

Developing disabled entrepreneurial graduates

A mission for the Nigerian universities?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the role of universities in preparing disabled students to become entrepreneurially inclined after graduation with the aim of developing an entrepreneurial inclination (EI) model.

Design/methodology/approach – A cross-sectional survey was employed using 220 disabled universities' students in the north-central Nigeria. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and structural equation model. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 22 and AMOS version 22.

Findings – The findings buttress the significant position of universities in promotion entrepreneurial spirit. It revealed that the university's role (UR), entrepreneurship education (EE) and role models (RMs) have a positive influence on disabled students' EI. Universities that make provisions for entrepreneurship infrastructure, knowledge and RMs to disabled students will boost their EI. Second, the more lecturers and RMs inspire students, method of teaching and demonstrating enthusiasm are applied in the teaching of entrepreneurship, the better it prepares students for entrepreneurial career after graduation.

Research limitations/implications – The study is only restricted to Federal Universities in the North-Central Nigeria. Further research could be conducted to cover other tertiary institutions in North-Central Nigeria. Furthermore, the study employed the cross-sectional approach. A longitudinal approach should be employed to study the trend over a period of at least two years. Finally, the factors identified in triggering EI may not be sufficient enough in explaining the phenomenon. There are other factors that may contribute in influencing EI of the disabled students that were not part of this study.

Practical implications – This study indicates a number of implications for the universities and policy makers. Specifically, EE, UR and RMs make significant contributions to inclination for disabled students. These factors are key for universities in Nigeria to consider in preparing these students to become entrepreneurial graduates. Policy makers and other stakeholders need to develop keen interest in designing entrepreneurship curriculum to accommodate the specific needs of students with disabilities.

Originality/value – This study is the first in Nigeria to empirically test the relationship between UR, EE and EI as well as the moderating effect of RMs among universities' disabled students.

Keywords Entrepreneurship education, Role models, Entrepreneurial inclination, University's role

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

This study extends the predominantly entrepreneurial inclination (EI) studies to the Nigerian Universities' level. Specifically, it investigates the relationship between university's role (UR), entrepreneurship education (EE), role models (RMs) and students with disabilities' EI. Considering the current realities in the job market characterized by increasing competition for survival through job and wealth creation, the crucial role of EI is pertinent. This seems to advocate that the needed wealth and employment creation are essential since it will improve the quality of peoples' lives. For instance, with the collapse of the last vestiges of the socialist economic system in 1991 and the global economic meltdown of 2008 which peaked with troubling job losses emerging from the collapse of blue chip companies around the world, the whole world has embraced entrepreneurship (Dakung and Munene, 2016; Kritikos, 2014; Mazanai and Fatoki, 2012; GUESS, 2011; Naude, 2010; Valliere and Peterson, 2009).

EI which is viewed in terms of activities and tasks entrepreneurs engage in when establishing a business or the act of becoming an entrepreneur is believed to be a reflection of academic performance (Keat *et al.*, 2011; Trevelyan, 2009; Carter *et al.*, 1996; Begley and Boyd, 1987). Evidence abound that various stakeholders today are focusing on the importance of entrepreneurship for various job positions. Consequently, universities around the globe are under pressure to adopt strategies that will enable them to generate competitive graduates for the job market or better still self-employment.

This becomes imperative to understand the factors that enhance the EI of university students. Previous research works have investigated the impact of factors such as RMs (Laviolette *et al.*, 2012), subjective norms (Kolvereid and Isaksen, 2006), self-efficacy (Drnovsek and Erikson, 2005; Zhou *et al.*, 2012; Krueger and Brazeal, 1994) and EE (Kuratko, 2005; Venkatachalam and Waqif, 2005) on students' EI. However, these studies focus generally on the students, thus paying less attention to the combined influence of UR, EE and RMs on students' inclination. Moreover, EE environment is crucial in developing entrepreneurial capacity and universities are legally required not to discriminate against PWDs by treating them less favorably than their counterparts without disabilities (Dakung and Munene, 2016). Under the Equality Act 2010, all higher institutions of learning have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to their services (entrepreneurship programs), so that students with disabilities are not placed at a disadvantaged position. The few studies that have examined specific aspects of EI have tended to concentrate on students without disabilities. Consequently, little is known about university students with disabilities. Furthermore, there is insufficient knowledge on the impact of UR, EE as well as the moderating effect of RMs on disabled students' EI, in a developing country like Nigeria.

Giving this scenario, a study by UNIDO-Nigeria (2012) revealed that entrepreneurship has the tendency to drive the Nigerian economy and, currently, there are over 17m ventures employing over 31m Nigerians. This accounts for over 80 percent of enterprises that employ about 75 percent of the Nigeria's total workforce (Dakung and Munene, 2016). In addition, the 2014 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor has empirically identified Nigeria as one of the most entrepreneurial countries in the world. The study showed that 35 out of every 100 Nigerian (both normal and disabled) are engaged in some kinds of entrepreneurial activity. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria constitute about 24m (14.1 percent) of the total population (Dakung and Munene, 2016; WHO, 2011). However, there are insufficient findings (information) on the value of disabled entrepreneurs in the economic policy or studies in the country. The scanty statistics on PWDs suggest that many are unemployed or at best, underemployed. Scholars (Dakung and Munene, 2016; Namatovu *et al.*, 2012) have documented that the marginalization of these people in relation to self-employment and entrepreneurship is extensive and theoretical development in understanding their involvement in entrepreneurial activities is still lacking. With this development, a number

of programs through support agencies such as National Directorate for Employment in 1987, National Poverty Eradication Programme in 2001, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) in 2003 and EE in 2006 were initiated by the Nigerian Government to ignite the entrepreneurial spirit in order to arrest the rising rate of unemployment. However, the evaluation of these programs in the area of addressing unemployment among graduates with disabilities suggests that the action plan was still lacking (Dakung and Munene, 2016; Akhuemonkhan *et al.*, 2013; Emmanuel *et al.*, 2012; Yoloje, 2008; Olayinka, 2010). This poses a concern on the role played by the Nigerian universities.

Consequently, 2006 became the watershed period for EE in Nigerian universities. It was taught as an interface with multiple disciplines where each institution caught the flame of entrepreneurship. In spite of the value of EE, EI among graduates with disabilities is low. One key reason attributed to this is that these graduates only concentrate on looking for employment opportunities from the government and private sectors. This supports the submission of Duval-Couetil (2013) who opine that there is a lack of evidence of benefits of EE in Nigeria. This indicates that there is a gap between the government's expectation and the actual level of graduates with disabilities' EI. In view of this, this paper recognizes the role of Nigerian universities in developing disabled entrepreneurial graduates in providing enabling learning environment.

