ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH IN BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The increasing application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has created new opportunities for improving research and entrepreneurial development in higher education. This study examined Artificial Intelligence and research in business and entrepreneurship in in Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the extent to which AI-enabled data analysis and market intelligence contribute to research quality and the extent to which AI applications contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning and development. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The study involved undergraduate students of business and entrepreneurship education in selected federal universities in South-East Nigeria. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Artificial Intelligence in Business and Entrepreneurship Education Index (AIBEEI). The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.81. Data were analysed using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that AI-enabled data analysis and market intelligence significantly contribute to research quality. The findings also showed that AI applications significantly contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning and development. The study concluded that effective integration of AI into business and entrepreneurship education can strengthen research quality and enhance students' entrepreneurial competencies. It was recommended that universities provide students and lecturers with adequate training in AI-enabled research tools and integrate relevant AI applications into business and entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Research, Business, Entrepreneurship, Data Analysis, Market Intelligence, Entrepreneurial Learning.

Introduction

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed education, research, business, and entrepreneurial activities across the world. The increasing application of AI has changed how information is accessed, processed, analysed, and applied to solve academic and business problems. According to Zawacki-Richter, Marín, Bond, and Gouverneur (2019), AI applications in higher education support learning, research, assessment, and decision-making. Similarly, Crompton and Burke (2023) noted that AI is increasingly becoming an important component of higher education, particularly in improving academic and research activities. These developments have created new opportunities for universities to strengthen research and prepare graduates for a technology-driven economy.

Artificial Intelligence refers to the ability of computer systems and digital technologies to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, data analysis, and decision-making. Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) describe AI as the ability of systems to interpret external data, learn from such data, and use the knowledge to achieve specific goals. In business and entrepreneurship, AI can be applied to analyse markets, understand customer behaviour, identify business opportunities, predict trends, automate routine activities, and support decision-making. Kietzmann, Paschen, and Treen (2018) noted that AI provides businesses with opportunities to improve information processing and decision-making, thereby supporting innovation and competitiveness.

Research is an important aspect of business and entrepreneurship because it provides knowledge for understanding markets, identifying opportunities, solving business problems, and developing innovative solutions. AI tools such as data analytics, machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics can assist researchers in processing large volumes of information, identifying patterns, analysing market trends, and generating useful insights (Adebayo & Aluko, 2020; Dwivedi, Hughes, & Rana, 2021). Thus, the application of AI in business and entrepreneurship research can enhance students' analytical, research, and problem-solving capabilities.

Entrepreneurship involves identifying opportunities, developing innovative ideas, taking calculated risks, and creating value through the establishment and management of ventures. AI can support these activities by helping entrepreneurs conduct market research, analyse customer preferences, generate business ideas, forecast demand, and make informed decisions. The emergence of generative AI has further expanded the use of intelligent technologies in entrepreneurship and research. Bell and Bell (2023) observed that generative AI provides opportunities for strengthening entrepreneurship education and developing practical entrepreneurial competencies. However, effective utilization requires adequate digital skills, ethical awareness, and proper guidance.

In Nigerian universities, the integration of AI into research and educational activities is still developing. Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to digital resources, poor internet connectivity, and insufficient technological expertise may restrict the effective use of AI (Chukwu, 2019; Eze, 2021). Shaibu, Mbaegbu, and Zion-Ngoka (2025) found that Artificial Intelligence has a significant relationship with sustainable productivity, highlighting its growing relevance to business operations and organizational performance in Nigeria. Similarly, Shaibu, Echetama, and Mbaegbu emphasized the importance of technology integration in business and entrepreneurship education, particularly through improved access to educational technologies and supporting infrastructure. These developments suggest that greater attention should be given to the effective integration of AI and related technologies into business and entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities. Against this background, this study examines Artificial Intelligence and research in business and entrepreneurship in South-East universities in Nigeria, with particular attention to AI tools for data analysis and market research, research quality, and students' entrepreneurial learning and development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing importance of Artificial Intelligence in research and business, its application in business and entrepreneurship education in South-East universities remains limited. Many students still depend largely on conventional research methods and have limited exposure to AI-supported tools for data analysis, market research, and information processing. This may affect their ability to conduct efficient and relevant research in a rapidly changing business environment.

