مجلة الأصيل للبحوث الاقتصادية والإدارية
El - Acil JournalforEconomic and Administrative Research
ISSN:2571-9866
EISSN:2661-7854 *Volume:10/ N°2/ October2026, PP320-339*

The Effect of Entrepreneurial Skills Development, Motivation, and Barriers on Entrepreneurial Intention among University Students - A Case Study of a Sample of Students from the Faculty of Economics at Souk Ahras University

أثر تنمية المهارات الريادية والدافعية والعوائق الريادية على النية الريادية لدى الطلبة الجامعيين -دراسة عينة من طلبة كلية الاقتصاد بجامعة سوق اهراس-

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Received:16/09/2026 Accepted:26/10/2026 Published: 31/10/2026

Abstract:

What drives the entrepreneurial intention of university students in a regional Algerian setting — and what holds it back? Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, this study tests the joint effect of entrepreneurial skills development, motivation, and perceived barriers among 255 students at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Souk Ahras. Data come from an online questionnaire adapted from Liñán and Chen (2009), analyzed in Jamovi. The three predictors explain 45% of the variance in intention ($R^2 = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$): skills development leads ($\beta = 0.47$), then motivation ($\beta = 0.41$), while barriers weigh against it more modestly ($\beta = -0.19$). No gender difference emerged ($p = 0.205$), contrary to much earlier work, whereas intention rose with age and academic level. Planning and organization was the weakest skill dimension — entrepreneurship education here needs less inspiration and more structured, practice-based competence building.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial intention; entrepreneurial skills; entrepreneurial motivation; perceived barriers; Theory of Planned Behavior; Algeria

JEL classification codes: L26, M13, I23

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1. Introduction

In many developing nations, entrepreneurship has shifted from a peripheral academic topic to a central pillar of economic strategy — a transformation clearly visible in the Algerian context. Over the past decade, Government programs targeting youth employment and economic diversification have pushed higher education institutions to go beyond diploma production and actively cultivate entrepreneurial profiles among students. Yet what happens between the lecture hall and the actual launch of a business venture remains poorly understood particularly in regional university contexts like Souk Ahras, where the private sector still plays a limited role in the local economy and where entrepreneurial culture is only beginning to take shape.

This study grew out of a practical observation made during fieldwork and training activities at the university's incubator: While a significant number of students articulate a clear aspiration toward venture creation, this aspiration seldom materializes into concrete entrepreneurial steps. The question, then, is not simply whether students want to become entrepreneurs most say they do but what drives that intention, and more importantly, what holds it back.

1.1 Research Problem

Despite growing institutional support for entrepreneurship in Algerian universities including incubation programs, training sessions, and funding mechanisms — relatively few studies have examined how skills, motivation, and barriers simultaneously shape students' entrepreneurial intentions within a specific regional context. The fundamental question guiding this research is**:**

What is the effect of entrepreneurial skills development, motivation, and perceived barriers on the entrepreneurial intention on students at the Faculty of Economics, Souk Ahras University?

1.2 Research Hypotheses

- H1: Entrepreneurial skills development positively affects entrepreneurial intention among university students.
- H2: Entrepreneurial motivation positively affects entrepreneurial intention among university students.
- H3: Entrepreneurial barriers negatively affect entrepreneurial intention among university students.

- H4: There are statistically significant differences in entrepreneurial intention according to the demographic characteristics of respondents.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to analyze the combined influence of entrepreneurial skills development, entrepreneurial motivation, and entrepreneurial barriers on entrepreneurial intention. More specifically, it seeks to: measure the level of entrepreneurial skills among students at Souk Ahras; assess their degree of entrepreneurial intention; examine how motivation shapes that intention; evaluate how perceived barriers may constrain it; and explore whether intention differs across demographic groups — particularly by gender, age, and academic level.

