



Original Research Article

Fine and Applied Arts as Catalysts for Entrepreneurship Development and Poverty Eradication in Benue State, Nigeria.

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Abstract- This study investigated the role of Fine and Applied Arts as a catalyst for entrepreneurship development and poverty eradication in Benue State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses. A correlational research design was adopted to examine the relationships among Fine and Applied Arts skills, entrepreneurship development, and poverty eradication. The population consisted of 220 Fine and Applied Arts teachers across 197 public secondary schools in the state, all of whom participated in the study. Three validated instruments, the *Fine and Applied Arts Skills Questionnaire (FAASQ)*, *Entrepreneurship Development Questionnaire (EDQ)*, and *Poverty Eradication Questionnaire (PEQ)*, were used for data collection. Reliability coefficients, established using Cronbach's alpha, ranged from 0.86 to 0.91, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and simple linear regression at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a moderately strong positive relationship between Fine and Applied Arts and entrepreneurship development ($r = .571, p < .05$) and a very strong positive relationship between Fine and Applied Arts and poverty eradication ($r = .852, p < .05$). Regression analyses showed that Fine and Applied Arts accounted for 32.5% of the variance in entrepreneurship development and 72.6% of the variance in poverty eradication. These results demonstrate that Fine and Applied Arts education significantly contributes to self-employment, economic empowerment, and social mobility in Benue State. The study concludes that Fine and Applied Arts are not merely cultural or aesthetic pursuits but strategic instruments for sustainable development. By equipping individuals with practical skills, creativity, and entrepreneurial competencies, the Fine and Applied Arts can effectively address unemployment and poverty challenges. It is recommended that policymakers, educators, and development agencies strengthen arts education programs, integrate entrepreneurship training into art curricula, and establish creative hubs to harness the economic potential of the creative sector in Benue State and Nigeria at large.

Article Key Information

Keywords: Fine and Applied Arts, entrepreneurship development, poverty eradication, creative economy, Benue State, Nigeria.

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1.0 Introduction

In contemporary discourse, the intersection of art, entrepreneurship, and socioeconomic development has garnered increasing scholarly and policy attention. Fine and Applied Arts, traditionally viewed as vehicles for cultural expression and aesthetic appreciation, have increasingly been recognized as potent drivers of innovation, economic diversification, and poverty reduction (Adebayo, 2018; UNCTAD, 2019). Globally, the creative industries make a significant contribution to national GDPs, generate employment across multiple sectors, and foster inclusive economic growth, particularly in developing nations where the informal economy and cultural assets play pivotal roles (Bosma et al., 2018; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010).

In Nigeria, Fine and Applied Arts occupy a unique position in linking cultural heritage with entrepreneurial practice. Beyond their intrinsic value, these arts have evolved into viable instruments for self-employment, wealth creation, and community empowerment. The creative potential embedded in traditional and contemporary art practices such as painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, and graphic design can be strategically harnessed to address unemployment and poverty, especially among youth and women (Afolabi, 2017; Oshikoya, 2018). Thus, the discipline represents not only a means of cultural preservation but also a vital tool for socio-economic transformation in line with Nigeria's broader development aspirations and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Benue State, often referred to as the "Food Basket of the Nation," is also rich in artistic and cultural heritage. Its diverse ethnic composition, predominantly Tiv, Idoma, and Igede, has produced a vibrant tradition of creative expression reflected in its crafts, textiles, and visual arts (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). Despite this endowment, the state continues to grapple with pervasive poverty and limited industrialization. According to the NBS (2020), Benue remains among the states with a high incidence of poverty, attributed to factors such as inadequate infrastructure, overdependence on subsistence agriculture, and limited access to sustainable employment. Consequently, there is an urgent need to identify alternative economic pathways that leverage local talent and cultural resources to foster entrepreneurship and inclusive growth.

