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Influence of Environmental Factors on Entrepreneurial Intention of Polytechnic Undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract—The study investigated the influence of environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of undergraduates in the polytechnics in Osun State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed and the study was conducted among 280 undergraduates selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Three null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A questionnaire adapted from literature and designed in 4-Likert format was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to a panel of experts' validation and reliability test for internal consistency of the instrument yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.79. Data analysis was based on 260 valid responses with the aid of regression analysis, ANOVA, and t-test for unrelated samples using SPSS version 23. The study found that environmental factor has a significant but negative influence on the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates ($p < 0.05$; $\beta = -.230$). The entrepreneurial intention of the undergraduates was found to significantly differ in favor of engineering and management studies ($p > 0.05$; $F = 224.035$). The study concluded that unfavorable business environmental factors negatively influence the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates. The study, therefore recommended that the Government should rise to its responsibility by providing a favorable political and economic environment that would trigger the development of entrepreneurial intention and passion for entrepreneurship in polytechnic undergraduates in particular.

Keywords: Environmental factors, entrepreneurial intention, polytechnic undergraduates

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I. INTRODUCTION

Willingness to engage in entrepreneurship at a future date is commonly referred to as entrepreneurial intention. It is a primary force that drives involvement in entrepreneurial activities, a foremost solution and remedy to the rising rate of graduate unemployment which is one of the greatest challenges faced by developing countries including Nigeria (Otache, Umar, Audu, & Onalo, 2020; Mansor, et al., 2020). As institutions of higher learning in Nigeria turn out graduates year in and year out, the rate of unemployment soars. This has continued to be a serious source of concern in the last few decades as the menace is taking its turn on polytechnic graduates who are being trained for self-reliant and not supposed to be job seekers. Passionate scrambling for paid employment that is scarcely available has been observed among graduates of polytechnic educational programs. As reported by Shamsudin, Al Mamun, Che Nawi, Md Nasir & Zakaria, (2017), engaging in small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures is a panacea to the unemployment problem. Becoming a successful business owner, however, begins with the development of strong desires and willingness for entrepreneurship. According to Amesi and Amachree (2021), entrepreneurial intention usually involves inner guts, ambition, willingness, and a feeling of conviction to stand on one's feet in self-reliance. It refers to an individual's state of mind that is aimed at creating new ventures and developing new business ideas (Ekeh, et al., 2022). It is a major contributing factor to the formation, growth, and development of entrepreneurship. Thus, investigating factors capable of influencing entrepreneurial drive and intentions in polytechnic undergraduates is a worthwhile effort.

Developing entrepreneurial intention and skills among polytechnic undergraduates in Nigeria has, in recent times, received greater attention as efforts are being directed toward compulsory entrepreneurship education courses for all students of all disciplines and programs (Salisu, et al., 2022). Educational institutions, therefore expend efforts on learning experiences in entrepreneurship that will enable

students to acquire practical skills and knowledge for successful entrepreneurial ventures. Students exposed to these entrepreneurship education courses are expected to develop passion and a strong inner drive for entrepreneurship after graduation. Despite government and institutional efforts on entrepreneurship education, the unemployment rate among graduates of polytechnic programs in Nigeria seems to be on the continued increase, indicating low graduates' interest in entrepreneurial ventures (Trade Economics, 2023). By implication, there might be other factors responsible for the development of entrepreneurial intention in these undergraduates apart from exposure to entrepreneurship education as a compulsory course. This could probably be due to the unfavorable business environment prevalent in the country. The perceived low level of entrepreneurial intention among these polytechnic undergraduates could therefore be linked with factors such as unfavourable economic, socio-cultural, and political environments that may be prevalent in the country, among others. Hence, the study seeks to investigate the environmental factors that may likely be influencing the entrepreneurial intention of tertiary education students, especially polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State.

According to Zarnadze, et al., (2022), business environments are those exogenous conditions capable of having both direct and indirect impacts on successful entrepreneurial activities. The environmental factors considered as barriers to developing strong intention for and engaging in entrepreneurial activities were viewed from political, economic, social, legislative, ecological, and technological points of view. Harsh economic policies, societal preferences for foreign goods that cripple local manufacturing firms, and possible bureaucratic bottlenecks in business registration may all influence the development of entrepreneurial intention of the polytechnic undergraduate students. It is assumed that a favorable business environment will naturally trigger intentions for business start-ups, hence the study considered the influence of environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduate students in Osun State, Nigeria.

