



# **Perceived Influence of Entrepreneurial Activities on Reduction of Poverty among Graduate Students in Rivers State Universities**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the perceived influence of entrepreneurial activities on reduction of poverty among Graduate students in Rivers State Universities. The purpose of study was stated and four objectives were achieved. Two research questions and two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design while the area of the study was Rivers State. The population of this study comprised 310 graduate students from Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample size was 310 using purposive sampling technique. A structured instrument was used to obtain information from the respondents. The instrument used for this study was validated by three experts. To test the reliability of the instrument, test-retest method was applied with 20 graduate students of UNIPORT drawn through simple random sampling technique that yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.90 using PPMCC. Two research assistants were trained and employed for the administration of the instrument. Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-Test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that tailoring activities, computer operation activities, soap making activities as well as hair dressing/barbing saloon as entrepreneurial activities will reduce poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities. Based on finding of this study, it was recommended among others that Entrepreneurship should be given relevance in education curriculum so as to make these activities effective. As a result, poverty can be reduced among youths in Rivers State. In conclusion, there is need to encourage the young minds to effectively acquire knowledge on entrepreneurial activities that will lead to expertise.

**Keywords:** Influence, Entrepreneurial, Reduction, Poverty, Students, Universities

## **INTRODUCTION**

Entrepreneurial activities are self-reliant and financial Independence programme that involves profit maximization and employment of the teaming populace, thereby bringing succor to the economy with increase in gross domestic products (GDP). Entrepreneurial activities can be best harnessed through formal education were the principle, values, ethics and moral will be unveiled in knowledge acquisition with instructional application.

Entrepreneurial activities are concerned with daily productions that are targeted into financial independence for the economic advancement such as increased in the standard of living that involves the four factors of production (Bakere, 2013). These activities are majorly anchored on acquisition of skills such as tailoring, computer operation, soap-making and saloon business (Hairdressing/barbing) that is ventured jointly with sole aim of wealth creation.

Entrepreneurship in general is vigorous approach in rising the standard of living through identification of business opportunities and mobilization of economic resources (Capital) to execute the idea into reality. Activities that involve enterprise always lead to entrepreneurial activities that result in the entrepreneur being self-reliant and financially independence (Zaha, 2012). Several factors were considered in perceived influence of entrepreneurial activities acquired by graduate students to reduce poverty among youths in Rivers State. The researcher was concerned with innovative approach in reducing poverty among youths. These approaches involve formal, informal and non-formal education respectively that exposed the individual to embark on field trip and practical practice of these activities (Bakere, 2013). Entrepreneurship is a phenomenon associated with entrepreneurial activities (Agrey, 2011). According to Agi and Yellowe (2013), types of entrepreneurial activities are retailing, wholesaling and manufacturing. One of the goals of Nigerian tertiary education is the acquisition of intellectual skills and entrepreneurial activities which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the world of work (FRN, 2008). According to Babalola (2007), it is the statutory duty of Nigerian tertiary education to groom the required human capital by using relevant manpower training skill, abilities, attitudes, skills, activities and knowledge. This means that if the needed manpower training skill is not adequately given to youths at the tertiary level of education, it can lead to unemployment. One of the consequences of unemployment in society is poverty.

Poverty as an outcome of unemployment is one of the most critical problems facing Nigerian society today. According to World Bank data, in Bakere (2013), poverty as a consequence of unemployment rate among the youths is over 38 percent with tertiary school graduates mostly found among unemployed rural population. Poverty means, lack of income or shortage of assets, lack of competence, confidence; disempowerment and also deprivation of national currency (United Nation Report on Poverty, 2016). Poverty is generally the scarcity or the state of lack in certain amount of material possession, it causes may be due to low productivity of households and financial constraints and lack of other incentive of entrepreneurial purposes (Agrey, 2011). Poverty alleviation in the society today, is seen as a global challenge and an indispensable requirement for national and sustainable development (NAPEP,2007). However, to address the issue of poverty alleviation, it is paramount to consider the cause of poverty in this sense is seen as lack of the possession of entrepreneurial activities by tertiary education graduates.

