

Mediating Role of Social Awareness on Relationship Between Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention of Students in North-Western Nigeria

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Abstract

Globally, entrepreneurial intention has been recognized as the key determinant of venturing into entrepreneurial act and was largely accepted as a means of reducing unemployment. This study empirically examined the mediating role of social awareness on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention of students in north-western Nigeria. The study is based on primary data collected from three hundred and eighty-four students using structured questionnaire. The data was analyzed using the technique of PLS path analysis. The finding of this study revealed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy significantly influences on entrepreneurial intention of students in north-western Nigeria. Furthermore, the findings indicated that social awareness was significantly related to entrepreneurial intention. In addition, the findings also revealed that social awareness partially mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention of students in north-western Nigeria. The study concluded that entrepreneurial self-efficacy aids the development of entrepreneurial intention through improved social awareness. The study recommends that curriculum planners should place more emphasizes on social awareness as it can mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention of students.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy, Entrepreneurial Intention, Mediating Role Social awareness and Relationship.

Introduction

Entrepreneurial intentions has been gaining increased attention in the popular literature considering its relevance as a determinant of entrepreneurship development which subsequently is seen as a yardstick for economic development. Entrepreneurial intentions open opportunities for graduates to attain financial freedom and aid in creating employment opportunities and economic development (Basu & Virick, 2008).

However, despite its relevance in economic development and unemployment reduction, evidence indicates that most countries today are facing persistent increase in the number of unemployment across nations (Yang, Pu & Guan, 2019). This challenge is largely attributed to low entrepreneurial intention of graduates across nations and the reason behind today's low entrepreneurial intention level in Nigeria is most probably due to the current system of

education operating in the country. For example, Mahmoud *et al* (2020) report that there is a clear lack of understanding of entrepreneurship education among young undergraduate students in Nigeria, hence hindering the actualization of entrepreneurial intention. This is supported further by Nigerian graduate report 2018 which reveals that the academic experiences gained from the education system prepares 72% of Nigerian graduates for employment rather than self-employment (Stutern, 2018). Hence, the Nigerian university system of learning can be said to have been breeding graduates that are at best fit for employment rather than graduates with entrepreneurial mindset.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is linked to students' judgments on performing the task of entrepreneur using their abilities to succeed (Shahab, Chengang, Arbizu & Haider, 2019). Thus, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a motivational factor to students on choosing entrepreneurship as their future career path (Shaheen & Al-haddad 2018). Given the critical influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on students' motivation, studies (e.g Fenech, Baguant & Ivanov, 2019; Zieba & Golik, 2018) applied entrepreneurial self-efficacy to explain students' entrepreneurial intention.

Acknowledging the importance of entrepreneurial intention among youth and university graduates, prompts policy makers to develop measures to support entrepreneurial intention through call to academia to consider their role as promoters of entrepreneurial intention (Djaoued *et al*, 2018). Hence, understanding the factors responsible for stimulating entrepreneurial intention is important (Li, 2017). Moreover, social awareness is seen as total capacity of individual to purposefully act. Thus, allowing more intelligent thinking that makes individuals discriminate intelligent choices in order to make decisions (Velasquez, 2018).

According to Dulewicz and Higgs (2017), social awareness is seen as important influencing factor towards entrepreneurial intention as possession of such skills and competence offered individual the ability to negotiate and handle various task through interpersonal exchanges. Empirical evidence such as Mio, Humphrey, Qian and Pollack (2018) and Velasquez, (2018) indicates that social awareness contributes immensely to success in human life as such might often help in improving entrepreneurial intention.

