

Exploring the Role of Strategic Intent in Boosting Employee's Entrepreneurial Behavior

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Abstract

Strategic intent creates an obsession of winning at all levels – helps organizations maneuver through challenges and adapt better considering forthcoming situations. This study explores how strategic intent creates a winning mindset and the ability to adapt on organizational level. Hence, encourage employee's entrepreneurial behavior. The relationships are hypothesized and empirically tested based on stretch goal theory. Data collected through surveys from employees of software firms in Pakistan. By examining the connection between strategic intent and employee entrepreneurial behavior, this study seeks to shed light on how companies can bridge the gap between intention and execution. Additionally, we highlight the importance of stretch goal theory in the field of organizational behaviors.

Keywords: *Strategic Intent, Winning Mindset, Strategic Agility, Entrepreneurial Behavior, Stratch Goal Theory, Moderated Mediation.*

Introduction

Strategic intent is “an obsession with winning at all levels of the organization” (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989, p.157) - helps organizations offset their weaknesses, improve strategic capabilities, gain a sustained competitive advantage and eventually outperform the market leaders (Cui, Meyer and Hu, 2014; Hamel and Prahalad, 1989; Mantere and Sillince, 2007; Rui and Yip, 2008). Hamel and Prahalad (1989) observe that strategic intent has differentiated Japanese and Western firms in terms of achieving competitiveness and lack of it respectively. Hamel and Prahalad (1989) suggest that Western organizations endeavor to trim their objectives for ‘strategic fit’ between opportunities and resources and, consequently, lacked competitiveness. On the contrary, Japanese organizations achieved competitiveness by focusing on ambitions that were beyond their capabilities and resources, leveraging their resources by enhancing the organizational learning pace (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). Thus, the goals of Japanese organizations were

more ambitious in comparison to Western organizations. Recently, we have many examples from Western organizations who have ambitious goals and strive to achieve them like Amazon, SpaceX, Tesla etc.

Strategic intent creates a mental focus on future opportunities and long-term ambition beyond short-term strategic planning (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). Origin of strategic intent within organization is at the highest most management layer (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). When it is shared at different organizational levels, it becomes the driving force for the individuals working inside the organization to self-analyze, adjust their approach to stay focused and keep exploiting opportunities until the ambitious goal is achieved (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). Strategic intent invokes organizational capabilities such as adapting internal and external changes, and risk-taking (Mantere and Sillince, 2007; Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). Strategic intent improves existing capabilities and skills by providing consistency to short term actions while leaving spaces for any reinterpretations (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). Strategic intent invokes organizational capabilities such as stamina, risk-taking and innovation (Mantere and Sillince, 2007; Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). Strategic intent drives organizations to make innovative use of existing resources, learn new skills and technologies and build new advantage (Cui et al., 2014; Hamel and Prahalad, 1989; Mantere and Sillince, 2007; Valkokari, 2015). Thus, strategic intent is a root cause for the many positive organizational initiatives.

Despite its significance for organizations' long-term success, empirical studies on strategic intent are rare (Valkokari, 2015). Furthermore, as suggested in the literature, highlighted above that strategic intent becomes the source for innovativeness, risk taking and exploitation of opportunities. It is important to analyze the impact of strategic intent on the constructs that are operationalized based on concepts like innovativeness, risk taking and exploitation of opportunities. Entrepreneurial behavior is a construct that seem like the probable result of Strategic intent. Entrepreneurial behavior is result of challenges put forward by the top management and customer (Zampetakis, 2009). Entrepreneurial behavior is defined as a set of actions or series of actions to be taken at the organizational level to exploit opportunities (Kuratko, 2007). Strategic intent as an antecedent of entrepreneurial behavior is not established in the literature, to fill this void, the present study builds mainly on the stretch goal theory to analyze whether strategic intent positively influences entrepreneurial behavior?

This is an original research article includes abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion. Next section is literature review, firstly, we discuss the stretch goal theory, then after that we justify our hypothesis.

