

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION, SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to examine the factors that influence the intention of female graduates at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to become entrepreneurs. This study investigates the impact of entrepreneurship education, family support, and structural support on entrepreneurial intentions, using the theory of planned behaviour as its foundation. The study adopts an explanatory study design and a cross-sectional survey. The research population consists exclusively of female graduates from Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. A total of 437 respondents were chosen for the study using simple random sampling, a probability sampling method. The data were gathered via questionnaire, and the data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate strong positive correlations between entrepreneurship education, family support, structural support, and entrepreneurial intention among female graduates. We therefore conclude that entrepreneurship education, family support, structural support, have significant and positive relationships with entrepreneurial intention of female students. We thus recommend that universities should incorporate entrepreneurship education programmes and provide support structures for female students pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship education, support systems, entrepreneurial intention, family support, structural support

### **Introduction**

Lately, there has been a significant international emphasis on addressing unemployment and poverty in developing countries across the globe. Governments have implemented programmes with the objective of promoting entrepreneurship among young individuals in order to address the increasing issues of unemployment and poverty (Dzingirai, 2021). The significance of entrepreneurial endeavours in nations such as Nigeria cannot be exaggerated. According to Adesua (2022), their potential benefits encompass a wide range of beneficial effects on the economy, including the creation of job opportunities, the enhancement of capacity development, the improvement of living standards, and the promotion of economic growth.

According to Ibidunni et al. (2021), entrepreneurs are acknowledged as knowledgeable, skilled, and competent persons in their specific industries and businesses. Okolie et al. (2020) emphasises that a considerable proportion of Nigerian university graduates encounter difficulties in securing employment as a result of the curriculum's primary emphasis on conventional white-collar professions. The scarcity of employment prospects is a significant economic and social predicament for the nation. The incorporation of entrepreneurial education has been broadly embraced in numerous industrialised countries, with its capacity to stimulate economic expansion being generally recognised (Ratten & Usmanij, 2021). According to Bodolica and Spraggon (2021), it is possible that redirecting the educational emphasis could help cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset and culture in a country. The choice to engage in entrepreneurship is frequently motivated by individual resolve, ambition, and the aspiration for self-sufficiency (Manishimwe et al., 2023).

The importance of intention in influencing behaviour or action cannot be emphasised enough, as it acts as a connection between contemplating engagement in entrepreneurship and actually pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours among students (Harima et al., 2021). Wegner et al. (2019) discoursed that intention can be viewed as a compelling factor that motivates individuals to engage with their surroundings, leading them to scrutinise, explore, or engage in activities that pique their curiosity. The propensity for entrepreneurship is evident through several means, such as the individual's commitment to actively progressing their business, their willingness to accept associated risks, their receptiveness to exploring novel approaches, their preparedness to lead a modest lifestyle, and their eagerness for ongoing education (Wu et al., 2020).

This study specifically examines female entrepreneurs, motivated by the prevailing belief that men predominantly dominate the entrepreneurial field (Elliott et al., 2020). According to Cardella et al. (2020), the field of entrepreneurship has historically been dominated by men, implying that women tend to avoid pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours. The study by Corrêa et al. (2021) highlights the worldwide lack of female entrepreneurs, which results in a failure to use their potential contributions to job creation, innovation, and economic progress. According to Corrêa et al., (2021) women generally view entrepreneurship as a field that is mostly dominated by men. Additionally, the duties of becoming a parent discourage women from pursuing their entrepreneurial goals (Dewitt et al., 2022). However, according to Huq and Venugopal (2020), experts contend that an increase in female participation in entrepreneurship can improve economic self-reliance, hence promoting geopolitical stability and global concord. Langworthy and Warnecke (2020) warned that failing to prioritise women's entrepreneurship may impede a nation's advancement.

According to Ge et al. (2022), research suggests that women demonstrate substantial entrepreneurial potential when they participate in entrepreneurial activities. The primary emphasis is on the entrepreneurial standing of women, rather than challenging their potential to flourish in this field (Ge et al. 2020). The imperative to promote greater female entrepreneurship in an economy has long been seen as essential, since the active participation of women in all aspects of life is deemed fundamental for attaining economic progress (Ilie et al., 2021). Zivkovic (2014) notes a dearth of female entrepreneurs in the northern region of Nigeria. The economic development prospects in northern Nigeria depend on a significant rise in the number of female entrepreneurs in the region. Studies indicate that enterprises headed by women have demonstrated significant rates of success in many regions globally (Khan et al., 2021).

