

The Impact of Socio-cultural Business Environment on Entrepreneurial Intention: A Conceptual Approach

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to examine the impact of Socio-cultural Business Environment on Entrepreneurial Intention. The paper set out to weigh the influence of Education, Religion and Family background in the making of entrepreneurs. The study was built on related literature review for the purpose of attaining the set objective. The study revealed that the Socio-cultural Business Environment is a very vital factor in Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Intention, especially with regards to breeding new entrepreneurs. Education, Religion and Family background were also found to be instrumental elements in studying the Socio-cultural Business Environment, hence, the reason for positive and significant impact on Entrepreneurial Intention. An empirical study was recommended in order to establish empirical evidence to further consolidate the findings of this work. The findings could be of great benefit to Public Policy makers and firms by explicitly describing how much Socio-cultural Business Environment could be relied upon to help boost supply of entrepreneurs, which would in turn translate into reducing unemployment (especially among the youths) and poverty. Therefore the findings are expected to provide an insight on how Socio-cultural Business Environment can be harnessed to achieve great results in upturning entrepreneurship activities especially among the youths.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Intention, Socio-cultural Business Environment, Education, Religion and Family background.

1.0 Introduction

The relevance of entrepreneurship in economic growth and development with regards to job creation and poverty alleviation cannot be over-emphasized (Gree and Thurnik, 2003). Entrepreneurship leads to industrialization which translates to provision of employment and indeed, poverty reduction as a result of entrepreneurial activities that follow it (Duru, 2011). The wherewithal of a society to create a steady generation of opportunities for entrepreneurs can only materialize if the people have entrepreneurship drive. This is because activities of

entrepreneurs boost economic activities and make the economy more viable through generation of employment opportunities and by extension, alleviation of poverty (Ihugba et al., 2013).

Nigeria is naturally endowed with abundance of numerous investment potentials as a result of the vibrant and dynamic human and natural resources it has (Ayatse, 2013; Ihugba et al., 2013). No wonder entrepreneurship training and empowerment were conceived by successive governments as ideal remedy for enhancing the knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes of individuals and groups to embrace entrepreneurship. This resulted to some carefully and strategically designed entrepreneurship training programmes under some Institutions and Agencies all over the country (Owualah, 1999). Naturally, an average Nigerian is considered to be vigilant, watchful and relentless in taking advantage of opportunities that avail (Obiajuru, 2012).

In order to harness the entrepreneurial spirit in young Nigerians, especially graduates, the government put in place mandatory Entrepreneurship Training for graduates during the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) Programme (compulsory one year service to the nation in a different place from the home state of the person). The training during this period is focused on skills acquisition and the revolutionizing of their mind-set to embrace self employment and to shield them from the menace of unemployment after the one year service (Ihugba et al., 2013). However, people do not just conclude overnight that they want to become entrepreneurs, but rather, it is usually a reaction to conditions around them. They ponder first on the idea to see how possibly they can tap from the opportunity that avails. Evidently, the behaviours or actions of entrepreneurs are usually carried with prior planning (Krueger et al., 2000). Socio-cultural Business Environment factors are those deeply rooted elements in people of a particular society or group and encompass the values, attitudes, norms, practices, institutions, stratifications, and related ways of a society (Azim, 2008).

Entrepreneurial Intention has been studied from distinct dimensions like Entrepreneurial traits, Psychology, Economics etc and the recommendations still not much handy in solving the problems holding entrepreneurship back, hence, the need to explore it from a perspective that integrates diverse sources of meaning and motivation, if a full picture of the construct is to be captured. The role of Socio-cultural factors portends a lesser explored avenue and a seemingly more promising solution to the problem at hand, which is the problem of poor youth entrepreneurship interests (Valliere, 2008; Wu and Wu, 2008). Education, Religion and Family Background have been proved by extant literature to be the most prominent dimensions of the Socio-cultural Business Environment and therefore, adopted for this study (Yeboah, 2014).

