



Acquisition of Entrepreneurial Skill in the Face of Covid-19 Pandemic among Students of Higher Institutions in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aims at finding out the entrepreneurial skills that the students of higher institutions in the Northern Nigeria region were able to acquire in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak that in resulted to closing down of schools in order to curtail the spread of the virus. Specifically, students of Federal University, Gusau (FUG) (North-west), Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa (FPN) (North-central) and Federal Polytechnic, Mubi (FPM) (North-east) respectively were administered questionnaires. The results of the finding revealed that the majority of the students in the three institutions had a strong desire to acquire entrepreneurial skills during the school closed down; and they were able to acquire farming, fashion design, hairdressing, technical works, trading, computer operation, art and printing, food and catering amongst others entrepreneurial skills. This opportunity perhaps was due to the incomplete lockdown that was observed in most places in the region. In addition, the results revealed that the majority of the students from the three schools acquired entrepreneurial skills in farming and fashion design except for FPM where students who learned fashion design were few. Technically, students from FPN and FPM who learned technical works were more in number compared to FUG. Also, students of FUG who learned other entrepreneurial skills that are not mentioned were more in number compared to FPN and FPM. Furthermore, from the three schools, results indicated that many students wish to be self-employed after graduation following the stint in their various fields of entrepreneurial skills, while few wish not to be self-employed.

Keywords: Covid-19, Entrepreneur, Lockdown, Skill and Students

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Introduction

The new severe disease (Covid-19) which emerged from the Republic of China in Wuhan was on March 11, 2020, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) a pandemic (Lima *et al.*, 2020; WHO, 2020). Afterwards, the disease became a global public health issue by its fast spreading across the boundaries of the countries. The rapid spread of the novel pandemic to the nations led many governments to take risky

measures, such as the closure of large social and economic sectors that attract people from all nooks and crannies of the globe to each other or another. The spread also created global necessary pressures in all sectors that suddenly affected economies (Kuckertz *et al.*, 2020). The duration of this crisis and the long-term effects on businesses and entrepreneurs is still uncertain (May & Marcela 2020). Before Covid-19, the world had experienced several crises that had

posed severe hardship on society. For instance, the great depression of the 1930s, and the financial crisis of the early 2000s (Tsilika et al., 2020). In the reviewed literature, May and Marcela (2020) posit that the Covid-19 incidence that is experienced globally has affected economies and production chains, hurting millions of businesspeople and entrepreneurs. The need to fast-track and stop infectious diseases through social distancing, lockdowns and border closures has resulted in huge business failures, hardship and the consequent loss of jobs that particularly affect entrepreneurs' households and SMEs (OECD, 2020). The economic structures that are most affected by the Covid-19 crisis are entrepreneurial orientation and innovative ventures that add value to improve the economy through job creation, making this a priority for many governments. They are also recognized as catalysts for economic recovery and growth because of their role as an engine of innovation and job creation (May & Marcela, 2020; Voda & Florea, 2019).

Entrepreneurship is characterized as generating novel ideas that create value for companies and society (Fisher et al., 2020; Shane & Venkataraman, 2020). It has also been recognized as a key element for local and regional development (Apostolopoulos *et al.*, 2020). The entrepreneur is an innovator and visionary who desires and seeks to develop new products, processes and organizations or improve existing ones (Schumpeter, 2013, as cited in May & Marcela 2020). He or she acts more dynamically and creatively in crises (Ratten, 2020; Santos et al., 2020) to make an impact on the well-being of the people, providing what is lacking, and increase in wealth. The entrepreneur achieves these through defined skills such as proactivity, identification of opportunities, innovation, risk management and resilience (Branicki et al., 2018; Portuguez & Zermeño, 2020). Entrepreneurial skills give a person the ability to develop a new company and promote social development (Suparno & Santono, 2018). In addition, it also gives a person the ability to create wealth. Those skills are essential to increase

competitiveness and taking risks (Chew et al., 2016). One of the characteristics of an entrepreneur is resilience, which is the ability of the entrepreneur to quickly adapt to situational change. An entrepreneur would never allow any situation that confronts him to consume him, rather he will see it as an opportunity to create something new to survive. In the face of the Covid-19 crisis, despite lockdown and restriction of movement, an entrepreneur invested little opportunity available for him/her to develop him or themselves either through learning or otherwise for future survival, and social and economic growth and development.

