THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL NORMS AND START-UP INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

Despite the usefulness of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in predicting intention and behavior, the results of social norms as one of the constructs in the theory have varied significantly. Although social norms are classified as injunctive and descriptive, past research that adopted the TPB has mostly focused on the injunctive component, ignoring the descriptive component. Given that experimental research have established that injunctive and descriptive norms are conceptually distinct categories that affect intent and behavior independently, this article examines the effect of injunctive and descriptive norms on startup intentions. Additionally, we examine whether entrepreneurial orientation can mediate the relationship. Using a simple random sample technique, data were collected from 432 final year students at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, from a population of 9, 825. Structural equation modeling (SEM) technique was used for data analysis in conjunction with the partial least squares technique. Both injunctive and descriptive norms were found to have a significant effect on startup intention. Additionally, it was discovered that entrepreneurial orientation partially mediates the association between the descriptive norms, the injunctive norms, and startup intention. Although injunctive and descriptive norms influence start-up intention, entrepreneurial orientation explains why a relationship exists between descriptive norm, injunctive norm, and start-up intention. The paper concludes with recommendations for future research

Keywords: Social Norms, Descriptive Norm, Injunctive Norm, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Start-up Intention

INTRODUCTION

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a paradigm regarded as beneficial and influential in predicting social behavior by numerous authors (Ajzen, 2020). It is one of the most effective supportive social psychology theories for understanding individual behavior when applied to a variety of actions (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2020). According to the TPB, the most important predictor of behavior is the intention to participate in it, which is governed by three constructs: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). This means that the more favorable one's attitude and subjective norm are, and the more control one perceives, the stronger one's intention to engage in an action. Among these dimensions, subjective norms (social norms) have been found to be mainly ineffective and inconsistent (Ajzen, 2020). The relationship claimed between norms and intentions has consistently been found to be weaker than other proposed associations. For example, Trafimow and Finlay (1996) revealed considerably stronger relationships between attitudes and intentions than between norms and intentions across 26 of 30 actions in a review of TPB research. Similarly, Armitage and Conner (2001) showed in a meta-analysis of 185 studies utilizing the TRA or TPB that the mean correlation between norms and intention was much less than the correlations between other predictors of behavioral intents. These relatively weak relationships may indicate that the TPBdefined normative construct may not adequately reflect various types of normative pressures (Wong, 2019).

Although social norms as defined in the TPB framework have been studied previously, they have generally been applied in a prescriptive manner, i.e. with the approval or disapproval of significant others. This is reinforced by Wong (2019), who stated that the TPB's definition of normative pressure does not adequately represent the variety of normative pressures. Rivis and Sheeranv (2003) emphasized that TPB's subjective norm is limited to the dimension of injunctive norm, which may explain why the long-term consistency between subjective norm and intention and action is so poor. Ajzen, on the other hand, postulated two distinct types of social norms: injunctive and descriptive norms (La Barbera, 2020; Tornikoski & Maalaoui, 2019; Wong, 2019). He contended that subjective norms should reflect not just what we believe others want us to do (injunctive), but also what we believe they are doing themselves (descriptive norm). Thus, an injunctive norm is one that is based on the approval or disapproval of influential figures, whereas descriptive norms are those that refer to prevalent or usual behavior. Both sorts of norms have been demonstrated experimentally to be conceptually distinct and capable of influencing intention and action separately (Ajzen, 2020). According to La Barbera (2020), examining Norms in both their injunctive and descriptive versions may help explain the relatively poor direct relationship between social norms and intention typically seen in TPB studies.

Given the inconsistent findings of research investigating the role of SN in the TPB, particularly the issue of low predictive power, Linan and Chen (2009) stated that an analysis of the link via interaction or indirect impact may provide a more complete explanation. While previous researches have examined several indirect relationships (e.g., Esfandiar et al. 2019; Hockerts 2017), no study has examined whether entrepreneurial orientation mediates the relationship between various types of Norms and start-up intention. Thus, this study shows that our entrepreneurial mindset is shaped by what we observe others doing and what is deemed acceptable in our community. This will have an effect on an individual's intention to engage in

entrepreneurship. This means that entrepreneurial orientation influences individual intentions to establish a firm, but entrepreneurial orientation is influenced by the existence and acceptance of entrepreneurship in society (injunctive and descriptive norms). Thus, the study hypothesized that injunctive and descriptive norms have an effect on entrepreneurial intention via entrepreneurial orientation. Although some studies have examined the effect of EO on intention and others have integrated it into the TPB model (Al-mamary et al., 2020; Hooi et al., 2016; Naqvi & Siddiqui, 2020), no study has examined its intervening effect on social norm dimensions and the intention relationship.