1.4 Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical quantitative approach. A structured questionnaire was developed on the basis of established instruments, including the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire(Liñán & Chen, 2009) and distributed via Google Forms to 255 students from the Faculty of Economic Sciences at the University of Souk Ahras. The online format was chosen deliberately to allow students to respond without the presence of the researcher, ensuring more objective and uninhibited answers. Statistical analysis was carried out using Jamovi software, covering reliability testing, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression.

1.5 Previous Studies

An extensive body of research has examined the determinants of entrepreneurial intention among university students across different national and cultural contexts. The studies summarized in Table 1 were selected for their methodological strength and their direct relevance to the variables investigated here.

Table 1: Summary of Previous Studies

Author(s) &Year	Context	Methodology	Key Findings
(Fayolle & Gailly, 2021)	Europe	Quantitative survey	ntrepreneurship education develops skills and strengthens intention
Sun, Lo, Liang, & Wong, 2023)	China	SEM	Skills influence intention indirectly through motivation and mindset
(Barba-Sanchez, Mitre-Aranda,, & del Brio-Go, 2022)	Spain	Regression	Entrepreneurial competencies and supportive environmentpositively affect intention

(Tabani & Radjef, 2022)	Algeria	Mediation	Skills influence intention indirectly through self-efficacy
(Boubke, Arroud, & Ouajdouni, 2021)	Morocco	TPB survey	TPB constructssignificantlypredict entrepreneurial intention
(Sampene, Li, Khan, & Agyeman, 2022)	Ghana	TPB survey	Attitude, norms, and perceived control predict intention via TPB
(Mezghiche, 2024)	Algeria	Quantitative	Self-efficacy and entrepreneurial knowledge drive student intention
(Lahouari, 2023)	Algeria	Mediation	Education predicts intention through self-efficacy
(Mekhmoukh, Meziani, Gassem, & Moume, 2025)	Algeria	Quantitative	Perceived behavioral control and institutional support are key drivers
(Xanthopoulou, Sahinidis, & Bakouros, 2024)	Greece	Longitudinal	Continuous skill development gradually increases entrepreneurial intention

Source: Authors' compilation based on previous studies**.**

Taken together, these studies point to three consistent conclusions. First, entrepreneurial skills — whether developed through formal education, incubation programs, or experiential learning — reliably predict entrepreneurial intention. Second, motivational factors such as the desire for autonomy, financial independence, and personal achievement play a reinforcing role that cannot be reduced to skills alone. Third, structural and psychological barriers significantly weaken intention, especially in environments where institutional ecosystems remain fragile.

What sets the present study apart is its simultaneous examination of all three variable groups within a single analytical framework, applied to a regional Algerian university context that remains largely absent from the international literature. Most existing Algerian studies focus on major urban universities; the Souk Ahras context — characterized by a relatively weak private sector and a student population with high female enrollment — offers a genuinely different angle on these questions.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning: Theory of Planned Behavior

The theoretical backbone of this study is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB has become one of the most widely applied frameworks in entrepreneurial intention research — and for good reason. It offers a structured yet flexible way of understanding how people move from abstract attitudes toward concrete behavioral decisions (Fayolle, & Liñán, 2019)(Liñán & Fayolle, 2015)

According to the TPB, three components jointly determine the formation of behavioral intention: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the entrepreneurship context, this mapping is fairly direct. Entrepreneurial skills correspond to perceived

behavioral control — the belief that one is capable of executing a given action. Motivation reflects attitude toward entrepreneurship — how positively an individual evaluates the prospect of starting a venture. Perceived barriers, in turn, reduce perceived behavioral control by making that same action feel harder or riskier than it actually may be
(Sampene, Li, Khan, & Agyeman, 2022) (Lekmiti, 2024)

2.2 Entrepreneurial Skills Development

Entrepreneurial skills refer to the range of cognitive and practical abilities that allow individuals to identify opportunities, generate innovative ideas, manage uncertainty, and mobilize the resources needed to create a venture. These competencies span several domains: creativity and idea generation, decision-making under risk, effective communication, collaborative teamwork, strategic planning, and time management (Barba-Sanchez, Mitre-Aranda,, & del Brio-Go, 2022)

