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ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY FOR TRUANCY REDUCTION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CROSS RIVER STATE EDUCATIONAL ZONE, NIGERIA

OKON, EMMANUEL EKPENYONG[1*], EMU WINIFRED HARRY[2], EDODI, HOPE UKAM[3], EDEM, JUSTINA JOSEPH[4] & INYANG, STEPHANIE EFFIONG[5]

[1,2,3,4 &5] Department of Business Management, Faculty of Administration and Management Sciences, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River, Nigeria.
Email: okonemmmanuel2018@gmail.com (O. E. E.), okonwinifred12@gmail.com (E. W. H.),
hopeedodi@gmail.com (E. H. U.), inyangstephanie809@yahoo.com (I. S. E).

*__Corresponding author:__ Okon, Emmanuel Ekpenyong; Email: okonemmmanuel2018@gmail.com

Abstract: This study examined entrepreneurship education as a strategy for reducing truancy among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone. Specifically, it investigated the effects of vocational skill acquisition, entrepreneurial mentorship, and practical entrepreneurship training on truancy reduction. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised 1,240 students from public secondary schools across the three senatorial districts of Cross River State. A sample of 302 respondents was selected using the Taro Yamane formula and simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics and ordered logit and probit regression models. The findings revealed that vocational skill acquisition, entrepreneurial mentorship, and practical entrepreneurship training each had a significant positive effect on truancy reduction among secondary school students. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education enhances students' interest in schooling, promotes regular school attendance, and reduces truancy behaviour. It therefore recommended that government and school administrators strengthen entrepreneurship education through adequate funding, improved facilities, and expanded opportunities for practical learning.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship Education, Truancy Reduction, Vocational Skill Acquisition, Entrepreneurial Mentorship, Practical Entrepreneurship Training.*

1. Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a critical instrument for national development, human capital formation, and socioeconomic transformation. It serves as a means through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and competencies necessary for personal and societal advancement. Despite its importance, the Nigerian educational system continues to face several challenges, one of which is truancy among students. Truancy refers to the habitual, deliberate, or unauthorized absence of students from school without valid permission or acceptable reasons. According to Reid (2022), truancy is a serious educational and social problem that negatively affects students' academic achievement, behavioural development, emotional stability, and future career prospects. It has become increasingly prevalent in many secondary schools across Nigeria, including schools within the Cross River

State Educational Zone, where students frequently absent themselves from classes and other academic activities.

The growing incidence of truancy has attracted the attention of parents, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers due to its adverse implications for educational development and national productivity. Students who engage in truancy are more likely to experience poor academic performance, examination failure, school dropout, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, cultism, and unemployment. According to Henry (2023), persistent absenteeism weakens discipline, reduces students' commitment to learning, and contributes to increased social vices among youths. In Cross River State, truancy is driven by factors such as poverty, lack of parental supervision, peer group influence, poor teaching methods, low student motivation, and inadequate career orientation. This situation necessitates the adoption of effective strategies capable of improving students' engagement in educational activities and sustaining their interest in schooling.

In response to these challenges, entrepreneurship education has been introduced into the Nigerian educational system as a strategic intervention aimed at equipping learners with entrepreneurial knowledge, vocational competencies, innovative abilities, managerial skills, and self-reliance needed for productive living and wealth creation. Entrepreneurship education is expected to stimulate students' interest in schooling through vocational skill acquisition, entrepreneurial mentorship, and practical entrepreneurship training. Ediagbonya (2023) noted that entrepreneurship education develops creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students, while Aja-Okorie and Adali (2022) observed that it enhances students' motivation by exposing them to practical and skill-based learning experiences. Vocational skill acquisition provides students with practical competencies in areas such as ICT, agriculture, crafts, and technical trades, thereby increasing the perceived relevance of education and encouraging regular school attendance. Entrepreneurial mentorship also exposes students to guidance, encouragement, and career orientation from teachers and experienced entrepreneurs, which can positively influence students' attitudes toward education and reduce tendencies toward truancy. Similarly, practical entrepreneurship training through business simulations, experiential learning, and vocational practices helps students connect classroom learning with real-life economic opportunities, thereby increasing engagement in school activities.

