



Entrepreneurship Education and Student Intention to Launch a Business: Does Entrepreneurial Knowledge and Skills Acquisition Act as a Mediator?

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Abstract: This paper examined the mediating role of entrepreneurship knowledge and skill acquisition (EKSA) in the interaction between entrepreneurship education (EE) and students' intention to launch a business (SILB), in the case of Nigeria. A quantitative correlational design was adopted for the study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire for data collection was validated once by three experts, two from the field of business education and one from the field of measurement and assessment. Pearson's correlation statistic, linear regression statistic and bias-corrected bootstrapping technique were performed to analyse the data collected from a randomly selected sample of 412 university students. The results of the Pearson's correlation analysis showed a significant correlation among EE, EKSA and SILB. The results of the linear regression analysis also indicated a significant association among EE, EKSA and SILB. The results of the bias corrected bootstrapping technique also showed that EKSA mediates the association between EE and SILB. The results showed the extent of association between EE and SILB and offer some logical implications for curriculum designers, university students and university administrators. This study contributed significantly to EE, EKSA and SILB literature.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, knowledge and skills acquisition, launch a business, students' intention

1. Introduction

Recently, the alarming rates of joblessness and underemployment have become critical issues which require attention. Successive government have attempted to devise various measures to overcome the alarming rates of joblessness and underemployment engulfing most youths, especially in developing countries. One of the strategic measures that the government has taken to curb the alarming rates of unemployment and underemployment is to ensure that all youths are entrepreneurially oriented by including an entrepreneurship education programme (EE) in the curriculum of every university. EE programme is delivered to assist in equipping higher education students with the information and capabilities to partake in entrepreneurial profession and lifetime studying after graduation (Edokpolor & Somorin, 2017; Edokpolor & Abusomwan, 2017; Edokpolor & Muritala, 2018; Wenstrom et al., 2018; Edokpolor, 2020). In developing countries like Nigeria, the fact has been revealed that the number of university graduates turned out yearly do not seem to acquire the relevant knowledge and skills that would encourage them to startup and manage a new business and become entrepreneurs upon graduation. Existing studies pointed out that there is a gap in the knowledge and skills acquired by university graduates and the knowledge and skills required to start and manage a new business and become entrepreneurs (Edokpolor & Somorin, 2017; Edokpolor & Omiunu, 2017; Okolie et al., 2020; Edokpolor, 2020; Okolie et al., 2020; Otache, 2022).

More recently, the entire number of university graduates who are unemployed was put at 40.1% (2,382,052 in terms of people) and the total number of university graduates who are underemployed was put at 12.5% (741,208 in terms of people) in the fourth quarter of 2021 (Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This report revealed how graduates from the universities in Nigeria are ill-equipped about the requisite knowledge and skills and exert low intentions to begin a new business. However, it is hoped that the effective implementation of functional EE in the university system may salvage the alarming costs of underemployment and joblessness among graduates of higher education institutions. Therefore, the factor responsible for the alarming costs of underemployment and joblessness among graduates of higher education institutions is largely subjective and driven by their level of exposure to EE programmes, which appears to be defective in nature (Ogege, 2011; ILO, 2013; Hwang, 2017; Onoyase, 2019; Dada, 2020).

In developing countries, EE programme appear to be surrounded by some irregularities ranging from epileptic power supply in the incubation centres; overcrowded classrooms; inappropriate teaching methods; poor attitude toward EE programme; low competent lecturers/instructors; lack of entrepreneurs in the management of EE programme; to lack of linkages to specific field of study. These issues and challenges seem to be the reasons for the existence of a dysfunctional EE in the university system as well as responsible for the low knowledge and skills acquired by university students and graduates. As such, this situation seems to largely hinder a student intention to launch a business (SILB) enterprise upon graduation. A student who participated in the current EE programme may not be strong enough to face the labour market competition, such as the uncertainty of employment situation currently experienced in Nigeria.

The huge gap between the knowledge and skills acquired by a student and those required to start a new business exist because such a student is prepared for the 21st century world of work using an abstract-based curriculum that suite the 20th century workplace. This curriculum tends to prepare university students to become effective servants who act as effective followers to few 'entrepreneurs' (Ile & Edokpolor, 2020). This means that university students participated in a dysfunctional EE programme whose curriculum or learning system is dominated by theories in the classroom.

