

## IMPACT OF GENDER ORIENTATION ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY OF UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the impact of gender orientation on entrepreneurial self-efficacy of university undergraduates. One research question and one null hypothesis tested at .05 level of significance guided the study. Ex post facto or causal comparative design was adopted. A structured Gender Orientation Scale (GOS) consisting of 34 items, and an entrepreneurial self-efficacy Scale (ESES) consisting of 30 items developed by the researchers and validated were administered to 278 final year students in the faculty of education, university of Nigeria, Nsukka. The data collected were presented using mean and standard deviation while Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis. Findings indicated that gender orientation had a significant impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy of university undergraduates. Masculine university undergraduates had higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy than feminine university undergraduates. The following recommendations were made: Entrepreneurship programmes should be more gender sensitive and geared towards building the self-efficacy and confidence of both sexes to enhance their zeal towards entrepreneurial tasks. There is need to educate and expose feminine students to entrepreneurial role models as this might help decrease entrepreneurship gender gap.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, gender orientation, entrepreneurial self-efficacy

### **Introduction**

Entrepreneurship is one of the most dynamic forces for sustainable development especially in developing nations. It is one of the major drivers of economic growth, productivity, innovation, and job creation. Baron (2008) defined entrepreneurship as a process through which an individual exploits an opportunity and creates value. To Eisemann (2013) entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled by an individual. Potential entrepreneurs recognize an opportunity and evaluate whether or not they have the entrepreneurial self-efficacy, knowledge, and skills needed to embark on it. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is the degree to which people perceive themselves as having the ability to successfully perform the various roles and tasks of entrepreneurship (De Noble, Jung, & Ehrlich,

1999). Without minimal levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy it is unlikely that potential entrepreneurs would be sufficiently motivated to engage in the new venture creation process (Siebert & Hills, 2005). In recent times, in Nigeria, there has been a gross underrepresentation and a lower participation of women in well rewarding careers, occupations, and general entrepreneurial activities. For instance, World Bank (2013) reported that only 25% to 33% of all private businesses in Nigeria are owned and operated by women. This perceived apathy of women towards gainful entrepreneurial engagement calls for urgent attention. While entrepreneurship has been viewed as crucial to economic growth and empowerment in developing countries like Nigeria, surprisingly, little research has been conducted on the factors that influence individuals' intentions to start new businesses (Karimi, 2013).

However, recently few attempts have been made by researchers on other factors influencing entrepreneurial self-efficacy with little attention on such socio-cognitive variable like gender orientation. Generally, women and men have historically assumed different roles in society. Certain jobs have traditionally been considered appropriate for men and others more appropriate for women (William and Best, 1996). It may be possible that women's lack of interest in entrepreneurial activities could have a relationship with their gender orientation or other socio-cognitive variables not adequately addressed by existing research.

Gender orientation describes any individual's tendency to play peculiar roles ascribed to one of the sexes; the type of aims or interests that a person is inclined to pursue in relation to their sex in a given society and culture. Gender orientation is simply a process in which society socializes male and female infants into masculine and feminine adults. Gender orientation is a fundamental issue because some of the most important aspects of people's lives, such as the talents they cultivate, the conception they hold of themselves and others, the socio-structural opportunities and constraint they encounter, and the social life and occupational paths they pursue are heavily prescribed by societal gender groupings (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). In the view of Mueller and Datoon (2008) gender orientation is a personal trait or attribute conditioned by a traditional social system in which women are expected to think and behave as women (feminine) and men as men (masculine). Within such a social system, some behaviours, roles, careers are stereotyped as masculine while others are stereotyped as feminine (William & Best, 1996).

Broadly, gender orientation may be classified into masculinity and femininity. According to Kent and Moses (2004) masculinity describes instrumental behaviour which has a cognitive focus on getting the job done. These instrumental behaviours and attitude that are stereotyped as masculine include assertiveness, competitiveness, independence, and aggressiveness. Femininity describes the affective concern for the welfare of others and the harmony of the group. Affective behaviours and attitudes that are stereotyped as feminine include submissiveness, dependence, deference, co-operation, caring and nurturing (Spence and Helmreich, 2004). Based on the conceptualization of masculinity and femininity as independent continuums of gender orientation, researchers explain variation among students in entrepreneurial activities (Mclabe, Ingram & Datoon, 2006).