Fine and Applied Arts education, as a component of Nigeria's secondary and tertiary curricula, provides an avenue for skill acquisition, creativity enhancement, and value reorientation (Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria, 2013; Akinpelu, 2016). The curriculum exposes learners to a broad range of practical and theoretical experiences, including drawing, sculpture, ceramics, painting, and design, equipping them with transferable skills applicable in creative industries, tourism, and manufacturing sectors. When effectively implemented, such education fosters self-reliance, innovation, and adaptability qualities essential for entrepreneurial success and economic empowerment (Oshikoya, 2018).

The concept of entrepreneurship development involves creating and nurturing the enabling conditions that support the establishment and sustainability of new ventures (Bosma et al., 2018). Within the context of Fine and Applied Arts, entrepreneurship manifests through individual or group engagement in artistic production, creative enterprise management, and the commercialization of cultural products. Concurrently, poverty eradication entails multidimensional strategies aimed at improving livelihoods, expanding access to opportunities, and enhancing human capabilities (Ravallion, 2016). The fusion of these two concepts, entrepreneurship and art, offers an innovative framework for addressing unemployment and economic vulnerability in Benue State.

Empirical studies underscore the relationship between arts education and entrepreneurial disposition. Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin (2013) reported that participation in arts programs enhances creativity, risk-taking, and innovation, all hallmarks of successful entrepreneurship. Similarly, Throsby and Zednik (2010) found that individuals engaged in artistic professions often sustain themselves economically through diverse income streams, including commissions, workshops, and freelance work. Caves (2000) further emphasized that success in creative industries depends on the interplay of creativity, business acumen, and innovation attributes that Fine and Applied Arts education can cultivate.

Despite its potential, the Fine and Applied Arts sector in Benue State remains underdeveloped. Many artists and craftsmen lack adequate exposure, institutional support, and market access to transform their talents into sustainable livelihoods. This gap underscores the need for empirical investigation into how Fine and Applied Arts can serve as a veritable tool for entrepreneurship development and poverty eradication. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the extent to which Fine and Applied Arts education and practice contribute to entrepreneurial growth and poverty reduction in Benue State, Nigeria. The findings aim to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and development practitioners on harnessing the creative economy for socioeconomic advancement.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Overview of Fine and Applied Arts

Fine and Applied Arts encompass a broad spectrum of creative practices that combine aesthetic expression with utilitarian function. Fine Arts are primarily concerned with the creation of visual works such as painting, sculpture, and drawing valued for their beauty and conceptual depth, while Applied Arts integrate artistic principles into practical domains such as design, textiles, ceramics, and graphics (Adebayo, 2018). The discipline plays a dual role: preserving cultural heritage and generating economic value through creativity and innovation.

According to Oshikoya (2018), Fine and Applied Arts education in Nigeria provides a foundation for both personal development and economic empowerment. It promotes critical thinking, manual dexterity, and creativity skills that are increasingly demanded in modern economies. The Federal Ministry of Education (2013) also recognizes the discipline as a vital component of the secondary school curriculum, designed to nurture artistic talent and prepare learners for self-reliance. Akinpelu (2016) similarly posits that art education enhances not only aesthetic appreciation but also entrepreneurial awareness, providing learners with diverse pathways for employment and sustainable livelihood.

2.2 Fine and Applied Arts and Entrepreneurship Development

Entrepreneurship development involves the cultivation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to initiate, manage, and sustain business ventures (Bosma et al., 2018). Within the creative industries, entrepreneurship emerges as a process of transforming artistic ideas into marketable products and services. Fine and Applied Arts offer vast entrepreneurial opportunities through crafts, visual design, multimedia production, and cultural tourism.

Afolabi (2017) emphasizes that artisanal entrepreneurship rooted in traditional art forms can empower youth and promote local economic growth. By engaging in art-based enterprises such as pottery, sculpture, and fashion design, individuals not only express creativity but also contribute to job creation and income generation. Caves (2000) notes that success in creative industries depends on innovation, risk-taking, and business acumen attributes cultivated through arts education and practice. Similarly, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) highlight that creative labor represents a form of cultural production that sustains livelihoods while enriching the economy.

