

SOCIOCULTURAL AND INDIVIDUAL DETERMINANTS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstrak

Minat terhadap kewirausahaan perempuan di Nigeria telah tumbuh dalam beberapa tahun terakhir, namun banyak penelitian yang mengabaikan faktor psikologis dan sosial budaya yang lebih halus yang membentuk niat kewirausahaan perempuan muda. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor ini dengan memeriksa interaksi antara sifat individu dan konteks sosial di antara mahasiswi di lembaga pendidikan tinggi di Nigeria barat daya. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain survei deskriptif lintas seksi. Penelitian ini melibatkan 385 mahasiswi di lembaga pendidikan tinggi federal di Nigeria Barat Daya. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis regresi berganda untuk menilai pengaruh variabel seperti efikasi diri, kepercayaan diri, sikap, panutan, pendapatan keluarga, latar belakang keluarga bisnis, dan etnisitas terhadap aspirasi kewirausahaan. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa sifat psikologis, khususnya kepercayaan diri, efikasi diri, dan sikap kewirausahaan, memiliki hubungan positif dan signifikan secara statistik dengan niat kewirausahaan. Panutan juga muncul sebagai pengaruh sosial budaya yang kuat. Sementara pendapatan keluarga, latar belakang bisnis, dan etnisitas secara signifikan terkait dengan niat kewirausahaan, pengaruhnya relatif lebih lemah. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa faktor psikologis tingkat individu merupakan pendorong yang lebih kuat bagi niat berwirausaha pada wanita muda Nigeria jika dibandingkan dengan faktor sosial budaya. Studi ini difokuskan pada wilayah tertentu, Nigeria Barat Daya, dan sampelnya terbatas pada mahasiswi di lembaga pendidikan tinggi federal, yang dapat memengaruhi generalisasi temuan di berbagai wilayah atau populasi. Studi ini menawarkan wawasan teoritis dan praktis yang bermakna dengan menyoroti cara-cara bernuansa elemen individu dan kontekstual bertemu di negara berkembang yang dinamis. Studi ini merekomendasikan pengembangan inisiatif bimbingan yang menampilkan wirausahawan wanita yang sukses untuk mendukung dan menginspirasi generasi pemimpin bisnis wanita berikutnya.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurial
Intentions;
Female Youths;
Personal
Factors,
Sociocultural
Factors;
Federal
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Abstract

In Nigeria, interest in female entrepreneurship has grown in recent years, yet many studies have overlooked the subtler psychological and sociocultural factors that shape young women's entrepreneurial intentions. This study explores these factors by examining the interplay of individual traits and social context among female students in tertiary institutions in southwest Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. It engaged 385 female students in federal tertiary institutions across Southwestern Nigeria. The study used multiple regression analysis to assess the influence of variables such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, attitude, role models, family income, business family background, and ethnicity on entrepreneurial aspirations. Findings revealed that psychological traits, particularly self-confidence, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial attitude, had positive, statistically significant relationships with entrepreneurial intention. Role models also emerged as a powerful sociocultural influence. While family income, business background, and ethnicity were significantly related to entrepreneurial intention, their effects were comparatively weaker. These results suggest that individual-level psychological factors are stronger drivers of entrepreneurial intentions in young Nigerian women when compared with sociocultural factors. The study focused on a specific region, Southwestern Nigeria, and the sample was limited to female students in federal tertiary institutions, which may affect the generalisability of the findings across different areas or populations. This study offers meaningful theoretical and practical insights by highlighting the nuanced ways individual and contextual elements converge



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in a dynamic developing country. It recommends the development of mentorship initiatives featuring successful female entrepreneurs to support and inspire the next generation of women business leaders.

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship refers not only to the attitude and process of initiating and expanding economic ventures, either within new businesses or established organizations, but also to a broader social and economic context. Schumpeter's (1934) foundational perception of entrepreneurship as a process involving the recombination of existing resources to develop new products, services, processes, and markets that are commercially viable remains relevant and influential. However, contemporary interpretations, such as those of Elia, Margherita, and Passiante (2020), build on this view by positioning entrepreneurship as a continuous process that involves an intentional effort to adapt, create, and generate value in a dynamic environment. It is an approach that blends innovation, creativity, and a willingness to take risks with sound managerial practices (Ratten, 2023). Although entrepreneurship is tied to the broader socioeconomic fabric of every nation, a country's economic prosperity is, however, not tied solely to the success of individual entrepreneurs or isolated innovations. Instead, national economic growth and wealth creation depend on the extent to which all segments of the productive population are enabled and empowered to participate in entrepreneurial and economic activities (Neumann, 2021).

