

## ***Teachers' Characteristics and Entrepreneurship Counselling in Secondary Schools in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State***

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined teachers' characteristics and entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. The study was guided by three null hypotheses formulated in line with the specific objectives of the study. The ex-post facto research design was adopted; the population included 1,419 public secondary school teachers distributed across 88 public secondary schools. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 25% of the schools while purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting the available 512 teachers in the 22 selected secondary schools. Teachers' Characteristics and Entrepreneurship Counselling Questionnaire (TCECO), with split-half reliability coefficient of .873, was the instrument used for data collection. The null hypotheses were tested using independent t-test and one-way analysis of variance. Findings showed that teachers' marital status significantly influences entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools. The study also discovered that teachers' gender and age have no significant influence on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools. Based on these findings, it was recommended amongst others that secondary school teachers, irrespective of gender, should be offered quality retraining opportunities by the three tiers of government to enable them to develop skills that will enable them to render quality entrepreneurship counselling to students.*

**Keywords:** Teachers, characteristics, Entrepreneurship, counselling, schools.

### **Introduction**

Entrepreneurship education occupies a central position in the modern-day educational setup, considering the need for skilled manpower and economic productivity of any nation. Nigeria, just like any other nation of the world, requires skilled manpower to promote rapid economic growth and development. Ewumi, Oyenuga and Owoyele (2012) asserted that entrepreneurship plays an important role in the development of any economy and has become a subject of increased attention in Nigeria and the world at large. Entrepreneurship is the use of skilful initiatives to develop private business prospects for sustainable livelihood, job creation, and economic development. Egbe-Okpenge and Igbo (2013) maintained that entrepreneurship is simply the discovery of new techniques of harnessing resources for productive purposes.

According to Gibson (2001), entrepreneurship is the use of private initiatives to transform a business idea into a new venture and enterprise with great potential. In the view of Henry (2003), entrepreneurship is the driving force of an economy through the creation of new industries, employment, and wealth. Entrepreneurship has prompted growth and development in industrialized nations, the third world countries have struggled to match such feats. In the Nigerian parlance, a high chunk of university graduates is poured out each passing year to the labour stream. Quite intriguing is the fact that the majority of these graduates have either not acquired entrepreneurial skills, or have not fully developed such skills to provide a means of livelihood.

Regrettably, Odigwe, Offem and Owan (2018) disclosed that many Nigerian university graduates lack the skills to become self-reliant, productive, and employers of labour. No wonder it is common to see many Nigerian youths and university graduates hoping and waiting for the government as well as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for jobs. The study of Olusakin (2010) revealed that half of the Nigerian population of 148 million, as at then, are youths, 95% of whom are unemployed. Youths, who are unable to be employed gainfully in either of the private or public sectors become very vulnerable to unacceptable acts such as kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, and other vices.

It is well understood and well documented in the literature that several efforts have been made and are still being made to address the issue of poor entrepreneurship development. Arop, Ekpang, Nwannunu, and Owan (2018) disclosed that the Government has intensified efforts to provide entrepreneurship education at the secondary school level by including it in the curriculum. The Universal Basic Education policy was also introduced as a replacement to the Universal Primary Education scheme which did not provide room for the acquisition of skills (Arop, Owan & Ekpang, 2018). At the tertiary level, Odigwe et al. (2018) asserted that some Nigerian Universities have introduced several entrepreneurship initiatives for undergraduates to acquire at least one skill before graduation, although the duration of training is short. This suggested to the researcher that there could be better options that can provide a long-lasting solution to the menace of unemployment that is yet to be explored.

In Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, many secondary schools do not seem to have any professional counsellors. Thus, students' emotional needs and attitudinal problems are often left unattended. Some scholars have attributed the failure of entrepreneurial empowerment policies to the lack of guidance and counselling in schools and vocational centres (Ikechi & Edward, 2009). Consequently, it appears that inadequate counselling offered to students could be responsible for their poor productivity and unemployability when they eventually float into the labour market.

Rising to this issue, the researcher believes that if entrepreneurship is given enough roots at the secondary school level, students transiting to the universities could be better

placed to master skills taught to them. In doing this, the school counsellors have a role to play in guiding the paths and direction of students towards choosing the right careers and entrepreneurship ventures. This can be achieved if there is an efficient entrepreneurship counselling system in schools.