2.2.1 Role of Entrepreneurial Skills in Higher Education

The question of how universities develop these competencies has attracted considerable scholarly attention over the past two decades. (Fayolle & Gailly, 2021) argue that structured entrepreneurship education does more than transmit knowledge — it actively reshapes how students think about their own capacity to act. This matters because perceived behavioral control, which skills training directly strengthens, is among the strongest predictors of entrepreneurial intention (Ajzen, 1991)

Within the Algerian context specifically, (Tabani & Radjef, Entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a mediator between skills and intention: Evidence from Algerian universities, 2022) found that entrepreneurial competencies developed through university programs influence intention indirectly, by first strengthening self-efficacy. (Lahouari, 2023) and (Ait Abbas & Salaouatchi, 2020)

similarly confirm that university-based skill development is a key predictor of entrepreneurial intention among Algerian students. The role of incubators deserves particular mention here: at the University of Souk Ahras, the incubator business center has been actively providing students with training, mentoring, and funding access — creating a practical environment where skills can be tested rather than merely discussed (Bensalem & Khelifa, 2023)

2.3 Entrepreneurial Motivation

Entrepreneurial motivation refers to the combination of internal and external forces that push or pull individuals toward entrepreneurial activity. These include the desire for financial independence, the pursuit of

personal achievement, the aspiration to implement innovative ideas, and the need for autonomy — all of which have consistently appeared as significant predictors of entrepreneurial intention across different cultural contexts (Sun, Lo, Liang, & Wong, 2023)

2.3.1 Motivational Dynamics Among University Students

The TPB provides a useful lens here: individuals who hold strongly positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship and who are genuinely motivated by its potential rewards are significantly more likely to develop entrepreneurial intention (Liñán & Chen, 2009). In practice, however, motivation alone is rarely sufficient. Empirical work by (salah, Garcia, & Morales, 2024) shows that students who perceive entrepreneurship as a viable path to self-achievement score considerably higher on measures of entrepreneurial intent — but only when that perception is anchored in some degree of confidence in their own abilities.

In developing and Arab-majority contexts, (Belguith, 2024) found that motivation is frequently intertwined with the desire to overcome structural constraints — unemployment, economic dependency, limited career options. This resonates strongly with what is observed among students in northeastern Algeria, where entrepreneurship is increasingly framed not just as an opportunity but as a practical alternative to a saturated public employment market. (Djeghiour & Kaouache, 2023) similarly found that institutional support and motivation are strongly linked to student entrepreneurial intention in Algeria, while(Benamra & Iken, 2025) demonstrate that entrepreneurial passion, mediated by self-efficacy, significantly boosts intention.

2.4 Entrepreneurial Barriers

Even students with well-developed skills and strong motivation may fail to engage in entrepreneurial action if they perceive the obstacles as too large to overcome. These barriers take multiple forms: financial constraints that limit access to startup capital, bureaucratic and regulatory complexity, limited mentoring or institutional support, and social pressures that attach stigma to failure (Hassan, Saleem, & Anwar, 2022); (Fragoso, Rocha-Junior, & Xavier, 2020)

2.4.1 Structural and Psychological Obstacles

In emerging economies, administrative complexity and weak institutional ecosystems have been identified as particularly significant deterrents (Bensalem & Khelifa, 2023) (Peng & Walid, 2022).

The Souk Ahras context reflects this pattern in a specific way: the local economy relies heavily on the public sector, and the private sector remains underdeveloped relative to larger Algerian cities. This structural reality means that students do not see many entrepreneurial role models around them — which amplifies the perceived difficulty of venturing out independently.