Historically, women have been marginalized and are often overlooked and under-supported in the process of wealth creation and broader economic activities, particularly in developing and more traditional economies (Al Omoush, 2024). However, the evolving argument over the past decade is the need to adopt a more inclusive approach to entrepreneurship, one that considers diverse groups such as youths, women, and the physically challenged, because of equity and, more importantly, their economic relevance (Carranza, Das, & Kotikula, 2023). Hence, while entrepreneurship is considered key to economic advancement, it is also a vehicle for broad-based socioeconomic inclusion and development (Chahine, 2020). Consequently, the involvement of women in entrepreneurial efforts is crucial to driving both social progress and economic growth (Al Omoush, 2024). Their impact on community development is particularly significant, as they often play a more prominent role in philanthropic and social ventures compared to their male counterparts (Ambepitiya, 2016; World Economic Forum (WEF), 2021). Therefore, encouraging female youths to engage in entrepreneurial activities from their undergraduate years can serve as a catalyst for reducing unemployment, fighting poverty, and enhancing economic stability. It also offers a promising outlook for future generations (Grecu & Denes, 2017; Kim et al., 2020). In light of this, addressing challenges such as poverty and unemployment requires strategic support for the expansion of existing businesses and the establishment of new ventures, especially among the younger population.

Although existing literature acknowledges the vital role women play in driving economic development and fostering societal progress, many young female entrepreneurs continue to face significant personal and social barriers. These include issues such as low self-worth, lack of self-confidence, attitudinal challenges, personality-related limitations, and family-related constraints (Raja, Davenport, & Billimoria, 2021). In the Nigerian context, women represent an important yet underexplored demographic in the entrepreneurship literature of developing and emerging economies, especially when cultural norms have historically positioned women, particularly young females, as subordinate, often viewing their primary role as fulfilling the needs and expectations of men (Ajayi, Chantler, & Radford, 2022). Furthermore, while some research has explored female entrepreneurship and the factors influencing the success of women-led ventures in Nigeria, there remains a gap in comprehensive investigations that fully unpack these underlying challenges. There are also no definitive conclusions on the role that individual-level factors play on the entrepreneurial intentions of women specifically.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how both sociocultural and individual factors shape entrepreneurial intentions among young women in southwest Nigeria. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, self-efficacy, and feminist theories, this study examines how self-efficacy, self-confidence, and entrepreneurial attitude influence the formation of entrepreneurial intentions among female students. It also investigates the sociocultural factors, such as role models, family income, business family background, and ethnicity, that may shape the entrepreneurial aspirations of female youths. The research focuses on female students within the youth age category enrolled in federal tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria. The primary purpose of this study is to deepen understanding of the individual and sociocultural determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among young women in a developing country context. By doing so, it contributes to the growing body of literature on female entrepreneurship and offers practical insights for government agencies and policymakers seeking to design effective support systems that encourage women's active engagement in entrepreneurship. Ultimately, the study aims to support broader goals of inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) opined that cognitive elements, including needs, wants, values, habits, and beliefs, influence a person's motivation to display a particular trait. Personal attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control all have an independent impact on behavioral intention, as opined by TPB. Subjective norm indicates felt social pressure; perceived behavioral control refers to how easy or difficult behavior is associated with being performed; and personal attitude refers to one's positive or negative assessment of behavior. Ajzen (2002) explained further that an individual's intention to act is stronger when these three circumstances are favorable. Previous studies indicated that social and cultural background, support networks, education, and individual demographics often have a significant impact on entrepreneurial drive and ambitions. Studies indicate that female students tend to perceive fewer chances and have lower expectations for professional progression than their male counterparts, making gender a particularly noteworthy factor (Benson, Li, & Shue, 2024).

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy refers to belief in one's capabilities to do specific tasks and execute some courses of action required to produce given attainments and outcomes (Bandura, 1997). It is a belief system that facilitates self-reflection because it enables people to examine their ideas and viewpoints, make sense of their experiences, assess themselves, and adjust their thoughts and behavior accordingly. A robust explanation of entrepreneurial intention is offered by the theory from the assumption that people who feel they are incredibly successful have a tendency to change how they think, act, and feel from others who feel like they cannot accomplish anything or are constantly plagued with self-doubt (Tran & von Korfflesch, 2016). The overarching principle of the self-efficacy theory is that when individuals are confident in their abilities, they will approach challenges as opportunities and demonstrate resilience (Kuhl, 1992). Conversely, however, individuals with low self-efficacy avoid challenges and are quick to abandon tasks that they view as threatening. In this research, the focus is on exploring the underlying principle of this theory in the context of young women and their propensity towards entrepreneurial activities.

