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BUSINESS EDUCATORS' SELF-EFFICACY AS CORRELATE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTENTIONS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated business educators' self-efficacy as a correlate of business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study, while three null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 113 business educators from seven public universities offering business education programmes in South East Nigeria. The entire population was targeted using the census method. Two researcher-developed instruments, the Business Educators' Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (BESSEQ) and the Entrepreneurship Intention Questionnaire (EIQ), were used for data collection. Three experts validated the instruments. A trial test involving 20 business educators outside the study area produced Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.83, 0.81 and 0.85 for mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion respectively, with an overall coefficient of 0.83 for BESSEQ; the coefficient for EIQ was 0.79. Of the 113 copies administered, 94 valid copies were analysed. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The results revealed a very high positive and significant relationship between mastery experience and students' entrepreneurship intentions ($r = 0.847$, $p < 0.001$), a very high positive and significant relationship for vicarious experience ($r = 0.822$, $p < 0.001$), and a high positive and significant relationship for social persuasion ($r = 0.711$, $p < 0.001$). The study concluded that these three dimensions of business educators' self-efficacy were important correlates of business

education students' entrepreneurship intentions. It was recommended that university management provide sustained opportunities for business educators to gain practical entrepreneurial experience, learn from successful professional models and receive constructive professional encouragement.

Keywords: Business Educators, Self-Efficacy, Mastery Experience, Vicarious Experience, Social Persuasion, Entrepreneurship Intentions.

Introduction

University education represents the highest level of formal learning and is intended to prepare students for professional service, further study and productive participation in society. In Nigeria, public universities carry out this responsibility through teaching, research and programmes that develop specialised abilities. Aluede et al. (2019) described university education as a means of developing skilled personnel and extending opportunities for intellectual growth. One of the programmes through which public universities pursue these objectives is business education. Umezulike (2021) described business education as professional training directed towards effective participation in business activities and related occupations. Otamiri and Otomiewo (2022) further viewed business education as preparation for classroom teaching, paid employment and independent enterprise. Consequently, graduates of business education programmes are expected to possess the capacity to establish business ventures as well as seek conventional employment.

Business education at the university level includes teaching and practical experiences intended to acquaint students with business organisation, resource management, opportunity identification and the operation of enterprises. Abdullahi et al. (2022) identified the development of managerial abilities and practical understanding of the business environment among the objectives of business education. Nwokike et al. (2018) similarly observed that business education has relevance to sustainable development because of the training it provides for self-employment. However, participation in entrepreneurship courses does not necessarily mean that graduates will wish to establish businesses after graduation. The willingness to consider such a career is reflected in business education students' entrepreneurship intentions, which are central to the present study.

Business education students' entrepreneurship intentions refer to the expressed readiness and determination of students enrolled in business education programmes to establish and manage their own business ventures in the future. Aladejebi (2018) described entrepreneurial intention as a willingness to engage in purposeful activities directed towards business establishment. Chhabra et al. (2020) defined entrepreneurial intention as a state of mind that directs an individual towards developing a business idea and pursuing entrepreneurship as a career. Within business education

programmes, business education students' entrepreneurship intentions may be reflected in students' interest in starting enterprises, their willingness to seek business opportunities and their plans to pursue self-employment. Although entrepreneurship intentions precede entrepreneurial action, entrepreneurship intentions do not guarantee that a business will eventually be established.

Business education students' entrepreneurship intentions have become a matter of concern in public universities in South East, Nigeria. Many graduates continue to depend on a limited market for paid employment even though their programmes are expected to provide preparation for self-employment. Nwosu (2019) discussed the difficulties surrounding youth entrepreneurship among university graduates in Anambra State, while Egberi (2024) examined the conditions associated with undergraduates' plans to start businesses in Nigeria. These discussions suggest a need to examine the educational and personal conditions associated with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions. For the researcher, the central worry is whether the learning experiences provided in business education programmes sufficiently encourage students to consider entrepreneurship as a realistic career choice. One factor that may be related to these students' entrepreneurship intentions is business educators' self-efficacy.

