

## Awareness of Entrepreneurship Opportunity Among Preservice Counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria: Implications for Career Counselling

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### Abstract

*The study investigated awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State. Descriptive design was employed for them study with the population of 7,693 and simple random technique was used to select 402 respondents for the study from the targeted population. The instrument was a researcher-designed questionnaire, titled: "Awareness of Entrepreneurship Opportunity Among Preservice Counsellors Questionnaire" (AEOPCQ). The reliability was ascertained by using test-retest method with a coefficient of 0.88. The data collected were analysed using frequency and percentage, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings revealed a low level of awareness (75.6%) among preservice counsellors regarding entrepreneurship opportunity in the counselling profession in Kwara State, while 24.4% had received education or training on counselling entrepreneurship. Findings showed further that there were no significant differences in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on gender and level of education. However, there was a significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on age. The study however concluded that there were few preservice counsellors are aware of the career opportunities in counselling profession. Based on the conclusion and findings of the study, it was recommended that there is need for integration of entrepreneurship education into counselling programmes in Kwara State to equip preservice counsellors with necessary knowledge and skills. Also, mentorship programmes and practicum/internship opportunities should be established in schools to pair preservice counsellors with experienced counselling entrepreneurs, providing guidance and support.*

**Key words:** Preservice Counsellors, Entrepreneurship Opportunity, Career Counselling

### Introduction

Unemployment remains a critical issue driving economic challenges and posing threats to graduates in Nigeria. This issue has contributed to the rise of poverty, crime, kidnapping, banditry, and other societal problems. However, it is essential to recognise that no nation's government can

completely eradicate unemployment due to the constraints of limited resources. Consequently, citizens must focus on acquiring and honing essential skills to achieve a more fulfilling life. Developing nations like Nigeria aspire to attain self-sustaining growth and development, which can be realized through access to education and skill acquisition (Rowell, 2023). It is not an exaggeration to state that a significant proportion of Nigerian graduates lack the necessary skills to secure employment.

The Nigerian education system, particularly at the university level, produces graduates who fail to meet the labour market's requirements. This has created a significant disparity between the output of educational institutions and the demands of employers (Suleiman, 2022). The disconnect between industry expectations and the competencies of graduates from the country's higher institutions has contributed to rising unemployment rates (Sofoluwe, Shokunbi, Raimi, & Ajewole, 2013). Supporting this view, Olaniran (2018) emphasised that the training and education provided in Nigerian higher institutions often fail to align with labour market demands, rendering many students unemployable upon graduation. This underscores the importance of *edupreneurship*—an education model that equips learners with the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and motivation needed to tackle the persistent problem of unemployment. Olaniran (2018) further highlighted that providing opportunities for youths to develop entrepreneurial skills is a crucial step in advancing the socio-economic and political sectors of any country. Entrepreneurship education not only prepares individuals to establish their own businesses but also empowers them to become entrepreneurs and valuable contributors to their nation's economy.

Entrepreneurship involves the process of creating something new, requiring significant time and effort to ensure tasks are effectively executed, leading to personal satisfaction and self-reliance. This process demands a commitment of time, risk-taking, personal effort, and dedication to achieving outcomes that include both financial gains and personal fulfillment (Sunday, 2012). It encompasses a creation process characterised by deliberate effort, risk management, and the pursuit of rewards. Also, it can be seen as a dynamic process of vision, innovation, and change, requiring energy and passion to develop and implement new ideas and innovative solutions (Mbwa & Katura, 2022). According to Godwin (2021), entrepreneurial education forms an integral part of the broader educational system, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, ideas, and managerial abilities necessary for job creation and economic stability. There is a pressing need for an educational approach that promotes self-reliance while enhancing individuals' creative and

innovative capacities. Entrepreneurship education emerges as a critical tool for addressing unemployment challenges (Joshua-Omoregie & Olubor, 2021). This underscores the importance of aligning educational quality at all levels with the objective of fostering competencies essential for self-reliance and poverty alleviation (Ubogu, 2020).

In response to the rising unemployment rate in Nigeria, the Federal Government introduced several intervention initiatives under the National Social Investment Programme. These include the N-Power Programme, the Government Enterprises Empowerment Programme (GEEP), and others aimed at addressing this challenge. The Federal Government's objective is to create an enabling environment for private enterprises to flourish while equipping individuals with skill acquisition opportunities to enhance employment prospects (FRN, 2024). These efforts are integral to the core goals of the National Development Plan (NDP 2021–2025).

