IInternational Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation
ISSN: 689-9493
Volume 7, Issue 2, 2024 (pp. 139-151)
www.abjournals.org

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ATTITUDES OF POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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Cite this article:

Akinleke Wasiu Olaitan (2024), An Examination of the Attitudes of Polytechnic Students to Entrepreneurship Education. International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation 7(2), 139-151. DOI: 10.52589/IJEBI-UIQ9EI0C

Manuscript History

Received: 18 Jan 2024

Accepted: 8 Apr 2024

Published: 1 May 2024

ABSTRACT: *It is a fact that entrepreneurship has important roles to play in any nation's socio-economic growth as it helps graduates to establish their own businesses, thereby creating jobs rather than depending on governments and private establishments for employment. This explains why entrepreneurship training was held important among students in higher institutions globally. However, gender differences have been observed in the attitudes of students towards such education. This study was conducted to investigate how students' gender might influence their attitudes toward entrepreneurship training in order to reinforce the opinion and behaviour of potential entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Three hundred and fifteen (315) randomly selected HND II students of the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State were involved in the study. The study was conducted in a classroom environment during some of their classroom sessions. A questionnaire which has 32 items (divided into three sections) was developed to gather information from the students. It was formed in Likert's 5-point format and subjected to a pilot study. After information was collected from the students, it was subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS V21. It was realized that gender is an important factor of entrepreneurship education as a significant difference was observed in the perceived behavioural control of the male and female respondents. It was also discovered that students' academic field does not make them feel differently about entrepreneurship lessons. It was then recommended that faculties must adopt methods and approaches that ensure gender neutrality when delivering entrepreneurship instructions. Also, policymakers in the education sector must make sure that the core objectives of entrepreneurship education are emphasized in all academic curriculums.*

KEYWORDS: Gender, Attitude, Entrepreneurship Training, Polytechnic Students, Self-employment.

Article DOI: 10.52589/IJEBI-UIQ9EI0C
DOI URL: https://doi.org/10.52589/IJEBI-UIQ9EI0C

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INTRODUCTION

Unarguably, it would be an understatement to say that the unemployment rate in Nigeria has not been on a continuous increase since the past three decades. More worrisome is the fact that graduates of tertiary colleges who have been equipped with managerial manpower that can enhance efficient service delivery are also finding it difficult to be gainfully employed. Specifically, Anah, Ezeji and Nwosu (2017) noted that graduate unemployment in Nigeria is traceable to the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) by President Ibrahim Babangida in 1996. However, Teshome (2014) observed that graduate unemployment is universal. According to him, across countries, it is becoming increasingly hard for college graduates to get employment in both public and private organizations due to global harsh economic conditions as a result of which governments of several countries have resorted to entrepreneurship training as a way of employment and wealth creation.

Karim and Reddy (2014) found that many governments all over the world have developed entrepreneurship culture in order to facilitate economic growth, hasten the development process and alleviate social challenges. In the opinion of Lokoko, Rankhumise and Ras (2012), the universal embracement of entrepreneurship education in higher institutions of education has become a necessary vehicle to self-employment and an important ingredient of economic advancement. Notably, entrepreneurship plays an important role in socio-economic development as it stimulates employment opportunities.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

As a social construct, entrepreneurship may be explained in several ways. For instance, Mokaya, Namusonge and Sikalieh (2012) saw it as a personal motivation and readiness to take risk, create and maintain a growth-directional and profit-making venture. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2014) described it as any effort to start a new business or make a new venture such as self-employment, a new business organization, or the expansion of an established business by an individual, a group of individuals, or a corporate body. This implies that entrepreneurship signifies an individual's determination to explore opportunities, develop strategic plans, possess and demonstrate skillfulness, exert managerial expertise and self-reliantly set up a business enterprise.

According to Ariyo (2019), promotion of entrepreneurship has become a global phenomenon, especially in the third world countries where youth unemployment is mostly rampant. Trading Economics (2017) reported that the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria rose to 33.10% in the third quarter of 2017 from 29.5% in the second quarter of the same year. In order to tackle this social problem, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced entrepreneurship education into the course components of its tertiary institutions. The policy is meant to change tertiary education from theory-based system to practical and enterprise-driven arrangement so that students of such institutions will be equipped with entrepreneurship experience, proficiency and mindset to become independent employers of labour and wealth creators in order to enhance the socio-economic development of the country. To enhance the ease of implementation of the policy, every institution of higher learning was directed to set up Entrepreneurship Development and Skills Acquisition

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Centers (EDASAC) which are funded by Education Trust Fund (ETF). The sole objective of such centers was to expose students to entrepreneurship education.