Learning environment refers to the whole range of components and activities within which learning takes place (Semukono *et al.*, 2013; Sternberg and Kaufman, 1998). It takes the form of entrepreneurship teaching characteristics, role modeling and institution's roles. Previous studies have used these factors separately to explain students' EI. Based on these insights, disabled students' EI at university may be explained by the institution's mission of providing enabling environment to them. Therefore, this study investigates this link. In this regard, few federal universities are seen to have made some concerted efforts (e.g. organizing excursions, club formations, involving guest speakers and business study clinics) to improve their EI. However, despite such efforts, empirical evidence indicates that students with disabilities tend to exhibit low EI. Furthermore, the inability of the majority of the Nigerian Federal Universities to employ the mission of developing entrepreneurial graduates leads to students with disabilities having low self-esteem in business start-up (Dakung *et al.*, 2017).

This study seeks to contribute in a number of ways. First, the findings will help academicians in theory development to explain EI. Second, the findings are important for university managers who want to determine the possible required changes to improve students with disabilities' EI. Third, policy makers may use the findings in institutional settings and entrepreneurship curriculum development for Nigerian Universities in their effort to improve students with disabilities' EI. This study is guided by the following research objectives:

- to examine the relationship between EE and students with disabilities' EI in Nigerian universities;
- to examine the influence of UR on students with disabilities' EI in Nigerian universities; and
- to examine the moderating effect of RMs on the relationship between EE and students with disabilities' EI in Nigerian universities.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: the next section discusses a literature review: overview of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, EI, UR, EE, RMs and hypotheses formulation. This is followed by a description of the approach employed to collect and analyze the data. Thereafter the results are presented. In the last section, conclusions and implications for academics, practitioners and policy makers are presented.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1 Overview of entrepreneurship in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship in Nigeria started when people produced more products than they needed; as such, they had to exchange these surpluses. Through this way, Nigerians in the olden days were engaged in entrepreneurship. Early entrepreneurship was characterized with production or manufacturing in which case the producer most often started with a small capital, most of it from his own savings. Early entrepreneurship started with trade by barter even before the advent of any form of money (Thaddeus, 2012).

Modern entrepreneurship in Nigeria started with the coming of the colonial masters, who brought in their goods and made Nigerians their middle men. In this way, modern entrepreneurship was conceived. Most of the modern entrepreneurs were engaged in retail trade or sole proprietorship. One of the major factors that discouraged this flow of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria is the value system brought about by formal education. For many decades, formal education has been the preserve of the privileged. With formal education, people had the opportunity of being employed in the civil service, because in those days the economy was large enough to absorb all Nigerians into the prestigious occupation. As such, the system made Nigerians to be dependent on the colonial masters.

Again, the contrast between Nigeria and foreign entrepreneurs during the colonial era was very detrimental and the competitive business strategy of the foreign entrepreneurs was against moral standards established by society. For instance, the United African Company that was responsible for a substantial percentage of the import and export trade of Nigeria had the policy of dealing directly with producers and refused to make use of the services of Nigerian entrepreneurs. The refusal of the expatriates to utilize the services of local businessmen inhibited their expansion and acquisition of necessary skills and attitude. As a result, the flow of entrepreneurship in the country was slowed down. But, with more people being educated and the fact that government could no longer employ most school leavers, economic programs to encourage individuals to go into private business and be self-reliant were initiated by the Nigerian Government (Nwachukwu, 2012; Thaddeus, 2012).

The role of government in entrepreneurship development in Nigeria became significant only after the Nigeria civil war (1967–1970). Around the mid-1980s, there has been an increased commitment of government to entrepreneurship development especially after the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program in 1986. Added to this was the establishment of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Open Apprenticeship Scheme and the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (Thaddeus, 2012). Fundamentally, the Nigerian Government promotes entrepreneurial culture through initiatives that build business confidence, positive attitude, pride in success, support/encouragement of new ideas, social responsibility, encouraging inter-firm linkages and promotion of research and development. In the early 2000s, entrepreneurship studies were introduced into the Nigerian educational system especially in higher institutions as a mandatory course. The Centre for Entrepreneurship Development, which has the objective of teaching and encouraging students of higher institutions to acquire entrepreneurial skills, was established. The centre's goal is to make the graduates self-employed, create job opportunities for others and to generate wealth (Nwachukwu, 2012; Thaddeus, 2012).

However, the case is different for PWDs since these programs in the area of igniting their entrepreneurial actions are still lacking for not being tailored to their specific needs. Although entrepreneurship has already been developed by some individuals with disabilities, yet it is in a very limited scale. In general, they face disempowerment and economic exclusion (Viriri and Makurumidze, 2014) and so, their decision to venture into business is seen to be low. This assertion is confirmed by scholars who opine that just few PWDs in Nigeria are self-employed and many of them (about 60 percent) are seen to be

unemployed because of discrimination and exclusion. PWDs seen in this regard are referred to as socially discriminated entrepreneurs (Mishra, 2005; Blanck *et al.*, 2000; Pagán, 2009; Schur, 2003; Holub, 2001).

2.2 Entrepreneurial inclination

EI is a psychological tendency to react in a favorable way toward entrepreneurship. It reflects a person's likings toward entrepreneurship as his/her career. It is the tendency of a prospective person to pursue an entrepreneurial career. Inclination toward entrepreneurship which is a central issue in our study can also be viewed as the intention to venture into business. This has proven to be a primary predictor of future entrepreneurial behavior (De Pillis and Reardon, 2007; Krueger *et al.*, 2000; Reynolds, 1995; Katz, 1988; Low and MacMillan, 1988). Hence, investigating what factors determine the EI is an important issue in entrepreneurship research (Gelard and Korosh, 2011). Defining and understanding the concept of EI is another important aspect as one could analogously use the terms like attitude or motivations in place of the word inclination. But they are quite different in their meaning from different reviews. Using these terms interchangeably while trying to find the mindsets of certain person or group of persons toward entrepreneurship could give rise to ambiguities.

EI for PWDs is significant from the lens of narrowing the gap in employment rates between disabled people from the rest of the population and preventing social exclusion (Viriri and Makurumidze, 2014). It has been documented that people with disabilities make natural entrepreneurs since having a disability can also be a stimulus for independent problem solving and innovation. This is seen in developed world like the UK and USA where PWDs have demonstrated a higher rate of self-employment than people without disabilities (Dakung and Munene, 2016; Kitching, 2014; Pagán, 2009; Harper and Momm, 1989). The argument then follows that people who are in some way excluded from society often strive to develop the initiative of starting their own enterprise. The successful enterprise often serves as an avenue for instituting confidence and satisfaction in the person. Hence, EI should be utilized more frequently to help PWDs move from unemployment, underemployment and welfare-based income to gainful employment and self-sufficiency (Burchardt, 2003; Blanck *et al.*, 2000; Harper and Momm, 1989).