Fear of failure adds a psychological layer to these structural challenges. When cultural environments treat business failure as a personal weakness rather than a learning experience, individuals tend to suppress entrepreneurial ambition even when they possess genuine capability (Xanthopoulou, Sahinidis, & Bakouros, 2024). What is notable — and somewhat reassuring — is that in this study, students acknowledged barriers without rating them as wholly prohibitive. This suggests that the support mechanisms already in place, including the university incubator, are doing meaningful work in moderating students' perception of risk (Boubke, Arroud, & Ouajdouni, 2021) (Hattab, 2020)

2.5 Entrepreneurial Intention

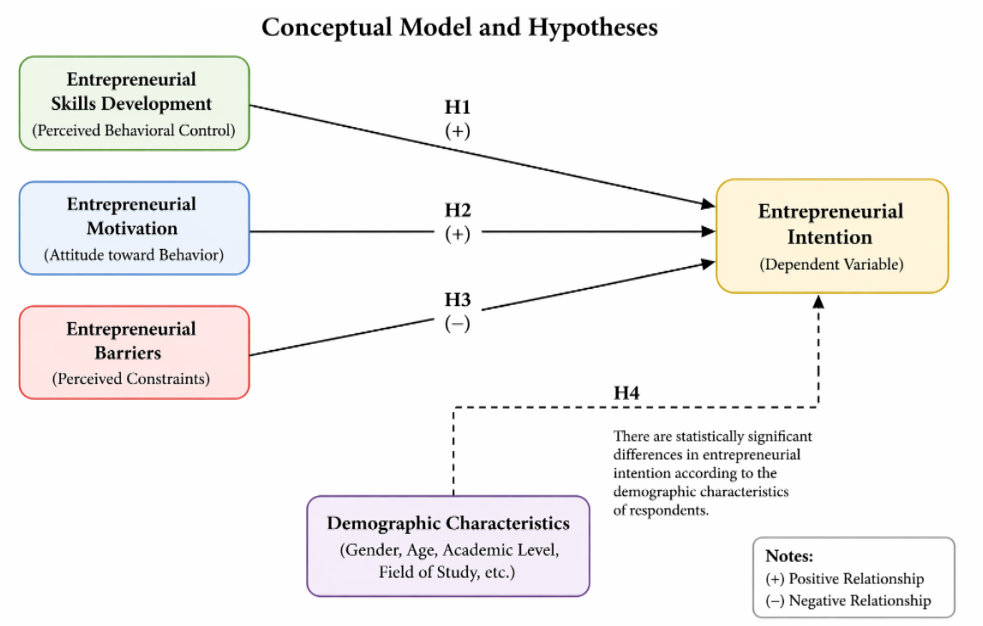
Entrepreneurial intention is broadly understood as an individual's deliberate decision and commitment to launch a new business venture at some future point. It occupies a central position in the entrepreneurship literature precisely because it serves as the most reliable bridge between personal attributes and observable action(Liñán & Fayolle, 2015). Research consistently shows that intention is among the strongest predictors of subsequent entrepreneurial behavior. That is precisely why understanding what builds or weakens it carries practical weight beyond the academic.

2.5.1 Antecedents and Predictors

Beyond skills and motivation, the literature identifies a range of additional factors that shape entrepreneurial intention: access to mentorship, exposure to role models, and participation in hands-on training programs (Anjum, Farrukh, & Nazar, 2024). In Algerian universities specifically, (Alili, 2019) and Limam (2023) show that entrepreneurial intention tends to strengthen progressively over the course of a student's academic career — particularly at master's level, where accumulated knowledge and growing confidence begin to outweigh initial hesitation. The presence of innovation hubs and incubators reinforces this trajectory (Bensalem & Khelifa, 2023)

2.6 Conceptual Model of the Study

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study.



Source: Developed by the author based on Ajzen (1991) and previous studies.

