

FROM MENTORSHIP TO MINDSET: THE ROLE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN SHAPING ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS

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Sayyam Alam**Abstract**

The primary focus of this research is the impact of servant leadership on the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate's students in Pakistan, especially the impact on the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of the students in this relationship. Using the social cognitive theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, the study examines the impact of mentorship and leadership on students' entrepreneurial self-belief and the willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The study adopts a quantitative and cross-sectional research approach. The primary data was derived from a structured questionnaire administered to 400 business and management students in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The reliabilities of the measurement scales were then derived from the computed Cronbach's alpha, and the proposed relationships were then assessed using regression and mediation analysis using the Preacher and Hayes bootstrapping method. The findings indicate that servant leadership has a positive predictive relationship with entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions. Furthermore, self-efficacy was found to be a partial mediator in the relationship between leadership and entrepreneurial intention. These results highlight the role of faculty mentorship in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and give actionable advice on how to construct mentorship-based entrepreneurial support programs at the university level. This research augments the existing literature on psychology by explaining the psychological processes which underpin the motivational stimuli which leaders create to motivate entrepreneurial endeavor, and acts as a policy framework for the higher educational institutions for promoting the entrepreneurial culture among students.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship activity has been the subject of significant research in the field of economics and business, largely because of its importance in creating new jobs, meeting societal needs,

advancing technology, and solving problems (Farrukh et al., 2019; Shirokova et al., 2021). Along with these factors, Also vital to this process is entrepreneurial intention (EI). It is considered

the most immediate, and is thus the most applicable, predictor of entrepreneurial activity (Ajzen, 1991; Liñán & Fayolle, 2015). Hence, in the context of policymakers and stakeholders who aim to foster entrepreneurial ecosystems, understanding the factors which drive EI will certainly aid these policymakers and stakeholders to better achieve their intended purposes.

Leadership styles, particularly in educational settings, increasingly focus on the antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions. In the context of higher education, where scholars serve as mentors and exemplary figures to students, the relevance of servant leadership, which focuses on the growth, empowerment, and wellbeing of followers (Greenleaf, 1977; Eva et al., 2019), becomes salient. Studies show that, on balance, servant leadership promotes prosocial motivation, resilience, and creativity, making it an action oriented catalyst of student development (Liden et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2020). When students identify their faculty as servant leaders, they receive incentivization, ethical and personal support, and frameworks which can amplify their entrepreneurial career intentions (Bavik et al., 2020).

Self-efficacy in entrepreneurial activities functions as a bridging mechanism that connects servant leadership with entrepreneurial outcomes. Based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy in entrepreneurial activities determines whether one has the belief in their capacity to carry out entrepreneurial activities. Previous research has shown that self-efficacy in entrepreneurial activities exerts a predictive value on the intention to undertake entrepreneurial activities and that it also has a mediating effect on the impact of contextual variables such as education, leadership, and institutional support on entrepreneurial intention (Newman et al., 2019; Hsu et al., 2019). In a university setup, servant leadership has been shown to increase self-efficacy and, in turn, entrepreneurial intention due to the role modeling, emotional support, and constructive criticism that they offer (Malebana, 2021; Shi et al., 2023).

In Pakistan, entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a solution to youth unemployment, economic

stagnation, and overreliance on traditional sectors (Khalil et al., 2022; Yousaf et al., 2023). Although there are policy efforts aimed at promoting entrepreneurial education and incubation centers, research shows that a large fraction of university graduates lack the confidence and willingness to become entrepreneurs (Ali et al., 2020). Local research has emphasized the role of psychological factors like self-efficacy and institutional mentorship in shaping entrepreneurial intentions (Farrukh et al., 2018; Batool & Ullah, 2022). Still, in Pakistan, the impact of faculty servant leadership on entrepreneurial intention as a function of entrepreneurial self-efficacy has yet to be investigated.

This is the gap that justifies the current research. This study examines the impact of servant leadership on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intention of university students in Pakistan to contribute to the body of knowledge and practice. From a theoretical perspective, the study combines the constructs of servant leadership and self-efficacy in the context of entrepreneurial intention, thereby enriching the existing literature on leadership and entrepreneurship. From a practical standpoint, the study provides recommendations to universities and policy makers on mentorship and leadership programs aimed at fostering student entrepreneurship in order to bridge the gap between education and the Pakistan socio-economic context.