In addition, previous studies examined the effects of entrepreneurial self-efficacy factors on entrepreneurial intention (Fenech *et al*, 2019; Zieba & Golik 2018; Li, 2017). However, little is understood about the mechanism as the results obtained are inconclusive or even contradictory thus, to increase levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, it is essential that social awareness programs influence entrepreneurial intention of individuals so that they persist in the pursuit of entrepreneurial act (Li, 2017). Additionally, Idris (2021) and Zieba and Golik (2018) suggest that further study should examine how social awareness can be deployed in mediating its antecedents (entrepreneurial self-efficacy) with entrepreneurial intention. In view of the above-mentioned gaps and suggestions for further studies, it is important to find out the extent to which entrepreneurial self-efficacy influences on entrepreneurial intention through mediation of social awareness among students in North-western Nigerian universities.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Concept of Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention is a concept that emanates from psychological theories when attempts were made to discover reasons for developing intention and behaviour. The work of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) plays a crucial role because it describes this association as an evolutionary transition from belief to attitude, from attention to intention and then from intention to behaviour. Therefore, the development of intention can be understood as determined or planned in some way. Intent represents a person's motivation to work hard in implementing conscious plan or decision (Liu *et al*, 2019). Hence, entrepreneurial intention is motivation of individuals consciously planning to execute act of business start-up. It has been used to describe self-prediction of engaging in certain behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). In other words, intent indicates how much effort people are willing to put in, how much effort they plan to put in to achieve a certain outcome (Ajzen, 1991). Entrepreneurs' intentions are the motivation that drive their goals, actions, and commitments to create a business (Bird, 1988). He adds that it is a way of thinking for a specific goal or path. The purpose is to achieve a certain goal through personal attention also known as their experience and actions

In addition, individuals' willingness to express entrepreneurial intention and participate in entrepreneurial activities related to self-employment and new venture establishment depends on the direct determinants of intention. Therefore, Davidson (1995) asserted that success will be based on individual applicability and views on desirability. Similarly, Basol and Karatuna (2019) believed that individuals will consider entrepreneurial careers based on belief that such efforts can contribute to achieving personal goals, pursuing ideas, and achieving financial benefits.

In another study, Pretheeba and Venkatapathy (2018) concentrated on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intent. The study tests the mechanisms whether entrepreneurial self-efficacy affect relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intent and the results indicate that entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediate relation between proactive personality and other forms of entrepreneurial intention. More so, Cavazos-Arroyo, Puente-Diaz and Agarwal (2017) examined how entrepreneurship self-efficacy influence entrepreneurial intentions among Mexican population. The findings disclosed self-efficacy to be strong predictor of entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, Utami (2017), within the Indonesian context found self-efficacy to have positive and significant effect on intention to entrepreneurship. In the same vein, Fenech, Baguant and Ivanov (2019) conducted an exploratory investigation on entrepreneurial self-efficacy on Emirati entrepreneurs' intention. The study embraced ex-post factor research design with population of 506 business undergraduate students engaging in entrepreneurial activity. The study used correlation and regression for data analysis. The finding proved that entrepreneurial self-efficacy significantly contributes to entrepreneurial intentions

Solesvik (2016) conducted an empirical investigation on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intention among 429 students across three universities in Ukraine and one university in Norway. Multiple regression analysis and t-test were employed in the study and the finding reveal significant positive effect of entrepreneurship self-efficacy on intention to entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Shahab, Chengang, Arbizu and Haider (2019) conducted an empirical investigation to examine the nexus between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions in emerging markets. The methodology employed in the study was survey method using 808 sample of respondents, SEM and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were used to analyze data for the study. Results indicated entrepreneurial self-efficacy relate to intention. However, entrepreneurial education can efficiently develop entrepreneurial creativity to nurture entrepreneurial intentions, regardless of economic maturity of countries'

In the same vein, Li (2017) examined impact of undergraduates' entrepreneurial self-efficacy and education on intention employing survey design with 282 samples. Logistic Regression was employed for data analysis and the results show entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial self-efficacy to be related positively and significantly with entrepreneurial intention. And thus, the entrepreneurial attitude partial intermediate relation among entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.

In a comparative analysis of two countries, Basol and Karatuna (2019) conducted an empirical investigation on perceived self-efficacy within university undergraduates in Poland and Turkey. The study employed a cross sectional research design and information was obtained through questionnaire from 365 Polish and 278 Turkish students. The study used correlation and regression for data analysis and the results indicated that Polish and Turkish students significantly concurred about overall measure of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The study suggested fostering entrepreneurial self-efficacy among college undergraduates.