The effective implementation of functional EE programme at the university level is very necessary in developing entrepreneurial knowledge and skills among university students. Despite the recognition that functional EE programme influences SILB, the mechanism underlying this interplay remains unclear and under-explored. EE programmes have attracted so many research that investigate the influence of EE programme on SILB (Otache, 2019; Otache et al., 2019; Otache et al., 2020; Yahya et al., 2023), leaving a void in the literature regarding the mediating impact of entrepreneurial expertise and competencies acquisition. However, a university-based EE has not received the bulk of research attention or support, despite the fact that government and other major stakeholders have expressed their feelings that to salvage the issues of joblessness and underemployment, there is need for the implementation of functional EE programme in the university system. However, it is believed that the requisite stock of entrepreneurial human capital (for example, knowledge and skills) can be acquired whenever students participate in or are exposed to a functional EE programme.

Although the alleged consequences of EE programme have been established by academic scholars and practitioners, yet there has been little rigorous research on its mechanisms. In recent time, the findings related to the interaction between EE and SILB are blended and unclear (Hassan et al., 2021; Otache et al., 2022), which implied that more rigorous studies are required. For instance, one stream of research showed a significant interplay between EE and SILB (Biemans et al., 2016; Westhead & Solesvik, 2016; Harti et al., 2022; Sarooghi et al., 2019; Ahmed, et al., 2020; Maresch, et al., 2016). The results explained the role of EE in developing entrepreneurial knowledge and skills as well as SILB. Yet, another stream of research found a non-significant interplay between EE and SILB (Otache et al., 2019; Tung et al., 2020; Oosterbeek et al., 2010; Souitaris et al., 2007).

Some scholars also found out that the interplay between EE and SILB can be established through the integration of intervening (that is, mediating or moderating) variable(s). For instance, a stream of research confirmed the mediating roles of self-efficacy, studying orientation, risk-taking capability, entrepreneurial attitudes, pro-activeness and perceived behavioural control in the interplay between EE and SILB (Adu et al., 2020; Hoang, 2020; Puni, et al., 2018). Similarly, research confirmed the moderating roles of gender, household background, age, instructional support, way of life and mentorship in the interplay between EE and SILB (Farrington et al., 2012; Feder & Nitu-Antomie, 2017; Gelaidan & Abdullateef, 2017; Sesen, 2012; Uddin & Bose, 2012). Research also showed how entrepreneurial motivation mediates the relationships among innovation, EE and SILB in vocational high school. Yet, some other research confirmed that entrepreneurial orientation and entrepreneurial motivation mediates the affiliation between EE and SILB (Otache et al., 2022). Taken together, these research reports provided the understanding that examining the role of intervening variable(s) in the relationship between EE and SILB is extra complicated than a direct or easy relationship. It is on this premise that some researchers cautioned that a built-in method be adopted when inspecting a direct relationship between EE and SILB (Otache et al., 2019).

It is evident, at this present time that the extent to which EKSA can be said to influence the interplay between EE and SILB requires further research. Hence, EKSA was adopted in this present study to mediate the interaction between EE and SILB. Therefore, the reason for conducting this study is twofold: First, to examine the extent of interplay

among EE, EKSA and SILB; and (2) to investigate the extent to which EKSA mediate the association between EE and SILB.

