

Original Paper

Social Background, Self-esteem and Entrepreneurial Intention among Young Graduates of Higher Education in Côte d'Ivoire. Case of Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Cocody

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Abstract

In a social context where unemployment is a societal problem with the emergence of a new phenomenon: graduate unemployment, entrepreneurship represents the palliative option for decision-makers, actors and other specialists in socio-professional integration.

The present study, which is part of such a dynamic, aims to understand the problems related to female entrepreneurship. It therefore seeks to investigate the role of psychosociological determinants such as social background and self-esteem in the entrepreneurial intention of female graduates of Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

A sample of three hundred and thirty-three (333) female students selected by the quota method participated in this study by means of a questionnaire.

The results obtained (Student's t-test) show on the one hand that the social environment of origin does not have a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intention of students at the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny. On the other hand, self-esteem had a significant effect on students' entrepreneurial intention. In other words, the results confirm that students with high self-esteem have a stronger entrepreneurial intention than those with low self-esteem. This study thus offers a way of thinking about the approach to female entrepreneurship in our current social context, which is faced with an employment crisis among young graduates.

Keywords

self-esteem, social background, entrepreneurial intention, female entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Unemployment is a global fact, a societal problem, and a phenomenon that affects the existence and life of all modern societies. There are currently several hundred million unemployed young people on the planet, 80% of whom live in developing countries (Dosso, 2013).

Already the ILO (2007) in its projections estimated the number of unemployed youth in the world to be 205 million in 2010. According to AFP (2011), this figure represents 27.6 million more unemployed than in 2007, with little hope of a decrease. This shows that another characteristic of the situation of young people in the labor market is the difficulty in finding a stable job.

Sub-Saharan Africa, where the unemployment rate was 77% of the active population in 2013, does not seem to be outdone. The situation remains even more worrying for some countries in the area such as Congo, Senegal, Botswana and South Africa (Dosso; op.cit.).

In Côte d'Ivoire the unemployment rate has been gradually increasing. In this same dynamic, data from the National Institute of Statistics (INS, 2015) reveal an unemployment rate of 53% and a poverty rate of about 48%, showing signs of a sluggish economy followed by a social depression.

Moreover, according to the "Agence d'Etude et de Promotion de l'Emploi" (AGEPE, 2012), the unemployment rate increases according to the degree. It is 14.1% for CEPE holders, 19.8% for BAC holders and 29.8% for those with a master's degree. This seems to convince us of the reality that unemployment is practically an obligatory passage for most young people leaving the education system, as direct access to employment is becoming increasingly rare.

Consequently, the integration of young people into the productive circuit in an adequate manner and the appearance of a phenomenon of increasing concern, graduate unemployment, raise the thorny issue of the employment crisis and related problems such as unemployment, underemployment, poverty and social exclusion (Otémé, 2009; Bomisso, 2008). This difficulty in integrating young graduates, particularly young women, constitutes one of the major problems in our current social context. The solution adopted by most of our countries to curb the progression of this phenomenon is in favor of entrepreneurship and business creation.

Entrepreneurship, especially business creation, is thus the new engine of the economy (Reynolds et al., 1994; Dejardin, 2000; UNIDO, 2003; Rasmussen & Sorheim, 2006; Obschonka et al., 2010). In other words, entrepreneurship appears to be a powerful factor of economic development on a national scale and useful in the fight against informal work, unemployment and poverty.

In this perspective, CEPICI (2017) as a support device for start-ups has allowed to record a turnover of more than one billion CFA francs with the ten laureates and to create 250 thousand effective jobs in Côte d'Ivoire. Also, the CEPICI's One-Stop-Shop has recorded the creation of more than 57,000 companies, thus generating more than 158,000 jobs. This makes some authors such as Anarfi; Anyidoho and Verschoor (2008) say that "one can make much more money by being self-employed than by working for someone else". Therefore, in Côte d'Ivoire, particular attention is paid to entrepreneurship as a palliative

solution to unemployment and to the difficult socio-economic situation of the population, which struggles to find a decent job.

