

**SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION IN NIGERIA: A  
CRITICAL REVIEW**

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**ABSTRACT**

With increasing awareness of the role of entrepreneurship as a key in a comprehensive economic development framework, researchers in recent years have focused attention on it with a view to discovering the factors that promote its development. Previous studies have discovered that the first major step in the promotion of entrepreneurship is the formation of the intention to be an entrepreneur. It has also been shown that entrepreneurial intention is influenced by environmental factors. Since most of the attention in previous studies had been given to environmental factors such as economic, political and psychological factors with little attention given to social environment, this study, therefore, examines the effects of social environment on entrepreneurial intention in Nigeria. The study is guided by three objectives which centered around the major components of social environment- education, family background and social network, and the effects that these components have on entrepreneurial intention. Adopting a critical review of literature methodology, the study hypothesized that, education, family background and social network of an individual, all play significant roles in the formation of entrepreneurial intention and should therefore be given adequate attentions in order to promote the formation of entrepreneurial behaviour needed for the economic growth in Nigeria. It is however, recommended that an empirical study be conducted to confirm the hypotheses stated in this study.

**Keywords:** Social Environment, Entrepreneurial Intention, Education, Family Background, Social Network

## **INTRODUCTION**

Entrepreneurship plays a significant role in the economic development of any nation. This view has been supported by scholarly works of researchers and theory (Richmell, Emmanuel & Augustine, 2018; Bagobiri & Yaroson, 2016; Eduardo & Manoj, 2017). It is considered as a vital source of innovation, employment and economic growth (Thortnton, Domingo & David, 2011). Entrepreneurship has become a major avenue for gainful employment with the capacity of improving the economic status of people (Mbiti, et al., 2015; Amakiri, et al., 2017). It is for this reason that entrepreneurship has attracted much attention from the government in most developing countries of the world, particularly, Nigeria.

Despite the emphasis and efforts by all nations to encourage the development of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intention has never been the same for all countries. Great differences exist among nations and even among sub-societies in nations, in terms of entrepreneurial development. Consequently, entrepreneurial intension has been related to environmental factors (Akp-or-Baro, 2012). The Nigerian society and environment have been widely and greatly discussed with regards to entrepreneurship. The common view is that entrepreneurship situation in Nigeria is greatly affected by the environment. Specifically, it is argued that the Nigerian environment has great influence and impact on the emergence of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial behaviour. The concept of environment has been narrowed in most cases to infrastructures of physical and economic/financial nature which are based on political and national economic decisions by government. This accounts for the reason that government is often blamed for low entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial development in Nigeria.

However, it has been posited by various scholars and researchers that social characteristics such as education, religion, and family background have great influences on entrepreneurial intention. This is the reason why we find unevenness in the distribution of entrepreneurship throughout the world. Scholars have pointed out the importance of social factors in the formation of an intention to create new businesses, arguing that entrepreneurship is a social phenomenon. (Carlos, et al., 2018; Casrud & Brannback, 2011). Therefore, while economic conditions may explain some of the variation, any convincing explanation must take account of the social aspect of entrepreneurial activity (Kalkan

& Kaygusuz, 2012). Although, there have been considerable studies on psychological and economic approaches to the development of entrepreneurial intention (Akhter & Sumi, 2014; Thornton, et al, 2011), the influence of social factors have not attracted the much needed attention from researchers. This paper, therefore, attempts to critically review the effects of social environment on entrepreneurial intention with focus on Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the improved attention given by the government to the development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, which manifest in the areas of establishing entrepreneurial centers in higher institutions, development of skill acquisition centers, establishment of micro credit financial institutions and provisions of micro credit, the level of entrepreneurial intention in Nigeria is still low when compared to most countries of the world (Bagobiri & Yaroson, 2016; Akpor-Robaro, 2012). Likewise, the increasing rate of unemployment in Nigeria (Trading Economics, 2017) is very worrisome.

Since most research efforts have focused on the psychological and economic approaches to the development of entrepreneurial intention (Akhter & Sumi, 2014; Akpor-Robaro, 2012), it becomes imperative, therefore, to explore the effect of social factors on entrepreneurial intention as a way of proffering solution to the problem of low entrepreneurial intention among Nigerians. This, therefore, is the crux of this current study.

### **Aim and Objectives Study**

The aim of the study is to assess the effect of social environment on entrepreneurial intention, adopting critical review of literature. This aim has been broken down into the following specific objectiveness:

- i. To examine the influence of education on entrepreneurial intention in Nigeria.
- ii. To assess the effect of family background on entrepreneurial intention in Nigeria.
- iii. To evaluate the effect of social network on entrepreneurial intention in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

This section presents review of relevant concepts and theories. Empirical review was also done and conceptual framework of the study was equally proposed.

