

Academic Self-Concept and Self-Efficacy as Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how academic self-concept and self-efficacy influence entrepreneurial intention among students with special needs at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were gathered from a sample of 1,305 students spanning three disability categories hearing impairment, communication and behavioural problems, and learning disabilities through purposive and random sampling techniques. Data collection involved the use of standardised instruments such as the Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (ASCQ) and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), with reliability established through Cronbach's Alpha, which was found to be 0.78. The analysis included the use of descriptive statistics, multiple regression techniques, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings indicated a significant entrepreneurial intention shaped by a favourable academic self-concept, whereas self-efficacy demonstrated a less pronounced correlation. The results indicate a necessity for focused strategies to improve academic self-concept and self-efficacy, essential components for cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets in students with special needs.

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Keywords: Academic Self-Concept, Self-Efficacy, Special Needs Students, Hearing Impairment, Communication and Behavioural Disorder, Learning Disabilities, entrepreneurial

INTRODUCTION

Students with special needs worldwide are especially susceptible to the social, technical, and economic barriers that hinder emerging individuals from making independent decisions, developing career trajectories, and achieving financial autonomy. These students encounter further obstacles stemming from restricted accessibility and participation in the workforce, complicating their ability to obtain employment and adapt to the swiftly changing requirements of the contemporary economy. Consequently, their capacity to adjust to novel experiences, establish a robust sense of identity, and pursue economic prospects becomes increasingly intricate, underscoring the necessity for interventions that enable them to attain self-sufficiency. Amidst these hurdles, cultivating entrepreneurial skills provides a feasible avenue for students with special needs to establish their autonomy, generate opportunities, and make significant contributions to society.

According to Niehuis & Alan (2022), the role of professionals in counselling and behavioural studies has become increasingly vital in addressing these issues, as they assist individuals, including students with special needs, in developing the skills necessary for personal growth, creative adaptation to changing environments, and economic productivity. The cultivation of academic self-concept and self-efficacy is essential for these students in influencing their entrepreneurial aspirations, enabling them to transcend the limitations of restricted employment

prospects. By cultivating self-assurance and enhancing self-esteem, students with special needs might be motivated to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours that yield a sense of achievement, financial autonomy, and a significant impact on their communities, (Liu, Lin, Zhao & Zhao, 2019).

According to Abu, Kazi, Mond, Abdullah, Aminul, & Abdul (2024), entrepreneurial intention, often defined as the commitment to starting a new business, plays a critical role in the development of entrepreneurial ventures. For students, particularly those with special needs, fostering entrepreneurial intention can be a powerful tool for achieving financial independence and empowerment. However, the factors that shape entrepreneurial intention among this group remain underexplored. Also, entrepreneurial intention, the personal drive to start a new business, is a critical area of study, especially for students with special needs who face unique challenges in education and employment. In today's competitive world, fostering entrepreneurial skills in these students is crucial for promoting self-reliance and economic empowerment (Aftab, Imamuddin & Misbah, 2022). Nursyirwan, Purwana, Suhud, Harahap, & Valentika, (2022), agreed that academic self-concept, refers to a student's perception of their own academic abilities, and self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to achieve specific goals, are two key psychological constructs that may influence entrepreneurial intentions. Understanding the role these factors play can provide insights into how students with special needs can be better prepared to pursue entrepreneurial careers.

Study by Jena, (2020), confirmed that academic self-concept plays a vital role in shaping their entrepreneurial intentions, just as it does for their non-disabled peers. However, for students with special needs, academic self-concept is closely tied to their unique experiences, learning environments, and the support systems in place. Their self-perception of academic abilities may be shaped not only by their comparison to peers but also by the accommodations, assistive technologies, and specialized instruction they receive. For instance, students with visual or hearing impairments often rely on assistive devices or adapted teaching methods to succeed academically. When these tools and support systems are effective, students can better recognize their academic strengths, which boosts their academic self-concept. This positive self-concept, in turn, empowers them with the confidence to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, knowing they can overcome challenges through adaptability and resourcefulness (Hussain, Nazir, Hashmi, Shaheen, Akram, Waseem & Arshad, 2021).

