

Entrepreneurship Skills and Entrepreneurial Intent of Graduating Students of Selected Universities in Northwestern Nigeria

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Abstract:-This study examined the effect of entrepreneurship skills on entrepreneurial intent of graduating students of selected Universities in Northwestern Nigeria. The study employed cross-sectional survey design. A sample of 364 successfully returned self-administered questionnaires were used in the final analysis. Frequencies, percentages and mean were used as descriptive statistics, while linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect entrepreneurial skills on entrepreneurial intent. The study showed that personal skills significantly affect entrepreneurial intent among graduating students (Adjusted $R^2=0.131$, $p=0.000<0.05$). Furthermore, technical skills was found to significantly affect entrepreneurial intent among graduating students (Adjusted $R^2=0.386$, $p=0.000<0.05$). In addition, business management skills was found to significantly affect entrepreneurial intent among graduating students (Adjusted $R^2=0.392$, $p=0.000<0.05$). The study concluded that personal characteristics, technical and business management are probable skill requirements for entrepreneurial intent. The study recommended that universities should adopt instructional methods that equip students with personal, technical and business management skills.

Key words: entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurial intent, personal skills, technical skills, business skill

I. INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, governments across the globe have come to regard entrepreneurship as a viable option for solving the unemployment problem among graduates in this 21st century[1]. Indeed entrepreneurship has been embraced as an important element that is able to cause rapid economic growth and consequent improvement in the welfare of young people[2]. However, entrepreneurship alone is not complete until it is incorporated in the institutions of higher learning as entrepreneurship education program. In Europe, entrepreneurship education was introduced in high schools and universities to promote creativity, innovativeness, and competitiveness[3]. In Indonesia,[4]explained that entrepreneurship education is highly considered as a prerequisite for gaining business skills that would help graduates in creating and managing a business venture.

In sub-Saharan Africa, entrepreneurship education is seen as panacea for abating the unemployment phenomenon and breeding entrepreneurial intention among graduates.

According to[5]entrepreneurial intention is majorly affected by motivation, capabilities, perceptions regarding available opportunities, attractiveness of the market and personal characteristics of an entrepreneur. However, Nigeria compared to other sub-Saharan African countries, entrepreneurial intention is still very low. In Nigeria, the 2012 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report indicated that entrepreneurial intentions was at 44%, compared to small economies such as Uganda and Malawi which stood at 79% and 70% respectively[5].

Therefore, inspite of entrepreneurship education, majority of graduates have shown no intent of entrepreneurship. A report by[6]revealed out of the 500,000 graduates that churned out of Nigerian institutions of higher learning every year, nearly 47 percent fail to find jobs and do not venture into self-employment. However, a number of factors that contribute to job seeking or failure to start small business have largely been attributed to lack of adequate employable and entrepreneurial skills[6]. This is because there are many half-baked graduates lacking self-confidence, not able to express themselves properly and lack the technical mastery required by the jobs they are supposed to do or start their own jobs[7].The majority of the number of youths graduating from tertiary institutions do not show the intention of using their skills to create opportunities for themselves, but, instead parade the big cities in search for white-collar jobs which are very difficult to come by [8].

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although there is a societal low attitude and entrepreneurial intention in Nigeria, universities in Nigeria have nonetheless continued to promote entrepreneurship education in different entrepreneurial courses such as Bachelor of Entrepreneurship among others [6]. This is because intentions give enough facts regarding the effect of an entrepreneurship training program and because intention is good indicator of an impending behavior [7]. This infers that intention could provide a reliable lead to future entrepreneurial intention and expression of interests. Even though there is much scholarly evidence that entrepreneurship education is pivotal to future entrepreneurial intentions [8][9], it is still baffling as to why majority of

graduates in Nigeria with entrepreneurship training still end up as job seekers instead of job creators. This study therefore investigated to find out whether entrepreneurial skill is a factor that influences entrepreneurial intention among graduating students in Northwest Nigeria.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of entrepreneurship skills on entrepreneurial intent of graduating students of selected Universities in Northwestern Nigeria. The following specific objectives guided the study:

