



Social Norms, Entrepreneurial Attitude, and Perceived Behavioral Control for Womens Entrepreneurial Intentions: A Moderated Mediation Model

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ABSTRACT

Developing entrepreneurship is key to economic sustainability; however, the determinants of entrepreneurial intention need to be uncovered, especially among females. This study aims to investigate the determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among female undergraduate students in Kathmandu. Using a deductive approach, survey-based primary data from 403 conveniently selected female students were analyzed using a Structural Equation Model to test whether social norms, attitude, and behavioral control variables determine entrepreneurial intentions. Results revealed an indirect effect of social norms through entrepreneurial attitude and perceived behavioral control, highlighting that supportive social environments enhance confidence and favorable perceptions toward entrepreneurship. Both entrepreneurial attitude and perceived behavioral control emerge as strong predictors of intention. Family profession was found to be a strong moderator, with stronger effects observed among students from non-business backgrounds. The findings extend the Theory of Planned Behavior and highlight the importance of social context, focused education, and family exposure in fostering womens entrepreneurship.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is crucial for economic growth by stimulating innovation, job creation (Bianchi & Henrekson, 2005; Oke, 2013), and business support. Women's entrepreneurship, the fastest-growing category globally, is drawing scholarly attention as women are recognized as key contributors to sustainable growth (Cooke & Xiao,

2021) and to fostering a country's economic and social development (Anggadwita et al., 2021; Gautam et al., 2025). Unfortunately, they face more considerable challenges than men when engaging in entrepreneurial activities (Anggadwita & Dhewanto, 2016). Consequently, further research is essential to explore the factors influencing women's inclination to pursue entrepreneurship. Various elements, such as psychological characteristics, personality traits, and entrepreneurial attitudes, can impact



a woman entrepreneur's decisions (Indarti et al., 2016). According to Singh and Denoble (2003), intentions are the most reliable determinants of future entrepreneurial activity (Fernández-Pérez et al., 2017). Olunfunso et al. (2010) emphasized that intentions represent a mindset that directs attention toward specific pathways to achievement. Therefore, it is essential to identify the determinants shaping women's entrepreneurial aspirations.

Several previous studies e.g., (Subedi & Gautam, 2024; Weiler & Bernasek, 2001) have reported that prejudice against women is a root cause for the weak development of women's entrepreneurship. Family professionals' backgrounds reflect the heterogeneity in support and motivation for self-employment or a secure career (Nguyen Quoc et al., 2023). The study will address inquiries such as the status of social norms, entrepreneurial attitude, and perceived behavioral control of female students for women's entrepreneurial intentions. Further, this study examines how social norms influence entrepreneurial attitude and perceived behavioral control of female students intending an entrepreneurial career; whether entrepreneurial attitude and perceived behavioral control mediate the predictive role of social norms on women's entrepreneurial intentions; and whether there is any effect of family professional background on the entrepreneurial intention of women.

This study investigates the effect of social norms on women's entrepreneurial intentions, examining female students. Additionally, the research explores the role of perceived behavioral control and attitude towards entrepreneurship in shaping women's entrepreneurial intentions. The study's primary objective is to address the existing research gap by examining the relationship between social norms and women's entrepreneurial intentions. This study analyzes the mediating role of entrepreneurial attitude and perceived behavioral control in shaping these intentions, while moderating the role of family occupation.

Literature Review

Adapting a moderated mediation model, this study is grounded in three theoretical frameworks: the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986), and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) (Duong, 2025; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Though TPB is a well-established psychological framework explaining entrepreneurial intentions, connecting beliefs and behavior, comprising three fundamental components: subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude, which collectively influence an individual's behavioral intentions, this study also incorpo-

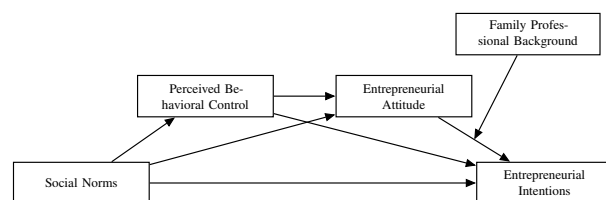
rates SCT and EEM to capture a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial intentions of female students.

TPB posits three independent determinants of entrepreneurial intention: attitude toward the entrepreneurial behavior (a favorable or unfavorable appraisal of entrepreneurial behavior), subjective norm (a social factor associated with perceived social pressure to engage in entrepreneurial activities), and perceived behavioral control (the perceived ease of engaging in entrepreneurial behavior).