In 2014, Olushoga wrote a report for the AWP Network, which centred on a roundtable discussion held in Lagos, Nigeria. The purpose of the debate was to tackle the difficulties encountered by young female entrepreneurs. One of the main obstacles identify by the entrepreneurs was the insufficient presence of effective support structures. The lack of supportive frameworks, which is particularly evident among younger female entrepreneurs, could perhaps contribute to the hesitancy of women in northern Nigeria to perceive entrepreneurship as a feasible means of earning a living. A significant proportion of women in northern Nigeria may not have access to crucial support networks. Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical evidence to substantiate the presence of such assistance in the area. The literature lacks documentation on the accessibility of support networks for females in northern Nigeria, despite demonstrating the various manifestations of these systems. Hence, the present study aims to examine the impact of both familial and structural support on entrepreneurial inclinations.

Zivkovic's (2014) research reveals the prevalence of gender disparities in education within the northern region of Nigeria, where women face significant disadvantages in accessing education compared to men. This inequality could potentially explain the relatively low number of female entrepreneurs in Northern Nigeria. The lack of representation of women in entrepreneurship education in northern Nigeria might contribute to the limited involvement of females in entrepreneurial pursuits in the region. As a result, this study focused exclusively on female students, recognizing the urgent need for greater representation of female entrepreneurs within the nation.

Zivkovic (2014) proposed that the number of female entrepreneurs in northern Nigeria is significantly deficient, highlighting the pressing necessity to enhance their representation in the region. Hence, it is imperative to study the determinants that impact the entrepreneurial intentions of women in northern Nigeria. Nevertheless, the study highlights a paucity of literature regarding this subject, with only a limited number of studies (particularly, Ahmed et al., 2020; Saoula et al., 2023) investigates the connection between family support and entrepreneurial intention. This study seeks to fill the existing information vacuum by examining the potential correlation between family support and Entrepreneurial Intentions.

A limited number of research (Yi, 2020; Olu, 2020) have examined the relationship between structural support and the entrepreneurial intention of students. It is crucial to evaluate the extent of government aid provided to women in northern Nigeria and how structural support influences their inclination to engage in entrepreneurial endeavours. This study aims to address the current lack of understanding by investigating the impact of Structural Support on the entrepreneurial intention of female students residing in the northern area of Nigeria.

Many research studies have examined the impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurial Intention. These works include research undertaken by Hassan et al. (2021), Nguyen & Nguyen (2023), Jena (2020), and Duong (2021). Nevertheless, there is a lack of information indicating whether the incorporation of Entrepreneurship Education increases students' propensity to pursue entrepreneurship as a profession in the northern part of Nigeria. Hence, it is imperative to incorporate Entrepreneurship Education as an independent factor in this research to address the discovered deficiency in understanding.

This study aims to fill the gaps in knowledge by investigating the relationships between entrepreneurship education, family support, structural support, and the entrepreneurial intention of female students in the northern area of Nigeria. As far as the researcher knows, no previous study has thoroughly examined the influence of entrepreneurship education, family support, and structural support as possible factors affecting entrepreneurial intention in a single study, despite the crucial importance of these variables. This study adds to the current literature by examining the correlation between three factors—entrepreneurship education, family support, and structural support—and their impact on entrepreneurial intention in single research.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending human behaviour, specifically in the context of decision-making and the formation of intentions. Ajzen (1985) proposed that the TPB suggests that an individual's behavioural intentions are influenced by three main factors: attitude towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Shalender & Sharma, 2020). Within the study's framework, the TPB offers useful insights into the elements that influence the intentions of female students towards entrepreneurship. Attitude towards behaviour relates to an individual's assessment of participating in a particular behaviour (Abbasi et al., 2021). This study examined how the attitude towards entrepreneurship education and the entrepreneurial endeavour impacts the intents of female students to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship education may arise from beliefs regarding the advantages of obtaining entrepreneurial skills and knowledge.

