



## **Skill Acquisition for Youth Empowerment and Reduction of Unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims at investigating the effect of skills acquisition and youth empowerment on the reduction of youth unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The Economic Survival-Based Theory was adopted. Data for the study were gotten from both primary and secondary sources. The research was conducted in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A total of 371 questionnaires were administered to respondents using purposive sampling techniques and on the spot filling and collection. The data obtained from the field were subjected to descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, particularly, using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient, Microsoft SPSS (version 21). The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient method. A total of 30 respondents who were not part of the sample were used in testing the reliability of this instrument. The reliability coefficient stood at 0.672. The results of the Mean and Standard Deviation and the testing of the four alternative hypotheses indicate that skills acquisition and youth empowerment have the potential to create employment opportunities and reduce youth unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Findings from this study reveal that skill acquisition in the areas of carpentry, fashion design/tailoring business, barbing saloon and handset repairs have empowered the youths meaningfully to generate employment and reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study also reveals that most youths accept political appointment as empowerment owing to the fact that they lack requisite skills and startup capital to be independent and self-reliant. The study show that most youths prefer skills acquisition and startup capital to start a venture of their own and be self-reliant than political appointment. The study concluded that the strategies of empowerment adopted by government through the offering of political appointment to young graduates without skills is erroneous and same does reduce unemployment per se. Based on the findings, the study recommended, amongst others that, skill acquisition should be made compulsory from secondary school to tertiary levels, such that every graduate irrespective of one's course of study should possess one skill as a prerequisite for graduation. The centre for the skill acquisitions in each institution should certify the student before graduation. It is also recommended that technical and vocational devices, machines and tools necessary for takeoff of every graduate with a requisite skill should be made accessible and supplied free of charge. Also, that there is need for reorientation of the youths in line with the present economic realities in order to obviate self-pride and shame and avail themselves with the skills acquisition opportunities available to them.

**Keywords:** Skills Acquisition; empowerment; youth unemployment; self-reliant and job creation



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## Introduction

The concept, youth have different meaning according to countries. Different countries have their own perception and understanding of who should be described as a youth. In Nigeria, the Nigerian National Youth Policy (2009), described youths as those between the ages of 18 - 35 years. In Nigeria, the population of people within this age bracket is estimated to be 67 million, Matawal, (2017), Ochogba, Johnwest, Isiodu and Igwe (2018). Available data also reveals that Nigeria's unemployment and underemployment rates are combined at 55.7% at the end of the second quarters of 2020, with Nigeria having the highest population of about 177 million people in Africa, which about 70% are youth (Olufemi, 2020). Thus, the National Population Commission (2013), Ojo, Abayomi and Odozi (2014) and Ogide and Amaso (2020) are of the view that sixty-four (64) million of Nigerian youths are unemployed. Obviously, about 80% or more of graduates of different tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the majority of which are youth do not get employment every year (Florence & Ekpungu, 2015), (Ogide and Amaso, 2020).

Consequently, unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of youths and graduates in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi state in particular; causing frustration, depression, dejection and undue dependency on family members and friends. The high level of unemployment among youths in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi State in particular has been the bane for the high rate of insecurity, cultism, violent crimes in societies, acute poverty and general youth restiveness (Mohammed, 2015). Similarly, Chijioke (2016), observed that there is 40% unemployment rate among urban youths aged, 20-24 and 31% among those aged 15-19 years, thus, leading to high rate of rural-urban migration occasioned by social vices such as youth restiveness, hooliganism, thuggery, rape, armed robbery. Furthermore, Amaechi (2018), has argued that the factors responsible for the high rate of insecurity in Nigeria includes; unemployment of youths and corruption among leaders. Meanwhile several factors have been



noted to be responsible for the high unemployment rate in Nigeria. Some are classified as individual factors while others are attributed to bad leadership and dysfunctional education that is characterized by poor infrastructure. Lending credence to this, Nnodim and Ochogba (2018), observed that the current situation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme in Nigeria is insufficient. They went further to contend that learning facilities in these institutions, which are skill oriented are poor and out of use and usually, results to improper skills acquisition after graduation. Also, Ongbali, Afolalu and Udo (2019) stated that one of the factors responsible for unemployment is the issue of lack of employable skills.

