

The Effect of Entrepreneurship Skills Among Female Students and Reduction of Unemployment in Nigeria: A Study of Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Entrepreneurship Development Centre

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Abstract

Nigeria's ability to thrive is greatly hindered by the rate of increase in the level of unemployment, especially among graduates. However, entrepreneurship is crucial role for economic development and creation of employment opportunities. This paper examined the effect of entrepreneurship skills among female students and the reduction of unemployment in Nigeria. The study employed a survey research approach. The target population comprised female students that were enrolled in the institution's entrepreneurship programs. A convenience sampling method was used to pick 150 participants, given the unlimited nature of the population. A significant number of participants emphasized the significance of training, innovation, and the enhancement of skills for the sustainability and expansion of enterprises in the present economic conditions of Nigeria. The results revealed a significant positive relationship (correlation coefficient of -0.862) between reducing unemployment and fostering creativity, suggesting that higher levels of creativity lead to lower rates of unemployment. Furthermore, a strong negative association (with a correlation coefficient of -0.851) was found between unemployment and entrepreneurial skills. This indicates that higher levels of entrepreneurial skills lead to a significant decrease in unemployment. The report also indicated that 76.4% of the growth of new enterprises may be ascribed to successful training. The study recommended that the educational curriculum should be revised to stress the acquisition of practical skills above solely theoretical information starting from high school and beyond and make it a priority to foster the growth

of innovative and successful persons to enhance their employability, therefore encouraging self-reliance and long-term viability.

Key words: Entrepreneur; Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship skills; Unemployment; Empowerment; Self-reliance

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INTRODUCTION

The impact of unemployment on Nigeria's socioeconomic development remains substantial. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that Nigeria's unemployment rate stood at around 33.3% in the fourth quarter of 2020 (NBS, 2021). The nation's ability to thrive is greatly hindered by the elevated levels of unemployment, especially among recent college graduates. Entrepreneurship has a crucial role in fostering economic development and generating employment opportunities in this particular context. By developing their entrepreneurial aptitude, students can get the essential competencies to build their own businesses and contribute to the economic advancement of their country (Adejimola & Olufunmilayo, 2009).

Entrepreneurial education and training have expanded in new ways as more people embrace comprehensive entrepreneurial education. Presently, it is mandatory for all students enrolling in Nigerian higher education institutions to possess entrepreneurial abilities. The aim of this requirement is to decrease the unemployment rate, with a specific focus on young adults. A considerable number of graduates from various higher education

institutions now possess at least one talent as a result of acquiring these skills. The Nigerian educational system is at risk and the number of unemployed graduates in the country has risen as a result of the perception that obtaining a higher education degree will guarantee work opportunities after graduation.

Unemployment, as defined by the World Bank (2009), refers to the proportion of the labour force that is without a job but actively looking for work.

Olubukola (2013) characterizes it as a worldwide problem where individuals who could be working in a country are not contributing to its development. The introduction of entrepreneurial education in Nigerian higher education aimed to address the issue of unemployment among graduates who possess diplomas but lack practical means of survival. The aim of entrepreneurial education was to provide students with the requisite information and abilities to develop and grow a firm, and to become successful entrepreneurs.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Due to the prevailing belief that, entrepreneurial skills are an effective solution to unemployment in Nigeria, many students have embraced the government's policy of mandatory entrepreneurship training. This training aims to help them transition from unemployment to job-seeking after graduation and to reduce the overall unemployment rate. The entrepreneurial program offered by Nigerian postsecondary institutions offers a wide range of skills, including event planning, carpentry, woodworking, welding, fashion design, hair styling, bead and adire making, phone repair, web design, computer programming, water production, soap making, and other skills (Lekoko, Rankhumise, & Ras, 2012) on entrepreneurial education. This type of education aims to provide students with the essential skills needed to start their own firms after they graduate. The goal is to invigorate the economy and alleviate unemployment through the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. However, Uzoagulu (2012) contended that in reality, many institutions only provide a small number of entrepreneurship courses, taught by professors who have no prior experience in the sector. Students enroll in these courses with the intention of fulfilling graduation requirements, therefore undermining the program's intended goal.

