



Global Scientific and Academic Research Journal of Economics, Business and Management

ISSN: 2583-5645 (Online)

Frequency: Monthly

Published By GSAR Publishers

Journal Homepage Link- <https://gsarpublishers.com/journals-gsarjebm-home/>



SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG UNIVERSITY GRADUATES IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LOKOJA, KOGI STATE.

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Article History

Received: 11/06/2026

Accepted: 25/07/2026

Published: 30/07/2026

Vol –5 Issue – 7

PP: -32-39

Abstract

This study examined the effect of Skill Acquisition Programmes on Entrepreneurial Intention among University Graduates in Nigeria, with specific focus on Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State. The study was guided by two objectives: to determine the effect of Technical Skills Acquisition on Entrepreneurial Intention, and to assess the influence of Managerial Skills Acquisition on entrepreneurial intention among graduates. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, with a population comprising all final-year students and recent graduates of the institution. A sample size of 200 respondents was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, while multiple regression analysis was employed to analyze the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that both technical and managerial skill acquisition have a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention among graduates. The study concluded that skill acquisition programmes play a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurial mindset and reducing unemployment among graduates. It was recommended that universities should strengthen practical-oriented skill acquisition programmes and provide adequate support systems to encourage graduate entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Skill Acquisition, Entrepreneurial Intention, University Graduates, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Skill acquisition programmes have gained significant prominence in Nigeria as a deliberate and strategic response to the persistent challenge of graduate unemployment and the urgent need to encourage self-reliance among university graduates. These programmes are structured to provide students with a blend of practical, technical, and managerial skills that enhance their capacity to recognize viable business opportunities and establish sustainable enterprises (Abdullahi & Jabor, 2019). In line with global trends, higher education institutions in Nigeria have increasingly shifted from an overreliance on theoretical instruction to a more balanced approach that emphasizes the development of entrepreneurial competencies capable of driving innovation and economic growth. Central to this discourse is the concept of entrepreneurial intention, which denotes an individual's conscious state of mind and preparedness to initiate and manage a business venture (Audu & Magaji, 2025). This

intention is largely shaped by the extent to which individuals are exposed to relevant skills, training, and experiential learning opportunities, thereby underscoring the critical role of skill acquisition programmes in nurturing future entrepreneurs. Graduate unemployment in Nigeria remains high despite the introduction of skill acquisition programmes in universities, raising concerns about their effectiveness in preparing students for self-employment (Abbas & Osunsan, 2020). Many graduates lack adequate technical skills needed to start and sustain productive ventures, while deficiencies in managerial skills hinder their ability to plan, organize, and manage businesses successfully. This gap between skill acquisition and practical entrepreneurial readiness has limited the development of strong entrepreneurial intention among university graduates.

The study addressed the following research questions:

- i. What is the effect of technical skills on entrepreneurial intention among university graduates of Federal University Lokoja?
- ii. How do managerial skills influence entrepreneurial intention among university graduates of Federal University Lokoja?

The broad objective of the study is to examine Skill Acquisition Programmes and Entrepreneurial Intention Among University Graduates in Nigeria: A Study of Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. To examine the effect of technical skills on entrepreneurial intention among university graduates of Federal University Lokoja.
- ii. To assess the influence of managerial skills on entrepreneurial intention among university graduates of Federal University Lokoja.

The research aimed to test the following hypotheses:

- H0₁: Technical skills have no significant effect on entrepreneurial intention among university graduates of Federal University Lokoja.
- H0₂: Managerial skills have no significant influence on entrepreneurial intention among university graduates of Federal University Lokoja.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Skill Acquisition Programmes

Skill acquisition programmes are structured educational and training interventions that are carefully designed to provide individuals with practical and employable skills needed to perform specific tasks efficiently in real-life situations. These programmes emphasize experiential and hands-on learning approaches that help participants develop technical expertise, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities required in different occupational fields. They are commonly implemented in educational institutions such as schools, vocational training centres, and universities to ensure that learners are not only grounded in theoretical knowledge but are also exposed to practical applications of what they learn; by bridging the gap between classroom instruction and workplace demands, skill acquisition programmes prepare individuals for both paid employment and self-employment, thereby improving their productivity and enhancing their contribution to economic development (Ihinmoyan et al., 2025).