2. Underpinning Theories

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The TPB is a widely applied theory postulated by Ajzen (1991) used in studying various human behavioural intentions in different domains or contexts. Pugh & Adkins (2020) depict that the TPB has been widely used by entrepreneurship scholars to describe human intentions to launch a business. The theoretical emergence of the TPB is derived from the theory of reasoned action (TRA). Like the TRA, the TPB posited that the three predictors of behavioural intention are attitudes toward behaviour (ATB), subjective norms (SN) and perceived behavioural control (PBC). ATB refers to human's contrast of whether or not it is beneficial or adverse to function a given behaviour. SN refers to human judgment about whether or not a person must or have to operate a given behaviour. SN represents an important predictor of behavioural intention in the TPB postulated by Ajzen (1991). The relationship between SN and behavioural intention has been established in different field of research. For instance, some studies suggested that SN were significant predictor of SILB (Ahmed et al., 2020; Maresch et al., 2016). PBC refers to the extent to which an individual feel successful to function or operate a given behaviour. Ajzen (2011) depicted that PBC is a key determinant of individual's intention to function any types of behaviour. Recent studies validated that EE is vital in predicting SILB (Ndofirepi, 2020; Shah et al., 2020). An earlier study argued that behavioural modifications in the form of EKSA could play an important role in predicting any kind of behaviour (Ajzen, 1988). This implied that the TPB was postulated to predict human behaviour in specific domains or contexts. For instance, the TPB has been used to support some specific behaviours such as career self-efficacy intention (Hackett & Betz, 1981) and entrepreneurial intention (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994). Therefore, SILB could be influenced by EE and EKSA. For example, EE provides an opportunity for students to acquire entrepreneurial skills and knowledge (Edokpolor & Somorin, 2017; Edokpolor, 2020) and, in turn, influences SILB (Okolie et al., 2021; Otache, 2019a). More importantly, the EKSA via EE can motivate students to make informed choices to start a business (Ndofirepi, 2020). More so, studies have confirmed that EE and EKSA influence SILB (Bolton & Lane, 2012; Sahoo & Panda, 2018; Solesvik, 2013). The TPB supported the present study in that the acquisition of knowledge and skills via education and experience can motivate students to make the informed choices to launch a business. As a result, this present study assumes that students' intentions to make the informed choices could be fostered through the acquisition of knowledge and skills through education and experience.

2.2 Human Capital Theory (HCT)

The HCT is a theory that has received accelerated attention in entrepreneurship research and was postulated by Becker (1964, 1973). Human capital consists of the stock of knowledge and skills that resides in the minds of individuals (Becker, 1964). Human capital can be developed or generated through education and life experience (Becker, 1994). HCT posited that folks with greater degree of human capital will reap extra fine effects (Becker, 1964). HCT posits that people with greater level of human capital (in the form of expertise and competencies obtained by using education, training and experience) are rapid to make decisions to begin a new business. The acquisition of knowledge and skills by an individual through education and life experience will allow him or her to make a quick decision to start a business. The term experience encompasses industry work experience and other forms of practical learning that takes place in the workplace and non-formal education such as training. However, an individual's exposure to industrial work experience and education in general has been theorized to increase their stock of human capital (Becker, 1964). This assumption implied that through entrepreneurship education and training, individuals develop requisite knowledge and skills that facilitate the decisions to start a business. The HCT is related to the present study in that SILB could be influenced by the stock of HC (i.e., knowledge and skills) acquired through education and experience. As a result, this present study assumes that SILB could be fostered through the accumulation of HC (i.e., knowledge and skills) acquired through education and experience.

3. Conceptual Clarification

3.1 Entrepreneurship Education

The place of EE is growing rapidly, probably conveying advantageous outcomes to education, innovation and economics (Mendonça et al., 2022). In order to give participants the skills to build something new or incorporate something new into an existing product; to solve problems and find entrepreneurial possibilities, there is need for EE to cut across all academic fields (Edokpolor & Somorin, 2017). Because to a great extent education gives students the tools (knowledge and skills) they need to launch a firm, EE is crucial for promoting entrepreneurial activities (Dogan, 2015). EE as a form of instruction intended to change students' perspectives by giving them the tools (knowledge and skills) to begin a business (Sulaiman & Wan-Fauziah, 2013; Abiodun-Oyebanji & Omojola, 2018) This means that EE

is essential in giving university students the tools (capabilities and competencies) they require to launch a business once they graduate. In a demanding and challenging study environment, EE offers students a realistic opportunity to build entrepreneurial knowledge and abilities. The goal of EE is to help people become more entrepreneurial so they can effectively launch a business. (Chhabra et al., 2020). Taken together, EE cultivates the abilities that allow people to engage meaningfully in all facets of life, produce something admirable and significant, and achieve financial independence, personal fulfillment, or both (Steenekamp, 2013). An important premise of EE is that people can acquire entrepreneurial knowledge and skills (Sirelkhathim & Gangi, 2015) through hands-on learning. In support of this, a previous study observed that students who participated in EE were extremely zealous to launch a firm after graduation as an end result of their high level of entrepreneurial abilities (Sanchez, 2011).

