



The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy in the Impact of Perceived Communication Skills of Tourism Students on Entrepreneurial Intentions

Turizm Eğitimi Alan Öğrencilerin Algıladıkları İletişim Becerilerinin Girişimcilik Niyetine Etkisinde Öz Yeterliliğin Aracılık Rolü

Yunus DOĞAN¹

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Mersin Üniversitesi Turizm Fakültesi'nde lisans ve lisansüstü eğitim gören öğrenciler üzerinde yapılan bir alan araştırmasıyla turizm eğitimi alan öğrencilerin algıladıkları iletişim becerilerinin girişimcilik niyetine etkisinde öz yeterliliğin aracı rolünü belirlemektir. Araştırma kapsamında, anket tekniği ve kolayda örnekleme yönteminden faydalanılarak toplam 396 anket toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler uygun analiz programları kullanılarak değerlendirilmiştir. Yapılan yapısal eşitlik modellemesi sonucunda, öğrencilerin algıladıkları iletişim becerilerinin girişimcilik niyeti üzerinde pozitif bir etkisi olduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca algılanan iletişim becerilerinin öz yeterliliği pozitif yönde etkilediği ve öz yeterliliğin de girişimcilik niyetini pozitif yönde etkilediği saptanmıştır. Son olarak, bootstrap testi sonuçlarına göre algılanan iletişim becerilerinin girişimcilik niyetine etkisinde öz yeterliliğinin aracı etkisinin anlamlı olduğu bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. Analiz sonuçları teorik ve pratik katkılar doğrultusunda ele alınmış ve eğitim müfredatları ile gelecek araştırmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Algılanan İletişim Becerileri, Girişimcilik Niyeti, Öz Yeterlilik, Turizm Eğitim Müfredatı

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention among students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs at the Faculty of Tourism of Mersin University. A field research was conducted using a survey technique and convenient sampling method, collecting a total of 396 responses. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical analysis software. Structural equation modeling revealed that students' perceived communication skills positively influence entrepreneurial intention. Furthermore, it was found that perceived communication skills positively affect self-efficacy, and self-efficacy in turn positively influences entrepreneurial intention. Finally, bootstrap test results confirmed the significance of the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between perceived communication skills and entrepreneurial intention. The findings were discussed in terms of theoretical and practical contributions, and recommendations were made for educational curricula and future research directions.

Keywords: Perceived Communication Skills, Entrepreneurial Intentions, Self-Efficacy, Tourism Education Curriculum

¹ Corresponding Author: Lec. Dr., Mersin University, yunus.dogan23@hotmail.com, 0000-0003-3145-8404



1. INTRODUCTION

Various studies have highlighted the critical importance of communication skills for students in tourism education to succeed in their future careers (Wang et al., 2009; Zehrer & Mössenlechner, 2009). However, some research indicates that newly graduated tourism professionals often lack sufficient communication skills (Lolli, 2013b; Paranto & Kelkar, 2000; Stevens, 2005). This underscores the need for a deeper examination of communication skills in the tourism sector and investigation into how these skills can be enhanced. While highlighting the critical role of communication skills in future interactions within the tourism sector, several scholars have pointed out notable shortcomings in these skills among tourism professionals (Bednar & Olney, 1987; Peterson, 1997).

The impact of communication skills on entrepreneurial intentions has become a significant research topic, particularly in service-oriented industries like tourism. Entrepreneurial intention is defined as an individual's determination and willingness to start and manage their own business, closely associated with their confidence in perceiving opportunities and their capability to evaluate these opportunities (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their capacity to successfully execute a specific task and plays a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial intention (Bandura, 1997). In this context, the research question guiding this study is whether self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the impact of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention among students in tourism education. This inquiry aims to address gaps in the existing literature regarding the critical importance of communication skills in the tourism sector and the extent to which students possess these skills. Additionally, by examining the influence of self-efficacy, this study seeks to contribute to both tourism education and entrepreneurship literature.

Denk (2023) examines the internship programs in tourism departments in Turkey, emphasizing the importance of academic and industrial integration within the framework of Innovation-Oriented Internship (IOI). The study evaluates stakeholder alignment and the contribution of innovative internships to the tourism sector, proposing more effective internship management strategies. Sesen (2013) investigates the factors influencing university students' entrepreneurial intentions, identifying entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) as the most significant factor, followed by social networks. The study highlights that the university environment does not have a notable impact on entrepreneurial intentions. Ehsanfar et al. (2023) explore the influence of family tradition and psychological traits on entrepreneurial intentions, finding that tolerance for uncertainty, need for achievement, and risk-taking tendencies positively affect entrepreneurial intentions, while a background of entrepreneurial families reduces it. Solunoğlu and İkiz (2017) examine the impact of entrepreneurial tendencies on university students, emphasizing the economic contributions of entrepreneurship and concluding that entrepreneurial education should be further expanded.

A fundamental issue in the literature is the insufficient investigation into how communication skills among students in tourism education affect their entrepreneurial intentions. Existing literature often separately addresses entrepreneurial intention and communication skills (Cuic Tankovic, 2020; Akkuş, 2023; Arpacı, 2022), but there is inadequate exploration of how these two crucial factors interact and the role of self-efficacy in this interaction. This gap creates uncertainty about which skills should be emphasized to enhance students' entrepreneurial intentions in tourism education. Furthermore, the critical role of self-efficacy in this process is often overlooked, resulting in insufficient guidance on how educational programs can support this important psychological factor. This research aims to address these gaps and demonstrate how communication skills and self-efficacy can be effectively utilized to enhance entrepreneurial intentions among students in tourism education.

