

Empirical Insights into Psychological Determinants and Entrepreneurial Motivation as Predictors of Entrepreneurial Career Choice: A PRISMA-Guided Literature Review in the African Context (2015–2025)

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ABSTRACT

The empirical data on psychological factors and entrepreneurial motivation as predictors of entrepreneurial career choice in the African environment between 2015 and 2025 is compiled in this comprehensive literature review. The review examined thirty peer-reviewed studies from several African nations, including Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana, Nigeria, Kenya, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire, in accordance with PRISMA guidelines. The evidence suggests that the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) dominate the theoretical landscape, with entrepreneurial self efficacy emerging as the most consistent and powerful predictor of entrepreneurial aspirations across varied African contexts. While fear of failure exhibits negative relationships reduced by the liveliness of the business environment, internal locus of control, the drive for achievement, and a predisposition for taking risks show strong positive associations with choosing an entrepreneurial profession. The review identifies a dual motivation structure in African entrepreneurship including necessity driven motives shaped by graduate unemployment and limited formal employment opportunities coexist with opportunity driven motives including financial independence, autonomy, and creative expression. Interventions that target self efficacy beliefs through entrepreneurial education, scaffolding, and psychological capital development may successfully convert psychological propensity into entrepreneurial action, as self efficacy functions as a crucial mediator between personality traits and entrepreneurial intentions. The association between psychological variables and career choice is strongly moderated by related characteristics such as perceived financial accessibility, social support systems, and entrepreneurial education. The results emphasize the necessity of context-sensitive entrepreneurship policies in Africa that tackle structural obstacles to entrepreneurial entry as well as psychological capacity building.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial career choice, psychological factors, entrepreneurial motivation, Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

In African economies, entrepreneurship has become a vital avenue for economic growth, job creation, and poverty relief. Given the continent's consistently high youth unemployment rates and the dearth of formal employment opportunities, it is crucial for policymakers, educators, and development professionals to comprehend the psychological and motivational elements that influence people to pursue careers in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial ambitions and job choice in African contexts have received increasing scholarly attention between 2015 and 2025, although the evidence is still dispersed across various theoretical frameworks, techniques, and country contexts.

In the literature on global entrepreneurship, psychological factors such as self-efficacy, locus of control, need for achievement, and risk-taking tendency have been found to be important predictors of entrepreneurial intents and behavior. It is yet unknown empirically, though, to what degree these associations hold true in African contexts, where structural barriers including poor institutional support, restricted financial access, and significant

economic uncertainty are common. Similar to this, the intricate interaction between necessity driven entrepreneurship which is pushed by economic hardship and unemployment and opportunity-driven entrepreneurship which is drawn by dreams for autonomy, innovation, and wealth creation defines entrepreneurial motivation in Africa.

A comprehensive, empirically supported synthesis of empirical research on psychological factors and entrepreneurial drive in African contexts is needed, and this systematic literature review fills that need. This review guarantees transparency, repeatability, and rigor in locating, choosing, and synthesizing pertinent research by adhering to PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) recommendations.

Scope and Objectives

This review focuses exclusively on empirical studies conducted in African countries between 2015 and 2025 that examine psychological determinants and entrepreneurial motivation as predictors of entrepreneurial career choice or entrepreneurial intentions. The primary objectives are:

- i. To identify and critically analyse the main theoretical frameworks used to explain entrepreneurial career choice in African contexts.
- ii. To synthesize empirical evidence on the relationship between specific psychological determinants (self efficacy, locus of control, need for achievement, risk-taking, fear of failure, attitudes, and subjective norms) and entrepreneurial intentions or career choice.
- iii. To examine the role of entrepreneurial motivation both necessity driven and opportunity-driven, in shaping career decisions among African youth and graduates.
- iv. To determine the mediating and moderating processes that describe the interactions between environmental variables and psychological components in African contexts.
- v. To provide evidence-based recommendations for entrepreneurship education, policy interventions, and future research directions.

Research Questions

This review addresses the following research questions:

- i. What theoretical frameworks dominate the study of entrepreneurial career choice in African contexts, and how are they operationalized?
- ii. Which psychological determinants consistently predict entrepreneurial intentions and career choice across African studies?
- iii. How do necessity-driven and opportunity-driven motivations influence entrepreneurial career decisions in African contexts.
- iv. What mediating and moderating mechanisms explain the relationship between psychological determinants and entrepreneurial career choice?
- v. How do contextual factors unique to African settings (unemployment, access to finance, institutional support) interact with psychological determinants?

METHODOLOGY

PRISMA Protocol

This systematic literature review adheres to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and reproducibility. The PRISMA

framework provides a standardized approach to conducting systematic reviews, minimizing bias in study selection and enhancing the quality of evidence synthesis. (Haddaway et al., 2022)

Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was implemented across multiple scholarly databases including SciSpace, Google Scholar, and PubMed. The search covered the period from January 2015 to December 2025, focusing on empirical studies examining psychological determinants and entrepreneurial motivation in African contexts. Search terms included combinations of keywords such as "entrepreneurial intention," "entrepreneurial career choice," "psychological determinants," "self efficacy," "locus of control," "entrepreneurial motivation," "Africa," and specific African country names.

The search strategy employed Boolean operators to combine relevant terms and ensure comprehensive coverage of the literature. Database-specific filters were applied to limit results to peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and dissertations published within the specified timeframe. Reference lists of identified studies were also manually screened to identify additional relevant publications through backward citation searching.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) examining psychological determinants of entrepreneurial motivation as predictors of entrepreneurial intentions or career choice
- Studies conducted in African countries or with African samples
- Publications between January 2015 and December 2025
- Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and dissertations
- Studies focusing on youth, students, graduates, or general population samples
- Studies written in English or with English abstracts

Exclusion criteria:

- Purely theoretical or conceptual papers without empirical data
- Studies conducted outside African contexts
- Publications before 2015
- Studies not examining psychological or motivational predictors of entrepreneurial career choice
- Duplicate publications or studies reporting the same data

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Following the search and screening process, 94 unique relevant papers were initially identified across multiple databases. After merging results and applying relevance ranking based on alignment with the review objectives, 15 studies were selected for in-depth analysis. These studies represent diverse African countries including Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana, Nigeria, Kenya, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire.

Data extraction focused on theoretical frameworks employed, psychological determinants examined, motivational factors investigated, sample characteristics and study context, research design and analytical

methods, key empirical findings including effect sizes and statistical significance, and mediating or moderating mechanisms identified.

The synthesis approach combined narrative synthesis with structured comparison tables to identify patterns, convergences, and divergences across studies. Findings were organized thematically around specific psychological determinants and motivational constructs, with attention to contextual variations across African countries and populations.