Scholars have studied Entrepreneurial Intention from various perspectives and have reached distinct conclusions in their findings, which is another evidence of the multi-faceted nature of the construct "Entrepreneurial Intention" (Wu and Wu, 2008). Studies have revealed that the social system and the culture of the people are what form the Socio-cultural Business

Environment and as such, entrepreneurs are invariably products of their Socio-cultural Business Environment (Azim, 2008). All the man made intangibles that have direct or indirect effect on the peoples' behaviour and total way of life in relating to career choice in this context are referred to as the Socio-cultural Business Environment (Akpór-Robaro, 2012). It refers to the set of common values that contribute to moulding of the behaviour pattern of the people (Boggs, 2004; Inglehart, 1997). Entrepreneurs are shaped by the factors of Socio-cultural Business Environment and invariably imbibe and practice what the environment has given to them. Therefore, Entrepreneurial Intention could be referred to as a response to cues from the Socio-cultural Business Environment individuals find themselves around. Alwis and Senathiraja (2003) put that Socio-cultural and personal factors like education, religion, ethnicity, age, etc have a significant influence on the business value formation and again, the mind-set of the individuals is a portrait of their past experience generated from the Socio-cultural Business Environment they have mingled with. The pattern of behaviour or lifestyle in the Business Environment determines whether or not people become entrepreneurs. Moreover, a favourable Socio-cultural Business Environment is however integral to industrial and economic well-being of entrepreneurship in general and entrepreneurs specifically. This insinuates that new ventures come into existence as a result of inter-play between environmental conditions and entrepreneurial tendencies of the people which undoubtedly, get precipitated by the Socio-cultural Business Environment factors like Education, Religion and Family background (Shivani et al., 2006).

2.0 Problem Statement

Nigeria has in abundance numerous investment potentials due to its vibrant and dynamic human and natural resources all over the country (Ayatse, 2013; Ihugba et al., 2013). Thus, entrepreneurship training was conceived by the Nigerian government as a reliable program of activities aimed at enhancing the knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes of individuals and groups to lure them into the shoes of entrepreneurs. This led to the initiation of carefully and strategically designed entrepreneurship training programs under some Institutions and Agencies in different parts of the country, with a view to boosting the supply of entrepreneurs (Owualah, 1999).

Despite the abundance of human and natural resources, the purported position of Nigeria as the largest economy in Africa in the face of the huge resources invested into entrepreneurship by government, Nigeria still rates very low in global poverty ranking probably due to low entrepreneurial activities especially in places like Kano. Indeed, Nigeria has the highest rate of youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa and it is really devastating to the general economic wellbeing of the people (Anyadike et al., 2012).

Economic opportunities single-handedly are not sufficient conditions for entrepreneurship to flourish, it also requires some favourable Socio-cultural Business environment factors in order to soar and meet the expectation of policy makers and all stakeholders. This magnifies the important role played the Socio-cultural Business Environment in the supply of entrepreneurs

as it has been found to be clearly one of the fundamental indicators of entrepreneurship activities globally. (Azim, 2008; Alwis and Senathiraja, 2003).

Azim (2008), Arasti et al., (2012), Zeffane (2014) suggested that having studied Entrepreneurial Intention using dimensions like Entrepreneurial Traits and Psychology (McClellan, 1961; Gartner, 1989; Shaver and Scott, 1991; Palich and Bagby 1995), Economics (Schumpeter, 1936; Eisenhauer, 1995) etc and results still in need of improvement, hence, the need to look at it from the Socio-cultural Business Environment perspective which is a less explored area but a highly promising one, in terms of influencing career choice. Yeboah (2014) postulated that the most prominent factors of the Socio-cultural Business Environment are; Education, Religion and Family background. This study will be guided by this background.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 The Socio-cultural Business Environment (SBE)

Socially built reality is when individuals create a social framework for themselves and consequently develop it into an effective reality that shapes and influences their behavioural pattern (Berger and Luckman, 1966). Business environment has a significant degree of influence on the entrepreneurial intention of individuals. This makes the study of entrepreneurship vis a vis Business Environment necessary as it would lead to new discoveries (Arasti et al., 2012). Studying entrepreneurship predictors from the perspective of personality traits alone will not suffice and as such it becomes paramount to explore the Socio-cultural Business environment dimension (Azim, 2008; Zeffane, 2014). Social system and culture of people are what mix-up to form the Socio-cultural Business Environment and consequently the entrepreneurs become moulded by it (Azim, 2008).