Theoretical Support

The present study utilizes Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) as a framework that focuses on individual beliefs, social aspects, and learning through observation. From the theory, the construct of entrepreneurial self-efficacy is one of the primary under self-efficacy of the environment and social factors. Abstract of its social facets, the servant leadership has elements of mentoring and support, thus providing students with mastery experiences, vicarious learning, and verbal persuasion, which are the predominant sources of self-efficacy. Students are more likely to encounter the faculty as servant leaders and, thus, tend to develop strong beliefs

about their entrepreneurial capabilities which, as a result, enhances their entrepreneurial intentions (Newman et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2023). Therefore, social cognitive theory is a reasonable theory to justify the entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a mediator between servant leadership and entrepreneurial intentions.

The work is also supported by Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, which claims that intention is what matters most when it comes to predicting intent, and is supported by behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Within the Theory of Planned Behavior, servant leaders support and sustain the ethics and positive learning culture and climate which assists in fostering positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship. Also, perceived behavioral control, which is an important predictor of entrepreneurial intention, is strengthened by servant leadership through an enhancement of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Prior research states that entrepreneurial intention is enhanced when individuals possess the belief that they have the requisite skills to successfully engage in an entrepreneurial endeavor (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Malebana, 2021). The current study, which integrates these two theoretical perspectives, proposes that it is entrepreneurial self-efficacy which mediates the enhancement of entrepreneurial intentions by servant leadership in the context of a Pakistani university.

Hypotheses Development

Servant Leadership and Entrepreneurial Intention

Servant leadership shifts away from traditional authoritative leadership and towards empowering and nurturing followers, which proves to be more effective (Eva et al., 2019). In higher education, faculty and mentors practicing servant leadership build trust and empathic relationships and provide individualized attention, supporting students' motivation, creativity, and responsibility (Liden et al., 2015; Bavik et al., 2020). From an entrepreneurial standpoint, servant leaders exemplify encouraging students to transcend conventional employment and embrace

entrepreneurship. They challenge and change students' entrepreneurial intentions and demonstrate that entrepreneurship is a widely-available and favorable opportunity. Cross-culturally, research suggests that students are more inclined to become entrepreneurs under such leadership (Shirokova et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2020).

According to Panjabi researchers, 'entrepreneurship is still new but important for remedying youth unemployment and economic despair and the role of the faculty in promoting entrepreneurial intentions is therefore critically important' (Ali et al., 2020; Yousaf et al., 2023). 'Although universities in Pakistan are now largely host to entrepreneurial programs, and therefore, are considered incubators of entrepreneurship, students rely almost exclusively on the faculty for mentorship, guidance, and support' (Khalil et al., 2022). Servant leaders provide more than just academic mentorship; they also offer encouragement and emotional support which influences the students' interest in pursuing entrepreneurship. Servant leaders provide a psychologically safe and empowering atmosphere which increases students' self-efficacy and in turn, increases the likelihood of choosing to become an entrepreneur rather than take up a more traditional job. This enables one to conclude that servant leadership has a positive effect on students' entrepreneurial intentions.

H1: Servant leadership is positively associated with entrepreneurial intention among university students.

Servant Leadership and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

ESE is the belief an individual possesses in their own capabilities to carry out entrepreneurial activities. ESE is pivotal in the prediction of entrepreneurial intention and behavior (Bandura, 1997; Newman et al., 2019). Servant leadership enhances ESE by how these leaders concerned about the development of their followers, made available mastery experiences, affirmative guidance, and vicarious learning, which are all crucial to self-efficacy. In the case of students, learning how the teachers resolve problems,

persistence, and providing guidance offers a model of entrepreneurial behavior which enhances the students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Hsu et al., 2019; Malebana, 2021). Further, servant leaders' encouragement and support is a form of verbal persuasion that enhances students' confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities. Evidence from around the world shows that the mentorship and supportive leadership behaviors in the entrepreneurial context increase self-efficacy (Wu et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2023).

