Trust in lecturer–student relationships as a factor supporting entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to identify trust's role in the student–lecturer relationship and to identify the factors that build trust in this relationship, as well as the mechanisms through which trust influences entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper presents the results of empirical research based on a semi-structured interview questionnaire. The participants included 12 entrepreneurs, 25–40 years old, who were running their own small enterprises. They were categorised by industry.

Findings – This study's results suggest that entrepreneurship education based on trust in student–lecturer relationships contributes to the formation of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours. This study has identified the factors that build trust between students and lecturers. Three mechanisms were also identified as having the greatest impact on transforming entrepreneurial intentions into actions: increasing self-efficacy, cultivating a broader perspective and encouraging initiative and risk taking.

Research limitations/implications – An obvious limitation of this research is its small sample size. Moreover, this study's respondents were all entrepreneurs running small companies – mainly start-ups – with up to 50 employees established by entrepreneurs up to four years after graduation. Additionally, the majority of the sample were men of Indian nationality. In subsequent studies, including more diverse respondents would be useful. Moreover, a quantitative survey of a larger sample with greater gender and cultural diversity would be worthwhile to test the proposed model.

Practical implications – This paper helps explain the trust's importance in the student–lecturer relationship. This paper reveals how relationships should be established to support entrepreneurial learning outcomes.

Originality/value – The results of this research expand the knowledge on trust-building between students and lecturers that can develop successful entrepreneurial attitudes amongst students and help students succeed as entrepreneurs. To the authors' knowledge, no previous research had examined this topic. This study's results are probably more universally relevant than our limited sample suggests, so further in-depth research is needed.

Keywords Trust, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial intention and behaviour, Student–lecturer relationship

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are currently challenged to actively connect with the business sector and stakeholders to ensure mutual benefits (Zollo *et al.*, 2017). Through such exchanges, the business sector derives social and economic benefits from university research and universities benefit from knowledge gained from the business community (Etzkowitz, 2013). Thus, this type of relationship enables an intensive knowledge transfer and the acquisition of empirical knowledge. Etzkowitz (2008) notes the emergence of an academic career path for entrepreneurial scholars who actively transform the results of their work into solutions that are useful for businesses. This trend perfectly complements current educational needs, which emphasise the development of students' entrepreneurial competencies, and lecturers' competencies can help achieve this goal (Joensuu- Salo *et al.*, 2020).

The entrepreneurship concept is understood in the literature more and more broadly, not only in the context of individuals running their own businesses and their competencies but also as individuals' ability to perceive and exploit opportunities that arise in their environments. The literature also discusses intra-organisational entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship oriented towards actively solving social problems (Bosma *et al.*, 2011). Entrepreneurship is regarded as a process of successive phases which start with an idea, the perception of an opportunity or the intention to start a business, which is called an entrepreneurial intention (Fayolle and Gailly, 2015). Therefore, the study of entrepreneurial intentions and their determinants are greatly important scientifically and practically because it helps identify the factors which influence decisions to set up a business (Turker and Sonmez Selcuk, 2009).

A large group of researchers have used Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour to explain entrepreneurial intentions and subsequent entrepreneurial behaviours (Ajzen, 2009; Gieure *et al.*, 2020). They point out that every directed, complex activity is preceded by a behavioural intention – in this context, an entrepreneurial intention, which is determined by factors that cause this type of behaviour. The categories of entrepreneurial intention determinants include individual characteristics, such as personality traits or individual beliefs, as well as life and educational experience. However, no unambiguous position on how education levels influence entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours has been expressed in the literature (Bae *et al.*, 2014; Fayolle and Gailly, 2015).

Also, an important trend has suggested that entrepreneurship can be learned using different educational strategies (Noorkartina *et al.*, 2015). Currently, classical lectures are considered to be the worst of them because of the fact that they do not allow students to be engaged in entrepreneurial activities and projects (Stovang and Nielsen, 2015). Business-plan-oriented courses have also been found to negatively influence students' intentions to start a business venture (von Graevenitz *et al.*, 2010), an outcome which is certainly not intended. By contrast, active courses that focus on developing the skills and competencies needed to operate under uncertain conditions are more likely to encourage students to start an entrepreneurial venture (Nabi *et al.*, 2017).

Creating an environment conducive to the transfer and absorption of knowledge through trust between lecturers and students is also important (Jederlund and von Rosen, 2021). HEIs have evolved from centres of social embedding to providers of education, understood as a set of competencies, enabling employability (Kezar, 2014). Ongoing changes to HEIs are also resulting in transformations of student–lecturer relationships, largely replacing individual relationships with relationships between lecturers and student groups. This shift requires attention to trust's important role in these relationships, as well as its impact on educational processes (Owen, 2016; Jederlund and von Rosen, 2021).

Trust in the process of teaching entrepreneurship seems particularly important, primarily because it involves both cognitive and social dimensions (Kolb, 1984, 2015). Firstly, the cognitive dimension implies learning from critical events that are relevant to an activity's success or failure (Cope, 2005). Effective experiential learning requires critical reflection and the questioning of not only established approaches but also their underlying values (Zhang and Hamilton, 2010). The social learning process connects individuals with their social contexts, as they develop their entrepreneurial identities and abilities through their environments (Rae, 2007). Secondly, the social aspect of learning is related to the possibility of learning from a lecturer as a role model and from fellow students. The intensity of a knowledge transfer seems to increase when lecturers have a demonstrated history of running their own business or developing ventures, share their experience with students and allow students to observe their entrepreneurial efforts. Furthermore, the quality of teaching relationships is believed to positively influence students' self-efficacy, which is – in turn – crucial for entrepreneurial behaviour (Bandura, 1997).

