

# **Passion and intention among aspiring entrepreneurs with disabilities: The role of entrepreneurial support programs**

## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study examines the relationship between entrepreneurial passion, entrepreneurial support programs, and entrepreneurial intention, and the moderating role of entrepreneurial support programs in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention, among students with physical disabilities in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

**Methodology:** This study used a closed-ended questionnaire survey, composed of previously validated scales, to sample 209 students with physical disabilities at tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Hierarchical regression was performed to assess the relationships between the variables and test the hypotheses.

**Findings:** Both entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial support programs were found to be significantly positively related to entrepreneurial intention, and entrepreneurial support programs also moderated the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention

**Originality/value:** This research addresses calls for further understanding of how those with disabilities can be supported into entrepreneurship, by identifying supporting factors. The research provides further understanding of the entrepreneurial passion and intention nexus by exploring the relationship within those with a physical disability, where significant barriers exist, and within a developing country context where entrepreneurship might be a necessity rather than driven by passion.

**Research limitations/implications:** This research identifies that developing entrepreneurial passion and providing accessible and inclusive entrepreneurial support programs are valuable in supporting and facilitating a passage into entrepreneurship for those with disabilities.

**Keywords:** Physical Disability, Disability Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Passion, Entrepreneurial Support Programs; Entrepreneurship Education; Entrepreneurial Intention

## **Introduction**

The increasing awareness towards people with disability (PWD) in Nigeria and the drive among many of the PWD for entrepreneurial venturing necessitates an effort to understand what role entrepreneurial support programs play in developing the entrepreneurial passion and intention of these underdogs, who are individuals with negative personal circumstances (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017) but against all odds are determined to make something purposeful and meaningful of their lives.

Whilst this study furthers our understanding of the entrepreneurial intentions of students living with physical disabilities, it specifically investigates the moderating role of entrepreneurial support programs in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and the entrepreneurial intention of disabled students in Nigeria- a developing economy where there is a paucity of literature in the area being researched. Similarly, more effort is required for job opportunity creation, career development and fostering entrepreneurship in Nigeria. It is important to highlight that people living with physical disabilities might have different motives for starting their own business, regardless of the context, such as-economic reasons; necessity reasons; the desire for independence and flexible working patterns; the avoidance of discrimination; for personal development; and the desire to be able to contribute meaningfully and positively to society (Norstedt and Germundsson, 2021). Several studies espouse the idea that entrepreneurship can provide an important means by which those with work-limiting disabilities can accommodate their challenges or impairments (Jones and Latreille, 2011; Pagán, 2009). Indeed, it is increasingly acknowledged that entrepreneurship can play a crucial role in supporting people with disabilities into the economic mainstream (Dakung et al., 2022; Renko et al., 2016). However entrepreneurial intention and the propensity to engage in actual entrepreneurial activities is context specific, for example, based on an individual's characteristics and societal context (Nakara et al., 2020; Karimiet al., 2017; Iakovleva et al., 2011).

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data (2020) over the last 10 years suggests a high entrepreneurial intention rate amongst developing and low-income countries in comparison to the same in developed and high-income countries (Nigeria-46.80; Brazil-27.20; South Africa-12.80; China-14.40; Uk-.7.20; USA-12.20) (GEM, 2022). It has been posited that encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial behaviour in Africa is an effective mechanism to alleviate systemic poverty (Jones et al., 2018). However, there are inherent variations between people with disabilities and those without (Gouskova, 2020; Shaheen, 2016; Pagán, 2009). For instance, in Australia, approximately 60% of persons with disabilities develop intentions and eventually engage in entrepreneurship activities (Boellstorff, 2019; Renko et al., 2016). This is largely because of the availability of intervention programs such as the Australian National Disability Strategy 2012–2020 and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Clegg and Bigby, 2017). As such, expanding knowledge and deepening understanding of the role of entrepreneurial support programs as enablers that moderate and facilitate the entrepreneurial career choice and implementation of disabled students' intentions is pivotal.

Whilst the entrepreneurial intention in Nigeria, as indeed in most developing and low-income countries, is relatively high (GEM, 2022; Nakara et al., 2020), the case is different for people with disabilities because only a relatively few people with disabilities (25%) develop the intention to go into business or participate in entrepreneurship activities due to a “*marginalization barrier*” (NBS, 2021; Dakung et al., 2019). Arising from this position, the marginalization of people with disabilities in Nigeria in relation to entrepreneurship and self-employment is broad, and theoretical progress in understanding their intentions to participate in entrepreneurial activities is still absent. This is consistent with Krüger and David (2020), Clegg and Bigby (2017) and Hodge (2016) that, despite the potential of disabled entrepreneurs in economic affairs, the barriers they face discourage them

from developing their intentions to start businesses. The marginalization barrier is reflected in areas of unequal opportunities, limitations in infrastructure and facilities, unwanted pity, and a lack of awareness about their disability conditions (Norstedt and Germundsson, 2021; World Bank, 2021).

One possible solution to the unemployment challenge for people with disabilities lies in their ability to develop the intention to start a business despite the challenges they face (Isaac et al., 2022; Shaheen, 2016). The reason is that intention is the best predictor of behaviour (in our case entrepreneurship behaviour) as argued by Barba-Sanchez et al. (2022), Norstedt and Germundsson (2021), and Krueger (2000). Furthermore, scholars, such as Tomal and Szromnik (2022), Szczepanik and Casais (2021), and Joensuu-Salo et al. (2020), have documented that entrepreneurial intention is a means of tackling unemployment. This corroborates the work of Dakung et al. (2019), who argued that developing entrepreneurial intention is crucial for reversing the rate of unemployment among people with disabilities. Therefore, developing the entrepreneurship intention of people with disabilities could trigger their engagement in entrepreneurial activities to reverse their unemployment situation (Gulzar and Fayas, 2021; Khaw et al. 2021). Arguably, this could be explained by factors such as entrepreneurial passion and support programs, as posited by Syed et al. (2020), and Maria and Allam (2019).

