

Personal Variables and perception on Entrepreneurship Education among Undergraduates in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study, guided by three research questions and three hypotheses, investigated the influence of age, gender and self-efficacy on perception on entrepreneurship education among undergraduates. A survey design was adopted. The population consisted 594 undergraduates of the three Faculties of Education, consisting 284 males and 310 females. A sample size of 500 students was selected using the stratified random sampling technique and the simple random sampling technique. A validated “Personal Variables and Perception on Entrepreneurship Education Questionnaire” (PVPEEQ) was used for data collection. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was established for the instrument using the Cronbach method. One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the influence of age while the independent t-test statistics was used to test influence of gender and self-efficacy on perception on entrepreneurship education at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that whereas age does not have a significant influence on students’ perception on entrepreneurship education, gender and entrepreneurial self-efficacy have significant influence on perception on entrepreneurship education among students. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that gender sensitive sensitization on the need for entrepreneurship education should be carried out among undergraduates in the universities.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, education, perception, gender, self-efficacy.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education has become a phenomenon of profound interest the world over in the 21st century for government, corporate organizations, and institutions of learning as well as individuals. The importance of entrepreneurship education no doubt accounts for this attraction. In order to comprehend, appreciate and consolidate its gains, governments

through institutions of higher learning have embarked on a lot of scientific investigations, and empirical findings abound on entrepreneurship education. Increased emphasis on this aspect of education today is clearly due to the realization that it plays a vital role in stimulating economic activity and reducing unemployment among individuals in a nation (Tambari & Baridoma, 2017; Maina, 2013). It is little wonder that focus on entrepreneurship education has reached a global scale. Corporate organizations and governments have taken this phenomenon with keen interest because entrepreneurship education is a viable tool for economic progress and social transformation.

Conceptually entrepreneurship education has been variously defined. Gautam (2015) defined entrepreneurship education as all activities aimed at fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills, covering aspects such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation. Entrepreneurship education creates entrepreneurial culture among young people, and helps potential entrepreneurs to identify and pursue opportunities. Gautam further argues that entrepreneurship education is not limited to boosting start-ups, innovative ventures and new jobs but also builds competency, helping young people to become creative and self-confident in whatever they undertake. For Mani (2017), entrepreneurship education is the collection of formalized teachings that educate anyone interested in business creation.

The European Commission (2021) highlighted the concept as well as benefit of entrepreneurship education in their assertion, that it gives responsibility to learners by encouraging them to do things themselves, guides them towards identifying and seizing opportunities, supports inventive learning, encourages confidence in the learner's own capabilities, pushes students to take risks and encourages them to cooperate with others. In another study, Gautam et al. (2015) contend that entrepreneurship education is the study of the source of opportunities and the process of discovery. However, the writers argue that entrepreneurship education is not just about teaching someone to run a business, it is also about encouraging creative thinking and promoting a strong sense of self-worth and empowerment. Therefore, creativity and self-efficacy are basic entrepreneurial traits to be inculcated on students in implementing entrepreneurship education in schools.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria FRN (2004) defined entrepreneurship education as those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technology related sciences and the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (FRN, 2004). Vaicekauskaite and Valackiene (2018) broadly defined entrepreneurship as the ability to create wealth and the dynamic interaction between the individual and any opportunities in a given environment marked by a high degree of complexity and uncertainty. The writers remarked that entrepreneurship is surrounded by myths of risk taking, moment-success and that young people can get wrong attitude; therefore, it is important to study early experience of successful entrepreneurs. They agree that studies of this nature are very necessary among undergraduates who are exposed to entrepreneurship education.

The importance of entrepreneurship education cannot be overemphasized. Chinyere (2019) highlighted its importance to individuals and nations. These include job creation, individual competence and self-development, economic growth, agency for social change,

anticipating future needs, promoting innovation, research and development as well as regional development. Entrepreneurship education also provides individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and to act on them. It includes instructions on opportunity recognition, commercializing a concept, managing resources, and initiating a business venture (Grecu et al., 2017). Also, entrepreneurship education and training can direct students towards certain career choices (Germinah, 2016).