Accordingly, the current paper aims to identify trust's role in entrepreneurship education. Although an increasing number of studies have addressed trust's importance in the education process (Hattie, 2009; Doğan and Adams, 2018), as well as entrepreneurship education (Kuratko, 2005; Boldureanu et al., 2020; Saadat et al., 2021), trust's importance in the particular case of entrepreneurship learning has not yet received much attention. Therefore, the current study fills a gap in the literature by identifying trust-building mechanisms in student–lecturer relationships and their impact on the development of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the assumptions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education; Section 3 is devoted to trust in entrepreneurial education; Section 4 presents adopted methodology of the study; Section 5 is the presentation of the research results and Section 6 is the discussion.

2. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education
Entrepreneurship continues to interest researchers and policymakers because it creates economic growth, as well as new businesses, ventures and jobs (Mittal and Raghuvaran, 2021). A diverse set of determining factors have been identified for entrepreneurship (Lüthje and Franke, 2003; Fini et al., 2012; Glińska-Neweś and Karwacki, 2018).

Entrepreneurship has been found to be conditioned by personal factors and stimulated, shaped or limited by external cultural, social, economic, political, demographic, institutional and technological factors (Kuckertz et al., 2015). According to researchers, entrepreneurs differ from non-entrepreneurs in their values, attitudes and needs, which effectively determine their behaviours. These traits also shape entrepreneurial intentions, which accompany, for instance, positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship-related opinions about the immediate environment and perceived feasibility – that is, the conviction that a given action can be carried out (Ajzen, 2009). Researchers have also indicated that individuals with entrepreneurial characteristics tend to be more likely to undertake entrepreneurial activities than individuals without such characteristics (Kundu and Rani, 2013). Self-efficacy, the ability to take risks and the need for autonomy (Rauch and Frese, 2007), as well as the need for achievements and an internal locus of control (Krauss et al., 2005; Kundu and Rani, 2016), have been most commonly identified amongst the characteristics of entrepreneurs and individuals who exhibit entrepreneurial traits.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs about whether they can succeed in a given venture (Segal et al., 2005). Risk propensity, on the other hand, can be defined as facing

extremely difficult problems without obvious solutions to increase one's likelihood of success (Neves and Eisenberger, 2014). The components of entrepreneurial motivation also include the need for autonomy, which is the ability to work on the basis of one's own goals, beliefs and values and the need for achievements, which manifests in the pursuit of goals and the continuous improvement of one's performance (Stewart and Roth, 2007). For entrepreneurs, the internal locus of control characteristic indicates the extent to which a person is willing to look for the causes of their own actions, efforts and works, and it is related to one's sense of influence over one's own life. Meanwhile, personality traits are constructs that explain the regularity of human behaviour and indicate why different people behave differently in similar situations. Moreover, these traits are relatively stable, so university education cannot be assumed to significantly influence them. However, given that creativity, emotional intelligence or assertiveness can be developed with the help of training designed especially for this purpose, entrepreneurship can also be developed through training. Nonetheless, which creative aspects of entrepreneurship are not clearly influenced by education remains unclear (Arasti *et al.*, 2012).

The university context – that is, the university environment – is assumed to enhance students' entrepreneurial attitudes (Kuratko, 2005). An important part of fostering entrepreneurship at HEIs is fostering perceptions of entrepreneurship, teaching entrepreneurship based on the most effective teaching methods and providing opportunities to collaborate with lecturers (Gibb and Hannon, 2006). Research has shown that students who choose entrepreneurship-related courses show higher levels of entrepreneurial intentions than students who do not (Liu *et al.*, 2019).

Moreover, research has confirmed that some aspects of entrepreneurship – especially the functional skills required to start a business – can be successfully developed through university education (Mwasalwiba, 2010; Zollo *et al.*, 2017). Many studies have confirmed that educational support is amongst the most significant predictive factors that shape students' entrepreneurial intentions (Bae *et al.*, 2014; Fayolle and Gailly, 2015). Entrepreneurial knowledge and inspiration have been identified as key factors that increase students' probability of choosing entrepreneurial careers (Turker and Sonmez Selçuk, 2009). Additionally, entrepreneurship education increases students' employability – that is, it makes their entry into the labour market easier (Scott *et al.*, 2019). Notably, entrepreneurship courses most often develop employability competencies, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, flexibility, adaptability, cooperation and negotiation, and they help students develop adequate self-esteem (Suleman, 2016).

Much research has been devoted to entrepreneurship teaching methods (Carrier, 2007). Such methods include the consolidation of knowledge conveyed through lectures, problem-solving and decision-making (Cope and Watts, 2000). They also include analytical skills, overcoming risk aversion and improve openness to change, as well as increasing self-efficacy, relationship skills, empathy and other qualities (Arasti *et al.*, 2012). Traditionally, entrepreneurship teaching methods have been divided into two groups: traditional (passive) methods, such as lecturing and innovative (active) methods, such as action learning, which allows for students' own exploration and formulation of conclusions (Bennet, 2006). Teaching methodology has shifted from a basic supply-side model to a competency-based model (Young and Sexton, 1997). On this basis, lecturers have started to impart knowledge through practical, innovative methods, using examples from real-life situations involving managers and company competencies (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008). Through teaching methods, lecturers can create environments where students can improve their thinking and creativity (Fitzpatrick, 2021).