Furthermore, it is argued that PWDs especially in Nigeria are largely invisible, ignored and excluded from mainstream development. This is reflected in the areas of disempowerment and economic exclusion. No matter where they live, they are statistically more likely to be unemployed and underemployed due to a lack of access to developed support connections and social capital than their able bodied counterparts (Cooney, 2008; Blanck *et al.*, 2000; Harper and Momm, 1989). This is supported by the submission of scholars (Dakung and Munene, 2016) who observe that for the fact that PWDs in Nigeria are stigmatized, discriminated and marginalized in every facet of life their EI is seen to be low. Also, there are insufficient findings (statistics) on the value of disabled entrepreneurs in the economic policy or studies in Nigeria suggesting that many are unemployed or at best underemployed.

2.3 Concept of entrepreneurship education

EE refers to the scope of curricular, lectures or courses that provides students with entrepreneurial competencies, skills and knowledge in pursuing entrepreneurial career (Ekpoh and Edet, 2011; Ooi *et al.*, 2011; Fayolle *et al.*, 2006; Van Clouse, 1990). It is one area that champions the principle of inclusivity, integration and mainstreaming and has become a serious matter for school administrators, course developers, government (public) servants and researchers (Kuratko, 2005). Rae (2010) argued that universities and their provision of education and learning for entrepreneurship must respond to the new economic era and the subsequent global recession. To respond to this, EE should be prepared for all university

students regardless of their majors in order to improve their competitive advantage (Lee *et al.*, 2005). Evidence is seen in the emerging number of young people and high-caliber graduates across the globe that are expressing inclination for starting their own businesses and becoming entrepreneurs rather than being employees of large corporations (Kelley *et al.*, 2011). Emphasis on EE has been proposed, recognized and touted as a way to drive development and sustainability of economies around the world (Neck *et al.*, 2014). Concurrent with this trend, the demand for EE at various academic levels has also increased steadily. One of the key purposes is to give students a thorough understanding of business start-up (Solomon, 2007; Heinonen and Poikkijoki, 2006).

Entrepreneurial training and educational services for learners with disabilities are very important in the area of self-employment and market development (Viriri and Makurumidze, 2014; Gnyawali and Fogel, 1994). To enhance their EI, the disabled learners need customized training in terms of business plan preparation, strategic planning, decision making, negotiation, pricing, market penetration, organization and management, management of the workforce and handling of cash-flow among other issues (Viriri and Makurumidze, 2014; Swanson and Webster, 1992). Concurring to their assertion, Powell (2013) pointed out that guest lectures be provided by entrepreneurs and professionals (in our case successful disabled entrepreneurs) for the students. These experienced and knowledgeable guest speakers could offer realistic feedback to these students and as well share their experiences with them. He also maintained that entrepreneurship educators should play a role as coaches rather than supervisors, so that the students could develop more realistic understandings of their abilities, pursue the applied knowledge particularly useful to them and learn to adapt rather than blindly imitate examples. This amplifies the importance of embracing and implementing pedagogical content knowledge (as discussed in the succeeding sections) in teaching and learning especially in EE.

2.4 Entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial inclination

EE has increased significantly in most industrialized countries by providing courses related to curricula. Basically, it is a process that provides entrepreneurial competencies and confidence to learners in order to venture into business (Oosterbeek *et al.*, 2008). This is evident from the strands of studies which have been conducted on the ability of entrepreneurship to create new jobs and the importance of EE in producing potential entrepreneurs (Kuratko, 2005; Raichaudhuri, 2005; Venkatachalam and Waqif, 2005; Kolvereid and Moen, 1997; Kourilsky, 1995). For example, Volery and Mueller highlight the role of EE in influencing an individual's tendency to become an entrepreneur. Basically, pedagogy and course contents are key components in EE.

2.4.1 Pedagogy. The delivery of EE depends on its objective. Common pedagogies such as lecturing and writing a business plan, which are more teacher-centered, remain more frequently used in EE (McKeown *et al.*, 2006). Some instructors and lecturers of entrepreneurship have started to adopt active pedagogies such as role playing, management simulations, team projects and participative discussion sessions to stimulate students' entrepreneurial behavior (Birdthistle *et al.*, 2007; Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Jennings, 2002). It is even argued that the best teaching methods for entrepreneurial learning should be learner-centered, using active-application and active experimentation approaches rather than teacher-centered approaches, so that students can acquire real-life experiences and develop techniques of reflective observation and abstract conceptualization during the enterprising learning process (Garavan and O'Conneide, 1994; Hytti and O'Gorman, 2004; Hegarty, 2006; Birdthistle *et al.*, 2007). Based on that, action learning has been viewed as one of the most effective tools for enhancing the effectiveness of any entrepreneurial development programs for developing

entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and attitude of learners (Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Jones and English, 2004; Jones-Evans and Williams, 2000). Focusing on the learners with disabilities, there is a need for little initiative by the lecturers in teaching EE. Therefore, mentioning specific objects/items to attract the learners' attention is key in enhancing their EI. Also, making provision for instructional materials and recorded lectures of EE (for the blind and partially blind students), providing sign language interpretation or information in accessible formats as well as involving them fully during lectures will give them practical and clearer picture of business start-up. Depending on the context, the outcomes of the portfolio of the various teaching methods employed in learning entrepreneurship will enhance students' (in our case disabled) EI (Clarke *et al.*, 2006).

2.4.2 Course content. The purpose of developing entrepreneurial course content is to stimulate entrepreneurship awareness among students that would increase their intention in entrepreneurship. Therefore, entrepreneurial course contents are key factors in developing and fostering their entrepreneurialism (Hannon, 2005; Charney and Libecap, 2003). Scholars (Edwards and Muir, 2005) express their views on the fact that entrepreneurial course contents are developed differently across institutions of learning either as an optional module within business courses or a specific course on entrepreneurship. These raise awareness by providing opportunities for students to learn from real-life practical experiences that make them think of entrepreneurship as a career (Hynes *et al.*, 2011; Kirby, 2004). Courses for entrepreneurship (i.e. course content) influence students' capacity to deal with real entrepreneurial activity. To further enhance the EI of students with disabilities, the course content should be customized to fit their specific characteristics. Additionally, the core structure of teaching entrepreneurship courses should draw on critical thinking, reliance on experience, business-general knowledge, thinking about entrepreneurship as a career, opportunity-specific knowledge and use guest speakers who are experienced entrepreneurs (Vesper, 2004; Brown, 1999).

This then points to the fact that embracing and implementing pedagogical content knowledge in EE will motivate and give students (in our case disabled) the confidence of starting new businesses (Delmar and Davidson, 2000). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1. EE is positively related to the EI of students with disabilities.

