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# Entrepreneurial self-confidence, perceived desirability and feasibility of hospitality business and entrepreneurial intentions of hospitality management technology students

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing on insights from the entrepreneurial event model, this study aims to examine the mediating effect of entrepreneurial self-confidence (ESC) on the relationship between perceived entrepreneurial desirability (PED), perceived entrepreneurial feasibility (PEF) and entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) among hospitality management technology (HMT) students. A descriptive correlational research design was adopted and data were collected from a randomly selected sample of 157 final year HMT students using a self-reported questionnaire. PLS-SEM was employed to test the hypotheses. The results showed that PED and PEF were positively associated with HMT students' ESC and EIs. Further analysis indicated that ESC significantly predicted HMT students' EIs and mediated the links between PED and EIs and between PEF and EIs of HMT students. These findings suggest that positive and strong perceptions of desirability and feasibility of a hospitality business activate high levels of ESC among HMT students and, high ESC, in turn, enhances their EIs. The findings have practical implications for higher education institutions that offer HMT course and governments. This study does not only validate the entrepreneurial event model in different contexts but also modifies the model by empirically demonstrating the indirect effects of PED and PEF on EIs through ESC.

## 1. Introduction

There has been a growing focus on entrepreneurship among governments, policymakers and economists in the past three decades (Boukamcha, 2015; Fayolle & Gailly, 2013; Ferreira et al., 2019; Otache, 2019a). One reason for the increasing interest in entrepreneurship is that it creates wealth for individuals and countries (Farmaki et al., 2020; Fernandes et al., 2017), thus contributing to the economic, social and technological growth and development of countries (Igwe et al., 2013; Ochepea et al., 2017). It has been argued that the level of economic, social and technological growth and development of a country depends on the level of entrepreneurial activities undertaken in the country (Otache et al., 2019). Another reason for the growing interest in entrepreneurship is its job creation potentials (Afolabi, 2015; Ayodeji & Oluwatayo, 2015). Entrepreneurs through their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) create jobs for the youths including young graduates. Indisputably, SMEs are the highest employers of labour in any country.

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According to Diabate et al. (2019), SMEs contribute over 65% to total employment in high-income countries, over 95% to total employment in middle-income countries, and over 70% to total employment in low-income countries.

Given the job creation potentials of entrepreneurship, it has been acknowledged that entrepreneurship (or self-employment) is an antidote to the problem of graduate unemployment and underemployment (Otache, 2019b; Otache et al., 2020; Vuorio et al., 2017). There is no denying that people acquire university degrees to secure jobs. In the past, university degrees were passports to securing paid-jobs for graduates. Unfortunately, university degrees no longer guarantee paid-jobs for graduates these days (Ajike et al., 2015). The labour market is intensely competitive and highly congested, thus making self-employment the only alternative career option left. Accordingly, candidates seeking admission to tertiary education institutions have been advised to go for courses that lead to self-employment (Otache et al., 2020). Interestingly, hospitality management technology (HMT) is one of those courses. By design, HMT is a course that equips students with a broad range of practical skills and competencies that are needed to exploit business opportunities in the hospitality industry. This implies that HMT students are being prepared to take entrepreneurial career paths after graduation. There are numerous viable business opportunities in the hospitality industry in Nigeria that HMT graduates can exploit. For example, HMT graduates can start a business in any of the following areas in the hospitality industry in Nigeria: amusement parks, bars and private clubs, catering services, concert and theatre centres, cruise ships, event planning or management, hotel business, hotel development and construction, manufacturing and supplying of hospitality equipment, restaurant business, tour operators and travel agencies, among others.

The Nigerian hospitality industry appears to be attractive. With a population of about 200 million and the daily influx of foreign tourists into the country, Nigeria has the largest hospitality market in Africa (Adeola & Ezenwafor, 2016; Teare, 2016). Moreover, the Nigerian hospitality industry is projected to witness an annual growth rate of 8.5% between 2015 and 2025 (Adeola, 2016). Surprisingly, despite the numerous viable business opportunities that exist in the hospitality industry in Nigeria, the large market size and the prospects for the industry, many HMT graduates have taken up paid-jobs in different industries with some of them underemployed and underpaid (Adeola & Ezenwafor, 2016). According to Adeola and Ezenwafor (2016), "most hospitality graduates are not motivated to follow the hospitality dream" (p.186). Besides, it has been noted that most hospitality businesses in Nigeria are not owned by professionals (Adedipe & Adeleke, 2016), and consequently, the Nigerian hospitality industry is in dire need of skilled manpower (Adeola, 2016). Of more worrisome is that some HMT graduates are still wobbling in the labour market in search of jobs that are scarcely available. This calls into question the entrepreneurial inclination of HMT graduates in Nigeria. Thus, there is a compelling need to assess the entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) of HMT students and the influencing factors. It is imperative to assess their entrepreneurial disposition because entrepreneurial actions are taken only by entrepreneurially-minded people. Besides, the entrepreneurship literature has established that entrepreneurial action is intentional and planned (Bellò et al., 2018; Molaei et al., 2014; Yang, 2013), suggesting that EIs predict entrepreneurial actions (Farrukh et al., 2017; Fernandes et al., 2018).

