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GENDER AND SCHOOL LOCATION AS MODERATORS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ASPIRATIONS AND MATHEMATICS INTEREST OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria with particular reference to Anambra state has made most secondary school leavers to develop varied aspirations for entrepreneurship. Whether or not these entrepreneurial aspirations had any relationship with their interest in mathematics based on their gender and school locations remains to be seen. This study therefore examined gender and school location as moderators of entrepreneurial aspirations with mathematics interest among senior secondary school students in Anambra state. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. Three research questions guided the study and three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels. Multi stage sampling procedure was used to draw 2000 SS3 students from a population of 43, 911 in the state. Entrepreneurial Aspiration Scale (EAS) and Mathematics Interest Scale (MIS) were used as instruments for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha for EAS and MIS which yielded coefficient values of 0.80 and 0.70 respectively. The instruments were administered to the students through the help of research assistants, who scored the instruments and collated the data for analysis. The data obtained from the study were analyzed using linear regressions and multivariate analysis of variance. Findings of the study revealed among others that students who have entrepreneurial aspiration for entertainment industry have significantly higher interest in mathematics than those having other entrepreneurial aspirations. There exists a significant relationship between senior secondary school students' entrepreneurial aspirations and their interests in mathematics $F_{(5,1994)} = 14.640$, $p < 0.05$. *Based on the findings, it was concluded that mathematics interest had a significant relationship with entrepreneurial aspirations. The study recommended among others that effort should be made by senior secondary mathematics teachers to relate mathematics concepts and contents to their applications in real life situations in order to enable students develop greater interest in the subject despite their varied intentions for any entrepreneurship undertaking.*

Keywords: Entrepreneurial aspirations, mathematics interest, gender, school location

Introduction

It is worrisome that most often, secondary school leavers in Nigeria including those in Anambra state spend much years searching for jobs. The implication is that the education system has failed to imbue the school leavers with the requisite skills and competencies for effective living as members of the society. This factor accounts for growing number of unemployed youths roaming the streets of Nigeria, especially secondary school leavers. These able-bodied

young boys and girls are seen at such places as motor parks, busy road junctions and bus stops and such other socially depraved areas. They are easily recruited as touts, party thugs and in hawking and child trafficking among others. The inability of secondary school leavers to be gainfully employed worsens the biting unemployment situation in the country. The sight of these hordes of unemployed young school leavers has continued to generate varied concerns over the failure of the education system to avail them appropriate entrepreneurial skills to enable them become entrepreneurs. However, with the trend of unemployment being well understood among secondary school leavers, they are believed to be aspiring for entrepreneurship.

An entrepreneur according to Uzoka (2015) is a person who organizes and manages a business, undertakes and assumes risk for the sake of profit. He tends to start ventures that build on specific skills they have already acquired either through formal education or in a certain occupation or industry. The entrepreneur is the chief executive or leader of a one-man business (Uyiagbe, 2017; Ogunleye & Fidel-Imoisili, 2020). Nnamani (2018) and Jimngang (2018) see the benefits of entrepreneurship to include development of business awareness, economic empowerment, management acumen, ability to bear risk, self-reliance etc. Considering this importance of entrepreneurship, it becomes imminent that the inculcation of entrepreneurial skills in our youths can be improved through mathematics education and to nurture their entrepreneurial aspirations.

Entrepreneurial aspirations according to Jamalia, Reza, Jahangir and Ali (2018) refer to a stated desire to start a new venture, or an expectation that one will be started. These aspirations are in levels according to individual differences. Entrepreneurial aspiration level, therefore, according to Danziger and Eden, (2021) and Litzky and Greenhaus, (2018) is defined as a person's dream, desired entrepreneurial goal and the extent to which an individual intends to take action to advance higher. Differences in entrepreneurial aspirations play a critical role in economic dynamism with growth aspiration, entrepreneurs standing out as the group which has the highest potential to generate the bulk of new jobs in the economy and therefore contribute the most to economic growth and development (Matt, 2016). These entrepreneurial aspirations include but not limited to Food services, Automobile services, Electrical/electronics, Building technology, Entertainment industry and Fashion/Beauty services. The different specific areas of aspirations as perceived by people are encapsulated into each of these six groups listed. The place of mathematics and mathematics education in this area of discipline remains to be seen.

