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Entrepreneurial Intervention Among Undergraduates: Do Entrepreneurship Education and Environmental Conditioning Count?

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A B S T R A C T

Graduate unemployment is an issue that affects individuals, families, government and other stakeholders with little solution in sight. While the Nigerian government has introduced entrepreneurship education in all tertiary institutions, research on predictors of entrepreneurial interventions has produced varied results. Therefore, this study examines the predictive roles of entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning on entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in selected universities in Rivers State. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted while purposive sampling technique was used to select four tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Data were conveniently collected from 230 participants using validated questionnaires and analyzed using multiple regression and independent samples t-test to test two hypotheses which were accepted at p <.001 level of significance. The result reveals that environmental studies and environmental conditioning jointly predicted entrepreneurial intervention among study participants, R^2 =. 477, F (2, 227) = 54.25, p < 0.001. Furthermore, the results indicate that entrepreneurship education (β =.438, t = 4.84, p <.001) and environmental conditioning (β = .401, t = 4.54, p < .001) independently predicted entrepreneurial intervention among study participants. The study concludes that entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning are robust predictors of entrepreneurial intervention among study participants. The study recommends that the university and the government agencies should make entrepreneurship education more meaningful and practical oriented to motivate undergraduates to seek self-employment after graduation.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship interventions refer to structured programs, initiatives, policies, and activities aimed at fostering entrepreneurial thinking, skills, and business development, especially among young and aspiring entrepreneurs (Chigbu et al., 2020). These interventions are typically implemented by government agencies, educational institutions, private sector actors, and non-governmental organizations to promote self-reliance, innovation, and job creation (Udu & Udu, 2015). In the Nigerian context, notable examples include national initiatives like *YouWin*, *N-Power*, and *Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programme*, which offer funding, mentorship, and training to young entrepreneurs. Within tertiary institutions, interventions often take the form of entrepreneurship development centers, pitch competitions, innovation hubs, capacity-building workshops, vocational training, and access to start-up capital or incubation spaces. In universities and polytechnics, these interventions are frequently embedded into the academic framework or operated as co-curricular engagements (Olokundun et al., 2017). For instance, students may be required to take part in business plan writing, attend entrepreneurship bootcamps, or intern with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as part of their graduation requirements (Olokundun et al., 2017). These platforms are designed not just to impart knowledge but also to provide practical exposure and mentorship opportunities that bridge the gap between theory and enterprise creation.

Some factors have been implicated as predictors of attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention such as role model, self-efficacy, personality traits, social support, government policy (Ehondor et al., 2024; Olokundun et al., 2017; Roberts et al., 2023). However, in this study three factors: entrepreneurship education, environmental conditioning and gender were investigated.

Entrepreneurship education refers to the formal academic courses, programs, and initiatives designed to cultivate entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and attitudes among students (Yusuf et al., 2021). It provides students with the necessary tools to succeed in entrepreneurial ventures, whether as entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs, who contribute innovatively within established organizations. Entrepreneurship education typically blends theoretical knowledge with hands-on exposure to real-life entrepreneurial challenges, ensuring that students are not only familiar with the foundational concepts of entrepreneurship but also gain practical experience in tackling actual business problems (Brush et al., 2018; Mohammed et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2026). This approach to education is dynamic and interactive, often incorporating diverse teaching methods such as case studies, simulations, business mentoring, and business incubation programs. These methods aim to provide students with the opportunity to apply their learning in a real-world context, allowing them to develop problem-solving skills and entrepreneurial resilience. Furthermore, students are encouraged to work in teams, which fosters collaboration and leadership—essential qualities for any entrepreneur (Ezeh et al., 2019)

Some studies have been conducted on the predictability of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intervention. For example,

Adebayo and Adeoye (2018) found entrepreneurship education to positively influence undergraduates' entrepreneurial interventions across Nigerian universities. Similarly, Akinbami and Adejumo (2018) confirmed entrepreneurship education to enhance entrepreneurial attitudes, self-efficacy, and readiness to engage in business start-ups. Moreover, Aliu and Ismail (2021) established entrepreneurship education to mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial attitude and intervention, reinforcing its critical role in shaping undergraduates' intervention to engage in entrepreneurship. Other studies have found entrepreneurship education to predict entrepreneurial intention in other climes. For instance, Bischoff et al. (2018) showed that undergraduates exposed to structured entrepreneurship curricula in European universities developed stronger entrepreneurial mindsets and higher participation in incubation programs. Likewise, Koe et al. (2012) affirmed the relevance of entrepreneurship education in fostering employability and entrepreneurial alternatives among graduates.

