

Gendered Perceptions of Spousal Support and Entrepreneurial Intention: Evidence from Nigeria

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In this study, we examined the impact of spousal support on the well-being and entrepreneurial self-efficacy of potential entrepreneurs and the consequent effects on their entrepreneurial intentions. Our goal was to understand how potential entrepreneurs might form an entrepreneurially-positive mindset and whether the relationships driving that mindset might differ between married women and married men. Using structural equation modeling, we tested our model on a sample of 288 married and employed individuals in Nigeria. We find strong evidence of a positive relationship between an individual's sense of subjective well-being and entrepreneurial self-efficacy – a relationship that in turn positively impacts the likelihood of entrepreneurial intentions. Spousal support – our presumed catalyst of this three-factor relationship – also plays a significant role, but only for women. The results of our study validate three key relationships that catalyze entrepreneurial action and explore the relationship spousal support and gender may play in their interaction. We highlight the importance of well-being in predicting entrepreneurial behavior and conclude with suggestions for further research.

Keywords: spousal support, gendered entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intention, well-being, emerging economies

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is a risky proposition. To have a chance at success, entrepreneurs must effectively identify new opportunities (Khin & Lim, 2018), create an organizational structure to exploit those opportunities (Zaridis & Mousiolis, 2014), develop products and services, win customers, and simultaneously balance the liabilities of size, newness, and limited experience (Zhang & White, 2016). When considering an entry into entrepreneurship, aspiring entrepreneurs must weigh these challenges, assess their confidence in their own abilities (Cardon & Kirk, 2015), and evaluate the contributions and support of friends and family (Kirkwood, 2012) who are often called on to provide emotional, financial, and material support to the entrepreneurs and their new endeavors.

Compared to other family members, spouses tend to play an important and consistent role in new venture success (Werbel & Danes, 2010; Yang & Danes, 2015). The proximity of spouses to the day-to-day efforts of the entrepreneur and the emotional bond already shared between the two parties have the potential to make spousal commitment a vital factor in entrepreneurial success, or even in the decision to engage in

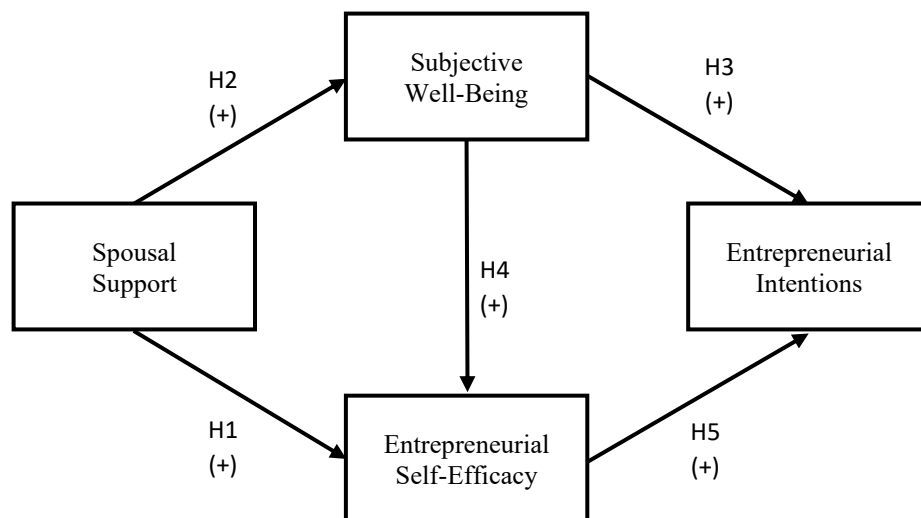
entrepreneurship in the first place. Prior research has revealed that spouses are an important source of advice, support, and encouragement (Kirkwood, 2009) and venture growth and success (Avolio et al., 2013).

A goal of this research is to deepen our understanding of the importance of spousal support by exploring its role before the venture takes shape – at the level of entrepreneurial intent. To date, most of the research devoted to this topic has focused on connecting spousal support with venture outcomes (e.g., venture creation and/or growth) or the ways in which a supportive spouse influences the trajectory of the venture or the entrepreneur (Danes et al., 2010; Owens et al., 2013; Prasad et al., 2013; Shelton, 2006; Werbel & Danes, 2010). The purpose of our study is to examine, in part, how spousal support may influence a person’s willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activity in the first place. A second goal of this research is to examine the importance of spousal support in a context that has up to now been overlooked – that of developing economies. According to the World Bank, about 3.2 billion women reside in low and middle-income countries, accounting for around 40% of the world’s population (World Bank, 2022). The sample for this study was taken from a country that is notable for gender inequality – Nigeria. To date, almost every study that we have found on this topic has examined the role of spouses in a western, developed-economy context. While we suspect that the importance of spousal support to entrepreneurial action will be important in both developing and developed economies, we also suspect that the dynamics of spousal support may change as entrepreneurial activity becomes inherently riskier, business knowledge less defined, and opportunities broader. Entrepreneurship in general and female entrepreneurship in particular have been identified as important potential catalysts for economic growth, individual empowerment, and the development of families (Brush & Cooper, 2012), thus it seems worth our while to understand how the role of a supportive spouse may influence the willingness of women and men to engage in entrepreneurial activity.

