

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATIVE SKILLS AS PREDICTORS OF EMPLOYABILITY AND JOB CREATION AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN EBONYI STATE

Nwogbodo, Vincent N. & Chukwuji, Chioma E.

Department of Educational Foundations
Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

The study investigated creativity and innovative skills as predictors of employability among postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State. The study adopted correlational research design. The study was guided by two purposes of the study, two research questions and two hypotheses. The population of the study consisted of 1,688 postgraduate students from Universities in Ebonyi State. The sample size for this study is three hundred and twenty-three (323) postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State. This sample was obtained using Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. Using a simple random sampling technique, the 258 postgraduate students were sampled from Ebonyi State University, and 65 students from Alex Ekwueme University, Ikwo. The total respondents for the study is 323. The Data was collected using three instruments titled Entrepreneurship Education Skills Questionnaire, (EESQ), Employability Questionnaire (EQ), and Job Creation Questionnaire (JCQ). The instruments were validated by three experts from the University of Nigeria Nsukka. The instruments yielded a reliability index of (0.72) for EESQ, (0.78) for EQ, and (0.84) for JCQ. The correlation coefficient was used to answer the research questions while regression t-test was used to answer the hypotheses. The results of the findings revealed that creativity and innovation skills significantly predict employability among postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State. The result also showed a high predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on job creation among postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that postgraduate programmes in Ebonyi State must move beyond theoretical instruction to deliberately embed skill-driven and innovation-oriented pedagogies that foster adaptability, self-reliance, and enterprise creation. The study recommended amongst others that Universities in Ebonyi State should deliberately redesign postgraduate curricula to place stronger emphasis on the development of creativity and innovations. These competencies have been shown to significantly predict both employability and job creation among postgraduate students.

Keywords: Creativity and innovative skills, employability and job creation, postgraduate students

Introduction

In recent years, the rate of unemployment among graduates in Nigeria and across various states has continued to grow significantly among youth. Despite the increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship education in academic institutions, there remains a gap in understanding its effectiveness in fostering employability and promoting job creation among postgraduate students. Employability refers to an individual's ability to gain and maintain employment by possessing the necessary skills, knowledge, attributes, and attitudes sought after by employers. It encompasses a wide range of factors beyond just having technical skills, including communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, adaptability, resilience, and a willingness to learn (Gedye & Beaumont, 2018). Employability also involves being able to effectively market oneself to potential employers, demonstrate relevant experience, and continuously develop and update skills to meet evolving job market demands. Essentially,

employability reflects an individual's capacity to secure and retain employment in a competitive job market (Mahajan, Gupta & Misra, 2022). Operationally, employability is the degree to which postgraduate students possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and attributes acquired through entrepreneurship education that enable them to effectively secure and sustain employment opportunities, as well as actively engage in entrepreneurial activities to create job opportunities for themselves and others. This includes proficiency in entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, innovation, problem-solving, leadership, communication, adaptability, and resilience, as well as the ability to apply these skills in diverse professional settings to enhance their competitiveness in the job market and contribute to economic development through job creation initiatives.

The importance of employability lies in its impact on individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. Employability facilitates personal growth and development by encouraging individuals to acquire and develop a diverse set of skills, knowledge, and competencies that are relevant and valuable in the job market. It empowers individuals to fulfill their potential, pursue their career aspirations, and achieve their professional goals (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). According to Donald, Ashleigh and Baruch (2018), employability enhances individuals' career prospects by increasing their attractiveness to employers and opening up opportunities for career advancement. It enables individuals to secure meaningful employment, progress in their chosen field, and achieve upward mobility within organizations. Employability contributes to economic stability by reducing unemployment rates, increasing labor force participation, and improving income levels (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017).