Literature Review

Strategic Intent

Strategic intent, a concept introduced by Gary Hamel and C.K. Prahalad in their groundbreaking work "Competing for the Future" (1989), goes beyond mere goals. Strategic intent serves as a powerful motivator for organizations, channeling energy towards ambitious yet achievable goals. By creating a gap between current capabilities and desired outcomes (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989, 1994), strategic intent fosters creativity and flexibility as employees find innovative solutions to bridge this gap. This intrinsic force, akin to a heart guiding the organization, fuels a relentless pursuit of success (Mburu & Thuo, 2015). It serves as a unifying ambition that rallies employees towards a clearly articulated and aspirational vision of the organization's desired future state. This ambition, as Hamel and Prahalad suggest, necessitates a level of personal dedication and a sense of urgency to achieve it. Strategic intent, by its very nature, is designed to be inspiring (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). Setting ambitious goals fosters a sense of excitement among employees who are drawn to the prospect of contributing to something bigger than themselves (Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. 2006).

However, a critical gap exists in research exploring strategic intent as a driver of an organization's unwavering commitment to achieving long-term goals. To bridge this gap and realize such aspirations, organizations require a dedicated workforce, intrinsically motivated to persevere in the face of challenges.

Entrepreneurial Behavior

Entrepreneurial behavior (EB) lies at the heart of successful new venture creation and organizational growth (Gartner, W. E. 1985; Zahra, S. A., Sapienza, H. J., & Davidsson, P. 2000). It includes all of the traits, drives, and behaviors people exhibit when they pursue business opportunities (Krueger, N. F. 2000). It is essential to comprehend EB in order to promote innovation (Drucker, P. F. 1985), propel economic development (Acs, Z. J., Desai, S., & Storey, R. J. 2014), and build long-lasting companies (Dean, T. 2000).

Numerous studies (Zhao & Seibert, 2002; Cooper & Dunkelberg, 2018; Shane, 2003) have identified factors that influence people to engage in entrepreneurial behavior (EB). Personality traits are important, and there is a positive correlation between entrepreneurial intentions and traits such as a propensity for taking risks, being proactive, having a strong sense of control over one's actions, and a drive for success (Zhao & Seibert, 2002). Zhao and Seibert's (2002) meta-analysis offered compelling proof of this connection. Furthermore, the identification and exploitation of market opportunities depend heavily on cognitive factors such as creativity, innovation, and opportunity recognition skills (Cantillon, 2003; Shane, 2003). According to Richard Cantillon (2003), two of the many important factors that lead to an entrepreneurial success are creativity and opportunity awareness. Another factor is education; research indicates that those with degrees in engineering or business are more likely to start their own businesses (Cooper & Dunkelberg, 2018). According to Cooper and Dunkelberg's (2018) study, graduates in business have more entrepreneurial intentions than graduates in other fields. The impact of strategic intent on entrepreneurial behavior is examined in this study.

Stretch Goal Theory

Edwin Locke and Gary Latham developed the stretch goal theory, which emphasizes the motivational value of lofty objectives. They posit that setting challenging goals, often called "stretch goals," leads to higher levels of performance compared to setting easy or moderately difficult objectives (Locke & Latham, 2006). The pursuit of ambitious goals demands a heightened level of concentration and commitment from employees. They're more likely to dedicate extra effort and devise strategies to achieve these challenging objectives (Locke & Latham, 2006). Successfully achieving a stretch goal can significantly boost an employee's confidence in their abilities (self-efficacy) (Bandura, A. 1997). This increased self-belief can fuel even greater motivation for future challenges. By their very nature, stretch goals often demand creativity and innovation (Locke & Latham, 2006). This can stimulate intrinsic motivation, as employees find themselves engaged in meaningful work that pushes their boundaries.

Research Questions

The following are the specific research question outline the specific questions this study aims to answer:

RQ1: Does strategic intent positively influence employees' entrepreneurship behavior?

