

# Role of Entrepreneurial Culture in Enhancing Apprenticeship Programs and Promoting Youth-Driven Business Creation in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Apprenticeship also contributes significantly to the creation of venture in Nigeria among the youth, as it gives them practical experiences of doing business that complement their theoretical entrepreneurship training; helps them to discover the real business operations and the strategies of handling customers and their problems. This study explores the mediating effects of entrepreneurial culture on the augmentation of apprenticeship system and creation of youth-led ventures in Nigeria. Survey questionnaire was administered to 389 respondents from the four vocational centers in Lagos. Path analysis structural equation modeling (PA-SEM) was applied for data analysis using STATA statistical software package version 15. Results show there is a significant relationship between the apprenticeship system and venture creation; gender norms perceived, celebrity endorsement and the cultural belief about expected behavior individually predict venture creation, but the variables indirectly affect venture creation in partial mediation of their relation to apprenticeship training.

**Keywords:** *apprenticeship system, gender norms, celebrity endorsement, societal expectations, youth*

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has a very high unemployment rate, especially amongst the youths. In 2023, it was at 3.07%, and it increased to 4.3% in 2024, according to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2024). Econometric models estimate that Nigeria will have a 5.20% unemployment rate in 2025. A huge challenge that it poses as both opportunity and threat for foreign and local investors, despite numerous entrepreneurship policies and programs implemented by successive governments. Nigeria remains one of the highest countries in the world in terms of unemployment rate (possibly within the top 10 countries). Examples include Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN), N-Power, and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and have worked to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment. However, the impact of such initiatives appears limited, and many youths still struggle with the transition from skill acquisition to running successful ventures.

The apprenticeship system is widely regarded by researchers, scholars and entrepreneurs as the basic system for acquiring skills which pervades both traditional and modern economies. It is a key factor for venture creation among Nigerian youth, alongside their entrepreneurship education (Nnonyelu & Onyeizugbe, 2020). While entrepreneurship education programs offer basic management knowledge and theoretical lessons for running businesses, the apprenticeship system provides hands-on experiences and technical skills as well as practical problem-solving knowledge in specific industries and disciplines (Ekekwe, 2018). Olulu and Udeorah (2018) posit that the apprenticeship system allows individuals to gain directly and relevant experience that can be translated to starting a business from the direct interaction with trade or industry. Roberts (2015) observes that learning from entrepreneurs already established in business may be beneficial in terms of learning customer relationships and operational strategies, which are often missing from formal training. Furthermore, Iwara et al. (2019) emphasize that apprenticeship programs facilitate a network of relationships with customers, suppliers and industry contacts which can be useful for the launch and operations of the business. The apprenticeship system thus links the world of training with that of practice by bridging the formal educational system with the real-world economy of doing business.

Another construct that enhances the relationship between apprenticeship system and venture creation is entrepreneurial culture. Entrepreneurial culture is defined as the cultural beliefs and practices that enhance entrepreneurship-driven venture creation by promoting risk-taking, self-reliance and innovation (Ajaero, 2015). Integrated with the apprenticeship system, entrepreneurial culture can be seen as an environmental factor that facilitates the transition from acquiring knowledge/skills through apprenticeships to becoming an entrepreneur and managing a business effectively (Adeola & Ozigbo, 2021). Chukwuma et al. (2020) also note that the development of an innovative business culture among apprentices will enable them to create and refine traditional production methods, develop new products and create new markets for their products/services, thereby enabling them to create new ventures and differentiating them in the markets. In essence, an entrepreneurial culture inculcates resilience and belief in growth and continuous improvement, enabling apprentices to take risks and build up successful ventures.

There is a host of research indicating the effect of apprenticeship system on venture creation in both developed and developing countries (Nwabuatu, 2024; Tummons, 2022; Soliman, 2023). However, little has been done to establish the degree to which apprenticeship system leads to venture creation when the dimensions of entrepreneurial culture are considered. This study, therefore, aims to address this research gap by testing the mediating role of entrepreneurial culture dimensions in the apprenticeship system – venture creation relationship for Nigerian youth and by extending the literature, to assess how entrepreneurial culture influences the relationship between the apprenticeship system and venture creation. In addition, this new study defines entrepreneurial culture in a way different from previous studies, focusing on perception of gender norms, celebrity endorsement and social expectations in conjunction with Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

