



## Original Research Article

# Assessing the Impact of Innovation and Creativity in Fine and Applied Arts on Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Bogbenda Gideon Kaanen  <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9595-912X>

Department of Fine Arts, Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo

Author E-mail: [bobgee20@gmail.com](mailto:bobgee20@gmail.com)

Phone: 07062660036

**Abstract-** Innovation and creativity have become critical engines of global competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development in the twenty-first century. This study examined the role of innovation and creativity in Fine and Applied Arts as pathways to entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Nigeria, using Benue State as a case study. A descriptive survey design was adopted, involving 240 respondents comprising Fine and Applied Arts lecturers, students, and professional artists selected through a stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire titled *Fine and Applied Arts Innovation and Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (FAAIEQ)* and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression. Findings revealed a strong positive correlation between Fine and Applied Arts skills and entrepreneurship development ( $r = 0.716$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and regression analysis showed that innovation and entrepreneurship jointly accounted for 65.9% of the variance in sustainable development outcomes ( $R^2 = 0.659$ ). The results demonstrate that creative and innovative art practices significantly enhance self-reliance, job creation, and poverty reduction, aligning with Schumpeter's Innovation Theory and the UNCTAD Creative Economy Model. The study concludes that Fine and Applied Arts serve as both cultural and economic capital capable of driving inclusive growth and sustainability. It recommends curriculum reform, digital integration, establishment of creative hubs, and policy support to reposition Fine and Applied Arts as a strategic driver of entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Nigeria.

## Article Key Information

**Keywords:** Fine and Applied Arts, Innovation, Creativity, Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Development, Nigeria

**Received:** 10th July 2025 **Revised:** 25th August, 2025 **Accepted:** 19th September, 2025 **Published:** 30th September 2025

This is an open-access article licensed under CC BY 4.0.



## 1.0 Introduction

In the 21st century, innovation and creativity have become defining forces of global competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development. Nations that effectively harness human creativity as an economic resource tend to achieve faster technological, social, and cultural advancement (Florida, 2002; Howkins, 2013). Within this context, Fine and Applied Arts have transcended their traditional aesthetic boundaries to emerge as engines of innovation and creative enterprise. The discipline, long perceived as a field of visual expression, now occupies a strategic position in fostering entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods in both developed and developing economies (UNCTAD, 2019). In Nigeria, where youth unemployment and poverty remain critical socio-economic challenges, Fine and Applied Arts represent a viable pathway for transforming creative skills into productive ventures that contribute to individual prosperity and national development.

The role of innovation and creativity in Fine and Applied Arts extends beyond the mere production of artworks. It involves the integration of design thinking, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial awareness into art education and practice (Bassey & Akpan, 2021; Garvey & Lepper, 2018). Innovation within the arts is expressed in the generation of new ideas, materials, and techniques that address human needs while creating marketable products. Creativity, in this sense, becomes a form of capital — a renewable and sustainable resource capable of driving socio-economic growth (Howkins, 2013; UNCTAD, 2019). Fine and Applied Arts education, when properly structured, cultivates such creativity through experimentation, craftsmanship, and intellectual engagement, thereby equipping learners with the competencies to adapt to dynamic labor markets and initiate self-reliant enterprises.

Nigeria's socio-economic realities make the creative sector particularly relevant. The country faces persistent challenges of youth unemployment, underemployment, and income inequality (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). Governmental strategies for economic diversification have repeatedly emphasized the potential of non-oil sectors, including the creative industries, as alternative engines of growth (Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, 2017). Yet, despite this recognition, Fine and Applied Arts remain underutilized in national development frameworks. Many art graduates struggle to translate their creative talents into viable businesses, largely due to limited entrepreneurial orientation, lack of access to finance, and inadequate institutional support (Adekanye, 2013). Consequently, the full economic potential of the Fine and Applied Arts sector remains unrealized, and the link between artistic innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship is weakly articulated in policy and practice.

From an educational perspective, Fine and Applied Arts provide fertile ground for fostering innovation-driven entrepreneurship. The pedagogical process in arts education inherently promotes imagination, experimentation, and divergent thinking — attributes essential to entrepreneurial success (Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013). Art studios and design workshops serve as laboratories for ideation and prototype development, paralleling innovation processes in science and technology (Bassey & Akpan, 2021). When Fine and Applied Arts curricula integrate business principles, design management, and digital technologies, they produce graduates capable of functioning not only as artists but also as innovators, designers, and entrepreneurs. This aligns with UNESCO's (2015) framework for creative education, which underscores the need for linking artistic practice with employability and sustainable livelihoods in the 21st century knowledge economy.

Globally, the creative economy has been identified as one of the most dynamic sectors of international trade, generating over \$1 trillion annually and providing millions of jobs across diverse industries, including design, fashion, architecture, crafts, and media (UNCTAD, 2019). In Africa, countries such as South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana have leveraged their creative sectors to promote innovation, tourism, and youth empowerment. Nigeria's film, music, and design industries have similarly demonstrated the potential of creative entrepreneurship to contribute significantly to the gross domestic product (GDP) (British Council, 2018). Fine and Applied Arts form the foundational skill base for many of these industries, providing training in visual communication, product design, sculpture, and decorative crafts that underpin broader creative economy activities. The expansion of this sector could therefore generate employment opportunities, promote cultural exports, and enhance sustainable economic growth.

