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Self-efficacy, government support, gender, and apprenticeship as predictors of entrepreneurial intention among graduates in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study sets out to unpack important predictors of entrepreneurial intention (EI) among fresh graduates in Nigeria, with specific attention to self-efficacy, government support, gender, and apprenticeship. The study provides further empirical evidence on interventions that are needed to motivate and mobilise support for entrepreneurship among the youth and to curb the menace of unemployment in the country.

Design/methodology/approach: The study utilised a dataset on apprenticeship and entrepreneurial characteristics of 16 296 graduates collected through a cross-sectional survey in 2020/1.

Findings: The study identified high EI among the graduates. Logistic regression results showed that self-efficacy, gender neutrality, access to loans, apprenticeship experience, relational support and government support are highly likely to significantly influence EI among graduates. The results suggested that to increase the pool of entrepreneurs in the country, government support and apprenticeship are fundamental, and these factors could be reinforced with entrepreneurship education and graduates' self-efficacy.

Recommendations/value: The study recommends that the government, university administrators, and relevant stakeholders need to create new and strengthen existing entrepreneurship facilities such as incubators, innovation hubs, and science parks, and float innovation and competitive business funds/grants to motivate graduates to pursue practical business ideas.

Managerial implications: A major implication of the study is that entrepreneurship education is important to boosting graduates' self-efficacy and where it is supported by government support and entrepreneurial infrastructure, there is a high likelihood of an increased stock of entrepreneurs within the system. Therefore, university administrators, SAED managers, government and key stakeholders have to create an enabling policy environment and appropriate infrastructures to support graduates' transition to entrepreneurs.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, graduate, entrepreneurship education, apprenticeship, Nigeria

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1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has been viewed as a strategic solution to the wicked problem of unemployment, especially among graduates in Africa and particularly in Nigeria (Siyanbola, 2019; Adelowo *et al.*, 2021). The argument in favour of entrepreneurship as a panacea for socio-economic challenges stems from the need to promote the development of small and medium enterprises that can create new products and generate wealth in society (Schumpeter, 1934). The relevance of entrepreneurship as a driver of economic activities is also enshrined in the Schumpeterian model of creative destruction, where it was argued that new firms or products disrupt existing market equilibrium and set the pace for a new one. In this case, industry renewals become possible either through the introduction of new products or services or by carving a niche in the existing market through innovation. It should be noted that entrepreneurs play pivotal roles in the innovation processes. Moreso, as the global economy is shifting away from resource dependence towards a knowledge economy, entrepreneurs now need to develop adequate knowledge and skills that can make them competitive in the new world order (World Bank, 2007; Lackéus, 2015). Within the knowledge economy, coherent interactions between the government, universities, research institutions, and the industry are central to entrepreneurial capacity development, access to new knowledge and innovations, and the intensity of new products or services development (OECD, 2019). There is a wide array of factors that determine the quantity and quality of entrepreneurs a nation can marshal to bolster economic growth and development. For instance, an economy with a friendly atmosphere for business registration, property protection and efficient rule of law tends to provide more incentives for entrepreneurs than otherwise (World Bank, 2022). Therefore, it is the government's responsibility to create a positive ambience through policy incentives and the provision of entrepreneurship infrastructure for new businesses to thrive.

The government of Nigeria has initiated several programmes to support entrepreneurship development in the past, including the establishment of the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN) to rejig the micro-, small and medium enterprise sector through skill development and the provision of loans; the national technology incubation programme (NTIP) to commercialise inventions from research institutions across the country; and the recent enactment of the Start-up Act 2022 to further improve business start-ups in the

Nigerian digital space among others. Other initiatives have been implemented to promote job creation and reduce unemployment (Ilevbare *et al*., 2022). The initiatives become so important considering the rate of unemployment in the country, particularly among graduates and the associated vices in society, i.e. increasing rates of unrest, kidnapping, and violence. For instance, a recent report shows a consistent rise in youth unemployment between 2011 and Q4 2020 (Agora Policy, 2022; NBS, 2020). The situation was worsened by the economic damage caused by the Covid-19 pandemic as more people were plunged into abject poverty (World Bank, 2022; NBS, 2020). To get out of the poverty trap, Ipinnaiye and Olaniyan (2023) suggested that social innovation and entrepreneurship are important strategies to bolster sustainable poverty reduction in Nigeria. Those who will engage in social innovation need to have an entrepreneurial mindset.