Thus, every student in higher institutions must undergo entrepreneurship instructions compulsorily irrespective of their discipline. Akpa (2008) described entrepreneurship instruction as a coursework that intends to change students' attitudes and perception and to equip them with the qualities to plan, implement and reliably manage their own business investments. It is a form of training that instills into learners concepts, abilities and ideas of how to start a new business (Adiele, 2010), develop entrepreneurship mindset and enterprise behaviour (Hong, 2000), create jobs (Adiele, 2010) and be responsive to their environments (Ilo, 2012) in order to control the high rate of unemployment and ensure a functioning economy (Chukwuna & Ogbeide, 2017).

Ango and Kyari (2018) noted that, as a form of strategy to curb socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, criminal activities and other underdevelopment indices, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) institutionalized entrepreneurship education in all Nigerian higher institutions of learning and mandated all students of such schools to go through that training. This is because students who have been exposed to such instructions developed positive attitudes and beliefs toward self-employment (Kumara, 2012). For instance, 78% of such students who studied in Ireland indicated willingness to start their own business upon the completion of their academic programmes (Hannon, 2009). In a similar study, Obisanya (2010) observed that 94% of the students he investigated found the training stimulating and showed readiness to work for themselves after graduation. Thus, entrepreneurship education instills entrepreneurial enthusiasm and behaviour change in students after undergoing entrepreneurship lessons.

Beyond individual advancement, Roxas and Cayoca-Panzales (2008) explained that promoting entrepreneurial knowledge among students can boost a country's growth and development. According to GEM (2006), nearly one-third of the differences in economic growth among nations can be linked to differences in enterprise activity. This is because such skill has the potential and capacity to create employment opportunities (Mustapha & Salvaraju, 2015) and can also serve as a driver for economic growth, productivity and social development (Derianyoh, 2015). This means it may be sufficient to say that engendering entrepreneurial culture among students of higher education will not only create national socio-economic benefits, it can also promote opportunity-oriented mindset of such students and as well enhance their intuitive ability, instincts, unique values, skills and positive attitude to life.

According to Sovitaris, Zerbinati and Andrea (2007), entrepreneurship education gives students the know-how, skills and a sense of confidence that inspire their intuitive intentions towards entrepreneurism. This is evident in a study that was conducted by Zain, Akran and Ghain (2010) where they discovered that more than 50% of students of their research subjects took the decision to become entrepreneurs after their exposure to entrepreneurship instruction. A similar study by Kabui and Maalu (2012) also revealed that nearly all students that underwent entrepreneurship lessons had the intention to engage in their own business in the future.

According to Iqbal, Melhem and Kokash (2012), when students are taught entrepreneurship education, they always believe that they have been given enough ideas and skills to successfully

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commence their own businesses. Thus, entrepreneurship education stirs students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship (Basu & Virik, 2008), increases the chances of self-employment and also enhances economic reward as well as self-satisfaction of such students (Kanffman Foundation, 2000). Entrepreneurship education instills values, beliefs and attitudes that play an important role in shaping students' attitude towards entrepreneurial dispositions. Solex-Borowska and Chudy-Laskwoska (2017) observed that effective entrepreneurship training is expected to increase the likelihood that more students would become self-reliant and be more involved in entrepreneurial activity. This is because proper education equips students with the knowledge and skills required to prosper in working environments, and also places them in a vantage position where some of them can become managers, business owners and career developers having possessed appropriate skills and practical guides through entrepreneurship education (Adroft, Dhaliwa & Willis, 2005).

However, some studies have found that personal attributes of students had an effect on their attitudes towards entrepreneurism. For instance, Kirby (2004) averred that students characterized by extroversion are more inclined to entrepreneurship than their introverted counterparts. It was also established that a supportive school environment has a positive impact on students' attitude towards entrepreneurship (Sriram, Mersha & Herron, 2007) just as mentoring and engagement of successful entrepreneurs as guest speakers encourage more students to be involved in entrepreneurship education (Bergh, Thorgren & Wincent, 2011). The aim of this study is to find out the extent to which gender variables influence students' attitude towards entrepreneurship training.

