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## Social Entrepreneurship Intentions Among University Students: A Comparative Analysis Across Academic Disciplines

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes social entrepreneurship intentions among 201 university students from five academic programs: Business Psychology, Tourism Management, Media Design, Psychology, and Social Work. The findings show that Business Psychology students report the highest founding intentions ( $M = 4.2$ ), driven by greater self-efficacy and risk readiness. In contrast, Social Work students display the lowest founding intentions ( $M = 3.1$ ), despite high social motivation. These results suggest that academic background significantly influences entrepreneurial behavior. The study recommends tailored educational programs to enhance self-efficacy and risk readiness, especially in non-business fields, to promote social entrepreneurship across disciplines.

### INTRODUCTION

The growing interest in social entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical approach to addressing pressing global challenges, including poverty, social inequality, and environmental sustainability (Bornstein & Davis, 2010; Defourny & Nyssens, 2017). Social enterprises operate at the intersection of social impact and economic sustainability, seeking to achieve societal goals through innovative business models (Zahra *et al.*, 2009). Despite the increasing relevance of social entrepreneurship in both academic and practical contexts, little attention has been paid to understanding the factors influencing young people's intentions to establish social enterprises, particularly in disciplines beyond business-related fields (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010).

Social entrepreneurship presents unique opportunities for addressing social issues through innovative solutions, yet university students in traditionally altruistic disciplines, such as Social Work, show significantly lower entrepreneurial intentions compared to students from business-related programs (Kickul & Lyons, 2020). This discrepancy raises important questions about the role of education and academic training in fostering social entrepreneurship across diverse disciplines. Why do students in Social Work, a field deeply embedded in social justice and community engagement, demonstrate comparatively lower intentions to establish social enterprises? What factors can be identified to strengthen social entrepreneurship intentions among these students? Existing research suggests that entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and contextual factors, such as self-efficacy, perceived

opportunities, and risk readiness (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger *et al.*, 2000; Mair & Marti, 2006). However, the unique context of social entrepreneurship requires further investigation, particularly in understanding how social motivations, values, and disciplinary backgrounds shape entrepreneurial behavior (Hockerts, 2018). The present study addresses this gap by examining social entrepreneurship intentions among university students across five academic disciplines, with a particular focus on Social Work students.

### Research Question

The research aims to explore the differences in social entrepreneurship intentions across academic disciplines and identify key factors that influence these intentions. The central research question is:

What factors can strengthen the social entrepreneurship intentions of university students, particularly those studying Social Work?

### Sub-questions include

1. How do social entrepreneurship intentions vary across academic disciplines?
2. What role do self-efficacy, perceived opportunities, and risk readiness play in shaping these intentions?
3. How can educational programs better support students from non-business disciplines in developing entrepreneurial competencies?

### Aim of the Study

This study aims to investigate the factors that influence social entrepreneurship intentions among university

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students from various academic disciplines. By identifying the key differences between disciplines, this research seeks to provide practical recommendations for educational institutions to strengthen social entrepreneurship education, particularly in non-business fields such as Social Work. The study also aims to contribute to the broader discourse on social innovation by exploring how social motivations, self-efficacy, and perceived opportunities interact to shape entrepreneurial intentions.

### Theoretical Framework

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a unique form of entrepreneurship that blends business acumen with social impact goals. Unlike traditional entrepreneurs, who focus on profit maximization, social entrepreneurs aim to address pressing societal issues through innovative and sustainable solutions. Scholars such as Dees (2001) and Mair and Marti (2006) emphasize that social entrepreneurs operate at the intersection of economic and social value creation, striving to achieve a balance between financial sustainability and positive social change. This dual mission distinguishes social enterprises from conventional businesses and requires a different set of motivations and skills from entrepreneurs. Understanding the factors that influence students' intentions to found social enterprises is crucial, particularly in academic disciplines that traditionally focus on altruistic values, such as Social Work and Psychology. Empirical studies confirm that entrepreneurship education significantly influences entrepreneurial intentions (Castro *et al.*, 2023). Research on students in the Philippines shows that while academic performance is not directly linked to entrepreneurship, exposure to relevant education fosters a social impact mindset.