Skill acquisition programmes can also be understood as well-structured capacity-building initiatives that are designed to empower individuals with both entrepreneurial and occupational skills required for achieving economic independence and self-sufficiency (Faloye & Olatunji, 2018). These programmes place strong emphasis on the development of diverse competencies such as craftsmanship, digital literacy, effective communication, and managerial abilities, all of which enable participants to create value, solve practical problems, and generate sustainable income. In higher education institutions, they serve as strategic tools for addressing the challenge of unemployment by equipping students and graduates with the mindset and skills needed for

innovation and enterprise development. Through this process, skill acquisition programmes promote self-reliance, encourage the establishment of small and medium-scale businesses, and contribute significantly to national economic growth and development (Ogbari, 2023).

Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention pertains to an individual's conscious, intentional, and goal-directed aspiration to create and oversee a new business enterprise in the future, representing a fundamental psychological basis for entrepreneurial conduct. It encapsulates the internal disposition of preparedness, drive, and strategic endeavour that steers an individual toward selecting entrepreneurship as a legitimate career option instead of salaried employment. This purpose reflects the gravity with which an individual regards self-employment, encompassing the readiness to undertake measured risks and participate in endeavours that foster value development and income generation via business ownership. It is not merely a vague interest but a structured mental commitment shaped by prior experiences, knowledge, and future expectations. Entrepreneurial intention is strongly influenced by personal attitudes toward entrepreneurship, where positive perceptions increase the likelihood of pursuing business ownership (Belchior & Lyons, 2021). It is also shaped by perceived opportunities in the business environment, availability of financial and material resources, and exposure to entrepreneurial education or training programs that build relevant competencies. Collectively, these factors interact to determine the strength of an individual's intention and the extent to which such intention is likely to be translated into actual business start-up and sustainable entrepreneurial practice (Donaldson, 2019).

Entrepreneurial intention denotes the degree of preparedness, inclination, and resolve an individual has to pursue self-employment by establishing a new enterprise or augmenting an existing one, signifying a pivotal psychological phase before actual venture initiation. It signifies the pre-startup phase in which individuals deliberately analyse company opportunities, analyse risks, and formulate strategic strategies to become entrepreneurs. At this stage, individuals begin to gather relevant resources, knowledge, and skills necessary for successful business initiation and sustainability. Entrepreneurial intention is often shaped by personal competencies such as skill acquisition, which enhances capability and practical understanding of business operations. It is also influenced by psychological factors like self-confidence, which strengthens belief in one's ability to succeed in entrepreneurial activities. Environmental support, including access to mentorship, finance, and enabling policies, further reinforces this intention. Ultimately, perceived feasibility of starting and sustaining a viable business plays a decisive role in converting intention into actual entrepreneurial action (Martins et al., 2023).

University Graduates

University graduates are individuals who have successfully completed a prescribed course of study at a university or other higher education institution and have been awarded an

academic degree such as a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. They are typically equipped with specialized knowledge, intellectual skills, and professional competencies in a particular field of study, which prepare them for the labour market or further academic pursuit. University graduates are expected to demonstrate critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and analytical reasoning acquired during their academic training (Fadzil et al., 2025). They also possess varying levels of practical and theoretical understanding depending on their discipline and exposure to experiential learning. In most cases, they are regarded as educated manpower capable of contributing to economic development, innovation, and societal growth. Their transition from academic environments to employment or entrepreneurship often depends on their acquired skills, adaptability, and opportunities available in the external environment (Liao et al., 2022).

Technical Skills and Entrepreneurial Intention among University Graduates

Technical skills significantly influence entrepreneurial intention among university graduates by improving their capacity to find, assess, and capitalise on business opportunities efficiently. The abilities encompassing digital literacy, problem-solving, ICT competence, financial management, and practical vocational competencies prepare graduates with the essential knowledge to establish and oversee company enterprises. Graduates with robust technical skills exhibit more self-confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities, hence enhancing their propensity for self-employment. Technical skills mitigate perceived company risks by enhancing decision-making and operational efficiency, thereby rendering entrepreneurship more viable and appealing (Adewumi & Cele, 2023). Moreover, graduates possessing pertinent technical skills are more adept at innovating and adjusting to evolving market requirements, hence enhancing their confidence in sustainability.