This study is very relevant as it helps African countries achieve Vision 2030 SDGs. The research addresses the problem of youth unemployment, which is very critical in Nigeria and has become a challenging task for government, citizens and foreigners alike.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been various studies using different theories, such as Human Capital Theory (Nnonyelu, 2020), Social Learning Theory (Poortman & Brown, 2023), Institutional Theory (Smolka et al., 2023), Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory (Soelberg et al., 2024), Cultural Dimensions Theory (Sajuyigbe et al., 2016) and Theory of Planned Behavior (Nwabuatu, 2024) to examine the link between the apprenticeship system, entrepreneurial culture and youth venture creation in developed and developing economies. This study however uses Institutional Theory to identify the links between the apprenticeship system, entrepreneurial culture and youth venture creation. Institutional Theory was chosen because it adequately explains why many Nigerian youths venture into entrepreneurship rather than formal employment.

Institutional theory deals with how institutions, both formal and informal, such as structures, rules and norms, influence the behaviour and economic activities of humans. The Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) serves as an example where formal and informal institutions guide people towards entrepreneurial practices in Nigeria (Nwabuatu, 2024). Rooted in the culture of Nigeria, the system guides youths into learning business skills, how to manage businesses, business ideas generation and development through business mentors, and provision of start-up capital upon completion of their training. It succeeds in the context of the existing socio-normative expectations to get involved in business venture creation and a prevalent belief in mentoring and progressive accumulation of wealth. According to Smolka et al. (2023), Institutional theory provides a framework to explain how institutions influence economic activity, human behavior, and social norms. Regarding the context of Nigerian youth entrepreneurship, the IAS provides mechanisms whereby young individuals would learn under a master tradesperson and later receive funds, in addition to business experience and advice from their master's to establish their businesses. Lockyer et al. (2024) posits that Institutional theory supports the apprenticeship system in the informal sector of the economy, where contractual relationships often operate on the basis of trust rather than legal enforcement. Nonetheless, traditional legalities and socio-norms still govern these transactions to ensure compliance. If a master does not provide the apprentice with funds at the completion of the training contract, the community may intervene and compel the master to give it to the apprentice. In line with the argument, Chukwuma-Nwuba (2019) notes that Institutional theory explains how governmental policies have guided the entrepreneurial culture of society by providing support for small businesses via grant and loans for young entrepreneurs (such as the YouWin! and N-Power programs in Nigeria), the alternative sources of financing are still essential such as the savings system, relatives' contributions and the apprenticeship settlement funds.

The apprenticeship system is a contract that exists between a master craftsman and a trainee, which obliges the trainee to acquire hands-on experience and knowledge from the master craftsmen under his tutelage through formal training (Gessler, 2019). It is a process in which an aspirant merchant obtains the necessary knowledge, business skills, and techniques from a professional entrepreneur in order to become a successful business owner (Wirth & Wirth, 2019). It is a way to prepare the young generation for business and vocation related careers (Ekekwe, 2018). Many researchers identified a relationship between the apprenticeship system and the venture creation by stimulating the development of entrepreneurial culture. Previous evidence confirmed that apprenticeship systems prepare people for both vocational and managerial business skills in a new venture (Adeyeye et al., 2015). According to Anyalor et al. (2023) an apprenticeship system provides hands-on training under the tutelage of expert practitioners, thereby enabling business owners to acquire skills and experience that contributes to business creation.

Agbionu et al. (2018) argue that the apprenticeship system plays a central role in facilitating youth entrepreneurship and job creation in developing countries by providing the required skills for specific industries and enabling youth to start businesses. Ali and Majid (2022) show that prior work experience

like apprenticeships also plays an influential role for business start-up. According to Anigbogu et al. (2019) apprenticeship promotes problem-solving, adaptability and risk-taking skills by offering on-the-job training, thus enhancing the development of entrepreneurial spirit. Supporting these findings, empirical research has indicated a link between entrepreneurship and the apprenticeship system in African countries as well as other regions. Studies of Falco and Haywood (2016) in Sub-Saharan Africa revealed that the apprenticeship system contributes a greater path toward self-employment. As such, experiential learning is vital to the development of entrepreneurship behavior (Eneh et al., 2023). Obeng and Blundel (2015) discovered that the apprenticeship system has the potential to improve business creation in Ghana. Ezenwakwelu et al. (2019) found that the practical skills that entrepreneurs acquire through apprenticeships are beneficial in managing the risk associated with running a business.