2.5 University's role and entrepreneurial inclination

Universities play a functional role in promoting EE to develop regional and society economies (Binks *et al.*, 2006; Co and Mitchell, 2006). Mahlberg (1996) agrees with the remarks by stating that universities have a key role to play in promoting entrepreneurship since educational institutions are ideally considered the place in shaping entrepreneurial cultures and aspirations among students while they are studying to survive in today's robust business milieu (Autio *et al.*, 1997; Landstrom, 2005). This could probably be because universities are seedbeds of entrepreneurship to teach their students the way to think and behave entrepreneurially (Bygrave, 2004). Universities, in this respect, are positioning themselves as a hub of entrepreneurship by making substantial contributions in nurturing an entrepreneurial environment that contribute to the development of entrepreneurship spirit among students (Nurmi and Paasio, 2007; Gnyawali and Fogel, 1994).

As a provider of entrepreneurship training program, universities are doing all the best they could to create an entrepreneurially supportive environment. This could encourage entrepreneurial activity that would help to develop an enterprise culture among university students who are tomorrow's entrepreneurs (Roffe, 1999). Autio *et al.* (1997) in their study on entrepreneurial intentions of technology and sciences students across four countries consistently conclude that university teaching environments are the most influential factors that affect students' perceptions toward entrepreneurial career and entrepreneurial convictions. Hence, it is

important to present a positive image of entrepreneurship as career option to draw students' attentions within the university environment by providing the resources and other facilities available to them. It should be remembered that even though individuals have the relevant entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, if they do not possess positive image about entrepreneurship, they might eventually not venture into the field (Alberti *et al.*, 2004).

Toward this end, universities, by creating an entrepreneurial culture across campus, are expected to influence students' decision to creating businesses with its considerable influential factor on students. This because of the fact that students' preferences toward career are easily influenced by the environmental conditions in which they interact with as they are young and always looking for appropriate models (Fayolle and Degeorge, 2006; Gnyawali and Fogel, 1994). Given the strong role that a university could play in fostering entrepreneurship among university students, it is hypothesized that:

- H2. The role to promote entrepreneurship played by the university increases the likelihood of students with disabilities to be more entrepreneurially inclined.

2.6 Role models, entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial inclination

The effect of RMs on inclination toward entrepreneurship is widely discussed in the literature (Laviolette *et al.*, 2012; Kirkwood, 2007; Van Auken *et al.*, 2006; Deakins *et al.*, 2005; Ghazali *et al.*, 1995). As stated by Gibson (2004), the term "role model" draws on two prominent theoretical constructs: the concept of role and the tendency of individuals to identify with other people and the concept of modeling, the psychological matching of cognitive skills and patterns of behavior between a person and an observing individual. This implies that individuals are attracted to RMs who are perceived to be similar in terms of their characteristics, behavior or goals (the role aspect), and from whom they are able to learn certain abilities or skills (the model aspect). Consistent with these role and model aspects, the phenomenon of RMs can be explained by theories of (role) identification and social learning (Gibson, 2004).

According to Hisrich *et al.* (2005), RMs are individuals influencing an entrepreneur's career choice or styles. They further accentuate that RMs have a vital influence on individuals in determining entrepreneurial careers as they would provide the useful business-related information, guidance as well as moral supports. In this context, they are very crucial in providing individuals with certain training for socialization (Postigo *et al.*, 2006; Rajkonwar, 2006). With the assumption of having to see successful persons in business, an individual would have the aspiration to imitate them in order to become a successful person in business too (Bygrave, 2004; Caputo and Dolinsky, 1998). Given the importance of RMs, the role of educators and friends of university students are examined as to how they might influence students' inclination toward entrepreneurship (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). Therefore, RMs may also enhance the inclination and ultimately, entrepreneurial activity (Van Auken *et al.*, 2006; Krueger *et al.*, 2000).

Social learning theory or social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) argues that individuals are attracted to RMs who can help them to further develop themselves by learning new tasks and skills (Gibson, 2004). People are assumed to learn in a social context through the observation of others with whom they can identify and who perform well in an area in which they, themselves, also wish to be involved or in which they want to excel, i.e. learning by example (or modeling). The role of positive entrepreneurial examples is important for enhancing entrepreneurial activity (Fornahl, 2003). Additionally, RMs may provide entrepreneurs with practical support and advice as a mentor to a mentee, i.e. learning by support (Nauta and Kokaly, 2001). In fact, many entrepreneurs find information on markets, industries, administrative regulations and potential pitfalls through their social network (Ozgen and Baron, 2007; Schutjens and Stam, 2003). Gibson (2004) summarizes the various functions that RMs may fulfill and argues that the importance of RMs lies in three interrelated

functions: to provide learning, to provide motivation and inspiration and to help individuals. Assessing the influence of RMs on students' academic and vocational decisions, Nauta and Kokaly (2001) add a support component, arguing that RMs not only provide individuals with inspiration and modeling, but also with support and guidance. Building on the theories of role identification and social learning as well as the proposed RM functions by Gibson (2004) and that of Nauta and Kokaly (2001), it can be argued that entrepreneurial RMs may perform the functions of inspiration and motivation (i.e. the RM creates awareness and motivates people to get started in business).

The contribution of RMs to new venture creation is documented both by career development (Gibson, 2004) and entrepreneurship literature (Bosma *et al.*, 2012; Kirkwood, 2007; Douglas and Shepherd, 2001). Parental, networking and media RMs may potentially impact entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Van Auken *et al.*, 2006) and entrepreneurial intentions (Engle *et al.*, 2010; McGee *et al.*, 2009). In a study focusing on enterprise creation, Douglas and Shepherd (2001) documented that exposure to entrepreneurial RMs positively impact the choice of an entrepreneurial career, which was confirmed by Van Auken *et al.* (2006) who established the moderating role of exposure to RMs on individuals' intentions to become entrepreneurs. Based on that, students' exposure to entrepreneurial RMs may provide invaluable information, inspire confidence and stimulus to elaborate the anticipatory scenarios of their own future business career.

Though research findings carried out till date have established the role of models in facilitating students EI; however, it is less known what motivates a student to exhibit extra entrepreneurship behavior that is independent of explicit recognition system defined in enterprise's reward mechanisms. Therefore, in the present study attempt has been made to establish a moderating effect of RMs on the relationship between EE and EI. So the third hypothesis and the conceptual framework (Figure 1) of this paper are stated as follows:

H3. RMs moderate the relationship between EE and EI of the students with disabilities.

