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## Entrepreneurial Intentions Among Senior High School Students in Ghana

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### Abstract

This study examines the entrepreneurial intent of senior high school students in the Sunyani Municipality of Ghana, addressing the gap in literature regarding youth entrepreneurship. While policymakers and academics acknowledge entrepreneurship's crucial role in economic development, job creation, and innovation, limited research has explored the entrepreneurial intentions of high school students. Given the rising unemployment rate among graduates in Ghana, fostering entrepreneurship at an early stage is increasingly seen as a potential solution to mitigate dependency and stimulate economic growth. Graduate unemployment has intensified the burden on individuals and society, making entrepreneurship an effective strategy for economic empowerment. To assess entrepreneurial intention, a 42-item questionnaire was administered to 499 students from two mixed-gender and two single-sex institutions. The study aims to achieve several objectives: first, to evaluate the impact of family businesses on entrepreneurial intent; second, to assess students' perceptions of the influence of education on entrepreneurship; third, to explore students' risk-taking propensity; fourth, to compare the entrepreneurial intentions of male and female students; and finally, to examine senior high school students' overall entrepreneurial orientation. Findings indicate a generally high level of entrepreneurial intent among SHS students, emphasizing the need for early exposure to entrepreneurship education. Encouraging entrepreneurship at the high school level could foster a culture of innovation and self-employment, equipping young individuals with the necessary mindset and skills to contribute to Ghana's economic transformation.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Intention, Senior High School Students, Ghana

**JEL Codes:** L26, I25, J13

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Most policymakers and academics agree that entrepreneurship is essential for the development and well-being of society. Entrepreneurs generate employment, drive innovation, and play a crucial role in accelerating structural changes within the economy. By introducing new competition, they indirectly enhance productivity, making entrepreneurship a key catalyst for economic growth and national competitiveness (GEM 2010). Rooted in the Schumpeterian tradition, entrepreneurship has long been recognized as a driver of technological progress (Schumpeter 1934; Baumol 1986). In recent years, there has been a renewed focus on entrepreneurship as a powerful force for economic transformation. It is becoming increasingly evident that economic policy reforms in Ghana cannot succeed without robust efforts to strengthen entrepreneurial activity.

Ghana, a country endowed with rich natural resources, has recently attained lower middle-income status. The production of gold, timber, cocoa, and, more recently, crude oil provides significant foreign exchange. However, Ghana remains heavily dependent on international financial and technical assistance, a recurring theme in the country's Annual Budget statements. Despite this, entrepreneurship holds the potential to reduce this dependency by fostering local innovation and economic self-sufficiency. While considerable research has explored the factors influencing entrepreneurial propensity (Learned, 1992; Brandstatter, 1997; Amofah, 2006), there has been limited focus on entrepreneurial intent among students, particularly Senior High School (SHS) students. Given the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial mindset early in life, this gap highlights the need for more research to understand how education, family business exposure, and societal factors influence entrepreneurial intentions in younger populations. Ghana currently finds itself at a crossroads, as graduate unemployment has become a significant burden for both school leavers and the government. This persistent issue has exacerbated the already high levels of dependency, creating socio-economic challenges that have far-reaching impacts. Many believe that entrepreneurship is the most effective solution to this problem, offering a path toward economic self-sufficiency and reducing reliance on formal employment sectors. In this context, Ghana's prosperity hinges on the development of a dynamic and thriving entrepreneurial sector.

The idea that early exposure to entrepreneurial principles can shape future success resonates strongly with the biblical adage, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Instilling entrepreneurial values and skills at a young age could lay the foundation for a new generation of innovators and job creators who can drive economic growth and address the country's unemployment crisis. This underscores the critical importance of fostering entrepreneurial mindsets in students, equipping them with the tools to become the engines of Ghana's future prosperity.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

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According to Bird (1988), intention models that focus on attitudes and their antecedents have been proposed as a means of better understanding the entrepreneurial process. These models emphasize the role of attitudes in shaping entrepreneurial intentions, and several personal variables—such as age, gender, education, vicarious experience, and experiences of change—have been linked to attitudes that influence conviction and entrepreneurial intent (Davidson, 1995, Amofah, 2006). The development of entrepreneurship in primary and secondary schools has gained increasing attention (Kourilsky, 1995), largely because students have shown a strong desire to engage in entrepreneurship education programs. It is widely believed that childhood and adolescence are the ideal stages to acquire basic knowledge about entrepreneurship and to cultivate a positive attitude toward entrepreneurial ventures (Filion, 1994). The recognition that starting a business is an intentional act is particularly relevant to this study. Intention models provide a framework for better understanding and predicting entrepreneurial activity, offering insights into how educational programs can nurture entrepreneurial mindsets. By incorporating these models, the study can more effectively explore how early exposure to entrepreneurship influences students' future business endeavors and contributes to the broader goal of fostering a culture of innovation and self-sufficiency (Imran et al., 2021).