Notwithstanding the importance of employability, the level of employability of postgraduates in Ebonyi State remains low. A survey conducted shows that only 2.6% of people who engage in further studies are employed (Nigeria Graduate Report, 2022). There is a widespread belief that Nigerian graduates often lack the essential skills sought by employers, leading to challenges in their employability (Omoniwa & Adedapo, 2017). The authors also asserted that employers frequently voice concerns that certain graduates, despite possessing professional or technical qualifications, are deemed unemployable due to their lack of essential skills or competencies required for sustainable employment in the job market. Nigerian employers often identify university graduates as lacking in communication skills, conceptual and analytical abilities, and technical proficiency, even within their respective fields of study (Adedeji & Oyebade, 2019). Professor Chris Onalo, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Postgraduate School of Credit and Financial Management, has remarked that about 95% of Nigerian graduates are not employable, because they lack the skills required to function effectively in the contemporary workplace (The Guardian, 2018).

Job creation is the process of generating new employment opportunities within an economy. It involves the establishment of positions or roles within organizations, industries, or sectors, either through the expansion of existing businesses or the creation of new ventures, which require a workforce to fulfill various tasks and responsibilities (Ciriaci, Moncada-Paternò-Castello & Voigt, 2016). Job creation can also be understood as the enhancement of livelihoods and socioeconomic well-being within a community or society. Beyond the purely economic perspective, job creation involves the provision of meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities that enable individuals to support themselves and their families, pursue personal and professional development, and actively contribute to the growth and stability of their communities (Kimengsi, Mukong & Balgah, 2020). According to Aka and Onoyima (2022), the concept of job creation encompasses three key aspects: firstly, it involves the provision of new employment opportunities for individuals currently unemployed. Secondly, it pertains to the act

of creating employment for oneself. Finally, it entails the expansion of the workforce by offering additional paid positions. In this study, job creation refers to the deliberate process of generating new employment opportunities through economic activities, public policies, and entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at expanding labor markets, increasing workforce participation, and supporting long-term socio-economic development. In other words, job creation is the ability of postgraduate students to be able to create jobs for themselves and others.

Job creation is essential for reducing unemployment rates, which not only improves the livelihoods of individuals but also reduces social and economic inequalities within society. According to Armeanu, Vintilă and Gherghina (2017), job creation drives economic growth by increasing consumer spending, which in turn stimulates demand for goods and services. As more people are employed, they have more disposable income to spend, thereby boosting economic activity. In the same vein, employment provides individuals with a stable source of income, lifting them out of poverty and enhancing their overall standard of living. Therefore, developing employability skills that enable individuals to access and retain meaningful work is essential, as it not only empowers them economically but also promotes sustainable job creation. When people are gainfully employed and financially stable, they contribute to long-term economic growth and help foster a cycle of opportunity, social mobility, and reduced poverty within the society (Gamu, Le Billon & Spiegel, 2015). Also, job creation contributes to social stability by providing individuals with a sense of purpose, dignity, and belonging within their communities. Employed individuals contribute to government revenues through income taxes, which are essential for funding public services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development. Job creation, therefore, supports the financial sustainability of governments (Winchenbach, Hanna & Miller, 2019). Despite all these benefits, there is still a high level of unemployment in Nigeria.

The unemployment rate in Nigeria as a whole has continued to increase due to lack of jobs. According to Amos (2020), the data available indicates that Nigeria's combined unemployment and underemployment rates stood at 55.7% by the conclusion of the second quarter of 2020. Each year, a substantial majority of approximately 80% or higher of graduates from various tertiary institutions in Nigeria, predominantly comprising young individuals, struggle to secure employment opportunities. The unemployment rate in Ebonyi state among the youth which includes postgraduate students continues to surge higher yearly, currently standing at the rate of 40.16% (Oyedeki, 2022). According to Aka and Onoyima (2022), this increase is a result of low level of job creation among the youth.

