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Attitude and Perceptions of Students Towards Entrepreneurship in Jammu and Kashmir

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***Abstract*— Entrepreneurship development is central to socio-economic growth in both developed and developing countries. In the case of India, it is a stated national policy to promote startups and kindle the entrepreneurial spirit among the youth. Else, there is a risk of the demographic dividend becoming a liability. Several states in India have made remarkable progress in this domain resulting in an established ecosystem for entrepreneurship development and support. Jammu and Kashmir, the northernmost region in the nation, also needs to emulate such successful models while leveraging government policies designed to support entrepreneurship. This exploratory study therefore examines the attitudes and perception of students in higher technical education towards entrepreneurship and choosing it as a career option. We conclude that government agencies, technical institutions, universities, schools, industry, and professional bodies need to come together with a viable action plan based around awareness, customized programs, deep engagement, handholding, mentoring and support for young students to see real outcomes on the ground.**

***Keywords*— Entrepreneurship Development; Startups; Jammu and Kashmir**

***JEET Category*—Research**

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a growth engine for nations manifesting in new business creation, jobs, innovation, wealth creation and positive societal impact. Major economies in the world are entrepreneur driven. Therefore, entrepreneurship development is a major agenda for most nations. Entrepreneurship is regarded as a driver of innovation and as an engine for sustainable economic growth. The existence of a strong and positive relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development of a nation is well established. This is especially true for developing economies as Governments do not have the wherewithal to ensure inclusive economic growth for its citizens. Hence, a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem is critical for developing economies.

In terms of wealth and employment creation, generation of taxes and new product/service creation, entrepreneurship accelerates nation building along multiple dimensions. It results in not only economic prosperity but also an expansion of industrialization, increased pace of innovation, raised living standards of the population and societal wellbeing. India has embraced entrepreneurship as a national policy through the "Make in India" and "Startup India" campaigns which have generated interest in entrepreneurship in India tremendously. Almost all the regions of India have recorded noticeable entrepreneurial development in recent years as a result of the collaborative efforts of central and state governments, regional bodies, governmental and non-governmental bodies, educational institutions, and the broader ecosystem. Several initiatives and steps are being taken in Tier-II/III cities in India to spur entrepreneurship and startups. These Tier-II/III cities possess immense potential for entrepreneurship; however, they lack essential elements of the entrepreneurial culture and environment including adequate awareness, critical support and resources to broad base entrepreneurship as a career option. It is pertinent to mention the pivotal role the Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) can play to enhance the appropriate understanding and create adequate awareness regarding entrepreneurship at grassroots level. HEIs can instill the willingness and intention among youth to opt for entrepreneurship as a career option through several measures including conferences, webinars, guest lectures, distinguished lecture series, training sessions, sharing of success stories, initial career guidance, mentoring, organization of startup and entrepreneurship fests and competitions. Numerous studies reported that HEIs are the major players in the formation of students' attitude and perception towards entrepreneurship (Anjum et.al, 2022; Nesrin, 2021; Mary & Rajashekhar, 2021). As the students in higher education institutes are prospective future entrepreneurs, hence, analyzing their attitude and perception towards entrepreneurship is extremely essential for formulating strategies to strengthen the entrepreneurial culture.

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The current study is extremely relevant especially in the context of Jammu and Kashmir, which has had a checkered history. Economic development and empowerment of the youth of J&K through entrepreneurship development is therefore a critical area which needs to be supported by in-depth and real-world research studies.

