ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY AND INNOVATION PERFORMANCE IN CHINESE TECHNOLOGY-BASED NEW VENTURES: THE MEDIATING ROLES OF ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION AND RESOURCE BRICOLAGE*

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Abstract

This research article aims to: (1) examine whether entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) directly influences innovation performance in Chinese technology-based new ventures; (2) investigate the mediating roles of entrepreneurial motivation (EM) and resource bricolage (RB) in the relationship between ESE and innovation performance; and (3) evaluate whether organizational learning (OL) moderates the strength of this relationship. The study employed a quantitative research design, collecting survey data from 740 founders and senior executives of technology-based new ventures across 29 regions in China. The data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM).

The research results found that: (1) Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has a significant positive direct effect on innovation performance. (2) Entrepreneurial

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motivation and resource bricolage both serve as significant mediators in the relationship between ESE and innovation performance, indicating complementary mediation mechanisms. (3) Organizational learning significantly moderates the relationship between ESE and innovation performance, such that the positive effect of ESE is stronger under high levels of organizational learning.
Keywords: Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, Innovation Performance, Entrepreneurial Motivation, Resource Bricolage, Organizational Learning

Introduction

Technology-based new ventures operate in environments characterized by rapid technological change, intense competition, and high uncertainty. In such contexts, innovation performance is essential not only for short-term competitiveness but also for firm growth, long-term sustainability, and value creation. These firms often face limited resources, institutional complexity, and fast product cycles, requiring continuous experimentation and adaptation. Entrepreneurs therefore play a pivotal role as strategic decision-makers, resource integrators, and drivers of innovation. Among individual-level factors, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE)—the belief in one's capability to successfully perform entrepreneurial tasks—has been recognized as a critical psychological resource shaping opportunity recognition, strategic action, and performance outcomes.

Although prior research has generally confirmed a positive association between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and various performance indicators, important limitations remain. Much of the existing evidence is derived from Western contexts or broad entrepreneurial samples, which may not adequately capture the institutional pressures, resource constraints, and competitive intensity faced by Chinese technology-based new ventures. Moreover, previous studies have tended to focus primarily on direct relationships between self-

efficacy and performance, offering limited insight into the psychological and behavioral processes through which entrepreneurial confidence translates into innovation outcomes. The mechanisms and boundary conditions underlying this relationship therefore remain insufficiently clarified.

Understanding how entrepreneurial self-efficacy contributes to innovation performance is theoretically and practically significant. From a theoretical perspective, integrating cognitive beliefs, motivational processes, behavioral adaptation, and organizational context provides a more comprehensive explanation of innovation in new ventures. In particular, entrepreneurial motivation reflects sustained psychological commitment to innovation, resource bricolage captures creative recombination of limited resources, and organizational learning shapes the firm's capacity to convert individual initiative into collective outcomes. From a practical standpoint, clarifying these mechanisms can inform entrepreneurs and policymakers in emerging economies on how to strengthen innovation capability under conditions of uncertainty and constraint.

Literature Review

1. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy and Innovation Performance

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is an individual's confidence in their ability to perform the tasks required for starting a business. This kind of confidence is particularly needed by technology-driven new ventures, which often have many uncertainties, are short of resources and need to carry out numerous experiments regularly make quick decisions; moreover, there might be an ongoing process during the choice-making period. From the perspective of social cognitive theory, efficacy beliefs shape goal setting, self-regulation, and persistence, which are essential for sustained innovation activities. Research has consistently shown that, with stronger self-efficacy, founders set goals higher and

are more resilient to failure; even so, they remain engaged in the related work of innovation. Empirical work shows that entrepreneurial confidence is positively correlated with significant enhancement of innovation performance and behaviour promoting greater innovation-driven development (Urban & Wood, 2017; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). However, although prior studies confirm a positive association, the internal mechanisms and contextual conditions underlying this relationship remain insufficiently clarified. Based on this, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is expected to directly enhance innovation performance in Chinese technology-based new ventures (H1).