The relevance of entrepreneurial passion in the formation of entrepreneurial intention as advanced by scholars, evaluating the boundary conditions of this association is imperative for two reasons. First, there is growing evidence that the entrepreneurial passion-entrepreneurial intention association does not always hold under certain circumstances (Barba-Sanchez et al. 2022; Neneh, 2020). For example, doubt has been cast on the assumption that entrepreneurial passion can lead to entrepreneurship in cases where there are barriers, such as for those with disabilities (Jammaers and Zanoni, 2020). Secondly, research suggests that some individuals in the developing world

characterized by high unemployment are most likely to engage in entrepreneurship out of necessity, irrespective of whether they are passionate about entrepreneurship or not (Amoros et al., 2019). Therefore, a nuanced understanding of this relationship is vital.

The present study proposes entrepreneurial support programs as a possible moderator in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and the entrepreneurial intention of disabled students. Even then, while there are considerable efforts to understand this entrepreneurial intention challenge as predicted by the entrepreneurial passion of people with disabilities, most strands of this research have concentrated mainly in the developed world (i.e., Europe and the USA) with little evidence from the context of the developing world (Neneh, 2020). Thus, a pertinent question is whether the universality of the entrepreneurial passion-entrepreneurial intention relationship holds true in the context of a developing world. Therefore, this study undertakes to further explain this phenomenon by highlighting the holistic and contextual aspects from a developing economy perspective. This is because individuals with disabilities in a developing economy like Nigeria adjust via assimilation, in our case entrepreneurial support programs, to participate in economic activities when the environment is favourable. This is further reinforced by Renko et al. (2016), who states that the relevance of assimilation calls for a novel approach to supporting people with disabilities in entrepreneurial activities. It has been highlighted within the literature that a dearth of literature exists which explores and identifies how those with physical disabilities can be effectively supported into entrepreneurship (Dakung et al., 2022). Saxena and Pandya (2018) have called for research to identify influences and determinant factors which can influence and support the entrepreneurship of individuals with physical disabilities.

To address these calls, this study seeks to unearth the moderating role of entrepreneurial support programs in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and the entrepreneurial intention of disabled students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Disabilities and Entrepreneurship***

In terms of support for entrepreneurship and self-employment, those with disabilities have often been marginalised and overlooked (Dakung et al., 2017; Namatovu et al., 2012). Such neglect has created barriers to entrepreneurial engagement for people with disabilities (Hagner and Davies, 2002). Jammaers and Williams (2021) have suggested that being physically impaired has been equated to being of less economic value. However, entrepreneurs with disabilities can still make a substantive contribution to society by potentially creating wealth, employment, and innovation, in the same way as those not affected with a disability. There has also been a growth in recognition that entrepreneurship and self-employment can be a particularly valuable way in which to bring those with disabilities into the workforce (Maritz and Laferriere, 2016) and the economic mainstream (Renko et al., 2016). This is supported by research which has shown and demonstrated that self-employment, microenterprise, and entrepreneurship are viable employment strategies for those with disabilities (Caldwell et al., 2020). Consequently, entrepreneurship can be a significant source of inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Kitching, 2014), which has the potential to enhance participation in society (Halabisky, 2014). This has led to calls for “rethinking disability” (Valle and Connor, 2019). Numerous governments and policy makers have reflected on how entrepreneurship can be promoted to emancipate individuals with disabilities in society (Halabisky, 2014). This is grounded in a belief that entrepreneurship and self-employment can offer advantages

and opportunities to accommodate disability related requirements and offer flexible working schedules (Jones and Latreille, 2011; Schur, 2003). Entrepreneurship has also been posited as able to offer a greater level of self-determination, independence, and choice (Anderson and Galloway, 2012; Larsson, 2006; Lorenzo et al., 2007), which can support greater satisfaction (Pagán, 2009). Despite an increased emphasis on supporting those with disabilities, researchers have identified a range of systemic challenges, including governmental financial structures, which discourage entrepreneurship (Hwang and Roulstone, 2015; Renko et al., 2016), limited accessibility to entrepreneurship and business support (Ashley and Graf, 2017; Vick and Lightman, 2010), and potentially prejudice from banks, customers, and suppliers (Jones and Latreille, 2011; Pagán, 2009).

Barba-Sánchez et al. (2022) found that disabled students had a lower propensity to entrepreneurship, although the concept of entrepreneurship offered a degree of validation and normalisation. It has been posited that entrepreneurship by individuals with disabilities can stem from, and be a consequence of, limited opportunities and potential discrimination within the workforce (Dakung et al., 2022). Research has also found that having a learning disability has a negative impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy perception, which mediates entrepreneurial intention (Powers et al., 2021). Therefore, adolescents with a learning difficulty have a lower self-esteem than those not affected with a learning disability and in turn express lower entrepreneurial intention (Powers et al., 2021). Whilst the work of Powers et al. (2021) was focused on learning disabilities, it can be argued that any individual with a disability might suffer from stereotypes and discrimination, which could dampen perceived self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention. Those with disabilities can be labelled as ‘disabled’ leading to the inference that they are less competent (Hsieh et al., 2019), and may suffer social exclusion from education, support, and other activities (Somavia, 2007).