According to Adewuyi (2016), the implementation of entrepreneurial education at post-secondary institutions is essential as it helps address many socio-psychological problems and delinquency that arise from unemployment among the graduates of these schools. Osalor (2013) argues that entrepreneurial education offers prospects for both individual and social growth by tapping into untapped potential for self-actualization and the achievement of specific business objectives. Nigerian tertiary institutions,

including universities, polytechnics, and colleges, offer students a wide range of skills throughout their academic journey, irrespective of their gender.

Development of entrepreneurial skills has to do with the existence of higher education institutions where such skills can be acquired. The Entrepreneurship Development Centre at the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro is one of the Entrepreneurship centers that has played a leading role in promoting student entrepreneurship skill acquisition. The institution aims to encourage students without discrimination to surmount the hurdles and actively engage in the economy by equipping them with necessary special practical skills and knowledge in entrepreneurship. It is germane to determine whether these entrepreneurial programs among female students can effectively alleviate the rate of unemployment among female students in Nigeria Polytechnics, despite the various skills open for this program. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of entrepreneurial skills on female students' and the propensity to generate employment to reduce unemployment and other social problems in Federal Polytechnic Ilaro.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effect of entrepreneurial skills acquisition on female students in Nigerian Polytechnic and reduction in unemployment in Nigeria with focus on The Federal Polytechnic Ilaro Entrepreneurship Development Centre. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. evaluates the entrepreneurial aptitude of female students at Federal Polytechnic Ilaro.
- ii. assess the degree to which these qualities can aid in decreasing the unemployment rate among female recent graduates.
- iii. To determine the challenges encountered by female students in entrepreneur skill acquisition programs.

CONCEPT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

An entrepreneur can be defined as an individual who is involved in the development of technology, the creation of new ideas, or the execution of tasks. Nevertheless, there is no singular, universally acknowledged delineation of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship, according to Akanwa and Akpanabia (2012) and Inegbebebor (1989), refers to an individual's ability and willingness to recognise investment prospects, develop, and efficiently oversee a business. Additionally, it refers to the act of gathering resources, capital, and personnel in order to fulfil a particular requirement and produce income. Efficient management and organisational skills are used to merge and duplicate new and imaginative ideas.

Akanwa and Akpanabia (2012), referring to Shepherd and Douglas (1997), argue that entrepreneurship development involves the ability to strategically plan and coordinate the establishment of a new business, while incorporating information from various sources and disciplines, all within the framework of the specific uncertainties and ambiguities that a new venture must face. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the economy and quality of life are only enhanced by enterprises that have fully embraced and implemented the principles of creativity and innovation. Change is the only enduring element in our cosmos. Thus, it is possible for an individual to imitate the conduct of the global community in this situation. The phenomena of creativity and invention are extremely significant from this standpoint. Presently, businesses, individuals, and organisations are actively adopting and embracing the ideas of innovation and creativity. According to Uru and Yozgat (2009), innovation and creativity are becoming more and more important for achieving personal and organisational objectives.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) has instructed the National Universities Commission, National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) of Nigeria to include entrepreneurship education in the curricula of Nigerian tertiary institutions. This directive is part of their dedication to ensuring that education in the country is characterised by creativity, innovation, and responsiveness to industry needs. This measure was imperative in order to offer a pragmatic resolution to the nation's ongoing endemic unemployment problem. Since then, it has been obligatory for all undergraduate students in all three levels of higher education to enrol in the course, regardless of their areas of specialisation (Yahya, 2011).