Furthermore, recent studies show that entrepreneurship can be promoted through entrepreneurship education and training (Lackeus, 2015; Petridou et al., 2009). It is for this reason that the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 2004 recommended the diversification of the tertiary Education curriculum so as to integrate entrepreneurship education as an important component of the curriculum. It is as a strategy to encourage entrepreneurship culture among Nigerian students and eliminate incidence of cultism, prostitution, kidnapping and hostage taking, and other social vices which sometimes are as a result of unemployment (Ekuri et al., 2013). Following this recommendation, the federal government in 2007, through the NUC, introduced entrepreneurship education in the university curriculum. In compliance, the Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) was established in the University of Calabar in 2009 to stimulate and motivate the learning and acquisition of entrepreneurship, knowledge, skills and attitude.

Interestingly, since entrepreneurship education became a phenomenon of research interest, literature is awash with studies in this direction. For example, according to Brijlal (2011), factors such as the course of study and race are the motivating variables for choice of entrepreneurship education among students. Marvin and Flora (2014) carefully explored institutional motivation to include: generating high-quality human capital with entrepreneurial thinking attributes and values, producing more graduate entrepreneurs who will act as agents of economic transformation among the many other research efforts made so far.

However, the researchers are not aware of any ongoing research directed at establishing students' perception on entrepreneurship education based on their age, gender and self-efficacy in the University of Calabar. Although Germinah (2016) discovered several factors serving as constraints to entrepreneurship education in institutions which include: inadequate curricula and study programme, wrong learning methods, negligence of students' personal environment, lack of trained teachers, lack of career information and business possibilities, lack of business and education linkages, these researchers seek to investigate students' personal variables and perception on entrepreneurship education in the University of Calabar. The researchers believe that the success of entrepreneurship education depends to a reasonable extent on student's perception on the scheme and their willingness to learn.

Personal variables are demographic characteristics or attributes of undergraduates in the University of Calabar. Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment (Singh, 2022; Fernanda et al., 2016). This means that an individual's perception of something is a function of his personal characteristics. Ibrahim (2014) found out that there is a positive and significant relationship with respect to perception and source of encouragement about entrepreneurship. Muharratul and Yong (2012) found out that subjective norm and

community support have profound influence towards perception of entrepreneurship as career choice. This means that the more favourable the attitude and the subjective norm with respect to becoming self-employed, the stronger the individual's intention to become self-employed; and the more positive community support received by the student, the higher will be the entrepreneurial intention. They also found that students with positive self-efficacy and entrepreneurial interest will also have stronger intention to be self-employed.

The concept of age describes how old a person is at a particular time. Research findings show that age is decisive in perception and cognition because the nature of perception about the environment is a function of one's age (Murman, 2015; Bouchard, 2016). This is to say that age is a determining factor in perception. It is often considered as a control variable in several studies, because of its influence on career decisions. Young adults are more explorative and forward about trying new fields of endeavor, even those with some degree of risk and difficulty, to test themselves in the situations in which risks must be taken (Biney, 2021). In their perception, the taking of the risk means that they have nothing destroying in it; even if they are unsuccessful, they take the lesson learned as experiences. Age differences account for why people perceive things differently as they see things on the basis of sensory interpretation which largely depends on maturation/age. Young adults' perception could be largely different from adult in the sense that so much is ahead of them about life; influences from peers, exciting trends, influences from role models, and so on, shape their perception and world view generally.

Undergraduates in the University of Calabar fall within the category of young adults and it is important to know what perception they have about entrepreneurship education as influenced by their age. The University of Calabar is attended by young adults from different geo-political zones in Nigeria. This does not in any way imply that there are no other older age categories that may also have their perception about entrepreneurship education. Therefore, how age influence students' perception about the scheme is crucial to the success of the entire programme. Sahinidis et al. (2021) found out that age and prior working experience affect entrepreneurial intention. Other empirical findings have shown that there is a positive significant relationship between the perception on entrepreneurship education and age (Akarue & Dafe, 2014; Oriarewo et al., 2013).