Moreover, the integration of technology such as AI-based instructional packages, social media, and other digital platforms offers students with special needs greater access to information and opportunities. As seen in the Asian study mentioned, the use of social media and technology enhances entrepreneurial intentions, a finding that is especially relevant for students with special needs. These technologies can help level the playing field, allowing them to showcase their creativity and entrepreneurial ideas in ways that were previously difficult due to physical or sensory barriers, (Vuong, Phuong, Huan & Quan, 2020).

Study by Iraqi university students further demonstrated that university students high in academic self-concept had high entrepreneurial intention to engage in business activity in the nearest future (Wang, Sun Wu, 2021). Also, Vodă & Florea, (2019), suggested that the entrepreneurship intention of the students' correlated significantly with their innovative and creative mind-set required for success in business enterprise. Thus, academic self-concept is vital in building students' entrepreneur intention and the required competence and skills for successful business engagement of intending entrepreneurs'. Thus academic self-concept is observed to have a vital moderating impact in fostering the intention of students' to engage in entrepreneurship activities in future.

It is noteworthy that an internal locus of control positively moderates the association between students' entrepreneurial intentions and their academic self-concept level. High academic self-concept unequivocally promotes and cultivates students' entrepreneurial behaviour and enhances their mind-set towards establishing new ventures. Consequently, qualities linked to students' business performance have been found to significantly correspond with their academic self-concept, (Liu, Lin, Zhao & Zhao, 2019). A study in Romania involving business students aimed to ascertain the correlation between students' academic self-concept and their entrepreneurial intentions, revealing a significant relationship between the two variables. This finding indicates that Romanian business students with a strong academic self-concept exhibit a creative concern for their ability to make independent decisions, assume accountability for their actions, take risks, and maintain productive responsibility towards themselves and their environment without parental interference, Boldureanu, Ionescu, Bercu, Bedrule-Grigoruță & Boldureanu, (2020).

On the other hand, for students with special needs, self-efficacy is a critical factor in shaping their entrepreneurial intentions, just as it is for the general population. Self-efficacy refers to a student's confident belief in their ability to successfully complete a task, despite any challenges they may face. (Nursyirwan, Purwana, Suhud, Harahap & Valentika, 2022). Also, in the context of students with special needs, this belief can be particularly important, as they often encounter unique obstacles related to their disabilities. The confidence to engage in entrepreneurial activities comes from their belief in their own abilities, not just academically but in navigating the world around them. For instance, a student with a visual or hearing impairment may need to believe in their capacity to adapt and succeed in a business venture, even when faced with additional hurdles. This self-belief is vital because a lack of confidence can hinder their ability to even consider entrepreneurship as a viable option. However, when students develop strong self-efficacy, they are more likely to take on entrepreneurial challenges with resilience, creativity, and determination, despite the odds, (Porfírio, Felício, Carrilho & Jardim, 2022).

Research by Yousaf, Ali, Ahmed, Usman & Sameer, (2021), on self-efficacy and entrepreneurship highlights the importance of this psychological construct. In entrepreneurship, self-efficacy not only motivates students to think about business ventures but also empowers them to follow through, even in difficult circumstances. For students with special needs, this is particularly important because they often rely on their sense of self-efficacy to overcome limitations imposed by their environment or disability. In essence, for students with special needs, self-efficacy is not just a personal belief but a product of the right support systems and opportunities that allow them to realize their potential. By developing strong self-efficacy, supported by social networks and technological tools, these students can pursue entrepreneurial ventures with the same passion and success as their peers, contributing to economic and personal development.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Social Cognitive Theory underscores the significance of self-efficacy, defined as an individual's conviction in their capacity to achieve success, a vital element in encouraging students with special needs to engage in entrepreneurship despite obstacles. The academic self-concept, influenced by the learning environment and support, affects entrepreneurial inclinations via perceived competence. The Theory of Planned Behaviour elucidates how attitudes regarding academic capabilities (self-concept), subjective norms (peer and teacher influences), and perceived control (self-efficacy) jointly drive entrepreneurial aspirations. Collectively, these theories elucidate how self-efficacy and academic perception can influence entrepreneurial ambitions among adolescents with exceptional needs, (Porfírio, Felício, Carrilho & Jardim, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

