PEER INFLUENCE AND SIWES AS CORRELATES OF COMPUTER EDUCATION STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS IN HARDWARE MAINTENANCE IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

Ugwuanyi Chinonso Eugene[1], Ezeudu Gilbert Chigbo[2], Bossah Chika Patricia[1], Ali Harrisson Ugadu[1]

[1]Department of Computer Science, Federal Polytechnic Ohodo, Enugu, Nigeria
[2]Department Business Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
ugwuanyichinonso1@gmail.com +2348167059622, gilbert.ezeudu.pg97284@unn.edu.ng +2348160331733, chipat4u2020@gmail.com +2348065438512, hary4c@gmail.com +2347030955378

Abstract

The study determined the relationship between peer influence and SIWES and computer Education Students' Entrepreneurial Intentions in Hardware Maintenance enterprises in Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria. The population for the study was 96 subjects, consisting of 16 final year students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 29 final year students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and 51 final year students of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The total enumeration sampling technique was used to select the entire population (96) due to the manageable size. A 26-item structured questionnaire titled "Determinants of Computer Education Students' Entrepreneurial Intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise. was used to elicit responses from the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha method yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.829. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to answer the research questions while p-value associated with the correlation coefficient was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. It was revealed that peer group influences have positive relationship with entrepreneurship intentions of Computer Education students in federal universities in South-East Nigeria. It was also revealed that students industrial work experience scheme has negative relationship with entrepreneurship intentions of Computer Education students in federal universities in South-East Nigeria. It was further discovered that there was no significant relationship between peer group influences, Students Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES) and entrepreneurial intentions of Computer Education students in computer hardware maintenance in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. It was recommended that Federal universities in South-East Nigeria should revamp the SIWES program to focus on developing entrepreneurial skills among students, incorporating components such as business planning, marketing, and financial management.

Keyword*:* Peer Influence, SIWES, Entrepreneurial Intentions, Hardware Maintenance, Enterprise**.**

Introduction

In vocational and technical education, it is said that there is dignity in every honest labour. Therefore, when someone lays his/her hands on anything worthwhile that could enable them make money and earn a living from the trade, such a person has entrepreneurial abilities. Entrepreneurship concerns the ability and willingness to take risks and to combine factors of production in order to produce goods and services that can satisfy human wants and create

wealth (Sharma, 2021). The forgoing clearly revealed that for an individual to undertake entrepreneurship opportunities, one must have developed entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial intention is the willingness to start own business and to become self-reliant (Mamman, 2019). Entrepreneurship intentions therefore can be said to be driving force or motivation behind starting up a business or an enterprise with the mindset of making profit and making himself/herself better in the society. Entrepreneurial intentions can be influenced by personal characteristics, culture or demographic factors; while deliberate entrepreneurial intention is the willingness of the individual to venture into business due to the feasibility of entrepreneurial behaviors. It depends on external resources such as prior experience or network building. Although it has also been argued that certain demographic factors influence the entrepreneurial intention of an individual.

Graduates of computer education are supposed to be employed or create their own jobs after schooling, instead of finding themselves in the mist of unemployed youths in the society since Vocational and Technical Education institution Impart entrepreneurial skill to students in Technical Education (TE). Technical and Vocational Education is established to provide knowledge and skills in different subject areas such as Computer and Robotics Education, Agric Education, Business Education, Industrial Technical Education, Entrepreneurship Education, among others. These subject areas consist of different trade areas which are capable of offering job opportunities to graduates. Here in this work the emphasis is on computer education as one of the programme currently running in vocational and technical education faculty. Computer Education is a type of education designed to impart the necessary knowledge and skills in various computer-based trade areas (Shahid et al., 2019).

Computer education offers basic knowledge and skills to operate computers in order to perform desired jobs including hardware maintenance. Hardware maintenance involves taking care of the computer's physical components, such as its keyboard, hard drive and internal CD or DVD drives (Iorliam, 2015). Maintenance of hardware helps to extend the computer's lifespan. It helps to prevent wear and tear, and keeps the system functioning smoothly. These maintenance services have made people self-reliant; hence, students who study and master computer hardware maintenance can be able to make a living from it after graduation; hence it is a viable entrepreneurial area.

Aminu (2019), Basil et al. (2021) & Kayode (2023) noted that most graduates of computer education are unemployed in developing countries, especially Nigeria. Some social factors can influence the intentions of computer education students to venture into the computer

hardware maintenance business or enterprise. Social influences, according to Rickman (2019), can shape an individual's behaviours and beliefs. The tendency towards conformity in society is so strong that intelligent and self-determined young people can feel the profound influence. Such factors that could influence computer education graduates to make entrepreneurial intention include: peer group and Students Industrial Work Experience Program (SIWES).