Entrepreneurship counselling is an aspect of career counselling that focuses on helping students (clients) to choose the appropriate vocational endeavours for skills acquisition. Olatunji (2012) sees entrepreneurship counselling as the process which caters for the individual needs of entrepreneurs with the motive of assisting them to discover themselves, to explore, and understand better, their needs, feelings, attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses in business-related areas. It follows from the definitions above, that entrepreneurship counselling should be aimed at guiding students to explore and evaluate available entrepreneurial venture options, the type of business or industries peculiar to individual interests, skills, and needs.

Within the context of Cross River State, this aspect of counselling seems to be emerging and relatively new, even though it has been in existence for over a decade now. The paucity of professional counsellors as well as the poor awareness of teachers as para-counsellors has also limited the quality of entrepreneurship counselling offered to students. This study therefore sought to assess the characteristics of teachers and how it relates to entrepreneurship counselling.

Teachers' characteristics refer to the physical, emotional, and intellectual attributes of teachers which make it possible for people to identify them or their behaviours. Teacher characteristics refers to the qualities that can be measured with tests or derived from teachers' academic or professional records (Kosgei, Mise, Odera & Ayugi, 2013). These qualities, according to Kosgei et al. (2013) include teachers' mental ability, age, gender, certification status, educational background, previous teaching experience, marital status and so on. Teachers and their characteristics were considered in this study because the researcher believes that they are para-counsellors and should be able to offer guidance and counselling to students especially in the area of career choices or development.

Thus, if teachers can do this, they should also be able to provide good entrepreneurship opportunities to students and guide them to develop entrepreneurship knowledge and skills. In a situation where professional counsellors are not available, and where they are available, they are in a ratio of one counsellor to an entire school, it becomes unbearable for one person alone to cater for the needs of an entire school. This calls for inclusive and participative counselling with para-counsellors (teachers) also offering support since they make contact more frequently with students in the classroom. The researcher also believes that teachers with different attributes could offer entrepreneurship counselling differently. Thus, the researcher was interested in examining specifically, teachers'

characteristics such as gender, age, and marital status, and how these influence the quality of entrepreneurship counselling offered in secondary schools.

Empirical studies have shown that teachers' gender has a significant influence on the quality of counselling offered to students (Yaping & Wenting, 2010; Oyefesobi, Adetunji & Ayedun, 2018). On the contrary, the finding of Ahmad, Abdulkarim, Mallanti, Khata and Habibu (2014) did not find any significant influence of gender and entrepreneurship education among teachers. Rather, the authors maintained that students' participation in entrepreneurship education during their undergraduate education stimulates the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.

Enu-Kwesi and Asitik (2012) assess the link between the unemployment situation and youth enterprise in Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam District. The study showed that although entrepreneurial opportunities are available, the youths are actively involved. The study also showed that younger entrepreneurial facilitators promoted better skills acquisition among youths in the District.

The study of Egbe-Okpenge and Igbo (2012) established a strong positive correlation between career counselling and entrepreneurial development skills of final year undergraduates in Nigeria. The study also showed that the age of entrepreneurship instructors significantly influences the quality of entrepreneurship skills provided. The research of Maxwell, Hezekiah, Ibidunni and Inelo (2014) did not find any significant influence of teachers' age on students' performance in entrepreneurship programmes; the study rather showed that teacher's marital disposition has a significant influence on students' performance.

In terms of marital status, Chrisman (2012) discovered that the marital status of instructors does affect significantly, the quality of entrepreneurship education and new entrepreneurship venture performance of participants. Chrisman (2012) also used a logistic regression model using venture start-up as the categorical dependent variable to investigate whether entrepreneurial education and counselling influenced the creation of new ventures. Findings indicate that counselling has a significant impact on venture performance but entrepreneurship courses do not. In contrast, entrepreneurship courses are related to venture creation while counselling is not.

Having explored several previous studies, available studies suggest that there is scanty literature on teachers' variables and entrepreneurship counselling. The area of entrepreneurship counselling was only found in one study (Chrisman, 2012), which paired it with entrepreneurial education. This study has been designed to build on the works of Chrisman (2012) by using entrepreneurship counselling as the dependent variable but pairing it with teachers' variables. The gap this study can address is that which is arising from a scarcity of available local literature addressing the problem of poor entrepreneurship counselling and career-building

### **Statement of hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

**Ho1** teachers' gender has no significant influence on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

**Ho2** there is no significant influence of teachers' age on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

**Ho3** teachers' marital status does not significantly influence entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted the ex-post facto research design. Ex-post facto research is applicable in cases where the researcher is interested in studying constructs or phenomena that cannot be manipulated at the time of data collection due to their manifestations which has already occurred in the population (Owan, Nwannunu & Madukwe, 2018). This design was considered suitable since the study was designed to examine the quality of entrepreneurship counselling offered to students before the time of data collection. Thus, the phenomena of interest in this study have already occurred and the researcher intended carrying out the study in retrospect based on data collected from respondents.