The foundation for building the critical pool of entrepreneurs rests with knowledge institutions and the industry with appropriate policy incentives from the government. As noted earlier, universities across the world, at one point in time, have designed one form of entrepreneurship course or another to improve the quality of graduates, and to develop their entrepreneurship mindset (Bacigalupo *et al.*, 2016). The EntreComp programme by the European Commission is meant to build entrepreneurship competencies in all citizens as part of the lifelong learning initiative (Bacigalupo *et al.*, 2016). Entrepreneurship programmes, whether education or training, stimulate entrepreneurship behaviour in learners and help them realise their entrepreneurship potential. In addition to entrepreneurship education, there are a plethora of factors that have been confirmed to influence entrepreneurship interest among undergraduates in Nigeria and elsewhere (Sieger *et al.*, 2021; Global Entrepreneuship Monitor, 2022). However, key predictors of entrepreneurial intentions among young graduates are underexplored. The young graduates here represent those who are out of school but are undertaking the one-year compulsory service to the nation. The graduates are not in the job market, but they are at a strategic point where important career decisions are made. Information on key determinants of EI among graduates is important for policy and practice, as it helps to strategically structure and plan plausible interventions for improving economic activities and employment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions and concepts

Entrepreneurship is a strategy for boosting economic growth and development, and its conceptualisation is heavily reliant on diverse theoretical lenses. Therefore, there is no single

definition of entrepreneurship, and experts across the globe acknowledge that it is crucial not only for economic growth and development but also for establishing the foundation for a competitive economy (Komarkova *et al.*, 2015). Political, social, and economic differences among nations affect how entrepreneurship is practised, and as a result, definitions of the terms entrepreneur and entrepreneurship vary depending on the setting, discipline, and method of enquiry (Lechuga Sancho *et al.*, 2022). The interdisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship makes it relevant in diverse fields of interest, including management, social science, and economics (Naz *et al.*, 2020). The main kernel of entrepreneurship definitions is anchored on a practice that starts the action and the establishment of a new business organisation (Barot, 2015). Croci (2016) defined entrepreneurship as a distinct field that may function both independently and transdisciplinary. Massouati and Abdelbaki (2022) described entrepreneurship as a strategic instrument for the achievement of the United Nations sustainable development goals in society through the creation of wealth and jobs as well as fighting against unemployment and poverty. Entrepreneurship is regarded as an engine of a nation's long-term economic growth. It is a function of innovation that is critical in economic growth and sustainable development (Schumpeter, 2017; Ajah, 2022). Margahana (2019) also posits that entrepreneurship has great potential for economic growth, economic recovery, employment, community empowerment, and social and innovation. The central argument in the above definitions is that nations with an adequate pool of actively productive entrepreneurs stand a chance to reduce poverty and unemployment while at the same time developing a strong and highly competitive economy. This is because entrepreneurship gives individuals the freedom to pursue dreams and desires in the creation of new businesses. Therefore, in the developing countries of Africa, there has been an upsurge in the establishment of entrepreneurship centres in universities to stimulate entrepreneurial intention among students and faculties (Adelowo *et al.*, 2021). Entrepreneurship education here includes helping young undergraduates understand the process of business creation and stimulating their interest in doing the same whenever they identify a plausible opportunity. Promoting and stimulating entrepreneurial intention among the students have also been identified as important strategies to mop up the high rate of unemployment in society, as they identify business opportunities and cash in on them.