The primary objective of this study is to determine the mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of perceived communication skills among students in tourism education on entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, the secondary objectives include examining the influence of perceived communication skills on self-efficacy and the impact of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention. Given the absence of studies examining the mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of perceived communication skills

on entrepreneurial intention among students in tourism education, this study aims to fill this gap. In this perspective, the research model and hypotheses were developed, and hypotheses based on the literature were explained. Moreover, this study not only addresses gaps in the literature but also provides valuable insights for both academic circles and educational programs.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Concept of Communication Skills

Communication skills refer to individuals' ability to effectively and clearly convey their thoughts, feelings, and information. These skills are critically important for success both in personal and professional life. Effective communication skills are crucial indicators in creating positive interactions with customers (Cuic Tankovic, 2020), hence continuous training should be provided to students in tourism education to enhance their communication skills. Moreover, effective communication is among the most essential skills for tourism professionals, as it plays a fundamental role in the daily operations of tourism businesses (Brownell, 2016; Lolli, 2013a). In this study, communication skills are analyzed across five dimensions: written communication skills, oral communication skills, listening skills, digital communication skills, and non-verbal communication skills.

Written communication skills: This involves the ability to convey information through written documents such as letters, emails, reports, and notes. Clarity, adherence to grammar rules, and structure are crucial in written communication. Guffey and Loewy (2012) highlighted that written communication provides reliability and professionalism in business, strengthening professional relationships.

Oral communication skills: Encompassing the process of transferring information through speech, these skills include effective speaking, appropriate intonation, and emphasis. Oral communication enables accurate understanding of the message and effective response. Bambacas and Patrickson (2008) demonstrated that effective oral communication enhances job performance and strengthens employees' commitment to the organization.

Listening communication skills: This includes active listening, providing feedback, and accurately understanding what the other party is saying. Good listening skills are critical in enhancing interpersonal relationships and collaboration. Brownell (2012) emphasized the central role of active listening in communication and detailed its importance in both personal and professional relationships.

Digital communication skills: This refers to the ability to effectively transfer information through digital tools and platforms. These skills encompass the use of digital communication tools such as emails, social media, video conferences, and instant messaging applications. Clarity, appropriate language use, and technological knowledge are important in digital communication. Morris (2010) noted that digital communication enhances productivity in business and facilitates global collaboration.

Non-verbal communication skills: This includes non-verbal communication elements such as body language, gestures, facial expressions, posture, and eye contact. Effective body language supports and reinforces verbal messages. Mehrabian (1971) highlighted that a significant portion of communication consists of non-verbal components, and body language plays an important role in message comprehension.

Tourism requires intercultural communication as it facilitates the interaction of different cultures. Travelers engage with local communities, experiencing diverse traditions, which enhances mutual understanding. Effective communication allows tourists and local communities to comprehend each other, creating positive experiences. Communication plays a critical role in tourism; tourists who do not understand cultural norms and language structures may encounter communication problems. This

can adversely affect their experiences and lead to missed opportunities for local businesses. Therefore, intercultural communication is essential for the successful development of tourism.

2.2. Concepts of Entrepreneurial Intention and Self-Efficacy

Entrepreneurial intention: Refers to an individual's determination and willingness to start and manage their own business. This intention reflects the motivation to engage in entrepreneurial activities and the desire to cope with the challenges encountered in this process. Research indicates that entrepreneurial intention is associated with an individual's confidence in perceiving opportunities and their capability to evaluate these opportunities (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993).

Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their capacity to successfully accomplish a particular task or navigate a specific situation. This concept is based on Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory and is closely related to a person's confidence in themselves. In entrepreneurship, high self-efficacy reinforces an individual's belief that they will succeed in entrepreneurial activities and enhances entrepreneurial intention (Bandura, 1997). Numerous studies have demonstrated that self-efficacy is a strong determinant of entrepreneurial intention. Individuals with high self-efficacy believe they can successfully conduct entrepreneurial activities, thereby increasing their entrepreneurial intention (Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005).

2.3. Relationship Between Communication Skills, Entrepreneurial Intention, and Self-Efficacy

Ferreira et al. (2022) conducted studies to analyze the impact of entrepreneurial competence and planning guidance on university students' entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions at a federal institution of higher education in the northeast of Brazil, where online surveys were collected from 2,771 university students. According to the findings of this study, there is a positive relationship between communication skills and entrepreneurial intentions. Similarly, Kokkonen and Koponen (2020) emphasize the importance of having effective communication skills for entrepreneurs to succeed. Likewise, Otache (2019) explored the relationship between entrepreneurial education and the conceptual analysis of undergraduate students' employment and employment intentions, focusing on the role of communication skills in shaping entrepreneurial intentions.

Polatçı et al. (2018) studied the positive impact of communication skills on entrepreneurial intention among 369 undergraduate students at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences of Gaziosmanpaşa University and also determined that each dimension of communication skills has a positive impact on entrepreneurial intention. Similarly, Mahmudul Hasan et al. (2017) concluded in their research that communication skills have a positive effect on entrepreneurial intention. Based on the findings of these studies, hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were formulated.

H₁: Perceived communication skills have a positive impact on entrepreneurial intention.

H₂: Perceived communication skills have a positive impact on self-efficacy.

H₃: Self-efficacy has a positive impact on entrepreneurial intention.