Moreover, Fajobi et al. (2017) observed that entrepreneurs with prior experience of the apprenticeship system were found to innovate more than those without any form of practical experience and Gessler (2019) suggest that entrepreneurs trained as apprentices are likely to introduce novel products and services which ultimately leads to business creation. These findings conclude that apprenticeship systems contribute to the development of entrepreneurship skills and business creation in that business owners are likely to create businesses by leveraging their gained experiences in their respective industries after completing an apprenticeship, thus it leads to the creation of a new business generation. This implies that the apprenticeship system serves as a tool to kick-start entrepreneurship in that it equips youth with relevant skills for their industry, instill entrepreneurial intention in trainees and subsequently affect business survival rate and create new businesses. It thus suggests that the government can make use of this relationship to improve the economy through increasing entrepreneurship and venture creation by strengthening the apprenticeship system. Hence, the following hypothesis were formulated:

*H1: Apprenticeship system is significantly associated with venture creation*

The entrepreneurial culture refers to the values, attitudes, beliefs and behavior that can motivate individuals to identify, create and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities (Castillo-Palacio et al., 2017). According to Nnonyelu, and Onyeizugbe (2020), entrepreneurial culture cultivates attitudes, values, and actions such as innovativeness, risk-taking, resilience, and an orientation towards business-oriented practices within society or a specific group. It plays an important role in defining young people's perception of entrepreneurship as a career path. The entrepreneurial culture in this study will be assessed through the dimensions of perceived gender norms, celebrity endorsement and perceived society expectations as influenced by Nigerian culture.

Okadi et al. (2020) argues that whilst apprenticeship has provided people with business and technical skills it is through the entrepreneurial culture – gender norms, celebrity endorsement and society expectation – that such knowledge can be successfully applied to creation of new businesses. According to Orogbu et al. (2021) perceived gender norms are socially constructed and influence a person's decision-making, choice of career and access to resources; Orogbu et al. (2021) thus noted that gender roles that are internalized through societal beliefs have significant impacts on career choices. Also, Sajuyigbe and Fadeyibi (2017) posits that perceived gender norms will influence entrepreneurial intentions through the mechanism by which an individual perceives appropriate role and profession; Stereotypes on genders are prone to hinder individuals of certain sex (women) from entering business creation or confine them into gender stereotyped sectors of industries. This correlates with Parker (2015) on the reinforcement of traditional genders role within apprenticeships, such as the case of sports, by some professions can lead to limited aspirations for entrepreneurs of various genders. The introduction of female entrepreneur into apprenticeship mentoring scheme will improve gender fairness and also broaden the spectrum of potential entrepreneurs. For developing countries such as Nigeria and other African countries, the entrepreneurship as well as venture creation of youths will be heavily influenced by gender norms (Sajuyigbe et al., 2021). Moreover, cultural beliefs of gender roles also influence the perceived role of entrepreneurship by young individuals as career choice (ILO, 2016). These norms influence all levels of business creation such as the industry sector, finance,

entrepreneurial risk-taking behavior, balance between working and personal life and formal support for businesses.

Celebrity endorsement as an influential dimension of entrepreneurial culture in that it serves as a vehicle for entrepreneurship motivation, role models, endorsement and consumer influence, and is believed to influence perception and attitudes of young individuals toward business creation. The influence of celebrities goes as far as affecting people's decisions for business start-up, their funding strategy, level of trust in products, and trends within various industries. Sajuyigbe et al. (2021) argue that apprentices with business and technical skills are less confident to run a business until their self-efficacy is boosted through exposure to models of success such as a celebrity endorsing a business venture which thus enhances their willingness to take risks. Similarly, Olugbola (2017) explains that the role of celebrity endorsement is instrumental in facilitating relationship between apprenticeship systems and the creation of new businesses in terms of boosting entrepreneurial self-confidence, enabling access to markets and improving chances for acquiring finance.

Perceived societal expectations are fundamental dimensions of entrepreneurial culture which influence both the apprenticeship system and venture creation. According to Irene et al. (2024) societal expectations affect human behavior, decisions, and careers, which are related to the learning in apprenticeship training and business creation. Institutional theory notes that families and social circles that valorize business ownership support young business owners with both financial and emotional capital, while young business owners from families that do not highly value owning a business will struggle for finance and support. Bloemen-Bekx et al. (2019) also note that social norms influence the entrepreneurial process following apprenticeships, and Olugbola et al. (2020) highlight that while in apprenticeship, individuals are likely to be unwilling to set up businesses due to possible negative public response, entrepreneurship is perceived more positively as a career option in societies that uphold entrepreneurship culture (Chen et al., 2021). Odora and Naong (2020) found that apprenticeship systems that encourage entrepreneurial culture help to demystify vocational careers and the importance of their role in creating self-employment and new business creation by embedding social values into the program design and support networks.