At the theoretical level, this discourse can be situated within the frameworks of Schumpeter's Innovation Theory (1934) and the Creative Economy Model (UNCTAD, 2019). Schumpeter postulated that economic development is driven by the introduction of new combinations of ideas, products, and processes — the essence of innovation. In Fine and Applied Arts, such innovation manifests in the creation of new visual languages, product designs, and digital art forms that stimulate market transformation and consumer engagement. The Creative Economy Model extends this idea by recognizing creativity and cultural expression as productive assets capable of generating tangible and intangible value. Within this dual framework, Fine and Applied Arts function both as a cultural resource and as a mechanism for sustainable entrepreneurship and development.

However, the Nigerian context presents several barriers to realizing this potential. Art education is often marginalized in national educational priorities, with inadequate funding, obsolete facilities, and minimal exposure to entrepreneurship training (Basse & Akpan, 2021; Afolabi, 2023). Many institutions still emphasize traditional art techniques without integrating digital media, innovation management, or market analysis into their programs. Moreover, the absence of effective collaboration between educational institutions, industry, and government agencies limits the transition from classroom creativity to market-ready innovation. Without deliberate institutional support — such as creative hubs, incubation centers, and access to microcredit — graduates of Fine and Applied Arts may remain creatively talented but economically constrained.

The pursuit of sustainable development requires a paradigm shift that positions Fine and Applied Arts as a strategic component of Nigeria's innovation ecosystem. As sustainable development encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions, the arts can contribute through eco-design, upcycling, community-based crafts, and cultural entrepreneurship that preserve local heritage while generating income (Throsby, 2010; Onuoha, 2021). Integrating innovation and creativity within Fine and Applied Arts education can thus foster a generation of artists who are not only culturally expressive but also economically productive and socially responsible. This aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

In this light, Fine and Applied Arts can no longer be viewed as peripheral to economic development but as a core driver of innovation and sustainability. The discipline provides a platform for translating creative ideas into tangible solutions for poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation. Encouraging innovation and creativity among art practitioners, therefore, becomes not just a cultural imperative but an economic necessity. This study, titled "Innovation and Creativity in Fine and Applied Arts: Pathways to Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development in Nigeria," explores this intersection. It seeks to demonstrate how creative competencies within Fine and Applied Arts can be harnessed to promote entrepreneurship, enhance employability, and drive sustainable development. By doing so, it aims to reposition the discipline as a vital contributor to Nigeria's evolving creative economy and to the broader agenda of national transformation.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptual Clarifications of Innovation and Creativity

Innovation and creativity are interrelated constructs that underpin progress in all fields of human endeavour. Creativity refers to the ability to generate novel and valuable ideas, while innovation is the process of transforming those ideas into practical outcomes, products, or services (Amabile, 2018; Howkins, 2013). Schumpeter (1934) defines innovation as the introduction of new combinations — new products, methods, markets, or organisational forms — that drive economic development. In the context of Fine and Applied Arts, creativity manifests in original artistic expression, while innovation involves the application of those creative processes in producing culturally and economically valuable goods and services.

Fine and Applied Arts serve as an ideal laboratory for the interplay of creativity and innovation. Through activities such as design, sculpture, ceramics, and graphic communication, artists explore aesthetic and functional possibilities that often lead to new forms of cultural production (Garvey & Lepper, 2018). The creative process in the arts exemplifies divergent thinking — the capacity to generate multiple solutions to a single problem — a cognitive skill highly correlated with innovative behaviour (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Therefore, in the creative economy, Fine and Applied Arts are not limited to cultural expression; they are integral to knowledge generation, technological adaptation, and entrepreneurship.

## **2.2 The Nexus Between Fine and Applied Arts, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship**

Globally, the creative economy has emerged as a vital sector for innovation and entrepreneurship. UNCTAD (2019) defines the creative economy as the interface between creativity, culture, economics, and technology — a dynamic area where ideas and intellectual capital become the primary inputs for production. Fine and Applied Arts lie at the heart of this economy, contributing to product design, advertising, fashion, digital media, and cultural tourism. The creative industries rely on artistic innovation to develop new products and services that respond to market needs and cultural trends (Florida, 2002).

In Nigeria, Fine and Applied Arts have played a significant role in the informal sector, where artisans and designers contribute to local economies through crafts, textiles, and sculpture. Afolabi (2023) observed that artisanal entrepreneurship rooted in Fine and Applied Arts traditions provides employment for thousands of young Nigerians and supports rural development. However, the transition from creative potential to entrepreneurial productivity remains constrained by inadequate training in business management, limited access to markets, and weak institutional support (Adekanye, 2013). For Fine and Applied Arts to function as a driver of entrepreneurship, innovation must be embedded not only in creative processes but also in enterprise development and marketing strategies.

