entrepreneurial education not only equips individuals with necessary skills but also normalizes entrepreneurship as a viable career choice.

Furthermore, media representations of successful entrepreneurs, innovation ecosystems, and startup culture contribute to shaping youth aspirations. The common narratives of entrepreneurial success, innovativeness, and self-made wealth influence how young people think about their future careers, particularly in urban and semi-urban settings.

Gaps in Existing Literature

While existing literature sheds light on the economic, psychological, and cultural aspects of youth entrepreneurship, most studies analyze these factors in isolation. There is a noticeable lack of research that significantly integrates **economic motivation with cultural narratives** to determine how the two interact to form entrepreneurial aspirations. To address this, this paper employs an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the entrepreneurial desire of Indian youth as a result of both economic realities and socio-cultural connotations.

Research Methodology

The current research design is qualitative and descriptive, relying exclusively on secondary data sources. Given its interdisciplinary nature, the methodology integrates economic

examination with socio-cultural explanations to study the entrepreneurial desires of Indian youth. The research aims to comprehend the combined effects of economic motivation and cultural narratives on entrepreneurial intentions, rather than isolating the effects of a single factor.

Research Design

This paper adheres to a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive approach is used to outline the current patterns, tendencies, and features of youth entrepreneurship in India, while the analytical approach assists in interpreting the connection between economic factors and cultural forces. A qualitative orientation is deemed appropriate as the research seeks to investigate aspirations and motivation, not to test a specific hypothesis.

Sources of Data

The entire research is founded on secondary sources of data from credible and reputable scholarly and institutional sources. Significant data sources include:

- **Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) India Reports** [1]: Providing empirical data on entrepreneurial intentions, motivations, and early-stage entrepreneurial activity.
- **Peer-reviewed research papers** published in journals such as the *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research* and the *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*.
- **Reports and working papers** produced by national and international organizations dealing with youth employment, entrepreneurship, and economic development.
- **Theoretical writings and books** by leading economists and thinkers, notably those addressing development, motivation, and agency (e.g., Schumpeter and Sen).
- **Indian policy documents** pertaining to entrepreneurship development.

This combination of sources provides a comprehensive basis for understanding the economic and cultural aspects of youth entrepreneurship.

Unit of Analysis

Since the research is based on secondary data, it does not involve a primary sample. The unit of analysis, as defined by GEM and other national reports, is the **Indian youth**, typically defined as individuals aged between 15 and 29. The analysis focuses on trends and patterns derived from various studies rather than individual respondents.

Analytical Framework

The evaluation is conducted based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines:

- 1 **Economic analysis:** Focusing on employment conditions, income expectations, access to finance, and policy support.
- 2 **Behavioural and psychological perspectives:** Examining motivation, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention.
- 3 **Socio-cultural explanations:** Considering family impact, social conventions, education, and media discourse.

The information and results from various research streams are contrasted and synthesized to determine prevailing trends, differences, and associations.

Method of Analysis

Content analysis and **comparative analysis** are the main methods employed. Major themes pertaining to economic motivation and cultural discourses are identified from the existing literature and reports. These themes are then examined to explain their interaction and contribution to entrepreneurial intentions in the lives of Indian youth. Instead of statistical testing, the research focuses on **interpretative analysis**, making inferences between empirical evidence and theoretical knowledge. This strategy provides a holistic insight into entrepreneurship as both an economic activity and a socially rooted process.

Limitations of the Study

As the research relies on secondary data collection, its findings are dependent on the scope and quality of the available research and reports. The results may not fully reflect contemporary, localized changes or the personal experiences of individual young entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the lack of primary data limits the ability to draw definitive causal relationships. Nevertheless, the application of multiple, reputable sources helps ensure the reliability and balance of the interpretation.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines the entrepreneurial desires of Indian youth by integrating economic, psychological, and socio-cultural perspectives. It discusses the interaction between economic incentives and cultural discourses in influencing the intentions and behaviours of young entrepreneurs in India.

Youth Entrepreneurship and Economic Motivations

The dual nature of entrepreneurial motivation—necessity versus opportunity—is a defining characteristic of youth entrepreneurship in India. While job scarcity and the need for income drive a significant portion of young people into self-employment, opportunity-based motivations are also prevalent, particularly among the urban and educated youth. Factors such as the prospects of financial independence, wealth generation, innovation, and professional flexibility are powerful drivers [8].

The following table, based on GEM India data, illustrates this dual motivation:

Table 1: The Motivations of Indian Youth to Become an Entrepreneur (GEM India 2022-23) [1]

Type of Motivation	Percentage of Youth Entrepreneurs
Job scarcity / necessity	45%
Opportunity / wealth creation	35%
Family continuity of business	15%
Social impact / innovation	5%

Table 1 emphasizes that both contingency and opportunity shape youth entrepreneurial intentions, highlighting the two-sided nature of motivation specific to the Indian context.

Socio-Cultural Narratives

While economic reasons provide the impetus, socio-cultural narratives profoundly influence how youth perceive and approach entrepreneurial opportunities. As noted in the literature review, **family influence** is a critical determinant [2]. Young people from business-oriented families often have a higher propensity to become entrepreneurs due to early exposure, role models, and available mentorship. Conversely, social pressure often steers youth from non-business families toward fixed-salaried employment [2].