Although AI has the potential to improve research quality through faster data analysis, market intelligence, and generation of useful insights, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited AI skills, poor access to digital resources, and insufficient training may hinder its effective

utilization. Consequently, students may be unable to fully exploit AI technologies for research and entrepreneurial development. Furthermore, available studies have given limited attention to the relationship between AI and research in business and entrepreneurship education in South-East universities in Nigeria. In particular, the extent to which AI tools for data analysis and market research relate to research quality and how AI applications relate to students' entrepreneurial learning and development remains insufficiently established. This gap in knowledge necessitates the present study.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do AI-enabled data analysis and market intelligence contribute to research quality in business and entrepreneurship in South-East universities?
2. To what extent do AI applications contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning and development in South-East universities?

Hypotheses

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

Ho1: AI-enabled data analysis and market intelligence do not significantly contribute to the quality of research in business and entrepreneurship in South-East universities.

Ho2: AI applications do not significantly contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning and development in South-East universities.

Review of Literature

Conceptual Review

Concept of Artificial Intelligence in Business and Entrepreneurship

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an important technological development in modern business and entrepreneurship. It refers to the use of computer systems and intelligent technologies that can perform tasks which normally require human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, problem-solving, data analysis, and decision-making. Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) describe AI as the ability of a system to interpret external data, learn from such data, and apply the knowledge to achieve specific goals. Similarly, Kietzmann, Paschen, and Treen (2018) explain that AI involves the use of intelligent algorithms to perform tasks such as information processing, pattern recognition, prediction, and automated decision-making.

In the business environment, AI is increasingly used to improve efficiency, understand customers, analyse markets, predict business trends, and support managerial decisions. Dwivedi, Hughes, and Rana (2021) noted that AI provides businesses with opportunities to analyse large volumes of information, improve decision-making, manage risks, and support innovation. AI applications such as predictive analytics, chatbots, recommendation systems, automated customer services, and machine learning can therefore assist businesses in responding more effectively to changing customer needs and competitive conditions. Kietzmann et al. (2018) further observed that AI can enhance the way businesses understand consumers and interact with them across different stages of the customer journey.

Artificial Intelligence is also increasingly relevant to entrepreneurship because entrepreneurs require timely information to identify opportunities, understand markets, develop business ideas, and make effective decisions. AI can support entrepreneurs in conducting market research, analysing customer preferences, forecasting demand, generating business ideas, and identifying potential opportunities. Bell and Bell (2023) observed that generative AI has created new possibilities for entrepreneurship education by helping learners develop practical and technical entrepreneurial skills. They, however, emphasized that students need to develop critical and reflective thinking so that AI is used as a support tool rather than as a replacement for independent thinking.

The application of AI has also become increasingly visible in entrepreneurship education. Vecchiarini and Somià (2023) found that AI-powered chatbots such as ChatGPT can support entrepreneurship education by encouraging students' curiosity, inquiry, and development of entrepreneurial skills. Similarly, Chen, Ifenthaler, Yau, and Sun (2024), in a scoping review of AI in entrepreneurship education, identified growing applications of intelligent technologies in entrepreneurship learning and highlighted the need for further research into their adoption and pedagogical use.

From these perspectives, Artificial Intelligence in business and entrepreneurship can be viewed as the application of intelligent digital technologies to improve business analysis, market research, decision-making, innovation, opportunity identification, and entrepreneurial learning. Its effective application can provide students and researchers with relevant technological competencies required to conduct quality research and respond to the demands of a rapidly changing business environment.

Research in Business and Entrepreneurship

Research in business and entrepreneurship refers to the systematic process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting information to generate knowledge, solve business problems, identify opportunities, and support decision-making. Business research covers areas such as marketing, management, finance, consumer behaviour, and organisational performance, while entrepreneurship research focuses on opportunity identification, innovation, venture creation, and business development. Fiet (2019) noted that research in entrepreneurship contributes to understanding how entrepreneurial knowledge and skills can be developed and applied effectively.