There seems to be an agreement among entrepreneurship scholars that cognitive factors such as positive attitudes and perceptions toward entrepreneurship influence EIs (Boukamcha, 2015; Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011; Giagtzi, 2013). The decision to become an entrepreneur is influenced by positive perceptions of entrepreneurial desirability and feasibility, as well as some degree of entrepreneurial self-confidence (ESC) (Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011; Krueger, 1993; Otache, 2020; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation posits that a person's choice among alternative behaviours is largely dependent on the behaviour which leads to the most desirable consequences. Also, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory postulates that an individual's performance of a given behaviour is dependent on the amount of confidence that the individual has in his or her abilities and skills to perform the behaviour. Therefore, drawing on insights from the expectancy and self-efficacy theories, it could be argued that people would take a particular action if they perceive that the action has favourable consequences and if they perceive that they have the ability and confidence in their ability to take the action (Boukamcha, 2015; Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011). Similarly, it could be said that people would start a new venture if they perceive that it is attractive and if they perceive that they possess the skills and resources and the ESC required to act upon the opportunity (Okolie et al., 2021; Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011; Otache, 2020).

Several studies (Dissanayake, 2013; Giagtzi, 2013; Saadin & Daskin, 2015; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014; Yamina & Mohammed, 2019) have explored the direct effects of perceived entrepreneurial desirability (PED) and perceived entrepreneurial feasibility (PEF) on EIs. However, studies on the mediating effect of ESC on the interplay between PED, PEF and EIs are scarce – a gap this study fills. This study fills the gap by empirically examining the mediating effect of ESC on the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs of HMT students. The present study demonstrates that the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs is more complex than a simple direct relationship by providing empirical evidence of the indirect effects of PED and PEF on EIs through ESC. Thus, the study makes a significant contribution to the general entrepreneurship literature and the literature on EIs in particular. This study also makes theoretical contributions. Apart from validating the general applicability of Shapero and Sokol's (1982) entrepreneurial event model (EEM) in different contexts, this study also modifies the model by empirically demonstrating that PED and PEF pass through ESC to exert greater impacts on EIs. The study demonstrates both the direct and indirect effects of PED and PEF on EIs. Additionally, the findings of this study would benefit the Nigerian government and governments of other countries, particularly in taking measures that would make a self-employment career in the hospitality industry or entrepreneurship more desirable and feasible.

Drawing on insights from the EEM, this study aims to examine the mediating effect of ESC on the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs among HMT students in Nigeria. This paper is organized as follows. After this introduction section, the second part provides the theoretical background and develops hypotheses. The third part explains the methodology, whereas the fourth part presents results. The fifth part discusses the findings, while the sixth part concludes the paper and highlights the study's limitations. The last part explains the implications of the findings.

## 2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

### 2.1. Entrepreneurial event model (EEM)

The increasing need to assess people's intentions to undertake certain actions and the influencing factors has led to the development of some theories or models. In the field of entrepreneurship, many intention-based models have been developed to explain and predict people's EIs, ranging from Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour, Krueger and Carsrud's (1993) Intentional Basic Model, Robinson et al. (1991) Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation, Krueger and Brazeal's (1994) Entrepreneurial Potential Model to Shapero and Sokol's (1982) EEM. But this study draws on insights from the EEM to assess the EIs of HMT students and the influencing factors. The EEM explains the cultural and social factors that interact to influence an individual's decision to start a business. According to the EEM, an individual's intention to start a business is influenced by three related factors, namely PED, PEF and propensity to act. Two of the factors, viz. PED and PEF are considered in this study.

#### 2.1.1. Entrepreneurial intentions (EIs)

Intention can be defined as a mindset that guides an individual's attention to take a particular action or perform a particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It is the extent to which a person is willing to engage in a particular behaviour. According to Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour, intention is directly linked to behaviour (Acheampong & Tweneboah-koduah, 2017). It is described as the best predictor of planned behaviour (Moghavvemi & Salleh, 2014). EI, therefore, is defined as a person's decision to start a business in the future. It is a conscious conviction by a person that he or she would start a business someday in the future. These definitions suggest that the decision to start a business involves a mental and conscious process, thereby making it volitional. EI is regarded as one of the important components of the entrepreneurial process (Henley et al., 2017). Research evidence has demonstrated that EI predicts entrepreneurial behaviour (Acheampong & Tweneboah-koduah, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2017; Henley et al., 2017). Moreover, it has been argued that people with strong EIs are significantly more likely to start a business than those with weak EIs (Otache, 2019a).

