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Entrepreneurship Education and Environpreneurial Alertness as Predictors of Social Entrepreneurial Intentions among Business Education Students in State Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract

With rising social problems and unemployment, promoting alternative employment opportunities through social entrepreneurship becomes crucial. In this study, business education students in State Universities in Nigeria had their social entrepreneurial and environpreneurial intents and alertness predicted. The study was led by four research questions and three hypotheses that were tested at a significance level of 0.05. A correlational survey design was employed. All 382 final-year business education students from five state-based tertiary institutions in Nigeria made up the population. The Entrepreneurship Education, Environpreneurial alertness and Social Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EASEIQ), which was validated by three experts, was used to gather data. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the instrument's dependability; the result was a coefficient of 0.81, 0.87 and 0.85 respectively. Multiple regression, simple linear regression, and Pearson product-moment correlation were used for data analysis. The result showed that students' intentions to engage in social entrepreneurship were significantly predicted by both environpreneurial alertness ($R^2 = .267$, $F(2, 242) = 87.975$, $p < .05$) and entrepreneurship education ($R^2 = .171$, $F(2, 242) = 50.035$, $p < .05$). In light of this result, promoting social entrepreneurship education was recommended.

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship education is a critical area of focus for policymakers, educators, and researchers globally. It equips students with the skills, knowledge, and mindset to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. In developing countries like Nigeria, where economic challenges are significant, entrepreneurship education goes beyond personal success. It empowers students to become agents of positive societal change. As Hagg, Politis and Alsos (2022) suggest, it fosters entrepreneurial knowledge, identity, and ultimately, a larger pool of entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship education goes beyond simply teaching business skills. It's a structured process, as defined by Alkali and Musa (2020) that instills competencies like innovation, calculated risk-taking, and proactiveness. It's transformative, encouraging students to think and act with an entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurship education is not just about starting businesses; it's about empowering students to develop solutions to social, environmental, and economic challenges in their communities.

Sulaiman and Wan-Fauziah (2013) highlight this by emphasizing how Entrepreneurship Education (EE) aims to shift students' perspectives and equip them with the skills to become self-employed or create innovative solutions. Ideally, all students in higher education should have access to EE to equip them with the skills necessary to navigate the current socioeconomic scenery (Ediagboya, 2022a, 2022b). The ultimate goal is to empower students to be creative, take calculated risks, and develop innovative solutions to real-world problems (Scott, 2018). As Kuratko and Hornsby (2019) point out, the growing popularity of EE stems from its potential to drive economic growth, job creation, and innovation.

Research shows that entrepreneurship education significantly influences students' entrepreneurial intentions and capabilities (Daneshjoovash & Hosseini, 2019). It encourages a mindset conducive to identifying and seizing opportunities, while equipping them with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of business creation. Entrepreneurial ventures can increase productivity, stimulate economic growth, reduce poverty, and address various socioeconomic issues. This focus on social impact has given rise to the concept of Social Entrepreneurship, a growing field that leverages business principles to address social challenges.

Social entrepreneurial thrives on identifying and acting upon opportunities that address both social

and economic needs. High entrepreneurial attention, the ability to spot these opportunities, significantly enhances the effectiveness and innovativeness of such ventures (Tiwari et al., 2017; Sousa et al., 2023). This approach has particular significance in developing nations where social inequalities and economic disparities persist (Tiwari et al., 2017). Tiwari et al. (2017) and Hattab (2023) describe social entrepreneurial as a process that starts with identifying a social need, transforming it into a viable business model, securing resources, and launching and growing the venture to achieve its social goals.

The driving force behind social entrepreneurial is the social entrepreneur. These individuals are distinguished by several key characteristics: (i) a mission-driven focus on creating and sustaining social value, not just personal gain; (ii) a keen eye for new opportunities that align with their mission; (iii) a commitment to continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning; (iv) a bold approach that isn't limited by current resources; and (v) a high degree of accountability to the communities they serve. These characteristics position social entrepreneurs as change agents within the social sector (Ahmed, Tundikabyela, & Ahmed, 2019).