2. Entrepreneurial Motivation as a Psychological Mechanism

However, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is likely not to enhance innovation performance through a direct path. Sustained innovation also needs the drive from within and a sense of mission to continue working despite an uncertain outcome. Entrepreneurial motivation is the psychological drive and dedication of the founder in innovative activities. According to expectancy theory, individuals exert greater effort when they believe their capabilities will lead to valued outcomes, suggesting that high self-efficacy strengthens motivational intensity. If the founders believe that they can achieve success, difficult objectives begin to appear feasible, and such belief encourages them to make greater efforts and persist longer. As shown in previous work, self-efficacy is a driving force for entrepreneurs to persistently pursue their goals, and individuals with higher motivation are more likely to take the initiative to acquire new information actively, be brave enough to try something novel, seize opportunities boldly, and thus enhance innovative results (Usman & Nabilla, 2020). Thus, motivation represents the psychological pathway through which cognitive confidence is translated into sustained innovative engagement. Therefore, based on this, higher ESE is expected to enhance entrepreneurial motivation (H2); it is expected that entrepreneurial motivation will improve innovation performance (H3); and

entrepreneurial motivation is proposed as a mediator between ESE and innovation performance (H4).

3. Resource Bricolage as a Behavioral Mechanism

Apart from motivation, the innovative capacity of Technology-based new ventures is also limited by how resource allocation utilised by entrepreneurs. Resource bricolage refers to the process of creatively reusing available materials, skills or relationships in problem-solving and value creation. The founding group that has more faith in themselves is more likely to come up with practical solutions in the face of a lack of resources and use existing conditions creatively to improvise. Bricolage thus becomes a behavioural pathway for confidence to be transformed into actual innovative actions. Compared with motivation as an internal psychological state, bricolage reflects an outward behavioral capability of recombining constrained resources, highlighting its complementary role in the mediation process. Bricolage has been shown in previous studies to enhance innovation of small enterprises lacking resources (Yuan, 2022). Therefore, ESE is expected to promote resource bricolage (H5), resource bricolage is expected to enhance innovation performance (H6), and resource bricolage is proposed as a mediator between ESE and innovation performance (H7).

4. Organizational Learning as a Contextual Moderator

ESE's effects on different organisational environments and the development of innovation. Organisational learning, a company's ability to acquire, share and apply knowledge through reflection, experiment and knowledge integration, may be able to determine the extent of the transformation of entrepreneurial confidence into innovation results. When a firm is genuinely learning-oriented, it can improve coordination, enhance its absorptive capacity, and create better conditions for turning entrepreneurial initiatives into actual results. Previous studies have shown that the learning process can enhance adaptability, promote related innovation behaviour (Wang & Ellinger 2008); At the same time, some perspectives suggest that excessive self-

efficacy may lead to overconfidence, which further underscores the importance of contextual mechanisms in channeling entrepreneurial confidence toward productive innovation outcomes. Therefore, organisational learning is expected to moderate the ESE-innovation performance relationship; that is, the effect of ESE will be more pronounced in organisations with a higher degree of organisational learning (H8).

Methodology

The relationships among variables were examined using a quantitative survey design. A cross-sectional approach was adopted because it is suitable for testing structural relationships across a large and geographically dispersed sample and is widely applied in entrepreneurship and innovation research. All measurement items originally developed in English were translated into Chinese using a back-translation procedure and reviewed by experts to ensure semantic equivalence. A pilot test with a small group of technology entrepreneurs was conducted to improve clarity and contextual relevance of the questionnaire items.

1. Population and Sampling

The study focused on Chinese technology-based new ventures operating in innovation-intensive industries. These firms were characterized by active engagement in technological or product development and relatively recent establishment. The sampling frame consisted of 3,466 enterprises across 29 provinces and municipalities in China, compiled from publicly available enterprise databases and regional innovation directories. Proportionate stratified random sampling was employed to ensure regional representativeness.