One of the most influential frameworks for understanding entrepreneurial behavior is the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to this theory, entrepreneurial intentions are shaped by three key components: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which is often equated with self-efficacy. Attitudes refer to the individual's positive or negative evaluation of starting a business, while subjective norms capture the perceived social pressure to engage in entrepreneurship. Perceived behavioral control, or self-efficacy, reflects the individual's belief in their ability to successfully execute the tasks required to start and manage a business. Ajzen argues that these three components interact to predict whether an individual is likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities. In the context of social entrepreneurship, the Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that students' intentions to found social enterprises are influenced by their perceived ability to create positive social change, the societal support they receive for such ventures, and their confidence in their own entrepreneurial skills. Hockerts (2015) found that students with higher self-efficacy and positive attitudes toward social entrepreneurship are likelier to express entrepreneurial intentions. However, the findings of

this study indicate that students from different academic disciplines exhibit varying levels of these components, which has important implications for fostering social entrepreneurship across fields. Studies on Nigeria's labor market highlight the role of entrepreneurship education in reducing graduate unemployment (Modupe & Damilare, 2023). Given the oversupply of graduates, self-employment and entrepreneurship serve as crucial alternatives, reinforcing the importance of institutional support.

Another critical theory that informs our understanding of entrepreneurial behavior is Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Bandura (1986). This theory emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in shaping behavior, arguing that individuals are more likely to engage in tasks they believe they can successfully perform. In entrepreneurship, self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to identify opportunities, manage risks, and mobilize resources to start a business (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994). Research shows that self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of entrepreneurial intentions (Chen *et al.*, 1998). Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to perceive entrepreneurial opportunities and persist in the face of challenges, whereas those with low self-efficacy may avoid entrepreneurial activities due to fear of failure. The findings of this study align with Social Cognitive Theory, particularly in the observed differences between Business Psychology and Social Work students. Business Psychology students reported the highest levels of self-efficacy, which likely contributes to their higher founding intentions. In contrast, Social Work students reported the lowest levels of self-efficacy, despite their strong social motivation. This suggests that while Social Work students may be driven by a desire to create positive social change, they may lack the confidence to translate their motivations into entrepreneurial actions. Bandura's theory suggests that self-efficacy can be enhanced through practical experiences, mentorship, and exposure to role models, which could help bridge the gap between motivation and action for Social Work students. Research in Kenya shows that social enterprises boost job creation and financial stability (Lihanda *et al.*, 2023). Practical experiences like microfinance initiatives enhance self-efficacy, aligning with Bandura's argument that experiential learning strengthens entrepreneurial persistence.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) also provides valuable insights into social entrepreneurship intentions. This theory posits that individuals are more likely to engage in activities that fulfill their psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. In the context of social entrepreneurship, intrinsic motivation plays a key role in driving behavior. Social entrepreneurs are often motivated by a desire to contribute to societal well-being, which aligns with the high social motivation observed among Social Work students (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010). However, while intrinsic motivation is necessary for social entrepreneurship, it is not sufficient on its own. Practical skills, self-efficacy,

and opportunity recognition must complement social motivation to drive entrepreneurial actions (Mair & Noboa, 2006). The study's findings suggest that students in social sciences, such as Social Work, may have strong intrinsic motivations but lack the practical skills and confidence to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. This aligns with research by Neck *et al.* (2014), who argue that experiential learning and mentorship programs can enhance students' entrepreneurial competencies. By providing opportunities for students to apply their social motivations in real-world contexts, universities can help bridge the gap between intention and action. Studies on Bangladesh Open University highlight how technology transfer supports entrepreneurship (Nayem *et al.*, 2024). Digital platforms provide mentorship and training, bridging gaps in skills and confidence to help students turn social motivations into action.