The second factor considered in this study is environmental conditioning which refers to the wide range of external influences that affect an individual's attitudes, motivations, and behaviors toward entrepreneurship. Environmental conditioning is rooted in the understanding that individuals do not form entrepreneurial interventions in isolation but rather within the context of their surroundings, which either support or inhibit their entrepreneurial thinking and behavior. Environmental conditioning is influenced by socio-economic status, cultural norms, family background, peer influence, community expectations, and institutional environments (Nwachukwu & Osemene, 2011; Roberts et al., 2026; Urban & Kujinga, 2017). Individuals from wealthier backgrounds would have better access to financial resources, education, and social networks, all of which serve as enablers for entrepreneurial activity compared to their counterparts from low income families (Fatoki, 2014).

Studies have confirmed that environmental conditioning predicts attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention. For example, Adenle et al. (2020) found socio-cultural and institutional environments to significantly predict entrepreneurial success and interventions among Nigerian university students. Similarly, Nwachukwu and Osemene (2011) found cultural perceptions of entrepreneurship as either prestigious or inferior depending on regional values, directly influencing students' entrepreneurial attitudes. In addition, Fatoki (2014) established that socio-economic background and access to resources significantly condition entrepreneurial interventions among South African youths, paralleling the Nigerian experience. Moreover, Carr and Sequeira (2007) found that children of entrepreneurial parents were more inclined to develop entrepreneurial attitudes and self-efficacy. Finally, Osuigwe and Eresia-Eke (2022) confirmed that cultural and family expectations in Nigeria often moderate the impact of entrepreneurship education, sometimes discouraging students from entrepreneurial pursuits in favor of conventional careers. Collectively, these findings affirm that while education is vital, environmental contexts largely determine whether entrepreneurial skills are internalized and acted upon.

The synergy between entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning is therefore crucial. While entrepreneurship education builds the intellectual and psychological tools needed to engage with interventions, a supportive environment reinforces these lessons and helps students visualize entrepreneurship as a tangible and culturally acceptable goal.

Some studies have been conducted on entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning on entrepreneurial conditioning. For instance, Muhammad et al. (2011) found entrepreneurship education to be more effective when reinforced by supportive environmental factors. In addition, Acs et al. (2018) found the interplay of institutional support and education to foster positive entrepreneurial outcomes. In Nigeria, Akanbi (2013) found that both curricular exposure and socio-cultural context jointly influenced entrepreneurial interventions among university students. Furthermore, Bischoff et al. (2018) found European students' entrepreneurial attitudes to be strengthened when educational programs aligned with cultural and institutional support systems. Finally, Amoke et al. (2020) stressed that while education builds skills, the absence of enabling environmental factors such as mentorship and funding limits students' entrepreneurial engagement. Collectively, these findings affirm that neither entrepreneurship education nor environmental conditioning alone is sufficient; rather, their combined effect yields stronger attitudinal shifts toward entrepreneurial interventions.

The final factor considered to influence entrepreneurial intervention in this study is gender. For example, Amoke et al. (2020) found gender disparities in entrepreneurial participation, with female undergraduates often demonstrating greater openness to entrepreneurship initiatives. Similarly, Akanbi (2013) found female undergraduates to display stronger entrepreneurial attitudes and interventions compared to their male counterparts in several Nigerian universities. Furthermore, Aliu and Ismail (2021) emphasized the growing participation of female undergraduates in entrepreneurship programs, attributing these trends to heightened policy focus on women's empowerment and inclusivity. In addition, Nwachukwu et al. (2022) reported that female students across multiple cultural contexts exhibited greater interest in entrepreneurial careers, often motivated by the pursuit of autonomy and flexibility. Finally, Amoke et al. (2020) found entrepreneurship programs focusing on women to have created a favorable environment that bolsters female students' attitudes toward entrepreneurial engagement.

Studies using different predictors of entrepreneurial intention have produced varied results. Also, studies investigated entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning as predictors of entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State are lacking leaving gaps in knowledge to fill. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the predictive ability of entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning as predictors of attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study sought to provide two research questions: Will entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning predict attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State?

And, will gender influence attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State?

The study would provide an insight into the contributions of entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning on attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State. In addition, the study would inform policymakers, universities and other stakeholders on the importance of developing positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention that promotes self-employment.

