AGRIPRENEURIAL EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL IN SHAPING ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS

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Abstract:

Agripreneurial education has emerged as a critical strategy for revitalising the agricultural sector by equipping learners with the skills, confidence, and innovative mindset required to pursue entrepreneurship. This study examines how exposure to agripreneurial learning experiences influences students' entrepreneurial intentions, with a particular focus on the mediating role of psychological capital. Using a survey-based approach, data were collected from students enrolled in agriculture and allied programmes to assess their perceptions of the learning environment, their levels of psychological capital, and their inclination toward entrepreneurial careers. The results indicate that agripreneurial education significantly enhances students' self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope core components of psychological capital which in turn strengthen their intentions to start agribusiness ventures. The findings suggest that entrepreneurial behaviour in the agricultural domain is shaped not only by technical knowledge but also by positive psychological resources that help learners manage uncertainty and perceive opportunities. The study highlights the need for educational institutions to integrate experiential learning, mentoring, and problem-solving activities within agripreneurial programmes to foster both capability and confidence among future entrepreneurs. Implications for curriculum design and rural entrepreneurship development are also discussed.

Key words: Agripreneurial, Entrepreneurship, Psychological Capital and Self-Efficacy

Introduction:

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in driving economic development, and its significance becomes even more pronounced during periods of economic crisis. It is widely associated with higher economic growth, enhanced wealth creation, and better quality of life. In developing nations such as India, effective planning and implementation of entrepreneurship development programmes are crucial for improving the living standards of people in backward regions, where employment is heavily dependent on agriculture (Uplaonkar and Biradar, 2015). Consequently, entrepreneurship development serves as a strong alternative for creating employment opportunities, generating income, reducing poverty, and promoting better nutrition, health, and overall food security within the national economy.

Agriculture has long been regarded as a major economic activity that contributes substantially to a nation's overall wealth. Traditionally, the sector was perceived as a lowtechnology domain dominated by small family-run farms, where the focus was largely on improving existing practices rather than introducing new ones. Over the past two decades, however, this scenario has shifted significantly due to economic liberalization and rapid social change. Modern agricultural enterprises must now respond to fluctuating market demands, evolving consumer preferences, stricter environmental norms, sustainability standards, and increased expectations regarding product quality and food safety. These shifts have created opportunities for innovation, new market participants, and diversified entrepreneurial ventures. Recognizing these developments, farmers, researchers, agribusiness firms, and policymakers have increasingly stressed the need for an entrepreneurial approach within agriculture (McElwee, 2008; Pyysiainen et al., 2006). Agricultural entrepreneurship has been shown to influence business expansion and long-term viability (Verhees et al., 2011). As a result, both small and large farmers are encouraged to adopt entrepreneurial strategies in their agricultural activities.

Definition of Entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship can be understood as a dynamic process through which individuals create and develop value-oriented ventures (Shailesh et al., 2013). This process involves people who assume significant risks—whether in terms of investment, time, or career commitment to bring a product or service to the market. The offering itself may not necessarily be entirely new or unique, but the entrepreneur adds value through innovation, effort, and strategic insight. In simple terms, entrepreneurship refers to the purposeful application of energy and initiative to start and grow an enterprise (Mishra et al., 2010). Thus, it is often viewed as a compelling concept, commonly defined as a creative and innovative response to prevailing environmental conditions (Chandramouli et al., 2007).

Agri-Entrepreneurship:

In simple terms, agri-entrepreneurship refers to a sustainable and community-focused form of agriculture where farm products are marketed directly to consumers. Sustainable

agriculture emphasizes a systems-based approach that considers the interconnected social, economic, and environmental aspects of farming. Agri-entrepreneurship represents the fusion of agriculture and entrepreneurial principles, transforming traditional farming into a form of agribusiness. This integration encourages farmers to innovate, identify suitable markets, and meet consumer needs through diverse strategies. Essentially, agri-entrepreneurship aligns with the broader concept of entrepreneurship within the agricultural and allied sectors, highlighting the establishment and growth of agribusiness ventures (Bairwa et al., 2014a).

Agripreneurial Education:

Agripreneurial intention is widely recognized as a key precursor to entrepreneurial action and serves as a strong indicator of whether individuals will eventually establish new ventures (Chevalier & Calmé, 2022). In recent years, agripreneurship education has emerged as an important component within higher education institutions, playing a vital role in nurturing entrepreneurial mind-sets, competencies, and practical skills among students (Mahama, 2023). Beyond knowledge and skill development, psychological factors particularly Psychological Capital (PsyCap), which includes hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism—also significantly shape individuals' motivation and intention to pursue agripreneurship (Gharira & Siddiqui, 2023; Zhao & Wei, 2020).

