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# AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PREDICTIVE VARIABLES OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' INTENTION TO BECOME ENTREPRENEURS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the predictive variables of undergraduate students' entrepreneurial intention in tertiary institutions. The study adopted survey research design using four hundred students randomly sampled from school of science and faculty of science and education of the two tertiary institutions purposefully sampled. The instrument used was questionnaire with reliability coefficient of 0.86. Simple percentage, correlation and weighted least squared analysis were the statistic used. The result shows that majority of students' parents are self-employed, students have some substantial knowledge of entrepreneurial education but were not entirely willing to become entrepreneur because their perception of social support system, government support and society value of entrepreneurship is not encouraging. The recommendations made include infusion of entrepreneurial education into the school curriculum and the establishment of social support system for would be entrepreneurs and mentorship for budding entrepreneurs.*

**Key words:** Entrepreneurial intention, Entrepreneurial education, Perceived social norms, Perceived feasibility, and Predictive variable

## Background

As societies grow the socio-economic and political ingredients of the society provided by the state becomes inadequate for the sustenance of the well being of the individual within the state and thus the need for individuals be it as a private person or business concern to contribute to the well being and sustainability of the state and the individual. The contributions of these individuals and business concerns have been hinged on the need to develop entrepreneurial spirit in the individuals. Thus entrepreneurship education have been touted to be the panacea to the development of entrepreneurial spirit in the individuals that make the state, as it is believed that it will enhance the development of small and medium scale business and the overall economic development (Okebukola, 2008, Inegberebor, 2009, Ehigiamuse, 2002).

Entrepreneurship education has become "Key issue in Nigeria and indeed all over the world whether developed or developing as almost all economies of the world are now market-driven or formulated. As we all probably know, the function of a private sector and economy is

entrepreneurship" (Inegberebor, 2009). That may have accounted for the statement in one of the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) of Nigeria government in "Growing the private sector" (Inegberebor, 2009), thus the capacity and capabilities of the entrepreneurs in the economy will define the growth potential of such economy. To engender sustainable growth in the capacity and capabilities of the entrepreneurs, a comprehensive entrepreneurship education must be put in place across the school system. What is entrepreneurship and .....? To what extent have the individuals within the educational system imbibed the entrepreneurship spirit and what are the entrepreneurship intentions of the products of the educational systems, are some of the questions addressed in this paper? Several authors have made effort to define entrepreneurial education, few of which include; McIntyre and Roche, (1999); Linam and Rodriguez, (2004); Loucks, (1988), but the simplest one identifies it with training for firm creation which McIntyre & Roche (1999) says it is the process of providing individuals with

concepts and skills to recognize opportunities that others have overlooked, and to have insight and self-esteem to act while others have hesitated. It includes instructions in opportunity recognition, marketing resources in the face of risk, and initiating a business venture.

Linam & Rodriguez, (2004) also sees it as the whole set of education and training activities whether within the educational system or not, that try to develop in the participants the intentions to perform entrepreneurial behaviours, or some of the elements that affects intentions, such as entrepreneurial knowledge, desirability of entrepreneur activity or its feasibility, which they say include development of knowledge, capacities, attitudes and personal qualities identified with entrepreneurship.

Loucks, (1988) says that though there have been preponderance of entrepreneurship development programmes in developing economies, yet these do not normally provide explicit definition of entrepreneurship education. However, the objective have always consists of trying to promote effective firm creation, with content of programmes addressing the basic issue of training on specific occupation and at the same time promoting participants establishment as independent craftspeople.

The Linam & Rodriguez, (2004) definition of entrepreneurship education emphasis that it involves all educational activities within and outside the school systems, and that emphasis is laid on the programme that reiterate the role of educators where instructions concentrate on creating and strengthening entrepreneurial intentions of participants. Thus, entrepreneurial intentions of the participants seem to be a major kernel of a comprehensive entrepreneurship education.

It is believe that intention of an individual to exhibit a certain behaviours depend on certain factors. For an individual to exhibit entrepreneurial behaviour Fayolle, (2002) observed that such a person must possess a consideration of attributes such as role orientation (which emphasizes effectiveness, abilities to think both intuitively and rationally and must have the driving force behind and action-motivated.

