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Modeling the impact of social factors on students' entrepreneurial intentions at a classical university

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Abstract

This study investigates how external social factors influence entrepreneurial intentions among university students, and whether these effects vary by academic discipline – a topic that has not been explored before. To this end, we analyse survey data from 1,917 students from all faculties at Lomonosov Moscow State University who completed entrepreneurship courses between 2020 and 2024. Using ordinal logit regression, we estimate the influence of the following factors on entrepreneurial intentions: the presence of entrepreneurs in the family, the presence of entrepreneurial friends, perceived peer appraisal of an entrepreneurial career, and the year and field of study. Our findings show that all four factors significantly increase entrepreneurial intentions in the pooled sample ($p < 0.01$). However, the effects vary markedly by field: having entrepreneurial friends is insignificant for Law and Business students, but highly significant for Social sciences/Humanities students. The year of study has a positive effect on the intentions of Management and Mathematics students, but a negative effect on those of Economics students, suggesting that the economics curriculum may steer students towards corporate employment. The perceived attractiveness of a career is not significant for STEM students, reflecting a stronger orientation towards academic research and development (R&D). This study is the first to empirically demonstrate that social factors operate differently across disciplines. Based on these differences, we propose discipline-specific recommendations for encouraging student entrepreneurship.

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Keywords
entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurship education, promoting entrepreneurship, university context, university entrepreneurial environment

JEL: L26, I23, I25.

Introduction

Higher education plays a vital role in shaping students' professional and social identities. During this formative period, it is important to provide an environment in which students can develop highly specialised competencies, as well as soft and universal skills that will benefit them in any career. One such universal competency is a basic knowledge of entrepreneurship and business management. Although not all students will become entrepreneurs, this knowledge enables them to navigate economic interactions more effectively in their professional careers and recognise opportunities for innovation in their respective fields. This recognition has encouraged universities worldwide to introduce entrepreneurship courses beyond traditional economics and management faculties.

Furthermore, the development of entrepreneurial and innovation infrastructure in educational institutions is explicitly intended to improve conditions for setting up a business, with the aim of increasing the number of student-led start-ups. For example, Russia has implemented the federal project 'University Technological Entrepreneurship Platform' since 2022. One of its objectives is to engage large numbers of students in technological entrepreneurship (Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2022). This initiative addresses the need to bridge the gap between scientific developments and innovative products brought to market. Without a steady influx of new entrepreneurs, including university students, commercialising breakthrough technologies is impossible. It is particularly important for students who are not studying economics to develop entrepreneurial competencies, as this enables them to assess the commercial potential of their scientific work and lay the foundation for a new technology-based business.

The intention to start a business precedes actual entrepreneurial action. Researchers have found that students with entrepreneurial intentions are more likely to take concrete steps towards creating a venture (Krueger et al., 2000; Ruiz-Palomino & Martinez-Cañas, 2021), and are also better at recognising economic opportunities than those who are not interested in entrepreneurship (Mohan, 2022; Hossain et al., 2023). While personal characteristics play a key role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions, the external environment is equally important, as certain conditions are more conducive to entrepreneurship than others. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important to study the factors that can impact students' entrepreneurial intentions, particularly those that can be influenced by universities or wider society.

The importance of this issue goes far beyond Russia. Firstly, youth entrepreneurship enables young people to realise their personal potential, and it also contributes to job creation, stimulates innovation and fosters technological development. All these are objectives that align with the policy priorities of many nations. For example, the 2023 GUESSS India national report states that 14% of Indian students are nascent entrepreneurs, while 31% intend to start a business within five years of graduating (GUESSS India, 2023). In China, government-supported small business development programmes predominantly target young participants, reflecting the strategic importance of youth entrepreneurship in that context.

Secondly, a growing body of research examining the factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions has emerged from the BRICS countries, with studies adopting multiple perspectives. Recent studies have explored the impact of cultural intelligence (Li et al., 2026) and perceived university support in China (Su et al., 2021), the role of the educational and business environment in Brazil (Faia et al., 2024) and a range of determinants among polytechnic students in India (Kumar et al., 2024). However, many of these studies are confined to a single field of study, such as tourism and hospitality (Sujood et al., 2024) or business school students (Su et al., 2021), with little attention to systematic comparisons across academic disciplines. The absence of a comparative analysis is a significant gap in the current literature.