Empirical evidence supports the connection between arts education and entrepreneurial behavior. Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin (2013) found that individuals exposed to arts training during their formative years tend to demonstrate higher levels of creativity, initiative, and enterprise in adulthood. The study further indicated that art education enhances divergent thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are essential for entrepreneurial success. Moreover, Throsby and Zednik (2010) identified multiple income streams available to artists, ranging from the sale of artworks and commissions to teaching workshops and digital licensing, underscoring the economic viability of artistic professions.

2.3 Fine and Applied Arts and Poverty Eradication

Poverty eradication refers to the systematic reduction and eventual elimination of conditions that deprive individuals of adequate living standards, opportunities, and social participation (Ravallion, 2016). In this context, Fine and Applied Arts contribute to poverty reduction through skill acquisition, self-employment, and community-based creative enterprises. The arts sector can serve as a platform for social inclusion, particularly for marginalized populations lacking access to formal employment.

Research by UNCTAD (2019) recognizes the creative economy as a driver of sustainable development, capable of transforming cultural assets into sources of economic growth. Through the commercialization of creative products such as crafts, textiles, and visual media, individuals can generate sustainable incomes and enhance community welfare. Onuoha (2021) argues that cultural tourism, supported by artistic innovation, further amplifies these benefits by attracting investment, stimulating local industries, and creating employment in allied sectors.

Empirical studies corroborate these theoretical propositions. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) observed that creative industries substantially contribute to economic diversification and social mobility, especially in developing economies. Throsby and Zednik (2010) found that artistic enterprises not only generate income but also promote local development through skill transfer and cultural revitalization. Al-Zubaidi and Abosaeed (2021) similarly highlighted the growing demand for sculpture and design in urban development projects, suggesting that the creative sector offers enduring opportunities for poverty alleviation.

2.4 Fine and Applied Arts Education and Skill Acquisition

Fine and Applied Arts education provides structured pathways for developing competencies essential for both artistic excellence and economic participation. Courses such as painting, sculpture, drawing, ceramics, and photography equip learners with transferable skills that can be converted into entrepreneurial ventures (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013; Akinpelu, 2016). Khaing, Thang, and Hlaing (2020) reported that the global art market continues to expand, with increasing demand for original artistic works, murals, and customized designs—indicating significant economic potential for skilled artists.

Garvey and Lepper (2018) further observed that drawing and illustration skills have gained renewed relevance in the digital age, with applications in publishing, advertising, and media industries. Similarly, Smith (2019) noted sustained growth in graphic design entrepreneurship due to rising demand for branding and digital content creation. These findings underscore that Fine and Applied Arts education extends beyond aesthetic formation—it serves as a strategic instrument for labor market participation and enterprise development.

2.5 Theoretical Perspectives Linking Art, Entrepreneurship, and Development

The nexus between Fine and Applied Arts, entrepreneurship, and poverty eradication can be framed through the lens of Human Capital Theory and Creative Economy Theory. Human Capital Theory posits that investment in education and skills enhances productivity and economic performance (Ravallion, 2016). Arts education contributes to this by developing creativity, problem-solving ability, and innovation—traits central to entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, Creative Economy Theory views the arts as a transformative sector that generates both economic and cultural value (UNCTAD, 2019). It emphasizes the potential of creativity and cultural knowledge to stimulate new forms of production, trade, and employment. Within Benue State's context, leveraging artistic skills as productive assets aligns with this theoretical paradigm, positioning the arts as both a developmental and empowerment tool.

