



# The Role of Prior Family Business Background on Entrepreneurial Intentions

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**Abstract:** Family experiences constitute a strategic force of social influence on the values, attitude, and behaviour of individual over the course of their live and it also serve as a powerful source of finance, human capital development and role model in the career choice of the individual. While studies have shown that family background is one of the numerous determinants of occupational choice of an individual, there is need to assess the role of family business experience in the drive towards entrepreneurship. The aim of this study is to assess the role of Prior family business background on entrepreneurial intention through the mediating effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, desirability, feasibility and attitudes towards business start-ups. The study used a survey of 450 University students to gather the data for this study. Structural equation modeling was used to validate the proposed model while multiple regression was used test the hypothesis raised in the study. The results revealed significant effects of prior family business background on entrepreneurial intention, through the mediation variables of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, desirability, feasibility and attitudes towards business start-ups.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in theory building in entrepreneurship and recommendations were made for policy and decision makers in entrepreneurship.

## **Introduction**

The family as a social system constitute a significant influence on the decisions of individuals who are members of such social unit. Studies in the literature as affirmed that the influence of family occupation on the career choice of an individual can be explained from the social perspective (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Altinay, 2006; Turkur & Selcuk, 2008). This emphasis that the decision of an individual to start a business is often derived from his constant interactions and consultations with his social environment. An individual who belong to an entrepreneur-family has a greater chance to choose an entrepreneurial career than one hailing from non-entrepreneurial background.

Studies in family business have shown different roles family play in decision making towards venture creation in form of source; information, finance, human resource, technology, role models, raw materials and supplies (Krueger, 1993; Zhang, Wong, & Soh, 2003). This makes the role of the family strategic in influential, most importantly in the early stages of the business venture (Klyver, 2007). However, earlier literatures have argued that the role of prior family background in business extends beyond the family members involvement in the decision making process of a new venture creation (Moore & Unwalla, 1964; Shapero, 1982; Scott and Twomey, 1988; Scherer, Carley & Weibe, 1989; Katz, 1992) or family-owned businesses handling succession (Stavrou and Swiercz, 1999).

Review of studies in recent times have also shown that research into the role of

family in new venture creation decision making have gained greater attention on a broader scope to include issues relating to; family business exposure, family support services, family prior business experience, family ownership, business transition and family occupation (Altinay, 2006; Klyver, 2007; Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Turkur & Selcuk, 2008). Yet, scholars are calling for more empirical research into this area as a result of the strategic role prior family background has as an intergenerational influence on entrepreneurial activity.

The family plays a fundamental role in creating entrepreneurship consciousness, by exercising great influence over the desirability and feasibility for entrepreneurial intention, for the creation of an entrepreneurial business (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Studies have shown that childhood socialization impacts on an individual's thoughts process and feelings towards entrepreneurship (Dyer & Handler, 1994; Jackson & Rodkey, 1994) as family members' engagement in entrepreneurial tasks creates opportunity for the individual /child to develop similar perceptions (Chrisman, Chua & Sterier, 2003). Family business experiences have powerful and lasting impacts on the social interactions and psychological development of the family in business (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003). Hence, Individuals who come from families who own businesses are likely to be aware of these impacts (Fairlie & Robb, 2005; Carr & Sequeira, 2007). As a result, individuals with prior family business experience may incorporate their experiences, such that

their attitudes and intentions can be either positively or negatively shaped towards entrepreneurial action (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). This emphasis that family business is the prominent factor that nurtures the attitude towards entrepreneurship. Thus, this study seeks to examine empirically the influence of prior exposure to family business on entrepreneurial intention, mediated through the individual's attitude towards business start-up, their perceived feasibility and desirability, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE).

## Literature Review

### Family experience

Previous research on the role of family in entrepreneurship, concentrate on various components targeted at defining the term 'family business'. Such components incorporate issues such as the level of majority ownership, family control and the probability of family succession (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). It is important to state that these elements do not envelop the extent to which norms, values, and even skills may be transferred from generation to generation through family business ownership.

There is no all-inclusive meaning to a family business; however the definition presented by Chua, Chrisman and Sharma (1999) gives credence to the role of the family in venture creation and business start-ups. According to Chua et al., (1999) a family business is one managed with the goal to refine and pursue the business' vision conceived by a coalition controlled by individuals from the same family or a number of families in a way that is conceivably maintainable across generations of the family or families. This definition suggests that family business may play an awesome role in the career decisions

of individual family members, and specifically the offspring of family or families connected with the business. This creates a foundation for the place of family experience in entrepreneurship development.