Entrepreneurial education is increasingly viewed as a potential solution for promoting self-employment and fostering innovation in developing nations such as India, where many educated young people continue to face unemployment or underemployment (Alukder, Lakner & Temesi, 2024). However, simply offering entrepreneurship courses is not enough; students must also develop strong psychological capabilities that enable them to handle uncertainty, risk, and ambiguity. Incorporating vision-building and Psychological Capital into entrepreneurial teaching approaches helps transform theoretical knowledge into actual entrepreneurial behaviour (Cui, 2021).

Although substantial research exists on agripreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions, the influence of Psychological Capital as a mediating or moderating factor has received comparatively limited attention particularly within the Indian context. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how agripreneurial education and Psychological Capital together shape the entrepreneurial intentions of university students (Cui, 2021).

Although agripreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions have been widely explored, the specific role of Psychological Capital in shaping or influencing this relationship has not received sufficient attention—especially within the Indian context. To address this gap, the present study examines how agripreneurial education and Psychological Capital jointly affect the entrepreneurial intentions of university students (Cui, 2021).

Need and Importance of Agri-Entrepreneurship:

Traditionally, many farmers have had limited exposure to scientific farming practices and modern agricultural management systems. As a result, they often struggle to cope with challenges such as delayed monsoons, drought, crop failures, counterfeit seeds, and fertilizer shortages, which can lead to severe financial distress. Developing strong managerial, technical, and innovative entrepreneurial skills within the agricultural sector can help cultivate capable agri-entrepreneurs who can serve as examples and sources of support for farmers facing such difficulties.

Agri-entrepreneurship holds significant potential for promoting both social and economic development. It can contribute to employment creation, poverty reduction, improved nutrition, better health outcomes, and enhanced food security, particularly in rural regions. With rising rural unemployment and persistent poverty, encouraging entrepreneurial practices in agriculture has become increasingly important for improving productivity and profitability. Agri-entrepreneurship can play a key role in easing the excessive pressure on traditional farming, generating job opportunities for rural youth, reducing migration to urban areas, increasing national income, fostering rural industrial development, and helping to balance the strain on growing cities.

Entrepreneurial Skills and Characteristics for Agri-Entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurial development refers to a systematic process through which an individual is equipped to become an entrepreneur. It involves imparting essential entrepreneurial abilities to a common person, including relevant knowledge and advanced technical, financial, marketing, and managerial skills, along with fostering an entrepreneurial mind-set. Entrepreneurial development programmes are designed to strengthen an individual's motivation, enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities, and help them acquire the competencies required to perform effectively in an entrepreneurial role. In agriculture, these competencies—needed to manage and grow a farm-based business can be cultivated through training, practical learning, and experience.

In agribusiness, the personal attributes of an agri-entrepreneur significantly influence success (Brockhaus & Horwitz, 1986; Nandram & Samson, 2000). Entrepreneurs typically demonstrate traits such as determination, ambition, resourcefulness, problem-solving ability, realism, and a strong goal orientation. An entrepreneur is someone who identifies unmet needs and is willing to take risks to address them. Additional important characteristics include the ability to improve productivity, explore new markets (Singh, 2013), practice self-evaluation, lead effectively, remain market-focused, and demonstrate creativity.

Statement of the Problem:

Despite the widespread introduction of agripreneurial education in universities and technical institutions, its actual impact on students' entrepreneurial intentions remains

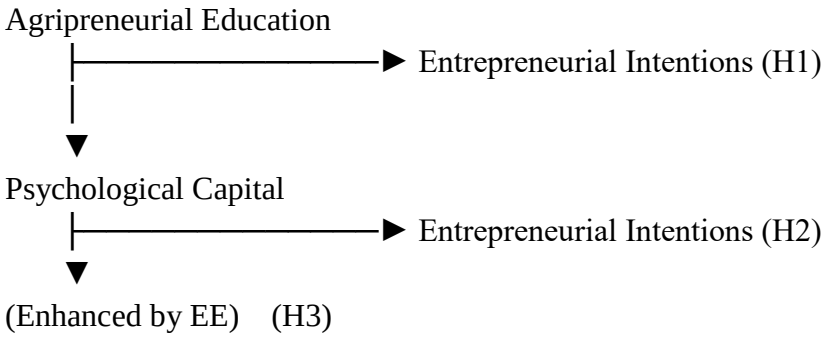
inconsistent. Many higher education programmes that teach entrepreneurship do not necessarily result in students converting their knowledge into real venture creation. This suggests that psychological readiness such as self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience may be missing in the pathway from education to entrepreneurial intention.