Secondly, subjective norms represent the perceived social pressures or expectations from important individuals on the behaviour being discussed (Rehman et al., 2023). Subjective norms for female students may encompass the impact of family members, friends, or mentors who either support or discourage entrepreneurial endeavours. Positive familial subjective norms towards entrepreneurship might have a beneficial impact on the intentions of female students to participate in entrepreneurial activities. Conversely, lack of support or discouragement can have a contrary effect. On the other hand, perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of their capacity to carry out a specific behaviour (Wach et al., 2021). According to Aliedan et al. (2022), this element includes

thoughts regarding the existence of obstacles or aids that can impact an individual's capacity to participate in entrepreneurship. Perceived behavioural control for female students encompasses elements such as resource availability, educational possibilities, and support systems. Increased levels of perceived control over entrepreneurial activities are likely to positively influence intentions to engage in entrepreneurship among female students.

Hence, this study use the TPB to examine the connection between entrepreneurship education, support systems (including family and structural support), and the entrepreneurial intentions of female students in the northern region of Nigeria. The objective is to offer significant insights into the factors that influence the intention of female students to become entrepreneurs. This research intends to contribute to the existing information on entrepreneurship education and women's entrepreneurship.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Entrepreneurial Intention**

Tomy and Pardede (2020) posits that an individual's intention to engage in a given behaviour is determined by their attitude towards that behaviour, which ultimately determines whether or not the behaviour will be carried out. Ben Youssef et al. (2021) proposed a direct correlation between an individual's inclination to engage in a specific activity and their future achievement in this activity. Entrepreneurial intention is the concept that describes an individual's predisposition or tendency to engage in entrepreneurship (Lv et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial intention refers to an individual's increasing recognition and aspiration to start a new business or generate innovative value inside an existing organisation (Jiatong et al., 2021). A person who has the necessary resources and opportunities, along with the purpose to perform a particular action, is more likely to successfully carry out that action (Al-Qadasi et al., 2023).

### **Concept of Entrepreneurship Education**

The concept of entrepreneurship education has garnered significant interest both domestically and internationally due to its capacity to tackle problems such as unemployment and other socio-economic obstacles that impede global sustainable development (Thomassen et al., 2019). Jardim et al. (2021) argue that providing entrepreneurship education and skill development chances is crucial for promoting a desire to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Liguori and Winkler (2020) emphasised that entrepreneurship education, sometimes referred to as the educational process, focuses on cultivating distinct personal attributes. According to Shah et al. (2020), Entrepreneurship education is intended to enhance the viability of entrepreneurship by increasing students' knowledge, confidence, and self-efficacy.

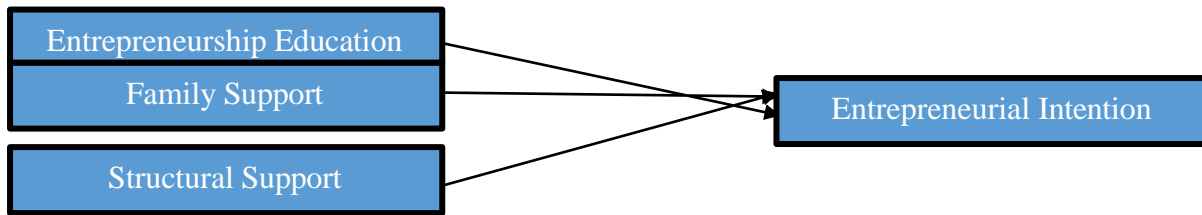
### **Concept of Family Support**

When someone begins a business endeavour, they often seek assistance from several sources, with family members playing a vital part. As per the findings of Baluku et al. (2020), the family unit, which is the closest social context, has the potential to greatly enhance an individual's motivation and inclination towards entrepreneurship. According to Georgescu and Herman (2020), families of entrepreneurs have a significant role in supporting and influencing the creation and management of a new business by providing a diverse range of resources, including both professional and non-professional ones. According to Shahzad et al. (2021), families have a crucial role in promoting the transfer and development of entrepreneurial characteristics, particularly among younger individuals who are influenced by their older family members. The upbringing of an individual can influence their predisposition towards entrepreneurship (Kusumojanto et al., 2021). Krichen and Chaabouni (2021) proposed that the acquisition of skills and knowledge, along with the perception of support from family members, enhances individuals' self-assurance and, thus, their inclination towards entrepreneurship.

