ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND SELF EMPLOYED INTENTIONS AMONG NIGERIAN GRADUATES NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORP MEMBERS IN AGBARA

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ABSTRACT: Nigerian economy is believed to be the largest in Africa yet it is still confronted with a very high rate of unemployment particularly among its youths. Government continued emphasis on self-employment and reliance appear not to be yielding the expected results even with the introduction of entrepreneurial training programmes both in the higher institutions and in National Youth Service programme. Many of them are still craving for salary paid jobs rather than becoming self-employed after their graduation. Experts as well as academics believed that lack of entrepreneurial skills among this group possess a huge challenge to self-employment. Given this background, the present study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and self-employed intention among the National Youth Service members at Agbara, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study employed survey questionnaire design with a population of 315 Corp members serving at Agbara. The study adopted a social media platform in particular WhatsApp procedure to distribute and retrieve the copies of the questionnaires, were out of 315 copies of questionnaire sent out, only 152 were returned filled, however, only 148 were usable. The questionnaire data which is primary source was analysed using the SPSS version 21 and the finding revealed that entrepreneurial skills are significantly and statically related to self-employed intention among the Corp members at Agbara zone. The study therefore concludes that entrepreneurial skills such as capability, knowledge, training etc. are vital to achieving ones dream of becoming self-employed. Discussions on finding, implications of the study and suggestions for future research are provided.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Skills, Self Employed, Intentions, Graduates, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigerian economy is generally believed to be one of the largest in Africa, however, with a very high rate of youth unemployment. In the recent times, Nigerian government has been making concerted efforts to revive the economy with the major objective of creating jobs for the citizens thereby reducing unemployment. However, the situation looks blur as the economy is still struggling. Its efforts are visible in many entrepreneurial policies and programmes such as the introduction of entrepreneurship development programme in the tertiary institutions in the country. For example, the mandatory entrepreneurship development training programme for the graduates in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria is one among others. This programme emphasises on the need for graduates to be self-employed after graduation. Also, Lucky (2013) noted the programmes also aimed towards gainful self-employment and self-reliance among the youth in the country. Ajeyalemi (2018) claimed that despite the many efforts of the government, many of the graduates still crave for salary paid jobs rather than becoming self-employed after their graduation. A similar study by Lucky and Minai (2014) has demonstrated that not many these graduate youths turn out to engage in entrepreneurial or business activity after graduation or while still studying. They claimed that their years of experience in teaching entrepreneurship and small business development revealed that majority of their students who graduated from entrepreneurship course do not end up in becoming entrepreneurs. In other word, they do not take entrepreneurship as a career. Even though, they have the intention of becoming one, they failed to actually become one. However, few among them have moved from mere intention to actualisation or realisation of their dreams, just like in the
U.S where many young people like Derry, Claud, Charles and Henry have built a company that employs ten people four months after their graduation from the university (Lucky and Yusoff, 2015).

Furthermore, it has been observed that addressing the issue of lack of self-employed intention among the graduates in Nigeria requires proactive approach which requires effective entrepreneurial skills. Adeyemo (2009) found that those who want to become entrepreneurs must possess entrepreneurial skills. For example, the study noted that those with entrepreneurial skill tend to contribute more in terms of educating others on the need for them to engage in entrepreneurship irrespective of their discipline. These entrepreneurial skills can only be acquired through entrepreneurial trainings. The entrepreneurial training is mainly to change their mindset and attitudes towards becoming self-employed rather than looking for white-collar jobs. In this respect, skills such as capability, knowledge, training etc. are vital to achieving ones dream of becoming self-employed. Thus, graduates should possess the necessary capability, knowledge and training for self-employed intention to become reality. However, the focus of the previous studies (Ajeyalemi, 2018) is often on entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial skills rather than self-employed. Thus, the present study focuses on entrepreneurial skills and self-employed intention. Therefore, the study investigates the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and self-employed intention among the Corp members at Agbara zone.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Relationship between Entrepreneurial Skills and Self Employment

Several authors have examined entrepreneurial skill and how it relates to entrepreneurial intention (Adeyemo, 2009; Leovie and Hart, 2009; Liñán et al., 2005). For instance, the empirical study by Adeyemo (2009) in an attempt to understand the entrepreneurial skills acquisition through a case study reported that teachers who want to become entrepreneurs must possess entrepreneurial skills. In his on view teachers with entrepreneurial skill tends to contribute more in terms of educating students on the need for them to engage in entrepreneurship irrespective of their discipline. That is to say there is a strong correlation between entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial intention. Similarly by Liñán et al. (2005) that examined how skills and value perception affect entrepreneurial intention using the Ajzen’s theory of planned behavior, employed 249-university students with a structural equation model to test hypothesis, with the main objectives of determining existence and reach of both skills and value perception. The result of the study indicates that both skills and perceived value are found to be significant, therefore, plays a vital role in the determination of entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, the study conducted by Phelan and Sharpley (2012) on the entrepreneurial skills in relation with the competency of farm tourism focused on how to diversify the farm tourism in other to generate more incomes. The findings of the study show that managerial skills are valued and vital to the farmers, however many of the farmers are found to be wanting or lacking in terms of entrepreneurial skills and business competency which are key requirements for the success of this diversification of the rural economy. This output suggests that entrepreneurial skill is significant to the success of the farm tourism.