Mathematics is very important to most disciplines and field of human endeavor. It has continued to play significant roles in nations. Hence, for any nation to survive and develop, it has to improve on its teaching and learning of mathematics in schools which is the basis for technological development. This explains why mathematics is one of the core subjects for every student at the secondary school level, Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN 2014). This policy also makes mathematics an important subject in the 9-3-4 structure, that every child must study it for nine years in lower and upper basic schools and three years in senior secondary school as a compulsory

subject. Ezeanyi (2021) stressed that mathematics is important because it is needed for the pursuit of higher education in science, technology, social science, education and in some art courses. As a condition for admission into tertiary institution, a candidate seeking admission to study any science or related course is required to have a credit pass in West African School Certificate Examination (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO).

Despite the importance and usefulness of mathematics in Nigeria educational system, development of the nation at large through the study of science and technology, the student's interest in mathematics have continued to deteriorate year by year. Literature is not replete with information as to whether entrepreneurial aspirations affect students' interest in mathematics. Interest is described as being engaged, engrossed, or entirely taken up with an activity, object, or topic (Desy, Peterson & Brockman, 2021). Interest is interpreted as a relatively stable tendency to occupy oneself with an object of interest. On a second level, interest refers to current engagements. Interest in mathematics can be influenced through assessment for learning strategy, this helps in making understanding and knowledge more visible. It also helps learners know the meaning of excellence and how they can develop their own work to reach that level (Akinoso & Ogunleye, 2016). The interest to learn mathematics as established hitherto, could be influenced by entrepreneurial aspirations. It is logical to think that such students who aspire to be entrepreneurs in different fields of life may have varied need and desire to learn or continue learning mathematics. The effect of entrepreneurial aspirations on students' interest in mathematics maybe mediated by gender.

Gender can be classified into masculine and feminine. It is defined by Bravo-Bauman (2022) as the social construction of male and female identity. Hyde, Lindbery, Linn, Ellis and Williams (2018) found that when it comes to mathematics interest, girls and boys are similarly capable. They reported that in children from grades two to eleven, there was no gender difference for mathematics interest. They further added that while more boys than girls demonstrated higher interest in mathematics, gender gap has been closing over times. In fact, they reported that the gap is smaller in countries with greater gender equality (Ogunleye and Ojekwu, 2019). Ezeanyi and Okigbo (2021) reveal that male students are academically superior to their female counterparts in mathematics interest. No study has explored however, whether gender differences in mathematics is mediated by entrepreneurial aspirations of the students. Female students may aspire more towards hair dressing, fashion design while male students may aspire for upholstery making and building constructions. The entrepreneur who is a fashion designer requires critical mathematics knowledge much as the building constructor and upholstery maker. A hair dresser on the other hand may not need much mathematics like the upholstery maker. Thus, there may be gender-based entrepreneurial aspiration which invariably could affect the interest to learn mathematics.

School location refers to the particular place, in relation to other areas in the physical environment (rural or urban), where the school is sited (Moore, 2019). In Nigeria, rural life is uniform, homogenous

and less complex than that of urban centers, with cultural diversity, which often is suspected to affect students' interest. Students in the rural areas tend to have informally developed skills which they always explore as they grow and would like to use them as entrepreneurs. They can aspire to be seeders for farmers, transporters of farm produce to cities, producers of fish nets and baskets, fish farmers, reapers of seedlings and grains and makers of earthen vessels. It is different from what is obtainable in the urban areas where students' entrepreneurial aspirations may be directed to paint producing, printer of fancy wall-papers, upholstery makers, social media software designers, printing press business, photo-laboratory owners, automobile mechanics among others. Thus, differences across entrepreneurial aspirations which have the potency to affect mathematics interest may exist due to school location. The correlation between entrepreneurial aspirations and mathematics achievement and interest was also tested on school ownership.