From the above studies, it is concluded that perception based gender norms, celebrity endorsement and perception based societal expectation influence relationship between apprenticeship system and youth venture creation in the fact that the apprenticeship system equipped an individual with technical skills but it is the psychological attributes gained as well as the social values of the individual, which are facilitated through entrepreneurial culture, that will assist them to apply these skills to create their own businesses. Hence, based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated:

*H2: Perceived gender norms have a significant association with venture creation*

*H3: Celebrity endorsement has a significant association with venture creation*

*H4: Perceived society expectations have a significant association with venture creation*

*H5: Perceived gender norms mediate the association between apprenticeship system and venture creation*

*H6: Celebrity endorsement mediates the association between apprenticeship system and venture creation*

*H7: Perceived society expectations mediate the association between apprenticeship system and venture creation*

### **Conceptual Framework**

The study presents a conceptual model showing the predictors of venture creation which include the apprenticeship system. From the model, it can be observed that celebrity endorsement, perceived gender norms, and perceived societal expectation act as mediators of the apprenticeship system and venture creation relationships. This section sets the context for the conceptual framework and hypotheses to be presented in the next section. Nigerian youth are taught skills in various trades in apprenticeship system which helps them to develop adequate knowledge and skills required for starting their own ventures. Entrepreneurial culture formed by perception of gender norms, celebrity endorsements, and social expectations plays a very vital role to drive venture creation by Nigerian

youths. The gender norms help in shaping choice of industry, motive, resources, role models and market demand to entrepreneurship and venture creation by the Nigerian youth. Also, celebrity endorsement provides market trends and stimulation, visibility and legitimacy for the business venture. Since Nigerian youth see the celebrities as role models, their endorsements may influence their choice of business. Society expectations lead youth to venture into entrepreneurship based on expectations they will achieve financial success by creating ventures with their entrepreneurship dreams being determined by society. Family, tradition, culture or social status could have influence on society's expectations. All these are likely to have positive relationship on venture creation by the Nigerian youths and that the apprenticeship system would positively affect venture creation directly while the perception of gender norms, celebrity endorsement and social expectations positively affected venture creation indirectly.