The figure illustrates the hypothesized relationships between entrepreneurial skills development, entrepreneurial motivation, and entrepreneurial barriers as determinants of entrepreneurial intention. Skills development and motivation are expected to positively influence entrepreneurial intention (H1, H2), while entrepreneurial barriers are expected to have a negative effect (H3). In addition, demographic characteristics are examined to identify statistically significant differences in entrepreneurial intention across groups (H4), in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study follows a descriptive-analytical quantitative research design, consistent with the positivist perspective that dominates studies of entrepreneurial intention grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Sampene, Li, Khan, & Agyeman, 2022) ;(Fayolle & Liñán, 2019)

3.2 Population and Sample

The study population comprises students enrolled at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Souk Ahras. A total of 255 valid responses were collected and retained for analysis, covering both undergraduate and postgraduate levels — from first-year bachelor students through to doctoral candidates.

Female students constitute approximately 81.6% of respondents, reflecting broader enrollment trends in Algerian higher education where women represent the majority in economic and social science programs (Ait Abbas &Salaouatchi, 2020). While this limits the generalizability of gender-specific findings, it does not compromise the validity of the multivariate analyses conducted here.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire built on established instruments from the entrepreneurial intention literature, most notably the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire developed by (Liñán & Chen, 2009). The questionnaire was organized into five sections: demographic information; entrepreneurial skills development, covering creativity, decision-making, communication, teamwork, and planning; entrepreneurial intention; entrepreneurial motivation; and entrepreneurial barriers. All substantive items were measured on a Likert-type scale ranging from "Never" to "Most of the time."

The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms. This format was chosen deliberately: by administering the survey online and without researcher presence during completion, the aim was to minimize social desirability effects and allow students to respond as candidly as possible. In contexts where respondents may feel observed or evaluated — which is a real risk when a trainer or faculty member distributes a paper questionnaire in class — online self-administration tends to produce more objective responses.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Statistical analysis was performed using Jamovi software. The analytical process followed a logical sequence. First, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated to verify the internal consistency of each construct before any inferential analysis was conducted. Second, descriptive statistics — means and standard deviations — were used to summarize respondents' perceptions across all four axes. Third, Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine the bivariate relationships between variables. Finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the

four hypotheses, with entrepreneurial intention treated as the dependent variable and skills development, motivation, and barriers as the independent predictors.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Before any analysis could begin, it was necessary to verify that the questionnaire was actually measuring what it was designed to measure. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with results presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Axis	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Entrepreneurial SkillsDevelopment	12	0.894
Entrepreneurial Motivation	4	0.863
Entrepreneurial Barriers	3	0.496
Entrepreneurial Intention	6	0.855
All Variables	25	0.926

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

Three of the four constructs returned reliability coefficients well above the conventional 0.80 threshold — entrepreneurial skills (0.894), entrepreneurial intention (0.855), and entrepreneurial motivation (0.863) — confirming strong internal consistency. The overall coefficient across all 25 items reached 0.926, which is a reassuring result for the instrument as a whole.

The exception is the entrepreneurial barriers subscale, which returned a coefficient of 0.496. This figure is low, and it would be intellectually dishonest to minimize it. The most likely explanation is straightforward: three items are simply not enough to capture a construct as multidimensional as perceived barriers. Financial constraints, regulatory complexity, fear of failure, and social stigma are not the same thing — compressing them into three items inevitably sacrifices measurement precision. This is acknowledged as a genuine limitation of the study, and future research should expand this subscale considerably.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	47	18.4
	Female	208	81.6
Age	Less than 20	65	25.5
	20–25 years	150	58.8
	More than 25	40	15.7

Academic Level	irst Year Bachelor	55	21.6
	Second Year Bachelor	39	15.3
	nird Year Bachelor	40	15.7
	First Year Master	60	23.5
	econd Year Master	56	22.0
	ostgraduateStudies	5	2.0
Total		255	100