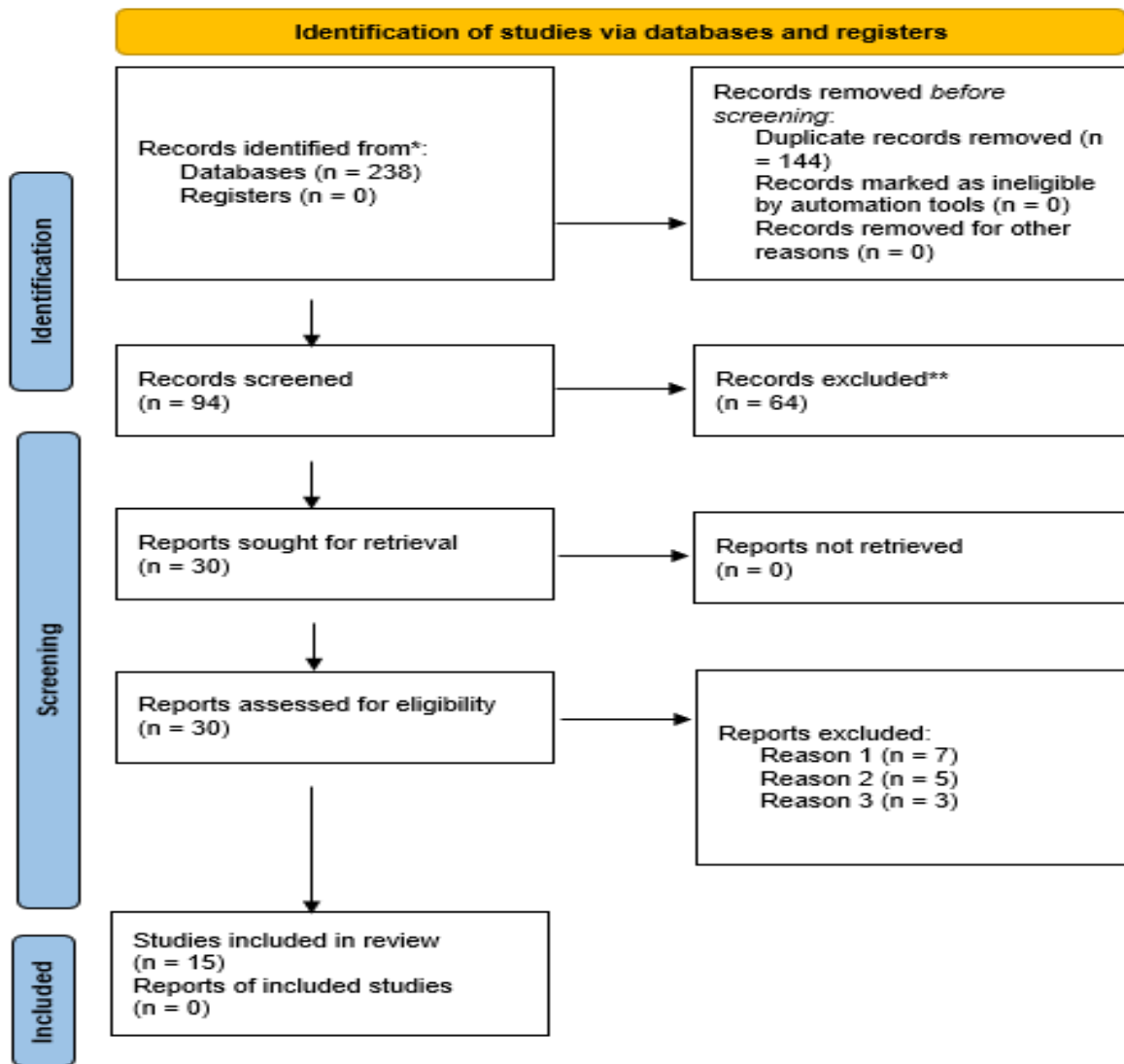


Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 flow diagram showing the selection process of empirical studies psychological determinants and entrepreneurial motivation as predictors of entrepreneurial career choice (2015–2025).

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior

According to the Ethiopian study by Asmare, it extended TPB by incorporating personality traits such as risk taking propensity and socio-demographic variables including parental role models, finding that perceived social norms and risk taking readiness significantly determined entrepreneurial intention ($p = 0.000$) among 333 graduating students at Madawalabu University (Asmare, 2023). Interestingly, perceived behavioral control was statistically insignificant in this context, which the authors attributed to potential curriculum gaps in entrepreneurship education.

TPB's compatibility with Bandura's concept of perceived self efficacy has been explicitly recognized in African research, with perceived behavioral control often operationalized as career self efficacy (Ndofirepi et al., 2018). This theoretical integration bridges TPB with social cognitive perspectives, creating a more comprehensive framework for understanding entrepreneurial career choice in contexts where both psychological beliefs and social influences are noticeable.

According to Nonkoudje in the Beninese study further enriched TPB by integrating psychological factors (self-confidence, perceived personal effectiveness) and social support (relational networks) into the framework, demonstrating that individual success ($P = 0.117$; $t = 6.778$) and value creation ($P = 0.207$; $t = 9.084$) significantly influenced entrepreneurial intention formation among 105 young people (Nonkoudje, 2023). This adaptation of TPB to incorporate culturally relevant constructs illustrates the theory's flexibility in African contexts.

Social Cognitive Theory and Self efficacy

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), particularly Bandura's concept of self efficacy, provides the second major theoretical pillar in African entrepreneurship research. SCT emphasizes the reciprocal interaction between personal factors, behavior, and environmental influences, with self efficacy, the belief in one's capability to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments serving as a central mechanism (Adebusuyi et al., 2021; Gebresilase et al., 2025; Ndofirepi et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurial self efficacy has been shown in numerous African research to be a mediating variable between personality traits and profession choice, as well as a direct predictor of entrepreneurial ambitions. Rambe et al.'s South African study shows that the association between University of Technology students' technological innovation and entrepreneurial career choice is mediated by entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Ndofirepi et al., 2018). These findings underscore self efficacy's dual role as both an outcome of personal characteristics and a proximate driver of entrepreneurial behavior.

The research done by Gebresilase et al. in Ethiopia provided robust evidence for self efficacy's mediating function, showing that self efficacy positively correlated with entrepreneurial intention ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) and partially mediated both internal locus of control ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.001$) and external locus of control ($\beta = -0.105$, $p < 0.001$) relationships with entrepreneurial intention among 455 final-year university students. This mediation pattern suggests that locus of control influences entrepreneurial intentions substantially through its effect on self efficacy beliefs (Gebresilase et al., 2025).

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively influenced entrepreneurial ability, which in turn positively affected entrepreneurial intentions among 347 university youth, according to a Botswana study that integrated self-efficacy within a larger model examining perceived access to finance, attitude toward entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial ability. (Svotwa et al., 2022). This sequential relationship highlights how self efficacy operates within a chain of psychological and contextual factors.

Adebusuyi et al. used the Social Cognitive Career Self-Management (CSM) theory in Nigeria and discovered that EPL self-efficacy predicted both job and entrepreneurial outcome expectations, mediating the effects of open personality and socioeconomic status on entrepreneurial intentions among 363 recent graduates. This application demonstrates SCT's versatility in explaining diverse career pathways beyond purely entrepreneurial choices.

Trait and Personality Theories

Trait-based approaches, which conceptualize entrepreneurship as a function of stable personality characteristics, constitute a third major theoretical stream in African research. These approaches draw on personality psychology to identify dispositional factors that differentiate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs (Ahmed et al., 2023; Kidane & Raju, 2016; Malebana, 2021).

The Ethiopian TVET study by Kidane et al. employed five core personality traits need for achievement, locus of control, risk-taking, need for independence, and self efficacy to measure entrepreneurial awareness among 194

students, finding that personality traits played a more important role than environmental factors in influencing students' decisions to become entrepreneurs (Kidane & Raju, 2016). This trait-centric finding challenges purely environmental or structural explanations of entrepreneurial career choice in African contexts.

According to Ahmed et al.'s Ethiopian study, trait theory was used implicitly by focusing on psychological trait factors, including need for achievement, need for independence, locus of control, and risk taking propensity, as significant predictors of youth entrepreneurship likelihood, employing binary logistic regression analysis with 385 respondents (Ahmed et al., 2023). The emphasis on stable traits reflects an assumption that entrepreneurial propensity is rooted in enduring individual differences.

However, trait approaches in African research have increasingly recognized the interaction between personality and context. The study by Asmare acknowledged that while traits like risk taking propensity significantly predicted entrepreneurial intention, contextual factors such as parental role models and entrepreneurship education also played crucial roles (Asmare, 2023). This integration suggests a movement toward interactionist perspectives that recognize both dispositional and situational determinants.