Considering that even the field of education is nascent in the regional context of Pakistan, fostering the self-beliefs of students requires the faculty to focus more on nurturing the areas of self-confidence about their capabilities and potential. There are students who come from certain cultures and social systems that impose psychological hindrances towards self-entrepreneurship. (Batool & Ullah, 2022). The Servant leadership style teaches that by removing and reframing the barriers through reinforcing the student's belief in himself, the students' psychological self-image can then be reshaped. Servant leaders are more willing to invite students into hands on projects, inter-university business case competitions, and incubation programs, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is further developed through augmenting engagement and robust scaffolding. Thus, the assertion can be made that servant leadership will increase the self-efficacy of entrepreneurial behavior among university students in Pakistan.

H2: Servant leadership is positively associated with entrepreneurial self-efficacy among university students.

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has repeatedly shown to be one of the most powerful predictors of entrepreneurial intention regardless of context (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Newman et al., 2019). As posited by social cognitive theory, self-efficacy beliefs influence the level of motivation, effort, and even which activities to engage in within the context of pursuing difficult objectives of which

entrepreneurship is one (Bandura, 1997). Highly entrepreneurial self-efficacious individuals are more confident in opportunity recognition, resource mobilization, and barrier navigation, which increases the intention to start a business (Hsu et al., 2019). Studies conducted across the globe indicate that ESE boosts entrepreneurial intentions by equipping individuals with the psychological arsenal to actively pursue favorable entrepreneurial attitudes toward actionable plans (Malebana, 2021; Shi et al., 2023). ESE is therefore a vital psychological determinant, underpinning students' choices to pursue entrepreneurship in their careers.

Self-efficacy in entrepreneurship is particularly important in Pakistan due to the limited access to capital, the absence of entrepreneurial role models, and the cultural bias towards conservative professions, which students, particularly, have to grapple with (Ali et al., 2020). Having greater self-efficacy allows students to overcome these societal and cultural barriers because they believe in their capabilities. Newer research in Pakistan also emphasizes that self-efficacy in entrepreneurship is a strong predictor of entrepreneurial intention in university students (Farrukh et al, 2018; Khalil et al, 2022). Hence, focusing on developing ESE is, in the current scenario, a pragmatic method of fostering entrepreneurial intention in the region. This makes ESE critical to understanding the entrepreneurial mindset among students in Pakistan.

H3: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is positively associated with entrepreneurial intention among university students.

Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Servant leadership has a direct impact on entrepreneurial intentions, although the impact is often through psychological factors like entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Servant leadership increases self-efficacy through mentorship, encouragement, and the facilitation of experiential learning actively provided to students (Eva et al, 2019; Wu et al, 2020). Higher self-efficacy leads to stronger entrepreneurial intentions, as students are more willing to

consider entrepreneurship as a career (Newman et al, 2019). This means self-efficacy works as a proxy mediating variable that justifies why servant leadership fulfills entrepreneurial intentions. Research, as a whole, confirms this mediated relationship stating that as a result of improved self-efficacy, leadership and educational programs targeting the enhancement of entrepreneurial intentions are more effective (Hsu et al, 2019; Shi et al, 2023).

Batool and Ullah (2022) explained that within the context of Pakistan, the lack of developed systems and education in self-driving entrepreneurship, self-efficacy becomes a cornerstone. Self-efficacy allows the person to imagine the possibility of attaining desired goals and the ability to take action, and these goals might be very much beyond what the person is holding. The leader’s attitude makes the person feel that it is possible, so it drives away the fear and makes them more resilient so that they can be more confident in jumping catastrophic applications. Then, self-efficacy becomes a stronger predictor of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors. Research that has been conducted in self-efficacy in Pakistan suggests that self-efficacy explains the relationship between the educational and institutional entrepreneurial intention supports and self-efficacy (Farrukh et al., 2018; Yousaf et al., 2023). Hence, the reasoning above illustrates why it is important to analyze self-efficacy and why it functions as a boundary condition in terms developing

European entrepreneurship in the context of university students the country.

H4: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the relationship between servant leadership and entrepreneurial intention among university students.

