

GENDER AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AMONG FINAL-YEAR STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a critical driver of economic growth and job creation, particularly in developing countries. Understanding the factors that influence students' entrepreneurial intentions is vital for designing effective educational and policy interventions. This study investigates the role of gender in shaping the entrepreneurial intentions of final-year students at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State. Specifically, the study examines whether male and female students differ significantly in their behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and personal attitudes toward entrepreneurship. The study was underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). A survey research design was adopted, and primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of final-year students. Regression analysis was employed to analyze the data using SPSS. The findings revealed a significant relationship between behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, personal attitudes, and entrepreneurial intentions. However, while both male and female students exhibited positive entrepreneurial intentions, gender-based disparities were observed in terms of risk tolerance, access to entrepreneurial role models, and confidence in starting a business. The study concluded that gender has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intentions of final-year students at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. Therefore, there is a need for gender-responsive entrepreneurship education and support systems to harness the full potential of young graduates, irrespective of gender.

Keywords: Gender Factor, Entrepreneurial Intention, Behavioral Beliefs, Normative Beliefs Personal Attitudes

Background to the Study

Globally, there is an increase in entrepreneurial activity, and governments everywhere are capitalizing on this trend by promoting and encouraging the formation of new businesses, enterprises, start-ups, and ventures. This rising awareness of entrepreneurship derives from the fact that entrepreneurship is always associated with wealth creation, economic stability and progress, and higher living standards, all of which contribute to a country's GDP (Omotajo, Akinola, & Akinbode, 2024). As a result, both male and female polytechnic students have demonstrated a strong desire to start their own businesses, with a focus on gender. Men have historically demonstrated stronger entrepreneurship, however women have also increased their entrepreneurship by founding high-growth enterprises (Gallegosa, Valencia-Arias, Bravo, Puentea, Valencia, Uribe-Bedoyab, Huertad, Vega-Mori, & Rodriguez-Correa, 2024).

Consequently, the Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) and other higher education institution governing bodies, such as the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), have therefore introduced and mandated that all tertiary institutions in the country begin incorporating entrepreneurship education studies into their programs. Some Nigerian educational schools have integrated entrepreneurship education into their curricula to improve and stimulate students' entrepreneurial intentions for their business start-up journeys. This approach would allow experts and students to address the issues of unemployment that Nigerian higher education institutions are facing.

The curriculum would address issues such as unemployment, underdevelopment, poverty alleviation, a lack of work possibilities, and the benefits of having an entrepreneurial attitude. Expanding it would result in the creation of new businesses, workspaces, and job opportunities (Farro-Ruiz, Figueroa, Cardenas, Ramon, & Chiparra, 2023). Despite the compulsory introduction, adoption of entrepreneurial intents among students in postsecondary institutions has been gradual. This can often be ascribed to barriers that inhibit both male and female students from participating in entrepreneurial activities at their particular postsecondary institutions (Azmi, 2020).

Students are the future business owners who will determine each country's economic viability, hence their role in entrepreneurship cannot be overstated in any economy. When students grasp the importance of entrepreneurship, the economy is expected to expand faster and the unemployment rate to fall. As a result, many developing countries are making major efforts to assist prospective business owners at all levels in launching new companies (Poi, 2019). Ward, Hernández-Sánchez, & Sánchez-García (2019) suggest that entrepreneurial potential, including environmental factors and personality traits, can be used to analyze the gender component of firm ownership.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's government implemented an entrepreneurship education policy in tertiary institutions in response to the country's rising unemployment rate in order to equip students with employable and self-reliance skills. However, it has been noted that comparatively fewer female students are utilizing this policy to get ready for the challenges of the labor market (Omotajo et al., 2024). Even though there are many female entrepreneurs in tertiary institutions, entrepreneurship is still stereotyped as being male-dominated and linked to masculine traits. This is because male and female students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education in their respective tertiary institutions have been found to influence their entrepreneurship intentions, entrepreneurship differences, and entrepreneurial characteristics in business start-up and growth (Brush & Cooper, 2019). Female students' entrepreneur is still significantly lower than male as a result of their entrepreneurial propensity.