Different researchers have made an effort to identify the factors influencing job creation among youths and postgraduate students in Nigeria and Ebonyi State. Some of these factors include inadequate infrastructure, limited access to essential resources like financing and workspace, insufficient government support, fluctuations in governmental policies, and lack of the right attitude by these students (Nnodim & Ochogba, 2018). Other factors include a lack of access to vocational training programmes that equip them with the necessary skills demanded by the labour market, leading to a mismatch between their skills and available job opportunities. The entrepreneurial ecosystem in Nigeria still faces challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, limited access to markets, and inadequate support structures for startups and small businesses, hindering the ability of youths to create sustainable enterprises and employment opportunities. Nnodim and Ochogba (2018) further noted that the present state of Technical and Vocational Education and Training programmes in Nigeria is inadequate. The authors further argued that the learning facilities in these institutions, which are geared towards developing practical skills, are

often in poor condition and underutilized. Consequently, this leads to inadequate skills acquisition among graduates. It is against this background that this study intends to investigate creativity and innovative skills as predictors of employability and job creation among postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State.

University education helps to nurture entrepreneurial mindset among graduates and postgraduates. By nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset, it stimulates innovation and drives economic growth through the creation of new products, services, and business models (Amundam, 2019). Maina (2014) posited that entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic development, fostering job creation, wealth generation, and poverty alleviation. By encouraging entrepreneurship education, societies can cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship and unlock great potential in their citizens. Also, it equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and achieve their goals. It instills a sense of self-reliance, initiative, and resilience, empowering individuals to take control of their destinies and create their opportunities (Boldureanu, Ionescu, Bercu, Bedrule-Grigoruță & Boldureanu, 2020). Mbanefo and Eboka (2017) opined that entrepreneurship education skills are business skills, which an individual acquires personally to function effectively in business as an entrepreneur and be self-reliant. The authors emphasized that these skills consist of effective utilization of ideas, information, and facts that help a learner develop competencies, services, or become productive employees of organizations. Simply put, these skills equip graduates to increase their employment potential by enhancing their capability to start businesses, solve problems, manage resources, and effectively communicate and market their ideas or products. Hence, entrepreneurship education helps to foster creativity and innovation skills.

Creativity and innovation are essential skills for success in any form of enterprise. Creativity and innovation skills as entrepreneurship education skills, could predict employability and job creation. Creativity as an entrepreneurial skill is the ability to generate novel ideas, solutions, and approaches to various challenges and opportunities in the business world (Tang, Byrge & Zhou, 2018). It involves thinking outside the box, being innovative, and coming up with unique strategies that differentiate a business from its competitors (Ferreira, Coelho & Moutinho, 2020). Innovation on the other hand is the process of turning creative ideas into tangible value, whether it is in the form of new products, services, processes, or business models (Burmeister, Lüttgens & Piller, 2016). Entrepreneurs need to be able to innovate to stay competitive and meet the evolving needs of customers and markets. This involves not only generating ideas but also implementing them effectively to create positive change and impact (Lowe & Marriott, 2012). Creativity and innovation are foundational skills for entrepreneurship, enabling entrepreneurs to generate new ideas, solve problems, take calculated risks, and drive positive change and impact in the world (Juliana, Hui, Clement, Solomon & Elvis, 2021). These authors opined that creativity and innovation are lever for people to be empowered, engaged, and encouraged to make major improvements to structures, cultures, people, goods, and processes.

Creativity and innovation skills are test scores on entrepreneurship education skills that can equip individuals with the ability to adapt to evolving job market demands, solve complex problems, seize entrepreneurial opportunities, collaborate effectively, and drive innovation. These skills directly equip individuals to thrive in dynamic environments. For example, entrepreneurship education teaches essential life skills such as an innovative approach to solve a problem, resolve real world problems, collaboration and working with a team, and many more. All these life skills which define the personality of an individual can never be learned through traditional book and classroom studies (Hazarika, 2025). Operationally, creativity and innovation are skills that equip individuals with essential skills for the job market