An individual's gender has a strong influence on the nature of perception, attitude and behaviour (Atli, 2017). Conceptually, gender has been seen as the range of physical, biological, mental and behavioural characteristics pertaining and differentiating between the feminine and masculine population (Hameed & Aseel, 2014). Whereas sex is a biological concept – the state of being male or female, gender is a social construct (Jones, 2012). Nimitha (2015) found out that gender is a significant factor in perception on entrepreneurship. In contrast, Mustapha and Selvaraju (2015) in their study found out that gender is not a significant factor in its relationship with students' intention to be entrepreneurs. Jones (2012) argued that most societies today have placed some behaviour as feminine and others as masculine - a situation that has assigned some activities or roles as male (masculine) and others as female (feminine).

However, Ronkko and Lepisto (2014) believe that gender, cultural and industrial heritage can moderate the impact of entrepreneurship education; and even though findings on

entrepreneurial attitudes show that men have stronger entrepreneurial intentions than women, both culture and gender moderate the conceptions of the entrepreneurial intention. Furthermore, Thebaud (2016) found out that there is anecdotal evidence that cultural beliefs about gender and entrepreneurship have consequences for women entrepreneurs. He stated that women entrepreneurs frequently report that perceived lack of credibility by investors due to their gender, places them at a disadvantage in their searches for investors. This can have serious influence on perception towards entrepreneurship education by female students. Thebaud (2016) also observed that there is disparity in expectation by people from task performed by men and that performed by women. That people tend to expect more competent task performances from men than from women, except in cases where the task being performed is particularly "feminine", such as a nurturing task. It is particularly in contexts where the task in question is male-typed, when gender beliefs about competence become linked to performance evaluations and ability assessments.

Several studies have found males more entrepreneurially disposed than females (Thebaud, 2016; Ramoni, 2015; Tshikovhi & Shambare, 2015; Neelam, 2014; Oriarewo et al., 2013; Farrington et al., 2012; Urban, 2011). Other studies however, contrast these findings reporting that females' entrepreneurial competencies are higher than that of males, thus corroborating the assertion that females' entrepreneurial age-based self-image has more effect on their entrepreneurial competencies than those of males (Mohammad et al., 2018; Ronkko & Lepisto, 2014; Manuere et al., 2013; Popowska, 2013). However, gender comparative studies have shown more similarities than differences between male and female entrepreneurs in innovation, marketing traits, motivation and success rates (Said et al., 2014)

Self-efficacy has been conceptualized as a person's perception or judgment of his or her own abilities to initiate and execute a task to achieve optimal performance (Mani & Mahendra, 2019). It is also regarded as one's optimistic self-reliance and self-belief that one can build up; the expertise to carry out innovative or complicated responsibilities and to deal with alterations in performance (Ahmed & Shaista, 2011). Underlying the concept of self-efficacy is the social-cognitive assumption that thinking and feelings influence the success in taking action. This appeal to common sense that those who are pessimistic about their own abilities are more likely to fail; while those who are optimistic about their own abilities are more likely to lead to success (Rose, 2022). Self-efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act (Zulkosky, 2009). When an individual recognizes self-efficacy, it enables him in setting goals, attempting to achieve them, boosts determination and overcomes dissatisfaction and poor performance (Ahmed & Shaista, 2011). Self-efficacy qualities include: forward looking self-sufficient, optimistic rather than pessimistic, task oriented, restless and energetic, self-confident, persistent, determined and dedication to completing a task (Rose, 2022; Ackerman, 2018). People are motivated by subjective beliefs about their self-efficacy rather than by objective competences (Stankiewicz & Wasilezuk, 2012).