Statement of the Problem

With the unemployment status in Nigeria worsening on a daily basis, the youths have continued to invent an alternative source of employment which is self-employment. In a bid to sustain a successful venture, it requires some knowledge of mathematics, entrepreneurial aspirations and skills. But they cannot be successful in any area of entrepreneurial endeavor without requisite skills and knowledge. Mathematics education is expected to equip students with relevant skills that will enable them to be self-employable and self-reliant on leaving school, especially helping them in the development of entrepreneurial aspirations for different fields of life. Students of all gender and locations are not left out in the menace of unemployment and therefore should be helped out of poverty. Understanding the relationship between entrepreneurial aspirations and mathematics interest and how gender as well as school location can moderate them is the crux of this research.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to determine how gender and school location moderated the relationship between entrepreneurial aspirations and mathematics interest among SS3 students in Anambra State. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Find out the relationship between the different entrepreneurial aspirations (food services, automobile services, electrical/electronic services, building technology, entertainment industry, fashion/beauty services) and students' interest in mathematics.
2. Determine the relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and students' interest in mathematics.
3. Determine the relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, school location and students' interest in mathematics.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the different entrepreneurial aspirations (food services, automobile services, electrical/electronic services, building technology, entertainment industry,

fashion/beauty services) and students' interest in mathematics?
2. What is the relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and students' interest in mathematics?
3. What is the relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, school location and students' interest in mathematics?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels.

1. There is no significant relationship between the different entrepreneurial aspirations (food services, automobile services, electrical/electronic services, building technology, entertainment industry, fashion/beauty services) and students' interest in mathematics.
2. There is no significant relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and students' interest in mathematics.
3. There is no significant relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, school location and students' interest in mathematics.

Methodology

This study adopted the Correlation research design. The sample size used for the study was 2000 SS3 students in Anambra state, which were obtained using multi-stage sampling procedure. First, four schools out of the six education zones in the state were selected through simple random sampling technique. Secondly, in each of the selected education zones, purposive sampling technique was used to select five co-education schools, this was to take care of the gender variable in the study and that the schools are located in urban and rural areas. Again, purposive sampling ensured the selection of urban and rural schools to take care of school location. In each of the five schools selected, 20 students were selected using simple random sampling technique.

Entrepreneurial Aspirations Scale (EAS) and Mathematics Interest Scale (MIS) were used as instruments for data collection. Entrepreneurial Aspirations Scale (EAS) is a scale developed by the researcher to determine the students' entrepreneurial aspirations. The scale was developed to generate information on students' entrepreneurial aspirations. Thirty-three entrepreneurial aspirations identified by the researcher were clustered into six groups. These groups are Food services, Automobile services, Electrical/electronics, Building technology, Fashion/Beauty services and Entertainment industry. Each of the groups has five different entrepreneurial aspirations, making a total of thirty. MIS is a mathematics interest scale adapted from Chiakwelu & Okigbo (2021) and modified to suit the present study. In their work, they constructed a 20-item scale to illicit responses from the respondents on their interest in mathematics. The items focused mainly on students' interest in general mathematics contents. But in this study, the MIS was designed to measure the students' interest in those mathematics concepts that has applications in various entrepreneurship areas. MIS is a twenty-five items scale structured on a four-point scale. The instruments were validated by three experts in science education.

The reliability of EAS and MIS were established using Cronbach's Alpha because they have multiple rating. The EAS and MIS yielded reliability coefficients of

0.80 and 0.70 respectively. The instruments were administered to the students through the help of four research assistants. When administering the instruments, students were assigned serial numbers which were written on their copy of instrument, to ensure that the scores of EAS and MIS matched for each student. They scored the instruments and collated the data for analysis. Data generated from this study were analyzed using simple linear and multiple regressions.