Business educators are professionally trained lecturers who teach business education courses and guide students in the acquisition of business-related capabilities. Their responsibilities include explaining business concepts, supervising classroom and practical activities, giving feedback and helping students interpret business opportunities. Business educators may perform these duties with different levels of confidence in their own capabilities. Business educators' self-efficacy is therefore relevant to an examination of the academic experiences associated with students' interest in entrepreneurship. The present paper concentrates on business educators' self-efficacy and does not examine their pedagogical or information and communication technology competencies, which were addressed separately in the researcher's first paper.

Business educators' self-efficacy refers to the beliefs business educators hold about their capacity to organise and perform the professional tasks required of them in business education. Bandura (1986) described self-efficacy as people's judgements of their capabilities to organise and perform actions required to achieve intended outcomes. In the context of this study, business educators' self-efficacy concerns educators' confidence in handling demanding teaching situations, applying business ideas in practical settings and responding effectively to challenges in their professional work. Business educators' self-efficacy is significant because an educator who believes that a task is manageable may persist in teaching difficult business concepts, attempt unfamiliar practical activities and approach professional difficulties with greater assurance. Such possibilities, however, require empirical examination before being treated as established relationships with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions.

Business educators' self-efficacy is informed by several experiences and social conditions. Bandura's account of self-efficacy identifies mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological or affective states as sources of efficacy beliefs. The researcher's thesis considered three dimensions for empirical examination, namely mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion. These dimensions were selected because they describe distinct ways business educators may develop or maintain beliefs in their professional capabilities. The present study therefore examines business educators' mastery experience, business educators' vicarious experience and business educators' social persuasion in relation to business education students' entrepreneurship intentions. Each dimension is treated separately to establish the nature and strength of its relationship with the dependent variable.

Business educators' mastery experience refers to the confidence associated with successfully carrying out tasks and overcoming challenges through personal participation. It is built through direct involvement in professional or business-related activities, including the satisfactory completion of demanding assignments, successful delivery of instruction, effective handling of practical exercises and successful resolution of work-related problems. Atoum and Al-Momani (2018) described successful experiences as important to the development of perceived self-efficacy, particularly when individuals face challenging activities. For business educators, repeated success in applying business knowledge or managing difficult classroom situations may provide practical evidence of their own capabilities. Conversely, unsuccessful experiences may weaken confidence, especially where educators have limited prior experience of successful performance.

Business educators' mastery experience may be associated with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions because educators who have successfully handled practical business activities can explain those activities from direct experience. An educator who has completed an enterprise project, addressed financial or organisational difficulties or successfully guided a practical business simulation can illustrate the demands involved in establishing a venture. Such illustrations may make entrepreneurship less abstract to students. Yet mastery experience remains a characteristic of the business educator. It should not be assumed that business educators' mastery experience automatically produces students' entrepreneurship intentions. The issue examined here is whether the two variables are related among public universities in South East Nigeria.

Business educators' vicarious experience refers to business educators' development of confidence through observing the activities and achievements of other people. Business educators' vicarious experience can arise when lecturers observe experienced colleagues, successful entrepreneurs or professional mentors perform tasks they also hope to undertake. Observational experiences provide models for handling teaching responsibilities, presenting business ideas and responding to practical problems. Bandura (1986) explained observational learning as one process through which

individuals acquire information about possible behaviours and outcomes. Thus, business educators' vicarious experience may help lecturers to judge whether they can perform unfamiliar professional or business tasks after observing comparable people perform those tasks successfully.