Managerial Skills and Entrepreneurial Intention among University Graduates

Managerial skills significantly influence entrepreneurial intention among university graduates by equipping them with the ability to plan, organize, coordinate, and control business activities effectively. These skills include decision-making, leadership, strategic planning, human resource management, and effective communication, all of which are essential for running a successful enterprise (Adeniyi et al., 2022). When graduates possess strong managerial competencies, they are more likely to develop confidence in their capacity to handle business challenges, thereby strengthening their intention to become entrepreneurs. Managerial skills also help individuals to identify business opportunities, allocate resources efficiently, and develop sustainable business strategies, which increases the perceived feasibility of entrepreneurship. In addition, graduates with sound managerial abilities are better positioned to manage risks, solve operational problems, and lead teams, making entrepreneurship appear more structured and less uncertain. Exposure to entrepreneurial and management training in higher institutions further enhances

their readiness to transition from employment-seeking to business creation. Consequently, strong managerial skills positively shape entrepreneurial intention among university graduates by improving both competence and psychological readiness for venture creation (Obeki et al., 2025).

Measurement of Entrepreneurial Intention among University Graduates

The Strength of Intention: The strength of intention represents the degree of commitment, determination, and seriousness a university graduate places on becoming an entrepreneur, reflecting how deeply the desire for business ownership is embedded in their career goals. It goes beyond mere interest, capturing a deliberate and well-thought-out decision supported by clear future plans, personal sacrifices, and a readiness to invest time, energy, and financial resources into entrepreneurial pursuits. This construct is commonly measured through self-assessment indicators such as the consistency of entrepreneurial goals, persistence in the face of challenges, and proactive steps taken toward venture creation. Graduates with a high strength of intention are more focused, resilient, and action-oriented, making them significantly more likely to transform business ideas into tangible enterprises, as their strong internal drive often overcomes external barriers and uncertainties associated with starting a business (Ogbari, 2023).

Attitudinal Disposition toward Entrepreneurship: Attitudinal disposition toward entrepreneurship refers to the overall evaluation and mindset that university graduates hold regarding entrepreneurship as a viable and desirable career path. It captures the extent to which individuals perceive entrepreneurial activities as attractive, rewarding, and aligned with their personal goals and values. Graduates with a positive attitudinal disposition typically associate entrepreneurship with opportunities for wealth creation, independence, innovation, and social recognition, while also demonstrating a higher tolerance for risk and uncertainty. This construct is often measured through beliefs about the profitability of business ventures, perceived benefits versus challenges, and the level of personal satisfaction expected from owning and managing a business. A favorable attitude not only strengthens entrepreneurial intention but also enhances the likelihood of proactive behavior, as individuals are more motivated to pursue and persist in entrepreneurial activities despite potential obstacles (Mohammed, 2021).

Perceived Behavioral Control or Self-efficacy: Perceived behavioural control, or self-efficacy, denotes the degree of confidence that university graduates possess on their capability to successfully launch and manage a business initiative. It indicates the extent to which individuals perceive their competence in executing fundamental entrepreneurial tasks, including recognising viable prospects, addressing business challenges, managing funds proficiently, and making strategic judgements amid uncertainty. This framework highlights not just the acquisition of skills but also the confidence in one's ability to utilise those skills in practical contexts. Graduates possessing elevated self-efficacy are more

inclined to demonstrate tenacity, resilience, and proactive behaviour when confronted with entrepreneurial hurdles, hence enhancing their intention to pursue business formation. The assessment of perceived behavioural control is generally conducted through standardised scales that gauge individuals' confidence in performing specific entrepreneurial tasks, rendering it a vital predictor of both entrepreneurial intention and subsequent business startup behaviour (Akinola et al., 2023).

Subjective Norms and Social Influence: Subjective norms and social influence denote the extent to which university graduates believe that significant individuals in their lives, including family, friends, mentors, and larger societal groupings, endorse or oppose their choice to pursue entrepreneurship. This framework highlights the influence of societal expectations, cultural norms, and interpersonal dynamics on entrepreneurial intention. Graduates who obtain encouragement, acceptance, or support from significant others are more inclined to cultivate enhanced confidence and enthusiasm for entrepreneurial endeavours, whereas criticism or absence of support may diminish their intentions. The measurement of this variable generally entails evaluating the extent of perceived social pressure, endorsement, or support for entrepreneurial endeavours, along with the significance individuals assign to these perspectives. As a result, subjective norms play a vital role in influencing decision-making processes and can significantly determine whether entrepreneurial intentions are strengthened or discouraged (Sherkat & Chenari, 2020).

