

**Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on the Entrepreneurial Mindset of Nigerian
University Students**

by

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Abstract

The rising statistics of unemployment in Nigeria continue to raise a number of concern, particularly on the impact of entrepreneurship education on the entrepreneurial mindset of graduates. It is quite appalling how many students have not transformed their training into ventures, and why those who initiated businesses cannot sustain beyond five years of start-ups. It is in this light that the study explored the role of entrepreneurial motivation in students' entrepreneurial mindsets. The research adopted a cross-sectional design, surveying 450 university students. Using regression analysis in SPSS v.25, there is a significant and positive relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and students' entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions. The findings suggest that students greatly value the knowledge and mindset shift obtained through entrepreneurship programmes, redirecting their focus from traditional employment to self-reliance through business creation. Consequently, the study advocates for the Nigerian government and policymakers to reconsider strategies for promoting entrepreneurship, emphasising the importance of raising student awareness and facilitating accessible funding for genuine business owners across various sectors, ultimately contributing to a more entrepreneurial culture and economic growth.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial attitudes, entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial motivation, university students.

1.0 Introduction

The entrepreneurial mindset is a critical factor in determining entrepreneurial success, encompassing motives, traits, skills, and thought processes that are essential for cultivating entrepreneurial activities. Although there are different perspectives of the entrepreneurial mind itself, i.e., behavioural, emotional, and cognitive perspectives, which interact with one another to

determine entrepreneurial actions, which are also dependent on the context itself (Kuratko, Fisher, & Audretsch, 2021). Entrepreneurship is essentially a socio-economic phenomenon (Fayolle, 2007). Societies lack entrepreneurship, not because they lack money or raw materials, but because they have very few men with the right attitudes. However, the main problem in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is the lack of a good climate for entrepreneurship development, i.e., a favorable or conducive entrepreneurial environment. The In order to create an environment that is good for starting a business, two things are needed: first, social and economic institutions that allow individuals to run their own businesses honestly; and second, people who are more focused on becoming productive, working, and creative (Jhingan, 2011; Dada et al., 2023) can grow and mature.

Current complexion of the global socio-economic landscape suggests that national economic success, particularly in Africa, tends to be dictated by the extent of entrepreneurial activity in countries. In the quest for increased entrepreneurial activity, additional visibility to a country's entrepreneurship tide can be achieved by paying attention to the entrepreneurial intentions and activities of students in tertiary institutions. Thus, one of the goals of 21st-century university education is to encourage and facilitate the social and economic development of its communities through venture creation training and entrepreneurship development (Barba and Sahaquillo, 2017). To curb redundancy in youth and to support and grow an entrepreneurial environment, the government of Nigeria designed and introduced entrepreneurship education as well as established entrepreneurship development centres across the nation's high institutions of learning that work towards the development of an integrated enterprise support environment in Nigeria. The study of entrepreneurial intentions is closely linked to the desire to be self-employed. As Fernández-Serrano and Romero (2012) note, the phenomenon of entrepreneurship is of particular interest when governments realize that the state alone is unable to ensure adequate levels of production and employment, thereby resulting in high unemployment, which explains why the topic of self-employment is so important for Nigeria.

Entrepreneurship education is intended to fundamentally change students' mind-sets and practices away from being dependent and move towards embracing business creation as a means to permanently overcome socioeconomic challenges and achieve grassroots development. Simply put, the programme is introduced at the university to essentially help students develop a

working knowledge of entrepreneurship and its application in real-life situations. Until now, university education in Nigeria did not properly include a philosophy of self-reliance based on the culture of research, creativity, invention, and innovation, which can boost students' competence and confidence in creating viable businesses with high potential for new value addition and high income. Following a continuous upward trend in unemployment and its attendant negative consequences, the Nigerian government has become very serious, apparently showing interest in the promotion of entrepreneurial culture, especially among the youth in the country. In fact, the introduction of entrepreneurship studies in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria demonstrates the government's strategic intention to educate, train, and motivate the younger generation (students) on how to become self-reliant through venture creation and growth even before graduation, so that after they graduate, they can have viable business alternatives. It is therefore important to evaluate the impact of these not-too-old courses in our universities.

