

Effect of Teachers' Charismatic Leadership Perceived by College Students on Their Entrepreneurial Intentions: The Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Passion

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Abstract

The present research examined the perceived teachers' charismatic leadership and entrepreneurial intentions of college students. Based on the theory of emotional contagion, this study proposes a mediating model of entrepreneurial passion between college students' perception of teachers' charismatic leadership and entrepreneurial intentions. A questionnaire survey was conducted in 420 college students in Jiangsu Province, China. The results showed that college students' perceived teachers' charismatic leadership had a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial passion. Moreover, perceived teachers' charismatic leadership of college students was found to have a significant positive predictive effect on entrepreneurial intentions, and entrepreneurial passion had a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions. The mediation model analysis indicated that entrepreneurial passion played a partial mediating role between college students' perception of teachers' charismatic leadership and entrepreneurial intentions. The study results deepened our understanding of the inner influence mechanism of college students' perception of teachers' charismatic leadership and entrepreneurial intentions, in addition to providing a practical basis for college educators.

Keywords: entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial passion, teachers' charismatic leadership

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship enables technological innovation and organizational breakthroughs and relieves employment pressure, eventually promoting economic development (Nguyen et al., 2020). Given the role of colleges and universities as an important talent pool for future entrepreneurs, it is necessary to pay attention to the key role of entrepreneurship in alleviating the employment pressure among college students (Kitrar & Lipkind, 2021). In entrepreneurship-related research, considerable attention has been paid to entrepreneurial intentions, which are considered to promote the development of entrepreneurial actions (Colman et al., 2021). Bird (1988) defined entrepreneurial intentions as a psychological state in which an entrepreneur's attention, energy, and behavior are directed toward a specific goal. Empirical studies have documented the effect of leadership style on entrepreneurial intentions (Gumusburun Ayalp, 2022; Khan et al., 2021). Previous studies have found that the leadership style of teachers is crucial to the formation of entrepreneurial intentions of college students (Bin et al., 2021; Sarfraz et al., 2018). The effect of charismatic leadership on entrepreneurial activities has also been reported in previous studies (Felix et al., 2019). House and Baetz (1979) defined charismatic leadership as the ability to exert a strong and extraordinary effect on followers by virtue of the strength of personal skills. Although many studies have focused on charismatic leadership (Gumusburun Ayalp, 2022; Khan et al., 2021), the decisive impact of teachers' charismatic leadership on students' entrepreneurial intentions is poorly understood, even less touched in the field. Therefore, the present study mainly explored the effect of college students' perception of teachers' charismatic leadership on entrepreneurial intentions.

A few empirical studies have illustrated that teachers play the role of a leader in a group of students, and teachers with charismatic leadership display their enthusiasm for entrepreneurship through non-verbal expressions, thereby stimulating higher entrepreneurial intentions among college students (Souitaris et al., 2007). Montiel Campos (2017) reported the key role of entrepreneurial passion in mediating the effect of entrepreneurial

alertness on entrepreneurial intentions, which suggests that entrepreneurial intentions are affected by the factors other than charismatic leadership. In addition, studies have shown that entrepreneurial passion affects college students' entrepreneurial intentions (Sriyakul & Jermsittiparsert, 2019). In summary, this study assumed that students' perceived teachers' charismatic leadership may affect entrepreneurial intentions through entrepreneurial passion.