Theoretical Framework

This enthusiasm translates into a heightened desire to succeed, which research suggests has a significant impact on entrepreneurial behavior (EB) (Saif et al., 2020). Employees with an entrepreneurial mindset are not simply motivated by a paycheck; they are constantly driven to discover, evolve, and exploit new opportunities (Timmons, 1999). This relentless pursuit of innovation and growth is crucial for navigating

the inevitable challenges encountered on the road to achieving a bold strategic intent. Stretch goal theory and strategic intent are complementary concepts. Strategic intent provides the overarching ambition that acts as a guiding star, while stretch goals serve as the stepping stones on the path towards achieving that ambition (Locke & Latham, 2006). Strategic intent, by outlining the organization's desired future state, provides a long-term ambition that serves as a guiding star (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). Stretch goal theory then offers a framework for setting specific, challenging goals that act as stepping stones on the path towards achieving that ambitious vision (Locke & Latham, 2006).

As Edwards and Baker (2013) and Khanagha et al. (2014) suggest, the pursuit of an ambitious strategic intent encourages a culture of collective experimentation. This experimentation can lead to the development of more detailed and contextually relevant strategies. In a dynamic and unpredictable business environment, the ability to experiment and adapt is critical (Teece, D. J. et al., 2019). Employees with an entrepreneurial mindset excel at adapting to changing situations and adjusting their approach (Xing & Ying, 2015). The desire to succeed has a significant impact on entrepreneurial behavior (EB) (Saif, Haroon AA, and Usman Ghania. 2020). Employees with entrepreneurship thinking are willing to constantly discover, evolve and exploit new opportunities (Timmons, 1999), that is highly important to work through ups and downs until that goal is accomplished.

Stretch goal theory posits that setting ambitious goals, often called "stretch goals," leads to a higher level of employee performance and motivation compared to setting easy or moderately difficult goals (Locke & Latham, 2006). The pursuit of ambitious goals demands greater focus and commitment from employees (amel and Prahalad, 1989). They're more likely to dedicate extra effort to strategize, overcome obstacles, and find innovative solutions (Locke & Latham, 2006). This increased engagement fosters an environment where employees take initiative and actively seek ways to contribute to the organization's success. Successfully achieving a stretch goal significantly boosts an employee's confidence in their abilities (self-efficacy) (Bandura, 1997). This increased self-belief translates into a greater willingness to take calculated risks, explore new ideas, and champion initiatives. This aligns perfectly with the entrepreneurial spirit of venturing into uncharted territory.

Stretch goals, by their very nature, often necessitate creative problem-solving and innovation (Locke & Latham, 2006). This can stimulate intrinsic motivation, as employees find themselves engaged in meaningful work that challenges them (Amabile, 1990). This intrinsic motivation fuels the desire to go above and beyond the call of duty, a core characteristic of entrepreneurial behavior. Strategic intent provides a clear direction for the organization's endeavors. This direction can then be translated into specific, measurable stretch goals for different departments and teams. These goals empower employees to identify opportunities and take initiative within the broader context of the strategic intent (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). Strategic intent causes constant urge to enhance knowledge, skill and vigilant mind set toward superior self (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). Likewise, (Hardly, 1999) mentioned that entrepreneurs are not satisfied with what they have, they are always willing to learn, discover and put efforts improve themselves. We believe that strategic intent is a potential antecedent of entrepreneurship behavior.

Hypothesis: Strategic intent positively enhance Entrepreneurial Behavior.