GENDER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Turker and Selcuk (2008) have argued that in order to increase involvement in entrepreneurship activities and as well stimulate entrepreneurial intentions among students, the underlying factors affecting entrepreneurial inclinations must be identified. Dabic and Dam (2012) noted that early focus of the studies on entrepreneurship was largely based on attributes such as self-confidence, risk-daring tendency and the drive for self-fulfillment, but subsequent ones have identified other factors such as socio-demographic variables like age, education, social status, parental influence and gender. For instance, Menzies and Tatroff (2008) observed that fewer females indicate a penchant for entrepreneurship education compared to men. This is because women have lower self-efficacy levels in areas linked to business activity such as problem solving, money management, decision-taking, and qualitative abilities (Marlino & Wilson, 2003); have insufficient female role models (Room & Harrison, 2010); lack risk tolerance (Fernandez, Linan & Santos, 2009); and are less likely to be self-reliant (Mimti, Arenius & Langwtz, 2005) when compared to men.

An investigation that was conducted by Marlino and Wilson among middle and high school students in 2003 revealed that female adolescents perceived entrepreneurism as risky, stressful and complex, thereby showing disinterest in being self-employed in contrast to young boys. A similar inquiry that was made among 15 European Union (EU) member countries and the United States of America (USA) by Grilo and Irigoyen in 2005 also found that the chances of preference for self-employment among women are significantly lower when compared to men. These conclusions were corroborated by Chinomona and Maziriri (2015) who reported that South African women

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entrepreneurs go through extensive challenges compared to businessmen. In the same way, Bandiera and Natraj (2013) observed that inequalities in accessing socio-economic and political opportunities existed between genders with women having less prospects and property rights. According to them, such limitations impair female economic attitudes and performance, making then susceptible to poverty and inadequacies. Ahang (2014) argued that such unequal and biased property law is a reflection of patriarchal institutional arrangements. In an explanation of the variance in the motivational variable to entrepreneurship, Eddleston and Powell (2008) investigated how gender identity influences an individual's attraction to entrepreneurship and found that gender identity, which is a measurement of masculinity and femininity, functions as a cognitive mechanism that accounts for difference in business enterprise involvement among women and men.

In a comparative analysis of some selected students in a South African University and micro-business owners, Farrington, Gray and Sharp (2012) established that males had greater entrepreneurial inclinations than females. They also detected considerable different gender-oriented perceptions about entrepreneurism between males and females, which is attributed to different reasons. For instance, it was discovered that in connection to their domestic responsibilities, women see entrepreneurship engagements as giving them the flexibility and independence to balance household and work commitments. According to Eagly and Koeny, (2006), a probable reason for such gender divergence is embedded in the social role theory which claims that gender differences influence the decision-making process and actions of men and women.

SOCIAL ROLE THEORY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social role theory portends that the social construction of gender results in gender role stereotypes (GRS) and gender role identity (GRI) (Wood & Eagly, 2012). As men and women fill and play different roles in society, their social characteristics and expectations from them also differ, which leads to the development of gender role stereotypes (GRS) that are described as shared beliefs and opinions about the features associated with males and females. In other words, GRS provides information about the sorts of behaviours that are socially acceptable and expected from specific individuals and groups of people. Such social ideologies are internalized during the socialization process facilitated by family, school, peers, media (social and mass), religion and other institutions that inspire and encourage people to conform to social stipulations regarding gender role stereotypes.

Abele and Wojciszke (2007) identified two dimensions of GRS as agency and communism. Agency suggests the assertive and instrumental tendency that is commonly attributed to males while communism explains emotional and relational qualities that are mostly linked to females. Agency characteristics are exhibited in the form of dominance, assertiveness, self-determination and mastery whereas communal traits are signified as empathy, self-sacrifice, neighborliness and attentiveness (Wood & Eagly, 2012). Largely, more men than women possess agency traits while more women than men are regarded as possessing communion features As individuals grow up, they become aware of the GRS in their social environments and gradually develop the tendency

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(sometimes subconsciously, or even unconsciously) to conform to the social regulations in line with the GRS (Gupta, Turban & Charie, 2008).

Gender role identity (GRI) is the extent to which people accept, adopt and develop their thoughts, behaviour, attitudes and career options based on the socially constructed expectations associated with GRS forms along the line of masculinity or femininity (Zakkariya, 2018). Masculinity describes the degree to which a person possesses attributes attached to male GRS and agency traits while femininity indicates the extent to which someone has characteristics linked to female GRS and communion features (Eddleston & Powell, 2008). Universally, males are brought up to internalize and adopt qualities that denote masculinity whereas females are socialized to learn and develop those attributes that depict femininity (Zampetakis et al., 2016).