As far as occupational skills are concerned, the research looks at broad occupational groups, and finds, at the top end of the skill spectrum, no evidence that the self-employed are less likely to have high level skills than employees in the same occupation. At the bottom end of the spectrum, however, the self-employed are more likely than employees to have no formal qualifications. This last finding does not necessarily imply a real skills deficit among the self-employed; it may simply mean that the least skilled jobs in any occupation are more likely to be done by self-employed workers. (Cooney, 2013) while analyzing entrepreneurial skills for growth oriented business found that entrepreneurial skills are critically important for business growth. Machekie (2012) also conducted an analysis of entrepreneurial and business skills and training needs in SMEs plastic manufacturing industry in South Africa. Skills studied included; financial, legal, communication, strategy among others. After collecting data from 74 respondents, the result revealed a strong relationship between training in entrepreneurial a skills and success of an organization. The respondents are too small to represent the entire manufacturing SMEs in the whole of South Africa. Kinyua (2014) investigated the factors affecting the performance of Small businesses in Limuru town market in Kenya. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 275 micro and small businesses and using a descriptive research design, SPSS output revealed that access to finance and availability of management experience are the key determinants of business performance. Other factors that were found to affect business performance include; access to business information, access to infrastructure, government policy and regulation. The study was restricted to micro and small business while other scales of businesses were not included, and deficient in some key skills.
Mohammed and Obleagu-ozelibe (2014) studied entrepreneurial skills and profitability of SMEs in Nigeria. Data was collected from 250 respondents in Nigerian major cities through a self-administered questionnaire. Entrepreneurial skills including record keeping, communication, and relationship were found to be significant factor required for business success and profitability in Nigeria. This study focused on only profitability as a performance indicator; however, other non-financial measures may have provided a better assessment. The major limitations of the above studies reviewed attempting to find the relationship between of entrepreneurial skills and SMEs performance is that most of them used very small sample and restricted to a particular business activity. This study cuts across all sectors including services, manufacturing, and distribution, wholesale and retailing.

The competencies (business skills) of entrepreneurs make business more successful and may lead towards sustainable competitive advantage as well (Shehnaz and Ramayah, 2015). Two entrepreneurial characteristics determine business success and these include psychological factors and education experience (Sarwoko et al., 2013). Psychological factors that affect business performance include need for achievement, locus of control and personal traits. On the other hand, the level of education is positively associated with business performance. Higher education is considered to have better impact in entrepreneurship because it reflects the fact that they are on average more capable. Though some of these traits could be in born, training entrepreneurs in management training improves management competencies while skills training is a powerful tool for job creation (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2014). Studies by (Sajilan et al., 2016) indicate that entrepreneurial skills lead to venture performance and, expansion and growth; and contribute towards profitability and growth of business. Entrepreneurial competencies linked with behavior and decision- making skills have been proven to influence business performance (Nieuwoudt, 2016). Yazeed and Ringim (2016) examined the effect of entrepreneurial skills on organisational performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Kaduna state and found that entrepreneurial skills generally affect SMEs performance. It further revealed that organizing and controlling skills have significant positive effect on the performance of SMEs in the state, while planning skills has insignificant but positive effect on the performance of SMEs in the state. The outcome of the study provided an important insight to both academics and managers with findings for further understanding on the effect of entrepreneurial skills on performance of SMEs. The current study looks at entrepreneurial skills in relation to self-employed intention which prior studies tend to neglect.

2.2. Hypothesis Development

H0: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial skills and self-employed intention among the youth Corp Members.

2.3. Methods

The research design employed in this study is survey questionnaire design with quantitative approach as recommended by Sekaran and Bourgie (2009). The population of the study covered all the Corp members in Agbara Local Government. According to the current Zonal Coordinator, there are 315 Corp members currently serving in Agbara Local Government. Therefore, the population of the study is 315. The survey questionnaire was sent to all the entire population through their social media in particular WhatsApp platform provided by the Zonal Coordinator. The study made use of primary data source which is survey questionnaire distributed and retrieved through WhatsApp platform. Among the 315 copies of questionnaires distributed, only 152 copies were retrieved. However, only 146 copies were usable accounting for 46.4% response rate more than the 32.6% responses rate recommended by American Association for Opinion Research (AAPOR). The variables were operationalised according while also being measured using a 5-point Likert-scales (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) with particular interest in descriptive, correlation and regression analyses.

4. DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Analysis Result

The descriptive study result revealed the age, gender, religion and educational background of the respondents. For example, the age characteristic shows that 91 among the respondents that is, majority of the respondents are females while the rest are males accounting for both 62.3 percent and 37.7 percent respectively. The age distribution shows that 77 of the respondents who participated in the study fall within 20-25 years, 68 are 26 years and above while just 1 is less than 20 years old accounting for 52.7
percent, 46.6 percent and .7 percent accordingly. The marital status characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study shows that majority of them numbering 137 accounting for 93.8% while the rest 9 of them are married representing 37.7%. Concerning the degree studied by the participants, the result in Table 1 revealed that 65 of them studied other disciplines other than management and engineering accounting for 44.5%. It equally shows that 56 of them studied management representing 38.4% while the rest 25 of them studied engineering accounting for 17.1%.