Research is important in business and entrepreneurship because it enables students and entrepreneurs to understand market conditions, identify customer needs, evaluate business opportunities, and develop evidence-based solutions. Nabi, Liñán, Fayolle, Krueger, and Walmsley (2019) emphasized that entrepreneurship education develops knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable learners to recognize opportunities and participate effectively in entrepreneurial activities. Maritz, Perenyi, and de Waal (2021) further observed that contemporary entrepreneurship research increasingly emphasizes innovation, technology, and practical approaches to entrepreneurial learning. In the context of higher education, research in business and entrepreneurship also provides a basis for improving teaching, curriculum development, entrepreneurial training, and students' practical competencies. Anubhav, Dwivedi, and Aashish (2024) noted that technological developments have increasingly influenced entrepreneurship education and research, creating new approaches to entrepreneurial learning. Therefore, research in business and entrepreneurship serves both academic and practical purposes by generating knowledge that can contribute to innovation, business development, and economic growth.

Artificial Intelligence and Research in Business and Entrepreneurship

Artificial Intelligence has introduced new approaches to conducting research in business and entrepreneurship. AI-powered tools can assist researchers in searching for information, reviewing literature, analysing datasets, identifying patterns, examining market trends, and generating insights for decision-making. Dwivedi, Hughes, and Rana (2021) observed that AI provides researchers and business practitioners with capabilities for processing large amounts of information and supporting evidence-based decision-making.

AI is particularly useful in business research through applications such as data analytics, predictive analytics, natural language processing, and market intelligence. These technologies can help researchers analyse consumer behaviour, identify emerging market trends, forecast business outcomes, and examine complex datasets more efficiently. Kietzmann, Paschen, and Treen (2018) noted that AI enhances information processing and enables businesses to obtain useful insights from large volumes of data. Similarly, Aure and Cuenca (2024) found that

generative AI can support students in business research by assisting with brainstorming, reading, writing, and other research-related activities.

In entrepreneurship, AI can support research by helping students and prospective entrepreneurs investigate business opportunities, understand customer preferences, evaluate markets, and develop innovative business ideas. Bell and Bell (2023) noted that generative AI creates opportunities for strengthening entrepreneurship education and developing practical entrepreneurial competencies. However, effective use of AI in research requires digital competence, critical thinking, ethical awareness, and appropriate academic guidance. Thus, AI can serve as an important research support tool in business and entrepreneurship by improving the efficiency of information processing, analysis, and decision-making.

Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurial Learning and Development

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly becoming a useful tool for strengthening entrepreneurial learning and development among university students. AI-supported platforms can provide learners with opportunities to explore business situations, analyse information, generate ideas, and receive immediate feedback. Bell and Bell (2023) noted that generative AI can support entrepreneurship education by developing students' practical and technical entrepreneurial skills while encouraging creativity and critical thinking. Similarly, Vecchiarini and Somià (2023) found that AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT can foster students' curiosity, inquiry, and entrepreneurial skills.

AI can also enhance creativity, innovation, and opportunity identification by helping students explore different business ideas, identify market gaps, and develop possible solutions to business problems. Chen, Ifenthaler, Yau, and Sun (2024), in their review of AI in entrepreneurship education, reported growing applications of intelligent technologies for supporting entrepreneurial learning and identified opportunities for further development of AI-supported pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, AI applications can assist students in developing business models, evaluating alternatives, solving entrepreneurial problems, and making informed decisions. A 2024 study by Zulfiqar, Sarwar, Huo, Zhao, and Mahasbi found that AI-supported teaching approaches improved students' entrepreneurial attitudes and learning, suggesting that AI can contribute to the development of entrepreneurial intentions and competencies.

Thus, the use of AI in entrepreneurial learning can enhance students' creativity, opportunity recognition, problem-solving, business idea development, and decision-making abilities, provided that its use is guided by appropriate teaching, critical thinking, and ethical considerations.

Theoretical Review

The study is anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Human Capital Theory.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model was developed by Fred Davis in 1989 to explain how individuals accept and use new technologies. The model proposes that technology adoption is mainly influenced by two factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a technology will improve performance, while perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which the technology is considered easy to understand and operate.

The relevance of TAM to this study is based on the fact that the effective use of Artificial Intelligence in business and entrepreneurship research depends largely on students' willingness and ability to adopt AI tools. Students are more likely to use AI for data analysis, market research, information retrieval, and entrepreneurial learning when they perceive such technologies as useful and easy to operate. The theory therefore provides a basis for understanding how students' acceptance of AI can influence their research activities and entrepreneurial development. In the context of South-East universities, factors such as digital literacy, access to technology, technical support, and the perceived usefulness of AI may determine the extent to which students utilize AI in their academic and entrepreneurial activities.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was propounded by Schultz in 1961 and further developed by Becker in 1964. The theory emphasizes that investment in education, training, knowledge, and skills improves individuals' productivity and contributes to economic development. It views the knowledge and competencies acquired through education as valuable resources that enhance employability, innovation, and an individual's capacity to contribute meaningfully to society.