According to Ogundele (2013), skill is that ability, which enables someone to do something well, usually gained through training. The act of getting this skill and knowledge could be described as acquisition. These skills can be acquired either through teaching, training, retraining, practical experience and on-the-job training (Uzokaand Bayode, 2010). Hence, Ochogba and Amaechi (2018), have argued that through teaching and training, several skills are acquired, such as; technical, vocational, managerial, entrepreneurial, communication, accounting, information and communication technology and many more. Okwelle and Amaechi (2017), found that acquisition of technical skills, such as; furniture making/carpentry, pipe fitting, fashion design/tailoring, phone repairs, masonry, barbing, electrical installation, boat building, automobile, scaffolding, welding and electronics, among others will help in empowering youths and would lead to reduction in unemployment. This is consistent with the views of Ochogba and Amaechi (2018), who observed that there are several ways by which skills acquisition can empower youths, such as encouraging self-employment, provision of diverse job opportunities, among others.

Furthermore, Ogide, Uka and Ogide (2019) pointed out that through skill acquisition an individual could be empowered to develop capabilities and values for the benefits of the individual and that of the society. From the foregoing, it is obvious that skill acquisition and empowerment have a role to play in reduction of unemployment among youth in Ebonyi State. In line with this, Okoye and Okwelle (2014) noted that if youths are provided with adequate skills while in school and aided with entrepreneurial skills, youth unemployment would be a thing of the past. Thus, having knowledge of the role skills acquisition and youth empowerment could



play in reduction of unemployment, especially, in today Nigeria and Ebonyi State where the rate of youth unemployment has got to its alarming stage becomes a desideratum. Hence, this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria, in general and Ebonyi State in particular, especially, in the recent time, has become a source of worry. The situation has led to poverty and the increasing spate of all forms of social vices and its attendant consequences. It has become obvious that owing to the changes in the socio-political and economic environments, government can no longer provide employment to the increasing youth graduates. The lack of employable skills among youth graduates from various tertiary institutions and skill training centres, as well as the wrong approach to youth empowerment by government have, indeed, worsened the situation. Consequently, there is now increased agitation from different strata of the society for skills acquisition and empowerment among Nigerian youth in general and the youth of Ebonyi State, in particular, to not only make the youth to be self-employed but also create job for others.

However, the insensitivity on the part of the youth who have failed to understand, that unless, empowered by skill acquisition, there can be no reduction of unemployment is also worrisome. Over the years, skills acquisition for empowerment among youth has been characterized by many challenges which has undermined the ability of the youth to attain self-reliance; thereby worsening the spate of youth unemployment and its attendant social vices in Nigeria, in general and Ebonyi State, in particular. Some of these challenges are, government's insensitivity, deceptive attitude and lack of political will, ill attitude of the youth towards skill acquisition, decaying societal values, over bearing influence of party politics on the youth, lack of reward system, continuous falling standard in education, giving of political appointments to only cultists, to mention but a few.

Thus, the rising rate of insecurity, youth restiveness and violent crimes in the society today has been blamed on lack of skills, unemployment and poverty among youth. There is also lack of adequate proactive curriculum in our educational system, to inculcate entrepreneurship, compulsory skills acquisition through mentorship, apprenticeship and professional tutelage.



Consequently, lack of skill for youth empowerment have led to dreaded unemployment, poverty and violent societal crimes, which as a matter of urgency now call for attention in order to avert the impending damage to the nation and the state of Ebonyi.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study is to empirically investigate the effect of skills acquisition for youth empowerment on reduction of unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the extent carpentry has empowered youth to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria;
- ii. Determine the extent skill in fashion design/tailoring has empowered the youths to reduce youth unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria;
- iii. Determine the extent barbing saloon business has empowered the youth to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- iv. Access the extent handset repair has empowered the youths to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed for the study:

- i. To what extent has carpentry empowered youths to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?
- ii. Does fashion design/tailoring have any significant effect in reduction of youth unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?
- iii. To what extent has barbing saloon business empowered the youth to reduce youth unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?
- iv. To what extent has handset repairs empowered the youths to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi state, Nigeria?



## Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Carpentry has not empowered youth to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
2. Fashion design/tailoring has not reduced youth unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
3. Barbing saloon business has not empowered the youth to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
4. Handset repairs has not empowered the youths to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

## Review of Literature

### Skills Acquisition

To better understand the concepts, Skill acquisition, it is important to first and foremost understand what the word, skill means in this context. Skill is defined as the ability to do something well. It also means competence or expertise in doing something. Thus, according to Omene (2021), skill is defined as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. From the above, skill acquisition has been conceptualized as the form of practical training by individuals or group of individuals aimed at gaining knowledge for self-sustenance. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade or profession such as furniture making or carpentry, mobile phone repairs, auto mechanic, mason, electrical installation, welding, pipe fitting, tiling among others, under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions (Idoko, 2021).

According to Ochiagha (2004), it is the process of demonstrating the habit of active thinking or behaviour in a specific activity. He further stated that skill acquisition is seen as the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. He went further to contend that for skill to be acquired, appropriate knowledge, attitudes, habits of thought and qualities of character are learnt to enable the acquirer develop intellectual, emotional and moral character which prepares him or her for a brighter future e through employment generation for



empowerment. This no doubt is in line with the views of Omene (Supra) that skills are usually acquired after a training session or after a practical, which training or practical involves the development of a new skill, practice of a way of doing things.

Donli (2004) views skill acquisition as the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He argued that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people.

Similarly, Magbagbeola (2004) posited that skills acquisition requires the accumulation of different skills that enhances task performance through the integration of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. Omene (2021), in writing about skill acquisition and its importance in employment generation and empowerment of citizens contended that skill acquisition requires a holistic approach in order to realize the required skill. He stated further, that skill acquisition helps in the transformation of knowledge and skills into creative venture; that the main aim of skill acquisition is to fight against unemployment among youths. Emeka (2011), in support of the above views stated that skills acquisition are what people can do to impact their generation; that it is not left for the poor and middle-class people, but it is for career and/or professionals who desire to make their lives multifaceted, adaptable, self-sustaining and independent.

On the other hand, Ogide and Ogide (2020), observed that skills acquisition is the act of getting skill and knowledge which enables individuals to do something well; usually achieved through teaching, training, retraining, practical experience and on the-job-training. Through teaching and training, several skills such as technical, vocational, managerial, entrepreneurial, accounting, communication are acquired (Ochogba and Amaechi, 2018).

The importance of skill acquisition among youth cannot be overemphasized. Hence, Okwelle and Amaechi (2017), observed that skill acquisition and empowerment in various areas of life helps to empower youths and engage them productively. This is in agreement with the views of Uka





and Ogide (2019) who posited that through skills acquisition, individuals could be empowered to develop capabilities and values that will not only benefit the individual, but others and the society at large through employment generation.

### **Youth Empowerment**

Youth empowerment is a multi-dimensional process by which the youths can be induced, motivated and made to embrace positive changes, particularly, in their economic life styles and thereby improve the economy. According to Jimba (2006), youth empowerment involves different ways the youth can be facilitated to cause changes in their life style. He maintained that youth empowerment means a way of inculcating into the youths the spirit of transformation of ideas into creativeness, which is capable of causing positive changes in their economic status. Youth empowerment can also be seen as a means of exposing the youths into skills or training that makes them productive. It encompasses different ways youth can be exposed into different trades that may help them to engage in sustainable paid and self-employment.

The need for youth empowerment is anchored on the fact that the youth remain one of the greatest assets of any community. Potentially, they are the greatest investments for a society's sustainable development and future. It is for this, that it is universally acknowledged that positive, fundamental and meaning changes across cultural settings are usually engineered, fostered and or shaped by the generation of youth in that society. Therefore, any culture or community, whether macro or micro that allows a good percentage of her youth to be misdirected or allowed to remain unproductive, risks her future viability and survival.

Thus, the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among the youths in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi State in particular, and perhaps, elsewhere, has attracted the attention of many researchers and academics, alike, on what should be done to make the youth to be empowered and to become more productive. To actualize this, a lot of programmes and policies which encourage youth empowerment such as skill acquisition programmes have been launched as a means of youth empowerment. This is the reason why skill acquisition according to Ogundowolo (1998) is to prepare and equip the youths with appropriate skills that can be beneficial to them in future. He maintained that ideal skill acquisition is capable of ensuring





value re-orientation among the youths and transforming them into creators of wealth and employment instead of seekers. Obviously, the creation of wealth and employment will lead to poverty reduction and increase of welfare status of individuals in the society.