Readiness and Preparatory Actions: Readiness and preparation acts embody the practical aspect of entrepreneurial purpose, indicating the degree to which university graduates transcend simple desire and actively undertake measures toward firm establishment. This includes concrete actions such as formulating business strategies, engaging in entrepreneurship training programs, networking with prospective investors or mentors, pursuing funding options, and testing small-scale or pilot companies. These activities indicate a shift from theoretical intention to genuine commitment, demonstrating that the individual is prepared to dedicate work, time, and resources to realising entrepreneurial objectives. Measurement of this construct focuses on the frequency, consistency, and seriousness of such preparatory efforts. Graduates who actively engage in these behaviors exhibit a higher level of entrepreneurial readiness, indicating not only strong intention but also an increased probability of successfully establishing and sustaining a business venture in the future (Issa & Tesfaye, 2020).

Empirical Review

The effect of technical skills on entrepreneurial intention among University Graduates in Nigeria

Adewale and Adedayo (2026) investigated the influence of technical and vocational skills on entrepreneurial intentions among TVET students at Polytechnic Ibadan, Oyo State, South-West Nigeria. The research employed a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of students enrolled

in technical and vocational education programs, from which a sample of 269 respondents was obtained by stratified random sampling. Data were gathered via a standardised questionnaire, and analysis was conducted utilising descriptive statistics and inferential methods, including ANOVA and independent t-tests, facilitated by SPSS software. The study found that technical skills such as ICT application, communication proficiency, and problem-solving abilities significantly enhanced students' entrepreneurial intention. The study concluded that technical competencies are essential for fostering entrepreneurship mindset among graduates. It recommended that technical institutions should integrate entrepreneurship-driven technical training and improve practical exposure in their curriculum.

Kalabeke and Olaniyi (2024) conducted a study on the factors of entrepreneurial intention among Nigerian university graduates, concentrating on the University of Lagos, Lagos State, and several other universities around Nigeria. The research employed a quantitative methodology. The population comprised final-year students and recent graduates, with a sample size of 180 respondents picked by a simple random sampling procedure from 250 distributed questionnaires. Data were gathered by a standardised questionnaire and analysed utilising regression analysis and correlation approaches, facilitated by SPSS software. The results indicated that the acquisition of technical skills substantially impacts entrepreneurial intention, explaining a considerable percentage of the diversity in students' readiness to initiate firms. The research determined that the enhancement of technical skills is a pivotal element in influencing the entrepreneurial aspirations of graduates. Nigerian universities are advised to enhance entrepreneurship education and incorporate additional technical and practical skill development into academic programs to augment graduate employability and foster business creation.

The influence of Managerial Skills on Entrepreneurial Intention among University Graduates in Nigeria.

Oshineye and Alo (2024) performed a study on managerial competencies and entrepreneurial intentions among students at Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. The research employed a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of undergraduate students and university staff, from which a sample of 150 respondents was chosen using a basic random sampling method. Data were gathered by a standardised questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean, frequency, and standard deviation, facilitated by SPSS. The findings indicated that students had moderate managerial skills, including planning, organising, and decision-making; nevertheless, their entrepreneurial desire was diminished due to limitations such as insufficient financial resources and lack of exposure. The research found that managerial competencies are significant factors influencing entrepreneurial preparedness. It is proposed that universities increase entrepreneurship education by including practical managerial skill training and experiential learning to bolster students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Omofowa and Egbule (2025) examined managerial competency and entrepreneurial intention among students at various universities in Edo State, Nigeria. The research utilised a correlational survey design. The population comprised undergraduate students, and a sample of 135 respondents was obtained by a stratified sampling procedure. Data were gathered via a questionnaire and analysed using inferential statistics, namely regression analysis, facilitated by SPSS. The research indicated that managerial qualities, including planning ability, leadership, and organisational competence, greatly affect students' entrepreneurial intentions. The research determined that managerial competencies augment students' confidence and readiness for entrepreneurship. It is proposed that higher education institutions enhance skill acquisition programs and incorporate practical managerial training into entrepreneurship education to augment graduates' self-employment capabilities.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The pertinent theoretical underpinning for this study is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1991. The idea asserts that human action is not arbitrary but is motivated by intention, with entrepreneurial intention serving as the most direct predictor of entrepreneurial behaviour. Ajzen (1991) posits that intention is influenced by three primary factors: attitude toward the activity, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) posits that university graduates who obtain pertinent vocational, technical, and managerial skills through structured skill acquisition programs are more inclined to cultivate a favourable attitude towards entrepreneurship, as they view business creation as both desirable and rewarding. Moreover, skill development augments perceived behavioural control by bolstering graduates' confidence, competence, and capacity to initiate and effectively manage a firm.