The relevance of Human Capital Theory to this study lies in its emphasis on the development of useful knowledge and skills through education. The integration of Artificial Intelligence into business and entrepreneurship education provides students with opportunities to develop modern research, analytical, creative, and problem-solving competencies. Through the use of AI-supported research tools, students can improve their ability to analyse data, conduct market research, identify business opportunities, develop innovative ideas, and make informed entrepreneurial decisions. Thus, investment in AI-related knowledge and skills can strengthen students' human capital and prepare them for employment, self-employment, and participation in the digital economy. The theory therefore supports the view that AI-enhanced business and entrepreneurship education can contribute to the development of a more technologically competent and productive graduate workforce.

Related Empirical Studies

Nzekwe and Ofuonye (2025) examined the contributions and impediments of integrating Artificial Intelligence tools into project writing among business education students in colleges of education in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 500 final-year business education students, from which 120 students were selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.81 and analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that students perceived AI tools as useful in improving the quality, speed, and structure of project writing. However, the study also identified challenges such as inadequate technical knowledge, over-dependence on AI, concerns about originality, and ethical issues. The study recommended that institutions should incorporate AI literacy into the curriculum and provide students with appropriate guidance on responsible AI use.

Igomu, Kwaghbo, Nayela, and Elujekwute (2024) investigated the application of Artificial Intelligence in business education and entrepreneurship practice in Nigeria. The study examined the roles, benefits, and challenges associated with the use of AI in business education and entrepreneurial activities. The findings indicated that AI applications support personalized learning, intelligent tutoring, accessibility, career guidance, automated assessment, idea generation, market research, predictive analytics, chatbots, and virtual assistants. The study further identified poor AI literacy, inadequate curriculum development, limited access to AI resources, high implementation costs, ethical concerns, and infrastructural limitations as major challenges to effective AI adoption. The study concluded that despite these challenges, AI has considerable potential to improve business education and entrepreneurship practice in Nigeria and recommended the integration of AI literacy into the curriculum and continuous training for students and educators.

Somià and Vecchiarini (2024) examined the impact of Artificial Intelligence on students' entrepreneurial competencies. The study focused on undergraduate students who used ChatGPT to improve their business model canvas. An exploratory mixed-methods approach was adopted, with data collected through open- and closed-ended survey questions and analysed using statistical and text-analysis techniques. The findings showed that ChatGPT supported the development of several entrepreneurial competencies, including opportunity recognition, creativity, vision, idea evaluation, and ethical and sustainable thinking. The study particularly found that AI was useful in helping students improve their ability to evaluate and develop

business ideas. The researchers concluded that generative AI can be effectively incorporated into experiential entrepreneurship education to strengthen students' entrepreneurial competencies and learning outcomes.

Zulfiqar, Sarwar, Huo, Zhao, and Mahasbi (2025) investigated the influence of Artificial Intelligence on the entrepreneurial mindset and intentions of university students. The study adopted a comparative, time-lagged research design involving students from higher education institutions in Pakistan. Data were collected in two stages, with 275 students participating in the first stage and 234 usable responses obtained in the second stage. The data were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings showed that the integration of AI tools into teaching significantly improved students' entrepreneurial attitudes and learning. The study concluded that AI can serve as an effective educational tool for strengthening entrepreneurial development and shaping students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Ogundola and Ogunleye (2026) examined the impact of Artificial Intelligence tools on Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and involved 300 undergraduate Business Education students selected from three universities using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using the Artificial Intelligence Impact Assessment Scale, which had a reliability coefficient of 0.82. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed a high level of adoption of general-purpose AI tools, particularly generative AI applications such as ChatGPT and Gemini. Students reported that AI improved research efficiency, understanding of business concepts, and examination preparation. The study also established a significant positive relationship between AI usage and academic performance ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.05$) and between AI usage and digital skill acquisition ($r = 0.512$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that AI tools enhance academic outcomes and digital competencies among Business Education students and recommended the integration of AI literacy and specialized AI applications into Business Education curricula.