Whilst society can place challenges and limitations on those with a physical disability, presenting socioeconomic barriers and restricting access and entry to entrepreneurship, these can be addressed and overcome with the right support mechanisms (Hsieh et al., 2019). To support people into entrepreneurship, including those with disabilities, requires inclusive educational support programs, technologies, and ecosystems (Dakung et al., 2022; Hsieh et al., 2019). With training, education and support programs offering an effective model to open entrepreneurial possibilities for people with disabilities (Wiklund et al., 2018; Maritz and Laferriere, 2016; Harris et al., 2013). This aligns with the need to broaden access to quality entrepreneurship education and support programs (Liguori et al., 2019). However, there is a tendency to generalise entrepreneurial support and training programs and the research into them, despite an identified need to customise and tailor them for specific groups and contexts (Bell, 2020; Ratten and Usmanij, 2020).

Muñoz et al. (2019) concluded that there was not a significant difference in the motivation to start a business, or entrepreneurial venture, between students with a disability and those not affected with a disability, in their research undertaken in Spain. This would suggest that the motivation to be an entrepreneur is not an issue. Hsieh et al. (2019) highlighted that having a strong desire to be a successful entrepreneur, can help with overcoming barriers specific to challenges and barriers relating to those with a physical disability. Boellstorff (2019) suggests that policies and benefits, often assume that those with a disability are incapable of working or being an entrepreneur. Therefore, those initially interested and motivated to be an entrepreneur might lose interest over time (Dakung et al., 2022). This highlights the potential need for nascent entrepreneurs with disabilities to be passionate about entrepreneurship, to sustain interest over time, against a backdrop of limited support and promotion of entrepreneurship for those with disabilities within society. However, Jammaers and Zanoni (2020), question whether the implicit belief that anyone can be an



entrepreneur with passion and hard work is in fact applicable to those with disabilities given the multiple barriers they face to enter entrepreneurship.

### ***Entrepreneurial Passion***

Passion refers to a feeling of intense enthusiasm or a compelling desire to engage in certain activities (Cardon et al., 2009). According to Iyortsuun and Shakpande (2022) the positive perspective of passion drives individuals to participate in valuable activities. In the studies conducted by Fellnhofer (2017) and Liu and Gu (2017), it was concluded that entrepreneurial passion facilitates entrepreneurial intention. This means that individuals who love business and see it as an important part of their lives will make efforts to start their own businesses. By implication, the love they have for businesses will help them develop entrepreneurial aspirations. Emanating from these arguments, the willingness of people with disabilities to offer a total commitment to businesses will enable them to be entrepreneurially inclined, especially when they receive support.

The theory of entrepreneurial passion suggests that not all passionate entrepreneurs are alike. The theory proposes that there are three kinds of salient role identities (Cardon, 2009) that characterize passionate-entrepreneurial behaviour: an inventor identity, a founder identity, and a developer identity. It further assumes that an entrepreneur develops a passion that is salient to these role identities, and that these different passions impact intention (Murad, et al., 2021; Karimi, 2020; Ip et al., 2018; Cardon, et al., 2009). Additionally, entrepreneurial passion has been found to support the development of bricolage and overcoming resource issues in resource constrained environments, which support the identification of new opportunities and potential overcoming of resources constraints and barriers (Ciambotti et al., 2022).

A passionate entrepreneur with an inventor identity is good at developing the intention to identify, invent, and explore new opportunities. They will engage in activities that involve seeking new ideas, tinkering with new product development, or scanning the environment for market-disruptive opportunities. Those with a developer identity have a passion for activities related to growing and expanding a venture once it has been established. A passionate entrepreneur with a founder identity will develop the intention to establish a venture to commercialize and exploit opportunities (Iyortsuun and Shakpande, 2022; Syed et al., 2020). Such a passionate entrepreneur will develop the intention to nurture, grow, and expand a venture once it has been created. While one role identity will, by definition, be more salient than another, the definition still allows for the entrepreneur to have “multiple identities” (Ma et al., 2017; Burke, 2006). Entrepreneurial passion theory is relevant to this study in terms of supportive capacity. This enhances our understanding of the entrepreneurial passion concept by providing a basis for the definition of passion. The theory further supports the conceptualization of the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention.

### ***Entrepreneurial Intention***

Intention has been described as a mental state that represents a commitment to carrying out an action in the future (Abbasianchavari and Moritz, 2021; Bell, 2019). Certain characteristics associated with entrepreneurial intention include the ability to have a vision, opportunity identification and exploitation, perseverance, and willingness to take risks. The concept of intention assumes that the best way to predict and explain a person’s behavioural action is through the behavioural intentions of the individual (Ajzen, 1991). The intention to act has been argued to precede any particular action; that is, one may not act if the intent to do so is lacking. According to

Barba-Sanchez et al. (2022) and Tomal and Szromnik (2022), intention is a predictor of one's decision to become an entrepreneur, making the intention to become an entrepreneur, or entrepreneurial intention, an important concept in the field of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial intentions can most practicably and appropriately be defined as a self-acknowledged conviction by a person that they intend to set up a new business venture and consciously plan to do so at some point in the future. Putting these together, scholars (Moussa and Kerkeni, 2021; Deepak et al, 2018) have summarized the concept of entrepreneurial intention as the determination and eagerness of a person to undertake a new business venture. In the following section, we present the theory of entrepreneurial passion in line with the explanatory variables of the current study.

### ***Entrepreneurial Passion, Entrepreneurial Support Programs and Entrepreneurial Intention***

A review of the literature indicates that entrepreneurial intention depends on entrepreneurial passion (Murad et al., 2021; Karimi, 2020). According to Cardon (2009), individuals with entrepreneurial passion have a strong and positive emotional experience to participate in business-related activities. With the emergence of ideas, potential entrepreneurs develop and translate this into intention and behaviour (Murad et al., 2021; Liu and Gu, 2017). In other words, during the development of entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial passion can lead to a narrower focus on actual venture creation without necessarily considering any contingencies or obstacles attached to it (Biraglia and Kadile, 2017).