The mediating effect of self-efficacy in the impact of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention can be based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, argues that individuals' behaviors are the result of dynamic interactions between personal factors (thoughts, beliefs, emotions) and environmental influences. In this theory, self-efficacy is defined as individuals' beliefs in their abilities to perform specific tasks, and these beliefs have a significant impact on their behaviors, motivations, and outcomes (Bandura, 1986). Individuals with good communication skills may increase their belief that they can effectively use these skills in the business world, thereby enhancing their entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, hypothesis H4 was formulated:

H₄: Self-efficacy mediates the impact of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention.

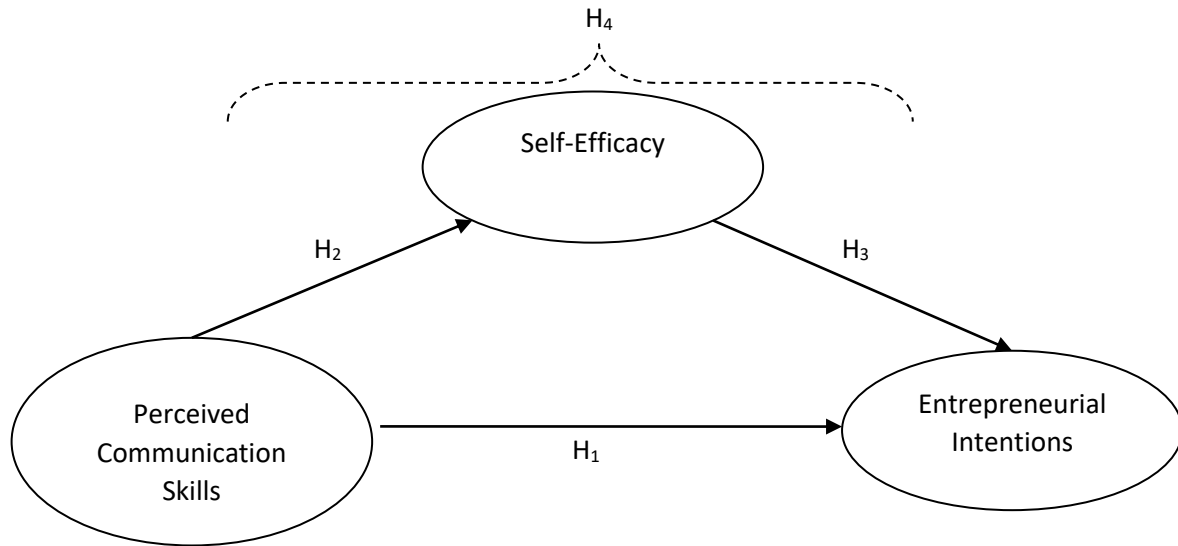


Figure 1. Research Model

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to determine the mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of students' perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention at the Faculty of Tourism in Mersin province. To achieve this goal, the research model prepared accordingly was tested using quantitative methods, and the study is of an explanatory nature.

3.1 Population and Sample

To test the hypotheses outlined within the scope of the study's objectives, preliminary field research was carried out. The study sample includes students enrolled in the Faculty of Tourism at Mersin University. The reason for selecting Mersin University's Faculty of Tourism as the sample of the study is due to it being one of Turkey's oldest tourism faculties (established on April 4, 1980) and the significant academic and sectoral achievements of its graduates. Mersin University's Faculty of Tourism comprises 4 undergraduate programs. These programs and their student numbers are as follows: Recreation Management (119 students), Tourism Management (392 students), Tourism Guidance (396 students), and Gastronomy and Culinary Arts (328 students), totaling 1235 students in undergraduate and graduate programs (MEU, 2024). Therefore, the sample of 396 surveys collected from June 11, 2024, to June 27, 2024, including undergraduate and graduate programs at Mersin University's Faculty of Tourism, represents the sample of the study.

3.2. Data Collection and Scales

The survey used in the study consists of three main sections. The first section includes questions related to demographic characteristics; the second section contains the "Perceived Communication Skills Scale"; and the third section includes statements related to Entrepreneurial Intentions and Self-Efficacy Scales. To measure the perceived communication skills of students enrolled in the Faculty of Tourism in Mersin province, the "Communication Skills Scale" developed by Cuic Tankovic et al. (2023) was used. For determining entrepreneurial intentions, the "Entrepreneurial Intentions Scale" used in the study by Akkuş (2023) was employed, and finally, the "Self-Efficacy Scale" used in the study by Arpacı (2022) was utilized to assess self-efficacy levels.

The communication skills scale includes 18 statements in total: written communication skills with 3 statements, verbal communication skills with 4 statements, listening communication skills with 3 statements, digital communication skills with 3 statements, and non-verbal communication skills with 5 statements. Initially, the communication skills scale was translated from English to Turkish by an academician at the School of Foreign Languages, followed by a back translation procedure. After the

target language translation of the scale, it was retranslated into English and compared with the original English text. No errors were observed in the Turkish translation of the scale, confirming its readiness for use.

Additionally, the entrepreneurial intentions scale consists of a single dimension and 3 statements, while the self-efficacy scale also comprises a single dimension with 7 statements, making a total of 28 statements in the survey form. A pilot study was conducted with 10 academics at the Faculty of Tourism, Mersin University, to ensure the applicability and comprehensibility of the statements in the scales. Any unclear or missing statements in the scales were adjusted accordingly.

