

Research Article

The Relationship between Accounting Students' Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Outcome Expectations on Intention to Become Chartered Accountants

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Abstract: In this paper we examined the relationship between accounting students' self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectation and the intention to become chartered accountant. The study surveyed 125 students of the Department of Accountancy, Yobe State University in Nigeria. Social Cognitive Career model was used to test the relationship between students' self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectation and the intention to become chartered accountants. Our result based on the Social Cognitive Career model (Schoenfeld, Segal, & Borgia, 2017) supports the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectation and intention to become chartered accountant. It specifically, shows that student's level of confidence and commitment is directly related to his intention of pursuing chartered accountant qualification. It further indicates that expected benefits of being a CA directly influence the student's intention of becoming chartered accountant. Policy recommendations were made to the relevant stakeholders in Nigeria for implementation.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Career, accounting, Yobe State University, chartered accountant.

INTRODUCTION

Previous studies have indicated that there has been a substantial decline in the number of university students studying accounting in some parts of the world (Jackling & Calero, 2006; Law, 2010; Sugahara & Boland, 2009). Similarly, the demand for professional accounting services has been on the increase requiring more professionally qualified accountants (Adediran, Josiah, Ozele, & Veronica, 2012). This gap has been an area of empirical analysis among various researchers leading to a number of studies on students' career choice in accounting (Abdul Aziz, Ibrahim, Jaafar Sidik, & Tajuddin, 2017; Jackling & Calero, 2006; Sugahara & Boland, 2009). A number of reasons have been attributed to students' career choice in accounting. Odia and Ogiedu (2013) found that students' career choice in accounting is influenced by personal, reference and job factors. In addition, Ibrahim (2014) found that parental influence, self – desire, better pay, prestige and future prospects were the major influential factors in accounting career choices among Nigerian University students. However, little is known about the factors that influence accounting student's intention to become professionally qualified accountants. Therefore,

the purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between students' self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and the intention to become professionally qualified accountants. This paper intends to contribute to the existing accounting literature by investigating fundamental factors influencing accounting students to pursue professional accounting qualification in Nigeria. In the next section, we will review the literature in accounting research to arrive at our hypotheses. Section 3 presents the methodology and data analyses. While section 4 reports the empirical results. Summary and conclusion are presented in section 5 by focusing on the policy implications.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Several theories have been postulated to explain occupational and career choices. Some of these theories identify specific personal preferences that could be used to guide the career choice process and some try to explain life-long dynamic process by which a person attempts to work out their self-concept through various stages in their career development. In addition, Schein, (1978) postulated the theory of Career Anchors where the author considers how career choice is guided

Quick Response Code



Journal homepage:

<http://www.easpublisher.com/easjebm/>

Article History

Received: 29.06.2019

Accepted: 09.07.2019

Published: 24.07.2019

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DOI: 10.36349/easjebm.2019.v02i07.007

by self-perceptions which is developed based on actual occupational experience. Additionally, Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) emphasizes the specific process by which individuals make choices. Likewise, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) highlights the reciprocal interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental variables that contribute to the formation of academic and career interests (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017). These theories have been used by various researchers in understanding the process of career choices.

Career choice including the accounting profession has been a subject of research efforts. Especially with the recent economic growth. The demand for professionally qualified accountants has been on the rise to meet the increased accounting services from existing and new clients (Ahmed, Alam, & Alam, 1997; Law, 2010). Accordingly, Felton *et al.* (1995) argued that the profession of accounting has become concerned about the short supply of university graduates willing to choose a career as chartered accountant. The demand for accounting services and the short supply of chartered accountants has spurred several researches to unearth the factors influencing career choice to become chartered accountant. Several studies in the USA, Canada, Malaysia, Japan, China, New Zealand and Australia have investigated the factors influencing students' career decisions in professional accounting (Abdul Aziz *et al.*, 2017; Ahmed *et al.*, 1997; Jackling & Calero, 2006; Law, 2010; Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017). These studies have attributed accounting students' choice of becoming professional accountants to a number of factors.

