

Influence of Age and Career Choice on Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition among Senior Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of age and career choice on entrepreneurial skills acquisition among senior secondary school students. Two objectives guided the study: to determine the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition based on age, and to determine the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition based on career choice. Two corresponding null hypotheses were formulated and tested. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. 54,622 Senior Secondary Two (SS II) students in public secondary school students in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. A sample size of 397 SS II Students obtained using Taro Yamens' formula was used for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used in obtaining the sample size for the study. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire, and the hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a significant difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition based on age, with older students demonstrating higher entrepreneurial competencies than younger students. The results also indicated a significant difference in entrepreneurial skills acquisition based on career choice, with students in commercial and vocational tracks showing stronger entrepreneurial skills than those in science and arts tracks. The study concludes that both age and career choice are key factors influencing entrepreneurial skills acquisition among senior secondary school students. It recommends the adoption of age-sensitive teaching methods, full integration of entrepreneurship across all career tracks, and increased provision of practical entrepreneurial exposure to enhance students' preparedness for self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.

Keywords: Age Career, Choice, Entrepreneurship, Skills

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has increasingly been recognized as a powerful tool for fostering economic development, reducing unemployment, and promoting innovation in both developed and developing economies. In Nigeria, the challenge of youth unemployment remains a pressing concern, as many school leavers and graduates lack the necessary skills to engage in self-employment. This situation has heightened the need for entrepreneurship education and the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills among young people, particularly at the secondary school level (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020; Adeyemo, 2021).

Entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, problem-solving, risk management, innovation, and business planning are essential in equipping young learners to become self-reliant and contribute meaningfully to society. In recognition of this, the Nigerian government incorporated entrepreneurship education into the secondary school curriculum as

part of its educational reforms, with the expectation that students would graduate with skills necessary for income generation and employment creation (Oladipo & Adebayo, 2022). However, the effectiveness of this initiative has been uneven due to several individual and contextual factors.

Among the key factors influencing entrepreneurial skills acquisition are age and career choice. Age has been shown to significantly affect the learning process and the ability to translate knowledge into practical skills. Older students are generally more mature, independent, and capable of applying entrepreneurial concepts compared to their younger counterparts, who may still be developing cognitively and emotionally (Ifeanyi & Onyeka, 2021). Similarly, career choice influences the orientation and motivation of students toward entrepreneurship. For example, students pursuing commercial or vocational careers often display stronger entrepreneurial tendencies than those in purely academic or professional tracks such as science and arts (Eze & Chukwuma, 2022; Olaitan, 2023). Ifeanyi and Onyeka (2021) revealed that older students (17–19 years) demonstrated significantly higher entrepreneurial skills in areas such as decision-making, risk-taking, and innovation compared to younger students (14–16 years). The researchers attributed this difference to maturity, cognitive development, and exposure to real-life economic activities. The study concluded that age plays a significant role in entrepreneurial skills acquisition at the secondary school level. Yusuf and Bello (2022) found that younger students possess enthusiasm but lacked the initiative and self-confidence to take risks.

Eze and Chukwuma (2022) found that students in commercial and vocational tracks acquired significantly higher entrepreneurial skills (such as financial management and innovation) compared to their peers in science and arts tracks. Similarly, Olaitan (2023) revealed that those aspiring for careers in business, vocational training, or creative industries demonstrated higher entrepreneurial skills acquisition, while those pursuing careers in science-based professions showed relatively lower entrepreneurial intentions. Despite the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education, there is still limited empirical evidence on how age and career choice jointly affect entrepreneurial skills acquisition among senior secondary school students. Most available studies tend to focus on university students or general youth populations, leaving a gap in understanding the peculiarities of skill development at the secondary school level (Ogunyemi, 2021; Ojo & Yakubu, 2023). Addressing this gap is critical, as the senior secondary school stage represents a pivotal period in career formation and personal development.

Therefore, this study seeks to ascertain the influence of age and career choice on entrepreneurial skills acquisition among senior secondary school students, with a view to providing evidence-based recommendations that can strengthen entrepreneurship education and improve youth preparedness for self-reliance.

Purpose of the Study

The main study of this study is to ascertain the Influence of Age and Career Choice on Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition among Senior Secondary School Students

1. Determine the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on age.
2. Determine the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on career choice.

Research Questions

1. What is the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on age?
2. What is the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on career choice?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on age.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on career choice.

Methodology

The study adopted the Ex-Post Facto research design. The Ex-Post Facto was considered appropriate for the study because the independent variables of age, gender, study habits, family background and career choices of students have already occurred and cannot be manipulated or controlled. The population of this study comprised 54,622 Senior Secondary two (SS II) students from the Eighty-five (85) public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District (State Secondary Education Board 2021). A sample of 397 Senior Secondary School two students in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District was used for the study. The sample size was obtained using Taro Yemans' formula as shown in appendix III. The simple random sampling technique was employed to obtain a sample of students based on the number of students in each of the 12 public secondary schools which is 14.1 % (percent) of the total number of schools that were used for the study. Simple random sampling technique was adopted by the researcher in selecting the students for the study to give all students equal chance of being used for the study.

A researcher-developed instrument tagged "Students Attribute and Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (SAESAQ)" was used in collecting data for the study. The instrument consisted of two sections A and B. The A section of the instrument was used in determining the category of students' attributes of study habit, family background, gender, age and career choice, while the B part of the instrument contains 20 items that are used in measuring entrepreneurial skills acquisition by students. The B section of the instrument was scored using a four point scale as described below; 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.