and as well contribute to improved organizational productivity, scope, and participation in businesses so as to ensure business growth and greater value. Several authors have carried out studies on creativity and innovation skills and employability. Chinyere and Ndirika (2020) investigated promoting innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship Skills in Science Education Students: A panacea for employability. The findings revealed that developing critical thinking skills will enhance innovative skills that will make students employable. Oboreh and Aruoren (2020) examined the effect of creativity on human capital development of Nigeria graduate entrepreneurs. The paper became necessary due to high rate of graduates unemployment in Nigeria. The findings indicated that there is a positive significant relationship between independent variables which have a positive influence on human capital development of graduate. Bhatti and Zakariya (2024) investigated the impact of graduates' creativity/innovation, work ability, and entrepreneurial attitudes of business students on the employability skills that business education delivers. It attempted to investigate the way these variables interact to condition the employability outcomes of the business graduates while focusing on work ability as the mediator and entrepreneurial attitudes as a moderator.

Hence, the study established that creativity/innovation and work ability have significant influences on the employability skills of graduates. Work ability, in addition, mediates the creativity/innovation and employability skills relationship while entrepreneurial attitudes moderately influence this relationship. Mugabirwe, Mugabe and Muhumuza (2025) examined the mediating role of skills development in linking creativity and innovation to employability outcomes among graduates of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs. Drawing on data from 312 recent graduates across diverse institutions, the research utilised a robust quantitative methodology incorporating correlational analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM). The SEM results supported these findings with excellent model fit indicators and explained high percentage of the variance in employability. These findings suggest that while creativity and innovation are valuable traits, their influence on employment outcomes is significantly enhanced when supported by structured, multidimensional skills training.

Some other researchers conducted studies on creativity, innovation skills and job creation. Mbanefo and Ebokab (2017) conducted a study on the acquisition of innovative and entrepreneurial skills in basic science education for job creation in Nigeria. The findings revealed that a lot of skills were needed in science education for job creation, the teachers were required to use practically oriented methods in teaching the students, and a lot of factors posed challenges to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in basic science education. Juliana, et al (2021) investigated the relationship between creativity and innovation on entrepreneurship development. The findings of this research were quite different from the influential factors. The two measured significant variables can then be considered as major factors or requirements for innovation and the success of a country's entrepreneurship development. Again, the matrix analysis established a strong relationship between creative thinking and innovative ability, as well as technological advancement although was negatively estimated on entrepreneurship development. This indicates that technological advancement is support for creativity and innovation. However, its direct effect on entrepreneurship development was not significantly estimated. Oyelekan, Ogunsanwo and Balogun (2024) examined the impact of Nigeria's creative industries on youth unemployment in Ogun State, Nigeria. The research assessed the potential of the creative industries to reduce youth unemployment, concentrating on three local governments: Abeokuta South, Sagamu, and Ado-odo Ota. The findings of the research showed a modest association

with government policies and creativity and creative abilities, as well as a significant positive relationship between youthful unemployment and technological innovation. The results showed that although government laws and inventiveness have minimal impact, technical innovation has a statistical significant impact.

Several researchers have established that the best way to increase employability and job creation is through creativity and innovation skills. Agetue and Nnamdi (2017) found that entrepreneurship training helps in building creativity and innovation skills in an individual. The authors also posited that these skills are necessary for graduates to be self-reliant and create jobs. Dimnwobi, Ekesiobi and Mgbemena (2016) emphasized that creativity and innovation skills are key determinants of competitiveness and job creation. These studies, however, did not show whether creativity and innovation skills can influence employability, and job creation among postgraduate students. Some of these studies suggested that creativity and innovation skills, can influence employability or job creation. However, none of these studies combined these skills in a single study to identify their influence on employability and job creation. Hence, this study sought to investigate creativity and innovation skills as predictors of postgraduate students' employability and job creation in universities in Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurship has gained widespread recognition worldwide as a key driver for sustainable economic growth and development. It has emerged as a pivotal source of self-employment, job creation, and economic advancement across developed, developing, and emerging economies in the 21st century. Despite this importance, employability and job creation among postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State remain low. Studies have shown that a substantial majority of approximately 80% or higher of graduates from various tertiary institutions in Nigeria, predominantly comprising young individuals, struggle to secure employment opportunities. The unemployment rate in Ebonyi state among the youth which includes postgraduate students continues to surge higher yearly, currently standing at the rate of 40.16%. Different scholars have attributed the problem of low employability and job creation to lack of essential skills sought by employers, a lack of communication skills, and a lack of skills to meet up with the reality in the workplace. Some blame the problem on inadequate infrastructure, limited access to essential resources like financing and workspace, insufficient government support, fluctuations in governmental policies, and lack of the right attitude by these students. Several studies have been carried out to proffer solutions to the problem of low employability and job creation among youths in Ebonyi State. Some studies suggested that technical and vocational training programmes are the way out of the problem. However, none of these studies have attempted to proffer solutions to the low employability among postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi state through creativity and innovation skills which are instrumental to employability and job creation. Hence, this study sought to investigate creativity and innovative skills as predictors of employability and job creation among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose was to determine creativity and innovative skills as predictors of employability and job creation among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the predictive power of:

1. creativity and innovation skills on employability among postgraduate students in universities in Ebonyi State;

2. creativity and innovation skills on job creation among postgraduate students in universities in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following specific research questions guided the study:

1. what is the predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on employability among postgraduate students in universities in Ebonyi State?
2. What is the predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on job creation among postgraduate students in universities in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: Creativity and innovation skills does not significantly predict employability among postgraduate students in universities in Ebonyi State.

Ho₂: Creativity and innovation skills does not significantly predict job creation among postgraduate students in universities in Ebonyi State.

Methods

This study adopted a correlational survey design. The study was conducted in Universities in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. These Universities offer entrepreneurship education as part of their postgraduate programmes, making the state an appropriate setting to carry out the study. The population of the study comprised 1,688 postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State. There are 767 postgraduate students from the faculty of education for Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, and 921 postgraduate students for the same faculty of education in Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike, Ikwo. The sample size for this study is three hundred and twenty-three (323) postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State. This sample was obtained using Taro Yamane (1967) sample size determination formula. Using a stratified proportionate random sampling technique, the 258 postgraduate students were sampled from Ebonyi State University, and 65 students from Alex Ekwueme University, Ikwo. The total respondents for the study is 323 postgraduate students.

The instrument for data collection was two self-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher to elicit responses to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses. These instruments are Employability Questionnaire (EQ) and Job Creation Questionnaire (JCQ). Both instruments were structured on a 4-point rating scale with response options of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The instruments were validated by three experts, two from Educational Administration and one Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach's Alpha method, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.83 for the EQ and 0.85 for the JCQ, indicating that both instruments were reliable for the study. Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaires to respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants. A total of 323 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and all copies were retrieved and found usable, giving a 100% return rate. Data collected were analyzed using linear regression. The correlation coefficient was used to answer the research questions and Regression t-test was used to test the hypotheses. Each null hypothesis was rejected where the p-value was less than or equal to 0.05, and retained where the p-value exceeded 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on employability among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Regression Analysis on the predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on employability among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State

Model	Predictor	R	R Square
1	Creativity and Innovation Skills	.301	.088

Note: R =Correlation coefficient, R^2 = Coefficient of determination

The result in Table 1 shows the correlation coefficient of creativity and innovation skills on employability among postgraduate students is ($r = .301$) with a coefficient of determination of ($r^2 = .088$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.088 which implies that 8.8% variation in postgraduate students' employability can be attributed to their creativity and innovation skills. Thus 91.2% variation in postgraduate students' employability can be attributed other factors that are not creativity and innovation skills.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on job creation among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Regression Analysis on the predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on job creation among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State

Model	Predictor	r	R Square
1	Creativity and Innovation Skills	.368	.160

Note: R =Correlation coefficient, R^2 = Coefficient of determination

The result in Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient of creativity and innovation skills on job creation among postgraduate students is ($r = .368$) with a coefficient of determination of ($r^2 = .160$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is .160 which implies that 16% variation in postgraduate students' job creation can be attributed to their creativity and innovation skills. Thus 84% variation in postgraduate students' job creation can be attributed other factors that are not creativity and innovation skills.