Psychological Capital Theory

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) theory, which conceptualizes psychological resources as a higher-order construct comprising self efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, has gained traction in African entrepreneurship research as a framework for understanding positive psychological states that facilitate entrepreneurial intentions (Mahama et al., 2023).

The study conducted in Ghana by Mahama et al. examined psychological precursors of entrepreneurial intentions among higher education students, found that psychological capital, combined with entrepreneurial scaffolding (structured guidance and support), significantly predicted entrepreneurial intentions among 250 university students. The research concluded that students' convictions about success or failure and plans for entrepreneurial behaviors depended on proper entrepreneurial guidance and a positive mindset (Mahama et al., 2023).

PsyCap theory's emphasis on malleable psychological resources aligns well with intervention-oriented research in African contexts, where entrepreneurship education and training programs seek to develop psychological capacities. Unlike trait theories that emphasize stable dispositions, PsyCap theory suggests that psychological resources can be developed through targeted interventions, making it particularly relevant for educational and policy applications.

The integration of PsyCap with entrepreneurial scaffolding in the Ghanaian context illustrates how psychological capital operates in conjunction with institutional support structures. This theoretical integration acknowledges that psychological resources alone may be insufficient without complementary environmental supports a recognition particularly salient in African contexts characterized by resource constraints and institutional gaps.

Achievement Motivation Theory

Achievement Motivation Theory, rooted in McClelland's work on the need for achievement (nAch), provides a motivational lens for understanding entrepreneurial career choice. According to this theory, people who have a strong drive for success are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors because they offer chances for self-actualization, moderate risk-taking, and immediate performance feedback. (Ahmed et al., 2023; Kidane & Raju, 2016).

African studies have consistently identified need for achievement as a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intentions. The Ethiopian TVET study found that need for achievement, alongside other personality traits, influenced students' entrepreneurial decisions (Kidane & Raju, 2016). Similarly, Ahmed et al.'s Ethiopian research identified need for achievement as one of the significant psychological traits predicting youth entrepreneurship likelihood. (Ahmed et al., 2023)

The theory's emphasis on intrinsic motivation aligns with opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, where individuals pursue entrepreneurial careers to fulfill personal aspirations rather than merely responding to economic necessity. However, African research has revealed that achievement motivation often coexists with necessity-driven motives, creating a more complex motivational landscape than the theory originally envisioned. (Kidane & Raju, 2016)

The study by Cheng et al., while not exclusively focused on Africa, examined achievement motivation theory alongside social cognitive theories to investigate how fantasy of success and fear of failure affect entrepreneurial choice, with business vibrancy and failure experience serving as moderators (Cheng et al., 2024). This application demonstrates how achievement motivation theory can be enriched by incorporating contextual moderators relevant to African business environments.

Theoretical Integration in African Contexts

A notable trend in African entrepreneurship research is the integration of multiple theoretical frameworks to capture the complexity of entrepreneurial career choice in contexts characterized by both psychological and structural constraints. Studies increasingly combine TPB's emphasis on attitudes and social norms with SCT's focus on self efficacy, trait theory's attention to stable dispositions, and motivational theories' concern with achievement and autonomy needs.

The Ethiopian study by Gebresilase et al. exemplifies this integrative approach by extending TPB through the incorporation of locus of control as a distal antecedent of self efficacy, drawing on both TPB and SCT to explain how internal control beliefs shape self efficacy, thereby enhancing entrepreneurial intentions (Gebresilase et al., 2025). This theoretical synthesis acknowledges that entrepreneurial career decisions. multiply determined by attitudes, social influences, personality traits, and self-beliefs.

Similarly, the South African study by Malebana integrated TPB with entrepreneurial motivation constructs, examining how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, need for independence, challenge, and creative talents interact with TPB components to predict entrepreneurial intention among 496 rural youth (Malebana, 2021). This integration recognizes that motivational factors operate alongside cognitive-attitudinal factors in shaping career decisions.

The theoretical landscape in African entrepreneurship research thus reflects a pragmatic eclecticism, drawing on multiple frameworks to address the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial career choice in contexts where psychological propensities interact with significant structural barriers and opportunities. This integrative approach enhances explanatory power while acknowledging the limitations of any single theoretical framework in capturing the complexity of African entrepreneurial contexts.

Table 1: Studies that directly supports the review of predictors and career choice in Africa

Authors/Year	Study Focus	Methodology	Key Findings	Relevance to Objective
Kidane & Raju (2016)	Entrepreneurial motivation and determinant factors of the TVET graduate students	Stratified survey (n=194), Ethiopia	Personality traits (need for achievement, locus of control) outweigh environmental factors.	Directly supports the review of predictors and career choice in Africa.
Malebana (2021)	The Effect of Entrepreneurial Motivation on Entrepreneurial Intention	Cross-sectional survey (n=496)	Motivation significantly predicts intention; pull factors (independence) dominate.	Directly supports the review of predictors and career choice in Africa.

	of South African Rural Youth			
Amani et al. (2016)	Predictors of Career Intentions among Undergraduate Students in Tanzania	Cross-sectional survey (n=1043), multiple regression	Attitude is the strongest predictor, followed by subjective norms and self efficacy.	Directly supports the review of predictors and career choice in Africa.
Gebresilase et al. (2025)	The role of locus of control in shaping graduates' entrepreneurial intentions	SEM (n=455), Ethiopia	Internal locus of control positively predicts intention, partially mediated by self efficacy.	Directly supports the review of predictors and career choice in Africa.
Adebusuyi et al. (2021)	Predicting entrepreneurial and professional mindsets in Nigeria	Regression path analysis (n=363)	Socioeconomic status and open personality predict EPL self efficacy and intentions.	Directly supports the review of predictors and career choice in Africa.
Nonkoudje (2023)	Formation de l'intention entrepreneuriale des jeunes	SEM (n=105), Benin	Social support and individual success factors drive entrepreneurial intention.	Directly supports the review of predictors and career choice in Africa.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial Self Efficacy

Entrepreneurial self efficacy appears as the most consistently substantial psychological determinant of entrepreneurial intentions and career choice across African studies. Self efficacy is the belief in one's capability to successfully perform entrepreneurial tasks and roles demonstrates robust positive associations with entrepreneurial intentions across diverse African contexts, samples, and methodologies.

According to an Ethiopian study by Gebresilase et al. provided convincing evidence for self efficacy's central role, reporting a strong positive correlation between self efficacy and entrepreneurial intention ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$) among 455 final year university students. This relationship remained significant even after controlling for locus of control and other personality variables, underscoring self efficacy's independent predictive power (Gebresilase et al., 2025).

With reference to Botswana context, Svotwa et al. demonstrated that entrepreneurial self efficacy, along with attitude toward entrepreneurship and perceived access to finance, positively influenced entrepreneurial ability, which in turn positively affected entrepreneurial intentions among 347 university youth (Svotwa et al., 2022). This finding suggests that self efficacy operates through entrepreneurial ability as an intermediate mechanism, highlighting the importance of confidence in one's capabilities for translating intentions into action (Svotwa et al., 2022).

