

Exploring How Passion Shapes Entrepreneurial Intentions: The Mediating Role of Persistence and Resilience

Saeid Karimi¹, Ahmad Yaghoubi Farani^{2*}, and Ahmad Salman Makreet³

Abstract

Past literature indicates that entrepreneurial passion is positively related to entrepreneurial intentions; however, less is known about the underlying mechanisms that might mediate this relationship, particularly in less developed countries. This quantitative, cross-sectional study extends the existing literature by investigating the mediating roles of persistence and resilience in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intentions. A total of 300 agriculture students were selected using proportional stratified random sampling from two public universities in Afghanistan. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and structural equation modeling (SEM) using partial least squares (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. The results showed that entrepreneurial passion is directly and positively associated with entrepreneurial intentions. Furthermore, persistence and resilience partially mediated this relationship. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how entrepreneurial passion fosters entrepreneurial intentions among students in fragile and resource-constrained environments. The study offers implications for educators and policymakers to design entrepreneurship education programs that promote emotional and psychological readiness for entrepreneurial action.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Passion, Persistence, Resilience, Entrepreneurial Intentions, Afghanistan.

Introduction

Many governments, planners, and policymakers have increasingly sought to promote a culture of entrepreneurship within their societies in recent years (Karimi & Makreet, 2020). However, a key question in this regard concerns the factors that motivate individuals to pursue an entrepreneurial career. As a result, a growing number of studies have attempted to identify the factors that directly and indirectly predict entrepreneurial intention (Karimi *et al.*, 2021). Entrepreneurial intention, considered the first step in the entrepreneurial process, is defined as

¹ Department of Agricultural Extension and Education, Faculty of Agriculture, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Islamic Republic of Iran.

² Department of Agricultural Extension and Education, Faculty of Agriculture, University College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Tehran, Karaj, Islamic Republic of Iran.

³ Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Samangan University, Samangan, Afghanistan.

*Corresponding author; e-mail: ayaghoobi@ut.ac.ir

an individual's conscious state where individuals *plan to initiate actions leading to new business creation* (Kumar & Shukla, 2023). One factor found to influence entrepreneurial intention is entrepreneurial passion, which can inspire individuals to pursue an entrepreneurial path. It is, indeed, a key driver of entrepreneurial efforts and outcomes (Luu, 2023). Newman et al. (2021) emphasize that passionate individuals are more motivated to start their own businesses and achieve their goals.

Cardon et al. (2009) define entrepreneurial passion as “a consciously accessible, intense positive feeling” that “results from engagement in activities with identity meaning and salience to the entrepreneur.” Passion reflects a strong inclination toward entrepreneurial behavior and predicts that the entrepreneur will invest significant energy and time into these endeavors. In recent years, extensive research has explored the effect of entrepreneurial passion on intention (Biraglia & Kadile, 2017). However, the underlying mechanisms of this relationship have received limited attention in the literature (Syed *et al.*, 2020; Neneh, 2022). A clearer understanding of these mechanisms is essential for developing effective strategies to encourage and support entrepreneurship. While most studies have examined cognitive mediators in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and intention (e.g., Elnadi & Gheith, 2023; Neneh, 2022), other potential mediating variables have often been overlooked. Therefore, this research investigates the mediating roles of two key variables—persistence and resilience—in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention among agriculture students (see Fig. 1).

Persistence and resilience are particularly significant in the entrepreneurial context. Persistence refers to continuing entrepreneurial efforts and actions despite failures, barriers, or threats (Gimeno *et al.*, 1997). However, persistence alone is insufficient; entrepreneurs are more likely to succeed when they are also resilient—capable of adapting to change and managing uncertainty (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Positive emotions combined with resilience enable individuals to achieve favorable outcomes in risky situations, which is especially important when launching a business under adverse conditions (Renko *et al.*, 2021).

Although previous studies have explored entrepreneurial passion and intention (Biraglia & Kadile, 2017; Neneh, 2022), critical gaps remain. First, most research has focused on stable, developed economies (AbuKaraki *et al.*, 2024), neglecting high-risk contexts such as conflict zones, where resilience and persistence may play a more prominent mediating role. Second, while cognitive factors (e.g., self-efficacy) are well-studied (Elnadi & Gheith, 2023), behavioral persistence and emotional resilience have received less attention as mechanisms

linking passion to intention—particularly in agriculture-dependent economies (Rashid *et al.*, 2024). This study addresses these gaps by examining how persistence and resilience mediate the relationship between passion and intention among Afghan agriculture students, a population facing profound socio-political instability.