H0₁: Creativity and innovation skills does not significantly predict employability among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on employability among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std Error	Standard Coefficients	t	Sig
		B		Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.938	1.390		5.844	.000
	Creativity	.035	.018	.301	1.885	.032
	and innovation skills					

Table 3 reveals the creativity and innovation skills significantly predicts postgraduate students' employability in Ebonyi State, $t = 1.885$ $p = .032$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected since the associated probability value of .032 is less than .05 level of significance. This means that creativity and innovation skills determine postgraduate students' employability in Ebonyi State.

H02: Creativity and innovation skills does not significantly predict job creation among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the predictive power of creativity and innovation skills on job creation among postgraduate students in Ebonyi State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std Error	Standard Coefficients		
		B		Beta	T	Sig
1	(Constant)	3.711	.390		10.001	.000
	Creativity	.600	.022	.368	20.966	.000
	and innovation skills					

Table 4 reveals the creativity and innovation skills significantly predicts postgraduate students job creation in Ebonyi State, $t = 20.966$ $p = .000$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected since the associated probability value of .000 is less than .05 level of significance. This means that creativity and innovation skills determine postgraduate students' job creation in Ebonyi State.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that creativity and innovation skills significantly predict employability among postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State. This implies that postgraduate students who demonstrate higher levels of creative thinking, and the capacity to generate and implement novel ideas are more likely to possess competencies that enhance their prospects in the labour market. The result shows the growing demand within contemporary knowledge-driven economies for graduates who can move beyond routine task performance to value creation and strategic thinking. In the context of universities in Ebonyi State, the finding suggests that the development of creativity and innovation skills constitutes a critical determinant of graduate employability, as these skills equip students with the flexibility and entrepreneurial orientation required to navigate dynamic employment environments. Consequently, integrating structured opportunities for creative engagement and research-driven innovation into postgraduate programmes may substantially improve students' transition from academia to the world of work.

These findings are in tandem with the findings of Mugabirwe, Mugabe and Muhumuza (2025), who found that creativity and innovation are valuable traits that significantly influence employability. The findings of this study also agree with the findings of Bhatti and Zakariya (2024) who established that creativity/innovation and work ability have significant influences on the employability skills of graduates. Work ability, in addition, mediates the

creativity/innovation and employability skills relationship while entrepreneurial attitudes moderately influence this relationship. This implies that there is a significant interplay of creativity, practical skills, and entrepreneurial mindset for the business graduate's employability outcomes.

The findings of this study revealed that creativity and innovation skills significantly predict job creation among postgraduate students in Universities in Ebonyi State. This suggests that postgraduate students who demonstrate higher levels of creative thinking, and the capacity to transform ideas into practical solutions are more likely to initiate and sustain entrepreneurial ventures. The result shows the importance of fostering innovation-oriented competencies within university programmes, as these skills enhance graduates' ability to identify market opportunities, develop viable business models, and respond adaptively to socio-economic challenges. In the context of rising unemployment in Nigeria, the finding implies that strengthening creativity and innovation training at the postgraduate level could serve as a strategic pathway for promoting self-employment and stimulating local economic development in Ebonyi State.