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

The sample skews heavily female — 81.6% The high percentage of female respondants is not a result of sampling bias but an actual distribution within the faculty of economics at Souk Ahras university. This resonates with the algerian statistics which show a higher presence of females in social and economic sciences in comparison to males who often choose technical paths. The dominant age bracket is 20 to 25 years, accounting for 58.8% of respondents, consistent with the typical undergraduate and early postgraduate profile. Academic level distribution is reasonably spread across all years, which strengthens the analytical value of any level-based comparisons.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Axis	Dimension	Mean	SD	Rank	Trend
Entrepreneurial SkillsDevelopment	Creativity& Innovation	3.94	0.71	1	Strong
	DecisionMaking& Risk Taking	3.62	0.74	3	Strong
	ommunication &Teamwork	3.81	0.69	2	Strong
	Planning &Organization	3.57	0.73	4	Medium
	Axis Mean	3.74	0.71	—	Strong
Entrepreneurial Intention	Desire to Start a Business	3.88	0.76	1	Strong
	Entrepreneurial Orientation	3.67	0.70	2	Strong
	Axis Mean	3.78	0.73	—	Strong
Entrepreneurial Motivation	Entrepreneurial Motivation	3.83	0.68	1	Strong
	Axis Mean	3.83	0.68	—	Strong
Entrepreneurial Barriers	Entrepreneurial Barriers	3.41	0.75	1	Medium
	Axis Mean	3.41	0.75	—	Medium

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

Several patterns in Table 4 are worth unpacking carefully. Entrepreneurial motivation recorded the highest overall mean (3.83), which tells us that students at Souk Ahras are not indifferent to entrepreneurship — they want financial independence, personal achievement, and the opportunity

to build something of their own. That aspiration is real and strong. Entrepreneurial intention followed closely at 3.78, confirming a genuine positive orientation toward future venture creation.

What is more telling, however, is the gap between these scores and actual entrepreneurial behavior — a gap that the questionnaire alone cannot capture, but that becomes visible when survey results are read alongside observable reality. Students rate their intention highly, yet executed projects remain rare. This disconnect is not unique to Souk Ahras, but it is particularly pronounced in an environment where the private sector is underdeveloped and where entrepreneurial role models are scarce.

Within the skills axis, creativity and innovation emerged as the strongest dimension (3.94), while planning and organization received the lowest score (3.57) — the only dimension rated at medium rather than strong. This is a practically important finding. Creative ideas without planning capacity rarely become viable ventures. Universities should take note: it is precisely the organizational and strategic dimensions of entrepreneurship education that need strengthening, not the inspirational ones (Lahouari, 2023).

Entrepreneurial barriers were rated at a medium level (3.41). Students acknowledge that obstacles exist — and in the Souk Ahras context, those obstacles are real, not imagined — but they do not appear to perceive them as entirely insurmountable.

4.4 Regression Model Assumptions

Prior to hypothesis testing, the validity of the multiple regression model was confirmed through a series of standard diagnostic tests, reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Model Diagnostic Tests

Test	Indicator	Result	Threshold	Interpretation
Linearity	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	p< 0.05	Linear relationshipsconfirmed
Multicollinearity	VIF	1.43	< 5	No multicollinearityproblem
Multicollinearity	Tolerance	0.698	> 0.10	Acceptable level
Normality	Skewness	0.41	±3.29	Normal distribution
Normality	Kurtosis	0.53	±3.29	Normal distribution
Outliers	Cook's Distance	0.39	< 1	No influential outliers

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

All key assumptions are satisfied. The VIF value of 1.43 and tolerance of 0.698 confirm the absence of multicollinearity among

predictors. Skewness and kurtosis values fall well within acceptable normality ranges. Cook's Distance indicates no influential outliers capable of distorting the regression estimates. The model is technically sound and results can be interpreted with confidence.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

4.5.1 Correlation Analysis

Bivariate relationships among the study variables were first examined using Pearson correlation, with results presented in Table 6.