The phenomena of peer pressure in a more subtle form might cause a change in behavior to meet the expectations of others (Gheorghiu et al.,2015). Isidor and Norsiah (2012) reported that social environment can influence undergraduate students' entrepreneurial intentions. Peng et al. (2017) also highlighted the importance of long-term interactions with friends in influencing economic decisions. Smith et al. (2020) provides further insight into the mechanisms underlying peer group influences, suggesting that individuals tend to imitate what they see, hear, and know from their closest environment. This implies that peer group influences may be a powerful force in shaping entrepreneurial intentions, as individuals are likely to be influenced by the behaviors, attitudes, and values of those around them.

Another factor that can influence entrepreneurial intentions is the students industrial work experience in an effort to enhance acquisition of practical and applied skills, the industrial training fund (I.T.F) initiated the students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) in 1973 The industrial scheme is aimed at helping students undergoing courses in engineering, technology and other professional courses in acquire the necessary practical knowledge in industry in addition to the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom. Aganbi (2013), Babalola and Tiamiyu (2013), Audu et al., (2013), and Usman and Tasmin (2015), reported that SIWES has failed to empower students for job creation, self-employment, and entrepreneurial intention and engagement. This suggests that SIWES exposure could potentially influence the entrepreneurial intention of computer education students to venture into computer hardware maintenance enterprise. Based on the forgoing, it therefore becomes necessary to identify the relationship between social factors like peer group influences and students' industrial work experience scheme, and entrepreneurial intentions of Computer Education students in hardware maintenance in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. relationship between peer group influences and Computer Education Students' entrepreneurial Intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria

2. relationship between students' industrial work experience programme (SIWES) and Computer Education Students' Entrepreneurial Intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between peer group influences and Computer Education Students' entrepreneurial intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between students' industrial work experience programme (SIWES) and Computer Education Students' Entrepreneurial intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were used to test at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between peer group influences and Computer Education Students' entrepreneurial Intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria
2. There is no significant relationship between students' industrial work experience programs (SIWES) and Computer Education Students' entrepreneurial intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. The study was carried out in South East Nigeria. The population for the study was 96 final year (400 level) Computer Education students in Federal Universities that offer computer education programme in South-East Nigeria. The population comprises 16 students from University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), 29 students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa (UNIZIK) and 51 students from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAU). Total enumeration sampling technique was used to select the entire population for the study due to its manageable size. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire**.** The instrument was face validated by three experts from the Department of Computer and Robotics Education, Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A reliability coefficient of 0.829 was obtained for the items using Cronbach alpha method. The instrument was

administered to the respondents and the completed questionnaire collected by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlations.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between peer group influences and Computer Education Students' Entrepreneurial Intentions in Hardware Maintenance in Federal Universities in South-East Universities, Nigeria?

Table 1: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between Peer Group Influences and Entrepreneurial Intentions of Computer Education Students in Computer Hardware Maintenance

Var.		Peer Influence	Entrepreneurial Intentions	N	r_{ppmc}	Remark	Sig.	Decision
1	Peer Influence	1	0.34	94	0.34	Weak relationship	.745	NS
2	Entrepreneurial Intentions	0.34	1					

Table 1 shows that there is a weak relationship (r_{ppmc}=0.34) between peer group influences and entrepreneurial intentions. This implies that peer group influence is weakly positively related to the entrepreneurial intentions of computer education students in computer hardware maintenance in universities in South-east, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between peer group influences and Computer Education Students' entrepreneurial intentions in Hardware Maintenance in Federal Universities in South-East Universities, Nigeria

Table 1 also revealed a probability value of 0.745, which is higher than 0.05, indicating that there is no significant relationship between peer group influences and entrepreneurial intentions of computer education students in computer hardware maintenance in universities in South-east, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 (Ho_1) is rejected.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between students' industrial work experience scheme programme (SIWES) and Computer Education Students' entrepreneurial intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of the Relationship between Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and Entrepreneurial Intentions of Computer Education Students in Computer Hardware Maintenance in Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria

Var.		Entrepreneurial intention	SIWES	N	r_{ppmc}	Remark	Sig.	Decision
1	SIWES	1	-0.122	94	-0.122	Very weak relationship	.242	NS
2	Entrepreneurial Intentions	-0.122	1					

Data in Table 2 show there is a very weak and negative relationship (r_{ppmc}=1) between SIWES and entrepreneurial intentions. This implies that SIWES is very weak and negatively related to the entrepreneurial intentions of computer education students in computer hardware maintenance in universities in South-east, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between Students Industrial Work Experience program (SIWES) and Computer Education Students' Entrepreneurial Intentions in Hardware Maintenance Enterprise in South Eastern Universities, Nigeria?