In their study, Felton *et al.* (1995) simply grouped the influential factors into intrinsic and extrinsic interest. Using the TRA model, Felton *et al.* (1995) reported that a student's choice of a chartered accounting (CA) career is a function of the student's attitudes towards becoming a CA. The study further argued that a student's decision of becoming a chartered accountant is based on a ratio between the beliefs that work variety, earnings potential, and career advancement will be achieved by becoming a chartered accountant and the value the student places on these outcomes, compared to the perceived costs of becoming a chartered accountant.

Furthermore, Sugahara and Boland, (2009) argued that the influencing factors on career choice in professional accounting included nature of the job, earning potential, required study duration and the influence from others such as one's teacher during school or in tertiary institutions. The study outlines five major factors as influential to choice of accounting. These are work and previous learning experience, gender, opportunity cost, and students' perception of the accounting.

Similarly, Schoenfeld, Segal, and Borgia (2017), argued that career intentions to become chartered accountant result from self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals. According to the authors, the stronger the self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations accounting students develop, the more likely they will pursue and remain committed to the achievement of a challenging career goal. Their argument was based on social cognitive theory which highlights the reciprocal interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental variables that subsequently contribute to the formation of academic and career interests (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017).

Previous studies have adopted various models and theories to explain accounting students' intention of becoming professionally qualified accountants (Law, 2010; Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017; Solikhah, 2014). Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) have all been used by different studies. The current study adopts SCT that explains the mutual interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental variables that subsequently contribute to the formation of academic and career interests. This is because previous studies have frequently used TRA and TPB to explain career choice as a function of attitude and subjective norms. However, there is a need for accounting education to move from a theoretical and exploratory process to research that is grounded in theory (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, to explain the processes and mechanisms, through which students develop major interests, make career choices, and achieve performance outcomes, Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017 used Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to explain students' intention to become chartered accountants. The model has been applied in the areas of mathematics, engineering, and science-related fields and there has been a call for the application of the model to other academic and career domains (Lent, Sheu, & Brown, 2010). The intention of becoming a chartered is influenced by a variety of personal inputs, environmental, situational and contextual factors.

Previous studies have reported that career intentions result from self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017). It is argued that student's perception of accounting has a significant influence on their intention to become CA. Perception has been measured by extrinsic, intrinsic prestige and social factors (Abdul Aziz *et al.*, 2017). Hence, the of becoming a chartered accountant is influenced by the extent of confidence a student has in his ability of becoming chartered accountant and the expected outcome of becoming chartered accountant. This relationship is depicted in Figure 1.

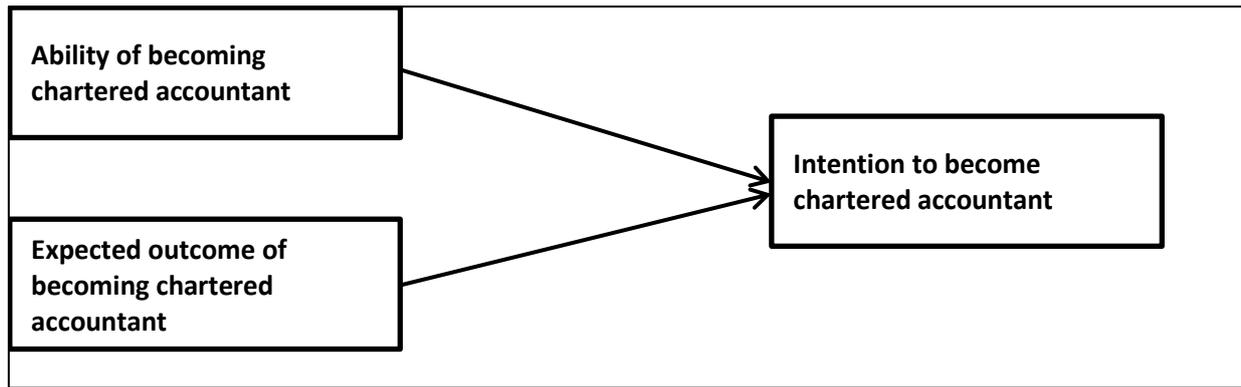


Figure 1: SCCT model of becoming chartered accountant Source: Schoenfeld *et al.*, (2017)