According to Amani et al, A Tanzanian study showed that while using the term "career self efficacy" within the TPB framework, self efficacy significantly predicted career intentions ($\beta = 0.21, p < 0.05$) among 1,043 undergraduate students, though its effect was smaller than attitude and subjective norms (Amani & Mkumbo, 2016). This pattern suggests that in some African contexts, social and attitudinal factors may be more proximate determinants of intentions than self efficacy beliefs (Amani & Mkumbo, 2016)

Rambe et al, in South Africa revealed that entrepreneurial self efficacy mediates the relationship between technological creativity and entrepreneurial career choice among University of Technology students. This mediation pattern indicates that self efficacy serves as a psychological mechanism through which personal capabilities and skills translate into career decisions (Ndofirepi et al., 2018)

In Nigeria study conducted by Adebusuyi et al. found that entrepreneurial, professional, and leadership (EPL) self efficacy predicted both entrepreneurial and job outcome expectations, mediating the effects of socioeconomic status and open personality among 363 new graduates (Adebusuyi et al., 2021) This finding extends self efficacy's relevance beyond purely entrepreneurial contexts, suggesting that confidence beliefs shape multiple career pathways (Adebusuyi et al., 2021)

Across these studies, self efficacy consistently demonstrates positive associations with entrepreneurial intentions, with effect sizes ranging from moderate to strong. The evidence supports self efficacy as a critical psychological resource that can be targeted through entrepreneurship education and training interventions to enhance entrepreneurial career choice in African contexts.

Locus of Control

Locus of control is the extent to which individuals believe they have control over events affecting their lives demonstrates consistent and theoretically coherent relationships with entrepreneurial intentions in African research. Internal locus of control (belief in personal control) positively predicts entrepreneurial intentions, while external locus of control (belief that external forces control outcomes) shows negative associations.

The Ethiopian study by Gebresilase et al. provided the most comprehensive evidence on locus of control, reporting that internal locus of control positively predicted both entrepreneurial intentions ($r = 0.38, p < 0.01$) and self efficacy ($r = 0.33, p < 0.01$), while external locus of control negatively predicted entrepreneurial intention ($r = -0.29, p < 0.01$) and self efficacy ($r = -0.25, p < 0.01$) among 455 university students (Gebresilase et al., 2025). Critically, self efficacy partially mediated both relationships, suggesting that locus of control influences intentions substantially through its effect on confidence beliefs (Gebresilase et al., 2025).

The TVET study by Kidane et al. in Ethiopia identified locus of control as one of five core personality traits influencing entrepreneurial decisions among 194 students, finding that personality traits (including locus of control) played a more important role than environmental factors (Kidane & Raju, 2016). This finding suggests that internal control beliefs are particularly salient in contexts where individuals must navigate significant structural constraints (Kidane & Raju, 2016).

Ahmed et al.'s Ethiopian research confirmed locus of control as a significant predictor of youth entrepreneurship likelihood using binary logistic regression with 385 respondents (Ahmed et al., 2023). The consistency of locus of control findings across multiple Ethiopian samples and methodologies strengthens confidence in this relationship (Ahmed et al., 2023).

The theoretical rationale for locus of control's importance in African contexts is compelling: entrepreneurship inherently involves uncertainty, risk, and the need to proactively shape outcomes despite environmental constraints. Individuals with internal locus of control are more likely to perceive entrepreneurship as a viable career path because they believe their efforts can overcome obstacles and produce desired results. Conversely, those with external locus of control may view entrepreneurship as too risky or futile in contexts characterized by institutional weaknesses and resource scarcity.

The mediation of locus of control effects through self efficacy, as demonstrated by Gebresilase et al., suggests that control beliefs shape entrepreneurial intentions partly by influencing confidence in one's entrepreneurial capabilities (Gebresilase et al., 2025). This mediation pattern has important implications for interventions, building self efficacy may be a more direct pathway to enhancing entrepreneurial intentions than attempting to shift locus of control orientations, which may be more resistant to change.

Need for Achievement

Need for achievement (nAch) is the desire to accomplish challenging goals and demonstrate competence consistently predicts entrepreneurial intentions across African studies, aligning with McClelland's classic theory linking achievement motivation to entrepreneurial behavior.

The Ethiopian TVET study by Kidane et al. identified need for achievement as one of five core personality traits influencing entrepreneurial decisions among 194 students. The study found that personality traits, including need for achievement, played an important role in influencing students' decisions to become entrepreneurs (Kidane & Raju, 2016).

Ahmed et al.'s Ethiopian research confirmed need for achievement as a significant psychological trait predicting youth entrepreneurship likelihood among 385 respondents. The consistency of this finding across different Ethiopian samples suggests that achievement motivation is a robust predictor in contexts where entrepreneurship offers opportunities for personal accomplishment (Ahmed et al., 2023).

The theoretical link between need for achievement and entrepreneurship is particularly relevant in African contexts where formal employment opportunities may not provide adequate outlets for achievement-orientated individuals. Entrepreneurship offers autonomy, direct feedback on performance, and opportunities to set and accomplish challenging goals and characteristics that appeal to individuals with high achievement motivation.

However, the evidence also suggests that need for achievement operates alongside other motivational factors. The South African study by Malebana found that entrepreneurial motivation, encompassing intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, need for independence, challenge, and creative talents, significantly predicted entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$) among 496 rural youth (Malebana, 2021). Respondents valued independence, challenge, creative talents, and earning more money as top motivators, suggesting that achievement needs are intertwined with autonomy and financial aspirations (Malebana, 2021).

According to Nonkoudje, the Beninese study demonstrated that individual success significantly influenced entrepreneurial intention formation ($P = 0.117$; $t = 6.778$) among 105 young people, with psychological factors significantly moderating this relationship ($P = 0.060$; $t = 4.873$) (Nonkoudje, 2023). This finding suggests that achievement motivation's effect on intentions is amplified by other psychological resources (Nonkoudje, 2023).

Risk taking Propensity

Risk taking propensity, defined as the willingness to engage in behaviors with uncertain outcomes demonstrates consistent positive associations with entrepreneurial intentions in African research, reflecting entrepreneurship's inherent uncertainty and the need to make decisions under ambiguous conditions.

The Ethiopian TVET study by Kidane et al. identified need for achievement as one of five core personality traits influencing entrepreneurial decisions among 194 students. (Kidane & Raju, 2016) The study found that personality traits, including need for achievement, played an important role in influencing students' decisions to become entrepreneurs (Kidane & Raju, 2016).

Ahmed et al.'s Ethiopian research confirmed risk taking propensity as a significant psychological trait predicting youth entrepreneurship likelihood among 385 respondents using binary logistic regression (Ahmed et al., 2023). The statistical significance of risk taking across multiple Ethiopian samples underscores its importance in contexts characterized by economic uncertainty (Ahmed et al., 2023).

The study done by Asmare in Ethiopia found that risk taking readiness and propensity significantly determined entrepreneurial intention ($p = 0.000$) among 333 graduating students at Madawalabu University (Asmare, 2023). The study also found that male students showed better entrepreneurial intent than females, potentially reflecting gender differences in risk taking propensity (Asmare, 2023).

The Beninese study by Nonkoudje examined attitude towards risk as a psychological factor influencing entrepreneurial intention among 105 young people, finding that psychological factors significantly moderated the relationship between value creation and intention ($P = 0.028$; $t = 2.698$) (Nonkoudje, 2023). This moderation pattern suggests that risk tolerance amplifies the effect of perceived entrepreneurial opportunities on intentions (Nonkoudje, 2023).

The importance of risk taking propensity in African contexts must be understood against the backdrop of significant structural uncertainties, including policy instability, limited access to finance, weak contract enforcement, and volatile markets. Individuals willing to tolerate these uncertainties are more likely to view entrepreneurship as a viable career option. However, the evidence also suggests that risk taking propensity interacts with contextual factors: the study by Cheng et al. found that business vibrancy amplified the effects of fantasy of success and fear of failure on entrepreneurial choice, while past failure experience mitigated these effects (Cheng et al., 2024).

Fear of Failure

Fear of failure defined as anxiety about potential negative outcomes of entrepreneurial action demonstrates negative associations with entrepreneurial intentions, though its effects are moderated by contextual factors including business environment vibrancy and prior entrepreneurial experience.