Afghanistan is a less developed country in Central Asia with a population of approximately 33 million (National Statistics and Information Authority, 2020), most of whom are young and live in rural areas. Around 85 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture and animal farming (Khan *et al.*, 2020). The country has long been affected by war and insecurity and remains socially, economically, and politically unstable. Although such conditions may seem unfavorable for entrepreneurship, turbulent socio-political environments can paradoxically present unique opportunities for entrepreneurial development (Karimi & Makreet, 2020).

In conflict-affected agrarian economies like Afghanistan—where institutional instability, resource scarcity, and market volatility are commonplace—persistence and resilience are not merely beneficial traits but essential survival skills. Unlike entrepreneurs in stable economies, Afghan entrepreneurs face systemic shocks (e.g., political unrest, infrastructure collapse) that make persistence and resilience prerequisites for developing entrepreneurial intentions.

This study makes several key contributions to the entrepreneurship literature. First, it expands theoretical models of entrepreneurial intention by incorporating behavioral persistence and emotional resilience as dual mediators, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how passion translates into intention. This stands in contrast to previous research that has focused primarily on cognitive mediators. Second, it introduces a novel empirical context—Afghanistan—as a case of entrepreneurship under extreme adversity, thereby addressing a major research gap that often overlooks fragile and conflict-affected states. Studying entrepreneurship in such contexts reveals how fundamental constructs like passion function differently under pressure and risk. Third, the findings provide practical insights for educators, development practitioners, and policymakers operating in fragile economies. Specifically, the results underscore the importance of fostering not only entrepreneurial passion but also persistence and resilience among students, as these qualities may be critical for entrepreneurial success in unstable environments.

In sum, this research offers a deeper understanding of the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention in a less developed country context. It also provides practical recommendations for designing entrepreneurship programs that are attuned to the realities of life in fragile and conflict-affected environments.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

This study draws on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991), Self-Regulation Theory (Zimmerman, 2006), and the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) to develop an integrated framework explaining how entrepreneurial passion influences persistence, resilience, and entrepreneurial intention.

According to TPB (Ajzen, 1991), entrepreneurial behavior—such as starting a new venture—is a planned, intentional act, with attitude toward the behavior serving as a key antecedent of intention. In the entrepreneurial context, passion reflects a strong positive attitude and emotional commitment to business creation. It stimulates desire, energizes effort, and serves as a critical motivational force. Prior studies have consistently shown that entrepreneurial passion is not only an affective state but also a reliable predictor of entrepreneurial intention (Biraglia & Kadile, 2017; Fellnhöfer, 2017; Huyghe *et al.*, 2016; Uddin *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, we conceptualize entrepreneurial passion as a core attitudinal driver of intention.

However, intention alone is insufficient for successful entrepreneurship. Launching and sustaining a business requires continuous effort, adaptability, and psychological resilience. To capture these dimensions, we draw on Self-Regulation Theory (Zimmerman, 2006; Forgas *et al.*, 2009), which emphasizes how individuals monitor and direct their behavior to pursue long-term goals. Passion activates self-regulatory processes by shaping goal commitment, directing effort, and reinforcing perseverance in the face of obstacles (Baum & Locke, 2004; Cardon *et al.*, 2009). From this perspective, entrepreneurial passion fosters both persistence and resilience—two essential capacities that enable entrepreneurs to endure challenges and recover from setbacks (Kiani *et al.*, 2021; Taifur *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) provides an affective lens through which entrepreneurial passion can be understood as a resource-enhancing mechanism. Positive emotions, such as those associated with passion, broaden individuals' cognitive and behavioral repertoires, enabling greater flexibility and more adaptive responses to uncertainty (Fredrickson, 1998; 2004). Over time, this broadening effect builds enduring personal resources—such as persistence and resilience—that are critical for entrepreneurial success (Lin *et al.*, 2016; Chhatwani *et al.*, 2022; Kiani *et al.*, 2022).

By integrating these three perspectives, we propose a comprehensive model in which entrepreneurial passion acts as a central psychological force: it enhances entrepreneurial intention (via TPB), strengthens persistence and resilience through goal-directed self-

regulation, and builds psychological resources through the broadening effects of positive emotion. This framework moves beyond a linear focus on intention to capture the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions vital for sustained entrepreneurial action (see Fig. 1).

While prior studies confirm the passion → intention link (Biraglia & Kadile, 2017; Neneh, 2022), they predominantly examine stable economies, assuming the availability of resources (AbuKaraki *et al.*, 2024). In conflict zones, however, persistence and resilience are not merely supplementary but serve as survival mechanisms (Bullough *et al.*, 2014). This study extends TPB by introducing context-dependent mediators, arguing that in resource-scarce, high-risk settings (e.g., Afghanistan), passion translates into intention only when entrepreneurs can endure setbacks (persistence) and adapt to shocks (resilience). This contrasts with Rashid *et al.* (2024), who focus on financial and technical factors, neglecting psychological endurance.

Entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention

Passion is regarded as the heart of entrepreneurship and plays a vital role in both the process of creating a new business and entrepreneurial outcomes (Cardon *et al.*, 2013; Cardon & Kirk, 2015; Santos & Cardon, 2019; Syed *et al.*, 2020). The first step in this process is the formation of entrepreneurial intention. Entrepreneurial intention reflects an individual's interest in launching a new business and choosing a self-directed career path over regular employment. As a result of entrepreneurial passion, entrepreneurs devote more energy and effort to the establishment and sustainability of their ventures (Balgiasvili, 2017).

Additionally, research has found that entrepreneurial passion, especially in contexts of uncertainty and resource scarcity, generates positive emotions and enhances motivational factors (Türk *et al.*, 2020; Moses *et al.*, 2016). Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive association between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention (Neneh, 2022; Kiani *et al.*, 2022; Qian *et al.*, 2022; Syed *et al.*, 2020; Kumar & Shukla, 2023). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Entrepreneurial passion is positively related to entrepreneurial intention.

The mediating role of persistence

Hallak *et al.* (2018) define persistence as an entrepreneur's sustained, effortful action, regardless of the hardships and challenges encountered throughout the entrepreneurial process. Persistence is a key element in entrepreneurship because starting and growing a business is an ambitious endeavor fraught with numerous obstacles (Cardon & Kirk, 2015). Entrepreneurs who remain determined in pursuing their goals are more likely to succeed (Timmons &

Spinelli, 2009). Therefore, it is essential to identify the factors that influence persistence in goal pursuit (Cardon & Kirk, 2015; Haddoud *et al.*, 2022).

Research shows that when persistence and entrepreneurial passion are combined, they can distinguish success from failure (Mooradian *et al.*, 2016; Tang, 2008). Entrepreneurial passion can stimulate persistence through its two components: identity and emotion (Cardon *et al.*, 2009). Based on the self-congruence model (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001), individuals are more likely to pursue goals persistently when they enjoy the process or feel a strong identity alignment with the goal. Moreover, when identity is closely tied to an activity, individuals persist even if the activity is not inherently enjoyable. The emotional component of entrepreneurial identity also fosters persistence—a positive emotional experience signals that things are going well, reducing the need for reassessment or change (Seo *et al.*, 2004). People in positive emotional states tend to maintain those states (Pham, 2004), which encourages continued action and enhances entrepreneurial intention.

When activities align with both identity and positive emotions, persistence is likely to increase—as is the case with entrepreneurial passion (Cardon *et al.*, 2009). Studies by Kiani *et al.* (2021) and Cardon and Kirk (2015) also report a positive association between entrepreneurial passion and persistence. Similarly, Bilal *et al.* (2022) found a positive relationship between persistence and entrepreneurial intention among Omani women.

Drawing on self-regulation theory, we argue that passion fuels persistence because goal-aligned emotions (Cardon *et al.*, 2009) reduce the need for behavioral reassessment (Seo *et al.*, 2004). In Afghanistan's unstable environment, where obstacles are frequent, this mediating mechanism is likely stronger than in stable contexts, as entrepreneurs must continually self-regulate to sustain effort (Gimeno *et al.*, 1997).

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Entrepreneurial passion is positively related to persistence.

H3: Persistence is positively related to entrepreneurial intention.

H4: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention is mediated via persistence.

The mediating role of resilience

Entrepreneurs often face substantial difficulties and barriers (Chadwick & Raver, 2020). Thus, understanding how entrepreneurs cope with adversity is crucial for fostering both their well-being and entrepreneurial success (Newman *et al.*, 2018). In this context, researchers

(Hartmann *et al.*, 2022) have emphasized the role of psychological resources (Frese & Gielnik, 2014), particularly psychological resilience (Hayward *et al.*, 2010; Shepherd *et al.*, 2020).

Theoretically, resilience is conceived as the capacity of individuals or systems to withstand adverse and variable conditions (Sabatino, 2016). While organizational resilience has received attention in economics and management, individual resilience—especially in entrepreneurship—has been relatively underexplored (Santoro *et al.*, 2020). At the individual level, resilience refers to a person's ability to adapt to environmental changes, cope with challenges, and recover from setbacks (Bonanno, 2012). Ayala and Manzano (2014) describe resilience in entrepreneurship as a dynamic, adaptive process that enables entrepreneurs to maintain future focus despite market disruptions and ongoing challenges. Resilient individuals are more inclined to take positive action, such as launching or managing a business. This trait is especially important in high-risk regions where threats are frequent and uncertainty is high.

