

THE SOCIAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILL- ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES ON YOUTHS IN SOUTHERN SENATORIAL DISTRICT, TARABA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the social and personal development outcomes of entrepreneurship skill-acquisition programmes among youths in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were collected from 384 respondents across Donga, Takum, and Wukari Local Government Areas using a structured questionnaire. Responses were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that entrepreneurship training improved participants' interpersonal communication, leadership abilities, and civic engagement, while also fostering personal outcomes such as confidence, motivation, goal-setting, and emotional resilience. These results supported Empowerment Theory by showing that youth entrepreneurship interventions contributed not only to technical competence but also to psychological and social transformation. The study concluded that entrepreneurship programmes should be designed to integrate mentorship, soft-skill development, and reflective practices to maximise their developmental impact on young people.

Keywords: Youth development, entrepreneurship training, identity, empowerment, personal growth

Introduction

Youth development has emerged as a strategic focus in Nigeria's national policy landscape, particularly in the face of persistent unemployment, social instability, and limited access to formal education and employment. Beyond economic advancement, the social and personal development of young people is essential to fostering responsible citizenship, leadership capacity, and self-actualisation. In this regard, entrepreneurial skill-acquisition programmes have gained prominence as multidimensional interventions that equip youths with not only technical competencies but also personal growth tools such as resilience, communication, confidence, self-awareness, and leadership potential (Abiola & Lawal, 2019). These outcomes are central to transforming passive youth populations into socially responsible, self-directed, and adaptable individuals.

In the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, like many rural and semi-urban regions in Nigeria, youths face structural challenges including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to education, and exclusion from mainstream employment systems. Entrepreneurship programmes implemented by government agencies and non-governmental organisations aim to address these gaps by promoting behavioural change, building self-worth, and encouraging community engagement among beneficiaries. These programmes often integrate life skills development with technical training in a bid to nurture not just entrepreneurs, but socially conscious individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society (Chukwudi & Uduji, 2020).

While several studies have examined the economic impact of entrepreneurship training, fewer have addressed its influence on personal development indicators such as leadership, confidence, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills. Yet these attributes are foundational to sustainable economic participation, civic engagement, and psychosocial stability. A study by Aliyu and Ibrahim (2023) affirmed that entrepreneurial training promotes behavioural independence, initiative, and goal orientation among youths attributes necessary for navigating uncertain socio-economic environments. Similarly, Amoah and Amoah (2018) emphasized that skill acquisition positively affects social status, peer influence, and community recognition, particularly in rural African contexts.

Despite these potential benefits, the personal and social dimensions of entrepreneurship skill acquisition remain underexplored in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State. Existing evaluations often focus narrowly on income levels and employment status, thereby overlooking the less tangible but equally important developmental gains. A contextual analysis of these outcomes is necessary to inform the design of more holistic programmes that meet both economic and psychosocial needs of youth populations. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the extent to which entrepreneurial training initiatives influence the social and personal development of young people in the region.

Statement of the Problem

Efforts to address youth unemployment in Nigeria have largely focused on improving economic outcomes such as income generation and self-employment. However, youth empowerment is incomplete without attention to the social and personal dimensions of development, including confidence, self-efficacy, leadership, communication, and goal-setting behaviour. While entrepreneurship skill-acquisition programmes have been deployed across various parts of Nigeria including the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, their success

is often measured in narrow economic terms, ignoring the broader transformative impact these programmes can have on the attitudes, behaviours, and social integration of participants. As a result, there is limited empirical evidence on whether and how such programmes foster personal growth and social development among rural youths. Existing research tends to generalize outcomes without capturing local experiences, contextual barriers, or the subtle psychological shifts that occur through entrepreneurial training (Ajani & Oluwaseun, 2022). This knowledge gap makes it difficult for policymakers, educators, and development actors to design holistic interventions that simultaneously promote economic, social, and emotional wellbeing. Without a deeper understanding of these non-economic outcomes, opportunities to harness entrepreneurship as a tool for comprehensive youth development may remain underutilized in regions like Southern Taraba.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine the social and personal development outcomes of entrepreneurial skill-acquisition programmes on youths in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State. The specific objectives are to

1. assess the social development outcomes of youth participation in entrepreneurship skill-acquisition programmes in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State.
2. examine the extent to which entrepreneurship skill-acquisition programmes enhanced the personal growth of participating youths in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What social development outcomes have resulted from youth participation in entrepreneurship skill-acquisition programmes in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State?
- ii. To what extent have entrepreneurship skill-acquisition programmes enhanced the personal growth of participating youths in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State?