The present study is an attempt to bridge the gap in the domain

and has high social relevance for J&K while being relevant to a mission of national importance. It will contribute to promoting regional entrepreneurship by forming the basis of a viable policy formulation customized to the needs of the region, based on insights into the attitudes and perceptions of the potential entrepreneurs in the region. Further to this, creating a vibrant Entrepreneurship culture and environment in J&K has wide-ranging ramifications for the future growth and development of this region. Currently, there are no comprehensive research studies carried out to analyze the attitude and perception of students towards entrepreneurship development initiatives in J&K. The proposed study therefore shall involve a comprehensive analysis of attitude and perception of students in Higher Education Institutes towards entrepreneurship. The study shall provide valuable insights for fostering entrepreneurial education, identifying the barriers and challenges, promoting an entrepreneurial mindset and has implications for education, innovation, and societal wellbeing.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Entrepreneurship is considered as an important pillar in the economic development of a nation, for employment generation, problem-solving and social welfare which ultimately contributes to national growth. It has been highlighted in several studies that a conducive environment or a mature 'Entrepreneurial Ecosystem' is the foremost requirement for the spread of entrepreneurship and for the success of an entrepreneur (Maroufkhani, Wagner & Ismail, 2017; Mason & Brown, 2014). Recent research has established the importance of studying the attitude and perceptions of the students for fostering an entrepreneurial culture and subsequent studies have been conducted by Zhang et. al (2022); Anjum et.al (2022); Nesrin (2021) and Mary & Rajashekhar (2021). These studies conclude that students have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education and are keen to take up entrepreneurship as a career option despite several obstacles. Entrepreneurial intentions of the students have also been the focus area of research in studies by Adeyemo et al. (2021); Obschonka et al. (2017) and Ferreira et al. (2017).

The role of universities and higher education institutes in supporting economies and promoting societal well-being has been highlighted in a study by Ratten (2017). Universities with the right culture help to shape the intentions of the students and subsequent efforts towards entrepreneurship and making them capable enough to develop a new venture (Anjum et al., 2022). This means that capacity and capability building for HEIs to support entrepreneurship is required (Kallany & Suresh, 2018; Husain et al, 2018). Similar findings were advocated in a study conducted by Ibrahim et.al (2017).

There have been several studies on entrepreneurial intentions in the Indian context which have highlighted the factors influencing the students' intentions and attitude towards entrepreneurship (Soam et. al, 2023; Hassan et al., 2020; Bhasin & Gupta, 2017; Pandit et al., 2018). Students hold a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, in spite of several factors including less knowledge and experience of the domain, decision-making skills, and less support from family. The students are the most important stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem and require nurturing and handholding (Sushila, 2019).

However, no one player can ensure the institutionalizing of the culture of entrepreneurship in any region. It will take the combined efforts of all stakeholders including changing the mindset of the society around issues such as careers, success, job security, risk-taking ability to spur a growth mindset across all sectors to ensure that entrepreneurship takes strong roots in remote regions of India, including Jammu and Kashmir which has had its own challenges in the past.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Objectives

1. To study the perception and attitude of students towards entrepreneurship.
2. To investigate the factors affecting the perception and attitude of students towards pursuing entrepreneurship.
3. To provide suggestive interventions for strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

B. Sampling Frame and Data Collection

Exploration of the objectives of the study requires a survey design to assess the attitude and perceptions of the students towards the Entrepreneurial ecosystem including the students of various higher education institutes in Jammu and Kashmir. The Stratified random sampling technique has been used to collect data from the respondents. The sample size included 451 students from different technical education institutes across Jammu and Kashmir. The quantitative data from the students was collected by using a self-structured questionnaire. The pretesting of the questionnaire was done by collecting responses from 150 students. The purpose of conducting the pilot survey was to establish the relevance of the instruments and the degree of accuracy to give the desired results. The survey questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section 1 contained questions related to the demographic profile of the respondents and the sectoral preference of the students to take up entrepreneurship. Section 2 included the questions related to measuring the attitude and perception of engineering students towards entrepreneurship. Out of the 500 responses only 451 were found filled and valid for use. A five-point Likert scale was employed in this study starting from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data has been analyzed using IBM SPSS 26.

C. Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out in a series of steps. For checking the internal consistency of the constructs, Cronbach alpha was used to calculate the reliability of the measurement analysis. Further, principal component analysis was used to extract the factors with appropriate loading. Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship among the extracted factors. Multiple regression analysis was then used to see the impact of entrepreneurial inspiration, entrepreneurial support, entrepreneurial intention on entrepreneurial perception as well as attitude towards entrepreneurship.

TABLE I
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	289	64.1
Female	162	35.9
Age		
18-21 years	354	78.49
21-24 years	97	21.50

1) Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents has been presented in Table I which indicates the respondents were mostly males (64%).

