

Effect of Attitudinal Change on Entrepreneurship Development Among Youth of Sokoto State Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the effect of attitudinal change on entrepreneurship development among the youth of Sokoto State Nigeria as the main objective of the study. The study employed descriptive research design. The study used quantitative research methodology and research design which is usually aimed at collecting large and small samples from a population in order to examine the distribution, incidence, and interaction of sociological phenomena. The population of the study comprises youth especially graduates, NYSC corps members and youths between the ages of 18-35 years of age. The study sampled 250 respondents and a well-structured questionnaire titled Effect of attitudinal change on entrepreneurship development among the youth of Sokoto State Nigeria, was administered to 250 where 195 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned for analysis from the analysis of the data collected. The study used SPSS for data analysis. Results of the study show that the overall attitude of youths towards entrepreneurship education has a mean score of 3.60 which shows a positive attitude. Results of the study also showed that there are a number of challenges that affect youths' entrepreneurship intentions.

Keywords: *Attitudinal Change, Development, Youth, Effect, Entrepreneurship*

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Background to the Study

Entrepreneurship has become the most mentioned and applied word today globally. At the turn of the century many universities, especially in the U.S.A, floated entrepreneurial education as a way of cushioning unemployment and getting the students integrated into normal life after graduation. The education (entrepreneur) process provides awareness for the student to acquire practice experience by sending them into the market to try their hands at creation by wealth (Brown 2019), Entrepreneurship development is premised on the fault that a body of knowledge skills and attitude, skills and attitude could be learned and supplied by people who are sufficiently motivated, in order to reduce unemployment (Jeverson, 2018).

Entrepreneurship is one of the sources of national wealth (Hindle and Yenchen, 2014). It promotes and stimulates economic development and employment generation (Liñán et al., 2021) via business expansion, technology advancement, and wealth creation (Lumpkin and Dess, 2016). It also serves as a developmental tool for a country (Ismail et al., 2019). Hence, there remains much work to do (Wu, 2019), especially now that it receives more attention than before due to its importance to the national economy (Muhammad et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential to conduct further studies on entrepreneurship. This paper contributes to the field of entrepreneurship by presenting the current attitude of African youth. The African continent has experienced poverty for several years, and there is a need for poverty alleviation if the continent is to be saved. Entrepreneurship is one of the options for encouraging growth and development in the continent. Thus, it is important to have a good understanding of the attitude of African youth towards entrepreneurship. The main objective of this study, focus on the effect of attitudinal change on entrepreneurship development among the youth of sokoto State Nigeria. The justification of this study, is that the authority concern, the Youth, the Institutions, the State, Nigeria and the entire World will benefit from the above research.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship is viewed as a multi-dimensional construct that is defined variously by different people hence there is no unified definition. According to Mokaya, Namusonge and Sikalieh (2022), entrepreneurship is the individual motivation and willingness to take risk, create and sustain a growth-oriented and profit-making enterprise. Entrepreneurship is also viewed as a cultural and economic phenomenon (Gzozdanic., 2018), a process of fundamental transformation from an innovative idea to an enterprise, from an enterprise to creation of value (The Kauffman Panel Report, 2017). According to Teshome (2014) and also Odunaike and Amoda (2013), entrepreneurship is the art of setting up and running an enterprise in a profitable and sustainable manner. The above definitions therefore imply that an entrepreneur is somebody who is innovative, daring and who is able to identify opportunities where others see risks. As also given by Mazura and Norasmah (2021) the above definitions also mean that entrepreneurship is a long-term strategy for reducing unemployment and boosting economic development through the exploitation of business opportunities available.

Entrepreneurship is further viewed as an important driver for economic growth, productivity and social development and hence is perhaps one of the main issues in current public policy

debate (Denanyoh, 2015). Demonstrating the importance of entrepreneurship in boosting economic growth, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (2006) indicated that as much as one-third of the differences in economic growth among nations may be attributed to differences in entrepreneurship activity. Fostering an entrepreneurial culture among the university graduates has therefore become an issue of great priority (Gerba, 2012) such that developing an opportunity-oriented mindset in university students is now considered very critical. The above is so because entrepreneurship is now viewed as a cog in the socio-economic performance of countries due to its potential and capacity to create employment opportunities (Mustapha & Selvaraju, 2015).