If the results of this initiative seem to be proven and contribute to the empowerment of the young graduate population, it is a persistent observation that young women entrepreneurs are underrepresented. An important study conducted by the Center for Investment Promotion in Côte d'Ivoire (CEPICI, 2013), reveals that out of 500 businesses created in five months, 133 belong to women. In the same perspective, only 15% of businesses in CI, according to the "Commission for the Development of Female Entrepreneurship" (CDEF) and the "Business Confederation of Côte d'Ivoire" (CGECI) are owned by women with a predominant presence in the informal sector (APA, 2018). And yet, in Côte d'Ivoire, the State encourages through many actions and other incentives, female entrepreneurship to raise it to the forefront of entrepreneurship of young graduates in our social context.

Determining the factors underlying such a paradox justifies the present study, which aims to investigate the role of the social environment of origin and socio-cognitive factors such as self-esteem in the entrepreneurial intentions of young graduates.

Intention is central to understanding the entrepreneurial process" (Benrejen & Shut, 2016, p. 113). According to Benrejen and Shut, intention constitutes a mental manifestation that implies a willingness, a conviction to achieve a certain goal including creating a business.

Other authors such as Boissin, Cholet and Emin (2009) have looked at the role of beliefs in students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. In their study, they investigated these beliefs to see how they can affect the intention to engage in a type of activity after graduation. In the end, these authors were able to establish a link between the three dimensions of planned behavior as described by Ajzen and the intention to create a business.

Harouna (2020) emphasizes instead in his study individual and cultural characteristics as determinants of entrepreneurial intention. The results of this study showed as a salient point the relationship between perceived behavioral control and entrepreneurial intention. Clearly, according to Harouna, individual and cultural characteristics have a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intention of graduating students. As for Maâlej (2013), he relied on Ajzen's theory of planned behavior to provide an explanation for the intention to start a business among young graduates. He found a significant combined effect of beliefs associated with behavior and social norms on entrepreneurial intention.

On the other hand, Nourreddine and Anas (2015), instead focused on the relationship that can exist between entrepreneurial orientation, social exchange and firm performance.

While these various studies shed light on the understanding of entrepreneurial intention, they do not address the specific issue of female entrepreneurship: the entrepreneurial intention of young female graduates. And yet, women entrepreneurs are now recognized as one of the sources of growth, job creation, innovation and wealth (Arazti, 2008; reprinted by Benhabib et al., 2014).

In a recent study, Zanga (2018) sought to determine the influence of female gender on the level of environmental responsibility of 42 banking groups following a longitudinal approach (2005-2014). The findings of this study show that women do have a natural propensity for management, including protecting the environment.

The study conducted by Benhabib et al, tends to show the effect of individual and environmental variables on female entrepreneurial intention in the Algerian context. This study shows a negative effect of individual variables such as motivation, confidence, and risk perception on entrepreneurial intention, contrary to environmental variables which reveal a rather positive impact.

What do we remember from a theoretical point of view? According to Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, the intention to create a business is underpinned by three dimensions, namely the perceived attractiveness of creating a business; the degree of incentive to undertake perceived in the social environment; and finally, the individual's confidence in his or her ability to carry out the entrepreneurial process (Boissin et al., op.cit.).

On this basis, Boissin et al., were able to identify the types of professional expectations likely to induce more attraction of the subjects for the creation of enterprises. We can therefore retain that the immediate social environment and confidence in one's abilities play a determining role among young graduates in the process that leads to the creation of a company.

Regarding the social environment of origin, we can indicate that certain stereotypes due to the education of the young girl and certain socio-cultural constraints could constitute a brake on the development, in the young girl, of certain aptitudes necessary for the function of management, thus forcing thousands of women and girls to domestic work for several hours (APA. CI, 2018).

