

Establishing the Moderating Effect of Social Norms on the Relationship between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intent of Graduating University Students in Western Uganda

Dr. Nuwatuahire Benard, Mubehamwe Janan, Prof. Emmanuel Karoro

Valley University of Science and Technology

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ABSTRACT

This study established the moderating effect of social norms on the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intent of graduating university students in Western Uganda. The study adopted cross-sectional and causal-comparative research designs on a sample of 435 graduating students in Western Uganda. Descriptive results revealed that students entrepreneurial intent ($\bar{x} = 3.03$) was good and entrepreneurship education (mean = 2.96) was also good. On the other hand, social norms (mean = 2.34) were poor. Inferential results revealed that social norms had a direct positive significant relationship with entrepreneurial intent ($\beta = 0.219$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and a positive and significant moderating effect ($\beta = 0.630$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) on entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intent. Therefore, it was concluded that appropriate social norms enhance development of entrepreneurial intent in students especially when students are also accessing entrepreneurship education in institutions of learning. It was thus recommended that management of universities such as directorates of student welfare should put in place environments that promote students that build appropriate social norms.

Key words: Social Norms, Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intent.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of entrepreneurial activity and the creation of new businesses on the economic growth of a country and the generation of jobs are recognised phenomenon worldwide (Sánchez, 2012). Entrepreneurship has been propagated as the remedy to high unemployment problems and stagnant economic growth (Audretsch, Carree, van Stel & Thurik, 2020; Dilanchiev, 2019; Chidiebere, Iloanya & Udunze, 2014). Entrepreneurial education promotes entrepreneurial intentions of students by raising their awareness of self-employment as a career option (Oguntimehin & Olaniran, 2017). Therefore, in this study, it was conceived that entrepreneurship education in terms of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills moderated by social norms related to entrepreneurial intentions of graduating students.

Theoretical Review

The Social Norms Theory which posits that individual behaviour is influenced by oftentimes perceptions of how other members of our social groups or community think and act (Berkowitz, 2021), underpinned the study. The Social Norms theory predicts that persons express or inhibit behaviour in an attempt to conform to a perceived norm (Berkowitz, 2021). Social norms relate to the perception of the societies about the particular behaviour. Norms govern much of the social and political life; an established norm can be very powerful. Prevailing social reward system plays a very important role to pave the way for the development of behaviour. The course of action that is more awarded and appreciated with in a particular society will be

adopted by the members. With respect to entrepreneurship, some of the societies are levelled high in entrepreneurship in comparison to other. This may be that in these societies entrepreneurial activities are appreciated hence, people are more intended towards entrepreneurship (Kothari, 2015). From the social norms theory, it emerges that the dominant behaviour in a society will be adopted by the members. The Social Norms Theory concerns itself with behaviour copying practices covered by the social norms. Therefore, the Social Norms Theory was the basis for analysing the moderating effect of social norms on entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intent.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A norm is a widely shared expectation about action. This expectation may be passive, as in expectations about customary or approved action, or active, as in enforced expectations (Bell & Cox, 2020). Social norms refer to the perception of the societies about the particular behaviour (Kothari, 2015). Conforming to social norms is often the appropriate course of action because collective wisdom tends to serve the individual, and the group, well. Among other things, it can provide a convenient decision-making heuristic and thus obviate the need to think critically about the consequences of each decision before acting on it; a process known as fixed-action patterns (Lapinski & Rimal, 2019). Social norms are directly associated with the entrepreneurship because they are the reason for differences among the societies with respect to entrepreneurial activities. Some of the societies are levelled high in entrepreneurship in comparison to others. This may be that in these societies entrepreneurial activities are appreciated; hence, people are more intended towards entrepreneurship (Kothari, 2015).