To instill an entrepreneurial mindset in the younger generation, the Ministry of Education incorporated entrepreneurship education into the curricula of Nigerian higher education institutions. This initiative was carried out in collaboration with two key supervisory agencies: the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) (Sunday & Dunsani, 2018). The inclusion of entrepreneurship education became essential in Nigeria's higher institutions as it provides a practical solution to the persistent issue of unemployment. According to Adenike (2016), the primary goal of entrepreneurship education is to cultivate a lasting entrepreneurial culture among students and faculty. This involves not only imparting knowledge but also establishing systems that support the creation and sustainability of businesses.

Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria aims to equip students in tertiary institutions with the knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to achieve entrepreneurial success across various ventures. Different forms of entrepreneurship education are integrated into the curriculum at all educational levels, from primary and secondary schools to university graduate programs (Sunday & Dunsani, 2018). Consequently, it is crucial to equip preservice counsellors with the foundational skills necessary to become successful entrepreneurs. Preservice counsellors are individuals currently undergoing training in counselling or counseling psychology to qualify as professional counselors. Typically, they are enrolled in graduate programs in counselling and related fields to acquire the essential professional competencies.

Guidance and Counselling is one of the programmes offered in higher education institutions and serves as a foundation for addressing individuals' emotional, psychological, and everyday challenges. In any therapeutic relationship, two individuals are involved: the person seeking assistance and a professionally trained counsellor who provides solutions to the problems. Entrepreneurial counseling involves fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in preservice counselors. A preservice counselor is a trainee preparing to become a professional counselor, typically enrolled in a counseling degree program or a related field. These individuals are usually students or interns gaining practical experience and developing counseling skills under the guidance of licensed professionals (Sweeny & Witmer, 2020).

The counseling profession involves instilling an entrepreneurial mindset in preservice counsellors to help them explore various career opportunities within the field. Counselling offers several areas of specialisation beyond school counselling, including vocational/career counseling, marriage and couple counselling, rehabilitation counseling, bereavement counselling, and more. Career counselling focuses on providing career information, exploration, development, and transitions, while marriage counselling addresses relationship issues, communication, and conflict resolution, helping couples or families manage marital and related family challenges. Preservice counsellors can also pursue careers in areas like clinical mental health counselling, which involves diagnosing and treating mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, trauma, and substance abuse. By specialising in any of these areas, preservice counsellors can establish their own counselling businesses to address a range of personal, social, educational, and vocational concerns. This not only allows them to gain valuable experience and skills but also enables them to earn income, fostering self-reliance and independence.

### **Statement of Problem**

The persistent rise in unemployment among Nigerian graduates, along with their limited entrepreneurial competencies, presents a significant challenge to national development. Despite the growing emphasis on education, many graduates remain ill-equipped for self-employment and the demands of the labor market. Lacking the entrepreneurial skills needed to establish and manage small businesses; graduates often struggle to become self-reliant, fueling poverty, dependency, and an overemphasis on acquiring certificates rather than practical, market-relevant skills. Recent statistics revealed that over 79% of Nigerian graduates are unemployed, highlighting a critical national issue. This skills gap underscores the urgent need for guidance counsellors to actively

collaborate with schools, faculties, and departments. These professionally trained counsellors play a vital role in providing career and vocational guidance to equip students with the entrepreneurial mindset and competencies required to thrive in a competitive economy. Targeted interventions by counsellors are essential to bridge the gap between education and employability, fostering a generation of self-reliant and innovative graduates.

Few studies had been carried out on entrepreneurial education in and outside Nigeria. For instance, Salihu, Audu, Ibrahim and Mohammed (2020) worked on the challenges of entrepreneurship education and ways forward in Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that inadequate startup capital and difficulties in expansion of business venture, inadequate facilities or equipment's, and poor enabling environment for business were major challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Rowel (2023) examined entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The finding revealed challenges militating against entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria which include lack of practical skills, insufficient resources, lack of qualified teachers, lack of infrastructure and limited funding.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, none of the previous studies have specifically explored the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunities among preservice counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. Furthermore, some existing studies are conceptual or theoretical papers lacking empirical investigation. This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examining the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunities among preservice counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State. The study also examined whether age, gender and level of education would influence the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

This research question was raised and answered to guide the conduct of the study:

1. What is the level of awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara state?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on age.
2. There is no significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on gender.
3. There is no significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on level of education.