The resilience of an entrepreneur can influence him or her to create jobs or to have business success in a threat and hard situation because resilient entrepreneurs exhibit a high degree of tolerance to ambiguity, can adapt to change quickly, and take advantage of those situations to achieve success. Morgan (2021) presents that on a more positive note, throughout this challenging time, youth entrepreneurs around the world are finding innovative ways to navigate the impact of Covid-19, adapt, and support their communities by developing new products and services. In addition, Palestinian youth overcame employment challenges by creating jobs in the face of Covid-19 through technology entrepreneurship, remote work and the app economy. It was further reviewed that in the Covid-19 crisis, a youth-led digital platform that sells Cambodian-produced products for an affordable price, turned to creating and selling handmade masks, while an ethical skincare company in Indonesia was able to reach even more of its customers by developing her digital market and e-commerce. Also, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) released a Business Integrity Toolkit for Young Entrepreneurs (BITYE). This was created during the Covid-19 pandemic, but also meant to encourage youth entrepreneurs to run their businesses ethically. Learning technical skills and otherwise in the present challenge of Covid-19 can

positively affect the livelihood of the students who are presently schooling and after their schooling. The objectives of this study are to find out whether the students had the desire to acquire entrepreneurial skills or not during the lockdown, find out whether the students engaged themselves in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills or not, investigate which of the skills the students learnt during the lockdown and know if the students want to be self-employed or not after their school program through the skills they have acquired.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a descriptive survey research method to investigate students' desire to acquire entrepreneurial skills in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in the northern part of Nigeria. We have noticed that lockdown was observed at different degrees of complete lockdown, partial lockdown and no lockdown at different places in the

region. The population of this study is the northern part of Nigeria which comprises three geographical zones, viz: Northeast, Northwest and North Central with a total population of an estimated projection of 104,179,937 in 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Figure 1 shows a Nigeria map where the green colour portion represents the entire northern Nigeria region. The region has a total number of 20 states with a breakdown of 6 states for the Northeast, 7 states for the Northwest and 7 states for the Northcentral respectively as shown in Table 1. Random sampling was applied to select three states from the region to make up a sample in which a state is selected from a zone. Those states include Nasarawa (Northcentral zone), Adamawa (Northeast zone), and Zamfara (Northwest zone), and the students of higher institutions in each of the states were the participants. This study was carried out when the students were back at school after the lockdown.

Table 1: Northern Nigeria Geographical Zones with their States.

Northcentral	Northeast	Northwest
Kogi	Adamawa	Kano
Nasarawa	Gombe	Kebbi
Kwara	Yobe	Jigawa
Plateau	Taraba	Kaduna
Benue	Borno	Sokoto
FCT Abuja	Bauchi	Katsina
Niger		Zamfara



Figure 1: The map of Nigeria

Research instrument and data collection

The research questionnaire for this study was structurally produced in line with the current Covid-19 pandemic issue. It consists of four research questions that the respondents would read and respond to by choosing from the options which are provided for each question. A total of 150 questionnaires each were sent to the states that are within the sample and specifically administered to students of their higher institutions, such as Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa (FPN) in Nasarawa state; Federal Polytechnic, Mubi (FPM) in Adamawa state and Federal University, Gusau (FUG) in Zamfara state. After administering the questionnaires to the students, they were told to read the questionnaires and respond to the research questions by choosing from the options provided. A total

of 146, 145 and 141 questionnaires from Nasarawa, Adamawa and Zamfara respectively were returned. After collecting the data, they were then statistically analysed using frequency counting and Analysis of Variance.

Results and Discussions

In recent times, entrepreneurial skills have tremendously contributed to socioeconomic development by creating job opportunities for many people across the globe. In this study, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the results obtained from three geographical zones after frequency counting.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance: Two-Way Classification between-Subjects Factors

		Value Label	N
TRT	1	Yes	3
	2	No	3
	3	Undecided	3
BLK	1	FUG	3
	2	FPN	3
	3	FPM	3

From Table 2 above, the treatments are the responses to the survey which comprise Yes, No and Undecided. The Blocks are the locations of the survey, and they include FUG (Northwest), FPN (Northcentral) and FPM (Northeast) respectively.

Research question: Did you have a strong desire to acquire entrepreneurial skills during the covid-19 lockdown?

H₀: The respondents do not have a strong desire to acquire entrepreneurship skills during the covid-19 lockdown.

H₁: The respondents have a strong desire to acquire entrepreneurship skills during the covid-19 lockdown.

Level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$)

Table 3: ANOVA analysis for research question which asked, 'did you have a strong desire to acquire entrepreneurial skills during the covid-19 lockdown?'