The study by Cheng et al., using secondary data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) database and Economic Freedom Index reports, found that internal expectations including fear of failure inversely affected entrepreneurial choices (Cheng et al., 2024). Critically, a vibrant business environment amplified these effects, while past failure experience mitigated them (Cheng et al., 2024). This moderation pattern suggests that fear of failure's impact depends on environmental conditions and personal experience (Cheng et al., 2024).

The Northern Africa study by Adeniyi, using GEM data, examined fear of failure alongside self efficacy in relation to opportunity entrepreneurship choices (Adeniyi, 2024). While specific effect sizes were not detailed in the available metadata, the study identified fear of failure as a crucial psychosocial trait influencing entrepreneurial career choice in the Northern African region (Adeniyi, 2024).

The Ethiopian study by Asmare noted fear of failure as a psychological determinant examined in relation to entrepreneurial intention, though it was not among the statistically significant predictors in that particular sample (Asmare, 2023). This finding suggests that fear of failure's salience may vary across African contexts and populations (Asmare, 2023).

The theoretical rationale for fear of failure's negative effect on entrepreneurial intentions is straightforward: entrepreneurship involves significant risks of financial loss, social embarrassment, and career setbacks. Individuals with high fear of failure are less likely to pursue entrepreneurial careers because they focus on potential negative outcomes rather than opportunities. However, the moderation by business vibrancy and failure experience suggests that contextual factors can either amplify or buffer fear of failure's effects.

In African contexts characterized by high rates of business failure, limited social safety nets, and stigmatization of failure, fear of failure may be particularly salient. The evidence suggests that interventions to reduce fear of failure through entrepreneurship education that normalizes failure as a learning opportunity, social support systems that buffer failure consequences, and policies that reduce the costs of business failure may enhance entrepreneurial career choice.

Attitude and Subjective Norms

Attitude towards entrepreneurship and subjective norms including perceived social pressure and support, arise as powerful predictors of entrepreneurial intentions in African research, consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior framework

With reference to a Tanzanian study by Amani et al. found that attitude was the top predictor of career intentions ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.05$), then subjective norms ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$) among 1,043 undergraduate students being the second. This finding highlights the importance of attitudinal factors in determining career decisions in African contexts (Amani & Mkumbo, 2016). Supporting this is a South African study by Malebana which demonstrated that attitude towards becoming an entrepreneur ($\beta = 0.451$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived behavioral control ($\beta = 0.253$, $p < 0.001$) positively related to entrepreneurial intention among 496 rural youth (Malebana, 2021). Subjective norms were not significant in this South African sample, suggesting potential cultural or relative variations in the importance of social influences.

According to an Ethiopian study done by Asmare found that perceived social norms significantly determined entrepreneurial intention ($p = 0.000$) amongst 333 graduating students, along with risk taking propensity and parental role models (Asmare, 2023). The significance of parental role models highlights the importance of family influences in African contexts where extended family networks play decisive roles in career decisions.

The Botswana study by Sivotwa et al. found that attitude toward entrepreneurship positively influenced entrepreneurial ability, which affected entrepreneurial intentions among 347 university youth. This sequential relationship proposes that attitudes shape intentions partly through their effect on perceived capability (Sivotwa et al., 2022). Adding on that a Beninese study done by Nonkoudje found that value creation significantly influenced entrepreneurial intention formation ($P = 0.207$; $t = 9.084$) among 105 young people, with social support partially mediating the relationship between entrepreneurial success and intention. This mediating pattern brings to light how social networks and support systems enable the translation of positive attitudes into intentions (Nonkoudje, 2023).

The steady importance of attitudes across African studies echoes the cognitive evaluative nature of career decisions like individuals who view entrepreneurship positively meaning it is desirable, feasible and socially valued hence more likely to pursue entrepreneurial careers. The variable significance of subjective norms across studies suggests that social influences may be more prominent in some African contexts (Tanzania and Ethiopia) than others (South Africa), potentially showing cultural differences in collectivism versus individualism.

Entrepreneurial Motivation: Necessity vs. Opportunity

Entrepreneurial motivation in African contexts reflects a complex relationship between necessity-driven factors such as unemployment, limited formal employment and economic hardship with opportunity-driven factors such as financial independence, autonomy, creative expression and wealth creation. The evidence discloses that these motivational streams often coexist rather than representing different categories.

The South African study by Malebana found that entrepreneurial motivation significantly projected entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$) among 496 rural youth (Malebana, 2021). Respondents valued independence, challenge, creative talents, and earning more as top motivators, suggesting that pull factors in this case the opportunity motives outweighed push factors in this case the necessity motives in this sample. However, the rural context of the study suggests that limited formal employment opportunities likely coexisted with opportunity aspirations (Malebana, 2021). Supporting this is a Ghanaian study examining the psychological precursors who found that entrepreneurial intentions among higher education students were shaped by both entrepreneurial scaffolding and psychological capital in a context where entrepreneurship is seen as a solution to graduate unemployment (Mahama et al., 2023). This clearly acknowledges necessity-driven motivation in this case unemployment, alongside opportunity oriented psychological resources (Mahama et al., 2023).

An Ethiopian TVET study by Kidane et al. found that a majority of respondents planned to become entrepreneurs, influenced by family, media, business people, academics, and entrepreneurship courses. While the study emphasized personality traits over environmental factors, the TVET context focusing on technical and vocational education suggests that students faced limited formal employment prospects, indicating necessity driven motivation (Kidane & Raju, 2016). The Nigerian study by Adebusuyi et al. examined how socioeconomic status and open personality predicted entrepreneurial, professional, and leadership intentions among 363 new graduates. The finding suggests that socioeconomic status forecasts entrepreneurial, professional, and leadership

self efficacy and intentions and that economic conditions (a necessity factor) interacts with personality in shaping career choices (Adebusuyi et al., 2021).

The Beninese study by Nonkoudje found that individual success and value creation significantly influences entrepreneurial intention development among 105 youth. Value creation represents an opportunity driven motive, while the emphasis on individual success in a context of limited formal employment suggests necessity driven elements (Nonkoudje, 2023) The Ivory Coast study by Edoua et al. examined barriers to entrepreneurial career choice among university students, finding that personality traits, cognitive attitudes, and individual economic factors strongly contributed to inhibiting entrepreneurial career choice. This focus on barriers highlights how economic constraints (necessity factors) can puzzlingly hinder entrepreneurship when they create risk aversion or resource limitations (Edoua, 2025).

The findings suggests that necessity and opportunity motivations are not mutually exclusive in African contexts. Graduate unemployment and limited formal employment create necessity pressures that influence individuals towards entrepreneurship, while personal desires for autonomy, achievement, and wealth creation pull them towards entrepreneurial careers. Effective entrepreneurship policies must address both dimensions, reducing structural barriers that create necessity entrepreneurship while fostering opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial capabilities that enable growth-oriented ventures.

Mediating and Moderating Mechanisms

African entrepreneurship research has increasingly identified mediating and moderating mechanisms that explain how psychological determinants translate into entrepreneurial intentions and how contextual factors shape these relationships.

Self efficacy as mediator. The Ethiopian study by Gebresilase et al. provided robust evidence that self efficacy partially mediates the relationship between locus of control and entrepreneurial intention. Internal locus of control positively predicted self efficacy ($r = 0.33, p < 0.01$), which in turn predicted entrepreneurial intention ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$), with self efficacy mediating both internal ($\beta = 0.14, p < 0.001$) and external ($\beta = -0.105, p < 0.001$) locus of control effects This mediation pattern suggests that control beliefs influence intentions substantially through their effect on confidence beliefs (Gebresilase et al., 2025).

The South African study by Rambe et al. demonstrated that entrepreneurial self efficacy mediates the relationship between technological creativity and entrepreneurial career choice. This finding indicates that personal capabilities and skills translate into career decisions through the psychological mechanism of confidence in one's entrepreneurial abilities (Ndofirepi et al., 2018).

