

**PREDICTORS OF UNDERGRADUATE SCIENCE
EDUCATION STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL
INTENTIONS IN GOVERNMENT OWNED UNIVERSITIES IN
SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

Stephen Chinedu NWAFOR, Ph.D.,

Science Education Department, Faculty of Education in Nnamdi
Azikiwe University, Nigeria,
sc.nwafor@unizik.edu.ng

Destiny Onyebuchi EKOYO, Ph.D.,

Science Education Department, Faculty of Education in Nnamdi
Azikiwe University, Nigeria,
do.ekoyo@unizik.edu.ng

Gift Amarachukwu JOSHUA, Ph.D.,

Science Education Department, Faculty of Education in Nnamdi
Azikiwe University, Nigeria,

Abstract: *The study examined the predictors of undergraduate science education students' entrepreneurial intentions in government owned universities in South-East Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The population for the study consisted of all the 472 undergraduate science education students in two federal government owned universities in South-East Nigeria, this include Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka (261 students) and University of Nigeria Nsukka (211 Students). Simple random sampling was used in selecting the sample for the study. The sample size for the study consists of 127 students. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire on four-point Likert scale adapted from Lee, et al. (2012) and Manzoor, Meheraj and Wali (2020), in addition, the research instrument was validated by three lecturers in the Department of Science Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Similarly, the reliability of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach Alpha reliability technique and a value of 0.76 was obtained. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The finding of the study shows that attitude, subjective norms (SN) and perceived behavioral control (PBC) have influence on entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of undergraduate science education students. Moreover, students' attitude accounted to a high extent their EI than SN and PBC*

which were to a moderate extent. Based on the results, it was recommended that Parents should encourage their children to associate themselves with entrepreneurship-based groups that support entrepreneurship since social norms have a significant influence on entrepreneurial intention and Government should establish entrepreneurship networks in universities and communities to support entrepreneurship activities set up.

Keywords: Science Education; Undergraduate Students; Entrepreneurial Intentions and South-East Universities in Nigeria.

Introduction

The unemployment rate has become a serious national issue in Nigeria as statistics shows that the level of unemployment has increased from 37.7% in 2022 to 40.6% in 2023. There is also, a continuous inflow of graduates from both private and public institutions every year into the job market, hence, an expected rise in the unemployment rate is envisaged. For this reason, graduates are encouraged to show positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and harness the numerous opportunities in Nigeria. This is in line with the assertion of Ojeifo (2012) who averred that the major aim of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions is to provide students with the needed knowledge, skills, attitude and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of ventures.

The strategic significance of entrepreneurship in maintaining and advancing economic and social development, generating and repurposing jobs, innovation, and productivity has drawn the attention of governments, legislators, and business professionals (Mensah et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship, according to Ohanu and Ogbuanya (2018), is the capacity to generate, recognize, and seize economic opportunities in order to add value and turn a profit. Nwafor, Chinweuba-Eze, and Chukwuka (2021) opined that entrepreneurship entails the establishment, administration, and growth of a business with the utilization of required resources, including labor, capital, and materials. According to Galvao et al. (2017), entrepreneurship can also be defined as a cohesive action resulting from inventiveness, ingenuity, or a fresh perspective on an existing concept. It acts as a career option, a catalyst for growth, and an engine for raising employment and national economies' performance (Tleuberdinova et al., 2021). Gieure et al. (2020) argued, in the same vein, that entrepreneurship fosters both social and economic growth and a decline in unemployment. Therefore, entrepreneurship education should be a top priority for the government when it comes to promoting entrepreneurial goals. Furthermore, entrepreneurship education was found by Fayolle and

Gailly (2015) to be one of the primary determinants influencing entrepreneurial intention. The formation of an entrepreneurial intention is one step in the intricate, multi-stage process that is entrepreneurship, according to Hisrich et al. (2013). An individual is more likely to carry out a specific behavior successfully if they have a stronger intention to do so (Maresch et al., 2016).

The secret to understanding human behavior is intention (Sheeran, 2002 cited in Bell, 2019). Therefore, it was suggested by Zhao et al. (2010) that having an entrepreneurial intention is a crucial step in the process of becoming an entrepreneur. Therefore, students should be encouraged to take that step by developing those behaviors that predict an increase in entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, Karimi et al. (2016) argued that an individual's entrepreneurial intention may be interpreted as a reflection of their mental condition that drives them to pursue self-employment as opposed to employment. It comprises self-confidence, aspiration, and the ability to stand tall (Tsordia & Papadimitriou, 2015). According to Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB), attitudes, social norms, and perceived control are the main indicators of behavioural intention. Therefore, the current study took these three factors into account and tried to find out if they could affect the entrepreneurial intention of science students. Subjective norm, also known as social norm, refers to the perceived social pressure (which can come from family, friends, and society) to engage in or not engage in a behavior. Attitude, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which an individual has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of that behavior, such as a positive evaluation of starting a new business. A person's assessment of how easy or difficult a behavior is to do is known as perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991).