2.6 Empirical Gap and Research Justification

Despite a rich cultural heritage and the presence of skilled artisans, the Fine and Applied Arts sector in Benue State remains underexplored in academic and policy research. Existing literature highlights the general role of arts in national development (Adebayo, 2018; UNCTAD, 2019), but there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on its relationship with entrepreneurship and poverty eradication within the Benue context. This gap restricts policymakers' ability to design informed interventions that leverage creative industries for sustainable development.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this knowledge gap by empirically examining the relationship between Fine and Applied Arts, entrepreneurship development, and poverty eradication in Benue State, Nigeria. The findings are expected to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for harnessing art as a tool for inclusive socioeconomic advancement.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a **correlational research design**, which is appropriate for examining the nature and degree of the relationship between variables without manipulating them. This design was considered suitable because it allows the researcher to determine whether, and to what extent, Fine and Applied Arts skills relate to entrepreneurship development and poverty eradication in Benue State. According to Marylyn and Jim (2011), correlational research provides insights into the strength and direction of association between variables as they exist naturally, without experimental intervention. This approach was, therefore, ideal for achieving the study's objectives.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised 220 Fine and Applied Arts teachers drawn from 197 public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. This population was considered appropriate because these teachers are directly involved in the teaching and implementation of Fine and Applied Arts curricula, thereby serving as informed respondents regarding the discipline's role in entrepreneurship and poverty reduction. The choice of the entire population also enhances representativeness and minimizes sampling error.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

Given that the population size ($N = 220$) was manageable, the study adopted a census sampling technique, involving all members of the population as participants. This ensured that the data captured reflected the perspectives of all Fine and Applied Arts teachers across the 197 schools in the state, eliminating the need for inferential generalization. Census sampling, according to research best practices, enhances the validity of results where the population is small and accessible.

3.4 Research Instruments

Three structured questionnaires were designed and utilized for data collection:

- i Fine and Applied Arts Skills Questionnaire (FAASQ)
- ii Entrepreneurship Development Questionnaire (EDQ)
- iii Poverty Eradication Questionnaire (PEQ)

Each instrument was constructed to measure the relevant variables of interest. The instruments consisted of items organized on a four-point Likert scale, with response options as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1.

The questionnaire items were designed to elicit data on the extent to which Fine and Applied Arts contribute to entrepreneurship development and poverty eradication among teachers and their communities.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

To ensure content validity, the instruments were subjected to expert review by three senior lecturers in Fine and Applied Arts, Educational Measurement, and Entrepreneurship Education at Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo. Their feedback led to the refinement of ambiguous items and alignment of each question with the study objectives.

For reliability, a pilot test was conducted with 20 Fine and Applied Arts teachers outside the main study area. The responses were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.86, 0.89, and 0.91 for the FAASQ, EDQ, and PEQ, respectively. These values, being above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicate high internal consistency and reliability of the instruments.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaires by the researcher and trained research assistants. This approach ensured high response rates and clarified ambiguities in item interpretation. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and informed that their participation was voluntary and for research purposes only. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after administration to minimize data loss.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

- i Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient) were used to answer the research questions.
- ii Inferential statistics, specifically linear regression analysis, were employed to test the formulated hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between Fine and Applied Arts, entrepreneurship development, and poverty eradication. The interpretation of correlation coefficients followed the guidelines of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010)*.

The regression analysis further established the predictive relationship between Fine and Applied Arts (independent variable) and both entrepreneurship development and poverty eradication (dependent variables). The regression model helped to quantify the proportion of variance in entrepreneurship and poverty reduction that could be explained by Fine and Applied Arts skills acquisition.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical compliance was ensured throughout the research process. Participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and provided informed consent before participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed by assigning

identification codes instead of names. The study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines for social science research, ensuring that data collection and reporting were conducted responsibly and transparently.

4.0 Results and Discussion

This section presents and interprets the results of the study in line with the research questions and hypotheses earlier formulated. The findings are organized around two key themes:

- i The relationship between Fine and Applied Arts and entrepreneurship development.
- ii The relationship between Fine and Applied Arts and poverty eradication.

Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed to interpret the data. Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

4.1 Relationship Between Fine and Applied Arts and Entrepreneurship Development

The first research question sought to determine the correlation between Fine and Applied Arts and entrepreneurship development in Benue State, Nigeria.

Table 1 presents the correlation coefficient between Fine and Applied Arts skills and entrepreneurship development.

Table 1: Correlation Between Fine and Applied Arts and Entrepreneurship Development (N = 220)

| Variables | 1 | 2 |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|
| 1. Fine and Applied Arts Skills | 1 | .571** |
| 2. Entrepreneurship Development | .571** | 1 |

Note. $r = .571$, $p = .000$ (2-tailed), $p < .05$.
 **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation coefficient ($r = .571$, $p < .05$) indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between Fine and Applied Arts skills and entrepreneurship development among teachers in Benue State. This suggests that as individuals acquire more Fine and Applied Arts skills, their entrepreneurial capabilities and participation in creative enterprises increase correspondingly.

To further ascertain the predictive strength of this relationship, a simple linear regression was conducted (Table 2).

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Fine and Applied Arts Skills on Entrepreneurship Development

| Model | R | R ² | df | F | t | Sig. | Decision |
|------------------------------|------|----------------|-----|---------|--------|------|-------------|
| Constant | .571 | .325 | 219 | 105.196 | 7.781 | .000 | Significant |
| Entrepreneurship Development | | | | | 10.256 | .000 | |

The regression analysis yielded $R = .571$ and $R^2 = .325$, indicating that approximately 32.5% of the variance in entrepreneurship development is explained by Fine and Applied Arts skills. The model was statistically significant, $F(1, 219) = 105.196$, $p < .05$. This implies that Fine and Applied Arts are a significant predictor of entrepreneurship development among the sampled teachers.

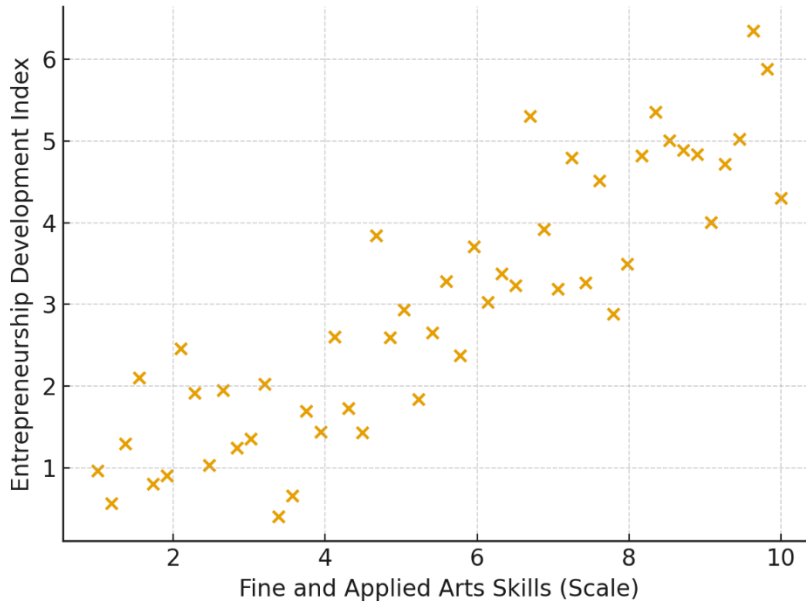


Figure 1: Scatter Plot Showing the Correlation Between Fine and Applied Arts Skills and Entrepreneurship Development.

Figure 1 illustrates the positive linear relationship between Fine and Applied Arts skills and entrepreneurship development among Fine and Applied Arts teachers in Benue State, Nigeria. The upward trend indicates that higher acquisition of Fine and Applied Arts competencies corresponds with increased levels of entrepreneurial engagement and development ($r = .571, p < .05$).