According to the theory of emotional contagion proposed by Schoenewolf (1990), individuals and groups influence the emotions or behaviors of other individuals or groups through conscious or unconscious guidance of emotional moods and behavioral attitudes. Some researchers have documented that leaders influence followers through emotional contagion (Banerjee & Srivastava, 2019; Johnson, 2008). Studies have shown that entrepreneurial passion is likely to be recognized by others (Hatfield et al., 1993; Sullins, 1991) because most passionate entrepreneurs show their passion to people around them, act with enthusiasm, and express their passion for entrepreneurial activity (Cardon, 2008). Similar to the contagion of other emotional moods, the contagion of entrepreneurial passion can be triggered emotionally and cognitively (Hillebrandt & Barclay, 2017; Kelly & Barsade, 2001). Teachers, being regarded as class leaders, are considered to have a significant effect on students' mindset, evoking strong emotions in students (Leithwood et al., 2004). Teachers indirectly predict students' entrepreneurial intentions through their enthusiasm for entrepreneurship (Sriyakul & Jermsittiparsert, 2019; Uddin et al., 2022). Therefore, the second objective of this study was to explore the mediating role of entrepreneurial passion in college students' perception of teachers' charismatic leadership on entrepreneurial intentions.

Numerous studies have explored the direct impact of various leadership styles on entrepreneurial intentions (Sujana et al., 2022; Rivera et al., 2018) and reported that teachers' transformational leadership positively affects students' entrepreneurial intentions (Sujana et al., 2022). Moreover, teachers' servant leadership was found to positively predict students' entrepreneurial intentions (Rivera et al., 2018). However, whether teachers' charismatic leadership is a decisive factor for students' entrepreneurial intentions remains unclear. In addition, the key mediators affecting the relationship between teachers' charismatic leadership and students' entrepreneurial intentions have been seldom studied. Therefore, this study constructs a mediation model to determine the influence of college students' perception of teachers' charismatic leadership on entrepreneurial intentions through the mediation mechanism of entrepreneurial passion. The study can contribute to addressing the gap in literature in two ways. First, it probed into the effect of college students' perception of teachers' charismatic leadership on entrepreneurial intentions. Second, it incorporated the theory of emotional contagion into the research framework of the exploration of the mediating mechanism of college students' entrepreneurial passion between teachers' charismatic leadership perceived by students and entrepreneurial intentions of students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teachers' Charismatic Leadership

House and Baetz (1979) defined charismatic leadership as the ability to exert a strong and extraordinary influence on followers by virtue of the strength of personal skills. A charismatic leader possesses a combination of traits that help expand vision, alleviate worry, and provide ideas and a sense of control to team members, resulting in a robust relationship of trust between them (Shamir, 1999). Biviano (2000) pointed out that charismatic leaders attract and motivate followers through vision and personal emotion and then influence the behavior of followers. Previous studies have documented the roles of teachers and students as leaders and followers respectively (Dunham, 1965; Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Sufficient empirical evidence is available to support that teachers are the most crucial in-school factor for student learning (Berry, 2013; Clotfelter et al., 2010). Based on leadership theory, Gunasekare (2019) found that the characteristics of teachers with charismatic leadership include setting tasks for students, unconditional commitment to student achievement, trusting students, taking personal risk in mentoring students and addressing abnormal behaviors, and emotional stimulation through communication. Earlier researchers applied House and Baetz's (1979) concepts as the basis for defining teachers' charismatic leadership (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011; Gunasekare, 2019); thus, teachers' charismatic leadership can be defined based on their vision, personal emotions to attract and motivate students, and influence on students' behavior.

2.2 Entrepreneurial Passion

From the perspective of the motivation of entrepreneurial passion on entrepreneurial activities, Chen et al. (2009) defined entrepreneurial passion as entrepreneurs' strong emotional expression accompanied by cognition and ideas and inspired potential entrepreneurs to participate in entrepreneurial actions by transforming their