Apart from PED and PEF that influence EIs, other influencing factors include potential abilities (Edokpolor & Abusomwan, 2019); age and gender (Farrington et al., 2012; Saraf, 2015); role model (Karimi et al., 2014); ESC (Ferreira et al., 2012; Gelaidan & Abdullateef, 2017); prior entrepreneurial experience (Galloway & Brown, 2002); entrepreneurship education (Biemans et al., 2016; Byabashaija & Katono, 2011; Westhead & Solesvik, 2016); creativity (Bellò et al., 2018); personal attitude, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms or relational support (Bahadur & Naimatullah, 2015; Nabila et al., 2016); peer group (Falck et al., 2012; Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017); entrepreneurial culture (Urban & Ratsimanetrimanana, 2015); risk-taking propensity, tolerance of ambiguity and need for achievement (Altinay et al., 2012; Embi et al., 2019; Ferreira et al., 2012); psychological capital (Jin, 2017); past entrepreneurial failure (Acheampong & Tweneboah-koduah, 2017); locus of control, social network and access to capital (Sesen, 2012); and family background (Farrukh et al., 2017).

#### 2.1.2. Perceived entrepreneurial desirability (PED)

According to Saadin and Daskin (2015), PED is defined as "the extent to which one views venturing into entrepreneurship as compelling and attractive" (p.461). Also, Boukamcha (2015) defined PED as the degree of attractiveness that an individual feels towards establishing a business. It is the extent to which an individual thinks that owning a business is attractive. It is a person's "affect toward entrepreneurship" (p.8) (Krueger, 1993). To develop an attitude toward performing a particular behaviour, the person must believe that the behaviour would lead to certain consequences. In other words, PED is a positive attitudinal judgment (Boukamcha, 2015). Thus, it is affected by the person's attitudes, values and feelings. It is important to note that PED is also influenced by culture, peers and family.

#### 2.1.3. Perceived entrepreneurial feasibility (PEF)

The decision to become an entrepreneur is dependent on information cues in one's own environment where they are perceived and interpreted (Saadin & Daskin, 2015). This suggests that EIs are derived through the perceptions of desirability and feasibility to act on opportunities. PEF, therefore, is defined as the degree to which an individual feels that establishing a business is realistic and practicable (Boukamcha, 2015). It is the extent to which an individual feels that he or she possesses the required skills and resources to start a business. Certain resources are required to make venturing into business work. Some of the resources are tangible like finance, while others are intangible like education, entrepreneurial experience and social networks (Saadin & Daskin, 2015).

## 2.2. Hypotheses development

### 2.2.1. PED and EIs

PED is the extent to which people feel attracted by a self-employment career. Scholars have argued that people with positive attitudes toward behaviour have desirable consequences, whereas those with unfavourable attitudes toward behaviour have undesirable consequences (Ajzen, 1991; Moghavvemi & Salleh, 2014). As well, an individual would perform a particular behaviour if the individual perceives that the behaviour has favourable outcomes. In the context of this study, it is argued that HMT students would develop strong EIs if they perceive that entrepreneurship is attractive. In other words, HMT students' acceptance of a hospitality business as a desirable career option is likely to have a positive impact on their EIs. Besides, empirical studies have shown that PED has a positive and significant impact on EIs (Saadin & Daskin, 2015; Solesvik et al., 2014; Urban & Ratsimanetrimanana, 2015). Based on the above premise, the following hypothesis is developed.

**H1.** PED is directly and positively associated with HMT students' EIs.

### 2.2.2. PEF and EIs

PEF is the extent to which people feel they have the capabilities to start a business. It is a person's perceived ability to perform a given behaviour. It has been argued that the more people perceive that they possess the skills and resources to take action, the more likely that they would take the action (Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011). In the context of this study, it is argued that HMT students would develop strong EIs if they perceive that entrepreneurship is practicable. In other words, HMT students' positive view of the possibility of starting a hospitality business someday is likely to have a positive impact on their EIs. Moreover, a review of the related literature reveals that PEF has a positive and significant impact on EIs (Saadin & Daskin, 2015; Solesvik et al., 2014; Urban & Ratsimanetrimanana, 2015). Based on the above premise, the following hypothesis is developed:

**H2.** PEF is directly and positively associated with HMT students' EIs.

### 2.2.3. The mediating role of entrepreneurial self-confidence (ESC)

A plethora of studies have established a positive relationship between PED, PEF and EIs (Saadin & Daskin, 2015; Solesvik et al., 2014; Urban & Ratsimanetrimanana, 2015). However, the fact that PED and PEF do not predict EIs 100% in those studies suggests that other variables influence EIs. It also implies that some intervening variables could help strengthen or enhance the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs. Thus, ESC is introduced as a mediating variable in this study. The entrepreneurship literature describes entrepreneurs as people who have the efficacy to launch a business (Azizan et al., 2019; Gelaidan & Abdullateef, 2017). Otache (2020) defined self-confidence as "the ability of an individual to possess complete sureness of feeling that he or she can accomplish a given task". Accordingly, ESC can be defined as the ability of an individual to exert complete sureness of feeling that he or she can perform entrepreneurial-related tasks. It is an individual's belief in his or her abilities. ESC is fundamental throughout the stages of the entrepreneurial process, from the conception of the business to the development and management of the resulting enterprise. Besides, studies have shown that ESC is positively linked to risk-taking propensity, innovativeness, tolerance of ambiguity, proactiveness and locus of control, which are essential qualities or enduring attributes of an enterprising individual (Margahana & Negara, 2019; Martins et al., 2018).