3. Method

3.1 Procedures and sample

A cross-sectional survey was employed as a research design. The participants were selected from the Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria using a simple random sampling technique after which data were collected through a personal approach. A total number of 220 copies of the questionnaire were circulated among students with disabilities. Participants with various forms of disabilities (crippled, partially blind, blind, deaf and albinos) were included in the study from 200 level to final year. The questionnaire was circulated to the students at their respective classroom and hostels and availed them time in filling the questionnaire. In order to have a free and frank opinion, the participants were

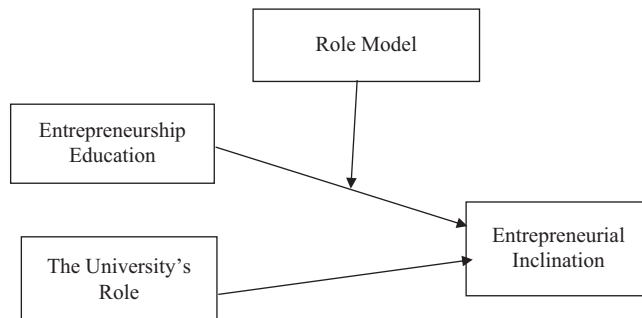


Figure 1.
Conceptual model of
the study variables

assured of the confidentiality of the survey in the form of anonymity. Out of the total number of copies of the questionnaire circulated, 213 were retrieved which were complete in all respect. This resulted in a response rate of 96.8 percent. The percentages of male and female respondents are 74.2 and 25.8 percent, respectively. Moreover, there was a fairly even distribution of respondents across the various age groups, i.e. almost 46.7 percent in the range of 20–29 years, 29.3 percent between 30 and 39 years and finally 11.9 percent in the age group of 40 years and above. Similarly, on the basis of the disability category, 49.8 percent of the sample are crippled, 28.2 percent of the sample comprises of those with visual impairment, 10 percent are those with albinism and the rest 12 percent are those with hearing impairment.

3.2 Measures

A well-structured questionnaire comprising of standardized instruments on EE, UR, RMs and EI was circulated among the students with disabilities for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of statements to which the respondent has responded on Likert's six-point rating scales varying from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), somewhat disagree (3), somewhat agree (4), agree (5) and strongly agree (6).

3.2.1 Entrepreneurship education. EE was conceptualized as the provision of knowledge, skills and motivation to students to encourage entrepreneurial success in them and measured in terms of pedagogy and course content. The 11-item EEQ scale proposed by Lanero *et al.* (2011) was utilized for this study. Some of the sample items are: pedagogy (five items): "Lecturers have influenced my ability to develop business networks," "My lecturers enhance my skills to handle an entrepreneurship project," "I experienced action-based entrepreneurship training from the lectures," "Views of the lecturers inspire my entrepreneurial mind" and "Students are engaged in the start-up process of a real business during lectures"; course content (six items): "The syllabus emphasizes entrepreneurial actions in business start-up," "The course increases my understanding of the attitudes of entrepreneurs," "Entrepreneurship course enhances my ability to identify business opportunities," "The course places emphasis on how students can develop business plan," "The syllabus is about the best method to train entrepreneurial action" and "The course places emphasis on how students can take business risk."

3.2.2 University's role. For the UR, we utilized a 13-item measure for this study based on a similar measure developed by Keat *et al.* (2011) utilized in a different context which was shown to have good construct validity. The variable of study has two dimensions as thus: campus experience (eight items): "University is an ideal place to learn about starting a business," "More entrepreneurship programmes on campus would help students to start businesses," "Students are encouraged to pursue entrepreneurship ventures in the university," "The university infrastructure discourage entrepreneurship," "Students are actively encouraged to pursue their own business ideas," "There are no student clubs on campus which promote entrepreneurship," "University has infrastructure in place to support the start-up of new businesses" and "The university provides resources to assist student entrepreneurs"; external interactions (five items): "The University organizes inter schools quiz and debates to encourage entrepreneurship," "Excursions to Companies/ entrepreneurship centers are being encouraged by the University," "Trade shows/ exhibitions are top priorities of the University to help students develop business ideas," "Get to meet foreign entrepreneurs with good ideas for new businesses on campus" and "Students are mandated to join club in other campuses which promote entrepreneurship."

3.2.3 Role models. The RMs scale is used for rating by the sample respondents. The nine-item scale proposed by Keat *et al.* (2011) is having two subscales as thus: internal RMs (five items): "Interested in business because my parents are in business," "Family is

main source of business-related information,” “Relatives are main source of business-related information,” “Care what my closest friends think about my employment decision,” “My father is crucial in inspiring me to think of going into business”; external RMs (four items): “Believe that guest speakers think I should become self-employed,” “My lecturers always inspire my start-up business decision,” “Care what lecturers think about my employment decision” and “The success stories of entrepreneurs give me confidence to start my business.”

3.2.4 Entrepreneurial inclination. EI was conceptualized as discrete of intention by an individual to start-up a business. In this regard, it was measured using items developed by Liñan and Chen (2009). Some of the sample items are: “Seriously considered entrepreneurship as a highly desirable career option,” “Never thought of entrepreneurship as a career choice,” “Have the plan of opening a new venture,” “Won’t start a business because I am afraid of failing,” “Would like someday to start my own business,” “Could easily pursue a career involving self-employment,” “If I pursue a career involving self-employment, the chances of failure would be very high” and “Prefer to work in a big organization rather than a small firm.”

4. Data analysis

Responses in the items of all the four study variables elicited from the sample were averaged to yield composite scores of each scale and were used for statistical analysis. Assumptions of normality, linearity of data and homogeneity of variance to explore the data and determine its distribution were tested. Also suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), normality of variables enhances the solution and because the numbers of factors are determined using statistical inference, multivariate normality is assumed. We assessed normality by skewness and kurtosis. According to Field (2009), the values of kurtosis and skewness should be 0 in a normal distribution. Following this rule, the data were found to be fairly normally distributed. Additionally, we tested for the assumption of the homogeneity of variance using the Levene’s test and this test returns a non-significant value making the homogeneity of variance tenable for the data.

4.1 Exploratory analysis

The principal components analysis as recommended by scholars (Pedhazur and Schmelkin, 1991; Churchill and Peter, 1980) for the cleaning of the scales and to testing the dimensionality of the constructs was applied. To measure sampling adequacy and relevant axes, we employed the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test, the Bartlett’s test of sphericity and Kaiser’s eigenvalues (Evrard *et al.*, 1993). During the first iteration, we employed a reliability test (α of Cronbach’s) for each scale. We therefore removed the items with loadings higher than 0.30 on several factors and those with no loadings higher than 0.6. Complementarily, we examined the communalities (cancellation below 0.4). All the values are found to be in acceptable limits (Table I) in the present study. Hence, no further treatment of data is required. We then went ahead to validate the measurement model.