A priori, we anticipate that if spousal support influences an individual’s intent to engage in entrepreneurship, it will do so through certain mechanisms. First, spousal support may impact a would-be entrepreneur’s sense of subjective well-being, positively or negatively framing the challenges they face in the world and their ability to overcome them. Second, spousal support could impact an aspiring entrepreneur’s sense of their own entrepreneurial ability – their entrepreneurial self-efficacy – an important precedent of entrepreneurial intent. Finally, these factors could work in combination with each other, given the powerful relationships between subjective outlook about the future and a person’s faith in their ability to succeed in that future.

These connected relationships form the basis of our model, which can be seen in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1
HYPOTHESIZED MODEL**



Furthermore, we expected that whatever effect spousal support has on an entrepreneur's intent to engage in entrepreneurship will be different for women as opposed to men – particularly in patriarchal or male-dominated societies - a characteristic common to many of the developing economies our sample environment is intended to represent. Consequently, our study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining the impact of spousal support on the decision to become an entrepreneur. The interrelated research questions addressed in our study are as follows:

Research Question 1: *How does spousal support impact a person's belief in their entrepreneurial capability and their sense of well-being?*

Research Question 2: *Does spousal support result in entrepreneurial intention through its effects on a person's well-being and belief in their entrepreneurial capability?*

Using structural equation modeling, we tested our hypotheses on a sample of 288 married and employed individuals in Nigeria, a country where spousal support is particularly relevant due to cultural beliefs. Our results indicated a significant and consistent relationship between a prospective entrepreneur's subjective well-being and their entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and a significant subsequent relationship between that self-efficacy and an intent to engage in entrepreneurship. Spousal support, the driver of our model, played a significant role in the aspiring entrepreneur's subjective well-being – their sense of the world around them – but only for the females in our sample; for our male participants, spousal support played no meaningful role in defining their sense of the world around them. In both instances, the evidence failed to support an important relationship between spousal support and an individual's entrepreneurial self-efficacy, nor was there a significant link between an individual's subjective well-being and their intent to engage in entrepreneurial activity. For both women and men, it appears that the intention to engage in entrepreneurial activity is driven by an individual's sense of the world around them, which in turn defines their perception of their ability to succeed in entrepreneurship, which then leads to an intention to act.

Our research provides two main contributions. First, it validates the relationship between an individual's outlook (subjective well-being), their sense of their own entrepreneurial self-worth (entrepreneurial self-efficacy), and the intent to engage in entrepreneurship. Second, it suggests that the role of spousal support – often discussed before now without regard to gender – is different between the sexes and that for women – particularly in developing economies – the presence of a supportive spouse may be an important catalyst for entrepreneurial activity.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Self-efficacy – a person's beliefs about their ability to exert control over events in their lives and successfully carry out certain tasks – is directly linked to one's thinking, motivation, and behavior (Bandura, 1989). People's beliefs about their capabilities influence what they choose to do, how much effort they muster, and even the extent to which they will persevere in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 1994). Bandura and colleagues (1999) proposed that self-efficacy beliefs are developed through four main means: perceptions of psychological states, mastery performance experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion. Respectively, these means contribute to a person's self-efficacy as they define beliefs regarding their emotional state, as well as beliefs resulting from prior experiences, observational learning, and the verbal persuasion of some referent others.

Research suggests that self-efficacy is contextual, hence the development of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) as a distinctively entrepreneurial characteristic (Chen et al., 1998). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in his or her capability to perform entrepreneurial roles and tasks successfully (Zhao et al., 2005). The development of ESE has been described as a form of motivation for engaging in or avoiding certain entrepreneurial activities, as it indicates a conscious belief of ability or inability to successfully complete these activities (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2015). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is therefore an important personal attribute of entrepreneurs (McGee et al., 2009).

In entrepreneurship, the concept of self-efficacy is an important one, as people must believe in their ability to overcome the challenges they will encounter in starting a business before they will do so. Research findings suggest that entrepreneurs are generally high in self-efficacy (Baron et al., 2016a; Baron et al., 2016b). In addition to being useful in predicting persistence in venture efforts (Cardon & Kirk, 2015), ESE has been identified as the single largest predictor of entrepreneurial intentions and consequent behavior and a significant predictor of venture success (Chandler & Jansen, 1997; Kreicar & Coric, 2013).