The increased understanding of special needs students' unique problems, particularly in reaching self-sufficiency and economic independence, has highlighted the relevance of entrepreneurial intentions in defining their future. As social expectations change, special needs students are encouraged to gain skills and competences that will help them contribute to the economy and society. Start-ups can help attain such goals by encouraging creativity, innovation, and financial independence. However, many of these students struggle with academic self-concept and self-efficacy, which are significant psychological elements affecting their motivation and ability to be entrepreneurs. Self-efficacy is the idea that one can succeed in specific tasks, while academic self-concept is how people view their academic talents. These elements can boost or hamper entrepreneurial intention, a fundamental predictor of entrepreneurial behaviour. Special needs students may not engage in entrepreneurship due to difficulties integrating academic self-concept and self-efficacy with entrepreneurial aspirations. This disengagement may prevent self-employment, economic independence, and social development. Without an entrepreneurial drive, these students may struggle with financial dependence, low self-esteem, and poor quality of life. These psychological characteristics are crucial, but few empirical studies have studied the relationship between academic self-concept, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention in special needs students. This study addresses the dearth of knowledge on how to encourage entrepreneurial aspirations in this population. This research will reveal how to better help special needs students build the psychological tools to become entrepreneurs.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to empirically investigate academic self-concept and self-efficacy as determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo. The specific objectives are to:

- i. identify the level of entrepreneurial intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo;
- ii. determine level of academic self-concept among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo;
- iii. determine significant relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey approach was utilised in this study to gather quantitative data from 1,305 students with special needs at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. A multistage sampling technique was utilised to select the sample. Initially, a targeted sampling approach was employed to identify three categories of disabilities: hearing impairment, communication and behavioural issues, and learning disabilities. Following this, a method of simple random sampling was employed to choose students from the specified disability categories, thereby guaranteeing a representative sample from each group. The main tool utilised for this study was the "Academic Self-Concept, Self-Efficacy, and Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire" (ASSSSEIQ). This questionnaire consisted of five sections: demographic information and measures aimed at evaluating entrepreneurial intention, academic self-concept, and self-efficacy. The Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (ASCQ) and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) were utilised to assess participants' academic self-concept and self-efficacy. To guarantee the dependability and accuracy of the research tools, evaluations of face and content validity were carried out. The evaluations underwent scrutiny by specialists in educational psychology, special education, and entrepreneurship to confirm that the tools effectively assessed the relevant constructs. A preliminary study was conducted involving 30 students, who were subsequently excluded from the final sample, to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and understanding of the questions posed. The insights gathered from the pilot test informed the refinement of the instruments. The internal consistency of the instruments was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.78, signifying a satisfactory level of dependability. The data collection process extended over a month and was overseen by a duo of trained individuals responsible for administering the questionnaires. The administration of the questionnaires was carried out with a strong emphasis on consistency and ethical standards, ensuring that all participants received appropriate guidance when needed to complete the forms. Various statistical techniques were employed for data analysis. To summarise and describe the data, various descriptive statistics were employed, including percentages, frequency counts, means, and standard deviations. To evaluate the hypotheses, Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were employed to assess the relationships between academic self-concept, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention among students with special needs. The significance level established for hypothesis testing was 0.05.