Participants were asked to rate each statement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The finalized survey form was distributed to participants via WhatsApp Student Groups through academic advisors and student representatives, resulting in a total of 396 surveys collected. The convenience sampling technique was chosen as the sampling method, ensuring the participation of all students enrolled in the Faculty of Tourism, Mersin University. **Ethical approval for data collection in this research was obtained from the Mersin University Ethics Committee under decision number 197 on June 11, 2024.**

3.3. Data Analysis

The analysis of research data was conducted using SPSS and AMOS statistical analysis programs. Initially, descriptive statistical tests were applied to the collected data in alignment with the study's objectives. Subsequently, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the validity of the "Communication Skills Scale" developed by Cuic Tankovic et al. (2023), the "Entrepreneurial Intentions Scale" used in the study by Akkuş (2023) for determining entrepreneurial intentions, and the "Self-Efficacy Scales" used in the study by Arpacı (2022) for assessing self-efficacy levels. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha test was employed to determine the reliability of the scales. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test the research hypotheses. Direct and indirect effects were tested through two SEM models. The significance of indirect effects was evaluated based on bootstrap testing results, thereby explaining the research hypotheses.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Demographic Findings

According to the results obtained from the descriptive questions asked in line with the objectives of the study, it was found that there were 206 female participants and 190 male participants. Thus, female participants constitute 52% of the study, while male participants constitute 48%. Regarding the age distribution of participants, it was determined that 220 individuals (55.6%) were in the age range of 18-21 years, 151 individuals (38.1%) were in the age range of 22-24 years, and 25 individuals (6.3%) were 25 years and older. In terms of educational status, it was found that 94 participants (23.7%) were freshmen, 97 participants (24.5%) were sophomores, 98 participants (24.7%) were juniors, 87 participants (22%) were seniors, 14 participants (3.5%) were master's students, and 6 participants (1.5%) were doctoral students.

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the Communication Skills Scale

The structural validity of the "Communication Skills Scale," developed by Cuic Tankovic et al. (2023) to determine the perceived communication skills of students in tourism education, was assessed. In this regard, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted on the collected data. The secondary level Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) fit indices for the communication skills scale are presented in Table 1 below. Following the CFA analysis, the model fit indices were examined and it was determined that a majority of these indices demonstrated a good fit. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model

developed within the scope of the research is consistent with and acceptable based on the collected data.

Table 1. Secondary Level CFA Fit Indices for the Communication Skills Scale

Measurement (Concordance Statistics)	Good fit	Acceptable fit	Values	Conclusion
CFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,95	Good fit
IFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,95	Good fit
RMSEA	$\leq 0,05$	0,06-0,08	0,06	Acceptable fit
NFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,91	Acceptable fit
NNFI (TLI)	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,93	Acceptable fit
(χ^2/df)	≤ 3	$\leq 4-5$	2,71	Good fit
AGFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,89-0,80	0,90	Good fit
GFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,89-0,85	0,91	Good fit

Table 2 presents the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and reliability values for the communication skills scale. As stated by Hair et al. (2017), factor loadings should be greater than 0.708. A review of the values in Table 2 indicates that all included items surpass this threshold, demonstrating satisfactory factor loadings. Furthermore, when examining the Cronbach's Alpha values of the dimensions constituting communication skills, they are as follows: written communication skills dimension is 0.764, oral communication skills dimension is 0.847, listening communication skills dimension is 0.852, digital communication skills dimension is 0.807, and non-verbal communication skills dimension is 0.833. Due to the composite reliability coefficients ranging between 0.770 and 0.848, internal consistency validity is considered established. Factor loadings range from 0.709 to 0.884, and AVE coefficients range from 0.504 to 0.665, indicating convergent validity is achieved (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2. Factor Loadings, CR, AVE, and Reliability Values for the Communication Skills Scale

Dimensions	Expressions	Factor Loadings	t Value	CR	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
WR	WR1	,709		0,770	0,531	0,764
	WR2	,710	12,29			
	WR3	,827	13,34			
VR	VR1	,752	15,10	0,848	0,582	0,847
	VR2	,753	15,14			
	VR3	,778	15,70			
	VR4	,767				
LS	LS1	,790	15,94	0,855	0,665	0,852
	LS2	,884	17,65			
	LS3	,768				
DG	DG1	,715		0,808	0,584	0,807
	DG2	,744	13,08			
	DG3	,829	14,03			
NON	NON1	,710		0,834	0,504	0,833
	NON2	,791	13,37			
	NON3	,732	12,58			
	NON4	,709	12,25			
	NON5	,703	12,10			

WR: Written, VR: Verbal, LS: Listening, DG: Digital, NON: Nonverbal.

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the Entrepreneurial Intention Scale

In order to determine the entrepreneurial intention of students in tourism education, the structural validity of the "Entrepreneurial Intention Scale" used in Akkuş's (2023) study was established. Accordingly, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was applied to the collected data. Primary-level CFA fit indices for the entrepreneurial intention scale are presented in Table 3 below. Following the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the model fit indices were assessed, revealing that all indices indicated a good fit. Accordingly, it was concluded that the proposed model aligns well with the collected data and is statistically acceptable within the scope of the research.