Innovation in the arts is also linked to digital transformation. The rise of digital tools and online platforms has revolutionised artistic practice, enabling artists to reach global audiences, monetise their works, and participate in the digital creative economy (British Council, 2018). Graphic design, animation, and multimedia arts are now integral components of Fine and Applied Arts education, opening new opportunities for creative entrepreneurship. As noted by Bassey and Akpan (2021), digital art markets and creative-technology hubs offer emerging economies pathways to sustainable job creation, particularly for youth. Integrating digital innovation into Fine and Applied Arts, therefore, extends the discipline beyond the traditional studio into virtual and commercial spaces.

## **2.3 Fine and Applied Arts Education and the Development of Creative Competence**

Fine and Applied Arts education serves as a crucial mechanism for cultivating creativity and innovation. According to Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin (2013), arts education enhances cognitive flexibility, persistence, and problem-solving — competencies that are fundamental to entrepreneurship. In Nigeria, Fine and Applied Arts programmes at secondary and tertiary levels aim to develop artistic skills and cultural appreciation (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013). However, as Bassey and Akpan (2021) note, many programmes still emphasise technical proficiency over creative experimentation and entrepreneurial thinking.

To reposition Fine and Applied Arts education for the 21st century, it must integrate interdisciplinary approaches that link design, technology, and business. UNESCO (2015) emphasises that education for creativity should promote “learning to innovate” — encouraging learners to apply artistic knowledge in solving real-life problems. This requires pedagogical reforms that foster project-based learning, collaboration with industries, and exposure to creative entrepreneurship models. For instance, introducing modules on art marketing, intellectual-property rights, and creative-enterprise management would enable graduates to commercialise their artistic innovations effectively.

The cultivation of creativity within Fine and Applied Arts education also aligns with Human Capital Theory, which posits that investment in education and skill development enhances productivity and economic performance (Ravallion, 2016). Creative education enhances both individual employability and collective economic resilience by generating adaptive, innovative thinkers capable of creating value in uncertain environments. Thus, Fine and Applied Arts education, when aligned with innovation and entrepreneurship, becomes a strategic investment in human-capital development for sustainable economic growth.

#### **2.4 Fine and Applied Arts and Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development entails meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Within this framework, Fine and Applied Arts contribute to sustainability in multiple dimensions: economic, social, cultural, and environmental. Economically, the creative sector fosters inclusive growth by generating employment and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (UNCTAD, 2019). Socially, art promotes community engagement, cultural preservation, and social cohesion (Throsby, 2010). Environmentally, artists are increasingly adopting sustainable practices such as eco-design, recycling, and up-cycling to minimise waste and environmental degradation (Onuoha, 2021).

The concept of sustainable art practice aligns with the emerging discourse of the circular economy, which emphasises resource efficiency and regeneration. Fine and Applied Arts practitioners can innovate by transforming discarded materials into valuable artistic products, thereby contributing to both environmental conservation and livelihood creation (UNESCO, 2015). Furthermore, cultural tourism, an area strongly linked to Fine and Applied Arts, can serve as a sustainable source of income and international visibility for local communities (Onuoha, 2021). By integrating sustainability principles into artistic innovation, Fine and Applied Arts can thus advance the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 4 (Quality Education), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and 13 (Climate Action).

#### **2.5 Theoretical Perspectives**

The intersection of Fine and Applied Arts, innovation, and sustainable entrepreneurship can be theoretically explained through Schumpeter's Innovation Theory (1934) and the Creative Economy Framework (UNCTAD, 2019). Schumpeter viewed innovation as the driving force of economic progress — achieved through new combinations of resources, ideas, and processes. In Fine and Applied Arts, these “new combinations” emerge in artistic experimentation, design evolution, and the commercialisation of creative outputs.

The Creative Economy Framework extends Schumpeter's thesis by positioning creativity as a form of capital and cultural expression as an economic resource. It emphasises the value chain from idea generation to market dissemination, highlighting how creative talents contribute to sustainable economic growth. Throsby's (2010) Cultural Capital Theory complements this by asserting that artistic production yields both cultural and economic value — the former sustaining identity and meaning, and the latter generating income and employment. These theoretical underpinnings validate the premise that Fine and Applied Arts are not peripheral to development but integral to innovation ecosystems that drive sustainability.

#### **2.6 Empirical Evidence from Nigeria and Beyond**

Empirical studies reinforce the transformative potential of innovation and creativity within Fine and Applied Arts. Adekanye (2013) found that art graduates who engage in innovative craft enterprises demonstrate higher levels of income stability and job satisfaction compared with their counterparts in non-creative sectors. Afolabi (2023) observed that integrating entrepreneurial training into Fine and Applied Arts programmes enhances students' capacity for self-employment. Similarly, the British Council (2018) reported that Nigeria's creative sector contributed an estimated

2.3% to GDP and employed over 4.2 million people, reflecting the expanding relevance of creative industries in national development.

Beyond Nigeria, Garvey and Lepper (2018) emphasised that design-led innovation contributes to product differentiation and brand competitiveness in global markets. Bassey and Akpan (2021) demonstrated that creative skills, when combined with digital literacy, improve entrepreneurial outcomes in developing economies. These findings collectively affirm that Fine and Applied Arts — when embedded with innovation and entrepreneurship — are potent drivers of economic diversification, youth empowerment, and sustainable development.