Although, the number of intentions-based assessments have expanded dramatically over the last decade, much work remains to be done to resolve conflicts and gain a better understanding of the elements impacting entrepreneurial awareness and start-up intention (Ajzen, 2020; Hu et al., 2018), while Al-mamary et al., (2020) suggested the theoretical integration of the EO and TPB models in their study. In response to these needs, this paper will add to a better understanding of the role of one of the most contradictory constructs, i.e social norm, by examining the injunctive and descriptive norms as distinct types of norms and their impact on start-up intention. Additionally, the study will contribute to the body of knowledge by examining if the effect of these two types of norms on intention is mediated by EO, which invariably influences start-up intention. The current paper is structured as follows: an introduction is followed by a review of prior research and the development of hypotheses. The following part discusses the technique, which is followed by an analysis of the data. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings and recommendations for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Norm and Start-Up Intention

According to Ajzen (1991), SN is one of three sets of variables that influences the intention to undertake particular activities. The remaining two categories are attitudes toward the act and perceived behavioural control. The author makes the assumption that social norm refers to perceived pressure or social control to exhibit or not manifest a particular action. These perceptions are connected with factors that the individuals' closest associates think significant. These individuals include parents, spouses, family members, acquaintances, and coworkers who would support the decision to engage in a particular behavior (Linán & Chen, 2009). The TPB model of entrepreneurship implies that the stronger the pressure or expectation, the greater the attraction toward entrepreneurship. It reflects an individual's influence, approval, and force, all of which are necessary for the establishment of a business (Linan et al., 2013). They noted that it is the perceived pressure to establish a business or not. Fishbein and Ajzen (2005) noted that social referents have an effect on individuals' judgments of whether or not to engage in entrepreneurial behavior. Esfandiar et al., (2017) defined it as the degree to which an individual's behavior is seen to be consistent with the thoughts of significant others. These societal influences can serve as a springboard or a hindrance to the growth of an entrepreneurial career.

One possible explanation for the relatively weak relationships between social norms and intentions is that the normative construct defined in the TPB does not adequately reflect various sorts of normative constraints. Subjective norms in the TPB typically represent an individual's perceptions of what significant people want him/her to do. However, it has been suggested that normative pressures originate from two distinct sources, namely injunctive and descriptive norm

(Ajzen, 2020). According to Ajzen (2011), an injunctive normative belief is the expectation or subjective probability that a particular referent individual or group (e.g., friends, family, spouse, coworkers, one's physician or supervisor) approves or disapproves of the action in question. On the other hand, descriptive normative beliefs are beliefs about whether significant others perform the activity. This means that Injunctive norms specify the behaviors that significant others want you to perform, but Descriptive norms specify what the majority of individuals do in a given context. He continued by stating that while the norms normally examined in TPB studies are injunctive, incorporating descriptive norms increased the ability to predict intents. Although, Schmidt (2019) argued that the theoretical and empirical evidence regarding the conflicting importance of injunctive and descriptive social norms is inconclusive, La Barbera (2020) suggested that future researches should examine the sub dimensions of social norm in connection to intention. Thus, based on the recommendation of the TPB model's developer as well as other authors, the following hypotheses have been stated:

H0₁: Injunctive norms significantly affect start-up intention

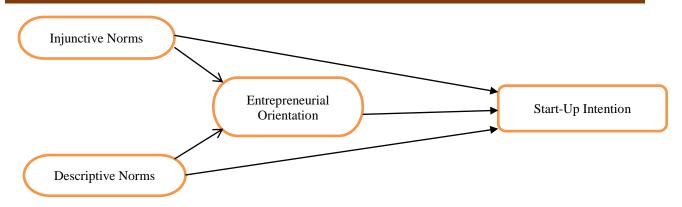
H0₂: Descriptive norms significantly affect start-up intention

Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Orientation

Social norms may be regarded as a sort of cognitive social capital to the extent that it reflects perceived values in the individual's surroundings (De Carolis & Saparito, 2006). Rimal and Real (2003) argued that introducing an intermediary variable between social norms, intention, and action after establishing a direct relationship was deceptive. Although prior research such as Ullah et al., (2020) discovered that entrepreneurial orientation characteristics (risk taking and proactiveness) have a favorable and significant effect on EI, innovativeness was found to be inconsequential. Several recent studies, such as (Awang et al., 2016), examine the link between EO and EI. No study has examined the possibilities of social norms (injunctive and descriptive) influencing an individual's orientation toward work, which in turn influences their inclination to begin entrepreneurial activities. Zhang et al., (2018) found in a study of the TPB that there are still a lot of opportunities for additional moderators, mediating variables, and even independent variables. Through entrepreneurial orientation, this study examines the indirect effect of social norms (injunctive and descriptive) on start-up intention. As a result, the hypothesis is as follows:

 $\mathrm{H0}_3$: Entrepreneurial orientation mediates the relationship between injunctive norms and start-up intention

H0₄: Entrepreneurial orientation mediates the relationship between Descriptive norms and startup intention



METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross-sectional design to collect primary data from a population of 9, 825 final year students at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria during the 2019/2020 academic year via a self-administered questionnaire. The university was chosen since it was one of the first to incorporate entrepreneurial education into its curriculum, and the students were picked because they were identified as the ideal response to futuristic entrepreneurial behavior (Krueger, et. al., 2000). The sample size of 370 was determined using the sample size formula developed by Dilman et al., (2014). However, in accordance with Israel's (2013) recommendation, 30% of the minimal sample size i.e 111 was added to the estimated sample size, resulting in a total of 481 of which 432 were correctly completed and returned. Simple random was used, in which each element has an equal probability of being selected from the sample.

DATA ANALYSIS

Prior to conducting the primary analysis, the assumptions of normality and multicollinearity were satisfied (Hair et al., 2017). The acquired data was subsequently analyzed using the Partial Least Squares modeling (SmartPLS). Hair et al. (2017) advocated a two-stage assessment process for validating and evaluating the model used in this work, namely measurement models (also known as external models) and structural models (also known as internal models).

Measurement Model

To assess the measurement model used in this study, the researchers looked at the reliability of the individual items measuring each potential construct, the internal consistency reliability (i.e., composite reliability and Cronbach Alpha), discriminant validity, and convergence validity for each construct (Henseler et al., 2009). Although Hair et al. (2017) presented a scale of development indicator, an outer loading of 0.70, an AVE of 0.50, and a Composite Reliability/Cronbach Alpha of 0.60 are dependable and acceptable. The table below summarizes the validity and reliability findings;

| | | | Chronbach's | Comp. | |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------|-------------|-------|------|
| Constructs | Indicators | loadings | Alpha | Rel. | AVE |
| Descriptive Norm | DN1 | 0.82 | 0.76 | 0.86 | 0.67 |
| | DN2 | 0.85 | | | |
| | DN3 | 0.79 | | | |
| Entrepreneurial Orientation | EO2 | 0.83 | 0.87 | 0.91 | 0.73 |
| | EO3 | 0.86 | | | |
| | EO5 | 0.85 | | | |
| | EO7 | 0.86 | | | |
| Injunctive Norm | IN1 | 0.78 | 0.6 | 0.78 | 0.55 |
| | IN2 | 0.64 | | | |
| | IN3 | 0.8 | | | |
| | SI1 | 0.74 | | | |
| Start-up Intention | SI2 | 0.82 | 0.84 | 0.88 | 0.61 |
| - | SI3 | 0.81 | | | |
| | SI4 | 0.72 | | | |
| | SI5 | 0.79 | | | |

Table 1: Measurement Model

According to table 1, each of these constructs is reliable because their composite reliability and Cronbach alpha values exceed the 0.60 threshold level. Again, all constructions show indicator reliability and convergence validity, since each structure has an AVE value more than 0.50.

Additionally, Duarte and Amaro (2018) developed an additional methodology for determining discriminant validity: the Heterotrait-multimethod (HTMT) matrix. Hamid et al., (2017) noted that, in comparison to the HTMT criterion, the standard Fornell-Larcker criterion and crossloading are insufficient and insensitive for detecting the effectiveness of the identification. As a result, the discriminant validity of the HTMT matrix is determined.

| Indicators | DN | EO | IN | SI |
|------------|------|------|------|----|
| DN | | | | |
| EO | 0.55 | | | |
| IN | 0.72 | 0.52 | | |
| SI | 0.63 | 0.64 | 0.63 | |

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As illustrated in Table 2, the HTMT statistics are calculated using the correlation of their construct. Due to the fact that the HTMT value is less than the 0.85 recommended by (Hair et al., 2017), this study's reflective latent structure has discriminant validity.

Structural Model

After the measurement model's conditions are satisfied, the structural model is evaluated. The first step in evaluating structural models is to examine theoretical relationships. Specifically, a

| Table 3: Hypotheses Test | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Hypotheses | Relationship | Beta Value | Std. Dev. | T-Stats | P-Value |
| H02 | DN -> SI | 0.23 | 0.06 | 3.61 | 0.00 |
| H01 | IN -> SI | 0.22 | 0.05 | 4.05 | 0.00 |
| H04 | DN -> EO -> SI | 0.12 | 0.03 | 4.43 | 0.00 |
| H03 | IN -> EO -> SI | 0.09 | 0.03 | 3.31 | 0.00 |
| | | | | | |

typical bootstrap was used on a sampled instance of 432 to determine the significance of path coefficients for the correlations (Hair et al., 2017).

