
SOCIAL NORMS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study questioned the correlation between social norms and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduates in South-West Nigeria. 6 universities and 3 polytechnics that offer entrepreneurship as a program in South-West Nigeria were surveyed. The multi-stage sampling technique and random sampling were used to determine 600 final-year students from the nine institutions. Data was collected from respondents using structured questionnaire. To analyse the data and test the hypothesis, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used. Findings demonstrate a strong positive association between students' entrepreneurial inclination and social norms, with a grand mean of 3.91 and an R-value of 0.083. The consequence is that social norms or popular trends have an impact on entrepreneurial intentions. People are more likely to indicate a high level of entrepreneurial intention if they think that their peers, friends, and family will support them in their decision. The study recommends that management of universities and polytechnics should establish environments that promote appropriate social norms among students.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurship education, social norms

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has assumed increased importance as a tool for global innovation incubation, economic recovery and growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation. Entrepreneurship encourages the growth of new businesses and equips individuals, particularly young people, to be responsible, enterprising, and to contribute to sustainable economic development (Oyeku et al., 2014). This is the reason policymakers and academics are interested in entrepreneurship (Siyanbola, 2016; Asaolu & Dada, 2018).

Entrepreneurship is about planned actions i.e. behaviours that are voluntary, observable, conscious, and quantitative. According to Krueger (2007), entrepreneurial purpose is a deliberate behaviour. Krueger et al. (2000) opined that a large portion of what is regarded as "entrepreneurial" activity (business strategy, opportunity finding, identification and exploitation, resource gathering, etc.) is consciously preplanned behaviour. The term "entrepreneurial intention" describes a person's desire to work for themselves by starting their own company or purchasing an existing one. Therefore, an individual's intention to start a business is referred to as entrepreneurial intention (Dada, 2019). Previous studies have shown that entrepreneurial intention can both explain and predict entrepreneurial behaviour.

Entrepreneurship education emphasizes the development of the mind (attitude) and hand (skills). Therefore, the main goal of this article is to investigate how undergraduate students in Southwest Nigeria, feel about entrepreneurship. A related study discovered a favourable association between students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship and their social environments, with family and friends' social expectations serving as moderating influences (Fretschner, 2013). On the other side, researchers have found that students' entrepreneurial inclinations were adversely impacted by lack of role models (Lerner, 2014). Awareness and understanding of a successful entrepreneur fosters entrepreneurial ambition. This is

because students who are aware of a successful entrepreneur are more likely to be interested in entrepreneurship than those who are not.

Denanyoh et al. (2015) probed variables that affect entrepreneurial intention of tertiary students in Nigeria and observed that financial assistance directly affects one's intention to start a business. This is because one would be inspired to start their own business if they knew they would receive financial assistance from family and friends. However, Thomas et al. (2014) did not discover any statistically significant correlation between social norms and entrepreneurial inclination. This is due to the belief that societal norms fall short of adequately explaining why students choose to engage in entrepreneurial activity. The lack of substantial correlation between social norms and entrepreneurial desire was also observed by a study on determinants of entrepreneurial ambition of students at Vietnam National University (Khuong & An, 2016). The authors made the case that a group of people with a strong history of entrepreneurship may not require social norms to function.

The Nigerian government is stimulating entrepreneurship through programmes that boost business confidence, a positive attitude, success pride, and support for fresh ideas. Early in the new millennium, entrepreneurship studies was made compulsory in higher education in Nigeria to prepare graduates for self-employment, create jobs for employable citizens, and create wealth. The unfortunate news is that the unemployment rate remains high even though entrepreneurial education has been implemented in higher institutions nationwide.