Another study was conducted by Ojewumi, Oyeleke, Agberotimi and Adedayo (2018) to examine self-efficacy role on OAU students' entrepreneurial intention in Nigeria. Survey research design was employed with (140) students sample size. Correlation and regression analysis was used for analyzing data and results disclosed no significant difference among male and female students on entrepreneurship intention. The finding further revealed significant difference between respondents rated high in self-efficacy with those rated low in self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention. The study proves entrepreneurial self-efficacy influence on intention to business start-ups and thus practical training on pedagogical approaches are required in developing entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Nevertheless, Ndofirepi, Rambe, Dzansi and Ndofirepi (2018) explored linkage between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions. The study adopted survey design with self-completion questionnaire of 130 students undergoing compulsory course in entrepreneurship at University of Technology in South Africa. Regression was used for analysis of data and the finding revealed that self-efficacy influence entrepreneurship intentions thereby concluding that inner

aspects, including self-efficacy and technological creativity effectively foster students' entrepreneurial intentions undergoing entrepreneurship education.

Conversely, Sadriwala and Khan (2018) attempted to ascertain the role of entrepreneurial traits present among selected college students. The study adopted a quantitative approach with questionnaire used for collection of data. The study population comprised Omani Accounting Undergraduate students. The study used purposive sampling technique and the findings indicated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy and career intentions of accounting major students are not significantly related.

In general, the main psychological characteristics related to entrepreneurship in the literature are: internal sources of control; propensity to take risks; self-confidence; need for achievement; tolerance of ambiguity and innovation. Robinson (1991) points out that internal control leads to a positive entrepreneurial attitude, and most students who accept entrepreneurial formation may develop a higher level of control and self-efficacy

H0₁: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has no significant influence on entrepreneurial intention

Concept of Social Awareness

It is important for employees' to possess the ability of understanding social and ethical norms for behaviour and recognize family, school and community resources and support. According to McPheat, (2010) social awareness is the process of interaction of employees with others in the discharge of their organization duties. This indicates the spirit of working in teams of certain project of organizations hence the desire to manage relationship become essential for the achievement of the organization objectives. Discovering the state of mind of organization employees within the organizations and others in an appropriate manner by making it our business to know how others are feeling and making them feel better since others happiness is our business.

According to Petrides, Frederickson and Furnham (2004) social awareness emphasizes social relationships especially in the workplace and how social influence on one and other workers within the environment. Victoroff and Boyatzis (2012) assert that social awareness prevails on how relationships and other people needs, feelings and wants are addressed within organization. Social awareness or being acutely aware of the needs of others is critical when working with other people especially in the workplace. Huynh (2018) opined that social awareness is the ability to recognize, empathize with other people from different background and cultures. Samuel and Okon (2016) social awareness are the ability to enter and sustain satisfactory interpersonal relationship. It involves the flexibility, behavioural change and adaptability of an individual based on certain circumstances

The link between social awareness and entrepreneurial intention was established considering the work of Fakh (2018) on Egyptian entrepreneurs' emotional intelligence on entrepreneurial intention using a sample of 378 entrepreneurs in Egypt. The study used motivation, social

awareness, self-awareness and interpersonal skills as proxies for emotional intelligence. The finding further revealed significant variation in the relationship between social awareness (emotional intelligence) and new venture creation based on the motivation to engage in entrepreneurship act.

Similarly, Chamola and Jain (2017) attempted to validate Shapero model via proposing an influence of social awareness on entrepreneurial intention through desirability and feasibility. The study adopted PLS structural model to test the multiple mediator model with sample of 120 university students. Findings of study indicated that emotional intelligence variable (social awareness) significantly affect the entrepreneurial intention. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that other effects are fully mediated by desirability and feasibility perception thus, suggesting the relevance of social awareness in the formation of entrepreneurial intention of students. Hence the second hypothesis was developed

H0₂: Social awareness has no Significant Influence on Entrepreneurial Intention

Following suggestion of further studies of Archana, Vasanthi and Kumari (2018), Nawaz, Khattak and Rehman (2019) and Idris (2021) to confirm empirically the mediating effect of social awareness on the relationship entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention, the third hypothesis was developed

H0₃: Social awareness does not significantly mediate the Relationship between Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention of Students

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Theory of Planned Behaviour was first developed by Ajzen (1991) as a result of the failure of the Concept theory. The essence of the introduction of the theory was to plan and predict the behaviour of an individual. The Theory of Planned Behaviour is used by many researchers and authors to describe individual's intentions transition (Nasiru *et al*, 2015; Krueger, 2004; Ekpe & Mat, 2012; Alvarado & Wolff, 2010; Kolvereid, 1996). According to this theory, individual intentions to execute any behaviour rely upon on three perceptions. These are attitude toward a behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Linan & Santos, 2007). In other words, increases on attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control of an individual are higher possibility of one becoming an entrepreneur.