Furthermore, extant studies have shown that ESC enhances EIs (Endratno, 2019; Margahana & Negara, 2019; Otache, 2020). Besides, empirical evidence has demonstrated the mediating potential of ESC (Otache, 2020). In the light of the foregoing, this study argues that people with positive and strong PED and PEF activate high levels of ESC, and consequently, high ESC, in turn, would motivate them to develop stronger EIs. Put differently, ESC would help to explain the effects of PED and PEF on EIs. It would serve as the route through which PED and PEF predict EIs. In the context of this study, it means that PED and PEF would first affect the ESC of HMT students and then ESC would, in turn, transfer the effects of PED and PEF to EIs. In other words, PED and PEF should affect ESC and, consequently, affect EIs. Based on the above premises, the following hypotheses are formulated:

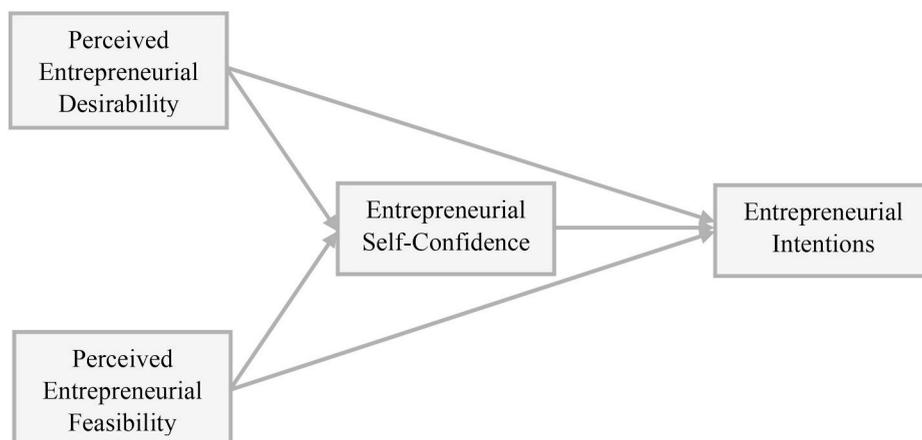
**H3.** ESC mediates the relationship between PED and HMT students' EIs

**H4.** ESC mediates the relationship between PEF and HMT students' EIs

Fig. 1 is the conceptual framework of the study. Specifically, it diagrammatically shows the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs and the mediating role of ESC.

## 3. Methodology

This study is descriptive. It describes quantitatively the links between the study variables (PED, PEF, ESC and EIs). Thus, the study



**Fig. 1.** Conceptual framework.

adopted a descriptive correlational research design. Also, it was a cross-sectional study, as the data for the study were collected from the sample at one point in time.

### 3.1. Population, sample and sampling technique

The population of this study consisted of the final year HMT students from three polytechnics in Nigeria. The three polytechnics were: the Federal Polytechnic, Idah (No. of students [N] = 79); the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro (N = 84) and the Federal Polytechnic, Bida (N = 96). Altogether, they were 259 students. To allow for the generalization of findings, samples of the students were studied. To determine the sample size, [Yamane's \(1967\)](#) formula was applied, arriving at 157 sample size. As the number of students from the three schools was not the same, the study first applied a proportionate sampling technique and, afterward, a simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the sampled students. In all, 48 students were randomly selected from the Federal Polytechnic, Idah; 51 students were randomly selected from the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro; and 58 students were randomly selected from the Federal Polytechnic, Bida. The class lists obtained from the three schools served as the sampling frame. Of the total sampled students, 46 (29.3%) were males, whereas 111 (70.7%) were females. Similarly, 52 (33.1%) of the sampled students were below 25 years old, while 105 (66.9%) of them were 25 years old and above.

### 3.2. Data collection and analysis techniques

A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was administered personally by the authors. Since three schools were involved, the questionnaire was administered in three rounds in a classroom context. The first round was at the Federal Polytechnic, Idah, on November 5, 2019, whereas the second round was at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, on November 13, 2019. The third round was at the Federal Polytechnic, Bida, on November 18, 2019. On every occasion, the authors addressed the students on the purpose of the study and the need for them to be objective in completing the questionnaire. The students were also assured of the confidentiality of the information provided, as the questionnaire did not require them to supply their identities. After the address, copies of the questionnaire were distributed, filled and returned immediately. It took the students about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was performed to test the hypotheses formulated using SmartPLS 2.0.M3. To test the hypotheses formulated, two models were developed and tested. Specifically, Model 1 was tested for the direct impacts of PED and PEF on EIs, while Model 2 was tested for the mediating effect of ESC on the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs. Bootstrapping technique (5000 resamples) was applied to test the significance level of paths. It should be noted that SmartPLS provides *t*-statistics to test the significance level of path coefficients. Thus, using a two-tailed *t*-test with a significance level of 5%, the path coefficient for each of the hypothesized relationships would be significant if the *t*-value is equal to or greater than 1.96 ([Wong, 2019](#)). Additionally, the significance of the indirect effect was tested following [Hayes' \(2013\)](#) PROCESS procedure in SPSS. The unit of analysis was the individual student.