Entrepreneurship intention has been widely recognised as one of the foremost predecessors of entrepreneurship activities that promote business opportunities and minimalise job search among graduates (Ajzen, 2011). Entrepreneurship intentions are driven by diverse factors, including the self-acknowledged confidence that one intends to start a new business with an

established plan (Lortie & Castogiovanni, 2015). Since starting a business requires a deliberate and conscious decision, the best predictor of entrepreneurship behaviour is frequently one's intention (Linán & Chen, 2009; Li *et al.*, 2020). Intention is seen as a driving force and willingness of a person to engage in certain behaviours (Ajzen *et al.*, 2018). Hai (2021) also refers to intention as a course of action or plan that an actor considers necessary and, therefore, intends to carry out to accomplish a certain behaviour. Liu *et al.* (2019) affirmed that entrepreneurship intention is the most important predictor of an individual's entrepreneurial behaviour. Several studies have examined the factors that influence entrepreneurial intention from various perspectives and have identified age, gender, educational level, personality traits, entrepreneurial knowledge and ability, desire for achievement, spirit of adventure, and value orientation as critical factors (Ajzen, 2011; Liu *et al.*, 2019; Lechuga Sancho *et al.,* 2021. From the perspective of the entrepreneurial environment, family education, market accessibility, entrepreneurial orientation from the government and related incentive policies and training services, and regional entrepreneurial atmosphere are also identified as fundamental factors that could stimulate entrepreneurship intentions. Additionally, regarding the interactive internal and external factors, Ajzen (1991) proposed psychological models of entrepreneurship to explain the entrepreneurial intention and behaviour of an individual. In his theory of planned behaviour, he asserted that entrepreneurial intention is determined by an individual's attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control.

2.2 Entrepreneurial intention: Theoretical framing and empirical evidence

The theory of planned behaviour in Ajzen and Bandura's model of self-efficacy is very important in explaining entrepreneurial intention. Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour explains the behaviour of the individual using three constructs, namely attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). These three constructs are usually found to predict behavioural intentions with a high degree of accuracy. How an individual perceives a behaviour determines their predisposition to it (Olofinyehun *et al.*, 2018; Ilevbare *et al.,* 2022; Adelowo & Henrico, 2023). In the field of entrepreneurship, the higher the degree of positive perception of entrepreneurship, the higher the chance of individual disposition to it. Moreso, in a developing country where the prospect of securing jobs after graduation is slim, embracing entrepreneurship could be said to be the new normal for individuals to break the yoke of poverty, unemployment or underemployment. The subjective norm relates to the degree of acceptance of entrepreneurship as a career option in society. It could be a result of social pressure and wishes from friends and family regarding the need to choose entrepreneurship

as a career to avert being unemployed. For instance, there is a high likelihood for individuals whose parents are entrepreneurs to have a strong interest in entrepreneurship compared to individuals whose parents never ran a business. The developing countries of Africa today recognise entrepreneurship as a lever of development, thereby mandating the teaching of entrepreneurship courses to undergraduates across all disciplines. In this case, government and society now perceive entrepreneurship as an important component of educational systems to unleash the entrepreneurship potential of students and faculties for economic growth and development. The third element of Ajzen's theory relates to perceived behavioural control, which defines the knowledge, skills, and competence that individuals need to possess for the effective implementation of business ideas. Lortie and Castogiovanni (2015) opined that these three constructs should be adequate for the formation of intentions. However, Botsaris and Vamvaka (2016) asserted that the significance of each factor is relative and can fluctuate across behaviour, circumstance, and setting. The skills and knowledge also connect with entrepreneurial self-efficacy among budding entrepreneurs.

Moreover, Bandura (1977) presents the dimensions of self-efficacy in entrepreneurship and describes how individuals can effectively use their own skill sets to achieve certain results within the entrepreneur's context. Self-efficacy influences entrepreneurship intention through cognitive processes, motivation, and emotions. A person who has high self-efficacy shows greater intellectual ability, strategic flexibility, and effectiveness in managing the environment (Bandura, 1997). Several studies have investigated the communal relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurship intention. For instance, Liu *et al.* (2019) and Garaika *et al*., (2019) established that self-efficacy significantly influences entrepreneurship attitude and intention.