Further, 78% of respondents were in the age group of 18-21 years and 22% were in the age group of 21-24 years.

2) Student Perception regarding the Scope of Startups in J&K

Majority of the students perceive Tourism and Hospitality Industry as the most attractive industry for setting up startups in J&K, 55% of the respondents see more scope in Fruits and Dry fruits industry and the least perceived industry is Fin-tech and Financial Services. Fig.1 below indicated the perception of engineering students regarding the sector wise scope of startups in Jammu and Kashmir.

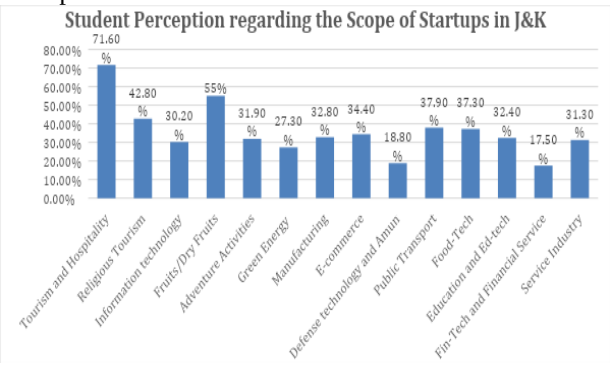

Fig. 1. Student Perception regarding the Sectoral Scope of Startups In J&K
Source: Data Analysis

3) Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to uncover the structure of the underlying variables. The Keiser Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (Kaiser 1974) and Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Bartlett 1954) were used to test the justification of factor analysis implementation. A principal component analysis and extraction method with a Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation was used to determine the factor loading and commonalities. The test of appropriateness of a factor analysis is the KMO measure of sampling adequacy where high values (>0.6) (TableII) indicate its relevance for further analysis.

TABLE II
KMO VALUE AND BARTLETT'S TEST OF SPHERICITY

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.892	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3786.432
	Df	351
	Sig.	.000

The total of 30 statements related to Attitude and perception towards Entrepreneurship were subjected to principal component analysis and five factors were extracted with appropriate loadings. Table III indicates the five extracted factors namely Entrepreneurial Intention, Entrepreneurial support, Entrepreneurial Inspiration, Attitude towards Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Perception along with the reliability of each construct. The Cronbach Alpha value of greater than 0.7 proves the reliability of the extracted factors. (Nunnally,1978).

TABLE III
COMPONENT MATRIX- FACTOR LOADINGS

Factor	Measurement Items	Factor Loading	CronBach Alpha
EN	I aspire to be a successful entrepreneur in the future	.535	0.873
	I follow news and updates about entrepreneurship and startups	.533	
	I have developed some ideas around a startup	.517	
	I am ready to use my own funds or funds from family/friends to launch my startup	.525	
	I think I can change my future employment direction	.640	
ES	There are many government schemes to promote and support entrepreneurs/startups in J&K	.545	0.616
	There are multiple startups incubators in J&K where I can get support in launching my startup	.654	
	My college/University organizes many events related to entrepreneurships/startups	.612	
	Governments and industrial bodies in J&K conducts awareness sessions on entrepreneurship/startup	.734	
	I can get guidance and support from my institution on my startup idea.	.802	
	My family would support me in case I decide to start my own venture.	.543	
	I need additional support in terms of guidance and finances to start my venture.	.617	
EI	There is a startup/entrepreneurship success story from my institution/region/UT.	.576	0.743

	I have a successful entrepreneur in my family	.632	
	The entrepreneurship opportunities in J&K changed my perception to successfully start my own business and become an entrepreneur	.573	
ATE	A career as an Entrepreneur is attractive for me.	.643	0.732
	Among various career options, I'd rather be an entrepreneur.	.560	
	Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfaction for me.	.616	
EP	It is unrealistic to expect college students to launch startups in J&K.	.585	0.845
	J&K is a good market to launch startups	.596	
	Startups founders and entrepreneurs enjoy the respect of the society.	.556	
	The earning potential of a successful entrepreneur is more than in a job	.641	
	Engineers are more likely to become successful startup founders	.690	
	Entrepreneurship can be considered as a career option in J&K	.526	
	Venturing into entrepreneurship is a risky business	.529	
	Those who can not get a decent job venture into entrepreneurship	.619	
	You should have a sound technical knowledge to start a business	.734	
	Lack of finance is one of the main reasons why many students don't start a business/firm	.814	
	You cannot start a business if you do not have good knowledge of the product or service	.735	