entrepreneurial ideas into behavioral intentions. Cardon et al. (2013) stated that entrepreneurial passion is a strong positive emotion consciously experienced and obtained by individuals through engaging in entrepreneurial activities related to important roles of relevant entrepreneurial identity. Subsequently, after surveying MBA students, academic scholars, and entrepreneurs, Cardon et al. (2013) divided entrepreneurial passion into two dimensions: intensive positive emotions and entrepreneurial identity. This emotional experience can be transmitted to entrepreneurial stakeholders through emotional contagion (Cardon et al., 2009). Stimulation of entrepreneurial passion, as an emotion, can eventually lead to entrepreneurial behavior (Cardon et al., 2009), while some researchers pointed out that entrepreneurial passion is closely related to entrepreneurial activities such as invention, establishment, or development of enterprises (Breugst et al., 2012; Cardon et al., 2013). Baron et al. (2016) and Foo et al. (2009) pointed out that passion is particularly important for entrepreneurship because individuals may be exposed to unfavorable, stressful, and unpredictable environmental factors in the process of entrepreneurship and they need to maintain higher perseverance, requiring higher and more sustainable efforts than those required in other work behaviors. Given the high application value in the studies on Chinese college students (Li et al., 2020; Li & Wu, 2019; Yi et al., 2020), the definition of entrepreneurial passion by Cardon et al. (2013) was adopted in this study, which refers entrepreneurial passion as a conscious and strong positive emotion generated by college students participating in entrepreneurial activities.

2.3 Entrepreneurial Intentions

The concept of “entrepreneurial intentions” was first proposed by Shapero and Sokol (1982), who advocated that “entrepreneurial intentions” is a psychological process that involves predicting behavior and revealing attitude, belief, and effective action. Based on the concept of “intention”, Bird (1988) defined entrepreneurial intentions as a state of mind that directs the entrepreneur’s attention, energy, and behavior towards a specific goal. Thompson (2009) refined the definition of entrepreneurial intentions as an individual’s belief in starting a new business and planning to practice it at some point in the future: it is the actions taken by individuals before formally starting a business, such as writing a business plan and searching for information pertinent to entrepreneurship, to help achieve their entrepreneurial goals. Some researchers have highlighted that entrepreneurial intentions do not necessarily result in early-stage entrepreneurship, but nascent entrepreneurs must have entrepreneurial intentions (Thompson, 2009). According to a recent Chinese empirical study, the formation of entrepreneurial intentions is a crucial step toward being an entrepreneur and starting and developing new enterprises and businesses (Mensah et al., 2021). In addition, exploring the process of entrepreneurial intention formation is the basis for promoting entrepreneurship (Carsrud & Brannback, 2011). Based on the definition of Thompson (2009), Li et al. (2011) compiled the “entrepreneurial intentions” measure for Chinese college students, which comprises two dimensions: entrepreneurial goal intention and entrepreneurial implementation intention. The entrepreneurial intentions scale compiled by Li et al. (2011) for Chinese college students has been employed and verified by many Chinese researchers (Cao et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021; Ye & Fang, 2017). Therefore, in accordance with Li et al. (2021), this study defines entrepreneurial intentions as the belief that college students intend to start a new company and consciously plan to take action at a certain point in the future.

2.4 Teachers’ Charismatic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Studies have confirmed that teachers, as the implementers of teaching activities, are crucial to the formation of college students’ behavioral intentions and their personality characteristics shape students’ behavioral intentions (Otahe, 2019). Teachers’ charismatic leadership has been shown to stimulate positive behaviors in individuals (Hiton et al., 2019; Michaelis et al., 2009; Souitaris et al., 2007). Hiton et al. (2019) conducted an online survey of 110 employees working in Jakarta from different types of organizations and reported that charismatic leadership can reduce or weaken employees’ turnover intentions. An empirical study by Souitaris et al. (2007) highlighted that charismatic teachers can convey their enthusiasm for entrepreneurship through non-verbal expressions, thereby stimulating higher entrepreneurial intentions among college students. From the perspective of entrepreneurship, teachers’ leadership qualities can stimulate and enhance university students’ entrepreneurial intentions (Torres et al., 2017). To sum up, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: College students’ perception of teachers’ charismatic leadership has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions.

