

Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduate Students: The Influence of Gender and Self-Efficacy on Entrepreneurial Intentions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of gender and self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention among Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates in Ile-Ife. A descriptive survey design was used in conducting the study. One hundred and forty (140) students comprising 74 males and 66 females whose ages ranged between 16 and 35 years participated in the study. Participants responded to items of a structured questionnaire, the response which was subjected to statistical analysis. The results showed there was no significant difference between male and female students on entrepreneurship intention ($t(138) = 1.81, p > .05$). The results also revealed that there is significant difference between respondents with high self efficacy and those with low self efficacy on entrepreneurial intention ($t(138) = 7.47, p < .05$). It is recommended that youth should continually seek to evolve into entrepreneurs and should stop the limiting mental paradigm and cliché of already made ‘white collar job’ after graduation.

Keywords/concepts: entrepreneurship, final year students, gender, self-efficacy, student involvement.

Introduction

Microsoft *Encarta Encyclopedia* (2008) defines an entrepreneur as one who assumes the responsibility and the risk for a business operation with the expectation of making a profit. The entrepreneur generally decides on the product, acquires the facilities, and brings together the labour force, capital, and production materials. If the business succeeds, the entrepreneur reaps the reward of profits; if it fails, he or she takes the loss.

In the recent decades, the concept of entrepreneurship has attracted many researchers from diverse background. Hence, there is no specific definition that is generally accepted across board. Drucker (1990) in his book *innovation and entrepreneurship* defines an entrepreneur as “one who always searches for change, responds to it and exploits it as an opportunity. Innovation is the basic tool of entrepreneurs, the means by which they exploit change as an opportunity for a different business or services.” An entrepreneur is a key figure in economic progress as he is the person who introduces new things in the economy. In every society, he is regarded as the business leader and not as simple owner of capital. He is a person with telescopic faculty, drive and talent who perceives business opportunities and promptly seizes them for exploitation.

According to Schumpeter (2005), “entrepreneurship is a creative activity and an entrepreneur is essentially an innovator. Innovation manifests itself in problem solving activities wherein entrepreneur acts as a problem solver. He is the person who converts the problems into opportunities. His role is to do the things in a novel and better way.

He goes beyond the traditional ways of thinking and starts the activity in an innovative way. It is a fact that a businessman who behaves in traditional ways hardly becomes an entrepreneur.” Thus, in Schumpeter’s opinion, the dream and the will to establish a private kingdom, will to conquer and finally the joy of creating, getting things done or simply exercising one’s energy and ingenuity are the motives that inspire the innovative entrepreneur to undertake innovation.

According to Jean Baptiste (2006), “An entrepreneur is the agent who unites all the factors of production and who finds in value of the products the re-establishment of the entire capital he employs, and the value of wages, the interest and the rent which he pays as well as the profits belonging to himself. He may or may not supply capital but he must have judgment, perseverance and the knowledge of the world of business.”

The process of entrepreneurship may involve the creation of new ventures, but it does not necessarily require this to take place (Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003). Entrepreneurship can take place inside large firms in which managers undertake entrepreneurial behaviours to drive change or achieve their vision of creating new products or processes (Pinchot, 1987).

Entrepreneurship represents planned, intentional behaviour (Bird, 1988; Krueger & Brazeal, 1994), and based on the fact that intention is said to precede action (Ajzen, 1991), it would be amenable to use entrepreneurial intention as the criterion variable in this study. Furthermore, entrepreneurial intention is said to be a reliable predictor or measure of entrepreneurial behaviour and entrepreneurial activity (Krueger, 2000). Generally, entrepreneurial intentions are a state of mind which directs and guides the actions of the individual towards the development and implementation of new business concepts (Bird, 1988). It can be viewed as the intention of a person to perform new venture creation behaviour or action (Grundsten, 2004). In other words, it is the inclination of an individual to start-up a business venture of his or her own or to be in partnership with an organization as owners of the business. The bottom-line of the above elucidation is the intention of an individual to start-up a business whose financial implication and calculated risks falls on the individual.

The entrepreneur has been studied in terms of their personality characteristics and the environmental forces that shape their behaviour and decide whether they will or won’t engage in entrepreneurial activity (Bird, 1988, Al-Harrasi, Al-Zadjali, Al-Salti, 2014). Shane, Locke & Collins (2003) identified some of these as the need for achievement, the propensity for taking calculated risks, the tolerance for ambiguity, locus of control, self-efficacy, goal setting, independence, drive and ego passion. These qualities have been identified in different combinations as those that characterise the typical entrepreneur (Osborne, 1995, Al-Harrasi, Al-Zadjali, Al-Salti, 2014).