Method

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study comprised undergraduate students of Business and Entrepreneurship Education in selected federal universities in South-East Nigeria. The universities included Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (UNIZIK), University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC), Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO), and Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select students who had adequate exposure to business, entrepreneurship, and digital technologies, as they were considered appropriate for the study. A total of 230 students were selected as respondents across the selected universities. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Artificial Intelligence and Research in Business and Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (AIRBEQ). The instrument was structured on a modified four-point Likert scale with the following response options: Very High Extent (VHE) = 4, High Extent (HE) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2, and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1.The instrument was validated by two experts in Business Education and Entrepreneurship Education, while its reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha, which produced a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Out of the 230 copies of the questionnaire administered, 219 copies, representing 95.2%, were properly completed and retrieved for analysis. Data were analyzed using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (r) to test the hypotheses in a bivariate format, with the aid of SPSS Version 25, at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Ho1: AI-enabled data analysis and market intelligence do not significantly contribute to the quality of research in business and entrepreneurship in South-East universities.

Table 1: Correlation

	AI-enabled Data Analysis and Market Intelligence	Quality of Research
AI-enabled Data Analysis and Market Intelligence		
Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.782**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
N	219	219
Quality of Research		
Correlation Coefficient	.782**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
N	219	219

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Researchers' Data, 2026.

Table 1 shows a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.782 and a significance value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the significance value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho1), which states that AI-enabled data analysis and market intelligence do not significantly contribute to the quality of research in business and entrepreneurship in South-East universities, is rejected. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that AI-enabled data analysis and market intelligence significantly contribute to the quality of research in business and entrepreneurship in South-East universities.

Ho2: AI applications do not significantly contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning and development in South-East universities.

Table 2: Correlation

	AI Applications	Entrepreneurial Learning and Development
AI Applications		
Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.806**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
N	219	219
Entrepreneurial Learning and Development		
Correlation Coefficient	.806**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
N	219	219

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Researchers' Data, 2026.

Table 2 shows a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.806 and a significance value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the significance value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho2), which states that AI applications do not significantly contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning and development in South-East universities, is rejected. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that AI applications significantly contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning and development in South-East universities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that AI-enabled data analysis and market research significantly contribute to the quality of research in business and entrepreneurship in South-East universities. This finding is supported by the study on the use of Artificial Intelligence tools in project writing among business education students in colleges of education in Anambra State, which found that AI improved the quality, speed, and structure of students' project work. The study, however, identified inadequate technical knowledge, over-dependence, originality, and ethical concerns as

challenges. This suggests that appropriate guidance and AI literacy are necessary to maximize the research benefits of AI.

The findings also showed that AI applications significantly contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning and development. This agrees with Igomu, Kwaghbo, Nayela, and Elujekwute (2024), who reported that AI supports idea generation, market research, predictive analytics, personalized learning, and virtual assistants in business education and entrepreneurship. Similarly, Somià and Vecchiarini (2024) found that the use of ChatGPT supported students' opportunity recognition, creativity, idea evaluation, and other entrepreneurial competencies. This implies that AI can serve as an effective tool for strengthening students' entrepreneurial knowledge and practical skills.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Zulfiqar, Sarwar, Huo, Zhao, and Mahasbi (2025), who found that AI-supported teaching significantly improved students' entrepreneurial attitudes and learning. Ogundola and Ogunleye (2026) also reported a significant positive relationship between AI usage and academic performance among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. These findings support the present study by demonstrating that effective use of AI can improve both research-related competencies and entrepreneurial development among university students.

Conclusion

This study examined Artificial Intelligence and research in business and entrepreneurship in Nigerian universities. The findings revealed that AI-supported data analysis and market research contribute to improved research quality, while AI applications support students' entrepreneurial learning and development. The study concludes that effective integration of AI can strengthen students' research skills, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and entrepreneurial competencies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Universities should provide students with access to AI-enabled data analysis and market research tools to improve the quality and efficiency of research in business and entrepreneurship.
2. Business and entrepreneurship education departments should integrate AI applications into learning activities to enhance students' entrepreneurial learning, creativity, opportunity identification, and decision-making skills.

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