All the man-made intangibles that directly or indirectly affect the peoples' behaviour and total way of life are referred to as Socio-cultural Business Environment (Akpór-Robaro, 2012). The Socio-cultural Business Environment refers to the set of basic common values which contribute to shaping the behaviour of people in a society (Boggs, 2004; Inglehart, 1997). Business environment has a significant degree of influence on the entrepreneurial intention of individuals. This makes the study of entrepreneurship vis a vis Business Environment necessary (Arasti et al., 2012). Studying entrepreneurship predictors from the perspective of personality traits alone will not suffice and as such, it becomes paramount to explore the Socio-cultural Business Environment dimension (Azim, 2008; Zeffane, 2014). Social system and culture of people are what mix-up to form the Socio-cultural Business Environment and consequently the entrepreneurs become moulded by it (Azim, 2008).

Entrepreneurial Intention is undoubtedly a response to cues from the Socio-cultural Business Environment. These factors play an influencing role in shaping the minds and consequently breeding entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are bred by the business environment and as such imbibe and practice what it has bred in them (Azim, 2008). Socio-cultural Business Environment

is integral to industrial and economic well-being of entrepreneurship in general and entrepreneurs in specific terms. This insinuates that new ventures come into existence as a result of intermingling that takes place between environmental conditions and entrepreneurial tendencies of the people which is naturally precipitated by the Socio-cultural Business Environment (Shivani et al., 2006). People acquire their shared characteristics and pattern of behaviour through socialization processes which involves factors like education, religion and family background. These dimensions happen to be the most prominent in describing the Socio-cultural Business Environment (Yeboah, 2014). This paper is set to study the impact of Education, Religion and Family background on Entrepreneurial Intention. This particular section will be dedicated to review of related and relevant literature on the subject matter as mentioned above.

3.2 Education and Entrepreneurial Intention (ED and EI)

In recent times, research attention has been focused more on the factors that aid entrepreneurial activities by developing models that depict the relevance of education, past experience and prior knowledge (Shane, 2000). The role of education in entrepreneurship, the contribution it gives to entrepreneurs and their success only came to limelight recently (Kuip and Verheul, 2004).

A wide range of literature on venture creation portrays education as a vehicle on which individuals are conveyed to entrepreneurship or self-employment. Entrepreneurship can possibly be culturally and experimentally imbibed and then polished by education. Education no doubt leads to awareness, new orientation and a whole lot of knowledge which combine together to make an individual a different person from what he/she used to be. These are invariably significant and helpful in the process of creating new ventures (Falck and Woessmann, 2013; Dinis et al., 2013). Education does not only aid gaining knowledge and developing abilities, but also creates room for improvement in the quality of life (Wu and wu, 2008).

Naturally, all humans possess some degree of entrepreneurial spirit which amounts to intention to become entrepreneur (Solomon, 1989). Such naturally possessed entrepreneurial tendencies could be unleashed through acquiring education (Schultz, 1980). Self-employment becomes attractive with increase in educational level. Managerial ability of individuals is enhanced and polished through acquiring education and consequently influences the tendency of them becoming an entrepreneur (Lucas, 1978; Kransniqi, 2009).