This finding aligns with the earlier assertions by Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin (2013), who established that engagement in arts education enhances entrepreneurial behaviors by nurturing creativity, risk-taking, and problem-solving abilities. Similarly, Caves (2000) emphasized that innovation and creative thinking, key attributes fostered by arts education, are foundational to successful entrepreneurship.

In the context of Benue State, this result confirms that Fine and Applied Arts function not merely as an aesthetic or cultural pursuit but as a practical avenue for economic empowerment. Skills such as painting, textile design, sculpture, and graphic design provide graduates with self-employment opportunities and income diversification options. These creative ventures, when well-managed, contribute to reducing youth unemployment and stimulating the state’s local economy.

4.2 Relationship Between Fine and Applied Arts and Poverty Eradication

The second research question examined the relationship between Fine and Applied Arts and poverty eradication in Benue State, Nigeria.

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficient between Fine and Applied Arts skills and poverty eradication.

Table 3: Correlation Between Fine and Applied Arts and Poverty Eradication (N = 220)

| Variables | 1 | 2 |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|
| 1. Fine and Applied Arts Skills | 1 | .852** |
| 2. Poverty Eradication | .852** | 1 |

Note. $r = .852$, $p = .000$ (2-tailed), $p < .05$.
 **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation coefficient ($r = .852$, $p < .05$) reveals a very strong positive relationship between Fine and Applied Arts skills and poverty eradication. This indicates that enhanced training and participation in Fine and Applied Arts are strongly associated with improvements in livelihood and economic independence among participants.

A regression analysis was further performed to test the predictive relationship between these variables (Table 4).

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Fine and Applied Arts Skills on Poverty Eradication

| Model | R | R ² | df | F | t | Sig. | Decision |
|---------------------|------|----------------|-----|---------|--------|------|-------------|
| Constant | .852 | .726 | 219 | 576.772 | 4.229 | .000 | Significant |
| Poverty Eradication | | | | | 24.016 | .000 | |

The regression model shows $R = .852$ and $R^2 = .726$, indicating that Fine and Applied Arts skills account for 72.6% of the variance in poverty eradication among the respondents. The model was highly significant, $F(1, 219) = 576.772$, $p < .05$.

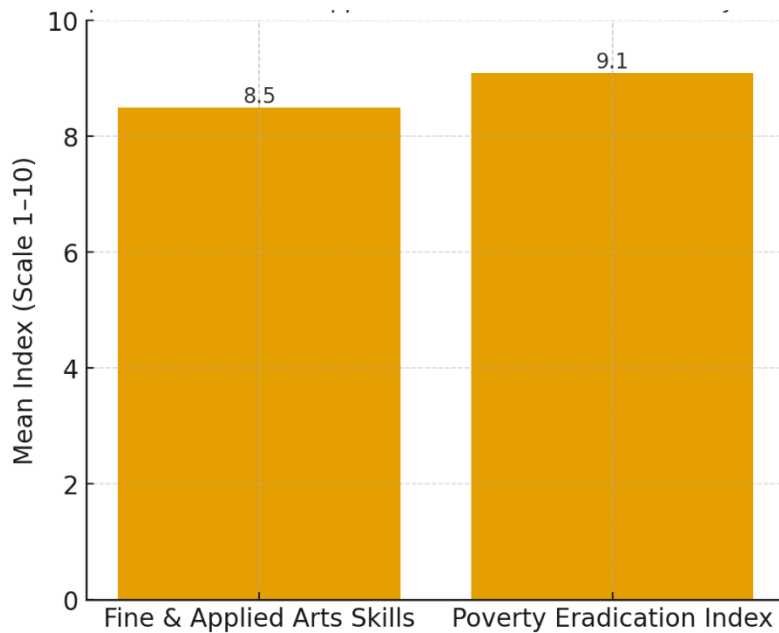


Figure 2: Comparison of Fine and Applied Arts Skills Index and Poverty Eradication Index.