In line with the above view, Ogbe (1996) stated that wealth creation acquired through youth empowerment is expected to reverse the structural weakness and imbalances in the economy by providing strategic focus and direction and inculcating in the youths the right ethics, discipline, values, hard work, honesty, respect and humility among others.

### **Skill Acquisition and Employment Generation among Youths**

In recent years, unemployment among the youths has been discovered to be one of the most challenging phenomena. This is because, year-in-year-out, thousands of students graduate from secondary schools and higher institutions of learning, with more than 70% of them in search of greener pastures. Not only that there are no white-collar jobs anywhere to absorb them but that a greater percentage of them have no requisite skills commensurate to the present digital economy. Obviously, in the midst of all these, skill acquisition becomes one of the important pillars that help many in actualizing their dreams and aid those who are not privileged to work with public or private organizations with academic certificates to have livelihoods (Garba, 2023). The essence of skill acquisition is as the relevancy of blood and water to human body; lack of regular sources of income has been blamed as a major cause of bribery and corruption and youth restiveness in any society. Skills increase employment opportunities, youth active involvement in economic productivity and crime reduction in societies. Skills help people to have better resources and financial management, improved strategic planning and curtailing crises in organizations due to experiences garnered.

In order to reduce the rate of unemployment and total reliance on government, in 1987 the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established; the directorate was mandated to deal with rising trend of unemployment through the training of people in various skills. Recently, also, various other programmes and policies have also been rolled out to fight the same mayhem of unemployment. But whether, these programmes and policies of government have been able to



address the problem of unemployment is better imagined that explained, as the rate of unemployment has continued to increase geometrically. It is therefore, expected that students' enrollment in skills while undergoing their studies would reduce the problem of unemployment and the burdens which parents bear on the course of the children's sponsorship and further sponsorship even after graduation. Basically, nowadays, if one wants to succeed, one must find alternative income sources, no matter how little he/she might be getting. The labour market is congested with many applications and few vacancies. In Ebonyi State, it is common to find a large array of people with diplomas and various degrees with no jobs. Skill acquisition therefore becomes imperative and a desideratum.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Economic survival-based theory or what some writers called, "survival of the fittest' theory was originally developed by Herbert Spencer (Miesing & Preble, 1985). The theory emphasized on the notion that by following the principle of nature, some people are politically and economically deprived or marginalized and that it is only the best and the fittest of competitors with relevant skills and/or endowments that will survive and win, which in the end would lead to the improvement of the social community as a whole. It also posits that it is through skills acquisition that people who have lost their jobs, possibly, to corporate downsizing and political marginalization can become entrepreneurs and thus, create jobs for themselves and others; that these people do not become entrepreneurs and create jobs by choice but by sheer will to survive. Mbaegbu (2008), argued that having lost their means of livelihood, these people now channel their creative energies to skills acquisition, usually after the initial period of inertia and despondency. This is a phenomenon that Gilder (1981) described as the movement from poverty to wealth.

This theory therefore, is adopted by the researcher in this work as the most suitable theoretical foundation for the presentation and better understanding of this research work, since the theory sees skills acquisition, as the movement from poverty to wealth; thereby shares link with youth empowerment and reduction of unemployment, which is the epicenter of this work.



## Methodology

The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 7099 registered artisans selected from among the artistry groups considered for the study. These include Carpenters, Fashion Designers, Barbers and Hair Stylists and Handset repairers. The sample size of the study was 371 derived using the Taro Yamene's formula. The sample size for each study group was selected through purposive sampling method. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled "Skills Acquisition for Youth Empowerment and Reduction of Unemployment in Ebonyi State Questionnaire" structured in the pattern of Likert 5-point rating scale of agreement. The instrument was face validated by three experts in the Department of Entrepreneurship, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient method for measuring of internal consistency of the instrument. A total of 30 respondents who were not part of the sample were used in testing the reliability of this study. The reliability coefficient of 0.672 was obtained. Copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved by the researchers at the spot through the assistance of 3 other research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient, Microsoft SPSS (version 21) was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. Mean values less than 3.01 were rejected while mean values equal or greater than 3.01 were accepted. Decision rule for the test of hypotheses was accepted if the calculated p-value 0.01 is less than the correlation coefficient,  $r$  0.490, and if the calculated p-value 0.01 is greater than correlation coefficient,  $r$  0.490, the null hypotheses was rejected.