Research conducted by Flacherty and Dusck (2010) revealed that masculine individuals exhibit more desirable intentions to entrepreneurial behaviours. The study found that masculine individuals show more psychological traits, including higher self-concept, self-esteem, and higher career self-efficacy. The study conducted by Scberer, Brodzinski and Wibe (2009) found that masculine individuals perceived a greater degree of competency for performing entrepreneurial task associated with owning and managing a business than the feminine. In a study by Zhao, Seibert, and Hills (2005) they found that gender was not significantly related to entrepreneurial intentions. Using a sample of MBA students at five US universities they found no difference in entrepreneurial intentions.

According to the finding of Daron, Markman and Hirsra (2001) individuals with masculine orientation do not significantly differ in entrepreneurship activities from those that received feminine orientation. The research showed that both the masculine and feminine individuals share the perceived characteristics required for entrepreneurship such as assertiveness, competitiveness, boldness, and ability to take risks, however a similar study by Veciana, Aponte, and Urbano (2005) feminine individuals were found to have lower entrepreneurial self-efficacy than the masculine individuals.

Carter, Anderson, and Shaw (2001) found that persons who exhibited feminine orientation individuals differed in entrepreneurial intentions from the masculine individuals in that feminine individuals were less likely to have prior business experience or training. Gelard and Saleh (2011) reported that gender role-orientation is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intentions among students. They found that entrepreneurship is carried out by individuals who show masculine orientation. Friedman and Tribunella (2009) in their empirical study found that gender orientation is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intentions among MBA students. Their study showed that students who received masculine orientation exhibited entrepreneurial behaviour more than those who showed feminine orientation. Not much can be found on literature on the socio-cognitive variables that impact entrepreneurial self-efficacy especially among university undergraduates.

### **The Problem**

There is a persistent increase in the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. This ugly situation is worsened by the observed apparent lack of relevant and needed skills for entry into the world of work. Universities in Nigeria have taken the timely palliative step by introducing entrepreneurship programmes into their academic curriculum to further ensure that graduates are well equipped for optimal development after graduation. However, current trends in Nigeria show that men continue to be more active in entrepreneurship than women. Perhaps, a better footing for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria universities is to ascertain the impact of gender orientation patterns on entrepreneurial self-efficacy of undergraduates who university education is preparing to become partners in achieving a sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Research question**

One research question guided the study:

1. What is the impact of gender orientation on entrepreneurial self-efficacy of university undergraduates?

### **Hypothesis**

One null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

**H<sub>01</sub>** The impact of gender orientation on mean entrepreneurial self-efficacy score of university undergraduates is not significant.

### **Method**

The study was carried out using Ex post facto research design. The population of the study was 354 final year Education students in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in the 2015/2016 academic session. The sample was 278 students who were willing to participate in the study. The rationale for the choice of final year students is that they are presumed to have done two compulsory courses at the university's Centre for Entrepreneurship Development and Research (CEDR) and as such have been exposed to the needed skills and knowledge about entrepreneurial activities and general venture creation process.

A 34-item Gender Orientation Scale (GOS) developed by the researchers was used to categorize the subjects into the masculine and feminine groups in gender orientation. The instrument consists of 34 items (comprising 17 masculine items and 17 feminine items). The items in the Gender Orientation Scale (GOS) has 10-points as response options where zero stands for a situation where the attribute being measured is never found, five represents neutrality while 10 stands for a situation where the attribute is present all of the time. A score below five, the neutral point, means feminine for a masculine item while a score above five means masculine for a masculine item. The reverse is also true. The subjects who score high on masculinity and low on femininity are classified as masculine; similarly subjects are classified as feminine if they score high on femininity and low on masculinity.

The second instrument was the Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy Scale (ESES) which sought information on the subjects' level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, skills, interest, abilities, and general disposition towards entrepreneurship. It consists of 30 items developed by the researchers. Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy Scale (ESES) was rated on a 4-point scale of Always (4), Sometimes, (3) Rarely (2) and Never (1) for positively skewed items and for negatively skewed items the scores were reversed (1,2,3, and 4). Respondents with scores from 1.00 – 2.49 were interpreted as having low Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy while those with scores from 2.50 – 4.00 were interpreted as having high Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy. Two experts in educational psychology and a psychometrician in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka face validated the GOS and the ESES. Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. A reliability estimate of .87 was obtained for the Gender Orientation Scale while .96 was obtained for the Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy Scale.

Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

## Results

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the impact of gender orientation on entrepreneurial self-efficacy of university undergraduates**

Gender Orientation	N	Mean	Std deviation
Masculine	133	3.29	0.33
Feminine	145	3.17	0.28

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the scores of masculine and feminine university undergraduates for the impact of gender orientation on their entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The analysis shows that masculine university undergraduates had mean entrepreneurial self-efficacy score of 3.29 with standard deviation of 0.33 while the feminine university undergraduates had mean entrepreneurial self-efficacy score of 3.14 with a standard deviation of 0.28. This indicates that masculine university undergraduates had higher mean entrepreneurial self-efficacy score than the feminine university undergraduates.

**Table 2: Summary of Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the impact of gender orientation on mean entrepreneurial self-efficacy scores of university undergraduates**

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig
Between groups	3.686	1	3.686	59.418	.000
Within groups	74.012	277	.92		
Total	78.598	278			

Data in Table 2 show that the probability associated with the calculated value of F (59.418) for the impact of gender orientation on mean entrepreneurial self-efficacy scores of university undergraduates is 0.000. Since the probability value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, gender orientation has a significant impact of on the mean entrepreneurial self-efficacy scores of university undergraduates in favour of the masculine university undergraduates.

## Discussion

It has been shown in this study that gender orientation had a significant impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy of university undergraduates. The findings of this study support the findings of Gelard and Saleh (2011) who reported that gender role-orientation is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intentions among students. They found that entrepreneurship is carried out by individuals who show

masculine orientation. The findings of this study also support the findings of Friedman and Tribunella (2009) who reported that gender orientation is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intentions among MBA students. Their study showed that students who received masculine orientation exhibit entrepreneurial behaviour more than those who showed feminine orientation. The findings of this study also corroborate the findings of Flacherty and Dusck (2010) who found out that masculine individuals exhibit more desirable intentions to entrepreneurial behaviours. The study found that masculine individuals show higher levels of psychological traits related to success in entrepreneurship including higher self-concept, self-esteem, and higher career self-efficacy. The finding also agree with the study conducted by Scherer, Brodzinski and Wibe (2009) who reported that masculine individuals perceived a greater degree of competency for performing entrepreneurial task associated with owning and managing a business than the feminine. Similarly, the findings also agree with the findings of Carter, Anderson, and Shaw (2001) who found that persons who exhibited feminine orientation differ in entrepreneurial intentions from the masculine individuals in that feminine individuals are less likely to have prior business experience or training. The findings of this study do not support the findings of Daron, Markman and Hirsra (2001) who reported that individuals with masculine orientation do not significantly differ in entrepreneurship activities from those that exhibited feminine orientation. The findings of this study also failed to support the research by Nwankwo, Kanu, Marire & Balogun (2012) showed that both the masculine and feminine individuals share the perceived characteristics required for entrepreneurship such as assertiveness, competitiveness, boldness, and ability to take risks. The findings of the study do not corroborate the findings of Zhao, Seibert, and Hills (2005) they found that gender orientation was not significantly related to entrepreneurial intentions. The study revealed that people differ significantly in entrepreneurial self-efficacy on the basis of their gender orientation. These findings indicate that the Nigerian social milieu may be responsible for the disparity in entrepreneurial self-efficacy of university undergraduates. The contemporary social environment in Nigeria still orients males and females in line with traditional culture and values which encourage gender stereotypes.

### **Recommendations**

- Entrepreneurship programmes should be more gender sensitive and geared towards building the self-efficacy and confidence of both sexes to enhance their zeal towards entrepreneurial tasks.
- There is need to educate and expose feminine students to entrepreneurial role models as this might help decrease entrepreneurship gender gap.
- Government should encourage the youths especially undergraduates who defy gender stereotypes and venture into areas that are proven to be gender sensitive.

### Conclusion

It was shown in this study that gender orientation had a significant impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. From the result, gender orientation is a significant factor in entrepreneurial self-efficacy and students with masculine orientation are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities compared to those who exhibit feminine gender orientation. It is possible to conclude that in as much as masculinity and femininity are socio-cultural phenomena; any person's gender orientation is culturally imposed and may have a pervasive influence on students' developmental process. The implications of this study are that students, parents, and entrepreneurship educators should be aware of the subtle influence of gender orientation on individual's entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Entrepreneurship education curriculum should be gender sensitive so as to capture the individual differences in gender orientation. It is recommended that entrepreneurship education should be more gender sensitive and should take into cognizance the differences in the needs, skills, and abilities of students. There is need to educate and expose feminine students to entrepreneurial role models as this might help decrease entrepreneurship gender gap. The contemporary social system and learning environments should be devoid of gender stereotypes and ultimately be made to optimize the innate skills and endowments of students irrespective of apparent differences in gender groupings.

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