


GENDER-RELATED FACTORS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS OF UNDERGRADUATES IN SELECTED FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received: Jun, 05th 2024 Accepted: Aug, 05th 2024</p>	<p>Purpose: The study assesses the gender related factors and entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate students of selected Federal Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. It specifically, examined barriers to male and female entrepreneurial activities in the selected Universities; assessed how entrepreneurship education has impacted entrepreneurial intentions of female and male undergraduates in the study area; and evaluated how entrepreneurial intentions of male and female undergraduates differ in the study area.</p>
<p>Keywords: Gender Related Factors; Entrepreneurial Intentions; Undergraduate Students; Federal University.</p> <div data-bbox="172 1010 475 1256" data-label="Image">  </div>	<p>Theoretical Framework: The study's foundation was Social Feminist Theory (SFT), which clarified the widely held stereotype that women are subservient to men. This stereotype is said to conflict with the innate desire for entrepreneurship, and female students' inclination to start their own businesses may be viewed as a hindrance. In this regard, the study has attempted to conduct a methodical assessment of several publications concerning the relationship between gender and the entrepreneurial intentions of students at particular Federal Universities in the Southwest region of Nigeria.</p> <p>Design/Methodology/Approach: To guide the investigation, three research questions were developed. Similarly, three objectives and three null hypotheses were generated for the study. The study adopted the use of a cross-sectional survey approach, and structured questionnaire administration was made use of, to gather data. A total of 1,820 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and were all recovered for the study. The study made use of a well-structured and validated "Gender Related Factors and Entrepreneurial Intentions Questionnaire" as the instrument for data collection. The data analysis included both inferential and descriptive statistics, such as; Mann-Whitney U Test, Multiple Linear Regression and basic percentages, counts, mean, and standard deviation..</p> <p>Findings: The study found that female students faced more barriers to entrepreneurial activities than male students. The distribution of barriers is not the same across the two categories of gender. Entrepreneurship education is positively related to entrepreneurial intention and explains a variation in the level of entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in the selected Federal universities. Female students showed less entrepreneurial intention than male students and suggests that the distribution of entrepreneurial intention is not the same across the two categories of gender.</p>

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Originality/Value: The study, recommended among others that; Policymakers and stakeholders in entrepreneurship matters should give adequate consideration and preference to the female gender in terms of training and other forms of entrepreneurial education to foster better intention with them. Nevertheless, the male gender must not be ignored completely as this may result in a viscous cycle; University management, facilitators and lecturers should also improve on the techniques and methods used in teaching entrepreneurship in Nigerian universities to positively impact the entrepreneurial intention of university students; and Management should also use attractive methods and practical styles that will raise the curiosity of students to the field of entrepreneurship..

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FATORES RELACIONADOS AO GÊNERO E INTENÇÕES EMPREENDEDORAS DE ALUNOS DE GRADUAÇÃO EM UNIVERSIDADES FEDERAIS SELECIONADAS NO SUDOESTE DA NIGÉRIA

RESUMO

Objetivo: O estudo avalia os fatores relacionados ao gênero e as intenções empreendedoras dos alunos de graduação de universidades federais selecionadas no sudoeste da Nigéria. Especificamente, examinou as barreiras às atividades empreendedoras masculinas e femininas nas universidades selecionadas; avaliou como a educação para o empreendedorismo afetou as intenções empreendedoras de estudantes de graduação do sexo feminino e masculino na área de estudo; e avaliou como as intenções empreendedoras de estudantes de graduação do sexo masculino e feminino diferem na área de estudo.

Estrutura Teórica: A base do estudo foi a Teoria Social Feminista (SFT), que esclareceu o estereótipo amplamente difundido de que as mulheres são subservientes aos homens. Diz-se que esse estereótipo entra em conflito com o desejo inato de empreendedorismo, e a inclinação das alunas para abrir seus próprios negócios pode ser vista como um obstáculo. Nesse sentido, o estudo tentou realizar uma avaliação metódica de várias publicações sobre a relação entre gênero e as intenções empreendedoras dos alunos de determinadas universidades federais na região sudoeste da Nigéria.