Intentions are a reliable predictor of action, as noted by Bagozzi et al. (1989), even when there are significant delays due to life events such as marriage, childbearing, finishing school, or starting a rewarding job. A strong entrepreneurial intention often leads to an eventual attempt to start a business, regardless of such delays. Therefore, if entrepreneurial intentions are identified early, structures and support systems can be put in place to help individuals realize their entrepreneurial dreams. Understanding intentions also helps researchers and theoreticians better grasp related phenomena, such as what triggers the scanning of opportunities, where ideas for new business ventures come from, and how these ventures ultimately come to fruition. Intention models provide valuable insights into how entrepreneurial training can shape intentions, which may later lead to the creation of new ventures. By promoting entrepreneurial intentions and fostering a public perception of both the feasibility and desirability of entrepreneurship, societies can significantly increase entrepreneurial activity.

In less developed countries, the encouragement of entrepreneurial activities is frequently recommended as a strategy to stimulate economic growth (Harper, 1991). As a result, many governments in Asian and Latin American countries, as well as in the transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe, have instituted national incentive and education programs designed to stimulate new venture development (Gibb, 1993). Ghana, too, stands to benefit from learning from these economies and implementing similar programs that nurture entrepreneurial intentions and support venture creation. By doing so, the country could better address its unemployment challenges and foster sustainable economic growth through entrepreneurship.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The Brong Ahafo Region, originally part of the Ashanti Region, was established in April 1959. It covers an area of 39,557 square kilometers and shares borders with the Northern Region to the north, the Ashanti and Western Regions to the south, the Volta Region to the east, the Eastern Region to the southeast, and La Cote d'Ivoire to the west. The region comprises 22 administrative districts, with Sunyani serving as the regional capital. Within the Sunyani municipality, there are 8 Senior High Schools (SHS) and 2 vocational and technical institutions, with an estimated student population of around 7,000 across the SHS institutions. A reconnaissance tour was conducted among the 8 SHS institutions in the Sunyani municipality, and 4 were randomly selected for the study. A descriptive approach was used to thoroughly analyze and present the results of the research. The stratified sampling technique was employed to group the institutions into mixed-gender and single-sex categories, ensuring representation from different types of schools within the municipality. The students from the four selected institutions formed the sampling unit for the study, while the target population included students from all 8 institutions in the Sunyani municipality. The survey population was derived from a list of institutions in the Brong Ahafo region, obtained from the Ghana Education Service. This list served as the sampling frame from which the study population was selected, ensuring a comprehensive and representative sample for the research.

The stratified sampling technique was employed to determine the sample size due to the population consisting of various subgroups with differing characteristics. To ensure an adequate and representative sample, a multi-stage sampling procedure was utilized. In the first stage, the institutions were categorized into mixed and single-sex schools using the stratified sampling technique. In the second stage, two mixed and two single-sex institutions were randomly selected from the sampling frame. The third stage involved the random selection of students from each of the chosen institutions. The total population for the four selected institutions was as follows: Twene Amanfo SHS with 1,500 students, Sunyani Senior High School (SUSEC) with 1,943 students, St. James Seminary with 750 students, and Notre Dame Girls SHS with 579 students. From this total population of 4,772 students, a sample size of 499 respondents was purposefully selected to gather relevant information for the study. The breakdown of the sample was as follows: 105 students from Twene Amanfo SHS, 188 students from Sunyani Senior High School, 108 students from St. James Seminary, and 98 students from Notre Dame Girls SHS. This selection ensured that the sample was representative of the population, allowing for meaningful data collection and analysis.