## 2.7 Summary and Identified Gaps

The reviewed literature establishes a strong conceptual and empirical foundation linking innovation, creativity, Fine and Applied Arts, and sustainable entrepreneurship. However, gaps remain in the integration of innovation ecosystems within Nigerian Fine and Applied Arts education and practice. There is limited research on how institutional frameworks, policy support, and digital transformation shape the entrepreneurial outcomes of art practitioners. Furthermore, few studies have empirically quantified the contribution of artistic innovation to sustainable development indicators at the state or regional level.

Addressing these gaps is crucial for repositioning Fine and Applied Arts within Nigeria's innovation and development agenda. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how creativity and innovation within Fine and Applied Arts can be effectively harnessed as pathways to entrepreneurship and sustainable development, with emphasis on contextual realities, institutional challenges, and opportunities for policy reform.

## 3.0 Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the role of innovation and creativity in Fine and Applied Arts as pathways to entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Nigeria. The descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data to describe current conditions, perceptions, and relationships among variables without manipulating the research environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design enables the identification of patterns in the integration of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial practices within Fine and Applied Arts education and professional activities across different institutions and communities.

The choice of this design was further justified by its ability to capture the perspectives of multiple stakeholders — including educators, students, practicing artists, and creative entrepreneurs — whose experiences reflect the dynamics of innovation and creative enterprise in the Nigerian context. Similar approaches have been used effectively in previous studies examining creative industries and arts education (Bassey & Akpan, 2021; Afolabi, 2023).

### 3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Benue State, Nigeria, selected for its vibrant artistic culture and growing community of Fine and Applied Arts practitioners. The state hosts several tertiary institutions offering Fine and Applied Arts programmes, including Benue State University, University of Agriculture Makurdi, and Benue State Polytechnic Ugbokolo. Benue is also known for its indigenous crafts, textile production, sculpture, and mural traditions, which reflect the intersection of art, creativity, and entrepreneurship (Onuoha, 2021). The choice of Benue State thus provides a representative microcosm of Nigeria's broader creative and cultural economy.

### 3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised Fine and Applied Arts lecturers, students, and professional artists operating within Benue State. These groups were selected because they represent the critical link between art education, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial practice. The lecturers embody the pedagogical dimension of creative education; the students represent emerging creative entrepreneurs; and professional artists demonstrate the real-world application of innovation and creativity in the art marketplace.

According to the records of tertiary institutions and professional art associations in Benue State (Benue State Ministry of Education, 2022), the estimated population of potential respondents was approximately 600 individuals, including 80 lecturers, 320 students, and 200 practicing artists.

### 3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 240 participants was selected for the study, representing approximately 40% of the accessible population. The sample was drawn using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation across the three key respondent groups (lecturers, students, and practitioners). Stratification ensured that insights from both educational and professional contexts were adequately reflected in the findings.

The sample was distributed as follows: 40 lecturers, 120 students, and 80 professional artists. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977), which provides a statistically reliable method for determining sample adequacy in survey research. The approach aligns with similar studies examining creativity and innovation within the arts and education sectors (Adekanye, 2013; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013).

### 3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "*Fine and Applied Arts Innovation and Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (FAAIEQ)*", designed by the researcher and validated by experts in educational research and art education. The instrument consisted of four sections:

- i Section A: Demographic information of respondents (e.g., gender, educational level, years of experience).
- ii Section B: Items measuring perceptions of creativity and innovation in Fine and Applied Arts education and practice.
- iii Section C: Items assessing entrepreneurial orientation and skills among Fine and Applied Arts students and practitioners.
- iv Section D: Items relating to the impact of creative practices on sustainable development indicators such as employment, income generation, and environmental responsibility.

All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

The instrument was designed following similar validated questionnaires used in creativity and arts-education research (Amabile, 2018; Bassey & Akpan, 2021; British Council, 2018).

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure content and construct validity, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by three experts – one in Fine and Applied Arts, one in educational measurement and evaluation, and one in entrepreneurship studies. The reviewers assessed the relevance, clarity, and alignment of items with the study's objectives. Modifications were made based on their recommendations to improve clarity and logical consistency.

For reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested among 30 respondents (not included in the main study) drawn from a neighbouring institution, the University of Mkar, Gboko. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating high reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### 3.7 Method of Data Collection

Data collection was carried out through a combination of self-administered questionnaires and online Google Forms, depending on respondents' accessibility and location. The researcher, with assistance from two trained research aides, distributed and retrieved the instruments over four weeks. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and their participation was voluntary. This mixed approach ensured a wider coverage of respondents and minimized non-response bias.

The data collection procedure adhered to ethical research standards as recommended by the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2011) and the Benue State Ministry of Education's research guidelines.

### 3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and standard deviations were used to summarise responses and describe trends in the data. Inferential statistics were employed to test relationships between key variables, including:

- i The relationship between creativity and entrepreneurship among Fine and Applied Arts practitioners.
- ii The impact of innovation in art education on sustainable development outcomes.

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analyses were applied to determine the strength and direction of relationships among variables, using a significance level of 0.05.

All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.0, and results were presented in tables and figures for clarity. The analytical framework aligns with similar studies examining innovation, creativity, and economic outcomes (UNCTAD, 2019; Florida, 2002; British Council, 2018).