2.5 Teachers’ Charismatic Leadership, Entrepreneurial Passion, and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Previous studies have reported the positive role of passion in the entrepreneurial process (Cardon et al., 2015; Huyghe et al., 2016). Gunasekare’s (2019) research in the education field demonstrated that teachers with charismatic leadership can stimulate students’ positive emotions. Li & Wu’s (2019) research showed that

teachers can promote students' entrepreneurial passion. In addition, Hubner et al. (2019) found that entrepreneurial passion is an important predictor of entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial passion has a positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions (Fellnhofer, 2017). Empirical studies have also confirmed the significant positive impact of entrepreneurial passion on entrepreneurial intentions (Fellnhofer, 2017; Huyghe et al., 2016; Kraiem et al., 2021). Specifically, entrepreneurial passion can not only directly promote the formation of entrepreneurial intentions but also indirectly affect entrepreneurial intentions through entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Huyghe et al., 2016). Therefore, it can be inferred that individuals' entrepreneurial passion may have an impact on their entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial passion has been studied as a key mediating factor in predicting entrepreneurial intentions (Liao et al., 2022; Murad et al., 2021). Specifically, a study of 390 college students found that entrepreneurial passion partially mediates the relation between college students' creativity and entrepreneurial intentions (Murad et al., 2021). In an empirical study of 221 undergraduate students from entrepreneurship programs, Li & Wu (2019) confirmed that entrepreneurial passion plays a mediating role in the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions. Accordingly, this study proposes the second hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: College students' perceived teachers' charismatic leadership affects entrepreneurial intentions through the mediating effect of entrepreneurial passion.

Based on the above theoretical analysis and literature review, a mediation model was constructed, as shown in Figure 1.

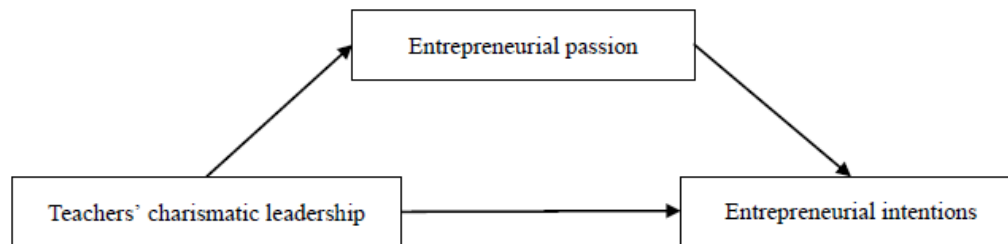


Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Data Collection and Method of Analysis

3.1 Participants

This study used convenience sampling and selected sophomore and junior students from two colleges in Jiangsu Province, China, as the research samples. The two colleges are among the top level higher education institutions in entrepreneurship education in Jiangsu Province, thereby qualifying for the representative of the development of entrepreneurship education in the region. All students participated voluntarily in this study, and the data were collected, submitted, and processed anonymously with the participants' knowledge and consent.

3.2 The Procedure of Data Collection

Data were collected between December 1, 2021 and December 15, 2021. According to the suggestion of Podsakoff et al. (2003), to prevent information bias, essential professional training was given to the head teachers responsible for distributing the questionnaires before data collection and were informed of the study purpose, as well as the number of questionnaires and their specific items. Before distributing the questionnaires, the head teacher informed the participants of the research purpose and the questionnaire content. In case of any doubts, the participants were free to quit at any time during the answering process, which was completed under the supervision of the head teacher. The questionnaires were distributed through Questionnaire Star (www.wjx.cn), which is a widely used online questionnaire answering software. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed. After screening the completion time and excluding the questionnaires with too short (<100 s) or too long (>900 s) completion time, 420 valid questionnaires were obtained, with the response rate of 93%, among which 246 (58.6%) were of sophomores, 174 (41.4%) were of juniors, 156 (37.1%) were of boys, and 264 (62.9%) were of girls.