Nevertheless, passion may not always have a positive effect on entrepreneurship. The prospect that passion has a dark side has been empirically validated in previous studies that investigated passion in other domains such as sports, music, or work (Cardon et al., 2013; Ho et al., 2011; Philippe et al., 2010). They argue that passion might include detrimental effects with negative

consequences, such as failure to recognize or accept disconfirming evidence and over-commitment despite failing ventures. When confronted with this situation, a passionate disabled person may never develop the right intention that would lead to action (e.g., venture creation). However, with proper care and support (or other applicable forms of entrepreneurial support programs), their talents can be fully harnessed to promote their intention to venture into entrepreneurship, thereby empowering them to contribute to economic and social development (Newman et al., 2021; Anjum et al., 2020; Haruna, 2017).

Entrepreneurial support programs can be an enabler that facilitates entrepreneurial career choices and their implementation by people with disabilities intentions (Malebana, 2020). According to Maria and Allam (2019), entrepreneurial support programs promote intention through indirect learning (e.g., universities' entrepreneurial education). In their argument, they reiterated that the higher the level of entrepreneurial support programs, the higher the level of entrepreneurial practices expected from people with disabilities. In addition, Walter et al. (2013) posited that entrepreneurial support programs (such as education, speeches, competitions, counselling, encouraging commercialization of innovative ideas and material support) could strengthen the intentions of individuals to achieve goals. In line with this, Renko et al. (2016) advocated that entrepreneurial support programs can assist groups within a society (such as those with disabilities in a tertiary institution) to adjust over time through assimilation.

In addition, entrepreneurial support programs reflect the breadth and depth of support for entrepreneurship. This study focuses on strengthening individuals' intentions to achieve their goals. This view builds on the submission of Anjum et al. (2021), Lu et al. (2021), and Maria and Allam (2019) that entrepreneurial support programs play an important role in stimulating students' willingness to start a business. Since entrepreneurial intention is based on the result of individual-

environment interaction, it is not only related to individual motivation and abilities but also closely related to the external environment, especially the institution of the learning environment. According to Renko et al. (2016), entrepreneurial support programs assist groups within a society (such as those with disabilities in a tertiary institution) to adjust over time through assimilation. This suggests that disabled students develop intentions to start their businesses when entrepreneurial support programs are made available to them in learning institutions. Therefore, in the present study attempt has been made to establish the relationships among the study variables. So, the three hypotheses and the conceptual framework (Figure one) of this paper are stated as follows:

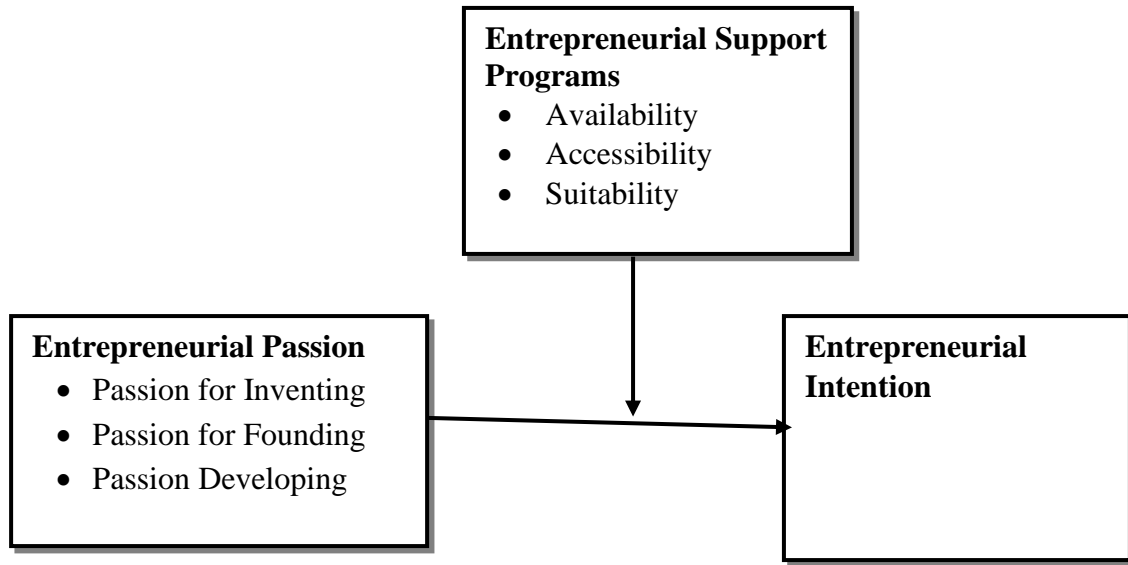
Drawing from the fore mentioned, we hypothesized that:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Entrepreneurial passion and intention of disabled students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are related.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Entrepreneurial support programs and entrepreneurial intention of disabled students of Nigerian tertiary institutions are related.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: Entrepreneurial support programs moderate the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention among disabled students of Nigerian tertiary institutions.*

*Figure One: Conceptual Framework of the study variables*



## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

Data were collected through a survey in November, 2022. A quantitative data collection method was used to produce quantitative descriptions of some aspects of the population and to explain possible relationships between variables (Evans and Rooney, 2013; Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993). The data were collected in a cross-sectional manner using a closed ended questionnaire survey of 209 tertiary institution students with disabilities in Plateau, State Nigeria. A convenience sampling method was employed and the data were collected through a personal approach. This approach was chosen because of the nature of our respondents (blind, partially blind, mobility impaired, deaf, albinos). Furthermore, the management of the institutions were contacted to seek permission and assistance with on-site data collection. The sample characteristics revealed that there were more males (143) than females (66), with the majority belonging to the 21 – 26 age range (M=68.4%; F=31.6%). Regarding the disability category, the majority (45.3%) of the respondents

were mobility impaired and 58.3% acquired their disabilities later in life. Finally, most of the respondents (87.2%) were single.