Furthermore, **educational institutions** and **media** play a crucial role. Entrepreneurship programs and incubators foster a culture where entrepreneurship is seen as a viable and prestigious career, enhancing a sense of perceived self-efficacy [7]. Media, through its portrayal of successful entrepreneurs and startup culture, reinforces positive perceptions of risk-taking and innovation, making entrepreneurial aspirations socially desirable [9].

Interaction of Economic and Cultural Factors

Entrepreneurial desires are most likely to translate into action when economic incentives align with favourable socio-cultural conditions. For instance, a young graduate who perceives an economic opportunity (motivation) and whose family supports the value of entrepreneurial risk (cultural support) is far more likely to act on their intention. Conversely, a strong economic impetus may be curtailed by the absence of family support or social depreciation.

The conceptual framework below illustrates this interaction:

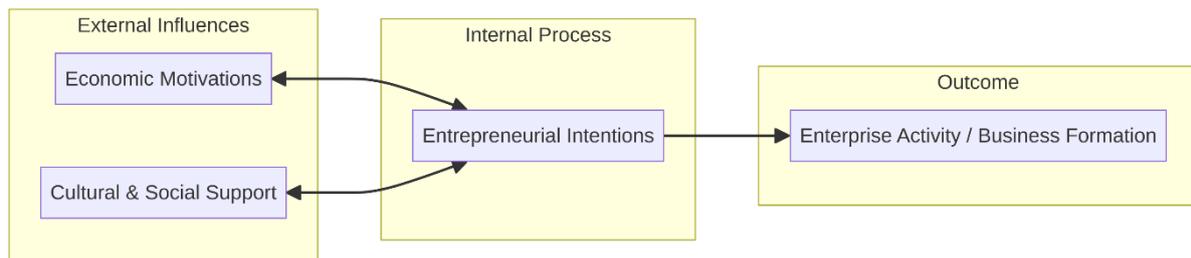


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Economic and Cultural Interaction in Youth Entrepreneurship.

Conceptual Framework of Economic and Cultural Interaction in Youth Entrepreneurship]

This framework demonstrates that while economic situations may trigger the intent, cultural discourses define the pathway and feasibility of pursuing that intent. A combination of these two factors provides a holistic picture of youth entrepreneurial behaviour in India.

Theoretical Perspectives

The wisdom of development economics offers valuable theoretical lenses. Economists like **Amartya Sen** highlight the role of **capabilities and agency** in determining individual choices [10]. Sen's view is that entrepreneurship is not merely an economic survival mechanism but an expression of personal freedom and capability enhancement. Youth with access to education, networks, and capital possess greater *real freedoms* to become entrepreneurs, whereas those lacking resources may have the desire but not the capability.

The **Schumpeterian theory** is also highly relevant, emphasizing innovation-based entrepreneurship as the result of opportunity discovery and the desire to disrupt the established order [11]. Indian youth are increasingly demonstrating this tendency toward **creative destruction**, particularly in digital services, e-commerce, and fintech sectors.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite their ambitions, Indian youth face several significant challenges:

- **Financial Constraints:** Limited access to capital and credit remains a major obstacle, especially for first-generation entrepreneurs.
- **Skill Gaps:** Insufficient business management, marketing, and technological expertise can hinder entrepreneurial success.
- **Social Restrictions:** Cultural demands for stable jobs and social norms can be limiting, particularly for women and rural youth [12].
- **Policy Awareness:** Despite the existence of government programs, awareness and equitable access remain low across regions and social strata.
- Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach involving policy, education, and cultural interventions.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The analysis confirms that a dual focus on economic determinants and cultural factors is necessary to create a more dynamic and inclusive youth entrepreneurial ecosystem in India. The following recommendations are proposed:

Integrated Support Systems

Policy should integrate financial assistance, mentorship, and skill-building interventions into a single, cohesive support system. This ensures that economic motivation is matched with the practical resources and guidance needed for success.

Cultural Sensitization

It is vital to actively support entrepreneurship by creating positive cultural narratives. This includes media campaigns, public acknowledgment of young entrepreneurs, and promoting community and family support to minimize social obstacles.

Education and Training

Universities and vocational schools must fully integrate entrepreneurship education, offering real-life exposure through incubation centers, workshops, and structured mentorship programs to enhance self-efficacy and practical skills.

Gender-Inclusive Programs

Culturally-sensitive programs are needed to promote female youth entrepreneurship, specifically designed to address the socio-cultural barriers that disproportionately affect women and rural youth. This includes targeted funding and mentorship networks.

Policy Awareness and Outreach

Efforts must be made to spread awareness of government policies and schemes through online platforms, university courses, and community-based activities. Simplifying access to information and application processes is essential to ensure equitable utilization by all aspiring entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

The entrepreneurial aspirations of Indian youth are shaped by a complex interplay of economic necessity and opportunity, mediated by profound socio-cultural discourses. While unemployment and the potential for wealth drive many towards entrepreneurship, socio-cultural factors—such as family support, educational exposure, social norms, and media narratives—play a critical role in shaping the perception and feasibility of these aspirations. This paper affirms that youth entrepreneurship is not only an economic reaction but also a socially instilled decision, rooted in both material conditions and personal agency.

The theoretical insights from Amartya Sen's capability approach and Schumpeterian innovation theory underscore that entrepreneurship is a manifestation of freedom, capability, and self-realization. However, persistent challenges—including financial inaccessibility, skill gaps, and social restrictions—continue to hinder these ambitions. To fully leverage the talent of India's youth and create a thriving, sustainable entrepreneurial economy, policy must adopt a multi-dimensional approach that strategically addresses both economic and cultural factors.

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