

# **LINKING ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE YOUTH TO ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION: THE MODERATING ROLES OF ENTREPRENEURIAL PERCEPTION AND ECOSYSTEM.**

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## **Abstract**

Graduate unemployment has gained currency in Ghana with graduates from tertiary institutions finding it extremely difficult to get employment. In the face of limited employment opportunities entrepreneurship has been touted as a viable alternative to wage employment. This study investigates the intentions of final year technical university students in Ghana to opt for self-employment or become entrepreneurs. It investigates the linkages between entrepreneurial characteristics, entrepreneurial perception and entrepreneurial intention. The study also explores the mediating role of entrepreneurial perception as well as the moderating role of entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The study used the mixed method approach to explore the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study analysis was conducted using the path analysis. The findings of the study revealed that internal locus of control and risk-taking propensity are important determiners of entrepreneurial perception among Ghanaian technical university students. Also, entrepreneurial perception is found to be positively related to entrepreneurial intention. This implies that students of technical universities have positive perception and intention toward becoming entrepreneurs. However, the study did not find support for the moderating role of entrepreneurial ecosystem that will facilitate the emergence of businesses by students. This hypothesis was not supported because the students indicated that even though they have entrepreneurial intentions it was not easy to access funds and resources from agencies such as National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program, and National Board for Small Scale Industries mandated to facilitate the setting up of businesses by young graduates. Moreover, these agencies have become politicized, thus they are ineffective in assisting young graduates realize their dream of setting up their businesses. Thus, the conducive entrepreneurial environment that could moderate the setting up of businesses by the youth is not available to them. The study advocates for policy measures to resource institutions and agencies mandated to facilitate the setting up of businesses by young graduates, with the necessary funds and logistics to be able to prosecute their mandate.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial intention; entrepreneurial characteristics; entrepreneurial perception; entrepreneurial ecosystem.