According to Linan and Santos (2007), two of these constructs' personal attraction as well as perceived behavioural control are exchangeable with that of Shapero and Sokol (1982) Event Model, these are perceived feasibility and desirability. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is used in describing the behaviour of humans which include their norms, attitudes, and perceptions in behavioural control. This implies that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control of an individual are key in determining the entrepreneurial intention of an individual since they are subset of behaviour.

In an attempt to reinforce the view of Shaheen and Al-haddad (2018) which establishes that increases in self-efficacy will increase the awareness of opportunities in individuals who are

alert and sensitive to opportunities, Idris (2021) emphasize that since opportunity can be discovered therefore individual perception of reality can be enhanced. This will enhance the decision to start a business. Hence, entrepreneurship is exactly the type of planned behaviour that the intention model fits.

Research Methodology

The research design was a survey in which primary data were used. The study instruments were all unidimensional adapted from previous studies. Social awareness was having eight items with composite reliability of 0.928 adapted from Schutte *et al* (1998), entrepreneurial self-efficacy had seven items with composite reliability of 0.933 adapted from the work Zhao *et al* (2005) and entrepreneurial intention had six items with composite reliability of 0.932 adapted from the work of Linan and Chen (2009). The populations of this study were four hundred level undergraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria who were 9,543 in number. Krejcie and Morgan sample table was used to ascertain the sample size and Proportionate Stratified Sampling technique was adopted across the faculties to select the sample for the study. The choice of Ahmadu Bello University as unit of analysis was based on the suggestion of Idris (2021) that population with homogeneous characteristics and large number can be used as representative of the population in the study area and the entrepreneurial curriculum is similar across Nigerian universities. Based on Krejcie and Morgan table, 384 samples were selected from the population of 9,543 students and Structural Equation Modelling using Smart PLS 3 statistical software was used for data analysis.

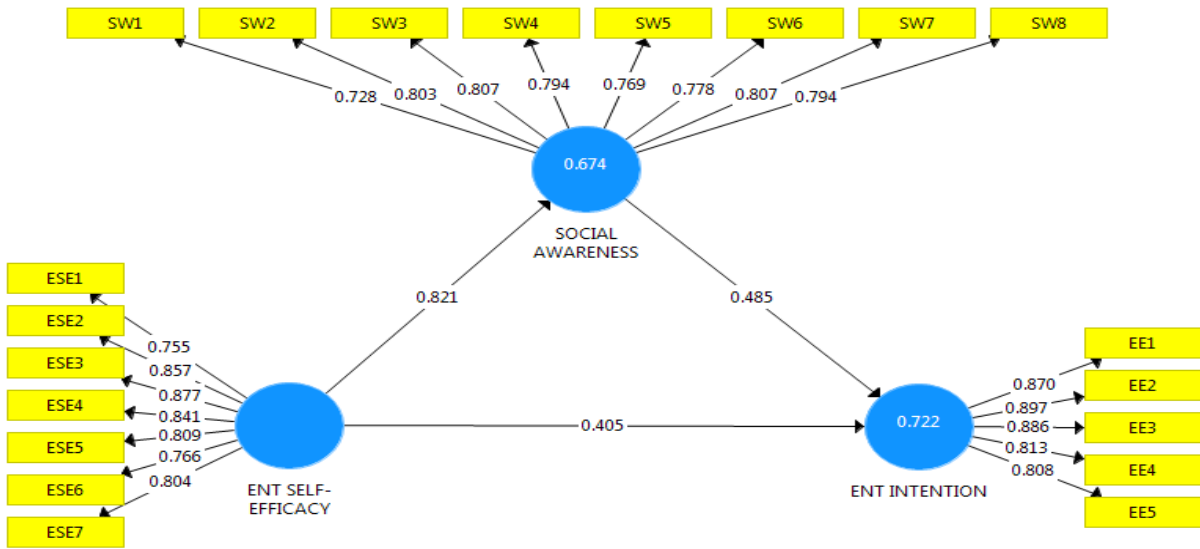
Data Analysis

Assessment of SEM Path Model Results

Following the suggestion of Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013), of adopting two-step process in the evaluation of structural modelling equation results i.e. measurement model and structural model, the measurement model was evaluated using items and consistency reliabilities and convergent validity. The rule of thumb as suggested by Hair *et al* (2014), Hair *et al* (2011), is to retained items that load above 0.7, AVE of 0.5 and composite reliability of 0.7. Hence based on the above suggestion the study has achieved the threshold as can be seen in table 1 and figure 1 below;