## **Methodology**

This study is a descriptive survey method with the population of 7,693 preservice counsellors in Kwara State. Following guidelines provided by Research Advisors (2006), a sample size of 365 was deemed appropriate given the size of the population. To account for potential attrition, an additional 10% ( $365 \times 10/100 = 37$ ) was added to the sample, resulting in a total sample size of 402 respondents. Two Universities (University of Ilorin and Al-Hikmah University) were purposively selected, while 402 preservice counsellors were sampled across these selected institutions using simple random sampling technique. Researcher's designed questionnaire titled "Awareness of Entrepreneurship Opportunity among Preservice Counsellors Questionnaire" (AEOPCQ) was used to obtain data from the respondents. The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by giving the instruments to experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin, while the reliability of the instrument was determined through the use of test re-test method at an interval of four weeks and coefficient of reliability of 0.88 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Therefore, the questionnaire is statistically said to be reliable for the study. Hence, the instrument has two sections: A and B. Section 'A' contained demographic data of the respondents while section 'B' contained 20 items on awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State. Mean rating was used to provide answer to research questions, while Independent t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test null hypotheses generated for the study.

## **Results**

The study selected 402 participants using a simple sampling technique, and all of them were provided with the questionnaire. However, only 400 filled questionnaires were returned and considered for data analysis.

**Research Question:** What is the level of awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among counsellors in Kwara state?

**Table 1: Respondents level of awareness about entrepreneurship opportunities in counselling**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	96	24.4
Low	304	75.6
Total	400	100

As indicated in Table 1, out of 400 (100%) preservice counsellors sampled, only 96 (24.4%) of them aware of entrepreneurship opportunity in counselling, while 304 (75.6%) were not aware of entrepreneurship opportunity in counselling profession. Hence, the respondents had low level of awareness about entrepreneurship opportunities in counseling profession.

### Hypotheses Testing

**Hypothesis One:** *There is no significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on age*

**Table 2: Analysis of Variance Showing Significant Difference in the awareness of Entrepreneurship Opportunity among Preservice Counsellors in Kwara State based on Age**

Sources	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	1515.932	2	757.966	23.019	.000	Rejected
Within Groups	13072.228	397	32.928			
Total	14588.160	399				

\*Significant,  $p < 0.05$

The data presented in Table 2 showed the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results for awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors. The analysis revealed that  $F(df = 2, 397) = 23.019, p < 0.05$ . Since the p-value of .000 was less than the 0.05 significance value, the null hypothesis that stated that there was no significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on age is therefore not accepted. Thus, there was a significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on age. The DMRT was applied as a post-hoc measure to determine the direction of the difference among the groups.

**Table 3: Post-Hoc Output Showing Difference the Awareness of Entrepreneurship Opportunity among Preservice Counsellors in Kwara State Based on Age**

Awareness of Entrepreneurship Opportunity				
Duncan <sup>a,b</sup>				
Age	N	Group	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
			1	2
28 years and above	180	B		57.63
18 - 27 years	172	A	51.75	
Less than 18 years	48	A	51.53	

The results of the post-hoc (DRMT) showed a significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on age. Since the three groups have different means of 57.63, 51.75 and 51.53, respectively. Thus, the age group “28 years and above” was responsible for the significant difference that was found in Table 3., because the group has the highest mean score of 57.63.

**Hypothesis Two:** *There is no significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on gender*

**Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value showing difference in the Respondents’ awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors based on Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	p-value
Male	180	45.17	10.95	213	.952	.342
Female	220	43.67	11.64			

Table 4 showed that the calculated t-value of .952 and a corresponding p-value of .342 which was greater than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value was greater than the 0.05 level of significance, hence the null hypothesis two was not rejected. This indicated that there was no significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on gender.

**Hypothesis Three:** *There is no significant difference between Level of Educational and Awareness of Entrepreneurship Opportunity among Preservice Counsellors in Kwara State*



**Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value showing difference between level of educational and Awareness of Entrepreneurship Opportunity among Preservice Counsellors in Kwara State**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. value	t- Crit. value	t- p-value
Undergraduate	178	41.73	3.299	393	.775	1.96	.439
Postgraduate	217	40.58	3.973				

Table 5 showed that the calculated t-value of .775 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .439 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis three is not rejected. Hence, there was no significant difference between level of educational and awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State. This implies that respondents' level of education does not determine the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity in counselling profession.