To determine the effect of personal skills on entrepreneurial intent of graduating students

To examine the effect of technical skills on entrepreneurial intent of graduating students

To establish the effect of business management skills on entrepreneurial intent of graduating students

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Effect of Personal Skills on Entrepreneurial Intent

Personal skills refer to the skills a person may possess that could make him or her a successful entrepreneur [13]. Personal skills involve locus of control, risk taking and proactiveness. Locus of control is a character disposition that reflects a person's ability to use *will* power to perform a given job. According to [14], locus of control prevents the rise of fear, doubt and giving-up. A study by [15] investigated the influence of entrepreneurial orientation on entrepreneurial intention among university graduates and found a positive correlation. However, entrepreneurial intention was found to be highly predicted by personal entrepreneurship skills, proactiveness and innovativeness, although risk-taking ability was found to not affect entrepreneurial intention.

Furthermore, [16] conducted a study on the effect of locus of control on entrepreneurial interest among university students in Malang, Indonesia. The results revealed that locus of control significantly influences entrepreneurial interest among students. In the same vein, [17] examined the role of entrepreneurial education in influencing entrepreneurship spirit among secondary school students in the Klang district, Selangor, Malaysia. The findings revealed that students with high locus of control possessed higher entrepreneurial spirit than those with low locus of control. In addition, [18] studied the correlation between risk-taking willingness and entrepreneurial intentions among university students. The study found no positive relationship between risk-taking willingness and entrepreneurial intentions.

2.2 The Effect of Technical Skills on Entrepreneurial Intent

Technical skills are a combination of specific knowledge and skills of the work done using the body to achieve the target [19]. Technical skills integrate concepts of technical expertise including working methods, processes and contexts (Sousa & Almeida, 2014). Technical skills are job-specific

related skills required to perform a particular job. Technical skills involve specialised knowledge, analytical ability within a speciality and faculty in the use of tools and techniques of the specific discipline [20]. Technical skills are related to an organisation's core business. These skills are typically easy to observe, quantify and measure. They are also easy to train because most of the time the skill sets are brand new to the learner and no unlearning is involved [21].

A study by [22] investigated the relationship between students' exposure to Entrepreneurship Education and their career entrepreneurial intentions in Ogun State-owned universities. Their correlation findings reveal that entrepreneurship skills both technical and business had a positive significant relationship with students' intentions to venture into an undertaking for self-engagement purpose. The exposure of university students to entrepreneurial education geared-up entrepreneurial drive in students and were a significant factor in reducing the chronic unemployment syndrome among graduate.

Furthermore, [23] examined the factors that contribute entrepreneurial intention of engineering students using final year engineering students from a public technical university in Malaysia. The findings revealed that entrepreneurship education had a significant relationship with students' perceptions and entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurship education provided necessary technical skills related to entrepreneurship leading to business start-ups. Entrepreneurship education allowed for a richer experience because it involved effective experiments, explorations, creative thinking, and problem solving that were necessary for the graduates.

2.3 The Effect of Business Management Skills on Entrepreneurial Intent

Business management skills involve effective communication, planning and goal settings, decision making, human relations, marketing and finance management [24]. Business management skills are important for entrepreneurs, for instance effective communication is important in the running of an enterprise. Communication skills such as basic oral and writing skills and the ability to communicate in work groups and teams with persons of diverse background, and when engaged in problem solving and conflict management by managers of an enterprise enhance its performance [25].

Additionally, [26] examined the entrepreneurial intention among Nigerian students in Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). The findings indicated that entrepreneurial skills such as business management skills had a strong association with entrepreneurial intention. Likewise, [3] found that business management skills had a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention after successful entrepreneurship education.

III. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study employed cross-sectional survey design. The key advantage of cross sectional research design is that it uncovers relationships that can be studied further in other experimental and descriptive studies. The target population was 24,000 graduating students from 7 universities in Northwest Nigeria. A sample size of 394 students was determined using Slovene's formula.

$n = \frac{N}{1+N(\alpha)^2}$, where n=sample size; N=target population, $\alpha=0.05$ level of significance.

Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the sampled students. A total of 394 questionnaires were administered and 364 were successfully returned. Simple random sampling was used to select the students' respondents. Frequencies, percentages and mean were used as descriptive statistics, while linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect entrepreneurial skills on entrepreneurial intent.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section provides the finding and the discussions of the major research objectives. Both descriptive and regression analysis tables have been used to present the findings.

Table 1: Personal Skills

Personal Skills	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
I am persistent when doing my work	10 (2.7)	44(12.1)	17 (4.7)	184(50.5)	109 (29.9)	3.93
I take risks fearlessly	8 (2.2)	44(12.1)	45 (12.4)	192(52.7)	75 (20.6)	3.77
I am disciplined in whatever I do	0.00(0.00)	68(18.7)	40(11.0)	178(48.9)	78 (21.4)	3.73
I am change oriented	34 (9.3)	57(15.7)	70 (19.2)	156(42.9)	47 (12.9)	3.34
I rarely depend on others for the activities I do	51(14.0)	58(15.9)	72(19.8)	108(29.7)	75(20.6)	3.27
I am able to create opportunities	18 (4.9)	98(26.9)	102(28.0)	102(28.0)	44 (12.1)	3.15

Table 1 shows that majority, (50.5%) of the respondents agreed that they are persistent when doing their work (mean=3.93), (52.7%) agreed that they take risks fearlessly (mean=3.77), while (48.9%) of the respondents agreed that they are disciplined in whatever they do (mean=3.73). In

addition, (42.9%) of the respondents agreed that they are change oriented (mean=3.34), while (29.7%) agreed that they rarely depend on others for the activities they do (mean=3.27), thus they are able to create opportunities (mean=28.0%).

Table 2: Technical Skills

Technical Skills	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
I am good at building networks	10(2.7)	14(3.8)	8(2.2)	134(36.8)	198(54.4)	4.36
I am good at organizing my activities	8(2.2)	10(2.7)	16(4.4)	181(49.7)	149(40.9)	4.24
I am good at communicating with people	18(4.9)	16(4.4)	26(7.1)	180(49.5)	124(34.1)	4.03
I have good interpersonal relationships	18(4.9)	42(11.5)	7(1.9)	204(56.0)	93(25.5)	3.86
I listen attentively	30(8.2)	59(16.2)	28(7.7)	121(33.2)	126(34.6)	3.70
I work easily in teams	36(9.9)	72(19.8)	8(2.2)	158(43.4)	90(24.7)	3.53

Table 2 shows that majority, (54.4%) of the respondents agreed that they are good at building networks (mean=4.36), whereas (49.7%) agreed that they are good at organizing their activities (mean=4.24). Furthermore, (49.5%) of the respondents agreed that they are good at communicating with

people (mean=4.03), while (56.0%) agreed that they have good interpersonal relationships (mean=3.86). On the other hand, (34.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they listen attentively (mean=3.70), while (43.4%) agreed that they work easily in teams (mean=3.53).