The result of the hypotheses shows that creativity and innovation skills significantly predict job creation among postgraduate students. The findings align with the findings of Mbanefo and Ebokab (2017) who found that creativity and innovation skills are needed for job creation. Again, the findings of this study agree with the findings of Juliana, et al (2021) who stressed that the two measured significant variables can be considered as major factors or requirements for innovation and the success of a country's entrepreneurship development notably technological advancement and strategy. Again, the matrix analysis by the authors established a strong relationship between creative thinking and innovative ability, as well as technological advancement although was negatively estimated on entrepreneurship development. This implies that technological advancement is support for creativity and innovation.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that creativity and innovation skills, collectively possess significant predictive power on both employability and job creation among postgraduate students in universities in Ebonyi State. These results affirm that beyond academic qualifications, higher-order cognitive abilities and practical entrepreneurial competencies are critical determinants of career success in a dynamic and competitive economic environment. The study therefore concludes that postgraduate programmes in Ebonyi State must move beyond theoretical instruction to deliberately embed skill-driven, problem-based, and innovation-oriented pedagogies that foster adaptability, self-reliance, and enterprise creation. By strengthening these competencies, universities can play a strategic role in addressing graduate unemployment, enhancing employability, and promoting sustainable job creation within the state and the broader Nigerian economy.

Recommendations

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

1. Universities should deliberately redesign postgraduate curricula to place stronger emphasis on the development of creativity and innovation, as these competencies have been shown to significantly predict both employability and job creation among postgraduate students.
2. Postgraduate programmes should incorporate experiential and learner-centred pedagogical approaches such as problem-based learning, case studies, project-based

assignments, research-driven innovation, and real-world simulations in order to enhance students' practical application of higher-order cognitive and entrepreneurial skills.

3. University management and relevant stakeholders should strengthen entrepreneurship education at the postgraduate level by providing functional entrepreneurship centres, innovation hubs, and business incubation units that can support students in translating creative ideas into viable enterprises.
4. Capacity-building programmes such as workshops, seminars, and short courses focused on creativity, innovation management, critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving should be regularly organized for postgraduate students to complement formal academic instruction.
5. Government and educational policymakers should provide adequate funding, grants, and policy support for postgraduate entrepreneurship and innovation initiatives, as this would further strengthen universities' capacity to produce graduates who are not only employable but also capable of creating jobs and contributing to sustainable economic development in Ebonyi State.

REFERENCES

- Agetue, F. U., & Nnamdi, A. E. (2017). Entrepreneurship training: A tool for job creation and sustainable national development, Nigeria. *Journal of teacher perspective (jofep)*, 5(3), 475-482.
- Aka, C. P., & Onoyima, N. S. (2022). Role of tertiary education in empowerment and job creation through emerging technologies and innovations in Udi LGA of Enugu State. *Journal of Continuing and Development Education*, 2(1), 63–72. <https://journalcde.com/index.php/jcde/index>
- Amundam, D. N. (2019). Enhancing potential social innovative thinking, responsible, social entrepreneurship education: A curriculum content and teaching method model. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 22(5), 1-21.
- Armeanu, D. Ș., Vintilă, G., & Gherghina, Ș. C. (2017). Empirical study towards the drivers of sustainable economic growth in EU-28 countries. *Sustainability*, 10(1), 4 - 11.
- Bhatti, M. A. & Zakariya, A. (2024). Graduates' creativity impact on employability skills: Moderated by entrepreneurial attitudes and mediated by work ability. *Foro de Educación*, 22(2), 23-43. doi: <https://doi.org/10.14201/fde.22202>
- Boldureanu, G., Ionescu, A. M., Bercu, A. M., Bedrule-Grigoruță, M. V., & Boldureanu, D. (2020). Entrepreneurship education through successful entrepreneurial models in higher education institutions. *Sustainability*, 12(3), 1267 - 1277.
- Burmeister, C., Lüttgens, D., & Piller, F. T. (2016). Business model innovation for industrie 4.0: Why the 'industrial internet' mandates a new perspective on innovation. *Die Unternehmung*, 2.
- Chinyere, A. P., & Ndirika, M. C. (2020). Promoting Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship Skills in Science Education Students: A Panacea for Employability. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(3), 44-55.
- Ciriaci, D., Moncada-Paternò-Castello, P., & Voigt, P. (2016). Innovation and job creation: a sustainable relation?. *Eurasian Business Review*, 6, 189-213.