The standpoint of the social role theory (SRT) is that subjective social expectations often play important roles in the entrepreneurial education of women. In an investigation of the influence of GRI on people's intention of business involvement, Zampetakis et al. (2016) revealed a positive correlation between GRI and entrepreneurial intent. In other words, masculinity and femininity significantly facilitated the impact of the investor's sex on the intentions of business growth. Another study that was conducted by Mueller and Conway Dato-on (2013) to examine the effects of biological sex, GRI and cultural expectations on entrepreneurial self-efficiency concluded that GRI had a notable impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy than biological sex.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Evidently, Nigeria is among the underdeveloped countries globally in terms of social and economic measurements. This has resulted in a lot of socio-economic problems that have worsened the condition of the country. Examples of such adverse effects are youth unemployment, insecurity, overpopulation, mass unemployment and so on. Considering the value of entrepreneurship in socio-economic development, the Federal Government made concerted efforts and programmes encouraging young adults to engage in innovative and wealth creation plans via various entrepreneurship activities; hence, entrepreneurship programmes and education were set up in all of the country's tertiary institutions.

Unarguably, certain factors will influence the realization of that policy, for example, classroom environment, teacher's competence, gender and attitude of students. Consequently, this study intends to analyze how students' gender might influence their attitude to entrepreneurship education in order to reinforce the opinion and behaviour of potential entrepreneurs. More importantly, understanding the constraints and attitudes of learners may be helpful in constructing effective policies that will encourage entrepreneurship. To achieve the aim of this study, two research questions were raised and answered. They are:

1) Is there any significant difference in the attitude of Polytechnic students to entrepreneurship training on the basis of their gender?

2) Is there any difference in the attitude of Polytechnic students to entrepreneurship training on the basis of their courses?

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METHODOLOGY

Participants

This investigation was conducted at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro in Ogun State, Nigeria. Permission was obtained from the Management of the school and the intention of the investigation was explained to the students before questionnaires were administered on them. Students in HND II were selected for this study because it is the opinion of this researcher that such students are in the decisive stages of their career.

Procedure

A total of nine classes were engaged in filling the questionnaires and each session lasted approximately thirty-five minutes. The classes were visited at different times during their entrepreneurship training sessions. After the purpose of the study was explained to them, the students were instructed to indicate if they were willing to participate in the exercise and once a student signified his/her willingness, a questionnaire was given to him/her. Detailed instructions were given to them in order to be sure that they understood how to provide their answers and as they filled the questionnaires, the researcher walked round the classrooms. A total of 315 students (150 males and 165 females) of the school of Management Studies and Engineering were involved in the study. All of them were in the final year of the Higher National Diploma program (HND II) and their age ranged between 19 and 24 (M=20.3). Using stratified random sampling, the sample was representative of the entire departments of the two schools. Out of the 315 students, 295 completed the questionnaire, making a response rate of 93.7% so as to be sure that appropriate answers were provided.

Instrument

A valid and reliable questionnaire was developed to collect information from the students. The questionnaire which consists of 32 items was divided into three sections. The first section asked respondents about their demographic characteristics such as age, current academic status, gender, and religion. The second and third sections were formed based on four dimensions of measuring attitudes towards entrepreneurship training which include: (1) entrepreneurial intention (Linan & Chem, 2009), (2) attitude towards entrepreneurship (Linan & Chem, 2009), (3) subjective norms (Ndofirepi, 2016), and (4) perceived behavioural control (Forbes, 2005). The Chronbach's coefficient alpha that was computed to determine the reliability of the items of the scales were 0.89, 0.75, 0.79, and 0.52 for entrepreneurial intention scale, attitudes towards entrepreneurship scale, subjective norms scale, and perceived behavioural control scale respectively. This shows that all of the instruments are very reliable.

Responses were fashioned in Likert-type scale format that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each respondent is expected to mark (√) either of the response format (as appropriate) for each statement. This allowed the responses to be categorized and analyzed statistically using SPSS V21.

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After the questionnaire was developed, a pilot study was organized to validate its precision. This was needed to improve the instrument and consequently, three items were deleted while another four were rephrased to ensure comprehension and unambiguousness.