Social norms may affect the status attributed to different occupations. In this respect, social norms can help explain the origin of non-pecuniary benefits from entrepreneurial activity. The prestige that different social norms attribute to occupations can affect occupational choice. More individuals may decide to become entrepreneurs in a community because they have characteristics that make them more prone to entrepreneurial activity. Additionally, some communities could have certain characteristics, such as easier access to funds, which generate the correlation between individual and aggregate occupational choices (Giannetti & Simonov, 2020). The availability of basic talent of entrepreneurship remains almost constant across the time and place. However, relative distribution of this talent among productive, unproductive, and destructive activities depends on prevailing social reward system. People use their entrepreneurial talent in those activities, which are appreciated by the society (Kothari, 2015).

Giannetti and Simonov (2018) investigate the extent to which differences in population, business environment and cultural values contributed to explaining differences in entrepreneurial activity across Swedish municipalities. The results reveal that social norms contributed to entrepreneurial activity. Individuals are more likely to become entrepreneurs where there were more entrepreneurs, even if entrepreneurial income was low. Kothari (2015) seek to identify social norms that affected the entrepreneurial intention in the entrepreneurially deficient western Uganda and using final year undergraduate students studying in different colleges of western Uganda. The results show that social norms were not significant determinants of entrepreneurial intent. Krithika and Venkatachalam (2014) investigate the impact of subjective norms on entrepreneurial Intention has not been uniform across the globe using GEM (global entrepreneurship monitor) data collected in Bangalore, India. The results reveal a relationship between the subjective norms and entrepreneurial intention among the business students.

Pacheco and York (2019) seek to determine important factors in promoting firm founding in the environmental context using the U.S. solar energy sector. The findings reveal that norms of family interdependence were related to new firm entry in this sector. Social norms played an integral part in influencing the creation of new firms. Wach (2015) explore the impact of cultural and social norms on entrepreneurship in the EU countries on the basis of the GEM data of the recent report of 2013. Correlation results reveal that cultural and social norms had a positive significant correlation with entrepreneurship

activities and intentions. The more entrepreneurial the national culture is, the more the business opportunities. In entrepreneurial cultures, the status of entrepreneur is rather widely appreciated and media pays a lot of attention to successful entrepreneurship stories. Entrepreneurial culture also influences the nascent entrepreneurship rate and new business ownership rate. Zali, Bastian and Qureshi (2013) analyse the role of cultural contingencies, notably social norms on innovation in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region using entrepreneurs as units of analysis. The results confirm the relevance of networks for innovation outcomes in the MENA region. The entrepreneurs in the MENA region mainly rely on private networks, which have no relevance for innovation, unlike professional and international networks. However, social norms had a negative effect on innovation outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the cross-sectional and causal-comparative research designs because the information about a study problem that is gathered represents what is going on at only one point in time (Olsen & Marie, 2004). In the cross-sectional study, the researcher compares two different groups within the same parameters (Williams, 2019). Therefore, using the cross-sectional design, the researcher was able to collect appropriate data quickly and cheaply. With respect to causal-comparative research design, it focuses on determining if a cause effect relationship exists between one factor or set of factors, the independent variable(s) and a second factor or set of factors, the dependent variable(s) (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Using causal comparative design, the researcher collected data that enabled regression analysis to establish whether entrepreneurship skills predicted entrepreneurial intent.

DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data was done through thematic and content analysis. Thematic analysis involved comparing the emerged codes of clusters together and in relation to the entire data set comprising the main components of data analysis. Thematic analysis helped in identifying links between elements, domains and dimensions of participants' perspective (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen&Snelgrove, 2016). Content analysis involved establishing the occurrence of selected terms within a text or texts . The data was interpreted by composing explanations and substantiating them using the respondents open responses. While analysing qualitative data, conclusions were reached on how different variables were related (Renner & Taylor-Powell, 2003).Quantitative data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS 24.0) involved calculation of descriptive statistics namely, frequencies, percentages and means for descriptive analysis. For inferential statistics, correlation and regression analyses were used in the testing of hypothesis.

DATA PRESENTATION

Response Rate

In spite of the reminders and follow ups, for about four weeks, 18 respondents did not complete and return their questionnaires, therefore out of the 453 respondents that make the sample for this study, 435 responded to the questionnaire. This presents a response rate of 96.03%.