Empirically, Austin and Nauta (2016) examined entrepreneurial role-model exposure, self-efficacy, and women's entrepreneurial intention using data from 620 female college students. The study found a positive association between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions among the students. In another study conducted among university students in Indonesia and Malaysia by Margahana (2019) and Wiramihardja *et al.* (2022), respectively, the study also found that self-efficacy has a positive significant influence on entrepreneurship intention, which suggests that self-efficacy activates the attitude to embark on entrepreneurship activities and empowers people to perform better in organisational settings. In addition to self-efficacy, Wiramihardja *et al.* (2022) also found entrepreneurship education to be a positive predictor of entrepreneurial intentions among students. They further argued that entrepreneurship education increases students' knowledge and aptitudes. It also offers them

business contacts to understand organisations and money-related assets that are fundamental to opportunity recognition and value creation. Conversely, Ajah (2022) investigated the motivating factors of students' interest in entrepreneurship in Anambra, Nigeria. The study found that entrepreneurship education and/or training may have an impact on attitude but not always on the intention to become an entrepreneur. This might be because many of them go through an apprenticeship and acquire real-world business experience different from the one learned in an academic environment. Kaijun and Sholihah (2015) argued that the impact of entrepreneurship education is not always the same, citing that entrepreneurship education in China has a strong direct impact on students' intentions to start their own businesses, but the same does not hold true in Indonesia.

Within another Nigerian context, Ajah (2022) revealed a significant negative relationship between policy support and entrepreneurial intention. In fact, the author argued that fewer than 5% of new small businesses survive beyond their first five years of existence due to difficulties in getting access to funding and other business support from the government. In this way, government support plays a significant role in stimulating entrepreneurship propensity, particularly through the creation of positive policies and an enabling environment. Other variables that influence entrepreneurship intention include gender. Jekwu (2016) investigated psychosocial predictors of entrepreneurial intention among Nigerian graduate students at the University of Ibadan, and the result indicated that male graduates have higher significant entrepreneurial intention than female graduates. This implies that the male gender shows stronger intentions to pursue an entrepreneurial career than the female gender. However, the author noted that the results may not be adequate to generalise the findings to a broad population of graduates in Nigeria.

To summarise the review, it should be noted that entrepreneurship is an economic phenomenon with no single definition, but it acknowledges that entrepreneurship is crucial for job and wealth creation, leading to economic development (Diandra & Azmy, 2020). Building high-quality entrepreneurs is more profitable for the economy as they represent better managers and can be more productive. Entrepreneurship intention is widely recognised as one of the foremost determinants of entrepreneurship, which promotes business opportunities and minimalises absolute reliance on paid employment. The theory of planned behaviour and Bandura's model of self-efficacy are important theories that explain or unpack entrepreneurship intention. The Ajzen theory explains the behaviour of the individual with three constructs, which are; attitudes towards a behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control, while Bandura emphasises the self-efficacy dimension. Based on these

two theories, several factors are identified to predict entrepreneurial intention among university students and graduates, including self-efficacy, policy support, apprenticeship, and gender. In this study, these constructs are empirically tested among Nigerian graduates.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study utilises a large-scale cross-sectional dataset on entrepreneurship and apprenticeship among young graduates in Nigeria (Olofinyehun, 2021). To put the dataset into proper perspective, it is important to set the tone for the context of the study. The Nigerian government initiated an entrepreneurship education policy in 2006 to improve the entrepreneurship competencies and mindset of young undergraduates to prepare them for life after school. The policy principally aimed to provide the students with both theoretical and practical entrepreneurship skills that could motivate them to undertake self-employment after graduation (Agboola, 2021; Ilevbare *et al.*, 2022). Additional policy intervention was designed to further equip young graduates with entrepreneurship apprenticeship during their compulsory National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC). The scheme is a mandatory one-year service to the nation in various capacities, depending on the discipline of the graduates. The NYSC scheme is usually preceded by a three-week orientation programme at a designated camp in each state of the Federation.

