



**International Journal of Economics,
Environmental Development and Society
(IJEEDS)**

BUSINESS EDUCATION TRAINING AND STARTUP CREATION AMONG GRADUATES IN RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of business education training on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State, Nigeria. Guided by three research questions and corresponding hypotheses, the study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 144 postgraduate business education students from Rivers State owned universities: Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) and Rivers State University (RSU). Census sampling technique was used in sampling the respondents of the study. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Business Education Training and Startup Creation Questionnaire (BETSCQ)," validated by experts in Business Education and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics (Simple Linear Regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation) tested the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Results indicated that business education curriculum exposure, experiential entrepreneurship training, and entrepreneurial skills acquisition all significantly influenced startup creation among graduates. Regression and correlation analyses confirmed positive predictive and associative relationships between these training variables and startup creation. The study concluded that entrepreneurship-oriented business education equips graduates with the knowledge, practical skills, and competencies necessary for venture creation and self-employment. It recommends strengthening curriculum delivery, expanding experiential training, enhancing entrepreneurial skills development, providing mentorship and startup support, and promoting supportive policies to encourage graduate entrepreneurship in Rivers State.

Keywords: Business Education, Curriculum Exposure, Entrepreneurial Skills, Entrepreneurship Training, Experiential Learning, Startup Creation.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Moses, P. Z. O., Ito, F. M., & Adiola, U. S. (2026). Business education training and startup creation among graduates in Rivers State Universities. *International Journal of Economics, Environmental Development and Society*, 7(1), 73-86. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19226793>.

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education has become a strategic response to graduate unemployment and economic instability in Nigeria. Universities are increasingly mandated to produce graduates who can create employment rather than depend solely on scarce white-collar jobs (Umesì, 2023). In Rivers State, entrepreneurship education has been integrated into Business Education programmes to equip students with practical competencies for self-reliance and economic participation.

Globally, entrepreneurship and startup creation have become important drivers of economic growth, innovation, and job creation. Entrepreneurship education is increasingly integrated into university programmes to equip students with the skills required to identify opportunities, generate innovative ideas, and transform them into sustainable business ventures. Studies have shown that entrepreneurship education enhances entrepreneurial competencies such as creativity, innovation, opportunity recognition, risk-taking, and leadership skills among students (Hasan et al., 2024). These competencies are critical for startup creation and long-term business sustainability in a competitive economic environment.

In many developing countries, including Nigeria, graduate unemployment has become a major socio-economic concern. The inability of the labour market to absorb the increasing number of university graduates has created the need for educational programmes that encourage self-employment and enterprise development. Evidence indicates that entrepreneurship education helps develop the skills, attitudes, and competencies necessary for graduates to initiate business ventures and contribute to economic development (Amaral et al., 2024). Consequently, universities have incorporated entrepreneurship and business training into their curricula to promote entrepreneurial mindset and enhance graduates' capacity to establish startups.

Despite the increasing emphasis on business and entrepreneurship education in universities, many graduates still struggle to translate their acquired knowledge and skills into actual startup ventures. Several challenges such as limited practical exposure, inadequate access to startup capital, weak entrepreneurial ecosystems, and insufficient mentorship opportunities often hinder graduates from establishing businesses after graduation. Consequently, the expected impact of business education training on startup creation among university graduates remains uncertain in many contexts.

In Rivers State, universities offer business education programmes designed to equip students with entrepreneurial knowledge and competencies required for self-employment and business creation. However, it is not clear whether the training received by business education graduates effectively translates into the establishment of startup ventures. This situation raises concerns about the effectiveness of business education training in fostering entrepreneurship and reducing graduate unemployment in the state. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between business education training and startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities, with the aim of determining the extent to which such training influences graduates' ability to establish and manage startup businesses.

Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurship education has been widely adopted in universities in Rivers State as a strategy for reducing unemployment and promoting self-reliance among graduates. Empirical studies confirm that entrepreneurship education enhances skill acquisition (Iweyah, 2023), managerial

competence (Dambo & Nwosu, 2024), economic empowerment (Mawo & Ogonu, 2025), entrepreneurial identity construction (Ikpesu & Ekweme, 2023), and career aspiration (Koko et al., 2025). However, despite these reported positive outcomes, evidence indicates that graduate business education students exhibit low levels of entrepreneurial involvement (Dambo & Ben-George, 2022). Structural challenges such as inadequate funding and limited institutional support further constrain sustainable self-employment among graduates (Brown & Nwaokokorom, 2025).

The problem, therefore, is the lack of empirical evidence establishing whether business education training significantly translates into actual startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities. Existing studies largely measure skills, intention, empowerment, or job creation plans, but do not examine whether graduates have actually started businesses as a result of their training. Without such evidence, the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education as an employment-generation strategy remains inadequately validated.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of business education training on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Determine the influence of business education curriculum exposure on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities.
- Examine the effect of experiential entrepreneurship training on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities.
- Determine the relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State universities.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided the study:

- To what extent does business education curriculum exposure influence startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities?
- What effect does experiential entrepreneurship training have on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities?
- What is the relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State universities?

Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses further guided the study:

- There is no significant influence of business education curriculum exposure on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities.
- There is no significant effect of experiential entrepreneurship training on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities.

- There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business Education and Startup Creation

Business education in Nigerian universities is structured to equip learners with competencies for economic participation and enterprise development. Amadi, Eme, and Anireh (2020) argued that business education develops managerial, accounting, and marketing skills necessary for economic value recovery and enterprise sustainability in Nigeria. The authors emphasize that effective utilization of business education skills contributes to economic productivity and national development.

In Rivers State, entrepreneurship education has been integrated into business education programmes as a strategy for reducing graduate unemployment. Umesi (2023) noted that universities are expected to produce graduates who are self-reliant and capable of generating employment rather than depending solely on white-collar jobs. Similarly, Mawo and Ogoni (2025) reported that entrepreneurship skills acquisition enhances students' economic empowerment and financial independence in public universities in Rivers State.

However, Dambo and Ben-George (2022) found that graduate business education students in Rivers State are involved in entrepreneurial activities only to a low extent despite exposure to entrepreneurship education. Brown and Nwaokokorom (2025) further identified funding constraints and structural challenges as barriers to sustainable employment among business education graduates. These findings raise questions about whether business education training translates into actual startup creation.

Entrepreneurship Education and Venture Creation

Entrepreneurship education is designed to foster entrepreneurial mindset, skill development, and venture readiness. Ordu (2019) found that activity-based entrepreneurship education significantly influences students' entrepreneurial intention to start businesses. Ikpesu and Ekweme (2023) further established that venture-creation learning approaches shape postgraduate students' entrepreneurial identity construction in Rivers State universities.

Koko et al. (2025) reported a positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and career aspiration among business education students, indicating that exposure to entrepreneurial activities enhances students' desire for business ownership. Similarly, Nwabueze and Chuku (2025) emphasized experiential engagement in business activities as a means of developing real-world entrepreneurial competence among students.

While these studies confirm positive cognitive and attitudinal outcomes, Dambo and Nwosu (2024) observed that although managerial skills among students were above average, creative thinking skills were relatively weaker. This suggests that entrepreneurship education may not fully prepare graduates for innovative venture creation.

Skill Acquisition and Economic Outcomes

Entrepreneurial skills acquisition is considered central to economic empowerment. Mawo and Ogona (2025) asserted that entrepreneurship skills such as financial literacy, creativity, and problem-solving enhance students' capacity for business sustainability. Similarly, Iweyah (2023) found that business education curriculum and teacher quality significantly influence skill acquisition among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Nwabueze and Anyanwu (2021) reported that functional entrepreneurship curriculum and entrepreneurship centres positively influence students' job creation plans. However, Dambo and Ben-George (2022) revealed that graduate involvement in self-employment activities remains low due to inadequate startup funds and insufficient entrepreneurial training.