Robinson et al, (1991) have emphasized that certain demographic variables also affect intentions to become entrepreneurs which according to them are age, gender, religion. Other factors according to Storey (1994) include

level of education and labour experience. The predictive capacities of these demographic variables have however been criticized. Reynolds, (1997) says the predictive capacities are limited and Krueger et al (2000) and Linam et al (2002) say that these have conceptual problems and low explanatory capacity.

Krueger et al, (2000) says that the decision to become entrepreneurs may be voluntary and or conscious, thus could be a previously and determined element towards performing entrepreneurial behaviours and in turn the intention to carry out a given behaviour will depend on the person's attitude towards the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, Fayolle & Gailly, 2004). It may then be said that attitude approach could be preferable to those of the demographic variables if ideas of Robinson et al, (1991), and Krueger et al (2000) is anything to go by. This attitude would measure the extent to which individual positively or negatively evaluates something.

Planned behaviour theory (Ajzen, 1991) and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) have been used to explain the relationship between the individual intention to exhibit certain behaviour and some elements such as attitude, subjective norms, and processed behaviour control.

According to the theory of planned behaviour optimal prediction of behaviour can be attained from a person intention, which is an indication of how hard people are willing to try, and how much effort people plan to exert towards the performance of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Intention is found to be a function of attitudes (a person's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behaviour), subjective norms (individuals belief that significant others may exert pressure on them to exercise the behaviour), and perceived behavioural control (the extent to which people believe they can control the performance of social behaviour) (Chatzisarantis, Hagger & Smith, 2007).

Knowing an entrepreneur, being familiar with the business environment, attendance of entrepreneurial courses, awareness of entrepreneurial education course centers that give analysis of the role of entrepreneurial agents on economic development and their importance and availability of start-up courses-centers on elaboration of business plan, might enhance positive attitude and improve upon the feasibility perceptions of the individual (Fayolle & Gailly, 2004).

Social support and self employed parents may exert significant influence on social norms. (Courneya et al, 2000).

The assumption on underlying the theory of planned behaviour have been tested in different social behaviors as in Armitage & Connor, (2001), health behaviours (Hagger, Chatzisarantis & Biddle, 2002), performance of physical activities (Chatzisarantis, et al, 2007), There is a strong evidence for the overall predictive ability of intention, that attitudes and perceived behavioural control explain a substantial proportion of variance in intention (Armitage & Connor, 2001, Hagger et al, 2002). There is also interaction between group norms and group identification such that perceived behaviours and attitudes sanction by a group (group norms) influences attitudes, intentions and behaviours displayed by an individual depending on how strong the individual identifies with the group (Terry & Hogg, 1996, Terry, Hogg & White, 1999).

Social support system (an indication of how significant others are perceived to assist the performance of behaviour particularly when such behaviour is difficult to be executed without assistance from others) has been found to predict intention (Courneya et al, 2000).

The major Kernel of self-determination theory is that social context has a pervasive effect in the motivation and psychological well being of an individual (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theory identified that interpersonal context can be autonomous and controlling. It is complete autonomous when significant others explains in a meaningful way why performance of an activity is important, and acknowledge the presence of conflict. When significant others acknowledge personal feelings and perspective and it is incomplete autonomous when any of the three factors that facilitate perceived autonomy are absent in the environment. While inter personal context are said to be controlling when significant others pressure people to act in specific ways by using pressuring languages during inter personal communication i.e. use of modal operators such as "should", "must" and do not provide choice and rationale (Deci, Eghari, Patrick & Leone, 1994). It has been found that complete autonomous support influences behaviour directly via attitude, facilitates internalization of social behaviour such as attitudes, drugs and emotions (Koestner, Bernieri & Zuckerman, 1992) and that incomplete autonomy support influences overt behaviour directly but not attitude (Deci et al, 1994,

William, McGregor, Zeldman, Freedman & Deci, 2004).

### Statement of problem

Since the intention to perform a given behaviour is influence by certain antecedents of intentions (entrepreneurial knowledge, perceived desirability – personal attitudes and social norms, and perceived feasibility – self efficacy) then it may be necessary to conduct an investigation into the entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students of our tertiary institutions. Thus this study is an investigation into the predictive variables of entrepreneurial intention of the undergraduate students in the Nigeria tertiary institutions.