Thereafter, to examine the relationship among the various variables viz. entrepreneurial perception, entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial support, entrepreneurial inspiration and attitude towards entrepreneurship, correlation analysis was conducted the results of which have been presented in Table IV. has been conducted. This was followed by regression analysis to study the impact of entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial support and entrepreneurial inspiration on the attitude towards entrepreneurship and on entrepreneurial perception.

TABLE IV
CORRELATION MATRIX

		EN	ES	EI	ATE	EP
EN	Pearson Correlation	1	.554**	.677**	.513	.413**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	451	451	451	451	451
ES	Pearson Correlation	.554**	1	.638**	.673	.400**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	451	451	451	451	451
EI	Pearson Correlation	.677**	.638**	1	.681	.513**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	451	451	451	451	451
ATE	Pearson Correlation	.513	.673	.681	1	.548
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	451	451	451	451	451
EP	Pearson Correlation	.413**	.400**	.513**	.548	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	451	451	451	451	451

According to Table IV, entrepreneurial intention (r=.413, p=.000), entrepreneurial support (r =.400, p=.000), entrepreneurial inspiration (r=.513, p=.000) and attitude towards entrepreneurship (r=.548, p=.000) have a significantly positive relationship with entrepreneurial perception.

The values of entrepreneurial intention (r=.513, p=.000), entrepreneurial support (r=.673, p=.000), entrepreneurial inspiration (r=.681, p=.000), and entrepreneurial perception (r=.548, p=.000) have a significantly positive relationship with attitude towards entrepreneurship.

Therefore, a multiple regression analysis was undertaken with entrepreneurial perception as the dependent variable and entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial support and entrepreneurial inspiration as the independent variables.

TABLE V
MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.526[a]	.727	.725	.43917	.277	57.084	3	447	.000

TABLE VI
MODEL SUMMARY

Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
1	Constant	1.652	.157		10.542	.000
	EN	.090	.052	.097	1.740	.001
	ES	.093	.048	.103	1.917	.002
	EI	.373	.059	.382	6.303	.000

The adjusted R square value in Table V is .725 which clearly indicates that the three factors (entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial support, and Entrepreneurial inspiration) together cause 72.5 percent variation in entrepreneurial perception. To examine the impact of entrepreneurial perception, multiple regression analysis has been conducted, the results of which are indicated in Table VI. The results indicate that Entrepreneurial Inspiration (Beta = 0.382, p =

0.000) has the maximum positive influence upon students' entrepreneurial perception followed by Entrepreneurial Support (Beta = 0.103, p = 0.002) and Entrepreneurial Intention (Beta = 0.097, p = 0.001).

The Regression Equation therefore is:
EP=1.652 + 0.090EN + 0.093ES + 0.373EI
where, EN=Entrepreneurial Intention
ES= Entrepreneurial support
EI= Entrepreneurial Inspiration

TABLE VII
MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.503[a]	.643	.647	.38156	.281	54.086	2	468	.000

TABLE VIII
COEFFICIENTS

Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
1	Constant	1.485	.162		10.365	.000
	EN	.416	.051	.384	1.532	.001
	ES	.117	.058	.093	1.863	.002
	EI	.386	.063	.108	5.313	.001

The adjusted R square value in Table VII is .647 which clearly indicates that the three factors (entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial support and Entrepreneurial inspiration) together cause 64.7 percent variation in attitude towards entrepreneurship. To examine attitude towards entrepreneurship, multiple regression analysis has been conducted, the results of which are indicated in Table VIII. The results indicate that Entrepreneurial Intention (Beta = 0.384, p= 0.001) has the maximum positive influence on students' attitude towards entrepreneurship followed by Entrepreneurial Inspiration (Beta =.108, p =.001) and Entrepreneurial Support (Beta =.093, p =.002).