### Entrepreneurial Intentions

Entrepreneurship involves a process that unravels over time; consequently entrepreneurial intention is viewed as the initial phase of the process (Kautonen, 2010; Lee et al, 2011). An individual's entrepreneurial intention is viewed as an impression of enthusiasm for setting up a business or creating a venture. Research in entrepreneurship has concentrated on entrepreneurial intentions especially in light of the fact that intentions represents one of the few quantifiable results of entrepreneurship education programs (Franke & Luthje, 2004; Fitzsimmons and Douglas, 2011; Dirk, Benson, & Bruce 2013). Motivation researchers consider intentions as great predictors of behaviours thus a decent comprehension of the factors of entrepreneurial intention is still viewed as a strong basis for determining entrepreneurial behaviour (Dirk, et al., 2013; Armitage & Conner, 2001). Therefore the more grounded an individual's entrepreneurial intention the more probable it is for him/her to engage in entrepreneurial behaviour.

### Conceptual Linkages:

#### Family Experiences and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Researchers such as Stavrou and Swiercz, (1999) have examined the strategies by which family-owned businesses tackle the issue of succession, however the role of prior family business in motivating future entrepreneurial tendencies is largely understudied. It is pertinent to state that

family business ownership influences future generations in diverse ways apart from succession which is the popular aspect of discussion.

The definition of family business given by Chua et al. (1999) provides supports for the influence of family business experience on individuals career choice. Individuals who come from families with a history of entrepreneurship are likely to be aware of these impacts of family business ownership (Fairlie & Robb, 2005). Consequently individuals with prior family business experience may incorporate their experiences, such that their attitudes and behaviors towards entrepreneurial actions are either shaped favourably or unfavourably towards entrepreneurial intentions for business ownership (Ajen & fishbein, 1980). Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes the value and significance of observing and modeling the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others, hence individuals who perceive their family business and the entrepreneurs in their families as successful may express a greater preference for an entrepreneurial career than those who have never had the experience of the effect of family business (Brennan Morris & Schindehutte, 2003).

Attitudes are majorly influenced by external factors and the close tie of social interactions an individual has with its environment. This was reinforced by the work of (Dick & Rallis', 1991) who emphasize that the career choice chosen by an individual is dependent on the interpretation of external experiences which influences individuals' belief on the career, attitude and increases their expectations of the career choice. These experiences vary from family background to childhood

experiences, exposure to family business and business of other people, experiences from previous job and entrepreneurship education which influences the developmental process of belief (Morris & Lewis, 1995). All of these interactions both external experiences and social influences affects attitude towards entrepreneurial career and entrepreneurial intentions (Pruett et al, 2009; Nicolaou and Shane, 2010; Laspita, Breugst, Heblichand, & Patzelt, 2012). The study of Fairlie and Robb (2005) found a direct effect of prior family experience on self employment and this was supported by the empirical finding of Carr and Sequeira (2007) who found that family background plays significant role in developing the entrepreneurial intentions of individuals.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory of Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) was developed by Shapero and Sokol (1982). The model suggests that intention formation is a result of interactions among contextual factors which influences individuals' perceptions. Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) contends that entrepreneurial intentions is motivated by perceived desirability which connotes the attractiveness for an individual to start up his/her own business, and perceived feasibility which connotes the extent to which individuals perceive that they are capable to start their own business (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000). This motivates a proclivity to act in the face of opportunities (Krueger, et al., 2000). It is based on the assumption that inertia or inaction in human behaviour is influenced by a negative or positive external event, the "trigger event" that changes an individual's situation or future plans such as career options.

According to the theory, perceptions of desirability are fashioned through culture, family, peers, colleagues and role models. The theory also suggests that family play a vital role in the process of establishing desirability especially noting that the authors cited various statistical evidences showing that the percentage of entrepreneurs show a higher value among individuals whose parents are also entrepreneurs. The theory argues that entrepreneurs among peers, classmates, and colleagues can also affect perceived desirability.