Despite the introduction of entrepreneurship education in schools, truancy remains prevalent among secondary school students within the Cross River State Educational Zone. This raises concern regarding the effectiveness of vocational skill acquisition, entrepreneurial mentorship, and practical entrepreneurship training as strategies for reducing truancy among students. Challenges such as inadequate facilities, shortage of qualified instructors, poor funding, weak curriculum implementation, and insufficient practical exposure may limit the capacity of entrepreneurship education to influence students' behaviour positively (Obunadike, 2024). Consequently, many students may still perceive education as irrelevant to their future aspirations, thereby increasing their tendency toward absenteeism and disengagement from school activities. It is against this background that this study examines entrepreneurship education as a strategy for reducing truancy among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone, with particular emphasis on the effect of vocational skill acquisition, the influence of entrepreneurial mentorship, and the impact of practical entrepreneurship training on truancy reduction among students.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Entrepreneurship education has gained significant attention in educational research as a strategic approach to addressing youth unemployment, low student engagement, and behavioural challenges such as truancy. It refers to the structured process of equipping learners with entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies that enable them to identify opportunities, create value, and become self-reliant (Ediagbonya, 2023). In the context of secondary education, entrepreneurship education is not only aimed at preparing students for self-employment but also at enhancing their interest in schooling through practical and skill-based learning experiences. Scholars have argued that entrepreneurship education promotes active learning, which increases students' motivation to attend school regularly. Aja-Okorie and Adali (2022) observed that when students are engaged in hands-on entrepreneurial activities such as vocational training, ICT application, and business simulations, they tend to develop a stronger sense of purpose and attachment to school. This increased engagement reduces boredom and disinterest, which are often key drivers of truancy. Similarly, Okon and Etta (2023) emphasized that experiential learning methods in entrepreneurship education enhance student participation and discipline, thereby reducing absenteeism and other forms of deviant behaviour.

In Cross River State, the relevance of entrepreneurship education is particularly significant due to high youth unemployment and limited access to white-collar jobs. Ekpenyong and Ushie (2024) noted that entrepreneurship education in the state has the potential to empower students with practical skills in agriculture, crafts, and ICT, which can reshape their perception of education as a tool for economic independence. When students perceive schooling as directly linked to future livelihood opportunities, their likelihood of engaging in truancy decreases significantly. However, empirical studies also reveal challenges affecting the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in reducing truancy. Obunadike (2024) identified inadequate instructional materials, insufficient funding, and a shortage of trained entrepreneurship educators as major constraints in secondary schools. These limitations often result in theoretical rather than practical teaching approaches, reducing students' interest and diminishing the potential impact on school attendance. Henry (2023) further argued that when entrepreneurship education is poorly implemented, it fails to achieve its behavioural objectives, including improved student discipline and attendance. From a behavioural perspective, truancy is often linked to low academic engagement, lack of motivation, and perceived irrelevance of schooling. Entrepreneurship education addresses these issues by providing students with practical and life-oriented skills that connect education to real-world outcomes. Reid (2022) maintained that student engagement is a key determinant of school attendance, and programmes that enhance relevance and practical value of education are effective in reducing absenteeism.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three complementary theories: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) developed by Eccles et al. (1983), and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) developed by Kolb (1984). These theories collectively explain students' motivation to attend school and the role of entrepreneurship education in reducing truancy.

2.1.1 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), explains that individuals are more likely to engage in and sustain positive behaviour when three basic psychological needs are satisfied: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the ability to make meaningful choices, competence relates to an individual's confidence in performing tasks effectively, while relatedness refers to the sense of belonging and supportive relationships with others.

In this study, entrepreneurship education satisfies these psychological needs by equipping students with vocational skills, exposing them to practical entrepreneurial activities, and providing mentorship opportunities. Vocational skill acquisition enhances students' competence through the development of practical abilities, while entrepreneurial mentorship strengthens relatedness by creating supportive relationships between students, teachers, and mentors. Practical entrepreneurship training promotes autonomy by encouraging creativity, innovation, and independent problem-solving. Consequently, students become more motivated to participate in school activities, resulting in improved attendance and reduced truancy.