The SCT (Bandura, 1986) provides a more comprehensive framework explaining the dynamic interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. The theory is grounded in reciprocal determinism, i.e., the continuous interaction among personal cognition, social context, and behavior in shaping entrepreneurial intentions (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2001). This theory features observational learning to expose entrepreneurial role models, which can significantly shape entrepreneurial intentions. SCT provides deep insights into how environmental support systems and internal cognitive mechanisms jointly influence entrepreneurial intention, particularly in socio-cultural contexts where gender norms remain salient.

EEM (Duong, 2025; Shapero & Sokol, 1982) describes that entrepreneurial intention is determined by three key antecedents: perceived desirability, perceived feasibility, and propensity to act, providing a cognitively grounded framework. Further, Shapero and Sokol (1982) explain how entrepreneurial intentions emerge in response to social and situational factors. Perceived desirability could be strongly shaped by prevailing social norms and cultural expectations regarding women's roles, while a supportive social environment further attracts entrepreneurship (Krueger, 1993).

Figure 1
Research Framework of the Study



The study framework (Figure 1) incorporates social norms as an independent variable, women's entrepreneurial intentions as a dependent variable, and entrepreneurial attitude and perceived behavioral control as mediating variables. The framework examines the moderated moderation effect of family professional background.

Social Norms and Womens Entrepreneurial Intentions

Social norms are external influences on entrepreneurial intentions, including whether relatives, family members, and others approve or disapprove of entrepreneurial professions. reflecting an individuals perception of social pressure to engage in or avoid certain actions. Social norms positively enhance women's entrepreneurial attitude and intention, as they are highly concerned about social views on engaging in certain entrepreneurial behaviors. Social norms are commonly assessed by probing respondents about which they believe their particular family members, friends, or colleagues would assist in participating in entrepreneurial behavior, i.e., activities (Anggadwita et al., 2021; Cuong et al., 2021; Jalil et al., 2023; Karim et al., 2022; Liñán & Chen, 2009). Based on prior empirical findings and theoretical concepts, the following hypothesis has been developed.

H1: Social norms have a positive and significant influence on the entrepreneurial intentions of women.

Perceived Behavioral Control and Womens Entrepreneurial intentions

Perceived behavioral control is a persons perception of how challenging or easy it is to perform entrepreneurial activities or behavior (Aga, 2023; Ajzen, 1991). Social beliefs structure an individual's beliefs about directing a specific entrepreneurial behavior, relating to personal self-confidence in entrepreneurial intentions (Aditya, 2025; Aga, 2023; Anggadwita & Dhewanto, 2016; Chowdhury et al., 2012; Ekpe & Mat, 2012; Linan et al., 2010; Otchengco & Akiate, 2021). Based on the evidence, the following hypotheses have been formulated.

H2: There is a significant positive influence of perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intentions in women.

H2a: Perceived behavioral control mediates the relationship between social norms and entrepreneurial intentions in women positively and significantly.

Entrepreneurial Attitude and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Entrepreneurial attitude is the mindset developed through critical observation and evaluation, which ultimately influences entrepreneurial intentions (Chhabra et al., 2020; Devi et al., 2019; Dinc & Budic, 2016; Echchabi et al., 2020; Ferri et al., 2018; Khan, 2019; Liñán & Chen, 2009; Qazi et al., 2022; Shook & Bratianu, 2008; Srivastava & Misra, 2017). Similarly, the more positive the influence of social norms, the more positive the attitude towards entrepreneurship becomes (Kim et al., 2022). The study will use five items from Dinc and Bu-

dic (2016) to measure the entrepreneurial attitude. Upon the empirical evidence discussed, the study has proposed the following hypotheses.

H3: Entrepreneurial attitude significantly influences women's entrepreneurial intentions.

H3a: Entrepreneurial attitude has a significant mediating role in social norms and womens entrepreneurial intentions.

Family Professional Background and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Family background influences entrepreneurial intentions (Criaco et al., 2017). Several previous studies e.g., (Carter & Allen, 1997; Miran & Gültekin, 2024; Weiler & Bernasek, 2001) have concluded that social and family discrimination against women is the root cause of vulnerability in womens entrepreneurship. Family professionals' backgrounds shape heterogeneity in support for and motivation toward self-employment or a secure career (Miran & Gültekin, 2024; Nguyen Quoc et al., 2023). Relying on the empirical evidence, the study has proposed the following hypothesis.

H4: Family professional background significantly moderates the mediating effects of perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial attitude in predicting the relationship between social norms and entrepreneurial intentions.