Table 1: Response Rate

Category	Number Responded	Percentage
Respondents	453	100
Total responses	435	96.03

Source: Primary Data

The results in Table 1 indicates that questionnaire Data were collected from 83(73.5%) out of the initially anticipated 115 anticipated to provide data. With respect to data for the interview from managers of the companies, data were collected from all 5(100%) respondents initially determined to provide interview data. The overall response rate for both questionnaires was 74.6%. This was considered an appropriate response rate because according to Nulty (2008), in social research a response rate of 50.0% is acceptable.

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The various items measuring entrepreneurial knowledge aspects were scaled using the four-point of 1=strongly disagree (very inadequate or no skills at all acquired); 2=disagree (inadequate skills acquired); 3= agree (adequate skills acquired); 4 = strongly agree (very adequate skills acquired). For each of the entrepreneurial skills aspects, descriptive statistics that include frequencies, percentages and means are presented and then the results of confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analyses follow. Thereafter correlation analysis is done and then regression.

The various items measuring social norms are scaled using the four-point of 1=strongly disagree (very low effect); 2=disagree (low effect); 3= agree (high effect); 4 = strongly agree (very high effect). The results presented include descriptive statistics that are namely; frequencies, percentages and means are presented and then the results of confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analyses follow. Thereafter moderation analysis is done. The results are presented item by item following the order of the self-administered questionnaire survey as presented in the instrument The results were as presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Frequencies, Percentages and Means for Social Norms

Achievement Attitude	F/%	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
Most of my friends show desire to start enterprises	F	129	183	64	59	2.12
	%	29.7	42.1	14.7	13.6	
Together with my friends we spend much time talking about starting business enterprises	F	107	189	71	68	2.23
	%	24.6	43.4	16.3	15.6	
Business is seen as a good work in my society	F	46	114	159	116	2.79
	%	10.6	26.2	36.6	26.7	
My society gives more respect to entrepreneurs	F	65	163	127	80	2.51
	%	14.9	37.5	29.2	18.4	
Most of the people in my society prefer to start enterprises than be employed	F	113	145	110	67	2.3
	%	26	33.3	25.3	15.4	
My society encourages most people to be entrepreneurs	F	117	111	131	76	2.38
	%	26.9	25.5	30.1	17.5	
More often a person who is unable to get job, starts his/ her business in our society	F	78	163	123	71	2.43
	%	17.9	37.5	28.3	16.3	
In my society business is regarded the most dignified work	F	84	177	103	71	2.37
	%	19.3	40.7	23.7	16.3	

Source: Primary Data

The results in Table 2 above on whether most of their friends showed desire to start enterprises showed that cumulatively the majority percentage (71.8%) of the respondents disagreed with 28.3% agreeing. The mean = 2.12 is close to two which on the scale used corresponded to “Disagreed”. On the scale used three being agreed (high), the results suggest that the respondents indicated that most of their friends did not show the desire to start enterprises. As to whether the respondents together with their friends spent much time talking about starting business enterprises, cumulatively the majority percentage (68.0%) of the respondents disagreed with 31.9% agreeing. The mean = 2.23 is close to three suggesting that the respondents disagreed. These results thus suggest that the respondents together with their friends did not spend much time talking about starting business enterprises.

With respect to whether business was seen as good work in their society, cumulatively the larger percentage (63.3%) of the respondents agreed with 36.8% disagreeing. The mean = 2.79 close to three suggest that the respondents agreed. Therefore, business was seen as good work their society. As regards to whether societies of the respondents gave more respect to entrepreneurs, cumulatively the larger percentage (52.4%) of the respondents agreed with 47.6% disagreeing. The mean = 2.51 is lowly close to three which corresponded to agreed. These results suggest that the respondents fairly agreed. Therefore, the respondents indicated that fairly, societies of the respondents gave more respect to entrepreneurs.