Table 3: Business Management Skills

Business Management Skills	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
I set my business plans	0.00(0.00)	10(2.7)	34(9.3)	171(47.0)	149(40.9)	4.26
I easily establish relationships with other people	0.00(0.00)	10(2.7)	26(7.1)	193(53.0)	135(37.1)	4.24
I am good at negotiating business deals	0.00(0.00)	26(7.1)	24(6.6)	170(46.7)	144(39.6)	4.19

I keep all my financial records	8(2.2)	10(2.7)	44(12.1)	154(42.3)	148(40.7)	4.16
I am good at making appropriate business decisions	0.00(0.00)	34(9.3)	18(4.9)	199(54.7)	113(31.0)	4.07
I easily supervise other people at work	8(2.2)	45(12.4)	26(7.1)	123(33.8)	162(44.5)	4.06
I can handle finances very well easily	8(2.2)	16(4.4)	106(29.1)	112(30.8)	122(33.5)	3.89

Table 3 revealed that majority, (47.0%) of the respondents agreed that they set their business plans (mean=4.26) and can easily establish relationships with other people (mean=4.24). In addition, (46.7%) of the respondents agreed that they are good at negotiating business deals (mean=4.19)

and keeping financial records(mean=4.16). Likewise, (54.7%) of the respondents agreed that they are good at making appropriate business decisions (mean=4.07), supervising other people at work (mean=4.06), and handling finances very well easily (mean=3.89).

Table 4: Entrepreneurial Intent

Entrepreneurial Intent	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
Among various options, I would rather be an entrepreneur	0.00(0.00)	10(2.7)	16(4.4)	195(53.6)	143(39.3)	4.29
I am up to the task of setting up my business	0.00(0.00)	8(2.2)	18(4.9)	197(54.1)	141(38.7)	4.29
To set off a business and keep it functioning would be easy for me	10(2.7)	16(4.4)	41(11.3)	120(33.0)	177(48.6)	4.20
I am capable to control the formation process of a new business	0.00(0.00)	28(7.7)	42(11.5)	183(50.3)	111(30.5)	4.04
My qualification has offered me with adequate knowledge required to start a business	0.00(0.00)	9(2.5)	57(15.7)	221(60.7)	77(21.2)	4.01
It would be very easy for me to develop a business idea	8(2.2)	19(5.2)	39(10.7)	206(56.6)	92(25.3)	3.98
I am prepared to do anything to be an entrepreneur	0.00(0.00)	20(5.5)	66(18.1)	204(56.0)	74(20.3)	3.91
Being an entrepreneur implies more merits than demerits to me	20(5.5)	23(6.3)	44(12.1)	163(44.8)	114(31.3)	3.90
I believe I am completely able to start a business	0.00(0.00)	23(6.3)	68(18.7)	203(55.8)	70(19.2)	3.88

Table 4 shows that majority, (53.6%) of the respondents agreed that among various options, they would rather be entrepreneurs (mean=4.29), while (54.1%) of the respondents agreed that they are up to the task of setting up their businesses (mean=4.29). On the other hand, (48.6%) of the respondent strongly agreed that it is much easier for them to set off a business and keep it functioning (mean=4.20). Similarly, (50.3%) of the respondents agreed that they are capable to control the formation process of new businesses (mean=4.04) due to the fact that their qualification has offered them with adequate knowledge required to start businesses (mean=4.01). Furthermore, (60.7%) of the respondents agreed that it would be very easy for them to develop business ideas (mean=3.98). In addition, (56.6%) of the respondents agreed that they are prepared to do anything to be entrepreneurs (mean=3.91), because being entrepreneurs imply more merits than demerits (mean=3.90). Therefore, (55.8%) of the respondents completely believe that they are able to start new businesses (mean=3.88).

Table 5: The Effect of Personal Skills on Entrepreneurial Intent

Personal skills	Standardized Coefficients Beta (β)	Significance (p)
Adjusted $R^2=0.131$	0.365	0.000
F=55.665		

a. Dependent variable: Entrepreneurial Intent

Table 5 shows that personal skills significantly affect entrepreneurial intent since it explains up to 13.1% variation

in entrepreneurial intent among graduating students (Adjusted $R^2=0.131$, $p=0.000<0.05$). Furthermore, the regression model in this study was found to be a good fit for predicting the effect of personal skills on entrepreneurial intent ($F=55.665$, $p=0.000<0.05$). In addition, table 5 indicates that an improvement in personal skills would account for 36.5% entrepreneurial intent ($\beta=0.365$).