Nigerian Polytechnics offered programs that can be broadly categorized into agriculture and related technology; art, design, and related technology; business management; engineering; environmental design studies; finance and related studies; health technology; hospitality; science technology; and information studies (National Board for Technical Education, 2023). These programs were designed to provide high-quality manpower that will readily apply technical and vocational skills for national development (Dung-Gwom, 2014). The entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates may, however, vary based on discipline or gender. Although Otache et al (2020) were of the view that entrepreneurship education was to prepare undergraduates to become self-employed irrespective of their chosen discipline, Swarupa and Goyal (2020) reported higher attitudes towards entrepreneurship in engineering students than in management students. Similarly, some studies linked passion for entrepreneurship with gender. For example, Caro-Gonzalez, Romero-Benabent, and Sanchez-Torne (2017),

Branchet (2015), Yordanova and Tarrazon (2019), and Li, et al, (2022) all reported significant differences in the entrepreneurial intention of males and female individuals. Hence the study sought to find the significant difference in entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates based on programmes of study and based on gender.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Concept of Entrepreneurship*

Entrepreneurship has been defined in various ways with a very wide range of meanings. Many scholars view entrepreneurship from different perspectives. "The sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, economists, and managers have divergent views of the concept of entrepreneurship" (National Open University of Nigeria, 2017). Sociologists believe entrepreneurship to be a concept governed by societal values and status hierarchy. In sociologists' view, entrepreneurship will flourish only in a society where people depend on hard work to prosper. Psychologists opine that successful entrepreneurship is fundamentally based on individual personality traits like creativity, innovativeness, and risk-bearing. To economists on the other hand, the entrepreneur is the fourth factor of production who coordinates land, labor, and capital to produce saleable goods or services for a profit. Obasan and Soyebó (2011) define entrepreneurship as the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence. Entrepreneurship is summarily the process by which an individual recognizes business opportunities, initiates a business start-up, displays personal skills in combining the factors of production while assuming moderate risks, and controls or coordinates resources for a profit. It is an act of being an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs therefore are individuals who identify business opportunities and create and organize businesses at a profit. Entrepreneurs are typically driven by certain forces such as the drive for achievement, the desire for freedom and autonomy, or the desire for wealth (National Open University of Nigeria, 2017).

B. *Entrepreneurial Intention Defined*

The entrepreneurial intention was first illustrated by Barbara Bird in 1988 as a state of mind directing a person's attention toward a specific object to achieve something. It is a great predictor of human behavior (Koe & Majid, 2014). Entrepreneurial intention (EI) is the mindset that directs, guides, coordinates, and controls the basic concept of new business development and implementation. Turker and Selcuk (2009) see intentionality as a state of mind directing a person's attention, experience, and actions toward a specific goal or path to achieve something. Similarly, Sanchez (2018) interpreted EI as a self-acknowledged conviction by a person who intends to set up a new business venture and consciously plans to do so at some point in the future.

Entrepreneurial intention is one of the major contributing factors to the formation, growth, and development of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial intention can be influenced by a variety of factors. Scholars differ in their opinions as to the factors responsible for the development of EI in students. Turker and Selcuk (2009) randomly selected 300 university students in Turkey for study. Their study revealed educational support, a supportive university environment, and structural support as factors predicting entrepreneurial intention in university students.

C. Environmental Factors

The environment is complex and consists of an aggregate of natural, social, and cultural conditions that surround an object or individual and that can influence the existence and survival of such object/individual, including the entrepreneur. Esuh and Najafi (2014) opined that entrepreneurs and business ventures react to what obtains in the environment. The authors classify the environment that could influence entrepreneurship as policy and programs of the government, socioeconomic conditions, and financial factors. Bewayo and Portes (2016) considered environmental factors for social entrepreneurship success in terms of economic and social factors. The study compared varying social and economic environments of North America, Latin America, India, and Sub-Sahara Africa, and how entrepreneurs exploited and worked around the environmental conditions to achieve success. Khan (2015) also established that successful entrepreneurship will depend on environmental factors such as social, economic, legal, political, and technological factors. The socio-economic factors were, however, considered the major key factor influencing entrepreneurial behavior.