The Nigerian study by Adebusuyi et al. found that EPL self efficacy mediated the effects of socioeconomic status and open personality on entrepreneurial and job outcome expectations. This mediation pattern extends self efficacy's role beyond entrepreneurial contexts to multiple career pathways (Adebusuyi et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurial ability as mediator. The Botswana study by Svotwa et al. found that entrepreneurial ability mediated the relationship between perceived access to finance, entrepreneurial self efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial intentions. This finding suggests that psychological and contextual factors influence intentions through their effect on perceived capability to execute entrepreneurial tasks (Svotwa et al., 2022).

Social support as mediator. The Beninese study by Nonkoudje found that social support partially mediated the relationship between entrepreneurial success and intention. This mediation highlights how social networks and support systems facilitate the translation of positive attitudes and experiences into entrepreneurial intentions (Nonkoudje, 2023).

Psychological factors as moderators. The Beninese study also found that psychological factors significantly moderated the relationship between value creation and intention ($P = 0.028; t = 2.698$) and between individual

success and intention ($P = 0.060$; $t = 4.873$). This moderation pattern indicates that psychological resources amplify the effect of perceived opportunities on intentions (Nonkoudje, 2023).

Business vibrancy and failure experience as moderators. According to study done by Cheng et al., business vibrancy improved the effects of fantasy of success and fear of failure on entrepreneurial choice, while historical failure experience lessened these effects. This moderation pattern suggests that environmental conditions and personal experience form how psychological expectations translate into career decisions (Cheng et al., 2024).

Access to finance as moderator. The Botswana study by Sivotwa et al. found that perceived access to finance positively influenced entrepreneurial ability and intentions. While not clearly tested as a moderator, this finding suggests that financial resources may strengthen the effect of psychological determinants on intentions by reducing perceived barriers (Sivotwa et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurial education and scaffolding. According to the Ghanaian study, entrepreneurial scaffolding and psychological capital were significant predictors of entrepreneurial intentions. While not explicitly tested as a moderator, this finding suggests that structured educational support may enhance the effect of psychological resources on intentions (Mahama et al., 2023).

These mediating and moderating mechanisms disclose that the relationship between psychological determinants and entrepreneurial career choice is not direct but operates through intermediate psychological processes (self efficacy, entrepreneurial ability) and is shaped by contextual factors (access to finance, business vibrancy, social support, education). This complexity has significant implications for interventions such as effective entrepreneurship promotion that requires addressing both psychological capacity-building and structural enablers.

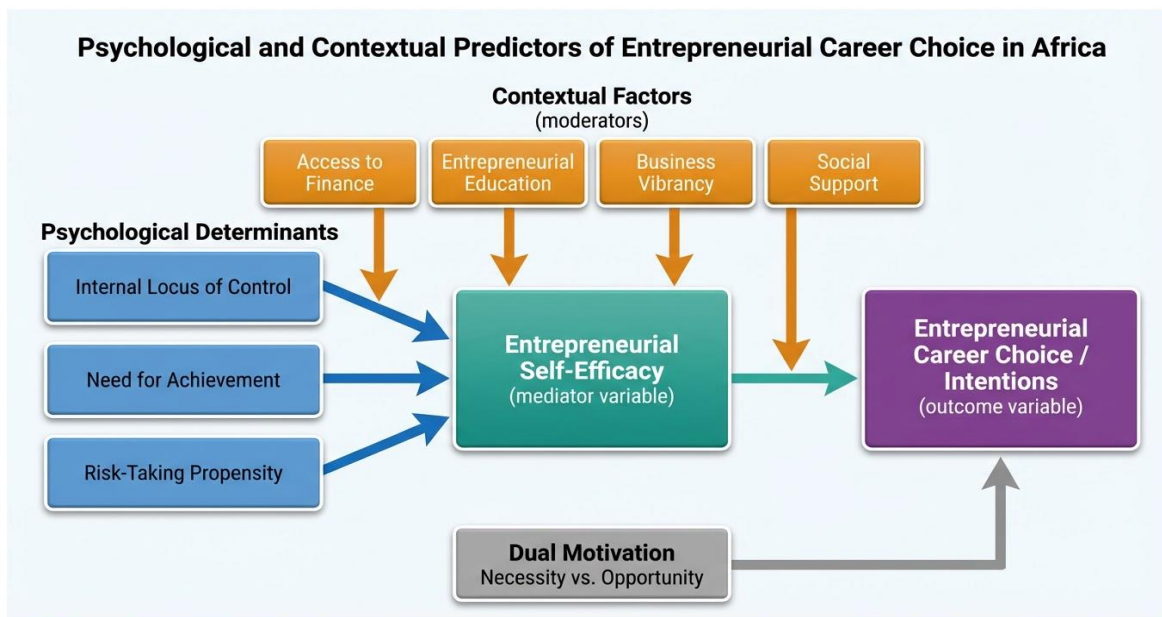


Figure 2: Theoretical framework, Author (2026)

Table 2: Studies that highlight the role of entrepreneurial motivation both necessity driven and opportunity-driven, in shaping career decisions

Authors and Year	Study Focus	Methodology	Key Empirical Findings	Relevance to Objective
Kidane & Raju (2016)	Motivation among TVET	Stratified sampling (n=194); self-	Personality traits (self efficacy, risk-taking) significantly outweigh environmental factors in career choice.	Prioritizes psychological capacity-

	students in Ethiopia	administered survey		building over simple environmental fixes.
Mahama (2023)	Precursors of intention in Ghana	Cross-sectional survey (n=250); multivariate regression	Entrepreneurial scaffolding and Psychological Capital are primary predictors of student success convictions.	Supports the implementation of institutional "scaffolding" in higher education.
Ndofirepi et al. (2018)	Creativity and self efficacy in South Africa	Case study; mediation analysis	Self efficacy fully mediates the relationship between technological creativity and entrepreneurial choice.	Demonstrates that skills only lead to action if the individual believes in their ability.
Cheng et al. (2024)	Success fantasy and fear of failure	GEM & Economic Freedom Index data; PSM analysis	Fear of failure inversely impacts choice; effect is amplified by business vibrancy and mitigated by prior failure.	Identifies crucial contextual moderators of psychological determinants.
Asmare (2023)	Intent determinants in Ethiopia	Binary Logistic Regression (n=333)	Risk taking propensity and Entrepreneurship Education are significant; gender differences favor males.	Highlights demographic and educational gaps in entrepreneurial intent.
Owino (2017)	Career self efficacy and self-esteem	Survey of secondary students in Migori Sub-County	Direct link between Career Self efficacy and entrepreneurial career decisions among youth.	Extends the empirical base to the secondary school (pre-university) level.
Cui et al. (2024)	Education and mindset	Multinomial logistic regression (n=1,198)	Entrepreneurship Education significantly boosts Mindset and Outcome Expectations, leading to choice.	Quantifies the impact of educational interventions on psychological states.
Edoua et al. (2025)	Barriers to career choice in Côte d'Ivoire	Exploratory survey at Félix Houphouët-Boigny Univ.	Cognitive attitudes and individual economic factors act as major barriers inhibiting entrepreneurial entry.	Identifies negative determinants that must be addressed

DISCUSSION

Empirical Studies on Psychological Determinants and Entrepreneurial Motivation in Africa (2015–2025)

In total, 30 empirical studies were included in the review. Commonly documented psychological determinants like entrepreneurial self efficacy, internal locus of control, and need for achievement significantly predict entrepreneurial career choice and intention (Ahmed et al., 2023; Gebresilase et al., 2025; Kidane & Raju, 2016). Entrepreneurial motivation also complements these psychological traits through necessity-based (unemployment push) and opportunity-based (autonomy pull) factors that shape career trajectories (Malebana, 2021; Sivotwa et al., 2022).