Research questions: These questions guided in the conduct of the study:

- What are the levels of students' parent's occupation?
- What are the levels of students' parent's income?
- What are the students' levels of knowledge about entrepreneurial and entrepreneurial education?
- To what extent do the students' attitude, perceived social norms and perceived feasibility affects their entrepreneurial intention?

### Research Hypothesis.

- There is no significant relationship between students' attitude, perceived social norms, perceived feasibility, entrepreneur knowledge, parents education, parents income level, parents employment level and students entrepreneurial intention

### Research Design

Descriptive survey research was adopted in the conduct of the research.

### Population

Students in tertiary institutions form the population for this study.

### Sample and Sampling Procedure

Four hundred (400) students randomly selected from two tertiary institutions purposively selected form the sample for the study.

The two tertiary institutions purposively selected were Lagos State University, Ojo and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ojo. These students were selected from the school of science in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education and Faculties of Science and Education, Lagos State University.

### Instrumentation

Students Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire was the instrument used in the conduct of the research. The questionnaire was structured on multiple response system, such as Yes & No; low, medium, and high; worse, good, and better and is made of two Sections (A & B). Section A measures the demographic variables of the respondents while Section B handles item that relate to respondents attitude, perceived desirability and perceived feasibility.

The questionnaire was subjected to construct and content validity and was found to be valid for the research. A reliability coefficient of 0.860 was obtained.

Table 1: Employments level of the student's parents

S/N	Item	Yes	No
1	Mother self employed	74.4	25.6
2	Father self employed	62.8	37.2
3	Mother working + small business	25.6	74.4
4	Father working + small business	37.2	62.8
5	Both parent employed	52	48

From table 1 majority of the students' parents are self-employed (74.4, 62.8 for their mother and father respectively). 52 percent are employees while few are employees and at the

Table 2: Parents' income level

INCOME LEVEL	FATHER	MOTHER
LOW	7.5	12.5
MEDIUM	64.5	64.5
HIGH	28.5	18.0

Table 2 shows that majority of the parents' level of income falls within medium category (between 64.5 - 69.1). This shows that the

Table 3: Choice of study

Career opportunity	60.2 %
Entrepreneurs	39.8 %

Majority of the students prefer to take employment instead of being entrepreneurs (62.2%, and 39.8%) respectively.

Table 4: Labour experience

	YES	NO
Labour experience	63.6	36.4

Table 5: Entrepreneur knowledge

S/N	ITEM	YES	NO
1	Knows an entrepreneur	74	26
2	Knows business association.	72.7	27.3
3	Knows business promotion bodies	54.5	45.5
4	Knows entrepreneurial education centre	45.5	54.5
5	Knows about entrepreneurial education	53.7	46.3

### Methodology

The questionnaire was administered to final year students in the selected institutions and was collected the same day.

### Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed and represented in percentages, correlation coefficients and weighted least squared analysis.

### Result

Research question one: what is the employment level of students' parents?

same time running small business (25.6, 37.2 for their mothers, and fathers respectively).

### Research Question Two

What are the levels of students' parents' income?

respondents agree that majority of their parents are within the middle class brass of the economy.

About 63.6 percent of the students said that they have one form of labour experience.

### Research question three:

What are the students' levels of knowledge about entrepreneurial and entrepreneurial education?

Majority of the respondents agrees that they have knowledge about entrepreneur, (53.7-74%),

except few who said they do not know about entrepreneurial education centre (54.5%).

Table 6: Preferred option after graduation

Continuing Education	53.7
Entrepreneur	28.1
Employment	18.2

When respondents were asked to respond to their preferred option after graduation, 53.7% opted for continuing education, 28.1% to be entrepreneur while 18.2% opted for employment.

Table 7: Prospect of becoming entrepreneurs

Low	68.60
Medium	25.60
High	5.80

The responded believed that the prospect of becoming an entrepreneur is low (68.60) Medium (25.6) and High (5.8)

Table 8: Probability of becoming entrepreneur

Low	44.60
Medium	35.50
High	19.80

The respondents (table 8) agreed that the probability of becoming entrepreneurs is low (44.6%) medium (35.5%) and high (19.8%).