Theoretical construct

The study was anchored using Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1997) which posits that individuals learn new skills, behaviour, by observing, imitating and modeling significant others. When applied to entrepreneurial intervention programs, undergraduates would learn entrepreneurial skills by observing successful entrepreneurs by observing successful role models, imitating their actions, and receiving feedback. This helps them refine their skills, learn from their mistakes, and build confidence. By creating a supportive environment that encourages observation, imitation, and feedback, intervention programs effectively apply Social Learning Theory to nurture entrepreneurial talent.

The hypotheses tested were:

H1: Entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning will jointly and independently predict attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State.

H2: Gender will significantly influence entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design using validated questionnaires to collect data from the study participants. Entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning were the independent variables while entrepreneurial intervention was the dependent variable.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Rivers State, Nigeria, located in the oil-rich Niger Delta region. Rivers State serves as a strategic area for research on entrepreneurship due to its dynamic economic environment, diverse population, and concentration of tertiary institutions. The state capital, Port Harcourt, is a major commercial and educational hub, hosting several public and private universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education that cater to a large student population from across the country. Rivers State was an ideal location for this study because of the growing youth population, high graduate unemployment rates, and increasing efforts by educational institutions and the federal government to promote entrepreneurship as a solution to joblessness and economic stagnation.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select four universities: University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT), Rivers State University (RSU), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), and PAMO University of Medical Sciences, all within the Greater Port Harcourt Metropolis. In addition, a convenient sampling technique was used for the distribution of questionnaires to the potential participants.

Instruments

Three research instruments were used for data collection.

Entrepreneurship Education Impact Scale (EEIS**,** Fayolle & Gailly, 2015), is a 12-item scale used to assess three key dimensions of entrepreneurship education: (1) Curriculum Quality (4 items), which measured students' perceptions of course relevance, practical orientation, and skill development effectiveness through statements like "My entrepreneurship courses provide hands-on business skills applicable to real-world ventures"; (2) Instructional Competence (4 items), which evaluated faculty expertise and teaching methodologies with items such as "My entrepreneurship instructors have substantial practical business experience"; and (3) Learning Outcomes (4 items) which captured self-assessed competency development through statements including "I can develop a complete business plan after taking entrepreneurship courses". The items were rated on a 5-point Likert's format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The study obtained Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Measure (EEM, Stam, 2015**)** is a 16-item scale to evaluate three critical components of the university entrepreneurial environment: (1) Mentorship Support (5 items) that assesses the quality and accessibility of entrepreneurial guidance through statements like "The university connects me with successful entrepreneurs for regular mentoring"; (2) Physical Infrastructure (5 items) that examines the availability and adequacy of workspaces and resources with items such as "Our entrepreneurship center has reliable facilities for developing business prototypes"; and (3) Institutional Support (6 items) used to measure the administrative and policy framework through statements including "The university provides clear pathways to access startup funding". The items were presented in a 5-point Likert's format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The present study obtained Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$.

Entrepreneurial Intervention Questionnaire (EIQ, Liñán & Chen, 2009) was used to evaluate students' attitudes toward entrepreneurial interventions. The scale assesses three distinct yet interrelated dimensions of cognitive, affective, and behavioral of potential entrepreneurs. The cognitive evaluation component consisted of five items measuring rational assessments of program effectiveness, including the sample statement: "Business incubators significantly improve startup success chances," which captures students' analytical judgments about

intervention value. For the affective orientation dimension, five items assess emotional responses and motivational states, exemplified by the item "I feel excited about participating in pitch competitions," designed to tap into students' enthusiasm and emotional connection to entrepreneurial activities. The behavioral intent dimension featured five items focusing on concrete action tendencies such as "I will apply for seed funding if available next semester," which directly measured students' self-reported likelihood of engaging with specific interventions. All items employed a 5-point Likert-type response format (1= Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to ensure psychometric precision. The present study obtained Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.98$.

Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was made possible through the letter of identification from the Department of Psychology, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, and where potential participants were met in the lecture halls, lounges, and under the trees. They were informed of the purpose of study and invited to participate in the study. They were duly informed of the voluntary nature of the study and consent was obtained from them. Only those who agreed to participate in the study were given the questionnaires to fill which took less than 12 minutes and were collected on the spot. Out of 234 questionnaires were distributed, 4 questionnaires were not properly filled and were removed leaving 230 used for the analysis.