Research indicates that resilience influences entrepreneurial decisions, particularly in politically or economically adverse environments (Bullough *et al.*, 2014). For instance, González-López *et al.* (2019) found that resilience positively correlates with students' entrepreneurial intentions. Similarly, Renko *et al.* (2021) reported that resilience significantly impacts entrepreneurial intention in economically unstable countries such as Afghanistan.

Kaplan (1999) proposed a three-factor model for recognizing resilience: outcomes, risk factors, and protective factors. In this model, resilience results from the interaction of risks and protective elements that lead to successful outcomes. Few studies in entrepreneurship have examined the link between passion and resilience, but existing research supports a positive relationship (Taifur *et al.*, 2020). Although the mediating role of resilience between entrepreneurial passion and intention has been largely overlooked, some studies suggest it mediates the link between passion and other outcomes. For example, Fisher *et al.* (2018) found that resilience mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial success.

The broaden-and-build theory posits that positive emotions—such as those arising from passion—expand cognitive flexibility, enabling adaptive responses in times of crisis (Fredrickson, 2001). In Afghanistan, where market disruptions are common, resilience—not merely intention—often drives entrepreneurial action (Renko *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, we propose a context-specific pathway: passion → resilience → intention, which has been largely overlooked in prior studies.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Entrepreneurial passion is positively related to resilience.

H6: Resilience is positively related to entrepreneurial intention.

H7: The positive relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention is mediated via resilience.

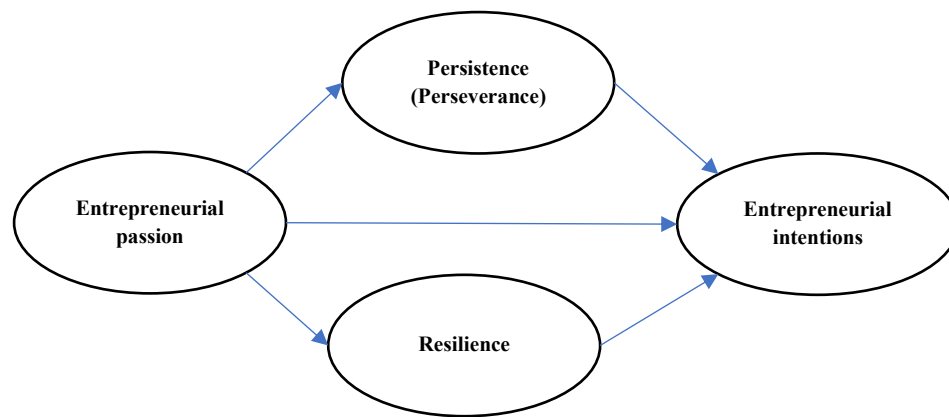


Fig. 1. The conceptual model.

Research Method

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

The target population for this study comprised junior and senior undergraduate students majoring in agricultural sciences at Balkh University and Samangan University in Afghanistan during the 2019–2020 academic year. These two universities were selected due to their prominent roles in agricultural education in northern Afghanistan and their relevance to youth entrepreneurship in a transitional economy. Focusing on students in their later years of study ensured the inclusion of individuals likely to have clearer entrepreneurial intentions and greater exposure to professional decision-making (Karimi *et al.*, 2021).

A total of 300 students (200 from Balkh University and 100 from Samangan University) were selected using proportional stratified random sampling, ensuring appropriate representation based on university size and academic level. The sample size was determined according to Bartlett *et al.*'s (2001) guidelines for survey research, which ensures sufficient statistical power for analysis.

Data were collected using a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire delivered during face-to-face sessions on university campuses. Participation was voluntary, and each respondent signed an informed consent form after receiving a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality safeguards. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Bu-Ali Sina University, Iran, ensuring adherence to ethical standards concerning voluntary participation, anonymity, and data protection.

Instrument Development and Validation

All measurement items were adapted from well-established scales and assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The original English-language questionnaire was slightly modified to enhance contextual relevance, translated into Persian by two bilingual translators, and subsequently back-translated into English to ensure conceptual equivalence. The research team reviewed the translations for consistency and clarity.

To ensure content validity, a panel of five subject matter experts in entrepreneurship and psychology evaluated the questionnaire based on necessity, relevance, and clarity. Minor revisions were made according to their feedback to improve item wording. Face validity was further assessed through a pilot test with 20 agricultural students not included in the final sample. These participants reviewed the instrument for clarity and comprehension; their feedback indicated no further modifications were needed.