Feminist Theory

The feminist theoretical approach examines the causes, effects, and potential remedies for women's subordination to males, both historically and within contemporary society (Acker, 1987). The theory focuses on two aspects: liberal and social feminism. The liberal feminism approach places a strong emphasis on the equality of men and women and the basis of individual rights in reason rather than sexual orientation. The argument of liberal feminism is that women should have equal rights and access to resources and opportunities as men (Baehr, 2021). The overarching assumption is that gender inequality is a consequence of discriminatory practices and institutional barriers as opposed to differences between sexes. The social feminist perspective held that both male and female entrepreneurs might compete in the case of resource equality. Succinctly, it acknowledges the effect of both capitalism and patriarchy in shaping the experiences of women. This suggests that legal and institutional barriers are not the only factors responsible for entrepreneurial inequality, but there are also deeper structural forces which are embedded in society that may play significant roles in limiting women's entrepreneurial potential (Stoker, Rossano-Rivero, Davis, Wakkee, & Stroila, 2024). The

feminist theory, therefore, provides a theoretical lens through which to understand the entrepreneurial challenges that young women may face in a traditional environment such as Nigeria.

This study's evaluation of how two distinct factors, individual and sociocultural, influence the entrepreneurial intentions of young Nigerian women is grounded in the foundational principles of the aforementioned three theories. The Theory of Planned Behaviour explains the interplay between personal beliefs and perceived social expectations in shaping an individual's intention towards undertaking an entrepreneurial venture. The theory underscores the importance of how the combination of personal attitudes and subjective societal norms influences an individual's motivation toward entrepreneurial activities (Stoker et al., 2024). Self-efficacy theory supports and strengthens this argument further by highlighting how a woman's entrepreneurial purpose could be influenced by her confidence in her ability to initiate and run a new business venture sustainably, particularly when reinforced by a supportive sociocultural environment (Simarasl, Tabesh, Munyon, & Marzban, 2024). Women's experiences are shaped by gendered power dynamics, cultural norms, and structural injustices, which impact both their internal characteristics and the external environment in which they pursue entrepreneurship. Feminist theory helps to shed more light on these complex interrelations by providing deeper insights into the socio-political structures that constrain and enable the choices made by women. The conceptual framework developed for this study, therefore, offers a robust basis for understanding the multi-layered factors that shape the entrepreneurial aspirations of young women within the context of a developing country.

Categorization of Youths in Nigeria

Youths are broadly categorized by the United Nations (2013) as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. However, in Nigeria, the National Youth Policy (2019) defined youths more broadly to accommodate contextual socioeconomic factors that may extend their period of dependency to individuals between 15 and 29 years.

Conceptual Model

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model developed for this study, in addition to illustrating the dynamic interactions among the variables investigated in this study.

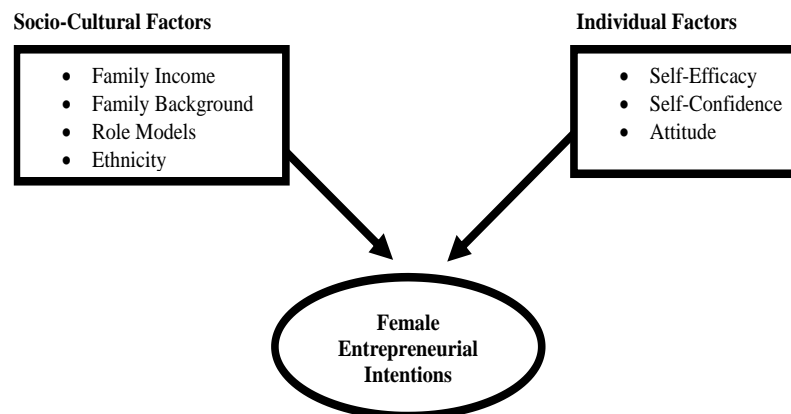


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

The conceptual framework illustrates that the entrepreneurial goals of young women in a developing context are influenced by their idiosyncrasies and sociocultural environment. Succinctly, this study argues that individual factors alone cannot explain the entrepreneurial intentions of women, but the nuances of their sociocultural environment also play a significant role in their entrepreneurial ambitions and aspirations.