Dependent Variable: Strong Desire

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model	43830.222 ^a	5	8766.044	43.733	.001
TRT	23281.556	2	11640.778	58.075	.001
BLK	4.222	2	2.111	.011	.990
Error	801.778	4	200.444		
Total	44632.000	9			

From Table 3 above, the F-statistic of the responses is 58.075 with p-value = 0.001. Since P-value (0.001) is < α (0.05), we reject H_0 and conclude that the respondents have a strong desire to acquire

entrepreneurship skills during the covid-19 lockdown. This is evident from the Post-Hoc test using the Fisher LSD test as shown below.

Table 4: POST-hoc test (Fisher LSD)

Dependent Variable: Strong Desire						
LSD						
(I) TRT	(J) TRT	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Yes	No	101.00*	11.560	.001	68.90	133.10
	Undecided	113.67*	11.560	.001	81.57	145.76

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

From Table 4 above, the mean difference between the yes response and other responses is significant at a 5% level. This infers that there exists a significant mean difference between them. Hence, it can be asserted that respondents have a strong conviction to acquire entrepreneurship skills during the covid-19 lockdown.

Research question: When School was closed because of the covid-19 pandemic, did you engage yourself in the acquisition of an entrepreneurial skill?

H₀: When School was closed because of the covid-19 pandemic, the respondents did not engage themselves in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.

H₁: When School was closed because of the covid-19 pandemic, the respondents engaged themselves in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.

Level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$)

Table 5: for the research question which asked, ‘When School was closed because of the covid-19 pandemic, did you engage yourself in the acquisition of an entrepreneurial skill?’

Dependent Variable: Acquisition

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model	35141.333 ^a	5	7028.267	45.737	.001
TRT	14400.667	2	7200.333	46.857	.002
BLK	4.667	2	2.333	.015	.985
Error	614.667	4	153.667		
Total	35756.000	9			

From Table 5 above, the F-statistic of the responses is 46.857 with p-value = 0.002. Since P-value (0.002) is < α (0.05), we reject H₀ and conclude that the respondents engaged themselves in the acquisition of

entrepreneurial skills during the covid-19 lockdown. This is evident from the Post-Hoc test using the Fisher LSD test.

Table 6: Post-hoc test (fisher LSD)

Dependent Variable: Acquisition
LSD

(I) TRT	(J) TRT	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Yes	No	63.67*	10.121	.003	35.56	91.77
	Undecided	96.33*	10.121	.001	68.23	124.44

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

From Table 6 above, the mean difference between the response yes and other responses is significant at a 5% level. This infers that there exists a significant mean difference between them. Hence, it can be asserted that when Schools were closed down because of the covid-

19 pandemic, the respondents engaged themselves in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.

Figure 2 shows the results for the research question that seeks to know the entrepreneurial skills that the students were able to acquire during the Covid-19

pandemic lockdown. From the results, out of 141, 146 and 145 questionnaires returned from FUG, FPN and FPM respectively, a total of 105, 108 and 93 respondents indicated the various entrepreneurial skills they had learnt. From the northwest, a total of 19, 28, 8, 9 and 13 respondents indicated that they learned fashion design, farming, hairdressing, trading and technical works respectively, while 8 and 3 respondents indicated that they learned computer operation and catering and food respectively. Furthermore, no respondents indicated art and printing, while 17 respondents learned other skills which are not mentioned among the options. The result from the north-central reveals that 25, 26, 11, 6 and 18 respondents indicated that they learned fashion design, farming, hairdressing, trading and technical works respectively when their schools were locked down because of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, while 3, 5 and 4 respondents indicated that they learned computer operation, art and printing, catering and food

respectively. In the same vein, 10 respondents indicated that they learned other skills which are not mentioned in the option. The result from the northeast shows that 8, 39, 10, 4, and 18 respondents learned fashion design, farming, hairdressing, trading and technical works when their schools were locked down due to Covid-19, while 5, 4, 0 and 5 respondents respectively learned computer operation, art and printing, catering and food and other skills. The results further reveal that most students from the three geopolitical zones engaged in farming followed by fashion design, but technical work is next to farming in the northeast. Those students who learned other skills are more number in the northwest compared to north central and northeast. The least entrepreneurial skills acquired by the students in the three zones are arts and printing (northwest), computer operation (north central) and catering and food (northeast) respectively,

