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## Perceptions and Attitude towards Entrepreneurship Education Programme, and Employment Ambitions of Final Year Undergraduate Students in Kano, Northern Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*This study was to determine the perceptions and attitude of graduating students towards entrepreneurship education, and how these affect their employment ambitions. Using a descriptive cross sectional design, a random sample of 340 final year undergraduates from Bayero University was studied. Data was analyzed using SPSS 16 statistical software. The students' mean age was 23.5 ±2.2 years. Majority was single (87.1%), male (63.8%), and Hausa/Fulani (84.7%). Majority (85.0%) had good perception about entrepreneurship, although 58.8% opined that the course is inadequate, and should be course specific (72.1%). Up to 84.1% had negative attitude towards entrepreneurship. Only 52.9% aspired to be self reliant after graduation. Having good perception about entrepreneurship ( $p = 0.0001$ ), negative attitude towards entrepreneurship ( $p = 0.002$ ) and Hausa/ Fulani ethnicity ( $p = 0.04$ ) were significant predictors of self employment ambition. Entrepreneurship Education for Nigerian Universities should be repackaged based on specific entrepreneurial areas and with built-in logistic support.*

**Key words:** Entrepreneurship education; Employment ambitions; Undergraduate students; Kano-Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

The ultimate desire and aspiration of the youth in school and of their parents or sponsors is to see them gainfully employed soon after graduation. In the face of the current global economic recession and expanding population however, opportunities for employment are becoming scarcer. This is more so as industries are shrinking in size or folding, and those that survive continuously down size their workforce, thereby compounding the already existing high numbers of the unemployed.

According to a recent statistics, the global unemployment rate was 12.6% in 2012 (ILO, 2012). The rate in Nigeria according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) was 23.9% in 2011 (NBS, 2012). On the average 4 million people entered the labour market in Nigeria every year (Asaju et al., 2014). Youth unemployment rate in Nigeria was 46.5% in 2011 (BGL, 2015), and in 2012, about 11.1 million youths were reported to be unemployed (NBS, 2012). Unemployment has deleterious consequences on the physical, mental and social wellbeing of individuals, and on the economic and social development of nations. Unemployment is associated with psychosocial and political menace like poverty, deskilling, social exclusion, loss of motivation, high dependency, high crime rates, violence, drug abuse, prostitution, low self esteem, civil unrest and revolution among others (Asaju et al., 2014; NBS, 2015; Ajaegbu, 2012; Dutse et al., 2013; EIAouad, 2011). The need to ensure that turned out graduates are not only self-reliant but employers of labour cannot be over emphasized. Based on this premise, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced Entrepreneurship Education as a compulsory module for all tertiary level students (Akhueomonkhan et al., 2013). The course is aimed at equipping students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competencies in order to be job providers and not job seekers (Ibe, 2013; and is designed to communicate and inculcate such properties to transform ideas into reality (Okafor and Izedonmi, 2010). Fostering entrepreneurship through education and training has received increasing attention from many universities around the world (Iqbal et al., 2012).

Experience with the implementation of entrepreneurship education programme in Nigeria suggests that polytechnic students as opposed to students from the Universities are more keen and committed to the programme, perhaps due to the technical and vocational nature of their training. The University students often consider entrepreneurship as menial and risky, and not on the path of their ambition to seek for senior white-collar job with certainty of income (Dutse et al., 2013). Similarly, reports from high enterprising nations in Asia indicate varied perceptions and attitudes of the youths in school towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education (Goel et al., 2006). Since customs, traditions and beliefs vary with population groups, a good understanding of the perceptions and attitude of local beneficiaries of the entrepreneurship education programme is crucial for the success of its implementation. De Gobbi (2014) argued that having a positive perception and attitude towards entrepreneurship increases the chances of becoming successful entrepreneurs. This study draws on the theory of reasoned action to study the perceptions, and attitude of the graduating students of Bayero University towards entrepreneurship and how these impact their employment ambition after graduation. Findings from this study would be useful to governments and other interest groups in strengthening implementation strategy, and for packaging specific interventions for the promotion of positive entrepreneurship culture among students.