In the context of Botswana, as mentioned above, studies show that the rate of unemployment was at 18% as of 2021 and has been rising ever since, with the majority of the unemployed being youths (Statistics Botswana, 2021). This result according to Lekoko (2011) posed a challenge for higher education institutions in Botswana to come up with programmes such as entrepreneurship education to help youths gain knowledge and skills to create their own jobs and be self-employed. The above point by Lekoko dovetails with views of Emanuel, Dazala and Daniel (2022) who argued that for far too long, higher education institutions have been concentrating on producing graduates for whom there is no market rather than concentrating on programmes such as entrepreneurship that help in job creation. Eugene, Adline and Agwubuike (2013) also opined that higher education institutions needed to be criticized for producing job-seeking rather than job-creating, self-reliant graduates.

It's therefore not surprising that the National Universities Commission (NUC) directed that the entrepreneurship education be mandatory for every student for at least two semesters in the course of one's university career irrespective of area of specialization. This is to enhance self-reliance and self-employment. In all countries of the world, education is seen as a process of transmitting cultural heritage, stabilizing the present and improving or changing the future. It is an essential process of developing the child cognitively, effectively and in the psychomotor aspect. In this regard, education has come to be viewed in every community as a matter of cultural compulsion. The best legacy to bequeath to a child is sound education. This is even more so in this 21st century. In this country, it is quite obvious that knowledge is the greatest asset to possess (Ayodele, 2020). Even though Nigerians keep struggling to have the essential post-secondary education, it is a common experience that about 80% of the graduates from Nigerian colleges of education, Polytechnics and Universities find it very difficult to get employment every year. The unemployment rate has been said to be growing upwards at 16% per year; the youth of the country being the most affected, with a youth employment rate of over 30% (Doreo Partners, 2013).

Now that the reality of graduate unemployment and national poverty has dawned on the government, institutions, parents, teachers, students, and indeed employers of labour, the need to sweeten and garnish Nigeria's current educational programmes with entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and positive attitude cannot be undeveloped (Olaajo, 2019). Entrepreneurial spirit is the much-needed pivot for sustainable economic growth, increased productivity, and the reduction in unemployment and poverty alleviation in Nigeria's social, political and

economic systems. In Nigeria, where the rate of unemployment has soared astronomically and poverty level increased tremendously, it is pertinent for education. Here, it is hoped, the undergraduate students will learn the techniques of barriers and of being able to organize and manage small businesses of their own (Salau, 2021).

The solution to the ever-present problems of poverty, unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria, problems which are a scourge on the national economy, and contributors to the high rate of social vices in the country, therefore, lies in education by which is meant entrepreneurship education. It is, however, worthy to note that the teacher is an important factor in any education system. Where all other inputs are adequately provided, without the teacher, the whole exercise will amount to nothing (Okeke-oti and Adaka, 2012). Additionally, one of the Editor's notes from Forbes.com stated that Africa is a large continent with enormous resources but surprisingly, it continues to be poor. Dr Mo Ibrahim, the writer of the note, asked "Why are we poor?", and in his answer, he argued that it is because of the attitude of Africans. He also argued that it is the responsibility of every African to build his/her nation. He urged them to wake up from their slumber and he slammed the African governance systems. He also stressed that unemployment, with increases in the number of youths these days, possesses a threat to the continent, and he concluded that it is the right time for Africa to encourage entrepreneurship and uplift its businesses (Forbes.com, July 15th, 2022). The World Bank (March, 2020) confirmed that Africa had a high potential to be successful in 21st century. The institution stated that Africans need to decide to make their continent grow and develop by investing in knowledge, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship. It was also mentioned by the organization that if Africa could invest in those areas, the poverty level could be reduced by half.

Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship development in Nigeria was not quickly given the needed attention until the last decade of the 20th century. Akiri, Onoja and Kunazang (2016) noted that right after the reinstatement of democracy in 1999, the primary focus of Obasanjo's policies centered on accelerated development through entrepreneurial education (which he made mandatory for college students of all disciplines) and the creation of condition favourable to a new business regime built on innovation and adaptability. This period ushered in economic reforms and a renewed focus on entrepreneurs' development as the only viable means of sustained growth. Nigerian leaders initiated a massive programme of disinvestment and financial deregulation aimed at boosting business development across the micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) space.

When the Federal Government of Nigeria recognized the role, entrepreneurship plays in jumpstarting the growth and development of the economy, it decided on two things in 2009. One, that entrepreneurship education should be made a general studies course for all undergraduates of the tertiary institutions. The second was that a centre for entrepreneurial development be established in each of the tertiary institutions where different skills would be taught. At the end of their programme of study, graduates of the tertiary institutions would be able to set up their own businesses with a view to contributing to the economy (National Open

University of Nigeria (NOUN, 2016). Ogundele and Abiola (as cited in Chioma, Ukoha and Alagah, 2018) revealed that the role of government in entrepreneurship development in Nigeria became significant after the Nigeria civil war (1967-70). Since the mid-1980s, there has been an increased commitment of government to entrepreneurship development especially after the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1986. Added to this are the establishment of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) and the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN).

Youth Attitudes Towards Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship education is viewed as a form of training in entrepreneurial knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and skills (Pulka et al, 2014). As a result, students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education can be measured in terms of three components of entrepreneurship attitudes namely cognitive, affective and behavioural attitude components (Pulka et al, 2014). The cognitive component relates to beliefs, thoughts and knowledge students have about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education that shape their attitudes and behaviours (Amdam, 2021). The affective component relates to feelings and emotions about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education, that is, how a person sees the desirability or relevance of something and hence whether eventually they either like it or not (Kulpa et al, 2014). The behavioural component relates to actions, overt responses and willingness to respond to or accept something (Mani, 2018).

The importance of entrepreneurship in alleviating economic and social challenges facing society is now a theme of heightened discussion the world over (Lekoko, 2021). The above is echoed by Ramalan and Ngah (2022) who averred that entrepreneurship is a critical agent for economic growth. Literature further attests to the fact that in many countries especially emerging economies, graduate unemployment has become an albatross around the neck of society in general and school leavers in particular (Opoku-Antwi, Amofah, Nyamaah-Koffuor & Yakubu (2022), hence the current clamour for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions. The issue of entrepreneurship as a vehicle to self-employment is further emphasised by Lokoko, Rankhumise and Ras (2022) who argued that the move towards self-employment the world over is and will continue to become an increasingly important element of economic growth and development.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme was launched on 15th of March 2016 by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). The objective of the YEDP scheme is to inspire and harvest the entrepreneurial abilities of Nigerian youths towards creating over one million direct jobs by 2020 (Amaefule, 2016). According to the CBN Governor, Mr. Godwin Emefiele, “the programme was to ensure that the creative energies of the over 64 million Nigerian youths were harnessed to stimulate growth, address restiveness and promote economic development”. The programme guidelines stated that the targeted beneficiary groups are National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members and those with not more than 3-5 years post – NYSC experience (CBN, 2016).

Theoretical Review

The Theoretical framework of this study was adopted from the theories of attitude formation and attitude change and also behaviour change theories. This was because the study was looking into the attitude of the young people and why they behaved in a certain way towards Entrepreneurship. The specific theories of attitude formation and attitude change used were social learning theory.

Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory pays particular attention on the development of cognitions interconnected to the expected outcome of behaviour. According to McDonald and Kielsmeier, (1970), this theory suggests that a person obtains attitudes by observing other people's behaviours and imitating them. The author adds that the person being observed must be convincing to the observer (Bednar & Levie, 1993). Credibility is largely achieved by creating trust and deep conviction. Observational learning is greater when the objects being observed are seen to be trustworthy and convincing (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). According to this theory the opinions that young people hold towards entrepreneurship could have been acquired by observing the society around them in early stages of life. The young people observed that a person who studied and became a doctor, engineer, pilot, among other professions was hailed and a person who started a business was not recognised as much or was not taken to be as successful or took long to succeed in life. Thus, the young people could have been conditioned to this thought and therefore need to be communicated to and informed in order to have some new learning experience which will make them have a change of attitude towards entrepreneurship.

The data obtained from the questionnaire of the 250 questionnaires administered, 196 were returned giving a return rate of 78.4%.

Table 1: Demographic variables (N = 196)

Demographic Variable	Number of Youth
Age:	
18 – 20	65.2%
21 – 24	18.8%
25+	16%
Gender:	
Male	52.4%
Female	47.6%
Category	
Graduates	44.8%
Still in School	26.8%
Corps member	28.4%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Results in Table 1 show that there were more male youth (52.4%) of the respondents than female (47.6%) of the respondents. Table 1 further shows that most of the youth in the programme were aged between 16 and 20 years while the least number of respondents were

aged above 25 years. Finally, most of the respondent's category were from the graduates (44.8%) while the least number (26.8%) of the respondents are still in school.

Table 2: Entrepreneurship development initiatives available to youth of Sokoto North Local Government Area Nigeria

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
There are entrepreneurship education lessons	4.06	1.3
Entrepreneurship education lessons increased my interest in a career in entrepreneurship	4.15	0.9
I consider entrepreneurship as being as important if not more important than any other subject	4.37	1.3
Entrepreneurship education prepared me to make innovative and informed decisions about career choices	3.48	1.1
I am happy to have learned entrepreneurship education	3.27	1.4
I consider entrepreneurship a desirable career option	4.24	1.1
The university encouraged youth to pursue entrepreneurship ventures	3.17	1.0
The university and my lecturers helped me to meet and interact with people with good entrepreneurial ideas	3.01	1.1
My institution helped me to meet successful entrepreneurs who motivated me towards entrepreneurship as a career	3.09	1.1
The university and my lecturers helped me to meet and interact with people with good entrepreneurial ideas	2.03	1.2
Average	3.49	1.2

Source: Field work (2024)

Results in Table 2 show that there is a willingness and acceptance by most of the youth ($3 < M \leq 5$) that entrepreneurship is a desirable career option and that entrepreneurship education is important in preparing them to become entrepreneurs. The mean of mean scores of 3.49 also indicates that for most respondents their behavioural attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education is positive. Of the 10 items measuring behavioural attitude towards entrepreneurship, 4 items with mean scores of 4 and above ($4 \leq M \leq 5$) demonstrate that youth have a very positive behavioural attitude towards entrepreneurship as a result of taking part in entrepreneurship education. Of the 10 items measuring behavioural attitude of youth, 5 items with mean of score $3 \leq M < 4$ show that youth have a fairly high behavioural attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. Only in one item out of 10 do youth show a negative behavioural intention towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education.

Table 3: The factors influencing the attitude of youth of Sokoto North Local Government Area, towards entrepreneurship development initiatives, (N=196)

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
Inadequate business opportunities	3.92	0.91
Lack of entrepreneurship knowledge and skills	1.45	1.5
Difficult in accessing funding	4.14	0.87
Lack of startup technical support such as how to write a winning business plan	3.95	1.1
Legislation which is not business-friendly	1.98	1.0
Average	3.09	1.1

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 3 shows the factors influencing the attitude of youth of Sokoto North Local Government Area, towards entrepreneurship development initiatives. The main factor that has an effect on the interest and hence attitude of youth towards entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship even after going through the entrepreneurship course is difficulty in accessing funds ($M \geq 4$). Challenges with a moderate effect on youth' interest hence negatively affect their attitude towards entrepreneurship are lack of technical support ($M = 3.95$) and lack of business opportunities ($M = 3.92$). Youth believe legislation ($M = 1.98$) is supportive of efforts to start new business also that they do not lack of entrepreneurship knowledge and skills ($M = 1.45$).