4.2. Validity, Reliability and Correlation Analysis Results

The result for validity of instruments show that items were valid through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) of 0.81 and 0.86 respectively while the reliability proved that items are reliable through the Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient of 0.86 and 0.88 for both entrepreneurial skills and self-employed intention factors respectively. The correlation analysis result revealed that entrepreneurial skills are strongly and positively correlated with self-employed intention among the participants with r=.712** at a significant level of p<0.01. The result indicates a very strong positive correlation between the variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>KMO</th>
<th>Cronbach alpha</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial Skills</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>.712**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed Intention</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

The study tested the hypothesis in order to determine the relationship between the independent variable (Entrepreneurial Skills) and dependent variable (Self-Employed Intention) using the regression analysis technique otherwise called ordinary Least Square (OLS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>Sig. Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>.712*</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td>11.733</td>
<td>137.662</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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a. Dependent Variable: Self-Employed Intention

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study attempts to address the issue of self-employed intention in relation with entrepreneurial skills with particular interest in the graduates in Nigeria. It attempts to find how the entrepreneurial skills possessed by the graduates could inspire them into becoming self-employed after their one year Youth Corp Service. The correlation analysis result demonstrates that entrepreneurial skill is positively and significantly correlated with self-employed intention of the Youth Corp members and correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed) with r= .712**. The finding proved that there is a strong association between entrepreneurial skills and self-employed intention, suggesting that Corp members have a very high tendency of becoming self-employed after their youth service programme. However, there is need to enhanced their entrepreneurial skills. This can be done through additional entrepreneurial trainings during the Youth Service programme to complement those entrepreneurial skills acquired while in the higher institutions.

For this reason, it was hypothesised that there is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial skills and self-employed intention, and questionnaire data collected was used to test the hypothesis. Strictly speaking, the finding revealed that entrepreneurial skills are statistically significant in achieving self-employed intention among the graduates with R Square of .507 which accounts for 50.7% variance in the DV and relationship is statistically significant at p<0.1. It shows that the relationship between entrepreneurial skills is statistically significant with self-employed intention among the graduates. Thus, it shows that entrepreneurial skills are significant predictors of self-employed intention among the graduates. It implies that graduates can be motivated to become self-employed when they possess the necessary entrepreneurial skills. From the findings it is reasoned that entrepreneurial skills are indispensible in self-employed intention particularly among the graduates. This study affirms the findings by Cooney (2013) and Macheke (2012). For example, Cooney (2013) while analyzing entrepreneurial
skills for growth oriented business found that entrepreneurial skills are critically important for business growth. Accordingly, Macheke (2012) also found strong relationship between entrepreneurial and business skills and training needs and success of an organization, suggesting that those with a high level of entrepreneurial skills may end up becoming self-employed after Youth Service.

5.1. Conclusions and Implications

The conclusion of this study is very straight in terms of its objective. It established the link between entrepreneurial skills and self-employed intention among the Youth Corp members at Agbara, Ado-Odo Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study was able to provide insight on how entrepreneurial skills affect the intention of the Corp Members to becoming self-employed after their national one year engagement. Hence, the study affirms that there is a strong relationship between entrepreneurial skills and self-employment, meaning that those with entrepreneurial skills are likely to become self-employed after the mandatory youth service. The entrepreneurial programme does not only emphasises on how to acquire entrepreneurial skills but also alters or change their attitude towards becoming self-employed. Some of them see these entrepreneurial skills as assurance or guarantee to become self-employed. For example, it is their belief that with good entrepreneurial skills, they can own their personal business and become successful in life. It is also concluded that skills such as capability, knowledge, training etc. are vital to achieving ones dream of becoming self-employed. Thus, graduates should possess the necessary capability, knowledge and training for self-employed intention to become reality. This study offers several implications. For example, the use of self-employed intention but not entrepreneurial intention like many other studies of similar nature is considered a novelty. The reason being that many people do not actually go through entrepreneurial training but rather they just start up doing business, and with that, they call themselves entrepreneurs which actually they are not. This equally contributes to the literature as subsequent studies would need it to advance their studies. Also, the use of graduates especially the Corp members to drive the study is additional contribution. Previous studies hardly use this group rather they depend on final year students of higher institutions in Nigeria, and this may not be a true reflection of the graduates.

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Practically speaking, several limitations are linked to this study. First and foremost is the COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the entire world. The pandemic has affected the data collection, and therefore warranted the use of email questionnaire distribution thereby preventing the researcher to have face-to-face interactions with the participants since they were not readily available. The face-to-face interactions with the participants in a way could have added more value and additional insight to the findings obtained.

Secondly, the sample size for this study may be considered small especially when compared with the population. That is, out of 315 only 149 participants were involved. The study expected a larger population for more robust findings. Therefore, subsequent study of this nature is advised to increase the sample size for additional insight.

REFERENCES