Brown and Nwaokokorom (2025) argued that institutional and financial barriers significantly constrain sustainable employment among business education graduates. These findings suggest that while skill acquisition occurs, measurable startup outcomes among graduates may not be proportionate.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was propounded by Theodore Schultz (1961) and later expanded by Gary Becker (1964). The theory posited that education and training are investments that enhance individuals' productive capacity and economic value. It assumes that skills and knowledge acquired through formal education increase an individual's ability to generate income and participate meaningfully in economic activities. In the context of entrepreneurship education, business education training represents an investment in entrepreneurial human capital. Mawo and Ogona (2025) emphasized that entrepreneurship skills acquisition enhances economic empowerment among university students, thereby supporting the central assumption of Human Capital Theory. The implication of this theory for the present study is that exposure to business education curriculum, experiential entrepreneurship training, and entrepreneurial skills acquisition should enhance graduates' capacity for startup creation. Its significance lies in providing the economic justification for examining whether educational investment translates into measurable venture establishment among graduates in Rivers State universities.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior was proposed by Icek Ajzen (1991). The theory explains that behaviour is intentional and influenced by attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. It assumes that individuals are more likely to perform a behaviour when they believe they are capable of performing it and when they hold positive attitudes toward it. Startup creation is a planned behaviour, not an accidental occurrence. Ordu (2019) found that activity-based entrepreneurship education significantly influences entrepreneurial intention, while Ikpesu and Ekweme (2023) reported that venture-creation learning approaches shape entrepreneurial identity among students. These findings align with the behavioural assumptions of the theory. The implication of the Theory of Planned Behavior for this study is that experiential training and skill acquisition may strengthen graduates' perceived competence and

readiness to establish businesses. Its significance to this study lies in explaining the behavioural pathway through which business education training may lead to actual startup creation.

Together, these theories provide a dual framework for understanding startup creation as both an economic return on educational investment and a planned behavioural outcome influenced by perceived competence and intention.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Recent global empirical evidence suggests that entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in venture creation, although the strength of this relationship varies across contexts. In a multi-country European study, Nabi et al. (2018) conducted a longitudinal quasi-experimental research design involving university students across the United Kingdom and Spain to examine the impact of entrepreneurship education on venture creation outcomes. The population comprised undergraduate business students, and structured questionnaires were administered before and after exposure to entrepreneurship programmes. Data were analyzed using regression and structural equation modelling techniques. The findings revealed that entrepreneurship education significantly influenced entrepreneurial intention and early-stage venture behaviour, particularly where experiential learning components were present. However, the study noted that long-term startup survival was not assessed, leaving a gap regarding sustained venture creation beyond graduation. The present study addresses this limitation by focusing specifically on startup creation among graduates.

In the United States, Martin et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analytic review of entrepreneurship education outcomes using quantitative studies across higher institutions. The study synthesized findings from multiple empirical works involving thousands of students and employed statistical meta-analysis to determine effect sizes. Results showed that entrepreneurship education had a moderate but significant impact on entrepreneurial knowledge and intention, but a weaker effect on actual venture creation behaviour. The authors concluded that more research is needed to examine behavioural outcomes rather than attitudinal measures. The present study contributes by directly measuring startup creation among graduates instead of relying solely on intention metrics.

Within the African context, a study by Brixiová and Kangoye (2019) examined entrepreneurship development programmes among university graduates in Sub-Saharan Africa using survey design and regression analysis. The population comprised graduate entrepreneurs across selected African countries, and structured instruments were used for data collection. Findings revealed that entrepreneurial training improved business startup rates, but financial and institutional constraints significantly moderated venture sustainability. The study emphasized the importance of linking training with structural support mechanisms. However, it did not specifically examine business education graduates, creating a contextual gap which the present study addresses.