A total of 800 questionnaires were distributed by on-site distribution and the internet. Out of the 777 returns, 37 were excluded for significant missing data or indications of response bias, such as invariant responses. A total of 740 valid

questionnaires were ultimately obtained, corresponding to a valid return rate of 92.5 per cent. The Quantity of samples satisfies the general requirements for structural equation modelling research and has sufficient statistical power to test hypotheses.

2. Instrumentation and Measurement

Data were collected using established measurement scales. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) was measured using the 22-item scale developed by McGee et al. (2009), covering marketing, innovation, management, risk-taking, and financial control. Innovation performance (IP) was assessed using five items adapted from Fischer (2001) and Romijn and Albaladejo (2002). Entrepreneurial motivation (EM) was measured using the 24-item scale of Vijaya and Kamalanabhan (1998). Resource bricolage (RB) was measured using seven items from Senyard et al. (2014). Organizational learning (OL) was assessed using 16 items adapted from Jerez-Gomez et al. (2005). All constructs were measured on five-point Likert scales. Reliability and validity were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

3. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. First, CFA was conducted to assess measurement reliability and construct validity. Second, structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized direct, mediating, and moderating relationships. SEM is appropriate because it allows simultaneous estimation of multiple relationships among latent variables while accounting for measurement error.

To reduce common method bias, anonymity was assured, scale items were separated, and respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers. A Harman single-factor test indicated that common method variance was not a major concern. Participation was voluntary, informed consent

was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained in accordance with research ethics standards.

Research Framework

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of the current study.

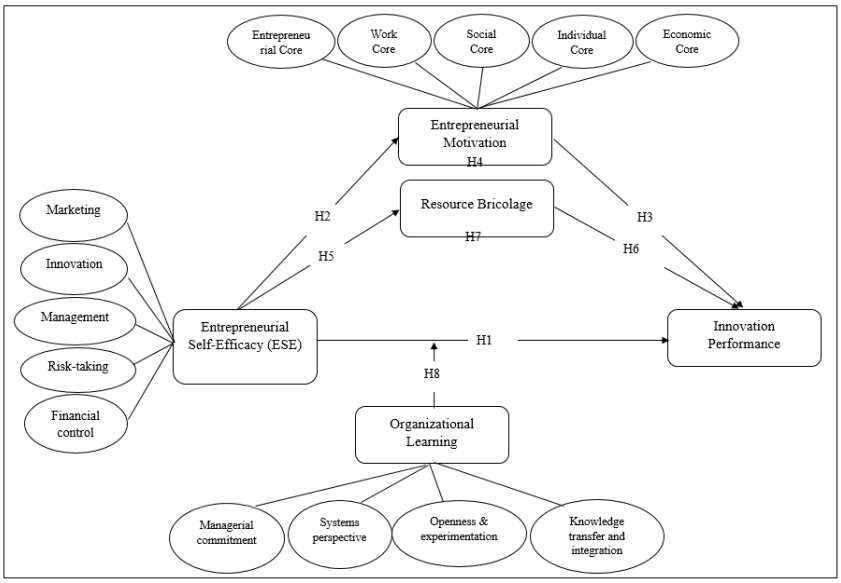

Figure 1 Research model (Source: Constructed by the researchers)

Results

1. Data Preparation

Table 1 displays abbreviations of variables in the conceptual framework.

Table 1 Variable Abbreviation

Variable Name	Abbreviation
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	ESE
Marketing	MAR
Innovation	INN
Management	MAN
Risk-Taking	RIT
Financial Control	FIC
Innovation Performance	IP
Entrepreneurial Motivation	EM
Entrepreneurial Core	ENC
Work Core	WOC
Social Core	SOC
Individual Core	INC
Economic Core	ECC
Resource Bricolage	RB
Organizational Learning	OL
Managerial Commitment	MAC
Systems Perspective	SYP
Openness and Experimentation	OPE
Knowledge Transfer and Integration	KTI

2. Sample Overview and Measurement Quality

The demographic features of the respondents in this questionnairesurvey are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Profile of Respondents

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	500	67.6
	Female	240	32.4
	Total	740	100
Education Background	Below undergraduate	207	28
	Undergraduate	296	40

