**Dynamics of ‘Entrepreneuring’: Evidence from Ghanaian University Students**

# Abstract

Interest in entrepreneurship as a solution to unemployment and a means to promote economic growth is growing globally. Final-year university students are recognised as crucial in this ‘entrepreneuring’ agenda. This study examines the dynamics of entrepreneurial intentions among Ghanaian university students. The study involved a diverse sample of 927 final-year university students in the Ashanti Region of Ghana selected using stratified random sampling. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire measuring the sub-dimensions of intentions and analysed using SPSS and Excel. The analysis employed the Mann-Whitney U test to compare differences between groups. The findings indicate that aspiring entrepreneurs exhibit stronger positive and greater confidence than those inclined toward traditional employment. Gender analysis suggests that women face unique challenges in entrepreneurship. The role of family background shows a complex influence on entrepreneurial intentions. The study concludes with recommendations for policymaking, academic initiatives and future research efforts.

**Keywords**: *entrepreneurial intention, gender dynamics, family background, attitudes and perceptions*

# Introduction

Entrepreneurship is at the forefront of global development, spurred by intensified competition and swift technological shifts (Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016).Recognised as a chief catalyst for economic growth, the link between entrepreneurial activities and economic progress is evident, with nations witnessing growth spurts due to increased entrepreneurial ventures (Ács et al., 2014; Dejardin, 2000; Holcombe, 1998; Kritikos, 2014; Stoica et al., 2020). Indigenous entrepreneurship is recognised as foundational for accelerated growth trajectories. International development agencies emphasise entrepreneurship’s crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness and longevity of aid (Booth et al., 2005; Naudé, 2013). This importance of entrepreneurship is further echoed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goals 1, 8, 9, and 10, which focus on "ending poverty in all its forms everywhere"; "promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all"; "building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation"; and "reducing inequality within and among countries" (Bosma et al., 2020; United Nations, 2018). Amidst these global imperatives, entrepreneurship's role in addressing socioeconomic challenges like poverty, unemployment, and inequality is paramount (Bosma et al., 2020; Bruton et al., 2021; Schramm, 2004; Seers, 1969; United Nations, 2014).

Most public universities in Ghana have mainstreamed entrepreneurship courses into their programmes to address graduate unemployment. The University of Cape Coast's Centre for Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprise Development focuses on entrepreneurship education and research. At the same time, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology underscores industry-academia collaboration through its Centre for Business Development (Boohene & Agyapong, 2017). The Technical universities also embed entrepreneurship in their core curricula, with entities such as the Institute of Entrepreneurship Ghana aspiring to cultivate job creators over seekers. Such initiatives reflect the belief that entrepreneurs are pivotal in poverty alleviation (Lee & Rodríguez-Pose, 2021; Naminse et al., 2019; Omoruyi et al., 2017).

Extant literature on the dynamics of entrepreneurial intentions seems to suggest disparities regarding gender, family background and occupational choice. The literature underscores significant gender disparities in entrepreneurial intentions, influenced by societal acceptance, traditional gender roles, and perceived behavioural control (Santos et al., 2016; Yordanova & Tarrazon, 2010). While some studies emphasise pronounced gender differences, others challenge these findings, suggesting no significant disparities in specific contexts (Contreras-Barraza et al., 2021); there remains a pressing need for a unified framework that integrates sociocultural nuances with the evolving gender landscape in modern societies (Donaldson et al., 2023; Epstein et al., 2022). The role of family background in influencing entrepreneurial intentions has gathered attention, with studies highlighting its complex interplay with entrepreneurial aspirations (Altinay et al., 2012; Georgescu & Herman, 2020; Kumar et al., 2022). Despite insights into familial background, psychological traits, and educational experiences shaping intent (Ehsanfar et al., 2021; Farrukh et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2018), gaps persist in understanding the multifaceted impacts of different familial exposures (Alpkan & Saral, 2019; Onjewu et al., 2022).

This study aims to comprehensively explore occupational choice, gender and family background dynamics of entrepreneurial intentions to enhance our understanding of their multifaceted influences.

## Gender Dynamics of Entrepreneurial Intentions

The interrelation between gender and entrepreneurial intentions has emerged as a pivotal area of research, providing insights into the distinct experiences of aspiring entrepreneurs across genders. Yordanova and Tarrazon (2010) and Santos et al. (2016) highlighted a consistent gender gap in entrepreneurial intentions. Yordanova and Tarrazon (2010) undertook a study focusing on Bulgarian university students. They discerned a notable gender disparity: women exhibited fewer entrepreneurial intentions than men. This discrepancy was primarily mediated by perceived behavioural control.

Additionally, perceived subjective norms and attitudes towards entrepreneurship partially mediated this gender gap. While these findings offer critical insights, the limited cultural scope of Bulgarian students necessitates caution in generalising to broader contexts. Santos et al. (2016) expanded the geographical scope, analysing data from Southern Britain and Southern Spain. Despite cultural differences, they found a consistent gender gap in entrepreneurial intentions, with men exhibiting stronger inclinations. Intriguingly, societal acceptance predominantly fuelled men's aspirations, indicating the influence of cultural narratives on gendered entrepreneurial perceptions.

Similarly, Haase et al. (2012) and Sánchez (2012) explored European university settings but delved deeper into the complexities of gendered entrepreneurial intentions. Haase et al. (2012) focused on German university students, revealing a gendered disparity in entrepreneurial inclinations. Male students exhibited a more robust drive, influenced by societal expectations and aspirations for influence. However, the allure of autonomy remained a shared motivator across genders. Sánchez (2012) conducted a comprehensive study among Spanish university students, revealing that while men displayed a higher confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities, factors like academic disciplines and age contributed significantly to gender differences, complicating the narrative around gendered entrepreneurial intentions. Alpkan & Saral (2019) found in their study of 607 students that males exhibited a stronger inclination towards entrepreneurship than females. Both studies highlight gender disparities in entrepreneurial intent, necessitating further sociocultural exploration. Epstein et al. (2022) studied 2,195 participants in the NSF I-Corps program, noting that female participants had less entrepreneurial exposure and intent than males despite the program's gender-neutral educational quality.