D. Empirical review

The influence of the college environment on the entrepreneurial intention of high school technical students was investigated in Brazil (Iizuka, Moraes & Souza, 2022). The study confirmed that the school environment positively influences the entrepreneurial intention of students. This study, unlike the current study, was conducted among high school students and not polytechnic undergraduates. In another study conducted to investigate the impact of environmental factors on entrepreneurial behavior, Akter and Igbal (2022) reported that the social and economic environment prevalent in contemporary society has a significant influence on entrepreneurial intention. Zarnadze et al (2022) further looked into the influence of the business environment on entrepreneurial intention. Business environments were viewed as business barriers, which were considered to include political, economic, social, legislative, ecological, and technological factors. Nguyen (2020) investigated the impact of access to finance and other environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of university undergraduates in Vietnam. The study reported both direct and indirect influences of perceived environmental factors on entrepreneurial intention. The study showed that exogenous factors such as environment

influence desires for and willingness to participate in entrepreneurial activities. It was noted from the review that most studies examining the influence of environmental factors on entrepreneurial intention were conducted amidst varying populations such as high school, college, and university students. However, studies on factors influencing the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates are still relatively scarce. Similarly, most of the studies reviewed were carried out in countries with different business environments from what is obtainable in Nigeria. Hence, this study was conducted to examine the influence of environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates in Nigeria to bridge the gap in the literature.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is quantitative, a descriptive design of survey type. The study was conducted among polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria. A sample size of 280 was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. At the first stage, final year (HND II) students from all faculties (categorized into Science, Management, Engineering, and Environmental) in all government-approved public and private polytechnics in Osun State were purposively selected (three public and seven private polytechnics in Osun State, retrieved from Federal Ministry of Education website). Justification for this selection is premised on the fact that the final-year undergraduate students are getting ready to join the labor force and they must have offered all prescribed entrepreneurship education/training courses. In the second stage, 280 of the selected population were sampled using proportionate stratified random sampling. A questionnaire adapted from Linan and Chen (2009) was used to measure entrepreneurial intention, and environmental factors were measured with a scale adapted from Hieu et al., (2022). The instruments were designed in a 4-Likert format, with responses ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The instruments were submitted to a panel of experts for validation. The panel carried out a content analysis of each of the questionnaires and eliminated items found to be irrelevant to the research problem. After necessary modifications, the instruments were subjected to a reliability test with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.79. The instruments were administered through personal contact with the help of two trained research assistants to allow respondents to clarify issues arising from the completion of the questionnaire. Regression, Analysis of Variance and t-test for independent samples were used for data analysis with the aid of SPSS vs 23.

IV. RESULT

H₀₁: Environmental factors do not significantly influence the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria.

The regression result in Table 1 revealed R² of .053 showing that environmental factors accounted for 5.3% variation in the entrepreneurial intention of the undergraduates while 94.7% variation in entrepreneurial intention will be determined by other variables apart from environmental factors.

TABLE 1 REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION OF POLYTECHNIC UNDERGRADUATES IN OSUN, STATE, NIGERIA

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
	Constant	3.993	.273	-.230	14.612
Environmental factors	-.391	.103		-3.796	.000

R = .230; R² = .053; Adjusted R² = .049; P < 0.05 (Significant)
 Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial intention

The result showed p < 0.05 (.000) indicating that the influence of environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of the polytechnic undergraduates is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The table, however, showed that environmental factor is a negative predictor of entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = -.230$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted.

H02: There will be no significant difference in the levels of entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria based on discipline.

TABLE 2A ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES IN LEVELS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION BASED ON DISCIPLINE

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	39.877	4	9.969	224.035	.000	Significant difference
Within Groups	11.347	255	.044			
Total	51.224	259				

Table 2 revealed a significant difference in the levels of entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates based on discipline with p < 0.05 (p = .000). To identify where the difference lies, the Scheffe post-hoc test was conducted for multiple comparisons across the five discipline areas.

TABLE 2B SCHEFFE MULTIPLE COMPARISONS

(I) Discipline	(J) Discipline	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Management	Engineering	.081	.039	.374	-.04	.20
	Environmental	.741*	.039	.000	.62	.86
	Finance	.950*	.039	.000	.83	1.07

Engineering	Science	.322*	.050	.000	.17	.48
	Management	-.081	.039	.374	-.20	.04
	Environmental	.660*	.039	.000	.54	.78
	Finance	.869*	.039	.000	.75	.99
Environmental	Science	.241*	.050	.000	.09	.40
	Management	-.741*	.039	.000	-.86	-.62
	Engineering	-.660*	.039	.000	-.78	-.54
	Finance	.209*	.039	.000	.09	.33
Finance	Science	-.419*	.050	.000	-.57	-.27
	Management	-.950*	.039	.000	-1.07	-.83
	Engineering	-.869*	.039	.000	-.99	-.75
	Environmental	-.209*	.039	.000	-.33	-.09
Science	Science	-.628*	.050	.000	-.78	-.47
	Management	-.322*	.050	.000	-.48	-.17
	Engineering	-.241*	.050	.000	-.40	-.09
	Environmental	.419*	.050	.000	.27	.57
	Finance	.628*	.050	.000	.47	.78

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Scheffe posthoc test results in Table 2b, however, showed that the mean differences in entrepreneurial intention are significant between engineering, environmental, finance, and science students (p > 0.05), but not significant between engineering and management students. (p = .374). This showed that the levels of entrepreneurial intention of engineering and management students are similar and that the levels of entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic students in science, environmental studies, and finance are significantly lower than those of engineering and management students.
 H03: There will be no significant difference in the levels of entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria based on gender.