Projeto/Metodologia/Abordagem: Para orientar a investigação, foram elaboradas três perguntas de pesquisa. Da mesma forma, foram gerados três objetivos e três hipóteses nulas para o estudo. O estudo adotou uma abordagem de pesquisa transversal, e a administração de questionários estruturados foi usada para coletar dados. Um total de 1.820 questionários foi distribuído aos entrevistados e todos foram recuperados para o estudo. O estudo utilizou um “Questionário de Fatores Relacionados a Gênero e Intenções Empreendedoras” bem estruturado e validado como instrumento de coleta de dados. A análise dos dados incluiu estatísticas inferenciais e descritivas, tais como: Teste U de Mann-Whitney, Regressão Linear Múltipla e porcentagens básicas, contagens, média e desvio padrão.

Conclusões: O estudo constatou que as alunas enfrentaram mais barreiras às atividades empreendedoras do que os alunos. A distribuição das barreiras não é a mesma entre as duas categorias de gênero. A educação para o empreendedorismo está positivamente relacionada à intenção empreendedora e explica uma variação no nível de intenção empreendedora dos alunos de graduação nas universidades federais selecionadas. As alunas demonstraram menos intenção empreendedora do que os alunos, o que sugere que a distribuição da intenção empreendedora não é a mesma entre as duas categorias de gênero.

Originalidade/Valor: O estudo recomendou, entre outras coisas, que os formuladores de políticas e as partes interessadas em questões de empreendedorismo deveriam dar a devida consideração e preferência ao gênero feminino em termos de treinamento e outras formas de educação empreendedora para promover uma melhor intenção com elas. No entanto, o gênero masculino não deve ser completamente ignorado, pois isso pode resultar em um ciclo viscoso; a administração da universidade, os facilitadores e os professores também devem aprimorar as técnicas e os métodos usados no ensino do empreendedorismo nas universidades nigerianas para impactar positivamente a intenção empreendedora dos estudantes universitários; e a administração também deve usar métodos atraentes e estilos práticos que despertem a curiosidade dos estudantes para o campo do empreendedorismo.

Palavras-chave: Fatores Relacionados ao Gênero, Intenções Empreendedoras, Estudantes de Graduação, Universidade Federal.

FACTORES RELACIONADOS CON EL GÉNERO E INTENCIONES EMPRESARIALES DE LOS ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS DE DETERMINADAS UNIVERSIDADES FEDERALES DEL SUROESTE DE NIGERIA

RESUMEN

Propósito: El estudio evalúa los factores relacionados con el género y las intenciones empresariales de los estudiantes universitarios de las universidades federales seleccionadas en el suroeste de Nigeria. Específicamente, examinó las barreras a las actividades empresariales masculinas y femeninas en las Universidades seleccionadas; evaluó cómo la educación empresarial ha impactado las intenciones empresariales de los estudiantes universitarios femeninos y masculinos en el área de estudio; y evaluó cómo las intenciones empresariales de los estudiantes universitarios masculinos y femeninos difieren en el área de estudio.

Marco Teórico: El estudio se basó en la Teoría Social Feminista (TFS), que aclara el estereotipo generalizado de que las mujeres están supeditadas a los hombres. Se dice que este estereotipo entra en conflicto con el deseo innato de iniciativa empresarial, y la inclinación de las estudiantes a crear sus propias empresas puede considerarse un obstáculo. A este respecto, el estudio ha intentado realizar una evaluación metódica de varias publicaciones relativas a la relación entre el género y las intenciones empresariales de los estudiantes de determinadas universidades federales de la región suroccidental de Nigeria.

Diseño/ Metodología/ Enfoque: Para orientar la investigación, se formularon tres preguntas de investigación. Del mismo modo, se generaron tres objetivos y tres hipótesis nulas para el estudio. El estudio se basó en una encuesta transversal y en la administración de un cuestionario estructurado para recopilar datos. Se distribuyó un total de 1.820 cuestionarios a los encuestados, todos los cuales fueron recuperados para el estudio. El estudio utilizó como instrumento de recogida de datos un «Cuestionario sobre factores relacionados con el género e intenciones empresariales» bien estructurado y validado. El análisis de los datos incluyó estadísticas inferenciales y descriptivas, como la prueba U de Mann-Whitney, la regresión lineal múltiple y porcentajes básicos, recuentos, media y desviación estándar.

Resultados: El estudio reveló que las alumnas se enfrentan a más barreras para emprender actividades empresariales que los alumnos. La distribución de las barreras no es la misma en las dos categorías de género. La educación empresarial está positivamente relacionada con la intención empresarial y explica una variación en el nivel de intención empresarial de los estudiantes universitarios de las universidades federales seleccionadas. Las alumnas mostraron menor intención emprendedora que los alumnos y sugiere que la distribución de la intención emprendedora no es la misma entre las dos categorías de género.