The aim of entrepreneurship education in the polytechnic system, according to Oyelola et al., (2013), is to provide students with the essential tools and skills to achieve self-reliance and independence when they finish their studies. The evidence provided by Abdul et al., (2011) supports the previously described perspective. The author notes that the main objective of entrepreneurship education in university institutions is to continually foster an entrepreneurial culture among teachers and students. The purpose of this is to assist graduates of the system in establishing and expanding enduring enterprises, particularly those that emerge from research efforts.

The main regulatory bodies overseeing each university, polytechnic, and college of education have authorised them to implement and promote the

government's strategy on entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The assigned role encompasses several expected outcomes, such as the integration of entrepreneurship studies in all postsecondary educational institutions, the development of a course curriculum, and the creation of teaching resources for commercial purposes, including instructional manuals, teacher guides, and student handbooks. The role also includes establishing entrepreneurial resource and information centres at the NUC, providing capacity-building for at least ten teachers in all institutions, and providing capacity-building for a minimum of 10 academicians in each university. Moreover, the responsibility involves creating Ph.D. and Masters Programs at designated institutions (Abdul et al., 2011).

CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS ACQUISITION IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTION

In Nigeria, the development of entrepreneurial abilities is hindered by a variety of educational, social, and infrastructure-related obstacles. Furthermore, these barriers not only hinder the building of a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem but also limit the possibilities for economic growth and the generation of employment, which were the main goals of the initiative.

Many educational institutions in Nigeria persist in implementing obsolete curricula that inadequately address the practical aspects of entrepreneurship. According to Osalor (2010), the students' exposure to real-life business challenges and essential entrepreneurship abilities is restricted. When comparing the two, theoretical knowledge is held in higher esteem than practical training and real-world experience. This gap identified by Agbonifoh and Inegbenebor (2006) prevents students from acquiring the essential skills needed to effectively start and manage businesses. Lack of modern technology and internet access hinders potential entrepreneurs from acquiring essential digital skills necessary for contemporary business operations (Adejumo & Adejumo, 2014). The frequent occurrence of power disruptions and the variable nature of electrical supplies worsen the difficulties faced during training activities that require a reliable supply of power (Adewuyi, 2016). In addition, their institutions have financial constraints that prevent them from funding training efforts and providing the essential resources needed to develop entrepreneurial abilities (Oteh, 2009).

Female students who are entrepreneurs may encounter difficulties in developing specific entrepreneurial qualities that are commonly linked to male students. These issues arise from gender discrimination and societal expectations (Mordi, Simpson, Singh, & Okafor, 2010).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human Capital Theory

According to Robert (1991), Human Capital Theory (HCT) advocates for education as a way to enhance human capital, boost labour productivity, and expedite global technological advancements. According to this viewpoint, both investments in education and training and investments in tangible assets are equally important for the growth of a country's workforce. The economic success stories of East Africa, Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan demonstrate how countries may promote sustainable growth and economic advancement by investing in top-notch education to cultivate human capital (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008).

Entrepreneurial education is essential for the process of "creative destruction," where learning serves as a catalyst for generating innovative goods and services, techniques, concepts, and technological driven society. The process is crucial for enhancing the economy's competitiveness and fostering its national growth.

Van-den-Berg (2014) in his own view, establishes a correlation between educational achievement and the creation of innovative products in economies that rely on import for survival. These economies have made significant expenditures in technology, education, and related areas of growth, indicating that workforces with higher levels of knowledge are more adept at contributing to economic and technical progress.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the nature of this study, a survey research approach will be adopted to examine the effect of entrepreneur skill acquisition on female students' entrepreneurial abilities to alleviation unemployment in Nigeria, specifically focusing on the Entrepreneurship Development Centre at the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. The target population comprised female students in HND II School of Management Studies who were enrolled in the institution's entrepreneurship programs in 2023/2024 session. A convenience sampling method was used to pick 150 respondents, given the large nature of the population. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data, res 114 were completed responses. The findings of study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The relationship between entrepreneurship skills and a decrease in unemployment was examined through the use of multiple regression analysis. This method was specifically developed to evaluate the degree to which the growth of entrepreneurial abilities in female students affect their employability and capacity to generate job possibilities.