Measures

The study employed validated scales to assess the key constructs, each defined conceptually and operationally. Entrepreneurial intention, defined as “*the individual’s conscious intention to participate in actions that will result in the emergence of a new business*” (Kumar & Shukla, 2023), was measured using a five-item scale by Liñán and Chen (2009). Entrepreneurial passion, conceptualized as “*a consciously accessible, intense positive feeling that results from engagement in activities with identity meaning and salience to the entrepreneur*” (Cardon *et al.*, 2009), was assessed using the five-item scale developed by Cardon *et al.* (2013). Persistence, defined as “*continuing entrepreneurial efforts and actions despite failures, barriers, or threats*” (Gimeno *et al.*, 1997), was measured with a five-item scale from Cardon and Kirk (2015). Resilience, referring to “*the ability to adapt to change and manage uncertainty*” (Ayala & Manzano, 2014), was assessed using the four-item scale developed by Sinclair and Wallston (2004). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

These instruments have been validated in previous studies across various cultural contexts, including Iran and Afghanistan (Karimi & Makreel, 2021; Karimi *et al.*, 2017). In the present study, all constructs demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha values exceeding 0.70.

Data Analysis

To test the hypothesized model, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed. This method is particularly appropriate for exploratory models, theory development, and situations where data normality cannot be assumed (Hair *et al.*, 2019; Henseler *et al.*, 2016). PLS-SEM is also widely used in entrepreneurship research (e.g., Karimi & Reisi, 2022).

The analysis followed a two-stage approach: First, the measurement model was assessed for internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Then, the structural model was tested to examine the significance of hypothesized relationships, the variance explained in dependent variables (R^2), and the model's predictive relevance (Q^2). All analyses were conducted using SmartPLS version 3.2.8 (Ringle *et al.*, 2015), a widely used software for SEM.

Common Method Variance

Given the use of self-report measures, common method variance (CMV) was addressed using both procedural and statistical remedies (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Procedurally, anonymity was ensured, and questions were carefully designed to be clear and free of bias. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, revealing that the first factor accounted for only 28% of the total variance, well below the 50% threshold. This indicates that CMV was not a significant concern in this study.

Results

Of the total participants, 36% were female and the remainder male. The mean age was 21.61 years. Approximately 30% of students had taken courses on entrepreneurship or business, and less than one-third reported having some form of entrepreneurial experience. Moreover, over two-thirds of the participants knew at least one entrepreneur and were familiar with their business operations.

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed positive and significant relationships between entrepreneurial intention and the three key independent variables: entrepreneurial passion, persistence, and resilience (see Table 1). In other words, students with higher entrepreneurial passion also demonstrated higher levels of persistence and resilience, which in turn were associated with stronger entrepreneurial intentions.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations (SD), and correlations for study variables.

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Age	21.61	1.45	-						
2 Gender	1.36	0.48	-0.25**						
3 Role model	0.78	0.44	0.11	-0.08					
4 Experience	0.34	0.47	-0.14*	-0.26**	0.14*				
5 Entrepreneurial Passion	3.77	0.63	-0.15**	-0.01	0.10	0.10			
6 Resilience	4.07	0.78	-0.06	-0.01	0.20**	0.08	0.58**		
7 Persistence	3.96	0.80	-0.08	-0.08	0.23**	0.14*	0.61**	0.68**	
8 Entrepreneurial intentions	3.77	0.88	-0.12*	-0.12*	0.32**	0.11*	0.58**	0.55**	0.62**

Note. * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$. Gender ((1 = Male, 2 = Female), role model (1 = Yes, 0 = No), and experience (1 = Yes, 0 = No) are binary variables. All other constructs (entrepreneurial passion, resilience, persistence, and entrepreneurial intention) were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Evaluation of the measurement model

The first step in analyzing the measurement model in PLS is to assess the overall model fit using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) index. The SRMR value for this study's measurement model was 0.07, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08 (Henseler *et al.*, 2016), indicating a good model fit.

Next, the measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity. Reliability was assessed using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, both of which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming the internal consistency of the constructs (see Table 2). Convergent validity was examined through factor loadings and the average variance extracted (AVE). All item loadings exceeded 0.70, and AVE values were above the 0.50 threshold, supporting adequate convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values were below the 0.90 cutoff, confirming discriminant validity. Additionally, multicollinearity was tested using the variance inflation factor (VIF). According to Aiken *et al.* (1991), a VIF below 10 indicates no multicollinearity concerns. The VIF in this study was 2.03, suggesting that multicollinearity was not an issue.

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Table 2. Assessment results of the measurement model.