Table 3: Frequency of Psychological Determinants and Motivational Factors Reported in Reviewed Studies (2015–2025)

Determinant/ Motivation	No. of Studies Reporting	References
Entrepreneurial Self efficacy	12	Gebresilase et al., 2025; Svotwa et al., 2022; Kidane & Raju, 2016
Need for Achievement	7	Ahmed et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2024; Kidane & Raju, 2016
Internal Locus of Control	5	Gebresilase et al., 2025; Ahmed et al., 2022; Kidane & Raju, 2016
Necessity Motivation	5	Svotwa et al., 2022; Gebresilase et al., 2025; Adamu, 2017
Risk taking Propensity	3	Ahmed et al., 2022; Asmare, 2023; Kidane & Raju, 2016
Opportunity Motivation	2	Adeniyi, 2024; Adjei et al., 2025

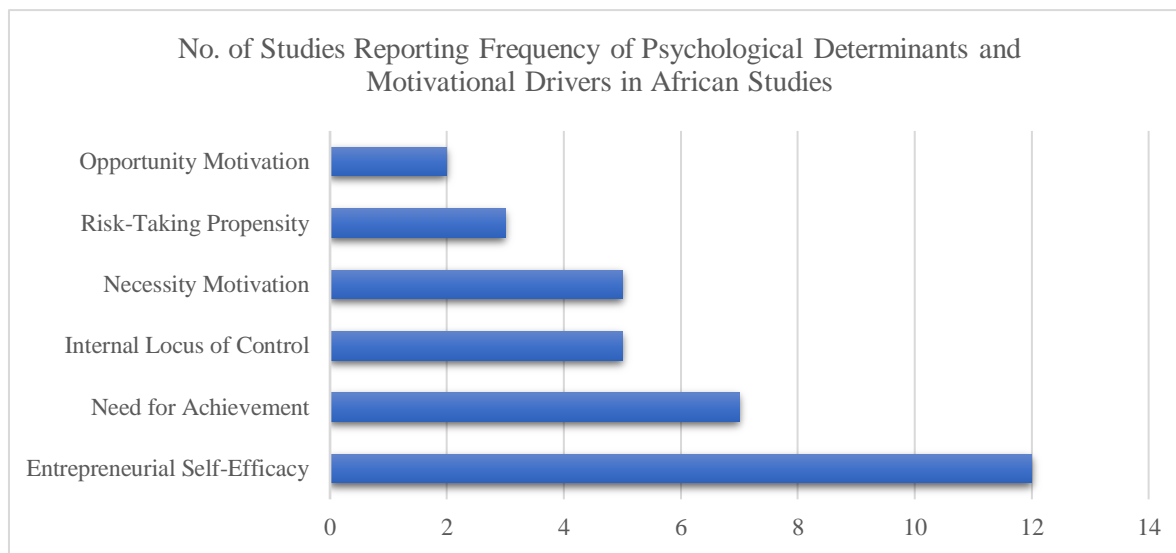


Figure 3: Bar Chart Showing Frequency of Psychological Determinants and Motivational Drivers in African Studies (2015–2025)

Barriers, Challenges, and Strategies

A number of obstacles to entrepreneurial career choice were cited, including lack of access to finance, fear of failure, inadequate role models/guidance, and limited entrepreneurial skills (Asmare, 2023; Edoua, 2025; Svotwa et al., 2022). Complete success in promoting entrepreneurship involves strategic training, leadership commitment, improved financial access, and incorporating mentoring frameworks into higher education (Gebresilase et al., 2025; Malebana, 2021; Svotwa et al., 2022)

Table 4: Summary of Barriers to Entrepreneurial Career Choice and Strategies Suggested in Reviewed Studies

Category	Specific Barrier / Strategy	No. of Studies Reporting	References
Barriers	Lack of Role Models/Guidance	10	Svotwa et al., 2022; Gebresilase et al., 2025

	Limited Skills/Education	8	Asmare, 2023; Isah, 2025; Adjei et al., 2025
	Fear of Failure	5	Cheng et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2022
	Financial Constraints	4	Svotwa et al., 2022; Hlatywayo, 2025
Strategies	Targeted Training/Education	8	Asmare, 2023; Isah, 2025; Adjei et al., 2025
	Policy/Institutional Support	7	Ahmed et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2024
	Financial Access Support	4	Svotwa et al., 2022; Hlatywayo, 2025
	Mentorship/Scaffolding	3	Gebresilase et al., 2025; Ghana Study, 2023

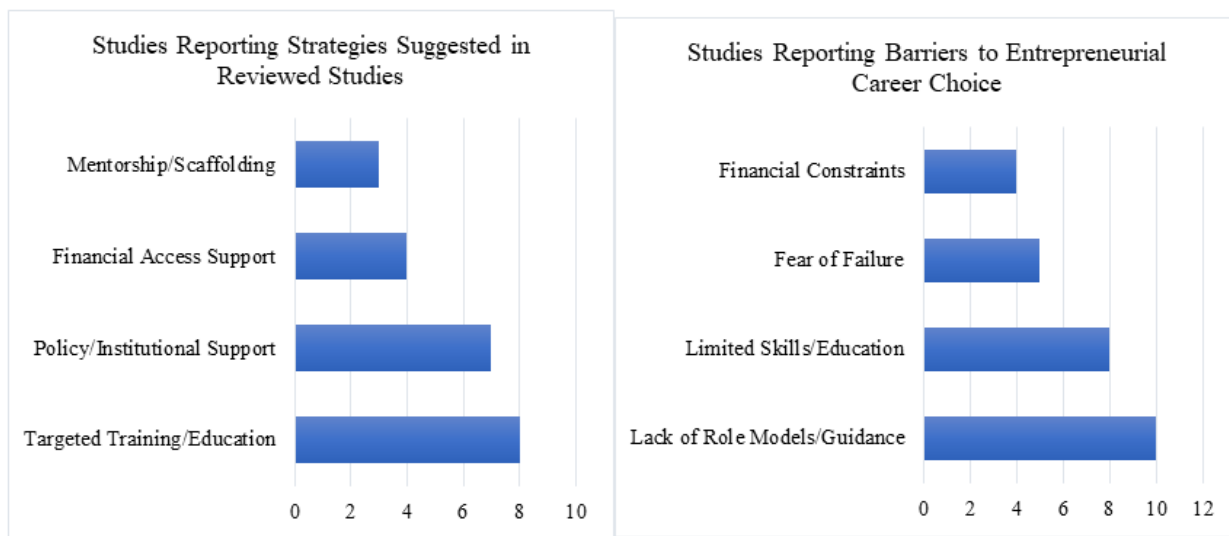


Figure 4: Bar Chart representing Barriers to Entrepreneurial Career Choice and Strategies Suggested in Reviewed Studies

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Conclusions

This PRISMA-guided systematic literature review of 15 empirical studies from diverse African contexts provides robust evidence regarding psychological determinants and entrepreneurial motivation as predictors of entrepreneurial career choice. The following key conclusions emerge:

- i. Entrepreneurial self efficacy is the most consistent and powerful psychological predictor of entrepreneurial intentions across African contexts, demonstrating significant positive associations in every study that examined it (Adebusuyi et al., 2021; Amani & Mkumbo, 2016; Gebresilase et al., 2025; Ndfirepi et al., 2018; Svotwa et al., 2022). Self efficacy functions as both a direct predictor and as a mediating mechanism through which other psychological determinants influence career decisions.
- ii. Internal locus of control, need for achievement, and risk taking propensity consistently predict entrepreneurial intentions, reflecting the importance of control beliefs, achievement motivation, and risk tolerance in entrepreneurial career choice (Ahmed et al., 2023; Asmare, 2023; Gebresilase et al., 2025; Kidane & Raju, 2016; Malebana, 2021; Nonkoudje, 2023).