This study addresses the question of whether the impact of social factors on entrepreneurial intentions varies depending on a student's field of study. More specifically, we examine how four external factors — the presence of entrepreneurs in the family, the presence of entrepreneurial friends, perceived peer appraisal of an entrepreneurial career, and the year of study — influence students' willingness to engage in entrepreneurship, and how this changes throughout their studies. The respondents are students from Lomonosov Moscow State University. As a classical university with a diverse range of faculties, from the humanities to the natural sciences, it provides a unique setting in which to examine disciplinary heterogeneity while controlling for institutional factors. By examining how these social factors influence different academic disciplines, we can provide empirical evidence to inform more targeted policy interventions that are sensitive to the specific needs of each field and stimulate student entrepreneurship.

Literature review and hypotheses development

Entrepreneurial intentions

Entrepreneurial intentions refer to an individual's desire and willingness to start their own business in the near future, as well as their assessment of how likely they are to do so (Krueger, 1993; Crant, 1996; Shirokova et al., 2016). A great deal of work has been devoted to systematising applied approaches in the study of entrepreneurial intentions

(Hossain et al., 2023; Maheshwari et al., 2023; Batista-Canino et al., 2024). Many studies have examined entrepreneurial intentions in different countries, primarily based on the theory of planned behaviour (Rocha et al., 2022; Su et al., 2021; Sujood et al., 2024; Vu et al., 2024). Our research also adopts this theoretical framework. At the same time, many studies focus on students, since they are usually the most active group when it comes to creating new ventures.

The level of entrepreneurial intentions is determined by a number of factors, the most important of which are the socio-demographic and personal characteristics of students. These characteristics are examined in most articles on this topic (Maheshwari et al., 2023; Fragoso et al., 2020; Sujood et al., 2024). Another area of study is the influence of external factors related to (i) students' social environment (Al-Qadasi et al., 2023; Dragin et al., 2022); (ii) the university environment (Noor, 2024; Bodolica et al., 2024; Van der Linde et al., 2024; Rocha et al., 2022); and (iii) socio-cultural and institutional conditions (Pruett et al., 2009; Al-Qadasi et al., 2023). As universities and government agencies can only influence external factors, understanding their connection to the desire to start a business can inform the prioritisation of measures and support mechanisms aimed at fostering student entrepreneurship.

Family Context

These intentions can be passed down through families (Laspita et al., 2012), an effect linked to parental authority (Dragin et al., 2022). Other factors include the influence of mentors or experts in specific regions or business sectors, access to start-up capital or resources (Ruiz-Palomino & Martinez-Cañas, 2021; Shirokova et al., 2016), and access to social capital and the ability to connect and communicate with existing entrepreneurs (Laspita et al., 2012).

However, some studies have revealed an inverse relationship between the presence of a family business and students' realisation of entrepreneurial intentions (Bogatyreva & Shirokova, 2017). This is probably because students are more likely to take over existing businesses than create new ones, or because negative experiences of family businesses can reduce the desire to pursue entrepreneurship. In this regard, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. The presence of entrepreneurs in the family has a positive effect on students' willingness and desire to engage in entrepreneurship.

Social Context

The influence of the social environment is evident in the responses of significant reference groups, such as family, friends and colleagues, to the decision to start a business. In other words, the student's social environment is considered even before any action is taken, depending on whether they approve or disapprove of their entrepreneurial activity (Gallegos et al., 2024).

Having entrepreneurs among one's classmates and acquaintances has a positive effect on the desire to start a business (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2021; Aka & Enagogo, 2025; Van der Linde et al., 2024). Meanwhile, support from friends has a moderate stimulating effect on entrepreneurial interest. The findings on this influence are mixed. Some studies confirm that public attitudes and the collective perception of entrepreneurship as a desirable career path can significantly influence the formation of entrepreneurial intentions (Van der Linde et al., 2024). However, others find that friends' assessment of the attractiveness of entrepreneurship and social approval have no significant influence (Al–Mamary et al., 2020).

This study focuses on two factors: the presence of entrepreneurs among friends, and how entrepreneurial careers are perceived by students within the student community. We propose the following hypotheses:

H2. The presence of entrepreneurs among their friends has a positive effect on the students' willingness and desire to engage in entrepreneurship.

H3. A positive assessment of an entrepreneurial career by student community has a positive effect on students' willingness and desire to become entrepreneurs.

