

## From Exposure to Intention: How Social Media Entrepreneurial Content Shapes Youth Entrepreneurial Intentions in Kabwe District, Zambia

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### Abstract

This study examined how exposure to entrepreneurial content on social media shapes entrepreneurial intentions among youths in Kabwe District, Zambia. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the study investigated the effects of social media entrepreneurial exposure, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intentions. An explanatory cross-sectional research design was adopted and data were collected from 253 youths using a structured self-administered questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the relationships between the study variables. The findings revealed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship and subjective norms have positive and statistically significant effects on entrepreneurial intentions. Among these variables, attitude toward entrepreneurship emerged as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intentions. In contrast, social media entrepreneurial exposure and perceived behavioral control exhibited positive but statistically insignificant effects on entrepreneurial intentions. The findings suggest that while social media exposure alone may not directly stimulate entrepreneurial intentions, it can indirectly shape entrepreneurial aspirations by influencing youths' confidence, attitudes and social perceptions toward entrepreneurship. The study contributes to the growing literature on digital entrepreneurship and youth entrepreneurial behavior in emerging economies by providing context-specific evidence from Zambia. The study recommends strengthening entrepreneurial content quality on social media platforms, promoting entrepreneurship mentorship programs and enhancing youth entrepreneurial self-efficacy through practical entrepreneurship education and digital entrepreneurial engagement initiatives.

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is one of the most important elements for economic development, prosperity and overall social change, and so understanding what drives someone to start a new venture is crucial (Kirkley, 2016; Metallo et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship has always been positioned as a driver of innovation, job creation and economic resilience, particularly in developing economies where formal employment opportunities remain limited. Several scholars have described entrepreneurship as creating value, evaluating business prospects and producing innovative products and services (Newman et al., 2019; Tondy and Tigga, 2019; Hang and Chen, 2021), and it is commonly recognized as the focal predecessor of entrepreneurial behavior (Abbasianchavari and Moritz, 2021; Fattah et al., 2022). Therefore, the most investigated issues are the entrepreneurial intention process and its impact on venture formation and economic growth (Youssef et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial intention, as an antecedent of actual behavior, reflects an individual's readiness to start a business, distinguishing it from actual entrepreneurship where a venture has already been initiated (Bae et al., 2014; Bengtsson and Edquist, 2022).

Globally, youth unemployment has become of great concern to governments and policymakers, particularly in developing economies (Fergusson & Yeates, 2021). The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2024) reports that the global youth unemployment rate stood at 20.4% in 2023, with nearly 65 million youths unemployed worldwide (WEF, 2024). The situation is even more pressing in Sub-Saharan Africa, where youth unemployment reached 21.9% (Fomba-Kamga et al., 2022; ILO, 2024). Consequently, entrepreneurship has been widely promoted as a strategic intervention to address unemployment and stimulate economic participation among young people (Ndlovu et al., 2024; Otache et al., 2024). Youth entrepreneurship is often advocated both to create employment and to promote private sector development, as entrepreneurship has been adopted as a strategy to promote economic activities among young people (De Gobbi, 2014).

In Zambia, youth unemployment has remained a persistent macroeconomic challenge despite policy interventions. Although the unemployment rate among youths aged 15 to 35 declined from 11.02% in 2020 to 9.76% in 2024, the rate remains high given that youths constitute 26.7% of the population (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2024). Youth unemployment continues to threaten the attainment of national development objectives and Sustainable Development Goal 8.6 (Simuyemba, 2022; Yangaio, 2024). The 8th National Development Plan (2022–2026) identifies job creation and entrepreneurship as key pathways toward achieving a prosperous middle-income economy. Similarly, the 2024 National Youth Policy emphasizes entrepreneurship education and skills development as critical interventions for addressing unemployment. However, despite these efforts, entrepreneurial activity among young people remains relatively low, raising questions about the factors shaping entrepreneurial intentions, particularly at local levels such as Kabwe District.

At the same time, the rise of digital technologies has transformed the entrepreneurial landscape, particularly through the emergence of social media. Social media are recognized as influential tools in daily life, affecting individual behavior, social attitudes and communication patterns. From an initial source of entertainment, they have evolved into powerful platforms for sharing information, knowledge and experiences (Radu & Redien-Collot, 2008). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and YouTube enable users to manage and share user-generated content without limitations of time and space (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). With approximately 97% of the young generation exposed to social media, these platforms significantly shape perceptions, behaviors and lifestyle choices (Kokkranikal et al., 2002).