According to the bootstrapping result in Table 3, all associations were significant. Specifically, descriptive norms and intention to start a business were strongly associated (t=3.53, P=0.05), whereas injunctive norms were similarly significantly associated with intention to start a business (t=4.07, P=0.05). Each relationship was evaluated at a 5% level of significance.

The Determination Coefficient (\mathbf{R}^2) , the Effect Size (\mathbf{F}^2) and the Predictive Relevance (\mathbf{Q}^2)

The coefficient of determination or R-square level was calculated to determine the amount of variation explained by exogenous latent variables over endogenous latent variables. Chin (2010) defines R2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 as substantive, moderate, and weak, respectively. The two numbers indicate the possible effect or impact of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable using a criterion of 0.02, 0.15, or 0.35 to designate small, medium, or big (Cohen, 1988). However, the predictive correlation (Q^2) of external latent factors was assessed in this study using cross-validated redundancy criteria, which reflect endogenous latent variables, as shown in Table 4 below:

| Indicator | Rsquare | Adjusted Rsquare |
|------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| SI | 0.41 | 0.41 |
| Indicators | SI | Effect Size |
| DN | 0.06 | Small |
| EO | 0.17 | Medium |
| IN | 0.05 | Small |
| Indicator | SSO | Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO) |
| SI | 2145 | 0.243 |

As illustrated in Table 4, descriptive norms, entrepreneurial orientation, and injunctive norms together account for 41% (0.41%) of the variance in Start-up Intention. The R^2 value for the explanation of the target endogenous latent variable by these latent variables is moderate. On the basis of effect size, it is clear that DN and IN have small effects on SI, whereas EO has a

medium effect. Additionally, if Q^2 is greater than zero, a predictive correlation is assumed, as the greater the Q^2 , the higher the projected connection (Duarte-Roposo, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The study's findings indicate that DN and IN are both important predictors of Start-up Intention. This shows that societal standards have a beneficial effect on the propensity to start new companies. In other words, societies that encourage, promote, and sanction entrepreneurship are likely to have members who wish to establish firms. In terms of the indirect link, the finding indicates that both DN and IN have an effect on start-up intention. This means that when a society supports, promotes, and practices entrepreneurship, it indirectly shapes its members' mindsets in terms of being proactive, innovative, and risk taking, which has a positive and significant effect on their intention to start a firm. On the whole, we find that partial mediation occurs in both types of relationships, as all direct and indirect relationships are significant.

Theoretical Implication

The study extends the TPB paradigm in order to provide helpful information about social norms and start-up intention. The current study provides empirical evidence for the significance of accounting for various types of normative influence in order to more accurately predict entrepreneurial intention. The synthesis of two distinct aspects of normative impact (injunctive vs. descriptive) that emerged as empirically distinct in our findings. Descriptive norms, in particular, emerged as peculiar drivers of this conduct. Substantial others are undoubtedly critical for individuals' daily decisions, and our findings indicate that social norms (both injunctive and descriptive) play a significant role in the prediction of start-up intention. Hence, the first contribution discusses the relative value of several forms of social norms as predictors of behavior.

While the evidence is mixed on whether injunctive or descriptive social norms are more associated with individual decision making, our paper supports the hypothesis that the explanatory power of descriptive social norm perceptions is more behaviorally relevant than perceptions of injunctive social norms. Although prior research has recommended that alternative normative behaviors should be explored and investigated, the majority of these studies have concentrated on the injunctive norms outlined in the initial TPB model. However, because descriptive norms are believed to be able to tap into social identification in order to provide additional information about the significance of subjective norms, this study is one of the few to examine both injunctive and descriptive norms as two dimensions of social norms. When the relative importance of injunctive and descriptive norms is compared, descriptive norms are found to be much more strongly associated with entrepreneurial intent. This indicates that respondents believed descriptive norms increased their propensity to start a business more than traditional injunctive norms.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions, some limits were recognized, as is the case with many investigative investigations. As a result of these constraints, this research highlighted the need for additional research that takes the following into account: To begin, this study used a cross-sectional research strategy, in which data were obtained from a random sample of students

in Nigeria. Because cross sectional designs do not address causality, caution should be exercised when making broad generalizations. Thus, future research can address this restriction by doing longitudinal studies that collect data at two or more periods in time for comparison and comparison with the findings of this study and can adequately produce causal impact. Thus, in the future, a qualitative approach is advocated in order to promote theory building. In addition, the study is one of the few to have looked at social norms as multidimensional constructs, measured by injunctive and descriptive norms. It is also the first study to investigate the mediating role of entrepreneurial orientation in the relationship between social norm constructs and start-up intention.

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