Materials and Methods

This study used a causal research design with a deductive approach. The total number of female students studying in the undergraduate program in Kathmandu was the population for the study. Based on the 2023/24 AD higher education report from the UGC Education Management Information System, the total number of female students in bachelor's programs is 326,864. Using a 95 percent confidence level (5 percent significance level), this study used responses from 403 respondents (sample size), as suggested by Makudza (2020). This sample size is determined using a sample size calculator provided by Qualtrics (2023). The data were collected via convenience sampling from students networks across different colleges/campuses. The study used the primary data collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire distributed to female students in bachelor's programs. The questionnaire included demographic information, such as family type and occupation, followed by 5-point Likert-scale questions to measure the variables presented in the research framework. The study adapted and contextualized the validated items from Dinc and Budic (2016) to measure social norms, entrepreneurial

attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and women's entrepreneurial intentions. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and to test hypotheses.

Most respondents (62.53 percent) belong to nuclear families, followed by 37.47 percent from joint families. Similarly, the majority (36.72%) reported coming from business-oriented families, followed by those from agricultural (25.56%) and service-related occupations (25.06%). A smaller proportion (12.66%) comes from families involved in professional occupations. This profile indicates that respondents' profiles are almost balanced across categorical variables that may influence entrepreneurial intentions.

Table 1

Measurement model (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Construct	Items	Standardized loading	CR	AVE
Social Norms	SN1	.78***	0.89	0.63
	SN2	.81***		
	SN3	.79***		
	SN4	.76***		
	SN5	.82***		
Entrepreneurial Attitude	EA1	.80***	0.9	0.65
	EA2	.84***		
	EA3	.83***		
	EA4	.78***		
	EA5	.81***		
Perceived Behavioral Control	PBC1	.77***	0.88	0.61
	PBC2	.80***		
	PBC3	.79***		
	PBC4	.75***		
	PBC5	.82***		
Entrepreneurial Intentions	EI1	.85***	0.91	0.68
	EI2	.88***		
	EI3	.86***		
	EI4	.83***		
	EI5	.87***		

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used to ensure the normality of these variables. A test statistic greater than 0.05 indicates that the data meet the normality assumption. Entrepreneurial intentions of female students (prospective women entrepreneurs) were measured using social norms, attitude, and perceived behavioral control as antecedents. The study followed a moderated mediation model. Table 1 presents a measurement model with standardized item loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR), thereby ensuring

convergent validity.

Similarly, Table 2 provides a good model fit, fulfilling the minimum goodness-of-fit indices threshold.

Table 2

Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Recommended value	Expected value	Interpretation
χ^2	–	412.35***	Significant
df	–	230	–
χ^2/df	< 3	1.91	Good fit
CFI	≥ .9	0.94	Good fit
TLI	≥ .9	0.93	Good fit
RMSEA	≤ .06	0.055	Good fit
SRMR	≤ .05	0.048	Good fit

The Fornell-Larcker criteria were used to test the discriminant validity (Table 3). All diagonal values (square roots of AVE) are greater than the inter-construct correlation, indicating the discriminant validity.

Table 3

Discriminant Validity

Constru	1	2	3	4
Social Norms	0.79			
Attitude	0.45	0.81		
PBC	0.42	0.48	0.78	
Intention	0.50	0.55	0.52	0.83

Results

The mean values for these items mostly cluster around 4, indicating that female students (women) have stronger entrepreneurial intentions when they receive strong social approval from their family members, close friends, colleagues, and close teachers and institutions. Similarly, the mean scores for each item were around 4, indicating a stronger entrepreneurial attitude, while a moderate level of perceived behavioral control was observed among the female students. This result indicates that undergraduate female students have low confidence in their ability to control contextual barriers to entrepreneurial activities. Likewise, it is found that a positive inclination towards initiating and managing one's own business, seeing one's profession as entrepreneurial, and being prepared for entrepreneurship.

Regression analysis is used to evaluate direct effects and mediation effects utilizing Hayes PROCESS version 4.2, employing process model 14 (Hayes, 2022) for the mod-

erated mediation effects. In the direct model, all three variables, i.e., social norms, entrepreneurial attitudes,

and perceived behavioral control, are predictors of entrepreneurial intentions.