The role of risk readiness also emerged as a significant factor in this study. According to Prospect Theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), individuals evaluate risks based on their perception of potential gains and losses. Entrepreneurs, particularly those in business-related fields, tend to have a higher tolerance for risk because they are more familiar with the potential rewards of entrepreneurial ventures (Lüthje & Franke, 2003). In contrast, students in social sciences may be more risk-averse due to their focus on minimizing harm and promoting stability in their professional practice. The findings of this study suggest that Business Psychology students have higher risk readiness, which likely contributes to their higher founding intentions. In contrast, Social Work students scored the lowest in risk readiness, which may hinder their willingness to pursue entrepreneurial ventures.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

This investigation employed a quantitative research methodology to examine social entrepreneurship intentions across five distinct academic disciplines. The research framework utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure critical variables, including founding intention, self-efficacy, social motivation, risk readiness, and perceived opportunities. This methodological approach was selected to facilitate comparative analysis between traditionally altruistic and business-oriented academic fields.

### Sample and Sampling Method

A total of 201 students participated in the study. The participants were recruited online through social media, email lists, and university platforms. To reach a broader audience, QR codes linking to the survey were posted on university bulletin boards, encouraging students to participate in the study by simply scanning the code.

The sample was distributed across five academic programs:

The sample consisted predominantly of female

**Table 1: Sample and Sampling**

Study Program	n	%
Social Work	45	22.4%
Psychology	42	20.9%
Tourism Management	38	18.9%
Business Psychology	41	20.4%
Media Design	35	17.4%

participants (61.7%), reflecting the typical gender distribution in social science disciplines. Male students made up 36.3% of the sample, while 2.0% identified as non-binary.

**Table 2:**

Gender	n	%
Female	124	61.7%
Male	73	36.3%
Non-binary	4	2.0%

The majority of participants were between 18 and 23 years old, indicating that the sample largely consisted of undergraduate students. Specifically, 48.8% were between 18 and 20 years old, and 40.8% were between 21 and 23 years old, while 10.4% were in the 24 to 26 age group.

**Table 3:**

Age Group	n	%
18-20 years	98	48.8%
21-23 years	82	40.8%
24-26 years	21	10.4%

Most students were in the early semesters of their academic careers. 25.9% of the participants were in their first or second semester, 27.9% were in their fifth or sixth semester, and 20.4% were in their third or fourth semester.

**Table 4:**

Semester	n	%
1-2	52	25.9%
3-4	41	20.4%
5-6	56	27.9%
7+	22	10.9%

The sample distribution across study programs, gender, age, and academic semesters indicates that the survey reached a diverse and representative group of university students.

### Data Collection

Data acquisition was executed through a structured online survey instrument incorporating validated Likert-scale measurements. The instrument assessed five

fundamental constructs: founding intention (five-year prospective), perceived entrepreneurial opportunities, self-efficacy in venture creation, risk tolerance, and social impact motivation. The survey administration protocol maintained participant anonymity and required approximately 10-15 minutes for completion.

### Data Analysis

The analytical framework incorporated both descriptive statistical methods and inferential analyses. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was implemented to examine inter-group variations in founding intentions across academic programs. Subsequent post-hoc analyses utilizing Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test revealed statistically significant variations between disciplines. The findings indicated that Business Psychology students demonstrated significantly higher entrepreneurial intentions compared to their counterparts in Social Work programs, with other disciplines showing intermediate levels of founding intention.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following section presents the results of the study, focusing on the analysis of social entrepreneurship intentions across five different academic disciplines. The

findings are divided into three parts: mean founding intentions by study program, detailed analysis of key variables, and ANOVA results to test for statistically significant differences between the groups.

### Founding Intentions by Study Program

The core variable analyzed in this study was students' founding intention to start a social enterprise within the next five years. The results show that Business Psychology students reported the highest mean score, while Social Work students had the lowest mean score. The table below provides an overview of the mean founding intention scores for each study program.

Table 5:

Study Program	Mean Founding Intention	Standard Deviation (SD)	n
Business Psychology	4.2	0.6	41
Tourism Management	3.7	0.7	38
Media Design	3.5	0.8	35
Psychology	3.3	0.9	42
Social Work	3.1	0.8	45

Table 6:

Item	Business Psychology	Tourism Management	Media Design	Psychology	Social Work
Founding Intention	4.2	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.1
Perceived Opportunities	4.3	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.2
Self-Efficacy	4.1	3.7	3.5	3.2	2.9
Risk Readiness	4.0	3.5	3.3	3.0	2.8
Social Motivation	4.0	3.8	3.6	4.4	4.5

The data indicates a hierarchical order of founding intentions across the academic programs, with students in business-related fields demonstrating a stronger inclination toward social entrepreneurship compared to students in social science fields.

