
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Influence of Environmental Factors on Entrepreneurial Intention of Polytechnic Undergraduates in Nigeria

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| ABSTRACT

As institutions of learning in Nigeria turn out graduates' year in and year out, the rate of unemployment soars. This has continued to be a serious concern in the last few decades as the menace is taking its turn on polytechnic graduates trained to be self-reliant and not supposed to be job seekers. Passionate scrambling for paid employment that is scarcely available has been observed among graduates of polytechnic educational programmes. Thus, investigating factors influencing entrepreneurial drive and intentions in polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria polytechnics. This study investigated the influence of environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of undergraduates in polytechnics in Osun State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, and the study was conducted on undergraduates selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. The questionnaire was adapted from literature and designed in a 4-Likert format for data collection. The Instrument was subjected to a panel experts' validation and reliability test for internal consistency, which yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.78. Data was analyzed with the aid of The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

| KEYWORDS

Entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial intention; unemployment

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Willingness to engage in entrepreneurship at a future date is commonly referred to as entrepreneurial intention. It is a primary force that drives involvement in entrepreneurial activities, a foremost solution and remedy to the rising graduate unemployment rate, one of the most significant challenges faced by developing countries, including Nigeria (Otache et al., 2020; Mansor et al., 2020). As institutions of higher learning in Nigeria turn out graduates' year in and year out, the rate of unemployment soars. This has continued to be a serious concern in the last few decades as the menace is taking its turn on polytechnic graduates trained for self-reliance and not supposed to be job seekers. Passionate scrambling for paid employment that is scarcely available has been observed among graduates of polytechnic educational programmes. Shamsudin et al. (2017) say that engaging in small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures is a panacea to the unemployment problem. However, becoming a successful business owner begins with developing strong desires and willingness for entrepreneurship. According to Ames and Amachree (2021), entrepreneurial intention usually involves inner guts, ambition, willingness and a feeling of conviction to stand on one's feet in self-reliance. It refers to an individual's state of mind that is aimed at creating new ventures and developing new business ideas (Ekeh et al., 2022). It significantly contributes to

entrepreneurship's formation, growth and development. Thus, investigating factors capable of influencing entrepreneurial drive and intentions in polytechnic undergraduates is a worthwhile effort.

Developing entrepreneurial intention and skills among polytechnic undergraduates in Nigeria has recently received greater attention as efforts are directed towards compulsory entrepreneurship education courses for all disciplines and programmes (Salisu et al., 2022). Therefore, educational institutions expend efforts on learning experiences in entrepreneurship that will enable students to acquire practical skills and knowledge for successful entrepreneurial ventures. After graduation, students exposed to these entrepreneurship education courses are expected to develop passion and a strong inner drive for entrepreneurship. Despite government and institutional efforts on entrepreneurship education, the unemployment rate among graduates of polytechnic programmes in Nigeria continues to increase, indicating low graduates' interest in entrepreneurial ventures (Trade Economics, 2023). By implication, other factors might be responsible for developing entrepreneurial intention in these undergraduates apart from exposure to entrepreneurship education as a compulsory course. This could be due to the unfavourable business environment prevalent in the country. Zarnadze et al. (2022) opine that business environments are those exogenous conditions that directly and indirectly impact successful entrepreneurial activities. The environmental factors considered barriers to developing firm intention for and engaging in entrepreneurial activities were viewed from political, economic, social, legislative, ecological and technological points of view. Harsh economic policies, societal preferences for foreign goods that cripple local manufacturing firms, and possible bureaucratic bottlenecks in business registration may all influence the development of entrepreneurial intention of the polytechnic undergraduate students. A favourable business environment is assumed to trigger intentions for business start-ups naturally. Hence, the study considered the influence of environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduate students in Osun State, Nigeria.