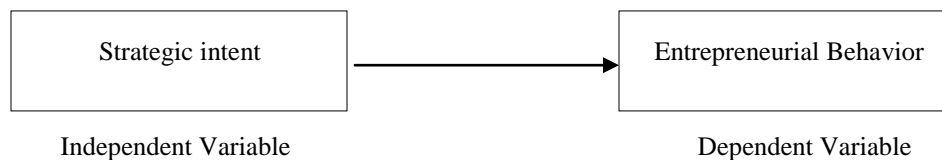


Figure No 1: Theoretical Framweork

Analysis

The epistemological position and ontological assumptions hailed from positivism when quantitative research methodology is employed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) suggest that when the objective of the study is to test hypothesized relationships it appropriate to use the positivist approach that allows researchers to use numbers-based quantitative data to draw results that can be generalized to the whole population. In other words, it demands numeric data, collected through a survey or secondary data depending upon the nature and purpose of the study. In sum, keeping in view the purpose of testing different hypotheses about the interrelations between strategic intent and entrepreneurial behavior, quantitative research methods will be used for this study.

Population and Sample

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the software industry, a survey was conducted in 2022 and 2023 targeting both managerial and non-managerial personnel across various software firms. Utilizing a convenience sampling approach, 700 questionnaires were distributed, resulting in a commendable 70% response rate. This high participation yielded valuable data from a diverse range of industry professionals, providing rich insights into the software industry landscape.

Data Collection

Data will be collected through questionnaires. Mainly, two mediums were used to distribute the questioners by email and through online surveyor. Data about strategic intent, and entrepreneurial behavior collected from management who participate in decision making. As they the best fit to collect data for organizational level construct because of their involvement in firms strategic decision making which which help organizations achieve their goals.

Common Method Variance

Common method bias is a problem that every research needs to address. We have used a combination of approaches to minimize it suggested by Podsakoff, Philip M., et al. (2003). We arranged the questions in such a way that possible inference between questions was disrupted. Second, to create psychological separation between independent and dependent variables, we included some filler tasks suggested by MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012). Moreover, common-method bias will also be examined using Harman's single-factor method. For this purpose, all the items of the variables will be constrained to load on one variable and common-method will be assessed based on the cut-off value (50%) of the total variance explained.

Research Instrument

All the variables have been measured using five-point Likert scales, anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Strategic intent. To measure strategic intent, an 8-item scale shall be adopted from Johnson and Sohi (2001). Sample item: "Our organization is strategically aggressive".

Entrepreneurial behavior. The 10-item scale developed by Pearce et al. (1997) shall be used to measure the entrepreneurial behavior. Sample item: "I display an enthusiasm for acquiring new skills"

The table shows the frequency and percentage of respondents by gender, age, education, and professional experience.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	572	74
Female	204	26
Age		
28-38 years (Generation Y)	72	9
39-54 years (Generation X)	624	81
>54 years (Baby boomers)	80	10
Education		
Bachelor	148	19
MS/M.Phil	548	71
PhD/PhD Scholar	80	10
Professional Experiences		
<5 years	396	51
5-10 years	280	36
11-15 years	84	11
>16 years	16	2

Note: N = 766 (Total Sample Size)

The demographic profile shows:

Gender: The majority of the respondents (74%) are male.

Age: The largest age group is 39-54 years old (Generation X), representing 81% of the respondents. The 28-38 year olds (Generation Y) make up only 9%, and those over 54 years old (Baby Boomers) account for 10%.

Education: The most common educational attainment is a PhD/PhD Scholar (71%), followed by a Master's degree (MS/M.Phil) at 10% and a Bachelor's degree at 19%.

Professional Experience: The majority of respondents (51%) have less than 5 years of professional experience. Another 36% have 5-10 years of experience, while 11% have 11-15 years, and only 2% have more than 16 years of experience.

To study this theme the data collected was analysed by using SPSS 26.

Cronbach Alpha, Pearson Correlation and Regression Analysis

The reliability of the responses from the sample was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, L. J., 1951). This statistical test helps ensure the internal consistency of the survey instrument. In other words, it evaluates whether the questions are all measuring the same underlying construct (e.g., mindfulness in this case). To investigate the potential relationship between employee mindfulness and job performance, Pearson correlation tests were conducted. These tests determine the strength and direction of the linear association between two variables.