In South Africa, Malebana (2020) investigated the relationship between entrepreneurship education and venture creation among university students using a correlational design. The study sampled final-year students across public universities and employed structured questionnaires analyzed through multiple regression. Findings indicated that entrepreneurship education significantly predicted entrepreneurial intention, but only a small proportion of graduates engaged in actual startup creation after graduation. The study suggested the need for post-

graduation tracking of venture behaviour. The current study responds to this recommendation by focusing specifically on startup creation among graduates.

In Northern Nigeria, a study by Afolabi and Adekunle (2021) examined entrepreneurship education and self-employment readiness among university graduates using a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of graduates from federal universities in Northern Nigeria, and data were collected using validated questionnaires analyzed with inferential statistics. Findings revealed that while entrepreneurship education enhanced self-employment readiness, startup engagement remained low due to limited access to capital and mentorship. The study primarily measured readiness rather than actual venture creation, thereby leaving a behavioural gap that the present study addresses.

In Southern Nigeria, outside Rivers State, Eze and Okoli (2022) investigated the influence of experiential entrepreneurship training on venture establishment among university graduates in the South-East region. The study adopted a correlational design, sampled graduate entrepreneurs, and used structured questionnaires analyzed through logistic regression. Findings showed that experiential learning significantly increased the likelihood of startup formation. However, the study did not specifically focus on business education graduates nor did it isolate curriculum exposure as a predictor. The present study expands this by examining specific components of business education training.

Within Rivers State, Dambo and Ben-George (2022) assessed entrepreneurial involvement among graduate business education students using descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 185 postgraduate students, and data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test. Findings revealed low involvement in entrepreneurial activities due to funding constraints and inadequate training exposure. However, the study measured involvement levels rather than testing predictive relationships between training variables and startup creation. The present study advances the discourse by employing predictive analysis.

Similarly, Iweyah (2023) examined business education programme impact on skill acquisition among tertiary students using survey design and z-test analysis. While the study found significant influence of curriculum and teacher quality on skill acquisition, it did not assess startup outcomes. This creates a clear gap between skill acquisition and venture establishment, which the current study seeks to bridge.

Collectively, global, African, and Nigerian studies confirm that entrepreneurship education improves knowledge, intention, empowerment, and readiness. However, consistent gaps remain in measuring actual startup creation behaviour among graduates, particularly using predictive statistical models that isolate curriculum exposure, experiential training, and entrepreneurial skills acquisition as determinants. This study therefore contributes by providing empirical evidence on startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State, Nigeria.

METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of business education training on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain quantitative data from respondents in order to describe relationships and test hypotheses regarding the variables of interest without manipulating them. Survey research is widely used in entrepreneurship education studies because it allows for the systematic collection of standardized data on training

exposure, entrepreneurial skills, and venture outcomes within natural educational settings (Ogbari et al., 2018; Dakung et al., 2017).

The population of the study comprised 144 postgraduate business education students from the Rivers State owned universities, namely Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) with 87 students and Rivers State University (RSU) with 57 students. The population data were obtained from the Office of the Coordinator of Postgraduate Programmes in the respective universities. Census method was used for the study. Thus, 106 postgraduate business education students constituted the sample for the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled “Business Education Training and Startup Creation Questionnaire (BETSCQ)” developed by the researcher.

The instrument contained items measuring business education curriculum exposure, experiential entrepreneurship training, entrepreneurial skills acquisition, and startup creation using a Likert-type scale. The validity of the instrument was established through face and content validation by three experts in Business Education and Educational Measurement and Evaluation, who examined the instrument for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated before the final administration of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test involving 20 postgraduate business education students from a university outside the study area, and the responses were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method, which yielded a reliability coefficient considered adequate for social science research.