Díaz-García & Jiménez-Moreno (2010) and Gupta et al. (2009) shifted the focus towards the influence of societal norms and gender roles. Díaz-García & Jiménez-Moreno (2010) delved into the entrepreneurial inclinations of Southern Spanish individuals. They observed that men demonstrated heightened entrepreneurial tendencies, particularly those strongly identifying with traditional masculine traits. This suggests that entrenched societal norms and gender roles may amplify entrepreneurial intentions among specific male demographics. On the other hand, Gupta et al. (2009) delved into socially constructed gender stereotypes. They found that while both genders predominantly associated entrepreneurship with masculine attributes, women also uniquely linked it with femininity. Such perceptions highlight the evolving nature of gender identities and their intersections with entrepreneurial aspirations.

In a departure from prevailing trends, Contreras-Barraza et al. (2021) explored Latin American students' entrepreneurial intentions in administration and economics. They found no significant gender disparities in entrepreneurial intent, challenging existing literature. Such findings underscored the importance of considering discipline-specific contexts in entrepreneurial research. Delving into the motivational facets of gendered entrepreneurial aspirations, Maes et al. (2014) highlighted the varying motivations shaping women's entrepreneurial intentions. While both genders valued autonomy, women's motivations leaned towards organisational facets like work-life balance. Men, in contrast, were more driven by societal recognition. These divergent motivational factors underscore the multifaceted nature of gendered entrepreneurial aspirations. Robledo et al. (2015) further emphasised the role of social norms, revealing a gender-specific effect: societal norms more strongly influenced female participants' perceived behavioural control. This suggests that societal expectations might be pivotal in shaping women's perceptions of their entrepreneurial capabilities.

Methodologically, Barron et al. (2022) employed structural equation modelling to validate gender-based influences on entrepreneurial intent among academics. Their findings reinforced male dominance in entrepreneurial intentions, emphasising the need for deeper exploration into underlying socio-cultural and institutional factors. Donaldson et al. (2023) employed a unique qualitative comparative analysis to discern gender-specific pathways in entrepreneurial intentions. Their findings underscored the importance of individual trajectories and external influences in shaping gendered entrepreneurial landscapes. Ward et al. (2019) provided a holistic examination, revealing that male students exhibited higher perceived control and subjective norms while females showcased stronger intrinsic business motivations. These insights emphasise the multifactorial nature of gendered entrepreneurial intentions.

The existing literature reviewed and summarised in Table 1 shows several trends and insights regarding entrepreneurial intentions among university students, particularly emphasising gender-related disparities and regional variations. It is apparent that the studies predominantly focused on Western and European contexts, leaving a substantial gap in understanding these dynamics in non-Western settings such as Ghana.

Table 1: Summary of Literature on Gender Disparities in Entrepreneurial Intentions across Different Contexts

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Author(s), Publication year | Context | Sample Size | Male: Female Ratio | Key Insights |
| 1 | (Yordanova and Tarrazon, 2010) | Bulgaria |  |  | Women had lower intentions than men |
| 2 | (Santos, Roomi and Liñán, 2016) | Southern Britain and Southern Spain | 516 | 260:256 | Men have higher intentions than women |
| 3 | (Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno, 2010) | Southern Spain | 967 | 434:533 | Men are more prone to contemplate the idea of establishing a company rather than being resolute about actualizing it. |
| 4 | (Contreras-Barraza *et al.*, 2021) | Latin America | 435 | 274:161 | No gender difference in all the three components of intention |
| 5 | (Maes, Leroy and Sels, 2014) | Belgium | 423 | 197:226 | Female students are less inclined to become entrepreneurs |
| 6 | (Robledo *et al.*, 2015) | Spain | 180 | 81:99 | 72% and 77% of variation in intentions in men and women respectively |
| 7 | (Haase, Lautenschläger and Thomas, 2012) | Germany  | 286 | 141:128 | Men are more likely than women to want to start their own business |
| [17 did not specify their gender] |
| 8 | (Gupta *et al.*, 2009) | U.S., India, & Turkey | 451 | N/A | Individuals who identified more with masculine characteristics were more inclined to have entrepreneurial intentions, despite similar intentions between men and women. |
| 9 | (Barron, Ruiz and Amorós, 2022) |  | 593 | N/A | Males have higher entrepreneurial intention than females |
| 10 | (Sánchez, 2012) | Spain | 818 | 283:535 | Males expressed greater inclinations towards entrepreneurship than females |
| 11 | (Donaldson, González-Serrano and Moreno, 2023) | Spain | 140 | N/A | Gender differences in intentions both at the sample and case levels |
| 12 | (Ward, Hernández-Sánchez and Sánchez-García, 2019) | Spain | 677 | 170:507 | Gender differences are sparse, with males showing higher intentions, PBC, and subjective norms, while females exhibit greater business motivation. |
| 13 | (Epstein, Duval-Couetil and Huang-Saad, 2022) | United States | 2195 | 1786:409 | Women reported less experience in entrepreneurship and lower levels of entrepreneurial intent than men. |
| 14 | (Vodă and Florea, 2019) |  Romania | 270 | 143:127 | Males have entrepreneurial intentions than females |
| 15 | (Coelho and Lira, 2021) | Brazil | 100 | 61:39:00 | Females exhibit higher entrepreneurial tendencies than males in a predominantly male-oriented setting |
| 16 | (Alpkan and Saral, 2019) | Czechia  | 607 | 499:108 | Males exhibit higher intentions than females |