The Important Role of Gender

Because of the roles many women play as nurturers, caregivers, managers, etc., the value of spousal support is likely to be key in enabling women to (a) see themselves as being capable of being an entrepreneur and (b) feel that they are living fulfilled lives that will give them the confidence to act. Prior research has indicated that by pursuing paid employment, both entrepreneurial and organizationally employed wives are deviating from the general societal expectation of women-as-traditional-homemakers role and, as such, they are likely to face conflicts and challenges in combining work and home roles (Nikina et al., 2015). While these gendered expectations regarding women's home responsibilities and roles can intensify tensions between work and family roles in western societies and organizations (Cha, 2010; Gaio Santos & Cabral-Cardoso, 2008), the situation will likely be exacerbated in societies like Nigeria where women are considered endangered, due to their heightened exposure to domestic violence and unequal opportunities (Abayomi & Olabode, 2013). Prior research also suggests that female managers feel stressed and guilty as a result of being frequently torn between their managerial and family roles (Ruderman et al., 2002).

While we do not hypothesize a specific difference between men and women in the relationships we seek to examine, a priori, we anticipate that some of these relationships will be more important for women than they are for men, thus we seek to explore two subsets within our population.

Spousal Support and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Being an entrepreneur is more challenging than being an employee (Shir, 2015) as entrepreneurship involves several decisions and behaviors that regular employment may not involve. Abundant research suggests that the entrepreneurial environment is challenging and stressful (Ahmad & Xavier, 2010; Cardon & Patel, 2015; Grant & Ferris, 2012; Subashini, 2016). Nascent entrepreneurs often must face the simultaneous liabilities of newness and smallness, and the availability of social capital has been found to be necessary for managing stress and strain (Gächter et al., 2011). People rely on their social networks for opportunity recognition, business advice, and other necessary resources (Singh et al., 1999). In line with Bandura's argument that a person's self-efficacy can be improved through verbal persuasion, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is likely to be impacted by the support of someone considered important. In the current study, we hypothesize that the role of a spouse is particularly relevant in predicting an individual's perception of their ability to carry out entrepreneurial tasks. Spousal support generally takes two forms – instrumental support in the form of tangible help and emotional support in the form of empathy, listening, moral support, and demonstrated interest in the spouse's work (Chasserio et al., 2014). Given the myriad potential challenges faced in entrepreneurship, we believe both forms of spousal support are likely to play an important role in convincing a spouse that they have what it takes (or do not).

We therefore argue that spousal support positively influences the development of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, given that starting a business places extensive demands – time, finances, energy, and others -- upon business owners and their spouses (Gudmonson et al., 2009). When contrasted with other types of employment, the running of a small business has been found to result in more strain for couples (Dolinsky & Caputo, 2003). We argue that the ability to successfully complete entrepreneurial-related tasks and activities would necessitate the availability of understanding and support from one's spouse if married individuals decide to start a business. Spousal support could serve as a buffer for the demands of entrepreneurship and provide a married individual with emotional and instrumental support that makes them feel more confident to carry out these tasks (Wolf & Frese, 2018). Consequently, we posit that:

Hypothesis 1. Spousal support is positively related to entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

The Influence of Spousal Support on Subjective Well-Being

The unique context of entrepreneurship suggests that starting a venture would require that a person has a stable state of mind that allows them to make informed decisions in a timely manner. The decision to start a business is therefore one that is contingent upon a healthy state of mind. Subjective well-being has been described as a broad category of phenomena which includes an individual's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999). It is composed of people's appraisals of their lives, including positive affect and negative affect and their life satisfaction (Tov & Diener, 2007).

Studies on well-being suggest that positive family relationships are consistently linked with adolescents' well-being (Moore et al., 2018); among adults, the findings appear to be the same. For example, perceived family support is positively related to the well-being of refugee employees (Newman et al., 2018). Marital status has been found to play a significant role in well-being and married women have been reported to experience higher well-being than single women (Diener et al., 1999; Rao et al., 2003), although this is also dependent upon the quality of the marital relationship, as well as the extent to which those women received support from their spouses (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1986; Rao et al., 2003). Carr and colleagues (Carr et al., 2014) reported a sizable and significant correlation between a person's marital satisfaction and their life satisfaction. Given that marital satisfaction is unlikely to be separable from spousal support, we argue that people who enjoy spousal support will also be more likely to be satisfied with their life as they are able to access emotional and instrumental support needed to cope with the stressful conditions they encounter in their lives.

Spousal support is a distinctly meaningful type of support, as many consider their spouses to be the most significant person in their lives (Liao & Stevens, 1994). Many married people look to their spouses for affirmation, encouragement, and advice – as well as emotional and financial support – more than they look to anyone else. While subjective well-being does not necessarily guarantee business success, the presence of subjective well-being among married individuals is likely to indicate that they have the capacity to deal with the unique challenges associated with starting a venture

We therefore argue that a married person's sense of satisfaction with their life and their overall subjective well-being will be positively impacted by spousal support.