Hypotheses Formation

Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention

Self-efficacy is recognized as an important psychological determinant of an individual's propensity toward entrepreneurial or economic activities (Newman, Obschonka, Schwarz, Cohen, & Nielsen, 2019). It is a concept that provides deep insight into the belief and trust that an individual places in his or her ability to execute specific actions or manage prospective undertakings effectively (Lansing, Romero, Siantz, et al., 2023). Self-efficacy was conceptualized by Bandura (1997) as the

belief in one's ability to accomplish specific tasks, suggesting that individuals are motivated into action by their self-perceived competency rather than innate talent. Self-efficacy is a dynamic trait that is shaped by personal experiences and other factors, such as one's emotional state and social factors (Wolff, Hilpert, Vongkulluksn, Bernacki, & Greene, 2024). In the context of entrepreneurship, self-efficacy is a deep reflection of the internal trust an individual has in their capability to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and manage a sustainable business, regardless of any complexities, challenges, and uncertainties they may face (Marshall, Meek, Swab, & Markin, 2020; Lansing et al., 2023). It is particularly salient for individuals considering venturing into entrepreneurial activities to possess high self-efficacy. Studies have shown that people with high self-efficacy typically have higher goals of working for themselves and initiating entrepreneurial ventures (Caliendo, Kritikos, Rodríguez, et al., 2023). Consequently, in developing economies such as Nigeria, self-efficacy becomes a key internal driver and motivation towards entrepreneurial and economic activities, particularly among young women, especially one that can mitigate the effects of multidimensional limitations such as cultural norms and expectations, structural inequality, and social boundaries (Ajayi et al., 2022; Al Omoush, 2024). In light of this discussion, the study proposes that:

H₁: Self-efficacy, as an individual factor, has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intentions of female youths in Nigeria.

Self-confidence and Entrepreneurial Intention

Self-confidence shapes how a person assesses their capacity to overcome obstacles and make informed decisions when confronted with uncertainties (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002). According to Bandura (1977), self-confidence is defined as the belief in one's abilities, i.e., the inner strength and assurance that an individual has towards their capacity to set clear goals and pursue them with resilience. Within the context of entrepreneurship, self-confidence is a psychological trait that is critical for success, especially in a highly dynamic environment (Maczulskij & Viinikainen, 2023). In developing countries, entrepreneurs most often operate in unstable environments characterized by structural complexities, ambiguity, and limited resources (Sendra-Pons, Comeig, & Mas-Tur, 2022). This requires possessing the capability to make complex decisions, sometimes continuously, hence the importance of a strong internal orientation towards success. In many geographical contexts across Africa, Asia, South America, and the Middle East, aspiring women entrepreneurs are confronted with other sociocultural barriers and limited institutional support, so they require a high level of self-confidence to operate resiliently in the volatile market conditions that characterize these environments. High self-confidence often results in positive outcomes, such as increasing an individual's ability to take risks and pursue opportunities with clarity; conversely, low self-confidence can inhibit entrepreneurial ambitions and activities (Muñoz, Barton, & Braun, 2023). Thus, in societies where women experience gendered expectations and institutional boundaries that limit their participation in core economic activities, self-confidence becomes highly relevant for women to develop entrepreneurial intentions. It determines the extent to which they believe in their capacity to succeed. The study's hypothesis is that:

H₂: Self-confidence, as an individual factor, significantly influences the entrepreneurial intentions of young women in Nigeria.

Attitude and Entrepreneurial Intention

Attitude shapes people's predisposition toward situations, opportunities, ideas, and other people. It is one of the most critical determinants of entrepreneurial actions at the individual level because attitude controls how an individual views, perceives and responds to different circumstances (Ben-Eliyahu, Moore, Dorph, & Schunn, 2018). According to Ajzen (2002), attitude towards a behavior reflects an individual's overall favorable or unfavorable evaluation of that behavior. The three dimensions most often used in the literature to conceptualize attitude are cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Vamvaka, Stoforos, Palaskas, & Botsaris, 2020). Cognitive reflects individual perceptions and beliefs; affective represents emotions which reflect their feelings, likes, and dislikes; while behavioral is outcomes shown by actions or one's intentions (Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2018). In the context of entrepreneurship, attitudes reflect an individual appraisal of venturing into a startup or distinct entrepreneurial activity (Vamvaka et al., 2020). It comprises the cognitive beliefs held by an individual about outcomes, such as autonomy and financial reward, and also their affective responses, such as enjoyment and personal fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Succinctly, an

individual's feeling toward entrepreneurship directly influences their readiness to embark on a process of venture creation (Vamvaka et al., 2020). When there is an anticipation that the new venture will provide self-achievement, personal satisfaction, and societal impact, then there may be an inclination towards creating a new venture or embarking on entrepreneurial activities (Ryan & Deci, 2020). More so, there is empirical evidence showing that positive attitudes significantly predict entrepreneurial intentions in different demographic indices (Pan, Li, Du, Hu, & Ye, 2025). Thus, the study hypothesizes that:

H₃: Attitude, as an individual factor, has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intentions of female youths in Nigeria.