### ***Operationalization and Measurement of Variables***

The main study variables were measured on a continuous scale using items developed and tested by previous studies. These were anchored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The independent variable for this study is entrepreneurial passion, which was measured using scales developed by Cardon et al. (2012), consisting of 15 items. The scale reliability ( $\alpha$ ) for inventing, founding and developing passion are 0.80, 0.78 and 0.82 respectively, which is above the minimum threshold (Nunnally, 1978). However, a PCA (see Table one) revealed a 11-item, three-factor solution with AVE of 0.52, CR of 0.74 for passion for invention, 0.50 and 0.86 for passion for founding and 0.57 and 0.79 for passion for developing respectively. The initial verification of the inter-item correlation matrix revealed that passion for invention item 'p\_inv2', passion for founding 'p\_fnd3' and passion for developing 'p\_dev1', 'p\_dev6' poorly correlated with other items in the scales (correlation coefficient as low as .25, .17, .32 and .24 respectively) and were deleted. An average of the 4-items represents a measure of passion for invention, an average of the 3-items represents a measure of passion for founding and the corresponding average of the 4-item scale measure developing passion.

The moderating variable which measured entrepreneurial support programs, assessed the entrepreneurial educational support, entrepreneurial activities support and entrepreneurial commercialization support of entrepreneurial support programs (Omer and Aljaaidi, 2020; Jiatong et al., 2021b), consisting of 14 items. The scale reliability ( $\alpha$ ) for entrepreneurial educational support, entrepreneurial activities support and entrepreneurial commercialization support are 0.73,

0.87 and 0.84 respectively, which is above the minimum threshold (Nunnally, 1978). However, a PCA revealed a 11-item, three-factor solution with AVE of 0.57, CR of 0.72 for entrepreneurial educational support, 0.51 and 0.76 for entrepreneurial activities support and 0.56 and 0.69 for entrepreneurial commercialization support respectively. The initial verification of the inter-item correlation matrix revealed that entrepreneurial educational support item 'ees2', entrepreneurial activities support item 'eas4' and entrepreneurial commercialization support item 'ecs5' poorly correlated with other items in the scales (correlation coefficient as low as .25, .31 and .14 respectively) and were deleted. An average of the 4-items represents a measure of entrepreneurial educational support, 3-items represents a measure of entrepreneurial activities support and 4-items represents a measure of entrepreneurial commercialization support.

Finally, the dependent variable, entrepreneurial intention was conceptualized as the desire (intent) of disabled students to search for business opportunities, start their business, and develop their business was measured by adapting the scales developed by (Liñán and Chan, 2009). A PCA revealed a 6-item single factor with AVE of 0.45, CR of 0.89. The initial verification of the inter-item correlation matrix revealed that entrepreneurial intention item 'ein3' poorly correlated with other items in the scales (correlation coefficient as low as .14) and was deleted. An average of the 5-items represents a measure of entrepreneurial intention. The calculated Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was 0.86 above the minimum threshold (Nunnally, 1978). Some minor modifications were made to the scales where necessary to suit the Nigerian context and ensure the respondents were able to understand the questions conceptually.



## *Data Analysis*

This section contains preliminary analysis to assess missing values and test the assumptions of the regression analysis whether the dataset is appropriate for the regression analysis. Missing values analysis was conducted to assess whether the missing values was missing at random. The result indicated that the Little's MCAR was not significant requiring the implementation of the expectation maximization procedure to replace the missing values. The dataset was thereafter subjected to test of normality, linearity, outliers and multicollinearity. The Histogram reasonably indicated normality while the Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual also followed a straight line satisfying the assumption of linearity. Furthermore, the boxplot did not indicate the presence of outliers while multicollinearity was assessed by calculating the Tolerance and VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values. The Tolerance values calculated were 0.765, 0.798, 0.846, 0.832, 0.798 and 0.883 while VIF values were 1.214, 1.176, 1.246, 1.202, 1.252 and 1.132 for passion for developing, passion for inventing, passion for founding, availability, accessibility, and suitability respectively, which were all within the acceptable threshold (Field, 2009; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007), making the dataset appropriate for regression analysis.

The preliminary analysis also focused on testing the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs used in this study. Table one contains the values for AVE and CR relevant in assessing convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was first evaluated by the loadings of the items on their respective factors as Table One indicated. This was further confirmed by the AVE which was all above the minimum threshold value of 0.50 as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The scales therefore, suggest reasonable convergent validity. To test discriminant validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommends that the square root of AVE of a construct should be compared with the correlations between and among the constructs.

*Table One: Exploratory Factor Analysis*

Variable	Loadings	Loadings	Loadings	Loadings	Loadings	Loading	Loadings	AVE	CR
<b>EPINV</b>								<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.74</b>
EP_inv1	.923								
EP_inv3	.716								
EP_inv4	.702								
EP_inv5	.578								
<b>EPND</b>								<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.86</b>
EP_fnd1		.684							
EP_fnd2		.865							
EP_fnd4		.793							
<b>EPDEV</b>		.783							
EP_dev2			.699					<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.79</b>
EP_dev3			.605						
EP_dev4			.772						
EP_dev5			.814						
<b>EES</b>								<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.72</b>
ees1				.927					
ees3				.874					
ees4				.735					
ees5				.802					
<b>EAS</b>								<b>0.51</b>	<b>0.76</b>
eas1						.765			
eas2						.828			
eas3						.559			
<b>ECS</b>								<b>0.56</b>	<b>0.69</b>
ecs1							.694		
ecs2							.735		
ecs3							.781		
ecs4							.822		
<b>EINT</b>							.694	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.89</b>
<b>Ein1</b>								.773	
<b>Ein2</b>								.894	
<b>Ein4</b>								.853	
<b>Ein5</b>								.729	
<b>Ein6</b>								.867	
Cronbach Alpha	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.86</b>		
Eigenvalues	<b>7.11</b>	<b>6.91</b>	<b>6.62</b>	<b>4.58</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>1.45</b>		
% of Variance Extracted	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>29.7%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>		

Descriptive statistics were used to determine sample characteristics. The zero-order correlation analysis was conducted to test the associations between the study variables. In establishing the moderation effect of entrepreneurial support programs in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention, first, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed with the aid of SPSS software version 22 followed by plotting of the interaction graphs. The results section details the tests conducted and the results.