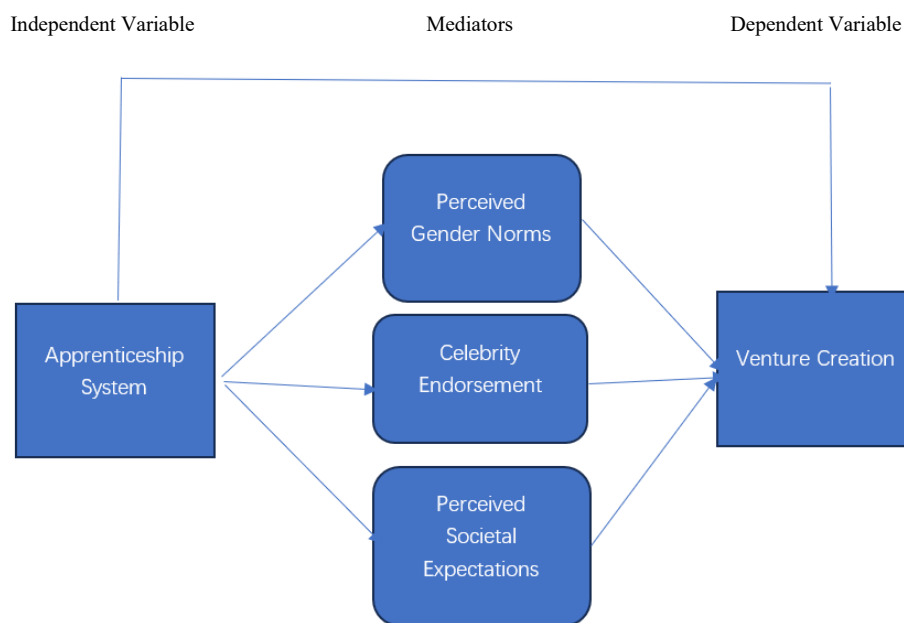


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

## METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected using a survey questionnaire from January 23 to February 31, 2025, in four vocational centers in Lagos, namely, Lagos State Vocational training and skill acquisition center, Etiwa Tech, Institute for Industrial Technology (IIT) and Olumide Osunsina Foundation (OOF). It was assumed that all respondents passed through the apprenticeship system and acquired relevant skills for their careers. The study was administered with 100 questionnaires to each vocational center in Lagos. Therefore, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 389 copies were retrieved, yielding 97.25% response rate, which is relatively high. High response rate might be due to the previous meeting with head of vocational centers and apprentices to explain the purpose of the study and seek their co-operation in distributing the questionnaire. Majority of the respondents was males (220; 56.55%) and 169 females (43.44%). The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to above 26 years and their mean age was 23 years.

This study consists of 5 constructs: (1) Apprenticeship System, (2) Perceived Gender Norms, (3) Celebrity Endorsement, (4) Perceived Societal Expectation, and (5) Venture Creation, all measured using multi-items on 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

*Apprenticeship System Scale (AS)*: It is a 6-item scale developed and validated by Nwabuatu (2024). It measured the impact of apprenticeship system on job skills development and preparing the youth for

entrepreneurship and it is higher than formal education. Sample items were “Apprenticeship programs equip youth with adequate job skills,” “I think apprenticeship is a better route to success than formal education,” “Apprenticeship system adequately equips youth to go into entrepreneurship in Nigeria,” “Most young Nigerians prefer apprenticeship than going to the university.” The authors reported Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.823 and composite reliability of 0.801.

*Perceived Gender Norms Scale (PGN)*: A 6-item scale of perceived gender norms adapted from the study by Sajuyigbe et al. (2021). It measured perceptions about gender role in access to opportunity, equity in treatment during apprenticeship training for entrepreneurship skills development and effect of gender norms on youth venture creation. Sample items were “Gender role plays a role in accessing apprenticeship programs for youth,” “There is equal training and mentorship between male and female apprentices in entrepreneurship-related skills,” “Incorporating gender equity in the apprenticeship system may boost youth-led venture creation,” “Gender norms discourage female apprentices from undertaking male-dominated businesses.” The authors reported Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.802 and composite reliability of 0.817.

*Perceived Societal Expectations Scale (PSE)*: A 7-item scale was adapted from Chukwuma et al. (2020). It measures society’s expectations about career and financial success by young people at an early age and influences such expectations on personal career decisions. Sample items were “Society expects youth to achieve financial success as soon as possible,” “I feel pressure to meet societal expectations on career and family,” “Social media magnifies the pressure to conform to society expectations,” “Society expectations influence my career and educational decisions,” “Fear of judgment from society affects my personal life decisions.” The authors reported Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.811 and composite reliability of 0.821.

*Celebrity Endorsement Scale (CE)*: A 7-item scale was developed and validated by Bergkvist et al. (2016). It measures whether endorsements from celebrities affect youths’ enrollment to apprenticeships, starting businesses in endorsed fields, the ventures perceived status of celebrity endorsed products/services, motivation to entrepreneurial ventures due to celebrity endorsement, and the perception on the credibility of celebrity endorsement on apprenticeship-based venture. Sample items were “Celebrity endorsements affect decision to enroll for apprenticeship,” “The perceived fame/success of a celebrity endorsing a trade/industry motivates youths,” “Decisions to choose it for starting their venture,” “Apprentices are attracted to specific apprenticeship programs based on celebrity endorsements,” “Celebrity endorsement of apprenticeship based venture is viewed as being more credible,” “Celebrity endorsements of business firms may motivate youths entrepreneurs to be entrepreneurial.” The authors reported Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.809 and composite reliability of 0.811.

*Venture Creation Scale (VC)*: A 7-item scale developed and validated by Sajuyigbe et al (2021). It was measuring how young Nigerians could initiate their business as a career. Sample items were “Young Nigerians have adequate opportunities for entrepreneurship,” “Lack of finance is not a major obstacle to youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria,” “The Nigerian government has provided support to facilitate youth entrepreneurship,” “Young entrepreneurs have adequate mentorship and guidance,” “I perceive entrepreneurship as a better career option than paid employment.” The authors reported Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.823 and composite reliability of 0.831.

### **Reliability of Research Instruments**

A pilot test was administered to 10% of the sample before administering the survey questionnaire to verify instrument’s validity and reliability. Certain modifications were made to measure instruments more clearly. Moreover, internal consistency reliability of measurement tools was checked using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) to determine measurement tool’s psychometric integrity and validity and reliability of these various tests measure are in favor. Nyagah and Mwangangi (2015) concluded that various measures must be used to ascertain the reliability and validity of measurement tools.