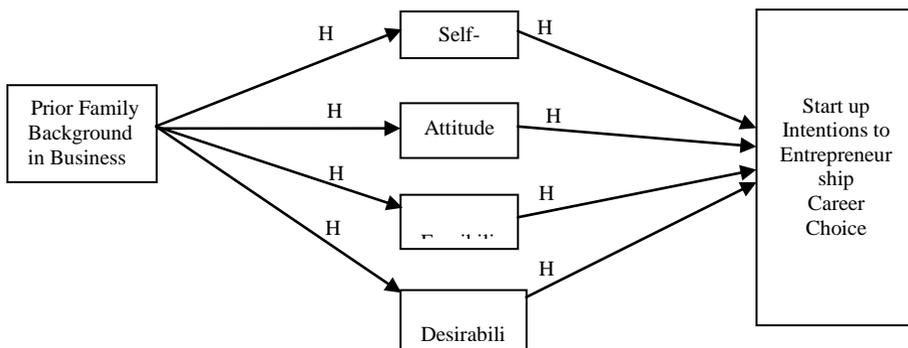
**Research Framework and Hypothesis Development**

The model in Figure 1 depicts the intervention influence of family background of business experience on students’ entrepreneurial intentions through entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude, feasibility and desirability. This study hinges on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) which provides rich addition to the Shapero’s (1982) Entrepreneurial Event model in the context of entrepreneurship education. Both theories has gained acceptance in research studies and has been validated through empirical research by various scholars such as

(Krueger et al., 2000; Audet, 2004; Fayolle et al., 2006; Gelderen et al., 2008; Fitzsimmons and Douglas, 2010, Singh, Prasad & raut, 2012, Shittu & Ayodele, 2014). The combination of both theories in this study provides strong foundation for the measurement of the development of entrepreneurial intentions through entrepreneurship education programmes (Fayolle et al., 2006) and family background in business experience, influencing perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy; perceived attitude towards entrepreneurial business, perceived desirability and feasibility of entrepreneurial venture.

Perception of venture feasibility which is the likely possibility of starting a new business based on possession of certain capabilities, resources or skills and perception of venture desirability which is the extent of attraction an individual has in entrepreneurial business has been postulated to have significant effect on entrepreneurial intention (Krueger, et al., 2000; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Graevenitz, Harhoff & Weber, 2010; Wang, Lu, & Millington, 2011; Nimalathasan & Achchuthan, 2012).

**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**



## Research Hypotheses

- H1a: Background in family business experience is positively related to entrepreneurial self-efficacy.
- H1b: Background in family business experience is positively related to entrepreneurial attitude.
- H1c: Background in family business experience is positively related to perceived venture feasibility.
- H1d: Background in family business experience is positively related to perceived venture desirability.
- H2: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is positively related to entrepreneurial intentions
- H3: Attitude towards starting a business is positively related to entrepreneurial intentions
- H4: Perception of venture feasibility has significant positive effect on entrepreneurial
- H5: intention Perception of venture desirability has significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention

## Methodology

The target population of the study was Covenant University students. The study population (Covenant University) was found suitable for the study because it was the first institution to commence the teaching of entrepreneurship study to students across all levels. The study adopted a cross sectional descriptive design in which students responded to a set of structured questionnaire at one time period. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed across all levels and only 400 were found usable after sorting and cleaning the retrieved questionnaires.

In developing the survey questionnaire instrument, questions were adapted from existing instruments of similar research to suit this study. Composite reliability, convergent and discriminant validity was used in validating and testing the reliability and validity of the research instrument used in collecting data for the study. Convergent and discriminant validity was used to measure how the variables for this study relate to one another. Regression analysis was used in validating the hypothesis raised in the study.

## Results

Frequency distribution of sampled respondents in table 1, showed both gender was represented in the study with the female gender having the highest percentage of 56.25% and male respondents comprise of 43.75% respectively. The analysis on respondent's age indicates that majority of the respondents (66.25%), are between the ages of 15-20years. Analysis of respondent's educational background reveals that majority of the respondent (40.5%) were from the college of Business and Social Sciences, 25.9% from the college of Sciences and Technology and 21.75% from the college of Engineering.

Analysis on respondents' family business experience reveals that 44.5% of the respondents have parent who currently own a business, 46.25% have close family members who own a business while 9.25% have a distance family member other your parent own a business. This finding indicates that sampled respondents have background in family business experience.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents

Demographic Categories		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	175	43.75	43.75
	Female	225	56.25	100
	Total	400	100	
Age	15-20yrs	265	66.25	66.25
	21-26yrs	121	30.25	96.50
	26-above	14	3.5	100
	Total	400	100	
Educational Colleges	Sciences and Technology	102	25.5	21.5
	Engineering	87	21.75	43.25
	Social Sciences	162	40.5	83.75
	Leadership	49	12.25	100
	Total	400	100	
Family business experience	Parent currently own a business	178	44.50	44.5
	A close family member other your parent own a business	185	46.25	90.75
	A distance family member other your parent own a business	37	9.25	100
	Total	400	100	