University environment

The university promotes the identification and realisation of business opportunities by providing students with access to resources, mentoring and practical learning experiences (Van der Linde et al., 2024). The concept of the 'university environment' in the context of entrepreneurial intentions is considered from several perspectives:

1) Entrepreneurial education. This is an important factor, the significance of which has been confirmed by several studies (Chahal et al., 2024; Aka & Enagogo, 2025; Do Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; Otache et al., 2024). However, as all students in our study took an entrepreneurship course, it was not possible to assess the impact of this factor within the model for this sample. Nevertheless, students were asked to self-assess whether the entrepreneurship course had influenced their desire to start a business.

2) The university provides support for business development in the form of specific educational or business events, business club activities, business incubators and other infrastructure elements. This infrastructure helps aspiring entrepreneurs to develop the skills and attitudes they need to create a start-up (Bodolica et al., 2024). As we are studying students from the same university, many of the programmes and organisations available across the university are similar and are not included separately in the model.

3) Perceived university support: students' awareness of the support available to them and the general atmosphere that encourages entrepreneurial initiatives. The results of the impact assessment are inconsistent. Several studies have shown that a favourable entrepreneurial climate at university positively influences students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship and behavioural control, both of which are

important components of entrepreneurial intentions (Van der Linde et al., 2024; Su et al., 2021; Rocha et al., 2022). However, Vu et al. (2024) and Wegner et al. (2020) note that the direct effect of 'nudging' from the university is not always apparent when several educational institutions are compared.

Wegner et al. (2020) conducted a comparative analysis of the impact of university environment on student entrepreneurial intentions. They compared a university with a strategy for developing entrepreneurship (educational programs, competitions, business incubators) to a university that focuses mainly on traditional management without a specific focus on entrepreneurship. The results differed from those of previous studies: the difference in approach and university environment did not significantly impact the level of entrepreneurial intention among students. In our study, we examined the impact of the university environment by asking students to self-assess whether completing entrepreneurship courses had influenced their desire to start a business. We also considered the impact of the university environment in relation to the length of study completed. As this question has received little attention, we hypothesise that:

H4. The closer to the completion of studies at the university, the higher the level of students' entrepreneurial intentions.

The reason for this connection may be the accumulation of competencies, increased self-confidence, greater involvement in extracurricular activities, and an expanding network of entrepreneurial contacts.

Field of Study

The differences in entrepreneurial intentions and the factors influencing their formation among students of different fields of study are a relatively under-researched area (Voronov et al., 2024). For instance, Sujood et al. (2024) only studied students in 'Tourism and Hospitality', while Fragoso et al. (2020) mainly focused on economic and managerial specialties. Furthermore, Neneh (2022), Liu and Yao-Ping Peng (2025) and Martins et al. (2023) restricted their samples to business school students, without comparing results across fields. It is intuitive to expect higher entrepreneurial intentions from students of economics and management. Supporting this, the GUESSS Russia 2023 report (Shirokova et al., 2024) reveals that Economics and Management students have the highest Entrepreneurial Intentions Index (4.21) of all groups. However, this is only slightly higher than the index for Art and Other Sciences students (4.20), suggesting that the difference may not be statistically significant.

One distinctive feature of this study is its focus on assessing whether the influence of various factors on entrepreneurial intentions differs depending on the students' field of study. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5. The results of the assessment of the influence of social factors on the formation of entrepreneurial intentions vary significantly depending on the student's field of study.

Data and method

Data and Sample

The respondents in this study were students at Lomonosov Moscow State University. The survey was conducted in several waves between 2020 and 2024, which allowed us to verify the stability of the results over time. There were no significant differences between the results from different years.

Students completed a questionnaire after finishing an entrepreneurship course. It is important to note that this course is optional; therefore, the survey included students who were potentially interested in entrepreneurship, innovation, marketing, management and business. We acknowledge that our sample is not representative of the entire student population and that it may overestimate the average level of entrepreneurial intent compared to the wider student body. This is partly due to self-selection: students who have attended entrepreneurship courses tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy, creativity and entrepreneurial orientation (Bodolica et al., 2024). However, the findings regarding the impact of courses rather than students' initial predisposition are mixed. Some authors confirm a positive impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions (e.g. Do Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; Otache et al., 2024), while others do not establish a direct link (Wegner et al., 2020). It is common practice in studies of entrepreneurial intentions to survey students who have already taken entrepreneurship courses (Su et al., 2021). The findings are valuable for understanding the mechanisms through which social factors operate among students who are already inclined towards entrepreneurial activity.