Research Model

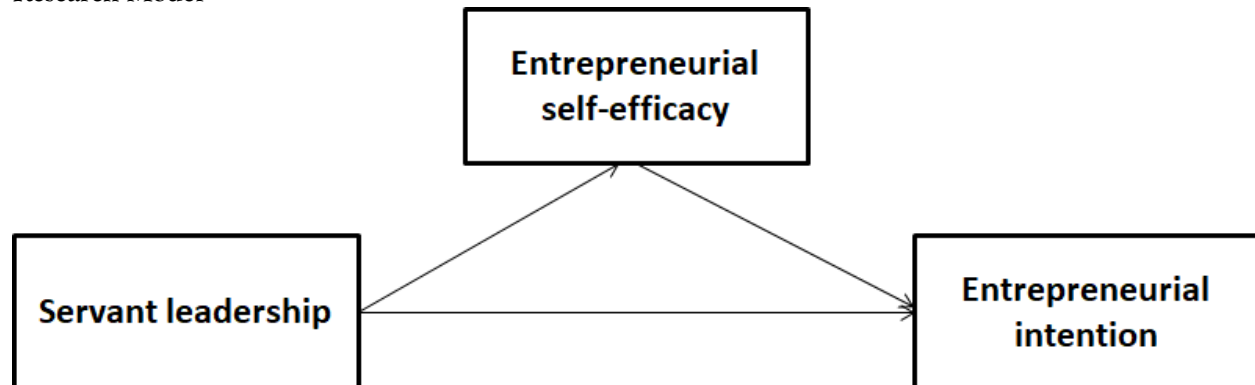


Figure 1. Research Model

Methodology

This study uses quantitative methods and cross-sectional research design using surveys as it captures the essence of the relationship of interest and leadership perception, psychological processes, and behavioral intentions. It studied the entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a mediator of servant leadership and entrepreneurial intentions, hence the application of Preacher and Hayes (2008) mediation analysis using the PROCESS Macro for SPSS. This approach is appreciated for the indirect effect estimates offered by the bootstrapping approach, which provides more valid results than the causal steps approach paddled by other methods. The study was conducted among universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan where the need for teaching and developing suppositional young entrepreneurs is gaining significance. The target population was selected from business and management students as they had better chances of learning and mentoring about the entrepreneurial course, hence, better suited for the study.

Sampling students from laudable public and private universities from various districts of KP required the implementation of stratified random sampling methods. In each stratum, students were chosen randomly to eliminate the chances of sampling bias. In mediation studies, as in Hayes (2013), a minimum of 200 cases considered to be acceptable. In such cases, a larger sample is preferred in order to increase the statistical power of the study. In this study, data was collected from 400 business students from Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, University of Peshawar, Islamia College University Peshawar, and Hazara University as well as from some private universities. Each student was given a structured questionnaire which ensued from

the scales developed on servant leadership student perceived faculty mentorship, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention. All respondents' participation was voluntary, and prior to the collection of data, confidentiality was promised. Informed consent was also obtained from the respondents. The institutional review boards also approved of the procedures to be followed in order to comply with the ethics of academic research.

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire was used to guide data collection which for this study was subdivided into three sections. These sections were: servant leadership, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), entrepreneurial intention, all of which were scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Servant leadership was measured with 7 items developed by Liden et al. (2008) and Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) with an emphasis on faculty mentorship, empowerment and follower growth (Eva et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2020). ESE self-efficacy was measured with 6 items by Chen, Greene, & Crick (1998) and Kickul et al. (2009) on students' confidence to engage in entrepreneurial activities such as opportunity recognition and risk taking (Newman et al., 2019; Malebana, 2021). Entrepreneurial intention was measured with five items by Liñán & Chen (2009) and by Liñán & Fayolle (2015) which measured students' intention to start a business (Shi et al., 2023; Shirokova et al., 2021). There were also some demographic data captured which consisted of age, gender, program, and year of study. To improve clarity of the questionnaire, 30 students were used as a sample and the scales were tested for reliability with Cronbach's alpha before the hypotheses were tested.