Nigerian polytechnics offered programmes that can be broadly categorized into agriculture and related technology; art, design and related technology; business management; engineering; environmental design studies; finance and related studies; health technology; hospitality; science technology; and information studies (National Board for Technical Education, 2023). These programmes were designed to provide a high-quality workforce that readily applies technical and vocational skills for national development (Dung-Gwom, 2014). However, the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates may vary based on discipline or gender. However, Otacheet al. (2020) believed entrepreneurship education was meant to prepare undergraduates to become self-employed, irrespective of their chosen discipline. Swarupa and Goyal (2020) reported a higher attitude towards entrepreneurship in engineering students than management students. Similarly, some studies linked passion for entrepreneurship with gender. For example, Caro-Gonzalez, Romero-Benabent and Sanchez-Torne (2017), Branchet (2015), Yordanova and Tarrazon (2019) and Li et al. (2022) all reported significant differences in the entrepreneurial intention of male and female individuals. Hence, the study sought to find the significant difference in entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates based on programmes of study and based on gender.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The first step for young graduates to become self-reliant is to develop an intention for an entrepreneurial career. Government and institutional efforts are consistently directed towards equipping polytechnic students with skills and ideas to boost their intention for entrepreneurship. Notwithstanding, the choice to participate in entrepreneurial activities after graduation still seems very low, and the rate of graduate unemployment is still on the rise. The perceived low entrepreneurial intentions contribute to the rising graduate unemployment rate. This seemingly low entrepreneurial intention could be linked to factors such as the unfavourable business environment that may be prevalent in the country. Hence, the study seeks to investigate the environmental factors that likely influence tertiary education students' entrepreneurial intention, especially the polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine how the political environment affects the entrepreneurial intention of students
- ii. To examine how the economic environment affects the entrepreneurial intention of students

- iii. To examine how the sociocultural environment affects the entrepreneurial intention of students
- iv. To examine how the technological environment affects the entrepreneurial intention of students

1.3 Hypotheses

H₀: The political environment does not have any relationship with the entrepreneurial intention of students

H₀: The economic environment does not have any relationship with the entrepreneurial intention of students

H₀: Sociocultural environment does not have any relationship with the entrepreneurial intention of students

H₀: The technological environment does not have any relationship with the entrepreneurial intention of students

2. Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been defined in various ways and has many meanings. Many scholars view entrepreneurship from different perspectives. "The sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, economists and managers have divergent views of entrepreneurship" (National Open University of Nigeria, 2017). Sociologists believe entrepreneurship to be a concept governed by societal values and status hierarchy. Sociologists believe entrepreneurship will flourish only in a society where people depend on hard work to prosper. The Psychologists opine that successful entrepreneurship is fundamentally based on individual personality traits like creativity, innovativeness and risk-bearing. To economists, on the other hand, the entrepreneur is the fourth factor of production who coordinates land, labour and capital to produce saleable goods or services for a profit. Obasan and Soyebó (2011) define entrepreneurship as creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence. Entrepreneurship is the process by which an individual recognizes business opportunities, initiates business start-ups, displays personal skills in combining the factors of production while assuming moderate risks, and controls or coordinates resources for a profit. It is an act of being an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs, therefore, identify business opportunities and create and organize businesses at a profit. Entrepreneurs are typically driven by specific forces, such as the drive for achievement, the desire for freedom and autonomy, or the desire for wealth (National Open University of Nigeria, 2017).

2.1 Entrepreneurial Intention

Barbara Bird first illustrated entrepreneurial intention in 1988 as a state of mind directing a person's attention towards a specific object to achieve something. It incredibly predicts human behaviour (Koe & Majid, 2014). Entrepreneurial intention (EI) is the mindset that directs, guides, coordinates and controls the basic concept of new business development and implementation. Turker and Selcuk (2009) see intentionality as a state of mind that directs a person's attention, experience, and actions towards a specific goal or path to achieve something. Similarly, Sanchez (2018) interpreted EI as a self-acknowledged conviction by a person who intends to set up a new business venture and consciously plans to do so at some point in the future.

Entrepreneurial intention significantly contributes to entrepreneurship's formation, growth and development. A variety of factors can influence entrepreneurial intention. Scholars differ in their opinions on the factors responsible for the development of EI in students. Turker and Selcuk (2009) randomly selected 300 university students in Turkey for study. Their study revealed that educational support, a supportive university environment, and structural support predict entrepreneurial intention in university students.

2.2 Empirical Review

The influence of the college environment on the entrepreneurial intention of high school technical students was investigated in Brazil (Iizuka et al., 2022). The study confirmed that the school environment positively influences students' entrepreneurial intentions. Unlike the current study, this study was conducted among high school students and not polytechnic undergraduates. Another study was conducted to investigate the impact of environmental factors on entrepreneurial behaviour. Akter and Igbal (2022) reported that contemporary society's social and economic environment significantly influences entrepreneurial intention. Zarnadze et al (2022) further looked into the influence of the business environment on entrepreneurial intention. Business environments were viewed as business barriers, including political, economic, social, legislative, ecological and technological factors.