TABLE 3 T-TEST ANALYSIS SHOWING DIFFERENCE IN ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION OF MALE AND FEMALE POLYTECHNIC UNDERGRADUATES IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

Group	N	X	SD	df	T	Sig.
Male	108	2.9506	.44114	384	.258	.557
Female	152	2.9686	.44855			

p > 0.05

From the results presented in Table 8, a t-cal of .258, which is lower than the critical t-value of 1.96, also, the p-value of .557 which is greater than the 0.05 showed that there is no significant difference in the levels of entrepreneurial intention of male and female polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

V. DISCUSSION

Regression analysis on the influence of environmental factors on entrepreneurial intention showed a significant but negative influence. This implies that the business environment prevalent in the nation is having a negative influence on the development of entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic

undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria. This finding corroborates Akter and Iqbal (2022), who reported a negative significant influence of environment on entrepreneurial intention. The finding, however, contradicts Iizuka, Moraes & Souza, (2022), and Nguyen (2020) who reported that exogenous factors such as the environment have a positive significant influence on the entrepreneurial intention of students. This variation might suggest that the business environmental factors (political, economic, socio-cultural, and technological) prevalent in Nigeria are quite different from those in Brazil and Vietnam where Iizka et al (2022) and Nguyen (2020) carried out their researches. This suggests that business environments in Nigeria are not favorable for the development of entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students. The findings that environmental factors can only account for 5.3% variation in entrepreneurial intention showed that other factors apart from environmental factors will account for 94.7% variation in EI. These other factors may include exposure to practical-oriented entrepreneurship education.

The study revealed a significant difference in the levels of entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates based on discipline. Environmental, Science, and Financial studies undergraduates significantly differ in their levels of entrepreneurial intention from those of their engineering and management counterparts. No significant difference was, however, shown in the levels of entrepreneurial intention of engineering and management students. This contradicts Swarupa and Goyal (2020) who reported a higher attitude towards entrepreneurship in engineering students than in management students. The findings implied that both engineering and management undergraduates in the polytechnics in Osun State have higher levels of entrepreneurial intention, while their counterparts in environmental, science, and financial studies showed lower levels of entrepreneurial intention.

The study also revealed no significant difference in the levels of entrepreneurial intention of male and female polytechnic undergraduates. This contradicts Sahinidis, et al (2012), Yordanova and Tarrazon (2019), and Li, et al, (2022) who all reported a significant difference in the entrepreneurial intention of male and female individuals. The finding, however, agrees with Hutahun (2018) who reported that gender is not a moderating variable on the influence of entrepreneurial knowledge on entrepreneurial intention. By implication, gender is not a determining factor for the development of entrepreneurial intention in an individual. In an actual sense, having a passion for entrepreneurship and becoming a successful entrepreneur does seem not gender-based as there are both male and female individuals who are successful entrepreneurs.

VI. CONCLUSION

The business environment prevalent in society will influence the development of entrepreneurial intention in undergraduates. Unfavorable economic, socio-cultural, technological, and political environments prevalent in Nigeria negatively influence the entrepreneurial intention of

polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria. The study concludes that if economic, socio-cultural, and political environments are favorable, intention to participate in entrepreneurship after graduation will be on the boost and will subsequently lead to entrepreneurial behavior, leading to a decline in the graduate unemployment rate. Also, levels of entrepreneurial intention in young undergraduates can vary depending on the discipline or program of study. It can also be concluded, that gender is not a factor in the development of entrepreneurial intention in students.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that:

1. The government should rise to its responsibility by providing a political and economic environment favourable for entrepreneurship which would trigger undergraduates' interest in entrepreneurial activities.
2. Management of the polytechnics should intensify efforts at exposing undergraduates of all disciplines, especially environmental, science, and financial studies, to practical-oriented entrepreneurship education.

VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused influence of environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria. It was limited to only environmental factors as the independent variable and focused only on polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State but did not cover other states in the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Future researchers may widen the conceptual and population scope.

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