Even though tertiary students are becoming more interested in entrepreneurship, there are still a number of real and potential obstacles that influence both male and female students' aspirations to pursue business. These consist of elements including individual attitude, drive, and experience, as well as behavioral and normative ideas. While previous research has attempted to investigate how gender-related characteristics impact students' entrepreneurial performance and intentions, much of this work is still in its early stages of development. In particular, research is increasingly concentrating on identifying overt gender disparities in entrepreneurial conduct. Nevertheless, there are no thorough explanatory theories and the body of cumulative information is still dispersed. The need for more research is highlighted by this vacuum in the literature, which is why this study was conducted.

Based on the above, therefore, this study intends to examine the effect of gender factor on entrepreneurial intentions of final students in Nigerian polytechnics, using final year students in the school of management students, Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro as reference point.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of gender factor on entrepreneurial intention of final students in Nigerian polytechnics. While the specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the impact of behavioral beliefs on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.
- ii. Determine the influence of normative beliefs on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.
- iii. Investigate the effect of personal attitudes on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: behavioral beliefs have significant impact on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

H₀₂: normative beliefs have no significant influence on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

H₀₃: personal attitudes have no significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

Literature Review

Gender Factor

Bela, Riani, and Indriayu (2021) define the gender factor as how gender discrepancies influence a person's motivation, viewpoint, and decision to pursue entrepreneurial pursuits. Social traditions and expectations about gender roles commonly impact entrepreneurial intention, which is the deliberate mental state that directs one's attention and activities toward establishing a new business. These positions can influence people's risk tolerance, opportunity perception, and self-efficacy, all of which can influence their decision to pursue entrepreneurship (Tambunan, 2021). According to Mubarik, Mujahid, and Naghavi (2020), women may face biases that limit their desires to become entrepreneurs, whereas men are often associated with attributes such as assertiveness and risk-taking, both of which are frequently connected with entrepreneurial success.

Gender has an important influence in entrepreneurship not only biologically, but also in institutional frameworks and socialization processes. Gender influences entrepreneurial aspirations in a variety of ways, including education, work experience, and social support networks. As a result, understanding the gender factor assists in developing targeted interventions and legislative steps to foster inclusive entrepreneurship environments. Addressing gender-specific hurdles and promoting equitable opportunities can boost the entrepreneurial potential of everyone, regardless of gender (Mubarik et al., 2020).

Behavioral Beliefs

Behavioral beliefs are a person's assessments of the likely consequences or outcomes of engaging in a given behavior. Behavioral beliefs are supposed to serve as the cognitive foundation for creating attitudes towards an activity. Tornikoski and Maalaoui (2019) found that if people believe an activity would have positive consequences, they are more inclined to engage in it. As a result, these beliefs are critical in defining intention and, ultimately, actual behavior. Personal experiences, social learning, and cultural environment all influence behavioral attitudes, which are not formed in a vacuum (Farrukh, Lee, Sajid, & Waheed, 2019).

An aspiring entrepreneur may be more motivated to pursue entrepreneurship if they believe that starting a business will result in social recognition and financial freedom. On the other side, their attitude may suffer if they perceive that entrepreneurship implies a high level of risk and the likelihood of failure. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2020), behavioral beliefs are important predictors in decision-making models because their accessibility and strength have a direct impact on how strongly they influence attitudes and behaviors.

Normative Beliefs

Normative views refer to a person's perception of society pressure or expectations regarding whether or not to partake in a given behavior. These opinions are based on what key people—such as family, friends, mentors, or coworkers—believe the individual should do. A person's subjective norms are shaped by their normative notions, which influence their behavioral intentions. A person is more likely to intend to engage in an activity if they believe it is supported by significant persons in their life (Zhao, 2021).