Data collection was carried out through direct administration of the questionnaire to the selected respondents. Ethical procedures were observed by obtaining permission from the postgraduate programme coordinators of the respective universities, ensuring voluntary participation of respondents, and guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity of responses for strictly academic purposes. The completed questionnaires were coded and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Simple Linear Regression analysis was used to test hypotheses one and two, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test hypothesis three. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent does business education curriculum exposure influence startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Business Education Curriculum Exposure and Startup Creation

S/N.	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Business education courses exposed me to entrepreneurship opportunities	3.42	0.78	Agree
2	The curriculum improved my understanding of business startup processes	3.36	0.81	Agree
3	Entrepreneurship courses increased my interest in starting a business	3.55	0.74	Agree
4	Business education training prepared me for venture creation	3.28	0.83	Agree
Grand mean		3.40		Agree

Table 1 showed that the mean responses range from 3.28 to 3.55, which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.40 indicates that business education curriculum exposure influences startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities to a high extent.

To determine whether the influence observed in the descriptive analysis is statistically significant, Hypothesis 1 was tested.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of business education curriculum exposure on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	F	Sig	Decision
Curriculum Exposure → Startup Creation	0.61	0.37	14.62	0.001	Rejected

The result in Table 2 shows that business education curriculum exposure has a significant influence on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities. Since the p-value (0.001) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research Question 2: What effect does experiential entrepreneurship training have on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Experiential Entrepreneurship Training

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Practical entrepreneurship training improved my business skills	3.48	0.72	Agree
2	Participation in practical business activities increased my readiness for startup	3.33	0.80	Agree
3	Experiential learning improved my confidence in running a business	3.55	0.74	Agree
4	Entrepreneurship workshops encouraged venture creation	3.51	0.70	Agree
Grand mean		3.43		Agree

The results in Table 3 indicate that the mean values range from 3.33 to 3.55, which exceed the criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.43 suggests that experiential entrepreneurship training positively influences startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities.

To determine whether the effect observed in the descriptive analysis is statistically significant, Hypothesis 2 was tested.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant effect of experiential entrepreneurship training on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	F	Sig	Decision
Experiential Training → Startup Creation	0.58	0.34	12.88	0.002	Rejected

The result in Table 4 shows that experiential entrepreneurship training has a significant effect on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities. Since the p-value (0.002) is less than the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State universities?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation on Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I acquired financial management skills during my training	3.44	0.75	Agree
2	Business education training improved my problem-solving skills	3.38	0.79	Agree
3	The programme enhanced my marketing and management skills	3.46	0.72	Agree
4	Entrepreneurial skills gained can support venture creation	3.52	0.68	Agree
Grand mean		3.45		Agree

The results in Table 5 show that the mean scores range from 3.38 to 3.52, which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.45 indicates that entrepreneurial skills acquisition positively contributes to startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State universities.

To determine whether the relationship observed in the descriptive analysis is statistically significant, Hypothesis 3 was tested.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State universities.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Variables	N	R	Sig. (2-tailed)
Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition and Startup Creation	106	0.63	.000

The result in Table 6 indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State universities ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that higher levels of entrepreneurial skills acquisition are associated with greater likelihood of startup creation among graduates. Since the p-value (.000) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence on the influence of business education training on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities. The results indicate that

business education curriculum exposure, experiential entrepreneurship training, and entrepreneurial skills acquisition all contribute positively to startup creation among graduates. These findings suggest that entrepreneurship-oriented business education programmes play an important role in preparing graduates for venture creation and self-employment.

The finding of this study revealed that business education curriculum exposure significantly influences startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities. The results showed that respondents agreed that business education courses exposed them to entrepreneurship opportunities and improved their understanding of business startup processes. The regression analysis further confirmed that curriculum exposure significantly predicts startup creation among graduates. This finding aligns with the work of Amadi et al. (2020), who emphasized that business education develops managerial, accounting, and marketing competencies necessary for enterprise creation and economic productivity. Similarly, Iweyah (2023) reported that the business education curriculum significantly enhances skill acquisition among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The finding also supports the observation of Nwabueze and Anyanwu (2021), who found that functional entrepreneurship curriculum and entrepreneurship centres positively influence students' job creation plans. The implication of this finding is that structured entrepreneurship content embedded within business education programmes provides graduates with the knowledge foundation necessary for venture creation.