Results

Respondents' Profile

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile (n = 400)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	220	55
	Female	180	45

Age (years)	18-20	90	22.5
	21-23	200	50
	24-26	70	17.5
	27+	40	10
Program	BBA/Business	260	65
	MBA/Management	140	35
Year of Study	1st Year	80	20
	2nd Year	120	30
	3rd Year	100	25
	4th Year	100	25

Table 1 demonstrates that the sample's population included slightly more male (55%) than female students (45%). This indicates that the sample's gender ratio was appropriate for analysis. Most respondents surveyed (50%) were 21-23 years of age, which is consistent with the expected age for undergraduate and early postgraduate students. In terms of academic programs pursued, 65% of respondents were enrolled in BBA/business programs while 35% were in MBA/management programs. This provides a balanced mix of students with

exposure to entrepreneurship education. Participation across years of study was also balanced with a slight overrepresentation of second-year students (30%). The demographic profile therefore suggests that the sample of students surveyed from KP universities is rich and varied, which is advantageous in exploring the proposed relationships between servant leadership and entrepreneurial self-efficacy/intentions.

Reliability Analysis

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of Study Variables

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Servant Leadership	7	0.88
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	6	0.85
Entrepreneurial Intention	5	0.87

Table 2 illustrates that every variable within the study displayed excellent internal consistency. The servant leadership component yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 stemming from the seven items, thus demonstrating strong reliability and excellent correlation between items measuring student perceptions of faculty mentorship. For entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the six items had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, which denotes strong reliability corresponding with the items measuring a student's perceived capability toward entrepreneurial tasks. Regarding

entrepreneurial intention, which was assessed through five items, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 was recorded, demonstrating strong reliability and reinforcing that the items evaluated a student's motivation toward business initiation. The reliability assessments conducted in this research confirm that the measurement instruments are appropriate for empirical hypothesis testing, with the mediation analysis conducted in this research utilizing the Preacher and Hayes methodology.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	No. of Items	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Servant Leadership	7	4.12	0.53
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	6	3.95	0.60
Entrepreneurial Intention	5	4.05	0.57

In Table 3, we see that the mean scores of the variables of the study are rather great and that the respondents to the study perceived the faculty to be servant leaders to themselves (M = 4.12), reported having moderate to high confidence in their entrepreneurial skills (ESE, M = 3.95), and had high entrepreneurial intention (M = 4.05). All standard deviations for the variables are less than one, implying that there is not much variability in the responses captured and that there is great consensus among the participants regarding their perceptions of the matter. These results further imply that along these aspects, the students in the sample understood the faculty to take a supportive stance, believed to be able to

accomplish entrepreneurial work and were willing to take part in entrepreneurial activities. These descriptive statistics form a reasonable basis for further computation like correlation and mediation with the Preacher and Hayes method.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was performed to analyze the degree and direction for the relationships between variables in the study which includes servant leadership, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), and entrepreneurial intention. All relationships were analyzed using Pearson’s coefficients and the significance level was set to $p < 0.01$.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Servant Leadership	1		
2. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	0.62**	1	
3. Entrepreneurial Intention	0.58**	0.65**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

Based on Table 4, all variables are significantly positively correlated. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and leadership served are positively correlated ($r = 0.62, p < 0.01$) and entrepreneurial intention ($r = 0.58, p < 0.01$) which means that students reporting more faculty mentorship and support are more confident and willing to pursue entrepreneurial activities. Also, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention are positively correlated ($r = 0.65, p < 0.01$) which means that students with self-efficacy are more likely to develop strong entrepreneurial intentions. These findings offer initial evidence for the proposed relationships and suggest that all variables are sufficiently correlated to perform

mediation analysis using Preacher and Hayes methodology.

Regression Analysis

Analysis was conducted to observe direct relationships between the variables as described under “servant leadership,” “entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE),” and “entrepreneurial intention” using regression and regression calculation. Before running the mediation analysis, the direct effects were hypothesized and tested using multiple regression.

Table 5: Regression Analysis for Direct Effects

Dependent Variable	Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	Servant Leadership	0.58	0.05	0.62	11.60	0.000
Entrepreneurial Intention	Servant Leadership	0.50	0.06	0.58	10.00	0.000
Entrepreneurial Intention	Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	0.55	0.05	0.65	12.00	0.000

As shown on the regression analysis, servant leadership positively predicts entrepreneurial self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$) and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$) and, predictably, self-efficacy, in turn, positively predicts entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$). These results validate H1, H2, and H3 as they demonstrate that faculty mentorship improves students' confidence in entrepreneurial tasks and more intention to participate in entrepreneurial activities.