Business educators' vicarious experience may also be relevant to business education students' entrepreneurship intentions through the examples educators choose to discuss in teaching. A business educator who has learnt from competent colleagues or entrepreneurs may be better placed to describe the steps, difficulties and achievements observed in actual business settings. Salami, Tella and Badiru (2023) reported that vicarious experience was positively associated with entrepreneurial intention among university students in Ogun State. Roberts et al. (2023) likewise reported a positive relationship between role models and entrepreneurial intention among University of Ibadan undergraduates. These studies concerned students' own experiences and beliefs, whereas the present study examines business educators' vicarious experience. Their relevance lies in showing why learning through observed examples deserves attention, without treating the concepts or populations as identical.

Business educators' social persuasion refers to the verbal encouragement, supportive feedback and expressions of confidence that business educators receive from people whose opinions they value. Social persuasion may come from colleagues, departmental leaders, mentors, professional associates or family members. It can reassure business educators that they are capable of managing difficult work, trying new activities and accepting professional responsibilities. Social persuasion does not create practical ability on its own; its effect on confidence depends partly on the credibility of the encouragement and the opportunities available to apply it. In this study, business educators' social persuasion is considered in relation to the educators' perceptions of support for their own professional and business-related abilities.

Business educators' social persuasion may be connected with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions where encouragement received by educators is reflected in their willingness to undertake demanding instructional or practical activities. Salami, Tella and Badiru (2023) reported a significant positive relationship between social persuasion and entrepreneurial intention among Ogun State university students. Their finding provides a related Nigerian context for examining social persuasion. However, the present study is specifically concerned with social persuasion experienced by business educators and the entrepreneurship intentions attributed to students in their programmes. Maintaining this distinction is necessary because the beliefs of educators and the aspirations of students are different constructs.

The foregoing discussion suggests that business educators' mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion may be related to business education students' entrepreneurship intentions. However, the relationships between these dimensions of business educators' self-

efficacy and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions have not been adequately established in public universities in South East, Nigeria. This gap is a concern to the researcher because business education programmes are expected to prepare students for self-employment, yet some graduates appear reluctant to pursue business ownership after completing their studies. Although business educators may acquire confidence through successful professional experiences, observing capable models and receiving credible encouragement, it remains uncertain how these experiences are related to the entrepreneurship intentions of their students. It was against this background that the study investigated business educators' self-efficacy, specifically mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion, as a correlate of business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Business education students in public universities are expected to develop strong entrepreneurship intentions through the knowledge, practical experiences and entrepreneurial training acquired during their studies. Such intentions should be reflected in their willingness to identify business opportunities, develop plans for establishing enterprises and consider self-employment as a career after graduation. However, the situation among business education students in public universities in South East Nigeria appears to be different. Despite their exposure to entrepreneurship education, some students seem more interested in securing paid employment than establishing their own businesses. There is also concern that some students complete their entrepreneurship courses without developing a firm determination to venture into business after graduation. This situation is particularly worrisome considering the limited employment opportunities available to university graduates in Nigeria. If business education students continue to demonstrate weak entrepreneurship intentions despite their professional training, the objective of preparing graduates who can establish businesses and become self-reliant may remain difficult to achieve.

The apparent weakness in business education students' entrepreneurship intentions has become a source of concern to the researcher, particularly because business educators are expected to prepare students for entrepreneurial careers. Although several factors may be associated with this problem, the self-efficacy of business educators deserves consideration. It is possible that some business educators have limited successful experiences in undertaking practical entrepreneurial activities, insufficient opportunities to learn from successful professional models or inadequate encouragement to develop confidence in their professional capabilities. These circumstances may be associated with how effectively business educators demonstrate entrepreneurial possibilities to their students. However, the extent to which business educators' mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion are related to business education students' entrepreneurship intentions remains uncertain. The problem that necessitated this study, therefore, is the apparent