The long-term effects of entrepreneurship education can change students' attitudes and value systems, allowing them to see and develop entrepreneurial opportunities (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008). However, the effectiveness of an entrepreneurship curriculum depends mainly on knowledge, experience, lecturers' methods and the type of relationship established with students (Arasti *et al.*, 2012). Research by Joensuu-Salo *et al.* (2020) confirmed that teachers' innovativeness and risk-taking ability positively influence their choice of entrepreneurial teaching methods and how they encourage students to develop entrepreneurial competencies whilst also confirming the importance of teachers' own innovativeness and risk-taking propensities in shaping students' entrepreneurial competencies. Also, worth considering are trust and transparency in the relationship between students and lecturers, which creates the necessary conditions for effective competency improvement (Cansoy, 2019).

3. Trust in entrepreneurship education

Trust is a complex phenomenon that has been understood and defined in many different ways (Osburn and Gocial, 2019). It is a belief in certain actions or properties of the trusted object, "a bet made on the uncertain future actions of other people" (Sztompka, 2007, p. 69). This bet comprises two elements:

(1) beliefs and their expression in practice; and

(2) specific expectations and expressions of beliefs through action – that is, acceptance of the bet.

Trust is a social phenomenon that occurs when people make decisions based on their beliefs about others (Lewicka *et al.*, 2018).

The current study focuses on trust as a component of interpersonal relationships at HEIs between students and lecturers. This type of trust can be defined as the degree to which a student is willing to rely on a lecturer and accept that the competencies developed through the lecturer's teaching will help the student achieve their academic and professional goals. The only way to gain this type of trust is to earn it. It is based on a subjective assessment of a lecturer's behaviours and actions, which reduces uncertainty concerning the quality and outcome of the educational process.

Trust is created under certain conditions; it develops over time and cannot be imposed. At the same time, it is fragile and prone to violations and erosion (Elangovan *et al.*, 2015). It is also characterised by gradualism, meaning it can range from low to high. Thus, trust can be a criterion that helps students make choices and shapes their chosen educational path. A trusting relationship can be established through many factors, such as shared values, common goals, mutual understanding and mutual respect (Cruz *et al.*, 2010; Lewicka, 2020). The ability, benevolence integrity (ABI) model, the most popular in the literature, helpfully distinguishes between ability, benevolence and integrity as the components of trust (Mayer and Gavin, 2005). Competence-based trust ensures the close development of trustee relationships and facilitates the exchange of resources and related knowledge. Meanwhile, benevolence refers to the trustor supporting the trustee without expecting personal gain; it also shows that the trustee favours the trustor's success (Casimir *et al.*, 2012). *Integrity* in a trust relationship refers to the trustee's honesty, fairness, truthfulness and good faith towards the trustor; it is defined as 'honesty and consistency between a person's espoused values and behaviour' (Yukl, 2013, p. 331). Integrity is the foundation of trustworthiness (Mayer and Gavin, 2005).

The lecturer's role is evolving from traditional teaching to supporting and facilitating student learning (Arasti *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, the learning process is increasingly based

on active learning and teaching methods for collaborative exploration, as well as the production and evaluation of knowledge. Accordingly, trust plays a crucial role in student–lecturer relationships and the educational process (Mitchell *et al.*, 2018). A lecturer's trust in students is an unobservable, attitudinal element that determines the lecturer's choice of educational techniques and methods (Najimdeen *et al.*, 2021). A very important element in this relationship is the lecturer's trust in their student's ability and motivation to engage in and complete tasks and solve problems (Zhang and Hamilton, 2010). A lack of trust may prevent students' active participation, which is crucial for the acquisition of entrepreneurial competencies. Also, an important element of engaging in the learning process is lecturers' feedback on students' performance (Owusu-Agyeman and Moroeroe, 2021). Research has confirmed that the acceptance of feedback depends on the source's approval and credibility, which indicates that trust influences a feedback receiver's evaluation of feedback's value and reliability (van Gennip *et al.*, 2010). The lecturer is largely responsible for creating the climate most conducive to learning and fostering creative ideas by encouraging experimentation, accepting a level of failure and valuing students' creative efforts (Nae *et al.*, 2015). This approach enables a learning and experience mindset that is conducive to testing new ideas.

Collaboration and trust between students and lecturers in the teaching and learning processes result in better outcomes (Florén, 2003). Several factors help build trust. Firstly, a mutual understanding between the lecturer and students is needed so that both parties can work together to ensure students' success. Secondly, the lecturer's willingness to support the student and openness to accepting the students' new ideas are required. Thirdly, the lecturer should be able to provide constructive feedback. Many students believe constructive criticism can help them correct their mistakes so that they can improve their work quality (Hajovsky *et al.*, 2017). Finally, the communication between a lecturer and students should be transparent, especially when the lecturer shares knowledge based on their own experience (Zhang and Hamilton, 2010).

Bandura noted a difference between having competencies and the ability to use these competencies, indicating that one's level of self-efficacy – that is, a person's ability to make judgements about their own ability to deal with certain situations or tasks – affects one's performance of these tasks (Bandura, 1997). Research has also indicated a positive relationship between self-efficacy and one's likelihood of becoming an entrepreneur (Chen *et al.*, 1998). High self-efficacy is also a predictor of success in business. Business owners with high self-efficacy generate high annual incomes.

Therefore, a lecturer must support students' self-efficacy by, for example, highlighting their achievements, good ideas and solutions. Trust can also be built by granting students responsibilities, helping them find solutions and serving as a role model (Karp, 2019). By contrast, totally relying on or automatically following a lecturer may not help develop entrepreneurial skills. The above-cited studies indicate the importance of trust in the student-lecturer relationship but also a belief that fostering certain attitudes and behaviours of students in the process of teaching entrepreneurship such as disagreement, the questioning of established truths and a creative search for new solutions are welcome. Therefore, we formulated the following research questions:

RQ1. What factors build trust in student–lecturer relationships in the context of entrepreneurship learning?