- Dimnwobi, S. K., Ekesiobi, C. S., & Mgbemena, E. M. (2016). Creativity, innovation and competitiveness in Nigeria: An economic exploration. *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences*, 5(3), 29-52.
- Donald, W. E., Ashleigh, M. J., & Baruch, Y. (2018). Students' perceptions of education and employability: Facilitating career transition from higher education into the labor market. *Career development international*, 23(5), 513-540.
- Ferreira, J., Coelho, A., & Moutinho, L. (2020). Dynamic capabilities, creativity and innovation capability and their impact on competitive advantage and firm performance: The moderating role of entrepreneurial orientation. *Technovation*, 92, 102061.
- Gedye, S., & Beaumont, E. (2018). "The ability to get a job": student understandings and definitions of employability. *Education+ Training*, 60(5), 406-420.
- Hazarika, D. (2025). Life skill education: Way to build efficiency among students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation*, 6(3), 1783-1785. <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJMRGE.2025.6.3.1783-1785>
- Holidi, N. A., & Seman, N. A. A. (2023). A Study of Employability Skills: From the Employers and Youth Perspectives. *Journal of International Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship*, 8(1), 64-64.
- Juliana, N. O., Hui, H. J., Clement, M., Solomon, E. N., & Elvis, O. K. (2021). The impact of creativity and innovation on entrepreneurship development: evidence from Nigeria. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 9(4), 1743-1770.
- Kimengsi, J. N., Mukong, A. K., & Balgah, R. A. (2020). Livelihood diversification and household well-being: Insights and policy implications for forest-based communities in Cameroon. *Society & Natural Resources*, 33(7), 876-895.
- Mahajan, R., Gupta, P., & Misra, R. (2022). Employability skills framework: a tripartite approach. *Education+ Training*, 64(3), 360-379.
- Maina, S. (2014). The role of entrepreneurship education on job creation among youths in Nigeria. *International letters of social and humanistic Sciences*, (04), 87-96.
- Mbanefo, M. C., & Ebokab, O. C. (2017). Acquisition of innovative and entrepreneurial skills in basic science education for job creation in Nigeria. *Science Education International*, 28(3).
- Mugabirwe, O., Mugabe, R., & Muhumuza, B. (2025). Creative pathways to employment: Examining the role of skills development in vocational graduates' innovation-Employability Trajectory. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 8(2), 1171-1186. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.2.3358>
- Nigeria Graduate Report (2022). <https://stutern.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/pdf-documents/2022+Graduate+Nigeria+Report+Stutern.pdf>
- Nnodim, A. U., & Ochogba, C. O. (2018). Perception on federal government of Nigeria whistle blowing policy on the implementation of technical and vocational education and training programmes in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Science and Technology*, 9(6), 8272-827.
- Oboreh J. & Aruoren E. (2020). Effect of creativity on human capital development of Nigeria Graduates Entrepreneurs. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal* 26(3) 1 1528-2686-26-3-361
- Omoniwa, O. B., & Adedapo, A. A. (2017). Assessing Nigerian graduate employability. *Global Journal of Business Disciplines*, 1(2), 58-75.

- Onalo, C. (2018, July, 19). *From Dysfunctional to Functional Education*. The Guardian Newspaper
- Oyedeji, O. (2022). Unemployment percentage in South Eastern Nigeria between 2018 and 2020 <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/in-south-eastern-nigeria-four-in-every-10-persons-dont-have-a-job/#:~:text=Ebonyi%20recorded%2040.16%25%20in%202020,a%20job%20in%20Southeastern%20Nigeria>.
- Rowe, A. D., & Zegwaard, K. E. (2017). Developing graduate employability skills and attributes: Curriculum enhancement through work-integrated learning.
- Tang, C., Byrge, C., & Zhou, J. (2018). Creativity perspective on entrepreneurship. *The palgrave handbook of multidisciplinary perspectives on entrepreneurship*, 81-102.
- Winchenbach, A., Hanna, P., & Miller, G. (2019). Rethinking decent work: The value of dignity in tourism employment. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.