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	0.180; p = 0.060
The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	0.0520
The comparative fit index (CFI)	0.98
The Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)	0.96
The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR)	0.0623

Looking at Table 1, the model has a chi square of 0.060, a CFI of 0.95, TLI of 0.96, RMSEA of 0.0520 and a SRMR of 0.0599. According to Green, and Yang (2015) the fit is good when the chi square probability is  $>0.05$ , CFI and TLI is 0.95 and, RMSEA and SRMR is below 0.06. Therefore, the fitness of the model is good.

Table 2. Factor Loadings, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs Variable	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Apprenticeship System	APSQ1	0.819	0.828	0.838	0.810
	APSQ2	0.812			
	APSQ3	0.801			
	APSQ4	0.821			
	APSQ5	0.818			
	APSQ6	0.811			
Perceived Gender Norms	PGNQ1	0.823	0.855	0.847	0.809
	PGNQ2	0.799			
	PGNQ3	0.831			
	PGNQ4	0.817			
	PGNQ5	0.813			
	PGNQ6	0.806			
Celebrity Endorsement	CEM Q1	0.817	0.828	0.829	0.815
	CEM Q2	0.832			
	CEM Q3	0.798			
	CEM Q4	0.831			
	CEM Q5	0.812			
	CEM Q6	0.809			
	CEM Q7	0.809			
Perceived Societal Expectations	PSEQ1	0.815	0.869	0.827	0.803
	PSEQ2	0.872			
	PSEQ3	0.781			
	PSEQ4	0.727			
	PSEQ5	0.786			
	PSEQ6	0.801			
	PSEQ7	0.720			
Venture Creation	VCQ1	0.819	0.898	0.839	0.821
	VCQ2	0.810			
	VCQ3	0.841			
	VCQ4	0.801			
	VCQ5	0.862			
	VCQ6	0.811			
	VCQ7	0.797			

Table 2 presents the item loadings and reliability measures for the construct variables of the model. Each construct's individual items meeting minimum factor loading cutoff 0.5 which needed to implement for PA-SEM were shaded. For reliability, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were calculated. The values shown for each Alpha were all over minimum cutoff 0.6. The CR coefficients were all over minimum cutoff 0.7. This indicates that internal consistency was strong and reliable. The measurement was checked for convergence validity with average variance extracted (AVE) values. As can be seen in Table 2, the AVE values for all constructs were over minimum cutoff 0.5; thus, they were all valid. So, the measurement model was reliable and valid. The data analysis has been done by means of path analysis structural Equation Modelling (PA-SEM) through STATA software 15.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 indicates the direct impacts of the 4 independent variables, Apprenticeship System, Perceived Gender Norms, Celebrity Endorsement and Perceived Societal Expectations, on Venture Creation through Path Analysis. The significance of each path was identified using estimates, t-value and p-value. Apprenticeship system recorded the highest independent impact on Venture Creation, indicated by the highest beta value (0.890) and a strong t-value of 17.51 with the p-value of 0.000. These statistics demonstrate a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The p-value confirms the statistical significance of this path, suggesting that the effect is not random. It suggests that a structured apprenticeship system helps in the creation of venture by developing skills, knowledge and experience. Governments, educators and industries should make a bid to expand apprenticeship opportunities and implement quality apprenticeship schemes to promote entrepreneurship. This study is like Ali and Majid (2022) that experience, especially Apprenticeships, significantly increases the likelihood of an individual starting her own venture. Anigbogu et al. (2019) suggested that hands-on-training from apprenticeships instill entrepreneurial mindset by boosting the self-efficacy of the individual to think entrepreneurial and the capability to be adaptable, creative and take risks, supported by empirics. Falco and Haywood (2016) found apprenticeship as a way out of unemployment into self-employment through creating new venture in Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, Eneh et al. (2023) argues that experiential learning like in apprenticeship plays a huge role in influencing entrepreneurial behavior. Obeng and Blundel (2015) also established a strong relationship between apprenticeship systems and business creation. The findings also echo Ezenwakwelu et al. (2019) who identified the practical training acquired in apprenticeships as contributing to a higher confidence of an entrepreneur to manage risks and survive. With these observations, H1 is supported.