## Results

The distribution of the instrument among the study groups was as follows: carpenter, 70; fashion designers, 107; barbers and hair stylists, 80 and handset repairers, 114. Therefore, analysis of data was based on the 371 (97.89%) total valid copies of the questionnaire instrument, having lost 8 copies on the course of collation.

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of the extent carpentry has enhanced employment generation**

S/N	Items	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DECISION RULE
1	High lucrative nature of handset repair.	371	3.7925	1.38624	HE
2	The low capital requirement to start up.	371	3.1671	.94959	HE
3	The high demand for the skill and services.	371	3.8625	1.19683	HE
4	The high tendency to carry on the business with or without electricity.	371	3.3558	1.02012	HE
5	The non-taxable nature of the business	371	3.5067	1.42063	HE
6	The short duration required to acquire the requisite skill.	371	3.1833	1.41186	HE
<b>Total</b>		<b>371</b>	<b>3.477</b>	<b>1.231</b>	<b>HE</b>

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

**Note:** 0.01-1.00= Very Low Extent (VLE); 1.01-2.00=Low Extent (LE); 2.01-3.00=Undecided (U); 3.01-4.0= High Extent (HE); 4.01- 5.00 Very High Extent (VHE).

The summary of result presented on table 1, reveals that carpentry has to a high extent enhanced employment generation. The mean score shown in the table for the six (6) items indicated the grand mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) of 3.477, and standard deviation (SD) of 1.231. This is an indication that the respondents upheld that carpentry has to a high extent enhanced employment generation.



**Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of the extent Fashion Designer's Business has empowered the Youth for Employment Generation**

S/N	Items	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DECISION RULE
7	The use of technology by designers in improving quality, quick service delivery and increased rate of daily output.	371	3.9973	1.42658	HE
8	Use of modern technology to easily import work done in other countries and redesigned it for local environment.	371	3.6765	1.23155	HE
9	Employment of workers from other professions requiring technical education and skills.	371	4.4151	.86380	VHE
10	Designing and provision of related services to customers such as supply and purchase of equipment	371	3.5984	1.04385	HE
11	Combining designing with entertainment and advertising	371	3.5714	1.13048	HE
12	A good fashion designer possesses varieties of skills and works with other professionals	371	3.1590	1.42906	HE
13	Easily employable in today's workplace.	371	3.4933	1.41109	HE
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3.70</b>	<b>1.22</b>	HE

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

**Note:** 0.01-1.00= Very Low Extent (VLE); 1.01-2.00=Low Extent (LE); 2.01-3.00=Undecided (U); 3.01-4.0= High Extent (HE); 4.01- 5.00 Very High Extent (VHE).

The summary of result presented on the table 2, indicated from the responses of the respondents that fashion designers' businesses have to a high extent empowered the youth for employment generation in the study state. All the items indicated high extent, except item 9, which shows very high extent. The grand mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), indicated 3.70, whereas, the standard deviation (SD), was



1.22; authenticating the fact that fashion designer business has empowered the youth for employment generation in Ebonyi State.

**Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of the Barbings saloon Businesses have impowered Youths to Reduce Unemployment.**

S/N	Items	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DECISION RULE.
14	Has high profit margin due to high demand for its services.	371	3.5984	1.40382	HE
15	The skill needed can easily be acquired	371	4.1914	1.09965	VHE
16	Needs less capital to start up	371	3.4124	1.22794	HE
17	Does not necessarily require educational qualification	371	3.3208	1.46935	HE
18	It is not taxable	371	4.1779	1.19261	VHE
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.279</b>	<b>HE</b>

**Source:** Field Study, 2023.

**Note:** 0.01-1.00= Very Low Extent (VLE); 1.01-2.00=Low Extent (LE); 2.01-3.00=Undecided (U); 3.01-4.0= High Extent (HE); 4.01- 5.00 Very High Extent (VHE).