Table 9: Students perceived social norms

S/N	Item	Better	Good	Worse
1	Society value of entrepreneurship	17.3	30.7	51.8
2	Society support for entrepreneurship	14.6	48.7	36.7
3	Government support for entrepreneurship	19.0	58.7	22.3
4	Economic environment for entrepreneurship	11.6	38.8	49.6

It can be shown from table 9 that society value for entrepreneurship is worse (51.8%) support for entrepreneurship to Good (48.7), government support is also good (58.7) while the economic environment is worse (49.6).

There is no significant relationship among students' attitude, perceived social norms, perceived feasibility, entrepreneur knowledge, parents education, parents income level, parents' employment level and students entrepreneurial intention.

### Research Hypothesis

Table 10: Correlation Coefficients

	Entrepreneur Knowledge	Personal Attitude	Perceived Social Norms	Perceived Feasibility	Parents level of employment	Parents Income Level	Entrepreneurial Intention
Entrepreneur Knowledge	1	0.167	-.241(*)	-.338(**)	.197	-.259(**)	-.165
Personal Attitude	.167	1	-.075	.056	.101	.016	-.003
Perceived Social Norms	-.241(*)	-.075	1	.310(**)	-.309(**)	-.129	-.039
Perceived Feasibility	-.338(**)	.056	.310(**)	1	-.117	.075	.005
Parents level of employment	.197	.101	-.309(**)	-.117	1	-.058	.216(*)
Parents Income Level	-.259(**)	.016	.129	.075	-.058	1	.101
Entrepreneurial Intention	-.165	-.003	-.039	.005	.216(*)	.101	1

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 10, it can be shown that there is a correlation between students perception of entrepreneur knowledge and entrepreneurial intention (-0.165), so also perceived social norms (-0.039), perceived feasibility (0.005), parents level of employment (0.216\*), personal attitude (-.003) and parents' income level (.101), however only parents' level of employment is significant at  $P < 0.05$ .

Table 11 shows the Beta Coefficient for the Weighted Least Square Analysis of the variables that impacted on entrepreneurial intention of respondents. The Beta values are entrepreneurial

knowledge(-0.313), personal attitude (0.198), perceived social norms (-0.082), perceived feasibility (-0.144), parents employment level (0.033), parents education (-0.064), parents income level (-0.036) and students labour experience (0.117).

By implication students' <sup>personal</sup> attitude, parents' employment level and students' labour experience contributed positively to the perceived model of students' entrepreneurial intention (0.198, 0.033 and 0.117) respectively.

Table 11. Beta Coefficients for the weighted Least Square Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	Std. Error		
(Constant)	4.566	1.304			3.501	.001
ENTREPRENEUR	-.116	.077	-.313	.209	-1.499	.143
ATTITUDE	.106	.093	.198	.174	1.142	.261
NORMS	-.019	.041	-.082	.183	-.450	.655
FEASIBILITY	-.032	.039	-.144	.173	-.829	.412
EMPLOYMENT	.012	.070	.033	.194	.167	.868
EDUCATION	-.086	.221	-.064	.163	-.390	.699
INCOME-	.020	.092	-.036	.169	-.216	.830
Labour	.120	.216	.117	.210	.555	.582