### 3.3. Measures

- PED. It measures the degree of attractiveness that HMT students feel toward starting a hospitality business. It was measured with a set of four items adapted from [Linda \(2016\)](#). One of the items reads "I am eager to start my own hospitality business". This instrument demonstrated a high level of reliability ( $\alpha$ : 0.85).
- PEF. It measures the extent to which HMT students feel that establishing a hospitality business is practicable. It was measured with five items adapted from [Linda \(2016\)](#). One of the items reads "starting a new hospitality business would be easy for me". This scale demonstrated a high level of reliability ( $\alpha$ : 0.82).
- ESC. It measures the belief that HMT students have in their ability to start and manage a hospitality business. It was measured with a set of four items adapted from [Gelaidan and Abdullateef \(2017\)](#). One of the items reads: "I believe I could operate a successful hospitality business". This instrument demonstrated an adequate level of reliability ( $\alpha$ : 0.78).
- EI. It measures the intention of HMT students to start a hospitality business after graduation. It was measured with a set of five items adapted from [Linan and Chen \(2009\)](#). One of the items reads "I am determined to start my own hospitality business after graduation". This scale demonstrated a high level of reliability ( $\alpha$ : 0.84). All the variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = total disagreement and 7 = total agreement.
- Control variable. The age of the students was used as a control variable. This is important because studies have shown that age affects people's decision to start a business ([Farrington et al., 2012](#); [Saraf, 2015](#)).

### 3.4. Common method variance (CMV)

As was stated before, a self-reported questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. However, it has been argued that data collected using a self-reported questionnaire is characterized by CMV. CMV according to [Podsakoff et al. \(2003\)](#) is "variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent" (p.879). CMV is likely to be present when data on the constructs are collected from the respondents using the same method. Thus, it is suggested that the data be checked to establish if a single factor is responsible for the variation in the data. To ascertain this, Harman's single-factor test is recommended. In this study, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to ensure that the data collected did not suffer from CMV using principal

component analysis in SPSS (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results showed that a single factor did not emerge. Out of the four-factor solution that emerged with a total variance of 78.257 percent, the first factor explained only 25.424 percent, suggesting that CMV is not a problem in this study.

### 3.5. The measurement model

To ascertain the quality of the measurement model, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity (DV) techniques were employed. While CR measures the reliability and internal consistency of the items measuring the constructs, AVE measures the amount of variance explained among the items of a construct (Hair et al., 2010). DV measures the extent to which a construct is truly different from other constructs. Table 1 shows the details of the measurement model. An evaluation of the measurement model showed that the requirements for assessing a reflective model were met. The CR values for all the constructs were greater than the threshold value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). PED and PEF had CR values of 0.91 and 0.88 respectively, whereas the CR values for EIs and ESC were 0.87 and 0.89 correspondingly. Also, the AVE values for all the constructs were more than the recommended value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). PED and PEF had the AVE values of 0.77 and 0.65 in that order, whereas the AVE values for EIs and ESC were 0.70 and 0.67 respectively. To establish DV, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion was used. The square root of the AVE for each construct should be greater than the correlations of that construct with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 1, the square root of the AVE for all constructs ranged between 0.81 and 0.88, which exceeds the correlations of that construct with other constructs (see Table 2 for the correlation matrix). Based on the results, it was concluded that there was no DV problem.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the control and study variables, as well as the correlations among them. The age variable was negatively and significantly correlated with EIs ( $r = -0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that as people grow old, their EIs become low. Results also showed that PED, PEF and ESC were moderately correlated with EIs ( $r > 0.50$  but  $< 0.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

### 4.2. The structural model and hypotheses testing

Table 3 shows the results of the structural model and hypotheses testing. As mentioned in the Methodology, the t-value for a path coefficient that is equal to or more than 1.96 is said to be significant (Wong, 2019). Model 1 was tested for the direct impacts of PED and PEF on EIs. As hypothesized, the structural model showed that PED had a significantly positive link with EIs,  $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $t = 4.70$ . Also, it was found that PEF had a positive and statistically significant link with EIs,  $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $t = 4.69$ . The model indicated that PED and PEF accounted for 56% of the variance in EIs. Additionally, the  $\beta$  values for PED and PEF are positive, suggesting that an increase in PED and PEF would lead to a proportionate increase in EIs. The structural model results validate the bivariate correlation results presented earlier.

Model 2 was tested for the mediating (or indirect) effect of ESC on the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs. A mediating effect occurs when a third variable (mediating variable) intervenes between two variables (independent and dependent variables) that are positively related (Otache et al., 2019). For a mediating effect to be present, there must be significantly positive links between the independent variable and the mediating variable and between the mediating variable and the dependent variable (Memon et al., 2018; Rucker et al., 2011; Zhao et al., 2010). Table 3 and Fig. 2 show the bootstrapping results of the mediation test. For the mediating effect of ESC on the relationship between PED and EIs, the structural model showed significantly positive links between PED and ESC,  $\beta =$

**Table 1**  
Results of the measurement models.

Construct	Indicators	Loadings	CR	AVE	DV
PED	PED1	0.84	0.91	0.77	0.88
	PED2	0.91			
	PED4	0.88			
PEF	PEF1	0.84	0.88	0.65	0.81
	PEF2	0.87			
	PEF3	0.79			
	PEF4	0.72			
ESC	ESC1	0.85	0.87	0.70	0.84
	ESC2	0.84			
	ESC4	0.82			
EIs	EIs1	0.78	0.89	0.67	0.82
	EIs2	0.91			
	EIs3	0.79			
	EIs5	0.78			

Notes: some items (PED3, PEF5 and EIs4) were deleted because their loadings on their associated constructs were less than 0.70.  $DV = \sqrt{AVE}$ .