The total number of respondents was 1,917 students. The distribution of respondents by field of study, year of study and year of survey completion is shown in Table 1. The sample is also balanced by gender: 45% men, 55% women.

The survey was conducted among representatives of all Lomonosov Moscow State University faculties. Students were then grouped according to their faculties and areas of study, as shown in Table 1, where the areas are ranked according to their share of the sample.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Characteristic	Variable	Distribution	Number of respondents and frequency, % (n=1917)
Year of survey	year2020	2020	124 (6%)
	year2021	2021	263 (14%)
	year2022	2022	472 (25%)
	year2023	2023	603 (31%)
	year2024	2024	455 (24%)
Year of study	Year of study	1 year of study	264 (14%)
		2 year of study	316 (16%)
		3 year of study	501 (26%)
		4 year of study	486 (25%)
		5-6 year of study (include specialist and 1-2 years of master's degree)	350 (18%)
Field of study	F_econ	Economics	427 (22%)
	F_Soc_hum	Social Sciences and Humanities (Sociology, Asian Studies, History, Foreign Languages and Regional Studies, Art, Psychology, Philology, Philosophy)	283 (14%)
	F_Business	Business and Management	249 (13%)
	F_Science	Natural Sciences (Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Geology, Materials Science, Soil Science, Medicine, etc.)	245 (13%)
	F_math	Exact and Technical Sciences, Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics	228 (12%)
	F_policy	Political Science and Public Administration	203 (10%)
	F_law	Jurisprudence	145 (8%)
	F_journal	Journalism and Television	137 (7%)

Source: developed by the authors

In addition to the questions that formed the variables used in the modeling, the questionnaire contained a number of substantive questions, the answers to which were analyzed separately.

Method

Different empirical approaches have been employed in the literature to examine the determinants of entrepreneurial intentions. Quantitative studies commonly rely on structural equation modelling (SEM) to test mediating and moderating relationships

(Al-Mamary et al., 2020; Rocha et al., 2022; Al-Qadasi et al., 2023). Alternatively, linear or ordinal regression models are used when the dependent variable is measured on a continuous or ordered categorical scale, allowing for direct estimation of the relationship between observed predictors and the outcome, without introducing latent constructs or a measurement model as in SEM (Gbaguidi et al., 2023; Van der Linde et al., 2024; Fragoso et al., 2020).

Since our dependent variable, Decision, is measured on a six-point ordered scale, we estimate a series of ordinal logit models using maximum likelihood estimation. To test the hypotheses, we first estimate a pooled ordinal logit model for the entire sample, including all the key independent variables (Family, Friends, Career, Year of study) and controlling for gender (Sex). Subsequently, to test hypothesis H5 regarding disciplinary heterogeneity, we estimate separate ordinal logit models for each of the eight disciplinary subsamples.

All models are estimated using the Gretl econometric analysis package. The significance of individual coefficients is assessed using z-tests, and overall model fit is evaluated using the likelihood ratio test and McFadden's pseudo-R^2.

Variables and statistical analysis

Entrepreneurial Intention (Decision)

The dependent variable captures students' entrepreneurial intentions. The main survey question assessing students' desire (intention) to engage in entrepreneurship was phrased as follows: "Do you want to start your own business?" with response options presented in Table 2. The responses to this question formed the dependent variable, *Decision*, which is measured on an ordered six-point scale ranging from 1 ("No") to 6 ("Already created a legal entity"). The table also reports the frequency of each response. The mean value of 3.62 indicates that respondents generally express a desire to engage in entrepreneurship in the long term.

Table 2. Decision – dependent variable

Decision	Ordinal value	Response frequency
Already created a legal entity	6	104 (5.5%)
Yes, this year	5	283 (15%)
Yes, in the short term (1 to 3 years)	4	769 (40%)
Yes, in the long term	3	391 (20%)
Don't know yet	2	285 (15%)
No	1	85 (4.5%)

Source: developed by the authors

Family and Friends

The *Family* variable is binary, coded as 1 if the respondent reported having entrepreneurs in the family and 0 otherwise. Similarly, the *Friends* variable is coded as 1 if the respondent reported having friends or acquaintances who are entrepreneurs and 0 otherwise. Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses regarding the presence of entrepreneurs in the immediate social circle across different levels of entrepreneurial readiness.