Table 6:Correlation Matrix

Variables	Skills	Motivation	Barriers	Intention
Entrepreneurial Skills	1			
Entrepreneurial Motivation	0.58**	1		
Entrepreneurial Barriers	-0.21**	-0.17*	1	
Entrepreneurial Intention	0.61**	0.56**	-0.29**	1

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

The correlation results offer preliminary support for all three directional hypotheses. Skills and motivation are both positively associated with intention (r = 0.61 and r = 0.56 respectively), while barriers show a negative association (r = -0.29). These directions are exactly what TPB would predict, and they align with findings from comparable studies (Sampene et al., 2022; Boubker et al., 2021; Fragoso et al., 2020).

4.5.2 Regression Model Summary

Table 7: Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
0.67	0.45	0.44	0.52

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

The three predictors together account for 45% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention (R^2 = 0.45), with an adjusted estimate of 44%. The remaining 55% is not unexplained noise — it points toward variables the model did not include: family entrepreneurial background, cultural norms, exposure to role models, quality of mentoring received. These are real

factors in the Algerian context and represent a clear direction for future research (Anjum et al., 2024).

4.5.3 ANOVA Test

Table 8: ANOVA Test of the Regression Model

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	42.63	3	14.21	56.48	0.000
Residual	51.78	251	0.21		
Total	94.41	254			

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

The ANOVA result confirms that the regression model as a whole is statistically significant ($F = 56.48$, $p = 0.000$). The three predictors collectively explain a significant and non-trivial share of variance in entrepreneurial intention.

4.5.4 Regression Coefficients — H1, H2, H3

Table 9: Regression Results for H1, H2, and H3

Independent Variable	β	t	Sig.	Result
Entrepreneurial SkillsDevelopment	0.47	8.62	0.000	Supported
Entrepreneurial Motivation	0.41	7.54	0.000	Supported
Entrepreneurial Barriers	-0.19	-3.26	0.001	Supported

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

Entrepreneurial skills development emerged as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.47$, $p = 0.000$), consistent with the TPB argument that perceived behavioral control is a primary driver of intention (Ajzen, 1991; Tabani &Radjef, 2022). H1 is supported. When students develop concrete competencies — in planning, communication, creativity — they become more convinced of their capacity to navigate the entrepreneurial process. This is not a theoretical abstraction; it is what structured incubator training does in practice.

Entrepreneurial motivation also exerts a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.41$, $p = 0.000$), reflecting the attitudinal pathway in TPB and corroborating findings from the Algerian context (Djeghiour&Kaouache, 2023; Benamra& Iken, 2025). H2 is supported. Students who genuinely want independence, achievement, and the chance to implement their ideas are meaningfully more likely to form entrepreneurial intentions.

Entrepreneurial barriers show a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = 0.001$). H3 is supported. The effect is real but smaller in magnitude

than the positive predictors — which suggests that skills and motivation can, to some degree, offset the dampening influence of perceived obstacles. That is an important practical implication: building competence and sustaining motivation may matter more than eliminating every barrier.

4.5.5 Differences by Demographic Variables — H4

Table 10:Differences in Entrepreneurial Intention by Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	Test Used	Test Value	Sig.	Result
Gender	T-test	1.27	0.205	Not Significant
Age	ANOVA	3.41	0.019	Significant
Academic Level	ANOVA	4.12	0.008	Significant

Source: Authors' calculations using Jamovi based on survey data.

The gender analysis showed the most **noteworthy** finding of this study. While classical literature suggests that male students typically express stronger entrepreneurial intentions, the **current data reveals** a different reality in the context of Souk Ahras University. Male and female students scored virtually identically on entrepreneurial intention ($t = 1.27$, $p = 0.205$), indicating a shift toward gender neutrality.

One interpretation, consistent with Mezghiche (2024), is that university education — and incubator exposure specifically — tends to equalize entrepreneurial orientation regardless of gender. Another is that economic necessity, which motivates entrepreneurship among both men and women in this context, is a stronger force than gender socialization. Either way, H4 is partially supported.