Source: Authors’ Construct, 2022

In some of the studies reviewed (e.g. Sánchez, 2012; Alpkan & Saral, 2019; Ward et al., 2019; Epstein et al., 2022), there appeared significant gender imbalances in the samples which potentially affected the outcomes. To address these gaps, the study endeavoured to bridge the geographical disparity in the literature by focusing on a Sub-Saharan African context, contributing to a more globally representative understanding of these dynamics. Using a robust methodology with a sizable sample, this research offers a comprehensive perspective on the gender dynamics of entrepreneurial intentions. Such insights can potentially inform policy and practice in Ghana and regions with similar cultural characteristics, ultimately advancing entrepreneurship research on a global scale.

## Family Background Dynamics of Entrepreneurial Intention

Several studies have emphasised the significance of familial entrepreneurial lineage in shaping entrepreneurial aspirations. Altinay et al. (2012) offered an exploration among UK hospitality students, elucidating the interplay between psychological traits and family lineage. Their findings emphasised that those with familial entrepreneurial lineage and a predisposition for innovation showcased heightened entrepreneurial intentions. A compelling correlation also surfaced between an individual's risk-taking propensity and leanings towards entrepreneurship. Such insights underscore the complex combination of innate psychological attributes and familial influences that shape entrepreneurial pathways.

Similarly, Georgescu and Herman (2020) investigated entrepreneurial inclinations among Romanian students. Their study underscored that students with familial entrepreneurial legacies exhibited a heightened intent for entrepreneurship and showcased a relationship with the perceived efficacy of entrepreneurship education. This suggests that formal entrepreneurial training might offer diminishing marginal returns for individuals with robust familial entrepreneurial exposure. Farrukh et al. (2017) assessed the determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among Pakistani business students, employing structural equation modelling. Their results indicated that family background and specific personality traits like conscientiousness and extroversion significantly influenced entrepreneurial aspirations, collectively explaining 74.3% of the variance.

Transitioning from individual predispositions to broader generational influences, Kumar et al. (2022) synthesised the existing literature, spotlighting the pivotal role of family business backgrounds in sculpting students' entrepreneurial trajectories. Their comprehensive review illuminated that familial business legacies confer significant advantages, equipping students with enriched entrepreneurial competencies and perspectives. Further contextualising this discourse within specific sociodemographic realms, Venkatapathy and Pretheeba (2014) explored the Indian academic landscape. Their empirical investigation discerned a notable correlation between familial business affiliations and heightened entrepreneurial aspirations. Interestingly, while familial ties played a pivotal role, the study also unveiled the interplay of gender dynamics, further shaping these entrepreneurial intentions. Building upon the theme of generational influences, Saeed et al. (2014) explored the dynamics within Pakistani familial structures. Their research illuminated the enduring impact of familial entrepreneurial histories, elucidating how such legacies profoundly influence subsequent generations' career trajectories. This generational continuity was further influenced by mediating factors such as perceived attractiveness and feasibility of entrepreneurial ventures. Wang et al. (2018) investigated the influence of family business exposure on entrepreneurial intentions, highlighting the critical role of perceived parental incentives. Their findings revealed a positive correlation between these incentives and entrepreneurial intentions, mediated by entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Interestingly, direct family business involvement altered this dynamic, strengthening the influence of self-efficacy over parental rewards, suggesting a complex interplay of familial and individual factors.

Shifting the focus to gender dynamics amidst familial influences, Coelho and Lira (2021) presented a stimulating exploration among Brazilian information systems students. Their findings challenged conventional gendered entrepreneurial narratives, suggesting that familial entrepreneurial backgrounds amplify entrepreneurial inclinations irrespective of gender, offering a more inclusive perspective on entrepreneurial determinants. In a broader exploration encompassing sociodemographic and contextual constraints, Hadjimanolis Poutziouris (2011) uncovered the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial decisions. While the study identified a modest correlation between family business legacies and entrepreneurial intentions, it highlighted the intricate interplay of various factors, often decoupling entrepreneurial decisions from conventional determinants like gender or perceived entrepreneurial capabilities.

Concurrently, Ehsanfar et al. (2021) provided a deeper dive into the psychological underpinnings among Iranian students with entrepreneurial backgrounds. Their findings elucidated the differential influences of psychological traits such as tolerance for ambiguity and the need for achievement, emphasising the multifaceted psychological landscape underpinning entrepreneurial intentions. In a distinctive vein, Hahn et al. (2021) underscored the catalytic role of family businesses in motivating subsequent generations towards entrepreneurship. Their research illuminated the gravitational pull of familial entrepreneurial success, emphasising its pivotal role in transitioning heirs from latent to active entrepreneurship. Lastly, offering granular insights into familial exposures, both (Alpkan & Saral (2019) and Onjewu et al. (2022) highlighted the differential impacts of various entrepreneurial exposures. While Onjewu et al. (2022) emphasised the effects within the Nigerian context, Alpkan and Saral (2019) accentuated the amplifying effect of closer familial ties, categorising students based on varying degrees of familial entrepreneurial exposure.

The literature review summaries in Table 2 highlight valuable insights into the relationship between family background and entrepreneurial intentions among university students, primarily in various international contexts. Most of these studies employ quantitative research methods, with a limited representation of qualitative or mixed-method approaches, which could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions. This methodological shortcoming of extant literature could not be addressed in this study.