Literature Gap

A clear gap in literature on skill acquisition programmes and entrepreneurial intention among university graduates in Nigeria is evident in previous studies that have largely focused on general entrepreneurship education without isolating structured skill acquisition interventions and their specific influence on graduates' intentions to start businesses. For instance, Uche and Okonkwo (2018) investigated determinants of entrepreneurial intention among undergraduates in Southeast Nigeria, identifying factors such as self-efficacy and access to finance, but gave limited attention to how vocational or technical skill acquisition shapes intention formation. In another study, Baba and Mohammed (2020) assessed entrepreneurship training and youth empowerment in Northern Nigeria, focusing more on employment outcomes than on psychological intention to engage in entrepreneurship. These studies reveal a methodological and contextual gap because they rarely isolate skill acquisition programmes as a distinct variable influencing

entrepreneurial intention among university graduates. Moreover, most existing research tends to rely on undergraduates rather than graduates who have completed university education and may have undergone formal or informal skill acquisition programmes. This creates a gap in understanding how practical skill acquisition specifically translates into entrepreneurial intention among Nigerian university graduates.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a descriptive survey study design to explore the opinions of a specific demographic regarding current practices and conditions. The study utilised primary data sources to obtain information. The research population comprises 19,112 undergraduate students from Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, throughout the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic sessions. Stratified random sampling was employed, a method that ensures each individual in a population has an equal probability of being included in the selection. As we will not examine the entire population, the sample size was determined statistically using Taro Yamane's formula from 1964 as follows. The hypothesis testing is conducted utilising multiple regression analysis as the primary method, facilitated by SPSS version 25.0.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where
 n = Sample size
 N = Actual population
 e = Level of significance (0.05)
 1 = constant

$$n = \frac{19,112}{1 + 19,112(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{19,112}{1 + 47.78}$$

$$n = \frac{19,112}{48.78} = 392$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study is 392

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In analyzing the data, a total of Three Hundred and Ninety-Two (392) respondents was observed. Therefore, the researcher makes use of total sample size of (392) for the analysis.

Testing of Hypotheses

- H0₁: Technical skills have no significant effect on Entrepreneurial Intention among university graduates of Federal University Lokoja.
- H0₂: Managerial skills have no significant influence on Entrepreneurial Intention among university graduates of Federal University Lokoja.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.854 ^a	.729	.728	.44725

a. Predictors: (Constant), Technical Skills, Managerial Skills

Table 1 presents the model summary illustrating the correlation between the predictors (technical skills and managerial abilities) and the dependent variable (Entrepreneurial Intentions). An R value of 0.854 implies a robust positive correlation between technical skills, managerial skills, and the outcome variable. This indicates that as technical and management competencies augment, the dependent variable similarly tends to rise. An R Square value

of 0.729 indicates that about 72.9% of the variance in the dependent variable is accounted for by the combination of technical and management skills. This indicates that the model possesses substantial explanatory power, signifying that the two skills significantly impact the outcome under investigation. Nevertheless, the residual 27.1% is attributed to additional factors not encompassed in the model, such as finance, experience, or environmental impacts.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA^a)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	209.476	2	104.738	523.615	.000 ^b
Residual	77.811	389	.200		
Total	287.288	391			

a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intentions

b. Predictors: (Constant), Technical Skills, Managerial Skills

Table 2 presents the ANOVA table, which assesses the statistical significance of the entire regression model in elucidating entrepreneurial intents through technical and management skills. The outcome indicates an F-value of 523.615 and a significance level of 0.000, which is below 0.05. This indicates that the model is statistically significant, demonstrating that technical and management skills collectively exert a substantial influence on entrepreneurial

inclinations. The regression sum of squares (209.476) significantly exceeds the residual sum of squares (77.811), indicating that the model accounts for a substantial share of the variation in entrepreneurial inclinations relative to the unexplained variance. Consequently, it may be inferred that the amalgamation of technical and management competencies substantially forecasts entrepreneurial inclinations among participants.