### **Entrepreneurial Intention**

The process of entrepreneurship begins with the development of entrepreneurial intentions (Amakiri, et al, 2017; Ali, et al., 2010). Individuals do not become entrepreneurs as a reflex. Rather they respond to the conditions around them, they think about the opportunity and process cues from the environment which help them to construct the perceived opportunity into a viable business proposition (Thuo, Tagesse & Senbetie 2016; Remeikiene & Startiene, 2013). Entrepreneurship intention refers to a conscious state of mind that direct a person's attention to fulfilling the goal of venture creation. It refers to the anticipation of a person to start and grow a new business venture.

According to Aliyu, Sirajo & Selim (2015), entrepreneurial intention is one of the major contributing factors to the formation, growth, and development of entrepreneurship. It is the way to create new firms within available resources which is based largely on environmental factors in which individual live (Aghazamani & Roozikhah 2010). However, entrepreneurial intention is very critical in ensuring the intended entrepreneurial behaviour among the citizen of a society or country.

### **Social Environment**

The idea that individuals and organizations affect and are affected by their social context is not new as scholars continue to argue that the entrepreneurial variations are better comprehended by reckoning with the social environment in which the firm is created, because, in addition to economic activity, entrepreneurship is a social phenomenon (Berger, 1991; Steyaert, 2007). Ramana and Sorenson (2008) contend that the social context plays an important role in shaping career aspirations and in legitimating different career choices. Thus, entrepreneurship could be seen as the outcome of a social influence process (Ijaz, Yasin & Zafar, 2012). However, the main components of social environment that are often talked about in literature: education, family background and Social network (Castano, et al., 2015).

Extant literature on venture creation has described education as a vehicle on which individuals are conveyed to entrepreneurship or self-employment (Suartha & Suprapti, 2016; Mulyadi, et al., 2016). Linan, et al., (2008) view education as instrument that can stimulate the development of entrepreneurial behaviour in different ways. According to them, the whole set of education would include the development of knowledge, capacity, attitudes, and personal qualities identified with entrepreneurship. Thus, education is a key element that could be used to improve entrepreneurial mindsets which in turn contributes to economic growth, employment, and personal fulfillment (European Commission, 2006).

Family plays an essential role in economic activity involving the creation of firms and their growth. Family represents the important part of culture and has the significant impact on the performance of its members. Moreover, family provides opportunities to its members to develop networking. Traditional families play important roles in business and society because of the stronger ties and relationships for the enhancement of business, for maintaining their position in society and to maintain their power as well (Ijaz, et al., 2012). Family business has greater influence on entrepreneurial intention because family has a greater role in career choice. Family business has stronger awareness of its impacts on new generation who want to become entrepreneur (Thompson, 2009). Czuchry and Yasin (2008) also found that the entrepreneurial engagements of both parents are strongly correlated with the children's business interests.

Social networks are such relationships that provide opportunities to access and/or use financial and human capital - such relationships in which ownership is not ultimately the property of any individual, but is organized jointly by members of a network (Thornton, et al 2011). It is believed that social networks influence entrepreneurial intention. Individuals in strong social networks exchange business information and material resources. This could give them special edge and positive effects in their entrepreneurial intentions and resultant outcomes.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

There have been a number of theories put forward to explain the relationship between entrepreneurial emergence and social environment. The central focus of these various theories was to explain the social factors which cause people to develop entrepreneurial intention and be positively disposed to venturing into entrepreneurship. First among the theories that sought to explain the influence of social environment on entrepreneurship is the social network theory, which was propounded by a sociologist, Ronald Burt (1991). A network represents all the relationships and connections that one has with others, no matter their nature or characteristics. According to Burt, the concept of network is central to the term of social capital and proposed that there are two possible interpretations of it.

Firstly, he proposed that a network is important because it can lead to significant resources and opportunities. Secondly, he proposed that a network can be considered important for the fact that it is a resource in itself. Which is able to offer better access, timing or chances. Entrepreneurial opportunities are found in a person's network if it is structured in a certain way (Brass, 1992). An entrepreneur can only act if is in a position of mediating between distinct members of its network. Burt called entrepreneurial opportunity as a structural hole which will occur between two non-redundant contacts. A network rich in entrepreneurial opportunities provide a player with the motivation to be entrepreneurial.

Furthermore, other theories, like human capital theory, have emphasized education and family background as relevant social factors which affect entrepreneurial intention. Proponents of this perspective hold strongly the role of the family in developing the entrepreneurial character. It is believed that the home atmosphere of a family can provide a great deal of nurturing and supports for development of entrepreneurial personality or character (Kuratko, 1989). The family background of an individual is a strong influence on his values and character, thereby serving as a strong source of influence whether he would be an entrepreneur or not.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Based on critical review of relevant literature conducted, the study proposed the model as showed in figure 1. The model shows the relationship between social environment and entrepreneurial intention.