Literature Review

Concept of Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition

Entrepreneurship skill acquisition refers to a structured process through which individuals gain practical competencies, knowledge, and behavioural attributes required to start, manage, and sustain a business venture in competitive and dynamic environments. These skills often include decision-making, creativity, opportunity recognition, financial literacy, problem-solving, and resource mobilisation, all of which are critical for entrepreneurial success. In youth development literature, entrepreneurship education is considered a transformative intervention that equips young people not only with income-generating abilities but also with social and leadership skills that contribute to their broader development trajectory (Adebayo & Daramola, 2023).

Entrepreneurship training programmes are delivered through a variety of platforms, including formal school curricula, vocational training centres, government interventions, and NGO-led initiatives. These programmes are often competency-based and learner-centred, allowing participants to engage in experiential learning while developing enterprise-specific capabilities. Studies have shown that effective skill acquisition involves both technical knowledge and soft skills, such as communication, resilience, and emotional intelligence,

which are essential for navigating the uncertainties of self-employment and social interactions (Ezeani & Iheanacho, 2020).

In Nigeria, entrepreneurship education has been integrated into tertiary institutions as a response to graduate unemployment and youth dependency. However, community-based programmes such as YouWiN, N-Power, and other donor-funded initiatives target non-graduate youth with short-term training and start-up support. These schemes have evolved to emphasise not only enterprise formation but also life-skills development and psychosocial outcomes, especially for vulnerable populations in rural and semi-urban regions (Olatunji & Adeboye, 2022).

Entrepreneurial skill acquisition serves as a vital foundation for shaping the personal identity and social agency of young people. It helps cultivate autonomy, goal-setting behaviour, and leadership attributes, which are linked to improved psychological wellbeing and increased participation in community development activities. Programmes that are well-designed and locally adapted tend to be more successful in generating these developmental outcomes because they integrate cultural relevance and mentorship structures into their delivery models (Aliyu & Ibrahim, 2023).

Entrepreneurship as a Catalyst for Youth Social and Personal Growth

Entrepreneurship training plays a vital role in fostering the personal and social development of young people by shaping their attitudes, behaviours, and interpersonal competencies. Beyond equipping individuals with technical and business knowledge, entrepreneurial education encourages youths to take initiative, communicate effectively, solve problems independently, and adapt to challenging situations. These soft skills are essential for building self-worth and facilitating positive social participation, especially in regions where traditional educational systems often fail to nurture these traits (Aliyu & Ibrahim, 2023). Youths who undergo such training are more likely to exhibit greater self-confidence, leadership orientation, and community involvement, which are foundational for long-term personal growth.

Empirical studies have shown that entrepreneurship programmes significantly influence how young people perceive themselves and interact with their environments. Participants often report increased confidence in public speaking, negotiation, team collaboration, and conflict resolution all of which are integral to their psychosocial development and civic participation (Chukwudi & Uduji, 2020). These outcomes are particularly important for youth in rural or underserved regions, where formal employment options are limited and individuals must rely on internal motivation and community networks to achieve stability and purpose.

The transformational impact of entrepreneurial skill acquisition also extends to the development of emotional resilience and a growth mindset. Through experiential learning, mentorship, and exposure to risk-taking, participants learn how to navigate failure, embrace uncertainty, and persist in the face of adversity. These personal qualities are critical for mental well-being and life satisfaction, especially among young people facing socio-economic marginalisation (Ajani & Oluwaseun, 2022). In Taraba State, such training helps shift the self-perception of youth from passive recipients of aid to proactive contributors within their families and communities.