weakness in entrepreneurship intentions among business education students in public universities in South East Nigeria, despite their exposure to entrepreneurship education, and the uncertainty surrounding its relationship with business educators' self-efficacy. It is against this background that the researcher investigated business educators' self-efficacy as a correlate of business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate business educators' self-efficacy as a correlate of business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria;
2. examine the relationship between business educators' vicarious experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria; and
3. ascertain the relationship between business educators' social persuasion and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between business educators' vicarious experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between business educators' social persuasion and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between business educators' vicarious experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between business educators' social persuasion and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. This design was appropriate because the study sought to determine the direction and degree of relationship between business educators' mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions without manipulating the variables. Creswell and Creswell (2022) explained that correlational research is concerned with associations among variables. The study was conducted in South East Nigeria, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The area was selected because public universities in the region offer business education programmes and their graduates are expected to demonstrate the capacity for self-employment and entrepreneurial activity.

The population comprised 113 business educators in seven public universities offering business education programmes in South East, Nigeria. The universities identified in the study were Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu; Abia State University, Uturu; Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki; and Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike. The census method was adopted because the population was manageable and all 113 business educators were targeted for the study. Nworgu (2015) explained the appropriateness of studying an entire population where its size permits.

Data for this paper were obtained using two researcher-developed instruments, the Business Educators' Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (BESSEQ) and the Entrepreneurship Intention Questionnaire (EIQ). The BESSEQ comprised 30 items organised into three clusters of 10 items

each. Cluster C1 measured business educators' mastery experience, Cluster C2 measured business educators' vicarious experience, while Cluster C3 measured business educators' social persuasion. The EIQ comprised 13 items on business education students' entrepreneurship intentions, as rated by business educators. Both instruments used a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2) and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1).

Face and content validation were undertaken by three experts, two from the Department of Vocational Education and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. They examined the relevance, clarity and suitability of the items. Their recommendations included rephrasing ambiguous expressions, separating statements that contained more than one idea and aligning items with the dimensions under investigation. The corrected instruments were trial tested with 20 business educators in public universities in South South Nigeria who were outside the study population. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of 0.83, 0.81 and 0.85 were obtained for the mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion clusters respectively. The overall BESSEQ reliability coefficient was 0.83, while EIQ yielded a coefficient of 0.79.

The researcher worked with six trained research assistants in the administration and retrieval of the instruments. Copies were administered to business educators at their universities, and the exercise lasted two weeks. Of the 113 copies administered, 94 valid copies were retrieved and analysed, representing approximately 83.2% of the copies administered. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the three research questions and to test the three null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 26. Positive correlation coefficients indicated direct relationships. Coefficients between 0.60 and 0.80 were treated as high relationships, while coefficients above 0.80 were interpreted as very high relationships in keeping with the interpretation guideline used in the thesis. Null hypotheses were rejected when the associated p-values were less than or equal to 0.05.

Results

The results of the study are presented in line with the three research questions and their corresponding null hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis between Business Educators' Mastery Experience and Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions in Public Universities in South East, Nigeria

Variables		Business Educators' Mastery Experience	Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions	Remark
Business Educators' Mastery Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.847**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	Very High Positive Relationship
	N	94	94	
Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions	Pearson Correlation	0.847**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
	N	94	94	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data in Table 1 reveal that the Pearson correlation coefficient is r = 0.847. This indicates a very high positive relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria. The positive coefficient means that higher reported mastery experience among business educators was associated with higher reported entrepreneurship intentions among business education students.

Hypothesis 1 (Ho1): There is no significant relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Table 1 further shows that the relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions was statistically significant ($r = 0.847$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p-value was below the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was therefore a significant positive relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between business educators' vicarious experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis between Business Educators' Vicarious Experience and Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions in Public Universities in South East, Nigeria

Variables		**Business Educators' Vicarious Experience**	**Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions**	**Remark**
Business Educators' Vicarious Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.822**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	Very High Positive Relationship
	N	94	94	
Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions	Pearson Correlation	0.822**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
	N	94	94	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data in Table 2 show that the Pearson correlation coefficient is r = 0.822. This indicates a very high positive relationship between business educators' vicarious experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria. The result suggests that business educators who reported greater confidence drawn from observing successful colleagues and other models also tended to report higher entrepreneurship intentions among their students.