Originalidad/Valor: El estudio recomienda, entre otras cosas, que los responsables políticos y las partes interesadas en cuestiones de iniciativa empresarial den la debida consideración y preferencia al género femenino en lo que se refiere a la formación y otras formas de educación empresarial para fomentar en ellas una mejor intención. No obstante, no se debe ignorar por completo al género masculino, ya que esto puede dar lugar a un ciclo viscoso; la dirección de las universidades, los facilitadores y los profesores también deben mejorar las técnicas y los métodos utilizados en la enseñanza del espíritu empresarial en las universidades nigerianas para influir positivamente en la intención empresarial de los estudiantes universitarios; y la dirección también debe utilizar métodos atractivos y estilos prácticos que despierten la curiosidad de los estudiantes hacia el campo del espíritu empresarial.

Palabras clave: Factores Relacionados con el Género, Intención Empresarial, Estudiantes Universitarios, Universidad Federal.

1 INTRODUCTION

Graduate unemployment is a significant global issue, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Entrepreneurship is recognized as a solution to address this problem, leading to increased entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduates (Brush & Cooper, 2019). Governments are implementing policies and programs to encourage public attitudes towards creating new ventures, addressing the fundamental predicament faced by graduates worldwide

Ahl, 2016). Career development and vocational identity formation begin in childhood, with children learning about work and establishing a sense of self (Blustein, 2020; Brown & Lent, 2018; Kickul et al., 2018). Adults shape their vocational identity by recognizing personal talents, values, and interests. Progress towards career development and gender identity is crucial, as a lack can negatively impact an individual's well-being (Kickul et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurship activities are on the rise globally, with governments encouraging businesses, start-ups, and new ventures (GEM, 2022). Entrepreneurship is seen as a key source of competitiveness and economic growth in both developed and developing countries (Nabi & Holden, 2018). Its popularity is due to its ability to create wealth, stability, and improve living standards, leading to increased GDP (Mehtap, 2018). Entrepreneurs worldwide are engaged in activities that positively impact nations' economies and individual citizens, making it a significant contributor to national economic growth (Davey et al., 2011).

Over the past few decades, entrepreneurship has evolved from an unanticipated, coincidental, and individualistic phenomenon to a socially organized set of skills that can be taught and practiced (Jacob et al., 2020). The primary goal of entrepreneurship education is to develop entrepreneurial capacities and encourage entrepreneurial intention in university graduates. Research shows that universities' environment and support systems can motivate both male and female students to consider entrepreneurship as a career (Omotajo et al., 2024; Farro-Ruiz et al., 2023).

The Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) introduced and mandated all universities in the country to start inculcating entrepreneurship education studies into their programmes. However, there is still low rates of entrepreneurial intentions recorded among students in universities, sometimes due to some barriers affecting male and female students towards entrepreneurial activities in their respective universities (Ojewumi et al., 2018; Azmi, 2020). The various universities' environment and support systems comprise the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem, which includes intellectual property protection policy, technology transfer mechanism, business start-up coaching, and business incubation services (Audretsch, 2019; Etzkowitz, 2014; Urbano & Guerrero, 2019). Many tertiary institutions have been playing active roles in the development of entrepreneurial intentions of students through commercialization of tertiary institution knowledge through companies founded by student entrepreneurs (Wright et al., 2016; Gür et al., 2017).

The negative effects of comparing businesses created by male and female students in universities highlight the need for an alternative theoretical position in gender entrepreneurship.

Gender stereotypes influence career plans and preferences, and female students tend to show fewer intentions towards entrepreneurial activities GEM (2022). Gender entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by macro-level elements, micro-level elements, and internal conditions (Ahl, 2016). Macro-level elements include permissive market design, easy access to funding, encouraging government laws, reduced bureaucratic performance, and political and economic equilibrium (Shinnar et.al., 2020). Micro-level elements involve the environment of students such as family, surrounding, and business start-ups (Rae & Woodier-Harris, 2018). A supportive environment in terms of access to business information, networking opportunities, and support from family and friends can stimulate and orchestrate entrepreneurial intentions of male and female students (De Vita et al., 2019; Rialti et al., 2017).

Female students are less inclined towards entrepreneurship due to a complex view that entrepreneurship is a male domain and high barriers to female entrepreneurship in the patriarchal world (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2018). Research suggests that males tend to adjust better to entrepreneurship due to personal traits such as attitude, behavior, and motivation (Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015).