RQ2. How does trust in a lecturer influence students' entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours?

4. Method
This study aimed to explain the relationship between student–lecturer trust and students' entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours. Given this aim and our research questions, our research followed an inductive procedure, allowing for a theory to emerge based on students' experiences with and observations of the interrelationship between the studied phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Exploratory, qualitative research based on individual in-depth interview technique allows for a holistic understanding of studied phenomena and a description of the specific issues or problems under investigation (Gioia *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly, we sought to identify subjective perceptions of how students' behaviours and relationships with their lecturers promote or strengthen their entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours.

We used purposive selection based on the criterion of similarity and the identification of cases that matched certain validity criteria (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). This approach also required the definition of inclusion criteria for the study's sample (Suri, 2011). Accordingly, entrepreneurs who were running small-size companies and were 25–40 years old mostly recruited from India were selected as interviewees from 12 different fields. Our selection criteria included: the completion of entrepreneurship courses during participants' university education and the start of their own business zero to four years after their graduation. The participating entrepreneurs worked in the IT consulting, software development, automobile maintenance, human resources (HR) agency, online apparel store, customer support services, translation and language training, raw material processing, online advertising, consulting, painting and art studio and accountancy fields. The interviewees comprised 10 male and two female participants. These respondents are presented in detail in Table 1.

For the study participant selection procedure, the snowball technique was used – that is, prospective participants were successively selected for the study based on previously selected participants' recommendations (Glinka and Czakon, 2021). This study was conducted between July and September 2021 using a semi-structured, individual-interview method. The interviews comprised 17 open-ended questions, such as:

Q1. How were the entrepreneurship classes conducted?

Q2. Did you notice any impact of these classes on your actions or behaviours?

Q3. Was there a situation when a lecturer, through his or her attitude or the content of the course, influenced the development of your entrepreneurial competence, made you take initiative or started an innovative idea or project?

The interviews lasted 30 min each and were conducted both in person and remotely using the Microsoft Teams and Google Hangouts platforms.

Our data collection through interviews continued until our sample reached a point of saturation (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). The literature has emphasised the relationship between the precise formulation of a research question and the achievement of saturation – that is, increasing repetition of the issues reported by respondents (Glinka and Czakon, 2021). Furthermore, a minimum case number of 10 is recommended for relatively homogeneous populations defined precisely before research is undertaken (Boddy, 2016).

Our data analysis process involved reviewing notes taken during the interviews and transcribing the interviews themselves. Additionally, source data were also referred to during our analysis – that is, interview recordings were viewed and reviewed.

Then, open coding was applied by constructing codes based on the transcript texts. Our preliminary coding included two coding techniques: line by line and event by event. Second-level coding, also called "theoretical coding" and was then conducted to aggregate the data

Respondent	Age group	Gender	Course	University	Type of business	Years in business	Years after graduation	Country of origin	Country of business
E1	30–35	Male	Bachelors (IT)	Techno India University	IT consulting	3	3	India	India
E2	35–40	Male	MCA	MLRIT(JNTU)	Software development	8	2	India	India
E3	25–30	Male	Bachelors (Tech)	IATE(JNTU)	Automobile maintenance	3	Immediately	India	India
E4	30–35	Female	MBA HR	Loyola College (Osmania University)	HR agency	4	3	India	India
E5	25–30	Male	MSc	Kakatiya University	Online apparel store	4	2	India	India
E6	30–35	Male	MCA	SRM University	Customer support services	2	4	India	India
E7	25–30	Male	MA Linguistics	Jagiellonian University	Translation and language training	3	immediately	US	US
E8	30–35	Male	MBA	University of Copenhagen	Raw material processing	2	immediately	Slovakia	Slovakia
E9	30–35	Male	Masters	Edexcel	Online marketing	6	immediately	UK	UK
E10	25–30	Female	MA Psychology	St. Francis (Osmania University)	Consulting	1	immediately	India	India
E11	30–35	Male	MBA	Symbiosis University	Painting and art studio	4	3	India	India
E12	30–35	Male	M Com CA	Osmania University	Accountancy firm	6	immediately	India	India

Table 1.
Interviewee details

(Glinka, 2013). These data were then reduced and aggregated to create a data structure (Czernek and Czakon, 2016).

Three main themes emerged from our analysis:

(1) trust-building factors in the student–lecturer relationship;

(2) lecturer competencies that support entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours; and

(3) the mechanisms through which trust influences entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours.

To make our results more transparent, the aggregated data were presented with illustrative quotations. During the final step of our analysis, our results were compared to previous findings in the literature.

5. Results

Through the interviews, we identified factors related to the establishment of trust, particularly in the context of entrepreneurship education. Moreover, the interviews enabled the identification of the mechanisms through which trust in a lecturer supports students' entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours.

The majority of the interviewees (E1, E2, E5, E7, E8, E9, E11 and E12) agreed that trust between a student and a lecturer is an important factor in promoting entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours amongst students. However, three interviewees (E3, E4 and E6) indicated that trust in a lecturer is not important for developing entrepreneurial intentions or behaviours. These three respondents believed that hard work, perseverance and dedication are key aspects of success. Additionally, like the other interviewees, they believed that self-efficacy is the key to success. One of these three respondents (E6) stated that family support was important for his ability to succeed in business (E6). Another respondent (E3) mentioned that working on innovative projects with companies such as Tesla has helped him develop new business ideas. Whilst these statements did not invoke trust specifically, they confirm the importance of external support and formative experiences during the process of becoming an entrepreneur.

Whilst these statements did not specifically invoke trust, they confirm the importance of external support and formative experiences in the process of becoming an entrepreneur.