The study of entrepreneurial intention (EI) according to Linan and Fayolle (2015) is a fast-developing topic of inquiry. Since studies on the desire to start a business have frequently been carried out in business schools with business students or undefined populations (Maresch et al., 2016) as well as students from a single academic discipline (González-Serrano et al., 2018) Recent research, however, has taken a bold step by combining students from several academic fields into a single sample (Koe, 2016; Muhammed, Alihu & Ahmed, 2015). For instance, Setuza (2016) carried out a study titled "entrepreneurial intentions among university student in East African Community: Cases of Rwanda and Kenya" and found out that subjective norm, personal attitudes and perceived behavioral control had positive influence on students' entrepreneurial intention. Richmell, Acheampong and Owusu (2018) explored the factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions among students in Ghana. The findings showed that students' exposure to other entrepreneurs and experienced

network are the most significant predictor of student entrepreneurial intentions followed by dissatisfaction with previous job and utilization of better opportunity in the market predicted student entrepreneurial intention. Abdulazeez (2022) also carried out a study on Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intention among Higher National Diploma Students of Polytechnics in Bauchi State and discovered that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavior influence students' entrepreneurial intentions. In addition to the above reviewed studies in business schools and other disciplines, there is an urgent need to look into the predictors of entrepreneurial intention among science education students especially taking into cognizance the significant of science education to national development.

The development of an entrepreneurial society is significantly aided by science education and university education. Thus, all students at Nigerian universities are required to take an entrepreneurship education course. Undergraduate science education instruction in Nigerian tertiary institutions is designed to produce students with the methodology, knowledge, attitude, and science-related skills needed for national development. With options in Biology, Chemistry, Computer science, Integrated Science, Mathematics, and Physics, scientific education includes teaching science concepts, methods of teaching, and resolving misconceptions held by learners regarding science concepts (Nwafor, Chinweuba-Eze and Chukwuka, 2021). This implies that science education students in these options are exposed to scientific processes and principles, thereby, equipping them with the right scientific attitude, subjective norms and professional skills of a science teacher. These factors could play some roles in developing entrepreneurial intention in the students and provide the necessary networking support of entrepreneurs for their endeavors.

Given the dwindling number of employment available in the labor market, the researchers believe that initiatives to promote intention in student entrepreneurship are necessary. A study concentrating on the entrepreneurial intentions and the variables that influence entrepreneurial intentions is necessary since a variety of factors affect undergraduate students' capacity to engage in entrepreneurial behavior. In the light of this, the researchers deemed it fit to investigate the predictors of entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate science education students in government owned universities in South-East Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the predictors of undergraduate science education student's entrepreneurial intentions in

government owned universities in South-East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study was aimed to determine the extent;

1. Attitude influences entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students.
2. Subjective norms influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students.
3. Perceived behavioral control influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students

Research Questions

In other to achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. To what extent does attitude influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students?
2. To what extent do subjective norms influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students?
3. To what extent do perceive behavioral control influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students?

Significance of the Study

This study when successfully completed will be of great importance and assistance to the following; science education students, policy makers the society and future researchers.

Thus, this study is significant for the science education students on their future career path. By identifying their strengths and weaknesses as well as their intention, it provides a better choice for their career development. They are able to identify their personal characteristics (attitude and perceived behavioral norms) and this would help them in figuring out their intention towards being an entrepreneur.

This study is also important for policy implementation with respect to future development of entrepreneurial program for undergraduates. By having a good understanding on factors predicting entrepreneurial intention among students, the plans of the government to the students would be fully utilized. This research would provide insights to the state of entrepreneurship education for policy makers in Nigeria to inspire entrepreneurial intention, in turn, increasing new business venturing rate.