Social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) is the goal to use business to bring about and maintain social change. The likelihood of launching a social enterprise is significantly influenced by this purpose. Motivated by a desire to provide enduring social impact, social entrepreneurs aggressively search out opportunities that support this goal and never stop learning and growing.

SEI can be understood as the deliberate decision to launch a new venture with the specific goal of creating social change. It also encompasses a mindset – a desire, a hope, and a motivation that propels the entrepreneur towards a novel business concept (Rozar et al., 2020; Ruiz-Rosa et al., 2020; Aloulou et al., 2023). This aligns with Tran and Korfflesch's (2016) view of SEI as a deeply held belief, a catalyst, and a combination of desire, determination, and commitment that drives individuals to create social enterprises. Social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) is the specific decision of an entrepreneur to launch a venture that addresses social needs. It reflects a mental state characterized by desires, aspirations, and a commitment to pursuing a novel business concept with a positive social impact (Rozar et al., 2020; Ruiz-Rosa et al., 2020; Aloulou et al., 2023). Korffleisch (2016) expands on SEI, describing it as a deep-seated conviction that motivates a business owner or individual to establish a social enterprise.

This intention can be influenced by factors like entrepreneurship education, an individual's natural alertness to opportunities and environprenerial alertness.

Environpreneual alertness is the ability to see and seize new business opportunities. It involves actively scanning and searching for information, identifying connections between seemingly unrelated data points, and evaluating their potential economic value. This attentiveness is a core aspect of entrepreneurial action, driving the identification and pursuit of promising ventures. Building on Kirzner's (1979) notion of alertness, which emphasizes identifying opportunities others might miss, can further be define as the ability to: Search for information: Actively seek out new data and insights; Make connections: Identify relationships between previously unconnected pieces of information; and Assess potential: Evaluate the viability and profitability of new business ideas. This concept of alertness aligns with the "entrepreneurial cognitive school of thought" (Lanivich et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022). This school emphasizes how an entrepreneur's cognitive framework, shaped by alertness, influences their interpretation of information and perception of the market, ultimately guiding their pursuit of opportunities (Li et al., 2022). Eteh (2020) further emphasizes the critical role of environprenerial alertness in the Environpreneual process, as it shapes how entrepreneurs see and evaluate external prospects.

Environpreneual alertness can be viewed as a cognitive process with several key components, echoing Tang et al.'s (2012) definition: searching and scanning: actively seeking out new information; association and connection: identifying relationships between diverse information; and assessment and judgment: evaluating the potential of identified opportunities. By honing these skills, entrepreneurs can develop a sharper eye for spotting and seizing valuable business opportunities, be they social ventures or traditional for-profit enterprises.

Statement of the problem

The importance of entrepreneurship education in igniting entrepreneurial spirit is widely recognized. Entrepreneurship education equips students with the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to launch businesses. Social entrepreneurial tackles critical social issues like poverty and environmental degradation, offering sustainable solutions. State-owned universities in Nigeria, with their distinct social challenges and developing economies, provide a compelling context

to investigate the potential of entrepreneurship education in nurturing social entrepreneurs.

However, research on its impact on social entrepreneurial intentions is limited, especially in developing regions like States in north-east Nigeria. Given their unique socioeconomic challenges, research on social entrepreneurial intentions in these areas is particularly relevant. Environpreneual alertness, the ability to identify and capitalize on overlooked business opportunities, is another crucial but under-researched factor. Little is known about its relationship with social entrepreneurial intentions. Understanding how both entrepreneurship education and Environpreneual alertness contribute to predicting social entrepreneurial intentions is essential for developing effective educational programs that support social ventures.

Purpose of the study

This study predicted the relationship between entrepreneurship education and Environpreneual alertness on Business Education students' intentions to pursue social entrepreneurship in State universities in Nigeria. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Determine the relationships between Entrepreneurship Education, Environprenerial alertness and social entrepreneurial intentions among Business Education students in State universities in Nigeria
2. Determine whether Entrepreneurship Education significantly predicts social entrepreneurial intention within this student population.
3. Assess the significance of Environpreneual alertness as a predictor of social entrepreneurial intention among Business Education students.
4. Examine the combine effect of Entrepreneurship Education and environprenerial alertness as predictors of social entrepreneurial intention among Business Education students in State universities in Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What are the relationships between Entrepreneurship Education, Environprenerial alertness, social entrepreneurial intentions among Business Education students in state universities, Nigeria?
- 2) Does Entrepreneurship Education significantly predict social entrepreneurial intention within the Business Education student population in State universities in Nigeria?
- 3) Is environprenerial alertness a significant predictor of social entrepreneurial intention

among Business Education students in State universities in Nigeria?