Results

Table 1: Relative contributory relationship between different entrepreneurial aspirations of senior secondary school students to interest in mathematics

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	65.777	.427		154.101	.000
	Food Services	.560	1.016	.013	.552	.581
	Automobile Services	1.322	1.018	.031	1.298	.194
	Electrical/Electronic	1.427	.834	.042	1.712	.087
	Building Technology	.457	.804	.014	.568	.570
	Entertainment Industry	.995	.835	.029	1.192	.234
	Fashion/Beauty Services	.724	1.038	.016	.697	.486

a. Dependent Variable: mathematics interest

Table 1 shows the standardized beta coefficient which indicates correlation between variables. The unstandardized beta coefficient shows the predictive powers of each entrepreneurial aspiration which indicates their relative contribution to interest in mathematics. Aspiration for food services has a positive relationship (R = 0.013) with students' interest in mathematics, automobile services has a negative relationship (R = 0.031) with interest in mathematics, while electrical/electronic has a positive relationship (R = 0.042) with interest, building technology has a positive relationship (R = 0.014) with interest while aspiration for entertainment services has a positive relationship (R = 0.029) and aspiration for fashion/beauty services has a positive relationship (R = 0.016). Table 1 also reveals that with a unit increase in the entrepreneurial aspiration for food services, interest in mathematics increases by 0.560; with a unit increase in the aspiration for fashion/beauty services, interest in mathematics increases by 0.724; and with a unit increase in the aspiration for building technology and entertainment industry, interest in mathematics increases by 0.457 and 0.995 respectively. However, interest in mathematics increases by 1.322 whenever students' entrepreneurial aspiration for automobile services increases by 1 unit and by 1.427 when aspiration for electrical and electronic services increases by 1 unit. The order of relative contribution to increment in interest in Mathematics from the highest to lowest by entrepreneurial aspiration is; electrical/electronic (1.427), followed by automobile services (1.322), entertainment industry (0.995), fashion/beauty service (0.725), food services (0.560) and building technology (0.457).

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Table 2: Relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and students' interest scores in mathematics

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Unstandardized coefficients (b)	Std. Error	Decision
Constant				64.551		
Entrepreneurial Aspiration	.024[a]	.001	.000	.159	11.558	Positive relationship
Gender				.248		

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Entrepreneurial Aspiration

Table 2 shows that a positive relationship (R = 0.024) exists between students' entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and their interest scores in Mathematics. The R-Square value of 0.001 indicates that 0.1% of the variance in mathematics interest scores is explained by students' entrepreneurial aspirations and gender.

Table 3: Relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, school location and students' interest scores in Mathematics

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Unstandardized coefficients (b)	Std. Error	Decision
Constant				66.266		
Entrepreneurial Aspiration	.041[a]	.002	.001	.122	11.552	Positive relationship
School location				.833		

a. Predictors: (Constant), School Location, Entrepreneurial Aspiration

Table 3 shows that a positive relationship (R = 0.041) exists between students' entrepreneurial aspiration, school location and their interest in Mathematics. The R-Square value of 0.002 indicates that 0.2% of the variance in Mathematics interest scores is explained by students' entrepreneurial aspirations and school location.

Hypotheses

Table 4: ANOVA on significance of relationship between students' entrepreneurial aspirations and interest in Mathematics

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1135.185	6	189.198	1.419	.204[b]
	Residual	265801.287	1993	133.367		
	Total	266936.472	1999			

a. Dependent Variable: Interest
b. Predictors: (Constant), Fashion/Beauty Services, Food Services, Automobile Services, Building Technology, Electrical/Electronic

Table 4 shows that the relationship between entrepreneurial aspirations and interest in Mathematics is not significant F (6, 1993) = 1.419, P (0.204) > 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected implying that there is no significant relationship between the different entrepreneurial aspirations (food services, automobile services, electrical/electronic services, building technology, entertainment industry, fashion/beauty services) and students' interest in Mathematics.