Table 3. Primary-Level CFA Fit Indices for the Entrepreneurial Intention Scale

Measurement (Concordance Statistics)	Good fit	Acceptable fit	Values	Conclusion
CFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,95	Good fit
IFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,94	Good fit
RMSEA	$\leq 0,05$	0,06-0,08	0,05	Good fit
NFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,93	Good fit
NNFI (TLI)	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,92	Good fit
(χ^2/df)	≤ 3	$\leq 4-5$	2,74	Good fit
AGFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,89-0,80	0,94	Good fit
GFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,89-0,85	0,93	Good fit

Table 4 presents the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and reliability values for the Entrepreneurial Intention Scale. According to Hair et al. (2017), factor loadings should exceed 0.708. A review of the values in Table 4 confirms that all included statements meet this criterion. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha value for the items measuring entrepreneurial intention is 0.866, with the CR coefficient also calculated as 0.866, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency validity. Factor loadings range from 0.745 to 0.816, and the AVE coefficient is 0.684, suggesting that convergent validity is achieved (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 4. Factor Loadings, CR, AVE, and Reliability Values for the Entrepreneurial Intention Scale

Dimensions	Expressions	Factor Loadings	t Value	CR	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
Eİ	Eİ1	,745		0,866	0,684	0,861
	Eİ2	,776	15,14			
	Eİ3	,816	16,03			

Eİ: Entrepreneurial Intention.

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the Self-Efficacy Scale

In order to determine the self-efficacy levels of students in tourism education, the structural validity of the "Self-Efficacy Scale" used in Arpacı's (2022) study was established. Accordingly, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was applied to the collected data. Primary-level Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) fit indices for the self-efficacy scale are presented in Table 5 below. Following the CFA analysis, the model fit indices were examined, and it was determined that a majority of these indices demonstrated a good fit. Accordingly, it was concluded that the model developed within the scope of the research is both consistent with the collected data and statistically acceptable.

Table 5. Primary-Level CFA Fit Indices for the Self-Efficacy Scale

Measurement (Concordance Statistics)	Good fit	Acceptable fit	Values	Conclusion
CFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,98	Good fit
IFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,98	Good fit
RMSEA	$\leq 0,05$	0,06-0,08	0,06	Acceptable fit
NFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,97	Good fit
NNFI (TLI)	$\geq 0,95$	0,94-0,90	0,97	Good fit
(χ^2/df)	≤ 3	$\leq 4-5$	2,59	Good fit
AGFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,89-0,80	0,95	Good fit
GFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,89-0,85	0,97	Good fit

Table 6 displays the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and reliability values for the Self-Efficacy Scale. As suggested by Hair et al. (2017), factor loadings should be greater than 0.708. An analysis of the values in Table 6 reveals that all included items surpass this threshold, indicating strong factor loadings. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha value for the self-efficacy items is found to be 0.898, and with a CR coefficient of 0.899, internal consistency validity is considered established. Factor loadings range from 0.710 to 0.870, and the AVE coefficient is calculated as 0.561, indicating that convergent validity is achieved (Hair et al., 2017).

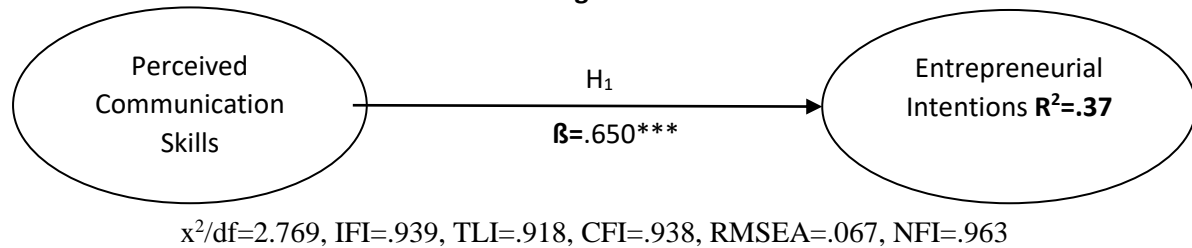
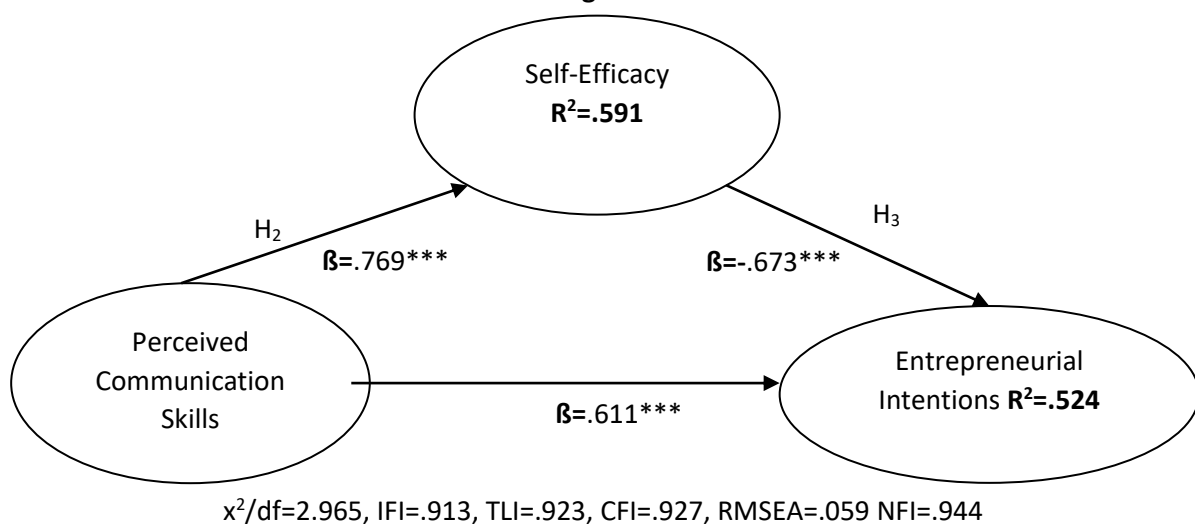
Table 6. Factor Loadings, CR, AVE, and Reliability Values for the Self-Efficacy Scale