As to whether most of the people in the society preferred to start enterprises than being employed, cumulatively the larger percentage (59.3%) of the respondents disagreed with 40.7% agreeing. The mean = 2.30 close to two suggest that the respondents disagreed. Therefore, the respondents indicated that people in the society did not prefer to start enterprises than being employed. Regarding whether the respondents’ societies encouraged most people to be entrepreneurs, cumulatively the majority percentage (52.4%) of the respondents disagreed with 47.6% agreeing. The mean = 2.38 close to two suggest that the respondents disagreed. Therefore, the respondents suggested that their societies did not encourage most people to be entrepreneurs.

As to whether the more often a person who was unable to get job started his/ her business in the respondents’ societies, cumulatively the majority percentage (55.4%) of the respondents disagreed while 44.6% agreed. The mean = 2.43 close to three suggested that the respondents agreed. Therefore, a person who was unable to get job not more often started his/ her business in the societies. As to whether in the societies of the respondents business was regarded the most dignified work, cumulatively the larger percentage (60.0%) of the respondents disagreed with 40.0% agreeing. The mean = 2.37 close to two suggests that the respondents disagreed. Therefore, the respondents indicated that in the societies business was not regarded the most dignified work. To establish whether the items in Table 2 are valid items measuring social norms, the items were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis and then reliability test to confirm their reliability. The results are given Tables 3 and 4below:

Table 3: Components on Social Norms

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.342	41.780	41.780	3.342	41.780	41.780
2	1.284	16.047	57.827	1.284	16.047	57.827
3	.985	12.316	70.143			
4	.799	9.987	80.130			
5	.681	8.517	88.647			
6	.492	6.154	94.801			

7	.375	4.693	99.494			
8	.040	.506	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 3 above shows that the eight items on social norms were reduced to as many components. However, only the first two component have eigenvalues = 3.342 and 1.284 that exceed 1.00. This implies that there are two significant components. The factors explain $3.342/8 \times 100 = 41.780\%$ and $1.284/8 \times 100 = 16.047\%$ of the joint variation in the eight items. The factor loadings of the respective items on the component and their reliability index (Cronbach alpha, α) are given in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Loadings and Cronbach Alphas for Items on Social Norms

Components	Component		Alpha
	1	2	(α)
Most of my friends show desire to start enterprises	0.632		0.788*
Together with my friends we spend much time talking about starting business enterprises	0.714		0.790**
Business is seen as a good work in my society	<u>0.367</u>		
My society gives more respect to entrepreneurs	0.693		
Most of the people in my society people prefer to start enterprises than be employed	<u>0.560</u>	<u>0.500</u>	
My society encourages most people be entrepreneurs	0.517		
More often a person who is unable to get job, starts his/ her business in our society.	0.809		
In my society business is regarded the most dignified work	0.763		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

The loadings in Table 4 above show that all the items load highly on the first and second components except for item three which load low and cross loaded. Item three that did not load was dropped from subsequent analysis because it was considered weak and item five that cross loaded was dropped because it was considered complex (Lance, Butts & Michels, 2006). The final Cronbach alpha result in Table 4 ($\alpha = 0.790^{**}$, initially 0.788^*) indicate that dropping the initial Cronbach alpha in Table 4 made the items more valid and more reliable. However, since the final alpha ($\alpha = 0.790$) was above 0.7, it suggested that the remaining items are internally consistent, therefore all items reliably measure social norms. To establish the effects of social norms on the respondents participating in the study, all items in Table 4 were aggregated into one average index (social norms) whose summary statistics are given in Table 5:

Table 5: Summary statistics on Social Norms

Descriptive		Statistic	Std. Error
Social Norms	Mean	2.34	0.03
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.28
		Upper Bound	2.41
	5% Trimmed Mean	2.33	

Median	2.33	
Variance	0.48	
Std. Deviation	0.69	
Minimum	1	
Maximum	4	
Range	3	
Interquartile Range	0.67	
Skewness	0.32	0.12
Kurtosis	0.07	0.23

Source: Primary Data

The results in Table 5 above show that the mean = 2.34 is equal to the median = 2.33 with a positive skew = 0.32 suggesting normality of the results. Besides, the mean and median close to two implies low levels of social norms because basing on the scale used, two represent disagreed. The low standard deviation = 0.69 means limited dispersion in the responses. The curve in Figure 1 confirms the suggested normality.