### **Conceptual/Theoretical Framework**

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) was proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975 & 1980). TRA assumes that a person's behavioural intention is related to the person's attitude about the

behaviour and subjective norms ( $BI = A + SN$ ). According to Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), attitude consists of beliefs about the consequences of performing the behaviour multiplied by his or her evaluation of these consequences; and subjective norm is the person's perception that most people who are important to him or her think he should or should not perform the behaviour in question. In this study, we assumed that employment ambition of a student (Behavioural intention) is predicted by his/her attitude toward entrepreneurship and how he/she thinks others would view him if he becomes an entrepreneur (Subjective norms).

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

### **Setting**

The study was conducted at Bayero University, Kano (BUK) located in the capital of Kano State in Northern Nigeria. Established in 1975, the University is now among the largest and best performing in Nigeria. It has eight faculties, college of health sciences, postgraduate school and school of general studies spread within its two campuses, and an average undergraduate students' population of 34,000. Majority of the students come from Kano and other states from northern Nigeria. Students are also enrolled from other parts of Nigeria and internationally.

### **Study design, Subjects and Sample size**

A cross sectional design was employed to study a random sample of 340 undergraduate final year students selected from the academic units of the University involved with training of undergraduate students (Eight faculties, college of health sciences and school of general studies). The sample size was determined using an appropriate statistical formula for estimating minimum sample size for descriptive studies (Lwanga, 1991); and 66% prevalence of good perception about entrepreneurship among students of University of Ilorin, Nigeria (Oduwaye, 2009).

### **Sampling**

A 3 - stage sampling technique was used for selection of the subjects. In the first stage, four faculties/ units were selected by one-time ballot from the ten (10) academic units of the university involved with undergraduate training: faculties of agriculture, arts and Islamic studies, computer science and information technology, education, engineering/ technology, law, science, social and management science; college of health sciences; and school of general studies. This resulted in the selection of faculties of law, social and management sciences, science; and engineering/ technology. In the second stage, one department was selected from each of the selected faculties using simple random sampling by drawing lot. This led to the selection of departments of biochemistry, electrical/electronic engineering, economics and law. In the third stage, students were systematically selected from the respective departments using the students' lists as the sampling frame. The numbers of the students selected from the respective departments were arrived at using probability proportionate to size (PPS) based on the numbers

of the final year students from each of the departments. Thus, 99 students were selected from law, 96 from economics, 99 from biochemistry and 76 from engineering.

### **Instrument and Method of data collection**

Pre-tested semi structured and self - administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of three sections that elicited the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, perception of the students and their towards the entrepreneurship education programme; and employment ambitions of the students after graduation. Questionnaire administration was supported by four trained assistants. The questionnaires were administered after obtaining informed consent from the students. Permission and ethical clearance for the study was obtained from Dean Students' Affairs, Bayero University and the Ethics Review team of Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital. The survey was conducted during a regular semester session in April/May 2014.

### **Data analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 16.0 computer statistical software. Absolute numbers and simple percentages were used to summarise categorical variables whereas quantitative variables were summarised using means and standard deviation. The students' perceptions about entrepreneurship education programme was scored and graded using a scoring system adapted from a past study where each correct answer was given one point and wrong response was allocated no point (Lawan et al., 2012). Accrued points were subsequently graded in percentages. Out of the total of 6 points for perception, respondents that scored 4 to 6 points were adjudged to have "good perception" whereas those that scored 0 to 3 points had "poor perception". In the same vein, the students' attitude towards entrepreneurship was assessed using their agreement with eleven statements/indices on a 5- points Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree - 1 point to strongly agree 5 points (Pulka et al., 2014). Accrued points were graded into positive and negative attitude using the total points of the least agreed responses ("Agreed" = 4 points x 11 responses = 44 points) as cut-off. Thus respondents that scored 33 – 43 points were considered to have negative attitude while those that scored 44 to 55 points had positive attitude. The chi-square test and Fisher's exact probability test were used for bi-variate analysis involving categorical variables, and binary logistic regression was used to determine factors that predict good perception, negative attitude towards entrepreneurship and employment ambitions of the students. A p-value  $\leq 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

## **RESULTS**

Out of the three hundred and seventy questionnaires given out, three hundred and forty were responded to giving a response rate of 91.9%.