### **Concept of Structural Support**

Elnadi and Gheith (2021) define Structural Support as a comprehensive set of elements that encompass various aspects such as providing business start-up opportunities, facilitating access to financial resources, ensuring compliance with state regulations, and fostering encouragement from

public, private, and non-governmental entities. The government plays a crucial role in providing structural support to the youth through several policies and programmes, including financial efforts, externalities, and infrastructure development. These measures have an impact on the local environment (Turulja et al., 2020).



**Fig 1: A Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Entrepreneurship Education, Support Systems and Entrepreneurial intention**

**Source:** (Jardim et al., 2021; Elnadi & Gheith, 2021)

### Empirical Review

Babatunde and Durowaiye (2021) conducted a study to investigate how entrepreneurship education influences the entrepreneurial intentions of Nigerian undergraduates. Employing stratified and simple random sampling techniques, the researchers distributed questionnaires to 120 undergraduate students at Landmark University in Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that the provision of entrepreneurship education significantly impacts students' inclination to start a business venture. Hussain (2015) explored the influence of Entrepreneurial Education on the entrepreneurial intention of Pakistani students, gathering empirical evidence from a sample of 499 enrolled individuals. The study found a positive correlation between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention, suggesting that educators should prioritize imparting theoretical knowledge to aspiring entrepreneurs.

Mustapha and Selvaraju (2020) conducted a study to investigate the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship inclination. They distributed 178 questionnaires among students from three public universities in the Klang Valley region, analyzing the data using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The research revealed that entrepreneurship education positively affects students' inclination toward pursuing entrepreneurship as a career path. Selcuk and Turker (2022) investigated the determinants of entrepreneurial intention among university students, specifically exploring the influence of contextual factors. Analyzing data from 300 questionnaires, their findings revealed that factors related to educational and structural support significantly shape students' entrepreneurial intentions. Similarly, Mei et al. (2020) examined the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention using data from 267 cases. Their study demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation between entrepreneurship education and students' inclination towards entrepreneurship as a career path.

Bazan et al. (2020) conducted a study to investigate how support systems influence students' entrepreneurial intentions, utilizing 250 questionnaires for analysis. Employing regression analysis as their statistical method, the research revealed that the extent of exposure to support systems positively impacts students' entrepreneurial intentions. More so, Ahmed et al. (2020) conducted a study aiming to assess the impact of family support on entrepreneurial intention. Their findings indicated that family support has a positive and significant effect on inclination to embark on their own business ventures. Similarly, Lingappa et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between support systems and entrepreneurial intention among university graduates. Employing a sample of 229 questionnaires distributed through stratified and systematic sampling methods, the research unveiled a positive effect of support systems on the entrepreneurial intention of study participants.



From the conceptual model, theoretical framework, and the empirical review of the study, we propose these hypothesised:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Entrepreneurship education has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention of female students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Family support has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention of female students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Structural support has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention of female students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

### Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional research design. The study employs a explanatory research design and adopts cross-sectional design as the researcher intends to gather the required data from participants at a single point in time using a structured questionnaire. The study's population comprises exclusively of female students at the 400 level of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The research exclusively focused on female students in their fourth year of study as the researcher assumes that all students in this academic level have completed mandatory entrepreneurship courses, which are compulsory for second and third-year students in the university. Based on the data obtained from the university administration, there exists a total of 3,284 female students enrolled in the 400 level during the academic session of 2022/2023. This study will utilise Dillman (2000) sample size formula to arrive at a minimum sample size for the study. Dillman (2000) formula is given below:

$$\frac{Np (p) (1 - p)}{(Np - 1) (B/C)^2 + (p) (1 - p)}$$

Where:

Np = Size of population

p = the population proportion expected to choose among the two response categories