Hypothesis 2. Spousal support is positively related to subjective well-being.

Subjective Well-Being and Entrepreneurial Intention

When one considers that entrepreneurship is challenging and involves much uncertainty, the importance of subjective well-being to entrepreneurial action becomes clearer. How people feel about their mental health is likely to predict their subsequent beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding entrepreneurship; subjective well-being acts as a natural motivator (Howell et al., 2016) to pursue potentially risky goals which one would otherwise turn away from in the absence of confidence in the state of things around them.

Bird (1988) defines entrepreneurial intentions as the state of mind that guides entrepreneurs' attention, experiences, and action toward a business concept and sets the form and direction of their organizations from their inception. Entrepreneurial intentions shape the decisions of entrepreneurs regarding venture creation, growth, and closure by inspiring entrepreneurs' goals and commitment (Bird, 1988).

Since entrepreneurial journeys rarely follow a smooth path (McMullen & Dimov, 2013), we argue that the presence of subjective well-being will positively relate to entrepreneurial intentions. According to Wiklund and colleagues (Wiklund et al., 2019), emotions are important in entrepreneurship because entrepreneurs must make decisions without any historical guidelines and in the face of uncertainty. This ambiguous and uncertain environment is further impacted by significant time pressures (Baron, 2008). Consequently, people are more likely to be influenced by their emotional states in such contexts (Wiklund et al., 2019). This is particularly true for married people who must factor in the decisions and feelings of their spouses, as well as rely on those to make their own decisions. Hence, for those who experience spousal

support, subjective well-being could trigger entrepreneurial intentions as they are likely to feel that they have something to fall back on even if the business does not go as planned or expected. We therefore argue that:

Hypothesis 3. Subjective well-being is positively related to entrepreneurial intentions.

Subjective Well-Being and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Building on previous arguments, we suggest that a sense of satisfaction and contentment with one's life is likely to promote a person's belief that they have the tools necessary to be a successful entrepreneur. Bandura suggests that people's evaluation of physiological and affective states that can occur in an accompanying activity could improve their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989; Bandura et al., 1999). This has been found to be more significant in areas that include physical achievement, health, and coping with stress (Krekar & Coric, 2013).

Entrepreneurship is a field that involves many stressful conditions; conditions that are more effectively managed if one possesses the appropriate coping skills. Given that a person's interpretation of the situation impacts their self-efficacy, it is possible that those who consider their lives, in general, to be satisfactory would be more likely to favorably consider their ability to successfully manage and cope with entrepreneurial activities. In other words, a person's sense of subjective well-being may also positively impact their levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. We therefore argue as follows:

Hypothesis 4. Subjective well-being is positively related to entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention

In line with findings that entrepreneurial intention is predicted by entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Chen et al., 1998; Zhao et al., 2005), we include a final hypothesis. Following Bandura's argument that people tend to fear and avoid threatening situations that they believe exceed their capabilities and coping skills while embracing those for which they believe they have sufficient capacity (Bandura, 1977), we suggest that when people do not consider themselves to possess the necessary skills or knowledge needed for success in entrepreneurship, they are likely to fear and avoid entrepreneurship due to their perceived inability to cope with the demands of starting and running their own businesses. The sense of stability and security that a paid job offers would then be more appealing to them than the idea of becoming entrepreneurs. Conversely, when people feel they have the skills and knowledge to succeed in entrepreneurship, they are more likely to report entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, we posit that:

Hypothesis 5. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is positively related to entrepreneurial intentions.

METHODS

Participants and Design

To measure the impact of spousal support on entrepreneurial intentions, we surveyed the perceptions and attitudes of currently-employed men and women in established marital relationships in Nigeria. As the focus of our study was on the intention of individuals to engage in entrepreneurship in the future, we intentionally recruited participants who were currently employed by and for someone else; they were neither currently self-employed nor unemployed, thus they would have to choose to give up a current opportunity to engage in entrepreneurship. Our focus on Nigeria was also intentional. We expect our hypothesized effects to be most pronounced in developing regions like sub-Saharan Africa where entrepreneurs operate in environments that are likely to place increased pressure on or add additional consequences to entrepreneurial activity. In such environments, spousal dynamics become more pronounced (Wolf & Frese, 2018); gender roles are more clearly delineated; and a high-power distance even in marriage is not uncommon. Entrepreneurship is also particularly important in developing countries, as it acts as a buffer for high levels of unemployment (Wolf & Frese, 2018).