Variables	Items	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE
Entrepreneurial Passion (PE)	It is exciting to figure out new ways to solve unmet market needs that can be commercialized.	0.78	0.86	0.90	0.64
	Searching for new ideas for products/services to offer is enjoyable to me.	0.80			
	I am motivated to figure out how to make existing products/services better.	0.79			
	Scanning the environment for new opportunities really excites me.	0.81			
	Inventing new solutions to problems is an important part of who I am.	0.80			
Persistence (P)	I continue to work on hard projects even when others oppose me.	0.74	0.79	0.86	0.55
	I can think of many times when I persisted with work when others quit.	0.75			
	No matter how challenging my work is, I will not give up.	0.76			
	I work harder than most people I know.	0.76			
	I frequently have to tear myself away from my work to satisfy other obligations.	0.69			
Resilience (R)	I look for creative ways to alter difficult situations.	0.78	0.76	0.85	0.58
	Regardless of what happens to me, I believe I can control my reaction to it.	0.75			
	I believe that dealing with difficult problems and situations will help me grow stronger.	0.81			
	I actively look for ways to replace the losses I encounter in life.	0.70			
Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI)	I am determined to create a business venture in the future.	0.72	0.76	0.85	0.53
	I will make every effort to start and run my own business.	0.69			
	I am ready to do anything to be an entrepreneur.	0.73			
	My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur.	0.76			
	I have very seriously thought about starting a company.	0.72			

Note: α : Cronbach's alpha; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; CR: Composite Reliability

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Table 3. HTMT criterion.

Variables	1	2	3
1- Entrepreneurial Passion	-		
2- Persistence	0.70	-	
3- Resilience	0.66	0.87	-
4- Entrepreneurial intentions	0.66	0.77	0.68

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351 Evaluation of the structural model

352 After confirming the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the structural model
 353 was evaluated using 5,000 bootstrap samples, following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019).
 354 According to Chin (1998), the coefficient of determination (R^2) should exceed 0.10 to be
 355 considered meaningful. In this study, the R^2 values indicated that the model explained 46% of

the variance in entrepreneurial intention, 34% in resilience, and 28% in persistence, suggesting acceptable explanatory power.

Additionally, the results of the Stone-Geisser test demonstrated that the model had good predictive relevance, as the Q^2 values for all endogenous constructs were positive. To test the research hypotheses, standardized path coefficients and effect sizes (f^2) were analyzed. As shown in Table 5, the bootstrapping results revealed a significant direct effect of entrepreneurial passion on entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.001$). Moreover, both persistence ($\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$) and resilience ($\beta = 0.16, p < 0.05$) had significant and positive effects on entrepreneurial intention. Entrepreneurial passion was also found to have significant positive relationships with persistence ($\beta = 0.58, p < 0.001$) and resilience ($\beta = 0.53, p < 0.001$). Therefore, all hypothesized relationships were supported by the data.

The mediation hypotheses were tested using the mediation analysis procedure in PLS as described by Nitzl et al. (2016) (see Table 4). According to Nitzl et al. (2016), "testing the indirect effect $a \times b$ provides researchers with all information for testing mediation" (p. 1852), where "a" denotes the path from the independent variable to the mediator, and "b" represents the path from the mediator to the dependent variable.

The analysis of the indirect effects revealed that the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention was significantly mediated by persistence. This was evidenced by the absence of zero in the bias-corrected, skewed confidence intervals ($\beta = 0.19, CI = [0.11, 0.31], p < 0.001$). Similarly, resilience significantly mediated the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.09, CI = [0.01, 0.13], p < 0.05$). However, because the direct effect of entrepreneurial passion on entrepreneurial intention remained significant in both models, the mediations via persistence and resilience were classified as partial.

Table 4. Direct, indirect and total effects.

Hypotheses	Path	β	t value	p value	CI	Supported
Direct effects						
H1	Passion → Intentions	0.30***	3.54	0.000		Yes
H2	Passion → Persistence	0.58***	13.30	0.000		Yes
H3	Persistence → Intentions	0.33***	5.32	0.000		Yes
H5	Passion → Resilience	0.53***	7.96	0.000		Yes
H6	Resilience → Intentions	0.16*	2.32	0.021		Yes
Indirect effects						
H4	Passion → Persistence → Intentions	0.19***	4.67	0.000	0.11-0.27	Yes
H7	Passion → Resilience → Intentions	0.09*	2.11	0.035	0.01-0.17	Yes
Total effects						
	Passion → Intentions	0.58**	12.323	0.000	0.44-0.65	

*Note:**** $p \leq 0.001$, * $p \leq 0.05$; β , standardized path coefficient; CI, confidence interval

Discussion

This study examined how entrepreneurial passion influences entrepreneurial intention among Afghan university students, and how persistence and resilience function as psychological mechanisms in this relationship. In doing so, it contributes to the growing but still limited body of research on entrepreneurship in conflict-affected and under-resourced contexts such as Afghanistan.