3.3 Measurements

3.3.1 Teachers' Charismatic Leadership

The Conger-Kanungo (C-K) scale developed by Conger and Kanungo (1998) was used to assess the degree of charismatic leadership perceived by college students. The scale comprises 20 questions and a total of five dimensions, namely strategic vision and articulation (e.g., my entrepreneurial teacher has a vision and often talks about future entrepreneurial opportunities); sensitivity to the environment (e.g., my entrepreneurial teacher knows the students' insufficiency of entrepreneurial competency); sensitivity to members' needs (e.g., my entrepreneurship teacher influences students by respecting each other and fostering a good teacher-student relationship); personal risk (e.g., my entrepreneurship teacher will be brave in innovation in order to achieve the goal of entrepreneurship practice activities); and unconventional behavior (e.g., my entrepreneurship teacher sometimes conducts some unexpected unique behaviors for students). C-K scale is a 6-point Likert scale, with the score ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The higher the score, the higher is the degree of perception of teachers' charismatic leadership by college students. An exploratory factor analysis on the pretest results was conducted, which showed that after excluding the questions with a factor loading < 0.4 , a total of 16 questions remained, with the final factor loading being 0.501–0.777, which is in line with the factor that proposed by Guadagnoli and Velicer (1988). A factor loading greater than 0.4 can be regarded as the standard, with the cumulative variance percentage of 95.496% and good validity. The reliability analysis showed the reliability was good, with the Cronbach's α of strategic vision and articulation = 0.974, Cronbach's α of sensitivity to the environment = 0.985, Cronbach's α of sensitivity to members' needs = 0.969, Cronbach's α of personal risk = 0.976, and Cronbach's α of unconventional behavior = 0.976.

3.3.2 Entrepreneurial Passion

The entrepreneurial passion measure developed by Cardon et al., (2013) was used to evaluate the degree of entrepreneurial passion of college students. The measure comprises 13 items and two dimensions, namely intense positive feelings (e.g., I think finding new opportunities in the environment will make me very excited) and identity centrality (e.g., I am happy to discover new ways to solve problems). It is a 5-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); the higher the score, the higher is the degree of college students' entrepreneurial passion. An exploratory factor analysis on the pretest results was conducted, which showed that the factor loadings ranged from 0.721 to 0.897, meeting the standard, and the cumulative variance percentage was 87.443%, with good validity. Reliability analysis showed of the Cronbach's α for intense positive feelings of 0.982 and the Cronbach's α for identity centrality of 0.944, indicating good reliability.

3.3.3 Entrepreneurial Intentions

The entrepreneurial intentions measure compiled by Li et al. (2011) was used to evaluate the degree of entrepreneurial intentions of college students. The scale comprises 12 items and two dimensions, namely entrepreneurial goal intention (e.g., I plan to set up a company in the future) and entrepreneurial execution intention (e.g., If I study entrepreneurship courses, I will start a business). It is a 7-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree); the higher the score, the higher is the degree of entrepreneurial intentions of college students. An exploratory factor analysis on the pretest results was conducted, and the results showed that the factor loading was 0.613–0.877, which met the standard, and the cumulative variance percentage was 85.671%, demonstrating good validity. The reliability analysis showed that the Cronbach's α for entrepreneurial goal intention was 0.982 and the Cronbach's α for entrepreneurial execution intention was 0.944, indicating good reliability.

3.4 Reliability and Validity Analyses

The reliability and validity of the three measures were assessed. According to the reliability test results, the Cronbach's α values of the nine dimensions ranged from 0.795 to 0.936, all greater than 0.7, indicating good reliability (Nunnally, 1978). The teachers' charismatic leadership scale showed good data fit ($\chi^2/df = 1.495$, RMSEA = 0.034, GFI = 959, AGFI = 941, NFI = 960, RFI = 949, IFI = 986, CFI = 0.959, and TLI = 0.983). The entrepreneurial passion measure also showed good data fit ($\chi^2/df = 1.407$, RMSEA = 0.031, GFI = 967, AGFI = 953, RFI = 968, IFI = 992, CFI = 0.992, and TLI = 0.991), whereas the entrepreneurial intentions scale showed acceptable data fit ($\chi^2/df = 1.268$, RMSEA = 0.025, GFI = 974, AGFI = 961, NFI = 983, RFI = 978, IFI = 996, CFI = 0.996, and TLI = 0.995). Overall, all three measures showed good convergent validity (McDonald & Ho, 2002).