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is defined as an individual's confidence in his or her ability to successfully perform entrepreneurial roles and tasks and lead to success (Newman et al., 2019; Bayron, 2013; Campo, 2010). Several studies show a positive correlation between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention (Iro-Idoro & Iro-Idoro, 2015; Asoni, 2011; Izquierdo & Buelens, 2008). For Asoni (2011), self-efficacy is same as self-

confidence and intelligence. He found out that individuals with higher measure of intelligence and self-confidence are more likely to be entrepreneur. Also, intelligence and self-confidence affect entrepreneurship through two different channels; intelligence increases business survival while self-confidence increases business creation. Perceived self-efficacy is the strongest single predictor of career choice and self-reported competencies predict entrepreneurial performance (Segal et al., 2002). Individuals with higher competencies for entrepreneurship have higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy and more entrepreneurial intentions (Izquierdo & Buelens, 2008). Iro-Idoro and Iro-Idoro (2015) found a significant composite contribution of self-efficacy in the prediction of entrepreneurial intention of students in tertiary institutions. But Afsanah and Zaidatol (2014) found a moderate self-efficacy in all entrepreneurial tasks by students in tertiary institutions. Self efficacy itself is the greatest motivation for entrepreneurship. This is because, it is intrinsic motivation that comes without external rewards.

Statement of the problem

Since entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education are perceived to play a vital role in stimulating economic activity, reducing unemployment and a tool for sustainable development, it has received so much attention from individuals, corporate organizations and governments of different nations. Research interest has also been focused in this direction from institutions of higher learning as there abound enormous empirical findings in extant literature. Although the federal government has integrated entrepreneurship education as a core course in university curriculum as a way to inculcate entrepreneurship consciousness and to equip young adults with knowledge, skills as well as values for self-reliance and as a strategy to ensure meaningful economic growth of the nation, limited research efforts have been carried out in the University of Calabar. There is therefore need for more research in this direction especially as it concerns students' perception as influenced by personal variables of age, gender and self-efficacy. The researchers believe that this will go a long way to ensure success of the entire programme.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How does students' age influence their perception on entrepreneurship education?
2. To what extent does gender influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education?
3. To what extent does entrepreneurial self-efficacy influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: Age does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education.

Ho2: Gender does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education.

Ho3 Entrepreneurial self-efficacy does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education.

Methodology

A survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all 594 regular final year undergraduates comprising of 284 males and 310 females of 2014/2015 session in the three Faculties of Education in the University of Calabar. A sample size of 500 students was selected using the stratified random sampling technique and simple random sampling technique, representing 84% of the population of 594.

The instrument used for data collection was the “Personal Variables and Perception on Entrepreneurship Education Questionnaire” (PVPEEQ). This was an 8-item close-ended questionnaire with a four-point likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), designed by the researchers and used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire had three sections (A, B and C). Section A was on personal information (age and gender); section B was on students’ Entrepreneurial self-efficacy which had 8 items while section C measured perception on entrepreneurship education. To determine the reliability of the instrument the questionnaire was administered by the researchers on fifty (50) respondents who were not part of the study population. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability method was used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire in order to find out the internal consistency of the instrument. The result of the reliability estimates of the study for the variables ranged from 0.72 to 0.82. These coefficients gave reasonable grounds for the instrument to be considered reliable for measuring the variables under study.

Different numbers were assigned to each category for easy scoring, 1 and 2 were assigned to male and female, respectively, while 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were assigned to ages 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34 and, 35 and above respectively. 4, 3, 2 and 1 were assigned to Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SD), respectively for all the items with positive statements. The scoring was reversed for all items with negative statements. The independent t-test analysis was used to test the hypothesis on gender and self-efficacy, while one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypothesis for age at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

Ho1: Age does not significantly influence students’ perception on entrepreneurship education.

Table 1: Summary of One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the influence of students' age on their perception on entrepreneurship education (n=500).

Age	N	Mean	SD
15 – 19 years	170	26.35	4.801
20 – 24 years	183	26.40	4.385
25 – 29 years	103	25.57	4.057
30 – 34 years	31	25.32	3.833
40 years and above	13	27.15	3.671

Source of variation	sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean Squares	F-value	Sig.
Between Group	86.85	4	21.712	1.110	0.351
Within groups	9684.37	495	19.564		
Total	9771.22	499			

$P > 0.5$ level; $df = 4$ and 495 ; critical F-ratio = 2.38

The result of the data analysis in table 1 shows that the calculated F-value of 1.110 is less than the critical F-value of 2.38 when tested at .05 level of significance with 4 and 495 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that age does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education was retained; implying that students' perception on entrepreneurship education is not determined by age.