B = sample error

C = confidence level

According to Dillman (2000), p should be set at 0.5, B at 0.05 and C at 1.96, which represent 5% level of significance. Substituting this into the formula we have:

$$\frac{(3284) (0.5) (1 - 0.5)}{(3284 - 1) (0.05/1.96)^2 + (0.5) (1 - 0.5)}$$

$$\frac{1642 \times 0.5}{3283 (0.026)^2 + 0.5 \times 0.5}$$

$$\frac{821}{3283 \times 0.00067 + 0.25}$$

$$\frac{821}{2.19961 + 0.25}$$

$$\frac{821}{2.44961}$$

$$= \underline{\underline{336}}$$

The minimum sample size for the study was determined to be 336 by the researcher. Israel (2013) recommends that an additional 30% be added to the minimum sample size of a study to account for any potential shortfall in respondents after the distribution of questionnaires. By increasing the sample size of the study by 30%, the researcher obtained a total of 437 participants.

The research methodology employed in this study involves the utilisation of a simple random sampling technique to administer copies questionnaires to the participants. The researcher employs a random selection process to choose twenty departments. The study utilises a sample size consisting of the students from twenty departments that were randomly selected to serve as respondents. The distribution of copies questionnaire was distributed in a manner that ensures equal representation of students from randomly selected departments. The present study employs primary and secondary data sources to investigate the impact of entrepreneurship education, family support, and structural support on the entrepreneurial intention of female students enrolled at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The statement items used for measuring each variable in this investigation were adapted from diverse sources to align with the aims of this research. The measurement of entrepreneurial intention was measured using six items, which have been adapted from the research conducted by Linan and Chen (2009). The study employs a six-item scale to assess family support, which has been adapted from the research conducted by Carr and Sequeria (2007). Furthermore, the measurement of entrepreneurship education was done using a set of five items, which have been derived from the research conducted by Franke and Luthje (2004). The present study utilises a set of four measures to assess structural support, which have been adapted from the framework developed by Turker and Selcuk (2019). The survey instrument employs a Likert scale consisting of five points, with the endpoints being strongly disagree (SD) and strongly agree (SA).

The data collected for the study was subjected to tests for missing values and multicollinearity. The data underwent processing through the application of Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) on SmartPls3. The present study employed structural equation modelling as it is a statistical technique that is better suited for analysing small sample sizes and permits rigorous testing (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010).

**Results**

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity

| Construct                 | Items | Loadings | AVE   | CR    |
|---------------------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
| Entrepreneurial Intention | EI1   | 0.750    | 0.599 | 0.872 |
|                           | EI2   | 0.788    |       |       |
|                           | EI3   | 0.767    |       |       |
|                           | EI4   | 0.779    |       |       |
|                           | EI5   | 0.766    |       |       |
|                           | EI6   | 0.794    |       |       |
| Structural Support        | PBC2  | 0.830    | 0.675 | 0.870 |
|                           | PBC3  | 0.781    |       |       |
|                           | PBC4  | 0.874    |       |       |
|                           | PBC5  | 0.799    |       |       |
| Family Support            | FS1   | 0.768    | 0.687 | 0.774 |
|                           | FS2   | 0.890    |       |       |
|                           | FS3   | 0.825    |       |       |
| Entrepreneurial Education | ED1   | 0.799    | 0.690 | 0.865 |
|                           | ED2   | 0.837    |       |       |
|                           | ED3   | 0.847    |       |       |
|                           | ED4   | 0.837    |       |       |

NOTE: No items were deleted from the data set, as they all met the minimum requirements. AVE stands for Average Variance Extracted while CR represents Composite Reliability. FS1, FS5-6, and ED5 were deleted to poor item loading.

Hair et al. (2019) highlight the importance of loadings surpassing the 0.7 threshold. As depicted in Table 1, all items exhibit loadings exceeding this criterion, indicating a consistent and robust association with their respective constructs. Additionally, Table 1 illustrates that each construct possesses a composite reliability coefficient exceeding 0.7, meeting the prescribed minimum

threshold for composite reliability (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Moreover, all constructs satisfy the stipulated minimum requirement for average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.5, as outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Hence, it can be inferred that the evidence strongly supports convergent validity. The evaluation of discriminant validity, based on the data in Table 2, was also conducted.