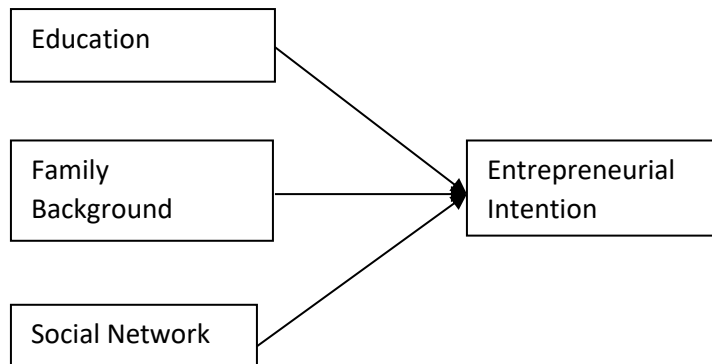


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework of the study

### **MATERIALS and METHODS**

The methodology adopted in this study was a critical review of previous relevant literature on the effect of social business environment on entrepreneurial intention. Literature were carefully studied, summarized, evaluated and synthesized into a comprehensive whole. Included literatures for the study were carefully selected on the basis of relevance and publishers' pedigree. Consequently, recent works published by notable publishers like Springer, Sage, Emerald, and Science direct, were mainly used. Variables included in the study were sourced from relevant theories and previous studies. However, the review formed the bases for the proposed conceptual framework of the study.

### **DISCUSSION OF REVIEW OUTCOMES**

A great number of research studies have been conducted regarding the impact of education on entrepreneurship. Despite the existence of the studies, the concepts of education and entrepreneurial intention require further investigation (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). Some Researches indicate that higher level of education leads to lower curiosity and risk taking (Naughton, 1987). Even some research studies refer to the type of the education, and the system through which it is proposed. For instance, it has been shown that traditional education leads to

lower creativity, curiosity, and risk taking, which later leads to lower tendency to become an entrepreneur (Ronstadt, 1984). Peterman and Kennedy (2003) claimed that formal education reduces the chances of becoming entrepreneurs, as these types of education are usually designed to prepare students to work in corporations.

Many scholars have established a positive relationship between the level of education and entrepreneurial intention (Asamani & Mensah, 2013; Garba, Mansor & Djafar, 2013 Zulfikar & Siti, 2014). Therefore, societies where there are a large number of people who have acquired various degrees of education are expected to have more entrepreneurs than societies where the number of people who have access to quality education is low (Akpor-Robaro, 2012). According to Samuel, Jacob & Ernest (2013), education is an important contributor for entrepreneurial intentions. They argue that education enhances creativity, innovativeness, risk-taking and ability to interpret successful entrepreneurial effect models and identification of business opportunities in a dynamic business environment. More so Linan et al. (2008) stated that the information regarding entrepreneurs and new venture creation is obtained through entrepreneurship programme. Apparently Friedrich and Visser (2005) pointed out that education about entrepreneurship increases students' interest in becoming entrepreneurs at some stage after graduation. Findings from this study have shown that education stimulates the entrepreneurship process and impacts entrepreneurial intention (Agbim, 2013).

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 & 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 (Akpor-Robaro, 2012). Findings from the reviewed literature (Akpor-Robaro, 2012; Peng, Lu & Hui, 2012; Krotan & Ratan, 2018; Ijaz, et al.) show that Family background have an influence on entrepreneurial intention. Analysis of the impact of parental background on business owners' entrepreneurial motivation shows very low indication that entrepreneurs are motivated by the fact that their parents own businesses. This findings corroborate the findings of (Ramos-Rodriguez, Medina-Garrido, Lorenzo-Gomez & Ruiz-Navarro, 2010;

Geissler & Zanger, 2013; Wang, Wong & Lu, 2011) who conclude that individuals close to successful entrepreneurs are very much likely to develop interest in entrepreneurship and most likely try to emulate. The nature of the relationship between social networks and entrepreneurial intention has been at the centre of discourse and research efforts for some time. Various scholars (Kro & Ratan, 2018; Thornton, et al, 2011; Mbiti et al 2015; Xiaohong, 2012) have established that social networking has an influence on entrepreneurial intentions. These findings are in line with the network theory propounded by Burt (1991). According to Burt, the concept of network is central to entrepreneurship because it is the way which can lead to significant resources and opportunities and for the very fact that it is in itself a resource, able to offer better access, timing or chances. The findings also agree with the position of Ghirmai (2011) that Social networking Social networking covers all the cultural as well as social aspects which help in the business plays an imperative role in developing entrepreneurial intentions among entrepreneurs and is the main cause for successful business.

## **CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having conducted a critical review of relevant literature with a careful study of their findings, the researcher, in line with the objectives of the study, posits that social environment could exert notable influence on the formation of entrepreneurial intention. The various dimensions of social business environment that have been carefully studied are worthy of attention in order to promote the formation of entrepreneurial intention. This may invariably lead to greater entrepreneurial behaviour, and by extension, result in the much sought-after economic growth and development of Nigeria, with all its attendant social and economic benefits.

However, in view of the relevance of the social environment to the formation of entrepreneurial intention and the resultant behaviour, this study has proposed a workable model which other researchers can subject to empirical study in order to ascertain its efficacy in the formation of entrepreneurial intentions and/or behaviour so as to make workable recommendation and possible generalization of findings.

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