Additionally, existing research in this area is fragmented, as many studies focus only on educational inputs or on Psychological Capital, rather than examining how the two interact to influence entrepreneurial intention. There is a clear need to explore how Psychological Capital, when integrated with agripreneurial education, can strengthen students' inclination toward entrepreneurship particularly in countries like India, where fostering youth entrepreneurship is essential for economic development.

Thus, the problem addressed in this study is:

How much does Education in entrepreneurship impact students' intentions to start businesses, and in what way do psychological strengths help deepen this connection among college students?

Conceptual Model (for SEM)



Psychological Capital as a Mediator between Agripreneurial Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions (H4):

The relationship among Agripreneurial Education (AE), Psychological Capital (PsyCap), and entrepreneurial intentions (EI) can be understood through a mediated framework. AE not only has a direct influence on students' entrepreneurial intentions but also contributes to the development of Psychological Capital, which in turn shapes their inclination to pursue entrepreneurial activities. In this way, PsyCap functions as a mediating factor between AE and EI.

Agripreneurial education strengthens key elements of Psychological Capital—such as hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. These psychological resources enhance students' confidence, motivation, and preparedness for entrepreneurship, thereby increasing their likelihood of developing strong entrepreneurial intentions.

This perspective aligns with research suggesting that PsyCap is a developable internal asset that can be nurtured through educational experiences. It plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the knowledge and skills gained through entrepreneurship education and the decision to initiate a new venture.

1. Direct effects (AE → EI; AE → PsyCap; PsyCap → EI)
2. Indirect/mediated effects (AE → PsyCap → EI)

Review of literature:

Entrepreneurial intention refers to an individual's deliberate mindset and commitment to starting a new venture, as noted by Krueger et al. (2000). Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior explains that intentions are the strongest predictors of actual behavior and are influenced by one's attitudes, social pressures, and perceived ability to carry out the behavior. Entrepreneurship education plays a central role in shaping the skills, perspectives, and motivation needed to consider business creation as a viable career path (Fayolle & Liñán, 2014).

Recent research indicates that agripreneurial education positively contributes to students' desire to launch their own enterprises. Coursework, experiential learning, and mentoring experiences are found to enhance this motivation (Nowinski et al., 2019; Nabi et al., 2017). However, the magnitude of this influence varies depending on how the programmes are delivered, learners' personal ambitions, and institutional or environmental support systems (Bae et al., 2014). Thus, although agripreneurial education increases knowledge and interest, it does not always translate into entrepreneurial action unless students are psychologically prepared.

Psychological Capital (PsyCap), a concept introduced by Luthans et al. (2007), encompasses four core elements—hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism—often referred to collectively as HERO. Unlike fixed personality traits, PsyCap is malleable and can be strengthened through targeted developmental efforts (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Within the context of entrepreneurship, PsyCap represents an internal resource that supports persistence, adaptive thinking, and motivation when dealing with uncertainty (Hmieleski & Carr, 2008).

Each component of PsyCap offers unique value to potential entrepreneurs: efficacy increases confidence in tackling new challenges; hope enables effective planning and pursuit of goals; resilience assists in recovering from setbacks; and optimism fuels a positive outlook on future outcomes (Sweetman et al., 2011). Since entrepreneurship inherently involves risk and ambiguity, strong PsyCap often determines whether individuals remain committed to their entrepreneurial pursuits or abandon them when faced with adversity (Luthans et al., 2020).

Empirical studies further reinforce the link between PsyCap and entrepreneurial intention. Research involving university students across different cultural settings demonstrates

that higher levels of PsyCap correlate with stronger entrepreneurial aspirations (Newman et al., 2014; Baluku et al., 2016). In particular, self-efficacy and positive expectations play a prominent role in encouraging risk-taking and opportunity recognition (Chen et al., 1998; Hmieleski & Baron, 2009). Resilience helps sustain motivation during challenges, while hope supports strategic goal-setting (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Collectively, PsyCap enhances psychological readiness and strengthens the likelihood that students will translate entrepreneurial learning into genuine intentions (Qureshi et al., 2021).