Table 2: Summary of Reviewed Literature on Family Influence and Entrepreneurial Intentions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Author(s), Publication year | Analytical Methods | Context | Sample Size | Key Insights | Limitations |
| 1 | (Altinay *et al.*, 2012) |  | United Kingdom | 279 | Family entrepreneurial heritage and innovation notably impact the entrepreneurial intentions of students, with risk-taking propensity possibly serving as a mediator. | Stem from its UK-based, individualistic sample and the Western context, making it less applicable to emerging economies with collectivist cultures like Ghana. |
| 2 | (Georgescu and Herman, 2020) | Descriptive statistics and correlations, regression analysis | Romania | 617 | Family backgrounds strongly influenced students' propensity for entrepreneurship and had a moderating effect on the connection between the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and students' intentions to pursue entrepreneurial paths | There is a focus on intentionality rather than actual behaviour. Future studies should focus on ascertaining the extent of the influence of prior exposure to formal and informal education on action. Further research is required to analyse whether entrepreneurial intention is due to entrepreneurial skills and or financial or social capital from self-employed parents to their children. |
| 3 | (Kumar *et al.*, 2022) | Narrative review | Various contexts | 34 | Family businesses have a substantial influence on improving students' entrepreneurship knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, and students with family business backgrounds derive enhanced advantages from entrepreneurial education. Students with entrepreneurial mothers showed higher entrepreneurial intentions | Future studies suggested to include samples from various locations and course. Mixed approach suggested since most research employed quantitative methods with few employing qualitative methods. Also investigate the specific type of family business that engenders entrepreneurial intentions and the influence of gender |
| 4 | (Venkatapathy and Pretheeba, 2014) | ANOVA | India | 176 | Statistically significant but not very strong connection between having family members engaged in business and the inclination to start a new business among postgraduate students in India, with gender significantly affecting entrepreneurial aspirations, whereas the specific academic field of study does not have a substantial impact. | Future research should explore the effectiveness of interventions aimed at changing traditional gender-related social norms to increase female students' entrepreneurial intentions and consider variations in entrepreneurial propensity across different sectors and businesses. |
| 5 | (Saeed, Muffatto and Yousafzai, 2014) | Structural equation modelling | Pakistan | 805 | Individuals with self-employed parents are significantly more likely to become self-employed themselves, indicating a strong intergenerational impact of entrepreneurial family backgrounds, and this influence is mediated by perceived attractiveness and perceived feasibility of starting a firm. | The need for longitudinal studies to understand the development of entrepreneurial intentions over time; and the recommendation for cross-cultural research to assess the model's applicability in various cultural contexts. Entrepreneurial intention may not reflect entrepreneurial action, so future research should involve managers and existing entrepreneurs for validation. |
| 6 | (Coelho and Lira, 2021) | Descriptive statistics | Brazil | 100 | Family entrepreneurial backgrounds positively influence students' entrepreneurial intentions, final-year students show stronger entrepreneurial intent, potentially due to extended exposure to the university's entrepreneurial environment | The sample was restricted to information systems students, suggesting the need for future research to explore its applicability in various courses and regions, while recommending the use of qualitative methods and mixed methods to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions. |
| 7 | (Hadjimanolis and Poutziouris, 2011) | Correlation and factor analysis | Cyprus | 167 | Having a family business background is weakly but significantly linked to the intention to start a new business, which is positively associated with entrepreneurial self-efficacy but not with entrepreneurial education. |  |
| 8 | (Ehsanfar, Namak and Vosoughi, 2021) |  | Iran |  | While students from entrepreneurial backgrounds exhibited lower entrepreneurial intent, this intent was significantly and positively influenced by certain psychological traits, including tolerance for ambiguity, need for achievement, and risk-taking propensity, but not by locus of control or innovativeness. | There is the need for studies in other regions and educational fields to assess the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused on quantitative methods, suggesting the need for qualitative and mixed methods approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurial intent. |
| 9 | (Hahn *et al.*, 2021) | Structural equation modelling  | International | 40,508 | Certain factors related to family businesses, including the performance of entrepreneurial parents and the success of the family business, play a substantial role in shaping the entrepreneurial aspirations of the next generation. These factors can either inspire them to pursue independent entrepreneurial careers or motivate them to take over the already successful family business. | The need for future longitudinal research to explore the circumstances in which entrepreneurial intentions translate into concrete career choices, particularly focusing on the transition to emergent entrepreneurship, the potential relationship between new ventures and family businesses, and the sociocognitive micro-processes involved in forming specific career preferences. |
| 10 | (Wang, Wang and Chen, 2018) | Correlation and regression analysis | China  | 131 | A positive correlation between entrepreneurial intentions and perceived rewards, which was partly mediated by entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Additionally, family business involvement moderated this relationship by reducing the impact of rewards and amplifying the role of self-efficacy. | Focusing on entrepreneurial intentions instead of behaviours, using data from a single source, not considering the negative aspects of parental entrepreneurship, and limiting the factors examined.t Future research to address these by investigating real entrepreneurial behaviours, collecting data from multiple sources, considering negative aspects and different types of entrepreneurial rewards, and exploring the quality of family business involvement, especially in different contexts. |
| 11 | (Farrukh *et al.*, 2017) | Structural equation modelling  | Pakistan | 306 | Family background, self-efficacy, and specific personality traits significantly impact the entrepreneurial intentions of students. | The specific focus on a limited target population from five universities in the capital territory and the exclusive concentration on individual student characteristics. Future research to incorporate additional variables, such as financial support, government assistance, and the economic context, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial intentions. |
| 12 | (Onjewu *et al.*, 2022) | Structural equation modelling  | Nigeria | 1,314 | Distinct dimensions of family business exposure, including parental, familial, and work involvement, have specific and significant effects on university students' entrepreneurial intentions, impacting factors such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes, and subjective norms. | This research involved a sample mainly composed of students from particular states and the importance of incorporating emotional factors alongside cognitive ones. The reliance on cross-sectional data imply that future studies should utilize longitudinal data for monitoring the evolving nature of entrepreneurial behaviour and determining causality. |
| 13 | (Herman, 2019) | Correlation and regression analysis | Romania | 138 | Students' desire to pursue entrepreneurship was mainly shaped by their family's history in entrepreneurship and their individual entrepreneurial qualities. |  |
|   | (Alpkan and Saral, 2019) | ANOVA | Czechia  | 607 | People whose family members were involved in entrepreneurial ventures demonstrated an increased propensity for entrepreneurship. |   |