Reliability

Cronbach alpha test is used to measure the reliability, internal consistency. The reliability of the statistics of mindfulness is calculated below:

Table 2. Reliability Statistics for Strategic Intent

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.954	8

Table 3. Reliability Statistics for entrepreneurial behavior

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.966	10

The acceptable value of reliability scores must be greater than 0.6 (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994). A value above this threshold is considered good, indicating a reliable data set for further analysis. Conversely, a value below 0.6 suggests the data may not be sufficiently consistent for meaningful interpretation. In this study, the overall reliability score for the strategic intent survey was 0.954 and for entrepreneurial behavior was .966. This positive value assures a good level of reliability and consistency within the scale. Since it surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.6, the data can be considered reliable for further analysis.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.355 ^a	.126	.124	.59908

a. Predictors: (Constant), SI

The analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This is reflected in the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.355. However, it's important to delve deeper into the explanatory power of this relationship. The coefficient of determination (R Square) indicates that 12.6% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. This value is adjusted slightly in the Adjusted R Square (0.124) to account for the number of independent variables included in the model. Finally, the Standard Error of the Estimate (59908) tells us the average distance between the actual data points and the regression line. In simpler terms, it reflects the typical amount of variation between the predicted values from the model and the actual observed values.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.224	1	27.224	75.854	.000 ^b
	Residual	189.141	527	.359		
	Total	216.365	528			

a. Dependent Variable: EB

b. Predictors: (Constant), SI

The overall fit of the model was statistically significant. This is evident from the F-statistic (75.854) being significant at the 0.005 level. The p-value of 0.0005 further strengthens this conclusion. In simpler terms, these results indicate that the model, as a whole, is statistically different from a model with no relationship between the variables.

Correlation

The next step involves investigating the potential relationship between strategic intent and entrepreneurial behavior. Pearson's correlation coefficient is a commonly used statistical test to assess the strength and direction of the linear association between two variables (Field, 2013). A perfect positive correlation, indicated by a value of 1, suggests that the two variables move in perfect unison. However, a score of 1 can also indicate multicollinearity, meaning the variables are essentially measuring the same underlying construct. Therefore, the acceptable range for the correlation coefficient typically falls between -1 and +1, with values closer to 0 indicating a weak or no relationship.

In this study, a Pearson correlation test was conducted to determine if a relationship exists between strategic intent and entrepreneurial behavior. The direction (positive or negative) and strength of this potential association will be revealed by the test statistic, which is presented below.

Table 7: Correlation

		SI	EB
SI	Pearson Correlation	1	.355**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	529	529
EB	Pearson Correlation	.355**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	529	529

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows a value of 0.355 for the Pearson correlation coefficient. This value indicates a moderate positive correlation between strategic intent (SI) and entrepreneurial behavior (EB). A positive correlation coefficient means that the two variables tend to move in the same direction. In this case, a higher SI (strategic intent) is associated with a higher EB (entrepreneurial behavior). The strength of the correlation is considered moderate (0.355), indicating that there is a connection, but it's not a perfect one. There could be other factors influencing entrepreneurial behavior besides the organization's strategic intent.

The table also shows a significance level of 0.000 (often denoted by p-value). This value is less than the commonly used threshold of 0.05, indicating that the correlation between SI and EB is statistically significant. In other words, it is very unlikely that this observed correlation is due to chance alone.

Table 8: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.200	.119		26.950	.000
	SI	.287	.033	.355	8.709	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EB

The analysis delves into the specific relationships between the variables. The constant term, listed as 3.200, represents the predicted value of the dependent variable (entrepreneurial behavior) when all the independent variables (including SI in this case) are zero. While the significance of the constant term might not be explicitly shown here, the key finding lies in the coefficient for SI (0.287). This positive value indicates that higher strategic intent (SI) is associated with an increase in entrepreneurial behavior (EB). The statistically significant p-value of 0.000 confirms the strength of this association.