A questionnaire was the sole tool used for data collection in this study. Its design was informed by a thorough theoretical review of entrepreneurial intention models and theories. The questionnaire was pre-tested to assess respondents' attitudes and behaviors toward the structure and wording of the questions. This pre-testing also helped determine whether the questionnaire items would elicit the necessary responses effectively. An often-overlooked aspect of research ethics is securing access to research sites. In Ghana, institutions have specific regulations governing research activities and the release of information to external parties. Therefore, permission to conduct the study was formally sought from the school

authorities, and approval was granted. To maintain confidentiality and ensure that responses were independent and free from peer influence, the authors personally supervised the administration of the questionnaire. This approach helped prevent participants from feeling uncomfortable about sharing information or being influenced by their peers' answers. Field editing was conducted by the authors during the data collection process to ensure that all questions were answered completely and clearly marked. This thorough supervision and editing helped improve the accuracy and reliability of the data collected. The questionnaire method was chosen for data collection because the respondents, being students, were literate and able to read, understand, and respond to the questions accurately. Hand-delivering the questionnaires ensured that the intended respondents received them and filled them out properly. This approach also provided respondents with a sense of privacy and increased confidence in answering the questions truthfully and without external influence. After the questionnaires were collected, the data processing phase began, which involved editing and data entry. The items on the questionnaire were coded after office editing, and the data were entered into the SPSS for Windows software. Once the data entry was completed, computer editing was conducted to ensure the accuracy of the data. Given the nominal nature of the variables, descriptive analysis was employed as the primary tool for data interpretation. The results were presented using absolute figures of respondents, with corresponding percentages provided in brackets to facilitate a clear understanding of the data. This method of presentation allowed for a straightforward interpretation of the respondents' answers, ensuring clarity in the communication of the study's findings.

#### 4. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 499 senior high school students surveyed in Ghana to assess their entrepreneurial intentions. The gender distribution indicates that a slightly higher proportion of respondents were male (57.5%) compared to female (42.5%), reflecting a near-balanced sample conducive for comparative analysis. This balance is essential, as previous studies have shown gender to be a significant factor influencing entrepreneurial inclination among students (Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007).

In terms of institutional representation, students were drawn from four prominent schools. SUSEC accounted for the largest share (37.3%), followed by Saint James Seminary (22.0%), Twene Amanfo (21.4%), and Notre Dame Girls SHS (19.2%). The variation in school type and location provides a broad educational context, which helps in understanding how institutional environments shape entrepreneurial mindsets.

Looking at academic programs, the largest group of respondents came from the business stream (28.7%), followed by general arts (23.8%) and science (23.4%). Students in visual arts, VOTEC (technical and vocational education), home economics, and agricultural science made up smaller proportions. These program distinctions are significant because prior literature has shown that students in business and vocational disciplines often demonstrate stronger entrepreneurial intentions due to curriculum content and skills-based exposure (Nabi, Holden, & Walmsley, 2006).

With regard to year of study, most students were in their fourth year (61.0%), suggesting they were at a more mature stage in their education, possibly with clearer career intentions. The rest were in years two (20.6%) and three (18.4%). Students at advanced levels typically exhibit stronger entrepreneurial orientation, as their exposure to career planning, leadership roles, and life skills training increases (Lüthje & Franke, 2003).

Finally, leadership roles were evenly distributed, with 49.9% of the students serving as prefects. Leadership experience has been linked to greater self-efficacy and decision-making confidence, both of which are predictors of entrepreneurial behavior (Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). This aspect of the data enables further exploration of how student leadership correlates with entrepreneurial drive.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Male	287	57.5%
Female	212	42.5%
Total	499	100.0%
INSTITUTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Twene Amanfo	107	21.4%

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
SUSEC	186	37.3%
Saint James Seminary	110	22.0%
Notre Dame Girls SHS	96	19.2%
Total	499	100.0%
PROGRAMME	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Science	117	23.4%
Visual Arts	26	5.2%
Business	143	28.7%
Home Economics	41	8.2%
VOTEC	32	6.4%
General Arts	119	23.8%
Agric	21	4.2%
Total	499	100.0%
YEAR	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
2	103	20.6%
3	92	18.4%
4	304	61.0%
Total	499	100.0%
POSITION	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Prefects	249	49.9%
Non-Prefects	250	50.1%
Total	499	100.0%

Table 2 outlines the responses of male and female students to ten statements that assess their locus of control, providing valuable insights into their internal or external orientation toward success, failure, and life outcomes. The majority of both male (71.0%) and female (70.4%) respondents agreed with the idea that success in life depends on personal ability, indicating a predominantly internal locus of control—a belief that personal effort and competence shape life outcomes. This aligns with Rotter's (1966) concept, where individuals with internal control tend to take responsibility for their achievements and setbacks, a trait strongly associated with entrepreneurial behavior (Lefcourt, 1991).