Recent literature also highlights PsyCap as a critical mechanism through which agripreneurial education fosters entrepreneurial intention. Studies by Pihie & Bagheri (2013), Wang et al. (2021), and Karimi et al. (2016) show that educational exposure helps cultivate psychological strengths such as optimism and confidence, which subsequently reinforce students' entrepreneurial drive. Evidence from structural equation modelling (SEM) studies (Gupta & Bhawe, 2007; Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2019) indicates that agripreneurial education enhances various dimensions of PsyCap, leading to higher entrepreneurial motivation. Furthermore, experiential learning initiatives—such as hands-on projects, incubator programmes, and practical training—are particularly effective in developing resilience and self-efficacy, often outperforming traditional lecture-based instruction (Martin et al., 2013).

Overall, the literature underscores the importance of entrepreneurship education models that intentionally integrate psychological development with technical and business-oriented learning. PsyCap's role as a connecting link between education and entrepreneurial intention highlights its significance in preparing students to face the challenges and uncertainties of entrepreneurial careers.

Research Gaps and Rationale of the Study:

Despite increasing research attention, significant gaps remain in understanding how Agripreneurial Education (AE) and Psychological Capital (PsyCap) shape entrepreneurial intentions, particularly in developing nations such as India. Much of the existing work has examined Western or East Asian populations, with relatively few studies validating these relationships in South Asian settings (Nabi et al., 2017; Nowiński et al., 2019). Furthermore, many of these investigations rely on cross-sectional data, which restricts the ability to draw causal inferences. Another limitation is that prior research often focuses on individual components of PsyCap—most commonly self-efficacy—rather than examining the complete HERO model as an integrated psychological resource.

The present study aims to address these gaps by examining three key areas: (1) the effect of agripreneurial education on students' intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activities, (2) the impact of Psychological Capital on entrepreneurial intentions, and (3) the mediating role of PsyCap in the relationship between AE and these intentions within the Indian higher education context. Gaining deeper insights into these interactions can support policymakers and educators in designing initiatives that foster entrepreneurship through both educational interventions and psychological development strategies.

Research Questions:

1. How does acquiring knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship influence students' motivation to launch their own businesses?
2. In what ways do an individual's mental strengths such as confidence, resilience, and optimism affect their drive to pursue entrepreneurial ventures?
3. Can mental strengths act as a connecting factor between Agripreneurial Education and the willingness to engage in start-up activities?
4. Are there observable variations in entrepreneurial drive among students based on their demographic or Educational profiles?

Research Objectives:

1. To empirically assess the direct influence of specialized Agripreneurial Education on the formation of students' entrepreneurial intentions.
2. To investigate the contribution of positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap) including Hope, Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism.
3. To test the hypothesized mediating role of Psychological Capital in the relationship between Agripreneurial Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions.
4. To identify and quantify the moderating effects of key demographic and academic variables.

Analytical Strategy:

To analyze the validity of the scales and examine the proposed hypotheses, structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed. Following the two-step procedure outlined by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the analysis began with the measurement model, using confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate model fit—based on the fit indices recommended by Kline (2010) and to establish construct validity. After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the second phase involved estimating the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships, using path coefficients, significance levels, R^2 values, and multiple goodness-of-fit indicators. In addition, the mediation effect was assessed using the three-step procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986).

Measurement Model:

We performed confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS 28 to estimate the construct validity of the study variables. The author estimated the variables' convergent and discriminant validity and reliability to establish the construct validity. Convergent validity (Table 1) was estimated using standardized loadings, p-values, composite reliability, and extracted average variance (Fornell and Larker, 1981; Hair et al., 2020). All the items had significant standardized estimates. The average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability values are within an acceptable range, confirming convergent validity. The correlations between the variables were lower than the square roots of the AVEs, indicating discriminant validity (see Table 3).

The four-factor model provides good fit ($\chi 2$ =2.25, RMR = 0.022, CFI = 0.910, GFI = 0.891, RMSEA = 0.049). From Table 2, it can be inferred that the square root of the AVE values of all the constructs, Entrepreneurial Education, Entrepreneurial Intentions, and Psychological Capital, are greater than the inter-construct correlations, which support the discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 1 shows Convergent validity

Construct Name	Item Code	Standardized Estimates	p-value	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Agripreneurial Education	AE1	0.773	***	0.897	0.535
	AE2	0.765	***		
	AE3	0.777	***		
	EE5	0.743	***		
	EE4	0.718	***		
	EE6	0737	***		
Entrepreneurial Intentions	EI1	0.856	***	0.916	0.621
	EI2	0.817	***		
	EI3	0.796	***		
	EI4	0.741	***		
	EI6	0.723	***		
Psychological Capital	PSC1	0.786	***	0.876	0.562
	PSC2	0.736	***		
	PSC3	0.717	***		
	PSC4	0.702	***		
	PSC5	0.681	***		