Moreover, entrepreneurship education promotes a sense of agency and future orientation, encouraging participants to set life goals, make strategic decisions, and take responsibility for their personal trajectories. When skill acquisition is integrated with mentorship and life coaching, its effects become more durable and holistic, leading to improvements in behaviour, identity formation, and social connectedness (Adejumo & Olamide, 2023). These outcomes contribute not only to individual transformation but also to the stability and growth of the communities in which empowered youth reside.

Entrepreneurship serves as more than a pathway to financial independence; it is a developmental platform for cultivating socially responsible, psychologically resilient, and self-aware youth. Its success lies not only in job creation but in shaping individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society. For this reason, the social and personal outcomes of entrepreneurship skill acquisition should be recognised as core components of youth empowerment programmes across Nigeria and beyond (Yakubu & Agboola, 2022).

Dimensions of Youth Empowerment Beyond Income

Youth empowerment encompasses a wide spectrum of developmental outcomes that extend far beyond financial independence. While income generation is often used as the primary indicator of empowerment, contemporary scholarship recognises that true empowerment involves emotional, cognitive, and social transformation. These dimensions include self-confidence, critical thinking, decision-making capacity, civic participation, and the ability to influence one's environment in meaningful ways. Programmes that focus solely on economic outcomes risk overlooking the internal changes necessary for long-term development and self-actualisation (Ismaila & Mohammed, 2021).

Entrepreneurship training offers a platform for cultivating these non-economic dimensions by challenging participants to set goals, confront personal limitations, and engage in problem-solving. Empowered youths report higher levels of autonomy, personal discipline, and assertiveness, which enable them to navigate both entrepreneurial ventures and broader life challenges. These qualities are particularly critical in rural regions like Taraba State, where formal institutional support is limited and self-direction becomes essential for survival and progress (Musa & Olamide, 2020). By reinforcing internal agency and reflective thinking, entrepreneurship education enables young people to take ownership of their developmental journey.

Social empowerment is another critical dimension fostered through skill acquisition programmes. This involves the ability to build networks, collaborate with others, and participate in collective decision-making processes. Youths who develop interpersonal competencies such as empathy, teamwork, and negotiation are more likely to contribute to community development and foster inclusive leadership practices. Entrepreneurship interventions that include group-based training, peer mentoring, and collaborative projects often see higher levels of social integration among beneficiaries (Adebayo & Daramola, 2023).

Personal growth also includes behavioural shifts in how youths perceive and respond to challenges. Effective entrepreneurship training equips individuals with coping strategies for managing stress, handling rejection, and maintaining perseverance through setbacks. These emotional capacities are essential for fostering resilience, which is a vital attribute for youths operating in high-risk environments characterised by economic uncertainty, political instability, and limited safety nets (Aliyu & Ibrahim, 2023). Empowerment, in this sense,

becomes a dynamic process rooted in the internal fortification of individuals rather than external material success alone.

Measuring youth empowerment through entrepreneurial training must go beyond tracking job creation or income increases. It must also account for the psychological, behavioural, and social transformations that define long-term wellbeing and community engagement. When programmes intentionally nurture these non-economic dimensions, they create not only entrepreneurs but empowered individuals who possess the skills, confidence, and vision to lead meaningful lives and impact their societies positively (Adejumo & Olamide, 2023).

Entrepreneurship and the Shaping of Youth Identity and Agency

Entrepreneurship serves as a developmental platform through which youths construct a sense of identity, autonomy, and social purpose. Identity formation in adolescence and early adulthood is influenced not only by family or education, but also by lived experiences that challenge individuals to reflect, act, and make consequential decisions. Entrepreneurship training introduces youth to such experiences by requiring them to assume responsibility, take risks, and manage outcomes, which in turn shapes how they perceive themselves and their place in society (Ajani & Oluwaseun, 2022). Through this process, youths begin to internalise an entrepreneurial mindset that is defined by innovation, resilience, and a proactive approach to challenges.