Table 3. Path Analysis Without Mediation (Direct Effect)

Relationship between Variables	Estimates	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis	Remark
APS → VC	0.890	17.51	0.000	H1	Confirmed
PGN → VC	0.649	7.99	0.000	H2	Confirmed
CEM → VC	0.545	6.89	0.000	H3	Confirmed
PSE → VC	0.493	5.93	0.000	H4	Confirmed

Note: APS = Apprenticeship System, PGN = Perceived Gender Norms, CEM = Celebrity Endorsement, PSE = Perceived Societal Expectations, VC = Venture Creation, Significance  $p \leq 0.05$ .

It was also established that Perceived Gender Norms have a significant impact on Venture Creation with beta value of 0.649 and t-value of 7.99. The positive beta estimate implies that as the Perceived Gender Norms change in support of entrepreneurship, the creation of new ventures increases. This suggests that Perceived Gender Norms play an important role in the formation of business. The positive estimate (0.649) and strong t-value (7.99) imply that a change in perceptions toward gender norms, making it favorable for the woman's involvement in business activities, increases the propensity for entrepreneurship. This research is aligned with Sajuyigbe et al. (2021) that the perceived gender roles influence the sectors young men and women operate in. Additionally, ILO (2016) supported the notion

that beliefs about the roles and behaviors of women and men affects their perceived role of entrepreneurship as a career. Thus, H2 is supported.

It was also established that Celebrity Endorsement ( $\beta = 0.545$ ,  $t=6.89$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) and Perceived Societal Expectations ( $\beta = 0.493$ ,  $t=5.93$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) both had significant impact on Venture Creation. This suggests that endorsements from public figures like Celebrities may positively affect business creation through boosting the business credibility, visibility and consumer confidence, thus encouraging new venture formation. Similarly, Perceived Societal Expectations have an impact on entrepreneurial behavior. The positive estimate shows that individuals are likely to embrace the creation of business if it is perceived that it is highly socially expected. This is evident with Olugbola (2017) which indicated that Celebrity endorsement acts as a mediator between Apprenticeship training and Venture Creation, and enhances young entrepreneur’s business confidence, access to markets and financial gains. In addition, Bridget et al. (2024) found that individuals’ behavior and attitudes are shaped by societal expectations in terms of how the role is enacted in both the process of apprenticeship and business establishment. Similarly, Bloemen-Bekx et al. (2019) argue that societal norms shape the transition process from apprenticeship training to business creation and Okadi et al. (2020) highlighted that young persons trained as apprentices will hesitate to create a business because of societal concerns. Besides, Chen et al. (2021) argue that Perceived Societal Expectations on business are influential in creating entrepreneurship because where a career choice like entrepreneurship is highly desired socially, youth are more likely to be encouraged into this profession. Thus, H3 and H4 are supported.

Table 4. Path Analysis Structural Equation Modelling with Mediation (Indirect Effect)

Relationship between Variables	Estimates	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis	Remark
APS → PGN → VC	0.998	18.90	0.000	H5	Partially Confirmed
APS → CEM → VC	0.924	17.89	0.000	H6	Partially Confirmed
APS → PSE → VC	0.899	17.78	0.000	H7	Partially Confirmed

Note: APS = Apprenticeship System, PGN = Perceived Gender Norms, CEM = Celebrity Endorsement, PSE = Perceived Societal Expectations, VC = Venture Creation, Significance  $p \leq 0.05$

Table 4 shows the indirect relationships between the Apprenticeship System (APS) and Venture Creation (VC) through Perceived Gender Norms (PGN), Celebrity Endorsement (CEM), and Perceived Societal Expectations (PSE) analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). We found that in absence of PGN, beta was 0.890 and t-value was 17.51. When Perceived Gender Norms was introduced the beta value increased to 0.908, while the t-value also increased to 18.90. Both the independent and mediator are predictors of the dependent variable hence PGN partially mediates the relationship between the Apprenticeship System and Venture Creation. With introduction of PGN beta and t-value of the independent variable increased to that it can be stated that though apprenticeship training is the strongest predictors of venture creation, gender norms add to it. This implies that societal perception about role of genders partially mediates the relationship between apprenticeship training and venture creation. This is supported by Zhang and Savalei’s (2020) guideline about partial mediation occurring when the independent variable predicts and the mediator also predicts dependent variable. However, for full mediation, independent variable does not predict dependent variable and mediator predicts dependent variable, and if independent predicts the dependent and mediator does not then it is no mediation. Hence, H5 is partially supported.