Moreover, entrepreneurial practice includes taking risks in certain situations. Given that, in our social context, the education of young girls in their early childhood does not allow for risk-taking, we may wonder if this does not appear, later on, as engrams that dictate their entrepreneurial behavior.

On the other hand, it has been observed that certain socio-cultural constraints reduce women to domestic tasks, even to the point of denying them the right to education and the right to work. Thus, when they engage in an activity, the lack of training, skills and a model of success could explain why they remain in the informal sector.

Regarding female entrepreneurship, Yeo (2018), in her study, explains the entrepreneurial intention of female students by the type of profession practiced by the parents. Thus, the parents' occupation, according to Yeo, exerts a considerable influence on the choice of children's occupation. For example, the author continues, students whose parents are judges are less likely to be entrepreneurs than children of business owners. While this study may be of interest to entrepreneurship education programs, it does not capture the full scope of entrepreneurial intent. Indeed, there are entrepreneurs who do not come from entrepreneurial families and public servants who come from entrepreneurial families. This means that other factors, such as the personal characteristics of the subject, can play a determining role in the process

that leads to the creation of a business. Holland (1997) is perfectly in line with this perspective. Thus, on the basis of career theory, Holland shows that the entrepreneurial personality is the one that predominates in people who are willing to create enterprises. This personality, according to him, is put in place from an early age and develops thanks to the individualities of the parents who influence the desire to undertake their offspring, especially with regard to the latter's professional orientation. Other works on the entrepreneurial intention, have rather insisted in their explanations, on the representation of the professional future and the environment (Bony; 2014); the desirability and the feasibility of the act of undertaking (Bentata & Sahouidi, 2009).

What about self-esteem? Self-esteem is defined as “the expression of approval of oneself. It indicates the extent to which an individual believes he or she is capable, valuable, and important. It is a subjective experience that is expressed verbally as well as through significant behaviors” C.P.A (1984, p. 6).

In psychology, self-esteem is a term that designates the judgment or evaluation made of an individual in relation to his own values. Thus, when an individual accomplishes something that he or she believes to be worthwhile, he or she feels a sense of self-worth, and when he or she evaluates his or her actions as being in opposition to his or her values, he or she reacts as if he or she were “dropping in self-esteem. Also, a high self-esteem can imply characteristics such as firm belief in one's words and principles, ability to make choices that seem right, self-confidence, positive anticipation of the future, resistance to manipulation; on the other hand, a low self-esteem can show characteristics such as strong self-criticism, chronic indecision, guilt, irritability, pessimism.

Much work has been done on subjects' self-esteem in relation to acts of violence or aggression in the case of threat or damage to “self-esteem” (Baumeister, Boden, and Smart (1996); risks of early motherhood (Youssof, 2010) and risky driving behaviors, Otémé (2010) etc.

From this review of works, we retain that the social environment of origin and the self-esteem can strongly influence the behavior of the individual in particular in the process which leads to the creation of company. And, many studies have confirmed the existence of this relationship in various fields. On the other hand, few works have approached the question of the entrepreneurial intention under this aspect of the influence of the social environment of origin and the self-esteem of the young girls graduated from higher education, in our context. In this respect, the present study, which focuses on young female graduates, aims to highlight the influence of the social environment of origin and self-esteem on the entrepreneurial intention of young female graduates of Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire.

From this objective, two specific assumptions follow:

Hypothesis 1—Female students from advantaged backgrounds have a stronger entrepreneurial intention than their counterparts from disadvantaged social backgrounds.

Hypothesis 2—Students with high self-esteem show strong entrepreneurial intention compared to those with low self-esteem.

2. Method

2.1 Description of Variables

The independent variables are each qualitative and dichotomous in nature. They are respectively the social environment of origin (advantaged social environment/disadvantaged social environment) and self-esteem (high or strong self-esteem/low or weak self-esteem). The dependent variable, of a qualitative nature, is represented by the presence of an entrepreneurial intention and the absence of an entrepreneurial intention.