The second item, “Life determined by powerful people,” saw over half of the respondents (55.9%) disagreeing, further reflecting internal orientation, as these students do not attribute life events solely to external authority figures. However, responses to the third item reveal some ambivalence: nearly half (49.3%) agreed that success depends on luck and timing. This suggests a degree of externalization in interpreting success, perhaps influenced by cultural or economic uncertainty, echoing previous research that found mixed beliefs in collectivist societies (Spector, 1988). Statements four and five, regarding life being controlled by accidents and luck, garnered similar responses, with more than half of the respondents disagreeing. This implies that while students may acknowledge the role of chance, they predominantly view personal control as more decisive. However, item five showed gender differences—more females (35.9%) than males (26.6%) believed that luck plays a significant role in achieving personal desires. Such findings may point to nuanced gender perceptions about control and opportunity in entrepreneurial or career settings (Brockhaus, 1980).

Strong internal control was also evident in responses to items six and seven. Over 81% of both genders agreed that life is determined by their own actions, and 72.4% agreed that hard work

determines success. These responses suggest a robust belief in meritocracy, which is essential for entrepreneurial motivation and resilience (Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003).

Despite this internal trend, item eight—"I feel in control of my life"—had a comparatively lower agreement rate (58.5%), hinting at possible external stressors such as societal constraints, institutional limitations, or personal anxieties. This might be reflective of contextual barriers that undermine the sense of agency despite high internal orientation (Ajzen, 1991).

Items nine and ten further highlight the tension between internal beliefs and external uncertainty. While 51.3% disagreed that business success is mostly about luck, a notable 25.1% still agreed, with higher agreement among females. Similarly, while nearly 60% disagreed that long-term planning is unwise due to misfortune, about 21.5% remained convinced otherwise—possibly reflecting a broader perception of instability in the business environment (Begley & Boyd, 1987). In sum, Table 2 suggests that the majority of students exhibit an internal locus of control, particularly regarding hard work, ability, and planning. However, a meaningful minority—especially among females—maintain beliefs in luck and external circumstances. This duality underscores the need for interventions that not only foster self-efficacy but also address the structural and cultural constraints that shape perceptions of control.

**Table 2: Locus of Control Scale**

No.	Statement	Response	Male (n=293)	Female (n=206)	Total (n=499)
1	Success in life depends on my ability	Disagree	50 (17.1%)	29 (14.1%)	79 (15.8%)
		Uncertain	35 (11.9%)	32 (15.5%)	67 (13.4%)
		Agree	208 (71.0%)	145 (70.4%)	353 (70.7%)
2	Life determined by powerful people	Disagree	158 (53.9%)	121 (58.7%)	279 (55.9%)
		Uncertain	65 (22.2%)	41 (19.9%)	106 (21.2%)
		Agree	70 (23.9%)	44 (21.4%)	114 (22.9%)
3	Success depends on luck and timing	Disagree	92 (31.4%)	73 (35.4%)	165 (33.1%)
		Uncertain	52 (17.7%)	36 (17.5%)	88 (17.6%)
		Agree	149 (50.9%)	97 (47.1%)	246 (49.3%)
4	Life controlled by accidents	Disagree	160 (54.6%)	118 (57.3%)	278 (55.7%)
		Uncertain	85 (29.0%)	56 (27.2%)	141 (28.3%)
		Agree	48 (16.4%)	32 (15.5%)	80 (16.0%)
5	Getting what I want is due to luck	Disagree	156 (53.2%)	89 (43.2%)	245 (49.1%)
		Uncertain	59 (20.1%)	43 (20.9%)	102 (20.4%)
		Agree	78 (26.6%)	74 (35.9%)	152 (30.5%)
6	Life determined by own actions	Disagree	32 (10.9%)	21 (10.2%)	53 (10.6%)
		Uncertain	22 (7.5%)	17 (8.3%)	39 (7.8%)
		Agree	239 (81.6%)	168 (81.6%)	407 (81.6%)
7	Hard work determines success	Disagree	45 (15.4%)	31 (15.0%)	76 (15.2%)
		Uncertain	36 (12.3%)	26 (12.6%)	62 (12.4%)
		Agree	212 (72.4%)	149 (72.4%)	361 (72.4%)
8	I feel in control of my life	Disagree	56 (19.1%)	49 (23.8%)	105 (21.0%)
		Uncertain	60 (20.5%)	42 (20.4%)	102 (20.4%)
		Agree	177 (60.4%)	115 (55.8%)	292 (58.5%)
9	Business success is mostly luck	Disagree	155 (52.9%)	101 (49.0%)	256 (51.3%)
		Uncertain	74 (25.3%)	44 (21.4%)	118 (23.6%)