3.5 Common Method Bias

Since the data collected in this study was through the self-report method, there might be common method or the same-source bias (Podsakoff & Todor, 1985). Therefore, the common method used in this research was evaluated with Harman's One-Factor Test. Common Method Variance (CMV) was evaluated using Harman's One-Factor Test. The results showed that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.933, which is greater than the reference value of 0.8, and the Bartlett test of sphericity was significant ($p < .001$). A total of 9 factors were extracted from the factor analysis. The explanatory power of the first factor was 29.261%, which is lower than the critical value of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003), indicating that there is no serious problem of common method bias in this study.

3.6 Discriminant Validity

The square root of the AVE of each dimension was greater than the correlation coefficient of each dimension, thus meeting the criteria for assessing discriminant validity (Fornell & Laecker, 1981), which indicates that all variables in this study have good discriminant validity. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Discriminant Validity and Correlation Analysis

| Dimension | YJ1 | HJ2 | HJ3 | MX4 | XW5 | QX1 | SF2 | MB1 | ZX2 |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| YJ1 | .782 | | | | | | | | |
| HJ2 | .468*** | .819 | | | | | | | |
| HJ3 | .393*** | .385*** | .765 | | | | | | |
| MX4 | .498*** | .512*** | .437*** | .823 | | | | | |
| XW5 | .437*** | .509*** | .361*** | .452*** | .813 | | | | |
| QX1 | .281*** | .169*** | .188*** | .190*** | .148** | .836 | | | |
| SF2 | .340*** | .198*** | .110* | .189*** | .147** | .520*** | .821 | | |
| MB1 | .442*** | .366*** | .280*** | .248*** | .294*** | .211*** | .293*** | .773 | |
| ZX2 | .351*** | .277*** | .182*** | .160*** | .271*** | .334*** | .351*** | .591*** | .755 |
| M | 4.871 | 4.666 | 4.840 | 4.628 | 4.733 | 3.928 | 4.007 | 4.648 | 4.549 |
| SD | 0.915 | 0.943 | 0.842 | 0.953 | 0.811 | 0.740 | 0.760 | 1.021 | 0.965 |

Note. $n = 420$; The bold and italic numbers in the diagonal are the square root of AVE (AVE denotes the average variance extracted). Numbers in the lower diagonal denote the correlation coefficients; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; YJ1 = Strategic vision and articulation; HJ2 = Sensitivity to the environment; HJ3 = Sensitivity to members' needs; MX4 = Personal risk; XW5 = Unconventional behavior; QX1 = Intense positive feelings; SF2 = Identity centrality; MB1 = Entrepreneurship goal intention; ZX2 = Entrepreneurial execution intention

3.7 Model Fit

A mediation model was constructed using SEM to test the mediation effect of entrepreneurial passion. The fit indices of the model are as follows: $\chi^2/df = 1.337$, RMSEA = 0.028, GFI = 0.895, CFI = 0.976, NFI = 0.912, TLI = 0.975, IFI = 0.976, and PNFI = 0.860, indicating a good model fit (McDonald & Ho, 2002).

The research results are shown in Figure 2. Teachers' charismatic leadership perceived by college students can significantly and positively predict entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = 0.387$, $p < 0.001$), as well as the entrepreneurial passion ($\beta = 0.399$, $p < 0.001$). Colleges students' entrepreneurial passion can significantly and positively predict entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = 0.396$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that college students' entrepreneurial passion partially mediates the relationship between teachers' charismatic leadership perceived by students and the students' entrepreneurial intentions.