Table 4: Possible solutions to the factors influencing the attitude of youths of Sokoto North Local Government Area, Sokoto State Nigeria towards entrepreneurship development initiatives

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
Due to entrepreneurship education, I am able to identify business opportunities	3.03	1.2
Due to entrepreneurship education, I can now create products and services that satisfy customers	3.01	1.0
Due to entrepreneurship education I can successfully develop business plans	3.74	1.1
Due to entrepreneurship education, I now have skills to can create a new business	4.84	1.2
Due to entrepreneurship education, I can now successfully identify sources of business finance	3.85	1.0
Due to entrepreneurship education, I can now anticipate, tolerate and manage unexpected market changes, setbacks and risks that may affect my business	3.54	1.1
Due to entrepreneurship education, I can perform feasibility studies to check if my business ideas work	2.73	1.3
Modules in the entrepreneurship programme stimulated my interest in entrepreneurship	4.62	1.1
Practical examples as well as use of guest speakers such as successful entrepreneurs helped me understand entrepreneurship better	4.38	1.2
Through entrepreneurship education, my knowledge, skills and interest in entrepreneurship have overall improved	4.33	1.2
Average	3.47	1.0

Table 4 shows that most of the youth believe that the entrepreneurship education they participated in developed knowledge and skills for them to effectively participate in entrepreneurship activities. This is shown by the mean scores $3 \leq M \leq 5$ where in 10 out of 11 items measuring the cognitive component of youth attitudes towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education, youth showed positive cognitive intentions. Out of the 10 items where youth showed high cognitive intentions towards entrepreneurship as a result of participating in entrepreneurship education, in 4 items youth showed very high positive intentions ($4 \leq M \leq 5$) and in 6 out of the 10 items, youth showed fairly high entrepreneurship intentions ($3 \leq M < 4$). It is only in 1 out of the 10 items that youth showed very low entrepreneurship intentions ($M < 3$). A mean of mean scores of $M = 3.47$ shows that overall youth had a positive cognitive intention towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education.

Discussion of Findings

Results of the study show that the overall attitude of youths towards entrepreneurship education has a mean score of 3.60 which shows a positive attitude. It is also shown in the results that youths believe that their participation in entrepreneurship education helped to stimulate their interest in entrepreneurship, and this is a further demonstration of how positive the attitudes of youths are towards entrepreneurship education. This result confirms earlier studies by Sonitariset al (2017) and also by Basu and Virik (2018) which found that entrepreneurship education stimulates youths' subjective norms and intentions towards entrepreneurship. Ediagbonya (2013) in his study also found that by developing skills, knowledge and motivation in university youths for them to be able to successfully engage in entrepreneurship activities, entrepreneurship education positively impacts on the attitudes of youths towards it and towards entrepreneurship. Iqbal et al (2022) in their study also found that after youths had participated in entrepreneurship education, most youths believed that: i) if they start their own business, they would have a high probability of success, ii) they were better prepared to start their own businesses, and iii) the entrepreneurship education programme had given them enough knowledge and skills to successfully start their own businesses. This is again a sign that youths have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship education as they see it as benefiting them in the end.

The positive attitude of youths towards entrepreneurship education is therefore an indication that most of them understand and view entrepreneurship education as an attempt to foster entrepreneurial awareness as a career option through the enhancement of the understanding in youths of the process of initiating and managing a business (Mapfaira and Setibi, 2014). The above is also confirmed by Gerba (2012) who argued that having a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship education implies having an appreciation of entrepreneurship education as an important means of developing entrepreneurial skills in people which skills manifest through creative strategies, innovative tactics, uncanny identification of trends and opportunities in the market. Having a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship also means that youths, just like all other people in this volatile economic environment, have come to an understanding and appreciate that the twin challenges of unemployment and the shrinking of economies, as articulated by Iqbal et al (2022), can be solved or at least minimized by

empowering people with entrepreneurial skills through entrepreneurship education. The above assertions are also confirmed by a study by Zain et al (2020) who found that more than 50% of youths intended to become entrepreneurs after going through the entrepreneurship programme while a study by Mapfaira and Setibi (2014) found that 73% of youths were willing to start their own businesses after going through entrepreneurship education.