	Master's degree level or above	180	24.3
	Graduate student	57	7.7
	PhD or above	207	28
	Total	740	100
Age	20-30	29	3.9
	31-40	228	30.8
	41-50	298	40.3
	50-60	185	25
	Total	740	100
Age of the firm	Less than one year	139	18.8
	1-3 years	292	39.5
	4-7 years	309	41.8
	Total	740	100
Number of employees	No employee	31	4.2
	1-4	151	20.4
	5-9	157	21.2
	10-49	160	21.6
	50-100	117	15.8
	More than 100	124	16.8
	Total	740	100
Position	CEO (Chief Executive Officer)	124	16.8
	CFO (Chief Financial Officer)	111	15
	CTO (Chief Technology Officer)	115	15.5
	COO (Chief Operating Officer)	77	10.4
	Chairman of the Board	79	10.7
	President	84	11.4
	Chief Creative/Product Officer	71	9.6
	Others	79	10.7
	Total	740	100

Descriptive statistics showed that the mean values of all constructs were in the moderate to high range, indicating that the entrepreneurs in the sample

group generally had a strong self-efficacy, motivation, resource bricolage and organisational learning degree, as well as positive innovation performance. Given the sample group consists of founder identities and senior managers in a high-technology environment, it is reasonable to assume there would be continuous competitive pressure and innovation demands.

CFA was used for the examination of the construct validity. Table 3 reports the results of the CFA. Convergent validity is supported by high standardised factor loadings (all above the acceptable benchmark of 0.70, and statistically significant), a strong composite reliability value (above the recommended threshold of 0.70) and adequate average variance extracted (AVE > 0.50).

Table 3 Convergent Validity Analysis

Latent variable	Observation variable	Standardized factor loading (>0.50)	S.E.	C.R.	P	CR (>0.70)	AVE (> 0.50)
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE)	Marketing (MAR)	0.898	0.016	55.641	< 0.001	0.952	0.799
	Innovation (INN)	0.890	0.017	53.212	< 0.001		
	Management (MAN)	0.895	0.016	54.523	< 0.001		
	Risk-Taking (RIT)	0.900	0.016	56.045	< 0.001		
	Financial Control (FIC)	0.887	0.017	52.292	< 0.001		
Innovation Performance (IP)	IP1	0.865	0.018	46.832	< 0.001	0.936	0.746
	IP2	0.868	0.018	47.661	< 0.001		
	IP3	0.869	0.018	47.663	< 0.001		
	IP4	0.860	0.019	45.810	< 0.001		
	IP5	0.856	0.019	45.076	< 0.001		
Entrepreneurial Motivation (EM)	Entrepreneurial Core (ENC)	0.873	0.018	48.617	< 0.001	0.939	0.756
	Work Core (WOC)	0.899	0.016	55.875	< 0.001		
	Social Core (SOC)	0.857	0.019	45.272	< 0.001		

	Individual Core (INC)	0.834	0.020	41.058	< 0.001		
	Economic Core (ECC)	0.882	0.017	50.972	< 0.001		
Resource Bricolage (RB)	RB1	0.826	0.021	39.838	< 0.001	0.940	0.689
	RB2	0.842	0.020	42.493	< 0.001		
	RB3	0.820	0.021	38.917	< 0.001		
	RB4	0.826	0.021	39.935	< 0.001		
	RB5	0.861	0.019	45.973	< 0.001		
	RB6	0.813	0.021	37.954	< 0.001		
	RB7	0.824	0.021	39.535	< 0.001		
Organizational Learning (OL)	Managerial Commitment (MAC)	0.904	0.016	57.650	< 0.001	0.945	0.811
	Systems Perspective (SYP)	0.899	0.016	55.903	< 0.001		
	Openness and Experimentation (OPE)	0.895	0.016	54.504	< 0.001		
	Knowledge Transfer and Integration (KTI)	0.903	0.016	57.334	< 0.001		

Discriminant validity was confirmed based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion; the square roots of AVE for each construct were greater than the inter-construct correlations, and therefore, it was demonstrated that each construct was empirically distinct (see Table 4). In summary, according to the diagnosis results, a robust measurement foundation has been laid for the following structural model test, and assurance has been provided that this basis will not cause a false association in the derived relationship due to an unstable measurement.