Mediation Analysis

Table 6: Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effect of Servant Leadership on Entrepreneurial Intention via ESE)

Path	Effect	SE	t	p	95% CI (Bootstrapped)
SL \rightarrow ESE \rightarrow EI (Indirect Effect)	0.32	0.04	–	0.000	0.24 to 0.41
SL \rightarrow EI (Direct Effect)	0.26	0.06	4.33	0.000	0.14 to 0.38
Total Effect (SL \rightarrow EI)	0.58	0.06	10.00	0.000	0.46 to 0.70

The analysis implies that self-efficacy has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between servant leadership and the entrepreneurial intentions. The effect size is positive and indirect (SL \rightarrow ESE \rightarrow EI) and significant (effect = 0.32, 95% CI [0.24, 0.41]) and the direct effect of servant leadership on entrepreneurial intention is still significant (effect = 0.26, $p < 0.001$) which indicates partial mediation. This confirms H4 and demonstrates that servant leadership directly and indirectly increases students' entrepreneurial intentions by enhancing their self-efficacy. In general, the findings illuminate the psychological dimension of entrepreneurial motivation which stems from faculty mentorship for university students in Pakistan.

Discussion

This study analyzed the effect of the servant leadership style on the entrepreneurial intentions of university students in Pakistan, along with the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) on this

The Preacher and Hayes (2008) bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, this time applied in the context of the PROCESS Macro (Model 4), was used to determine whether and to what extent entrepreneurial self-efficacy served as a mediator on the relationship between servant leadership and entrepreneurial intention. Bootstrapping method the ability to approximate confidence intervals on bias corrections for indirect effects which means it can be used to assess the different types of mediation without making the normality assumption.

relationship as a mediating variable. All hypothesized relationships were confirmed which helps to sustain the theoretical and empirical relevance of these relationships with regards to entrepreneurial education.

The first hypothesis that servant leadership would positively influence a student's intention to become an entrepreneur was confirmed. It was discovered that students who relate to their instructors as concerned, caring and willing to assist them in their advancement stand a greater chance of engaging in entrepreneurial activities. This parallels the research on a student's entrepreneur career orientation and the influence of leadership and mentoring (Shirokova et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). Servant leaders in the educational environment act as sponsors and guides, which helps to galvanize and stimulate students to touch on entrepreneurial activities, while the educational system's framework is geared to support them (Eva et al., 2019). This is particularly applicable in the context of Pakistan

where there is an increased concern for tackling youth employment issues which is mainly through the promotion of entrepreneurship education (Ali et al, 2020, Yousaf et al., 2023).

The second hypothesis which predicted a positive correlation between self-efficacy of entrepreneurship and servant leadership was also confirmed. The findings indicate that students who report having a mentor and support from the faculty self-evaluate their entrepreneurial skills at a much higher level. This corroborates social cognitive theory, which states that self-efficacy is enhanced through role models and leaders who provide positive reinforcement, feedback, and opportunities to practice (Bandura, 1997; Newman et al., 2019). A similar trend has been documented in overarching research as servant leadership corroborated the self-efficacy and willingness to entrepreneurship of the followers (Hsu et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2023). In Pakistan, students attempt to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors amidst complicated socio-economic circumstances. In such scenarios, the substantial mentorship provided by faculty is paramount in encouraging self-belief and self-efficacy around entrepreneurial endeavors (Batool & Ullah, 2022).

The third hypothesis, which proposed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively affects entrepreneurial intention, was supported. Students with greater self-efficacy showed greater intention to become entrepreneurs, mirroring the Theory of Planned Behavior, which regards self-efficacy as a primary predictor of intention (Ajzen, 1991). These findings support earlier studies that ESE is one of the strongest predictors of entrepreneurial intentions regardless of the culture and level of education (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Malebana, 2021). In the case of Pakistan, university students who have more confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities were more likely to demarcate the structural and social obstacles to entrepreneurship, thereby increasing their willingness to start new ventures (Farrukh et al., 2018; Khalil et al., 2022).