Our research has shown that trust in the student–lecturer relationship is developed and established by supporting students' decisions, motivating students, discussing the quality of students' ideas and expressing constructive criticism of students' actions. Moreover our research has shown that students strongly consent to criticism from their lecturers, which some of our interviewees (E2, E3 and E8) understood as a benevolent action that helps them succeed since it enables them to discontinue wrong or unnecessary actions. Trust was also noted to have been developed when a lecturer devoted time or special attention to a student. We included these elements in a broader *benevolence* category and benevolence is an important element of trust.

A respondent (E10) also indicated that the necessary conditions for building trust comprise high-quality communication and cooperation between the lecturer and the student, confidentiality, honouring obligation and fair treatment. We included these factors in the integrity or honesty category. These factors, together with corresponding illustrative quotations, are summarised in Table 2.

The interviewees indicated that lecturer competencies is an important factor in supporting entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours. Three aspects of lecturer competencies were indicated in this context: the development of entrepreneurial intentions,

Trust-building factor	Illustrative quotes
Showing support for the student's actions	"A lecturer being supportive of their student's decisions is what creates a bond of trust between them". – E2 "Lecturers, they are your point of contact and are present throughout your research studies and internship period. So, I think having their support is essential". – E10
Motivating action	"When my lecturer motivates me and supports me, it increases my trust in him". – E3 "Once, my lecturer guided me in choosing an appropriate research topic, as the area I was studying was narrow. Instead of directly pointing out, he suggested some great books and academic sources that helped me gather more information on the subject. In another incident, my professor … arranged two additional sessions, giving some additional context of the topic, which builds up my knowledge". – E5
Discussing the quality of the student's ideas	"I think it's like being able to share your ideas, and to be able to receive constructive feedback, you should be providing help in understanding why it's not a good idea and helping you find alternative ideas or develop the idea further to a stage where it could be viable". – E9
Constructive criticism of wrong decisions	"Constructive criticism: I would like my professor to criticise my ideas if they are not worth my time or effort and support ideas only when they are valid and will work in the future, instead of sugar-coated conversation wherein they say the idea is amazing. By end of the day, those ideas are of no use". – E8 "When he scolds me for my mistakes and helps me in correcting those, I understand that he cares about me and wants me on the correct path". – E3 "Being critical about the drawbacks of the decision and explaining it to me thoroughly, whether it is a good idea, will build my trust in my lecturer". – E2
Openness and accessible communication	"Communication, transparency and cooperation between the lecturer and student". – E2 "Being able to communicate effectively and listening to students". – E9
Confidentiality	"Other factors, including confidentiality and motivation, would further enhance the trust in the lecturer". – E10
Fair treatment	"It's also fairness in treatment, no partiality in treatment with all the students". – E10
Honouring obligations	"Also, excellence and communicating effectively and keeping the promises". – E10

Table 2.
Trust-building
factors in the
student–lecturer
relationship

practice-based learning applications and opportunities to imitate the lecturer as an entrepreneurial practitioner.

One interviewee (E1) mainly emphasised the value of practical teaching methods and the possibility of acquiring useful – that is, practical – knowledge. Another (E8) emphasised the value of independent problem-solving through experiments and practical tasks, which require taking initiative and improving management competencies. They (E8) also indicated that recalling some lecture content whilst running a business helped them overcome obstacles.

Lecturer competencies can also help students develop entrepreneurial intentions (E1, E8, E11). This process includes such elements as motivating students or orientating them towards practical solutions (E11). Students' ability to observe the lecturer engaging in entrepreneurial activities, serving as an example, is also very important (E10). Moreover, working together and overcoming difficulties can energise and motivate both students and lecturers (E8). These experiences can inspire students to start their own entrepreneurial journeys (Table 3).

Improving entrepreneurial intentions through teaching methods	"He [the interviewee's professor] always instructed us not to take just theoretical lessons from the subjects; rather, learn practical lessons from them and how to implement them in real-life situations". – E1
	"When I decided to start my own company, I always look back at what we learned. How we learned and what was taught by the professor always help me in different situations". – E8
	"I opened up my company, developing it slow and steadily. I would say perhaps I attribute this idea of starting up my enterprise due to the motivation I got from this professor. He always motivated us, directly or indirectly, to start a business". – E8
Promoting practice-based learning	"[My] professor was the owner of one of the biggest breweries in Denmark .... During our classes with him, we were asked to work on business plans, gather data – primary and secondary. We were doing competitor analysis, and the best part was his criticism of the ideas we developed. It was bang-on, and we always had the opportunity to retrospect what we did. With all these activities I was involved in, I always wanted to start something of my own and develop it". – E8
	"A project for which we had to visit a company or a cafe or any outlet and try to understand their business model, observe, and give our inputs and speak to a representative working there. There was a questionnaire on which we were working .... So, I selected an art gallery. I went there, as it was close to my heart. I understood what the business model was. And then, I came back and submitted my questionnaire to the professor with all my findings. I developed an idea for how this business model could work. It eventually helped me in setting up my online gallery. I understood how paintings could be sold on that. I had that intention. When my professor told me that, I could also look at it as a new venture". – E11
Serving as a role model (showing initiative and achieving goals)	"We had a lecturer who has her clinic set up. And she has many women therapists working there. She promotes LGBTQ rights. And she promotes feminism. . . . I think she's sort of influenced a lot in what we do". – E10
	"For example, there was a situation where we worked on a project related to airlines, and this professor motivated us and appreciated the idea and asked our team to go present it to Ryanair. We could not do that with Ryanair, but we went to Budapest to share this idea with Wizz Air. The professor helped us in getting funds for our travel, and he arranged the visit, which motivated us to pursue such ideas for the future". – E8

Table 3.
Lecturer competencies that support students' entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours

Importantly, trust is also based on a lecturer's competencies. The perception of a lecturer as competent should inspire trust in them [E8, E10, E11]. Competence is one element of the ABI model, which recognises three components of trust (alongside benevolence and integrity). However, when discussing lecturers' competencies, our respondents did not associate them with trust. Instead, they mainly associated them with lecturers' professionalism, achievements and use of practical teaching methods [E8, E10, E11]. Nonetheless, we include this discussion amongst our results to fully represent our data and because of their substantive connection.

