

**ATTITUDE AND GENDER AS PREDICTORS OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT
INTENTIONS OF UNDERGRADUATE ECONOMICS STUDENTS IN
SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN OSUN STATE**

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment situation in Nigeria has worsened in recent times as many university graduates roam the streets without any employment. Different government interventions aimed at creating employment opportunities have not significantly improve the situation. The newly introduced entrepreneurship education by the National Universities Commission (NUC) has been applauded by different stakeholders, but the cognitive knowledge of entrepreneurship has not been translated into job creation by graduates. This study thus, aimed at identifying sundry factors that influence self-employment intentions of undergraduate Economics students in four private universities in Osun State. The research applies a regression research design involving 122 final year students who were randomly selected from four private universities. Two instruments used were: Students' Attitude Towards entrepreneurship Scale (SATES) and Self-Employment Intention Questionnaire (SIQ). Three research questions were raised and answered and the data obtained were analysed using linear regression and Pearson product moment correlation. The results show that, there was a positive moderate relationship between attitude and self-employment intention with $R = 526$, gender and self-employment intention had a significant relationship with $R = 535$ and male being the most influential predictive variable. The combination of the two independent variables had a significant positive relationship. From the findings of this study, it was observed that there is a positive but moderated relationship among, attitude, gender and students' self-employment intention. Therefore, it was concluded that, there is a great possibility of having some graduates who will want to pursue self-employment as a career option if the conducive environment is provided through government policies and actions.

Key words: Predictors, Attitude, Gender, Undergraduate, Students and Self-employment Intentions

Introduction

Nigerian has been severally described as the largest economy in Africa. It is also one of the largest crude oil-producing countries within the OPEC nations. With all these potentials and with about 200 million population and other natural resources, Nigeria has been bedeviled by massive youth unemployment. Massive unemployment has cut across gender, age and educational qualification. The government in its efforts to tackle this national challenge has instituted many intervention programmes to ensure that the youth are

oriented and reoriented to pursue self-employment as an alternative to engage in productive economic activities. In recent times, this novel initiative has been taken to the tertiary institutions with the introduction of entrepreneurship training for undergraduate students. Though there are courses on entrepreneurship which are compulsory for all students, there seems to be a mismatch between the numbers of undergraduate students who went through these entrepreneurship training and the number that eventually becomes entrepreneurial and self-employed. This then suggests that there could be factors that may determine who becomes an entrepreneur besides the mere entrepreneurship training at the tertiary institutions.

Although entrepreneurship training has its own grade and most often students pass excellently, these performances have not been translated into creation of concrete enterprises as most of them possess negative attitude towards self-employment. Sundstrom (2005) as cited by Nwaimo (2019) observed that one cannot educate himself to become an entrepreneur, it is an attitude. This implies that, to become self-employed is not only a function of any theoretical knowledge garnered, but there is an attitude which must accompany the knowledge in order to incline one towards entrepreneurship. In the same vein, becoming entrepreneurial has been observed to be gender-sensitive. Because of the inherent attributes of entrepreneurs, many undergraduate see it as something which they might not be able to venture into due to their gender stereotype. Therefore, gender has been observed in literature as one of the predictors of the self-employment intention of young people who often base their career choices on their gender stereotype.

Entrepreneurship intentions are very strong factors that precede human behaviours. According to Azjen (1991) intentions are a good predictor of future behaviour. Hence, Abun, Foronda, Agoot, Belandres and Magallanez (2018) define entrepreneurial intention as a mental orientation such as desire, wish and hope influencing people's choice of entrepreneurship. It is considered as personal orientation toward owning a business in the future. Therefore, Kolvereid, 1996 and McStay, (2008) stated that entrepreneurial intention is defined as an individual's willingness to be self-employed. Bird (1988) adds that, intention is a state of mind directing a person's attention (and therefore experience and action) toward a specific object (goal) or a path in order to achieve something (means) and more specifically, entrepreneurial intentions as aimed at either creating a new venture or creating new value in existing ventures.

The earliest approaches focused on the existence of certain personality traits that could be associated with entrepreneurial activity. These are Davidsson (1995), need for power, Hatch and Zweig, 2000; McClelland (1961), propensity to take risk, Begley and Boyd, 1987 and Brice, (2002), need for affiliation, McClelland 2006; Wainer and Rubin, (2016), internal locus of control, Begley and Boyd, 1987; Bird, (1988) tolerance of ambiguity and Schumpeter (1934) innovations. Afterward, other studies as cited by Sata (2013) have pointed to the importance of demographic variables such as age, gender, family background, religion, education, experience, and so on (Reynolds et al., 1994; Robinson et al., 1991; Hisrich and Peters, 1989 and Krueger , 1993) as an antecedents to become entrepreneur. Several other factors associated with successful entrepreneurs include a high