The finding that entrepreneurial passion significantly predicts entrepreneurial intention aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and supports prior empirical work in other settings (e.g., Neneh, 2022; Qian *et al.*, 2022). However, this study adds nuance by demonstrating that this relationship holds true even in highly uncertain environments, where institutional and financial support for entrepreneurship is weak. In such contexts, passion may serve not just as a motivator but as a critical psychological buffer against external adversity—making its influence particularly salient in fragile states like Afghanistan.

The positive relationships between entrepreneurial passion, persistence, and resilience affirm and extend prior findings (Cardon *et al.*, 2009; Kiani *et al.*, 2021; Bilal *et al.*, 2022). While much of the existing literature conceptualizes passion primarily as a source of motivational arousal, our findings suggest that passion also activates deeper self-regulatory mechanisms critical for sustained entrepreneurial engagement. Specifically, persistence reflects the capacity to maintain goal-directed effort in the face of obstacles, whereas resilience denotes the ability to recover and adapt following setbacks. This distinction is especially salient in the Afghan context, where chronic instability renders persistence and resilience not merely advantageous traits but essential psychological resources for entrepreneurial survival and success.

Moreover, the partial mediation effects of persistence and resilience highlight that entrepreneurial passion influences intention both directly and indirectly. This supports the integration of Self-Regulation Theory (Zimmerman, 2006; Forgas *et al.*, 2009) and Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory into entrepreneurship models, suggesting that emotionally grounded motivation facilitates the acquisition of psychological capabilities over time. Students who possess passion but lack resilience or persistence may find it difficult to act on their intentions, particularly in environments fraught with uncertainty. Conversely, those with well-developed self-regulatory capacities are better positioned to translate their passion into concrete entrepreneurial goals and behaviors.

These findings challenge the assumption that entrepreneurial intention is primarily driven by opportunity structures or economic incentives. In the Afghan context, where such opportunities

are scarce, internal psychological factors like passion, persistence, and resilience may be more critical. Thus, entrepreneurship education and policy should move beyond cognitive or skill-based training and focus more on emotional and psychological preparedness. This aligns with emerging calls for affective and resilience-based approaches to entrepreneurial learning (Shepherd, 2020; González-López *et al.*, 2019).

Finally, the study's context adds value to global entrepreneurship literature, which has often overlooked post-conflict or low-income countries. The consistency of our results with studies in more stable contexts (e.g., González-López *et al.*, 2019; Fisher *et al.*, 2018; Qian *et al.*, 2022) suggests that these psychological dynamics may be universally relevant, though potentially more consequential in challenging environments.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of entrepreneurial psychology by examining how entrepreneurial passion influences entrepreneurial intention, directly and through the mediating roles of persistence and resilience. It advances the entrepreneurial emotion literature (Cardon *et al.*, 2009; 2013) by conceptualizing passion not merely as an affective state, but as a psychological resource that cultivates essential self-regulatory capacities. While passion has long been recognized as a key driver of entrepreneurial success, its influence on underlying cognitive and behavioral mechanisms remains insufficiently explored (Kiani *et al.*, 2021). This study addresses this gap by identifying persistence and resilience as critical psychological pathways linking emotional motivation to entrepreneurial intention.

By focusing on Afghanistan—a conflict-affected and under-researched context—this research responds to longstanding calls (e.g., Tsui, 2004) to test and extend Western-developed management theories across diverse cultural and institutional environments. The findings affirm that psychological resources such as passion, resilience, and persistence are not only applicable but may be especially vital in fragile ecosystems, where institutional support for entrepreneurship is minimal or absent.

Theoretically, the study underscores the importance of integrating emotional and self-regulatory dimensions into models of entrepreneurial intention. It demonstrates how persistence and resilience serve as psychological conduits that translate passion into sustained, goal-directed entrepreneurial behavior. These insights refine foundational psychological frameworks—such as Self-Congruence Theory (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), Self-Regulation

Theory, and the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001)—by illuminating the dynamic interplay between affective motivation and self-regulatory capacities, particularly in settings characterized by chronic uncertainty and resource scarcity.

The study also provides actionable implications for entrepreneurship education, policy, and practice, especially in post-conflict and resource-constrained environments. For educators, the findings highlight the need to expand entrepreneurship curricula beyond technical skills to include emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and resilience. Experiential learning approaches—such as venture simulations, peer mentoring, and group problem-solving—can foster the psychological adaptability necessary for entrepreneurial success. Embedding entrepreneurial role models and real-life narratives of success and failure can help normalize risk and build emotional readiness (Vermeire & Collewaert, 2013; Neneh *et al.*, 2022).