Dimensions	Expressions	Factor Loadings	t Value	CR	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
SF	SF1	,733		0,899	0,561	0,898
	SF2	,776	15,14			
	SF3	,799	15,59			
	SF4	,710	14,95			
	SF5	,714	15,01			
	SF6	,870	17,00			
	SF7	,717	13,94			

SF: Self-Efficacy

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

The first model designed for direct effects yielded the following goodness-of-fit values: $\chi^2/df=2.769$, IFI=.939, TLI=.918, CFI=.938, RMSEA=.067, NFI=.963. These values suggest that the proposed model fits the data well (Hair et al., 2017). Subsequently, direct effects were examined, revealing that perceived communication skills significantly and positively affect entrepreneurial intention at a level of .650 ($p<.001$). Furthermore, it was determined that perceived communication skills account for 37% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention (Figure 2). Based on these results, Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Figure-1**Figure-2**

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Figure 2. Models Created to Test Mediation Effects

The second model designed for indirect effects exhibited the following goodness-of-fit values: $\chi^2/df=2.965$, $IFI=.913$, $TLI=.923$, $CFI=.927$, $RMSEA=.059$, $NFI=.944$. These values indicate that the proposed model fits the data well. Once data fit was confirmed, the significance of relationships between variables and beta coefficients was examined. It was found that perceived communication skills significantly and positively affect self-efficacy at a level of .769 ($p<.001$), explaining 59.1% of the variance in self-efficacy (see Figure 2). Based on these findings, Hypothesis 2 was accepted. Additionally, it was determined that self-efficacy has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention at a level of .673 ($p<.001$). Moreover, perceived communication skills and self-efficacy together explain 52.4% of entrepreneurial intention (Figure 2). Hence, Hypothesis 3 was accepted. Furthermore, the mediation variable indicates that the inclusion of communication skills in the model still shows a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention ($\beta=.611***$; $p<.001$).

To determine whether self-efficacy mediates the effect of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention, Bootstrap Analysis recommended by Hayes (2013) was conducted. The results of the Bootstrap test are presented in Table 7 below. The Bootstrap analysis was conducted with a 95% confidence interval and 5000 resampling options. Hayes (2018) emphasizes that confidence intervals should not include zero for the presence of a mediation role. The analysis results indicate that since the confidence interval does not include zero, the mediation effect of self-efficacy is considered significant ($\beta=.769$; $CI=95\%$; [Lower Bounds=.383-Upper Bounds=.666]). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 regarding the mediation effect is accepted. In other words, it was found that self-efficacy mediates the effect of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention. Overall, it can be concluded that all hypotheses developed in the study were accepted.

Table 7. Bootstrapping Analysis Results

Mediating Variable	Total Impact	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Bootstrapping-Lower Bounds	Bootstrapping-Upper Bounds
Communication Skills	.650	.611	.039	.383	.666

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examines the impact of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention among students in tourism education. The research findings indicate that communication skills play a significant role in entrepreneurial intention. Particularly, factors such as self-confidence, social networks, and demographic characteristics were found to mediate or moderate the relationship between communication skills and entrepreneurial intention. These findings emphasize the importance of considering communication skills when evaluating the entrepreneurial potential of students in tourism education. Furthermore, the study fills a gap in the literature by providing a perspective that deeply investigates the effects of communication skills on entrepreneurial intention, particularly within the tourism sector. While existing literature often focuses on the role of communication skills in job success, this study clarifies how this relationship manifests in the context of entrepreneurial intention in the tourism sector.

As a result, it is concluded that developing communication skills is crucial for understanding and supporting the entrepreneurial intentions of students in tourism education. Future research is recommended to focus on developing educational programs and policies that promote entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, aligning with these findings.

5.1. Contributions to the Literature

The theoretical contributions of this study to the literature are significant. Firstly, it supports the reliability and validity of the communication skills scale used in the research (Cuic Tankovic et al., 2023), the entrepreneurial intention scale (Akkuş, 2023), and the self-efficacy scales (Arpacı, 2023). Secondly, a model analyzing the mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention was developed. Additionally, the study contributes to the literature by developing and testing four hypotheses derived from the literature.

This study makes significant contributions to the literature by examining the impact of perceived communication skills on the entrepreneurial intentions of students in tourism education. Although the role of communication skills in entrepreneurship has been addressed in various studies (Baron & Markman, 2003), no such study has been conducted specifically focusing on tourism students. By identifying how factors such as self-efficacy, social networks, and demographic characteristics mediate or moderate the relationship between communication skills and entrepreneurial intention, this research adds depth to the existing literature.

Solunoğlu and İkiz (2017) emphasized the economic contribution of entrepreneurship by examining its effects on university students, concluding that entrepreneurship education should be more widely disseminated. Sesen (2013) researched the factors influencing university students' entrepreneurial intentions, indicating that entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is the most significant factor, with social networks following closely behind. However, it is highlighted that the university environment does not have a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention. Zhao et al. (2005) underscore the importance of the mediating role of communication skills. This study, focusing on tourism students, reveals the factors that influence the entrepreneurial intentions of this specific group. Such information is critical for developing strategies to enhance industry-specific knowledge and skills (Li & Petrick, 2008). Ehsanfar et al. (2023) explored the impact of family tradition and psychological traits on entrepreneurial intention, finding that tolerance for ambiguity, need for achievement, and risk-taking propensity positively influence entrepreneurial intention, while a background in entrepreneurial

families tends to reduce entrepreneurial intent. Denk (2023) examined the internship programs of tourism departments in Turkey, emphasizing the importance of academic and industrial integration within the framework of Innovation-Focused Internships (IFI). This study evaluates the contribution of stakeholder alignment and innovative internships to the tourism sector and proposes more effective internship management strategies.