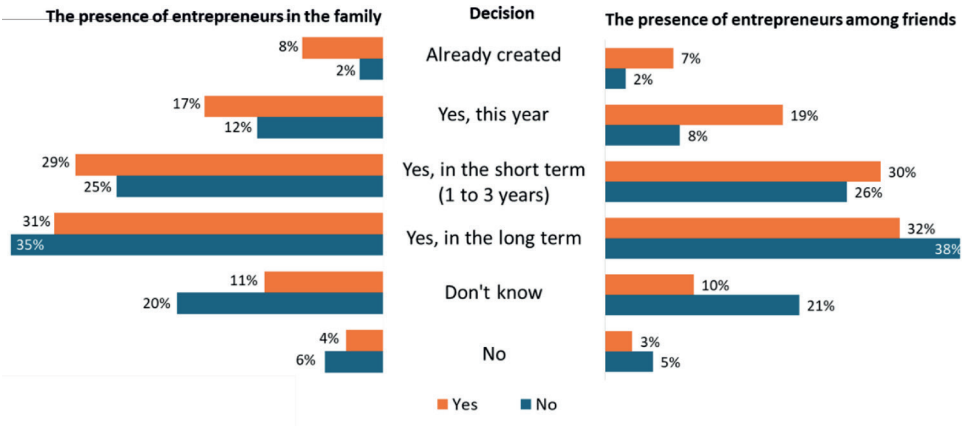

Figure 1. Distribution of students by entrepreneurial intentions across two groups based on the presence of entrepreneurs among family and friends. *Source*: compiled by the authors

A consistent pattern emerges for both factors: students who have entrepreneurs in their immediate social circle are more likely to have already started a business or to plan to do so in the near future. Conversely, students who are undecided or do not wish to start a business report fewer connections with entrepreneurs. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the 1% significance level confirmed the difference in entrepreneurial preferences between these groups. This relationship highlights the importance of students interacting with active entrepreneurs during their studies and forming student business communities to share experiences and build networks.

The correlation coefficient between *Family* and *Friends* is 0.30 ($p < 0.01$). This positive association is consistent with the idea that students from entrepreneurial families are more likely to meet other businesspeople and become part of entrepreneurial networks, intentionally or not. (Laspita et al., 2012).

To ensure the reliability of our estimates, we examined VIF for all independent variables which turned out to be below 5 (the maximum value for VIF was 1.309 for "*Year of Study*"). This suggests that multicollinearity is not a concern in our models and the estimated coefficients are stable and that the independent variables provide distinct contributions to explaining entrepreneurial intentions.

Career

The *Career* variable, constructed to test hypothesis H3, is based on responses to the question "Do you think entrepreneurship is considered a preferred career path in your student environment?" with response options coded as no = 0, unsure = 1, yes = 2. This question does not measure the respondent's own attitude towards entrepreneurship, but rather their perception of public opinion within their student environment. Of the respondents, 55% answered positively, 22% negatively and 23% were undecided. These figures suggest that entrepreneurship is generally perceived as a viable career alternative. This perception also varies systematically according to the student's social circle: positive assessments are, on average, 2.5 times more common among those who have entrepreneurs among their friends.

Year of Study

The *'Year of Study'* variable captures the student's current academic year and is used to test hypothesis H4. We observe an association between the year of study and the presence of entrepreneurial friends: only 73% of first-year students reported having entrepreneurial friends, compared to 80% in the second year and 81% in all subsequent years. This upward trend can be explained by the gradual emergence of aspiring entrepreneurs among classmates and the expansion of professional networks as students progress through their studies.

Field of Study

Field of Study corresponds to the disciplinary grouping of the student's faculty, as detailed in Table 1. Our results reveal notable differences in entrepreneurial readiness across academic disciplines. The highest rates of readiness to engage in entrepreneurship were observed among Business and Management (29%) and Political Science and Public Administration (31%) students, likely due to the managerial competencies developed on these programmes. In contrast, the lowest rates were observed among students of Chemistry (14%), Law (14%) and Economics (12%). These fields typically orient towards scientific research or corporate employment in resource-intensive sectors, where creating a start-up is particularly challenging because of the substantial resources required for developing knowledge-intensive products.

Gender

The sex variable is coded as 1 for female and 0 for male. This variable is missing for the economics subsample because the survey was conducted anonymously and it was not possible to identify the gender of that group.

Gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions, well documented in the literature (Dragin et al., 2022), are also evident in our data. A one-way ANOVA revealed that

male students report significantly higher entrepreneurial intentions on average (mean = 2.71) than female students (mean = 2.32). Accordingly, *Sex* is included in the model as a control variable to account for this effect, even though it is not the primary focus of the study.

Results

Logit model

First, we estimated a series of ordinal logit models using maximum likelihood estimation. Table 3 reports only the variables that retained statistical significance; all other variables were excluded in earlier iterations due to being insignificant.

Table 3. Results of evaluation of Ordered Logit Model

Dependent variable: Decision					
	Coefficient	**Std. Error**	**z**	**p-value**	
Family	0.504	0.115	4.386	<0.0001	***
Friends	0.734	0.132	5.572	<0.0001	***
Career	0.369	0.070	5.301	<0.0001	***
Year of study	0.206	0.039	5.330	<0.0001	***
Sex	−0.722	0.110	−6.551	<0.0001	***
McFadden R-squared	*0.139*				

Note: QML standard errors. The symbol of *** means significance at a 1% level, ** – significance at a 5% level, * – significance at a 10% level.

Source: compiled by the authors

The estimated ordinal logit model is statistically significant overall, as confirmed by the likelihood ratio (LR) test ($p < 0.01$). All retained coefficients are individually significant at the 1% level based on z-tests. Positive coefficient estimates indicate that higher values of the respective regressors are associated with higher entrepreneurial intentions. These results provide support for hypotheses H1-H4. As an additional test of the university environment's influence we analysed students' self-reported responses regarding the impact of the entrepreneurship course on their intentions (Figure 2). Only 18% of respondents said that the course had no impact or a negative impact. While these self-reported perceptions are subjective and should be validated through a follow-up survey at a later date, the preliminary assessment indicates a positive effect.

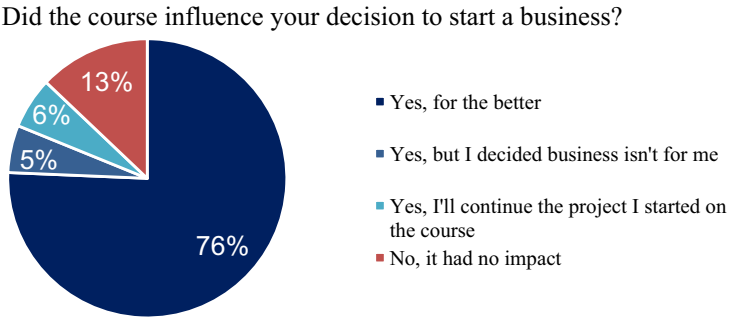

Figure 2. Students' assessment of the impact of the entrepreneurship course on their entrepreneurial intentions. *Source*: compiled by the authors

Logit Models by Field of Study

To test hypothesis H5, we estimated separate ordinal logit models for each field of study subsamples. The results are presented in Table 4, with coefficient estimates and significance levels.

Table 4. Coefficient values of logit models constructed for subsamples taking into account students' field of study

	Law	Economics	Journalism / TV	Political science / Public administration	Mathematics /IT/ Physics	Natural Science	Social sciences and Humanities	Business / Management
Family	0.686*	0.71***	0.141	0.854***	0.492*	0.686**	0.671**	0.071
Friends	0.836	N/A	0.651*	0.892**	0.652**	0.704*	1.161***	0.422
Career	0.525**	0.49***	0.549**	0.451**	0.142	0.343*	0.398**	0.722***
Year of study	0.341**	-0.564***	0.122	0.137	0.408***	0.143	0.024	0.499***
Sex	-0.627*	N/A	-0.118	-0.926***	-0.757**	-0.537	-0.286	-1.712***
Mean Decision	3.545	3.166	3.62	3.98	3.68	3.857	3.603	3.795

Note: QML standard errors. The symbol of *** means significance at a 1% level, ** – significance at a 5% level, * – significance at a 10% level. N/A means that this parameter was not included in the questionnaire distributed among students of the Faculty of Economics.

Source: compiled by the authors

The comparative analysis of the eight models reveals substantial heterogeneity in the significance and magnitude of coefficients across fields. Key findings are summarised below.