Many interviewees instead emphasised the importance of trust in the contexts of increasing self-efficacy, cultivating a broader perspective and preparing and encouraging initiative and risk-taking (e.g. E1, E5, E10, E12). These data led us to consider these three mechanisms as factors that mediate the effect of lecturer trust on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours during the educational process (Table 4).

The majority of respondents (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E10, E11 and E12) indicated that self-efficacy played a very important role in the process of setting up their own ventures.

Increasing self-efficacy	"An entrepreneur always carries an idea or an innovation in his pocket. The only thing that hinders his progress is support. Trust in a teacher is an initial planning element for the success of business ideas. It helps the entrepreneur to understand, exhibit his ideas and possibilities ahead". – E12
	"Without trust, I don't think I would have the confidence even to do something like that". – E10
	"I reflect on the learnings that I have received from my lecturer. Trust emerges as the most important factor in developing my confidence. Based on this intuition, I have motivated myself in the journey of setting up a new venture". – E5
Encouraging initiative and risk taking	"I believe to achieve great success, one must have the courage to take risks. Even after knowing the competition in the market and the risks involved, I decided to go for it. My lecturer's trust in me to take the correct decisions is one reason that I was confident about myself". – E1
	"My lecturer made us understand the beauty of taking risks in a new business. Apart from identifying potential risks, the lecturer also developed my understanding in preparing appropriate risk-mitigating strategies to minimise the risk's impact on my businesses. – E5
	"He motivated me to take the initiative so that I could get out of my social awkwardness and take a little step towards better communication. This actually has helped me a lot to reach the point of my career where I stand now". – E2
	"The university where I studied in Denmark, we had a Professor Peter. His way of teaching was entirely practical. . . . While working on the team, each one of us took accountability for what we did and made sure all the tasks we divided are completed on time. There were situations where we had to take initiative to get to the end of the project assigned to us". – E5
	"Without trust, I would not even have the confidence to make my decisions, let alone taking risks". – E1
Cultivating a broader perspective	"If I had no trust in the professor, I would have ended up doing something else. Maybe, like all others, end up in a full-time job where I would be working for somebody else. But due to the trust I had in this professor, I was able to think beyond the job and what I could do". – E8
	"One day, my teacher organised a group discussion on the topic "unemployment and its causes". And the crux of the discussion resulted in reducing unemployment by finding solutions to the real-world problems by having an entrepreneurial mindset". – E12
	"My professor . . . thought that entrepreneurship is better than jobs, as it not only provides us a dream to achieve but also ensures more employment for the people in need. He always motivated us to set up a business and achieve our dreams, rather than work for someone else in an office" – E1

Table 4.
Mechanisms through
which trust
influences
entrepreneurial
intentions and
behaviours

Their statements suggest that trust in the student–lecturer relationship strengthens self-efficacy in two contexts. The first context concerned the lecturer's trust in the students – for example, believing in their abilities or decisions. The second context concerned the students' trust in the lecturer – that is, their trust in the knowledge or ideas instilled by the lecturer during the learning process and the advice or recommendations they had received. We also noted that the process of enhancing self-efficacy relates to practical learning based on successes and failures, in which encouragement and feedback from the lecturer has an important impact. Trust in the student–lecturer relationship may also support students' ability to take initiative and risks, which are especially important when starting one's own business (E1, E8). According to our respondents (E1, E2, E5), trust in a lecturer may influence a student's taking initiative and risks in three contexts: encouraging and creating opportunities for students to undertake challenges (e.g. by accomplishing, during their education, practical and complex tasks that require decision-making), theoretical and mental

preparation for risk-taking via a knowledge transfer (e.g. about how to deal with risk) and strengthening self-efficacy.

Interviewees (E1, E8, E12) also pointed out that trust in the student–lecturer relationship allows for the adoption of a broader perspective on one's actions, which can be adopted from an entrepreneurial perspective and which comprises realising one's own ideas and concepts, sometimes even a certain mission (e.g. solving social problems or helping underprivileged community members). The role of an entrepreneur, a person who is largely independent and who can build their enterprise to comply with their own values, was juxtaposed with the necessity of performing paid work (E8). Illustrative quotations for these mechanisms are presented in Table 4.

Therefore, we concluded that trust in the lecturer promotes the acquisition of entrepreneurial competence and the development of students' entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour. Moreover, as one respondent suggested, "It seems to be important at the beginning of a business career (e.g. before starting a company and at the beginning of its operation) also supporting the decision to choose this particular path. But over time, its importance is likely to decrease, giving way to actual experiences and relationships" (E10).