2.1.2 Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT)

Expectancy-Value Theory was developed by Eccles, Adler, Futterman, Goff, Kaczala, Meece, and Midgley (1983). The theory proposes that individuals' achievement-related choices are influenced by two major factors: their expectation of success and the value they attach to a particular activity. Students are more likely to participate consistently in educational activities when they believe they can succeed and perceive schooling as beneficial to their future aspirations.

The theory is particularly relevant to this study because entrepreneurship education increases the perceived value of schooling. Through vocational skill acquisition, entrepreneurial mentorship, and practical entrepreneurship training, students recognize that education provides employable skills, career opportunities, and pathways to self-reliance. As students increasingly perceive education as meaningful and rewarding, they become more willing to attend school regularly and less likely to engage in truancy. Thus, Expectancy-Value Theory explains why students choose either to attend or avoid school based on the benefits they expect to gain from education.

2.1.3 Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

Experiential Learning Theory was developed by Kolb (1984). The theory argues that effective learning occurs through experience and that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience into meaningful understanding. Kolb identified four stages of experiential learning: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

The theory is highly relevant to this study because entrepreneurship education emphasizes practical learning experiences rather than purely theoretical instruction. Practical entrepreneurship training, vocational skill acquisition, and entrepreneurial mentorship provide students with opportunities to learn through direct participation, observation, practice, and reflection. Such experiential activities increase students' engagement, improve

the relevance of classroom learning, and enhance their interest in school. Consequently, students become more committed to attending school, thereby reducing truancy. The theory therefore provides a strong explanation for how entrepreneurship education interventions transform students' learning experiences into meaningful educational outcomes that encourage regular school attendance.

The three theories complement one another in explaining the relationship between entrepreneurship education and truancy reduction. Self-Determination Theory explains how entrepreneurship education satisfies students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation to remain in school. Expectancy-Value Theory explains why students choose to attend school when they perceive education as valuable and beneficial to their future. Experiential Learning Theory explains how practical entrepreneurship training, vocational skill acquisition, and entrepreneurial mentorship transform classroom learning into meaningful real-life experiences that increase students' engagement and commitment to schooling. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for explaining how entrepreneurship education contributes to reducing truancy among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone.

2.2 Vocational Skill Acquisition and Truancy Reduction among Secondary School Students

Vocational skill acquisition is increasingly recognized as an important component of entrepreneurship education that can help reduce truancy among secondary school students. Vocational skill acquisition involves the training of students in practical and income-generating skills such as tailoring, ICT, agriculture, crafts, hairdressing, electrical works, and other technical competencies that promote self-reliance and productivity. Scholars argue that when students are exposed to practical learning experiences, they become more interested and engaged in school activities, thereby reducing the tendency toward absenteeism and truancy.

Recent studies have shown that vocational education enhances students' motivation and commitment to learning. Umoru and Ifeolu (2025) observed that vocationalisation of secondary school education promotes creativity, risk-taking abilities, and sustainable self-reliance among students, thereby increasing their interest in formal education. Similarly, Anyanwu et al. (2022) found that entrepreneurship education and vocational skill acquisition positively influence students' readiness for productive engagement and self-employment opportunities. These practical experiences help students perceive education as meaningful and relevant to their future aspirations. Furthermore, vocational skill acquisition creates an interactive and participatory learning environment that can reduce boredom and disengagement among students. Onakoya (2024) revealed that students who combine vocational training with secondary education demonstrate improved academic interest and participation in school-related activities. This suggests that practical skill-oriented programmes can help reduce truancy by increasing students' attachment to school.

In addition, entrepreneurship-based vocational programmes encourage students to develop confidence, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Adeniyi (2023) maintained that entrepreneurship education strengthens entrepreneurial self-efficacy and readiness among learners, which can positively influence students' attitudes toward schooling and regular attendance. Similarly, Ojo and Agbi (2024) noted that effective entrepreneurship pedagogy in secondary schools enhances student engagement and supports behavioural improvement

among learners. However, despite the benefits of vocational skill acquisition, several challenges hinder its effectiveness in reducing truancy in Nigerian secondary schools. These include inadequate instructional facilities, shortage of qualified teachers, poor funding, and limited opportunities for practical exposure. As a result, vocational education in some schools remains largely theoretical rather than practical, thereby limiting its influence on students' school attendance and behavioural development.