need for achievement Henry et al., (2003) and a desire for autonomy (Patel, 2012). Therefore, Individual's entrepreneurial intentions are important variables to predict their entrepreneurial behaviours. Hence, gender and attitude could affect the mental state of undergraduates.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria has become a source of concern for many stakeholders. The situation is complicated with the massive turnout of tertiary institutions' graduates without any available job openings to absorb them. In a bid to solve this problem, the Federal Government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) introduced entrepreneurship as a compulsory course so that undergraduate students will become creators of jobs instead of perpetual job seekers. This objective cannot be said to have been adequately achieved as there are still many unemployed graduates even after passing through entrepreneurship courses at the undergraduate level. This then suggest that, besides the entrepreneurship knowledge, other factors such as attitude of the students towards self-employment and their gender affect their willingness or intention to go into self-employment.

Most of the students that patronise private universities in Nigeria hail from mostly above average income homes. Some of their parents and sponsors own private enterprises and may want them to continue with the management of these businesses upon graduation. This however, provides them with certain privileges which are not available to several other students attending public universities. Hence, there appears an unwieldiness and low intentions of choosing self-employment as a career choice. There were other different reasons given by respondents for this development which includes; business environment not encouraging self-employment in Nigeria and self-employment sector being dominated by non-university graduates given rise to unhealthy competitions. It has been observed that, female students prefer security that comes from paid jobs than the uncertainties that characterise the self-employment subsector. Overall, students have bemoaned the undue societal respects for paid jobs and the disdain to which self-employed is regarded as a major reason for negative attitude towards self-employment. Because most student possess negative attitude towards becoming self-employed, they harbour negative feelings towards self-employment. Fatoki (2010) observed that, negative attitude results in discouragement and failures in venturing into self-employment career. In the same vein, Abu Saifan (2016) in a study of undergraduate Economic students in three states in Nigeria observed that, graduates do not possess a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, resulting in the failure for them to address the opportunities in this field. However, other studies opined that students' positive attitude influenced their decision to venture into self-employment. A longitudinal study by Godwin (2006) revealed that, students with positive thinking towards independent career and self-employment were found to be involved in businesses and ventures after many years of graduation.

In all these studies, gender has not been adequately considered as a contributory variable to self-employment decision. Luca, Gialuca, Rosanna and Annamaria (2018) concluded in

their study that gender influences self-employment intentions indirectly through their effect on attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. Hence, Adekoya (1996) in his study found that male students have a significantly higher preference for self-employment than female students. Cognizance of the inconclusive nature of these issues, this study takes its focus to investigate the predictive powers of attitude and gender of entrepreneurship intention of undergraduate students.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the stated problem, the following research questions have been raised and answered in this study.

1. Will the attitude of students predict self-employment intention?
2. What is the relationship between genders, attitude and self-employment intention?
3. Which of the predictor variables is most influential in predicting the dependent variable?

Methodology

This study utilizes a survey methodology with a view to determining the predictive powers of attitude and gender on self-employment intentions of undergraduate Economics students.

Population

The population for this study comprise of all 400 and 300 level undergraduate students of Economic in the following selected private universities in Osun State: Adeleke University, Fountain University, Redeemers University and Oduduwa University. These are the four most prominent private universities in Osun State in terms of ownership, students' population and recent NUC rating. The average population in each of these universities is 1000. Furthermore, 400 level students who would soon be graduating and 300 level who must have done Entrepreneurship courses were used because, they are the most qualified cluster to give informed responses towards self-employment intentions.

Sampling Technique and Sample

Purposive sampling was used to select the four universities. First, ownership; two of the universities are owned by religious organisations and the other two are owned by individual entrepreneurs. Simple random sampling was used to select participants from 400 and 300 level students in the universities. The size was 122; comprising of all 400 and 300 level students who have done Entrepreneurship Course as required by NUC. All the students were given the opportunity to participate in the study.

Sample Summary

University	Location	No. of students per university
Adeleke	Ede	40
Fountain	Osogbo	22
Redeemers	Ede	37
Oduduwa	Ile-Ife	23
Total		122

Instrument

Students' Attitudinal Scale (SAS) is a self-report attitudinal scale designed by the researcher to obtain information on the attitude of the respondent towards the establishment of businesses. It has two sections: A and B. Section contains the biodata of the respondent while section B contains the items. They're also three components in section B: self-efficacy, innovation and perseverance. It has 5 scale rating options beginning from 1-5. 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest. Cronbach alpha will be used to establish internal consistency of the instrument.

Self-Employment Intention Questionnaire (SEIQ) is a questionnaire designed by the researcher to elicit responses from the participants on their intention of establishes new businesses after graduation. It has two sections; A and B. Section A contains biodata of the participants while section B contains the items. It is 4-point Likert scale of (Strongly Interested, Interested, Not Interested and Strongly Not Interested) with five items.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected from students through questionnaire administration which lasted for four days.