Other characteristics include a person's gender (Buttner & Rosen, 1989; Kolvereid et. al., 1993, Urban, 2011), education level (Storey, 1982, Kamau, 2010), family background (Scott & Twomey, 1988; Matthew & Moser, 1995, Shittu & Dosumu, 2014), and ethnicity (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990, Urban & Ratsimanetrimanana. 2015). These drivers of entrepreneurship have been researched in some depth with several being identified as being of particular importance.

The importance of entrepreneurship for economic development has been widely acknowledged in recent years. Entrepreneurship is assumed to be a major source of innovation, job creation and growth (Audretsch and Thurik, 2001; Carree, Van Stel, Thurik and Wennekers, 2001; Audretsch, Carree, Van Stel and Thurik, 2002, Parker, 2004). "The experiences of developed economies in relation to the roles played by entrepreneurship buttresses the fact that the importance of entrepreneurship cannot be overemphasized especially among the developing countries" (Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah, 2012). According to (Adejumo 2001, Parker, 2004), "entrepreneurial activities have been found to be capable of making positive impacts on the economy of a nation and the quality of life of the people".

In both developed and developing countries, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) play important roles in the process of industrialization and economic growth (Adekunle & Tella, 2008). According to Aina (2007), "SMEs contribute significantly to the economic development of Nigeria. These contributions are remarkable as about 10% of the total manufacturing output and 70% of the industrial employment are by SMEs." Also, Ihua (2009), states that about 97% of the entire enterprises in Nigeria are SMEs and they employ an average of 50% of the working population as well as contributing up to 50% to the country's industrial output.

Generally, business entrepreneurs are considered as very important agents of economic growth and societal renewal (Cantzler & Leijon, 2007). In spite of the enormous contribution of women entrepreneurs, there is a wide gap or difference in terms of entrepreneurship participation between men and women. The women are believed to have lower propensity for entrepreneurship compared to men (Koellinger, 2008; Lyons & Kirkwood, 2009). Some studies revealed that they are generally less growth oriented than men (Coleman, 2007).

The research on female entrepreneurship in western countries is extensive as female entrepreneurs were more similar than different to those of male entrepreneurs (Carter, 2001, Vossenber, 2013). However, female entrepreneurs differ from their male counterparts in that they are less likely to have prior business experience or training, they choose entrepreneurship as a result of experiencing glass ceiling in large organizations, and have difficulties in acquiring resources such as financial, human, and social capital (Carter, Anderson & Shaw 2001, Coleman 2002). In addition, female owned businesses are relatively younger, tend to operate mainly in retailing and services industries, and perform less well than companies owned by men (Carter, 2001, Vossenber, 2013).

Differences exist in the levels of new firm creation across genders, with international studies indicating that the number of women involved in starting a business is significantly and systematically lower than that of men (Bosma & Levie, 2009; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007).

Another factor that could influence entrepreneurship intention in an individual is self-efficacy. This refers to the beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviours at designated levels (Bandura, 1986, 1997), and is said to have a measure of control over individual's thoughts, feelings and actions. In other words, the beliefs that individuals hold about their abilities and outcome of their efforts influence in great ways how they will behave. Therefore, it is not surprising that many researches show that self-efficacy influences academic achievement, motivation, learning and academic achievement (Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1995, Alci, 2015).

Therefore, self-efficacy is the key element in exercising control and personal efficacy. This affects behaviour in two ways: either he engages in tasks he feels competent and confident or avoidance of those that he feels contrary. Self-efficacy helps in determining how much effort, perseverance and resilience that an individual will exhibit on a given task. In other words the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence and resilience. Efficacy beliefs also trigger emotional reaction. For example, individuals with low self-efficacy believe that a task is tough and hence build stress, depression and a narrow vision on how to solve problems. On the other hand, those with high efficacy would be more relaxed in solving difficult tasks. Therefore, these influences are strong determinants of the individual's level of achievement.

Due to the limited literature on factors influencing the intention to embark on entrepreneurship activities in Nigeria, the present study aimed to assess the influence of gender and self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intentions of university undergraduates.

Method

A descriptive survey design setting was used in the present study. The independent variables are gender and self-efficacy, while the dependent variable is entrepreneurial intentions. The study was conducted at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State. Hence, one hundred and forty (140) undergraduate students of the Obafemi Awolowo University participated in the study, conveniently selected in one of the lecture rooms of the institution where a large pool of undergraduate students converged. And therefore, data was collected with a structured questionnaire divided into three sections. Section A contains information on demographic variables such as age, gender, religion, marital status, and department. Section B contains a seven-item scale which elicited responses on the measure of the dependent variable. The scale was designed by the *European Journal of Scientific Research*, which was adapted from past researches of Davidsson, 1995; Krueger, 1993; Tkachev & Kolvereid, 1999).