The perceived expectations of a reference group or society as a whole are represented in normative notions that have their origins in social and cultural settings. People may face greater normative pressure to start a business in societies where entrepreneurship is widely welcomed and promoted. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2020), normative beliefs are made up of two parts: the desire to live up to others' standards and the perceived expectations of others. When both elements are strong, they have a major influence on behavior and decision-making.

Personal Attitudes

In the context of entrepreneurship, personal belief refers to the belief and judgment of a favorable, negative, or neutral approach to an action influenced by sentiment. As a result, someone may have a good attitude about a project because they believe it will produce more or less beneficial outcomes (Al-Mamary and Alraja, 2022). According to Yang, Chen, Wei, and Su (2020), attitudes regarding entrepreneurship have long been recognized as having a substantial influence on the formation of entrepreneurial behaviors. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that an individual's attitude toward entrepreneurship is a strong predictor of their willingness to pursue entrepreneurship (Gansser & Reich, 2023).

Personal beliefs are the convictions, perceptions, and understandings that shape a person's worldview and decision-making process (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2020). Typically, one's values, experiences, education, culture, and cognitive processes shape these views. They frequently serve as the foundation for attitudes, intents, and behaviors, representing what a person believes to be true about himself, others, and the greater world (Rokeach, 2023). Personal beliefs have an important role in developing attitudes toward specific activities and how people appraise the potential consequences of their actions, according to behavioral theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2019).

Entrepreneurial Intentions

Entrepreneurial intention is an individual's self-admitted confidence in the possibility of starting a new business with a true and dedicated strategy at a certain time. The concept of entrepreneurial intention is determined by the strength or intent to start a new business (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2020). This is compatible with the premise of Ajzen's theory, which claims that the possibility of engaging in an activity increases with intention. Indeed, it is widely documented that an individual's entrepreneurial intention is a validated predictor of their entrepreneurial behaviors; hence, investigating entrepreneurial intention is a straightforward way to comprehend the components that influence entrepreneurial intention (Poi, 2019).

Entrepreneurial intention refers to people's willingness to act entrepreneurially, work for themselves, or create their own business. It usually requires ambition, inner strength, and the capacity to stand on one's own two feet. Even if someone has the potential to be an entrepreneur, they may not pursue this road unless they specifically decide to (Zhao, 2021). The word "entrepreneurial intention" refers to the mental states of persons who aspire to establish a new business, develop a new business concept, or add value to current businesses. It has a significant impact on the success, survival, and extension of businesses, and it is an essential component in enabling the establishment of a new enterprise (Ward et al., 2019).

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen (1991) develops the Theory of Planned Activity (TPB), a psychology theory that explains human action by relying on intention, which is regarded to be the immediate predecessor to actual activity. TPB identifies three major aspects influencing a person's behavioral intention: attitude toward the action, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The degree to which an individual regards the action in question favorably or negatively is referred to as their attitude. Subjective norms include perceived social pressure to engage or refrain from engaging in an action, as well as perceived behavioral control, which, like self-efficacy, refers to how easy or difficult the conduct is seen to be.

By highlighting the importance of behavioral ideas, normative views, and personal attitude, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) offers a helpful framework for comprehending how gender affects entrepreneurial aspirations. Regarding gender, TPB posits that societal expectations, cultural beliefs, and individual experiences may influence how male and female students develop their views toward entrepreneurship. Women may feel more social or structural barriers, which can make them feel less in control of their conduct and less inclined to start their own business. On the other hand, men might encounter more support or fewer limitations, which could result in more positive views and a greater desire to pursue business. Gender differences in subjective norms, such social acceptance or family support, might also affect the chance of taking entrepreneurial action.