Table 4 Discriminant Validity Analysis Results

Construct	ESE	EM	RB	OL	IP
ESE	0.894				
EM	0.636	0.869			
RB	0.771	0.520	0.830		
OL	-0.017	-0.007	-0.017	0.901	
IP	0.681	0.595	0.614	0.115	0.864

Notes. Bold numbers on the diagonal are the square roots of the AVE values for each variable, and other numbers are the correlation coefficients among these variables.

3. Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

3.1 Direct Effect and Mediation Model Analysis

A structural equation model is built in this study to estimate the structural paths of the direct and mediation hypotheses (H1-H7).

The SEM model fit was acceptable (e.g.). χ^2/df (2.10), CFI and TLI (0.96, 0.95) close to the recommended values, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.037, consistent with Hu et al. (1992) Guidelines.

Table 5 presents the results of direct effects in the mediation model for the structural equation model in this study. According to Table 5, the direct pathway from ESE to IP was still significant after controlling for other variables (standardised β = 0.361, p < .001), which supports H1; that is, higher levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy are positively associated with greater innovation performance. ESE strongly predicted EM (β = 0.636, p < .001) and RB (β = 0.771, p < .001), supporting H2 and H5. Both mediators significantly predicted IP: EM → IP (β = 0.262, p < .001) and RB → IP (β = 0.199, p < .001), supporting H3 and H6. From these results, it can be seen that entrepreneurs with high self-efficacy tend to perform better in both direct terms and motivation for resource bricolage; Therefore, their innovative capabilities have also been improved.

Table 5 Direct Effects in the Mediation Model

Direct Effects	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Unstandardized Estimate	Hypothesis
ESE → IP	0.361	0.046	8.161	< 0.001	0.373	H1
ESE → EM	0.636	0.027	22.415	< 0.001	0.611	H2
EM → IP	0.262	0.036	7.928	< 0.001	0.282	H3
ESE → RB	0.771	0.023	32.891	< 0.001	0.769	H5
RB → IP	0.199	0.041	4.971	< 0.001	0.206	H6

Table 6 shows the indirect (mediated) effects. The indirect effect of ESE on IP through EM was significant (standardised indirect $\beta \approx 0.17$, 95% Cl [0.126, 0.217], H4 supported), and the indirect effect through RB was also significant ($\beta \approx 0.15$, 95% Cl [0.096, 0.221], H7 supported). That is to say, there is a complementary mediation effect in the research; ES has been found to have some positive impacts on IP through the enhancement of motivation and resource bricolage.

Table 6 Indirect (Mediated) Effects

Indirect Effects	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	Lower	Upper	Hypothesis
ESE → EM → IP	0.167	0.023	0.126	0.217	H4
ESE → RB → IP	0.153	0.032	0.096	0.221	H7

Figure 2 displays the mediation structural equation model.