Table 4

Direct Effects and Mediation Effects of Social Norms

Direct Effects							
Path	β	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI	Decision
Social Norms → Attitude	0.46	0.04	11.5	< .001	0.38	0.54	Supported
Social Norms → PBC	0.39	0.05	7.8	< .001	0.29	0.49	Supported
Attitude → Intention	0.31	0.05	6.2	< .001	0.21	0.41	Supported
PBC → Intention	0.36	0.05	7.2	< .001	0.26	0.46	Supported
Social Norms → Intention	0.10	0.04	2.5	0.013	0.02	0.18	Supported
Mediation Effects (Indirect)							
Path	Effect (β)		Boot SE		LLCI	ULCI	Decision
Social Norms → Attitude → Intention	0.14		0.03		0.09	0.20	Supported
Social Norms → PBC → Intention	0.14		0.03		0.08	0.19	Supported

The direct results (Table 4) indicate that social norms significantly influence both entrepreneurial attitude ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$) and perceived behavioral control ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$). In turn, entrepreneurial attitude ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$) and perceived behavioral control ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$) significantly predict entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, social norms retain a smaller but significant direct effect on entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = .10$, $p = .013$), indicating partial mediation. All confidence intervals (LLCIULCI) exclude zero, confirming the

statistical significance of these relationships. The mediation analysis using bootstrapping, the indirect effect of social norms on entrepreneurial intention through entrepreneurial attitude is significant ($\beta = .14$, LLCI = .09, ULCI = .20). Likewise, the indirect effect through perceived behavioral control is also significant ($\beta = .14$, LLCI = .08, ULCI = .19). Both mediation effects are supported because of none zero confidence intervals that confirms that attitude and perceived behavioral control act as significant mediators.

Table 5

Role of Family Background on the Entrepreneurial Intention

Interaction	β	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI	Decision
Attitude × Service → Intention	0.17	0.05	3.4	< .001	0.07	0.27	Supported
Attitude × Agriculture → Intention	0.11	0.05	2.2	0.028	0.01	0.21	Supported
Attitude × Profession → Intention	0.20	0.06	3.33	< .001	0.08	0.32	Supported
PBC × Service → Intention	0.22	0.06	3.67	< .001	0.10	0.34	Supported
PBC × Agriculture → Intention	0.14	0.05	2.8	0.005	0.04	0.24	Supported
PBC × Profession → Intention	0.25	0.07	3.57	< .001	0.11	0.39	Supported

Table 5 reveals that family background significantly moderates the relationships between both attitude and PBC with entrepreneurial intention, given that the interaction between entrepreneurial attitude and service background ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < .001$), agriculture background ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < .05$), and professional background ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the interac-

tion effects between PBC and service background ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .001$), agriculture background ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < .01$), and professional background ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < .001$) were also significant. These findings suggest that, compared to individuals from business families, those from service, agriculture, and professional backgrounds exhibit stronger relationships between cognitive

antecedents and entrepreneurial intention.

Discussion

The study intended to examine the moderated mediation model exploring entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate female students. The results reveal significant direct and indirect influences of social norms on entrepreneurial intention. These findings align with prior studies emphasizing that societal expectations, family approval, and peer influence play a critical role in shaping women's entrepreneurial decisions (Karim et al., 2022; Linan et al., 2010). This result advocates that women's professional choices are not purely personal decisions but are embedded within collective norms and expectations (Noguera et al., 2013).

The result emphasizes that entrepreneurial intentions are outcomes of a socially desirable and acceptable context. The significant direct effect of social norms on entrepreneurial intentions suggests that normative support reduces perceived social barriers and enhances the legitimacy of women's participation in entrepreneurial intentions (Khan, 2019; Sarwar et al., 2021). In the common male-dominated entrepreneurship context, motivating social norms and supports become crucial for inducing entrepreneurial intentions by overcoming psychological and cultural constraints (Sullivan & Meek, 2012).

The confirmation of a significant mediating effect of entrepreneurial attitude in the relationship between social norms and entrepreneurial intention highlights the stronger entrepreneurial intentions of female students compared to those of students with positive entrepreneurial intentions in a supportive society. This finding underscores the significance of a positive entrepreneurial attitude and strong social norms in developing strong entrepreneurial intentions, as reported by Anggadwita and Dhewanto (2016) and Dinc and Budic (2016).

Furthermore, this study argues that female students' entrepreneurial attitude becomes more favorable towards an entrepreneurial career when they perceive strong social support. Strong positive social support fosters a positive psychological evaluation, which increases the likelihood of pursuing an entrepreneurial career path. The result reinforces the cognitive mechanism proposed by the Theory of Planned Behavior, in which attitude predicts entrepreneurial intention. It also supports the argument that attitude is a central driver of the transformation of external social influences into internal motivation for entrepreneurial action. This finding supports the conclusion of Jalil et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of social and psychological factors in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes among women.

