


From Personality to Entrepreneurial Intention: The Mediating Role of Innovative Digital Attitude Among Tunisian Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of personality traits, digital entrepreneurship education, and digital mindset on entrepreneurial intention among 250 Tunisian university students. The findings indicate that openness to experience and conscientiousness positively influence both digital entrepreneurial intention and academic performance. Digital mindset emerges as a mediating variable between openness and academic performance, highlighting the role of technological curiosity in translating personality traits into learning outcomes. Notably, formal entrepreneurship education exerts a negative moderating effect on the relationship between digital mindset and academic performance, suggesting that overly standardized instructional approaches may constrain creativity. Extraversion and agreeableness show no direct effects, while emotional stability appears as a weak predictor. The results offer practical implications for the design of personality-informed entrepreneurship curricula in less developed countries.

KEYWORDS

Personality, Innovative Digital Attitude, Entrepreneurial Intention, Digital Entrepreneurship, Training

INTRODUCTION

Today, digital entrepreneurship has become a key transition in social and economic forces (Etemad, 2023). Driven by digital technologies, this phenomenon challenges and redefines value creation modes and classical economic models. From a global perspective, digital entrepreneurship is presented as an engine of innovation, inclusive growth, and social transformation (Yáñez-Valdés et al., 2023). Digital technologies enable entrepreneurs to be creative and agile and, in many cases, to develop sustainable solutions to local challenges (Isensee et al., 2023). The digitization of the economy, driven by increasing access to the internet, smartphones, digital platforms, and artificial intelligence (AI), has severely disrupted traditional market structures (Lang, 2021). It has created new opportunities for entrepreneurial activity, supported the emergence of disruptive models, and accelerated the rapid internationalization of some startups. According to Della Porta et al. (2022), this

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era reflects a shift in economic structures, patterns of social interaction, and the fabric of enterprise, with digital actors serving as key agents of change.

Within this changing context, digital entrepreneurship is conceptualized as the exploitation of technology-enabled opportunities (Si et al., 2023). It involves adopting digital tools that allow individuals to identify, experiment with, and exploit opportunities in a networked and dynamic environment (Khurana et al., 2022; Sutrisno et al., 2023). Studies such as Antonizzi and Smuts (2020) and Nambisan et al. (2019) further delineated the boundaries of this form of entrepreneurship by emphasizing its close association with digital transformation. In this vein, this paper demonstrates that digitization is not merely a tool but fundamentally alters how value is created and how customers engage in value creation and innovation (Bican & Brem, 2020; Zahra et al., 2023). In the Tunisian context, this process is still emerging. A young, increasingly connected population and a growing technological ecosystem have begun to respond to these dynamics. Alongside national initiatives such as “Startup Tunisia” and the Startup Act, interest in digital entrepreneurship has continued to grow (Mohamed et al., 2025). However, the antecedents of this form of entrepreneurship among university students remain under-researched.

Personality is one of the determinants that affects involvement in digital entrepreneurship. The influence of the Big Five personality traits—openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—on entrepreneurial behavior in online settings has been empirically demonstrated (Pandey et al., 2023). Openness to experience facilitates a willingness to embrace novelty and innovation (Nguyen et al., 2024), while conscientiousness is associated with stronger organization and perseverance in pursuing digital projects (Lechler & Huemann, 2023). Extraversion plays a role in networking and collaboration, particularly within contemporary digital environments (Mehta, 2024). Moreover, agreeableness—through cooperation, empathy, congruence, and the capacity for harmonious relationship building—supports effective group dynamics in virtual projects (Singh & Arora, 2024). By contrast, neuroticism, which reflects emotional instability, tends to discourage engagement in entrepreneurship because of heightened sensitivity to stress and failure, conditions that are prevalent in digital contexts (Martin et al., 2023).

Despite these theoretical contributions, few studies have directly examined the relationships among personality traits, digital innovation attitude, and entrepreneurial intention among higher education students, particularly in contexts such as Tunisia. Although research has addressed digital entrepreneurial intention as an integrated construct (Al-Mamary & Alraja, 2022; Mir et al., 2023; Younis et al., 2020), most studies overlook personality dimensions as explanatory mechanisms. This study addresses this gap by examining how personality traits among higher education students in Tunisia influence two key dimensions: innovative digital attitude and digital entrepreneurial intention, while also assessing the moderating role of digital entrepreneurship education. By clarifying these interactions, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological and educational factors that support the emergence of innovative, resilient, and locally grounded digital entrepreneurship. The underlying rationale is that skills associated with academic success, such as conscientiousness, intellectual curiosity linked to openness, and goal-oriented capacity, are similarly transferable to the entrepreneurial domain, where stronger academic achievement may enhance confidence in business creation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions

Mowen’s (2000) metatheoretical model of motivation and personality, commonly known as the 3M model, provides a structured approach for examining the complex interplay between personality traits and motivational influences (Lopes et al., 2025). The model, which aims to integrate motivational and personality perspectives, proposes a hierarchical structure that classifies individual differences into three levels of analysis: global dispositional traits at the highest level, followed by more specific

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