The data was collected from young graduates across ten orientation camps in the country, including the Federal Capital Territory (Olofinyehun, 2021). Those surveyed included graduates from universities and polytechnics across different disciplines. At the data collection stage, none of the graduates had been introduced to the NYSC apprenticeship scheme, but they were asked whether they would be interested in the programme or not. Moreover, the research instrument used was a single questionnaire that was adapted from Olofinyehun *et al.* (2022). Field officers were trained and dispatched for data collected in November 2020 through October 2021. Given that the data was collected as part of a longitudinal study, this paper utilises the first midline data collected between January and March 2021 when the graduates were undertaking the orientation programme for the NYSC. In total, about 16,296 young graduates participated in the study. The datasets contain information related to graduates' entrepreneurship experience, background, characteristics, and important government support. The main section of the dataset that provides the impetus for this study is section I, which details personal, family, and societal influence on entrepreneurship development in the country.

3.1 Variables and measurement

The variables of interest in this study were captured in different sections of the questionnaire, particularly the entrepreneurial interests of the graduates and family background. The 20 items were used to capture gender roles, self-efficacy, government support, and loan access. For the entrepreneurship interest, the graduates were asked to respond to a question of whether they are interested in starting their own business or not and the response was coded '1' for Yes and '0' for 'No'. Linán and Chen (2009) have argued that entrepreneurship interest or intention could be motivated by several factors, including needs, values, wants, habits, and beliefs, and they capture these with multi-item variables. Clearly, all six items used in Linán and Chen (2009) show individuals' level of intention to become an entrepreneur either at the present, future, and/or at different levels. The items are similar to those adopted in the Global University Entrepreneurship Student Spirit Survey (GUESSS) (Sieger *et al.*, 2021). However, a few studies have adopted the use of single-item questions to explore entrepreneurship intentions without any ambiguity (Kraus *et al.*, 2018; Werner *et al.*, 2014; Xu *et al.,* 2016). The entrepreneurship interest in this study is used as the dependent variable in the binary logistic regression analysis conducted.

For the independent variables presented in Table 1, 20 statements were used to capture self-efficacy, relational support, government support, gender neutrality, masculinity, and access to loans as important predictors of entrepreneurship intention among the graduates. The graduates were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements, and they were later coded as '1' strongly disagree and '5' as strongly agree.

The 20 items were sorted based on the relatedness of the questions and important theoretical assumptions. For instance, the first item related to the self-efficacy (SE) indicator of entrepreneurship as it defines the relative confidence of the graduates to undertake entrepreneurial activities (Bandura, 1997; Ajzen, 2002; 2011). The item also defines the perceived behavioural control element of entrepreneurship, as clearly defined in Ajzen (1991). The second grouping observed from the items in Table 1 is relational support (RS), which is defined by five of the items. Relational support includes the available assistance that potential entrepreneurs could access from immediate family and friends. Relational support has been an important source of both motivation and resources for young entrepreneurs in Nigerian settings (Ilevbare *et al.*, 2022). The five items indicate the level of assurance and confidence that family and friends are able to provide the necessary support for a successful entrepreneurship journey to the graduates. The third variable, named masculinity (Mas),

relates to the perception that men are better suited for entrepreneurship activities than their female counterparts (Sánchez Cañizares & Fuentes García, 2010; De Vita *et al.*, 2014; Thebaud, 2015; Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Kauffman Foundation, 2015; Moreira *et al.*, 2019). Three items also relate to gender neutrality, which indicates that entrepreneurship activities are not gender-determined. Considering the gender roles in African settings, certain activities are attached to women, including childcare and household demands, which could limit their potential for entrepreneurship. Three items were used to capture the variable on government support for entrepreneurship in the country, including the certainty with which the graduates perceived they could access government support for entrepreneurship ventures. Entrepreneurship could become easy in an environment where access to loans is not complicated. The loan access in this study was operationalised using a single item named loan access (LA).

For the purpose of the logistic regression analysis used to examine the relationship between the dependent variable (entrepreneurship intention) and the independent variables (self-efficacy, relational support, masculinity, loan access, gender neutrality and government support), the mean value of each independent variable is used. The next section discusses the results of the data analysis.