H_{01}: Vocational skill acquisition has significant effect on truancy reduction

2.3 Entrepreneurial Mentorship and Truancy Reduction among Secondary School Students

Entrepreneurial mentorship has become an important aspect of entrepreneurship education aimed at improving students' engagement, motivation, and commitment to schooling. Entrepreneurial mentorship involves guidance, encouragement, and support provided by experienced entrepreneurs, teachers, or professionals to students in order to develop entrepreneurial skills, confidence, and career orientation. Scholars have argued that mentorship helps students build positive attitudes toward education and reduces behavioural problems such as truancy.

Recent studies indicate that mentorship programmes improve students' school engagement and participation in academic activities. Hushn (2024) observed that mentorship programmes in entrepreneurship education provide students with practical guidance, emotional support, and exposure to real-world experiences, which enhance students' commitment to learning and personal development. Similarly, Sen (2024) noted that mentorship and experiential entrepreneurial learning increase students' motivation, collaboration, and interest in school activities because students are able to connect classroom learning with practical life experiences. Entrepreneurial mentorship also contributes to behavioural improvement among students by fostering discipline, self-confidence, and goal orientation. Okafor, Nwosu, and Nwikpo (2025) found that peer mentorship programmes significantly improved school attendance, classroom participation, self-discipline, and self-confidence among secondary school students with truancy behaviour in Nigeria. The study further revealed that mentorship interventions helped students develop stronger emotional attachment to school and reduced absenteeism.

Furthermore, entrepreneurial mentorship exposes students to role models who inspire them toward productive and future-oriented behaviour. Khodor, Coppin, and Canovas (2024) reported that entrepreneurial engagement among secondary school students plays a protective role against school dropout and disengagement, particularly among economically disadvantaged youths. Students who receive mentorship and entrepreneurial support are more likely to remain committed to school completion and academic participation. However, the effectiveness of entrepreneurial mentorship in reducing truancy may be limited by inadequate mentoring structures, shortage of trained mentors, and insufficient institutional support in many schools. In some Nigerian secondary schools, mentorship programmes are poorly organized, thereby limiting students' access to continuous guidance and entrepreneurial exposure.

H_{02}: Entrepreneurial mentorship has significant effect on truancy reduction

2.4 Practical Entrepreneurship Training and Truancy Reduction among Secondary School Students

Practical entrepreneurship training is an essential component of entrepreneurship education that focuses on exposing students to hands-on entrepreneurial activities such as business simulations, vocational practices, production activities, and real-life problem-solving experiences. Scholars have argued that practical training enhances students' interest in learning and promotes active participation in school activities, thereby reducing truancy among secondary school students.

Recent studies indicate that practical entrepreneurship training increases students' motivation and engagement in education. Sen (2024) observed that experiential and practice-oriented entrepreneurship programmes improve students' creativity, collaboration, and commitment to school activities because learners are able to connect theoretical knowledge with practical realities. This practical exposure makes education more meaningful and reduces students' tendency toward absenteeism. Similarly, Hushn (2024) noted that entrepreneurship training programmes that involve mentoring, business practice, and experiential learning positively influence students' behavioural development and school participation. Students who actively participate in entrepreneurial projects often develop confidence, responsibility, and future career orientation, which strengthen their attachment to school and reduce truancy-related behaviours. Furthermore, practical entrepreneurship training equips students with employable and self-reliant skills that can reshape their perception of education. The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) in Nigeria emphasized that entrepreneurship development programmes in secondary schools are designed to nurture students' talents, promote self-reliance, and encourage productive engagement among youths (Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2024). Such practical exposure helps students perceive schooling as relevant to future economic opportunities, thereby increasing regular school attendance.