The study also found that experiential entrepreneurship training has a significant effect on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities. The results revealed that practical entrepreneurship training, participation in business activities, and entrepreneurship workshops enhance students' readiness and confidence to start businesses. The regression result further confirmed that experiential training significantly predicts startup creation among graduates. This finding is consistent with the study of Ordu (2019), who reported that activity-based entrepreneurship education significantly influences students' entrepreneurial intention to start businesses. Similarly, Ikpesu and Ekweme (2023) found that venture-creation learning approaches shape entrepreneurial identity among postgraduate students in Rivers State universities. The finding also agrees with the study of Eze and Okoli (2022), which revealed that experiential entrepreneurship training significantly increases the likelihood of venture establishment among university graduates in Southern Nigeria. These results suggest that practical exposure to entrepreneurial activities strengthens students' confidence and competence in venture creation.

Furthermore, the study revealed a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and startup creation among business education graduates in Rivers State universities. The correlation analysis indicated that graduates who acquired entrepreneurial skills such as financial management, marketing, and problem-solving skills were more likely to engage in startup creation. This finding supports the argument of Mawo and Ogonna (2025), who stated that entrepreneurship skills acquisition enhances economic empowerment and business sustainability among university students. Similarly, Dambo and Nwosu (2024) reported that entrepreneurship education improves managerial competence among business education students. The finding also aligns with the position of Brixiová and Kangoye (2019), who found that entrepreneurial training contributes to increased startup activities among graduates, although financial constraints may affect long-term sustainability. The implication of this finding is that entrepreneurial competence acquired through business education programmes enhances graduates' ability to translate knowledge into practical business ventures.

The findings of this study can also be explained using the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. From the perspective of the Human Capital Theory proposed by Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964), the results suggest that investment in entrepreneurship education enhances the productive capabilities of graduates by equipping them with relevant skills and knowledge for venture creation. The positive relationship observed between business education training and startup creation indicates that educational investment in entrepreneurial competencies yields measurable economic outcomes. Similarly, the findings support the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991), which explains that behaviour is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Experiential entrepreneurship training and skills acquisition may strengthen graduates' perceived competence and confidence in starting businesses, thereby increasing the likelihood of entrepreneurial behaviour.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that business education training plays a significant role in promoting startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities. However, previous studies such as Dambo and Ben-George (2022) and Brown and Nwaokokorom (2025) have highlighted structural challenges such as inadequate funding and limited institutional support as barriers to graduate entrepreneurship. This suggests that while business education training provides the necessary skills and knowledge for venture creation, supportive institutional and financial environments are also essential for translating entrepreneurial competence into sustainable business establishment.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of business education training on startup creation among graduates in Rivers State universities, focusing on curriculum exposure, experiential entrepreneurship training, and entrepreneurial skills acquisition. The findings revealed that all three factors significantly promote graduates' ability to establish startups, demonstrating that entrepreneurship-oriented business education equips graduates with the knowledge, practical experience, and competencies needed for venture creation. These results support Human Capital Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, indicating that educational investment and enhanced perceived competence translate into measurable entrepreneurial outcomes. Overall, the study confirms that business education training is a key driver of graduate self-employment and economic participation in Rivers State.

Recommendations

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

- Universities should enhance the implementation of entrepreneurship-focused business education courses to equip students with relevant knowledge and competencies for startup creation.
- Institutions should provide more practical learning opportunities, including workshops, internships, and business simulations, to improve students' readiness for entrepreneurship.
- Universities should prioritize the development of essential skills such as financial management, creativity, problem-solving, and innovation through targeted training activities.

- Graduates should have access to mentorship, business incubation programs, and seed funding to translate acquired skills into successful ventures.
- Educational authorities and policymakers should strengthen initiatives that encourage entrepreneurship education as a strategy to reduce graduate unemployment and promote self-employment.

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