The results of our study presented in Figure 1 indicate that the first stage of the process of trust's impact on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours is the building of trust in the student–lecturer relationship, which importantly shapes how entrepreneurial education influences entrepreneurial intentions and, as a result, entrepreneurial behaviours. We identified eight factors that affect the formation of trust in this relationship. These factors can be classified into four categories:

(1) benevolence, which includes supporting students' actions and motivating them to act;

(2) competent communication regarding the quality of students' ideas and constructive criticism of mistakes;

(3) reliability – that is, keeping promises and maintaining confidentiality; and

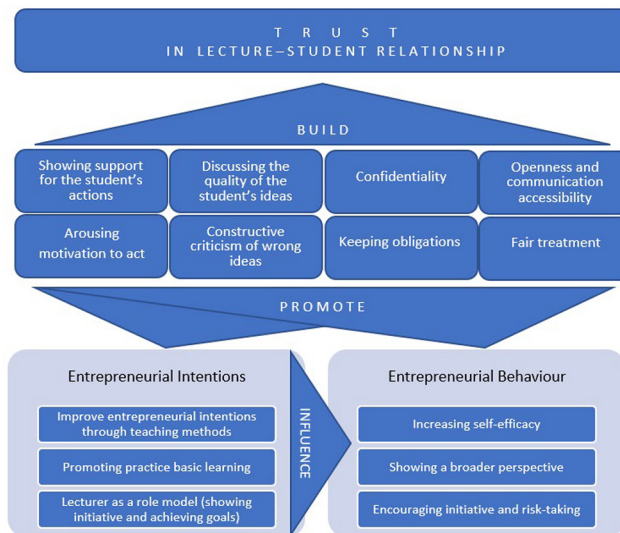(4) fair treatment – that is, fairness and communicative justice.

Figure 1.
Model of trust's impact on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours

Entrepreneurial intentions are formed based on trust in student–lecturer relationships, which stimulates learning outcomes, and the use of the most effective teaching methods, based on practical examples. Amongst these methods, the use of problem-based learning techniques which enables hands-on learning is notable. The use of simulations, which allow for the solving of entrepreneurial problems in a classroom environment, helps students appreciate entrepreneurial problems, develop divergent thinking and increase their confidence in their own entrepreneurial competencies. Trust is embedded in norms of reciprocity and social exchange, which makes students more creative and willing to share ideas. By contrast, a lack of trust weakens social integration and hinders students' full engagement with the educational process.

Another mechanism that influences the formation of entrepreneurial intentions is a lecturer's serving as a role model. This position is based primarily on students' observations of the lecturer's performance and solutions for entrepreneurial problems. Lecturers who are recognised as role models increase entrepreneurial intentions and improve several student behaviours and competencies (Bae *et al.*, 2014). Notably, to serve as a role model, a lecturer should be perceived as trustworthy, credible, precise and consistent in their actions. Therefore, trust in the student–lecturer relationship is inscribed in the mechanisms described above (see Figure 1).

However, to transform intentions into actions, a deeper psychological influence is needed. This influence involves the mechanism of strengthening self-efficacy, which is related to trust-based education in the student–lecturer relationship. In this context, trust can act as a catalyst – for instance, by enhancing entrepreneurial self-efficacy and learning outcomes, which can transform intentions into behaviours. The impact of trust on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour also takes place through feedback, evaluations of past performance and discussion of wrong decisions. Trust is essential in this process, as it conditions the acceptance of feedback with confidence in the good intentions of the lecturer. Similarly, trust influences risk propensity by increasing one's willingness to be vulnerable to a risk. This willingness can be shaped in classes in a relatively safe, simulated manner. However, we found that this training transfers into a willingness to take risks in real business situations.

Identification-based trust is considered the highest level of trust. Through identification, one party tends to perceive the other party as following the same norms and values (Rathbun, 2009). Because of the nature of the student–lecturer relationship, this mechanism may be understood to occur mainly in one direction – that is, via the student's identification with their lecturer. This relationship stimulates the student's willingness to accept new information without requiring verification. Additionally, it induces the sharing of common values. Therefore, we conclude that trust facilitates lecturers' demonstration of entrepreneurial activities' value from a broader perspective relevant to students' social development and well-being.

6. Discussion
Our results support other researchers' reports that trust in a lecturer plays an important role in students' academic life by influencing their levels of knowledge acquisition and learning atmospheres (Goddard, 2001; Karp *et al.*, 2019). Based on this study, we identified a list of factors that help build trust between students and lecturers. Furthermore, our study outlines how this trust in lecturers influences students' entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours. Accordingly, we developed a process model (Figure 1). This model comprises three main parts: trust-building factors in a student–lecturer relationship, how trust promotes entrepreneurial intentions and how trust influences entrepreneurial behaviours. The model

explains that trust between students and lecturers helps develop entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours.

Research has confirmed that benevolence is the factor that determines trust in a lecturer. Benevolence in the student–lecturer relationship reflects in the support or advice students receive, the time lecturers dedicate to students and lecturers' care and actions to address students' needs (McKnight and Chervany, 2002). Furthermore, benevolence includes the following elements: motivating action, discussing students' ideas and constructive criticism. Our interviewees understood constructive criticism as indicating alternatives and ideas, helping fix mistakes and suggesting ways to improve performance whilst appreciating students' efforts. In our study, respondents also noted that they accepted this type of criticism because of its significant developmental value. They indicated that this approach helped them start their own businesses.

Integrity or honesty (i.e. the degree to which a person is perceived as adhering to their principles and maintaining honesty, as well as the degree to which their words correspond to their actions) is also an important component of trust. It includes fair treatment, inclusion in the communication process, keeping promises and commitments and confidentiality in relationships. Our interviewees mentioned these elements somewhat less frequently and less extensively in relation to the benevolence. However, their discussion suggested that these elements create a framework for the emergence of trust in relationships. Benevolence, on the other hand, shapes a special kind of relationship between students and lecturers, based on mutual commitment. Such bilateral relationships influence future career growth and development (Karacabey *et al.*, 2020).