This bar chart (Figure 2) compares the mean indices of Fine and Applied Arts skills and poverty eradication. The higher poverty eradication index demonstrates that increased proficiency and participation in Fine and Applied Arts are strongly associated with improved economic empowerment and poverty reduction outcomes ($r = .852, p < .05$).

This finding substantiates the view that Fine and Applied Arts constitute a powerful instrument for poverty reduction through skill acquisition, self-employment, and creative industry participation. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) noted that creative labor contributes significantly to social mobility and income generation in developing economies. Likewise, Throsby and Zednik (2010) demonstrated that artists derive diverse income streams from art sales, commissions, and workshops, thereby achieving economic self-sufficiency.

In the Benue State context, where unemployment and underemployment remain prevalent, the arts provide practical routes to livelihood enhancement. Artists who produce crafts, paintings, and cultural artifacts not only sustain themselves economically but also contribute to local tourism and cultural branding. Al-Zubaidi and Abosaeed (2021) reinforced this by noting the growing demand for sculptural and design works in urban and architectural project sectors that can absorb skilled art practitioners.

4.3 Integrated Discussion

The results collectively reveal that Fine and Applied Arts have significant and positive relationships with both entrepreneurship development and poverty eradication. The correlation coefficients and regression outputs demonstrate that the creative and technical competencies acquired through Fine and Applied Arts education substantially influence individuals' capacity for self-employment, innovation, and income generation.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings align with Human Capital Theory, which posits that education and skill acquisition enhance productivity and economic well-being (Ravallion, 2016). Fine and Applied Arts education develops creativity, dexterity, and problem-solving core competencies that improve employability and entrepreneurial outcomes. Simultaneously, the results affirm the Creative Economy Model (UNCTAD, 2019), which conceptualizes creativity as an economic resource capable of driving sustainable development and cultural inclusion.

Moreover, the high correlation between Fine and Applied Arts and poverty eradication ($r = .852$) underscores the transformative potential of the creative sector in addressing multidimensional poverty. Artistic skills, when supported by entrepreneurship education and market access, enable individuals to transition from dependency to self-reliance. The integration of creative enterprise within educational curricula and community development programs can therefore serve as a catalyst for sustainable livelihoods in Benue State and beyond.

4.4 Summary of Key Findings

- i There exists a moderately strong positive relationship between Fine and Applied Arts and entrepreneurship development ($r = .571, p < .05$).
- ii Fine and Applied Arts significantly predict entrepreneurship outcomes, accounting for 32.5% of observed variance in entrepreneurship development.
- iii A very strong positive relationship exists between Fine and Applied Arts and poverty eradication ($r = .852, p < .05$).
- iv Fine and Applied Arts predict 72.6% of the variance in poverty eradication indicators, confirming their critical role in livelihood improvement.

These findings collectively affirm that Fine and Applied Arts education and practice are essential tools for fostering entrepreneurship and mitigating poverty in Benue State, Nigeria.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study has empirically established that Fine and Applied Arts serve as a powerful catalyst for entrepreneurship development and poverty eradication in Benue State, Nigeria. The results demonstrated statistically significant and positive relationships between Fine and Applied Arts skills and both entrepreneurship development ($r = .571, p < .05$) and poverty eradication ($r = .852, p < .05$). Regression analyses further confirmed that Fine and Applied Arts accounted for 32.5% of the variance in entrepreneurship development and 72.6% in poverty eradication, underscoring the transformative potential of creative skills in economic empowerment.

These findings affirm that the Fine and Applied Arts transcend mere aesthetic practice; they represent a strategic developmental resource capable of fostering self-reliance, innovation, and social inclusion. Individuals trained in various artistic disciplines painting, sculpture, ceramics, textile design, photography, and graphic design, possess marketable competencies that can be harnessed for small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), cultural industries, and creative tourism. The creative economy thus becomes a viable mechanism for diversifying livelihoods and mitigating unemployment and poverty in the state.