## Results

### *Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Results*

Table Two presents the mean, standard deviation, and zero-order correlation results, showing the relationships between the study variables.

**Table Two: Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlation results**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Entrep Passion (1)	3.29	.542	1.000								
Passn for Dev (2)	3.31	.549	.351**	1.000							
Passn for Invent(3)	3.33	.621	.295**	.295**	1.000						
Passn for Found(4)	3.36	.715	.110*	.544**	.121*	1.000					
Entr Supp Prog (5)	3.45	.691	.377**	.297**	.411**	.190*	1.000				
Availability (6)	3.48	.736	.201*	.287**	.230*	.352*	.356*	1.000			
Accessibility (7)	3.57	.588	.110*	.321**	.224*	.155*	.356*	.137*	1.000		
Suitability (8)	3.64	.737	.148*	.145**	.259*	.141*	.356*	.111*	.130*	1.000	
Entrep Int (9)	3.72	.492	.140**	.244**	.256*	.247*	.356**	.150*	.148*	.188*	1.000

n = 201

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

From the results in Table Two, the means and standard deviations for entrepreneurial passion, entrepreneurial support programs, and entrepreneurial intention of disabled students were 3.28;0.54 3.45;0.691 and 3.72;0.492, respectively. The correlation results showed a significant positive association between the main study variables. Specifically, the results reveal a positive and significant relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention ( $r = .140, p < .01$ ), entrepreneurial passion and support programs ( $r = .377, p < .01$ ), and entrepreneurial support programs and intention ( $r = .356, p < .01$ ). These results indicate that positive changes in entrepreneurial passion and education support programs are associated with positive changes in the entrepreneurial intention of disabled students of Nigerian tertiary institutions.

### ***Regression Analysis***

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed with the aid of SPSS software version 22 to ascertain the contribution of the confounding variables (gender and age), entrepreneurial passion, entrepreneurial support programs and the interaction term in explaining the variations in the entrepreneurial intention of disabled students. The moderated analysis was computed using the PROCESS version 3.2 macro for SPSS. This method provides a structured and standardized approach to conducting moderation analysis, which is essential for understanding the complexities of relationships between variables in social sciences research. It simplifies the process, provides reliable output, and contributes to the rigor and validity of statistical analyses (Hayes, 2018; Neneh, 2022). The results are summarized in Table Three.

**Table Three: Hierarchical Regression Results**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
<b>Variable</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>
Gender	-0.081	0.032	0.076	0.097
Age	0.259	0.095	0.044	0.028
Entrepreneurial Passion		0.667*	0.342*	0.134*
Entrepreneurial Support Programmes			0.507**	0.422*
EP x ESPs				0.378*
R	0.263	0.693	0.779	0.912
R <sup>2</sup>	0.069	0.478	0.510	0.573
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	0.051	0.514	0.587	0.692
R Square change	0.020	0.511	0.465	0.273
F. change	3.1	25.84	31.62	38.64
Sig. F change		0.000	0.000	0.000

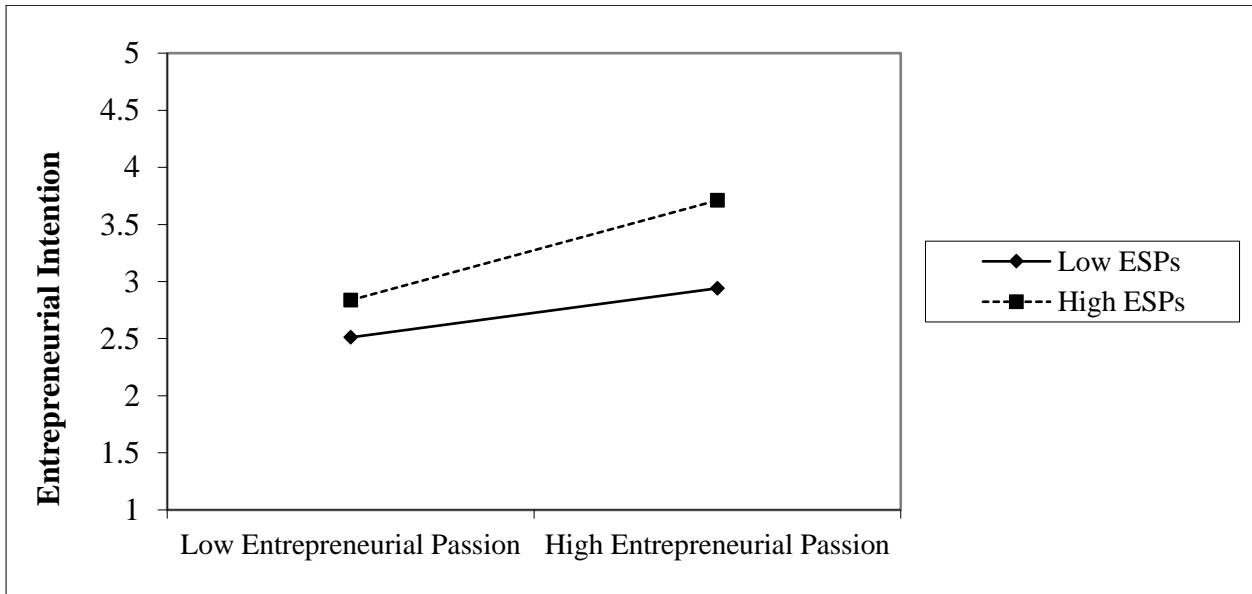
*Dependent variable – Entrepreneurial Intention; \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01.*