In the context of entrepreneurship, social media has emerged as a critical enabler of e-entrepreneurship, which involves creating new business activities through internet-driven platforms (Farooq et al., 2018; Lai and To, 2020). It enhances communication, accelerates operations and provides cost-effective opportunities for young entrepreneurs to start businesses with minimal financial resources (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Empirical studies have demonstrated that social media use facilitates opportunity exploitation, knowledge seeking and business model innovation (Muninger et al., 2019; Zhang & Zhu, 2022), while also influencing entrepreneurial intentions among young people (Abdelfattah et al., 2022). Social media content, including entrepreneurial success stories, online seminars and digital communities, can inspire individuals and shape their attitudes toward entrepreneurship. However, the proliferation of unverified or overly optimistic content may also create unrealistic expectations and influence perceptions negatively (Quang, 2018; Laguía González et al., 2018).

Despite the growing importance of social media, the relationship between exposure to entrepreneurial content and entrepreneurial intention remains underexplored, particularly in emerging economies and localized contexts such as Kabwe District. While social media has the potential to educate, inspire and shape entrepreneurial mind-sets, there is limited empirical evidence on how such exposure translates into entrepreneurial intentions among youths. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to examine how social media entrepreneurial content shapes youth entrepreneurial intentions, providing context-specific insights from Kabwe District, Zambia.

## 1.2 Research Hypotheses

H<sub>0</sub>1: Social media entrepreneurial exposure has a positive and significant relationship with entrepreneurial intentions.

H<sub>0</sub>2: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has a positive and significant relationship with entrepreneurial intentions.

H<sub>0</sub>3: Attitude toward entrepreneurship has a positive and significant relationship with entrepreneurial intentions.

H<sub>0</sub>4: Subjective norms has a positive and significant relationship with entrepreneurial intentions.

H<sub>0</sub>5: Perceived behavioral control has a positive and significant relationship with entrepreneurial intentions.

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## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

#### Theory of Planned Behavior

The concept of entrepreneurial intention was first introduced in the 1960s, and since then, researchers have expanded the analytical model in various directions. Initially, researchers focused on personality traits that drive an individual's intention to start a business (Lu et al., 2021). However, using personality traits alone is insufficient to explain entrepreneurial intention (Gartner, 1985; Lu et al., 2021). Hence, since the 1980s, cognitive factors have been included to understand the causes of entrepreneurial intention. To date, two commonly used theories in research on entrepreneurial intention are the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) and the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) by Shapero and Sokol (1982).

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that an individual's intention is the strongest predictor of their behavior as it reflects their level of effort and willingness to work hard (Ajzen, 1991; Mwiya et al., 2017). According to TPB, entrepreneurial intention is influenced by three key factors: attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to how positively or negatively an individual perceives a behavior, such as starting a new business. Subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a particular behavior, which can be influenced by how friends, relatives, or coworkers view the behavior. Perceived behavioral control reflects how easy or challenging it is perceived to carry out the intended behavior (Mwiya et al., 2019). Higher levels of perceived behavioral control are associated with greater entrepreneurial intent (Sabah, 2016).

In this study, TPB provides a suitable theoretical lens for explaining how exposure to social media entrepreneurial content shapes youth entrepreneurial intentions in Kabwe District, Zambia. Given the prevalence of interactive social media networks like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, the impact of social media also needs to be taken into account. Social media entrepreneurial content may influence youths' attitudes toward entrepreneurship, shape perceived social norms through peer and role-model influence, and strengthen perceived behavioral control by exposing young people to business ideas, skills and success stories.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

Entrepreneurial intention (EI) has attracted significant scholarly attention due to its role as the most important predictor of entrepreneurial behavior. Bird (1988) underscored the concept of entrepreneurial intention in the Theory of Entrepreneurial Competency, arguing that entrepreneurial behaviours or actions are motivated by entrepreneurial intentions. According to Bird (1988), entrepreneurial intention is a mental state which makes an individual invest resources toward achieving specific goals. Similarly, Krueger (2017) stated that EI is the commitment of potential individuals to undertake entrepreneurial activities in the near future, while Bae et al. (2014) referred EI to the desire to start one's own business. Since intention comes before behavior (Ajzen, 1991), entrepreneurial intention has been widely studied within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that attitude toward behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are key predictors of entrepreneurial intention (Ajzen, 1991; Ridha and Wahyu, 2017; Soomro and Shah, 2015).