As unemployment in Nigeria continues to rise with its associated adverse effects, the government has demonstrated a heightened commitment to fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, particularly among the nation's youth (Olubusoye, Salisu, & Olofin, 2023). Evidently, the inclusion of entrepreneurship studies in all tertiary institutions across Nigeria reflects the government's deliberate strategy to educate, equip, and inspire the younger generation, i.e., students, on the path to self-sufficiency through the creation and growth of ventures, well before they graduate. This proactive approach ensures that upon graduation, they have viable business prospects. Consequently, it is imperative to assess the effects of these relatively recent courses implemented in our universities. Thus, the main aim of the paper is to examine the role entrepreneurship education plays in the development of Nigerian students' entrepreneurial mindset, i.e., students' attitudes and motivation towards business creation and growth. Thus, the hypothesis identified here is that entrepreneurship education contributes significantly to changes in students' attitudes towards future career choices. Following this section, we first present a brief literature review on some important concepts, a few empirical studies, and a theoretical framework. Then, we provide the methodology for the study, present the results and discussions of the survey afterwards, and finally draw conclusions and limitations for the study.

2. Literature Review

Entrepreneurial Mindset

The entrepreneurial mindset, a key aspect of business success, is a mindset that individuals adopt and cultivate to achieve their goals and achieve success. The entrepreneurial mindset is characterised by three distinct aspects: emotional, behavioural, and cognitive aspects (Kuratko, Fisher, & Audretsch, 2021). Entrepreneurial mindset is a phenomenon that involves a deep understanding of one's own emotions, the ability to manage both positive and negative emotions, and the ability to adapt to change. An entrepreneur must manage internal emotions such as surprise, anticipation, and stress, which are more focused on their mind. These emotions are crucial for running a business and managing relationships, demonstrating how an entrepreneur can mitigate these feelings effectively. The behavioural aspect refers to the capacity to swiftly react to a decision under uncertainty regarding potential gain opportunities.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education goes beyond merely instructing individuals in the mechanics of creating and managing a business venture. Instead, it aims to instill a comprehensive entrepreneurial mindset characterised by creative and innovative thinking, fostering a robust sense of self-initiative, and emphasising accountability. As outlined by Shepherd and Douglas (1997), entrepreneurship education revolves around envisioning and charting a path for a new business venture. This process involves integrating knowledge from various functional disciplines and external environmental factors, all within the context of the remarkable uncertainty and ambiguity that often confront new ventures. According to Paul (2005), the goal of entrepreneurship education is to cultivate a talent pool that produces not only productive entrepreneurs but also thoughtful citizens who contribute significantly to local, state, and national competitiveness. In simpler terms, entrepreneurship education can be defined as the process of equipping individuals with the concepts and skills required to identify opportunities that might be overlooked by others and to possess the insight and self-confidence needed to act when others might hesitate, as articulated by Souitaris et al. (2007). Traditionally, human capital attributes such as education, relevant experiences, and specific knowledge have been deemed critical for entrepreneurial success, as argued by Iyigun and Owen (1998). However, a growing body of research suggests that a diverse skill set is often more pivotal for entrepreneurial success

than a specific educational background or degree, a viewpoint echoed by studies like Lazear (2004) and Wagner (2003).

Drawing upon the foundations of social cognitive theory, Hsu et al (2014) posit that entrepreneurship education is anticipated to enhance individual Entrepreneurial mindsets through several avenues. Firstly, entrepreneurship education creates opportunities for individuals to engage repeatedly in tasks, allowing them to cultivate confidence in their ability to successfully execute similar tasks in the future. For instance, by participating in activities such as market analysis, pitching business ideas, or crafting business plans as part of their entrepreneurship coursework, students can progressively bolster their self-assurance in their entrepreneurial competencies. Secondly, entrepreneurship education exposes individuals to role models, often in the form of guest speakers or through the examination of real-life entrepreneurs in case studies. This exposure not only provides inspiration but also serves as a source of learning and emulation. Thirdly, entrepreneurship education facilitates social persuasion by offering feedback from various sources, including instructors and peers. These assessments and feedback mechanisms, whether in-class activities or evaluations of course assignments, can profoundly impact individual perceptions of their entrepreneurial abilities and expectations. Gatewood et al. (2002) delved into the influence of feedback on individual perceptions within the context of entrepreneurial abilities and expectancies. Their study of undergraduate students underscored the positive effect of feedback on "expectancies for future entrepreneurial performance".