Source: Authors’ Construct, 2022

Additionally, the geographical scope of these studies needs to be expanded, primarily concentrating on specific regions such as Europe and Asia. At the same time, the dynamics of family background and entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Ghana, still need to be explored. The study expands the geographical scope by focusing on Ghana's unique cultural context, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive perspective on the interplay between family background and entrepreneurial aspirations.

# Theoretical Framework for Entrepreneurial Intentions

## Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides a framework to understand the interplay between beliefs and behaviours, originally conceptualised to predict individual intentions at specific instances (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The TPB emphasises three main determinants: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). In entrepreneurship, the TPB has been adapted to highlight the influence of attitudes towards entrepreneurship, social norms, and perceived control on entrepreneurial intentions (Fretschner & Weber, 2013; Liñán & Chen, 2009). Cárcamo-Solís et al. (2017) further underscored the relevance of these dimensions in evaluating entrepreneurship training's impact. Essentially, personal evaluations of entrepreneurship, societal expectations, and the perceived ease of venture creation shape entrepreneurial ambitions, with attitudes and beliefs predominantly driving intent (Mueller, 2011). Beyond entrepreneurial contexts, the TPB has been effectively employed to understand diverse behaviours, from health-related choices to consumer decisions, emphasising the role of perceptions in driving actions (Ajzen et al., 2009; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

# Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework explains the interplay between intention, commitment to entrepreneurship, and nascent business initiation. Figure 1 presents the multifaceted sub-concepts central to this framework. Foremost, personal attitude emerges as a foundation, dividing into two dimensions: instrumental and affective attitudes. Instrumental attitudes capture entrepreneurs' calculated assessments concerning the tangible prospects and challenges intrinsic to business ventures, such as financial prospects and associated risks. Conversely, affective attitudes involve the emotional appeal and intrinsic motivations that propel individuals towards entrepreneurial pursuits, capturing elements like passion and innate gratification.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on the Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intentions



Source: Adapted from (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen et al., 2009; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Vamvaka et al., 2020)

Externally, the construct of subjective norms underscores the pervasive influence of societal, familial, or peer expectations on entrepreneurial decisions. Entrepreneurs find themselves at the intersection of these external anticipations and their internal drives, navigating a delicate balance that significantly shapes their entrepreneurial commitment and trajectory. The perceived behavioural control (PBC) dimension critically shapes entrepreneurial intentions and subsequent actions. Entrepreneurs engage in a self-assessment gauging their ability to translate aspirations into reality. This self-evaluation encompasses anticipating challenges, from market volatilities to resource limitations, captured as perceived difficulty. Similarly, perceived confidence examines entrepreneurs' self-belief, resilience, and adaptability amidst adversities. Perceived controllability reflects entrepreneurs' convictions regarding their influence over venture outcomes, providing insights into their predominant locus of control orientation.

# Methods

## Sample Techniques and Selection

The study comprised a diverse sample purposively drawn from two (2) public universities, a private university and a technical university in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The sample encompassed final-year university students of varying gender and academic backgrounds. A total of 927 university students were recruited for the study. The stratified random sampling technique, designed to ensure representativeness across gender and academic disciplines, was employed for the quantitative phase.

## Sample Selection Criteria

The study's inclusion criteria included final-year university students across various faculties, departments, and programmes with or without entrepreneurial experience who were sampled to participate. The exclusion criteria included university students in the first, second, and third year, graduate students, and university students in distance and sandwich programmes of the four sampled universities.

## Materials

A structured questionnaire was developed to capture demographic information, personal attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and overall entrepreneurial intentions. Personal attitude was gauged using a six-point Likert scale across two dimensions, affective and instrumental, drawing from Liñán & Chen (2009), Maes et al. (2014) and Vamvaka et al. (2020). Concurrently, subjective norms assessed the perceived approval from close contacts like family and friends, utilising a Likert scale adapted from Kolvereid (1996) and Liñán & Chen (2009). Perceived behavioural control (PBC), encompassing dimensions of perceived difficulty, confidence, and controllability, was measured on a nine-item scale derived from multiple studies (Grundstén, 2004; Guerrero et al., 2009; Kolvereid, 1996; Vamvaka et al., 2020). Lastly, overall entrepreneurial intentions, including choice intention, commitment, and nascent entrepreneurship, were captured through a 14-item Likert scale. These items were sourced from studies including Liñán & Chen (2009) and Thompson (2009), including some reverse-worded items for enhanced robustness.

## Data Collection Procedure

Respondents were recruited through face-to-face interactions on the university campuses, after which questionnaires were shared online. Potential respondents were initially approached through classroom announcements detailing the study’s objectives, procedures, and potential implications, after which samples were drawn using the stated sampling technique. Data collection commenced on 30th May 2023 and concluded on 13th September 2023.

## Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS (version 23) and Excel. In cases where the dependent variable was ordinal, and the independent variables were dichotomous, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was employed. The Mann-Whitney U test is appropriate for comparing two independent groups without making assumptions about the normal distribution of the data (Dehaene et al., 2021; Hart, 2001; Holt & Sullivan, 2023). It was used, for example, to examine differences in responses between groups such as students who had entrepreneurial family backgrounds and those who had not.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was secured from the Institutional Review Board at Ashesi University, Berekuso (Reference number: 1302023). Introductory letters from the Department of Planning, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, vouched for the research team's credibility during data collection. Participants gave informed consent electronically before questionnaire administration. They were informed of the study's objectives, processes, and their rights, ensuring voluntary participation. Participants indicated their consent by clicking to participate in the study or declining participation. For participants who declined to participate, the questionnaire was terminated. Data confidentiality was upheld, with access limited to the researcher and supervisory committee. Proper citations were meticulously provided to uphold intellectual integrity, ensuring due credit to original works and ideas.

# Results

## Profile of Respondents

A total of 927 participants were recruited for the study. As presented in Table 3, the sample comprised 53.7% females and 46.3% males. The predominant age bracket was 21-25 years, representing 73.0% of the participants, with fewer individuals aged above 40 years. Disciplinary representation showcased social sciences and humanities (35.6%) as the leading fields, succeeded by built environment (16.6%) and business (13.7%). Less represented fields included multidisciplinary (5.2) and engineering (2.8%).

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Categories | Frequency | Percent (%) |
| Gender | Male | 429 | 46.3 |
|  | Female | 498 | 53.7 |
| Age | 21-25 years old | 667 | 72 |
|  | 26-30 years old | 77 | 8.3 |
|  | 31-35 years old | 50 | 5.4 |
|  | 36-40 years old | 20 | 2.2 |
|  | 41-45 years old | 10 | 1.1 |
|  | 46-50 years old | 2 | 0.2 |
|  | Under 20 years old | 101 | 10.9 |
| Field of study | Arts | 44 | 4.7 |
|  | Built environment | 154 | 16.6 |
|  | Business | 127 | 13.7 |
|  | Engineering | 26 | 2.8 |
|  | Health sciences | 118 | 12.7 |
|  | Humanities and Social Sciences | 330 | 35.6 |
|  | Multidisciplinary  | 48 | 5.2 |
|  | Sciences and mathematics | 80 | 8.6 |
| Entrepreneurial family background | No | 217 | 23.4 |
|  | Yes | 710 | 76.6 |

Source: Survey Data, 2023

## Occupational Choice Dynamics of Entrepreneurial Intentions

The Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon W test, shown in Table 4, were used to compare the two groups of respondents who expressed their occupational choice intention: to be an entrepreneur or to be employed by someone else based on the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference in entrepreneurial intention between individuals who want to be entrepreneurs and those who want to be employed by someone else in terms of their instrumental attitude, affective attitude, subjective norm, perceived difficulty, perceived confidence, perceived controllability, choice intention, commitment to an entrepreneurial career, and nascent entrepreneurship.

Table 4: Occupational Choice Dynamics of Entrepreneurial Intentions

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Mann-Whitney U | Wilcoxon W | Z | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Instrumental attitude | 57231.5 | 72109.5 | -2.451 | 0.014 |
| Affective attitude | 47996 | 62874 | -5.386 | 0.000 |
| Subjective norm | 55020.5 | 69898.5 | -3.162 | 0.002 |
| Perceived difficulty | 58571.5 | 73449.5 | -1.931 | 0.054 |
| Perceived confidence | 48474.5 | 63352.5 | -5.218 | 0.000 |
| Perceived controllability | 54926.5 | 69804.5 | -3.079 | 0.002 |
| Choice intention | 44753 | 59631 | -6.388 | 0.000 |
| Commitment to an entrepreneurial career | 42697 | 57575 | -7.043 | 0.000 |
| Nascent entrepreneurship | 51733 | 66611 | -4.13 | 0.000 |

Source: Survey Data, 2023

The study's results, as shown in Table 4, reject the null hypothesis, indicating significant differences between aspiring entrepreneurs and those who prefer traditional employment. Specifically, individuals with entrepreneurial intentions exhibited significantly higher instrumental attitudes (U = 57231.500, p = 0.014), affective attitudes (U = 47996.000, p < 0.001), and subjective norms (U = 55020.500, p = 0.002) compared to those inclined toward traditional employment. While no significant difference was found in perceived difficulty, those with entrepreneurial intentions displayed higher perceived confidence (U = 48474.500, p < 0.001). Additionally, these individuals showed significantly higher choice intentions (U = 44753.000, p < 0.001), commitment to an entrepreneurial career (U = 42697.000, p < 0.001), and nascent entrepreneurship tendencies (U = 51733.000, p < 0.001).

## Gender Dynamics of Entrepreneurial Intention

The Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon W test shown in Table 5 examine the gender dynamics of entrepreneurial intention by exploring differences in intentions between males and females based on the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis**: There is no significant difference in entrepreneurial intention between males and females in terms of their instrumental attitude, affective attitude, subjective norm, perceived difficulty, perceived confidence, perceived controllability, choice intention, commitment to an entrepreneurial career, and nascent entrepreneurship.