Social media has emerged as an important factor influencing entrepreneurial intention among young people. Social media is considered a useful tool for connecting individuals, gathering additional information and acquiring knowledge (Nisar et al., 2022). According to Ellison et al. (2011) and Thomas et al. (2020), social media platforms enable individuals to expand their networks by establishing new connections and maintaining existing relationships. Utilizing social media in entrepreneurship can help youths connect with experienced business entities and entrepreneurial communities, thereby boosting confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities (Sahoo & Panda, 2019). Social media also serves as a source of entrepreneurial information and knowledge through formats such as videos, text, podcasts and short stories (Johannisson, 1990; Karimi et al., 2016). Success stories and entrepreneurial lessons extensively shared on platforms such can influence individuals' perceptions and entrepreneurial intentions (Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2016; Liñán & Santos, 2007). Studies by Do et al. (2020), Abdelfattah et al. (2022), and Barrera-Verdugo and Villarroel-Villarroel (2022) established that social media usage positively influences entrepreneurial attitudes, perceptions and intentions among students and young people.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is another important determinant of entrepreneurial intention. From Bandura's (1978) theory, self-efficacy refers to the beliefs that individuals have in their own abilities to perform a certain task. Matos et al. (2020) defined entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a person's belief in their own abilities to execute a new opportunity, while Bae et al. (2014) referred to ESE as the belief in one's aptitude to effectively perform various tasks and roles of entrepreneurship. Empirical studies suggest that social media exposure can enhance entrepreneurial self-efficacy by exposing youths to entrepreneurial experiences, business knowledge and practical success stories, thereby strengthening their confidence in starting and managing businesses (Hayward et al., 2010).

Attitude toward entrepreneurship has also been consistently linked to entrepreneurial intention. According to Ajzen, 1991; Mundia et al., 2025; Mufalali et al., 2026; Mwiya et al., 2017), attitude toward behavior refers to the degree to which an individual views a behavior positively or negatively. In entrepreneurship, attitudes refer to the extent to which individuals perceive entrepreneurship as valuable, satisfactory and advantageous (Hattenberg, Belousova & Groen, 2021). Studies conducted among university students in the United States, Turkey and Saudi Arabia found that individuals with positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship are more likely to exhibit stronger entrepreneurial intentions (Yurtkoru et al., 2014; Aloulou, 2016b; Cater et al., 2021; Mwiya 2026). Exposure to positive entrepreneurial content on social media may therefore shape favorable attitudes toward entrepreneurship among youths.

Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control have equally been found to influence entrepreneurial intentions. Subjective norms refer to perceived social pressure from friends, relatives, and peers regarding entrepreneurial behavior, while perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or complexity of performing entrepreneurial activities (Ajzen, 2002; Mundia et al., 2026; Mwiya et al., 2017). Research conducted in Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, South Africa and Zambia established that greater perceived behavioral control increases motivation to start a business (Trivedi, 2016a; Aloulou, 2016; Duong, 2021; Mahlaole, 2021; Mwiya et al., 2017). Social media platforms may strengthen perceived behavioral control by increasing access to entrepreneurial information, networks and role models, thereby making entrepreneurship appear more feasible and achievable for youths.

Although previous studies generally support the positive relationship between social media exposure and entrepreneurial intention, scholars have cautioned that excessive exposure to overly optimistic entrepreneurial content may create unrealistic expectations and distort perceptions of entrepreneurial risk (Forlani & Mullins, 2000; Tognazzo et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the growing body of literature suggests that entrepreneurial knowledge, exposure and early business involvement through social media significantly contribute toward shaping entrepreneurial intentions among young people.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between social media entrepreneurial exposure and cognitive determinants on entrepreneurial intentions among youths in Kabwe District, Zambia. An explanatory design is appropriate for testing theoretically grounded relationships between variables and determining the extent to which independent variables influence a dependent variable (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The cross-sectional approach involves collecting data at a single point in time and is widely used in entrepreneurship behavioral research where constructs such as attitudes, intentions and perceptions are relatively stable (Creswell, 2014). This design was suitable for the present study as it enabled the analysis of how social media exposure, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control influence entrepreneurial intentions.