The acquisition of entrepreneurial activities in recent time has been given serious attention by scholars and academics owing to its numerous contributions in alleviating poverty. Singer (2006), observed that the best treatment of poverty alleviation in any region of the globe, rely on encouraging more business activity and start-up new ventures through entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurial activities are those relevant activities and competences that will enable an individual seek and run an enterprise successfully. For example, creative skill, marketing skill, managerial skill, innovative skill and time-management skill, consists of effective utilization of ideas, information and facts that help a learner to develop competences or being productive employee of labour (Olibie & Obidike, 2008). In view of this, entrepreneurship education is directly needed in tertiary education, especially in Rivers state which is the focus of this study. Entrepreneurship education is conceived as a vehicle aimed at providing these skills in order to be self-reliant (Agi & Yellowe, 2013). Utim (2013) in supporting the use of entrepreneurial education as a tool for poverty alleviation, noted that education is the main mechanism for social and economic development of the people which contribute to economic growth by alleviating poverty through career training, job specification and wealth creation. Indicating the need and relevance of entrepreneurial activities, (Amaewhule, 2014) opined that, for Nigeria and other developing nations, it is of a social and economic imperative to encourage entrepreneurship development. And hence, our school system is faced with challenged to its products in venturing into the path of entrepreneurship as a career choice, as an endeavor that can make them self-employed and move them away from endless quest for non-existence white collar jobs that makes them job creators instead of job seekers.

The relevance of entrepreneurial activities in poverty reduction may not be achievable if the students are not taught the skills and operational activities using the right approaches or mechanism. Tertiary schools in Rivers State need a pragmatic approach in meeting entrepreneurial development goals. If students of

the institutions do not understand the need and methods to implement certain entrepreneurial activities programmes towards poverty reduction, it will lead to low productivity. Furthermore, poverty alleviation can mostly be achieved if students are taught on the need for independence and self-reliant, rather than waiting wholly on government to do everything for them after graduation. The relevance of Entrepreneurial activities as a tool to reduce poverty cannot be overemphasized. Paul (2005) and Nwalado (2012) observed that entrepreneurial skills when inculcated in the tertiary school students will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying great business opportunities, and offers functional education to the youths that can enable them to be well empowered and self-reliant in the society. Entrepreneurial activities serve as catalyst for economic growth and development, reduces the high rate of poverty and insecurity that will lead to stabilities and creates jobs for its citizenry as well as provide the young graduates with enough training skills which support the establishment of a career in small and medium scale businesses (SMEDAN, 2010).

Considering the population of Nigeria today, pragmatic entrepreneurial activities are highly needed in order to reduce poverty. Nigeria has an estimated population of 170 million people (NPC, 2006). According to Abayomi and Odozi (2014), this population is endowed with abundant human and natural resources and a favorable geographical location in the world map. The current global financial crisis has impacted negatively on the macro and micro levels of the Nigerian economy. At the moment, this situation has posed serious challenges and threats to government and large number of the citizens. Nigeria like other developing countries is faced with a number of problems ranging from youth and graduate unemployment as a result of lack of entrepreneurial skills, high level of poverty, insurgency, conflict, diseases, insecurity, over dependence on foreign made goods, low economic growth and development, lack of capacity and required skills to move the economy forward and urbanization (Vesper, 2010). Lack of entrepreneurial skills and eminent poverty has constituted a major problem bedeviling the lives of youths and graduates causing frustration, depression, dejection and dependency on family members and friends for survival. To further buttress this fact, Simkovic (2012) noted that the high level of unemployment as a result of lack of entrepreneurial activities among this population in Nigeria has contributed to the high rate of insecurity, violence and poverty.

Abayomi and Odozi (2014) and Awogbenle and Iwamadi (2010) are of the view that sixty-four (64) million of the Nigeria youths are unemployed while one million six hundred thousand (1.6million) are underemployed bringing the total of youths' population to eighty (80) million representing youth population of the entire Nigerian population. When this percentage is deducted from the total population of Nigeria then you would agree with the researcher that repositioning entrepreneurship education in our tertiary schools especially in Rivers State would salvage this gap. However, it should be noted that, one of the possible causes for this, is most of tertiary education in Nigeria did not recognize holistically the relevance of pragmatic integration of entrepreneurial skills such as; creative skills, managerial skills, self-motivation skills, time-management skills, marketing skills, administrative skills, innovative skills etc., rather it addresses only output end of capacity development solving problems, which is theoretical. For it to address the input therefore, a complimentary approach is needed for giving entrepreneurial activities training to the students.