Family Income and Entrepreneurial Intention

There is empirical evidence supporting the positive relationship between the socioeconomic status of parents and that of their children (Fletcher & Wolfe, 2016). Family income, a core component of parents' socioeconomic status, includes a broad range of economic earnings from salaries or wages, investments, earnings from rents, pensions, benefits, and other financial sources (Raffalovich, Monnat, & Tsao, 2009). The income of a family plays an important role in shaping the future financial status of children (Fletcher & Wolfe, 2016). Empirical evidence also supports the positive linkage between family income and startup activities undertaken by young entrepreneurs (Edelman, Manolova, Shirokova, & Tsukanova, 2016). For instance, Ali, Topping, and Tariq (2011) found a positive relationship between family income and the propensity for self-employment. This suggests that individuals from financially stable households are more inclined to pursue entrepreneurial ventures because their economic background cushions the risks involved with venturing into an unfamiliar path (Wang, Wang, & Chen, 2018). More so in developing economies where access to financial resources is often limited, family income plays a more crucial role in fostering the entrepreneurial aspirations of youths (Martins, Shahzad, & Xu, 2023). Other factors such as personal ambition, social support, and access to entrepreneurial education could also play important roles in driving the entrepreneurial intention of young people (Wale-Oshinowo & Kuye, 2016; Suratno, Narmaditya & Wibowo, 2021), higher-income families are also more likely to provide a financial safety net for youths considering entrepreneurship as a viable career path (Edelman et al., 2016; Rusu et al., 2022). In light of this discussion, the hypothesis below is proposed:

H₄: Family income, as a sociocultural factor, significantly influences the entrepreneurial intentions of female youths in Nigeria.

Business Family Background and Entrepreneurial Intention

A business family background refers to an upbringing in which one or more members of the immediate or extended family are actively engaged in entrepreneurial ventures, regardless of whether the business is formally classified as a family business. This family context shapes the everyday experiences of children and young adults, encouraging their early exposure to business discussions, values, and decision-making processes in enterprise management (Aldrich & Jennings, 2003). Furthermore, growing up in households that often blend familial and commercial norms also fosters entrepreneurial thinking through informal learning in such children and young adults (Tarling, Jones, & Murphy, 2016). Rather than focusing solely on ownership and succession within a single enterprise, business family backgrounds are marked by entrepreneurial embeddedness, an environment where commercial activities are perceived as viable and even desirable career options. This exposure, as suggested by Carr and Sequeira (2007), enhances young individuals' perceptions of the feasibility and desirability of entrepreneurship. The presence of entrepreneurial role models within the family unit can also nurture a practical understanding of enterprise management while promoting self-confidence and entrepreneurial intention from an early age. Moreover, studies such as Shirokova, Osiyevskyy, and Bogatyreva (2016) provide empirical support that young individuals from entrepreneurial family environments are more likely to transition their intentions into action. They benefit from tacit knowledge and direct mentoring and often possess greater familiarity with risk management, customer engagement, and informal business networks. Therefore, a business family background can provide a nurturing base for entrepreneurial development, particularly for young women navigating restrictive sociocultural expectations. Hence, the hypothesis below is proposed:

H₅: Business family background, as a sociocultural factor, has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intentions of female youths in Nigeria.

Role Models and Entrepreneurial Intention

A role model is someone who exemplifies a standard of achievement and demonstrates the behaviors and attitudes necessary to reach that level of success (Kim et al., 2020). Role models serve three core, interrelated purposes: they offer learning opportunities, provide motivation and inspiration, and help individuals build a sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Kovaleva, Hyrynsalmi, Saltan, Happonen, & Kasurinen, 2023). Through observation, aspiring individuals begin to internalize both the success and the journey of their role models, using this as a template for their own aspirations and behavior. The confidence and direction drawn from such figures can be especially powerful when young people are at critical decision-making stages. In the context of entrepreneurship, role models can significantly shape the entrepreneurial aspirations of women by showing that such ambitions are attainable. The visible success of other entrepreneurs, particularly women who have overcome similar sociocultural constraints, can inspire others to pursue a similar pathway. Within the Nigerian context, where societal expectations, gender norms, and structural limitations often hinder women's participation in entrepreneurship, having accessible and relatable role models is more than beneficial; it becomes essential. Positive female role models demonstrate not only what is possible but also offer a sense of validation and credibility to entrepreneurial aspirations. Evidence consistently shows that young women who observe successful female entrepreneurs are more likely to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career path (Bosma et al., 2012; Kovaleva et al., 2023). In recognizing this dynamic, the hypothesis below is proposed:

H₆: Exposure to entrepreneurial role models, as a sociocultural factor, has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intentions of female youths in Nigeria.