Table 2  
*Discriminant Validity using Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio*

|                               | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4 |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Entrepreneurship Education |       |       |       |   |
| 2. Entrepreneurial Intention  | 0.529 |       |       |   |
| 3. Family Support             | 0.754 | 0.529 |       |   |
| 4. Structural Support         | 0.333 | 0.375 | 0.410 |   |

The outcomes derived from the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) analysis reveal that the correlations among different constructs (off-diagonal components) are notably lower compared to the correlations within the same constructs (diagonal elements). Specifically, the HTMT values for each pair of attributes fall significantly below the recommended threshold of 0.85, as advocated by Hair et al. (2019). This observation indicates that each construct demonstrates stronger associations with its own indicators than with indicators of other constructs, affirming the presence of discriminant validity. The utilization of diverse assessment methods to scrutinize these constructs underscores their measurement of distinct underlying concepts in the research, thereby further reinforcing the notion of discriminant validity.

**Test of Hypotheses**

Table 3  
*Path Coefficient*

| Hypotheses              | Beta Value | Std. Error | T Stat | P Value | Decision  |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|--------|---------|-----------|
| H <sub>1</sub> : ED->EI | 0.293      | 0.141      | 2.079  | 0.038   | Supported |
| H <sub>3</sub> : FS->EI | 0.342      | 0.111      | 3.078  | 0.002   | Supported |
| H <sub>5</sub> : SS->EI | 0.358      | 0.09       | 3.974  | 0.000   | Supported |

It is seen on Table 3 that there exists a positive and significant relationship between Entrepreneurship Education (ED) and the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) of female graduates in Ahmadu Bello University. The data presented demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between the variables at less than 5% significant level ( $\beta = 0.293$ , T Stat = 2.079,  $P < 0.05$ ). As a result, hypothesis 1 that states that entrepreneurship education has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention of female students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is supported. Similarly, on Table 3, it is seen that Family Support (FS) does exert positive and significant influence on the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) of female graduates in the study area ( $\beta = 0.342$ , T Stat = 3.078,  $P < 0.05$ ). This means that the study does supports the second hypothesis of the study that states that family support has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention of female students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Finally, that there exists a positive and significant relationship between Structural Support (SS) and the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) of female graduates in the Ahmadu Bello University. The data presented demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between the variables at less than 1% significant level ( $\beta = 0.358$ , T Stat = 3.974,  $P < 0.01$ ). As a result, hypothesis 3 that states that structural support has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention of female students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is supported.



Table 4  
R Square

| Construct                 | R Square |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Entrepreneurial Intention | 0.505    |

The R-square value of 0.505 indicates that approximately 50.5% of the variance in the dependent variable, which is the entrepreneurial intention of female students at Ahmadu Bello University, can be explained by the independent variables of the study—entrepreneurship education, family support, and structural support. This suggests that these three variables collectively account for a substantial portion of the variation observed in the entrepreneurial intentions of female students. However, it also implies that there are other factors not included in the study that may influence entrepreneurial intention, as the remaining 49.5% of the variance is unexplained. Therefore, while entrepreneurship education, family support, and structural support significantly contribute to understanding female students' entrepreneurial intentions, there are additional factors that may also play a role in shaping their entrepreneurial aspirations.

### Discussion

The strong and important connection between Entrepreneurship Education (ED) and the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) of female graduates at Ahmadu Bello University, as explained in Table 3, highlights the crucial role of educational programmes in fostering entrepreneurial aspirations among female students. This finding aligns with previous research, indicating that being exposed to entrepreneurship education programmes fosters a greater tendency towards entrepreneurship. The statistically substantial association confirms the validity of hypothesis 1, demonstrating that entrepreneurship education has a significant impact on the Entrepreneurial Intention of female students at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The positive result can be ascribed to the extensive scope of entrepreneurship education programmes, which provide students with vital knowledge, abilities, and attitudes required for recognising and developing entrepreneurial prospects. Prior research has also emphasised the beneficial impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions among various groups of students (Aliedan et al. 2022; Babatunde & Durowaiye, 2021; Duong, 2021), highlighting the importance of incorporating entrepreneurship education into academic curricula as crucial for cultivating entrepreneurial skills and promoting economic development.