Responses to the items were made on a 5-point scale (1= very unlikely to 5 = very likely). Section C of the questionnaire contains the General Self-efficacy scale (GSE) developed by Schwarzer & Matthias Jerusalem (1995). The scale was created to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy with the aim to predicting coping with daily hassles as well as adaptation after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events. Responses are made on a 4-point scale. All the responses from the 10 items were later summed up to yield the final composite score with a range from 10 to 40. Its reliability from samples of twenty three countries, ranged from .76 to .90, with the majority in the high .80s. The scale is uni-dimensional in nature and its validity is based on criterion-related validity with documentation in numerous correlation studies where positive coefficients were found with favorable emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction, utilizing Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group, generally considered to be a measure of scale reliability, thus, the value was .85. And procedurally, all participants freely consented to participate in the study after the purpose of the study was explained to the large audience of students in a lecture theatre. The researchers carefully and to the satisfaction of the students responded to all the questions raised concerning the study. A total number of 200 questionnaires were administered out of which one hundred and forty (140) were found usable for data entry and analysis. Data was collected in a day. Confidentiality of response provided was also assured by the researchers. Data collected were subjected to the Statistical Package for Social Scientist version 20. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage and standard deviation were used to analyze the socio-demographic variables while Pearson correlation and independent sample t-test analyses were used to analyze the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1 Summary of Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>Levels</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage (%)</i> |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Sex | Male | 74 | 52.9 |
| | Female | 66 | 47.1 |
| | Total | 140 | 100 |
| Religion | Christianity | 83 | 59.3 |
| | Islam | 57 | 40.7 |
| | Total | 140 | 100 |
| Age | 16-20 | 51 | 36.4 |
| | 21-25 | 58 | 41.4 |
| | 26-30 | 23 | 16.4 |
| | 31-35 | 8 | 0.8 |
| | Total | 140 | 100 |
| Ethnic | Yoruba | 93 | 66.4 |
| | Igbo | 37 | 26.4 |
| | Hausa | 10 | 7.2 |
| | Total | 140 | 100 |
| Marital status | Single | 115 | 82.1 |
| | Married | 25 | 17.9 |
| | TOTAL | 140 | 100 |

Table 1 showed that 74(52.9%) of the total respondents were male, female respondents were 66(47.1%) of total respondents. It is also noted from the table that 51(36.4%) of total respondents are within the age of 16-20 years, 58(41.4%) are within the age of 21-25 years of age, 23(16.4%) are within 26-30 years of age and only 8(0.8%) are within 31-35 years of age.

Meanwhile 115(82.1%) respondents were single while 25(17.9%) of respondents were married. The table also shows that 83(59.3%) of total respondents are affiliated to Christian religion while 57(40.7%) are affiliated to Islamic religion. Finally 93(66.4%) of total respondents are Yoruba's, 37(26.4%) are from the Igbo 10 (7.2%) are from the Hausa.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis one: The hypothesis stated that entrepreneurial intention will be significantly lesser among women than among the men counterparts. The hypothesis was tested with an independent sample t-test. The result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: An Independent sample t-test table showing difference between men and women on entrepreneurial intention

| Variable | N | X | S.D | T | Df | P-value |
|----------|----|-------|------|-------|-----|---------|
| Male | 74 | 58.47 | 10.7 | | | |
| | | | | 1.608 | 138 | >0.05 |
| Female | 66 | 61.00 | 7.24 | | | |

The result in table 2 showed that there was no significant difference between male and female students on entrepreneurship intention ($t(138) = 1.81, p > .05$). The hypothesis stated was therefore rejected. This implies that on the average both male and female have similar entrepreneurial intentions.

Hypothesis two states that entrepreneurial intention will be significantly less likely for undergraduates with low self-efficacy than for undergraduates with high self-efficacy. The hypothesis was tested with an independent sample t-test. The result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: An independent sample t-test table showing difference between high and low self efficacy respondents on entrepreneurial intention

| Variable | N | X | S.D | T | Df | P-value |
|--------------------|-----|-------|------|-------|-----|---------|
| High self efficacy | 131 | 60.99 | 7.62 | | | |
| | | | | 7.466 | 138 | <0.05 |
| Low self efficacy | 9 | 40.78 | 11.0 | | | |

The result presented in table 3 revealed that there is significant difference between respondents with high self efficacy and those with low self efficacy on entrepreneurial intention ($t(138) = 7.47, p < 0.05$). It was further shown from the difference of means that respondents with high self efficacy show more entrepreneur intention ($M = 60.99, SD = 7.62$) than their counterparts with low self efficacy ($M = 40.78, SD = 11.0$). The stated hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Discussion