Further findings demonstrate that Celebrity Endorsement ( $\beta = 0.724$ ;  $t= 9.78$ ;  $P<.005$ ) partially mediates the relationship between apprenticeship system and venture creation. Partially mediated by CEM means that while apprenticeships themselves predict venture creation, the added effect of celebrity endorsement further reinforces entrepreneurial motivation and perceived market acceptability. Additionally, it was found that the relationship between apprenticeship training and venture creation is also mediated by Perceived Societal Expectations (PSE) where beta was 0.672 and t was 8.89. While

apprenticeships instill the required skills and knowledge, an entrepreneur feels encouraged or discouraged in his pursuits by society at large.

The partial mediation shown in H5, H6 and H7 indicates that while the apprenticeship system acts as a powerful direct predictor for venture creation, factors such as gender norms, celebrity involvement and societal expectations further strengthen the decision-making process to venture. Thus, it can be implied that for enhanced outcomes of apprenticeship system there is a need for gender friendly approach, celebrities who promote entrepreneurship and positive support from society at large. Efforts for enhancing venture creation should be multi-faceted beyond providing skills, it should also focus on removing the social and cultural obstacles to entrepreneurship.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that Apprenticeship System is very important in venture creation. The apprenticeship system positively influenced the creation of business, with direct impact on venture creation. This implies that the entrepreneur can develop skills, acquire knowledge and gain experience through apprenticeships that are essential to starting their business. Policymakers and business leaders should put more emphasis on the apprenticeship system so that they can promote the venture creation of business. The perceived gender norm is very important in creating venture, so that entrepreneurs, especially the marginalized, should create business that will involve women and other people that could benefit in the future when the gender norm shift positively for all entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship are increased and enabled, so it is important to create policies that involve all and promote their own businesses. Celebrity endorsement and the perceived societal norm are two other factors that are found to affect the creation of ventures on their own, but when used together with Apprenticeship system it mediates the process of entrepreneurship. The findings confirm that there is a strong relationship between the Apprenticeship System and Venture Creation; nevertheless, it is also evident that the Perceived gender norm, celebrity endorsement and perceived societal norm have mediating roles in this process. Policymakers should therefore implement gender-friendly policies and the public authorities should focus on social aspect of creating new business so that it can lead to the success of new entrepreneurs.

## Practical Implications

In practice, this study offers many suggestions for both apprentices and the policymakers. This study shows that apprentices should make use of their Apprenticeship program to develop their entrepreneurship. They can achieve this by acquiring skills and knowledge that will be useful to start business and to run their business smoothly. The understanding of perception of society can guide the apprentices for selecting the suitable industry in business formation and sustainable running of the business, for the endorsement from renowned entrepreneurs and celebrities, they can play as motivator to business aspirants by being role models and by lending their credibility and popularity to entrepreneurship development. Female entrepreneur and the entrepreneurs belonging to marginalized group should be aware of the evolving societal trend where gender equity is promoted, which in turn is beneficial for the entrepreneurial venture creation. Furthermore, peers, mentors and leaders in the field should be consulted by apprentices to achieve efficient networks for venture creation.

Policymakers should focus on structured apprenticeship programs integrated with entrepreneurship development, to strengthen the process of venture creation and business formation. Addressing the gender barriers through equal financing and mentoring opportunities for female entrepreneur and the marginalized ones is essential. Public awareness through media and various campaigns will raise their awareness and perception towards business formation and entrepreneurship activities, while the media endorsement from public figures should be promoted to enhance their image as role models. Besides, governments and various organizations should also strive to facilitate the development of sustainable business through financial aid, consulting, and legal assistance so that newly created businesses can

succeed for longer duration. By following such approach both apprentices and policymakers can achieve and stimulate venture creation to a greater extent.

### Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that future research can attempt to address. First, this study only considers four vocational centers from the 36 states in Nigeria. For increased generalizability of the study, future research should consider a wider number of states in the region. Second, the current study used a quantitative design. Integrating a qualitative approach would help in obtaining deeper understanding of factors that drive venture creation. Third, this study is rooted in institutional theory. Future research could consider alternative theoretical frameworks like Human Capital Theory, Social Learning Theory, Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, Cultural Dimensions Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior in analyzing the relationship between the constructs in this study to provide a holistic perspective. Fourth, while this study investigates mediating relationships among the variables, future research should test moderation effects between the independent variables on venture creation for a more comprehensive examination of the nature of the inter-relationships of the variables in this study.

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