The research area's Table 3 highlights the substantial and beneficial influence of family support on the entrepreneurial intention of female graduates. This emphasises the vital role that familial encouragement and support play in developing the entrepreneurial intentions of female students. This finding is consistent with the second hypothesis of the study, indicating that family support has a major impact on the entrepreneurial intention of female students at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The found statistically significant connection highlights the crucial role of familial networks and support systems in promoting entrepreneurial aspirations among female students. Prior research consistently underscores the beneficial impact of family support on entrepreneurial intentions (Baluku et al. 2020; Ahmed et al. 2020; Saoula et al. 2023), emphasising the significance of familial encouragement, role modelling, and resource provision in fostering entrepreneurial aspirations. Therefore, the results of this study add to the current body of research by confirming the substantial influence of family support on the entrepreneurial intentions of female students. This study recommends the inclusion of family-based interventions in Entrepreneurship Education programmes to further strengthen students' entrepreneurial pursuits.

The correlation between Structural Support (SS) and the Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) of female graduates at Ahmadu Bello University is both positive and significant, as shown in Table 3. This highlights the crucial role of external support systems in promoting entrepreneurial aspirations among female students. This finding offers empirical evidence supporting hypothesis 3, which states that structural assistance has a substantial impact on the entrepreneurial intention of female students at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The found statistically significant association highlights the crucial role of external support mechanisms, such as access to financial resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities, in fostering entrepreneurial aspirations among female students. Prior

research continuously underscores the favourable impact of Structural Support on entrepreneurial intentions (Elnadi & Gheith, 2022; Salamzadeh et al., 2022), emphasising the importance of supporting ecosystems and infrastructural resources in promoting entrepreneurial pursuits. Therefore, the results of this study add to the current body of research by confirming the significant influence of structural support on the entrepreneurial intentions of female students. It also advocates for the creation of strong support frameworks to encourage and maintain entrepreneurial aspirations among female students in academic settings.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing the entrepreneurial intentions of female graduates at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. We therefore conclude that entrepreneurship education, family support, structural support, have significant and positive relationships with entrepreneurial intention among female students. Specifically, entrepreneurship education, family support, and structural support emerged as crucial determinants of entrepreneurial intentions, highlighting the importance of educational initiatives and external support systems in nurturing and fostering entrepreneurial aspirations among female students.

### **Recommendations**

According to the results of this study, we provide various solutions to improve the entrepreneurial environment and encourage female students' entrepreneurial ambitions at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Academic institutions should give first priority to incorporating entrepreneurship education into their curricula, making sure to cover all aspects of entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and attitude development in a thorough manner. This can be accomplished by creating tailored curricula, interactive seminars, and hands-on learning experiences that provide students with tangible entrepreneurial abilities and cultivate an entrepreneurial attitude from the outset of their academic endeavours. In addition, universities should establish partnerships with industry collaborators, entrepreneurial networks, and alumni to offer students practical entrepreneurial experiences, mentorship, and networking opportunities. This will help bridge the gap between academia and the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Moreover, the active participation and assistance from family members are essential in influencing students' aspirations to become entrepreneurs. Hence, it is imperative to make endeavours to enhance the knowledge among families regarding the significance of endorsing and fostering entrepreneurial ambitions among their daughters. Educational institutions have the ability to arrange outreach programmes, workshops, and educational sessions to actively include families and teach them about the advantages of entrepreneurship and the role they may play in supporting their daughters' entrepreneurial pursuits. In addition, colleges can create family support networks or resource centres to offer guidance, counselling, and resources to families who are interested in nurturing entrepreneurial aspirations in their girls.

Furthermore, the provision of institutional support, which encompasses access to financial resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities, is crucial for fostering entrepreneurial ambitions. In order to tackle this issue, it is crucial for university administrators and policymakers to work together with government agencies, financial institutions, and industry stakeholders. Their objective should be to create funding schemes, mentorship programmes, and networking platforms that are specifically designed to support female students who are interested in entrepreneurship. In addition, universities have the ability to establish incubation centres, entrepreneurship hubs, or innovation laboratories that provide students with access to resources, mentorship, and support for the purpose of developing and expanding their entrepreneurial endeavours.

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