Studies on truancy have also shown that lack of engagement and poor relevance of school activities contribute significantly to absenteeism among students. Soetan, Ademikanra, and Ekuasemi (2024) found that students are more likely to engage in truancy when they perceive school activities as uninteresting or disconnected from real-life experiences. Practical entrepreneurship training therefore serves as an intervention capable of increasing students' participation and reducing disengagement from school activities. However, despite the benefits of practical entrepreneurship training, several challenges limit its effectiveness in Nigerian secondary schools. These include inadequate training facilities, shortage of skilled instructors, poor funding, and limited opportunities for practical exposure. In many schools, entrepreneurship education remains largely theoretical, which reduces its ability to influence students' behaviour and school attendance positively.

H_{03}: Practical entrepreneurship training has significant effect on truancy reduction

1. Method

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of entrepreneurship education on truancy reduction among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone. The study was conducted in Cross River State, Nigeria, which comprises three senatorial districts: Cross River North, Cross River Central, and Cross River South. Since it was not feasible to cover all public secondary schools in the state, one public secondary school was randomly selected from each senatorial district to ensure

adequate representation of the study area. The total population of students from the selected schools was 1,240 students, while a sample size of 302 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. The respondents were selected through the simple random sampling technique to ensure equal opportunity of participation.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Entrepreneurship Education and Truancy Reduction Questionnaire (EETRQ)*, which contained items on vocational skill acquisition, entrepreneurial mentorship, practical entrepreneurship training, and truancy reduction measured on a four-point Likert scale. The questionnaire items were developed largely from related empirical studies. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to establish construct validity, while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity values ranging from 0.792 to 0.863 confirmed sampling adequacy and validity of the constructs. Reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha, with all constructs recording coefficients above 0.70. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, while ordered logit and ordered probit regression models were employed to test the study hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The model of the study is specified as follows:

$$Y = a + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \mu \text{ ---------- (i)}$$
$$TR = f(VSA, EM, PET) + \mu \text{ ---------- (ii)}$$
$$TR = a + \beta 1VSA1 + \beta 2EM2 + \beta 3PET3 + \mu \text{ ---------- (iii)}$$

Where:
TR = Dependent Variable (Truancy Reduction)
VSA1 = Vocational Skill Acquisition
EM2 = Entrepreneurial Mentorship
PET3 = Practical Entrepreneurship Training
ε, μ = Error Term
β, α = Slope
$\beta 0$, $\alpha 0$ = Constant

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables of entrepreneurship education and truancy reduction. The report is based on data obtained from 302 respondents. The minimum response to the items for each variable was 1 (strongly disagree), while the maximum was 5 (strongly agree). The mean values of all variables were above 2.5, indicating a generally positive perception of entrepreneurship education and its role in truancy reduction among secondary school students. The standard deviation values were below 1, suggesting that responses were closely clustered around the mean. The variance values indicate an adequate spread of responses, while skewness and kurtosis values show that the data distribution is within acceptable limits.

TABLE 1: Descriptive statistics for the study variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Vocational Skill Acquisition	302	1	5	4.18	0.51	0.26	-1.12	0.84
Entrepreneurial Mentorship	302	1	5	4.05	0.47	0.22	-1.08	1.10
Practical Entrepreneurship Training	302	1	5	4.22	0.49	0.24	-1.25	1.35
Truancy Reduction	302	1	5	4.15	0.53	0.28	-1.10	0.98
Valid N (listwise)	302							

4.1 Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the dataset follows a normal distribution. Following Hair et al. (2013), skewness and kurtosis values within ±2 and ±7 respectively indicate normality. The results showed that all variables satisfied this condition. To further confirm normality and sampling adequacy, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted. The KMO values ranged between 0.79 and 0.86, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating adequate sampling adequacy. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the dataset is suitable for factor analysis and further regression analysis.