Table 5: Gender Differences in the Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intentions

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable | Mann-Whitney U | Wilcoxon W | Z | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Instrumental attitude | 106622.5 | 198857.5 | -0.049 | 0.961 |
| Affective attitude | 105609 | 197844 | -0.301 | 0.764 |
| Subjective norm | 96813 | 189048 | -2.49 | 0.013 |
| Perceived difficulty | 91170.5 | 183405.5 | -3.707 | 0.000 |
| Perceived confidence | 102206 | 194441 | -1.141 | 0.254 |
| Perceived controllability | 93540.5 | 185775.5 | -3.092 | 0.002 |
| Choice intention | 99868.5 | 192103.5 | -1.716 | 0.086 |
| Commitment to an entrepreneurial career | 94162 | 186397 | -3.126 | 0.002 |
| Nascent entrepreneurship | 99614 | 190992 | -1.66 | 0.097 |

Source: Survey Data, 2023

As shown in Table 5, the study revealed significant gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions. Female participants scored significantly higher in subjective norms (Z = -2.490, p = 0.013), perceived difficulty (Z = -3.707, p < 0.001), perceived controllability (Z = -3.092, p = 0.002), and commitment to entrepreneurship (Z = -3.126, p = 0.002) compared to their male counterparts. However, no significant gender variations were observed in perceived confidence and nascent entrepreneurship.

## Family Background Dynamics of Entrepreneurial Intention

Table 6 presents findings from the Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon W test examining the differences in entrepreneurial intentions between individuals from entrepreneurial backgrounds and those from non-entrepreneurial backgrounds based on the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis**: There is no significant difference in entrepreneurial intention between individuals from entrepreneurial family backgrounds and those from non-entrepreneurial backgrounds in terms of their instrumental attitude, affective attitude, subjective norm, perceived difficulty, perceived confidence, perceived controllability, choice intention, commitment to an entrepreneurial career, and nascent entrepreneurship.

Table 6: Comparison of Entrepreneurial Intentions Between Individuals from Entrepreneurial and Non-Entrepreneurial Family Backgrounds

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Mann-Whitney U | Wilcoxon W | Z | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Instrumental attitude | 70351.5 | 93787.5 | -1.855 | 0.064 |
| Affective attitude | 74198.5 | 326603.5 | -0.727 | 0.467 |
| Subjective norm | 69825 | 93261 | -2.014 | 0.044 |
| Perceived difficulty | 75450 | 326436 | -0.091 | 0.928 |
| Perceived confidence | 74854 | 98290 | -0.533 | 0.594 |
| Perceived controllability | 76214 | 99650 | -0.01 | 0.992 |
| Choice intention | 74815 | 327220 | -0.544 | 0.587 |
| Commitment to an entrepreneurial career | 75736 | 328141 | -0.275 | 0.783 |
| Nascent entrepreneurship | 76023 | 327009 | -0.129 | 0.898 |

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 6 presents the findings from the Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon W test, examining the differences in entrepreneurial intentions between individuals from entrepreneurial backgrounds and those from non-entrepreneurial backgrounds. Participants from entrepreneurial family backgrounds exhibited higher subjective norms (Z = -2.014, p = 0.044), indicating a more significant influence from familial expectations on entrepreneurship. However, no significant differences were observed in instrumental attitudes, affective attitudes, or choice intentions between these participants and those from non-entrepreneurial backgrounds. Both groups showed similar perceptions regarding difficulty, confidence, controllability, commitment, and nascent entrepreneurship.

# Discussions

The results underscore the stronger positive attitudes and societal approval that aspiring entrepreneurs possess compared to individuals leaning toward traditional employment. The significantly higher instrumental attitudes, affective attitudes, and subjective norms among aspiring entrepreneurs suggest that these individuals perceive entrepreneurship more favourably and feel more supported by their social environment. Interestingly, both groups perceived similar challenges regarding entrepreneurship, as indicated by the lack of significant difference in perceived difficulty. However, the higher perceived confidence among aspiring entrepreneurs suggests a firm belief in their capabilities to overcome these challenges. This confidence likely plays a crucial role in driving their greater commitment and stronger intention towards an entrepreneurial career. Moreover, the significantly higher levels of nascent entrepreneurship among those with entrepreneurial intentions highlight a proactive approach. This suggests that their entrepreneurial aspirations are not merely abstract intentions but are being translated into tangible actions, demonstrating a clear pathway from intention to action in the entrepreneurial journey.

The significant gender variations observed in subjective norms, perceived difficulty, controllability, and commitment to entrepreneurship align with previous studies, such as those by Santos et al. (2016), Coelho & Lira (2021), and Robledo et al. (2015), which emphasise women’s greater sensitivity to social norms and higher tendencies toward entrepreneurship. This suggests that women may be more attuned to societal expectations and face greater perceived challenges, yet they demonstrate a stronger commitment to entrepreneurship. Yordanova & Tarrazon (2010) similarly found that women perceive entrepreneurship as more challenging, while Haase et al. (2012) highlighted women’s perceptions of the controllability of entrepreneurship. Additionally, Donaldson et al. (2023) noted women’s more substantial commitments to entrepreneurial careers, further supporting the findings of this study. However, the study did not find gender differences in instrumental attitudes, affective attitudes, and choice intentions, which contrasts with the findings of Maes et al. (2014) and Contreras-Barraza et al. (2021). This divergence suggests that further exploration of these dynamics is needed, as the overall findings across various dimensions of entrepreneurial intentions do not align with much of the existing literature. For instance, studies (Alpkan & Saral, 2019; Barron et al., 2022; Haase et al., 2012; Maes et al., 2014; Sánchez, 2012; Santos et al., 2016; Vodă & Florea, 2019; Yordanova & Tarrazon, 2010) have generally reported that males exhibit higher entrepreneurial intentions than females. The current study’s findings challenge this narrative, pointing to a more distinct understanding of gender dynamics in entrepreneurial intentions.