Ethnicity and Entrepreneurial Intention

Ethnicity reflects a set of shared values, customs, beliefs, and behaviors grounded in a common heritage, ancestry, and cultural background (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010). It forms a crucial aspect of an individual's identity, often shaping one's view and influencing social expectations and opportunities. Ethnic affiliations may also determine one's access to social capital, networks, and even economic opportunities in more traditional societies (Moser & Ashforth, 2021). Cultures entrenched in traditionalism tend to discourage risk-taking and innovation, thereby stifling entrepreneurial behaviors, while cultures that value innovation and change are more likely to produce individuals who are receptive to entrepreneurial ventures (Kreiser, Marino, Dickson, & Weaver, 2010). For instance, in Nigeria, certain ethnic groups, such as the Igbos, are historically and culturally associated with commerce and enterprise. However, cultural norms often dictate more traditional roles for women (Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, & Madichie, 2018). In many communities across Africa, ethnic norms define not only acceptable female roles but also dictate the limits of women's involvement in public or economic life (Peters, Adelstein, & Abare, 2019; Cislighi & Heise, 2020). Ssendi (2013) notes that culture profoundly affects the development of institutional frameworks that either limit or enhance social equality, thereby influencing women's confidence and readiness to pursue entrepreneurial careers.

Despite global and national efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship, ethnic traditions and expectations can continue to shape young women's self-perceptions and career choices (Bullough, Guelich, Manolova, & Schjoedt, 2022). For instance, in more conservative ethnic communities, a young woman's ambition to become an entrepreneur may be met with familial or societal resistance, potentially discouraging her from pursuing such aspirations. On the other hand, in communities where entrepreneurial success is culturally esteemed, ethnicity can serve as a motivational force, reinforcing a young woman's confidence and legitimizing her ambitions. Therefore, understanding the role of ethnicity is essential to capturing the sociocultural dynamics that influence entrepreneurial intentions among Nigerian women. The hypothesis was formulated as: **H₇:** Ethnicity, as a sociocultural factor, has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intentions of female youths in Nigeria.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, with a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. The research focused on female youths in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Southwest Nigeria to capture a diverse range of individual and sociocultural factors influencing their entrepreneurial intentions. A total of 385 respondents were selected based on

Cochran's formula for sample size determination at a 95% confidence level. The sample was drawn across Federal Tertiary Institutions in Southwestern Nigeria using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data were gathered using a self-administered structured questionnaire designed around key variables such as role models, ethnicity, gender norms, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention. Questions were adapted from existing literature to suit the Nigerian context and ensure clarity for participants. The reliability tests using a pilot sample of approximately 40 respondents produced values ranging from 0.726 to 0.89. Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarise participant profiles and responses. Inferential statistical methods, including correlation and regression analyses, were employed to examine the relationships and assess the significant effects of sociocultural and individual factors and entrepreneurial intentions. Ethical standards were upheld throughout the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The purpose of the study was clearly explained, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured. No identifying information was collected.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Demographic Analysis

The descriptive findings of this study provide a nuanced view of the socio-demographic profile of young Nigerian women and the underlying context that shapes their entrepreneurial aspirations. Understanding these attributes is essential as demographic characteristics often influence both access to resources and motivation toward entrepreneurial engagement (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). The age distribution shows that a significant proportion (51%) of the respondents were between the ages of 22 and 26 years, highlighting a predominantly youthful population with a potentially high level of energy, creativity, and risk appetite. This aligns with previous research by Schoof (2006), who emphasized that young adults in developing economies often view entrepreneurship as a viable alternative to unemployment or underemployment. This age group is also crucial because they are at a life stage where personal identity is being shaped and long-term career choices are being considered, making it a fertile period for entrepreneurial aspiration formation (Archer & Yates, 2017).

Family income plays a substantial role in determining entrepreneurial aspirations, particularly in resource-constrained settings. The finding that half of the respondents came from families earning between ₦200,000 and ₦500,000 monthly suggests a modest middle-income bracket by Nigerian standards. Literature suggests that youth from such households are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship due to both necessity and opportunity, having limited access to elite employment yet possessing basic financial support to explore self-employment (Chigunta, 2017). Conversely, 10% of respondents from high-income families (earning above ₦1 million) may have greater financial cushioning to explore entrepreneurial ventures without immediate survival pressure, a condition which Fairlie and Robb (2007) describe as enabling "opportunity entrepreneurship" rather than "necessity entrepreneurship."