Table 1: Groupings and descriptions of Items of independent variables

Description of Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SE	S.D
SE: I feel I have skills and knowledge to… business or entrepreneurship	15635	1	5	4.23	.007	.935
RS: I feel my family will support me if I…than seeking a job	15628	1	5	4.09	.008	1.012
RS: I feel my family roles and responsibilities… into business (RC)	15507	1	5	2.38	.010	1.296
RS: I feel family roles and duties can reduce...to business and work	15484	1	5	2.53	.010	1.267
RS: I think my family and friends…to start a business	15447	1	5	2.15	.010	1.252
RS: Decision making on how to use or invest my money…friends	15526	1	5	3.17	.011	1.370
Masculinity: I think men can perform better…than women	15588	1	5	2.41	.011	1.376
Masculinity: I think women are rarely good business managers	15456	1	5	2.75	.011	1.384
Masculinity: The economic environment…challenging for women	15491	1	5	3.04	.009	1.180
Masculinity: I think a woman's sole responsibility…husband	15458	1	5	2.28	.012	1.458
Masculinity: I think there…businesses that only men engage in	15431	1	5	2.78	.011	1.399
Masculinity: I think a woman should not… starting a business	15514	1	5	2.16	.011	1.422
Loan Access: I can take loans from formal sources (e.g. banks, microfinance) if I need to start or expand my business	15596	1	5	3.06	.010	1.252
Gender Neutral: I feel both men and women have equal opportunity for business	15571	1	5	4.06	.009	1.127
Gender Neutral: I feel both gender…have equal access start-up	15484	1	5	4.34	.008	1.006
Gender Neutral: …credits in Nigeria are fair to men & women	15550	1	5	3.52	.009	1.148
Gender Neutral: …gender identity…affect credits and loans	15559	1	5	2.28	.010	1.265
Govt. Support: I will get support …from govt.…to start a business	15489	1	5	3.21	.010	1.283
Govt. Support: …are adequate to support women entrepreneurs	15441	1	5	3.20	.010	1.271
Govt. Support: The current strategies…take care of business for both	15465	1	5	3.61	.010	1.247

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data analysis using both descriptive and logistic regression. The descriptive analysis in Table 2 shows the gender analysis of entrepreneurship intention and practice among the graduates in Nigeria. Regarding entrepreneurial interest, the overall result indicates that about 96% of the graduates are interested in starting their own businesses. This result suggests that entrepreneurship intention is very high among the graduates, even higher than those reported in previous studies (Olofinyehun *et al.*, 2018; Adelowo *et al.*, 2016; 2021; Ilevbare *et al.*, 2022). In a comparative analysis of entrepreneurship intention among universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Nigeria, it was reported that the entrepreneurship propensity among Nigerian students was higher (Adelowo & Akinwale, 2024). The recent report from the Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students Survey also showed that Nigerian students lead intentional founders among 58 countries sampled (Sieger *et al.*, 2021). From the gender perspective, the intention of female entrepreneurs is higher than that of their male counterparts. This is an interesting result as it challenges the norms in the system where it is always assumed that males are more entrepreneurial than their female counterparts (Sánchez Cañizares & Fuentes García, 2010; De Vita *et al.*, 2014). In fact, a recent analysis of entrepreneurship intentions among undergraduates in Nigeria reveals higher entrepreneurial intention among males (Olofinyehun *et al.*, 2022; Ilevbare *et al.*, 2022; Adelowo & Akinwale 2023). This result could show how entrepreneurial interest is improving among graduates in Nigeria, probably due to their participation in entrepreneurship education. The results further show a significant influence of gender on entrepreneurial intention (X^2=4.03, p<0.05).

On the entrepreneurship practice among the graduates, the results show that about 46% of them are already engaging in one form of entrepreneurship activity or another during their service year. The gender dimension indicates that more males engage in entrepreneurship activities than their female counterparts. The result upholds the earlier argument that males engage more in entrepreneurial activities than females do (Sánchez Cañizares & Fuentes García, 2010; De Vita *et al.*, 2014). It further implies that transitioning from intention to actual practice takes time and effort. Gender also shows an important and significant influence on entrepreneurial practices among the graduates (X^2=4.03, p<0.05). The bond yield was relatively high at the beginning of the study period and peaked at 16.99% in May 1995. Since that period, the yield rate has declined to the lowest point of 6.09% in May 2013.