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Entrepreneurship is often seen as a male-dominated field, with female undergraduates often undervalued and underrepresented (Marlow & McAdam, 2021; Sweida & Reichard, 2020). This stereotype can hinder female students' entrepreneurial intentions, leading to a reduction in their desirability. In Nigeria, where gender stereotypes are socially reinforced, women's first responsibility is to be submissive to their husbands, households, and children. Despite entrepreneurship being seen as essential for economic growth and development, there is a lack of research on gender-related factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions of students, particularly female undergraduates in universities.

According to Wale-Oshinowo and Kuye (2016), Nigeria is one of the few African nations with government attention to entrepreneurship education in universities, but there is still a significant gap between the number of graduates produced annually and the establishment of businesses in the country. The government has implemented policies to equip undergraduates with employable and self-reliance skills, but fewer female undergraduates are taking advantage of these policies (Brush & Cooper, 2019).

Barriers to growth and development for both male and female undergraduates include motivation, experience, education, culture, psychological characteristics, finance, networking, and barriers to growth and development. Most entrepreneurship studies in Africa focus on opportunities and challenges facing entrepreneurs, but less on entrepreneurial intention, competencies, and pedagogies (Naude & Havenga, 2019; Singh & Belwal, 2018).

South Africa has the highest number of entrepreneurship studies (61.2%), followed by Zimbabwe (5%), Nigeria (3.8%), and Kenya (3.7%) (Naude & Havenga, 2019). However, Nigeria has few scholarly studies on entrepreneurial intentions and women's employment/empowerment, and most studies are reports. The literature on gender-related factors in university undergraduates' entrepreneurial intentions is developing.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to examine gender-related factors and entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduates in selected federal universities in southwest, Nigeria. The specific objectives is to:

1. examine barriers to male and female entrepreneurial activities in the selected Universities;
2. assess how entrepreneurship education has impacted entrepreneurial intentions of female and male undergraduates in the study area;
3. evaluate how entrepreneurial intentions of male and female undergraduates differ in the study area.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching research questions for this study are:

1. what are the barriers to female and male undergraduates' entrepreneurial activities in the selected Universities in South Western Nigeria?
2. how has entrepreneurship education impacted entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduates in the study area?
3. to what extent does entrepreneurial intention of male and female undergraduates differ in the study area?

1.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses was generated for the purpose of this study:

H₀₁: Given different barriers, significant differences do not exist between female undergraduates' entrepreneurial intentions than the males in the selected universities.

H₀₂: The current state of entrepreneurship education does not significantly shape entrepreneurial intentions of male and female undergraduates in the selected universities.

H₀₃: Entrepreneurial intentions of male students differ significantly from their female counterparts in the selected universities

1.5 CONCEPTUALISATION OF TERMS

Entrepreneurship: This has to do with the creation and development of economic ventures relating to or characteristics of or suited to be an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurial Intention: This is a self-acknowledged convictions of individuals that they intend to set up new business ventures and consciously plan to do so at some point in the future.

Gender: This refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, attributes and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, male and female and women and men.

Intentions: This is described as a thing intended to do; an aim or plan. It is also a conception formed by directing the mind towards an object.

University: This is a high-level educational institution in which students study to earn a degree and academic research is done.

2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 SOCIAL FEMINIST THEORY (SFT)

The study is based on Social Feminist Theory, which combines gender socialization concepts with psychological and philosophical theories about the inherent distinctions between male and female personalities or moral development (Greer & Greene, 2003). According to Shirokova et al. (2016); De Vita et al., 2014 (Hamilton, 2011), SFT proposes that gender differences exist in socialization processes and experiences, leading to different modes of knowing and viewing the world. This theory explains why males and females have different

motivations for entrepreneurship and certain aspects of life. Women's lower intention to start their own businesses may be due to their stronger urge to balance their personal and professional lives, prioritizing financial gain. Similarly, according to Henderson and Robertson (2000); Kennedy (2013), SFT also suggests that there may be significant variations between males and females in specific psychological qualities, which are indicators of entrepreneurial ambition. Women are likely to have fewer entrepreneurial intentions than men due to their higher levels of self-assertion, autonomy, independence, self-confidence, and risk-taking propensity (Fraccaroli & Vitali, 2001).