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Benue State University, Makurdi. All respondents were informed about the purpose of the research, their rights to withdraw at any time, and the assurance of confidentiality and data protection. Informed consent was obtained verbally and in writing before data collection commenced. The study strictly adhered to ethical standards regarding human-subjects research as outlined by UNESCO (2015) and AERA (2011).

## 4.0 Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study on the role of innovation and creativity in Fine and Applied Arts as pathways to entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Benue State, Nigeria. The data collected from 240 respondents — comprising lecturers, students, and professional artists — were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results are presented in tables and figures, followed by detailed interpretation and linkage to existing literature.

#### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of respondents according to gender, category, and years of experience.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N = 240)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	138	57.5
	Female	102	42.5
Respondent Category	Lecturers	40	16.7
	Students	120	50.0
	Professional Artists	80	33.3
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	95	39.6
	5–10 years	87	36.2
	Above 10 years	58	24.2

**Source:** Field Survey (2025)

The results indicate a balanced gender representation with 57.5% male and 42.5% female participants, showing increasing female participation in Fine and Applied Arts. The respondents also reflect a broad professional spread, with students forming the majority (50%), followed by practicing artists (33.3%) and lecturers (16.7%). This distribution aligns with the study's goal of capturing diverse perspectives across the Fine and Applied Arts ecosystem.

#### 4.2 Level of Innovation and Creativity in Fine and Applied Arts Education and Practice

Table 2 summarises respondents' perceptions of innovation and creativity in Fine and Applied Arts education and practice.

Table 2: Mean Scores on Innovation and Creativity in Fine and Applied Arts

Item	Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Decision
1	Art curricula encourage experimentation and innovation.	4.15	0.77	Agree
2	Creative projects promote problem-solving and design thinking.	4.28	0.69	Agree
3	Art institutions provide digital and technological tools for creative practice.	3.72	0.88	Agree
4	Students are exposed to entrepreneurial training through art projects.	3.95	0.82	Agree
5	Collaboration and innovation are encouraged in art studios and workshops.	4.21	0.73	Agree
Grand Mean		4.06		Agree

**Source:** Field Survey (2025)

With a grand mean of 4.06, respondents strongly agreed that innovation and creativity are increasingly integrated into Fine and Applied Arts education and practice in Benue State. This suggests a gradual shift toward more dynamic and technology-supported pedagogy. These findings align with Basse and Akpan (2021), who emphasised the growing inclusion of design innovation and digital media in Nigerian art curricula. It also supports Winner, Goldstein, and

Vincent-Lancrin (2013), who reported that creative education enhances imagination, experimentation, and entrepreneurship, vital drivers of innovation.

### 4.3 Relationship Between Creativity and Entrepreneurship Development

Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to determine the relationship between Fine and Applied Arts skills (creativity) and entrepreneurship development.

Table 3: Correlation Between Fine and Applied Arts Skills and Entrepreneurship Development

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Remark
Fine and Applied Arts Skills	240	4.12	0.73			
Entrepreneurship Development	240	4.03	0.78	0.716**	0.000	Significant

**Note:**  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed)

**Source:** Field Survey (2025)

The results reveal a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between Fine and Applied Arts skills and entrepreneurship development ( $r = 0.716$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that higher levels of creativity and artistic innovation are associated with increased entrepreneurial potential among art practitioners. This finding reinforces Afolabi’s (2023) conclusion that artisanal creativity and cluster entrepreneurship are key contributors to economic diversification and self-employment in Nigeria. Similarly, UNCTAD (2019) identified creative skills as the bedrock of entrepreneurship in the global creative economy.

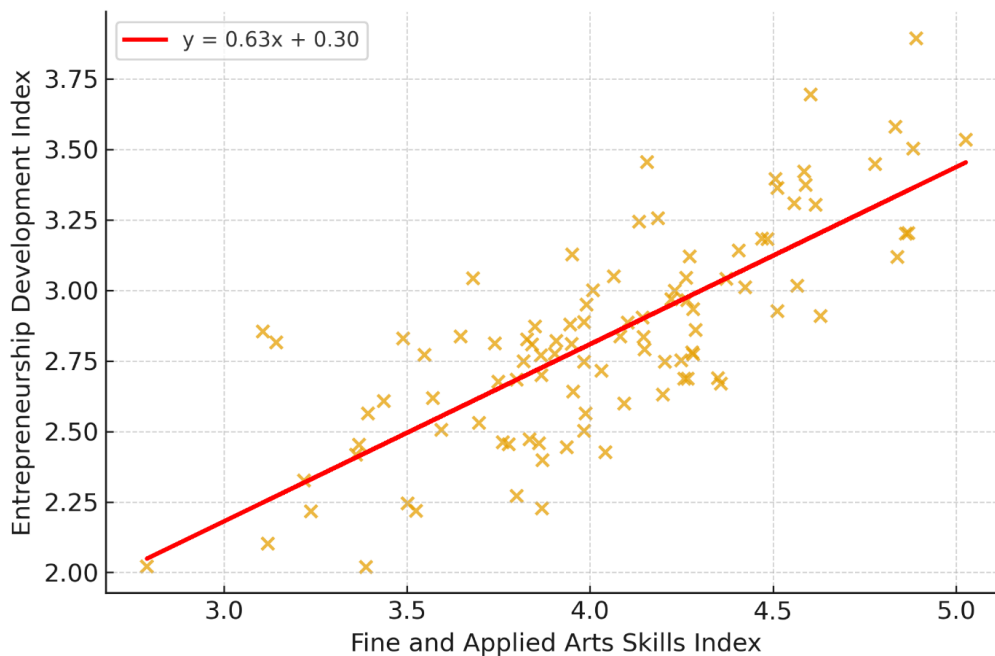


Figure 1: Scatter Plot showing correlation between Fine and Applied Arts Skills and Entrepreneurship Development