Table 2: Entrepreneurship Interest and Practice among the graduates by gender

Gender	Male (N=7862)		Female (N=7672)		Total (N=15534)		Chi-Sq (X^2)
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	
Entrepreneurship interest	4.8%	95.2%	4.1%	95.9%	4.4%	95.6%	4.03*
	Male (N=7714)		Female (N=7511)		Total (N=15225)		
Entrepreneurship Practice	53%	47%	55.4%	44.6%	54.2%	45.8%	8.6*

*p<0.05

On the predictors of entrepreneurship intentions among Nigerian graduates, Table 3 presents the binary logistic regression results. The results show that self-efficacy is significantly and highly likely to influence entrepreneurship intention among graduates (OR=1.49, p<0.01). The result is consistent with various studies that have established the positive and significant influence of self-efficacy on the entrepreneurship intention of students (Adeniyi, 2021; Adeniyi *et al.*, 2022; Suhartanto, 2022). In fact, the likelihood of self-efficacy influencing EI among the graduates is 49%, which is considered high. In this study, relational support is less likely to significantly influence entrepreneurship intention among graduates. This result contradicts existing studies that have established a positive and significant relationship between relations support and entrepreneurship intention (Ilevbare *et al.*, 2022). It could be argued that because the graduates have completed their programme in school and are already preparing for their future careers, this may influence their perception of the support that they receive from relations for their entrepreneurial journey. In the Nigerian setting, it is largely believed that once a child completes the first degree, parental influence diminishes while the child takes responsibility for their care. The rare exception to this is when the family already has a business that the child can participate in during its day-to-day running and/or proceed to study for a postgraduate programme. Furthermore, masculinity (MS), which measures the belief that men are better cut out for entrepreneurship than their women counterparts, is less likely to influence entrepreneurship intention among the graduates in this study (OR=0.89, p<0.05). This result further suggests that entrepreneurship is not gender-determined, as both males and females can do well if they choose to engage in business. Gender roles may have shaped the belief that women are less entrepreneurship-inclined than their male counterparts; however, some recent analyses have shown that women are better managers when they get involved in entrepreneurship activities (Olofinyehun *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, gender neutrality on its own shows a high likelihood of influencing entrepreneurship interest among the

graduates (OR=1.19, p<0.01). This result suggests that when given similar incentives, the graduates perceive themselves to be positively inclined to entrepreneurship. This corroborates the earlier assertion that entrepreneurship itself is not gender-determined. However, men tend to have greater access to entrepreneurship incentives than women do due to societal belief systems and gender roles in the family (Kauffman Foundation, 2015).

A friendly environment where access to start-up capital or grants or loans is guaranteed tends to promote or boost entrepreneurship development. In this study, the result shows that access to loans is likely to stimulate entrepreneurship intention among the graduates (OR=1.04, p>0.05), although it is not significant. The next variable considered is government support, which shows a significant likelihood of determining entrepreneurship intention among graduates (OR=1.13, p<0.01). The assurance that the graduate will have access to entrepreneurship facilities and that adequate entrepreneurship strategies and policies are in place to encourage self-employment is fundamental within this context. There have been several government initiatives in the country, as discussed in Section 1, but they have been faced with an implementation dilemma in recent times. For instance, the implementation of the Start-Up Act 2022 could redirect Nigerian youth's energy to entrepreneurial activities and improve employment opportunities across the country. Other important government support includes funding mechanisms, innovation infrastructure, and robust venture capital systems, among others. Therefore, for the aspirations of these young graduates to become a reality, adequate mechanisms to implement entrepreneurship-inclined policy interventions should be set in motion. A typical example is the SAED programme of the NYSC, which allows graduates to undertake an apprenticeship programme before the completion of their one-year compulsory youth service to the nation (SAED, 2023). In fact, when the apprenticeship variable is introduced into the analysis, the result reveals that it is highly likely and significant to influence entrepreneurship intention by a factor of 124%, which is considered to be huge (OR=2.124, p<0.01). An apprenticeship is a form of business attachment where practical experience is attained, and the individual learner is mentored. Apprenticeship is particularly interesting because it creates an opportunity for graduates who have gone through entrepreneurship education while in school to be exposed to real-world experience in entrepreneurship.