For policymakers and curriculum designers, these findings underscore the need for entrepreneurial development programs that integrate structured modules on passion cultivation, emotional regulation, and stress management. In environments with limited external support, such psychological tools become essential for fostering entrepreneurial capacity. Storytelling, role model exposure, and narrative-based training can play a pivotal role in developing the emotional resilience of future entrepreneurs.

For practitioners and entrepreneurship support organizations, the study emphasizes a holistic development approach that combines technical training with psychological empowerment. Interventions such as resilience workshops, coaching, reflective group sessions, and facilitated peer discussions can equip young entrepreneurs with the mindset and coping strategies needed to navigate uncertainty (Gray & Jones, 2016; Manning *et al.*, 2020). In fragile contexts like Afghanistan, these psychological resources are not supplementary but foundational to entrepreneurial viability and sustainability.

Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with all research, this study has several limitations. First, data were collected through self-report questionnaires, raising the potential for common method bias. Although steps were taken to minimize this issue—following Podsakoff *et al.* (2003)—it cannot be entirely ruled out. Future research should consider using multiple data sources (e.g., interviews, observations) to mitigate this risk. Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to draw causal inferences using structural equation modeling (SEM). Longitudinal designs are recommended to better explore causal relationships over time. Third, the sample was limited

to agriculture students from two universities in Afghanistan, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the sample to include students from other universities across the country would enhance external validity. Fourth, the study focused solely on the role of entrepreneurial passion in fostering persistence and resilience. Given the importance of these traits in the Afghan context, future studies should explore additional predictors such as entrepreneurship education, environmental conditions, and cultural influences. Finally, the research was conducted prior to the Taliban's return to power, a political shift that has significantly altered Afghanistan's economic, social, and cultural landscape. Future research should re-examine these constructs in the current context to provide more up-to-date and relevant insights into the evolving entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Conclusions

This study provides critical insights into the psychological drivers of entrepreneurial intention among Afghan university students in a resource-scarce, conflict-affected context. It establishes entrepreneurial passion as a pivotal force, directly fueling intention and indirectly fostering it through persistence and resilience, thus deepening the understanding of entrepreneurship in fragile settings like Afghanistan. These findings emphasize that internal psychological resources are essential for sustaining entrepreneurial aspirations and actions where institutional support is limited. To leverage these insights, entrepreneurship education and policies should prioritize emotional intelligence, resilience training, and self-regulatory skills alongside technical competencies. Given Afghanistan's evolving socio-political landscape, future research should continue exploring these psychological mechanisms to ensure their relevance, paving the way for resilient entrepreneurs who can drive economic and social transformation in challenging environments.

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تحلیل تاثیر اشتیاق بر قصد کارآفرینانه: نقش میانجی پشتکار و تاب‌آوری

سعید کریمی، احمد یعقوبی فرانی، و احمد سلمان مکریت

چکیده

مطالعات پیشین نشان می‌دهند که اشتیاق کارآفرینانه با قصد کارآفرینی رابطه مثبت دارد، اما مکانیسم‌های زیربنایی این رابطه، به ویژه در کشورهای کمتر توسعه یافته، همچنان شناخته نشده است. این پژوهش کمی و مقطعی، با بررسی نقش میانجی پشتکار و تاب‌آوری در رابطه بین اشتیاق کارآفرینانه و قصد کارآفرینی، ادبیات موجود در این زمینه را بسط می‌دهد. در این پژوهش، نمونه‌ای متشکل از 300 دانشجوی رشته کشاورزی از دو دانشگاه دولتی در کشور افغانستان با روش نمونه‌گیری تصادفی طبقه‌ای متناسب انتخاب شدند. داده‌ها از طریق پرسشنامه ساختاریافته جمع‌آوری و با استفاده از مدل‌سازی معادلات ساختاری (SEM) و روش حداقل مربعات جزئی (PLS-SEM) تحلیل شدند. نتایج پژوهش نشان داد که متغیر اشتیاق کارآفرینانه رابطه مثبت و معنی‌داری با قصد کارآفرینی دارد. بعلاوه، متغیرهای پشتکار و تاب‌آوری این رابطه را به‌صورت جزئی میانجی‌گری می‌کنند. یافته‌های پژوهش حاضر درک بهتری از چگونگی تاثیر اشتیاق کارآفرینانه بر تقویت قصد کارآفرینی در میان دانشجویان در محیط‌های آسیب‌پذیر و کمتر برخوردار نظیر کشور افغانستان ارائه می‌دهد. این مطالعه همچنین توصیه‌هایی برای سیاست‌گذاران و مربیان کارآفرینی ارائه می‌دهد تا برنامه‌های آموزش و توسعه کارآفرینی را به گونه‌ای طراحی کنند که آمادگی‌های روانی و عاطفی برای اقدام کارآفرینانه در دانشجویان را تقویت نمایند.