Ho2: Gender does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education.

Table 2: Summary of independent t-test analysis on the influence of gender on students' perception on entrepreneurship education

Sex	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Male	243	25.66	4.448	2.507*	0.012
Female	257	26.65	4.357		

* $p < .05$ level; $df = 498$; critical t-value = 1.96

The result of data analysis in table 2 reveals that the calculated t-value (2.507) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) when tested at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that gender does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education was rejected. This implies that students' perception on entrepreneurship education is determined by gender.

Ho3: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education.

Table 3: Summary of independent t-test analysis of the influence of students' self-efficacy on their perception on entrepreneurship education (n=500).

Students' Self-efficacy	n	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig
Students with high Self-efficacy	493	26.24	4.381	2.961*	0.003
Students with low Self-efficacy	7	21.29	5.155		

* p < .05 level; df = 498; critical t-value = 1.96

The result of data analysis in table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 2.961 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 when tested at .05 level of significance with 498 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that entrepreneurial self-efficacy does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education was rejected. This implies that the higher the students' self-efficacy, the more positive their perception on entrepreneurship education and vice versa.

Discussion of findings

The result from the first hypothesis revealed that age does not significantly influence students' perception on entrepreneurship education. This implies that age does not determine how students perceive entrepreneurship education in the University of Calabar. This contradicts Akarue and Dafe (2014), Oriarewo et al. (2013) and Ibrahim (2014) whose studies indicated a significant positive relationship between age and perception on entrepreneurship education, and that the desire to be one's own boss increased with increase in age. Differences in findings could be attributed to differences in the sample size and area of study.

The second result of this study indicates a significant influence of gender on students' perception on entrepreneurship education, implying that students' perception on entrepreneurship education is determined by their gender. This corroborates findings on entrepreneurial attitudes that indicate significant gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions between men and women. Some studies found men to be more inclined towards entrepreneurship than women (Thebaud, 2016; Ramoni, 2015; Tshikovhi & Shambare, 2015; Neelam, 2014; Oriarewo et al. 2013; Farrington et al., 2012; Urban, 2011). Others indicated that females' entrepreneurial age-based self-image has more effect on their entrepreneurial competencies than those of males (Mohammad et al., 2018; Ronkko & Lepisto, 2014; Manuere et al., 2013; Popowska, 2013). This finding however contradicts Marvin and Flora (2014), Mustapha and Selvaraju (2015), whose studies revealed that gender has no influence on students' attitude towards entrepreneurship.

The result from the third hypothesis revealed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy significantly influences students' perception on entrepreneurship education. This implies that the higher the entrepreneurial self-efficacy the more positive the perception of entrepreneurship education. This finding agrees with Stankiewicz and Wasilezuk (2012) who reported that self-efficacy is associated with higher intentions to become an entrepreneur. People with a high or positive entrepreneurial self-efficacy are characterised with positive perception, attitude, intention and choice towards it. High entrepreneurship self-efficacy among

students of the University of Calabar possibly indicates that many students will choose a career in entrepreneurship in future.

Conclusion

From the findings it can be concluded that whereas age does not have a significant influence on students' perception on entrepreneurship education, gender and entrepreneurial self-efficacy have a significant influence on perception on entrepreneurship education among students in the University of Calabar.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian universities should integrate current, realistic and relevant career content for entrepreneurship education programme that will be more attractive to young adults and that promise better career prospects in entrepreneurship.
2. More gender sensitive sensitization on the need for entrepreneurship education among undergraduates in universities should be carried out on regular bases. Both male and female students should be encouraged on entrepreneurship venture.
3. Students should be encouraged to embark on startups while still pursuing their studies in school.

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