We collected data via an online survey; 296 individuals completed the survey. Six of those respondents (less than two percent) omitted crucial gender or spousal support information, while normality checks indicated that two cases exhibited significant outlier potential. These cases were removed, resulting in a final sample population of 153 men (53.1% of the sample) and 135 women (46.9%). On average, our participants were between 35 and 44 years old (71% of the sample), possessed a high school or two-year college education (76% of the sample when combined), and had two to three children (62% of the sample when combined).

Measures

Entrepreneurial Intentions

The entrepreneurial intentions of our respondents were measured by the six-item entrepreneurial intent scale developed by Liñán & Chen (2009). Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements (examples include “I will make every effort to start and run my own firm” and “I am ready to do anything to become an entrepreneur”) on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach’s alpha for the six entrepreneurial intention measures was 0.89, with latent factor loadings between .60 and .90.

Spousal Support

Our respondents’ perception of their level of spousal support was measured by the emotional and instrumental spousal support scales developed by Schuster and colleagues (Schuster et al., 1990), and Mickleson and colleagues (Mickleson et al., 2006), respectively.

Emotional spousal support measures speak to the perceived level of concern, understanding, and commitment an individual feels they receive from their spouse, and were measured by asking the participant to respond to five questions of emotional support (examples include “how much does your spouse understand about the way you feel about things?” and “how much can you trust your spouse to show concern for your feelings and problems?”) on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all; 5 = a great deal). The Cronbach’s alpha for the five emotional spousal support measures was 0.90.

Instrumental spousal support measures a related dimension of support – the actual effort contributed by the marriage partner to household work and management. This two-item scale consists of two separate questions – “who spends more time taking care of responsibilities at home – you or your spouse?” and “how willing is your spouse to help you at home when you are tired after a demanding day?” – measured on seven-point (1 = not at all; 7 = my spouse does all of it) and five-point (1 = not at all; 5 = a great deal) scales, respectively. The Cronbach’s alpha for these two instrumental support measures was 0.561. When the scales were combined, the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.84, with latent factor loadings of between 0.42 and 0.88.

Subjective Well-Being

To measure our participants’ sense of subjective well-being, we utilized the five-point scale developed by Diener and colleagues (Diener et al., 1985). Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements (examples include “in most ways my life is close to ideal” and “so far I have gotten the important things I want in life”) on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach’s alpha for the five subjective well-being measures was 0.80, with latent factor loadings between .65 and .83.

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

The entrepreneurial self-efficacy of participants was measured with the four-item scale developed by Zhao et al. (2005). Participants were asked to rate their level of confidence in four key dimensions of entrepreneurial activity (examples include “creating new products” and “commercializing an idea or new development”) on a 7-point scale (1 = extremely unconfident; 7 = extremely confident). The Cronbach’s alpha for the four entrepreneurial self-efficacy measures was 0.84, with latent factor loadings between .75 and .86.

Control Variables

Following previous research on entrepreneurial intentions, we controlled for the age and education level of our participants (Liñán et al., 2011; Mueller, 2011). Correlations between variables, means, and standard deviations are provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS

	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Entrepreneurial Intentions	5.80	1.13							
2. Spousal Support	3.97	.80	.04						
3. Subjective Well-Being	4.12	1.28	.09	.22**					
4. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	5.57	1.10	.31**	.18**	.22**				
5. Age Group	3.90	.59	.09	.06	-.06	-.05			
6. Gender	1.47	.50	-.06	-.29**	-.01	-.12*	-.16**		
7. Educational Level	2.77	.91	-.05	-.06	.12*	-.10	.15*	.13*	

* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed)

** Significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

Analysis

We analyzed our data by applying structural equation modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood (ML) estimation using AMOS. We began with a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model to examine the fit of the model to the data. We then estimated structural models for our male and female participants to test the effects of spousal support on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, subjective well-being, and entrepreneurial intentions.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

The results of our CFA analysis suggested a strong fit between the latent variables and their measurement items. Unstandardized factor loadings ranged between .42 and .90, and the Cronbach's alpha of the four latent variable scales in our model ranged between .80 and .89. The latent variable measurement properties are provided in Table 2.