Discussion

This study investigated the connection between an organization's strategic intent (SI) and the level of entrepreneurial behavior (EB) exhibited by its employees. The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation ($R = 0.355$), suggesting a moderate association between these two concepts. While the model explains a portion of the variance in EB ($R\text{-squared} = 0.126$), the findings offer valuable insights into the potential link between an organization's overarching ambition and employee initiative.

A key takeaway from the analysis lies in the regression coefficient for SI (0.287). According to this positive value, companies that have a clear and well-communicated strategic intent tend to encourage their staff members to behave more entrepreneurially. This relationship is further supported by the statistically significant p-value of 0.000, which shows a high probability that the observed relationship is not coincidental.

Potential Explanations and Implications

Organizations in pursuit of success must have a strategic intent and emphasize on transmitting that intent at a levels within the organization. The intent within organizations, if rightly transmit, can become the driving forces for the employee's. Strategic intent gives a greater purpose to achieve and clear direction to follow. No only a greater purpose and clear direction is enough but encouraging and rewarding the innovation and calculated risk taking is vital. Every employee must feel like they are part the journey to pursue the ambition and take responsibility of the part they are doing. It is only achievable when organization exhibit that the strategic intent the pivotal point for all the efforts being done and whoever is playing a significant role would be appreciated appropriately.

From an organization perspective, exploring the new opportunities and challenging its abilities become the central idea because the complete focus is to achieve and strategic intent as soon as possible. Achieving an ambitious goal never done by staying in the comfort zone, for an organization everyone must be experimenting and taking risks to push their limits. Eventually, organization have to exhibit such leadership behavior and create supporting environment which ensure their success.

Top leadership make adjustment in there strategy based on the feedback they get from within and outside of organization. A strong feedback loop is essential for making the right adjustments in the strategy to closing the gap between the current situation and future intent. While organization is urging for the progressive behavior towards the intent, employees motivation is enfluenced by this fact.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

This study acknowledges some potential limitations that warrant further exploration. First, the generalizability of the findings might be limited due to the specific sample used. Future research could benefit from employing larger and more diverse samples, encompassing a broader range of industries and organizational contexts.

Second, the current study focused solely on strategic intent as the independent variable influencing entrepreneurial behavior. However, other organizational factors could play a significant role. Future research could investigate potential mediating or moderating effects of factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and resource availability on the relationship between strategic intent and employee behavior. This could involve incorporating leadership behavior surveys, organizational culture assessments, or measures of resource allocation into the research design.

Finally, the study relied on potentially subjective measures of both strategic intent and entrepreneurial behavior. Future research could address this limitation by incorporating more objective measures. This could involve employing validated organizational culture surveys, objective measures of innovation (e.g., patent applications, new product launches), or conducting in-depth interviews with employees and management to gain richer insights into how strategic intent translates into real-world actions and behaviors within organizations.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on a potentially powerful link: an organization's ambitious aspirations (strategic intent) can significantly influence the entrepreneurial drive of its employees. Although more research is required to completely understand the underlying mechanisms, these results point to a distinct benefit of developing an environment that encourages risk-taking and gives staff members the freedom to act independently.

Organization exploit this causal effect of this relationship by spreading awareness about the bigger goal through top to bottom at all levels. More importantly explaining that how any individual working in the organization fit in the bigger picture is vital. Furthermore, nurturing an environment that encourage and reward experimentation, affective risk taking, and inventive problem-solving can boost entrepreneurial spirit in workers.

In nut shell, if an organization's leaders exhibit the ambitious goal setting and willing to do whatever it takes to achieve that, will transmit this mindset in the employee's. Consequently, employees are more inclined toward looking foot the opportunities to contribute in the bigger goal. By understanding this causal effect of the strategic intent and entrepreneurial behavior, organizations can maximize the employee's willingness to get out of there comfort gone, gain new knowledge, grab opportunities, take risks.

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