FINDINGS

Research Questions

This section answers the research questions that guide the study:

Research Question One: What is the level of entrepreneurial intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo?

Level of entrepreneurial intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean (\bar{x})	SD.
1	I am ready to make anything to be an entrepreneur	487	396	154	66	3.18	0.888

		(44.2%)	(35.9%)	(14.0%)	(6.0%)		
2	My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur	245 (22.2%)	418 (37.9%)	264 (23.9%)	176 (16.0%)	2.66	0.994
3	I will make every effort to start and run my own firm	553 (50.1%)	242 (21.9%)	154 (14.0%)	154 (14.0%)	3.08	1.093
4	I am determined to create a firm in the future	685 (62.1%)	88 (8.0%)	132 (12.0%)	198 (18.0%)	3.14	1.200
5	I have very serious thought of starting a firm	597 (54.1%)	418 (37.9%)	66 (6.0%)	22 (2.0%)	3.44	0.697
6	I have got intention to start a firm some day	641 (58.1%)	242 (21.9%)	44 (4.0%)	176 (16.0%)	3.22	1.100
7	A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me	421 (38.2%)	462 (41.9%)	154 (14.0%)	66 (6.0%)	3.12	0.864
8	If I had the opportunity and resources, I would like to start a firm	553 (50.1%)	396 (35.9%)	88 (8.0%)	66 (6.0%)	3.30	0.854
9	Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfaction for me	597 (54.1%)	264 (23.9%)	198 (18.0%)	44 (4.0%)	3.28	0.895
10	Among various options, I would rather be an entrepreneur	267 (24.2%)	396 (35.9%)	110 (10.0%)	330 (29.9%)	2.54	1.154
11	To start a firm and keep it working would be easy for me	377 (34.2%)	462 (41.9%)	154 (14.0%)	110 (10.0%)	3.00	0.939
12	I am prepared to start a viable firm	333 (30.2%)	418 (37.9%)	154 (14.0%)	110 (10.0%)	2.80	1.059
13	I can control the creation process of a new firm	157 (14.2%)	418 (37.9%)	132 (12.0%)	396 (35.9%)	2.30	1.103
14	I know the necessary practical details to start a firm	135 (12.2%)	264 (23.9%)	462 (41.9%)	242 (21.9%)	2.26	0.938
15	I know how to develop an entrepreneurial project	69 (6.3%)	132 (12.0%)	374 (33.9%)	528 (47.9%)	1.77	0.891
16	If I try to start a firm, I would have a high probability of succeeding	465 (42.2%)	418 (37.9%)	132 (12.0%)	88 (8.0%)	3.14	0.917
Weighted Average Mean (\bar{x}) = 2.89							

Threshold: mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Very Low Level; 1.500-2.499 = Low Level; 2.500-3.499 = High Level and 3.500 to 4.500 = Very High Level

Decision- level of entrepreneurial intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo is high.

From the result in table 4.3.1, it is revealed that the level of entrepreneurial intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo is high with the weighted average mean (\bar{x}) score of 2.89. The result implies that Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo have high tendency to own businesses and enterprises. As it is observed before the study was carried out, and confirmed in this study, Federal College of Education Special Oyo have entrepreneurship as their focal points whereby their graduate with Special Needs become enterprising, owning businesses even while they are still in school. Many students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo are full or partly self-sponsored through small and medium scale enterprises that they own.

Research Question Two: What is the determine level of academic self-concept among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo?