From the table 3 above, the respondents indicated that barbing saloon businesses have empowered the youth to reduce unemployment in the study state. This was evidenced as shown in items 14, 16, and 17, items, which indicated high extent 15 and 18, indicated very high extent. The grand mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) stood at 3.74, whereas, the standard deviation (SD) indicated 1.279, authenticating the fact that barbing saloon businesses have empowered the youth to reduce unemployment in the study state.

**Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of the extent Hand Set Repairs have empowered Youths to Reduce Unemployment.**



S/N	Items	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DECISION RULE.
22	Research and development by the software industries leading to innovations in the methods of repairs.	371	3.5984	1.40382	HE
23	Serves as a means of livelihood through generation of income.	371	4.1914	1.09965	VHE
24	Ability to divert attention from youth involvement in politics.	371	3.4124	1.22794	HE
25	Requires very little capital to start up with huge prospects.	371	3.3208	1.46935	HE
26	Does not necessarily require shop to operate	371	4.1779	1.19261	VHE
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.279</b>	<b>HE</b>

**Source:** Field Study, 2023.

**Note:** 0.01-1.00= Very Low Extent (VLE); 1.01-2.00=Low Extent (LE); 2.01-3.00=Undecided (U); 3.01-4.0= High Extent (HE); 4.01- 5.00 Very High Extent (VHE).

From the table 4 above, the respondents indicated that hand set repairs have empowered the youth to reduce unemployment in the study state. This was evidenced as shown in items 22, 24, and 25, even as item 23 and 26, indicated very high extent. The grand mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) stood at 3.74, whereas, the standard deviation (SD) indicated 1.279, authenticating the fact that hand set repairs have empowered the youth to reduce unemployment in the study state.

### Test of Hypotheses

#### Hypothesis One

HO<sub>1</sub>: Carpentry has not significantly empowered the youth to enhance employment generation in Ebonyi state.

HA<sub>1</sub>: Carpentry has significantly empowered the youths to enhance employment generation in Ebonyi state.





This hypothesis was tested using the mean of scaled responses from the respondents on the dependent and independent variables using the statistical package for social sciences version 21.

The result was presented in the table below:

### Correlations test of Hypothesis one

#### Correlations

##### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CARPENTRY	4.0970	1.25903	371
EMPLOYMENT GENERATION	3.5764	.41825	371

##### Correlations

		CARPENTRY	EMPLOYMENT GENERATION
CARPENTRY	Pearson Correlation	1	.490**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	371	371
EMPLOYMENT GENERATION	Pearson Correlation	.490**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	371	371

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows the result of the correlations test to determine the relationship between carpentry and employment generation. The result revealed that the P-value 0.01 was less than the correlation coefficient,  $r$  0.490 which implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between carpentry and employment generation. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected, consequently, the study upheld that carpentry has significantly empowered the youths to enhance employment generation in Ebonyi State. Moreover, the statistical test showed a correlation coefficient  $r$ , 0.490 which implies that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between carpentry and employment generation.

### Hypothesis Two



HO<sub>1</sub>: Fashion design/tailoring has not significantly reduced youth unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

HA<sub>1</sub>: Fashion design/tailoring has not reduced youth unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

#### Correlations

		FASHION DESIGNER BUSINESS	EMPLOYMENT
FASHION DESIGNER BUSINESS	Pearson Correlation	1	.188**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	371	371
EMPLOYMENT	Pearson Correlation	.188**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	371	371

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FASHION DESIGNER BUSINESS	3.4933	1.41109	371
EMPLOYMENT	3.7016	.57153	371

The table above shows the result of the correlations test to determine the relationship between fashion designer/tailoring business and empowerment of youth for employment generation. The result revealed that the P-value 0.01 was less than the correlation coefficient,  $r$  0.188 which implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between fashion designer/tailoring business and employment. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected, consequently, the study upheld that fashion designer business has significantly empowered the youth for employment generation. Moreover, the statistical test



showed a correlation coefficient  $r$ , 0.188 which implies that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between fashion designer/tailoring business and employment generation.