Akpor-Robaro (2012) stated that societies with high number of educated people are expected to produce more entrepreneurs compared to those societies with less number of educated people. This is simply because individuals who are educated are believed to be in a better position to detect entrepreneurial opportunities and quickly pick interest to exploit them (Davidsson and Honig, 2003). The opportunity cost for venture creation is more rampant and feasible in educated persons when compared to those with little or no education (Brixy and

Hessels, 2010). Education has a great deal of influence on the probability of individuals becoming entrepreneurs. The higher the level of education of a particular group people, the higher the entrepreneurial tendencies amongst them and vice-versa (Reynolds, 1991; Dolinsky, 1993; Selameab, 1997). An increase in education of people and favourable economic realities have aided in breeding more entrepreneurs (Garba et al., 2013).

Analytical and computational ability together with the communication skills of entrepreneurs grow commensurately with their level of education (Morrisson, 2000; Hayton et al., 2002). Skills and knowledge acquired through education and training help put the entrepreneurs at a vantage point compared to those who do not get the opportunity to be educated (Robinson and Sexton, 1994; Altinay and Wang, 2011). Creativity and flexibility are qualities imbibed by entrepreneurs through acquiring education which help them tackle and provide solutions to delicate issues that may confront them (Carneiro, 2000; Fahey and Prusak, 1998). Education impacts positively on risk-taking behaviour of the entrepreneurs. A great deal of threat faces those entrepreneurs who lack education but dream of breaking into the mainstream market with their businesses (Lavent et al., 2003).

Crant (1996) in his study involving some students from a Mid-western University found that, Education has a positive relationship with Entrepreneurial Intention. Selameab (1997) in his study titled; Factors Impacting Entrepreneurial Behaviour among Graduates of Post-Secondary Entrepreneurial Programs. A questionnaire was used to obtain data from completers of entrepreneurship trainings. Findings of the analysis revealed that Education has a positive impact on Entrepreneurial Intention.

Duygu Turker and Senem Sonmez Selcuk in the year 2009 studied Entrepreneurial Intention from the perspectives of Educational, Relational and Structural Supports on a sample size of 300 students from two states and two private universities. The entrepreneurial support model (ESM) was used in the study. Questionnaire was used to obtain data and analysis was done using hierarchical regression model. Findings revealed that only two subsets of the proposed model were found to be significant predictors of entrepreneurial intention. Educational and structural supports were found to be significant while relational support was found to be insignificant to Entrepreneurial Intention.

Levent Altinay and Catherine L. Wang in the year 2011 studied The Influence of an Entrepreneur's Socio-cultural characteristics on the entrepreneurial orientation of small firms. In the study data was gathered through 139 face-to-face structured interviews with Turkish ethnic entrepreneurs in London, UK. Part of the findings of the work was that educational attainment of an entrepreneur makes a positive impact on a firm's entrepreneurial orientation. Educational attainment equips business owners with the skills and reflective mindsets of understanding customers and responding to their needs.

Based on the above mentioned remarkable findings of previous researches on the impact of Education on Entrepreneurial Intention, we can reliably conclude that Education (ED) has a positive impact on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI).

3.3 Religion and Entrepreneurial Intention (RE and EI)

Different streams of literature have reported the popularity recently gained by the study of relationships between religion, entrepreneurship and economic growth (Galbraith and Galbraith, 2007). Religious beliefs to a large extent are positively related to other socio-economic factors which are instrumental to economic growth and they include education, self-esteem, family unit and life expectancy and so on (Barro and McCleary, 2003).

Religion is one of the leading factors that mould economic consciousness. Again, social construction and intention have effect on the process of exploration of new opportunities (Weber, 1904; Krueger, 2000). Religion is one of the factors that determine the basic values and beliefs of people. In essence, it explains the extent to which individuals or group take entrepreneurship as valuable and a career (Bwisa and Ndolo, 2011; Garba et al., 2013).