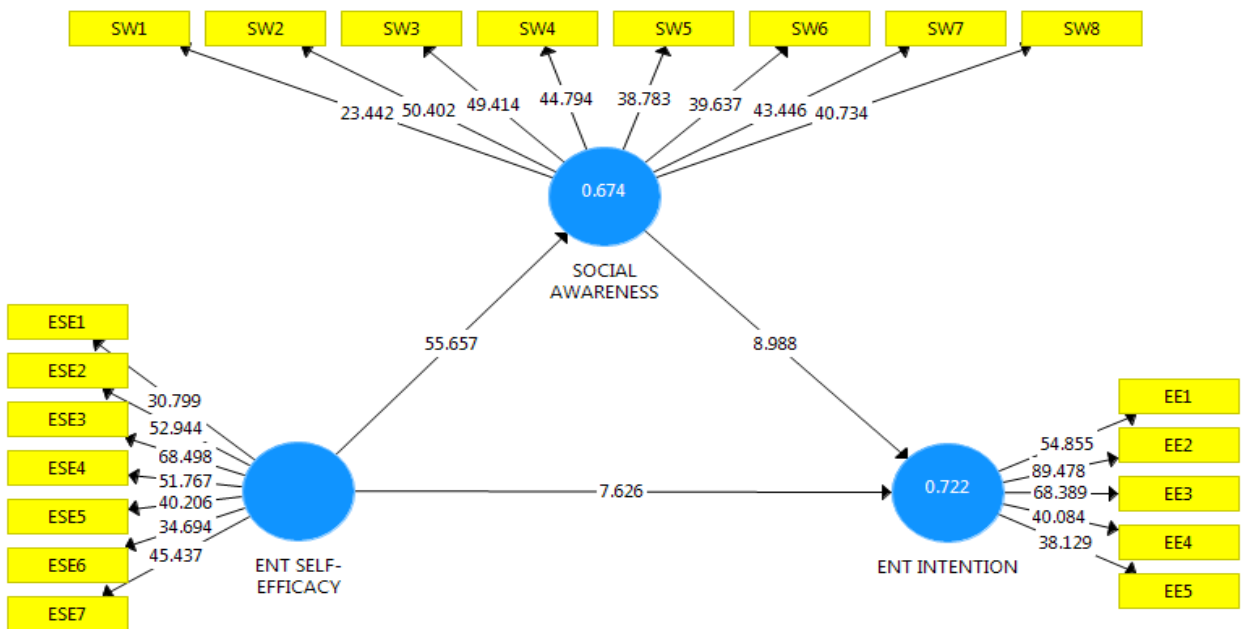
Table 1. Assessment of SEM Path Model Results

VARIABLE	ITEM	LOAD	COMPOSITE	AVE
ENT INTENTION	EE1	0.870	0.932	0.732
	EE2	0.897		
	EE3	0.886		
	EE4	0.813		
	EE5	0.808		
ENT SELF-EFFICACY	ESE1	0.755	0.933	0.667
	ESE2	0.857		
	ESE3	0.877		
	ESE4	0.841		
	ESE5	0.809		
	ESE6	0.766		
	ESE7	0.804		
SOCIAL AWARENESS	SW1	0.728	0.928	0.617
	SW2	0.803		
	SW3	0.807		
	SW4	0.794		
	SW5	0.769		
	SW6	0.778		
	SW7	0.807		
	SW8	0.794		



Assessment of Significance of the Structural Model

Following the suggestion of Hair *et al* (2011), the study used a bootstrapped samples of 5000 and 384 cases in the path coefficient assessment of as shown in Figure 2 and Table 2



Test of Hypotheses

In this section the entire hypothesis formulated were tested for validation as shown in table 2