Table 3: Determinants of entrepreneurial intention among the graduates

Independent variables	B	Sig.	Exp. (B)
Self-efficacy (SE)	.403	.000	1.496
Relational support (RS)	-.238	.000	.788
Masculinity (MS)	-.111	.051	.895
Gender neutrality (GN)	.180	.009	1.197
Loan access (LA)	.040	.251	1.041
Government support (GS)	.122	.009	1.130
Apprenticeship	.753	.000	2.124
Constant	1.305	.000	3.686

Cox & Snell R Square= 0.018 *Nagelkerke R Square = 0.060*

5. CONCLUSION

The study sets out to examine the predictors of entrepreneurship intention among young Nigerian graduates, using large-scale cross-sectional survey data collected from ten selected states of the Federation. The study focused essentially on how self-efficacy, government support, gender neutrality, access to loans, relational support, and apprenticeship influence the entrepreneurship intention of graduates. The dataset contains information on graduates' backgrounds, entrepreneurship interests and practice, apprenticeship activities, self-efficacy and other important variables that address research objectives. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential analysis, especially binary regression, which provides the likelihood of the degree of influence that independent variables have on the dependent variable (EI). The result provides further empirical insights into the theory of planned behaviour and Bandura's model of self-efficacy as an important driver of entrepreneurial intention. The uniqueness of this work is two-fold; firstly, it shows the gender-disaggregated analysis of entrepreneurship intention among the graduates. Secondly, this is the first large-scale study that examines the influence of after-school apprenticeship programmes on the intention of young graduates to become entrepreneurs or self-employed.

The study clearly demonstrates higher entrepreneurial intention among women than among their male counterparts; however, more men engage in actual entrepreneurship activities. This result is interesting in that it points in the direction that the belief that men are more

predisposed to entrepreneurship than women is fading gradually, especially in a developing country. It also indicates that where a level playing field is provided for both men and women, the latter can also do well in venture creation. In fact, it is time for policymakers to begin to provide more incentives for women to boost entrepreneurship activities and enhance national productivity.

The study further shows that self-efficacy, government support, apprenticeship, access to loans and gender neutrality are important predictors of entrepreneurship intention among Nigerian graduates. Although access to loans is not significant in this study, however, it is noteworthy that entrepreneurship activities tend to improve where access to loans is guaranteed. Government and other key stakeholders in the education and industrial sectors, therefore, need to provide necessary support to young graduates so that their entrepreneurship aspirations can become a reality. Specifically, the existing technology business incubators across the country could be strengthened while new ones could be established to accommodate viable and innovative business ideas from these graduates. Young and aspiring entrepreneurs need mentorship, which could be provided through an apprenticeship programme; the onus is on the Federal government to expand the existing SAED programme to accommodate more graduates. The time for industry partnerships to co-create appropriate mentorship programmes for aspiring entrepreneurs is long overdue in the country. The triple helix model and innovation system model have identified the role that strong interaction between the university and industry could play in stimulating entrepreneurship in the system. The co-created curriculum would be tailor-made for aspiring entrepreneurs to practically lead them in nurturing their business ambitions. This could further reinforce their entrepreneurship self-efficacy. The creation of entrepreneurship clubs targeted at different sectors of the economy could also be another strategy to improve entrepreneurship activities among graduates.

The study is not without any limitations, particularly on how entrepreneurship intention of the graduates was obtained through dichotomous variables. Although several studies have adopted the use of a single variable to capture entrepreneurship intention (Wang & Wong, 2004; Olofinyehun *et al.*, 2018; 2022), other studies have also argued that a multi-item construct is a better reflection of intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1991; 2002, Kolvereid & Isaken, 2006; Ilevbare *et al.*, 2022). The measure adopted in this study, therefore, allows for binary logistic regression, which provides adequate quantification for the determinants of entrepreneurship intention among the graduates. It should also be noted that

further study is needed, especially qualitative analysis, to adequately cover more details that a structured questionnaire may have omitted.

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