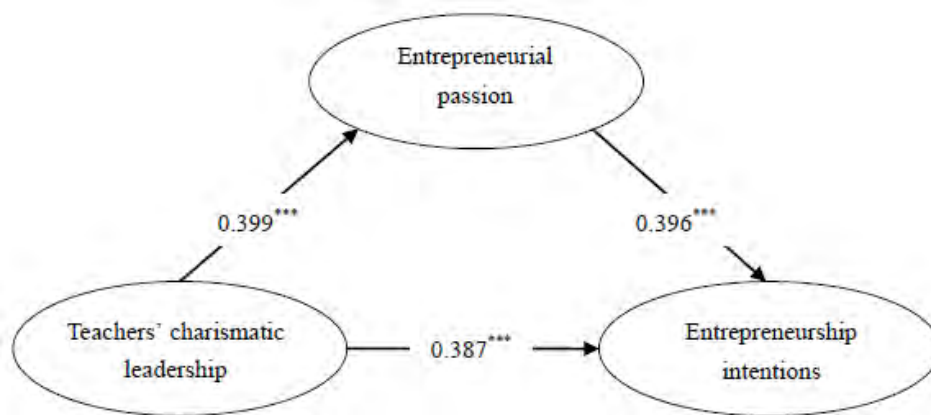


Figure 2. Mediation Model Diagram

The mediating effect of entrepreneurial passion was further tested using the bias-corrected, non-parametric percentile Bootstrap method. The results are shown in Table 2. The indirect effect value was 0.253, with 95% CI = 0.095–0.253 (excluding 0), indicating that there is a mediating effect. The direct effect value was 0.387, with 95% CI = 0.233–0.516 (excluding 0), indicating that the effect is a partial mediating effect. The total effect value was 0.544, with 95% CI = 0.424–0.644 (excluding 0), which indicates that the mediation effect accounted for 46.51% of the total effect.

Table 2. Mediation Effect Bootstrap Test Analysis

| Path | Estimate | 95% LLCI | 95% ULCI |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Indirect effect | 0.253 | 0.095 | 0.253 |
| Direct effect | 0.387 | 0.233 | 0.516 |
| Total effect | 0.544 | 0.424 | 0.644 |

Note. LLCI: lower limit; ULCI: upper limit.

The sample size for the percentile bootstrap confidence interval is 5000.

The data in the table are all standardized data.

4. Discussion

4.1 Theoretical Contributions

The results of this study showed that teachers’ charismatic leadership has a significant positive impact on college students’ entrepreneurial intentions, and the finding is consistent with those of previous studies (Sujana et al, 2022; Suyudi et al., 2020). Sujana et al. (2022) conducted a study in college students and found that their entrepreneurial intentions are significantly and positively affected by teachers’ transformational leadership. Consistent with the finding, Suyudi et al., (2020) found that the principal’s entrepreneurial leadership has a significant positive impact on students’ entrepreneurial intentions. Unlike previous studies, the present study determined the impact of teachers’ charismatic leadership on college students’ entrepreneurial intentions. The results provide evidence for the relationship between teachers’ charismatic leadership and students’ entrepreneurial intentions. This study is based on the fact that teachers, as the implementers of teaching, are crucial to the formation of college students’ behavioral intentions, and their personality charm and teaching style can shape students’ behavioral intentions (Otache, 2019); teachers with articulating skills convey their entrepreneurial passion to students, thereby motivating them to generate higher entrepreneurial intentions (Souitaris et al., 2007).