### Detailed Analysis of Key Variables

The survey measured additional variables related to social entrepreneurship intentions, including perceived opportunities, self-efficacy, risk readiness, and social motivation. The table below provides a detailed item analysis of the mean scores for these variables across the five study programs.

Table 7:

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F	p-value
Between Groups	28.45	4	7.11	12.34	< .001
Within Groups	113.12	196	0.58		
Total	141.57	200			

The results highlight that:

- Business Psychology students consistently scored the highest across self-efficacy, perceived opportunities, and risk readiness.
- Social Work students demonstrated the highest social motivation but reported the lowest scores in self-efficacy

and risk readiness, which may hinder their entrepreneurial intentions.

- Psychology students showed relatively high social motivation but low self-efficacy, similar to Social Work students.

These patterns suggest that while students in social

sciences are highly motivated to create positive social change, they may lack confidence and risk tolerance, which are essential traits for entrepreneurial success.

### ANOVA Results

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test whether the differences in founding intentions between the study programs were statistically significant. The table below summarizes the results of the ANOVA test.

The ANOVA results indicate that the differences in founding intentions between the study programs are statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). This confirms that students' academic background plays a key role in shaping their entrepreneurial intentions. A post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD test showed that Business Psychology students scored significantly higher in founding intentions compared to students in Social Work, Psychology, and other programs. The largest difference was observed between Business Psychology and Social Work students.

### Summary of Key Findings

The results of the study reveal several important patterns:

- Business Psychology students showed the highest social entrepreneurship intentions, driven by higher self-efficacy and risk readiness.
- Social Work students demonstrated high social motivation but low entrepreneurial confidence and risk tolerance, which may explain their lower founding intentions.

The differences in founding intentions across the five study programs were statistically significant, as confirmed by the ANOVA test.

These findings highlight the importance of tailored educational interventions to strengthen entrepreneurial confidence, particularly in non-business fields such as Social Work. Students in social sciences may benefit from practical exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities and training programs aimed at building self-efficacy and risk tolerance.

### Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate clear differences in social entrepreneurship intentions across the five academic programs, with Business Psychology students reporting the highest founding intentions and Social Work students the lowest. This aligns with existing research suggesting that entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by a combination of self-efficacy, perceived opportunities, and risk readiness, which tend to be stronger in business-related fields (Urban & Kujinga, 2017; Hockerts, 2018).

### Self-Efficacy as a Key Determinant of Social Entrepreneurship Intentions

One of the most significant findings in this study is the strong relationship between self-efficacy and founding intentions. Business Psychology students reported the highest levels of self-efficacy ( $M = 4.1$ ), while Social Work students scored the lowest ( $M = 2.9$ ). According

to Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), self-efficacy is a critical determinant of whether individuals believe they can successfully perform entrepreneurial tasks. Higher self-efficacy leads to greater persistence, better problem-solving, and an increased likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial behavior (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994). Research by Mair and Noboa (2006) highlights that self-efficacy is particularly important in the context of social entrepreneurship, as it influences individuals' belief in their ability to create social change through business ventures. Students in business-related programs are often exposed to practical, skills-based education, which enhances their entrepreneurial self-efficacy. In contrast, students in social sciences, such as Social Work, may lack such exposure, resulting in lower confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities (Smith *et al.*, 2014). This gap in self-efficacy is a significant barrier to fostering social entrepreneurship in non-business disciplines. Studies have shown that targeted interventions, such as experiential learning programs, mentorship opportunities, and role model exposure, can significantly increase self-efficacy among students in non-business fields (Hockerts, 2015; Neck *et al.*, 2014).