4.2 Validation of the measurement model

According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the validation of the measurement model consists of a two-step analysis: the first step is a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measurement model, designed to assess data adjustment to the measurement model, and to define and improve the convergent validity and the discriminatory validity of the constructs. In assessing discriminant validity, squared correlations among constructs were compared with the respective AVE. Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria was used which suggests that if the squared correlation values among the latent variables are less than the AVE, it is an indication of discriminant validity. The results in Table II indicate

Item	α	Eigen value	Item	Loading	Communality
Pdg2	0.7	1.807	Lecturers have influenced my ability to develop business networks	0.865	0.888
pdg3			I experienced action-based entrepreneurship training from the lectures	0.781	0.856
pdg4			Views of the lecturers inspire my entrepreneurial mind	0.764	0.862
pdg5			Students are engaged in the start-up process of a real business during lectures	0.871	0.732
cc1			0.84	5.112	The syllabus emphasizes entrepreneurial actions in business start-up
cc2	The course increases my understanding of the attitudes of entrepreneurs	0.834			0.812
cc3	Entrepreneurship course enhances my ability to identify business opportunities	0.784			0.753
cc4	The course places emphasis on how students can develop business plan	0.699			0.685
ce1	0.8	2.281	University is an ideal place to learn about starting a business	0.746	0.852
ce2			More entrepreneurship programs on campus would help students to start businesses	0.652	0.821
ce3			Students are encouraged to pursue entrepreneurship ventures in the university	0.873	0.876
ce4			The university infrastructure discourage entrepreneurship	0.811	0.769
ce5			Students are actively encouraged to pursue their own business ideas	0.845	0.764
ce6			There are no student clubs on campus which promote entrepreneurship	0.766	0.853
ce7			University has infrastructure in place to support the start-up of new businesses	0.766	0.851
eis1	0.86	1.264	The university organizes inter schools quiz and debates to encourage entrepreneurship	0.752	0.833
eis2			Excursions to Companies/entrepreneurship centers are being encouraged by the University	0.698	0.795
eis4			Get to meet foreign entrepreneurs with good ideas for new businesses on campus	0.756	0.763
eis5			Students are mandated to join club in other campuses which promote entrepreneurship	0.685	0.874
irm1			0.74	3.871	Interested in business because my parents are in business
irm2	Family are main source of business-related information	0.652			0.934
irm3	Relatives are main source of business-related information	0.852			0.784
irm4	Care what my closest friends think about my employment decision	0.746			0.699
irm5			My father is crucial in inspiring me to think of going into business	0.812	0.823
erm1	0.91	4.567	Believe that guest speakers think I should become self-employed	0.781	0.756
erm2			My lecturers always inspire my start-up business decision	0.733	0.746
erm3			Care what lecturers think about my employment decision	0.591	0.652
erm4			The success stories of entrepreneurs give me confidence to start my business	0.804	0.851
ei2	0.79	2.443	Considered entrepreneurship as a highly desirable career option	0.856	0.746
ei3			Have the planning for opening a new venture	0.852	0.591
ei4			Won't start a business because it is too risky and I am afraid of failing	0.673	0.704
Ei6			Could easily pursue a career involving self-employment	0.866	0.775
Ei7			Would like someday to start my own business	0.652	0.786
Ei8			Prefer to work in a big organization rather than a small firm	0.829	0.812

Notes: Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = 0.869; Bartlett test for sphericity = 1,221.706, df = 55, significance level = 0.000; % of variance = 69.645

Table I. Factor analysis for key variables

that all squared correlations were less than the AVE hence concepts studied are different. The second step is the testing of the relationships between the constructs. To do CFA, we used factor loadings and structural covariance analysis. Also, we employed the use of structural equation model to assess the relationship between EE and EI, to examine the influence of UR on disabled students' EI and to see whether RMs moderate the relationship of EE and EI.

4.3 Confirmatory factor analysis

We performed construct validity test using CFA; with the aid of AMOS version 22 to assess the extent to which operationalization of a construct does actually measure what theory purports (Sarantakos, 2005). This step involved specifying separate measurement models for EE, UR, RMs and EI. CFA is understood as a more flexible statistical tool than other multivariate techniques because it allows for simultaneous multiple dependent relationships between the variables (Holmes-Smith *et al.*, 2004).

4.3.1 CFA for entrepreneurship education. The measurement scale for EE after the EFA involves eight items. The initial CFA results indicated that although the standardized parameter estimates were all significant ($p < 0.001$), the fit-indices were below the acceptable level signifying a poor measurement model fit. This informed a re-specification by iteratively deleting items that did not meet the acceptable criteria. The modification indices revealed misspecifications associated with "pdg5" and "cc4." In total, 5 out of 11 items in total were deleted in the final model prior to further analysis. The retained items were significant and had standardized factor loadings higher than the recommended level of 0.50, thus preserving the meanings of the factors. The results of the initial estimation of the proposed model were acceptable for a well-fitting model. The measurement model is stated in Table III and Figure 2.

4.3.2 CFA for university's role. The measurement scale for UR after the EFA involves 11 items. The initial CFA results indicated misspecifications associated with "ce1" below the acceptable level signifying a poor measurement model fit. This was deleted from the model. Concerning the fit of the model, the indicators are adequate. The GFI, TLI and the CFI are all higher than 0.9 (Table IV and Figure 3). Additionally, the RMSEA satisfies the norms of Hu and Bentler (1999).

4.3.3 CFA for role models. The measurement scale for RMs after the EFA involves eight items. The initial CFA results indicated that the fit-indices were below the acceptable level signifying a poor measurement model fit. This informed a re-specification by iteratively deleting "rms3" item that did not meet the acceptable criteria. The retained items were significant and had standardized factor loadings higher than the recommended level of 0.50

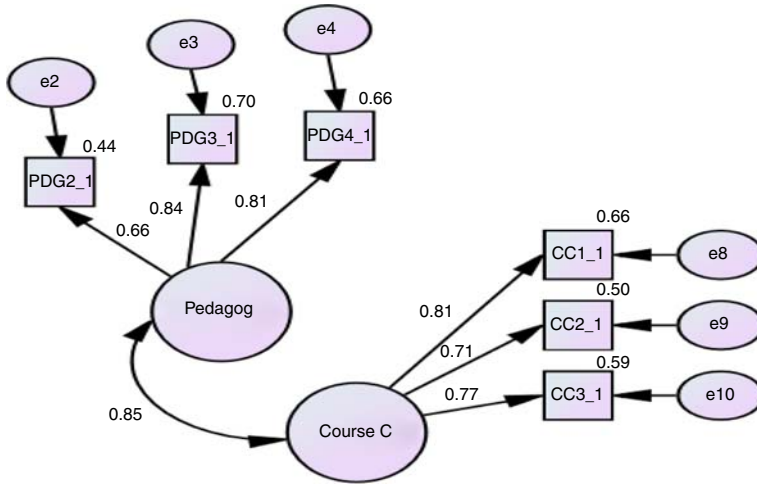
Table II.
Convergent validity and discriminant validity

	Mean	SD	EE	UR	RM	EI
Entrepreneurship education	4.53	0.61	(0.592)			
University's role	4.92	0.63	0.434**	(0.515)		
Role models	5.17	0.52	0.472**	0.320**	(0.579)	
Entrepreneurial inclination	5.28	0.46	0.120**	0.081**	0.284**	(0.623)

Notes: **, *Significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels (two-tailed), respectively

Table III.
Goodness-of-fit results for entrepreneurship education

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	p	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	Items deleted
PDG	13.7	8	1.712	0.000	0.947	0.978	0.973	0.056	1
CC	31.8	1.871	2.446	0.034	0.925	0.953	0.964	0.045	1