In this context, the study is considered to provide significant contributions to the development of educational strategies and the support of career development by addressing the effects of communication skills on the entrepreneurial intentions of students in tourism education. These findings offer valuable insights for educational institutions to shape their curricula and practices, laying the necessary foundations to enhance students' entrepreneurial potential.

5.2. Recommendations for Curriculum Development

- Communication skills enhancing courses should be added to the curriculum. These courses can focus on improving students' written and oral communication skills. Topics such as effective presentation techniques, interview skills, and customer relationship management can be covered.
- Entrepreneurship courses should be integrated with communication skills training. Students can learn how to utilize communication strategies while developing entrepreneurial projects. Practical applications such as business plan preparation, investor presentations, and marketing communication can be emphasized.
- Programs should be developed to enhance self-efficacy. These programs can be designed to increase students' confidence in their abilities and support their entrepreneurial intentions. Activities such as mentor-mentee programs, personal development seminars, and sharing success stories can be utilized for this purpose.
- Internships and practical training programs in the tourism sector should be increased. These programs allow students to test their communication skills and entrepreneurial abilities in real-world settings. Additionally, interacting directly with professionals in the industry can enhance their self-efficacy.
- Tourism education should be integrated with other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and business administration. This provides students with a broad perspective, enhancing both their communication skills and entrepreneurial intentions.
- Developing digital communication skills should also be included in the curriculum. Topics such as social media management, digital marketing, and online customer relations are critically important in the modern tourism sector.

5.3. Recommendations for Tourism Businesses

- Tourism businesses can organize regular communication skills workshops for their employees. These workshops may cover topics such as written and verbal communication, negotiation techniques, and crisis management.
- Through role-playing activities that simulate customer interactions, employees can experience real-life situations, thereby enhancing their communication skills.
- Tourism businesses can regularly organize entrepreneurship competitions to encourage the emergence of new ideas. Such events not only develop employees' creative thinking abilities but also promote teamwork.
- By establishing a mentorship program between experienced entrepreneurs and employees, businesses can assist employees in discovering their entrepreneurial potential.
- Tourism businesses can collaborate with universities to offer internship opportunities for students. This allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice and develop their communication skills.
- Opportunities can be created for interns to participate in real projects, enabling them to enhance both their communication skills and entrepreneurial abilities.

- By encouraging employees to receive training in fields such as psychology, sociology, and business, tourism businesses can improve not only their communication skills but also their entrepreneurial capabilities. Particularly, providing training in digital marketing and social media management can equip employees with skills tailored to the needs of modern tourism enterprises.
- An evaluation system that provides regular feedback on employees' communication skills and entrepreneurial capabilities can be established. This system could be beneficial for monitoring employee development and updating training programs as needed.
- Continuous improvement of employees' communication skills and service quality can be ensured through feedback obtained from customers.

5.4. Recommendations for Researchers

Within the scope of this study, the mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of perceived communication skills of tourism students on entrepreneurial intention has been examined. In this framework, it was concluded that perceived communication skills influence entrepreneurial intention, supporting findings from other studies in the literature (Akkuş, 2023; Arpacı, 2022; Cuic Tankovic, 2020). Furthermore, the literature review did not find any studies specifically addressing the mediating role of self-efficacy in the influence of perceived communication skills of tourism students on entrepreneurial intention. However, factors such as perceived communication skills (confidence, social networks, leadership skills, problem-solving skills) may play a mediating role, while factors such as demographic characteristics, cultural factors, and financial resources may act as moderators. Therefore, future studies can investigate the mediating or moderating roles of these factors in the influence of perceived communication skills on entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, due to time and location constraints, this study only included students from Mersin University's Faculty of Tourism. Future research could include students from tourism departments in other cities or students from different disciplines.

Compliance with Ethical Standard

Conflict of Interest: *The author(s) declare that they do not have a conflict of interest with themselves and/or other third parties and institutions, or if so, how this conflict of interest arose and will be resolved, and author contribution declaration forms are added to the article process files with wet signatures.*

Ethical Approval: *The ethics committee approval required for data collection in this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Mersin University with the decision/number 197, dated 11/06/2024.*

Financial Support: *No financial support was received for the study.*

Acknowledgements:

REFERENCES

- Akkuş, Y. (2023). Girişimcilikte sosyal engeller ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi ve kontrol odağı, girişimcilik niyeti ile ilişkisi. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, 12(2), 81-98. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jeim/issue/81564/1350416>
- Arpacı, S. (2022). Turist rehberlerinin öz yeterlilik düzeylerinin incelenmesi. *Journal of Tourism Research Institute*, 3(1), 59-70. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jtri/issue/71514/1125189>
- Bambacas, M., & Patrickson, M. (2008). Interpersonal communication skills that enhance organizational commitment. *Journal of Communication Management*, 12(1), 51-72. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1986(23-28), 2.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy the exercise of control*. New York: H. Freeman & Co. Student Success, 333, 48461.
- Baron, R. A., & Markman, G. D. (2003). Beyond social capital: The role of entrepreneurs' social competence in their financial success. *Journal of business venturing*, 18(1), 41-60. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0883902600000690>
- Bednar, A. S., & Olney, R. J. (1987). Communication needs of recent graduates. *The Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*, 50(4), 22-23. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/108056998705000408>
- Brownell, J. (2012). *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, and Skills*. Pearson.
- Brownell, J. (2016). *Listening: Attitudes, Principles and Skills*. (5th ed.). Routledge.
- Cuic Tankovic, A. (2020). Importance of communication skills for tourism students. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Global Economy in Business, Management, Social Science and Humanity Perspective (GEMSH-20)*, IIRST Explore. 52-56.
- Cuic Tankovic, A., Kapeš, J., & Benazić, D. (2023). Measuring the importance of communication skills in tourism. *Economic Research - Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 36(1), 460-479. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/437930>
- Denk, E. (2023). Turizm yükseköğretim stajlarında yenilikçi düşünce: İnovasyon odaklı stajın Türkiye'ye uyum ve koordinasyonu ile ilgili bir model önerisi. *Dynamics in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(2), 52-66. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/dssh/issue/80898/1389324>

- Ehsanfar, S., Namak, S. K., & Vosoughi, L. (2023). A developing-country perspective on tourism students' entrepreneurial intention using trait approach and family tradition. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 48(1), 43-59. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02508281.2021.1885800>
- Ferreira, A., Loiola, E., Gondim, S. & Pereira, C. R. (2022). Effects of entrepreneurial competence and planning guidance on the relation between university students' attitude and entrepreneurial intention. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 31(1), 7-29. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/09713557211069261>
- Guffey, M. E., & Loewy, D. (2012). *Essentials of Business Communication*. Cengage Learning.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., & Thiele, K. O. (2017). Mirror, mirror on the wall: A comparative evaluation of composite-based structural equation modeling methods. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45, 616-632. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11747-017-0517-x>
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*. Guilford Press.
- Hayes, A. F. (2018). Partial, conditional, and moderated moderated mediation: Quantification, inference, and interpretation. *Communication Monographs*, 85(1), 4-40. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03637751.2017.1352100>
- Kokkonen, L., & Koponen, J. (2020). Entrepreneurs' interpersonal communication competence in networking. *Prologi: Puheviestinnän Vuosikirja*, 16(1), 8-25. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/73367>
- Krueger, N. F., & Carsrud, A. L. (1993). Entrepreneurial intentions: Applying the theory of planned behaviour. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 5(4), 315-330. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08985629300000020>
- Li, X., & Petrick, J. F. (2008). Tourism marketing in an era of paradigm shift. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(3), 235-244. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0047287507303976>
- Lolli, J. (2013a). Perceptions of the importance and preparedness of interpersonal communication skills of the entry-level hospitality leader: Implications for hospitality educators. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 13(4), 354-373. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15313220.2013.839302>
- Lolli, J. C. (2013b). Interpersonal communication skills and the young hospitality leader: Are they prepared? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 32, 295-298. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278431912000230>
- Mahmudul Hasan, S. K., Eijaz Ahmed, K., & Noor Un Nabi, M. D. (2017). Entrepreneurial education at university level and entrepreneurship development. *Education Training*, 7(8), 888-906. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ET-01-2016-0020/full/html>
- Mehrabian, A. (1971). *Silent Messages*. Wadsworth.
- MEÜ, (2024). Mersin Üniversitesi, Turizm Fakültesi, <https://www.mersin.edu.tr/akademik/turizm-fakultesi> (Erişim Tarihi: 05/06/2024).
- Morris, M. (2010). *Digital Communication and Collaboration in the Modern Workplace*. Business Communications Quarterly.

- Otache, I. (2019). Entrepreneurship education and undergraduate students' self-and paid-employment intentions: A conceptual framework. *Education Training*, 61(1), 46-64.
- Paranto, S. R., & Kelkar, M. (2000). Employer satisfaction with job skills of business college graduates and its impact on hiring behavior. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 9(3), 73–89. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J050v09n03_06
- Peterson, M. (1997). Personnel interviewers' perceptions of the importance and adequacy of applicants' communication skills. *Communication Education*, 46(4), 287–291. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03634529709379102>
- Polatçı, S., Yalap, O., & Yılmaz, H. (2018). The effect of communication skills on entrepreneurial intentions. *Contemporary Issues In Business & Economics (Iccibe)*, 363-367.
- Sesen, H. (2013). Personality or environment? A comprehensive study on the entrepreneurial intentions of university students. *Education Training*, 55(7), 624-640.
- Solunoğlu, A., & İkiz, A. N. (2017). Üniversite öğrencilerinin girişimcilik eğilimleri. *Journal of Recreation and Tourism Research*, 4(2), 44-57. <https://jrtr.org/index.php/jrtr/article/view/183>
- Stevens, B. (2005). What communication skills do employers want? Silicon Valley recruiters respond. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 42(1), 2–9.
- Wang, J., Ayres, H., & Huyton, J. (2009). Job ready graduates: A tourism industry perspective. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 16(1), 62–72.
- Zehrer, A., & Mössenlechner, C. (2009). Key competencies of tourism graduates: The employers' point of view. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 9(3-4), 266–287. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15313220903445215>
- Zhao, H., Seibert, S. E., & Hills, G. E. (2005). The mediating role of self-efficacy in the development of entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(6), 1265. <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2005-14549-017.html>