The support for the mediation hypothesis indicates that entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) uniquely, though partially, mediates the

association between servant leadership and entrepreneurial intention. The entrepreneurial intention of students is influenced by self-efficacy, which is enhanced by faculty mentorship, as the indirect effect indicates. The indirect effect indicates that other psychological and contextual elements could also be involved. This finding is consistent with earlier research which emphasizes ESE as a vital psychological factor that supportive leadership or educational intervention translates to entrepreneurial activity (Newman et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2023). This effect, in the context of Pakistan, emphasizes the significance of faculty role and mentorship in entrepreneurship education, as they help improve students ESE which positively impacts their motivation to carry out entrepreneurial endeavors (Batool & Ullah, 2022; Ali et al., 2020).

Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

This paper develops the field of entrepreneurship and leadership by highlighting the direct and indirect impacts of servant leadership on students' intention to become entrepreneurs. The finding of self-efficacy as a fully mediating variable provides a psychological rationale as to why self-efficacy, as a result of leadership practices, is a source of entrepreneurial motivation, thereby integrating social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to the context of Pakistan's higher education. It also expands the understanding of servant leadership beyond the workplace by demonstrating its use within educational institutions designed to foster an entrepreneurial mindset and proactive career encouragement (Eva et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2020).

Practical Implications

The findings also augment the need for mentorship and servant leadership for the entrepreneurial activities of students, particularly for instructors and university leaders. Faculty training programs focused on individual mentoring, actionable feedback, and autonomy diminish the barriers to student self-efficacy,

thereby enhancing students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the likelihood of venture creation. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that universities should integrate mentorship driven entrepreneurship programs, workshops, and incubation to develop an ecosystem that nurtures and self-confidence in students toward entrepreneurial activities.

Policy Implications

These insights may be used as a foundation on which relevant science policy can be developed by the HEC and higher education authorities in Pakistan concerning the incorporation of teaching mentorship and entrepreneurship into curriculum development. Such policy will increase the entrepreneurial culture within universities and, more generally, within the society by stimulating the participation of faculty members through engagement incentives and mentorship in entrepreneurship school programs and student incubation centers. There are likely to be significant socio-economic benefits as well, as the skills students acquire will increase self-employment and employment opportunities, and increase the innovation and economic growth in Pakistan.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this research has added to our understanding of servant leadership, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intentions, we must also recognize its limitations. The first issue pertains to the study's cross-sectional design. As such, the study is unable to demonstrate cause-and-effect relationships between variables: longitudinal studies can better establish temporal relationships. The second issue is that data was collected from only the business and management students from universities located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, which may significantly limit the ability to generalize the findings across other disciplines, countries, or regions. The third issue is that this study was based solely on self-reported surveys. This data collection method is the most likely to perpetuate social desirability bias regardless of the

anonymity provisions made. Moreover, concern was given to entrepreneurial self-efficacy and other psychological or contextual elements such as risk-taking, social capital, or institutional support were left out, which can affect entrepreneurial intentions. Future studies to this research can aim to extend thinking about longitudinal or experimental designs, diverse geographic and academic students, and more mediators or moderators like perspective traits, culture, and the university entrepreneurship ecosystem of the country. These studies will aim to broaden the insight of how the leadership and support from institutions drives the students in Pakistan and around the world to become more enterprising.

Conclusion

The current study assessed the effect of servant leadership on the entrepreneurial intentions of university students in Pakistan and tested the mediating impact of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The results verify that faculty mentorship, in terms of nurturing and advocacy, greatly boosts students' confidence in entrepreneurial activities and bolsters their entrepreneurial career intentions. The results also indicate that entrepreneurial self-efficacy partially mediates the effect of servant leadership on entrepreneurial intention, thereby illuminating the psychological pathway that transforms servant leadership into entrepreneurial motivation. These results advance the theory of leadership and entrepreneurship by further applying the social cognitive theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior in higher education in emerging economies such as Pakistan.

In practice, the research highlights the need to cultivate servant leadership behaviors among faculty members and to implement mentorship-centered entrepreneurship programs to improve students' self-confidence and preparedness for entrepreneurial activities. From a policy perspective, the research indicates that the relevant authorities in Pakistan's higher education system, including the HEC, need to implement policies that positively reward faculty mentorship, entrepreneurial-centered curriculum

frameworks, and entrepreneurial incubation programs to enhance the university entrepreneurial ecosystem. In summary, the research highlights the role of leadership driven psychological empowerment as the most critical element in shaping students' entrepreneurial intent and provides a framework for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in fostering entrepreneurship within higher education at the local and global scales.

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