Table 3: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.353	.065		5.395	.000
Technical Skills	.432	.046	.470	9.384	.000
Managerial Skill	.386	.046	.418	8.333	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention

Table 3 presents the coefficients illustrating the impact of technical skills and managerial abilities on entrepreneurial intention. The fixed value of 0.353 signifies the degree of entrepreneurial purpose in the absence of both technical and managerial capabilities. The findings indicate that technical skills ($B = 0.432$, $t = 9.384$, $p = 0.000$) exert a positive and substantial influence on entrepreneurial intention, suggesting that an enhancement in technical skills correlates with a rise in entrepreneurial intention among participants. Furthermore, managerial skills ($B = 0.386$, $t = 8.333$, $p = 0.000$) exert a positive and statistically significant influence on entrepreneurial intention, indicating that enhancements in

managing abilities correspondingly elevate entrepreneurial intention. Upon comparison of the two predictors through standardised beta values, technical skills ($\beta = 0.470$) exert a marginally greater impact on entrepreneurial intention than management skills ($\beta = 0.418$). This indicates that although both abilities are significant in influencing entrepreneurial inclination, technical skills exert a more pronounced influence among the respondents.

Discussion of Finding

The outcome of the test for research hypothesis one, employing regression analysis at a 5% significance level, led

to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho). The researcher concluded that technical skills exert a positive and significant impact on graduates' propensity to participate in entrepreneurial activities. Graduates with pertinent technical skills, including ICT proficiency, vocational capabilities, problem-solving acumen, and practical business competences, are more inclined to cultivate robust aspirations to establish their own enterprises. The findings indicate that technical proficiency enhances self-assurance and mitigates the fear of failure, thereby motivating graduates to view entrepreneurship as a legitimate career path instead of depending exclusively on salaried positions. This conclusion corroborates the perspective of Bayero (2020), who determined that technical abilities augment perceived behavioural control, a crucial element of entrepreneurial ambition. Technically proficient graduates are more adept at recognising business prospects, managing manufacturing processes, and providing quality services, hence enhancing their preparedness for self-employment. It suggests that skill development programs are essential in cultivating an entrepreneurial attitude by providing graduates with practical competencies required in real-world business contexts. Consequently, enhancing technical skill training in universities and skill acquisition centers can substantially bolster entrepreneurial intention among graduates in Nigeria.

The results of research hypothesis two indicate that managerial skills exert a positive and significant influence on entrepreneurial intention, suggesting that graduates with robust managerial competencies such as planning, decision-making, leadership, communication, and resource management are more inclined to cultivate the intention to establish and operate their own enterprises. Managerial abilities enable graduates to comprehend the organization of business activities, coordinate resources, and make successful judgements, so enhancing their confidence in managing entrepreneurial obligations.

The finding is in agreement with the view of (Neupane & Bhattarai, 2024) who opined that, managerial skills play an important role in shaping entrepreneurial mindset among university graduates. When graduates are exposed to skill acquisition programmes that improve their managerial competence, they become more prepared to face the challenges of business ownership and management, this increased preparedness enhances their perceived ability to succeed in entrepreneurship, thereby strengthening their entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, strengthening managerial skill training in higher institutions and skill development programmes can significantly promote entrepreneurial intention among graduates in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study establishes that skill acquisition programmes play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial intention among university graduates in Nigeria, by equipping graduates with practical competencies, technical know-how, and problem-solving abilities, these programmes enhance

self-confidence, perceived feasibility, and readiness to venture into business creation. The study also suggests that graduates who actively participate in skill acquisition initiatives are more likely to develop strong intentions toward self-employment, thereby contributing to job creation and economic development. However, the effectiveness of such programmes depends on their quality, relevance to market demands, and the availability of supportive infrastructure. It is therefore concluded that strengthening and integrating skill acquisition programmes into university education is essential for fostering a sustainable entrepreneurial culture among Nigerian graduates.

The study recommended that;

- i. The university should intensify the provision of practical, hands-on technical training through well-equipped skill acquisition centres and entrepreneurship programmes to enhance students' competencies. The university should also partner with industries and vocational experts to expose students to real-world technical experience and innovation. Furthermore, continuous support such as access to tools, startup funding, and mentorship should be provided to help graduates effectively apply their technical skills in establishing and sustaining their own businesses.

The management of the university should strengthen managerial skill training through practical courses, workshops, and entrepreneurship development programmes to enhance students' competence. The university should also collaborate with industry experts and business mentors to provide real-life managerial experience and guidance for students. Additionally, continuous support such as business incubation centres and advisory services should be provided to help graduates translate their managerial skills into entrepreneurial ventures.

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