The Regression Equation therefore is:
ATE = 1.485 + 0.416 EN + 0.117 ES + 0.386 EI
Where ATE= Attitude towards Entrepreneurship
EN= Entrepreneurial Intention
ES= Entrepreneurial Support
EI=Entrepreneurial Inspiration

IV. DISCUSSION

The results of the study have shown that students' attitude and perception towards entrepreneurship largely depends on the entrepreneurial intent, entrepreneurial inspiration and the entrepreneurial support the student is receiving. Similar findings have also been corroborated in a study by (Phuong et.al., 2021; Amofah and Saladrigues, 2022). The data shows that students in the region are keen and easily inspired by entrepreneurial success stories and the possibilities. However, the entrepreneurship support system is not well established in terms of mentoring for refining ideas, market analysis, financial planning and projections leading to creation of viable business models and plans. This impacts their perception and intention towards entrepreneurship. Lack of success stories around student entrepreneurship is a major contributing factor which prevents students from pursuing the entrepreneurial path during their studies. While our study has delved into the evaluation of entrepreneurial intent and aspirations among students in the state, it is essential to acknowledge the critical role of customer discovery in the entrepreneurial process. Recognizing and addressing the current issues faced by potential customers is paramount for tailoring products or services, enabling entrepreneurs to pivot their strategies when necessary for optimal impact and success.

V. IMPLICATIONS

The present study has several important implications for policy makers, state government agencies, technical institutions and other entities in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in J&K. The current ecosystem can best be described as nascent. Students in technical institutions are fascinated by entrepreneurship and find it glamorous. Many students come from families with a business/trading background and hence have the mental makeup to become successful entrepreneurs. However, they are unaware of the many supporting policies available to prospective entrepreneurs and lack the confidence to take the first step. The three major incubators in the region have no successful student startups to showcase and a few mature startups have enrolled. This indicates that to create a vibrant student entrepreneurial ecosystem the following interventions are required:

1. An empowered task force should be set up at the regional level comprising industry experts and startup founders with roots in the region to create an actionable roadmap for entrepreneurship development while championing and evangelizing entrepreneurship.
2. Domain-specific support groups should be created with deep domain expertise especially for startups in deep tech leading to product development. This is especially important as most of the new startups are currently being registered in the domains of tourism and hospitality or the service industry.
3. Existing incubators in J&K need to conduct a lot of capacity building workshops for students for idea curation, idea development, solution formulation, prototyping, business plan formulation and launching pilot programmes so that students are equipped with the basic framework for evolving ideas into a business.
4. Entrepreneurship internships/apprenticeships should be started with promising students working with successful entrepreneurs in the region to gain deep insights and first-hand experiential learning.

5. Early success stories around student entrepreneurship need to be created through a model of deep engagement and mentoring of promising student ideas by pairing them with experts in the relevant domains.
6. Prominent accelerators, angel networks and startup funding platforms should be invited to partner with local institutions and help disseminate knowledge around student startup funding and support.
7. Higher Technical Institutions in both the government and private sector need to create in-house capacities and capabilities to support prospective entrepreneurs, backed by financial provisioning and strategic hiring.
8. Entrepreneurship/startup festivals celebrating entrepreneurs in the region should be made into marquee events to transform the perception of the general public around entrepreneurship as a viable option.

VI.CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship is non-trivial, with a high failure rate. Yet, it is the bedrock for economic growth and national supremacy as demonstrated by the USA and other economic powerhouses. India is well-placed to become an entrepreneurial success story with a booming economy, large market, world's largest young workforce and growing geo-political clout. The Indian growth engine needs to fire all-cylinders necessitating each region and state to also embrace startups and entrepreneurship culture. J&K has had a troubled past and it is now ready to turn over a new leaf of economic growth, stability and progress through heightened entrepreneurial activity. This study looks at the perceptions and attitudes of students towards entrepreneurship and suggests cogent interventions designed to accelerate the adoption of entrepreneurship in the region. We believe that a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem can be created in J&K with a well-defined strategy, alignment of all stakeholders and combined concerted efforts in this direction.

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