Method of data analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation will be used to answer research questions one and two, while multiple regressions would be used to analyse research question three.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research question one: 1. Will attitude of students predict self-employment intention?

Table 2.1: Predictive relationship between attitude and self-employment intentions of undergraduate economics students.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.203	2.278		1.406	.162
	TotalSAC	.213	.031	.526	6.771	.000

Significant at 0.05

Result:

Table 2.1a and 2.1b present a multiple linear regression was calculated to predict participants’ self-employment intention based on their attitude score. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1,120) = 45.849, p < .001$), with an R^s of .203. Subjects’ predicted self-employment intention is equal to $7.555 + 153$. Hence, the attitude was a significant predictor of self-employment intention.

Discussion:

The calculated significant relationship between attitude and self-employment intention support one of the objectives of studying economics which is to make student self-reliant after graduation (Obemeata, 1992). The psychological-economic models of Davidson (1995 and the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991) postulated that intention level would be the best predictors of survival for the expected behaviour based on individual attitudes. Therefore, the attitude towards entrepreneurship can be used to predict the level of intention to shape the behaviour of an entrepreneurship career choice. Attitude is assumed to a better explanatory factor for a career choice than demographic variables (Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner & Slatter, 1991). Hence, Nagarathanam and Buang (2016) conclude that students’ entrepreneurial career choice can be predicted based on their attitude. Davey et al. (2011), once observed that early exposure to the entrepreneurship field will drive attitude towards the cultivation of self-employment intention. Mohd Salleh et al. (2005), Sudipa and Damodharan (2012) cited in Buang, et al (2016) state that attitude is one of the important factors in determining the success of individuals in entrepreneurship.

Attitude which is an individual possession is influenced by factors like self-efficacy, innovativeness and risk-bearing. Nandram and Samson 2006; Jones et al. 2011) submit that, individual’s attitude in deciding who he would like to become and whether to be involved or not, is based on the individual’s positive attitude towards the object. In the same vein, Wu and Li (2011) explain that, attitude of the individual arouses feelings toward an object and whether or not the individual enjoys strong belief in the object will lead to action. Self-employment is highly desired but it takes a strong positive attitude to venture into it. Linan et al. (2011) and Zahariah et al. (2010) in Buang et al (2016) mentioned that

attitude is an important element to determine the intention towards entrepreneurship or self-employment in a person.

In view of the above result and similar literature, attitude indeed plays a critical role in determining who becomes self-employed or entrepreneur. There is a need for a proper programme that is aimed at shaping students' attitude to favour self-employment. This could be done through training, mentoring and provision of interest-free loans.

2. What is the relationship between gender, attitude and self-employment intention?

Table 2.2: Correlation between gender attitude and self-employment intention of participants.

			TotalSAC	SEINTQUEtotal	What is your gender
Spearman's rho	TotalSAC	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.522**	-.460**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	122	122	122
	SEINTQUEtotal	Correlation Coefficient	.522**	1.000	-.552**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	122	122	122
	What is your gender	Correlation Coefficient	-.460**	-.552**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	122	122	122

Significant at 0.05

Result

A spearman rho correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the variables. A moderate positive correlation was found between attitude and self-employment intention ($r(120) = .522, p < 0.05$). This indicates that participants want to go into self-employment as an alternative to paid job. However, a moderate negative relationship was found between self-employment intention and gender ($r(120) = -.552, p < 0.05$).

Discussion

While the major motivation for self-employment is to be productively active, gender has been identified as a factor that affects attitude and self-employment intention. There have been studies on the difference between men and women in the self-employment intention formation stage with men having more intention to become self-employed (Snnear and Jenssen, 2014). Leroy et al. (2009) found the effect of gender to be mediated by personal attitude towards entrepreneurship and the perceived behavioural control. Many other

studies have found that males have a higher preference for entrepreneurship behaviour than females (Oswald, 1989). Kolvereid (1996) found that males have a significantly higher preference for self-employment than females. Ferri, Ginesti, Spano and Zampella (2018) concluded in their study that, gender influences self-employment intentions indirectly through their effect on attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. Similarly, Veciana et al. (2005) investigated the attitude, social norms and perceived behavioural control for entrepreneurship according to students' gender in Spain and Puerto Rico and concluded that, although the female students interviewed had a favourable perception of the attitude towards entrepreneurship, their perceived social pressures were not positive and their intentions were relatively low. Contrarily, Davidsson (2003) investigated the determinants of entrepreneurial intention based on Swedish participants and concluded that gender has little or no direct influence on entrepreneurial intentions.