Participation in entrepreneurship skill acquisition programmes also fosters a heightened sense of agency among youths. Agency refers to the capacity to make independent choices and act on them to influence one's circumstances. Entrepreneurial learning strengthens this capacity by offering real-world opportunities to initiate projects, manage limited resources, and navigate uncertainty. These experiences cultivate confidence, decision-making competence, and long-term orientation, particularly among young people who have previously felt excluded from economic and civic systems (Chukwudi & Uduji, 2020). By learning to take initiative, youths become more than passive recipients of aid; they evolve into actors capable of shaping their futures.

Studies have shown that youths who complete entrepreneurship programmes report shifts in their self-perception, aspirations, and life goals. This transformation is often marked by a departure from dependency narratives toward a mindset rooted in self-determination and social relevance. Such psychological shifts are critical in societies where structural constraints have traditionally silenced youth voices. Entrepreneurship provides an avenue for young people to assert themselves, build credibility, and earn recognition within their communities (Ibrahim & Danladi, 2023). The ability to engage in economic activities on their own terms reinforces their identity as capable, purposeful individuals.

In addition, the interaction between entrepreneurial training and identity formation is strengthened when programmes integrate reflective practices such as peer learning, mentorship, and journaling. These components allow youths to process their growth, articulate their values, and develop a coherent sense of self. This is particularly important for marginalised populations who have limited access to affirming spaces or role models. When entrepreneurship is presented not only as a career path but as a developmental journey, it supports deeper personal alignment and ethical engagement with society (Oladele & Ayeni, 2022).

In essence, entrepreneurship fosters youth identity and agency by enabling self-expression, building self-efficacy, and promoting active participation in social and economic life. Its true value lies not only in its capacity to generate employment, but in its potential to develop individuals who see themselves as empowered, responsible, and capable of transforming their own realities and that of others (Yakubu & Agboola, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Empowerment Theory, as articulated by Marc A. Zimmerman (2000). The theory provides a multidimensional framework for understanding how individuals gain control over their lives, access opportunities, and influence their environment. Empowerment is viewed as a process that includes developing critical awareness, acquiring relevant skills, and engaging in active participation in personal and social transformation. Zimmerman's framework distinguishes between psychological, organisational, and community levels of empowerment, with the psychological dimension being most relevant to this study of youth development through entrepreneurship (Zimmerman, 2000).

Empowerment Theory suggests that when youths participate in structured training programmes, they not only learn technical skills but also develop a sense of agency, confidence, and social responsibility. These psychological outcomes are essential for initiating self-directed behaviour, making informed life choices, and engaging in meaningful contributions to one's environment. Youths begin to see themselves as capable of influencing their futures, which aligns with the theory's emphasis on self-efficacy and decision-making capacity (Aliyu & Ibrahim, 2023).

For youths in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State where access to formal employment and civic inclusion is limited empowerment through entrepreneurship becomes a critical tool for fostering resilience, self-worth, and behavioural independence. It enables young people to reframe their roles in society from passive dependents to active agents of change. Empowerment Theory thus provides a robust lens through which to examine not only the acquisition of business-related skills, but also the deeper psychological and social transformation that occurs through entrepreneurial learning (Adebayo & Daramola, 2023).

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design to examine the social and personal development outcomes of entrepreneurship skill acquisition among youths in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State. The design was considered appropriate for collecting data from a large population in order to explore attitudes, experiences, and behavioural outcomes related to entrepreneurial training (Wimmer & Dominick, 2019). The study population comprised youths in Donga, Takum, and Wukari Local Government Areas, with a total population of 511,006 (National Population Commission, 2022). A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size table, and proportional allocation was applied across the three LGAs to ensure balanced representation. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted: the three LGAs were purposively selected, five wards from each LGA were chosen randomly, and systematic random sampling was used to identify individual respondents within each ward (Obasi, 2017). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: Section A captured demographic information, while Section B focused on social and personal development indicators. The items in Section B were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Respondents rated their experiences using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Mean scores of 2.50 and above were interpreted as agreement with the statements.