The ethnic distribution reveals that the majority of respondents were from the Southwest (48%) and Southeast (28%) regions historically associated with high entrepreneurial vibrancy and commercial culture in Nigeria (Igwe et al., 2018). The Southwest, dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group, and the Southeast, home to the Igbo, both have rich histories of trade, apprenticeship systems, and informal enterprise development (Golub & Hansen-Lewis, 2012; Godwin, van der Sijde & Bossink, 2024). The lower representation of respondents from the North is likely attributable to the geographical concentration of the study rather than to deeper sociocultural or demographic nuances. A notable 57% of the respondents reported a business family background, indicating prior exposure to entrepreneurial environments. This supports the notion of "business family embeddedness" (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003), where the intergenerational transmission of values, resources, and tacit business knowledge can influence the development of entrepreneurial competencies and confidence. Shirokova, Osiyevskyy, and Bogatyreva, (2016) argue that individuals from business-oriented families often display higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy due to access to mentorship, role modeling, and informal learning. This exposure, particularly in the formative years, contributes to the perception of entrepreneurship as both feasible and desirable.

The role of entrepreneurial role models is evident, with 47% of respondents reporting inspiration from successful entrepreneurs, even if followed from afar. This supports the findings by

Bosma et al. (2012), who highlight the importance of visible entrepreneurial role models in shaping entrepreneurial intentions, especially in contexts where formal entrepreneurial education may be lacking. The presence of role models, whether local or global, can help demystify entrepreneurship and serve as a source of motivation and guidance (Calvo, Neira, & Atrio, 2024). The fact that 38% actively follow multiple entrepreneurs reflects the rise of digital platforms and social media in disseminating entrepreneurial narratives. However, the 15% who reported having no role models indicate a potential gap in entrepreneurial exposure and mentorship, which may hinder their confidence or ambition to pursue business ventures.

Regression Analysis

Table 1. Regression Analysis

Hypotheses	β (Beta Coefficient)	p-value
H ₀₁ (Self-efficacy)	.756	.001
H ₀₂ (Self-confidence)	.787	.001
H ₀₃ (Attitude)	.752	.001
H ₀₄ (Family Income)	.473	.001
H ₀₅ (Business Family Background)	.463	.001
H ₀₆ (Role Model)	.730	.001
H ₀₇ (Ethnicity)	.360	.001

**** Note:** β = Standardised Regression Coefficient; p = Significance Level (significant at $p < .001$).

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of individual and sociocultural variables on entrepreneurial intentions among young women. The results revealed that the following individual factors had positive and statistically significant effects on entrepreneurial intention: self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.756$, $p < .001$), self-confidence ($\beta = 0.787$, $p < .001$), attitude ($\beta = 0.752$, $p < .001$), and role models ($\beta = 0.730$, $p < .001$). These findings align with Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991), which highlights the role of individual attitudes and perceived behavioral control in shaping intention. They are also consistent with previous studies that highlight the important role of psychological factors in entrepreneurial decision-making (Bosma et al., 2012; Willis, Lee, Reynolds, & Klik, 2020). Significant positive effects were also found between the following sociocultural factors examined in this study and entrepreneurial intention: family income ($\beta = 0.473$, $p < .001$), business family background ($\beta = 0.463$, $p < .001$), and ethnicity ($\beta = 0.360$, $p < .001$). However, the effects of these sociocultural factors appear to be relatively weaker than those of individual-level psychological factors in determining the entrepreneurial aspirations of young Nigerian women. These findings reflect the broader patterns identified in research linking sociocultural context to entrepreneurial outcomes (Méndez-Picazo, Galindo-Martín, & Castaño-Martínez, 2021).

Discussion

Entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a powerful tool for economic empowerment and poverty reduction, particularly in developing and emerging economies (Bruton, Ketchen, & Ireland, 2013; Bhuiyan & Ivlevs, 2019). However, the systemic underrepresentation of women in the current entrepreneurial ecosystems of these economies makes it essential to understand the factors that enable or hinder their participation (Brush, Edelman, Manolova, & Welter, 2019; Ogundana et al., 2021; Alkharafi, 2024). In this study, self-confidence was the strongest individual-level predictor of entrepreneurial intention among young Nigerian women. This supports Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which argues that a person's belief in their own capabilities is a stronger predictor of behavior than actual skills. Empirical studies have consistently found that women with greater self-confidence are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial activities (Alkharafi, 2024). This suggests that interventions designed to boost confidence through education, exposure, and supportive networks could significantly improve entrepreneurial engagement among young women.

Self-efficacy and attitudes towards entrepreneurship also emerged as statistically significant predictors. According to Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour, a positive attitude, shaped by beliefs about outcomes and perceived behavioral control, plays an important role in the formation of intentions. In line with this theory, the findings support the argument that favorable attitudes and strong self-efficacy can fuel entrepreneurial desire. This resonates with Niu et al. (2022), who found that vocational students with high self-belief and positive entrepreneurial attitudes were more inclined to develop startup ambitions. Other studies also confirm the positive association between

self-efficacy, entrepreneurial aspirations, and performance (Caliendo et al., 2023).