Table 2 also revealed probability value of 0.242 which is higher than the 0.05 indicating that there is no significant relationship between Students Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES) and entrepreneurial intentions of computer education students in computer hardware maintenance in universities in South-east, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis 2 (Ho_2) is rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

The positive relationship between peer group influences and entrepreneurial intentions suggests that the people students surround themselves with can have a profound impact on their career aspirations. When students are part of a peer group that values entrepreneurship, they are more likely to be inspired and motivated to pursue entrepreneurial ventures themselves. This is likely because peer groups can provide support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging, which can be particularly important for students who are considering non-traditional career paths. In the context of Computer Education students, peer group influences may expose students to new ideas, opportunities, and networks that can help them develop entrepreneurial skills and mindset. In line with the finding of this study, Isidor and Norsiah (2012) reported that social environment (friends' agreement) moderates the relationship between

entrepreneurial orientation (education) and entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. Also, in alignment, the findings. Peng et al. (2017) specifically highlight the importance of long-term interactions with friends in influencing economic decisions, which is consistent with the idea that peer group influences can have a profound impact on entrepreneurial intentions. The study by Smith et al. (2020) provides further insight into the mechanisms underlying peer group influences, suggesting that individuals tend to imitate what they see, hear, and know from their closest environment. This implies that peer group influences can be a powerful force in shaping entrepreneurial intentions, as individuals are likely to be influenced by the behaviors, attitudes, and values of those around them.

One possible explanation for this finding is that SIWES may be providing students with a glimpse into the realities of working in an established organization, which may not align with their initial entrepreneurial aspirations. Alternatively, the nature of the work experience itself may not be conducive to fostering entrepreneurial spirit, perhaps due to the structured and routine nature of the work. It's also possible that the SIWES program is not providing students with the autonomy and freedom to explore their own ideas and initiatives, which is a critical component of entrepreneurial development. In alignment to the findings. Aganbi (2013), Usman and Tasmin (2015), Babalola and Tiamiyu (2013), and Audu, et al. (2013), reported that SIWES has failed to empower students for job creation, self-employment, and entrepreneurial intention and engagement. However, in contrast, Liqiang (2013) found that social influence is a significant determinant of entrepreneurial intention among college students. This suggests that SIWES exposure could potentially influence the entrepreneurial intention of computer education students to venture into computer hardware maintenance enterprise. While Liqiang's study suggests that SIWES exposure could influence entrepreneurial intention, the other studies suggest that SIWES may not be effective in promoting entrepreneurial skills and mindset among students.

The lack of significant relationship between peer group influences, SIWES, and entrepreneurial intentions in computer hardware maintenance is also noteworthy. One possible explanation for this finding is that computer hardware maintenance is a highly specialized field that requires specific technical skills and knowledge. In this context, students' entrepreneurial intentions may be more influenced by their technical skills and knowledge rather than peer group influences or work experience. Additionally, the nature of computer hardware maintenance may not lend itself to entrepreneurial ventures, perhaps due to the high capital

requirements or the dominance of established players in the industry. Ibitomi & Olamide (2020) A Nigerian study analyzing entrepreneurship education found that it's *specifically the skills and knowledge* that determine students' entrepreneurial intention in specialized fields like computer hardware maintenance, technical mastery may outweigh influences like peers or work experience when shaping entrepreneurial intent. Indicating that in Nigerian undergraduates, only skills/knowledge predicted entrepreneurial intention

Conclusion

The study concludes that peer group influences have a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intentions, while SIWES was found to have a negative relationship. The positive influence of peer groups suggests that students are more likely to develop entrepreneurial intentions when surrounded by peers who share similar interests and values. On the other hand, the negative relationship between SIWES and entrepreneurial intentions is concerning, as it suggests that the program may not be achieving its intended goal of promoting entrepreneurship among students.

Recommendations

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

1. Federal universities in South-East Nigeria should revamp SIWES program to focus on developing entrepreneurial skills among students. This can be achieved by providing students with opportunities to work on projects that require innovative thinking, problem-solving, and risk-taking. Industry partners should also be encouraged to provide mentorship and support to students during their SIWES placement.
2. Federal universities in South-East Nigeria can also modify the SIWES program to include entrepreneurial components, such as business planning, marketing, and financial management. This can help students develop practical entrepreneurial skills and apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. Federal universities in South-East Nigeria should also establish entrepreneurship mentorship schemes that pair students with experienced entrepreneurs.
3. Federal universities in South-East Nigeria should encourage the formation of entrepreneurship clubs or groups where students can share ideas, experiences, and knowledge. This can help strengthen peer influence and create a supportive environment that fosters entrepreneurial intentions.

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