The intention to pursue professional accounting qualification is daunting for an undergraduate student choosing their career path and heavily influenced by their perceptions of accounting (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017; Solikhah, 2014). In addition, accountants are considered and viewed as having a dull image, and anticipated job satisfaction (Solikhah, 2014). Typically accountants have been referred to as 'number crunchers' given that book-keeping and auditing work has emphasized upon numerical accuracy, routine recording and calculation methods, and attention to detail (Jackling & Calero, 2006). Consequently, a student seeking this career option recognizes the existence of rigorous and challenging preparatory standards (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017). As depicted in Figure 1, goal refers to plans, aspirations, or intentions. In this context, it requires the student to engage in a particular activity by organizing and directing his behavior in a sustained manner to achieve the desired goals of becoming chartered accountant. This can be achieved if the student has developed a strong self-efficacy belief.

Self-efficacy is a set of beliefs and thoughts on one's capability to achieve a desired level of performance (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017). It regulates behavior, determines course of action one chooses, the amount of effort one puts in the pursuit of a goal, and the perseverance that will be displayed when faced with setbacks or difficulties. It is therefore, hypothesized that

H1: There is a positive relationship between student's Self-Efficacy and his intention to become chartered accountant

Previous studies have linked students' career choice in accounting to students' belief about the outcome of their actions (Felto *et al.*, 1995) and argued that intrinsic motivation; financial rewards; perceptions of the work of accountants; perceptions toward chartered accountant and the prestige of the profession significantly influence their attitude and intention of becoming chartered accountants (Abdul Aziz *et al.*, 2017; Solikhah, 2014). Others have reported the influence of future prospects and self-desire of choosing an accounting career (Umar, 2014). In fact, outcome expectation plays an important role in choosing a career

of becoming chartered accountants. These expectation include higher income, better job security, advancement potential, social prestige, self-employment opportunities, and intrinsic rewards such as challenging and interesting work (Felto *et al.*, 1995; Law, 2010; Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017; Solikhah, 2014). Therefore, the stronger the outcome expectation from being chartered accountant the stronger will be the intention to become chartered accountant. Thus, we hypothesized that:

H2: There is a positive relationship between students' outcome expectations and his intention to become chartered accountant.

Students who have stronger self-efficacy beliefs and more positive outcome expectations are more likely to pursue the difficult challenge of achieving the CA credential than those accounting students who have weaker efficacy and less positive outcome expectations. In other words, to develop a goal or intention to become CA, one must believe that he or she can perform well and that it will lead to positive outcomes.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

This study is conducted to test the relationship between students' self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectation and the goal of becoming chartered accountants. The current study used questionnaire as a medium of data collection. The questionnaire is administered to students studying accounting in Yobe State University, Nigeria. Unlike previous studies, the current study administered the questionnaire to all the students at various levels of their studies. The population of the study is 125 students cutting across four levels. The printed questionnaires were distributed to the students during accounting lectures where students were asked to fill and return the questionnaire. This was done within March 2019. The instruments used were adopted from Schoenfeld *et al.*, (2017).

The questionnaire has four sections A, B, C and D. Questions on demographic information were categorized under section A. It captures information on gender, age and level of study. Section B is designed to gather information on students' level of preparedness and intention to become a professionally qualified

accountant. It asks student about the probability of becoming a chartered accountant. The level of confidence a student has is measured by three items ranging from 'successfully completing undergraduate' and any other task that is necessary of becoming a chartered accountant. This was categorized in section C. Section D elicited information on the factors that are considered important in becoming chartered accountant.

Students were asked to fill the questionnaire by ticking the appropriate column. Section B required student to tick the probability (from 0 - 100) that best described the possibility of becoming a chartered accountant. Sections C and D were based on five Likert scales. In section C we used not confident at all to completely confident while Section D we used not important at all to extremely important. These were adopted from previous study (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017).