Data Analysis

IBM^{R} SPSS version 26 was used for data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. Hypothesis 1 was tested using multiple regression while hypothesis 2 was tested using independent samples t-test. All the hypotheses were accepted at $p < .001$.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1: Participants' demographic variables

Category	Sub-Category(Years)	Frequency	%
Age	18–21	64	28
	22–25	82	36
	26–30	54	23
	31–35	30	13
Gender	Male	112	49
	Female	118	51
Marital Status	Single	173	75
	Married	32	14

Category	Sub-Category(Years)	Frequency	%
	Divorced	5	2
	Separated	12	5
	Widowed	8	4
Religion	Christian	209	91
	Muslim	9	4
	Others	12	5
Total		**230**	**100.0**

Source: SPSS version 26, 2025

As presented in Table 1, more participants (36%) were in the age bracket of 22-25 years with almost equal of both genders while 75% were singles and 91% were Christians. Out of the 230 participants, the data indicates that the sample is youthful, predominantly single, with nearly equal male and female representation, and largely affiliated with Christianity

Table 2: Zero-order correlation statistics of study variables

Variable	Environmental Attitudes	Entrepreneurship Studies	Environmental Conditioning
Environmental Attitudes	-		
Entrepreneurship Studies	.639*	-	
Environmental Conditioning	.654*	.461*	-

NB: N=230, **p <.001*

Table 2 presents zero-order correlation of study variables. The result indicated that entrepreneurial studies (r = .639, p < .001) and environmental conditioning (r = .654, p <.001) significantly and positively correlated with attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State. Therefore, the variables were considered robust enough for multiple regression analysis.

H1: Entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning will jointly and independently predict attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State. The hypothesis was tested using multiple regression and the results are presented in Tables 2a-c.

Table 2a: Model attitudes towards entrepreneurial intervention

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.691a	.477	.472	5.543

Table 3b: ANOVA of attitudes towards entrepreneurial intervention

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2135.783	2	1067.892	54.25	.000b
Residual	2333.217	227	10.281		
Total	4469.000	229			

Table 2c: Coefficients of attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	12.654	1.754	–	7.21	.000
Entrepreneurship Studies	0.295	0.061	.438	4.84	.000
Environmental Conditioning	0.268	0.059	.401	4.54	.000

Source: SPSS version 26, 2025

As presented in Table2a-c, the results of multiple regression revealed that entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning jointly predicted attitudes towards entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State, $R^2 =. 477$, F (2, 227) = 54.25, $p < 0.001$. This means that entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning accounted for 47.7% of variance in entrepreneurial intervention among study participants. Furthermore, the results showed that both entrepreneurship education ($\beta =.438$, $t = 4.84$, $p <.001$) and environmental conditioning ($\beta = .401$, $t = 4.54$, $p < .001$) independently predicted entrepreneurial intervention among study participants. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

H2: Female undergraduates will have more positive attitudes towards entrepreneurial intervention than male undergraduates.

Table 2: Independent samples t-test of students' attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Male	112	64.28	11.524	228	-2.380	.018
Female	118	67.85	10.936			

Source: SPSS version 26, 2025

According to Table 3, the result of independent samples t-test showed that gender significantly influenced attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State, $t(228) = -2.380$, $p < 0.05$ such that female participants scored higher in attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention (M