1) The effect of having entrepreneurs in the family is strongest and most significant for students in Economics, Political science, and Public administration ($p < 0.01$). By contrast, this factor is insignificant for students in Journalism/Television, Business/ Management.

2) The effect of having entrepreneurs among friends is most significant for students in Social Sciences and Humanities (coefficient = 1.161, $p < 0.01$). It is also significant at the 5% level for students of Political science, Public administration, Mathematics, IT and Physics. This likely reflects the fact that students in these fields tend to have fewer entrepreneurial connections on average, meaning that each connection is more influential. In contrast, Management and Law students typically encounter entrepreneurs more frequently through their professional networks, so the prevalence of such connections reduces the factor's discriminatory power, rendering it statistically insignificant.

3) Perceived career attractiveness (*Career*) is significant at the 1-5% level for all majors except Mathematics, IT and Physics (insignificant), and Natural Science (significant only at the 10% level). This pattern probably reflects the tendency to prioritise academic or research-oriented careers in STEM fields, where commercialisation and venture creation are considered to be more difficult and less compatible with the prevailing professional culture.

4) The *Year of study* coefficient is significant at the 1% level for Economics, Mathematics/IT/Physics, and Business/Management, and at 5% for Law. Notably, the direction of the effect differs between the closely related fields of Economics and Management. In Economics, the coefficient is negative (–0.564, $p < 0.01$), indicating that entrepreneurial intentions decline as students advance through their studies. In contrast, Management students show a positive and significant effect (0.499, $p < 0.01$), meaning that intentions increase over time. One possible explanation is that, as Economics students progress through their studies and complete internships, they refine their specialisation (in areas such as finance, accounting and macroeconomics) and increasingly view corporate employment as a more attractive and accessible career path. Similarly, management students develop organisational and strategic competencies that can be applied directly to entrepreneurship, thereby enhancing their readiness to start a business.

5) The *Sex* coefficient is negative across all models, indicating that female students exhibit lower entrepreneurial intentions than their male counterparts. This effect is significant at the 1-5% level for Political Science and Public Administration, Mathematics/IT/ Physics, and Business/Management. These findings are consistent with the broader literature on gender differences in entrepreneurship and align with the results from the pooled sample.

Collectively, these findings confirm that the influence of external factors on entrepreneurial intentions varies systematically across academic disciplines, thereby supporting hypothesis H5.

Discussion and conclusion

This study confirmed the positive influence of four key factors on entrepreneurial intentions: the presence of entrepreneurs in the family (H1), the presence of entrepreneurial friends (H2), the perception of positive peer appraisal of an entrepreneurial career (H3), and the year of study (H4). While the confirmation of the influence of family (H1) and friends (H2) on the overall sample is consistent with the results of many previous studies (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2021; Aka & Enagogo, 2025; van der Linde et al., 2024), the finding that this influence is insignificant in certain fields of study is a novel contribution. Furthermore, the confirmed differences in the formation of entrepreneurial intentions across academic disciplines (H5) highlight the need for a systematic, differentiated approach to fostering an entrepreneurial environment within universities.

Theoretical contributions

Previous studies have primarily examined the effects of social factors, without considering how these effects might be moderated by a student's chosen area of study (Laspita et al., 2012; Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas, 2021; Van der Linde et al., 2024). Our results suggest that disciplinary cultures act as important contextual filters, amplifying or attenuating the influence of social factors on entrepreneurial intentions. Accordingly, the central contribution of this study lies in the empirical demonstration that these factors operate differently depending on the student's field of study (H5).

We have also revealed the effect of the year of study and its discipline-specific direction, extending previous research (Dragin et al., 2022). For example, we found that economics students showed a decline in entrepreneurial intentions over time, while management students exhibited an increase. This counterintuitive finding suggests that the content and orientation of disciplinary curricula may shape students' career aspirations in ways that either encourage or discourage entrepreneurship.

Practical implications

Our findings have several practical implications for university administrators and educators who are looking to encourage student entrepreneurship. The most important of these is that a one-size-fits-all approach to entrepreneurship education and support is unlikely to be equally effective across all faculties. Instead, we recommend interventions that are tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of each disciplinary group.

Based on our findings, we propose the following four recommendations, which are designed to address the specific gaps identified and leverage the strengths of each disciplinary group. These measures were chosen as they are the most common and cost-effective for the university and can be implemented with minimal resources. The

ratings in Table 5 were assigned based on a combination of the following: the statistical significance of the corresponding factor in the disciplinary models; the direction of the effect; descriptive statistics (e.g. readiness rates and perceived career attractiveness); practical feasibility; and cost effectiveness.