Canon and Tabares (2017) and Setuza (2016) showed that students' entrepreneurial inclinations are positively impacted by subjective norms. Muhammed and Ahmed (2015) also stated that subjective norm is a key determinant of entrepreneurial intention. However, Lerner (2014), and Khuong et al. (2016) did not find a connection between social norms and entrepreneurial intent. Ward et al. (2019) suggest that the influence of social norms on intentions is not statistically significant in Argentina or Chile. These conflicting reports indicate a need for further research. Therefore, this study examined how societal norms affect the intention of undergraduate students in South-West Nigeria's intention to start their own business.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Entrepreneurial Intention

In simple terms, entrepreneurship is the act of creating a new business. Entrepreneurship is ultimately defined as the process of identifying or establishing a chance to generate value through innovation (Fretschner, 2013). Aloulou (2016), Lawal (2014) and Fatoki (2010) view entrepreneurship as ability and willingness as well as imaginative and creative qualities that facilitate the invention, development and administration of a profitable business with all associated risks. Profit is the desired reward. Entrepreneurship offers a fulfilling and rewarding working environment, a flexible way of life, and a great deal of corporate autonomy. According to Bell and Cox (2015), entrepreneurship refers to willingness and capacity to look for investment opportunities in a given setting and to successfully launch and manage a business based on those opportunities.

Intention on the other hand is predisposition of individuals to enact a given behaviour in the future (Ateke & Didia, 2018). It describes a readiness and willingness of individuals or a favourable disposition to behave or act in a particular manner. Intention is an important predictor of consumer behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975); and scholars are concerned about intention because it indicates individuals' preference to enact a given behaviour (Ateke & Didia, 2018; Pooladireishahri et al., 2015).

In the study of human behaviour, cognitive techniques place intentions at the centre of the discussion. Majority of socially relevant behaviours, such as those involving health and formation of new

organisations, are under voluntary control (Ajzen, 1991). As a result, one might consider intentions to be both the primary and most accurate predictors of behaviour. Entrepreneurial ideas do start with inspiration, but they must also be accompanied by intention if they are to materialize. According to Krueger et al. (2000), people do not establish businesses based reflex, they do so purpose.

Because they serve as the foundation for new businesses and are also seen as the initial step in an evolving, long-term process, entrepreneurial intentions are essential to understanding the entrepreneurial process (Fretschner, 2013). As a direct effect of attitudes, behavioural intention influences behaviour immediately (Setuza, 2016). Intention rather than personality traits, demographics, or environmental factors can be used to predict entrepreneurial behaviour more effectively (Krueger et al., 2000).

Entrepreneurial behaviour is strongly influenced by intention. It is the result of one's attitude toward behaviour, social norms, and behavioural control that are significant predictors of a student's tendency and intention toward self-employment. However, other factors, such as education and personality traits, may also have an impact (Souitaris et al., 2007).

Concept of Social Norms

Social or subjective norm describe individuals' perception of the norms, values, and beliefs held by important people who have a substantial impact on them or whom they hold in high regard. Social norms as dictated by family, friends, classmates, and society determine the degree to which a person engage in desired conducts. According to Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) model, gravitation toward a behaviour increases with increasing anticipation or pressure. Social norms concerning entrepreneurship represent the degree to which relevant environment of the individual (peers, family, and society) views establishing an enterprise as an acceptable or undesirable thing to do.

According to Krueger et al. (2000), networking and any "role model" or "mentor" (such as friends and family) are two significant social influences. A straightforward illustration of social norms is when parents want their child to become a doctor or engineer since, in the eyes of the majority of Nigerians, those are honorable and dignifying professions.

In general, parents anticipate that their children will follow in their professional footsteps, especially after they retire. According to Lamidi et al. (2019), entrepreneurial parents have a considerable impact on their children's intention to start their own businesses, and entrepreneurial family backgrounds have strong influence on undergraduates' entrepreneurial intention. The intention of children to become entrepreneurs is influenced by favourable experiences provided by their families.

Although family and friends have strong influence on entrepreneurs' business decisions, other elements, such as educational environment, also play a role. For instance, it is likely that most students will be interested in starting their own business in a school setting where the administration, the curriculum, and professors or lecturers support such endeavours (Saeed et al., 2015).