- 4) Do Entrepreneurship Education and Environpreneurial alertness together predict social entrepreneurial intentions among Business Education students

Hypotheses

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

1. Entrepreneurship education does not significantly predict social Entrepreneurial intention of among Business Education students in State universities in Nigeria.
2. Environpreneurial alertness is not a significant predictor of Business Education students' social entrepreneurial intention in State universities in Nigeria.
3. Entrepreneurship Education and Environpreneurial alertness do not jointly predict social entrepreneurial intention of Business education students in State universities in Nigeria.

Literature review

Entrepreneurs thrive on identifying new business opportunities and leveraging available resources to create value (Puapradit & Supan, 2021). This translates to an action-oriented mindset, where entrepreneurs readily pursue promising ventures based on their knowledge and understanding (Izlem, & Nurdan, 2016; Ugwueze, Ike, & Ugwu, 2022). Several studies have explored the concept of opportunity perception, highlighting how the interplay of desirability and feasibility (perceived value and potential for success) influences the decision to act on an opportunity (Alvi & Sharma, 2017; Biswas & Verma, 2021; Gill et al., 2021; Jiatong et al., 2021; Odebunmi et al., 2020; Urban, 2020). Additionally, Saadat et al. (2022) established a strong link between environpreneurial alertness—the ability to identify opportunities and entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurial education is an educational process that focuses on developing information, skills, attitudes, and personal character associated with entrepreneurship (Hussain & Norashidah, 2015). In fact, Kirkwood et al. (2014) describe it as the capacity to analyze one's own behavior in order to promote learning. With the rise of social entrepreneurial, research has increasingly focused on the connection between entrepreneurship education, Environpreneurial alertness, and the desire to pursue social ventures. Hockerts' (2018) research demonstrates that entrepreneurship education can

boost self-efficacy, social support perception, and overall enthusiasm for this path. Similarly, studies by Chang et al. (2021), Hassan (2020), Ndou (2021), and Naweed et al. (2021) all found a significant correlation between entrepreneurship education and the intention to pursue social entrepreneurial.

Further research connects social entrepreneurial intention directly to Environpreneurial alertness. Studies by Urban (2020) and Nsereko et al. (2022) revealed a strong influence of Environpreneurial alertness on participants' inclination towards social ventures. This review highlights a gap in existing research. Existing research primarily focuses on the general impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial aspirations, neglecting the social dimension. Similarly, research on Environpreneurial alertness has largely focused on for-profit ventures. There is a lack of evidence on its influence in the context of social entrepreneurship, particularly among business education students in developing economies. While prior studies have explored the connections between entrepreneurship education and alertness, none have specifically examined their combined influence on social entrepreneurial intention among business education students in State universities in Nigeria. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how entrepreneurship education and Environpreneurial alertness predict social entrepreneurial intention within this specific student population.

Method

A correlation study was the design on which this study was anchored. According to Esser and Vliegthart (2017), correlational design is a study design that looks at the associations between or among two or more variables in a single group, which can happen at several levels. This kind of non-experimental design looks at how two or more variables relate to one another. All 382 final-year business education students from five state-based tertiary institutions in Nigeria made up the population. Due to the small nature of the population, the entire population was used. The Entrepreneurship Education, Environpreneurial alertness and Social Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaires (EASEIQ) was used to gather data, these questions contain seven, eight, and six items respectively, the questionnaires were validated by three experts. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the instrument's dependability; the result was a coefficient of 0.81, 0.87 and 0.85 respectively with an overall reliability index of 0.92 which was deemed to be very high for the study. Multiple regression,

simple linear regression, and Pearson product-moment correlation were used in the data analysis.

