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Manuscript Abstract

Activating Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation: The Role of Narrative Perspective in Entrepreneurship Education

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Full reference

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship education is expected to foster students' entrepreneurial development, yet less is known about which instructional design features shape this development and through which psychological mechanisms. This study examines narrative point of view as a micro-level design feature in case-based entrepreneurship education. Drawing on construal level theory and narrative persuasion research, we theorize that first-person narration reduces psychological distance to entrepreneurship by making entrepreneurial action more realistic, engaging, and self-relevant. Two pretests refined the case, validated the manipulation, and assessed adapted individual entrepreneurial orientation (IEO) measures. In a lab experiment, 290 business students were randomly assigned to read the same entrepreneurial case in either first- or third-person narration. Covariance-based structural equation modelling showed that first-person narration increased perceived realism descriptively, but this effect was conditional on gender. Perceived realism was positively related to transportation, identification, and self-referencing, while transportation and self-referencing, but not identification, were positively associated with IEO. Conditional indirect effects showed that first-person narration fostered IEO among female students through perceived realism and self-referencing, with partial evidence for a transportation pathway. These findings suggest that first-person entrepreneurial cases do not simply prompt students to identify with an entrepreneur; rather, they appear to work when they help students mentally enter the entrepreneurial situation and connect it to their own possible entrepreneurial selves. The gender-contingent pattern indicates that narrative design may be especially consequential for students who experience greater psychological distance from entrepreneurship, highlighting the potential of carefully designed EE materials to make entrepreneurial action more accessible, imaginable, and personally relevant for underrepresented groups. Overall, the study advances an intervention-specific account of EE by showing how a low-cost case-design feature can shape students' entrepreneurial orientation through theoretically specified narrative mechanisms.