International Journal of Education and Psychological Science (IJEPS)
Vol. 4 No. 2, 2026: 147-154

Self-Efficacy as Predictor of Entrepreneurial Engagements among Youth Samples

Chidinma P. Nebo[1], Ekaette N. Ufeh[2], Emmanuel E. Uye[3]*
[1]Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo
[2]Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Aro, Abeokuta, Ogun State
[3]University of Ibadan
Corresponding Author: Emmanuel E. Uye **emmanuel.e.uye@gmail.com**

A R T I C L E I N F O
Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Entrepreneurial Engagements, Youth Samples

Received: 28, January
Revised: 27, February
Accepted: 31, March

A B S T R A C T
Entrepreneurial engagements have been receiving awareness as a potential panacea to unemployment situations in Nigeria. Studies have used different predictors to investigate youths' entrepreneurial engagements with varied results. This study examines the predictive role of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial engagements among youth samples in Rivers state, Nigeria. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted while a purposive sampling method was used to select the study population. Data were collected from 219 participants using validated questionnaires and analyzed with simple linear regression to test one hypothesis that was accepted at p <. 001 level of significance. The result demonstrates self-efficacy having a significant relationship with entrepreneurial engagement among study participants, $R^2 = .387$, $F(1, 218) = 39.48$, $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, the result indicates self-efficacy independently predicted entrepreneurial engagement among study participants ($\beta = .622$, $p < .001$). The study concludes that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of entrepreneurial engagements among study participants. The study recommends that government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and higher institutions should design and implement entrepreneurship development programs that would enhance self-efficacy among potential entrepreneurs.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.59890/ijeps.v4i2.334
ISSN-E: 3030-8410
https://dmimultitechpublisher.my.id/index.php/ijeps

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial engagement involves the planning, initiation, and management of income-generating activities by individuals especially those driven by innovation, opportunity, or necessity. Entrepreneurial engagements come in different forms and types. It ranges from street vending and digital marketing to operating barbing salons, food services, and clothing lines (Okojie & Shimwaava, 2018). While many youths have demonstrated impressive entrepreneurial creativity, some have remained passive or somehow inclined to white-collar job expectations, even in the face of limited job availability.

Some factors such as access to capital, government policies, motivation, risk tolerance, and social support have been implicated as predictors of entrepreneurial engagements (Gielnik et al., 2014, Roberts et al., 2026). However, in this study, self-efficacy would be investigated. Self-efficacy refers to individuals' belief in their ability to accomplish specific tasks (Bandura, 1997). In addition, it reflects the self-belief of an individual that is not just persistent in performing difficult and novel tasks, but that such individuals would cope with adversity. In the context of entrepreneurship, self-efficacy connotes whether individuals' perceive themselves as capable of successfully launching and managing a business (Chen et al., 1998; Urban, 2020; Yusuff & Olagunju, 2020).

In the context of the study population, youths in Obio/Akpor with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to overcome the challenges of entrepreneurship, including financial constraints and market competition. New entrepreneurial engagements are considered successful when they survive the start-up period, generate sufficient income to their entrepreneurs, and when businesses start to grow in terms of job creation and innovation activities.

Some studies have been carried out on self-efficacy on entrepreneurial engagements among different populations and samples. For instance, Chen et al. (1998) found that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is positively related to the intention and likelihood of starting a business. In addition, Hmieleski and Corbett (2008) reported that entrepreneurs with higher self-efficacy are more innovative and resilient in uncertain business environments. Another confirmation was from Zhao et al. (2010) who found that self-efficacy strongly predicts entrepreneurial intentions across different contexts. In the Nigerian context, Oulhou and Ibourk (2023) and Opinwa (2025) demonstrated that self-efficacy significantly predicts youths' entrepreneurial drives, particularly in overcoming financial and structural barriers.

Youth entrepreneurial engagement has been seen as a potential panacea to unemployment. Although many youths are now showing interest in starting businesses, few successfully establish and sustain viable ventures. Most youth-led businesses are short-lived, poorly structured, or stagnant due to various challenges. External barriers like limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, lack of mentorship, and inconsistent government support hinder business growth.

Although some external factors have been used to investigate predictors of entrepreneurial engagement with varied results, however, few studies have used psychological factors to examine entrepreneurial engagement especially among youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, thus leaving gaps in knowledge to fill.

Therefore, this study examines the predictive role of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial engagement among youths in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) in Rivers state, Nigeria. The study sought to answer the question: Will self-efficacy predict entrepreneurial engagement among youths in Obio/Akpor LGA?