Significant differences were found for both age ($F = 3.41$, $p = 0.019$) and academic level ($F = 4.12$, $p = 0.008$), with older and more advanced students expressing stronger intentions. This aligns with Limam (2023) and Alili (2019): as students accumulate knowledge, experience, and confidence over their academic career, their belief in their own entrepreneurial capacity grows — and so does their intention.

4.6 Discussion of Results

The results of this study converge around a picture that is both encouraging and sobering. On the encouraging side: students at Souk Ahras want to be entrepreneurs. Their motivation is genuine, their skills are developing, and their perception of barriers — though real — does not entirely suppress their ambition. On the sobering side: intention and action

are not the same thing, and the gap between them remains the central unresolved challenge.

The strong effect of entrepreneurial skills (β = 0.47) confirms what practical training experience suggests — that students who feel capable are students who dare. The implication for curriculum design is direct: competency-based entrepreneurship education deserves to be treated as a core academic priority, not an extracurricular supplement (Fayolle &Gailly, 2015; Lahouari, 2023).

The motivational effect (β = 0.41) adds an important nuance. Skills alone are not enough — students also need a reason to act. Fostering an environment that connects entrepreneurship to students' deeper aspirations for independence, meaning, and economic agency may be just as important as teaching them how to write a business plan. This is particularly relevant in northeastern Algeria, where entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a genuine alternative to public sector employment — a shift in mindset that universities can either accelerate or ignore.

The barrier effect, while statistically significant, is the smallest of the three (β = -0.19). Admittedly, this could partly reflect the limited reliability of the barriers subscale. But it may also reflect something more interesting: that students who are sufficiently skilled and motivated manage to maintain their entrepreneurial intention even in the face of real obstacles. Longitudinal skill-building, as Xanthopoulou et al. (2024) found, can gradually erode the perceived severity of barriers — which is exactly what sustained incubator engagement aims to do.

Perhaps the most striking takeaway is the absence of any gender gap. In a faculty where women outnumber men four to one, both groups expressed virtually identical entrepreneurial intentions. When education and institutional support are present, gender stops being the deciding factor — and that finding carries real weight for policy.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how entrepreneurial skills development, motivation, and perceived barriers shape the entrepreneurial intentions of university students at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Souk Ahras. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior and a sample of 255 students, the analysis confirmed all three hypotheses: skills and motivation

significantly strengthen entrepreneurial intention, while barriers weaken it. Entrepreneurial skills emerged as the strongest predictor (β = 0.47), followed by motivation (β = 0.41), with barriers exerting a smaller but meaningful negative effect (β = -0.19) — together explaining 45% of the variance in intention.

Three findings stand out. Planning and organization was the weakest skill dimension, suggesting that universities must go beyond inspiration and invest in practical, structured competency building. Gender showed no significant effect, indicating that when education and institutional support are in place, entrepreneurial orientation tends to equalize across groups. Finally, intention varied significantly by age and academic level, confirming that entrepreneurial confidence builds progressively over a student's academic career.

Entrepreneurial intention is not fixed — it is shaped by the conditions students are exposed to. Universities, incubators, and policymakers all have a role to play in making those conditions stronger.

5.1 Recommendations

For universities and faculty: Entrepreneurship curricula must shift toward competency-based, practical learning — particularly in planning, decision-making, and risk management, the weakest dimensions in this sample. Project-based exercises and mentored incubation experiences would address this gap directly (Fayolle &Gailly, 2015; Lahouari, 2023).

For incubators and support structures: The Souk Ahras incubator is doing meaningful work, but its reach remains limited. Expanding outreach toward earlier-year students — before discouragement sets in — would likely improve both intention and eventual venture creation (Bensalem & Khelifa, 2023; Anjum et al., 2024).

For policymakers: Structural barriers cannot be addressed by universities alone. Simplifying administrative procedures, improving access to seed funding, and creating visible entrepreneurial success stories in regional contexts would shift both motivation and perceived behavioral control in the right direction (Peng & Walid, 2022; Djeghiour&Kaouache, 2023).

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