The presence or absence of entrepreneurial intention in the subject is apprehended through three elements: the perceived attractiveness of starting a business; the degree of incentive to undertake perceived in the social environment; and finally, the individual's confidence in his or her ability to carry out the entrepreneurial process (Boissin et al., op.cit.).

2.2 Participants

The present study recorded the participation of 333 subjects, all female, without distinction of race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, all from the UFR-SHS of Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Cocody. The minimum size of the 333 subjects was determined using the Bernoulli method with a margin of error of 5%, a confidence level of 1.96 and a study population estimated at 2546.

The sampling method chosen is the empirical method which uses the quota technique. In this sample, the 333 subjects come from the six (6) Departments of the "UFR des Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société" and have a level of study between the "Licence 3" and the "Doctorat". The choice of the level takes into account the LMD system where each level corresponds to an end of cycle sanctioned by the obtaining of a diploma. Table 1 below presents the distribution of female students registered at the UFHB (UFR-SHS) for the academic year 2020-2021, organized according to the level of study and the Field.

Table 1. Distribution of Female Students Enrolled in the UFHB's UFR SHS in 2021

<i>Discipline/Level</i>	<i>L3</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>Psychology</i>	114	60	105	9	288
<i>Sociology</i>	184	153	81	43	561
<i>Anthropology</i>	37	32	18	10	97
<i>Geography</i>	405	327	261	20	1013
<i>History</i>	99	88	106	12	305
<i>Ireep</i>	0	9	12	4	25
<i>Philosophy</i>	98	90	61	8	257

TOTAL

2546

Source: UFHB Central School 2021

The numbers thus defined according to disciplines and different levels of study made it possible to construct the quota table, the aim of which is to obtain a sample with a structure identical to that of the parent population for certain important variables (Chauchat, 1995).

Table 2. Quota Distribution of Female Students Enrolled by Discipline in SHS for the Year 2021

<i>Materials</i>	<i>L3</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Psycho</i>	4,47% <i>n = 15</i>	2,35% <i>n = 8</i>	4,12% <i>n = 14</i>	0,35% <i>n = 1</i>	38
<i>Socio</i>	7,22% <i>n = 24</i>	6% <i>n = 20</i>	7,10% <i>n = 24</i>	1,68% <i>n = 6</i>	74
<i>Anthropology</i>	1,45% <i>n = 5</i>	1,25% <i>n = 4</i>	0,70% <i>n = 2</i>	0,39% <i>n = 1</i>	12
<i>Geography</i>	15,90% <i>n = 53</i>	12,84% <i>n = 43</i>	10,25% <i>n = 34</i>	0,78% <i>n = 3</i>	133
<i>History</i>	3,88% <i>n = 13</i>	3,45% <i>n = 11</i>	4,16% <i>n = 14</i>	0,47% <i>n = 2</i>	40
<i>IREEP</i>	0 <i>0</i>	0,35% <i>n = 1</i>	0,47% <i>n = 1</i>	0,15% <i>0</i>	2
<i>Philosophy</i>	3,84% <i>n = 13</i>	3,53% <i>n = 12</i>	2,39% <i>n = 8</i>	0,31% <i>n = 1</i>	34
Total	123	99	97	14	333

Source: Data from our study

Table 2 shows the distribution of the sample of female students enrolled in SHS in 2021 by discipline and level of study.

2.3 Survey Methodology

The survey itself consisted of inviting participants to fill out a questionnaire at the selected sites, specifying that the objective of our study is to evaluate the intention to create a business among students at the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, in particular among students in the departments and institutes of the UFR-SHS.

The Departments of Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy, Geography, History and the Institutes including ISAD and IREEP were the sites where our questionnaire was administered. All questionnaires were administered directly to the subjects on class days, taking into account their schedules.