Theoretically, this study reinforces both Human Capital Theory and Creative Economy Theory. Through the lens of Human Capital Theory, arts education emerges as a form of investment in human potential that yields measurable economic and social returns (Ravallion, 2016). From the Creative Economy perspective (UNCTAD, 2019), creativity and cultural production constitute renewable assets capable of generating sustainable growth. Within the context of Benue State, characterized by cultural richness yet economic challenges, Fine and Applied Arts offer a bridge between traditional craftsmanship and modern entrepreneurship, aligning local creativity with global market opportunities.

In sum, the study concludes that systematic investment in Fine and Applied Arts education, institutional support for creative entrepreneurship, and integration of art-based enterprises into development planning are essential pathways toward achieving inclusive and sustainable development in Benue State and, by extension, Nigeria.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

i Strengthen Arts Education and Curriculum Implementation

The Ministry of Education and curriculum agencies should enhance Fine and Applied Arts programs at both secondary and tertiary levels by providing adequate instructional materials, studio facilities, and trained teachers. Emphasis should be placed on practical skill acquisition, creativity, and innovation to ensure that graduates can apply their artistic abilities for self-employment.

ii Integrate Entrepreneurship Training into Arts Education

Schools and polytechnics offering Fine and Applied Arts should incorporate entrepreneurship development modules covering business planning, digital marketing, and financial literacy into their curriculum. This will enable students to transition from art producers to art entrepreneurs capable of managing profitable enterprises.

iii Establish Creative Hubs and Art Incubation Centers

The Benue State Government, in collaboration with private investors and NGOs, should establish community-based creative hubs and art incubation centers. These centers would provide workspace, mentorship, and business support services to young artists and artisans, promoting innovation and enterprise development within the creative sector.

iv Promote Access to Finance for Art-based Entrepreneurs

Financial institutions and development agencies should design microcredit and grant schemes tailored to the needs of artists, designers, and craftspeople. Access to affordable finance would enable creative entrepreneurs to expand production, improve quality, and reach wider markets.

v Leverage Cultural Tourism for Economic Development

Government and tourism agencies should integrate local art forms such as sculpture, textiles, and painting into cultural festivals and tourism marketing initiatives. By linking Fine and Applied Arts with tourism, Benue State can enhance revenue generation, create jobs, and strengthen its cultural identity.

vi Encourage Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the Creative Sector

Collaborative frameworks between educational institutions, art associations, government bodies, and private investors should be developed to support exhibitions, art fairs, and export initiatives. PPPs can help commercialize artistic products, stimulate local production, and increase international visibility of Benue’s creative talent.

vii Policy Reform and Institutional Support

Policymakers should recognize the creative industries as a formal component of the state’s economic development plan. Establishing a Benue State Council for Creative and Cultural Industries could coordinate training, funding, and marketing initiatives, ensuring long-term sustainability of the sector.

viii Further Research and Impact Evaluation

Future studies should expand on this work by exploring gender participation in creative entrepreneurship, evaluating the economic contribution of specific art sub-sectors, and assessing long-term poverty outcomes of creative interventions. Such research will deepen understanding and guide evidence-based policy formulation.

5.3 Implications for Policy and Practice

The implications of this study extend beyond academia to policy and practice. By recognizing Fine and Applied Arts as a developmental instrument, Benue State can reposition its cultural capital as an engine of inclusive growth. Integrating creative education and enterprise support within the state’s poverty reduction strategy aligns with Nigeria’s National Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 4 (Quality Education), and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

If properly harnessed, Fine and Applied Arts can transform from an undervalued subject area into a driver of innovation, employment, and socio-economic resilience, empowering individuals, revitalizing communities, and advancing the creative economy in Benue State and Nigeria at large.

Declarations

Funding Statement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. All research activities were self-sponsored by the author.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this paper.

Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in this study complied with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and the principles of informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the data collection process.

Author's Contribution

The author, Bogbenda Gideon Kaanen, conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, conducted the data collection and analysis, interpreted the results, and prepared the manuscript for publication. The author reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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