3.2 Knowledge and Skills Acquisition

The competencies students need to launch a firm are referred to as entrepreneurial talents (Edokpolor & Chukwuedo, 2018). Core skills, lifestyle and professional skills, knowledge acquisition and innovation skills, and information, media and technical skills are four categories of entrepreneurial abilities (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008). Entrepreneurship abilities are frequently categorized as non-cognitive skills (Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, 2013). Non-cognitive skills were defined as socio-emotional characteristics and actions, or "soft" talents. Communication, creativity and innovation, teamwork and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, desirability and feasibility, ICT literacy, social and cross-cultural, studying and self-direction, administration and leadership, flexibility and adaptability are just a few of the traits that can be used to gauge an individual's entrepreneurial skills. These abilities would give pupils a fantastic opportunity to make wise decisions to launch a business. The development of productive capacities and the promotion of business creation, which expands the pool of opportunities available to all people and gives them the opportunity partake in and benefit from sustainable development, are two ways that entrepreneurial skills contribute to social outcomes (United Nations, 2016). It is broadly stated that EE will alternate graduates from job seekers to enterprise proprietors and furnish them the chance to make knowledgeable selection about beginning their very own entrepreneurial company.

3.3 Intention to Launch a Business

For many years, scholars and practitioners defined intention to launch a business as the wish to personally own a business enterprise (Crant, 1996), or to begin a new one (Krueger et al., 2000). This notion was later described as a self-acknowledged conviction held via an individual who personally and consciously plan to launch a business task at some time in the future (Thompson, 2009). The selection to commence a business enterprise requires cautious planning (Bird, 1988), and this technique makes beginning an entrepreneurial business a planned and deliberate intention. Based on this assertion, it is essential to comprehend that the choice or intention to begin a new entrepreneurial business or business enterprise is voluntary or deliberate (Krueger et al., 2000). And due to the fact that it is a deliberate decision, one can predict and recognize it via a specific theory and a model of intention and behaviour.

A schematic model was developed by the authors through which the connectivity among the variables of the study is embedded and explained. The model describes the link between EE and student intention to begin a business enterprise and the mediating effect of EKSA in such a relationship. The underlying assumptions are that when university students participate in functional-oriented EE programme, they will acquire with the requisite knowledge and skills, which would reinforce their intention to begin a business enterprise. In contrast to this, when EE programme is defective in nature, knowledge and skills acquired by university students could be hindered, which would further lower their intention to launch a business enterprise. Another underlying assumption is that the relationship between university students' participation in a functional-oriented EE programme and the intention to begin a business enterprise could be established by the knowledge and skills acquired by the university students.

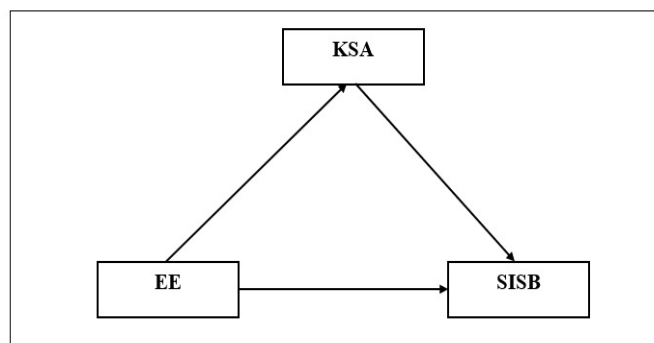


Fig. 1 - Proposed hypothesised model

- H1. EE will significantly associate with EKSA.
 H2. EE will significantly associate with SILB.
 H3. EKSA will significantly associate with SILB.
 H4. EKSA will significantly mediate the association between EE and SILB.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

A descriptive correlation design was employed in the study. The study is descriptive and correlational in nature because it quantitatively describes the link between and among all the study variables (e.g., EE, EKSA and SILB). The degree to which the predictor variable (i.e., EE), the mediator variable (i.e., EKSA) predict the outcome variable (i.e., SILB) was represented as correlational coefficient (r).