Results

Table 1: Correlation matrix showing the relationship among entrepreneurship education, environpreneurial alertness and social entrepreneurial intention (N=382)

	Entrepreneurship Education	Environpreneurial Alertness	Social Entrepreneurial Intention
Pearson Correlation	1	.436	.404**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.001
N	382	382	382
Pearson Correlation	.436**	1	.504**
N	382	382	382
Pearson Correlation	.404**	.504**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	
N	382	382	382

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Our findings, presented in Table 1, reveal moderate positive correlations between entrepreneurship education, Environpreneurial alertness, and social entrepreneurial intention among business students (n=382). Specifically, the correlation coefficients range from .404 to .504. Entrepreneurship education exhibits a moderate positive relationship with social entrepreneurial intention ($r = .404$). Similarly, Environpreneurial alertness demonstrates a somewhat stronger positive

relationship with social entrepreneurial intention ($r = .504$). Interestingly, a moderate positive correlation also exists between Environpreneurial alertness and entrepreneurship education ($r = .436$).

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between Entrepreneurship Education and Business Education students' social entrepreneurial intention in State universities in Nigeria. The result of this hypothesis analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Entrepreneurship education predicting business education students' social entrepreneurial intention in state universities in Nigeria.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1. (Constant)	6.875	.667		10.919	.001
Entrepreneurship Education	.282	.040	.404	7.074	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Social Entrepreneurial Intention

Note: $R^2 = .171$, $F = 50.035$, $P < .05$, $Df = 1, 242$

Regression analysis in Table 2 shows that entrepreneurship education significantly predicts business students' social entrepreneurial intention in State universities in Nigeria ($R^2 = .171$, $F(2, 242) = 50.035$, $p < .05$). Entrepreneurship education alone

explains 16.5% of the variance in social entrepreneurial intention.

Hypothesis 2: Environpreneurial alertness is not a significant predictor of Business Education students' social entrepreneurial intention in State universities in Nigeria

Table 3: Environpreneurial alertness predicting business education students' social entrepreneurial intention in state universities in Nigeria.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1 (Constant)	5.155	.503		10.516	.001
Environpreneurial Alertness	.454	.048	.504	9.379	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Social Entrepreneurial Intention

Note: $R^2 = .267$, $F = 87.975$, $P < .05$, $Df = 1, 242$

The results of the regression on Table 3 indicated that Environpreneurial alertness explained 24.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .267$, $F(2, 242) = 87.975$, $P < .05$). The result from hypothesis one revealed that Environpreneurial alertness is a significant predictor of business education students' social entrepreneurial intention in State universities in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3: Entrepreneurship Education and Environpreneurial alertness are not jointly significant predictors of Business Education students' social entrepreneurial intention in State universities in Nigeria

Table 4: Entrepreneurship education, environpreneurial alertness predicting business education students' social entrepreneurial intention in state universities in Nigeria

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1(Constant)	4.820	.704		5.155	.001
Entrepreneurship Education	.159	.041	.233	3.920	
Environpreneurial Alertness	.365	.052	.436	6.976	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Social Entrepreneurial Intention. Note: $R^2 = .311$, $F = 54.279$, $P < .05$, $Df = 2, 241$

The study found that exposure to entrepreneurship education and having a keen eye for opportunity (Environpreneurial alertness) were important factors influencing business students' interest in pursuing social entrepreneurial (intention) in universities in Nigeria. The analysis showed that these two factors together explained over 24% of the variation in students' social entrepreneurial intentions.

Discussion of findings

The results of this study provide important light on how business education students at Nigerian state universities interact with environmental awareness, social entrepreneurial intentions, and entrepreneurship education. This section highlights the findings' implications for theory, practice, and policy while discussing them in the context of earlier studies.

Relationship between entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurial intentions

In line with previous research, the study found a strong positive correlation between social entrepreneurial ambitions and entrepreneurship education (Hockerts, 2018; Chang et al., 2021). It seems that entrepreneurship education cultivates the attitude required for students to view social entrepreneurship as a feasible career option, in addition to the necessary knowledge and abilities. This research backs up the claim made by Sulaiman and Wan-Fauziah (2013) that entrepreneurship education changes student' viewpoints and prepares them to recognize and solve societal issues. According to Alkali and Musa (2020), the transformational aspect of entrepreneurship education is demonstrated by its capacity to shape students' aspirations toward tackling societal issues through creative solutions. This emphasizes how important

Nigerian universities are to developing future social entrepreneurs who can address the socioeconomic issues facing the area.