2.2 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.2.1 Barriers to male and female entrepreneurial activities

Solomon and David (2021), identified challenges in Nigerian entrepreneurship education, including inadequate trainers, lack of knowledge from lecturers, inadequate funding, and curriculum development issues. They recommend implementing entrepreneurship education in higher institutions to overcome these issues. Other studies have examined female entrepreneurs and financial sources for business start-ups, finding that policy interventions should be tailored to female entrepreneurs. Factors affecting entrepreneurship intention include family environment, self-concept, motivation, and risk-taking propensity (Buba & Pulka, 2020). Gender influences entrepreneurship intention, with the impact influenced by the country and higher institutions attended (Daim et al., 2016). Contextual factors such as family entrepreneurial background, age, gender, university entrepreneurial environment, and country uncertainty avoidance also influence entrepreneurial intentions. Malebana (2014), conducted a cross-sectional survey of 355 final-year commerce students found significant correlations between entrepreneurial intention, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and awareness of entrepreneurial assistance.

2.2.2 Entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions

Anwar et al. (2022), found that entrepreneurial education and opportunity recognition play a mediating role in determining entrepreneurial intention through the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The study used a convenience sample method to gather data from

663 students from three distinct Indian institutions. Results showed that self-efficacy plays a role in both the direct and indirect effects of entrepreneurial education and opportunity recognition on entrepreneurial intention. The association between opportunity recognition, entrepreneurial education, and entrepreneurial ambition is moderated by entrepreneurial attitude.

Mukhtar et al. (2021), investigated the moderating effects of the entrepreneurial mindset on the link between entrepreneurship education, culture, and the entrepreneurial ambition of college students. The study found that the entrepreneurial mentality has successfully accelerated university students' entrepreneurial ambition, with entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention being influenced in part by entrepreneurial culture. There is a strong association between students' entrepreneurial attitude and both entrepreneurial culture and education. However, this study did not discover a significant relationship between students' entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurship education.

Kusumojanto et al. (2021), investigated the link between predicted variables, including entrepreneurial education, entrepreneurial attitude, family education, and environment, which might influence students' entrepreneurial intention. The study supported the idea that a student's surroundings might influence their intention and attitude toward entrepreneurship.

Turulja et al. (2020), examined the effect of perceived formal, informal, and regulatory assistance on entrepreneurial intention. The study found that informal assistance, which is understood as encouragement from family and friends, has a considerable beneficial impact on entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial ambitions are significantly harmed by fear of failure, but entrepreneurial capacity strengthens entrepreneurial intention.

Nowiński et al. (2019), examined the contribution of entrepreneurial education to the entrepreneurial intentions of University Students in Visegrád countries. The study found that only Poland, the only nation out of the four to offer entrepreneurship instruction at the high school level, saw a direct, positive, and considerable influence from it.

Yordanova and Tarrazon (2010), explored gender effects on entrepreneurial intention and identified factors that may account for the gender gap in the entrepreneurial intention of students in Bulgaria. Mungai and Ogot (2012), analyzed the entrepreneurial perceptions and traits as displayed by gender of different ethnic communities in Kenya.

Steenkamp et al. (2011), examined the state of entrepreneurship education in selected South African secondary schools, surveying 1,748 pupils. The study revealed a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and opportunities for new venture creation but less interest in starting their own

business ventures. Wilson et al. (2009), explored the effect of gender, entrepreneurship education, and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intention and behavior.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to investigate gender-related factors and entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduates at selected federal universities in six South Western Nigerian states: Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, and Ekiti. The chosen universities were Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, University of Lagos, Akoka, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Federal University Oye Ekiti, and University of Ibadan. The study used a quantitative method through a cross-sectional survey design, with the population comprising undergraduates from various fields participating in entrepreneurial courses.

The oldest universities in Nigeria are mostly Federal, with three from the Southwestern part of the country. The sample size for the study was 2000, with 473 from the University of Ibadan, 396 from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, 171 from Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, 170 from Federal University of Technology, Akure, 496 from University of Lagos, Akoka, and 294 from Federal University Oye Ekiti.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire called "Gender Related Factors and Entrepreneurial Intentions Questionnaire." The instrument's reliability was assessed through face and content validation by two experts in Entrepreneurship. A pilot study was conducted to assess the instrument's reliability, with the Cronbach Alpha test being used as a measure.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine socio-economic characteristics and relationships between variables, while inferential statistics like Mann-Whitney U Test and Multiple Linear Regression were used to test hypotheses. The study highlights the importance of considering gender-related factors and entrepreneurial intentions in the context of higher education institutions in Nigeria.