Figure 1: 1 Histogram on Social Norms

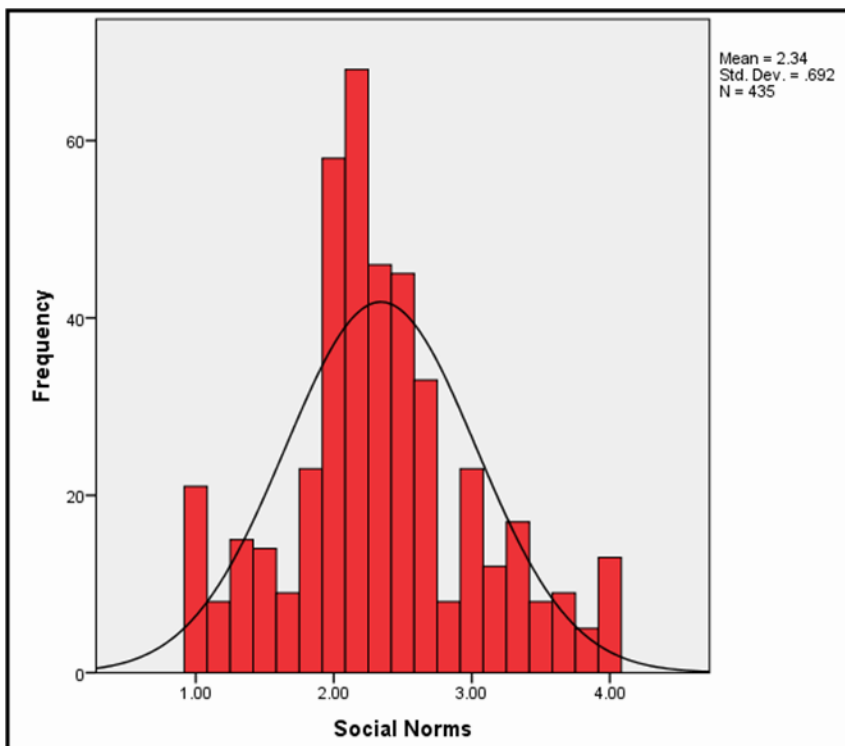


Figure 1 above shows normal distribution of the responses obtained from the respondents. This means that the data obtained on achievement attitude could be subjected to linear correlation and regression and appropriate results obtained.

With regard to the question item in the section of the questionnaire survey requiring the respondents to show what value was attached to starting a business in their social circles, the respondents generally indicated that the value to entrepreneurship was high but largely they through of getting employed first and then entering in business later or having business as a supplementary activity. One respondent stated, “I hope to get a job and when I have established myself, I enter into business. Currently, I do not have the resources to engage in

business ventures.” Another respondent stated, “My goal is to carry out by profession as an engineer but when I have accumulated resources, I will also set up a business to supplement my income.” However, one respondent stated, “I come from a business background and I hope not to look for a job. I will straight away join business because it is what has built my family and so my family values business very much.” The views above show that largely, business was looked at as a secondary activity for professionals. Thus, although the graduating students hoped to carry out entrepreneurial activities, it came secondary to their professions. Indeed, these results reflect the descriptive statistics results which showed that entrepreneurship social norms were low.