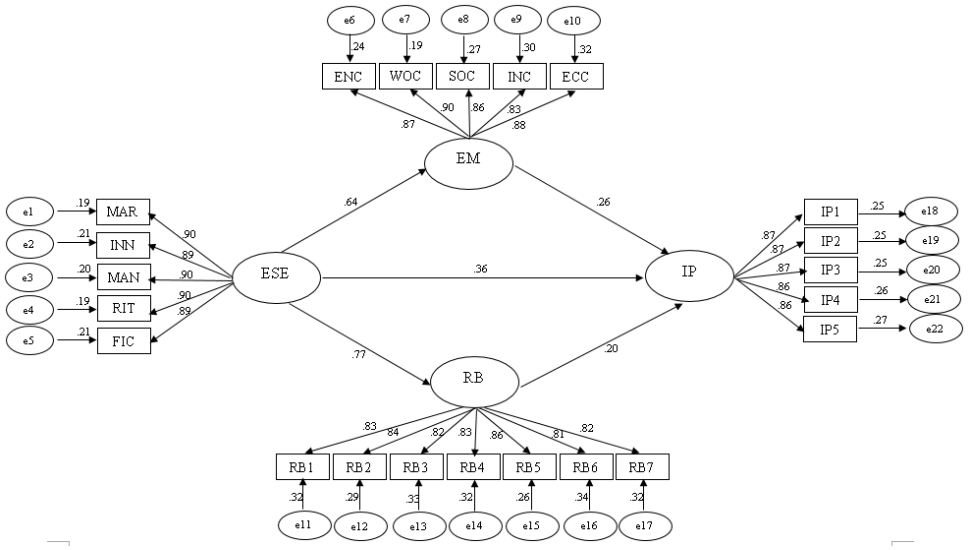

Figure 2 Mediation Structural Equation Model (Source: Constructed by the researchers)

3.2. Moderation Model Analysis

This study separately established an SEM model to test the moderation hypothesis (H8). To form a latent interaction term (ESE × OL) to predict IP, in addition to the main effects of ESE and OL.

The model fit indices of the moderation SEM showed that it was acceptable (e.g.). χ^2 /df (2.00), CFI (0.94) and TLI (0.93) close to the recommended values, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.041, consistent with Hu et al. In 1992, under the guidance of (1992).

Table 7 shows that the ESE × OL interaction term had a significant positive impact on IP (β = 0.071, p = .004), indicating that among various factors affecting innovation performance, those promoting it are further amplified under high organizational learning conditions; However, if "organisational learning" cannot be considered here, no conclusions should be drawn from other aspects. In terms of simple-slope, at a high OL the ESE → IP slope was steeper than at

a low OL (refer to Figure 3). The primary effect of ESE was still positive and significant (β = 0.489, p < .001), but OL's main effect was not significant. Therefore, H8 is supported: Organizational learning amplifies the relationship between ESE-IP.

Table 7 Moderation Model (ESE $\times$ OL).

Direct Effects	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Unstandardized Estimate	Hypothesis
ESE ⟶ IP	0.489	0.079	6.208	0.000	0.489	-
OL ⟶ IP	-0.083	0.078	-1.071	0.285	-0.083	-
ESE × OL ⟶ IP	0.071	0.024	2.924	0.004	0.071	H8

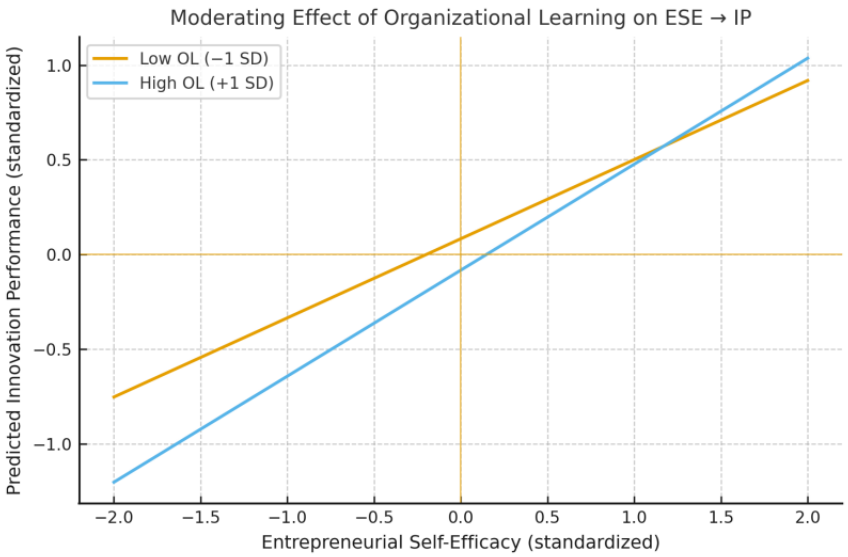

Figure 3 Simple slopes for the moderating effect of OL on the relationship between ESE and IP (Source: Constructed by the researchers)