The questionnaire administered at these sites therefore consists of three main parts:

- The first part of the questionnaire provides information on the socio-biographical characteristics and social background of the participants.
- The second part of the questionnaire is related to self-esteem. This part of our instrument consists of the statements of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale which includes ten items.
- The third part of the questionnaire is related to entrepreneurial intention. This last part of our instrument is made up of the entrepreneurial intention scale taken up and adapted (cf. Bony, 2014). It consists of Twenty-five items.

2.4 Data analysis Method:

For the counting of the self-esteem scale, the total of the scores of items 1, 2, 6, 8, 9 is added to the total of the reverse (1, 3, 4, 7, and 10). The result is a self-esteem score. The distribution of participants' scores ranges from 10 to 40. Regarding the entrepreneurial intention, the subject had to choose among four possible answers the one that best corresponds to his degree of adhesion to the proposed item. The result gave rise to scores according to the level of entrepreneurial intention.

The data thus constituted were statistically processed using the Student's T test (t) from the SPSS version 20 software.

3. Result

3.1 Social Background and Female Students' Entrepreneurial Intention

Table 3. Data on the Effect of Social Background on Female Students' Entrepreneurial Intention

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t—test for equality of means					
		F	Sig	T	Ddl	Sig (bilateral)	Average difference	Standard deviation	Interval Lower
Entrepreneurial Intention	Assumption of variance equals	,060	,806	1,497	331	,135	,848	,566	-,266
	Assumption of unequal variances			1,614	193,290	,108	,848	,525	-,188

Source: Data from our study.

In view of this table, the statistical treatment of the data with a threshold $P < 0.01$ at 1 ddl 331 and (t) student = 1, 497, we can affirm that there is a Non-significant Relationship (NS) between the social background of origin and the entrepreneurial intention.

In other words, these results allow us to conclude that our hypothesis 1, according to which female students from privileged backgrounds show a stronger entrepreneurial intention than their counterparts who come from disadvantaged social backgrounds, is not confirmed.

3.2 Self-esteem and Entrepreneurial Intention among Female Graduate Students at the UFHB of Cocody

Table 4. Data the Effect of Self-esteem on Entrepreneurial Intention among Female Graduate Students

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t—test for equality of means					
		F	Sig	T	Ddl	Sig (bilateral)	Average difference	Difference Standard deviation	95% Interval Lower
Intent	Hypothesis	6,937	,009	3,340	331	,001	1,681	,503	,691
Entrepreneurial	Equal variances								
	Hypothesis			3,505	319,275	,001	1,681	,480	,737

Source: Data from our study.

The results of the Student's (t) statistical test with a (tc= 3, 440) at the .001 probability level and at 331ddl, allows us to conclude that there is a significant relationship. In other words, there is a significant difference, i.e., students with high self-esteem have a stronger entrepreneurial intention than those with low self-esteem. We can therefore affirm that self-esteem has an effect on the entrepreneurial intention of female students at the Université Félix Houphouët Boigny, particularly in the UFR-SHS. Our hypothesis 2 according to which students with a high level of self-esteem show a stronger entrepreneurial intention compared to those with low self-esteem. These results can be interpreted in light of Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior and Bandoura's (1982) theory of self-esteem.

4. Discussion

In the present study, we proposed to see to what extent the social background and self-esteem could be factors that could influence the entrepreneurial intention of young girls with higher education in our social context.

The results concerning the influence of the participants' social background do not confirm our hypothesis. It follows that the social background of the participants does not have an effect on the entrepreneurial intention of young girls with higher education.

Previous work (Boissin & Col, 2009), which is based on one of the three dimensions of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, op. cit.) underlying the process that leads to the creation of a business, has shown the determining role of the immediate environment of young graduates on entrepreneurial intention.