The influence of gender and self efficacy on entrepreneurial intention among Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates in Ile-Ife, was investigated in the present study. The first hypothesis which postulates that there will be no significant influence of gender on entrepreneurial intention was accepted as a result of findings from the empirical study. The result indicated that there is no significant influence of gender on intention to self employed. This means that the fact that an individual is male or female is not a leverage as an advantage over others in term of intention to establish their personal business, this result negates the popular conception of the people on the fact that they perceived men to be more business oriented than their women counterparts, this result indicated that on an average, male and female have similar motives in establishing their own personal business. While being a driving force in global economy, the number of enterprises owned by women has increased persistently (Greene, Frank, Cherry and Fallik, 2003), yet many business sectors remain dominated by males, presenting a challenge to women entrepreneurs (Godwin, Stevens, Brenner and Brush, 2006). However, some studies (e.g. Chaganti & Parasuraman, 1996; Fischer et al., 1993; Kalleberg & Leicht, 1991) provide evidence that female-run businesses perform relatively well in comparison with male-run companies.

Taking the above into account, we should point out that despite the recent growing interest in female entrepreneurship; the majority of the research examines entrepreneurial intention in terms of men when making assumptions and judgements of characteristics of women-led businesses and women entrepreneurship, both in research and in practice.

A growing number of studies also consider significant gender differences between entrepreneurial intention vis-à-vis aspects of personal and business profile: they start and run businesses in different manners, have different experiences and backgrounds, aim at different goals, and structure their businesses in different ways (Verheul, Hulaner and Thurik, 2006). In general, businesses led by females underperform in a number of areas (Verheul, Henriques, Knaap & Bischoff, 2003) and are characterized as smaller in size compared to those led by male counterparts (Carter, Gartner and Reynolds, 1997; Hill, Henry & Leitch, 2006). This can be related to the sector their businesses are in, which is more likely to have low entry barriers, low profit margins, and high competition (Verheul & Thurik, 2001). Females tend to have less business experience (Fischer, 1993, Tsyganova & Shirokova, 2010) and their businesses are usually undercapitalized (Carter, 2000; Marlow & Patton, 2005).

The second hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between a respondent that reported high self efficacy and those that reported low self efficacy on entrepreneur intention is rejected following the result of the findings. The analysis result postulates that there is significant difference between respondents that reported high and low self efficacy on entrepreneur intention with high self efficacy respondents reported higher intention to engage in entrepreneur than their low self efficacy counterparts. By implication this means that an individual that belief they have high capacities, potential and competency to successfully carry out an action have high intention of engaging in entrepreneurial activities than those with low self-efficacy. These individual as reported by this empirical study belief they can cope with entrepreneurial challenges and life stressor that may otherwise discourage them from taking the risk of establishing their own personal business. High self efficacy respondents are risk takers and therefore, always engage in activities that involve risks such as entrepreneurship. The result of this study is supported by the works of Lent, 1997, and Zhao, 2005. Lent (1997) found that self-efficacy was significantly related to career interests, career choice goals (intentions), and occupational performance. However, Lent (1997) also found that self-efficacy is the sole mediator between a person's abilities and his or her career interests. Self-efficacy may be used to predict the intended career-related intentions and behavior of individuals. It has been established that self-efficacy is the major influence on career-related behavior in Bandura's social cognitive theory. Zhao's (2005) study provided evidence that individuals choose to become entrepreneurs because they are high in entrepreneurial self-efficacy—the belief that they can succeed in this role. Also, their results supported the critical mediating role of self-efficacy in entrepreneurial intentions for three of the four antecedent variables (perceptions of formal learning, entrepreneurial experience, risk propensity and gender).

Conclusion

One of the main driving forces behind every nation's economy is entrepreneurship, especially in the developing economy like Nigeria. Entrepreneurial activities provides a solution to massive unemployment in the country and may otherwise lead to increase in Gross domestic product (GDP) as well as per-capital income and finally improve standard of living of the people, thereby reducing the endemic unemployment in the country. From the above study it can be concluded that the starting point for any individual to begin the conceptual phase of entrepreneurship is for that individual to build a high efficacy in self before engaging in entrepreneurial expenditures. Gender is an insignificant variable with respect to the intention of any individual to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Males and females alike are equally probable in engaging in entrepreneurship. This may be as a result of the present situation in the country where white collar jobs of government are fast declining and the realization that one needs to think in terms of providing employment for him or herself. It is recommended that youth should continually seek to evolve into entrepreneurs and should stop the limiting mental paradigm and cliché of already made 'white collar job' after graduation. It is also recommended that the government should intensify developmental programs that increase awareness and specific competencies about the concept of entrepreneurship among undergraduate students.

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