Hypothesis 2 (Ho2): There is no significant relationship between business educators' vicarious experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

The result in Table 2 indicates that the relationship was statistically significant (r = 0.822, p < 0.001). The p-value was below the 0.05 level of significance, and the null hypothesis was rejected. There was therefore a significant positive relationship between business educators' vicarious experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between business educators' social persuasion and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria?

Table 3: Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis between Business Educators' Social Persuasion and Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions in Public Universities in South East, Nigeria

Variables		Business Educators' Social Persuasion	Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions	Remark
Business Educators' Social Persuasion	Pearson Correlation	1	0.711**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	High Positive Relationship
	N	94	94	

Variables		Business Educators' Social Persuasion	Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions	Remark
Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions	Pearson Correlation	0.711**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
	N	94	94	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data in Table 3 reveal that the Pearson correlation coefficient is r = 0.711. This indicates a high positive relationship between business educators' social persuasion and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria. Thus, business educators who reported stronger professional encouragement and supportive feedback also tended to report higher entrepreneurship intentions among their students.

Hypothesis 3 (Ho3): There is no significant relationship between business educators' social persuasion and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

As shown in Table 3, business educators' social persuasion had a statistically significant positive relationship with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions ($r = 0.711$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was therefore a significant positive relationship between business educators' social persuasion and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings is presented in line with the three research questions and hypotheses of the study.

Relationship between Business Educators' Mastery Experience and Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions

The findings revealed that business educators' mastery experience had a very high positive relationship with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria (r = 0.847). This result suggests that the direct professional successes through which business educators develop confidence are relevant to the level of entrepreneurship intentions reported among their students. Business educators who have successfully undertaken business projects, managed practical assignments or resolved difficult professional tasks may be more willing to discuss these experiences and demonstrate how business activities are carried out. The present finding is related to the work of Jimoh, Olatunji and Babajide (2023), who identified self-efficacy as a significant contributor to entrepreneurial intention among Ogun State undergraduates. Sahid, Norhisham and Narmaditya (2024) also reported a positive relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention among Malaysian university graduates. In addition, Amani et al. (2024) demonstrated the relevance of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in explaining students' entrepreneurship intentions. Although these studies centred on students' own self-efficacy, their results provide a basis for considering how successful experience and confidence can be associated with entrepreneurship intentions.

The study further established that the relationship between business educators' mastery experience and business education students' entrepreneurship intentions was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This finding may be explained by the practical authority that successful professional experiences give business educators when discussing entrepreneurship with their students. A business educator who has worked through enterprise-related problems can describe the decisions, risks and corrective actions involved, which may make entrepreneurship appear more understandable to students. The finding is also consistent with the emphasis on successful experience in Bandura's (1986) explanation of efficacy beliefs. Nevertheless, the present data establish an association, not that business educators' mastery experience directly caused students to develop entrepreneurship intentions. The relationship also concerns educators' assessments of the student outcome, an issue that should be considered when interpreting the strength of the correlation.

Relationship between Business Educators' Vicarious Experience and Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions

The findings revealed that business educators' vicarious experience had a very high positive relationship with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria (r = 0.822). This result indicates that the confidence business educators develop by observing successful people is associated with the reported entrepreneurship intentions

of their students. Educators may gain practical insights from the achievements and difficulties of colleagues, entrepreneurs and professional mentors, particularly when the activities observed concern unfamiliar business operations. The finding is comparable to the result of Salami, Tella and Badiru (2023), who reported that vicarious experience was positively and significantly associated with entrepreneurial intention among students in Ogun State. It is also related to Roberts, Uye, Stephen and Olapegba (2023), who identified a positive relationship between role models and entrepreneurship intentions among undergraduates at the University of Ibadan. Those earlier studies examined role modelling from the student perspective, whereas this study examined business educators' vicarious experience.