In a developed economies or industrialized economies for instance, the education system emphasizes the trail of inquiry-discovery application in teaching and students to perceive problems (including societal problems) as challenges and opportunities that can be turned into goods and services of commercial value (Adejimola & Olufumilayo, 2009, Giwa 2000, and Adeyemi 2006). Solomon (2007), highlighted entrepreneurship education teaching approaches, to include business study practical methods than writing, lecture by professionals, case studies, chose programmes supervision and experimental learning, visit of experts on site. Above all the approaches of teaching and learning entrepreneurship activities, mentioned above, the experimental teaching which involves pragmatic approach seem to be the best base on the studies of (Solomon and Tarabisky, 2009). One of the approaches to achieve this landmark in Rivers state is to inculcate entrepreneurial activities through teaching and research at tertiary schools and entrepreneurship and innovative centres through promotion of private sector collaboration. This can be

attained through utilization of various methods such as; Human Capital Development Theory, Achievement Motivation Theory and Refugee Effect Theory, collaborative methods etc. These will enable the implementation of entrepreneurial education programme at tertiary schools in Rivers State. For instance, Nwaokolo (2003) posited that entrepreneurial education and training of students should have equipped with the needed entrepreneurial activities via Human Capital Development Theory, Achievement Motivation Theory and Refugee Effect Theory, method of teaching. In the same vein, Kennedy (2011) posited that entrepreneurial education should be aimed at improving the business techniques of students and teachers through collaboration. Therefore, the researcher is investigating whether existing gap can be filled. The researcher is intensifying and emphasizing the need for total development of individual training in entrepreneurial activities and skills such as: creative skills, marketing skills, financial management skills, self-motivation skills, time-management skills, administrative skills etc. Which can be sub-divided into the following activities: Tailoring, computer operation, and saloon business entrepreneurial activities for self-sustenance and profit maximization. When these skills are inculcated in students of high Institutions in Rivers State, it will enable them to be, self-reliance after graduation if job opportunities are not readily available. These activities can be subdivided into tailoring, computer operation, soap-making and hairdressing/saloon for self-reliance that will necessitate profit maximization.

### **Statement of the Problem**

One of the major challenges facing developing and underdeveloped countries of the world is poverty. Alleviation of this pandemic have not to be effective due to factors such as lack of entrepreneurial activities acquired by graduate students to reduce poverty among youths. Despite the enormous benefit of entrepreneurship education, Nigerian tertiary Institutions have not given adequate attention and priority to acquisition of entrepreneurial activities to her graduates, which has led to the neglect of this life changing influence. It has been so endemic as a result of the high rate of unemployment that has become the major characteristic of the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world (Adofu & Ocheja, 2013). Poverty still remains the major obstacle to the success of the struggle for the optimum utilization of human resources for both social and economic development of nations. More than a billion people, live in extreme poverty (Collier, 2007). Both scholars and policymakers have proposed that entrepreneurship is an effective means for economic development and poverty alleviation in impoverished and lower income regions of the world (Mead & Liedholm, 2018). Worse still the problems of poverty in Nigeria is multifaceted, among which are, lack of access to good health facilities, high infant mortality rate, lack of essential infrastructure, unemployment, underemployment and corruption (International Monetary Fund). It is argued that the depth and extent of global poverty would be far greater without the activities of entrepreneurs who have created jobs and wealth (Singer, 2014). This clearly signifies that entrepreneurship is a good tool in fighting poverty. The reduction of poverty is the most difficult challenge facing any country in the developing world where on the average majority of the population is considered poor. In attempt to alleviate poverty, the federal government introduced various programmes to tackle poverty but to no avail. Also, the introduction of Entrepreneurship Education in tertiary institutions was a means of alleviating unemployment among graduates. From the foregoing, it is clear that the problem of poverty has engulfed the developing countries of the world and Nigeria is not an exception and the solution to this problem could be the acquisition of entrepreneurial activities. That being so, this study seeks to examine the perceived influence of entrepreneurial activities and reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived Influence of entrepreneurial activities on reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities. Specifically, the study achieved the following objectives:

1. Determine the influence of tailoring as entrepreneurial activities on reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State universities.