Environpreneurial alertness as a predictor of social entrepreneurial intentions

The study also showed that social entrepreneurial goals are highly predicted by environmental vigilance. This is consistent with earlier studies that emphasize the importance of cognitive attentiveness in spotting and seizing business opportunities (Urban, 2020; Saadat et al., 2022). The results support Kirzner's (1979) claim that entrepreneurial awareness entails the capacity to spot opportunities that others would miss, highlighting the significance of this talent in social entrepreneurship. Students studying business education who were more environmentally conscious were more likely to start social projects. This suggests that students' inclination to participate in social entrepreneurship can be greatly increased by cultivating abilities like opportunity scanning, association, and evaluation—essential elements of environpreneurial alertness (Tang et al., 2012).

Combined effect of entrepreneurship education and environpreneurial alertness

The results of the combined study showed that social entrepreneurial intentions are jointly predicted by entrepreneurship education and environmental awareness. Given that both education and cognitive awareness are critical for cultivating a mentality that is supportive of tackling social and economic concerns; this research highlights the synergistic interaction between these characteristics. This aligns with research by Hassan (2020), Ndou (2021), Naweed et al. (2021), Chang et al. (2021), and Nserekko et al. (2023), who found similar connections in their studies. The necessity for comprehensive educational approaches that stress both the academic and practical facets of entrepreneurship is highlighted by this joint predictive power. Students' abilities to recognize and seize chances with a social impact can be efficiently developed through such an approach.

Implications of the findings

By demonstrating that education and cognitive awareness are important predictors, our findings advance the theoretical understanding of social entrepreneurial goals. By highlighting the significance of environmental awareness in the context of social entrepreneurship, especially in developing nations, the study expands on preexisting frameworks.

Practically speaking, the findings imply that in order to improve students' awareness and problem-solving skills, academic institutions had to implement programs that combine experiential learning opportunities with entrepreneurial instruction. Students' capacity to recognize and respond to social needs can be improved by exposing them to real-world issues through programs like case studies, internships, and simulation exercises.

Implications for policy

These results highlight for policymakers the value of funding entrepreneurial education initiatives that are specifically designed to address the particular difficulties presented by the socioeconomic environment in Nigeria. The social and economic disparities in the area can be addressed with the support of policies that encourage colleges to include social entrepreneurship in their curricula. Support systems like funding opportunities for social initiatives and mentorship programs can also motivate students to turn their goals into meaningful actions.

Conclusion

The study emphasizes how important entrepreneurship education and environmental awareness are in encouraging students studying business education to pursue social entrepreneurship. Universities can create a new generation of social entrepreneurs ready to tackle pressing issues in Nigeria and beyond by giving students the information, abilities, and awareness to spot and seize opportunities. Future studies could examine how these factors affect social venture success such as: over time, offering further information on successful policy and educational initiatives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, which investigated the relationships between entrepreneurship education (EE), environpreneurial alertness (EA), and social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) among business education students in state-owned universities in Nigeria. The following recommendations are proposed:

- **Integrate Social Entrepreneurship Content:** Business education programs should incorporate social entrepreneurship principles, case studies, and practical applications into their curriculum to expose students to the unique challenges and rewards of social ventures.
- **Develop Skills for Social Impact:** EE programs should extend traditional business

skills to social entrepreneurial, focusing on impact measurement, fundraising, and navigating social change ecosystems.

- Foster Opportunity Recognition: incorporating activities and exercises that promote entrepreneurial alertness, such as case studies, simulations, or guest lectures from successful social entrepreneurs.
- Mentorship and Networking: Offer students the chance to connect with mentors or advisors who can effectively identify and address their social needs for successful business ventures.
- Community Engagement: Encourage students to participate in community service projects or social innovation competitions to enhance their sense of social responsibility and identify potential opportunities.

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