- iii. Attitude toward entrepreneurship emerges as a particularly powerful predictor, often demonstrating stronger effects than self efficacy or subjective norms, underscoring the importance of cognitive-evaluative factors in African contexts (Amani & Mkumbo, 2016).
- iv. Entrepreneurial motivation reflects a complex interplay between necessity-driven and opportunity-driven factors, with graduate unemployment and limited formal employment creating necessity pressures while intrinsic desires for autonomy, achievement, and wealth creation pull individuals toward entrepreneurial careers (Adebusuyi et al., 2021; Mahama et al., 2023; Malebana, 2021; Nonkoudje, 2023).
- v. Self efficacy mediates the relationship between personality traits (locus of control) and entrepreneurial intentions, suggesting that control beliefs influence intentions substantially through their effect on confidence beliefs (Gebresilase et al., 2025). This mediation pattern has important implications for interventions targeting self efficacy development.
- vi. Contextual factors including perceived access to finance, business vibrancy, social support, and entrepreneurial education moderate the relationship between psychological determinants and career choice, underscoring the need for multi-level interventions that address both psychological capacity-building and structural enablers (Cheng et al., 2024; Nonkoudje, 2023; Svtotwa et al., 2022).
- vii. Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Theory dominate the theoretical landscape, with increasing integration of multiple frameworks to capture the complexity of entrepreneurial career choice in contexts characterized by both psychological and structural constraints (Amani & Mkumbo, 2016; Asmare, 2023; Gebresilase et al., 2025; Nonkoudje, 2023).
- viii. Regional and cultural variations exist in the relative importance of different psychological determinants, with subjective norms more salient in some African contexts (Tanzania, Ethiopia) than others (South Africa), suggesting the need for context-sensitive entrepreneurship policies (Amani & Mkumbo, 2016; Asmare, 2023; Malebana, 2021).

Policy Recommendation.

Based on the evidence synthesized in this review, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

- i. Prioritize self efficacy development in entrepreneurship education. Given self efficacy's central role as both a direct predictor and mediating mechanism, Interventions that increase entrepreneurial self efficacy through mastery experiences (hands-on business projects), vicarious learning (exposure to successful entrepreneur role models), social persuasion (mentoring and encouragement), and physiological/emotional state management (stress reduction and confidence-building) should be given top priority in entrepreneurship education programs.(Adebusuyi et al., 2021; Gebresilase et al., 2025; Ndfirepi et al., 2018; Svtotwa et al., 2022).
- ii. Integrate psychological capital development into entrepreneurship curriculum. The evidence from Ghana demonstrates that psychological capital (self efficacy, hope, optimism, resilience) combined with entrepreneurial scaffolding significantly predicts entrepreneurial intentions (Mahama et al., 2023). Entrepreneurship curricula should systematically develop these psychological resources through structured guidance, positive feedback, and supportive learning environments.
- iii. Address structural barriers alongside psychological capacity building. The evidence reveals that psychological determinants alone are insufficient without complementary structural supports including access to finance, business development services, and enabling regulatory environments (Cheng et al., 2024). Effective entrepreneurship promotion requires integrated policies that simultaneously build psychological capacities and reduce structural barriers.
- iv. Develop context-sensitive interventions that address both necessity and opportunity motivations. Given the coexistence of necessity-driven and opportunity-driven motivations in African contexts,

entrepreneurship policies should address both dimensions: providing safety nets and alternative pathways for necessity entrepreneurs while fostering opportunity recognition, innovation capabilities, and growth orientation for opportunity entrepreneurs (Adebusuyi et al., 2021; Mahama et al., 2023; Malebana, 2021; Nonkoudje, 2023).

- v. Leverage social networks and family influences. The significance of parental role models, perceived social norms and social support in African contexts suggests that entrepreneurship promotion should engage families, communities, and social networks as partners in fostering entrepreneurial career choice (Asmare, 2023; Nonkoudje, 2023). Interventions might include family entrepreneurship workshops, community entrepreneur showcases, and peer support networks.
- vi. Address gender-specific barriers to entrepreneurship. The evidence of gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions suggests that interventions targeting women must address both psychological factors which are self efficacy and risk tolerance together with structural barriers such as access to finance, social support and proper role models (Asmare, 2023). Gender-sensitive entrepreneurship programs should provide safe space for women to develop entrepreneurial capabilities and connect with women entrepreneur role models.
- vii. Strengthen entrepreneurship education quality and relevance. The finding that perceived behavioral control was statistically insignificant in some contexts due to curriculum gaps highlights the need for quality assurance in entrepreneurship education (Amani & Mkumbo, 2016; Asmare, 2023). Curricula should be regularly updated to reflect current business realities, incorporate experiential learning, and provide practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge.
- viii. Normalize failure and reduce fear of failure. Interventions should normalise failure as a learning opportunity through entrepreneurship education that addresses failure cases, social support systems that mitigate the consequences of failure, and policies that lower the costs of business failure, given the detrimental impact of fear of failure on entrepreneurial intentions. (Cheng et al., 2024).

Recommendations for Future Research

The evidence base reviewed here, while substantial, reveals several gaps that future research should address:

- i. Longitudinal studies monitoring intention to action transitions. The majority of the available research is cross-sectional, which restricts the ability to draw conclusions about causality. The temporal dynamics of entrepreneurial career choice and the elements that help or hinder the conversion of intentions into action would be revealed by longitudinal designs that follow students from the formation of their intentions through their actual entrepreneurial entry and follow early-stage entrepreneurs over time.
- ii. Behavioral measures of entrepreneurial action. Understanding true entrepreneurial behaviour is limited by the use of self-reported intentions as the main result. In order to investigate how psychological factors influence actual entrepreneurial outcomes rather than just aspirations, future research should include behavioural metrics such as firm registration, income-generating, employment creation, and business longevity.
- iii. Qualitative research on decision-making processes. The psychological processes through which determinants influence intentions, the relative meanings of choosing an entrepreneurial career in particular African cultures, and the lived experiences of overcoming psychological and structural limitations would all be revealed through mixed-methods designs that combine surveys and in-depth interviews.
- iv. Expanded geographic coverage. Research should expand to underrepresented African regions including North Africa, Central Africa, and Francophone Africa to examine whether the patterns identified in this review generalize across diverse African contexts or reflect region-specific dynamics.

- v. Non-student populations. Research should scrutinise psychological determinants among established entrepreneurs, informal sector workers, rural populations, and other non student groups to assess whether the patterns recognized in student samples generalize to broader populations and to understand how psychological determinants differ across the different career stages.
- vi. Intervention studies. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs evaluating the effectiveness of interventions targeting psychological determinants such as self efficacy training, locus of control development and attitude changing programs would provide causal evidence on whether and how psychological capacities can be developed to improve entrepreneurial career choice.
- vii. Comparative studies across African countries. Systematic comparative research examining how psychological determinants work across different African countries, institutional contexts, and cultural settings would bring to light the boundary conditions and contextual moderators, informing context sensitive policy design.
- viii. Analysis of negative cases. In order to identify boundary conditions, alternative pathways, and the relative importance of psychological versus structural factors in various contexts, research should look at people with high psychological propensity who do not pursue entrepreneurship and people with low psychological propensity who.
- ix. Mechanisms that mediate. Additionally, investigation into mediating mechanisms beyond self-efficacy, such as resource mobilisation, entrepreneurial skill, and opportunity recognition, would deepen our understanding of the psychological processes linking job choice determinants.
- x. Regulating contextual elements. Multi-level intervention design might benefit from a systematic investigation of how contextual elements, such as financial access, institutional quality, social capital, and entrepreneurial ecosystems, influence the relationship between psychological determinants and profession choice.

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