Empirical Review

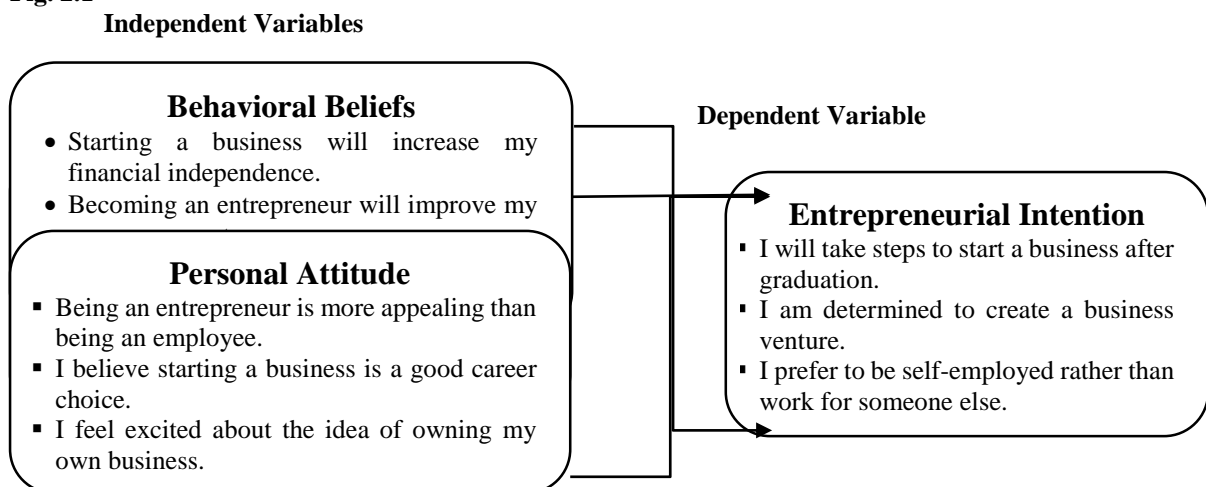
Omotajo, Akinola, and Akinbode (2024) looked into how students' entrepreneurial intentions were influenced by gender-related characteristics in a few public tertiary schools in Southwest Nigeria. A systematic questionnaire and cross-sectional survey were used to gather information from 351 respondents at six different institutions. According to the report, female students had a harder time juggling their entrepreneurial endeavors and academic obligations than their male counterparts.

Gallegosa et al. (2024) conducted a comparative analysis of the factors influencing the entrepreneurial intention of male and female entrepreneurial students in Peru. Using a survey of 1006 college students, a quantitative analysis based on the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model was conducted. The findings showed that men are more likely than women to have an entrepreneurial goal, and that this intention is influenced more by social support, personal attitude, and current behavior control. On the other hand, characteristics pertaining to control and individual attitudes toward entrepreneurship were more prevalent among women.

Bela, Riani, and Indriayu (2021) used hierarchical multiple regression analysis with a sample of 200 students to investigate whether men's entrepreneurial potential is greater than women's, meaning that men have more intentions to start their own businesses than women. The findings indicated that while gender does not significantly moderate the relationship, entrepreneurial potential has a significant impact on student intention.

Conceptual Framework

Fig. 2.1



Source: Researchers' Concept, 2025.

The conceptual framework above illustrates the diagrammatic relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. From the diagram, entrepreneurial intention—the dependent variable—is predicted by the independent variables: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and personal attitude.

Methodology

To examine the effect of gender factor on entrepreneurial intention of final year students in the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, survey research design was employed. Survey allows for the collection of factual data from a population to comprehend the present status of many variables. The study focuses on 2639 HND final year students across all departments of the institution, out of which 338 students were selected as sample size through a multi-stage sampling technique with the aid of Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination formula as shown below:

$$n = \frac{x^2 Np(1-p)}{e^2(N-1) + x^2 P(1-P)}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (2639)

e = acceptable error of sample size (0.05)

x^2 = chi-square df and reliability level 95% (3.841)

p = population proportions (assumed to be 0.5)

Then,

$$n = \frac{x^2 Np(1-p)}{e^2(N-1) + x^2 P(1-P)} = \frac{3.841 \times 2639 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2(2639-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}$$

$$n = \frac{2534.09975}{7.49525} = 338.094$$

$$n = 338$$

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire, which were administered online (goggle form). The goggle form was sent across the final year students Whatsapp platforms. The data collected were analyzed using correlation and multiple regression analysis with the aid of SPSS.