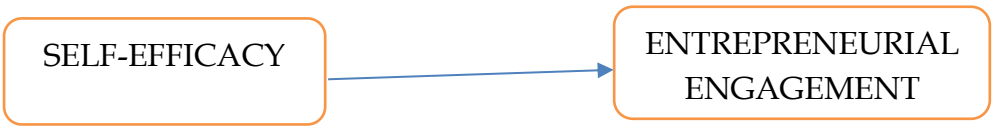
The findings of this study would help youths to develop the confidence mindset needed for entrepreneurship. In addition, it would guide policymakers in designing effective youth empowerment programs. Furthermore, it would assist educators in improving entrepreneurship education, and support business organizations in enhancing training programs. Finally, it would contribute valuable insights to existing literature on youth entrepreneurship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was anchored on the Entrepreneurial Intention Model (EIM) developed by Krueger et al. (2000). EIM asserts that entrepreneurial intentions, which is the conscious state of mind that precedes and directs entrepreneurial behavior, are the most reliable predictors of whether an individual will take concrete steps to start a business. Intentions reflect the motivational factors that influence a person's decision to engage in entrepreneurship. EIM has two key cognitive beliefs: perceived desirability and perceived feasibility. Whereas the perceived desirability refers to the degree to which an individual views entrepreneurship as an attractive and worthwhile career option, perceived feasibility, on the other hand, reflects the individual's confidence in their ability to successfully perform the tasks necessary to launch and sustain a business.

These two constructs in the EIM closely align with the psychological factor of self-efficacy which predicts youths' entrepreneurial engagements. Perceived feasibility closely mirrors the concept of self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to organize, execute, and manage the tasks necessary for entrepreneurial success. Individuals with high entrepreneurial self-efficacy would tend to have increased perceived feasibility, fostering confidence that the individuals would navigate the complexities of starting and sustaining a business. Youths with strong self-efficacy are more likely to translate entrepreneurial intentions into actual ventures because they trust their capacity to overcome obstacles.

Conceptual Review



- The hypothesis tested was: Self-efficacy will independently predict entrepreneurial engagements among youth samples in Obio/Akpor LGA, Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design while validated questionnaires were used to collect data from study participants. The independent variable was self-efficacy and the dependent variable was entrepreneurial engagements.

Setting

The study was carried out in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers state, Nigeria. The LGA is one of the 23 LGAs in the State and is part of the Port Harcourt metropolis. The LGA is known for its vibrant urban setting, high population density, and commercial activity. It is predominantly inhabited by the Ikwerre ethnic group but accommodates diverse populations due to internal migration and economic opportunities. The LGA is considered a hub for youth-driven activities and small-scale entrepreneurial engagements, making it a relevant and strategic location for studying entrepreneurial engagement among Nigerian youths.

Population of the Study

The target population comprises youths between 18 and 35 years of age residing in LGA who are either currently engaged in or have shown interest in starting entrepreneurial engagements.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the LGA while convenience sampling technique was used to select the study participants.

Data Collection Method

Potential participants were approached in strategic locations including youth centers, recreational hubs, shopping malls, religious centers, etc. Potential participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were asked for their consent to participate in the study. They were informed of the voluntary nature of the study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Only those who agreed to participate were given the questionnaires to fill which took less than 14 minutes. The questionnaires were collected back on the spot. A total of 223 were administered, however, during screening and coding four questionnaires were not properly filled and were removed leaving 219 questionnaires used for the analysis.

Instruments

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES, Chen et al., 2001) was used to measure participants' belief in their ability to succeed in challenging situations. The scale consisted of 8 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type format ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). Sample items include: "I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges" and "In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me" The study obtained Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$.

Business Engagement Assessment (UK-Government Programm) was used to determine participants' degree of entrepreneurial engagements. It consisted of 12 items focusing on practical entrepreneurial involvement, decision-making, and persistence. It is rated on a 7-point Likert's format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Sample items include: "My colleagues

value entrepreneurial activity above other activities and careers" and "In my community, entrepreneurial activity is considered to be worthwhile, despite the risks". The study obtained Cronbach's α = 0.80.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS version 26 was used for data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. Hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression. The hypothesis was accepted at p <. 001 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test the relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial engagement, a zero-order correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 1. Zero-Order Correlation of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Entrepreneurial Engagement	45.2348	7.15069	-	
2. Self-Efficacy	63.5696	11.05453	.622	-

The zero-order correlation analysis established a statistically positive significant relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial engagements (r=.622, p <.001). This coefficient signifies high effect size with the squared correlation (R^2 = .387) suggesting that approximately 38.7% of the variance in entrepreneurial engagement scores was explained by self-efficacy.

H1: Self-efficacy will independently predict entrepreneurial engagements among youths in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression and the results are presented in Table 2a-c.

Table 2a. Model of Self-Efficacy on Entrepreneurial Engagements

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.622a	.387	.384	6.214

Table 2b. ANOVA of Self-Efficacy on Entrepreneurial Engagements

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1520.311	1	1520.311	39.48	.000b
Residual	2434.689	218	11.171		
Total	3955.000	219			

Table 2c. Coefficients of Self-Efficacy on Entrepreneurial engagements

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	14.623	1.742	–	8.39	.000
Self-Efficacy	0.428	0.068	.622	6.29	.000

Table 2a-c presents simple linear regression of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial engagements among youths in Obio/Akpor. The regression model was significant [F (1, 218) = 39.48, p < 0.001], explaining 38.7% of the variance (R^2 =.387). This means that for every one-unit increase in self-efficacy, entrepreneurial engagement increased by .428 units (β = .622, p <.001). The result

implies that self-efficacy significantly predict youth entrepreneurial engagements in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

The hypothesis that self-efficacy will independently predict entrepreneurial engagement among youth samples in Obio/Akpor LGA was confirmed. This finding means that youths with higher belief in their ability to perform entrepreneurial tasks would be more likely to initiate and sustain entrepreneurial engagements. The result shows that self-efficacy explained nearly 39% of the variance in entrepreneurial engagements which underscores its centrality in determining entrepreneurial behavior. In the context of entrepreneurial engagement, a youth with strong self-efficacy is more confident in recognizing opportunities, mobilizing resources, and navigating challenges compared to youth with low self-efficacy who are likely to avoid entrepreneurial risks and settle for less demanding alternatives.