Moderating Effect of Social Norms on the Relationship between Entrepreneurial Education and Entrepreneurial Intent

To establish whether social norms had a moderating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intent, a moderation analysis was carried out. The results were as presented in Table 6. below

Table 6. Below Moderating Effect of Social Norms on Entrepreneurial Education and Entrepreneurial Intent

Model	Standardised Coefficients	Significance
	Beta (β)	(p)
Entrepreneurial education	0.676	0
$R^2 = 0.456$ F= 363.938, P = 0.000		
Entrepreneurial education	0.63	0
Social Norms	0.219	0
$R^2 = 0.501$, F= 218.010, p = 0.000		

1. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intent

The results in Table 6 above show that, entrepreneurial education explains 45.6% of the variation in entrepreneurial intention (adjusted $R^2 = 0.456$). This means that 54.6% of the variation was accounted for by other factors. However, when moderated (educational entrepreneurial intent x social norms) there is increase in the variation in entrepreneurial intent to 50.1% ($R^2 = 0.501$). This suggests when entrepreneurial education was moderated by social norms, 49.1% of the variation was accounted for by other factors. This means that the moderation between entrepreneurial education and social norms led to an increase of the variance in entrepreneurial intent of 4.5%. Entrepreneurial education is a significant positive determinant of entrepreneurial intent ($\beta = 0.676$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). When moderated by social norms entrepreneurial education was still significant ($\beta = 0.630$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Similarly, social norms also had a direct positive significant relationship with entrepreneurial intent ($\beta = 0.219$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, social norms have a moderating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intent. The direct relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intent is more highly positive and significant than when moderated by social norms.

Summary Multiple Regression Model for Educational Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intent Moderated by Social Norms

To develop an overall model for entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intent also indicating the moderating effect of social norms, the aspects of educational entrepreneurship namely entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes are in combination regressed on entrepreneurial intent moderated by social norms. The results on the same were as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: 1 Multiple Regression Model for Educational Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intent Moderated by Social Norms

Model	Entrepreneurial Education	Standardised Coefficients		Significance
		Beta (β)		p
1	Entrepreneurial Knowledge	0.464		0
	Entrepreneurial skills	0.138		0.001
	Entrepreneurial attitude	0.224		0
R2 = 0.485, F= 135.164, P = 0.000				
2	Entrepreneurial Knowledge	0.467		0
	Entrepreneurial skills	0.141		0
	Entrepreneurial attitude	0.158		0
	Social Norms	0.221		0
R2 = 0.526 F= 129.149, p = 0.000				

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intent

The results in Table 7 show that in a combined model for entrepreneurial education aspects, namely entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes, they explain 48.5% of the variation in entrepreneurial intention (adjusted R^2 0.485). This means that 51.5% of the variation was accounted for by other factors. However, when moderated (entrepreneurial knowledge + skills + attitudes x social norms) there was increase in the variation in entrepreneurial intent to 52.6% ($R^2 = 0.526$). This suggests that when entrepreneurial education aspects were moderated by social norms in a combined model, 47.4% of the variation was accounted for by other factors. This means that the moderation social norms of social norms on entrepreneurial education in terms of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes led to an increase of the variance in entrepreneurial intent of 4.1%. Entrepreneurial education is a significant positive determinant of entrepreneurial intent that is entrepreneurial knowledge ($\beta = 0.464$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), skills ($\beta = 0.138$, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$) and attitudes entrepreneurial knowledge ($\beta = 0.224$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). When moderated by social norms entrepreneurial education was still significant ($\beta = 0.630$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Similarly, social norms ($\beta = 0.221$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) also have a direct positive significant relationship with entrepreneurial intent that is entrepreneurial knowledge ($\beta = 0.467$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), skills ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and attitudes entrepreneurial knowledge ($\beta = 0.158$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, social norms have a moderating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intent with an increasing effect on each of the aspects of entrepreneurial education. The direct relationship between entrepreneurship education aspects and entrepreneurial intent is positive and more highly positive and significant for each aspect when moderated by social norms.

Conclusion

Drawing on the findings of this study it was concluded that appropriate social norms enhance development of entrepreneurial intent in students. This especially when students are also accessing entrepreneurship education in institutions of learning.

Recommendation

Basing on the f conclusion above, it was recommended that Management of universities such as directorates of student welfare should put in place environments that promote students building appropriate social norms. This should involve putting in place activities that make students get involved in discussing

entrepreneurial activities and develop contacts with successful entrepreneurial environments.

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