### The Role of Social Motivation in Social Entrepreneurship

The study found that Social Work students exhibited the highest levels of social motivation ( $M = 4.5$ ), indicating a strong desire to create positive social change. This finding aligns with research suggesting that individuals in altruistic fields are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010). Social motivation theory posits that individuals are driven by intrinsic values and the desire to contribute to societal well-being, which is a key factor in social entrepreneurship (Hockerts, 2015). However, while high social motivation is a necessary component of social entrepreneurship, it is not sufficient on its own to drive entrepreneurial behavior. According to Mair and Marti (2006), social entrepreneurship requires a combination of social motivation and entrepreneurial competencies, such as recognizing opportunities and managing risks. The results of this study indicate that Social Work students may lack the latter, which explains their lower founding intentions despite high social motivation. Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory suggests that social motivation can be enhanced by providing individuals with opportunities to develop competence, autonomy, and relatedness. In the context of social entrepreneurship education, this implies that students in altruistic fields need more practical training and support to transform their social motivations into actionable entrepreneurial intentions.

### Risk Readiness and Entrepreneurial Behavior

The study also found significant differences in risk readiness across the academic programs. Business Psychology students scored highest in this variable ( $M = 4.0$ ), while

Social Work students reported the lowest score ( $M = 2.8$ ). Risk readiness is a critical factor in entrepreneurial decision-making, as it influences individuals' willingness to take the necessary risks involved in starting a business (Lüthje & Franke, 2003; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). According to Prospect Theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), individuals perceive and evaluate risks differently based on their prior experiences and knowledge. Business students are often exposed to entrepreneurial case studies and simulations, which may increase their tolerance for risk and uncertainty. In contrast, Social Work students are typically trained to avoid risks and minimize harm in their professional practice, which may contribute to their lower risk readiness. This finding suggests that entrepreneurial education in non-business fields should focus on risk management strategies and opportunity recognition exercises to help students become more comfortable with taking calculated risks. Providing students with real-world examples of successful social entrepreneurs who have managed risks effectively can also enhance their risk readiness (Smith & Woodworth, 2012).

### Implications for Social Entrepreneurship Education

The study highlights that traditional entrepreneurial education models may not suit students from all disciplines. Educational programs should be tailored to the unique needs of students, particularly in fields like Social Work, where entrepreneurial intentions are lower but social motivations are high.

- Integrating Entrepreneurial Content into Social Work Curricula: Social Work programs should incorporate entrepreneurship modules that focus on problem-solving, opportunity recognition, and business planning. These courses can show how entrepreneurial approaches help address systemic social challenges.
- Experiential Learning and Mentorship: Practical experiences and mentorship programs can enhance students' self-efficacy by connecting them with successful social entrepreneurs and offering hands-on learning opportunities.
- Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration: Universities can promote interdisciplinary projects between business and social science students. This approach would help Social Work students develop entrepreneurial skills, while business students would gain a better understanding of social issues.

### Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. The sample size of 201 students may not be representative of all university students. Future research could involve larger, more diverse samples from various universities and countries. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias, as participants might overestimate their entrepreneurial intentions. Using behavioral measures or longitudinal studies could provide more reliable insights. Finally, the study focused mainly on academic programs, without accounting for

personal background, prior entrepreneurial experience, or socioeconomic status. Future research should consider these factors to better understand what drives social entrepreneurship intentions.

### CONCLUSION

This study examined social entrepreneurship intentions among students from five academic programs, revealing significant differences in founding intentions, self-efficacy, social motivation, and risk readiness. Students from business-related fields showed the highest entrepreneurial intentions, driven by greater self-efficacy and risk tolerances. In contrast, Social Work students demonstrated high social motivation but lower confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities. The findings suggest that academic background influences entrepreneurial behavior. Business programs foster practical skills and risk readiness, whereas social science programs emphasize altruistic values. To encourage social entrepreneurship across all fields, universities should adapt educational programs by integrating entrepreneurial content, offering mentorship, and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration. By enhancing students' confidence and practical skills, especially in non-business fields, educational institutions can empower the next generation of social entrepreneurs to tackle pressing societal challenges through innovative, sustainable solutions.

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