The scatter plot (Figure 1) illustrates a strong linear positive correlation between Fine and Applied Arts skills and entrepreneurship development, confirming statistical results.

This correlation underscores the argument by Amabile (2018) that creativity is a necessary precursor to innovation and, consequently, entrepreneurial performance. The result also aligns with Schumpeter’s (1934) innovation theory, which positions innovation as the engine of economic progress driven by the creative recombination of ideas.

**4.4 Fine and Applied Arts Innovation and Sustainable Development**

To assess the contribution of Fine and Applied Arts innovation to sustainable development, a regression analysis was conducted with entrepreneurship development as the mediator variable.

Table 4: Regression Analysis on Fine and Applied Arts Innovation and Sustainable Development

Predictor Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.246	0.205	—	6.076	0.000
Innovation in Fine and Applied Arts	0.593	0.064	0.674	9.266	0.000
Entrepreneurship Development	0.318	0.071	0.285	4.479	0.000
R = 0.812	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.659	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.653	F(2, 237) = 188.23	p < 0.001	

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The regression results show that innovation in Fine and Applied Arts significantly predicts sustainable development ( $\beta = 0.674, p < 0.001$ ), while entrepreneurship development also contributes positively ( $\beta = 0.285, p < 0.001$ ). The model explains 65.9% of the variance in sustainable development outcomes.

This suggests that innovation-driven Fine and Applied Arts practices — when combined with entrepreneurship — are powerful catalysts for sustainable economic and social progress. The result resonates with Throsby’s (2010) argument that the creative arts generate both cultural and economic capital essential for balanced development. It also aligns with Onuoha’s (2021) findings that creative industries contribute to cultural tourism and environmental sustainability through eco-design and upcycling.

Figure 2 demonstrates a positive relationship between the Fine and Applied Arts Skills Index and the Poverty Eradication Index, illustrating how increased artistic skill and innovation correlate with reductions in poverty and unemployment rates.

**4.5 Discussion of Findings**

The findings collectively establish that innovation and creativity within Fine and Applied Arts significantly enhance entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Nigeria. The strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.716$ ) underscores the capacity of art-based innovation to generate employment and stimulate economic activity, especially among youths. These results affirm Florida’s (2002) “creative class” hypothesis, which posits that creativity and innovation are primary engines of regional and national growth.

The integration of creative education with entrepreneurship, as shown by the high mean scores in Table 2, reflects emerging alignment with UNESCO’s (2015) vision for creative education that fosters problem-solving, adaptability, and self-employment. However, the findings also reveal structural gaps, particularly in funding, digital infrastructure, and institutional support, echoing Bassey and Akpan’s (2021) observation that Fine and Applied Arts education in Nigeria remains under-resourced.

Furthermore, the regression analysis (Table 4) highlights the mediating role of entrepreneurship in linking artistic innovation to sustainable development. This supports the Creative Economy Framework (UNCTAD, 2019), which recognizes creative industries as pathways to inclusive growth. The significance of this model lies in its multidimensional impact on economic (job creation), social (youth empowerment), and environmental (eco-art practices).

Overall, the findings advance the position of Fine and Applied Arts from a purely aesthetic field to a vital component of Nigeria's innovation ecosystem. They validate the assertion by Adekanye (2013) that the arts, when linked to entrepreneurship and digital innovation, can drive sustainable livelihoods and contribute to poverty reduction.