#### 3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kabwe District, Zambia, a centrally located urban district with a population exceeding 300,000 with youths constituting of over 60% (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2022). Kabwe has transitioned from a historically industrial town to a commercial hub driven largely by small and medium enterprises engaged in trading activities. The persistent challenges of unemployment underscore the growing importance of entrepreneurship as a key pathway for economic participation. Further, the increasing internet penetration and widespread use of social media among urban youths (Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority, 2023) make Kabwe an appropriate setting for this study. These characteristics make Kabwe an ideal setting for examining how entrepreneurial strategic behaviours influence firm performance in an emerging market environment.

#### 3.3 Population

The target population comprised of youths residing in Kabwe District, Zambia, representing individuals within the economically active age group who in the process of making career and livelihood decisions. Youths were considered relevant for this study because of their increasing engagement with social media platforms and their potential to pursue entrepreneurship as a viable economic pathway. The unit of analysis and observation was the individual youth because entrepreneurial intention is inherently a personal cognitive and behavioral outcome shaped by individual perceptions, attitudes and social influences (Lyon et al., 2000).

### 3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that each youth in the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample. The sample size of 253 respondents was obtained and used for analysis. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirements for multiple regression analysis, as recommended by Cohen (1992) and Hair et al. (2010), ensuring adequate statistical power and robustness of the estimates.

### 3.5 Data Collection Methods and Instrument

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire, consisting of closed-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was divided into four main sections: Section A captured the demographic characteristics of respondents; Section B measured social media entrepreneurial exposure; Section C assessed key cognitive determinants, including entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Section D measured entrepreneurial intentions. The measurement items were adapted from established scales grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and prior entrepreneurship literature to ensure consistency, validity and comparability of the data collected. The use of questionnaires allowed for the collection of standardized data across a relatively large sample, ensuring consistency and comparability of responses (Saunders et al., 2007).

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the instrument's validity and reliability, several measures were undertaken. Content validity was established through a detailed review of relevant literature and expert evaluation of the questionnaire items (Sekaran, 2003; Zikmund et al., 2003). Construct validity was assessed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the results of which confirmed that both social media entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial intention formed unidimensional constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable for internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010; Pallant, 2020). These steps ensured that the measurement items were both accurate and consistent across respondents.

### 3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the sample and provide an overview of the data. Inferential analysis, specifically multiple regression analysis, was employed to examine the effects of social media entrepreneurial exposure, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intentions. This approach enabled the estimation of the relative contribution of social media the research variables while controlling for overlap among predictors.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary and respondents were informed of the study's purpose before giving their informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained and all data collected were used solely for academic purposes. These ethical procedures align with the principles of responsible and ethical research practice outlined by Bryman and Bell (2011) and Creswell and Clark (2017).

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## 4 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the study findings. Literature and related studies assisted in the discussion of the findings. The section begins with demographics and then moves into the analysis of data.

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

This section provided a detailed analysis of the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile Analysis

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
15-19 years	28	11
20-24 years	179	70
25-29 years	42	17
30 years and above	4	2
Total	253	100
Gender		
Female	101	40
Male	152	60
Total	253	100
Education Level		
Certificate	12	5
Diploma	95	38
Bachelors' Degree	138	54
Masters	8	3
Total	253	100

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The table shows that the majority of respondents are aged between 20 to 24 years (70%), indicating a predominantly young sample. Male respondents constituted 60% of the sample, while females accounted for 40%. In terms of education, most respondents had attained tertiary-level qualifications, with 54% holding bachelor's degrees. The sample reflects a young, tertiary-level student population, suitable for examining entrepreneurial intentions among youths.

#### 4.2 Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intentions

Table 2 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the effects of social media entrepreneurial exposure and key Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) constructs; entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, on entrepreneurial intentions.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Results Predicting Entrepreneurial Intentions

Construct	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Decision
(Constant)	1.512	0.259	-	5.834	.000	-
Social Media Exposure	0.084	0.061	0.090	1.390	.164	Reject
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	0.312	0.078	0.278	4.020	.000	Accept
Attitude Toward Entrepreneurship	0.347	0.079	0.317	4.410	.000	Accept
Subjective Norms	0.186	0.061	0.170	3.050	.002	Accept
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.079	0.060	0.077	1.310	.155	Reject

#### 4.3 Social Media Entrepreneurial Exposure and Entrepreneurial Intentions

According to the results, social media entrepreneurial exposure does not have a statistically significant direct effect on entrepreneurial intentions ( $\beta = 0.090$ ,  $p = .164$ ). This finding indicates that mere exposure to entrepreneurial content on social media is not enough to directly influence youths' intentions to start a business. Although social media has emerged as an important factor influencing entrepreneurial intention among young people, the findings suggest that exposure alone may not automatically translate into entrepreneurial action or intention. This finding contrasts with prior empirical studies by Do et al. (2020), Abdelfattah et al. (2022), and Barrera-Verdugo and Villarroel-Villarroel (2022), who established that social media usage positively influences entrepreneurial attitudes, perceptions and intentions among students and young people. Similarly, Camelo-Ordaz et al. (2016) and Liñán and Santos (2007) found that entrepreneurial success stories and entrepreneurial lessons shared on social media platforms can positively shape entrepreneurial perceptions and intentions.