**Table 2**  
Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation matrix.

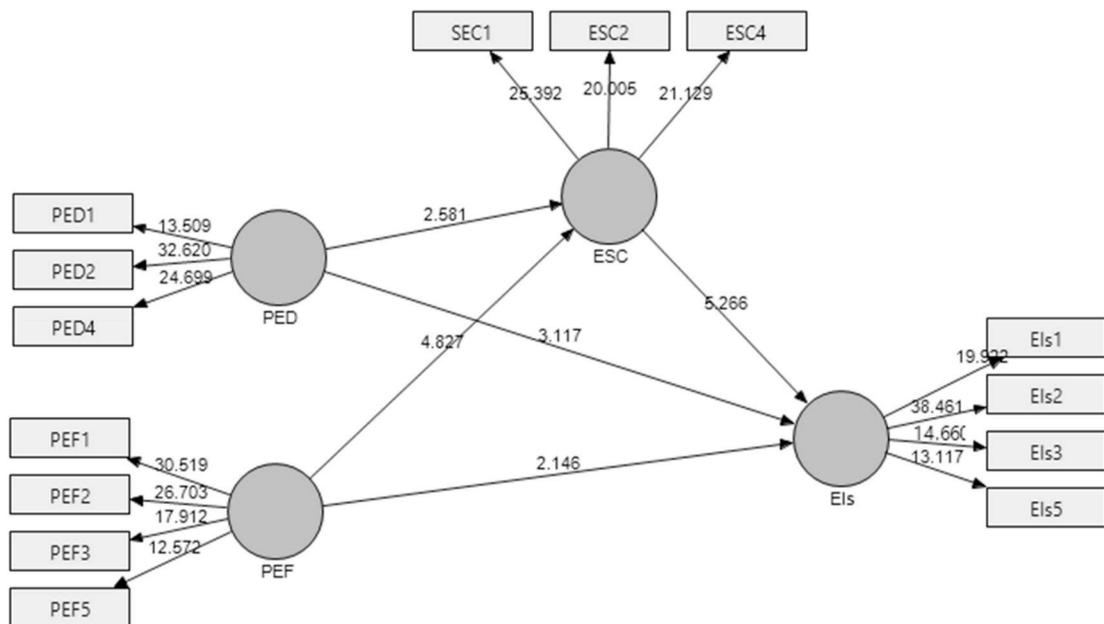
Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1.57	0.53	1					
2. Age	1.67	0.47	0.19*	1				
3. EIs	4.40	0.77	-0.04	-0.05	1			
4. PED	4.76	0.94	0.09	-0.05	0.58**	1		
5. PEF	4.88	1.01	0.07	-0.02	0.55**	0.68**	1	
6. ESC	4.73	0.95	0.04	-0.12	0.52**	0.50**	0.53**	1

Notes: n = 157. \*p < 0.05 (two-tailed). \*\*p < 0.01(two-tailed).

**Table 3**  
Results of the structural model and hypotheses testing.

Paths	Coefficients	Std Errors	T values
PED→EIs*	0.39	0.083	4.70
PEF→EIs*	0.41	0.089	4.69
PED→EIs**	0.26	0.083	3.12
PEF→EIs**	0.19	0.087	2.15
PED→ESC**	0.30	0.115	2.58
PEF→ESC**	0.52	0.109	4.83
ESC→EIs**	0.42	0.080	5.27

Notes: Model 1 (R<sup>2</sup> = 56%); Model 2 (R<sup>2</sup> = 63%); \*without mediator variable; \*\*with mediator variable.



**Fig. 2.** The structural model.

0.30,  $t = 2.58$  and between **ESC** and **EIs**,  $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $t = 5.27$ . These results show the presence of a mediating effect. To confirm this, the variance accounted for (VAF) was determined. VAF is the indirect effect divided by the total effect (Hair et al., 2014). The indirect effect was determined by multiplying the coefficient for the path between **PED** and **ESC**,  $\beta = 0.30$ , and the coefficient for the path between **ESC** and **EIs**,  $\beta = 0.42$ . Thus, the indirect effect is  $0.30 \times 0.42 = 0.125$ . The total effect was calculated by adding the direct effect (0.26) and the indirect effect (0.13), which is  $0.26 + 0.13 = 0.39$ . VAF, therefore, is  $0.13/0.39 = 0.33$ . This means that 33% of the variance in **EIs** is explained by **PED** through **ESC**, an indication of a partial mediation as interpreted by Hair et al. (2014). The significance of the indirect effect was tested following Hayes' (2013) PROCESS procedure in SPSS (Hayes, 2013; Kane & Ashbaugh, 2017; Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Zhao et al., 2010). Therefore, using a bias-corrected bootstrapping (5000 resamples), it was found that the indirect effect was statistically significant,  $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.030$ , with a 95% confidence interval (CI) excluding zero (0.031–0.102).