Notes: χ^2 (CMIN)= 56.404; degree of freedom (df)=34; probability (P)=0.009; χ^2 -degree of freedom ratio (CMIN/df)=1.659; goodness of fit index (GFI)=0.959; Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)=0.976; comparative fit index (CFI)=0.982; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.054

Figure 2. Measurement model for EE

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	p	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	Items deleted
CE	17.2	11	1.563	0.002	0.967	0.953	0.963	0.016	1
EIs	38.5	23	1.674	0.054	0.951	0.958	0.974	0.025	-

Table IV. Goodness-of-fit results for university's role

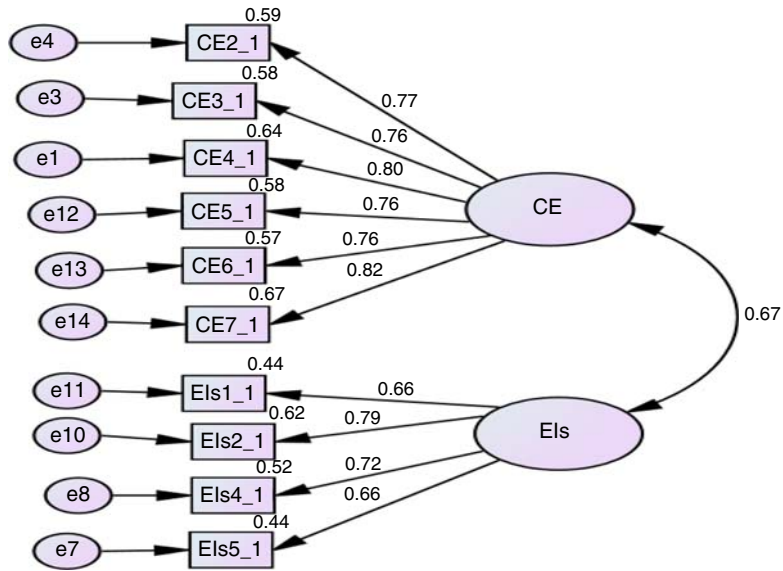
thus, preserving the meanings of the factors. The results of the initial estimation of the proposed model were acceptable for a well-fitting model. The initial measurement model is as indicated in Table V and Figure 4.

4.4.4 CFA for entrepreneurial inclination. The measurement scale for UR after the EFA involves six items. The initial CFA results indicated misspecifications associated with "ei1" and "ei8" below the acceptable level, signifying a poor measurement model fit. These were deleted from the model. Concerning the fit of the model, the indicators are adequate. The GFI, TLI and the CFI are all higher than 0.9 (Table VI and Figure 5). Additionally, the RMSEA satisfies the norms of Hu and Bentler (1999).

Evaluation of hypothesized model. The three hypotheses were tested to examine the influence of EE on EI, UR on EI and the moderating effect of RMs on the relationship between EE and EI. The effect of the variables is indicated in Table VII.

H1: EE and EI are positively related. H1 investigated the relationship between EE and EI. The results show that the relationship is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.376$, t -value = 5.130, $p < 0.05$), and thus the hypothesis was supported. This implies that positive changes in EE are associated with positive changes EI.

H2: UR and EI are positively related. H2 tested the relationship between UR and EI. The results show that UR and EI are positively related, and the association is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.251$, t -value = 4.516, $p < 0.05$), thus the hypothesis was supported. This indicates that positive changes in pedagogy are associated with positive changes in entrepreneurial action.

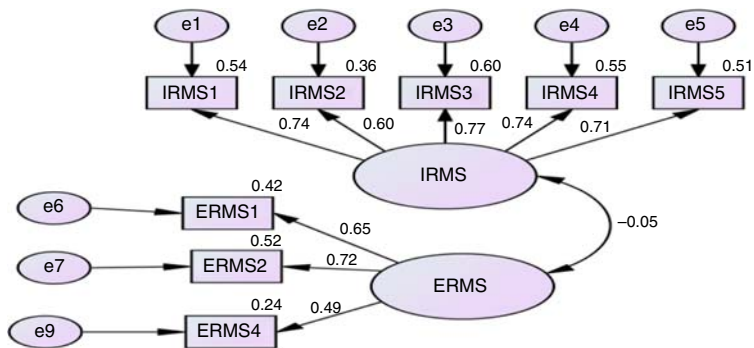


Notes: χ^2 (CMIN)=36.645; degree of freedom (df)=26; probability (P)=0.080; χ^2 -degree of freedom ratio (CMIN/df)=1.409; goodness of fit index (GFI)=0.967; Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)=0.987; comparative fit index (CFI)=0.991; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.039

Figure 3.
Measurement model
for university's role

Table V.
Goodness-of-fit results
for role models

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	p	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	Items deleted
IRMS	22.4	9	2.488	0.042	0.952	0.988	0.978	0.052	-
ERMS	31.8	14	2.271	0.014	0.949	0.957	0.967	0.035	1



Notes: χ^2 (CMIN)=28.034; degree of freedom (df)=19; probability (P)=0.083; χ^2 -degree of freedom ratio (CMIN/df)=1.475; goodness of fit index (GFI)=0.975; Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)=0.977; comparative fit index (CFI)=0.985; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.042

Figure 4.
Measurement model
for role models

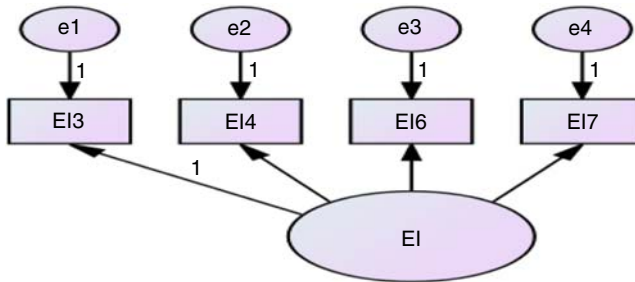
H3: to investigate moderation effect of RMs between EE and EI, AMOS model was run (Table VII and Figure 6) considering a moderation effect with mean centered scale items. Goodness-of-fit measures of the model found satisfactory ($\chi^2 = 21.92$; $df = 16$; $\chi^2/df = 1.372$, GFI = 0.955, CFI = 0.983, TLI = 0.972, RMSEA = 0.067). Analyzing the results reveal that EE has a significant influence on EI ($\beta = 0.376$, t -value = 5.240, $p < 0.05$), whereas the moderation influence of RMs on the relationship between EE and EI was found to be supported: $\beta = 0.047$, t -value = 1.042, $p < 0.05$ (see Figure 7, interaction graph).

5. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate how Nigerian universities can develop entrepreneurial graduates with disabilities. It was hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between EE and EI. In addition, it was posited that there is a relationship between EI and UR. Finally, it was hypothesized that RMs moderate the relationship between EE and EI. This study provides empirical evidence indicating that gender is consequential in determining the inclination of students with disabilities to venture into business. The result on gender is not surprising because in Nigeria going into business could depend on gender. For instance, most Miango women in the north-central part of the country are seen to be entrepreneurially inclined than the male counterparts. This supports the findings of some scholars (Kolvereid and Moen, 1997; Bosma *et al.*, 2012; Chlosta *et al.*, 2012). A plausible explanation for the finding on the role of gender is the fact that they are

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	p	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	Items deleted
EI	11.503	5	2.301	0.042	0.978	0.970	0.909	0.072	2

Table VI. Goodness-of-fit results for entrepreneurial inclination



Notes: χ^2 (CMIN)=11.503; degree of freedom (df)=5; probability (P)=0.042; χ^2 -degree of freedom ratio (CMIN/df)=2.301; goodness of fit index (GFI)=0.978; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)=0.909; comparative fit index (CFI)=0.970; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.072

Figure 5. Measurement model for entrepreneurial inclination

	B	SE	β	t -value	p	Decision
H1: EI←EE	0.373	0.071	0.376	5.130	***	Yes
H2: EI←UR	0.207	0.046	0.251	4.516	***	Yes
H3: EI←EE×RMs	0.038	0.036	0.047	1.042	0.001	Yes

Table VII. Results on direction of relationship paths

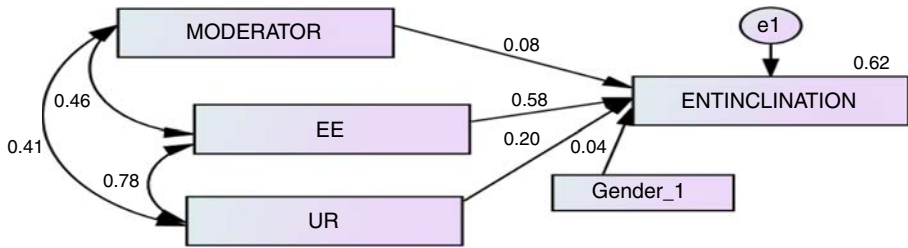


Figure 6.
Overall model and moderating effect of role models

Notes: χ^2 (CMIN)=21.92; degree of freedom (df)= 16; probability (P)=0.063; χ^2 -degree of freedom ratio (CMIN/df)= 1.372; goodness of fit index (GFI)=0.955; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)=0.972; comparative fit index (CFI)=0.983; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.067

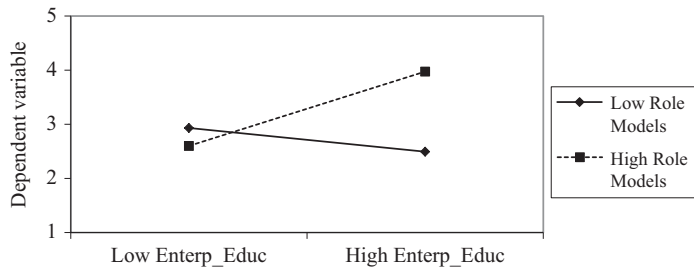


Figure 7.
Interaction graph

action oriented. As a result, the gender of an individual is considered to a great extent theoretic and relevant for EI.

The results of *H1* revealed that EE is positively related to EI. The EE orientation inspires the entrepreneurial feelings of students. This kind of motivation promotes extra-role performance in business start-up decisions. The results are in tandem with the findings of Volery and Mueller who documented that participation in EE in this regard has been associated with the increasing interest by students toward choosing entrepreneurship as a viable career option. Earlier research has confirmed that EE is related to EI (Clarke *et al.*, 2006). They observed that depending on the context, the outcomes of the portfolio of the various teaching methods employed in learning entrepreneurship will enhance students' EI. Moreover, universities are ideally considered the place in shaping entrepreneurial cultures of students. To this end, they have the mandate to play a leading role in inculcating students with the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills that will be useful in their future career endeavors (Nurmi and Paasio, 2007).

The results of *H2* provide empirical support for the position played by the universities in promoting entrepreneurship (Edwards and Muir, 2005; Postigo *et al.*, 2006; Nurmi and Paasio, 2007). This relationship may be attributable to the increasing demands from students to seek for quality education from the universities to equip them with the entrepreneurial competencies for future careers. Moreover, universities are ideally considered the place in shaping entrepreneurial cultures among students while they are studying (Mahlberg, 1996). Hence, it is important for universities to provide entrepreneurially friendly environment to encourage and foster entrepreneurial culture. Finally, the findings of *H3* indicated the significant moderating effect of RMs on the relationship between EE and EI. Thus, *H3* was supported. The study supports the findings of Van Auken *et al.* (2006) and Krueger *et al.* (2000) as RMs may also enhance the

inclination and ultimately, entrepreneurial activity. Earlier research has confirmed that RMs are related to EI (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). Also, Nauta and Kokaly (2001) add a support component, arguing that RMs not only provide individuals with inspiration and modeling, but also with support and guidance. In a study focusing on enterprise creation, Douglas and Shepherd (2001) documented that exposure to entrepreneurial RMs positively impact the choice of an entrepreneurial career, which was confirmed by Van Auken *et al.* (2006) who established the moderating role of exposure to RMs on individuals' intentions to become entrepreneurs. Based on that, students' exposure to entrepreneurial RMs may provide invaluable information, inspire confidence and stimulus to elaborate the anticipatory scenarios of their own future business career. A plausible explanation is linked to the fact it is more credible for disabled students to become successful entrepreneurs when they have good examples to copy from. It is based on the assumption of seeing successful persons in business that they would aspire to imitate in order to become successful persons in business.

6. Conclusion and implications

In this paper, students with disabilities' EI are examined together with three related variables. The results of the analyses indicated that EE, UR and RMs are statistically significant. These results are anticipated to have certain implications to Nigerian universities, students and policy makers. It provides empirical evidence showing the strong predictors of EI through EE, UR and RMs' perspectives. This is a crucial factor for the universities in Nigeria to consider in preparing the disabled students to become entrepreneurially inclined. On the other hand, students with disabilities must be ready to be flexible in their present learning approach to a more practical way required in the entrepreneurial learning process. The findings of the results are expected to shed some new insights to the current entrepreneurship literature particularly in Nigerian settings.

It is suggested here that future studies should consider other attributes such as experience, disability category, gender and self-efficacy. Second, the present study has employed a survey questionnaire for collecting the data from sample respondents which may stand problematic for generalization. Follow-up interviews which would employ a qualitative approach or mixed model would be of immense benefit. Finally, the present study is cross-sectional and views held by individuals may change over the years. This suggests that future studies should employ a longitudinal approach to test the robustness of the model. In spite of its limitations, this study reliably makes important contributions as discussed above. Future research may wish to replicate in different country contexts.

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