Data Analysis

This section covered the analysis, interpretation, and application of the data gathered using the research instrument basically, the self-administered questionnaire to the testing of the study's hypotheses. Furthermore, the findings were based on 311 data collected.

Table **Pearson Correlation Matrix**

	Behavioral Beliefs	Normative Beliefs	Personal Attitude	Entrepreneurial Intention
Behavioral Beliefs	1.000	.763	.742	.653
Normative Beliefs	.763	1.000	.805	.943
Personal Attitude	.742	.805	1.000	.801
Entrepreneurial Intention	.653	.943	.801	1.000

Source: Extracted from SPSS Output

According to the correlation table above, entrepreneurial intention and behavioral attitudes are highly associated ($r = 0.653$). This implies that students' internal assessments of the results and advantages of launching a firm have an impact on their attitudes about entrepreneurship as well as their desire to pursue it.

Interestingly, the strongest positive correlation between entrepreneurial intention and normative beliefs is found at $r = 0.943$. This implies that social factors like peer pressure, family expectations, instructor support, and motivation from prosperous businesspeople all have a significant impact on students' intention to pursue entrepreneurship.

Lastly, personal attitude also displays a substantial positive link with entrepreneurial intention ($r = 0.801$), showing that students who see entrepreneurship favorably are more likely to want to start a business. This corresponds with TPB, where attitude toward the behavior is a primary predictor of intention. It is clear that students are more likely to take entrepreneurial activity if they believe that entrepreneurship is honorable, lucrative, or personally fulfilling.

Table		Regression Table ^a		
Source	SS	Df	MS	No. of Obs. = 311
Regression	50.507	3	16.836	F (3, 307) = 285.765
Residual	4.890	307	0.059	Prob>F = 0.000
Total	55.397	310		R-Squared = 0.622
				Adj R-Squared = 0.611
				R = 0.653
Model	Coef	Std. Err.	T	P> t
Behavioral Beliefs	0.227	0.055	4.121	0.000
Normative Beliefs	0.905	0.058	15.705	0.000
Personal Attitude	0.221	0.064	3.461	0.001
const	0.352	0.108	3.255	0.002

a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Behavioral Beliefs, Normative Beliefs, Personal Attitude

The coefficient determination value of 0.653, as displayed in the regression table, indicates the joint effect of the gender factor on entrepreneurial intention. The findings showed that final-year students of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro entrepreneurial intention is strongly positively impacted by their gender. According to the R-squared value of 0.622, differences in the degree of behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and personal attitude account for 62.2% of the variation in entrepreneurial intention, with other models not included in the study accounting for the remaining 37.8%. After controlling for the degree of freedom, the model was still able to account for roughly 61.1% of the systematic variation in entrepreneurial intention, according to the adjusted R square, which had a value of 0.611.

Additionally, the result showed that the model as a whole was statistically significant. This suggests that the study's models, personal attitude, normative beliefs, and behavioral beliefs were effective in predicting the desire to start a business. This was corroborated by the F-statistic value of 285.765 and the reported $p < 0.000$ which was less than the standard probability of 0.05 level of significance. This finding indicates that final-year students at the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro in Ogun State had a substantial impact on their entrepreneurial ambition based on gender factor.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis I:

H₀: behavioral beliefs have no significant impact on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

The regression table indicates that behavioral beliefs have a significant value of 0.000, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05. This suggests that behavioral beliefs is statistically significant with entrepreneurial intention. According to this result, null hypothesis is rejected, it is concluded that behavioral beliefs has significant impact on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

Hypothesis II:

H₀: normative beliefs have no significant influence on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

The regression table further clarified that normative beliefs has a significant value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. This inferred that normative beliefs have a statistical significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, it is concluded that normative beliefs have significant influence on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