Entrepreneurial Motivation

Motivation is important in our daily lives. It is the core of biological, cognitive, and social regulation. This is because motivation involves energy, direction, perseverance, and intention. Goals and motives play a role in predicting human behavior. This indicates a link exists between intentions, motivations, and behavior. Motivation drives us into action. The motivational orientation is the reason behind such actions. In rediscovering motivation, Krueger (2007) reviewed that critique on entrepreneurship intentions studies and argued that there is a lack of basis to support intention-action linkage, although intentions have been centred as predictors of future action. The link was used loosely, as implied or assumed. They then argued that motivation provides the link between intention and action. Edelman et al. (2010) argue that

motivations could be the stimulus to transform a latent intention that drives entrepreneurship, and reiterate that they could be the missing link between intentions and action. It implies that the underlying attitudes and goals of entrepreneurial motivation should give rise to entrepreneurial intention. An individual's perceived entrepreneurial motivation pertains to their beliefs regarding the appeal of pursuing an entrepreneurial career within a particular country (Solesvik, 2012).

Entrepreneurial Intention Entrepreneurial intention. Intention is a state of mind directing a person's attention towards a specific action (Bird, 1988). More specifically, Thomson (2002) defines entrepreneurial intention as a self-acknowledged conviction that a person will set up a business venture sometime in the future. The definition points to an independent assessment of one's belief that they will establish a business venture. Krueger (2007) suggested that behind entrepreneurial actions lie entrepreneurial intentions, and behind entrepreneurial intentions lie entrepreneurial attitudes or dispositions. This view suggests that entrepreneurial intentions are consistent with certain attitudes. While there are a growing number of models explaining entrepreneurial intentions, Ajzen's Model of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and the Shapero-Krueger Entrepreneurial Event Model are quite popular. In the context of entrepreneurship, Ajzen's model suggests that three constructs, namely attitude towards behaviour, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms, interplay and contribute towards the development of entrepreneurial intentions.

Empirical Literature

From their research, Souitaris et al. (2007) discovered that entrepreneurship programmes serve as catalysts, inciting students by arousing emotions and altering mindsets. This inspiration represents a tangible benefit derived from the programme, ultimately fostering entrepreneurial attitudes. While Veciana (2005) opines that the catalyst for aspiring entrepreneurship can be ignited within an entrepreneurship course, serving as the primary precursor to nascent entrepreneurial behaviour. In a similar vein, Fayolle et al. (2006) identified that entrepreneurship programmes exert a substantial and quantifiable influence on students' entrepreneurial intentions. Furthermore, Duval-Couetil (2013) established a positive correlation between strong performance in a 'creativity in entrepreneurship' course and heightened entrepreneurial intentions. Malebana (2014) effectively employed the TPB model to investigate the entrepreneurial

intentions of students studying at a rural university in South Africa. The study's findings indicated that most of the students expressed intentions to embark on entrepreneurial ventures in the future. Neck & Greene (2011) observed that entrepreneurship education empowers students to nurture and harness their creativity, encouraging them to take initiative, assume responsibility, and embrace risk. Additionally, Van et al. (2006) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of seventy-seven studies, and their analysis concluded that expectancy theory significantly predicted various aspects such as performance, effort, intentions, preference, and choice. However, there are also studies that found a weak or negative link between entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial motivation, and entrepreneurial intention. For example, Coduras (2008) observed a limited prevalence of entrepreneurial intentions among students, while Fatoki (2010) similarly noted the presence of weak entrepreneurial intentions among final-year students in a South African university.

1. Theoretical Framework

Vroom Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory suggests that individuals are driven by their unique goals and can be motivated when certain expectations are met. Focused on decision-making, it explains the cognitive processes involved in making choices (Filipova, 2016). Expectancy pertains to the conviction that investing considerable effort will lead to superior performance. Consequently, a strong sense of expectancy is likely to serve as a motivating factor, prompting individuals to participate in particular behaviors. Expectancy, within the context of expectancy theory, signifies the conviction that investing substantial effort will yield superior performance. Consequently, high expectancy tends to serve as a motivating factor, encouraging individuals to participate in specific behaviors.

Nevertheless, expectancy theory comprises more than just expectancy itself; it incorporates two additional vital elements: instrumentality and valence. Instrumentality refers to the belief that achieving a specific level of performance is essential for achieving individual goals, whereas valence refers to the value ascribed to these goals by the individual. Locke and Baum (2007) argue that "expectancy theory offers a framework for comprehending the reasons and methods

by which individuals opt to become entrepreneurs.” In their research, Hsu et al. (2014) examined college students enrolled in an introductory entrepreneurship course, revealing that according to the expectancy theory, individuals are likely to be motivated to invest the necessary effort to establish a business. In the same way, authors such as Manolova et al. (2012) conceptualise new venture creation as a process based on the effort-performance-outcome model of entrepreneurial expectations. This study will therefore be conducted within the framework of expectancy theory.