This finding partially relates to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which suggests that entrepreneurial intention is shaped through attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control rather than exposure alone (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, social media exposure may indirectly influence entrepreneurial intentions through its effect on youths' entrepreneurial attitudes, social perceptions and confidence levels. However, the insignificant relationship observed in this study may suggest that youths in Kabwe District are exposed to entrepreneurial content mainly for entertainment and information purposes rather than for actual entrepreneurial engagement. This finding also supports the argument by Forlani and Mullins (2000) and Tognazzo et al. (2017), who cautioned that excessive exposure to overly optimistic entrepreneurial content may create unrealistic expectations and distort entrepreneurial risk perceptions. In addition, Zhao et al. (2022) argued that social media platforms also expose individuals to negative entrepreneurial experiences and failures, which may weaken the motivational influence of entrepreneurial content. Therefore, while social media provides access to entrepreneurial knowledge, networks and information (Nisar et al., 2022; Ellison et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2020), its direct influence on entrepreneurial intentions may depend on how youths interpret, evaluate and internalize the information received.

#### 4.4 Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy was found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions ( $\beta = 0.278$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This suggests that confidence in one's ability to successfully perform entrepreneurial tasks is a very important determinant of entrepreneurial intentions. Youths who feel they have the skills, knowledge and capabilities needed to start and manage a business are more likely to develop strong entrepreneurial intentions. This finding is consistent with Bandura's (1978) self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes that individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors they believe they can successfully perform. Similarly, (Matos et al., 2020; Mundia et al., 2023) defined entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a person's belief in their own abilities to execute a new opportunity, while Bae et al. (2014) referred to entrepreneurial self-efficacy as the belief in one's aptitude to effectively perform entrepreneurial tasks and roles.

The findings also relate closely to the TPB construct of perceived behavioral control, which reflects an individual's perceived capability to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Mundia et al., 2025; Mwiya et al., 2019). Higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy therefore strengthens youths' confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities, increasing the likelihood of developing entrepreneurial intentions. The findings further align with empirical studies suggesting that exposure to entrepreneurial experiences, business knowledge and practical success stories can strengthen entrepreneurial confidence and motivation (Hayward et al., 2010; Mwiya et al., 2026). Social media platforms provide opportunities for youths to interact with entrepreneurial communities, successful entrepreneurs and business information, thereby enhancing confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities (Sahoo & Panda, 2019). The results therefore suggest that entrepreneurial self-efficacy remains a critical psychological mechanism through which entrepreneurial intentions are formed among youths in Kabwe District.

#### 4.5 Attitude Toward Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Attitude toward entrepreneurship showed a positive and statistically significant effect and was found to be the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intentions ( $\beta = 0.317$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result indicates that youths' personal evaluation of entrepreneurship, particularly whether they perceive it as

desirable, rewarding and worthwhile, stands as the most influential factor shaping entrepreneurial intentions. This finding strongly supports the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that attitude toward behavior is one of the strongest predictors of intention (Ajzen, 1991). According to Hattenberg, Belousova and Groen (2021), entrepreneurial attitudes refer to the extent to which individuals perceive entrepreneurship as valuable, satisfactory and advantageous.

The strong significance of attitude toward entrepreneurship directly validates the TPB proposition that favorable evaluations toward entrepreneurship increase the likelihood of entrepreneurial intention formation among individuals. The findings are also consistent with prior empirical studies conducted among university students in the United States, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which found that individuals with positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship are more likely to exhibit stronger entrepreneurial intentions (Yurtkoru et al., 2014; Aloulou, 2016b; Cater et al., 2021; Mwiya et al., 2025). The implication of this finding is that youths in Kabwe District are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial careers when they perceive entrepreneurship positively in terms of independence, self-employment opportunities, income generation and personal fulfillment. Exposure to positive entrepreneurial content on social media may also contribute toward shaping favorable entrepreneurial attitudes among youths.