In addition to attitude, this study examined perceived behavioral control as a significant mediator in the proposed model. This indicates that the influence of social norms on entrepreneurial intention is shaped not only by how female students feel about entrepreneurship and the support they receive from their society, but also by their perceived ability to successfully engage in entrepreneurial activities. More specifically, females with strong entrepreneurial attitudes and perceived con-

trol intend to engage in entrepreneurial activities, and strong social norms will intensify this intention. This finding is consistent with earlier studies e.g., (Chowdhury et al., 2012; Echchabi et al., 2020), suggesting that supportive social environments enhance individuals' confidence and perceived competence. For women, who often face structural barriers such as limited access to finance, networks, and training, social encouragement can significantly boost perceived feasibility (Carter & Allen, 1997; Subedi & Gautam, 2024; Weiler & Bernasek, 2001).

The findings of the study suggest that social norms strengthen perceived behavioral control by fostering a sense of capability and reducing perceived uncertainty in entrepreneurial activities. This message is vital for developing entrepreneurial intention, particularly among undergraduate female students who may rely heavily on external validation and support and are at an early stage in career decision-making.

This study proposed that family occupation serves as the contextual control factor for the social norms that set entrepreneurial intentions. Students from non-business backgrounds (e.g., service, agriculture, and professional families) exhibit stronger relationships between attitude and intention, as well as between PBC and intention, compared to those from business families. Meaning that the students from business family contexts used to have higher intentions, attitudes, and confidence to control business risks. Individuals from business families are more likely to have direct or indirect exposure to entrepreneurial activities, which may reduce their reliance on cognitive mechanisms such as attitude and perceived control. This finding is consistent with prior studies e.g., (Autio et al., 2001; Gautam & Khadka, 2022; Krueger, 1993), which highlight that the entrepreneurial environment influences cognitive evaluation processes.

In contrast, the study revealed that female students from non-business backgrounds require stronger attitudinal conviction and higher perceived capability to form entrepreneurial intentions. This finding aligns with Qazi et al. (2022) and Gautam et al. (2025), i.e., family support and background significantly shape entrepreneurial intentions, thereby redefining the balance between risk perception and attitude.

The study identified stronger mediation effects among students from service and professional backgrounds, suggesting that these groups may rely more heavily on cognitive processes when forming entrepreneurial intentions. This finding is consistent with Khursid et al. (2021) and Fernández-Pérez et al. (2017), who highlighted the importance of contextual moderators in shaping entrepreneurial intention models. Further, the study argues that entrepreneurship is not only an individual's cognitive process but also a socially embedded phenomenon (Cardella et al., 2020).

Conclusion

The study concludes that the entrepreneurial intention among women is not only a cognitive process but also a socially embedded phenomenon. By establishing key mediating roles of entrepreneurial attitude and perceived behavioral control in the re-

relationship between social norms and entrepreneurial intention, this study highlights that a positive social environment fosters favorable attitudes and strengthens confidence, thereby increasing the likelihood of entrepreneurial intention. The study results indicate that womens entrepreneurial decisions are shaped by cognitive processes influenced by broader social support systems. In addition, the study explores the family profession as a contextual factor that moderates these relationships. A stronger influence of family background on the relationship between entrepreneurial intentions, attitudes, and perceived behavioral control indicates that entrepreneurial intention formation is both socially embedded and context-dependent.

Implications

The findings of the study offer important insights for policy-makers, community leaders, and educators in promoting womens entrepreneurship. The most significant implication of the study is a focus on policies that create a supportive ecosystem through incentives, inclusive policies, and the removal of structural and cultural barriers that limit womens entrepreneurial participation. Another key implication of the study is empirical evidence supporting the need for supportive social norms that encourage and legitimize womens participation in an entrepreneurial career. Encouraging a culture that values entrepreneurship helps reshape perceptions and attitudes, and strengthens womens confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities. This study also provides empirical evidence that educational institutions should advocate for and incorporate entrepreneurship education into academic curricula, thereby promoting innovation-driven learning. This study suggests that expanding programs such as mentorship, experiential learning, and exposure to successful women entrepreneurs can further reinforce confidence and motivation by fostering positive entrepreneurial attitudes and enhancing perceived behavioral control from an early stage. This study examined a comprehensive framework examining womens entrepreneurial intentions, driven by social norms, entrepreneurial attitude, and perceived behavioral control; however, it has scope for future research. Future researchers are advised to adopt a transactional research design to overcome the limitations of a cross-sectional design, i.e., collecting data through a survey at a single point in time. Cluster sampling across different regions, age groups, and educational backgrounds can mitigate the limitations of data collected through convenience sampling. Further studies should investigate how cultural and regional variations in social norms influence entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use and Disclosure

Statement: In the preparation of this manuscript, AI tools were used for some sections, with minimal or no editing.

Similarity and Originality Confirmation

The manuscript is original, not under review elsewhere, and complies with TUJ publication ethics.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Data Availability

Data available from the corresponding author on request.

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