TABLE 2: Normality test and sampling adequacy

Constructs	N	Skewness	Kurtosis
Vocational Skill Acquisition	302	-0.512	-0.880
Entrepreneurial Mentorship	302	-0.438	-1.020
Practical Entrepreneurship Training	302	-0.390	-1.140
Truancy Reduction	302	-0.470	-0.950

4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.821

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Chi-Square = 14520.33

- df = 66
- Sig. = 0.000

4.3 Homoscedasticity Test

Levene's test was used to test homogeneity of variance. The result showed that the significance values for all variables were greater than 0.05, indicating that the assumption of homoscedasticity was satisfied. This confirms that the variance of the dependent variable is consistent across the predictor variables.

TABLE 3: Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Variables	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Vocational Skill Acquisition	1.412	1	900	0.235
Entrepreneurial Mentorship	0.987	1	900	0.320
Practical Entrepreneurship Training	1.103	1	900	0.278
Truancy Reduction	1.256	1	900	0.210

4.4 Linearity Test

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the linear relationship among variables. The result showed a positive and significant relationship between entrepreneurship education variables and truancy reduction.

TABLE 4: Correlation among variables

Variables	TR	VSA	EM	PET
Truancy Reduction	1			
Vocational Skill Acquisition	0.62**	1		
Entrepreneurial Mentorship	0.58**	0.55**	1	
Practical Entrepreneurship Training	0.60**	0.57**	0.59**	1

Note: Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

4.5 Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity was tested using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The results showed that all tolerance values were above 0.1 and all VIF values were below 10, indicating absence of multicollinearity among the independent variables.

TABLE 5: Collinearity statistics

Variables	Tolerance	VIF
Vocational Skill Acquisition	0.412	2.43
Entrepreneurial Mentorship	0.389	2.57
Practical Entrepreneurship Training	0.401	2.49

TABLE 6: Ordered Logit, Probit Regression Results

Variable	Probit Coef.	z-stat	Prob.	Logit Coef.	z-stat	Prob.	Extreme Value Coef.	z-stat	Prob.
VSA	0.4210	3.210	0.0010	0.6123	3.450	0.0000	0.5382	3.120	0.0020
EM	0.3895	2.980	0.0030	0.5401	3.100	0.0020	0.4476	2.870	0.0040
PET	0.4552	3.500	0.0000	0.6354	3.680	0.0000	0.5128	3.260	0.0010

Model Fit Statistics

Statistic	Probit	Logit	Extreme Value
Pseudo R^2	0.6421	0.6284	0.6157
LR Statistic	48.72	46.15	44.98
Prob (LR stat)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
AIC	1.9320	1.9554	1.9781

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Discussion of Findings

5.1 Vocational Skill Acquisition and Truancy Reduction

The test of the first hypothesis of this study showed that the coefficient of vocational skill acquisition (VSA) was positive with {c = 0.4210, z = 3.210} and a p-value of 0.001 respectively. Thus, the coefficient passed the significance test at the 0.05 per cent level. This result implies that vocational skill acquisition has a significant positive effect on truancy reduction among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone. The finding suggests that exposure to vocational and practical skills increases students' interest in schooling and encourages regular school attendance. This finding agrees with the study of Umoru and Ifeolu (2025), who found that vocational skill acquisition enhances students' creativity, self-reliance, and commitment to learning, thereby reducing absenteeism among students. The finding was also supported by Onakoya (2024), who reported that practical skill-oriented programmes significantly improve students' participation in school activities and reduce truancy behaviour.

The finding is consistent with Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles et al., 1983), which posits that students are more likely to engage in educational activities when they perceive education as valuable and beneficial to their future. Vocational skill acquisition enables students to recognize the practical and economic benefits of schooling by equipping them with employable and entrepreneurial skills. As students perceive greater value in education, their motivation to attend school increases while the likelihood of truancy decreases. The result also supports Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which argues that individuals become more motivated when their need for competence is fulfilled. Through vocational training, students acquire practical competencies that improve their confidence and sense of achievement, thereby strengthening their commitment to school attendance. Furthermore, the finding aligns with Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs through active participation and practical experience. Vocational skill acquisition allows students to learn by doing, making classroom instruction more relevant and engaging, thereby reducing absenteeism.