The results in Table Three indicate that in Model One, the confounding variables (gender and age) have an insignificant explanatory power of 0.2 percent. This suggests that the effect of the disabled students' gender and age on entrepreneurial intention is inconsequential. Model Two shows that the addition of entrepreneurial passion to the equation accounts for an additional 51 percent of the variance explained by the model. The model also revealed a statistically significant relationship between entrepreneurial passion and disabled students' entrepreneurial intention ( $\beta=.667$ ;  $F\Delta=25.84$ ;  $p<.05$ ), thus providing support for H1. The addition of entrepreneurial support programs in Model 3 reveals an additional 47 percent of variability in entrepreneurial intention ( $\beta=.507$ ;  $F\Delta =$

31.62,  $p < 0.01$ ). Moreover, there is a positive and significant relationship between entrepreneurial support programs and the entrepreneurial intention of students with disabilities, thus supporting H2.

Finally, the moderation results were assessed using Model 4. The addition of the moderating variable (entrepreneurial support programs) in the model reveals an extra 27 percent of the variability in entrepreneurial intention ( $\beta = .378$ ;  $F\Delta = 38.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The results reveal that entrepreneurial support programs significantly moderate the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and the entrepreneurial intention of disabled students, thus lending support to H3. The result of the significant moderation analysis is confirmed by Figure Two, which shows a straight and parallel relationship between low and high levels of entrepreneurial support programs.

**Figure Two: Moderation effect of entrepreneurial support programmes in the relationships between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention**



To better illustrate the moderating effect of entrepreneurial support programs on entrepreneurial passion, we graphed the interaction effects following procedures set forth by Cohen and Cohen (1987). See Figure Two for the resulting graph. We then used methods described by Aiken and West (1991) to test the simple slopes of the graphed interactions to identify if they were significantly different from zero. Significance of the interaction graphs was found. Specifically, the slope significance test demonstrated that higher levels of entrepreneurial passion did improve entrepreneurial intention. As Aiken and West (1991) argue, it is not enough to simply assume that the interaction graph validates, that the change in entrepreneurial intention is significantly different than zero without testing for the significance of the slope. Hypothesis 2 stated that entrepreneurial passion would be positively related to entrepreneurial intention. Hypothesis 2 is supported since a positive main effect of entrepreneurial passion on entrepreneurial intention was observed. Hypothesis 3 stated that entrepreneurial support programs will positively moderate the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention. The interaction of entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial support programs on entrepreneurial intention ( $\beta=0.378$ ) was positive and significant (Figure One). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported. The slope tests confirmed that in the presence of higher levels of entrepreneurial passion, entrepreneurial support programs improved entrepreneurial intention. The slope test also demonstrated that in the presence of low passion, ESPs moderated and improved the relationship with entrepreneurial intention.

## **Discussion**

This research examined the influence of entrepreneurial passion on entrepreneurial intention across a group of Nigerian people with disabilities in tertiary education. The theory of planned behaviour, which postulates that the intention to become an entrepreneur is a result of subjective

norms (for instance, support through entrepreneurial programs) guided this research. Specifically, the individual effects of both entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial support programs on entrepreneurial intention were tested, as well as the moderating effect of entrepreneurial support programs on the entrepreneurial passion - entrepreneurial intention relationship. As hypothesized, entrepreneurial passion positively influenced entrepreneurial intention, in line with the findings of other researchers who researched samples not affected with disabilities (e.g., Iyortsuun and Shakpende, 2022; Murad et al., 2021; Karimi, 2020; Syed et al., 2020; Fellnhofer, 2017; Liu and Gu, 2017; Cardon, 2009). This finding helps to move the literature forward and addresses a question posed by Jammaers and Zanoni (2020) as to whether passion plays an influential role in entrepreneurship in those with disabilities, given the multiple barriers they face to enter entrepreneurship. High levels of entrepreneurial passion have the potential to be useful for those facing challenges and barriers, as it has been found to support overcoming restraints in challenging environments (Ciambotti et al., 2022). This research suggests that developing entrepreneurial passion can be an important way in supporting those with disabilities into entrepreneurship and facilitating their passage into viable employment and the economic mainstream. However, it has been suggested that when faced with too many, or perceived overwhelming, barriers and challenges to entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial passion can wane and this can have an impact on entrepreneurial venturing (Abebe et al., 2020). As entrepreneurial passion is dynamic and constantly evolving (Murphy, 2022), it is important to ensure that it is developed and nurtured in a supportive and inclusive manner.

Passion and interest for entrepreneurship can be developed through active engagement in entrepreneurship, which can be achieved through active learning environments in which students are introduced to applied activities, resources, and guidance through which they can act, reflect,



assess, and learn through experience (Bell, 2015). Whilst, supporting engagement with entrepreneurship can be challenging, it has the potential to develop and spark entrepreneurial interest and passion, which can lead to the development of entrepreneurial intention and potentially subsequent entrepreneurial action. Also, the main effect of entrepreneurial support programs was positive, aligning with the mainstream entrepreneurship education literature, which has primarily been drawn from studies of institutions of learning. We suggest here that entrepreneurial programs designed to support disabled students will help them develop businesses in pre-start, start-up, and ongoing situations. This is because entrepreneurial support programs are enablers that facilitate the entrepreneurial career choice and implementation of intentions, in our case, students with disabilities. The results obtained in this study support similar conclusions and results from the work of Anjum et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2021; and Malebana, 2020- although the contexts are different (Pakistan, China and South Africa). As such, it is important to point out that the current study equally makes a contextual contribution by enriching the existing literature from a different context (Nigeria).