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Table 5: Significance of relationship among students' entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and interest in mathematics

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	150.438	2	75.219	.563	.570[b]
	Residual	266786.034	1997	133.593		
	Total	266936.472	1999			

a. Dependent Variable: Interest
b. Predictors: (Constant), Entrepreneurial Aspiration, Gender

Table 5 shows that the relationship between entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and interest in Mathematics is not significant F (2, 1997) = 0.563, P > 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected implying that there is no significant relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and students' interest in Mathematics.

Table 6: Significance of relationship among students' entrepreneurial aspirations, school location and interest in mathematics

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	453.804	2	226.902	1.700	.183[b]
	Residual	266482.668	1997	133.441		
	Total	266936.472	1999			

a. Dependent Variable: Interest
b. Predictors: (Constant), Entrepreneurial Aspiration, School location

Table 6 shows that the relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, school location and interest in Mathematics is not significant F (2, 1997) = 1.700, P > 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected implying that there is no significant relationship among entrepreneurial aspirations, school location and students' interest in Mathematics.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study showed that although, there exists a non-significant positive relationship between senior secondary school students' entrepreneurial aspirations and their interest in mathematics, students who have entrepreneurial aspiration for entertainment industry have significantly higher interest in mathematics than those having other entrepreneurial aspirations. Given that mathematics is a necessary and important subject and may have been perceived as difficult by students opting to venture into entertainment industry, their interest may grow out of a desire to ensure that they pass the subject. Therefore, students who have aspirations for entertainment industry develop serious interest in mathematics more than students of other entrepreneurial aspirations.

The study further revealed that gender (male and female) significantly moderated the relationship between senior secondary school students' entrepreneurial aspirations and interest in mathematics. Male students with the entrepreneurial aspirations for food services, electrical and electronic, building technology and entertainment industry had

higher mathematics interest scores than their female counterparts whereas female students aspiring for automobile services and fashion/beauty services had higher interest scores than the males. Thus, such students' interest in mathematics is a strong influencing factor that motivates them to study harder as to attain higher achievement scores in the subject than the female counterparts.

The findings of the study further revealed that school location is a significant moderator of the relationship between senior secondary school students' entrepreneurial aspirations and interest in mathematics. Urban students with the entrepreneurial aspiration for food and automobile services would have higher interest in mathematics than the rural students whereas rural students aspiring for electrical/electronic services, building technology, entertainment industry and fashion/beauty services had higher interest in mathematics than the urban students. The possible explanation for the observation could be that rural students are not well exposed to electrical/electronic services, building technology, fashion and beauty services and entertainment industry. Thus, by associating what they see in modern cities in urban areas with what obtains in the rural areas, they may associate as well some level of complexity to the practices or venturing into such business; the same complexity easily associated with mathematics learning. This may on the long run, influence them to have more interest in mathematics as they aspire for these entrepreneurship areas unlike students in the urban areas.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the findings of the study that gender and school location are significant moderators of senior secondary school entrepreneurial aspirations and interest in mathematics. There exists a statistically significant positive relationship among senior secondary school students' entrepreneurial aspirations, gender and their interest in mathematics.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

1. Effort should be made by senior secondary mathematics teachers to relate mathematics concepts and contents to their applications in real life situations in order to enable students develop greater interest in the subject despite their varied intentions for any entrepreneurship undertaking.
2. School administrators should ensure that rural students have enough mathematics teachers and should conduct entrepreneurship seminars and exhibitions to acquaint them with the knowledge necessary to guide them into such ventures. Such seminars would expose them to the place of mathematics in every aspect of human endeavor while arousing and sustaining their interest.

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