HYPOTHESIS		Beta Value	Mean	(STDE V	T- Stat	P Values	Decision
H01	ESE -> EI	0.803	0.805	0.018	44.202	0.000	REJECT ED
H02	SAW -> EI	0.485	0.480	0.054	8.988	0.000	REJECTED
H03	ESE->SAW->EI	0.398	0.394	0.043	9.280	0.000	REJECTED

p<.05; p<.01

A partial least square path analysis was conducted to test whether entrepreneurial self-efficacy influence on entrepreneurial intention of student and the result revealed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively and significantly influence entrepreneurial intention of student ($\beta=0.803$, $t=44.202$, $p< 0.05$). This indicated that the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention of student was significant. It is on these bases that the first hypothesis was rejected as shown in Table 2.

Furthermore, in the path analysis conducted to test whether social awareness influence entrepreneurial intention of student, it was found that social awareness positively influence on entrepreneurial intention of student ($\beta=0.485$, $t=8.988$, $p< 0.05$) is on these bases that the second hypothesis was rejected. As shown in Table 2.

Nevertheless, from the analysis conducted to ascertain whether social awareness mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention of student, it was found that social awareness partially mediate on the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta=0.398$, $t=9.280$, $p<0.05$). It is on these bases that the third hypothesis was rejected as shown in Table 2

Assessment of Variance Explained in the Endogenous Latent Variables

Another important criterion for evaluating structural models in PLS-SEM is the R-squared value, also known as the coefficient of determination (Hair *et al*, 2011). The R-squared value represents the proportion of change in the dependent variable that can be explained by one or more predictor variables. Although the acceptable level of R Square depends on the study context (Hair *et al*, 2011), the recommended minimum acceptable level for R-squared is 0.10. Table 3 lists the R-square value for endogenous latent variables.

Dependent Variable	R Square
Entrepreneurial Intention	0.72 (72%)

As indicated in Table 3, the research model explains 72% of the total variance in entrepreneurial intention.

Discussion of the findings

The main objective of this study is to investigate the mediating effects of social awareness on the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intention of students in northern western Nigeria. Analysis of the collected data revealed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy has a substantial influence on entrepreneurial intention. This particularly indicates that prior knowledge and confidence in success achievement of the students is a critical determinant of their intention to entrepreneurship. This finding is in line with studies of Ojewumi, Oyeleke, Agberotimi and Adedayo (2018), Ndofirepi, Rambe, Dzansi and Ndofirepi (2018). Similarly, the finding of the study indicated that social awareness substantially influences entrepreneurial intention. This is particularly attainable through increase in composure of students based on their awareness on the discovery and utilization of entrepreneurial opportunities surrounding the entrepreneurial environment. This finding is in line with the study of Yıldırım, Trout and Hartzell (2019), Nawaz, Khattak and Rehman, (2019), Chamola and Jain (2017). Additionally, social awareness was found to mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention. This finding in line with the study of Idris (2021) which established that social awareness strengthen the interaction between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.

Conclusion

The study has examined the mediating role of social awareness on relationship between Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention of students in northwestern Nigeria. The study findings revealed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy significantly influences entrepreneurial intention of students in north-western Nigeria. The findings also indicated that social awareness was significantly related to entrepreneurial intention. The study therefore concludes that entrepreneurial self-efficacy and social awareness are critical predictors of students' entrepreneurial intention as the duo significantly influence on the level of entrepreneurial intention of students, hence considerable effort is required to enhance the two variables (entrepreneurial self-efficacy and social awareness) since they aid in improving entrepreneurial intention of students.

Recommendations

Based on the finding which establishes that entrepreneurial self-efficacy had significant positive influence on entrepreneurial intention of student. It is recommended that government, educators and curriculum planners should devote adequate means of enhancing entrepreneurial self-efficacy as the construct was found to be a determinant of entrepreneurial intention of Nigerian students. The study also recommends that policy planners and curriculum developers should redesign the curriculum to pave way for equipping students with positive social awareness, which will ultimately increase their aspiration and motivation to venture into entrepreneurship.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Future research should attempt to identify and test additional variables for the model with a view to presenting an even richer understanding of the formation of entrepreneurial intention and the eventual entrepreneurial behaviour. This addition might be shaped in terms of additional contextual variables, moderating influences of entrepreneurial passion, orientation and mediating effects of such variables on entrepreneurial intention.

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