Furthermore, this study showed that teachers’ charismatic leadership perceived by college students significantly affects college students’ entrepreneurial passion, consistent with the results of Bono and Ilies (2006), indicating that the higher the degree of students’ perception of teachers’ charismatic leadership, the higher is their enthusiasm for entrepreneurial activities. This study also showed that entrepreneurial passion significantly positively affects college students’ entrepreneurial intentions, which is consistent with the results of the study by Murad et al. (2021), thus indicating that the higher the students’ entrepreneurial passion, the stronger is their entrepreneurial intention. This study also found that entrepreneurial passion partially mediates the relation

between teachers' charismatic leadership perceived by college students and entrepreneurial intentions of students, with the entrepreneurial passion of students in turn affecting their entrepreneurial intentions (Uddin et al., 2022). In addition, the results of this study support the theory of emotional contagion, the process by which individuals influence their emotions or behaviors by consciously guiding their emotional states and behavioral attitudes through leadership (Schoenewolf, 1990). According to this standpoint, students generate entrepreneurial passion through their perception of teachers' charismatic leadership, which in turn affect the entrepreneurial intentions of students. In the field of education, teachers serve as leaders, while students serve as followers (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Specifically, teachers' charismatic leadership perceived by students affects their entrepreneurial intentions via entrepreneurial passion. The reason is that entrepreneurial passion can be contagious by emotion (Hillebrandt & Barclay, 2017). Teachers' positive emotions as class leaders can have a profound effect on students' mindset and evoke strong emotions in them (Leithwood et al., 2004). Teachers can also indirectly predict students' entrepreneurial intentions through their passion for entrepreneurship (Uddin et al., 2022).

4.2 Practical Contributions

Based on the research results, this study puts forward the following suggestions: First, colleges and universities should strengthen the training of charismatic leadership for entrepreneurship teachers by implementing effective measures such as inviting senior managers with charismatic leadership styles to deliver special lectures for teachers and providing entrepreneurship courses concerning teachers' charismatic leadership vision and ability enhancement. Second, colleges and universities should regularly hold relevant entrepreneurial lectures and forums and invite entrepreneurs with rich entrepreneurial experience for knowledge and experience sharing and exchanges, thereby helping students to become well-familiar with the entrepreneurial process of entrepreneurs, being inspired with positive emotions, and deepen the identity of entrepreneurs, all of which can stimulate students' entrepreneurial passion. Finally, colleges and universities should strengthen cooperation with enterprises and develop some entrepreneurial projects where college students can participate, which can help them acquire entrepreneurial knowledge and practice.

5. Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations

Based on the theory of emotional contagion, our study confirmed the positive effect of Chinese college students' perception of teachers' charismatic leadership on their entrepreneurial intentions, with the entrepreneurial passion mediating the relationship between teachers' charismatic leadership and students' entrepreneurial intentions. Additionally, the study found that teachers' charismatic leadership had a positive effect on students' entrepreneurial passion. Finally, the study provides evidence that students' high entrepreneurial passion enhances their entrepreneurial intentions during entrepreneurship education. This study applied charismatic leadership theory to the field of entrepreneurship teaching, thus broadening the ways to shape students' entrepreneurial intentions.

5.1 Recommendations

Further research should expand the geographical scope of the samples by including students from other colleges and universities in China. Previous studies on entrepreneurship have confirmed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is the key mediating variable (Anwar et al., 2021, Wang & Huang, 2019). Hence, it is suggested that future research incorporate entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a mediating variable in the model to expand the scope of exploration. In addition, only few studies in the past have analyzed factors that affect the formation of charismatic leadership, such as culture, personality traits, cognitive capacity, environmental sensitivity, and the like (Banks et al., 2017; Conger et al., 1997; Mittal, 2015; Shahzad et al., 2020). Therefore, it is suggested that future research should further explore the influence of other triggering factors on charismatic leadership on the basis of previous research. Finally, longitudinal research or experimental research design can be adopted to understand the dynamic process of changing relationships between variables.

5.2 Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the study obtained self-reported questionnaires from students of only two colleges in Jiangsu, China, which limits the universality of the results. Second, the results of this study showed that entrepreneurial passion partially mediates the relationship between teacher's charismatic leadership and students' entrepreneurial intentions, which indicates that there may be other mediating variables. Furthermore, this study adopted a horizontal research design; although the study revealed the predictive relationship between variables, the causal relationship between them could not be verified due to the horizontal research design. Therefore, future studies should use longitudinal data or causal experiments.

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