For the mediating effect of **ESC** on the relationship between **PEF** and **EIs**, the structural model indicated significantly positive links between **PEF** and **ESC**,  $\beta = 0.52$ ,  $t = 4.83$  and between **ESC** and **EIs**,  $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $t = 5.27$ . These results indicate the presence of a

mediating effect. To confirm this, VAF was determined.  $VAF = \text{indirect effect} / \text{total effect}$ . The indirect effect is  $0.52 \times 0.42 = 0.22$  and the total effect is  $0.19 + 0.22 = 0.41$ . VAF, therefore, is  $0.19 / 0.41 = 0.46$ . This means that 46% of the variance in EIs is explained by PED through ESC, an indication of a partial mediation. The significance of the indirect effect was tested following Hayes' (2013) PROCESS procedure in SPSS. Thus, using a bias-corrected bootstrapping (5000 resamples), it was found that the indirect effect was statistically significant,  $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.065$ , with a 95% CI excluding zero (0.022–0.098).

## 5. Discussion

This study examined the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs and the mediating role of ESC. Regarding the impacts of PED and PEF on EIs, the results show that PED and PEF have positive and significant impacts on EIs. The findings mean that the sampled HMT students perceived a hospitality business to be desirable and feasible, and these positive perceptions of a hospitality business positively and significantly impacted on their EIs. Also, the results demonstrate that PED and PEF are predictors of EIs. In practical terms, the results mean that HMT students would choose a self-employment career in the hospitality industry after graduation if they find it to be attractive and feasible. These findings are consistent with previous related studies (Saadin & Daskin, 2015; Solesvik et al., 2014; Urban & Ratsimanetrimanana, 2015). Based on the findings, H1 and H2 were supported.

As postulated, the results of the mediation test established that ESC mediated the relationship between PED and EIs and between PEF and EIs of HMT students. First, the structural model results demonstrated that PED and PEF had positive and significant relationships with ESC. The findings suggest that positive and strong perceptions of desirability and feasibility of a hospitality business increase HMT students' ESC to establish and manage a hospitality business. Second, it was found that ESC had a significantly positive link with HMT students' EIs. The results imply that an increase in HMT students' ESC would lead to a proportionate increase in their EIs. The findings also mean that ESC enhances the students' proclivity to establish a hospitality business after graduation. On the whole, this study has established the direct and indirect effects of PED and PEF on EIs. It means that ESC helps in transferring the positive impacts of PED and PEF to EIs. In other words, PED and PEF pass through ESC to exert greater impacts on HMT students' EIs. In practical terms, the findings mean that positive and strong perceptions of desirability and feasibility of a hospitality business give HMT students the confidence to make decisions to start the hospitality business after graduation. These findings are in agreement with prior studies (Endratno, 2019; Margahana & Negara, 2019; Otache, 2020). From the findings, it was concluded that H3 and H4 were supported.

## 6. Conclusions

Against a backdrop of the dearth of professionals in the ownership of hospitality businesses in the Nigerian hospitality industry (Adedipe & Adeleke, 2016; Adeola, 2016) and the apparent lack of interest in choosing a self-employment career in the hospitality industry among HMT graduates in Nigeria (Adeola & Ezenwafor, 2016), this study drew on insights from the EEM to assess HMT students' EIs and the influencing factors. Specifically, the study examined the mediating effect of ESC on the relationship between PED, PEF and EIs among HMT students. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis showed that PED and PEF were positively associated with HMT students' EIs and ESC. Further analysis indicated that ESC significantly predicted HMT students' EIs and mediated the links between PED and EIs and between PEF and EIs of HMT students. Based on the findings, this study concludes that HMT students would choose a self-employment career in the hospitality industry after graduation if they find it to be desirable and practicable. The study further concludes that positive and strong perceptions of desirability and feasibility of a hospitality business activate high levels of ESC among HMT students and, high ESC, in turn, enhances their EIs.

Despite the significance of this study, some limitations have been noted. Firstly, the use of cross-sectional data may prevent inferences to be made regarding the causal relationship between the study variables. Consequently, future researchers should use longitudinal data to replicate this study. Secondly, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to students of other disciplines, as only HMT students were studied. Thus, future researchers should test this study's model on students of other disciplines to validate the findings presented. Thirdly, other factors may have significant impacts on EIs, which this study did not consider. For example, empirical evidence has established that previous entrepreneurial experience has a positive and significant influence on EIs (Farrington et al., 2012). Therefore, future researchers should integrate the previous entrepreneurial experience of the respondents into their model in replicating this study. Lastly, this study shows that PED, PEF and ESC predict HMT students' EIs. However, the fact that the sampled HMT students showed a moderate level of EIs does not imply that they would choose a self-employment career in the hospitality industry after graduation. This is because EIs do not always predict entrepreneurial behaviour in reality (Rauch & Hulsink, 2015). It suggests that some situational variables could affect the actual development of entrepreneurial behaviour and this study did not consider those situational variables. Thus, future studies should identify and explore those situational variables.