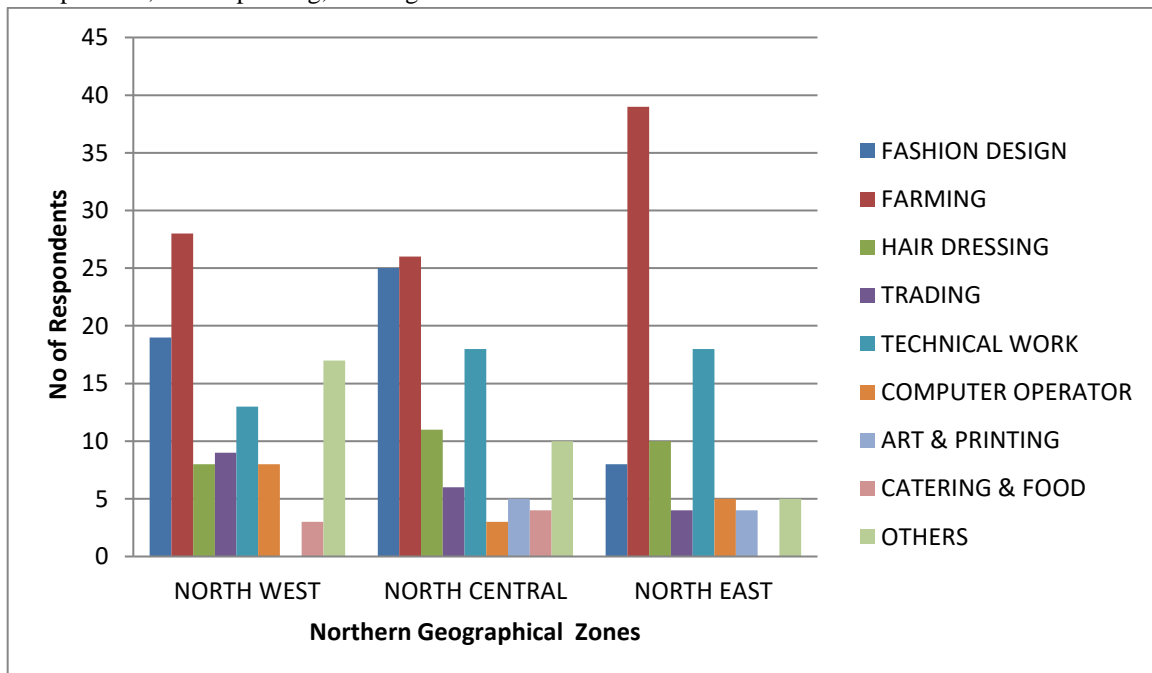


Figure 2: The results for the research question that seeks to know the entrepreneurial skills that the students were able to acquire during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

Research question: Based on the skill you acquired during your learning stint; would you like to be self-employed after your program?

H₁: The respondents would like to be self-employed after the end of the program

H₀: The respondents would not like to be self-employed after the end of the program

Level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$)

Table 7: For the research question which asked, 'based on the skill you acquired during your learning stint, would you like to be self-employed after your program?'

Dependent Variable: Self Employed

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model	41738.222 ^a	5	8347.644	149.213	.000
TRT	20802.889	2	10401.444	185.925	.000
BLK	6.889	2	3.444	.062	.941
Error	223.778	4	55.944		
Total	41962.000	9			

From Table 7 above, the F-statistic of the responses is 185.925 with p-value = 0.000. Since P-value (0.000) is $< \alpha$ (0.05), we reject H₀ and conclude that the

respondents would like to be self-employed after the end of their programs. This is evident from the Post-Hoc test using the Fisher LSD test.

Table 8: Post-hoc test (Fisher LSD)

Dependent Variable: Self Employed

LSD

(I) TRT	(J) TRT	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Yes	No	97.00*	6.107	.000	80.04	113.96
	Undecided	106.33*	6.107	.000	89.38	123.29

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

From Table 8 above, the mean difference between the response yes and other responses is significant at a 5% level. This infers that there exists a significant mean difference between them. Hence, it can be concluded that the respondents would like to be self-employed after the end of their programs.

Conclusion

In our previous study, it was revealed that the entire region did not fully observe the lockdown. While some parts of the region observed total lockdown, some parts observed partial and no lockdown at all. In the face of the Covid-19 lockdown, many students had the

strong desire to learn entrepreneurial skills. Many of them that live where there was partial, or no lock down was observed were able to use the opportunity of the closing down of schools due to Covid-19 to acquire skills. Among the skills some of the students were able to learn during the lock down of schools are computer operation, farming, fashion design, technical works, food and catering, art and printing among others. After their school graduation, many of them preferred to be self-employed and earned their living through their entrepreneurial learned skills. This will also in turn promote socioeconomic development and growth in the country.

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