TABLE 2
LATENT VARIABLE MEASUREMENT PROPERTIES

Latent variables (in bold) and measurement items	standardized factor loadings
Entrepreneurial Intentions (Liñán & Chen, 2009) ($\alpha = .89$)	
<i>We would like to understand your attitudes toward running your own business. How much do you agree with each of these statements?</i>	
1. I am ready to do anything to become an entrepreneur.	.60**
2. My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur.	.77**
3. I will make every effort to start and run my own firm.	.88**
4. I am determined to create a firm in the future.	.86**
5. I have very seriously thought of starting a firm.	.89**
6. I have the firm intention to start a firm someday.	.90**
Spousal Support (Schuster et al., 1990 (a); Mickleson et al., 2006 (b)) ($\alpha = .84$)	
<i>Emotional support from one's spouse may impact one's business. How much support do you feel that you receive from your spouse in each of these areas?</i>	
1. How much does your spouse understand the way you feel about things? (a)	.75**
2. How much can you depend on your spouse to be there when you really need them? (a)	.86**
3. How much does your spouse show concern for your feelings and problems? (a)	.88**
4. How much can you trust your spouse to keep their promises to you? (a)	.87**
5. How much can you open up to your spouse about things that are really important to you? (a)	.81**
6. Who spends more time taking care of responsibilities at home – you or your spouse? (different scale) (b)	.42*
7. How willing is your spouse to help you at home when you are tired after a demanding day? (different scale) (b)	.60**
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (Zhao et al., 2005) ($\alpha = .84$)	
<i>Entrepreneurship requires certain skills. How confident are you regarding your ability to complete each of these skills?</i>	
1. Successfully identifying new business opportunities.	.85**
2. Creating new products.	.86**
3. Thinking creatively.	.83**
4. Commercializing an idea or new development.	.75**
Subjective Well-Being (?) ($\alpha = .80$)	
<i>When you consider your current life and expectations, how much do you agree with each of these statements?</i>	
1. In most ways, my life is close to ideal.	.71**
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.	.81**
3. I am satisfied with my life.	.83**
4. So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.	.74**
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	.65**

** Significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

*** Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level (2-tailed)

Structural Models

The structural equation model we created to analyze our data yielded acceptable fit statistics χ^2 (470) = 744.17 ($p < 0.001$), PCMIN/DF = 1.58, CFI = 0.92, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .09. While the SRMR of our structural model exceeded traditional cutoff values, the remaining measures of fit met or exceeded expected thresholds for good fit (Hair et al., 2010). The results of our structural model are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
STRUCTURAL MODEL ASSESSMENT

Path between latent variables		Males (<i>n</i> = 153)	Females (<i>n</i> = 135)
From	To	Direct Effects	Direct Effects
Spousal Support	→ Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	H1: .085	H1: .009
	→ Subjective Well-Being	H2: .143	H2: .315**
Subjective Well-Being	→ Entrepreneurial Intention	H3: .097	H3: -.050
	→ Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	H4: .250*	H4: .251*
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	→ Entrepreneurial Intention	H5: .359**	H5: .269**
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Age Group	→ Entrepreneurial Intention	.163 [†]	.096
Educational Level	→ Entrepreneurial Intention	-.091	-.067
Model Fit: $\chi^2 = 744.166$ (470 d.f.), $p < .001$, PCMIN/D.F. = 1.583 CFI = .920, TLI = .906, RMSEA = .045 (.039, .051), SRMR = .088			

[†] Significant at the $p < 0.10$ level (2-tailed)

* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed)

** Significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

We hypothesized that spousal support would have positive effects on an individual's entrepreneurial self-efficacy (H1) and on their subjective well-being (H2). A significant positive relationship between spousal support and entrepreneurial self-efficacy failed to emerge for males ($b = .085$, n.s.) or females ($b = .009$, n.s.), thus H1 was not supported for either group. While the relationship between spousal support and subjective well-being was positive for both males ($b = .143$, n.s.) and females ($b = .315$, $p < 0.01$), only in the case of females was that relationship statistically significant. Thus, H2 was not supported for males but was supported for females.