### **Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents**

The mean age of the students was 23.5 years with standard deviation of 2.2 years. Their ages ranged from 19 to 34 years with more than three - quarters (76.2%) within 19-24 years age group. Majority were single (87.1), males (63.8%), and came from Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups (84.7%) as shown in Table 1. The students were from Faculties of Law, Social and Management Science, Science and Engineering.

### **The students' perceptions about the entrepreneurship training programme**

All of the students had either taken the compulsory entrepreneurship course or were currently on it. The students' perception about the course was assessed based on questions that elicited their responses on the adequacy of the course content, scope of the course, perceived usefulness, appropriateness of the strategy for reducing unemployment among targets, importance of extramural skills acquisition; and implementation of learnt course after graduation. Significant proportion of the students gave positive responses on majority of the indices used for the assessment, although more than half of them perceived that the course content was inadequate (58.8%) and that the course should be specific to the students' area of studies (72.1%) as summarized in Table 2. Out of the 200 respondents that perceived the course as being inadequate, slightly above half (55.0%) said that it was because the course is too theoretical and lacks practical applications. Significant proportions also claimed that the course is inadequate because of poor teaching skills (26.0%) or that the time allocated for it was not enough (12.0%) as depicted in Fig 1. Of the 212 respondents (62.0%) that perceived entrepreneurship training programme as useful to students, 138 (65%) and 43 (20.0%) said that it was because the course motivates self employment and self reliance, and it teaches new business plan and innovations/ creative thinking respectively. Other reasons given by the students for perceiving the course as useful are as depicted in Fig 2. Overall, 289 (85.0%) of the students assessed had good perception about the entrepreneurship training programme (Table 2). Good perception of entrepreneurship was significantly associated with the female sex ( $X^2 = 4.55$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ), being from the Hausa/ Fulani ethnic group (Fisher's  $p = 0.0002$ ) and being ever married Fisher's  $p = 0.0003$ ). However, respondents' age was not statistically associated ( $p > 0.05$ ). On binary logistic regression using a model that consisted of the factors that were found statistically significant, belonging to the Hausa/ Fulani group ( $Z = 3.16$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and being ever married ( $Z = 2.79$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ) were the only factors that emerged significant (Table 4).

### **Attitude of the students towards the entrepreneurship training programme**

The students' attitude towards entrepreneurship was assessed using eleven points/ indices that sought their opinions and beliefs about the subject matter. The reactions were mixed, with large proportions of both negative and positive opinions and beliefs about entrepreneurship. For instance, about three – quarters of the students were of the opinion that students from tertiary institutions do not require entrepreneurship skills (71.5%) or that entrepreneurship programme is a distraction from academic activities (61.8%). Similarly, 70.3% of the students opined that it is better to earn money working for someone than to go into entrepreneurship, and 85.3% preferred

to work for large scale organizations for better carrier prospect. On the other hand, 67.4% of the students were of the opinion that academic institutions should support students to develop entrepreneurship skills, 72.6% believed that entrepreneurship is a good way of securing employment, and 71.5% believed that entrepreneurs are innovative and a source of aspiration for others. The remaining responses are as summarized in Table 3. When the different indices were cumulatively assessed on a Likert scale, it was observed that up to 286 (84.1%) of the students had negative attitude towards entrepreneurship programme (Table 3). On bi-variate analysis, negative attitude of the respondents was found to be significantly associated with the male sex ( $X^2 = 3.98$ ,  $p = 0.04$ , Hausa/ Fulani ethnicity (Fisher's exact  $p = 0.05$ ) and good perception about entrepreneurship ( $X^2 = 29.73$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ). Respondents' age more than 24 years ( $X^2 = 0.09$ ,  $p = 0.76$ ) and being ever married (Fisher's exact  $p = 0.13$ ) were not significantly associated with the observed negative attitude of the respondents. On Multivariate analysis however, Hausa/ Fulani ethnicity ( $Z = 2.46$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ) was the only factor found to be significantly associated with the negative attitude of the students towards entrepreneurship (Table 4).