#### 4.6 Subjective Norms and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Subjective norms were found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions ( $\beta = 0.170$ ,  $p = .002$ ). This suggests that perceived social support and approval from important referents such as family members, peers, friends and society play a very important role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions among youths. The findings support the Theory of Planned Behavior, which identifies subjective norms as one of the major predictors of entrepreneurial intentions (Ajzen, 1991; Ridha and Wahyu, 2017; Soomro and Shah, 2015).

This finding confirms the TPB assertion that social pressure and approval from important referent groups significantly influence individuals' intentions to engage in entrepreneurial behavior. The findings imply that youths are more likely to consider entrepreneurship when people around them view entrepreneurship positively and provide encouragement and social approval. Social media platforms may further strengthen subjective norms by exposing youths to entrepreneurial role models, peer entrepreneurial communities and online success stories, thereby normalizing entrepreneurship as a desirable career path. (Ellison et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2020; Mundia et al., 2026; Mwiya et al., 2026) argued that social media platforms enable individuals to establish new relationships and maintain existing connections, which may influence social perceptions and entrepreneurial aspirations. Therefore, the findings highlight the importance of social influence and social approval in stimulating entrepreneurial intentions among youths in Kabwe District.

#### 4.7 Perceived Behavioral Control and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Perceived behavioral control exhibited a positive but statistically insignificant effect on entrepreneurial intentions ( $\beta = 0.077$ ,  $p = .155$ ). This indicates that although perceived behavioral control is theoretically expected to influence entrepreneurial intentions, its direct effect was not significant among youths in Kabwe District. According to Ajzen (2002), perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a particular behavior, while (Mwiya et al., 2017; Mwiya et al., 2026) explain that it reflects individuals' perceptions regarding access to resources, opportunities, skills, and capabilities required to start a business.

Although the relationship was statistically insignificant, the positive coefficient still provides partial support for TPB, which posits that higher levels of perceived behavioral control are associated with stronger entrepreneurial intentions (Ajzen, 1991; Sabah, 2016). The finding contrasts with previous studies conducted in Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, South Africa and Zambia, which established that greater perceived behavioral control increases motivation to start a business (Trivedi, 2016a; Aloulou, 2016; Duong, 2021; Mahlaole, 2021; Mwiya et al., 2017; Mundia et al., 2026). The insignificant effect observed in this study may suggest that youths in Kabwe District do not perceive external barriers such as financial limitations, lack of resources or regulatory challenges as the primary determinants of entrepreneurial intentions. Instead, internal psychological factors such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitudes appear to play a stronger role. It is also possible that social media exposure creates perceptions that entrepreneurship is more accessible and achievable, thereby weakening the influence of perceived constraints. Nevertheless, perceived behavioral control still exhibited a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intentions, suggesting that improving youths' access to entrepreneurial resources, mentorship and practical business skills may still contribute toward strengthening entrepreneurial intentions.

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitude toward entrepreneurship and subjective norms significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions, with attitude toward entrepreneurship emerging as the strongest predictor. In contrast, social media entrepreneurial exposure and perceived behavioral control showed positive but statistically insignificant effects. The study concludes that psychological and social factors play a more significant role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions than mere exposure to entrepreneurial content on social media. The findings contribute to the growing literature on youth entrepreneurship and digital entrepreneurial engagement in emerging economies.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends strengthening entrepreneurship education and practical entrepreneurial training programs aimed at improving youths' entrepreneurial self-efficacy and positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship. Institutions of higher learning, government agencies, and entrepreneurship support organizations should promote mentorship programs, innovation hubs, business incubation initiatives and experiential entrepreneurial learning opportunities to enhance youths' entrepreneurial confidence and capabilities.

The study further recommends that social media platforms be strategically utilized to provide credible, educational and practical entrepreneurial content capable of positively shaping entrepreneurial mind-sets among youths. Content creators and entrepreneurship stakeholders should focus on sharing realistic entrepreneurial experiences, practical business knowledge, and mentorship-oriented content rather than overly exaggerated success narratives.

Additionally, families, peer groups, educational institutions, and community organizations should actively support and encourage entrepreneurship among youths, as social approval and encouragement were found to significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions. Finally, future studies should

explore the indirect and mediating mechanisms through which social media exposure influences entrepreneurial intentions using longitudinal or mixed-method research approaches.

### Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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### Ethical considerations

The article followed all ethical standards appropriate for this kind of research.

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