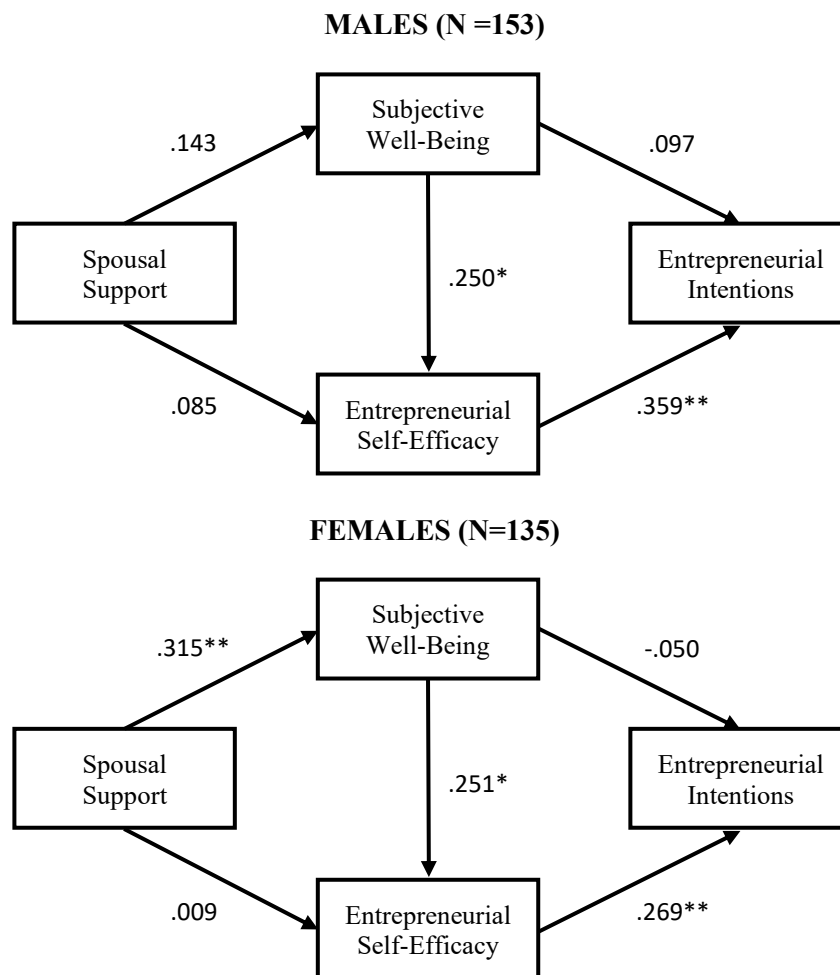
We further hypothesized that subjective well-being would have positive effects on an individual's entrepreneurial intention (H3) and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (H4). No statistically significant relationship existed between the entrepreneurial intention of men ($b = .097$, n.s.) or women ($b = -.050$, n.s.) and their entrepreneurial intention, thus H3 was not supported for either group. However, in the case of H4, a significant positive relationship emerged between the subjective well-being of males and their entrepreneurial self-efficacy ($b = .250^*$, $p < 0.05$) and that relationship continued to persist, effectively unchanged, for females ($b = .251$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, H4 was supported for both groups.

Finally, we hypothesized that an individual's entrepreneurial self-efficacy would have a significant positive relationship with their entrepreneurial intention (H5). Our model supported this hypothesis for both groups. Among our sample population, both men ($b = .359, p < 0.01$) and women ($b = .269, p < 0.01$) displayed a significant positive relationship between their entrepreneurial self-efficacy and their intent to act entrepreneurially. Thus, H5 was supported for both groups.

In both models, we controlled for the potential influence of the participant's age and level of education on their entrepreneurial intention. While the participant's age had a negligible positive effect for males on entrepreneurial intention ($b = .163, p < 0.10$), it was insignificant for females ($b = 0.96, n.s.$). Education level had no significant relationship for males ($b = -.091, n.s.$) or females ($b = -.067, n.s.$) on entrepreneurial intention.

A comparison of the latent variable paths in both groups is shown in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2
MODEL COMPARISONS FOR MALE AND FEMALE ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS**



DISCUSSION

We began by suggesting that entrepreneurship is a risky proposition. For an individual to leave the relative predictability and security of regular employment and embrace the challenges and uncertainty of entrepreneurship, multiple stars must align. The results of our study validate three key relationships that

catalyze entrepreneurial action and explore the relationship that spousal support and gender may play in their interaction.

Our results suggest that the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities is – at least in part – a function of an individual’s sense of well-being – their satisfaction with their own life situation, which gives them the confidence and intellectual freedom to search for and potentially act upon new opportunities. An increased sense of well-being, we have argued, will also positively influence another key factor – the individual’s entrepreneurial self-efficacy – their confidence that they can meet the known and unknown challenges of entrepreneurship. We began our study with the assumption that these two variables, which have often been examined but have rarely been examined together – could display both direct and indirect effects on our measure of future entrepreneurial action – entrepreneurial intention.

Thus, we argued that the decision to act entrepreneurially is a function of mindset, and few of us make our minds up all alone. Given the vastly different roles women and men often occupy in society, the workforce, and families, we expected that the importance of some or all of these variables would differ when we compared the perspectives of married women and men and that a key driver of those differences could be the importance of spousal support – the perception of the emotional and instrumental support an individual perceives they have from their partner.

The model that emerges from our results is remarkably consistent for married women and married men, but distinct when an antecedent of that model – in this case, the perceived support of one’s spouse – is assessed. Subjective well-being emerges as a significant positive influence on an individual’s entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial self-efficacy exhibits a significant positive influence on an individual’s entrepreneurial intentions. No significant direct relationship emerges, for either sex, between their subjective well-being and their intent to act entrepreneurially; rather, the importance of subjective well-being manifests as an indirect driver of behavior reflected through an individual’s entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The self-narrative of these individuals may sound something like “I’m in a good place...” [*subjective well-being*], “...so I can be ready to take advantage of new opportunities...” [*entrepreneurial self-efficacy*], “...and I’m ready to make something happen” [*entrepreneurial intention*]. This three-step thought process is consistent for men and women in both its intensity and its direction and suggests that mindset is an essential catalyst for entrepreneurial activity.