2. Determine the influence of computer operation as entrepreneurial activities on reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State universities.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does tailoring as entrepreneurial activity influences reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities?
2. To what extent does computer operation as entrepreneurial activity influence the reduction poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities?

### **Hypotheses**

The following were formulated and was test at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of RSU and IAUE graduate students on the influence of tailoring on poverty reduction.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of RSU and IAUE graduate students on the influence of computer operation business on poverty reduction.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey research design. The researcher adopted the descriptive survey research design due to the fact that at the end of this research the findings from the sample are generalized to the population from which the sample was drawn (Nwankwo, 2006). This study was carried out in Rivers State Government owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State which include, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The population of this study comprised 310 Graduate students from both universities. 78 postgraduate students of Business Education Department, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University and 232 students of Faculty of Business Study, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The entire population of 310 postgraduate students was used as sample size of this study. The instrument for the data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Perceived Influence of Entrepreneurial Activities and Reduction of Poverty among Graduate Students in Rivers State Universities Questionnaire" Copies of the instrument (EARPAGSRSUQ) were given to the researcher's supervisor and two lecturers from Business Education Department, who are experts in measurement and evaluation for face and content validation. They vetted and scrutinized the instrument in terms of relevancy, appropriateness and language level. Their recommendations and corrections were incorporated in the final version of the instrument before administering. The reliability of the research instrument was established for measure of stability of the instrument. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw 20 graduate students from University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State with the reliability value of 0.90. To ensure accuracy and precision of the research Instrument, the researcher with the aid of three trained others, administered the instrument to the respondents. All the 310 copies of questionnaires that was distributed were retrieved and used for the study. Data collected for this study was analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test at a significance level of  $P < 0.05$  percent level of significance.

**RESULTS**

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Research Question 1:** *To what extent does tailoring as entrepreneurial activity influences reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities?*

**Table 4.1: Mean ratings of RSU and IAUE graduate students on the influence of tailoring on poverty reduction (N=310)**

S/N	Items	RSU (n=78)			IAUE (n=232)		
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	Remark	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>	Remark
1.	My participation in tailoring activity has improved my income.	3.18	0.87	High Extent	3.43	0.71	High Extent
2.	Participation in tailoring has enabled me to pay my house rent.	3.15	0.88	High Extent	3.52	0.81	High Extent
3.	Participation in tailoring activity has enabled me feed myself.	3.20	0.84	High Extent	3.69	0.62	High Extent
4.	Participation in tailoring activity has enabled me provide for myself clothing.	3.15	0.84	High Extent	3.60	0.70	High Extent
5.	Participation in tailoring has contributed in enhancement of good living.	3.38	0.73	High Extent	3.58	0.82	High Extent
6.	Participation in tailoring activity has provided income for my up-keep	3.26	0.86	High Extent	3.51	0.68	High Extent
<b>Grand Mean\Std. Dev.</b>		<b>3.22</b>	<b>0.84</b>		<b>3.55</b>	<b>0.78</b>	

**Source:** Field Survey, (2020)

The results in table 4.1 above show the grand mean scores of students of RSU, Port-Harcourt and IAUE, Port-Harcourt on the extent tailoring as entrepreneurial activities on reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities the scores were 3.22 and 3.55 respectively with added deviation mean of 0.84 and 0.78. These scores are obviously above the decision mean of 2.50. The low value of the standard deviations also emphasized how closely related the individual responses are from the grand mean.