Nguyen (2020) investigated the impact of access to finance and other environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention of university undergraduates in Vietnam. The study reported direct and indirect influences of perceived environmental factors on entrepreneurial intention. The study showed that exogenous factors such as environment influence desires for and willingness to participate in entrepreneurial activities. It was noted that most studies conducted to examine environmental factors' influence on entrepreneurial intention were conducted amidst populations other than polytechnic undergraduates. Studies investigating the influence of environmental factors on Nigerian polytechnic undergraduates are still relatively scarce; hence, this study was carried out to bridge the gap in the literature.

3. Methodology

The study is quantitative, a descriptive design of survey type. This study was conducted among polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria. A sample size of 280 was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. At the first stage, final year (HND II) students from all faculties (categorized into Science, Management, Engineering and Environmental) in all government-approved public and private polytechnics in Osun State, Nigeria, purposively selected (three public and seven private polytechnics in Osun State, retrieved from Federal Ministry of Education website). Justification for this selection is premised on the fact that the final-year undergraduate students are getting ready to join the labour force and must have been offered all prescribed entrepreneurship education/training courses. In the second stage, 280 of the selected population was sampled using proportionate stratified random sampling. The questionnaire was adapted from Linan and Chen (2009) and was used to measure entrepreneurial intention and environmental factors, which will be measured with a scale adapted from Hieuet *al.* (2022). The instruments were submitted to a panel of experts for validation. The panel conducted a content analysis of each questionnaire and eliminated items irrelevant to the research problem. After necessary modifications, the instruments were subjected to a reliability test with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.78. The instruments were administered through personal contact with the help of two trained research assistants to allow respondents to clarify issues arising from completing the questionnaire. Data was analyzed with the aid of The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

4. Analysis, Results and Findings

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PolEnvi1	280	1	5	4.44	.726
PolEnvi2	280	1	5	4.24	.988
PolEnvi3	280	1	5	4.43	.663
EcoEnvi1	280	1	5	4.43	.663
EcoEnvi2	280	1	5	4.19	1.049
EcoEnvi3	280	1	5	4.39	.710
SocEnvi1	280	1	5	4.43	.663
SocEnvi2	280	1	5	4.30	.584
SocEnvi3	280	1	5	4.29	.799
TechEnvi1	280	1	5	4.43	.749
TechEnvi2	280	1	5	4.23	.859
TechEnvi3	280	1	5	4.16	1.081
EntrepInt1	280	1	5	4.59	.493
EntrepInt2	280	1	5	4.30	.584
EntrepInt3	280	1	5	4.34	.600
Valid N (listwise)	280				

Source: Computation of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient for the Instrument used

Table 2. Effect of Political Environment on the Entrepreneurial Intention of Students

X	Y	X –Mean (x)	Y –Mean (y)	xy	x ²	y ²
4.44	4.59	0.1	0.18	0.018	0.0001	0.000324
4.24	4.30	-0.1	-0.11	0.011	0.01	0.000121
4.43	4.34	0.09	-0.07	-0.014	0.0081	0.0049
				0.015	0.0182	0.006434

Source: Authors Field Survey (2025)

Mean for x = 4.34

Mean for y = 4.41

$$r = \frac{\sum(xy)}{\sqrt{(x^2)(y^2)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.015}{\sqrt{(0.0182)(0.006434)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.015}{\sqrt{(0.000117)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.015}{0.0108}$$

$$r = \mathbf{1.39}$$

In order to test this hypothesis, the response form of the independent variable (political environment) from the questionnaire was grouped as X. In contrast, the dependent variable (entrepreneurial intention of students) Y and the Pearson product-moment correlation were used. The calculations and indications from the table above show the substantial relationship between political environment and entrepreneurial intention since the correlation coefficient $r = 1.39$. The critical values of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were consulted to test the hypothesis. The critical value for r at $N - 2$ degrees of freedom is 0.996, where $N = 3$. Therefore, the result is significant for the $r > t_v$ (i.e. $1.39 > 0.996$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. That is, the political environment affects the entrepreneurial intention of students.

Table 3. Effect of Economic Environment on Entrepreneurial Intention of Students

X	Y	X –Mean (x)	Y –Mean (y)	xy	x ²	y ²
4.43	4.59	0.09	0.18	0.0162	0.0081	0.000324
4.19	4.30	-0.15	-0.11	0.0165	0.0225	0.000121
4.39	4.34	0.06	-0.07	-0.0042	0.0036	0.0049
				0.0285	0.0342	0.006434

Source: Authors Field Survey (2025)