One significant difference emerges in our two models – the importance of spousal support to the formation of an entrepreneurially-positive mindset. Among our female participants, spousal support emerges as a highly significant positive influence on an individual’s subjective well-being, while for our male participants, the relationship, while still positive, is insignificant. For the women in our study, the attainment (or the recognition) of a sense of subjective well-being appears to be predicated on the belief that their spouse will (or already does) support them as they engage in an activity that is challenging, uncertain, and likely to result in disruption to the established rhythms of their marital relationship.

Taken together, our results suggest that the intention to engage in entrepreneurial pursuits is strongly influenced by the attainment of an entrepreneurially-positive mindset – a combination of contentment with one’s present life circumstances coupled with confidence in one’s ability to weather the challenges of entrepreneurial activity and that for married women, the formation of that entrepreneurially-positive mindset may be predicated on whether they feel their partner is a willing and able to support them.

Practical Implications

For more than forty years, researchers, educators, and policymakers have shown a keen interest in understanding how we promote and grow entrepreneurship – particularly in developing economies where entrepreneurship is seen as a path toward economic growth and social freedom. Much of that energy – particularly at the level of economic and social policy – has focused on the creation of opportunities (e.g., entrepreneurial education, access to development grants and funding, mentoring, and professional development). While there seems little doubt that these are important elements in the growth of an enterprise, our research suggests that an individual’s general outlook – their confidence in their ability and perception of their own life circumstances – may be an important driver of the formation of an

entrepreneurially-positive mindset, and – at least for married women – the support of their spouse may be critical to the development of that mindset.

If we seek to grow entrepreneurship or the chances of success among aspiring female entrepreneurs, we may wish to turn more of our attention to the important role spouses can play in providing female entrepreneurs with the emotional and instrumental support they need to feel that they can succeed before they must do so. The perception of spousal support may trigger more entrepreneurial activity in certain parts of the world, and as such, policies and programs should take a holistic approach that addresses social and cultural factors which could impact the success of would-be entrepreneurs. Among other things, such policies and programs must go beyond providing direct support to aspiring female entrepreneurs and extend to providing programs that educate and support their spouses as well.

Patriarchal societies tend to limit the possibilities available to women through entrenched mindsets and beliefs, as well as systems and structures. We therefore suggest that efforts to promote entrepreneurship in such contexts should focus on gender-specific challenges such as bias and stereotypes that can affect women's confidence and opportunities, and the demands and pressures of caregiving that are likely to affect women disproportionately.

Future Research and Limitations

While we believe our findings provide many specific directions for future research around the types of entrepreneurs, the types of entrepreneurship considered, and the context of the family in entrepreneurial decision-making, the key consideration our research suggests is that any future examination of entrepreneurial intentions should factor in the potential role that spousal relationships may play in decision-making. Our findings argue that the context of entrepreneurial intentions may be as important as the decisions themselves, and we would encourage future researchers to dig deeper into these ideas.

Although our research has addressed an under-explored area, we acknowledge certain limitations of the research that could provide directions for future research. Our research did not examine the length of the marriage or the quality of the marital relationship. It is possible that among married people, the level of support and subjective well-being may be impacted by the length of the marriage. Additionally, we did not factor in the spouse's level of income. It is also possible that spouses who are more well-off financially will be more willing to support their spouses who decide to start a business.

Our choices regarding the placement of our study and the population we examined were intentional but may also limit or modify our results. The patriarchal system that governs many perceptions about spousal roles in Nigeria – a system that we felt allowed us to better highlight the role of spousal support in developing entrepreneurial systems – may not translate directly to the perceptions and importance of spousal roles in less patriarchal or more formal entrepreneurial systems. Our decision to examine only individuals who were in a declared marital situation – to better isolate the importance of the spousal bond – necessarily omitted non-marital partnerships where the bonds and connections may be equally intense or quite different. Finally, our choice to examine individuals who were currently employed in a non-entrepreneurial capacity – to better understand the trade-offs that would be required to engage in entrepreneurship – did not allow for an examination of individuals who were unemployed or engaged in another entrepreneurial endeavor. It may be of benefit to future researchers to consider all of these limitations.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores the relationship between the support of a spouse and two variables that could potentially impact entrepreneurial intention among married individuals – subjective well-being and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Particularly in contexts where culture plays a significant role in marital relationships, we bring into light the possibility that spousal support may be a significant predictor of subjective-wellbeing and entrepreneurial efficacy, and consequently, entrepreneurial intentions. We offer both theoretical and practical insight into the relationship between well-being and entrepreneurship.

ENDNOTE

1. Given that this scale was comprised of only two measures, we were not particularly surprised by the Cronbach's alpha of 0.56. As we viewed spousal support as a function of both the instrumental (observed) and emotional (perceived) support one recognized in their spouse and intended to use the combined scale, we focused on the measure of that combined instrument, which was a well within the bounds of acceptability at 0.84.

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