4 RESULTS

4.1 RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Table 1

Classification of the Respondents According to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	1078	59.2
Male	742	40.8
Total	1820	100.0

Source: Field Survey, (2024)

The result in Table 1 showed the gender distribution of the respondents where 59.2% were female while 40.8% were male. The result indicates that majority of the respondents are female and this means that the frequency of female undergraduates is more than their male counterpart.

4.2 HYPOTHESES TESTING

4.2.1 Hypothesis one

H₀₁: Given different barriers, significant differences do not exist between female undergraduates' entrepreneurial intentions than the males in the selected universities.

The first hypothesis was tested using the Mann-Whitney U test to examine whether the barriers to entrepreneurial activities among the respondents in the elected universities significantly differ between male and female students. The result is presented below:

Table 2

Hypothesis One Test Result

Variable	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Barriers	Female	1074	946.06	1016068.00
	Male	746	859.31	641042.00
	Total	1820		
Test Statistics	Barriers			
Mann-Whitney U		362411.000		
Wilcoxon W		641042.000		
Z		-3.475		
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.001		

Source: Field Survey, (2024)

The results in Table 2 showed the mean ranks as well as test statistics for the barriers to entrepreneurial activities in the selected universities. The results for mean rank suggest the group that experiences the under-listed barriers to entrepreneurial activities more. This result implies that female ($\mu_R = 946.06$) students in the selected universities are faced with more barriers to their entrepreneurial activities than male students ($\mu_R = 859.31$). Furthermore, the U statistics as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) p -value are important to the decision. From the result, it can be concluded that barriers to entrepreneurial activities with female students of the selected universities were statistically significantly higher than the barriers with the male group ($U=362411.000, p=0.001$). The distribution of barriers is not the same across the two categories of gender. Therefore, with this result, the null hypothesis which states that “given different barriers, significant differences do not exist between female and male students in the selected universities” is rejected and the study concludes that there is a statistically significant difference in the barriers to entrepreneurial activities between male and female students of the selected universities.

4.2.2 Hypothesis two

H₀₂: The current state of entrepreneurship education does not significantly shape entrepreneurial intentions of male and female undergraduates in the selected universities.

The second hypothesis was tested using multiple linear regression analysis to determine how entrepreneurship education shapes the entrepreneurial intentions of male and female students in the selected universities.

Table 3

Regression Result

Variables	Unstandardized Beta Coefficient	<i>t</i> -statistic	Sig.
Constant	2.527	26.406	.000
CURRICULUM	.029	1.699	.089
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT	.257	18.136	.000*
FACILITATORS	-.041	-3.345	.001*

$R=0.402, R^2=0.161, Adjusted R^2=0.16, F_{(3,1816)}=116.586, p=0.000*$
 * Denotes significance at 5% level of significance

Source: Field Survey, (2024)

The study examined how entrepreneurship education shaped the entrepreneurial intentions of female and male students in the selected universities. The multiple linear

regression analysis was used to determine the relationship and influence of entrepreneurship education on the entrepreneurial intentions of the students. The results in Table 3 showed that there is a positive and moderate relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention ($r=0.402$, $p<0.05$). The study further investigated the causal relationship between the two variables by using multiple linear regression analysis to test the influence of the independent variable (entrepreneurship education) on the dependent variable (entrepreneurial intention). The adjusted r^2 value of 0.16 showed that entrepreneurship education explains a 16% variation in the level of entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in the selected universities.

Furthermore, the overall regression model showed statistical significance for entrepreneurial intention from the *F-statistic* value shown in Table 3 above ($F=116.586^{***}$, $p<0.05$). The result also showed individual effects of the parameters of entrepreneurship education on the entrepreneurial intention of students. The result revealed that facilitators ($\beta=-0.041$, $p<0.05$) and school environment ($\beta=0.257$, $p<0.05$) are significant predictors of the entrepreneurial intention of students in the universities investigated while curriculum ($\beta=0.029$, $p>0.05$) did not have a statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial intention. However, the facilitator element of entrepreneurship education has a negative but statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial intention.

4.2.3 Hypothesis three

H₀₃: Entrepreneurial intentions of male students differ significantly from their female counterparts in the selected universities.

The third hypothesis was also tested using the Mann-Whitney U test to examine whether the entrepreneurial intention of male students differs significantly from their female counterparts.