Level of academic self-concept among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean (\bar{x})	SD
1	I can follow the lectures easily.	377 (34.2%)	286 (25.9%)	198 (18.0%)	242 (21.9%)	2.72	1.150
2	I day dream a lot in class.	465 (42.2%)	66 (6.0%)	330 (29.9%)	242 (21.9%)	2.68	1.225
3	I am able to help my course mates with their term papers if permitted.	201 (18.2%)	242 (21.9%)	88 (8.0%)	572 (51.9%)	2.07	1.210
4	I often do my assignment without thinking	465 (42.2%)	418 (37.9%)	44 (4.0%)	176 (16.0%)	3.06	1.047
5	If I work hard I think I can graduate with a good grade from the university	707 (64.1%)	176 (16.0%)	154 (14.0%)	66 (6.0%)	3.38	0.935
6	I pay attention to the lecturers during lectures	641 (58.1%)	264 (23.9%)	66 (6.0%)	132 (12.0%)	3.28	1.020
7	Most of my course mates are smarter than I am	421 (38.2%)	462 (41.9%)	198 (18.0%)	22 (2.0%)	3.16	0.784
8	I study hard for my tests	663 (60.1%)	330 (29.9%)	88 (8.0%)	22 (2.0%)	3.48	0.728
9	My lecturers feel that I am poor in my work	267 (24.2%)	220 (19.9%)	418 (37.9%)	198 (18.0%)	2.50	1.046

10	I am usually interested in my course work	443 (40.2%)	198 (18.0%)	242 (21.9%)	220 (19.9%)	2.78	1.172
11	I often forget what I have learnt.	619 (56.1%)	264 (23.9%)	132 (12.0%)	88 (8.0%)	3.28	0.960
12	I am willing to do my best to pass all the courses	861 (78.1%)	44 (4.0%)	154 (14.0%)	44 (4.0%)	3.56	0.875
13	I get frightened when I am asked a question by the lecturers.	355 (32.2%)	396 (35.9%)	198 (18.0%)	154 (14.0%)	2.86	1.021
14	I often feel like quitting school.	465 (42.2%)	176 (16.0%)	264 (23.9%)	198 (18.0%)	2.82	1.161
15	I am good in most of my university courses	553 (50.1%)	308 (27.9%)	132 (12.0%)	110 (10.0%)	3.18	0.994
16	I am always waiting for the lectures to end.	685 (62.1%)	88 (8.0%)	176 (16.0%)	154 (14.0%)	3.18	1.143
17	I always do poorly in tests	201 (18.2%)	66 (6.0%)	286 (25.9%)	550 (49.9%)	1.93	1.133
18	I am not willing to put in more effort in my course work	157 (14.2%)	308 (27.9%)	550 (49.9%)	88 (8.0%)	2.48	0.833
19	I am able to do better than my friends in most courses	487 (44.2%)	286 (25.9%)	88 (8.0%)	242 (21.9%)	2.92	1.181
20	I am not willing to put in more effort in my course work	135 (12.2%)	242 (21.9%)	528 (47.9%)	198 (18.0%)	2.28	0.899
Weighted Average Mean (\bar{x}) = 2.88							

Threshold: mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Very Low Level; 1.500-2.499 = Low Level; 2.500-3.499 = High Level and 3.500 to 4.500 = Very High Level

Decision- the level of academic self-concept among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo is high.

From the result in table 4.3.2, it is revealed that the level of academic self-concept among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo is high with the weighted average mean (\bar{x}) score of 2.88. The result implies that Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo see themselves highly from the lens of self-perception of academic prowess. These students rate themselves highly regarding academic confidence and they have a positive evaluation of their own view in relation to activities on campus geared towards good academic outcomes. High academic self-concept Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo connotes strong view of themselves regarding self-perceptions when it pertains academic competence.

Research Question Three: What is the level of self-efficacy concept among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo?