This finding supported Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory on youths' entrepreneurial engagements. Bandura argued that self-efficacy determines individuals' motivation, efforts, persistence, and resilience in pursuing challenging tasks. As entrepreneurship is inherently demanding, requiring individuals to cope with uncertainty, manage risks, and persist in the face of repeated obstacles. In this regard, self-efficacy plays a pivotal role because youths who believe in their ability to succeed are more likely to choose entrepreneurship as a viable path, invest sustained effort, and remain committed to their goals even when confronted with difficulties.

In addition, Bandura emphasizes that self-efficacy influences thought patterns and emotional regulation, meaning that individuals with higher efficacy interpret stress and uncertainty as manageable challenges rather than insurmountable barriers. This psychological framing is particularly important for entrepreneurship in environments where limited resources, market fluctuations, and infrastructural gaps could easily discourage potential entrepreneurs. The study showed that self-efficacy remains a significant predictor of entrepreneurial engagements strengthens the argument that it provides youths with the psychological foundation to act decisively and persistently.

Furthermore, Bandura explains that self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences, observation of role models, encouragement from others, and the interpretation of emotional states. These insights suggest practical pathways for fostering entrepreneurship among youths. In the study population, the culture of "familial-apprenticeship programs" provide young individuals with small but successful business experiences, exposure to peers and community members who have succeeded in business, mentorship opportunities, and training in stress management could all help build self-efficacy(Roberts et al., 2023). Such interventions not only increase the likelihood that youths would attempt entrepreneurial engagements but also improve their chances of sustaining them over time.

Taking together, Bandura's theory and these study's findings aligns with the conclusion that self-efficacy is not merely a background factor but a direct driver of entrepreneurial engagement. It shapes whether youths see business as

attainable, whether they are motivated to pursue it, and whether they can persist when challenges arise. This explains why the statistical analysis demonstrated such a significant effect: self-efficacy provides the belief system that transforms entrepreneurial intentions into sustained business activities. Thus, the hypothesis that self-efficacy significantly influences youth entrepreneurial engagements is strongly supported both theoretically and empirically. In the context of the study population where youths face high unemployment and limited formal job opportunities, self-efficacy becomes a psychological trigger that determines whether entrepreneurship is even seen as a feasible alternative. The results of this study, which shows that self-efficacy explained a significant portion of variance in youths' entrepreneurial engagements, mirror Chen et al's 1998) conclusion. Youths with higher efficacy are more likely to perceive business ownership not just as desirable but as personally achievable, which increases their readiness to act on entrepreneurial ideas (Opinwa, 2025). This theoretical and empirical alignment demonstrates that the hypothesis is well-founded: the stronger the self-efficacy beliefs, the greater the likelihood of initiating entrepreneurial engagements. Conclusively, these findings confirm that self-efficacy enhances confidence, problem-solving, and resilience, key factors necessary for youths to engage in viable entrepreneurial engagements.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study offers the following recommendations:

The government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and higher institutions should design and implement entrepreneurship development programs that explicitly enhance self-efficacy. Practical workshops, mentorship schemes, and simulation exercises should be employed to build youths' confidence in their ability to start, manage, and expand entrepreneurial engagements. Training that focuses on problem-solving, creativity, and leadership would empower youths with the psychological capital required for entrepreneurship.

To sustain entrepreneurial motivation, the government and private sector should provide support mechanisms such as grants, start-up capital, tax incentives, and recognition awards for outstanding youth entrepreneurs. In addition, creating entrepreneurial hubs and incubators in Obio/Akpor would provide an enabling environment that motivates youths by reducing barriers and offering continuous encouragement to pursue their ventures.

FURTHER STUDY

Because the study was conducted in only one LGA out of 23 LGAs of Rivers State, it limits generalization of the study findings. Therefore, further study should include more LGAs possibly beyond the State to enhance generalization of study findings. In addition, the use of self-reported questionnaires introduced response bias, suggesting further study to include group discussion and key informants to triangulate data collected from self-reported questionnaires. Moreover, the use of cross-sectional surveys did not allow establishing cause and effect, therefore, longitudinal studies would be

better suited to observe how self-efficacy would predict entrepreneurial behavior over time. Finally, self-efficacy as a predictor of entrepreneurial engagement other factors such as access to capital, family background, government policies, and social support systems were not directly investigated. These factors should be investigated in further study.

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