The study also looked at the influence of demographic characteristics of youths that include gender, age and area of specialisation on their attitude towards entrepreneurship. Results showed that gender has an influence on how youths perceive entrepreneurship education as male youths indicated more willingness to and satisfaction in participating in entrepreneurship education than female youths. The above results confirm earlier results in a study by Ismael et al (2020) which found that there were significant differences in attitudes between male and female youths with male youths believing that entrepreneurship is important in shaping their future careers. With regards to the influence of age of youths on their attitude towards entrepreneurship education, results of the study showed that age had a significant influence on the attitude of youths towards entrepreneurship education. The study showed that older youths (21-24 years and 25+ years) had a more positive attitude towards entrepreneurship than youths in the 16-20 years bracket who had a positive attitude but not as high as that of the upper age groups. A study by Pour et al (2013) however found that age did not have an influence on the attitude of youths towards entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship as a future career. The current study also showed that area of specialisation did not have an influence on how youths perceive entrepreneurship education which confirmed an earlier study by Pour et al (2013) that also showed that area of specialisation did not have a significant influence on the entrepreneurship inclination of youths.

Results of the study also showed that there are a number of challenges that affect youths' entrepreneurship intentions. It was revealed in the study that difficulty in accessing funding, lack of start-up support as well as inadequate business opportunities were some of the challenges that may affect their entrepreneurship intentions despite having successfully gone through the entrepreneurship programme. Results further showed that youths felt that the entrepreneurship course had given enough knowledge and skills to start their own business and the issue of knowledge and skills was not a challenge. Results also show that the legal environment in Botswana is pro-business, hence laws of the country are not a hindrance to their aspiration to start businesses. The above results confirm an earlier study by Mapfaira and Setibi (2014) that found that some of the challenges highlighted by youths as hindrances to starting their own businesses were difficult in accessing funds and lack of start-up technical support.

Conclusion

Based on the main objective of this study, which focuses on the effect of attitudinal change on entrepreneurship development among the youth of Sokoto State Nigeria, the results above, shows that there are a number of conclusions that can be given. First, youths have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and they understand and appreciate the role the programme plays in developing entrepreneurship knowledge and skills. Second, as a result of

participation in the entrepreneurship education programme, many of the youths show willingness to engage in entrepreneurship activities after completing schooling. Third, age and area of specialisation have no influence on the attitude of youths towards entrepreneurship education while gender has an influence. Fourth, challenges that have a potential of affecting the motivation of youths to participate in entrepreneurship activities after completing school include accessing seed money as well as a lack of business opportunities. Finally, it is also concluded that legislation in Botswana is very conducive to the promotion of entrepreneurship activities.

Recommendation

Based on the above conclusions, there are a number of recommendations that can be made. First, lecturers teaching entrepreneurship education need to be more specific on the sources of finance available to youths and how exactly they can access these funds. Second, and as a follow-up to the above recommendation, lecturers teaching entrepreneurship need to invite, as part of teaching, members from institutions that provide loans for start-up business, to come and address youths on the technicalities involved in the successful application for loans. Third, more needs to be done by lecturers to help youths become more able to identify business opportunities. In this regard, more case studies can help. Fourth, as part of teaching entrepreneurship education, lecturers need to make the teaching more practical by linking youths with institutions that are known to provide technical start-up support so that before the youths complete the course they are aware of these institutions and how to use them when they need information about how to start and run their businesses. Fifth, institutions need to come up with databases of youths who were able to start their own businesses so that they can monitor and provide technical support where needed.

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