Discussion

All three research objectives and all eight hypotheses have been verified empirically. In summary, the entrepreneurial self-efficacy promotes the innovation performance of Chinese technology-based new enterprises by means of psychological factors, behavioural factors and organisational factors. ESE directly enhances the innovation performance (H1) and indirectly via entrepreneurial motivation (H2-H4) and resource bricolage (H5-H7), as well as organizational learning enhancing this effect (H8). In general, these conclusions have obtained empirical support for the view that founders' confidence is significant for innovative behaviour among previous studies; therefore, self-efficacy is regarded as an available resource to improve performance rather than merely an individual trait (Urban & Wood, 2017). The added contribution of this study is that it makes the intervening process clearer; if ESE is regarded as an independent predictor, then many of these intervening processes will be overlooked.

The motivational path is intuitively easy to understand; as long as the founders themselves feel that they can achieve success in the innovation, they will be more committed to achieving the goal of innovation under harsh circumstances. Under the constraints of resources and markets, firms are still motivated by the efficacy-seeking motive to choose an innovative path. The bricolage path offers an alternative: Entrepreneurial confidence helps individuals persist with effort continuously, and such people tend to be more active in utilising available resources for their own purposes. Entrepreneurs who trust themselves are more likely to be innovative in improvisation and combination, turning limitations into creative resources. Bricolage is an actual creative ability and not merely a way of dealing with things, so this view agrees that bricolage is a genuine capability (Yuan, 2022). Especially, ESE predicted bricolage more

strongly than motivation; This suggests that confidence may have a particular impact on the production of adaptive behaviour under conditions of limited resources.

To sum up, in several respects, the impact of entrepreneurial confidence on motivation is reflected in a motivational effect; Adaptive behaviour and organisational learning ability also affect innovation performance. Efficacy beliefs are realised through certain paths, and organisational learning provides these paths with a feasible environment; otherwise, the process cannot be smoothly carried out. A very high level of self-efficacy is, in some ways, likely to lead to overconfidence or an inefficient use of resources; therefore, future research can examine what kind of boundary conditions result in a negative relationship between ESE and innovation.

This study confirms that entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) positively influences innovation performance in Chinese technology-based new ventures both directly and indirectly. Entrepreneurial motivation and resource bricolage function as complementary mediating mechanisms, demonstrating that founders' confidence enhances sustained innovative effort and promotes adaptive recombination of limited resources. Furthermore, organizational learning significantly strengthens the ESE–innovation relationship, indicating that entrepreneurial confidence is more effectively translated into tangible innovation outcomes in firms with strong learning capabilities. Grounded in social cognitive theory, this research integrates individual cognition, motivational processes, behavioral adaptation, and organizational context into a unified analytical framework, thereby extending existing entrepreneurship literature by clarifying how and under what conditions ESE contributes to innovation performance, particularly within an emerging economy setting. Practically, the findings suggest that sustainable innovation requires both the development of founder competence and the cultivation of organizational systems that support

knowledge sharing, experimentation, and continuous learning. Policymakers should therefore promote entrepreneurial training while fostering institutional environments that enhance organizational learning capacity in technology-driven ventures.

Recommendation

Several deficiencies point to directions for subsequent work. A cross-sectional design is unable to determine a causal order; it cannot ascertain whether self-efficacy causes motivation and bricolage, or vice versa. A long-term investigation needs to be conducted that will follow the changes of these factors over time and their mutual impacts, as well as any feedback effects resulting from innovation success on the founder's sense of achievement.

Single-respondent, self-reported data may also contain common-source bias, and subjective evaluations of innovation performance do not necessarily represent objective results. Add several informants and objective index items, such as patents or innovation income, to improve accuracy.

Finally, the focus on Chinese technology-based new ventures limits generalisability. In future research, the cross-border extension of the current findings should be carried out in various countries, industries and institutional backgrounds to examine whether bricolage and organisational learning will also have an impact in other environments.

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