Discriminant Validity			
	Entrepreneurial Education	**Psychological Capital**	**Entrepreneurial Intentions**
Agripreneurial Education	0.803		
Psychological Capital	0.498	0.830	
Entrepreneurial Intentions	0.625	0.443	0.820

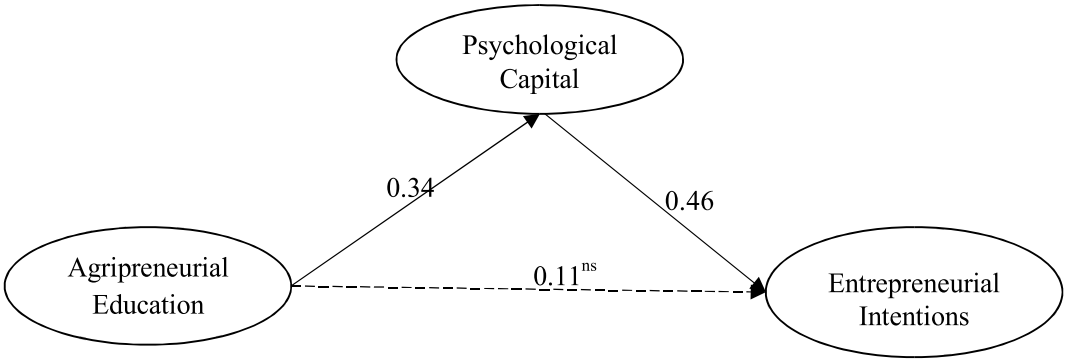
Hypotheses Testing:

The theoretical model describes that Psychological Capital mediates the relationship between two relationships: Entrepreneurial Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions. Structural equation modelling was used to test this hypothesized model. According to Byrne (1996), "SEM is a powerful tool which offers a simultaneous test of an entire model which enables evaluation of the extent to which the model is consistent with the data". We performed a mediation analysis following the steps outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). First, the direct relationships between independent and dependent variables were estimated individually. The results (Table 2) indicate that the hypotheses H1-H3 are accepted.

Later, we used bootstrapping estimation to test Hypothesis H4, the mediating role of psychological capital. The mediation SEM results indicated that the model fit the data well ($\chi 2/df=2.917$, GFI=.896, RMSEA=.061, TLI=.937, CFI=.945). Analysing the direct and indirect effects between Entrepreneurial Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions in the mediated model reveals a direct, insignificant impact (.11) and a significant indirect effect (.156), confirming the complete mediation of Psychological Capital and supporting hypothesis H4. Figure 2 represents the mediation structural model with path coefficients.

Table 2 shows Structural equation model results

Relationship	**β coefficient**	**R2**	**p-value**	**Hypothesis**	**Result**
Agripreneurial Education → Entrepreneurial Intentions	0.39	0.22	0.000	H1	Supported
Agripreneurial Education → Psychological Capital	0.54	0.39	0.002	H2	Supported
Psychological Capital → Entrepreneurial Intentions	0.44		0.000	H3	Supported
Relationship	Total effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Hypothesis	Result
Agripreneurial Education → Psychological Capital → Entrepreneurial Intentions	0.26	0.11n.s	0.156	H4	Supported



Conclusion:

Agri-entrepreneurship has become essential today for transforming agriculture into a more appealing and profitable business venture. The agricultural sector holds vast entrepreneurial potential, which can be realized through the efficient management of key resources like soil, seeds, water, and market demand. Although agriculture and related rural activities account for nearly half of employment in developing nations (World Bank, 2012), they often fail to generate sufficient income to lift households out of poverty. Promoting entrepreneurial initiatives within agriculture can help enhance family earnings and improve livelihoods. Strong managerial capabilities, coupled with an entrepreneurial mindset and supportive government policies, can significantly strengthen agri-business development. Individuals who possess confidence, a willingness to take risks, integrity, vision, and creativity are well suited to become successful agri-entrepreneurs. This form of entrepreneurship not only contributes to national income but also creates direct employment opportunities, particularly in rural regions. Moreover, producing value-added goods can yield higher profits and better returns. Hence, entrepreneurs should respond to evolving consumer preferences by offering value-enhanced products, such as organically cultivated coffee.

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