The findings of this study would help the society to understand their roles in enhancing the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students and providing them the needed social support. Parents who are running a business could provide prior business knowledge and experience for undergraduate entrepreneurs in the country; people who are jobless may be hired by these

entrepreneurs, thus reducing the rate of unemployment. This would be beneficial to the society by providing better living quality and standards. Finally, the study would be a source of material, reference and useful guide to those that will engage in similar research work in the future.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. A survey design aims at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population; hence it is suitable for this research (Nwogu, 2018). The study was carried out using two federal government owned universities in Enugu State and Anambra State. Enugu state and Anambra state are two out of the five States of in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population for the study consisted of all the 472 undergraduate science education students in two federal government owned universities in South-East Nigeria, this include Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka (261 students) and University of Nigeria Nsukka (211 Students). The sample size of 127 undergraduate science education students was used for the study using simple random sampling techniques (by folding of papers). This consisted of 70 students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and 57 Students from University of Nigeria Nsukka. Hence, the sample size is made up 27% of the total population of the study. Sampling numbers 1-100 were written, folded and put inside a ballot box, the undergraduate science education students who picked from 1-70 in Nnamdi Azikiwe University were selected while those who picked from 1-57 in University of Nigeria Nsukka were also selected.

The instrument used for collection of data in this study was a 20 items four-points Likert scale structured questionnaire which was adapted from Lee, et al. (2012), Manzoor, Meheraj and Wali (2020) and Abdulazeez (2022) titled “Questionnaire on predictors of entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate students of science education (QPEIAUSSE)”. The instrument for the study was validated by three experts from the Department of Science Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established to be 0.76 using Cronbach alpha formula. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by hand delivery during which the intent of the research study was explained to them. It was collected back that same day. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The weighted mean of 2.5 stands as a critical value upon which acceptance and rejection of the responses are determined. Hence, any item with mean value equal to 2.5 and above was interpreted as “Agreed” (Accepted) while that from 2.49 and below was interpreted as “Disagreed” (Rejected). Also, to

determine the extent of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control influence entrepreneurial intentions among science education students in South-East, Nigeria, the real limit of numbers was used as follows; low extent (2.49 and below); moderate extent (2.50-3.49) and high extent (3.50-4.00). This analysis was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 25 (SPSS, Version 25).

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does attitude influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of the extent attitude influences entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students

S/N	ITEM	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I will prefer entrepreneurship for a career choice	127	3.78	0.42	High Extent
2	Being an entrepreneur implies more advantage than disadvantage to me	127	3.57	0.53	High Extent
3	A career as an entrepreneur is attractive to me.	127	3.90	0.30	High Extent
4	If I had the opportunity and resources, I would like to start a business.	127	3.63	0.52	High Extent
5	Being an entrepreneur means great satisfaction for me.	127	3.66	0.48	High Extent
6	Among various options, I rather be an entrepreneur.	127	3.28	0.69	High Extent
7	I will prefer to be an entrepreneur rather than an employee in a company.	127	3.79	0.43	High Extent
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		127	3.66	0.27	High Extent

The results in Table 1 show that all the items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 were to a high extent, since the entire items have mean scores within 3.50 to 4.00. The grand mean score of 3.66 was also obtained which shows that attitude influences undergraduate science education students' entrepreneurial intentions to a high extent. Moreover, the grand mean indicates that the respondents agree that attitude influences

the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students in South-East, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: To what extent do subjective norms influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores of the extent subjective norms influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	SD	Decision
8	My parents' opinion is important to me.	127	3.06	0.64	Moderate Extent
9	My close friends' opinion is important to me.	127	3.86	0.37	High Extent
10	People who are important to me should pursue a career as an entrepreneur.	127	2.87	0.62	Moderate Extent
11	In my University, students are actively encouraged to pursue their own ideas.	127	3.46	0.74	Moderate Extent
12	There is a well-functioning infrastructural support in the community for start-up of new business.	127	2.03	0.74	Low Extent
13	My friends see entrepreneurship as a preferable choice for me.	127	3.55	0.63	High Extent
14	My parents are positively oriented towards my future career as an entrepreneur.	127	2.95	0.60	Moderate Extent
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	127	3.11	0.24	Moderate Extent

The results in Table 2 indicate that item 12 was to a low extent while items 8, 10, 11 and 14 were to moderate extent and item 9 and 13 were to high extent. The high extent mean scores of items 9 and 13 reveals that importance of friends' towards promoting and increasing students' entrepreneurial intentions. Also, the grand mean score of 3.11 was gotten which shows that subjective norms influence undergraduate science education students' entrepreneurial intentions to a moderate

extent. In addition, the grand mean score indicates that the respondents agree that subjective norms influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students in South-East, Nigeria even though they do not have well-functioning infrastructural support in their community to start up a new business.