Among the sociocultural factors, the influence of role models had the most significant effect on entrepreneurial intention. Many respondents shared that observing the success stories of entrepreneurs, especially women in their immediate environment, strengthened their belief in the feasibility of starting and sustaining a business. This is consistent with findings of previous studies that emphasize that accessible, relatable role models can enhance motivation and self-perception, particularly among individuals from underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds (Lockwood et al., 2002; Bosma et al., 2012; Morgenroth, Ryan, & Peters, 2015; Abbasianchavari & Moritz, 2020). When young women see others 'like them' succeed, entrepreneurship becomes a more realistic and attainable aspiration.

Family income and business-oriented family background were also positively linked to entrepreneurial intention, though their effect was somewhat more modest. This aligns with some empirical findings that higher socioeconomic status can facilitate access to education, resources, and career opportunities, including entrepreneurship (Crawford et al., 2016; Manstead, 2018; Meroka, 2023). Similarly, some other studies found that individuals raised in entrepreneurial families often develop early familiarity with business practices and a greater inclination toward self-employment (Criaco et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2018).

Ethnicity, though statistically significant, showed a weaker effect on entrepreneurial intention. This implies that cultural identity may function more as a contextual lens through which entrepreneurial decisions are shaped rather than as a primary motivational driver. In the Nigerian context, ethnic and religious affiliations are deeply embedded in the social and economic life of people, thus may influence their access to networks, resources, and community support (World Faiths Development Dialogue, 2019; Adisa, Mordi, Simpson, & Iwowo, 2020). However, the findings of this study suggest that ethnicity seems to have a more indirect impact on motivation and entrepreneurial intentions. Although taken together, these findings suggest that while structural and cultural factors matter, internal drivers such as the belief systems of individuals reflecting their self-confidence, self-efficacy, and attitudes play an even more critical role.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal an interplay between personal traits and the social environments in which these women operate. Among individual factors, self-confidence emerged as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention, supporting research that highlights the role of psychological factors in motivating entrepreneurial ambition, particularly in environments where there are systemic and institutional barriers. Sociocultural structures such as role models, family income, and business-oriented family backgrounds also significantly influenced the entrepreneurial intentions of these young Nigerian women. This finding emphasizes that entrepreneurship is not shaped only by personal drive but also by exposure and support from one's environment. However, the weaker influence of ethnicity suggests that cultural and structural constraints may still limit entrepreneurial pathways. The gendered norms in many African societies can hinder the entrepreneurial ambition of women, thus preventing their intention towards entrepreneurship from transitioning from intention to action. Theoretically, by showing that young women who exhibit a stronger sense of belief in their abilities are more likely to develop entrepreneurial goals, the study supports existing work on psychological factors and entrepreneurial motivation, especially in environmental contexts where structural support is limited. Secondly, the sociocultural variables examined, such as the presence of entrepreneurial role models, family income, and business-oriented family background, emerge as important predictors. These findings provide evidence that entrepreneurship is not shaped by individual traits alone but also by the social environment and early exposure to a culture of creating and managing a business. This aligns with existing theories, which suggest that family and community play important roles during children's formative years and could shape their mindsets towards entrepreneurial activities. In practice, the study suggests that if young Nigerian women are to be encouraged into entrepreneurship, interventions must go beyond training and skills acquisition. Efforts should include building confidence through mentorship and peer networks, improving early access to entrepreneurial experiences, and fostering enabling sociocultural environments where business activity is visible, valued, and supported. Furthermore, public policy

should focus on improving infrastructure and reducing systemic barriers that often discourage women from transforming intentions into actual business ventures.

This research is not without limitations. Firstly, it focused on young female students in Nigeria, which, although relevant, limits the generalisability of the findings to other categories of women. Including older women, non-students, or those already engaged in informal or formal business activity would likely offer broader insights into how different life stages and responsibilities affect entrepreneurial aspirations. Secondly, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and collected data through a structured questionnaire. While this approach provided useful statistical data, it may not have captured the more profound, lived experiences behind the responses. Future studies could consider using mixed-method approaches to explore how and why specific individual or sociocultural factors influence entrepreneurial thinking and intentions among young women. There is also scope to explore the influence of social norms, cultural expectations, and gender roles more explicitly, particularly in rural or traditional settings where such factors may be more pronounced. Finally, comparative research with other African countries or emerging markets could provide a richer understanding of how young women in similar economic and cultural contexts navigate their entrepreneurial journeys. Such work would add both theoretical depth and practical insight to the growing body of knowledge on female entrepreneurship in developing economies.

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