Social norms impact the status given to various professions. The prestige that various societal norms attach to certain professions impact career choice. More people may choose to start their own businesses in a given community because they possess traits that make them more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activity (Aj-Jubari et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

One of the most influential conceptual frameworks for the study of human activity is the TPB (Ajzen, 2001), which focuses on people's intentions to engage in particular activities. TPB identifies attitude toward behaviour, social norms, and perceived behavioural control as the determinants of intention. TPB's

three predictors of intents may be used to determine whether someone intended to start their own business in the following way:

Attitude towards behaviour: A person's attitude can be described as their positive or negative evaluation of the adoption and utility of a certain piece of information, as well as the degree to which they have a reasonable or unfavourable judgment of the behaviour. That is, being an entrepreneur. As an illustration, a favourable attitude toward entrepreneurship, indicates that the individual prefers entrepreneurship over other professions.

Social Norms: A social component is the perceived social pressure to engage in or refrain from the behaviour. According to Krueger et al. (2000), it is important to recognize each person's social influences, including those of their parents, friends, and mentors. As a result, it refers to the perceptions of individuals, regarding what significant others in their lives think of their decision to launch a business. Most aspects of social and political life are governed by norms. The dominant social reward system is crucial in laying the groundwork for the evolution of behaviour. Individuals will follow the path that is more rewarded and respected in a society.

Perceived Behavioural Control: Experience and anticipated barriers and hurdles impact how simple or challenging a behaviour is to enact, indicates one's belief in their ability to be a successful entrepreneur (Kolvereid, 1996), and more specifically, it refers to how easy or difficult they believe it will be to start their own business.

Social Norms and Entrepreneurial Intention

According to a study by Falck et al. (2012) which used data from Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, young people who have either an entrepreneurial parent or school friends or peers who have at least one entrepreneurial parent report higher business start-up intentions. Similar studies in Saudi Arabia by Aloulou (2016), and India by Roy et al. (2017) provide empirical evidence that people are more likely to intend to start a business if they believe that their peers, family, and friends will support them in their entrepreneurial endeavours. This is because the possibility of receiving social and emotional support for a choice one makes, gives one's behaviour more motivation.

According to Emami and Khajeheian (2019), social norms (how societies view a given behaviour) tend to benefit both individual and groups. So, conforming to them is frequently the right course of action. It can, among other things, offer handy decision-making heuristic and eliminate the requirement to carefully consider the effects of each option before taking it (Lombardi et al., 2019).

TPB with perceived desirability, behavioural control, and social norms as variables, was utilized by Canon and Tabares (2017) to examine factors influencing entrepreneurial intention among Colombian university students. In the study, factors that predicted entrepreneurial intention and behaviour included personal motivations for starting a business, the intensity of that motivation, family influence, and the social environment of university students.

Setuza (2016) looked at university students' entrepreneurial intentions in Kenya and Rwanda. 275 students from the University of Nairobi and Kigali Independent University (ULK) participated in the study. Using a standardized questionnaire, the information and variables from TPB were collected. The results showed that subjective norms, individual beliefs, and perceived behavioural control all had a positive effect on students' entrepreneurial inclinations in Kenya and Rwanda.

In Nigeria, similar studies on students' entrepreneurial inclinations have also been conducted. To gauge entrepreneurial intention, Muhammed and Ahmed (2015) probed entrepreneurial intention of students of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University. TPB was modified to analyse data along with structural equation modelling. The significant factors of entrepreneurial intention were all determined to be subjective norms, entrepreneurial mindset, and perceived behavioural control.

In view of the reports, arguments and submissions above, we hypothesize that:

H₀₁: Social norms do not significantly relate to entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in South-West Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on probing the correlation between social norms and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in South-West Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study consists final year students of colleges/faculties of business/social/management sciences of NUC accredited Universities that offer entrepreneurship as a programme, and NBTE accredited Polytechnics (HND final year only) that currently offer entrepreneurship in their programmes in South-Western Nigeria.

Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 6 universities in South-Western Nigeria currently running entrepreneurship as a programme, then 3 polytechnics running entrepreneurship courses in their programmes. Lastly, a stratified sampling technique was used to select 600 respondents from colleges/faculties of business/social/management science as the case may be. A sample size of 600 was determined using Godden's (2004) formula. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data while descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation analysis were used for analysis and test of hypothesis.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of responses on entrepreneurial intention

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Standard Deviation
I consider self-employment a very desirable	359	229	8	2	2	4.57	0.58
I desperately want to work for myself	237	220	137	4	2	4.14	1.81
I am working towards owning my own business	275	317	6	2	-	4.44	0.54
I intend to start my own business within the shortest possible time	247	340	8	2	3	4.38	0.58
My satisfaction with self-employment is very high	385	177	32	6	-	4.57	0.64
Average mean:	4.42						

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 1 illustrates the present entrepreneurial intention of undergraduates. With a grand mean score of 4.42 this shows that on average, respondents agreed they have a high entrepreneurial intention.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of responses to social norms

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Members of my family have advised me that I should start my business as soon as possible	264	221	20	90	5	4.08	1.07
My friends have advised me that I should set up my business as soon as possible	196	216	96	89	3	3.86	1.05
My lecturer (s) had a great influence on me to start my own business	196	216	76	96	16	3.80	1.14
Average mean	3.91						

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 2 reveals the influence of social norms on the entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students. With an average mean score of 3.91, this shows that on average, respondents agreed they are influenced by their family members, friends and lecturers to engage in a particular business.

Table 3: Correlation between Social Norms and Entrepreneurial Intention

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	R	Sig	Remark
Social norms	11.74	2.59	600	598	0.083*	0.041	Sig.
Entrepreneurial intention	22.10	2.08					

Source: Field Survey 2023

Pearson's product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study. The results indicate a significant positive correlation between social norms and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students ($r = 0.083^*$; $p < 0.05$). This means that family members, friends and lecturers of students could influence their entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The findings indicate that social norms have a significant relationship with entrepreneurship intention of students in South-West Nigeria. This finding is consistent with the reports of Setuza (2016) and Muhammed et al. (2015). The inference is that students cannot escape the influence of family members, friends, or even lecturers because they are so close by and inevitable at this stage of their lives. Students constantly look to these persons for guidance, including choice to launch their firm. They constantly seek the advice of people they can trust.

Previous researchers like Gelard and Saleh (2011), Fretschner, (2013), Denanyoh, et al. (2015), and Khuong, et al. (2016) also supported the idea that social norms and entrepreneurial intent are directly related. This suggests that proper social norms encourage students to develop entrepreneurial intent. According to these findings, people are more likely to indicate a high level of entrepreneurial ambition if they think that their peers, friends, and family will approve of their plan to start a firm. The results of a few earlier investigations (Siu & Lo, 2013; Shinnar & Giacomini, 2012) also support this position.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The examination of the data led to the conclusion that there was a positive correlation between social norms and undergraduate students' inclination to pursue entrepreneurship. The results' significant value, which was less than 5%, revealed that there was a substantial relationship between the students' entrepreneurial aspirations and social norms. This implies that established social norms or popular trends may have an impact on an entrepreneur's intention.

This study has shown that social norms enhance the development of entrepreneurial intent in students and thus affect undergraduate students' desire to start their businesses. Thus, the study recommends that:

- a) Efforts should be made to educate the general public on the importance of entrepreneurship for job creation, means of livelihood, and the provision of goods and services because the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that their family members, friends, and even lecturers have a significant impact on their proclivity toward entrepreneurship.
- b) Management of universities and polytechnics should establish environments that promote appropriate social norms among students.

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