The results align with many studies that highlight the influence of family background on entrepreneurial intentions. The higher subjective norms among participants from entrepreneurial families suggest a stronger impact of familial expectations, consistent with studies (Alpkan & Saral, 2019; Coelho & Lira, 2021; Farrukh et al., 2017; Georgescu & Herman, 2020; Herman, 2019; Kumar et al., 2022; Saeed et al., 2014; Venkatapathy & Pretheeba, 2014; Wang et al., 2018). These studies suggest that individuals from entrepreneurial backgrounds may feel more societal or familial pressure to pursue entrepreneurship, which can shape their intentions. However, the lack of significant differences in instrumental attitudes, affective attitudes, or choice intentions indicates that the influence of an entrepreneurial family background is complex and not uniform across all aspects of entrepreneurial intention. Kumar et al. (2022) found that the influence of family background on entrepreneurial intentions was maternal rather than paternal, suggesting that the overall family background alone does not entirely shape these intentions. Additionally, Venkatapathy & Pretheeba (2014) and Hadjimanolis & Poutziouris (2011) noted that having entrepreneurial family members does not necessarily lead to a stronger inclination towards entrepreneurship. The similar perceptions of difficulty, confidence, controllability, commitment, and nascent entrepreneurship between the two groups further emphasize this complexity. Ehsanfar et al. (2021) found that an entrepreneurial family background could lower entrepreneurial intention, indicating that the presence of entrepreneurship in the family might not always serve as a motivating factor. Additionally, Hahn et al. (2021) emphasised that the influence of family background on entrepreneurial intention depends on various factors, such as the entrepreneurial parents' performance and the success of the family business. Contrary to much of the literature that suggests a positive relationship between entrepreneurial family background and entrepreneurial intentions, these findings indicate that the dynamics are multifaceted. The role of family background, while influential in some aspects, may not be as straightforward in shaping overall entrepreneurial intentions. This calls for a more detailed understanding of how family experiences with entrepreneurship impact individuals' entrepreneurial aspirations.

# Limitations

Firstly, the research primarily concentrates on entrepreneurial intentions among final-year university students in selected universities in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. This potentially limits the generalizability of findings to a broader demographic. Also, the reliance on self-reported data from students introduces the possibility of response biases and social desirability effects. This impacts the accuracy of insights into gender and family background dynamics. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional nature provides a snapshot of entrepreneurial intentions. The dynamic and evolving nature of entrepreneurial pursuits may need to be fully captured in future studies.

# Conclusions

This study examined the dynamics of entrepreneurial intentions across the dimensions of occupational choice, gender, and family background. The study’s findings indicate that individuals aspiring to be entrepreneurs possess a more positive outlook toward entrepreneurship and greater confidence in their abilities than their counterparts inclined toward traditional employment. Female participants demonstrate higher subjective norms, perceived difficulty, perceived controllability, and commitment to entrepreneurship than males. This highlights women’s greater sensitivity to societal expectations and challenges in entrepreneurship. However, no significant gender differences exist in perceived confidence and nascent entrepreneurship, indicating that men and women approach the entrepreneurial journey with similar levels of self-assurance and proactivity. The influence of family background on entrepreneurial intentions is complex. While individuals from entrepreneurial families exhibit higher subjective norms, there are no significant differences in other key dimensions such as instrumental attitudes, affective attitudes, and choice intentions compared to those from non-entrepreneurial backgrounds. This finding challenges the assumption that a family history of entrepreneurship uniformly encourages entrepreneurial intentions. The impact of family background depends on specific familial dynamics and experiences with entrepreneurship.

# Contribution to Knowledge

The study explores distinctions in inclinations between prospective entrepreneurs and those gravitating towards traditional employment. It uncovers an increasing societal endorsement for entrepreneurial pursuits, with budding entrepreneurs showcasing more favourable attitudes and greater confidence in navigating associated challenges. Further, gender-specific disparities emerge prominently, with women entrepreneurs navigating unique challenges, thereby adding depth to our comprehension of the interplay between societal norms and entrepreneurial trajectories. The study also highlights the complex role of family background in entrepreneurial intentions. While an entrepreneurial family influences subjective norms, it does not uniformly impact most dimensions of intention. The influence of family dynamics on entrepreneurial aspirations is therefore contentious.

## Implications for Policy and Practice

The research underscores the pivotal role of entrepreneurial education within Ghana's education system. A strategic recommendation is the integration of entrepreneurship as a core subject from secondary to tertiary education. Collaborative efforts between institutions like the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Plan (NEIP) are crucial to ensure effectiveness. Supplementing theoretical knowledge with practical exposure, establishing entrepreneurship clubs across institutions can provide students with platforms to ideate, collaborate, and initiate ventures. Additionally, fostering partnerships with local businesses and entrepreneurs for mentorships and internships can significantly enhance students' experiential learning.

Moreover, the research emphasises the significant influence of familial backgrounds on entrepreneurial intentions. To leverage this influence positively, there is a compelling need for awareness campaigns targeting families across socio-economic divides. Organisations like the Ghana Enterprises Agency (GEA) could lead such initiatives, emphasising the broader societal benefits of entrepreneurship. Collaborative endeavours with bodies like The African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) can further enhance these awareness campaigns, tapping into existing community networks and expertise. By equipping families with the requisite resources and knowledge through workshops and capacity-building initiatives, Ghana can cultivate an environment where entrepreneurial aspirations thrive, ultimately driving sustainable economic growth.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Given the current study's findings, future research could emphasise role models rather than solely examining family background's influence. Additionally, future studies should consider other psychological factors like locus of control, innovativeness, emotional intelligence, and values shaped by socialisation agents. These elements could significantly impact entrepreneurial intentions and warrant exploration. Lastly, addressing the observed gender disparities in entrepreneurial engagement in Ghana requires focused research to identify and address specific challenges women entrepreneurs face to facilitate a more inclusive entrepreneurial environment.

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