4.2 Research Participants

The participants comprised of 412 university students from different faculties. A random sampling technique was applied because the students were a defined group (400L and 500L students) who had previously taken part in an EE programme at the university. The demographic characteristics of the participants comprises of gender, age and faculty (Table 1).

Table 1 - Demographic characteristics of the research participants

Demographics	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	191	46
	Female	221	54
Age	20 - 25 years	237	58
	26 - 30 years	107	26
	31 - 35 years	35	08
	36 - 40 years	21	05
	41 years and above	12	03
Faculty	Arts and Education	95	23
	Agriculture and Agricultural Technology	08	02
	Law	67	16
	Sciences	84	20
	Social and Management Sciences	106	26
	Engineering	52	13

4.3 Research Instruments

Data had been gathered from the research participants via the use of a structured questionnaire. Questionnaires have been administered personally by the authors and four assistants to the research participants and have been advised that the questionnaire was for research functions only. The respondents had been additionally informed that their participation was once voluntary and their anonymity is tremendously guaranteed, as they had not requested to supply any means of identification like their names and matriculation numbers. The predictor variable (i.e., EE) was once measured with six items adapted from Lorz (2011). One of the items in the instrument reads "My University offers project work focused on entrepreneurship". The items have been measured on a 5-point Likert scale, the place of 1 characterize as strongly disagree and 5 signify strongly agree. The unique scale had a Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$. However, the study reported the coefficient alpha value for the overall reliability to check the instrument's internal consistency, e.g. EE (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$). The mediator variable (i.e., EKSA) was measured with four items constructed by the authors. One of the items reads "Entrepreneurship education in your institution enhances your practical management skills in order to begin a business enterprise". The items have been measured on a 5-point Likert scale, the place of 1 characterize as strongly disagree and 5 signify strongly agree. However, this study reported the coefficient alpha value for the overall reliability to check the instrument's internal consistency, e.g., EKSA (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$). The outcome variable (i.e., SILB) was once measured with a set of six items adapted from Linan & Chen (2009). One of the items from the instrument reads "I am equipped to do something to be an entrepreneur". The items have been measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The places of 1 represent strongly disagree and 5 represent strongly agree. The authentic instrument had a Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$. However, this study reported the coefficient alpha value for the overall reliability to check the instrument's internal consistency, e.g., SILB (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$).

4.4 Data Analysis

The IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v. 23.0 and PROCESS Macro plugging for SPSS v. 3.4.1 by Hayes (2013) were used as the statistical packages for data analyses. The statistics employed to perform the analyses were Pearson’s correlation, linear regression and 10000 re-samples bias corrected (BC) bootstrapping regression estimate. Pearson’s correlation was performed to answer the research questions raised in the study. Linear regression analysis was performed to test the unmediated hypotheses formulated in the study. Model 4 of a non-parametric re-samples BC bootstrapping regression estimate was performed to test the significance of the direct and indirect effects. As recommended by Uzoagulu (2011), Pearson’s correlation analysis can be performed to measure the strength of associations among variables based on a range of coefficient r-value in the following order: coefficients r-value between ± .8 and ± 1.0 means very high correlation; ± .6 and ± .8 means high correlation; ± .4 and ± .6 means moderate correlation; ± .2 and ± .4 means low correlation; ± .0 and ± .2 means very low correlation; ± 1.0 means perfect correlation; and coefficient r-value of 0 means no correlation. Note that when a coefficient r-value is a negative value, it is a negative correlation; which means also that as one variable increases the other decreases. When a coefficient r-value is a positive value, it is a positive correlation; which means that as one variable increases the other increases as well. For regression analysis, the probability *p*-value less than or equal to .05 implies significant (reject H0), while the probability *p*-value greater than .05 implies not significant (accept H0). For the BC bootstrapping regression estimate, if the values of the confidence interval (CI) (LL - lower limit and UL - upper limit) fall within the same axis (that is, not including zero value), it means that the hypothesized relationship would be significant (accept H0). If CI values are across axes (that is, including zero value), it means that the hypothesized relationship would be significant (reject H0).