The finding of this study is consistent with that of [11]who found that personal skills in terms of risk taking directly influences an individual's entrepreneurial intent. Likewise, [16] found that personal skills had a positive correlation with entrepreneurial intent. In addition, [15] established that personal skills in terms of proactiveness and innovativeness significantly affected the entrepreneurial intent of university students.

Table 6: The Effect of Technical Skills on Entrepreneurial Intent

Technical skills	Standardized Coefficients Beta (β)	Significance (p)
Adjusted $R^2=0.386$	0.623	0.000
F=229.295		

a. Dependent variable: Entrepreneurial Intent

Table 6 shows that technical skills significantly affect entrepreneurial intent since it explains up to 38.6% variation in entrepreneurial intent among graduating students (Adjusted $R^2=0.386$, $p=0.000<0.05$). Furthermore, the regression model in this study was found to be a good fit for predicting the

effect of technical skills on entrepreneurial intent ($F=229.295$, $p=0.000<0.05$). In addition, table 6 indicates that an improvement in technical skills would account for 62.3% entrepreneurial intent ($\beta=0.623$).

The finding of this study agrees with previous studies such as [24], [23] and [22]. For instance, [27] found that technical skills positively affected the entrepreneurial intention among corporate workers in small firms. In addition, [23] found that entrepreneurship education provided students with technical skills which later positively affected their entrepreneurial intention. Likewise, [22] found that technical skills significantly affected students' entrepreneurial intention to embark on self-employment.

Table 7: The Effect of Business Management Skills on Entrepreneurial Intent

Technical skills	Standardized Coefficients Beta (β)	Significance (p)
Adjusted $R^2=0.392$	0.628	0.000
F=235.155		

a. Dependent variable: Entrepreneurial Intent

Table 7 shows that business management skills significantly affect entrepreneurial intent since it explains up to 39.2% variation in entrepreneurial intent among graduating students (Adjusted $R^2=0.392$, $p=0.000<0.05$). Furthermore, the regression model in this study was found to be a good fit for predicting the effect of business management skills on entrepreneurial intent ($F=235.155$, $p=0.000<0.05$). In addition, table 7 indicates that an improvement in business management skills would account for 62.8% entrepreneurial intent ($\beta=0.628$).

The current study is in line with scholarly works of [28], [26] and [3]. For example, [28] found that business management skills significantly influenced entrepreneurial intention. In addition, [26] found that business management skills had a strong connection with entrepreneurial intention. Subsequently, [3] found that business management skills had a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention after successful entrepreneurship education.

Table 8: The Effect of Entrepreneurial Skills on Entrepreneurial Intent

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients Beta (β)	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error				
1	(Constant)	1.670	.125		13.390	.000
	Personal skills	.138	.023	.230	6.043	.000
	Technical skills	.174	.028	.295	6.241	.000
	Business management skills	.303	.032	.428	9.472	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intent

Table 8 shows that business management skills significantly predicts 42.8% variation in entrepreneurial intent ($\beta=0.428$, $p=0.000$), followed by technical skills which predicts 29.5% ($\beta=0.295$, $p=0.000$), and lastly personal skills which predicts 23.0% variation in entrepreneurial intent ($\beta=0.230$, $p=0.000$).

V. CONCLUSIONS

Personal characteristics, technical and business management are probable skill requirements for entrepreneurial intent. However, business management skills are the most required skills for entrepreneurial intent followed by technical skills and personal skills.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Universities should adopt instructional methods that equip students with personal, technical and business management skills. The instructional methods should ensure that students become disciplined and creative individuals who are change oriented and resilient. The methods should also promote students ability to develop good interpersonal relationships, be able to listen attentively, make appropriate business decisions, have finance management skills and have the capacity to supervise others.

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