Although our interviewees did not explicitly mention lecturer competence, it can be understood as another factor that builds trust (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). Research has confirmed that experiencing competence in relationships increases trust (Tolley, 2009). Lecturer competence manifests primarily in the ability to transfer knowledge effectively and influence the development of students' competence. Our interviewees also valued their lecturers' focus on students' acquisition of practical knowledge and opportunities to solve real-world problems in simulated settings. As our data show, several respondents mentioned that practice-based learning promotes entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours, which prepares them to face challenges.

Many entrepreneurs claim that their business start-up decisions and the development of their businesses were influenced by others (Van Auken *et al.*, 2006). In our study also, lecturers' important position as role models was emphasised in reference to both approaches to conducting business and implementing and organising joint ventures. Our interviewees described their lecturers as influential people who allowed for "learning by example", in which a role model provides guidelines for action (Slack *et al.*, 2015). The literature has indicated that this ability to influence behaviours through the observation of an example is very effective, based on social learning and role identification theory (Bosma *et al.*, 2011).

Based on our results, we conclude that trust is an essential element in the transfer of knowledge and skills during the learning process. Two-way trust in the student–lecturer relationship and the practical, initiative-encouraging transfer of knowledge influence the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. Moreover, respondents' statements show that when relationships are not based on trust, students focus more on formal course completion and obtaining high final marks, rather than on improving their competencies and their own development.

We also identified the trust-based mechanisms in the student–lecturer relationship that respondents believed to most encourage the transformation of entrepreneurial intentions into action. One such mechanism is strengthening students' sense of self-efficacy. A lecturer,

through a special kind of relationship based on trust and feedback, makes students feel confident that they can achieve a certain goal. The literature supports this conclusion, having shown that a person's belief in their own abilities and capabilities can influence their decision to perform a task and choice of career type (Johnson *et al.*, 2008).

Self-efficacy is enhanced by feedback and evaluations of past performance. People are more likely to trust feedback from individuals who hold positions of authority in their field. Our data show that respondents' sense of self-efficacy increased after they received positive feedback and support from a lecturer. This increased belief in one's own ability led individuals to feel more capable when one succeeds at something, which further motivated them to continue achieving their goals. Thus, the majority of our interviewees confirmed that trust in a lecturer effectively supports a sense of self-efficacy that helps them succeed entrepreneurially. Few respondents denied the importance of trust when pursuing an entrepreneurial career. They suggested that developing self-efficacy completely depends upon their capabilities and other external factors, such as family support; trust does not act as a catalyst.

The structure of a business and its conceptual framework are determined not only by setting goals but also by establishing a mission and vision for the company and its underlying values (Wu *et al.*, 2007). According to our interviewees, a trusting relationship with a lecturer helped them not only define their career paths but also adopt a broader perspective on how to act for the benefit of others, underprivileged community members and society, as well as to promote well-being and wealth. This relationship also helped interviewees to recognise the entrepreneurial needs associated with starting a venture, such as the need for independence, control and achievements.

One important objective of entrepreneurial education is to help improve students' capacity to deal with risks and uncertainty (Ciappei *et al.*, 2016). In our study, respondents mentioned that their lecturer had developed their understanding when preparing appropriate risk mitigation strategies and minimising risks' impact on their business, and this effect was possible because of their trust in the lecturer. However, some respondents expressed that risk-taking is a personal trait and that trust in a lecturer does not significantly impact this trait.

This research has further explained how to support students' entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours during their university education. It indicates that relationships based on mutual trust are critical to the learning process of becoming an entrepreneur. In addition to developing substantive competencies and providing opportunities for practical knowledge acquisition, lecturers should also have relationship-building skills. Our study confirms that the quality of the student–lecturer relationship depends on trust levels, and this finding aligns with other authors' results (Ennis and McCauley, 2002; Durnford, 2010). The behaviours characteristic of a positive, trusting relationship – such as supporting student activities and initiatives, dedicating time and attention, discussing ideas' quality and providing feedback – influence the development of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours. Also, worth considering is lecturers' ability to serve as role models, which indicates that entrepreneurship courses should be taught by lecturers who have successfully run their own businesses. Another important trust-related issue is the support of students' self-efficacy through relevant tasks and constructive feedback. Moreover, to establish trust, lecturers must support students' sense of self-efficacy through tasks that challenge students, positively validating students' self-efficacy and providing valuable feedback.

Furthermore, these results suggest that lecturers should also focus on helping students develop risk management skills and enabling them to participate in decision-making games in a simulated environment designed to help them analyse a decision in terms of its

consequences and risks. This provision will enable students to make more balanced decisions about their future businesses.

The present study faced several limitations that reveal potential areas for future research. The first such limitation is its small sample size because of which our findings' applicability may be limited. Therefore, this study must be replicated with a larger sample of respondents from other countries before our results can be generalised. Additionally, this study has revealed the scope to expand our research to entrepreneurs who have globally established businesses. Our data were collected from small-scale entrepreneurs who mostly came from and operated in India alone. Therefore, our findings' applicability to other contexts may be limited. Similar research across other countries may reveal how cultural aspects influence student–lecturer trust. Furthermore, such research with entrepreneurs from other countries may yield results about how teaching methods in those countries differ and help develop entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours. Another of the current study's limitations is closely connected with the nature of qualitative research in that our findings may have been influenced by participants' subjective perspectives. However, we tried to minimise such biases through prolonged engagement and immersion in our study context.

Another interesting direction for further research would be more deeply examining lecturers' positions as role models for entrepreneurs. The literature has seldom addressed this topic. Furthermore, a quantitative study testing the current study's model on how trust influences entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours would be worthwhile.

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