4. Methodology

The study methodology entails explanations on how the study was conducted or the processes undertook in the conduct of the research. This includes the description of the research design, the study population, the sample and sampling techniques, instrumentations, procedure for data collection, method of data analysis.

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive design of survey type. This involves gathering data from a specific population or sample through standardized questionnaires or interviews (Siedlecki, 2020). For the present study, questionnaire were distributed to elicit responses from undergraduates who offered entrepreneurship education in their third year.

Population and Sample

The study area is Kebbi State University of Science and Technology Aliero. The university was established in 2006 and presently with faculties that include Agriculture, Education, Engineering, Environmental Science, Life Science, Physical Science, Health science and a postgraduate school. The data collation was planned and implemented 2021/2022 session. Multistage (3 stage) sampling techniques were applied for the selection of sampled respondents. The first stage was the purposive selection of four faculties, the second stage was the selection of the two departments from each faculty, while the final stage involved a proportional sampling of students from each of the departments. In fact, the sample consisted of 450 students that attended both courses (i.e., GST 202 & GST 302) of the entrepreneurship programme. Therefore, the selected students completed the questionnaires themselves both before taken the entrepreneurship courses

to identify the starting situation in terms of their entrepreneurial perception, and after the entrepreneurship programme to evaluate the effects of knowledge and experiences of entrepreneurship education they received on their entrepreneurial intention. Thus, the impact of entrepreneurship education on students' entrepreneurial perception is studied in two periods; ex ante and ex post as the students were asked shortly before and rightly after attending the entrepreneurship courses.

Instruments

The survey questionnaire designed for this study is made up of three parts. Part A consists of questions requiring respondents to answer questions about their background. Part B comprises of questions related to entrepreneurial motivation because of entrepreneurship education they received. Students were required to indicate the level of agreement of their motivation to choose entrepreneurship as their career by circling on a scale 1 to 5 where 1= very unlikely 2= likely 3= Not Sure 4= likely 5= very likely for each of the respective statements. Part C is questions requiring them to rate the degree of impact of entrepreneurship education on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly not impactful 2= not impactful 3= Not Sure 4= impactful 5= strongly not impactful) through circling the number for each of the respective statements. Data will be collected within a span of four months within 2021/2022 academic year. Reliability analysis will be done using the Cronbach method to test the instrument for internal consistency. The Alpha Cronbach's of 0.76 and 0.81 were obtained for the dependent and independent variable respectively. Component scores from principal component analysis (PCA) for each measure were used as the dependent and independent variable in the analysis.

The parametric model considered is a multiple regression method of the form:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_o Ent + \beta_i X_{i1} + \dots + \beta_k X_{ik}; i = 1, \dots, n$$

Where Y_i is the dependent variable, Ent is the independent variable i.e., entrepreneurship education, and X_{ik} are the control variables (gender, age, and parental background in entrepreneurship).

Control variables

From the literature (e.g., Bates, 1995), individual-level characteristics have been documented to be relevant in the entrepreneurship education-entrepreneurial intention nexus. Therefore, this study included three control variables, namely, gender, age, and parental entrepreneurial background. Women encounter both attitudinal and resource-related obstacles when it comes to entrepreneurship, and research typically indicates that women are less inclined to express entrepreneurial intentions compared to men (Lee et al., 2011; Liñan and Chen, 2009; Zhao et al., 2005). Male students were allocated a value of “1” while female students were allocated a value of “0”. It was also established that older individuals could possess a broader range of skills and expertise. Thus, the years age of students was taken. In addition, parental business experience is also equally reported to be an important variable (Curran et al.1991; Pruett et al. 2009). Meaning that entrepreneurial parents positively and strongly influenced entrepreneurial intentions of their children. In this regard, following Hsu et al (2014) students whose parents have no business experience were allocated a value of “0”, while students with one or more entrepreneurial parents were allocated a value of “1”.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results obtained in the study. It provides the results of the research questions stated and tested in the study. For each of these raised questions, the statistical tests of significance selected and applied to the data were described, and a statement confirming the acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses was made. This is followed by interpretation.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Frequency (%)	250 (56%)	200 (44%)	450 (100%)
Parental B.E.			
Yes	113	93	206 (46%)
No	137	107	244 (54%)
Ent. Motivation			

Yes	189	96	285 (63%)
No	61	104	165 (37%)

Table 1 shows the distribution of gender. Based on respondents statistic, there were 250 males (56%) and 200 females (44%) in the sample. The table also shows that 206 respondents (46%) have parents with a degree or higher certificates, while 244 individuals (54%) have parents who do not have degree or higher certificates. Estimation shows that majority of the respondents (63%) are motivated, while 165 (37%) respondents are not motivated for entrepreneurial activities