Level of self-efficacy concept among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)							
S/N	Items	Not at all true	Hardly true	Moderately true	Exactly true	Mean (\bar{x})	SD
1	I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	465 (42.2%)	264 (23.9%)	198 (17.9%)	176 (15.9%)	2.23	1.227
2	If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	458 (41.5%)	376 (34.1%)	144 (13.1%)	125 (11.3%)	2.08	1.235
3	It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	308 (27.9%)	520 (47.1%)	100 (9.1%)	175 (15.9%)	2.48	1.325
4	I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	500 (45.3%)	432 (39.2%)	64 (5.8%)	107 (9.7%)	1.72	0.964
5	Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	351 (31.8%)	320 (29%)	200 (18.2%)	232 (21%)	2.54	0.917
6	I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	329 (29.8%)	411 (37.3%)	200 (18.2%)	163 (14.7%)	2.31	1.243
7	I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	412 (37.4%)	241 (21.8%)	210 (19%)	240 (21.8%)	2.49	0.876
8	When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	469 (42.5%)	311 (28.2%)	223 (20.2%)	100 (9.1%)	2.22	0.912
9	If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution	422 (38.2%)	400 (36.3%)	117 (10.6%)	164 (14.9%)	2.17	0.897
10	I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	442 (40.1%)	300 (27.2%)	234 (21.2%)	127 (11.5%)	2.13	0.162
Weighted Average Mean (\bar{x}) = 2.24							

Threshold: mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Very Low Level; 1.500-2.499 = Low Level; 2.500-3.499 = High Level and 3.500 to 4.500 = Very High Level

Decision- the level of self-efficacy concept among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo is Low.

The result in table 4.3.3 showed that the level of self-efficacy among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo is low with the weighted average mean (\bar{x}) score of 2.24. The result implies that Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special have a poor judgment of their capabilities to accomplish task and achieve goals in life. These students' beliefs in themselves to be able to navigate life's difficulties are adjudged to be poor and weak.

H₀₁: There will be no significant relationship between academic self-concept and entrepreneurship intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Showing Relationship between Academic Self-concept and Entrepreneurial Intention among Students with Special Needs in Federal College of Education Special Oyo

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation	N
Academic Self-concept	59.32	17.317	1103
Entrepreneurial Intention	42.97	10.286	1103
Correlations			
		Academic Self-concept	Entrepreneurial Intention
Academic Self-concept	Pearson Correlation	1	.724*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	421134.612	245191.160
	Covariance	472.749	221.234
	N	1103	1103
Entrepreneurial Intention	Pearson Correlation	.724*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	245191.160	178334.296
	Covariance	221.234	196.521
	N	1103	1103
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table above provides compelling evidence leading to the rejection of hypothesis H₀₃, which posited no significant relationship between academic self-concept and entrepreneurial intention among students with special needs at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.724*, along with a significance level of 0.000, demonstrates a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between these variables. The mean scores of 59.32 for academic self-concept and 42.97 for entrepreneurial intention indicate that, on average, special needs students have a favourable perception of their academic abilities

and entrepreneurial intentions. However, the standard deviations (17.317 for academic self-concept and 10.286 for entrepreneurial intention) suggest some variability in the data. The findings imply that as students' academic self-concept increases, so does their likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial activities. While correlation does not imply causation, and other factors may influence this relationship, the large sample size (1103) enhances the reliability of these results. These findings have significant implications for educators, policymakers, and counsellors in fostering entrepreneurial intentions by improving academic self-concept among special needs students. Further research is necessary to explore potential causal mechanisms within this context.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from the research question revealed that the entrepreneurial intention among students with special needs at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, is notably high. This indicates that individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 show a strong propensity for entrepreneurship, with numerous individuals already managing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) while pursuing their education. Their enterprises encompass both product and service domains, probably influenced by Nigeria's difficult economic landscape, characterised by elevated inflation and unemployment rates (Aftab, Imamuddin & Misbah, 2022). This scenario motivates the youth to generate employment opportunities and enhance economic growth. Similar to developed nations, where small and medium-sized enterprises significantly contribute to economic advancement, these students view entrepreneurship as a means to achieve financial independence and personal satisfaction. This finding corresponds with a report from the University of New Hampshire, which highlighted that, in light of the global economic crisis and job shortages, entrepreneurship serves as a practical avenue for young adults to attain economic independence (Nursyirwan, Purwana, Suhud, Harahap, & Valentika, 2022).