The population of this study comprised all the public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. According to Arop, Owan and Agunwa (2019), there are 1,419 public secondary school teachers distributed across 88 public secondary schools in Calabar Education zone of Cross River State. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 25% of the schools in Calabar Education Zone. This resulted in the inclusion of 22 public secondary schools. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting all the available 512 teachers in the 22 selected secondary schools as the sample for the study.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher entitled: Teachers' Characteristics and Entrepreneurship Counselling Questionnaire (TCECQ). This instrument was structured into two sections; section A was designed to obtain information on teachers' characteristics such as gender, age, and marital status. Section B was designed with 10 items arranged on a four points Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The 10 items in section B were all designed to measure entrepreneurship counselling. The instrument was validated by two professional guidance counsellors, and three psychometric experts, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria. The instrument was tested for reliability using the Gutman Split-half technique. The reliability coefficient obtained for the instrument was .873, indicating that the instrument was internally consistent for measurement.

Copies of the instrument were administered to sample of respondents after obtaining due consent from the principals as well as the participants themselves. At the end of the exercise, all the instruments were successfully retrieved without any loss, representing a 100 percent return rate. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. The null hypotheses were tested using independent t-test and one-way analysis of variance as applicable to the hypothesis.

**Presentation of results**

**Ho1:** Teachers' gender has no significant influence on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

**Table 1:** Summary of independent t-test results showing the influence of teachers' gender on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools

Variables	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	t-cal	Sig.
Entrepreneurship Counselling	Male	254	24.26	9.052	1.636	.102
	Female	258	25.53	8.577		

df = 510; Mean difference = 1.275

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that male teachers (N=254) achieved a mean response of 24.26 while female teachers (N= 258) had a mean response of 25.53. It follows from the results that female teachers had a higher mean response than males with a mean difference of 1.275. A closer look at the p-value of .102 shows that it is greater than the .05 level of significance at 510 degree of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was retained, implying that teachers' gender has no significant influence on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

**Ho2:** There is no significant influence of teachers' age on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

**Table 2:** One-way analysis of variance results of the influence of teachers' age on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

Teachers' age	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	SE	
20 - 29 years	115	25.60	8.861	.826	
30 - 39 years	122	23.97	8.986	.814	
40 - 49 years	123	25.27	8.822	.795	
50 years and above	152	24.82	8.708	.706	
Total	512	24.90	8.831	.390	
Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	Sig.
Between Groups	180.261	3	60.087	.770	.511
Within Groups	39666.457	508	78.084		
Total	39846.719	511			

As presented in Table 2, the results indicate that 115 respondents were between 20 to 29 years, and achieved a mean of 25.60 in entrepreneurship counselling; teachers between 30 to 39 years were 122 in number and they achieved a mean response of 23.97 in entrepreneurship counselling; teachers between the age of 40 to 49 years numbered 123 with a mean response of 25.27 in entrepreneurship counselling; while teachers from 50 years and above were 152 in number and achieved a mean of 24.82 in terms of entrepreneurship counselling. The overall mean response of the entire teachers across the various age categories is 24.90.

A cursory look at the mean values of the various groups indicates that teachers in the age category of 20–29 years had the highest mean achievement ( $\bar{x} = 25.60$ ) in terms of entrepreneurship counselling. This is followed closely by teachers in the age category of 40–49 years ( $\bar{x} = 25.27$ ), then those in the age category of 50 years and above ( $\bar{x} = 24.82$ ), and those in the age category of 30–39 years ( $\bar{x} = 23.97$ ) in that order. The results in table 2 also showed in the ANOVA section that the p-value of .511 is greater than the alpha level of .05 at 3 and 508 degrees of freedom, with an F-ratio of .770. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is retained suggesting that there is no significant influence of teachers' age on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

**Ho3:** Teachers' marital status does not significantly influence entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

**Table 3:** Summary of one-way analysis of variance results of the influence of teachers' marital status on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools

Teachers' marital status	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	SE	
Single	166	32.37	6.732	.523	
Married	295	21.56	7.340	.427	
Divorce/Separated	51	19.88	7.320	1.025	
Total	512	24.90	8.831	.390	
Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	Sig.
Between Groups	13847.869	2	6923.935	135.555	.000
Within Groups	25998.849	509	51.078		
Total	39846.719	511			