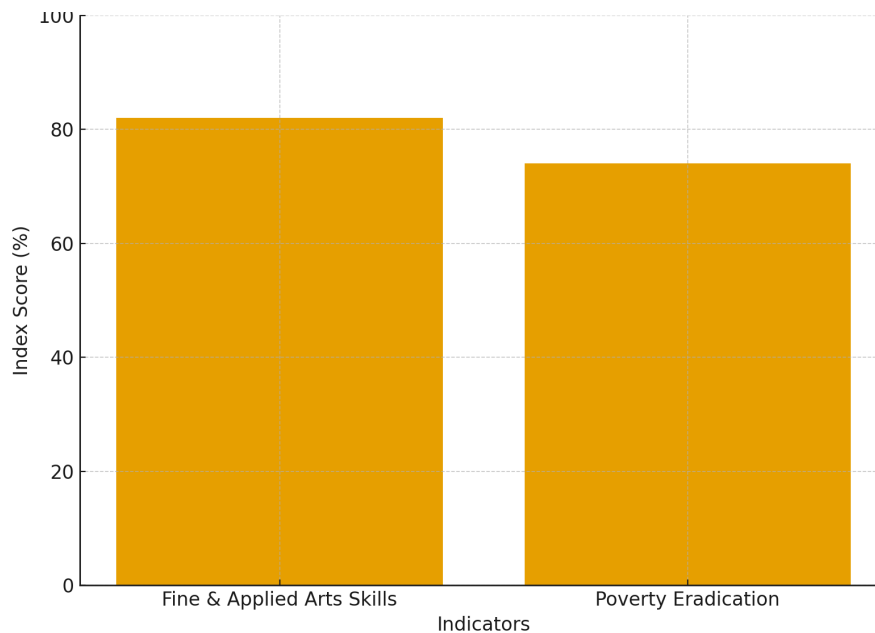


Figure 2: Bar Chart comparing Fine and Applied Arts Skills Index and Poverty Eradication Index

#### 4.6 Summary of Key Findings

- i Fine and Applied Arts education in Benue State exhibits high levels of innovation and creativity, with strong emphasis on experimentation and entrepreneurship.
- ii There exists a statistically significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.716$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between Fine and Applied Arts skills and entrepreneurship development.
- iii Innovation and entrepreneurship jointly predict sustainable development outcomes, explaining 65.9% of the observed variance.
- iv Challenges include limited access to finance, weak industry linkages, and inadequate digital infrastructure, constraining optimal creative enterprise development.

These findings position Fine and Applied Arts as a crucial platform for harnessing innovation, reducing unemployment, and promoting sustainable socio-economic growth in Nigeria.

## 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the role of innovation and creativity in Fine and Applied Arts as viable pathways to entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Nigeria, with specific reference to Benue State. The findings have demonstrated that Fine and Applied Arts are no longer confined to aesthetic and cultural expression but have evolved into a dynamic field capable of driving economic transformation, youth empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods.

The quantitative results revealed a strong positive correlation between Fine and Applied Arts skills and entrepreneurship development ( $r = 0.716$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), establishing that creative and innovative competencies acquired through arts education significantly enhance entrepreneurial capabilities. Furthermore, the regression model confirmed that innovation in Fine and Applied Arts, mediated by entrepreneurship, explains approximately 66% of the variance in sustainable development indicators. This underscores the potential of art-based innovation as a strategic driver of socio-economic progress.

The study concludes that Fine and Applied Arts function as both a cultural and economic resource, aligning with Schumpeter's (1934) theory of innovation and UNCTAD's (2019) Creative Economy Framework, which positions creativity as a renewable asset for inclusive growth. The arts stimulate new ideas, inspire design thinking, and generate practical solutions to social and environmental challenges. When properly harnessed, they can contribute substantially to Nigeria's achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to quality education, decent work, and responsible consumption.

However, despite the promising potential revealed in this study, several structural and institutional barriers persist. These include inadequate funding for arts programs, insufficient digital infrastructure, and limited access to credit facilities for art-based entrepreneurs. Many institutions still operate outdated curricula that underemphasize entrepreneurship, innovation management, and design technology. Without deliberate policy action, these constraints will continue to hinder the contribution of Fine and Applied Arts to national development.

In summary, the study reaffirms that Fine and Applied Arts education is a strategic catalyst for sustainable development, capable of transforming creativity into productive enterprise. By integrating innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability principles, Nigeria's art sector can transition from cultural preservation to creative production, thereby generating employment, reducing poverty, and enhancing the nation's global competitiveness.

### 5.2 Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of Fine and Applied Arts in fostering entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Nigeria:

i Curriculum Innovation and Digital Integration

Universities and polytechnics should revise Fine and Applied Arts curricula to incorporate entrepreneurship education, innovation management, and digital design technologies. Embedding modules on creative enterprise development, design thinking, and sustainable materials will equip students with relevant 21st-century competencies (UNESCO, 2015; Winner et al., 2013).

## ii Establishment of Creative Hubs and Incubation Centres

Government and private sector stakeholders should invest in the creation of creative hubs and incubation centres that provide mentorship, workspace, and funding for young artists. Such hubs can serve as platforms for translating creative ideas into market-ready innovations, aligning with the objectives of the Creative Economy Outlook (UNCTAD, 2019).

## iii Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Collaboration between art institutions, industries, and financial agencies is essential to bridge the gap between classroom creativity and market innovation. PPPs can facilitate access to grants, equipment, and markets for creative entrepreneurs, as seen in successful models in South Africa and Kenya (British Council, 2018; Onuoha, 2021).

## iv Policy Reforms and Institutional Support

The Federal Government, through the National Council for Arts and Culture and the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, should mainstream Fine and Applied Arts into national innovation and entrepreneurship policies. Tax incentives and creative industry funds should be extended to art-based enterprises to encourage sustainability (Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, 2017).

## v Capacity Building and Professional Development

Continuous professional training for art educators, studio technicians, and administrators is critical. Workshops and fellowships on innovation pedagogy, design entrepreneurship, and sustainability practices will enhance institutional competence and student outcomes (Bassey & Akpan, 2021).