Face-validation was carried out by three experts. The experts were from Business Education Department, Faculty of Vocational Education, Information and Library Science, University of Uyo, Uyo. final copy of the instrument. An instrument is said to be reliable when it measures what it is designed to measure consistently (Nelson, 2019). A reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha statistic. Mean was used in answering the research questions while independent t-test statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on age?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the difference in entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on age (n=392).

Age	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Difference
10-15 Years	246	2.81	1.28	0.67
16 Years and Above	146	3.48	1.09	

The summary of the result presented in Table 1 indicates that the mean score of students between 10-15 years in acquisition of entrepreneurial skills is 2.81 and that of students' with 16 years and above in entrepreneurial skills acquisition is 3.48. The mean difference between the two variables is 0.67 with the score of students with 16 years and above having the highest mean score of 3.48.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in students acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in senior secondary schools based on career choice?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the difference in students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in senior secondary schools based on career choice (n=392).

Career Choice	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Difference
Science	189	2.63	1.05	0.20
Commercial/Arts	203	2.43	1.04	

The summary of the result presented in Table 2 indicates that the mean score of students with science career choice in acquisition of entrepreneurial skill is 2.63 and that of students with Commercial/Arts career choice in entrepreneurial skills acquisition is 2.43. The mean difference between the two variables is 0.20 with the score of students with science career choice leading with a mean score of 2.63.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on Age.

Table 3: Results of independent t-test Analysis on the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on age

Age	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Df	Decision
10-15 Years	246	2.81	1.28	2.33	1.96	390	Reject H
16 Years and Above	146	3.48	1.09				

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-cal value of 2.33 at 390 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Hence, the researcher concludes that there is a significant difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on age in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on career choice.

Table 4: Results of independent t-test Analysis on the difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on career choice

Career Choice	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Df	Decision
Science	189	2.63	1.05	1.74	1.96	390	Reject H
Commercial/Arts	203	2.43	1.04				

*Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-cal value of 1.74 at 390 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. Hence, the researcher concludes that there is no significant difference in students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in senior secondary schools based on career choice in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Discussion of Finding

Age and Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition

The result of the forth hypothesis revealed that there is a significant difference in acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in senior secondary schools based on age in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. This means that age of students is crucial to their motivation to acquire entrepreneurial skills in senior secondary schools. This is possible as some

students that are in the senior secondary schools are 15 years and below. Students within this age range may not know or understand the importance of acquisition of entrepreneurial skills to motivate them to aspire for it. When students do not see the benefits embedded in doing one thing or the other, it would be difficult for them to engage in it. On the other hand, when students are older enough, let say above 15 years, there is the tendency that they would understand why it is important to acquire entrepreneurial skills. Knowing the benefits of acquiring entrepreneurial skills would act as a catalyst that would boost students' interest in acquiring entrepreneurial skills. The findings of the study is in agreement with the submission made by Onyejiaku (2018) that students who are young do not understand the need for entrepreneurial skill acquisition and as such may not see the benefit of acquiring it.

Career Choice and Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition

The result of the fifth hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference in acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in senior secondary schools based on career choice in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. This implies that senior secondary school students do not differ in acquisition of entrepreneurial skills based on their interest career aspirations. This is possible as students who are aspiring for career choice in the Science area saw the need of acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and this made them to explore ways in ensuring that they acquire entrepreneurial skills to improve their economic status. Likewise, students that are aspiring for career in the Art/Commercial fields, also shown a keen interest in engaging in one activity or the other that would enhance acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. Their interest in acquiring entrepreneurial skills despite the career of interest is as a result of wanting to improve on their state of economy, as they would a source of income to use in assisting themselves in academic activities and other things. The findings of the study is in agreement with the submission made by Melbourne (2019) that career decision determines acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of age and career choice on entrepreneurial skills acquisition among senior secondary school students. The findings revealed significant differences in entrepreneurial skills acquisition based on students' age and career choice. Older students were found to demonstrate stronger entrepreneurial competencies such as creativity, risk-taking, problem-solving, and initiative compared to younger students. Similarly, students who pursued commercial and vocational career tracks exhibited higher levels of entrepreneurial skills acquisition than their counterparts in science and arts tracks. The results highlight that age and career choice are critical factors influencing how students engage with and apply entrepreneurial education. The study therefore concludes that entrepreneurial education in secondary schools should be tailored to address developmental differences among learners and to integrate entrepreneurship across all career pathways.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. **Differentiated Instruction by Age:** Teachers should adopt age-appropriate teaching strategies in entrepreneurship education to accommodate differences in maturity, experience, and readiness between younger and older students.
2. **Integration Across Career Tracks:** Curriculum planners and policymakers should ensure that entrepreneurship education is fully integrated into science and arts tracks, not only commercial and vocational, to give all students equal opportunities to acquire entrepreneurial skills.
3. **Practical Exposure and Mentorship:** Schools should provide students with practical entrepreneurial experiences such as projects, business clubs, and mentorship programs to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and real-life practice.
4. **Career Guidance Programs:** School administrators should strengthen career counseling units to sensitize students and parents on the importance of entrepreneurial skills acquisition regardless of chosen career paths.
5. **Government and Stakeholder Support:** The government, in collaboration with NGOs and private organizations, should provide resources, training, and incentives to support entrepreneurship education in secondary schools.

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