Hypothesis III:

H₀: personal attitude has no significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

The regression table also revealed that personal attitude has a significant value of 0.001, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05. This connotes that personal attitude is statistically significant with entrepreneurial

intention. According to this result, null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that personal attitude has significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions of HND final year students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicated that entrepreneurial intention is positively and statistically significantly impacted by behavioral beliefs ($\beta = 0.227$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, students are more likely to declare their goal to become entrepreneurs if they believe in the possible advantages or results of entrepreneurship (autonomy, revenue generating, professional fulfillment). This is consistent with a study by Gallegosa et al. (2024) that indicated that males in Peru are more impacted by behavioral beliefs and have a higher intention to start their own business than women. Maria (2022) also agreed that among Kogi State final-year students, the association between behavioral attitudes and entrepreneurial desire is moderated by gender differences.

The model's best predictor was the second objective, normative beliefs ($\beta = 0.905$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that students' entrepreneurial intention is significantly influenced by their perceptions of societal expectations, particularly those from friends, family, and society at large. This implies that students may be socially or culturally encouraged to pursue business. This is consistent with research by Gallegosa et al. (2024), which found that men are more likely than women to have an entrepreneurial desire and that normative attitudes in Peru have a greater influence on this intention. The study of Oyo-Ita (2020), which demonstrated that normative attitudes at the University of Calabar, Faculty of Education, have a substantial impact on students' entrepreneurial intention, further supports this.

Finally, it was discovered that entrepreneurial intention was significantly predicted by personal attitude ($\beta = 0.221$, $p = 0.001$). This suggests that students are more inclined to think about entrepreneurship as a career route if they have positive opinions about it and believe it to be worthwhile, respectable, and fulfilling. This is consistent with the findings of Gallegosa et al.'s study from 2024, which demonstrated that women in Peru were more influenced by aspects pertaining to their own attitudes toward entrepreneurship. Omotajo, Akinola, and Akinbode's (2024) study also showed that students' entrepreneurial ambition in Southwest Nigeria tertiary institutions is influenced by their personal attitudes.

Conclusion

According to the first objective, students' behavioural beliefs toward entrepreneurship have a big impact on whether or not they decide to launch a business. Students are more inclined to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours when they see the advantages and successful results of doing so. The Theory of Planned Behaviour, which holds that behavioral beliefs mold attitudes that impact intention, is consistent with this.

The second objective demonstrated that the best indicator of entrepreneurial intention was normative beliefs, underscoring the significant influence of peer, family, and societal norms on students' entrepreneurial choices. This implies that entrepreneurship is socially rooted in the students' surroundings in addition to being a personal decision. The TPB idea that subjective norms can greatly influence behavioral intentions is supported by the very high influence of normative beliefs, particularly in community countries like Nigeria.

Lastly, the third objective revealed that personal attitudes of students on entrepreneurship had a big impact on their intention to start their own business. Students are more likely to want to pursue entrepreneurial professions when they have positive attitudes, including positive views of the value and desirability of entrepreneurship. This finding is consistent with TPB, which holds that entrepreneurial intention is directly influenced by one's own attitude.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendation were made:

- i. In order to reinforce students' positive behavioral beliefs and promote entrepreneurial aspirations, curriculum agencies and tertiary institutions should create programs that clearly convey the advantages and potential rewards of entrepreneurship.
- ii. In order to promote entrepreneurship as a respectable and feasible career route, policymakers and institutions should work with peer groups, families, and community leaders. Programs like parental engagement initiatives and entrepreneurship awareness campaigns may contribute to the development of socially friendly environments that promote students' aspirations to pursue entrepreneurship.
- iii. By clearing up common misunderstandings, lowering failure anxiety, and emphasizing the positive effects of business on society, entrepreneurship education programs should concentrate on fostering positive personal attitudes. Students' confidence and positive attitudes can be bolstered by mentorship and role model programs.

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