5. Results

Table 1 - Bootstrapping and Pearson’s correlation between the study variables

S/N	Variables	10000 Resample Bootstrapping Iterations		Remark
		Pearson <i>r</i>	<i>p</i> - value	
1.	EE → SILB	.689**	.000	High Correlation
2.	EE → EKSA	.716**	.000	High Correlation
3.	EKSA → SILB	.757**	.000	High Correlation

Note. *N* = 412, *p* < 0.05, EE = Entrepreneurship Education, EKSA = Entrepreneurial Knowledge and Skills Acquisition, SILB = Students Intentions of Launching a Business.

Table 1 presents the relationships among and between the study's variables. The Table demonstrates the correlation between EE and SILB as positively high (*r* = .689, *p* = .000). The Table also shows that the correlation between EE and EKSA is positively high (*r* = .716, *p* = .000). Further analysis also shows that the correlation between EKSA and SILB is positively high (*r* = .757, *p* = .000). By and large, there is empirical evidence of a high correlation between the study variables.

Table 2 - Linear regression estimates of the direct relationship between the study variables

Pathways	SE (β)	<i>T</i>	Bias	<i>R</i> ²	Adj <i>R</i> ²	<i>P</i>	Bootstrap with BCa 95% CI	
							Lower Limit	Upper Limit
EE → SILB	.060 (.689)	19.272	.002	.689	0.474	.000	0.836	1.070
EE → EKSA	.040 (.716)	20.779	.000	.513	0.512	.000	0.522	0.677
EKSA → SILB	.066 (.757)	23.435	-.001	.573	0.572	.000	1.115	1.375

Note. *N* = 412, *p* < 0.05, EE = Entrepreneurship Education (*F*=371,415), EKSA = Entrepreneurial Knowledge and Skills Acquisition (*F*=431,752), SILB = Students’ Intentions of Launching a Business (*F*=549,179), BCa = Bias-Corrected and Accelerated Estimates, CI = Confidence Interval.

Table 2 reveals that EE (*F* (1, 411) = 371,415, SE = .060, β = .689, *t* = 19.272, 95% LLCI = .836 – ULCI = 1.070) had a significant positive influence on SILB. The adjusted R-square (.474) reveals that 47.4% of the variance in SILB is influenced by EE. The results of the 10000-resample bootstrap coefficients for EE influencing SILB (bias = .002, *p* = .000) were statistically significant. All in all, the results confirmed the expectations of the authors. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted in the study.

Table 2 also reveals that EE (*F* (1, 411) = 431,752, SE = .040, β = .716, *t* = 20.779, 95% LLCI = .522 – ULCI = .677) had a significant positive influence on EKSA. The adjusted R-square (.512) reveals that 51.2% of the variance in EKSA is influenced by EE. The results of the 10000-resample bootstrap coefficients for EE influencing EKSA (bias =

.000, $p = .000$) were statistically significant. All in all, the results confirmed the expectations of the authors. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is accepted in the study.

Further analysis also reveals that EKSA ($F(1, 411) = 549.179$, $SE = .066$, $\beta = .757$, $t = 23.435$, 95% LLCI = 1.115 – ULCI = 1.375) had a significant positive influence on SILB. The adjusted R-square (.572) reveals that 57.2% of the variance in EKSA is influenced by SILB. The results of the 10000-resample bootstrap coefficients for EKSA influencing SILB (bias = -.001, $p = .000$) were statistically significant. All in all, the results confirmed the expectations of the authors. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is accepted in the study.

Table 3 - Mediating effect of EKSA in the relationship between EE and SILB

Pathways/Effects	Estimates (β)	SE	P	Bootstrap with BCa 95% CI	
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Total effect					
EE → SILB	0.949	0.049	0.000	1.046	0.233
Direct effects					
EE → EKSA	0.598	0.029	0.000	0.541	0.654
EE → SILB	0.417	0.060	0.000	0.298	0.535
EKSA → SILB	0.890	0.072	0.000	0.748	1.032
Indirect effect					
EE → EKSA → SILB	0.532	0.018	<i>Sig.</i>	0.373	0.698

Note. $N = 412$, $p < 0.05$, EE = Entrepreneurship Education, EKSA = Entrepreneurial Knowledge and Skills Acquisition, SILB = Students' Intentions of Launching a Business, BCa = Bias-Corrected and Accelerated Estimates, CI = Confidence Interval.