Instrument validity was ensured through expert review by academic staff at Taraba State University, while reliability was established through a pilot test in Ussa LGA using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.83 (Taber, 2018). Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviation, with the aid of SPSS version 26. Ethical approval was obtained before the study, and all respondents gave informed consent, with assurances of confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Results and Findings

This section presents the analysed data on the social and personal development outcomes of entrepreneurship skill acquisition among youths in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State.

Social Development Outcomes of Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I communicate better with others since completing the entrepreneurship training.	3.38	0.66	Agree
2	The programme helped me become more active in my community.	3.21	0.72	Agree
3	I collaborate more effectively with peers and business partners.	3.35	0.68	Agree
4	I have developed leadership skills through the training.	3.29	0.70	Agree
5	The training increased my willingness to take part in group initiatives.	3.18	0.75	Agree

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The responses show a strong agreement that entrepreneurship training contributed to various social development outcomes. The highest mean (3.38) was recorded for improved communication, indicating that participants found the programme helpful in enhancing interpersonal interaction. Other high scores reflect increased civic engagement, teamwork, and leadership capacities.

Personal Development Outcomes of Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
6	I feel more confident in making life decisions since the training.	3.41	0.60	Agree
7	The programme helped me develop emotional resilience.	3.26	0.71	Agree
8	I am more goal-oriented and focused since completing the training.	3.36	0.65	Agree
9	I am more motivated to improve my personal life and future.	3.44	0.59	Agree
10	I can now manage challenges and setbacks more constructively.	3.31	0.69	Agree

The findings indicate high levels of personal growth attributed to the entrepreneurship training. Respondents reported increases in confidence, motivation, and emotional resilience. The highest mean score (3.44) was associated with personal motivation, highlighting the transformative impact of the training on participants' self-perception and life goals.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that entrepreneurship skill acquisition has significant social and personal development benefits for youths in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State. The findings of this study demonstrated that entrepreneurship skill acquisition had notable social development benefits for youths in Southern Senatorial District, Taraba State. Respondents reported improvements in communication skills, leadership capacity, teamwork, and civic engagement, which are consistent with broader social development indicators. These outcomes align with the work of Chukwudi and Uduji (2020), who highlighted entrepreneurship training as a driver of positive behavioural change and stronger interpersonal relations among young people. Similarly, Ajani and Oluwaseun (2022) reported that skill-acquisition programmes across sub-Saharan Africa enhanced youth identity and agency, reinforcing the view that entrepreneurship interventions contribute meaningfully to social inclusion and community participation. The results of this study therefore underscore that entrepreneurship programmes in underserved areas should be assessed not only by their economic returns but also by their capacity to strengthen youths' social integration and leadership potential.

With respect to personal development outcomes, the study revealed that participants experienced increased self-confidence, motivation, goal orientation, and emotional resilience following their engagement in entrepreneurship training. These results support the principles of Empowerment Theory, which emphasises that individuals gain psychological strength, self-efficacy, and agency when given opportunities to develop both technical and soft skills (Zimmerman, 2000; as cited in Onuoha & Bassey, 2019). The emergence of attributes such as persistence, emotional regulation, and constructive decision-making reflects the transformative nature of entrepreneurship education as more than a technical intervention. Similar findings were observed by Oladele and Ayeni (2022), who showed that programmes integrating mentorship and reflective practices produced durable behavioural changes. By fostering identity formation, self-leadership, and psychosocial stability, the entrepreneurship training examined in this study confirmed that skill-acquisition initiatives can serve as platforms for holistic youth empowerment, complementing economic objectives with vital personal growth outcomes.

Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that entrepreneurship training is an effective intervention for promoting personal and social development among youth. To maximise its impact, such programmes should be designed not only to transfer technical knowledge, but also to build life skills and self-leadership capacities. When properly implemented, entrepreneurship education becomes a powerful tool for shaping responsible, resilient, and empowered young citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

Recommendations

1. Entrepreneurship programmes should be designed to include structured components that build communication, confidence, leadership, and teamwork skills. These non-technical modules will strengthen the overall developmental impact of the training.
2. Training providers should integrate mentorship schemes and peer collaboration activities into entrepreneurship programmes to enhance identity formation, goal-setting behaviour, and sustained motivation among participants.

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