Research Question 3: To what extent do perceive behavioral control influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation scores of the extent perceived behavioral control influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students

S/N	ITEM	N	Mean	SD	Decision
15	To start a business would be easy for me.	127	2.54	0.68	Moderate Extent
16	To keep a business working well is easy for me.	127	3.45	0.65	Moderate Extent
17	I know how to develop an entrepreneurial idea.	127	3.74	0.46	High Extent
18	If I tried to start a business, I have a high probability of succeeding.	127	3.28	0.59	Moderate Extent
19	If I want, I could become self-employed after my studies.	127	3.82	0.38	High Extent
20	To start my own business would probably be the best way for me to take advantage of my education.	127	3.92	0.27	High Extent
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		127	3.46	0.26	Moderate Extent

The results in Table 3 show that items 15, 16 and 18 were to moderate extent while item 17, 19 and 20 were to high extent. Moreover, the grand mean score of 3.46 was also obtained which shows that perceived behavioral control influence undergraduate science education students' entrepreneurial intentions to a moderate extent. Moreover, the grand mean indicates that the respondents agree that perceived behavioral control influence entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students in South-East, Nigeria.

Discussion

The result showed that attitude influences undergraduate science

education students' entrepreneurial intentions to a high extent. Moreover, further analysis showed that attitude influences the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students. This may be due to a developed interest in entrepreneurship among the science education undergraduate students after undergoing entrepreneurship as a course during their third year in the university. This is in line with the findings of Maes et al. (2014) who stated that personal attitudes and perceived behavioral are working indirectly with social norms in setting the person's intention in involving the entrepreneurship. In the same vein, Mumtaz et al. (2012), found that the undergraduate students' attitude has a positive impact on intention to choose entrepreneur as a career. Similarly, Abdulazeez (2022) and Ambad and Damit (2016) averred that students' attitude strengthens their intention to participate in entrepreneurship.

The findings of the study revealed a moderate extent of influence of subjective norms on entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students. Furthermore, subjective norms were showed to influence the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate science education students. The study indicated that universities in South-East, Nigeria do not have well-functioning infrastructural support in their community to start up a new business, though it acknowledges the important of friends in promoting students' entrepreneurial intentions. The lack of well-functioning infrastructural support might be due to the governments' lack of interest in proving infrastructures for different universities in the country. However, the doggedness of people like parents, friends and the community within the environment the school is located goes a long way to contribute to the influence of subject norms on entrepreneurship intentions of undergraduate science education students. This is in line with this Muhammed, Alihu and Ahmed (2015) who stated that subjective norm is a significant predictor of Entrepreneurial intention. This is in agreement with the findings of Zapkau et al. (2015) who stated that, the role of friends and roles models is prominent in influencing the decisions to become an entrepreneur. This is against the finding of Lortie and Castogiovanni (2015) who asserted that "subjective norms may affect entrepreneur intention only through personal attitude and perceived behavioral control, exercising an indirect, rather than direct, effect on individual intentionality". Also, Ceresia and Mendola (2020) found a non-significant effect of subjective norms but a significant effect of personal attitude on entrepreneurial intention.

The findings of the study showed that perceived behavioral control influence undergraduate science education students' entrepreneurial intentions to a moderate extent. Likewise, perceived behavioral control was shown to influence the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate

science education students. This might be because of the high entrepreneur mindset of people within the South-East Zone in Nigeria. This is supported by the findings of Mumtaz et al., (2012) who concluded that behavioral control (creativity and risk taking) had a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention. Also, in alignment with the findings is Bagheri and Pihie (2014) who opined that students who have high perceived behavioral control are supposed to have high entrepreneurial intentions. However, Ceresia and Mendola (2020) found a weak effect of perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intentions which is against the finding of the study.

Conclusions

The researchers concluded that attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control influences entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate science education students in South-East, Nigeria. Subjective norm influence students perceived behavioral control and increase attitude towards behavior which will lead to an increase in students' intention towards becoming an entrepreneur, especially in South-East, Nigeria which serves as the business hub of the country.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should encourage the students to develop positive attitude towards entrepreneurship because it is a major predictor of their entrepreneurial intentions.
2. Teachers should help to increase a better understanding of their learner's attitude and perception of social norms as well behavioral control, and provide suitable guidance.
3. Parents should encourage their children to associate themselves with reference groups that support entrepreneurship since social norms have a significant influence on entrepreneurial intention.
4. Government should establish entrepreneurship networks in universities and communities to support entrepreneurship activities set up.

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