Religion naturally affects personal values and pattern of behaviour like encouraging honesty, hard work, perseverance and improving general ethical standards (Altinay and Wang, 2011). Society deduces meaning to its ethical structures through religion and also determines whether or not to encourage certain behaviours (Dodd and Seaman, 1998). Adherence to religious teachings and practices invariably expose individuals to new behavioural patterns which alter their life style in virtually all manners (Nikolova and Simroth, 2013). Economic growth is largely moved by religion from the angles of belief, practices, governmental influences etc (Barro and Mc Cleary, 2003). Entrepreneurs' religious background affects their decision making process which often guides decisions on who to employ and whom not to employ (Zahari, 1983; Abdullah, 1992; Altinay, 2008).

Entrepreneurship provides freedom and autonomy and these factors afford the entrepreneurs the ability and wherewithal to tailor their business activities to explicitly reflect their religious teachings and practices (Valliere, 2007). Religion is a strong influencing factor that motivates human behaviour beyond expectations. Religious networks and connections serve as significantly valuable business support that is capable of broadening opportunity discovery and access to potential entrepreneurs. Religious influence on societies affects entrepreneurship in a direct or indirect manner and it impacts on the entrepreneurs positively by moulding their minds to embrace entrepreneurship (Nikolova and Simroth, 2013).

Alex De Noble, Craig S. Galbraith, Gangaram Singh and Curt H. Stiles in the year 2007 studied Entrepreneurial Intention vis a vis Market Orientation and Religious Orientation. A questionnaire was used to obtain data from senior level business students who were chosen as the sample numbering up to 141. Part of the findings of the research was that the intrinsic

religiosity hypothesis was statistically supported, meaning that religion was found to have a positive impact on Entrepreneurial Intention.

Craig S. Galbraith and Devon M. Galbraith studied Entrepreneurial Intention vis a vis Intrinsic Religiosity in the year 2007. A number of 23 countries that were considered to be predominantly Christian were selected and the connection between country-wide religious orientation, entrepreneurial activity and general economic growth of a country was examined. Findings of the research revealed that while “intrinsic religiosity” is positively related to economic growth, the key relationship may be between intrinsic religiosity and entrepreneurial activities, with entrepreneurial activity and then consequently resulting to economic growth. Based on the above mentioned remarkable findings of previous researches on the impact of Religion on Entrepreneurial Intention, we can conclude that Religion (RE) has a positive impact on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI).

3.4 Family background and Entrepreneurial Intention

Surprisingly, researchers have been oblivious of the gigantic and important role of family background in building entrepreneurial intention and consequently, entrepreneurs. This left a vacuum in entrepreneurship studies for long and thus, the need now for research on the relationship between Family background and entrepreneurship so as to come up with a model that depicts the impact of Family background in entrepreneurship and also as an influencing factor (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Klyver, 2007).

Family is an institution where individuals first imbibe cultural codes from (Kalkan and Kaygusuz, 2012). The values and behaviour pattern exhibited within the family are key in creating and nurturing support for potential entrepreneurs in their bid to actualize their dream of owning a business of their own or doing whatever they deem as “profitably” never done hitherto (Kuratko, 1989). The family is regarded as a focused unit within which entrepreneurial traits are spread and encouraged especially by the young members in the midst of the elderly ones. This can be traced to repeated interactions taking place amongst members which in turn creates room for some idea exchanges (Fairbain, 1988; Scott and Towney, 1988). The traits imbibed from elementary life of an individual are carried on and eventually they end up influencing what the person becomes in future. Moreover, people raised by parents who are entrepreneurs are very much likely going to inherit some values from the parents and probably could become entrepreneurs someday (Hodgetts and Kuratko, 1998; Kirkwood, 2007).

The propensity to financially support the children to start up their chosen venture is higher with parents who are entrepreneurs. More so, they are in a good position to offer the young intending entrepreneurs moral support to lure them to embrace self-employment (Kalkan and Kaygusuz, 2012). Parents are no doubt real life and symbolic role models to their children, as such, very much convincing to them which could facilitate with ease, inculcating entrepreneurial intention in them (Laviolette and Radu, 2008). Basis for entrepreneurship could be as a result of exposure to and mingling with successful entrepreneurs, who often time

happen to be parents or family members of the potential entrepreneurs (Boyd and Vozidis, 1994).