Even though there are considerable efforts to understand the association between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention, Barba-Sanchez et al. (2022) and Neneh (2022) argued that association does not always hold under certain circumstances. Hence, little empirical research has examined moderators of the entrepreneurial passion–entrepreneurial intention link. As such, perhaps the most important contribution of this research is the results of our examination of entrepreneurial support programs as a moderator of the link between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention. Our findings indicate that entrepreneurial support programs appear to moderate the effects of entrepreneurial passion on entrepreneurial intention, which directly addresses Renko et al.'s (2016) calls for a novel approach to supporting persons with disabilities in

entrepreneurial activities (i.e., empirical research on the moderators of the passion – entrepreneurial intention link). This finding suggests that entrepreneurial support programs are an important tool for supporting those with disabilities into entrepreneurship, through supporting the development of entrepreneurial intention.

The study also contributes to the literature by underscoring the value of creating an enabling environment that will enhance the desire of students with disabilities to venture into business. Furthermore, since entrepreneurial intention is anchored on the result of individual-environment interaction, it is not only related to individual motivation and abilities but also closely related to the external environment, especially the institution of the learning environment. Consequently, the benefits to develop the intention to start a business by disabled students can be achieved when entrepreneurial support programs (such as education, speeches, competitions, counselling, and material support) are made available to them by the institutions of learning in Nigeria. Thus, there should be deliberate commitment by the university stakeholders to interact and institute the ideas of entrepreneurship programs that reflect the breadth and depth of support for entrepreneurship needs/peculiarities of students with disabilities.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

This work addresses calls to identify influences and determine factors which can influence and support entrepreneurship of individuals with physical disabilities (Saxena and Pandya, 2018) and to further our understanding of how those with physical disabilities can be effectively supported into entrepreneurship (Dakung et al., 2022). The findings and discussion above lead to the conclusion that entrepreneurial support programs are a moderator in the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and the entrepreneurial intention of physically disabled students in Nigerian tertiary

institutions. From a theoretical perspective, the key contribution of this study relates to the earlier observation that there has been insufficient research focusing on the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention in a developing economy, where entrepreneurship might be a necessity rather than driven by passion (Amoros et al., 2019) and within samples where barriers to entrepreneurship are present, such as those with disabilities (Jammaers and Zanoni, 2020). In this regard, this study extends research about the entrepreneurial passion and intention nexus into new territory. Finding that passion is important in supporting the entrepreneurial intention of people with disabilities in the context of a developing country and entrepreneurial support programs can further enhance entrepreneurial intention. These findings lay the groundwork for recommendations as to how those with disabilities can be supported into entrepreneurship and increased economic engagement within society. The findings highlight the need for policy makers to support those with disabilities to develop entrepreneurial passion and ensure that inclusive support programs are in place to help create a path to encourage people with disabilities into entrepreneurship.

For Nigerian tertiary institutions, this study provides empirical evidence indicating entrepreneurial support programs act as a moderator of the entrepreneurial intention of physically disabled students. In addition, entrepreneurial support programs are enablers that facilitate the entrepreneurial career choice and implementation of disabled students' intentions. Therefore, policymakers and the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria should consider implementing and consolidating various support programs to determine possible changes to enhance the entrepreneurial intention of disabled students. This, together with an inclusive approach to entrepreneurship education (Dakung et al., 2022), and an institutional entrepreneurial ecosystem with links to external partners in industry and commerce, can help to encourage the development of

both passion and entrepreneurial intent (Bell, 2019). Support programs and entrepreneurial ecosystems should be tailored to participants and allow participants to take advantage of relevant technology (Hsieh et al., 2019). For example, support and training on artificial intelligence could be particularly beneficial for those with disabilities, as artificial intelligence has the potential to support entrepreneurs in some tasks and such assistive technology could be used to overcome some of the challenges which might be associated with disabilities (Short and Short, 2023; Bell and Bell, 2023).

Whilst the research sample was built of individuals with physical disabilities in Nigeria, the research has the potential for some generalisability. The findings might be generalizable to those with disabilities in other similar geographical contexts and potentially other marginalised groups who might struggle to enter entrepreneurship or meaningful employment. Future research could explore whether findings might be different in contexts where there are different levels and types of support for those with disabilities.

Additionally, the study has some limitations which could provide fruitful avenues for future research. First, this study lacked cross-validation. The extant literature is replete with studies on factors explaining the entrepreneurial intention of students, especially in African countries. Consequently, the limited literature available, especially in a developing country context, deprives the study of the opportunity to cross-validate the present study findings. Further studies should be conducted to confirm these results. Second, a cross-sectional survey design was employed; therefore, the study was limited to a particular measurement. Given that perceptions and beliefs change over time, longitudinal research is required. This approach did not allow clear causal attributions for the observed relationships. Additionally, this research conducted statistical analysis using a PROCESS macro, which whilst has some advantages and is an approach commonly used within entrepreneurship research (e.g., Ip and Liang, 2023; Mitra et al., 2022; Neneh, 2022), it has

some limitations as it is susceptible to bias in effect estimations due to random measurement error and provides an unstandardised beta score (Hayes et al., 2017). Finally, the model explained 57 percent of the variance in entrepreneurial passion. Therefore, future studies should explore other factors.

General frameworks and guidance are presented within the literature for delivering effective entrepreneurial support programs and learning (Bell and Bell, 2020), given that previous research has highlighted and suggested a need to tailor and adjust support for disabled entrepreneur's (Dakung et al., 2022). It would be beneficial for future research to explore in detail as to how tertiary institutions in Nigeria can focus and support the commercialization of innovative ideas of students with physical disabilities.

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