Other authors have insisted on cultural characteristics (Harouna, 2020); beliefs (Boissin, op. cit.); the effect of environmental variables (Benhabib & Col, 2014); the professional future and the environment, in particular stereotypes due to the education of young girls; socio-cultural constraints as a brake on the development of entrepreneurial intention in young girls (Bony, 2014; Holland, 1997). Thus, it has been shown that the reactions of the subjects regarding their entrepreneurial intention, depend on the quality of the practices of the social environment of origin. In other words, the high level of negative practices of the social environment induces a low entrepreneurial intention among the subjects.

As paradoxical as it may seem, our results indicate an absence of effect of the variable social environment of origin on the intention to create a business among the participants. This means that the entrepreneurial intention observed is not attributable to the poor quality of practices in the subject's immediate environment. Thus, we can conclude that regardless of the social environment of origin, young female graduates show a low entrepreneurial intention.

Applying the theory of planned behavior, Krueger and Casrud (1993) focused on the link between feelings of personal efficacy and entrepreneurship. Their study shows that the sense of self-efficacy has a significant effect on entrepreneurship. This idea has also been tested by authors such as Branchet, Boissin et al. (2009). According to these authors, the feeling of perceived personal efficacy, which refers to a person's self-confidence, is a factor in entrepreneurial behavior.

The results of our study on this aspect also highlight the relationship between self-esteem and entrepreneurial intention among young women with higher education. In other words, subjects with high self-esteem are the ones who express the majority of their intention to create a company. These results are supported by the work of some authors on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Bamberg, Ajzen, & Smith, 2003); risk behaviors in the daily practice of the profession of urban cab driver (otémé; 2010). As indicated by the principle of personal mastery (Bandoura, echoed by otémé, 2010), engagement in action is a function of beliefs about "behavioral control and the resources necessary for perceived action (Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

Moreover, other works (Kueguer & Casrud, 1993), in application of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen) have emphasized the link between the feeling of personal effectiveness and entrepreneurship. They found that self-efficacy has a significant effect on the ability to undertake in subjects. The work of Boissin and Branchet (2009), goes in the same direction. In this perspective, the feeling of perceived

efficiency (self-confidence) is a factor of entrepreneurial behavior. Thus, the lack of self-confidence related to low self-esteem is an inhibitor of entrepreneurial intention.

The results of Le Breton's study (1972) also show that the uncertainties surrounding self-esteem and the feeling of inferiority make it extremely difficult for the subject to make decisions about the career and profession that he or she should embrace later on. These results are similar to those of Boissin et al. (2009), who indicate that confidence in oneself and one's abilities encourages one to face certain tasks that are qualified as difficult or to invest in certain fields that are perceived as risky. It follows that self-image is positively correlated with entrepreneurial intention. Thus, subjects capable of self-control in the face of adversity and of positive self-assessment are more willing to engage in a process leading to the creation of a business.

The results of this study allow for a better understanding of the impact of the limits of policies to encourage and support entrepreneurship, particularly female entrepreneurship, in our social context, which is dominated by unemployment among higher education graduates.

5. Conclusion

The results, at the end of this study, allowed us to show that the variable (VI) social background does not have a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intention of young girls with higher education. Only the variable (VI) self-esteem induces a significant effect on the intention to create a company among the subjects.

It should be noted, however, that these results need to be qualified with the help of control variables: given that this study only took into account subjects from one Training and Research Unit (UFR-SHS) of the humanities and social sciences. This could constitute a bias that would explain the results (hypothesis 1). Thus, the use of a control group or even a study on the scale of the entire UFHB University would have allowed us to better highlight the effect of our variables (VI).

It should be noted that the interest of the results of this study lies in the fact that they confirm that cognitive and affective aspects do indeed play an important role in the process that leads to the creation of businesses among the subjects.

Thus, the knowledge of self-assessment made by individuals is an avenue to be explored in the design of policies and other strategies aimed at intervening in the complex field of unemployment in general and graduate unemployment in particular, including the issue of female entrepreneurship.

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