**Research Question 2:** *To what extent does computer operation as entrepreneurial activity influences reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities?*

**Table 4.2: Mean ratings of RSU and IAUE graduate students on the influence of computer operation on poverty reduction (N=310)**

S/N	Items	RSU (n=78)			IAUE (n=232)		
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	Rmark	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>	Rmark
1.	Participating in computer operation activity will help meet my financial needs.	3.26	0.81	High Extent	3.62	0.67	High Extent
2.	Acquiring skills in computer operation has advance my standard of living.	3.43	0.70	High Extent	3.42	0.73	High Extent
3.	Computer skills knowledge has helped in raising income for me to help my family.	3.25	0.78	High Extent	3.48	0.83	High Extent
4.	Acquisition of computer skills has enabled me get money for further study.	3.31	0.82	High Extent	3.36	0.78	High Extent
5.	Participation in computer operation activity will reduce poverty.	3.39	0.70	High Extent	3.53	0.65	High Extent
6.	Computer operation knowledge has salvaged me for a better living.	3.14	0.88	High Extent	3.49	0.86	High Extent
<b>Grand Mean\Std. Dev.</b>		<b>3.29</b>	<b>0.78</b>		<b>3.48</b>	<b>0.78</b>	

From table 4:2 the grand mean scores of the respondents' responses on the extent to which computer operation as entrepreneurial activity influence reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities were 3.29 and 3.48 respectively with standard deviation of 0.78 and 0.78 respectively. These were below the decision mean of 2.50. The low values of the standard deviation also indicate the views of the respondents. The implication is that computer operation as entrepreneurial activity influence reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of RSU and IAUE graduate students on the influence of tailoring on poverty reduction.

**Table 4.5: Computation of Difference in the Mean Ratings of RSU and IAUE graduate students on the influence of tailoring on poverty reduction.**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df.	$\alpha$	t-cal.	t-crit.	Remarks
RSU	78	3.22	0.84	308	0.05	0.63	1.96	<b>Accepted</b>
IAUE	232	3.55	0.78					

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 4.6, the t-calculated value of 0.63 is less than the t-critical table value of 1.98 at 0.05 levels of significance and degree of freedom of 308. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in mean ratings of respondents in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on tailoring as entrepreneurial activities and reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of RSU and IAUE graduate students on the influence of computer operation on poverty reduction.

**Table 4.6: Computation of Difference in the Mean Ratings of RSU and IAUE graduate students on the influence of computer on poverty reduction.**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\alpha$	df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Remarks
RSU	78	3.29	0.78	0.05	308	0.87	1.96	<b>Accepted</b>
IAUE	232	3.48	0.75					

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 4.6, the t-calculated value of 0.87 is less than the t-critical table value of 1.96 at 0.05 levels of significance and degree of freedom of 308. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on computer operation as entrepreneurial activities and reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities was accepted.

**Summary of Major Findings**

The following were findings from the study.

1. The study found that tailoring as entrepreneurial activities on reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities will facilitate the reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities.
2. The study also found that computer operation as an aspect of entrepreneurial activities on reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities can be used to reduce poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Table 4.1 revealed that perceived influence entrepreneurship activities that if acquired will reduce poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities. The result show that use of tailoring for living on graduation, tailoring technical ideas and professionalism, tailoring for economic growth, income generation tailoring as an occupation etc. can reduce poverty among graduate students in Rivers

State Universities. The finding is in agreement with the finding of Okwelle and Deebom (2018) that these activities if acquired by graduate students will enhance self-reliance and reintegration upon their discharge. Results from Table 4.2 revealed that poverty are alleviated among graduate students of tertiary institutions in Rivers State through acquisition of entrepreneurial activities. Hence, the findings further found that this activity will enhance employment opportunities, individual becomes self-reliant through acquisition of entrepreneurial activities to reduce poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities. This finding is in line with Maclean and David (2009) who opined that entrepreneurship is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and activities for the world of work to increase opportunities for productive empowerment and socio-economic development in knowledge economics and rapidly changing work environment. The finding also agreed with the finding of Okwelle and Deebom (2018) that skills if acquired by will enhance self-reliance and reduce poverty.

## CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the study found that majority of the entrepreneurial activities on reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities. Entrepreneurial activities such as tailoring, computer operation activities respectively acquired by graduate students can be used to reduce poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Entrepreneurship should acquire more tailoring activities for reduction of poverty among youths in Rivers State.
2. Entrepreneurship should acquire more of computer operation activities for reduction of poverty among graduate students in Rivers State Universities.

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