The data in Table 3 reveals that EE had a significant positive effect on SILB ($\beta = 0.949$, $SE = 0.049$; $p = 0.000$, 95% CI = [1.046-0.233]). Also, Table 3 reveals that the direct effect of EE on SILB ($\beta = 0.417$, $SE = 0.060$; $p = 0.000$, 95% CI = [0.298-0.535]) were statistically significant. Table 3 also reveals that the indirect effect of EE on SILB via EKSA ($\beta = 0.532$, $SE = 0.018$; $p < 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.373-0.698]) were statistically significant. However, since the direct effect of EE on SILB ($\beta = 0.417$, $SE = 0.060$; $p = 0.000$, 95% CI = [0.298-0.535]) is statistically significant; the direct effect of EE on EKSA ($\beta = 0.598$, $SE = 0.029$; $p = 0.000$, 95% CI = [0.541-0.654]) is statistically significant; and the direct effect of EKSA on SILB ($\beta = 0.890$, $SE = 0.072$; $p = 0.000$, 95% CI = [0.748-1.032]) is statistically significant, EKSA is regarded as a full and potential mediator in the relationship. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is accepted in the study.

6. Discussions of Findings

What is the role of EKSA in the relationship between EE and SILB? To answer this question, this study adopted a descriptive correlational research design to explore the mediating role EKSA on the relationship between EE and SILB. Concerning the relationship between EE and SILB, the result shows that EE had a significant positive influence on SILB (H1). This confirms that student's exposure to, or participation in a functional EE influences their decisions of starting a new business after graduation. This finding also implies that EE predicts SILB. Given the majority of favorable reports, this outcome was anticipated by previous studies as regards the influence of EE on SILB (Volery, Müller, Oser, et al., 2013; Anosike, 2019; Otache, 2019; Otache, et al., 2019; Otache, et al., 2020).

Additionally, EE had a significant positive influence on EKSA (H2). The result suggests that EE influences EKSA, which will reinforce their confidence and determination of starting a business after graduation. This means that EE predicts EKSA. The finding is consistent with those of previous studies (Chell, 2013; Edokpolor, 2020; Anosike, 2019). For example, Edokpolor (2020) recently reported a positive relationship between EE and EKSA among university undergraduates in Nigeria.

Further result showed that EKSA had a significant positive influence on SILB (H3) and EKSA significantly mediated the link or association between EE and SILB (H4). These results indicate that EE influences EKSA, in turn, reinforces SILB after graduation. All these findings suggest that EKSA help to boost the significant and positive influence of EE on SILB. These findings reveal that there is a connection between EE and SILB and were fully mediated by EKSA. First, this finding validates the significant and positive relationship between EKSA and SILB (Anosike, 2019; Edokpolor & Abusomwan, 2019). Second, this finding implies that the student's exposure to, or participation in a functional EE can provide the chance for them to acquire requisite capacities (i.e., knowledge and skills) and, ultimately, their intentions of starting a business upon graduation will greatly improve.

7. Conclusions

The mediating function of EKSA in the connection between EE and SILB was studied. The study showed that EE had a significant positive influence on SILB. The study also showed that EE had a significant positive influence on EKSA. The study also showed that EKSA had a significant positive influence on SISB. Further analysis showed that since the direct impact of EE on SILB is statistically significant, EKSA is regarded as a full mediator in the relationship. Based on these results, the authors conclude that EE is a significant positive predictor of SISB. The authors also conclude that EE is a significant positive predictor of EKSA. The authors also conclude that EKSA is a significant positive predictor of SILB. The authors further conclude that since the direct function of EE on SILB is statistically significant, EKSA is a full mediator in the relationship. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: university administrators should endeavour to establish a functional EE as this will provide opportunity for university students to acquire entrepreneurial knowledge and skills; university administrators should endeavour to establish a functional EE as this will provide the opportunity for university students to start a business after graduation; and lastly, university students should endeavour to continually participate in EE programme and acquire a variety of requisite skills and knowledge as this will help to reinforce their intentions to start a business after graduation.

Author Contributions

Edokpolor: Writing – Original Draft, Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Discussion of Result, Visualization. **Imeokparia:** Supervision, Writing – Review and Editing, Validation. **Osifo:** Writing – Data Curation, Reliability of the Instruments, References.

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