The relation between gender and attitude often affect self-employment intention of the persons involved. This is supported by Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner and Slatter, (1991) who assert that women limitations affect their attitude which in turn influences lower their confidence, enthusiasm, inclination and aspiration toward entrepreneurship. Men have more risk-taking capability which is why they invest more resources towards actualizing their self-employment or entrepreneurial ambitions. Attitude is exhibited through different media. Hence Shaver (1995) submits that entrepreneurs who show some personality traits such as strong achievement orientation, strong individual control, and willingness to take risks, endurance, and intelligence prefer to establish their own business and become boss for their own business rather than they are controlled by other people, though this might not be the single reason for going into business. However, from the literature reviewed, it is established that self-employment intention is influenced by gender and attitude which may not be on a linear relationship. Hence, must educational and economic encouragement should be given to female students through training and provision of accessible soft loans.

3. Which of the gender is most influential in predicting the dependent variable?

Table 2.3: Predictive relationship gender and self-employment intentions of undergraduate economics students.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	23.483	1.929		12.175	.000
	Male	-4.100	1.917	-.870	-2.139	.035
	Female	-3.191	.953	-1.362	-3.350	.001

Significant at 0.05

Result

Multiple linear regression was calculated to predict subjects' self-employment intention based on their gender. A significant regression equation was found ($F(2, 120) = 23.835, p < .001$), with R^2 of .286. Participants' predicted self-employment score is equal to $23.483 - 4.100(1) - 3.191(2)$, where the male is coded as = 1 and female is coded as = 2. It implies that gender is a significant predictor, however, the male is the most influential predicting variable.

Discussion:

The result of this study is in agreement with several research findings. Gender has been identified as a significant predictor of self-employment intention. The first scientist who defined the self-employment intention was B. Bird in 1983. He understood it as the state of mind directing a person's attention and action towards self-employment as opposed to organizational employment. Furthermore, one of the most popular factors that have been the subject of research on self-employment intention is gender. According to Pawlak (2016), for centuries self-employment or entrepreneurship has been symbolically attributed to men. It often appear as if self-employment is connected with such traits as initiative taking, relative risk and accomplishment which are traditionally thought to be a domain of men, unlike women, who are attributed to such traits as passivity, adaptation and flexibility (Pawlak, 2016) the trend has changed as more women are now engaging in self-employment. Minniti, Allen and Langowitz (2005) submit that nowadays more than one-third of all people involved in entrepreneurial activity in the world are women.

In a cross-cultural study, Shinnar et al. (2012) reported a significant positive gender effect on entrepreneurship intention. Ugwu and Ugwu (2012) corroborate that, wom entrepreneurs are increasingly becoming significant contributors to the entrepreneurial growth around the world, opening up economies and creating employment. Minniti et al (2005) maintain that, women ventures are no longer connected with housework; more and more frequently they are owners and managers of great ventures. However, there have been studies which found gender having no significant on self-employment intention. Pawlak study on the Influence of Gender on the Entrepreneurial Intention of Polish High School Students revealed that, there was no Significant Influence of Gender on Entrepreneurial Intention and that the same factor affects Entrepreneurial Intention in males as well as in females cases. However, Shook and Bratianu (2010) in their study on the role of gender on entrepreneurial intention among students found that gender as a control variable was significant, noting that male students found entrepreneurship more attractive than female students. This is in tandem with the result of this current study. Furthermore, Leroy et al. (2009) in their study reported that, while male students were achievement-driven, females were interested in a balanced life. With a plethora of youth unemployment in the country, entrepreneurship intention should be encouraged amongst undergraduate students. More attention should also be given to female students to spur them into embracing self-employment rather than being passive and interested in a balanced life.

Conclusion

The two predictor variables, attitude and gender predicted the dependent variable (self-employment) significantly. It thus implies that self-employment or entrepreneurship intention is a function of other antecedents which includes attitudes toward behaviour, subjective norms

and perceived behavioural control. The stronger the entrepreneurial intention, the higher the probability of starting a business in the future and attitudes toward behaviour plays a critical role in an individual's awareness of the outcome of behaviour and the perceived opinion of it. There was a significant relationship between gender and self-employment intention. Moreover, it equally revealed that male respondents are most likely to venture into a self-employed career than their female counterparts. If this is allowed, it means that there could be more female unemployed youth who are not interested in venturing into self-employment. Therefore, universities should make entrepreneurship education more practical by involving real-time entrepreneurs in the teaching of entrepreneurship courses.

Recommendations

From the findings made by this study, the following recommendations are instructive:

- The National Universities Commission (NUC) entrepreneurship education should be fully developed with the involvement of seasoned entrepreneurs needed to complement the efforts of the academic.
- Self-employment should be modelled for the students to appreciate the inherent opportunities and how they can benefit from them for a sustainable national development.
- The government should make interest free loans available to those who are interested in starting their own businesses so that start-up funds would not serve as a hindrance.
- Government policies should be formulated to encourage women who are interested in starting their own businesses.

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