=67.85, SD = 10.936) compared to their male counterparts (M=64.28, SD = 11.524). Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis that entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning will jointly predict entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State was confirmed. This explains 47.2% of variance in entrepreneurial intervention among study participants. This suggests that both academic exposure and environmental influences complement each other in shaping students' perceptions and participation in entrepreneurial programs. This result resonates with Muhammad et al. (2011) who found entrepreneurship education as the most effective when reinforced by supportive environmental factors. Similarly, the present finding agrees with that of Acs et al. (2018) who found the interplay of institutional support and education that fosters positive entrepreneurial outcomes. Further support comes from the result of Bischoff et al. (2018) who noted that European students' entrepreneurial attitudes were strengthened when educational programs aligned with cultural and institutional support systems. Finally, the study agrees with that of Amoke et al. (2020) that while education builds skills, the absence of enabling environmental factors such as mentorship and funding limits students' entrepreneurial engagement. Collectively, these findings affirm that neither entrepreneurship education nor environmental conditioning alone is sufficient; rather, their combined effect yields stronger attitudinal shifts toward entrepreneurial interventions.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship education was found to independently predict attitudes towards entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State which accounted for 40.8% of variance in entrepreneurial intervention. This shows the role of structured academic exposure in shaping entrepreneurial intervention among study participants. This result lent credence to the finding by Adebayo and Adeoye (2018) who found that entrepreneurship education positively influenced students' entrepreneurial interventions across Nigerian universities. Similarly, the study supported Akinbami and Adejumo (2018) result that entrepreneurship education enhanced entrepreneurial attitudes, self-efficacy, and readiness to engage in business start-ups. Moreover Aliu and Ismail (2021) established that entrepreneurship education mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial attitude and intervention, reinforcing its critical role in shaping students' intervention to engage in entrepreneurship. Finally, Bischoff et al. (2028) and Koe et al.(2012) results equally lent credence to the current finding that undergraduates exposed to structured entrepreneurship curricula developed stronger entrepreneurial mindsets and higher participation in incubation programs. The consistency across these findings suggests that entrepreneurship education is not merely academic exercises but vital interventions that equip students with knowledge, confidence, and skills necessary for entrepreneurial engagement. In the Nigerian context, where graduate unemployment remains high, embedding entrepreneurial education into the curriculum serves as a pragmatic strategy for stimulating students' interest and participation in entrepreneurship interventions.

Furthermore, environmental conditioning was found to independently predict attitudes towards entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State which accounted for 42.5% of variance among study participants. This indicates that family background, peer influence, socio-cultural values, and community environment critically shape how students perceive and engage with entrepreneurial initiatives. This aligns with Adenle et al. (2020) who found socio-cultural and institutional environments as a significant predictor of entrepreneurial success and interventions among Nigerian university students. This finding corroborates Nwachukwu and Osemene's (2011) result that found cultural perceptions of entrepreneurship as either prestigious or inferior depending on regional values, directly influencing students' entrepreneurial attitudes. Further confirmation is that of Osuigwe and Eresia-Eke (2022) finding that cultural and family expectations in Nigeria moderate the impact of entrepreneurship education, sometimes discouraging students from entrepreneurial pursuits in favor of conventional careers. Collectively, these findings affirm that while education is vital, environmental contexts largely determine whether entrepreneurial skills are internalized and acted upon.

Finally, the hypothesis that female undergraduates will have more positive attitudes towards entrepreneurial intervention than male undergraduates was supported. This implies that female undergraduates in Rivers State exhibit more favorable attitudes towards entrepreneurial interventions. This result corroborates the findings of Amoke et al. (2020) who identified gender disparities in entrepreneurial participation, with female undergraduates often demonstrating greater openness to entrepreneurship initiatives. Similarly, the result aligns with that of Akanbi (2013) who found female undergraduates to display stronger entrepreneurial attitudes and interventions compared to their male counterparts in several Nigerian universities. Furthermore, Aliu and Ismail (2021) emphasized the growing participation of female undergraduates in entrepreneurship programs, attributing these trends to heightened policy focus on women's empowerment and inclusivity. The findings from this study therefore reinforce global evidence that gender is a significant determinant of entrepreneurial orientation, with females increasingly demonstrating stronger positive attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The study examines predictability of entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning on attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among undergraduates in Rivers State where two hypotheses were tested. The results confirmed that entrepreneurship education and environmental conditioning are robust predictors of attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention among study participants. In addition, female undergraduates showed significant positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intervention than their male counterparts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study proffered the following recommendations. To begin with, universities should strengthen entrepreneurship education by incorporating experiential learning, mentorship, and access to incubation centers. In addition, policymakers should create enabling environments that provide funding, infrastructure, and institutional support for entrepreneurship. Moreover, families and communities should be sensitized to view entrepreneurship as a respected and viable career choice. Furthermore, gender-sensitive interventions should be promoted to ensure equal opportunities and encourage participation by both male and female students. Finally, mechanisms should be developed to track and evaluate the long-term outcomes of entrepreneurship education on graduates' entrepreneurial ventures.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study

The study suffered some limitations which need to be remedied in further study. For example, self-reported questionnaires were used for data collection which introduces response bias, therefore, further study should use focus group discussion and key informant interview to triangulate data from self-reported questionnaires. The study population was only restricted to undergraduates in some universities in Rivers state, therefore, further study should include polytechnic and other monotechnics in the State to enhance generalization of study findings. The two independent variables investigated were not exhaustive, therefore, further study should include social support, personality traits and mentorship on entrepreneurship intervention.

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