## Implications

The findings of this study provide some implications for higher education institutions that offer HMT course. The findings suggest that a self-employment career in the hospitality industry should be made more attractive and feasible with a view to enhancing HMT students' ESC and EIs. For example, a self-employment career in the hospitality industry or entrepreneurship generally would be more attractive and practicable if HMT graduates possess relevant and sufficient skills and competencies. To establish and grow a successful hospitality business from scratch, one would require skills and competencies such as business opportunity recognition skills, business development skills, business management skills, cultural awareness skills, communication skills, multitasking skills, problem-solving

skills, information technology skills, human relations skills and customer service skills, among others. Studies have shown that entrepreneurial skills and competencies influence EIs (Solesvik, 2013), and entrepreneurship education equips students with basic skills and competencies for entrepreneurship (Okolie et al., 2021; Puni et al., 2018). Moreover, it has been argued that entrepreneurial skills and competencies enable students to develop positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship (Puni et al., 2018; Solesvik, 2013). Therefore, HMT students should be exposed to an HMT-based entrepreneurship education curriculum. In other words, entrepreneurship education should be embedded in the HMT curriculum. This would help equip HMT students with HMT-related entrepreneurial skills and competencies. More importantly, emphasis should be placed on the acquisition of hands-on hospitality management and entrepreneurial skills and competencies. Possession of these skills and competencies would motivate the students to develop a strong entrepreneurial mindset. Overall, improved entrepreneurial skills and competencies enhance students' entrepreneurial attitudes, ESC and EIs (Cho & Lee, 2018).

In addition to exposing HMT students to the embedded entrepreneurship education, this study suggests that entrepreneurship seminars should be organized periodically to promote entrepreneurship and enhance HMT students' ESC and EIs. In doing this, renowned and successful hospitality entrepreneurs can be invited to share their personal experiences and success stories with the students. The interaction would make a self-employment career in the hospitality industry more attractive and consequently have a considerable impact on students' ESC and EIs. Some of the students might take the renowned hospitality entrepreneurs as their role models, and studies have demonstrated that entrepreneurial role models have a positive impact on students' EIs (Abbasianchavari & Moritz, 2020; Nowiński et al., 2019). Moreover, Bandura's (1971) social learning theory argues that new behaviour can be learned by observing, imitating and modeling other people (Otache, 2019a).

Furthermore, the findings of this study provide some implications for governments. The findings suggest that HMT students' decision to own a hospitality business after graduation depends on how desirable and feasible a self-employment career in the hospitality industry is to them. In this regard, the government has a role to play in providing entrepreneurship-friendly policies and an environment that would make owning a hospitality business or entrepreneurship generally more attractive and practicable. Specifically, the government has the responsibility to improve on the ease of doing business. For example, literature review shows that Nigeria ranks low in terms of ease of doing business (Otache et al., 2019). This implies that the cost of doing business in Nigeria is high, thereby making entrepreneurship less desirable and practicable. To improve on the ease of doing business, the government must provide an enabling business environment that would encourage people to start new businesses and also make the existing businesses thrive. For example, improved provision of basic infrastructures such as power, water, good road network and adequate security could make entrepreneurship more desirable and practicable (Otache et al., 2019).

Additionally, one of the significant factors that can make a self-employment career in the hospitality industry or entrepreneurship more attractive and practicable is the availability of resources (Campopiano et al., 2015), particularly financial resources. Unavailability of startup capital can make a self-employment career in the hospitality industry or entrepreneurship unattractive and unrealizable. A review of the related literature reveals that perceived access to startup capital has a positive impact on students' EIs (Engelschion, 2014). In this regard, the government can assure HMT students (who would choose a self-employment career in the hospitality industry after graduation) of financial assistance. The assurance of financial assistance could motivate them to develop strong EIs, which is a significant element in the entrepreneurial process. More importantly, the government can make funds available through relevant agencies for the existing and would-be entrepreneurs to access. Provision of soft loans with flexible repayment plans for the existing and potential entrepreneurs who need financial assistance is important in this regard. Giving financial assistance to existing and potential entrepreneurs could make entrepreneurship more desirable and feasible.

Lastly, the government might consider embarking on a massive youth entrepreneurship promotion. In doing this, the government can organize skills acquisition programmes for the youths. The programmes should be designed to equip the youths with hands-on entrepreneurial and business management skills. The youths should be allowed to choose the trades that interest them and be equipped with relevant skills and competencies. The overall goal is for them to become self-employed. As well, the government can organize youth entrepreneurship competitions, where the youths including young graduates would be invited to compete with their business plans or proposals, and the best business plans or proposals would be selected for funding by the government. Overall, promoting youth entrepreneurship would engender strong entrepreneurial culture and also make entrepreneurship more attractive and practicable to the youths including HMT undergraduates and graduates.

#### Authorship contributions

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