### Discussion of findings

The finding of this study showed that out of 400 preservice counsellors sampled for the study, 304 (75.6%) respondents are not aware of the career opportunities in counselling profession. The result contradicts with the findings of Arinze, Martina and Nkiru (2020) who noted that Nigeria youths posed the acquired technical, managerial and personal skills a needed to be gainfully employed. The reason supporting this finding might be as a result of low level of exposure and information on the career opportunities in the field of counselling.

The finding revealed a significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on age. This showed that age is a determinant factor in the awareness level of the preservice counsellors. The cause of the difference observed in the table was caused by sub-group of respondents within the age group of "28 years and above" with the highest mean score. The reason for this finding could be due to the respondents' lack of experience, as some are undergraduates within a particular age group, and may have limited knowledge and awareness of career opportunities within the counselling profession. The finding of this study disagree with the outcome of the research by Scholastica (2022), who observed no significant difference in guidance and counselling for promoting effective entrepreneurship education in public institutions in Nigeria based on age.

Another finding also showed that there was no significant difference in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on gender. This indicated male and female preservice counsellors are similar in their awareness of entrepreneurship skill irrespective of gender difference. The result is in support of the findings by Raquel, Ana and Enric (2021) who noted no significant difference between men and women in term of impact of competence on entrepreneurship education and learning process. The reason could be attributed to equal gender rights, where both male and female respondents are provided with the same learning experiences, resources, and exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities. This equality in access and information may result in both gender having similar levels of awareness regarding entrepreneurship opportunities.

The finding also revealed no significant difference between level of education and awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State. This indicated that educational level, being an undergraduate or postgraduates, does not determine the awareness level of entrepreneurship opportunity among the preservice counsellors in Kwara State. The result of this finding agreed with the outcome of the research by Alfredo, Carmen and Juan (2020). The results of their findings revealed that level of education has no significant relationships with entrepreneurship awareness. The reason for this finding could be that the preservice counsellors might have limited access to resources, such as entrepreneurship training programmes, mentorship opportunities and funding.

### **Implications of the Findings for Career Counselling**

A career counsellor is a professionally trained person in the field of counselling with a special task of guiding the clients on the information, job requirement and condition attached to a particular profession, job, work or career. The counsellors should make effort by being a role model and encourage the young graduates to venture into counselling profession as a career in order to be self-reliant and independent. This could serve as a basis for graduates to rationalize and settle with their professional course or area of specialization instead of looking for a white collar jobs after graduation. Organising and provision of career and vocational guidance would equip the preservice counsellors with adequate job information, requirements and management of career specification so as to enable them to settle with a particular job.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, majority of the preservice counsellors in Kwara State had low level of awareness entrepreneurship opportunities in counselling profession. Further finding showed that there were no significant differences in the awareness of entrepreneurship opportunity among preservice counsellors in Kwara State based on gender and level of education, while significant difference was revealed based on age. Therefore, there is need to create more awareness and encourages the preservice counsellors both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels to see counselling profession as a venture and use their acquired skill and techniques to established personal and private counselling centre. The awareness should be spread through and organise periodic seminars that centre on awareness of career opportunities in counselling profession.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it was therefore recommended that there is need for integration of entrepreneurship education into counselling programmes in Kwara State to equip preservice counsellors with necessary knowledge and skills in the counselling profession. Also, mentorship programmes and practicum/internship opportunities should be established in schools to pair preservice counsellors with experienced counselling entrepreneurs, providing guidance and support.

It was also recommended further that the body of counselling profession both Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria and (APROCON) and Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should organise a seminar with a theme centre on career opportunities in counselling profession. Such programme would assist the preservice counsellors to gather career information related to different field of counselling.

There is need to make more awareness across all ages so that everyone would aware of career opportunity in counselling. This goes along with the saying that “it is better to catch them young”. This would help in having preplans and prerequisite entrepreneurial skills.

There is also need to spread the awareness level irrespective of gender. Both male and female preservice counsellors should be aware of entrepreneurship opportunity in counselling profession.

At all level of education there should be an increase in the creation of awareness and broaden the source of information among preservice counsellors both at undergraduate and

postgraduate levels. There is also the need for follow-up services on the graduates of counsellor education in order to determine their progress after graduation.

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