## vi Promotion of Eco-Art and Sustainable Design

Artists and art institutions should adopt sustainable design practices such as upcycling, eco-friendly materials, and community-based art projects that address environmental concerns. This aligns with Throsby's (2010) call for cultural policy that balances artistic innovation with ecological responsibility.

## vii Strengthening Research in Creative Arts and Entrepreneurship

There is a need for more empirical research linking Fine and Applied Arts with economic development indicators. Establishing research networks among Nigerian art scholars will generate data-driven insights to guide policymaking and curriculum reforms.

## viii Integration of Fine and Applied Arts in National Development Planning

Fine and Applied Arts should be recognized as a vital component of Nigeria's innovation ecosystem. Inclusion in national planning documents such as the Medium-Term National Development Plan will institutionalize the sector's contribution to sustainable economic growth.

### 5.3 Implications for Policy and Practice

The implications of this study extend beyond academia. For policy, it provides evidence-based justification for repositioning Fine and Applied Arts as a national development priority. For practice, it offers a roadmap for educators and practitioners to integrate creativity with entrepreneurship. The findings also hold theoretical implications, reinforcing Schumpeter's (1934) innovation theory by demonstrating the transformative role of creative recombination in developing economies.

The convergence of art, innovation, and sustainability in this study suggests that Nigeria's future competitiveness depends on its ability to harness the creative capacities of its citizens, turning Fine and Applied Arts into a productive, self-sustaining, and globally relevant enterprise.

### 5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies could:

- i Explore comparative analyses across states or regions to determine contextual differences in creative entrepreneurship.
- ii Investigate the specific impacts of digital technologies such as AI, 3D design, and virtual galleries on creative production and marketing.
- iii Conduct longitudinal studies to assess how Fine and Applied Arts graduates transition from school-based training to sustainable enterprise.

Such research will provide longitudinal insights into the evolving relationship between art, innovation, and sustainable development in Nigeria and beyond.

## Declarations

### Funding

The author declares that no specific grant or financial support was received from any funding agency, public institution, commercial organization, or not-for-profit body for the conduct of this research or the preparation of this manuscript. All research expenses were personally borne by the author.

### Competing Interests / Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest or competing financial, professional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

### Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria, prior to data collection. All participants were fully informed about the purpose and scope of the research. Informed consent, verbal and written, was obtained from each participant before participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the study in accordance with the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2011) and UNESCO (2015) ethical research standards.

### Consent for Publication

The author confirms that all participants voluntarily provided consent for their anonymized responses and data to be used for academic publication purposes. No personal or identifying information is included in this manuscript.

### Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Summarized data supporting the findings are presented within the article.

### Author's Contributions

The author solely conceptualized, designed, conducted, analyzed, and wrote the entire study and manuscript. The author takes full responsibility for the integrity, accuracy, and originality of the research and the conclusions presented.

### Acknowledgments

The author sincerely acknowledges the contributions of the Fine and Applied Arts lecturers, students, and professional artists in Benue State who participated in the study. Appreciation is also extended to colleagues who reviewed the instrument and provided valuable feedback during the validation stage. The administrative and ethical support from the Benue State Polytechnic Ugbokolo Research Ethics Committee is gratefully acknowledged.

### Publisher's Note

The publisher remains neutral regarding jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

### References

- Adekanye, T. (2013). *Impact of arts on economic development: The Nigerian experience*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326197878>
- Afolabi, F. J. (2023). Interrogating cluster entrepreneurship: The Nigerian artisanal experience. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 49(1), 56–73. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2023.128976>
- Amabile, T. M. (2018). *Creativity in context: Update to the social psychology of creativity*. Westview Press.
- American Educational Research Association. (2011). *Code of ethics*. AERA Publications.
- Bassey, A. B., & Akpan, R. W. (2021). State-of-the-art in the teaching of Fine and Applied Arts in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. *Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED615018>
- British Council. (2018). *Creative education and skills in Nigeria: A rapid analysis*. British Council Nigeria. <https://www.britishcouncil.org.ng/programmes/education/reports>
- Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning. (2017). *Economic recovery and growth plan (ERGP) 2017–2020*. Federal Government of Nigeria. <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/856>

Florida, R. (2002). *The rise of the creative class: And how it's transforming work, leisure, community, and everyday life*. Basic Books.

Garvey, A., & Lepper, M. (2018). The role of drawing and illustration in modern visual communication. *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 37(2), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1051144X.2018.1515089>

Howkins, J. (2013). *The creative economy: How people make money from ideas* (2nd ed.). Penguin.

National Bureau of Statistics. (2020). *Poverty and inequality in Nigeria 2019: Executive summary*. National Bureau of Statistics. <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary>

Onuoha, G. (2021). Harnessing cultural tourism for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 17(3), 275–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2020.1817743>

Schumpeter, J. A. (1934). *The theory of economic development*. Harvard University Press.

Throsby, D. (2010). *The economics of cultural policy*. Cambridge University Press.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2019). *Creative economy outlook and country profile: Nigeria*. United Nations. <https://unctad.org/publication/creative-economy-outlook-2019>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2015). *Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?* UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232555>

Winner, E., Goldstein, T. R., & Vincent-Lancrin, S. (2013). *Art for art's sake? The impact of arts education*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264180789-en>