DATA ANALYSIS AND TEST OF HYPOTHESES

There is no significant relationship between creativity and unemployment reduction.

Table 1
Correlation between Creativity and Unemployment Reduction

	Creativity	Unemployment
Creativity	1	-0.862
Unemployment	-0.862	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	000	000

The research showed significant findings, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.862 and a p-value below 0.05. These results imply a strong negative relationship between unemployment and creativity. This suggests that there is a negative correlation between inventiveness and the unemployment rate, meaning that as inventiveness increases, the unemployment rate tends to drop. Consequently, it may be deduced that there is a strong relationship between reducing unemployment and fostering creativity, and that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2
Correlation between Entrepreneurial Skills and Unemployment Reduction

	Creativity	Unemployment
Creativity	1	-0.851
Unemployment	-0.851	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	000	000

The results revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.851, suggesting a significant negative relationship (p-value < 0.05) between unemployment and entrepreneurial abilities. This illustrates that there is a strong inverse relationship between entrepreneurial capabilities and unemployment, indicating that when entrepreneurial skills and abilities improve, jobless rates tend to decline dramatically. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is affirmed and the null hypothesis is negated, signifying a substantial association between entrepreneurial aptitude and a decrease in unemployment.

Table 3
Model Summary for Entrepreneurship Training and Youth Business Growth

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.874	0.764	0.762	0.291

The model summary indicates a strong positive relationship between entrepreneurship training and the growth of young enterprises, with an R-squared value of

0.764. This suggests that the rise in the number of new businesses may be mostly attributed to the implementation of efficient entrepreneurship education, which makes up around 76.4% of the increase.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Out of the 114 students surveyed at Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, most were middle-aged, married, and possessed at least a bachelor's degree, along with over five years of professional experience. A significant number of participants emphasised the significance of training, innovation, and the enhancement of skills for the sustainability and expansion of enterprises in the present economic conditions of Nigeria.

The results signalled a significant positive relationship (correlation coefficient of -0.862) between reduction in unemployment and fostering creativity, suggesting that higher levels of creativity lead to lower rates of unemployment. Furthermore, a strong negative association (with a correlation coefficient of -0.851) was found between unemployment and entrepreneurial skills. This indicates that higher levels of entrepreneurial skills will definitely lead to a significant decrease in unemployment. The report also indicated that 76.4% of the growth of new enterprises may be ascribed to successful training.

CONCLUSION

The ravage of unemployment in Nigerian economy can be addressed by enhancing entrepreneurial skills among undergraduate in Nigeria institutions, The problem of unemployment has continued to wreak havoc basically because there is no adequate focus on skills acquisition especially among the female students who constituted higher proportion in the teeming population of unemployed Nigerians and has led to lack of economic growth and a decrease in conventional job prospects, Incorporating entrepreneurial skills and innovation into school curricula from elementary level will aid expertise in the area of skill at tertiary institution level, the government at all level may successfully tackle the problem of unemployment by creating skill acquisition hub for the completion of skills that require more time, therefore encouraging self-employment, nurturing economic growth, and generating employment prospects. This paper highlights the importance of entrepreneurship education in fostering the growth of native entrepreneurs and mitigating unemployment.

To ensure that Nigerian graduates are adequately equipped for the ever-changing demands of the job in global market, it is essential to close the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills among academics. In order to foster the development of an independent and proactive workforce, it is crucial for

policymakers and educational institutions to work together to guarantee that entrepreneurship education is seamlessly included into academic curricula at all level.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations are based on the findings:

- i. The educational curriculum should be reviewed at all levels to accommodate skill acquisition through practical skills
- ii. There should be no discrimination between the male and female students in the choice of their entrepreneurial skill.
- iii. Adequate time should be given to practical session in tertiary institutions
- iv. Government at all level should provide skill acquisition center for student with deficiencies in school
- v. Allocation of more fund to tertiary institutions for skill acquisition program

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