The finding that business educators' vicarious experience was significantly related to business education students' entrepreneurship intentions may be associated with the examples educators acquire through observing others. Such examples can make it easier to explain how opportunities are recognised, how entrepreneurs handle uncertainty and how practical business decisions are made. Roberts, Uye, Stephen and Olapegba (2023) reported that role models, rather than self-efficacy independently, significantly predicted entrepreneurial intention in their study. This detail shows why the effects of observation and personal beliefs should not be treated as identical. In the present study, a high correlation suggests that business educators' vicarious experience deserves attention in programmes seeking to strengthen students' interest in entrepreneurship. However, the cross-sectional design does not establish the direction of influence or rule out other conditions that may contribute to both variables.

Relationship between Business Educators' Social Persuasion and Business Education Students' Entrepreneurship Intentions

The findings revealed that business educators' social persuasion had a high positive relationship with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria ($r = 0.711$). Business educators' social persuasion refers to the encouragement, assurance and constructive feedback they receive concerning their own professional capabilities. Such messages may support educators' willingness to accept demanding responsibilities and persist with difficult activities. Salami, Tella and Badiru (2023) reported a significant positive relationship between social persuasion and entrepreneurial intention among university students in Ogun State. Their result is relevant because it establishes an empirical association between persuasion and entrepreneurship intentions, although their respondents were students and the present study measured social persuasion among business educators. In a related study, Nwibe and Ogbuanya (2024) reported that some self-efficacy dimensions helped explain students' entrepreneurship intentions in South East Nigerian universities, further indicating that efficacy-related beliefs merit attention in entrepreneurship research.

The study also established that business educators' social persuasion had a statistically significant relationship with business education students' entrepreneurship intentions at the 0.05 level. This finding may reflect the way professional encouragement contributes to educators' confidence when they prepare demanding business activities or engage in practical entrepreneurship teaching. Encouragement from mentors and colleagues may help educators persist in activities they would otherwise regard as difficult. The finding does not mean that every form of praise is useful or that business educators' social persuasion, by itself, is sufficient to produce students' entrepreneurship intentions. The relationship was weaker than those obtained for mastery experience and vicarious experience, although it remained high and statistically significant. No test of the differences between the three correlation coefficients was conducted; therefore, the study does not establish that one dimension is statistically more influential than the others.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that business educators' mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion are positively and significantly related to business education students' entrepreneurship intentions in public universities in South East, Nigeria. Mastery experience and vicarious experience exhibited very high positive relationships, while social persuasion exhibited a high positive relationship. These findings suggest that business educators' confidence developed through successful professional engagement, observing capable models and receiving supportive encouragement is associated with the level of entrepreneurship intentions reported among business education students. The findings also point to the value of professional learning opportunities that allow educators to develop these dimensions of self-efficacy. Since the study used a correlational survey of business educators, it cannot establish that any of the three dimensions caused changes in students' entrepreneurship intentions. The results should therefore guide further investigation and the design of supportive professional development activities, without being interpreted as proof of causal effects.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. University administrators should create regular opportunities for business educators to acquire mastery experience through practical business projects, entrepreneurship workshops, enterprise attachments and supervised business simulations. Such opportunities would allow educators to gain confidence from successful participation in professional and entrepreneurial tasks.

2. Departments of business education should support structured professional observation, mentoring and peer learning so that business educators can develop vicarious experience from competent colleagues, practising entrepreneurs and other suitable role models.

3. Heads of department and university management should promote constructive professional feedback, recognition of genuine achievement and credible encouragement for business educators. These measures may support the development of social persuasion within an environment that also provides opportunities for practical performance.

4. Business educators should be encouraged to reflect on successful professional experiences, observe effective entrepreneurial practices and respond constructively to feedback. Universities should also examine students' entrepreneurship intentions directly in subsequent evaluations, so that educators' self-reports can be compared with students' own responses.

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