DATA ANALYSIS

As stated earlier, SPSS V.21 was used to analyze the data that were obtained for this study. This means that reliability analysis and t-test were determined using the SPSS statistical package. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Table 1: Attitude of Polytechnic Students on the Basis of Gender

Dimension	Academic Discipline	Mean	SD	t-value	P
Entrepreneurship Intention	Male	61.03	7.18	1.46	0.19
	Female	58.89	5.64		
Attitude towards Entrepreneurship	Male	10.14	3.01	7.38	0.00
	Female	13.37	3.11		
Subjective Norms	Male	27.68	2.39	1.29	0.11
	Female	29.67	2.16		
Perceived Behavioural Control	Male	76.29	5.61	5.49	0.00
	Female	94.76	2.48		

P>005

As a response to the question that sought to determine if gender underscores the perceived need for entrepreneurship training among polytechnic students, Table 1 reveals t-cal for gender variable towards entrepreneurial intention is 1.46 and P-value is 0.19; for attitude towards entrepreneurship, t-cal is 7.38 and P-value is 0.00; for subjective norms, t-cal is 1.29 and P-value 0.11; and the perceived behavioural control is 5.49 and P-value is 0.00 all at P>0.05. This means that in all dimensions of the investigation about the student's perceived importance of entrepreneurial education, males and females are not different on the basis of entrepreneurial intention whereas a significant difference is observed in their attitude towards entrepreneurship. Also, regarding their subjective opinion about the training, male and female respondents of the inquiry are not significantly different but in their perceived behavioural control, males differ remarkably from females.

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Table 2: Attitude of Polytechnic Students on the Basis of Academic Discipline

Dimension	Faculty	Mean	SD	t-value	P
Entrepreneurship Intention	Management Studies	67.39 61.86	7.81 4.77	0.46	0.87
	Engineering				
Attitude towards Entrepreneurship	Management Studies	12.04 12.97	3.29 3.87	1.76	0.16
	Engineering				
Subjective Norms	Management Studies	22.73 23.67	2.59 2.36	1.98	0.09
	Engineering				
Perceived Behavioural Control	Management Studies	81.59 83.64	8.13 6.40	1.30	0.14
	Engineering				

p>0.05

The second research question tried to find out whether academic discipline stresses class persistence of polytechnic students. The statistical analysis as shown in Table 2 reveals that the t-cal for academic discipline towards entrepreneurial intention is 0.46 and P-value is 0.87; for attitude towards entrepreneurship, t-cal is 1.76 and P-value is 0.16; for subjective norms, t-cal is 1.98 and P-value 0.09; and the perceived behavioural control of the students toward using entrepreneurship training is 1.30 and P-value is 0.18 all at P>0.05. This implies that in all dimensions of entrepreneurial intention, attitude towards entrepreneurship, subject norms, and perceived behavioural control towards entrepreneurial lessons, there is no any significant difference between students of different academic disciplines.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated entrepreneurial intention, attitude towards entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control as predictors of students' inclination towards entrepreneurship training.

The result shows that gender is an important index of entrepreneurial intention as significant differences were observed in the responses of the students. In all identified areas, the mean responses of male students are higher than that of the female students of the polytechnic, which means that TVET-oriented students are more likely to utilize the knowledge that they have obtained from their entrepreneurship classes than the female students. This finding is in line with the submissions of Ndofirepi, Ranibe and Dzansi (2018), Solek-Borowska and Chudy-Laskowska

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(2017), Dabic et al. (2012), which found that more male than female students are willing to set up their own business after completing their academic program. According to Ndofirepi and Ranibe (2018), the discrepancy in the attitudes of male and female attitudes to entrepreneurial education may be due to the common way of perceiving entrepreneurship as a masculine pursuit, which makes more males than females intend to take innovative risks.

It was also revealed that choice of students' academic field does not make them feel differently towards entrepreneurship education. In other words, there is no variance in the assessment of entrepreneurship education by polytechnic students based on their academic programs. This means that the education authorities have been able to stress the importance of entrepreneurial education as a crucial tool for gaining vocational expertise in all scientific and technical realities and suppositions.

Inability of this study to detect a considerable difference in the students' perception about entrepreneurship training may be as a result of the fact that students in other related schools such as universities pursuing medical and science based courses were not involved in the study, which is a major weakness of this study. For instance, Dutse, Mamaki and Djibo (2019) argued that polytechnic students are noted to be very committed and versed in entrepreneurship education because of the practical skills they obtained from the technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and more so, their National Diploma (ND) program already prepared them for middle manpower expertise.

Although no significant variance was observed in the respondents' opinion despite their different courses of study, it is suggested that all curriculums of academic programs must be designed in such a way that they will emphasize the core objectives of entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, since gender variables were observed in the students' attitudes and intentions toward entrepreneurship, it is recommended that methods and approaches of delivering entrepreneurship instructions should be designed in a way that gender neutrality will be ensured. For instance, programs and activities that will change gender role stereotypes should be designed and emphasized in traditional and educational institutions.

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