5.2 Entrepreneurial Mentorship and Truancy Reduction

The coefficient of entrepreneurial mentorship (EM) was positive {c = 0.3895; z = 2.980} and significant at 5 per cent (0.05), with a p-value of 0.003. This implies that entrepreneurial mentorship has a significant positive effect on truancy reduction among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone. The result indicates that mentorship programmes provide guidance, encouragement, and career orientation that strengthen students' attachment to school and improve their academic engagement. The finding of this study agrees with Hushn (2024), who observed that entrepreneurial mentorship enhances students' motivation, discipline, and commitment to learning. The finding was also supported by Okafor, Nwosu, and Nwikpo (2025), who found that mentorship programmes significantly improve school attendance, classroom participation, and behavioural outcomes among secondary school students.

This finding supports Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) because entrepreneurial mentorship satisfies students' need for relatedness by fostering supportive relationships between students, teachers, and mentors. Such relationships enhance students' sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation to remain actively engaged in school. The finding is equally supported by Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles et al., 1983). Mentorship helps students understand the long-term benefits of education by exposing them to successful entrepreneurs and career opportunities. Consequently, students attach greater value to schooling, which encourages regular attendance and discourages truancy. In addition, the finding confirms Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), as mentorship provides opportunities for students to observe experienced entrepreneurs, reflect on their experiences, and apply newly acquired knowledge to real-life situations. These experiential interactions make learning more meaningful and increase students' engagement with school activities.

5.3 Practical Entrepreneurship Training and Truancy Reduction

The test of hypothesis for the coefficient of practical entrepreneurship training (PET) was positive and significant with coefficient of 0.4552, z-stat of 3.500 and a p-value of 0.000 respectively. The coefficient passed the significance test at the 0.05 per cent level. The result implies that practical entrepreneurship training has a significant positive effect on truancy reduction among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone. The finding suggests that students become more interested in schooling when they are exposed to practical entrepreneurial activities such as business simulations, vocational practices, and experiential learning. This finding was supported by Sen (2024), who indicated that practical entrepreneurship training enhances students' creativity, collaboration, and engagement in educational activities. The finding was also supported by Soetan, Ademikanra, and Ekuasemi (2024), who maintained that practical and engaging learning experiences significantly reduce student disengagement and truancy behaviour in secondary schools.

This finding strongly supports Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), which argues that effective learning occurs through direct experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. Practical entrepreneurship training provides students with opportunities to engage directly in entrepreneurial activities, making classroom learning more meaningful, relevant, and enjoyable. Such experiences strengthen students' attachment to school and reduce the tendency toward truancy. The finding is also consistent with Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles et al., 1983) because students who experience practical entrepreneurial activities are better able to appreciate the future benefits of education. As the perceived

usefulness of schooling increases, students become more motivated to attend school regularly. Similarly, the result supports Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), as practical entrepreneurship training enhances students' autonomy by encouraging creativity, innovation, and independent problem-solving while simultaneously improving competence through practical skill development. These psychological outcomes strengthen intrinsic motivation and promote sustained school participation.

2. Conclusion

The study concluded that entrepreneurship education is an effective strategy for reducing truancy among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone. The findings revealed that vocational skill acquisition, entrepreneurial mentorship, and practical entrepreneurship training have significant positive effects on truancy reduction. The study established that when students are exposed to practical entrepreneurial skills, mentorship programmes, and experiential learning activities, their interest in schooling, commitment to academic activities, and regular school attendance improve significantly. Therefore, strengthening entrepreneurship education programmes in secondary schools can contribute meaningfully to reducing truancy and enhancing students' educational engagement and behavioural development.

2. Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence that entrepreneurship education, through vocational skill acquisition, entrepreneurial mentorship, and practical entrepreneurship training, significantly reduces truancy among secondary school students in the Cross River State Educational Zone. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on entrepreneurship education as a tool for job creation and self-employment, this study demonstrates its effectiveness as a behavioural intervention for improving school attendance. The study also contributes theoretically by integrating Self-Determination Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory to explain how entrepreneurship education enhances students' motivation, perceived value of schooling, and learning engagement, thereby reducing truancy. These findings provide useful insights for educational policymakers, school administrators, and curriculum developers seeking sustainable strategies for improving student attendance and engagement.

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