### Hypothesis Three

HO<sub>1</sub>: Barbing saloon business has not empowered the youth to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

HA<sub>1</sub>: Barbing saloon business has empowered the youth to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
BARBING SALOON BUSINESS	3.0728	1.37451	371
	3.9444	.35101	371

### Correlations

		BARBIN G SALOO N	EMPLOYME NT
BARBING SALOON	Pearson Correlation	1	.492**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	371	371
EMPLOYMENT	Pearson Correlation	.492**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	371	371

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



The table above shows the result of the correlations test to determine the relationship between barbing saloon business and employment generation. The result revealed that the P-value 0.01 was less than the correlation coefficient,  $r$  0.492 which implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between barbing saloon business and employment generation. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected, consequently, the study upheld that barbing saloon business has significantly empowered the youth to generation employment. Moreover, the statistical test showed a correlation coefficient  $r$ , 0.492 which implies that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between barbing saloon business and employment generation among the youths of Ebonyi State.

#### Hypothesis Four

HO<sub>1</sub>: Handset repairs has not empowered the youths to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

HA<sub>1</sub>: Handset repairs has empowered the youths to reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

#### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
HANDSET REPAIRS	4.1779	1.19261	371
EMPLOYMENT	3.7402	.71628	371

		HANDSET REPAIRS	EMPLOYMENT	
HANDSET REPAIRS	Pearson Correlation	1	.555**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	371	371	
EMPLOYMENT	Pearson Correlation	.555**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	371	371	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



The table above shows the result of the correlations test to determine the relationship between handset repairs and employment generation. The result revealed that the P-value 0.01 was less than the correlation coefficient,  $r$  0.555 which implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between handset repairs and employment generation. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected, consequently, the study upheld that handset repairs has significantly empowered the youth to generate employment. Moreover, the statistical test showed a correlation coefficient  $r$ , 0.555 which implies that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between handset repairs and employment generation.

### **Discussion of Results**

The results of this study reveal that skill acquisition in the areas of carpentry, fashion design/tailoring business, barbing saloon and handset repairs have empowered the youths meaningfully to generate employment and reduce unemployment in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This finding corroborates the empirical studies of Omene (2021), Idoko (2021), Ogide and Ogide (2020), Emeka (2011) and Ogeh (2023) that skill acquisition empowers the youth for employment generation and thus, reduce unemployment in any society.

Again, on the strategies of empowerment adopted by government through the offering of political appointment to young graduates without skills, the study reveals that most youths accept political appointment as empowerment owing to the fact that they lack requisite skills and startup capital to be independent and self-reliant. The study show that most youths prefer skills acquisition and startup capital to start a venture of their own and be self-reliant than political appointment. This finding is in agreement with the empirical views of Olufemi (2020), Tokunbo (2022), Christopher (2021) and Kalagbor (2019).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Ebonyi state is one of the states in Nigeria and with large proportion of the youth's unemployed, because of lack of skills and empowerment to start up a venture and be independent and self-reliant. To address this situation, successive governments has put up strategies such as political appointment, establishment of skill acquisition centres, giving of grants etc. Curing this unemployment menace has not been easy, as yearly; graduates from different higher institutions



are turned out in their thousands; without commensurate employment opportunities. This study has examined these skill acquisition and empowerment strategies adopted by the government in reducing unemployment in Ebonyi state. Obviously, skill acquisition is the best empowerment, as it gives the youths a better employment status, and the zeal to startup their own business in order to become independent and be self-reliant.

This study has advanced the following recommendations:

- i. Skill acquisition should be made compulsory from secondary school to tertiary levels, such that every graduate irrespective of one's course of study should possess one skill as a prerequisite for graduation. The centre for the skill acquisitions in each institution should certify the student before graduation.
- ii. Technical and vocational devices, machines and tools necessary for takeoff of every graduate with a requisite skill should be made accessible and supplied free of charge. This will inspire many to enroll and become beneficiaries too instead of looking for white-collar jobs that are nonexistent anywhere.
- iii. Government instead of giving political appointment to young graduates are encouraged to provide grants and institutions responsible for giving loans should provide an interest free loan scheme for graduate undergoing skills acquisition training to start up their business and be self-reliant.
- iv. There is need for reorientation of the youths in line with the present economic realities in order to obviate self-pride and shame and avail themselves with the skills acquisition opportunities available to them.

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