Mean for x = 4.34

Mean for y = 4.41

$$r = \frac{\sum(xy)}{\sqrt{(x^2)(y^2)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.0285}{\sqrt{(0.0342)(0.006434)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.0285}{\sqrt{(0.00022)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.0285}{0.0148}$$

$$r = \mathbf{1.93}$$

In order to test this hypothesis, the response form of the independent variable (economic environment) from the questionnaire was grouped as X. In contrast, the dependent variable (entrepreneurial intention of students) Y and the Pearson product-moment correlation were used. The calculations and indications from the table above show the substantial relationship between economic environment and entrepreneurial intention since the correlation coefficient $r = 1.93$. The critical values of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were consulted to test the hypothesis. The critical value for r at $N - 2$ degrees of freedom is 0.996, where $N = 3$. Therefore, the result is significant for the $r > t_v$ (i.e. $1.93 > 0.996$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. That is, the economic environment affects the entrepreneurial intention of students.

Table 4. Effect of Sociocultural Environment on the Entrepreneurial Intention of Students

X	Y	X –Mean (x)	Y –Mean (y)	xy	x²	y²
4.43	4.59	0.09	0.18	0.0162	0.0081	0.000324
4.30	4.30	-0.04	-0.11	0.0044	0.0016	0.000121
4.29	4.34	-0.05	-0.07	0.0035	0.0025	0.0049
				0.0241	0.016	0.006434

Source: Authors Field Survey (2025)

Mean for $x = 4.34$

Mean for $y = 4.41$

$$r = \frac{\sum(xy)}{\sqrt{(x^2)(y^2)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.0241}{\sqrt{(0.016)(0.006434)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.0241}{\sqrt{(0.000102)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.0241}{0.0101}$$

$$r = \frac{0.01009}{2.3885}$$

In order to test this hypothesis, the response form of the independent variable (sociocultural environment) from the questionnaire was grouped as X. In contrast, the dependent variable (entrepreneurial intention of students) Y and the Pearson product-moment correlation were used. The calculations and indications from the table above show that the relationship between sociocultural environment and entrepreneurial intention is strong since the correlation coefficient $r = 2.3885$. The critical values of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were consulted to test the hypothesis. The critical value for r at $N - 2$ degrees of freedom is 0.996, where $N = 3$. Therefore, the result is significant for the $r > t_v$ (i.e. $2.3885 > 0.996$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. That is, the sociocultural environment affects the entrepreneurial intention of students.

Table 5. Effect of Technology on Entrepreneurial Intention of Students

X	Y	X –Mean (x)	Y –Mean (y)	xy	x ²	y ²
4.43	4.59	0.16	0.18	0.0288	0.0256	0.000324
4.23	4.30	-0.04	-0.11	0.0044	0.0016	0.000121
4.16	4.34	-0.11	-0.07	0.0077	0.0121	0.0049
				0.0409	0.0393	0.006434

Source: Authors Field Survey (2025)

Mean for x = 4.27

Mean for y = 4.41

$$r = \frac{\sum(xy)}{\sqrt{\sum(x^2)\sum(y^2)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.0409}{\sqrt{(0.0393)(0.006434)}}$$

$$r = \frac{0.0409}{0.0159}$$

$$r = 2.5723$$

In order to test this hypothesis, the response form of the independent variable (technological environment) from the questionnaire was grouped as X. In contrast, the dependent variable (entrepreneurial intention of students) Y and the Pearson product-moment correlation were used. The calculations and indications from the table above show that the relationship between the technological environment and entrepreneurial intention is substantial since the correlation coefficient $r = 2.5723$. The critical values of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were consulted to test the hypothesis. The critical value for r at $N - 2$ degrees of freedom is 0.996, where $N = 3$. Therefore, the result is significant for the $r > t_v$ (i.e. $2.5723 > 0.996$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. That is, the technological environment affects the entrepreneurial intention of students.

5. Conclusion

The prevalent business environment in society will inspire the development of entrepreneurial intention in undergraduates. Unfavorable economic, sociocultural, technological, and political environments in Nigeria negatively influence the entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria. Conclusively, economic, sociocultural, and political environments are favourable. In that case, the intention to participate in entrepreneurship after graduation will be on the boost. It will subsequently lead to entrepreneurial behaviour, leading to a decline in the graduate unemployment rate and, in turn, alleviating poverty. Also, entrepreneurial intention levels in young undergraduates can vary depending on the discipline or program of study. It can also be concluded that gender is not a factor in students' entrepreneurial intention development.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that:

1. The government should rise to its responsibility by providing a political and economic environment favourable for entrepreneurship, stimulating undergraduate interest in entrepreneurial activities.
2. Management of the polytechnics should intensify efforts at exposing undergraduates of all disciplines, primarily environmental, science, and financial studies, to practical-oriented entrepreneurship education

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