**Measurement Model**

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test discriminant and convergent validity of the study constructs. The goodness of fit indices help to determine if the theoretical model is backed by the data collected for study (Byrne 2001). The results of goodness of fit indices for CFA are presented in Tables 2 below. The fit of the six factor measurement model consisting of study constructs shows an acceptable fit indices as they all

exceeded the recommended threshold (Hair et al. 2010) with normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ )  $\chi^2 = 2.65$  ( $p < 0.000$ ); CFI = 0.931; NFI = 0.840; GFI= 0.938; AGFI= 0.878; RMSEA = 0.070 satisfied the recommended cut-off criterion.

Based on result of the goodness-of-fit indices, it is considered that measurement model demonstrates adequate fitness, and that the data used for this study supports the theoretical model which provides a platform for the assessment of the structural model.

Table 2 Fitness Measure for Measurement Model

Fit indices	Criteria	Result
$\chi^2/df$	<3	2.65
GFI	0.90	0.938
AGFI	0.85	0.879
CFI	0.90	0.931
NFI	0.80	0.840
RMSEA	<0.08	0.070

Convergent validity of the constructs is assessed by examining the standardized factor loadings of measurement variables and average variance extracted (AVEs) of the constructs which should exceed the recommended value of 0.5 for satisfactory convergent validity for a construct (Hair et al. 2010). The values of average variance extracted (AVEs) for the constructs in this study has shown in table 3, exceeds the recommended threshold and range from 0.659 to 0.832. Convergent validity can also be assessed by calculating the composite reliability (CR) which should exceed the recommended cut-off of 0.7 (Hair et al. 2010). The composite reliability (CR) for the constructs in this study has shown in table 3 exceeds the threshold of 0.7 ranging from 0.872 to 0.928. All of the composite reliability CR values were greater than the average variance extracted AVE values (Byrne 2010) in this study. To achieve satisfactory discriminant validity, the

square root of the average variance extraction (AVE) for a particular construct (shown on the diagonal of each constructs) should be larger than the correlations between it and the other constructs (Hair et al. 2010). This was achieved as all values on the diagonal constructs in table 4 is higher than the correlations between it and the other constructs. And also the values for MSV and ASV were lower than the AVE values, thus confirming the discriminant validity of the model as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). It suffices to say that the theoretical constructs in this research study have demonstrated adequate convergent and discriminant validity based on the above criteria as shown in table 4. Findings from table 4 showed adequate psychometric properties in reliability and validity of the study constructs and displayed meaningful relationships with relevant variables.

Table 3. Composite Reliability, Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV						
					PD	PF	PSE	ATTD	EI	PFBE
PD	0.928	0.723	0.719	0.493	0.850					
PF	0.931	0.629	0.398	0.273	0.631	0.793				
PSE	0.912	0.776	0.524	0.381	0.652	0.466	0.881			
ATTD	0.905	0.761	0.709	0.477	0.772	0.500	0.724	0.873		
EI	0.905	0.719	0.705	0.512	0.840	0.545	0.694	0.842	0.848	
PFBE	0.900	0.643	0.354	0.288	0.572	0.450	0.505	0.551	0.595	0.802

FBBE= Family Background in Business Experience, PSE= Perceived Self-efficacy, ATTD= Attitude, PF= Perceived Feasibility, PD= Perceived Desirability, EI = Entrepreneurial Intention

Note: The square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) are represented on the diagonal of the constructs

### Test of Research Hypothesis

After achieving a satisfactory fit in the measurement model, the structural model was estimated using Structural

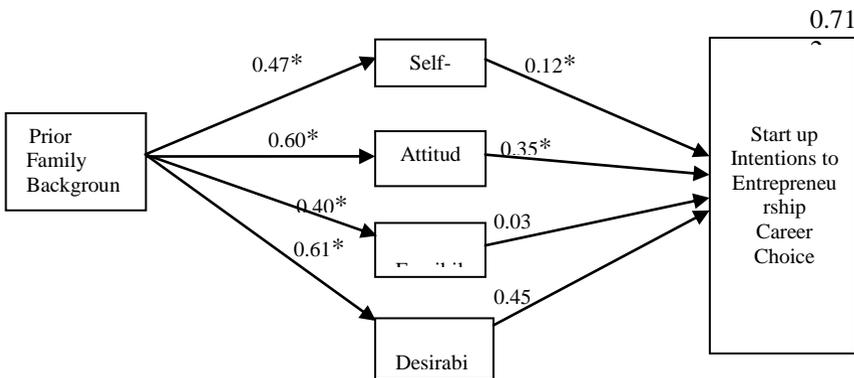
equation model AMOS 18. The goodness of fit indices was evaluated to determine if the model could be considered reliable in testing the