Table 5. Measures to support student entrepreneurship by field of study

Field of study	Inter-faculty networking events	Entrepreneurship and technology commercialization courses	Mentoring programs and internships in startups	Entrepreneurship events for higher courses
Economics	Average	Low	High	Low
Social Sciences / Humanities	High	Average	Average	Low
Business / Management	Low	Low	High	High
Natural Sciences	Average	High	Average	Low
Mathematics, IT, Physics	Average	High	Low	High
Political Science / Public Administration	High	Low	Average	Low
Law	Low	Low	High	Average
Journalism / TV	Average	Low	High	Low

Source: compiled by the authors

Inter-faculty networking events are designed to expand students' social capital by connecting them with entrepreneurial peers and professionals. This approach is particularly effective for students of the Social Sciences and Humanities, for whom the presence of entrepreneurial friends has the greatest impact on their intentions (coefficient 1.161, $p < 0.01$), and for those studying Political Science and Public Administration, who show a high level of preparedness (31%) and significant peer influence. In these fields, networking events are the most powerful tool for enhancing entrepreneurial intentions, as they create connections.

The aim of entrepreneurship and technology commercialisation courses is to develop the practical skills needed to commercialise scientific research and build business models, addressing the weak perceived career attractiveness among STEM students. This pattern indicates a strong focus on academic or research careers. Therefore, commercialisation courses are essential for demonstrating how scientific discoveries can be transformed into market opportunities. Lomonosov Moscow State University has already introduced inter-faculty disciplines, in which students attend classes outside their own faculty. Courses on entrepreneurship and innovation

development are offered in this format, and after several years, this has already been shown to increase student engagement in entrepreneurial activities at the university.

Mentoring programmes and internships at start-ups offer exposure to entrepreneurial role models and experiential learning, which compensates for the absence of entrepreneurs within families and the weak influence of peers observed in certain fields. This measure is a high priority for Economics students, whose intentions to become entrepreneurs have been found to decline significantly over time (coefficient -0.564, $p < 0.01$). Mentoring can counteract the pull of corporate employment by providing role models and practical experience. It is also essential for Law and Journalism students, who have the lowest levels of preparedness (14% for Law, alongside Chemistry) and lack entrepreneurial social capital. Family and peer influence has little or no significance for them.

Entrepreneurship events for higher-level courses are designed to capitalise on the positive effect of progressing through the years of study. Placing additional courses closer to graduation shows students an alternative career path, provided they have already acquired sufficient professional skills and understand their future career environment. This measure should be prioritised for Mathematics, IT and Physics students, who demonstrate an increasing interest in entrepreneurship over time. Events in later years build on students' accumulated knowledge and growing momentum at a critical decision point.

Our field-specific recommendations show that effective university policies for encouraging student entrepreneurship must not be one-size-fits-all. Interventions should be designed with the differences between disciplines in mind to ensure that resources are allocated to the most effective measures for each academic field.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that external social factors, such as family background, peer influence, perceived career attractiveness and the year of study, significantly shape students' entrepreneurial intentions. These effects vary systematically across different academic disciplines, and we suggest a framework for field-sensitive recommendations that depend on the specific needs of students.

Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was drawn from a single university, which limits the generalizability of our findings to other institutional and national contexts. Secondly, our sample consists exclusively of students who voluntarily enrolled on entrepreneurship courses. This introduces a self-selection bias that may overstate entrepreneurial intentions, but we have accounted for this in our interpretation. Third, the gender variable is missing for the Economics subsample, reducing comparability across models. Fourth, the cross-sectional nature

of the data does not permit causal inference; unobserved confounders such as risk tolerance or prior entrepreneurial experience may influence both the presence of entrepreneurial connections and intentions.

Future research should extend this analysis to multiple universities, particularly classical universities, to enable cross-institutional comparisons and the development of more effective, context-specific support measures for student entrepreneurship. Ideally, such research should also span different BRICS countries to facilitate cross-national comparisons and determine whether our findings are universal or context-specific. Longitudinal designs would also be valuable for establishing causal relationships and tracking the evolution of entrepreneurial intentions over time. Addressing these limitations collectively in future research would strengthen the evidence base for field-sensitive entrepreneurship policies.

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