No.	Statement	Response	Male (n=293)	Female (n=206)	Total (n=499)
10	Long-term planning is unwise due to bad fortune	Agree	64 (21.8%)	61 (29.6%)	125 (25.1%)
		Disagree	168 (57.3%)	130 (63.1%)	298 (59.7%)
		Uncertain	56 (19.1%)	38 (18.4%)	94 (18.8%)
		Agree	69 (23.6%)	38 (18.4%)	107 (21.5%)

## 5. CONCLUSION

The research findings are not only interesting but also revealing and promising, offering valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders alike. These results provide a deeper understanding of the factors that influence entrepreneurial intent and behavior, such as gender differences, the impact of family business background, and the role of education in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes. The positive correlation between leadership roles, risk-taking propensity, and entrepreneurial intention also offers an encouraging outlook for fostering entrepreneurship among students. These findings carry several implications. For policymakers, the research underscores the importance of promoting entrepreneurship education at an early stage, as it can significantly influence students' future career paths. Tailored educational programs that nurture entrepreneurial skills and traits, such as innovation and an internal locus of control, can equip the younger generation with the tools necessary to drive economic growth. For stakeholders in the educational sector, the study highlights the need to ensure that both male and female students are equally encouraged and supported in their entrepreneurial pursuits. The observed gender differences in entrepreneurial intent suggest the necessity for targeted interventions that empower female students to develop entrepreneurial mindsets. Additionally, fostering leadership opportunities within schools may serve as a catalyst for entrepreneurial development, as students with leadership experience show a higher inclination toward entrepreneurship. These findings provide essential "food for thought" for anyone involved in shaping the future of entrepreneurship in Ghana. By addressing the identified gaps and building on the strengths observed in this research, policymakers and educators can help create a more entrepreneurial society. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the overall entrepreneurial intention among Senior High School (SHS) students in the Sunyani municipality is high and encouraging. This suggests a strong potential for fostering entrepreneurship among the youth in this region. However, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial intent, further studies are recommended. Future research could explore additional variables, such as the impact of family income on entrepreneurial intention, to see how financial background influences students' entrepreneurial aspirations. Additionally, including students from vocational and technical institutions in the study could provide valuable insights, as these students may have different perspectives or levels of readiness for entrepreneurship compared to those in traditional SHS programs. Another important area for future research is investigating the role teachers can play in stimulating entrepreneurial intention among SHS students. Understanding how educators can encourage and nurture entrepreneurial mindsets within the classroom would be beneficial for designing more effective entrepreneurship education programs.

By addressing these variables, future studies could offer deeper insights into the factors shaping entrepreneurial intent, leading to more tailored interventions and support systems for students aspiring to become entrepreneurs. There is a clear need to incorporate entrepreneurship into the educational curriculum of Senior High Schools (SHS) in Ghana. The study revealed that many students have a limited understanding of who an entrepreneur is, as evidenced by the fact that 70.7% of respondents viewed an entrepreneur simply as someone who owns a small business. This narrow perception highlights the importance of broadening students' knowledge of entrepreneurship to include its various dimensions, such as innovation, risk-taking, and leadership in both small and large enterprises. By integrating entrepreneurship education into the curriculum, students can be enlightened about the full scope of what it means to be an entrepreneur. This would help them understand that entrepreneurship is not limited to small business ownership but also encompasses innovation, strategic thinking, and value creation in a wide range of sectors. Such education could empower students to view entrepreneurship as a viable career path and equip them with the necessary skills and mindset to succeed in entrepreneurial endeavors.

Incorporating entrepreneurship into the curriculum would also provide practical knowledge and foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills—key attributes that are essential for future entrepreneurs. The empowerment of the girl-child must be intensified to ensure they reach the same level of entrepreneurial development as their male counterparts, aligning with the objectives of Millennium Development Goal 3, which promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women. The study's findings suggest that male students tend to exhibit higher entrepreneurial intentions than females, underscoring the need for targeted efforts to encourage and support girls in pursuing entrepreneurial ambitions. One key approach to achieving this is through the introduction of role models and mentors for students. Role

models can play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between theory and practice, showing young girls that entrepreneurship is not only attainable but also a path to success. Exposure to successful female entrepreneurs and leaders can inspire girls to develop confidence in their abilities and pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Institutional heads and other stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and community leaders, can contribute significantly to this effort by creating opportunities for mentorship programs, workshops, and entrepreneurial activities specifically aimed at empowering female students. By fostering a supportive environment and providing the necessary resources and guidance, these stakeholders can help bridge the gender gap in entrepreneurship, ensuring that girls have equal opportunities to succeed and contribute to economic growth.

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