The second inquiry indicated that students with special needs at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, possess a strong academic self-concept, suggesting they view their academic abilities in a positive light. This may be linked to the encouraging connections they maintain with their instructors, who inspire and foster self-assurance in them. A robust sense of school connectedness could significantly enhance these students' academic self-concept. Evidence backs this finding, indicating that academic self-concept plays a crucial role in predicting student achievement and is associated with favourable educational and social outcomes (Wang, Sun Wu, 2021). Students who possess a strong academic self-concept often demonstrate greater engagement in their learning processes, exhibit heightened motivation to achieve success, and maintain a clear focus on reaching their academic objectives. This concept, which embodies individual perspectives on scholarly ability, significantly influences their cognitive and emotional orientations (Vodă & Florea, 2019). The Theory of Planned Behaviour suggests that elements such as self-regulation and attitude control, integral to self-concept, play a role in shaping intentions, including those related to entrepreneurship, (Porfírio, Felício, Carrilho & Jardim, 2022).

The results from the third inquiry, which explored the self-efficacy levels of students with special needs at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, indicated a low level of self-efficacy among the participants. This indicates that these emerging adults may struggle with self-assurance regarding their capacity to implement plans and reach objectives. The implementation of a general self-efficacy scale might have influenced this outcome, given that it did not focus on particular activities or domains. In contrast to the more defined nature of academic self-concept, general self-efficacy might have created ambiguity regarding participants' perceptions of their own abilities. This corresponds with a study conducted in Nigeria in 2021, by Yousaf, Ali, Ahmed, Usman & Sameer, which indicated that self-efficacy did not significantly influence entrepreneurial intention among young graduates. The belief in one's capabilities, shaped by personal achievements, observations of others, and encouragement from others, plays a significant role in shaping attitudes and behaviours in multiple areas. This concept is closely linked to individual skills, personal experiences, and growth objectives, shaping the way people tackle obstacles and achieve success across various aspects of life.

The findings indicated a noteworthy connection between academic self-concept and entrepreneurial intention among students with special needs at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. An elevated academic self-concept was associated with increased entrepreneurial tendencies, indicating that nurturing this self-concept can improve students' autonomy, economic potential, and contributions to society. The concept of academic self-concept plays a crucial role in educational psychology, encompassing perceptions of one's academic abilities,

personal growth, and identity, all of which significantly impact professional development and entrepreneurial mindset. This finding is consistent with a comparable study carried out among international business students in Vietnam, which validated that academic self-concept has a positive correlation with entrepreneurial intentions (Boldureanu, Ionescu, Bercu, Bedrule-Grigoruță & Boldureanu, 2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study emphasises the notable entrepreneurial potential present among students with special needs at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, fuelled by a robust academic self-concept yet moderated by diminished self-efficacy. The students exhibit a significant inclination towards entrepreneurship, primarily shaped by their favourable views of their academic skills and the demanding economic landscape in Nigeria. Nonetheless, their limited self-efficacy may obstruct their ability to completely realise these entrepreneurial aspirations. Therefore, nurturing their academic self-concept and self-efficacy is essential for improving their overall entrepreneurial success and contributions to society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Implementation of targeted entrepreneurial development initiatives designed specifically for students with special needs, emphasising the enhancement of confidence and practical business skills to support their academic self-concept.
2. Create mentorship programs that connect successful entrepreneurs who have faced similar challenges, allowing them to provide guidance and support to students. This approach will enhance students' self-efficacy and offer concrete examples of overcoming obstacles.
3. Promote on-going positive reinforcement from special educators, school counsellors to sustain and elevate students' academic self-concept, as it will play a crucial role in shaping their entrepreneurial intentions.
4. Implement focused initiatives, such as workshops or personal development courses, to enhance students' overall self-efficacy, enabling them to build the confidence required to reach their entrepreneurial aspirations.

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