Table 2. Regression Analysis

	Model 1 (Before)	Model 2 (After)
Independent variable	0.432**	0.524**
Control variables		
Gender	0.321**	0.432**
Age	0.123**	0.245**
Parental B.E.	0.120	0.127
R²	0.441***	0.678**

Model 1, n = 450; Model 2, n = 450; * Coefficient is significant at .05; ** Coefficient is significant at .01, *** Coefficient is significant at .10

Table 2. present the regressions for the two models with the variables taken before (model 1) the entrepreneurship course and after the course (model 2), respectively. The results show that both the independent variable (0.524**) and the control variables excluding parental business experience are significant and positively influence the perception of students in changing their mindset towards entrepreneurship. As indicated in Table 2, the R-squared value transitioned from 0.441 to 0.678. This indicates that Model 2 provides a more comprehensive explanation of the variance in the dependent variable compared to Model 1. Consequently, it is evident that Model 2 exhibits a higher predictive capacity for explaining the variance in entrepreneurial mindset in contrast to Model 1.

Discussion

The regression results initially revealed that 44.1% of the variability in entrepreneurial mindsets could be accounted for by these factors before taking the entrepreneurship course. Subsequently, our findings lend credence to the studies in the literature that show that entrepreneurship education exerts a positive influence on students' perceived entrepreneurial motivation. After the entrepreneurship course, this influence becomes evident in the increased proportion of variance explained (67.8%) by the same three predictors. Following completion of a semester-long entrepreneurship course, students exhibited heightened levels of entrepreneurial morale, which, in turn, translated into enhanced motivation and intentions. This substantiates the proposition that entrepreneurial competencies can be imparted through education, subsequently reinforcing individuals' self-perceptions of competence and their expectations for achieving success.

It's worth highlighting that the instructors responsible for teaching the introductory course, which serves as the foundation for this research study, focused on reinforcing students' comprehension of the essential skills required for engaging in entrepreneurial endeavours and their capacity to effectively apply these skills. Their primary emphasis was on enhancing students' belief in their ability to successfully accomplish entrepreneurial tasks. Furthermore, the instructors focused on instrumentality, which refers to students' understanding of the importance of specific activities for their success as entrepreneurs. However, it's noteworthy that the instructors did not actively seek to enhance students' valence, which pertains to the value they place on business ownership. Instead, entrepreneurship was presented as a career choice with its distinctive advantages and disadvantages. While entrepreneurship education can indirectly influence valence, it's essential to clarify that this introductory course did not have the explicit goal of directly strengthening the valence (Hsu et al. 2014).

5. Conclusion and Limitations

This paper examined the impact of entrepreneurship education introduced and implemented in Nigerian universities. The contents of these courses include entrepreneurship and innovation, identifying business opportunities, business creation and growth, financing entrepreneurial ventures, family business, social entrepreneurship, feasibility studies, and business plans. These

courses were designed as a framework to provide university students with the chance to train and develop entrepreneurial skills through a theoretical and practical approach. The results of this study, as displayed in the regression analysis, showed that there was a substantial and significant impact on some aspects of students' entrepreneurial attitudes and perceptions. Remarkably, there has been a change in students' entrepreneurial attitudes in terms of their entrepreneurial intentions, and they exhibit a clear sense of direction for their career choice. Our research findings provide compelling evidence of the importance of entrepreneurship education in bolstering university students' entrepreneurial motivations. In summary, the results indicated that students exhibited heightened confidence in their capacity to effectively execute the tasks related to initiating a business. In addition, students had a more favorable perception of entrepreneurial careers in terms of desirability. It is therefore suggested that the Nigerian government and policymakers re-strategize efforts to tap the employment potential of entrepreneurship by increasing the effectiveness of actions aimed at promoting students' awareness of the importance of self-reliance through business creation and making funds available at the lowest possible cost to genuine business owners across the various sectors of the economy.

However, this study was conducted at just one university out of more than 100. As a result, the conclusions can't be generalized to other groups of students. Therefore, further research should use new, larger, and more diverse samples. A larger and more diverse sample would provide useful insights on entrepreneurship education versus entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, the methodology used, i.e., the instruments of data collection, is also another limitation, as the closed, structured questionnaires constrained the respondents in terms of the information they supplied. The use of linear regression as a data analysis tool can also be supplemented with other suitable analysis techniques, such as logistic regression.

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