Naturally, family has an instrumental influence on the career choice of people. Career choice of individuals more often than not reflects the interest of the family they come from (Wu and Wu, 2008). This is strongly related to the orientation with which the individual is raised in the family. More so, individuals raised by families with entrepreneurs are more likely to embrace entrepreneurship as a career in life (Scherer et al., 1990; Akpor-Robaro, 2012). Family background does not only influence individuals to develop interest in entrepreneurship, but also helps in providing insight and an identification of what one is capable of achieving in life as a result of making a decision to be self-employed (Davidson and Honig, 2003; Laviolette and Radu, 2008). Individuals close to successful entrepreneurs are very much likely to develop interest in entrepreneurship and most likely try to emulate. Thus, individuals who are associated closely with entrepreneurs are more likely to become entrepreneurs too as a result of interactions and exchange of views (Geissler and Zanger, 2013; Wang et al., 2011; Ramos-Rodriguez et al., 2010; Wu and Wu, 2008; Kickul et al., 2008; Davidsson, 1995).

The findings of Crant (1996) revealed that having entrepreneurial parents impacts positively on Entrepreneurial Intention. Muhammad Azam Roomi in the year 2010 studied the variables contributing to the growth of women owned enterprises in Islamic Republic of Pakistan from the perspectives of personal resources, firm's characteristics, human resource strategy and favourable women friendly social values and cultural traditions. Statistical analysis and in-depth interviews confirmed that women entrepreneur's personal resources and social capital have a significant role in their business growth. It further discovers that moral support of immediate family, independent mobility, and being allowed to meet with opposite gender play a decisive role in both sales and employment growth of women owned enterprises in an Islamic country like Pakistan.

Also, Jill Kickul, Fiona Wilson, Deborah Marlino and Saulo D. Barbosa in the year 2008 studied Entrepreneurial Intention for the purpose of understanding the reasons behind the gaps in entrepreneurial intention amongst adolescents. Specifically, the research aimed to test multiple models that analyze direct and indirect relationships between work and leadership experience, presence of a parental role model, self-efficacy, and interest by adolescents in entrepreneurship. Questionnaires were used to obtain data from the sample which was 5,000 middle and high school students in four geographic states or regions (New England, Illinois, California and Texas/Florida/Tennessee). Focused group interview was also conducted in order to obtain qualitative data as the study adopted the mix method. Part of the findings of the research revealed that having an entrepreneurial mother or father was found to have a significant and positive effect. Thus, confirming the positive impact of Family background on Entrepreneurial Intention.

Based on the above mentioned remarkable findings of previous researches on the impact of Family background on Entrepreneurial Intention, we can reliably conclude that Family background (FA) has a positive impact on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI).

Enough evidence has been established by past researches that Education, Religion and Family background which when put together form the Socio-cultural Business Environment all have positive impact on Entrepreneurial Intention. In general, it can be hypothetically stated that Socio-cultural Business Environment has a positive impact on Entrepreneurial Intention.

For purpose of encouraging entrepreneurship especially amongst the young people, the Socio-cultural Business Environment should be given adequate attention and manipulated towards boosting supply of entrepreneurs.

4.0 Conclusion and Implication

This paper has in conceptual terms investigated the role played by the Socio-cultural Business Environment in nurturing and building Entrepreneurial Intention especially in the young people using related past literature. A clear evidence has been established which insinuates that Education, Religion and Family background have a key role in developing Entrepreneurial Intention. Thus, for purpose of boosting supply of entrepreneurs, these factors should be given adequate attention and included in the framework due to the vital role they have been found to play. However, an empirical research is suggested to be carried out in order to concretize the findings of this work by establishing empirical evidence on how each of the factors aids Entrepreneurial Intention.

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