### **Employment Ambitions of the students**

About half of the students (52.9%) aspired to be self reliant when they graduate from school. The remaining preferred to be employed either in the public sector or private as depicted in Figure 3.

### **Having good perception about entrepreneurship education**

( $Z = 6.37$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ), negative attitude towards entrepreneurship ( $Z = 3.13$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and belonging to Hausa/ Fulani ethnicity ( $Z = 2.04$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ) emerged as the independent predictors of the students' ambition of self employment on multivariate analysis.

## **DISCUSSION**

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities is a positive step towards curtailing youth unemployment in the country as traditionally most students only aspire for gainful employment after graduation. Entrepreneurship education is designed to change this notion within students and to equip them with the requisite knowledge and skills for survival outside official employment. Thus, a clear understanding of the students about this motive is crucial for the success of the programme.

### **The perceptions and attitude of the students towards entrepreneurship education programme**

This study observed that the students in Bayero University appreciate and had good perceptions about the entrepreneurship training programme. However, female students, those from Hausa/Fulani ethnic group and the married were seen to have better perception than others, probably as a result of their life experiences and exposure, as the married and females because of their expected roles in the African society are generally more focused and responsible.

Furthermore, Kano is a known commercial centre, and the Hausa/Fulanis of Kano are renowned entrepreneurs since antiquity. Findings by some researchers demonstrated that factors such as parental role that includes nature of work the parents are into especially for those whose parents are into business and one's experiences shapes the perception of students on entrepreneurship (Maalu, 2010).

Although the perception of entrepreneurship among the students was good, a significant proportion demonstrated negative attitude towards the programme. Majority were of the opinion that University students do not require entrepreneurship skills, and that the course was a mere distraction from their studies. A good number of the male students would prefer to work for others to earn a living after graduating from school. This finding could be perhaps due to the general believe that University graduates are meant for white collar jobs and most aimed at the so call lucrative jobs (Kabui and Maalu, 2012). One important concern expressed by the students that could have affected their attitude to entrepreneurship was the fact that most of them felt the training content was more theoretical than practical and one wonders if the approach was wrong and there will be a need to consider newer approaches that will be practical based to enhance planned behavior and attitude change. This is corroborated by the finding that more than half of the students felt that the course contents should be improved and designed to be specific to the area of study of the students. Tapping from the entrepreneurship enterprises developed in Nigeria, potential areas for developing successful entrepreneurship education packages include agriculture/agro-allied activities; solid mineral; power and transport; haulage business (cargo and passengers); information and telecom business; hospitality and tourism business; oil and gas business; environmental and waste management business; financial and banking services; engineering and fabrication work; building and construction among others (Thaddeus, 2012). Specific packages in these areas may stimulate entrepreneurial interest especially with good mentorship and financial support from government in form of loans or bank guarantee.

### **The students' preferred employment after graduation**

It is worthy of note that about half of the respondent aspire to be self employed and self reliant after graduation. The others were perhaps among those that expressed mixed feelings depicting uncertainty, fear of taking risk and probably lack of sufficient funds to start a business, and thus preferred public employment or for big organizations where they will have job security and earn more money. This is not unexpected as one of the challenges facing entrepreneurship training is that of raising funds by the graduates to start up a business (Alabi et al., 2014). Entrepreneurship education in the Universities is a key strategy for reducing youth unemployment. A survey of alumni of higher education institutions from Europe showed that those that passed through entrepreneurial programme and activities displayed more entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions, got job earlier after finishing their studies, could innovate more even as employees in a firm, and start more companies (Gibcus et al., 2012).

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Entrepreneurship training programme is a formidable strategy for reducing unemployment among graduates. However, the programme in Nigeria does not take cognizance of the varied entrepreneurial needs of the students based on cognate experience; and in addition lacks clear guidelines for logistic support for graduates with good entrepreneurial intention. It is therefore recommend that the National Universities Commission (NUC) should work closely with Centre for Entrepreneurship Education (CED), experts in entrepreneurship education and relevant development partners to repackage the programme for University students into more practical based options that are based on entrepreneurial areas that students can choose from, and with a built-in logistic support for implementation.

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