hypotheses. The result showed that normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ) = 3.32 ( $p < 0.001$ ); CFI = 0.994; NFI = 0.993; GFI= 0.992; AGFI= 0.876; RMSEA = 0.051 satisfied the recommended cut-off criterion and yielded a reasonable fit to the data. Although the chi-square statistics are significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), the other goodness-of-fit indices also indicated a good fit. Therefore, the model was considered fit enough to proceed with the test of research hypothesis.

The results from the structural path using the standardized coefficient estimate (S.E) and p-value (significance) are shown in Figure 2 indicate that background in family

business experience is a positive predictor of perceived self-efficacy (S.E= 0.052,  $p < 0.001$ ), entrepreneurial attitude (S.E= 0.053,  $p < 0.001$ ), perceived feasibility (S.E= 0.055,  $p < 0.001$ ) and perceived desirability (S.E = 0.054,  $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, perceived self-efficacy (S.E= 0.044,  $p < 0.001$ ), entrepreneurial attitude (S.E= 0.047  $p < 0.05$ ) and perceived desirability (S.E= 0.044,  $p < 0.001$ ) was found to have a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention while perceived feasibility (S.E= 0.036,  $p > 0.05$ ) was found not to have a significant effect. Thus, all the hypothesis were supported except for H4 which was not supported.

Figure 2 Structural Path Model



**Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Finding of this study reveals that background in family business experience has significant influence on self-efficacy, attitude, perceived venture feasibility and desirability which supports the finding of Shittu and Dosunmu (2014), Carr and Sequeira (2007) and Fairlie and Robb (2005). This finding reveals the significant role of prior family business experience in influencing perceived positive entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude,

perceived venture feasibility and desirability. This implies that family business provides platform for the acquisitions of business skills through constant interaction and exposure to entrepreneurial activities. This finding also reveals the strategic role of family system in the development of the self and in socializing through the transmission of values which helps in creating individual belief system. This suggests that family business is synonymous to business incubation centers which serve as a training

platform for the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for future business start-ups.

The findings of this study also indicate significant positive effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude and perceived venture desirability on entrepreneurial intentions. This finding is consistent with other studies (Sesen 2013; Kickul et al. 2008; Wilson et al. 2007; Kickul & D'Intino 2005; Zhao et al. 2005) who found that entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude towards entrepreneurship and perceived venture desirability is positively related and are important predictors of entrepreneurial intention to new venture creation. The findings of this study indicate that prior family business background have the capacity to stimulates intention for venture creation through impacts on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes toward entrepreneurial acts and perceived venture feasibility (Gerba, 2012; Matlay, 2008; Dickson, Solomon & Weaver, 2008; Muofhe & Du Toit 2011). This finding indicates the important role of early exposure to training and business activities which helps in equipping an individual with the needed entrepreneurial mindset and capability that will initiate positive intentions to new venture creation.

Also, findings from this study revealed a non-significant effect of perceptions of feasibility on entrepreneurship startup intention of students. This finding was supported by the study of Shittu and Dosunmu (2014) but contrary to the findings of Fitzsimmons and Douglas (2011), who found a positive and significant relationship between perceptions of feasibility on the entrepreneurship startup intention of students. This finding reveals that

perceptions of venture feasibility cannot on its own positively influence entrepreneurial intention but with the inclusion of other internal and external factors acting as support facilities either from the government, society, environment and internal sources could influence entrepreneurial startup intentions.

The findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge by validating the applicability of prior family background in enhancing entrepreneurial self-efficacy, perceived desirability, attitude and its influence on entrepreneurial startup intentions in the Nigerian context. This study concludes that exposure to family business background serves as the platform for the development of mentor– mentee interaction and apprenticeship program that specify the actual work experience in small business operation and could serve as a means to develop the general and specific human capital skills necessary to become a future entrepreneur.

The study findings further demonstrated the significance of the family Business as a source of entrepreneurial role model for venture creation as exposure and experience from family business background have a significant impact on the perceived desirability, feasibility and entrepreneurial self-efficacy of intending entrepreneurs.

The findings of this study have established the significance of family business in human capital enhancement and development as it serves as “business incubation platform” for future business start-ups by serving as a training ground for those moulding intending entrepreneurs.

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