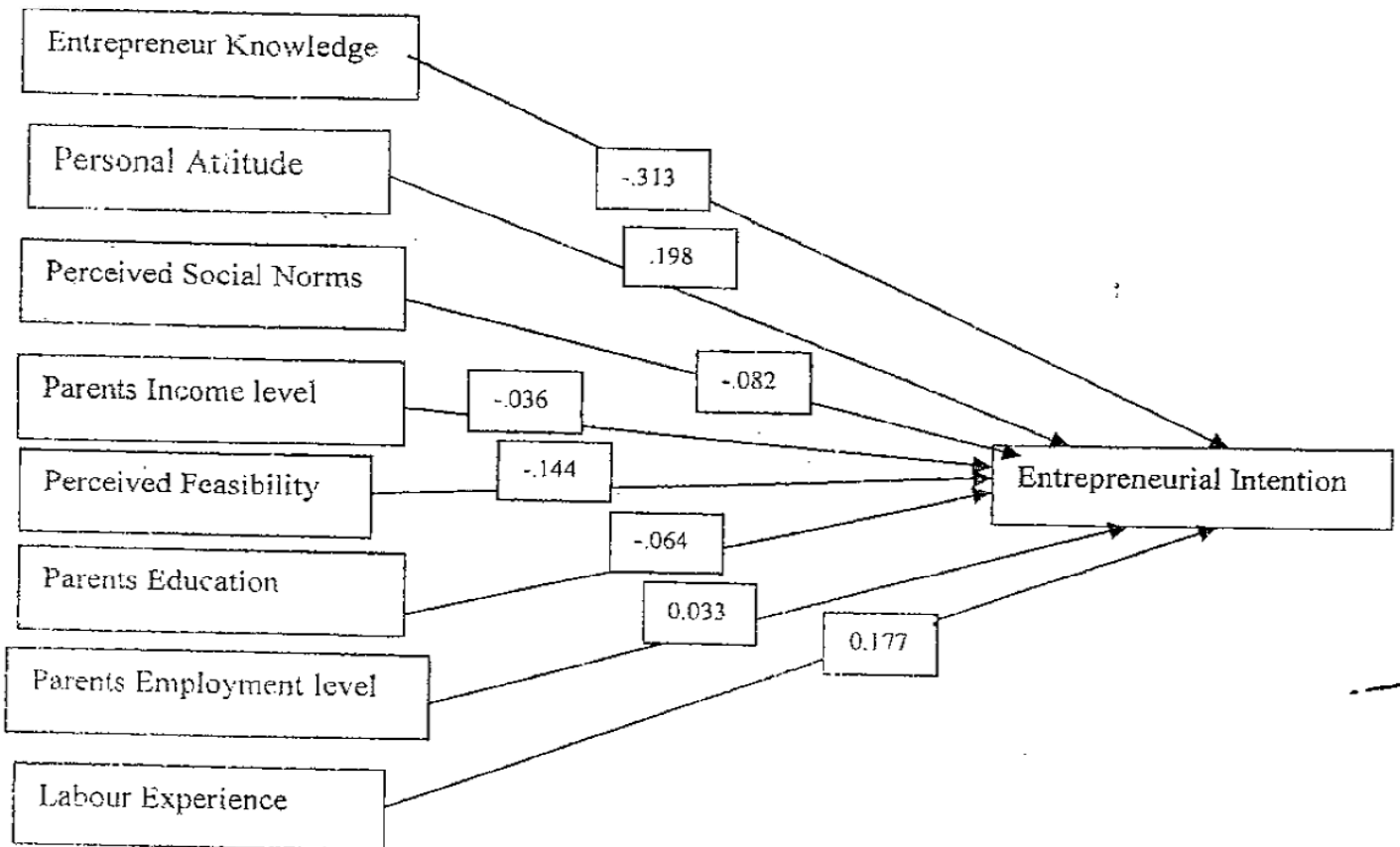


Fig 1: Student's Entrepreneurial Intention Model

## Discussion

This study <sup>found</sup> find out that majority of the students were self-employed (table 1), that they have medium income level, that the students have labour experience, have substantial knowledge about entrepreneur and will probably seek employment after graduation.

In addition their perception of social support for entrepreneur is good. This may support the <sup>not</sup> nations for only perceived feasibility, parents level of income and parents level of employment have positive correlation with students entrepreneurial intention (table 10). Even on then, only the correlation of parents' employment level is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . The Weighted Least Square Analysis shows that personal attitude, parents' level of employment and students labour experience have positive contribution, though maybe regarded as weak on entrepreneurial intentions of students (table 11). This however agrees with the finding of the Fayolle and Gailly (2004), Armitage & Connor, (2001) and Hagger et al (2002) that attitude, perceived behavioural controls explain a proportion of variance of intention. Social norms according to Courneya et al (2000) predict intention which according to this study has a negative correlation (-0.039), and negative beta value (-0.082).

## Conclusion

It is a general norm that personal attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control influences intention (Ajzen, 1991), hence for our students to exhibit intention to become entrepreneur there must be concerted effort to educate the public on the advantages of entrepreneurs for economic development. This done with effort on the part of the government to establish entrepreneurial centers will enhance a positive perception of students towards entrepreneurship.

## Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings of this study it is recommended that entrepreneurial education be incorporated to the school curriculum. Business promotion and entrepreneurial education centers should also be established for those who cannot be incorporated into the school system.

The government should also establish social support centers for those who intend to become entrepreneurs and those who are young entrepreneurs. A system of mentorship for about to be entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs should be encourage.

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