Table 4*Hypothesis Three Test Result*

Variable	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Entrepreneurial Intention	Female	1074	855.22	918510.50
	Male	746	990.08	738599.50
	Total	1820		
Test Statistics	Entrepreneurial Intention			
Mann-Whitney U		341235.500		
Wilcoxon W		918510.500		
Z		-5.394		
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000		

Source: Field Survey, (2024)

The implication of the result in Table 4 above is that female ($\mu_R = 855.22$) students in the selected universities showed less entrepreneurial intention than male students ($\mu_R = 990.08$). Furthermore, the U statistics as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) p -value showed the relevance of this difference to the study. The results showed that entrepreneurial intention in male university students is statistically significantly higher than in the female group ($U=341235.500$, $p<0.05$). The distribution of entrepreneurial intention is not the same across the two categories of gender. Therefore, with this result, the null hypothesis which states that the “entrepreneurial intention of male students does not differ significantly from their female counterparts” is rejected.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Female ($\mu_R = 946.06$) students in the selected universities are faced with more barriers to their entrepreneurial activities than male students ($\mu_R = 859.31$). Furthermore, the U statistics as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) p -value made the study to concluded that barriers to entrepreneurial activities with female students of the selected universities were statistically significantly higher than the barriers with the male group ($U=362411.000$, $p=0.001$). The distribution of barriers is not the same across the two categories of gender suggesting a statistically significant difference in the barriers to entrepreneurial activities between male and female students of the selected universities. This supports the view of Buba and Pulka (2020), which suggested that there is a need to enhance policy intervention tailored to female entrepreneurs towards achieving business success as well as to overcome financial obstacles during start-up. The study concludes that female are facing more barriers to

entrepreneurial activities than female and confirms the findings of Barron and Markman. (2018), who posited that male students are likely to become entrepreneurs.

The study found a positive and moderate relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention ($r=0.402$, $p<0.05$). Mukhtar et al. (2021), also found a link between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention with some other variables. However, the current study reported a significant link between the variables. Entrepreneurship education explains a 16% variation in the level of entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in the selected universities. Although Nowiński et al. (2019), observed an indirect influence of EE on EI, the current study showed that entrepreneurial education has a direct influence on entrepreneurial intention by explain 16% variations in the relationship.

The study found facilitators ($\beta=-0.041$, $p<0.05$) and school environment ($\beta=0.257$, $p<0.05$) to be significant predictors of the entrepreneurial intention of students in the universities investigated while curriculum ($\beta=0.029$, $p>0.05$) did not significantly impact on entrepreneurial intention. The study also found that facilitator element of entrepreneurship education has a negative but statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial intention. Solomon and David (2021), also observed the inadequate trainers or little knowledge of entrepreneurship by the university's lecturers. However, the current study has shown that the knowledge of entrepreneurial course facilitators has negative impact on the students' entrepreneurial intention. The current study also found school environment to have significant influence on the entrepreneurial intention of student which supported the finding in Kusumojanto et al. (2021), where it was observed that the environment of students influences entrepreneurial intention. Overall, entrepreneurial education is vital to entrepreneurial intention as found in Anwar et al. (2022).

5 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that barrier to entrepreneurial activities in the selected universities differ between female and male gender. Female students faced more barriers to entrepreneurial activities than male students. The distribution of barriers is not the same across the two categories of gender. Entrepreneurship education is positively related to entrepreneurial intention and explains a 16% variation in the level of entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in the selected universities. Facilitators and school environment are significant predictors of the entrepreneurial intention of students in the universities investigated even

though facilitator has a negative effect on entrepreneurial intention. Female students showed less entrepreneurial intention than male students and suggest that the distribution of entrepreneurial intention is not the same across the two categories of gender.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study present a few recommendations that could be implemented by policymakers and other stakeholders to further strengthen entrepreneurial intention in Nigerian universities.

Policymakers and stakeholders in entrepreneurship matters should give adequate consideration and preference to the female gender in terms of training and other forms of entrepreneurial education to foster better intention with them. Nevertheless, the male gender must not be ignored completely as this may result in a viscous cycle.

University management, facilitators and lecturers should also improve on the techniques and methods used in teaching entrepreneurship in Nigerian universities to positively impact the entrepreneurial intention of university students.

Management should also use attractive methods and practical styles that will raise the curiosity of students to the field of entrepreneurship.

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