The population of the study comprises of all accounting students in Yobe State University. The choice of the institution was bone out of the agreement reached between the University and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) in October 2018 to allow the students graduating from the school to be exempted from writing some of the ICAN qualifying examinations. It is also the University of the Authors of this paper. Making it easier for data collection and policy recommendations.

RESULTS

The data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Following the identification of the variables we ran a Pearson Chi-square to test the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectation and intention to become chartered accountant among accounting students in Yobe State University, Nigeria.

Table 1: Demographic and Descriptive statistics

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	88	73.9	73.9
Female	31	26.1	26.1
Total	119	100.0	100.0

Descriptive	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Probability of becoming chartered accountant	119	1	5	3.75	1.067
Level of confidence to graduate	119	2	5	4.10	.796
Level of confidence to pass professional exams	119	2	5	3.82	.883
Level of confidence to do all tasks to become CA	119	2	5	3.82	.880
Higher income	119	1	5	3.79	.938
Job Security	119	1	5	3.89	.722
Opportunity for advancement	119	2	5	3.83	.933
Status and prestige	119	1	5	3.88	.913
Interesting job	119	1	5	3.96	.867
Work independently	119	1	5	3.97	.947
Challenging tasks	119	1	5	3.53	1.288

Source: Computed from field survey data 2019.

A total of 119 valid responses were analyzed comprising of 88 males (representing 73.9%) and 31 females (representing 26.1%). Table 1 above shows that participants belief that confidence level to graduate, pass professional examinations, confidence to take tasks to become a chartered accountant and opportunity for further advancement indicates a minimum of 2, which signifies certain level of influence on their chances of becoming a chartered accountant, as no respondent indicated any of confidence on the statements as provided on the questionnaire. Furthermore, level of confidence to graduate shows the highest mean value (4.10) among the range of variables under consideration, this signals a level of enthusiasm on the side of the students to graduate. However, the ability of the students to take challenging task is low, as represented by the lowest mean value (3.53) among the

dataset. Moreover, Probability of becoming chartered accountant and Challenging tasks show the highest level of standard deviation of 1.067 and 1.288 respectively signifying high level of deviation from the mean value.

The finding of the current study is based on the Social Cognitive Career model (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017) supports the relationship that students level of confidence or self-efficacy is directly related to his intention of becoming a chartered accountant. It further supports the relationship between outcome expectation and the intention of becoming chartered accountant. We earlier hypothesized as follows:

H1: There is a positive relationship between student's Self-Efficacy and his intention of becoming a chartered accountant

Students' intention of becoming chartered accountants were influenced by their determination to complete their undergraduate program, registering and passing professional examination as well as getting professional certification. Accounting program is considered one of the challenging profession that requires higher hours of workload at the undergraduate level and subsequently to become a professionally recognized one needs to pass the professional examination and paying the necessary fees to become a member. Our results show that the intention to become chartered accountant is positively and significantly influenced by students' level of confidence or self-

efficacy beliefs. Students' belief about his ability to graduate was found to influence the intention to become chartered accountant significantly ($X^2 = 33.59$ (12) $P < 0.001$). Similarly, the ability to pass professional was also found to influence the intention of becoming chartered account significantly ($X^2 = 27.75$ (12) $P < 0.01$). The other constructs, 'doing all necessary tasks to become chartered was also found influence students' intention significantly ($X^2 = 25.90$ (12) $P < 0.001$). This demonstrates that one's level confidence is associated with higher likelihood of becoming a chartered accountant. Thus, there is sufficient evidence from the sample to support the research hypothesis that, in the sampled population, there is association between student's Self-Efficacy and his intention of becoming a chartered accountant.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test Summary

Construct	Pearson chi-square (X^2)	df	P-value
Completing undergraduate program	33.59	12	0.001
Passing Professional Examination	27.75	12	0.006
Doing all necessary tasks	25.90	12	0.010

Source: Computed from field survey data 2019.