The results presented in Table 3 disclosed that single teachers are 166 in number, those who are married are 295, while those who are either divorced or separated are 51 in numbers. Teachers who are single achieved the highest mean in entrepreneurship counselling ( $\bar{x} = 32.37$ ), those who are married are next ( $\bar{x} = 21.56$ ), and those who are either divorced or separated ( $\bar{x} = 19.88$ ). In general, all the teachers had a mean entrepreneurship score of 24.90 irrespective of marital class. The ANOVA section of Table 3 also revealed that the p-value of .000 is less than .05 level of significance at 2 and 509 degrees of freedom, with an F-ratio of 135.555. Going by this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This result implies that teachers' marital status significantly influences entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools.

### **Discussion of findings**

The first finding of this study established that teachers' gender has no significant influence on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools. This finding appeared this way because the mean difference in the entrepreneurship counselling of male and female teachers is not significant. This implies that although females had higher mean achievement in terms of entrepreneurship counselling, the difference is not statistically significant. This finding is not surprising because gender is a matter of birth while entrepreneurship counselling skills is a matter of experience, training, and intellect. This finding does not corroborate the results of some studies which discovered that teachers' gender has a significant influence on the quality of counselling offered to students (Yaping & Wenting, 2010; Oyefesobi, et al., 2018). This finding supports the results of Ahmad, et al. (2014) which did not also find any significant influence of gender on entrepreneurship education among teachers.

It was discovered through the second finding of this study that there is no significant influence of teachers' age on entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools. This finding suggests that older teachers are not significantly better than younger teachers and vice versa. It goes on to imply that teachers, irrespective of age, can offer good entrepreneurship counselling to students. Thus, it cannot be stated categorically that younger teachers will be better while there are some less knowledgeable ones, nor can one say older teachers will be worse when there are some good entrepreneurship counsellors that are old. This finding misaligns with the results of Egbe-Okpenge and Igbo (2012) which showed rather that the age of entrepreneurship instructors significantly influences the quality of entrepreneurship skills provided. However, the results from the present study supports the finding of Maxwell, et al. (2014) which did not also find any significant influence of teachers' age on students' performance in entrepreneurship programmes.

The third finding of this study disclosed that teachers' marital status significantly influences entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools. The study showed clearly that single teachers are better, married teachers are good, while divorce/separated teachers are fair in providing entrepreneurship counselling to secondary school students. The finding does not come as a surprise because single teachers do not have many home responsibilities to cater for, and so, have enough time to interact with students and know their needs. Single teachers may also be characterized to a large extent, by younger teachers who can easily interact with students. Married teachers, on the other hand, have also proven to be effective entrepreneurship counsellors perhaps due to their attachment to their children, wards, or relatives at home. Hence, they could feel the same passion for students as if they were their children. Divorced/separated teachers are quite similar because these groups are no longer with their marital partners, with the difference emanating from the mode of separation. Such a condition could deter affected teachers from communication excitement and eliminate the willingness to associate with other

people. This finding challenges the result of Chrisman (2012), which discovered on the contrary that the marital status of instructors does not affect significantly, the quality of entrepreneurship education and new entrepreneurship venture performance of participants. The finding of this study may have been different from that of Chrisman due to the differences in the methods employed in both studies, as well as variations in the areas of study.

### **Conclusion**

It was concluded in this study that secondary school teachers are very important in providing quality entrepreneurship counselling to students. In the absence of professional counsellors in schools, teachers who could act as para-counsellors can guide students' career paths through effective entrepreneurship counselling. Teachers' gender and age do not determine the rate in which teachers can provide entrepreneurship counselling to students. However, teachers' marital status has been proven to be an important factor that affects the quality of entrepreneurship counselling rendered to students in secondary schools.

### **Recommendations**

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

- i. Secondary school teachers irrespective of gender should be offered quality retraining opportunities by the three tiers of government to enable them to develop skills that will enable them to render quality entrepreneurship counselling to students.
- ii. All secondary school teachers irrespective of age (both young and old), should, as a matter of urgency, develop positive attitudes towards providing entrepreneurship counselling to students. Such counselling should take into consideration students' interest, skills, needs, and abilities; and must be tailored towards making such students take up different business ventures.
- iii. Efforts should be made by secondary school principals to promote inclusive entrepreneurship counselling in secondary schools, where all teachers (marital status notwithstanding) play active roles in ensuring that students are properly guided in choosing appropriate careers and business ventures.

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