H2: There is a positive relationship between students' outcome expectations and his intention of becoming a chartered accountant.

Similarly our result support the assertion that the higher the expected outcome the higher the likelihood of becoming chartered accountant. It suggests that the higher the expected income from becoming chartered accountant the higher the likelihood of pursuing a career as a chartered accountant. The result was strong for higher income ($X^2 = 12.77$, $P \leq 0.05$), Interesting job ($X^2 = 37.71$, $P < 0.05$), and challenging work ($X^2 = 24.78$, $P \leq 0.10$). However,

opportunity for career advancement, status and working independently were found to be insignificant as a predictor of students' intention to become chartered accountants. This demonstrates that the intention to become chartered accountant is influenced by outcome expectation of becoming chartered accountant. Hence, there is sufficient evidence from the sample to support the research hypothesis that, in the sampled population, there is association between students' outcome expectations and his intention of becoming a chartered accountant.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test Summary

Construct	Pearson chi-square (X^2)	df	P-Value
Higher income	12.77	16	0.050
Opportunity for advance in career	15.59	12	0.211
Status and Prestige	20.86	16	0.184
Interesting Job	37.71	16	0.002
Work independently	20.98	16	0.179
Challenging work	24.78	16	0.074

Source: Computed from field survey data 2019.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Students' intention to become chartered accountants is influenced by their attitude, perception, expectation, societal stereotyping and their experiences when studying accounting at the University (Jackling & Calero, 2006). In this study we found that students' intention to become chartered accountants is influenced by the expected benefits derivable from becoming chartered accountant. These expected benefits include opportunity for higher earning or income, interesting job and the challenge associated with accounting job. Other factors include the ability to work independently, societal recognition in form of prestige of the profession and the opportunity for career advancement. Our results

confirmed earlier studies (Germanou, Hassall, & Tournas, 2009; Solikhah, 2014; Wessels & Steenkamp, 2009). It specifically supports the finding that extrinsic interest is a major predictor of the intention to become CA (Ahmad, Ismail, & Anantharaman, 2015; Felto *et al.*, 1995). In fact it agrees with model and finding by Schoenfeld *et al.* (2017).

The second objective of this study was to find the relation between students' self-efficacy beliefs and the intention to become chartered accountants. We found that student's level of confidence or his perception of accounting profession significantly influenced their intention to pursue chartered

accounting designation. Accordingly, students are aware that career in accounting is associated with numerous and rigorous standards (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017) and the general negative perception of the required attributes of professional accountant (Jackling & Calero, 2006). However, our study shows that students' self-efficacy beliefs is a significant predictor of the intention to pursue professional accounting qualification. This demonstrates that the students are confident that they graduate as accountants, pass professional examination and any other tasks to qualify as chartered accountant. This is similar to previous studies (Felto *et al.*, 1995; Jackling & Calero, 2006; Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017).

In this study, we examined the factors influencing students' intention to become chartered accountants and found that self-efficacy beliefs that is the perception and level of confidence a student has towards accounting greatly influence his intention to become chartered accountant. This depicts the level of teaching, coaching and mentoring student should have in order to develop a positive perception towards accounting profession. Most of the students who participated in this survey show some level of confidence that they can qualify as chartered accountants. To achieve this dream of becoming chartered accountants, the university management should provide conducive learning environment. Efforts should be geared towards recruiting professionally qualified accounting academics to provide the need moral supports and encouragement. Seminars, symposium and other advocacy means should be encouraged to create awareness to the students about professional accounting bodies. Lecturers in the accounting departments should provide monitoring to the students by guiding them towards professional qualification. In addition, the professional accounting bodies in Nigeria should take it up as a duty to enlighten the students of the needs to qualify as professional accountants.

The study further reveals that extrinsic factors have significant influence on the students' intention to become chartered accountants. These include higher income, prestige, and opportunity for advancement as well as working independently. Other factors identified were interesting and challenging job. This finding expand our understanding of what drives Nigerian accounting student to pursue CA designation. In other words, increased in salary/income from being a chartered.

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