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Artificial Intelligence Skill Development as a Predictor of Job Readiness among Business Education Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This the study explored the development of AI competencies and job preparedness in 106 business-education undergraduates in the state of Anambra.

Methodology/approach – The information was collected electronically with the help of Google Forms, using a four-point Likert scale questionnaire that included demographic variables, AI skill dimension, and job-readiness competencies. The responses were summarised using descriptive statistical analysis such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The methodological strategy allowed collecting data effectively and reliably, as well as defining the theoretical strengths of students in the field of AI knowledge and identifying the areas that needed to be developed to inform curriculum and skill-development interventions.

Findings – The general job-readiness with significant time management and communication competencies, but low teamwork skills. Regression analysis revealed a strong predictive effect of AI competencies on job -readiness, and the model was found to be stable and reliable. These results support the claim that improvement of AI skills may significantly boost graduate readiness to the labour market. The paper thus highlights the need to incorporate practical AI education in curricula to enhance employability.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, AI has been redefining the workplaces of a wide variety of industries, which essentially redefined the skillsets that could be needed to be employable. To learners of business-education programmes in tertiary institutions, the study of AI-related competencies has ceased to be an optional augmentation, and become a mandatory pre-condition of job preparedness in an increasingly automated and data-driven world. The present discourse thus questions the relevance of AI-based skills training to undergraduates in business-education, outlines the existing gaps and lack of job-relevance in the curriculum, and offers evidence-based suggestions on how improved outcomes in education can be achieved.

The increased relevance of AI to business scenarios and its use in marketing analytics, financial forecasting, and operations management has yet to be reflected in the development of many business-education programmes, which continue to lag in integrating AI skills into their education offerings (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2017). This gap in the curriculum is a severe issue, with graduates often becoming members of the workforce without either the knowledge or the practical experience of how to use AI tools, interpret AI outputs, or become effective participants in AI-enhanced business operations. The resulting gap in AI skills reduces job preparedness, thus limiting the competitiveness of graduates in the labour market (Huang and Rust, 2021). Therefore, it is vital to explain how effective approaches should be designed to develop AI skills in business-education undergraduates to match educational outcomes to the changing labour market requirements.

Artificial intelligence capabilities refer to a set of skills which comprise data literacy, fundamental machine-learning concepts, natural language processing, and applying AI to business issues. In a business environment, such skills enable students to process large amounts of data, automate daily tasks, and help make strategic decisions (Davenport and Ronanki, 2018). An example of this is the use of AI-based analytics to help future managers detect market trends or to optimize supply chains, which traditional business training cannot provide (Nweje and Taiwo, 2025). To this end, AI competency becomes the defining factor of employability as employers value applicants who are skilled in AI technologies.

Despite the fact that a few tertiary institutions have put in place courses related to data science or business analytics, a substantial percentage of business-education programmes still do not prioritize practical training in AI. According to empirical evidence, the provisions in the curriculums often focus on theoretical materials without practical interaction with AI tools (Nweje and Taiwo, 2025). Business-education students can gain the theoretical understanding of big data without having a chance to apply actual AI software or engage in project-based learning, which simulates workplace activities. Consequently, graduates are usually able to understand AI in a theoretical manner but become confused when it comes to real-world implementation. The theoretical bias is further enhanced by the lack of faculty expertise in AI, limited budgets to support technological laboratory, and absence of industry collaborations that can augment academic education and work.

Job readiness refers to the readiness of a graduate to work in entry-level jobs and provide competent performance. In the case of business-education undergraduates, job preparedness is becoming more dependent on the ability to demonstrate both technical and soft skills. Employers are looking for people, who, besides having a good understanding of the basics of business, are able to make sense of the AI results, work in multidisciplinary teams and adapt to changing technologies (World Economic Forum, 2020). The lack of AI competencies in the curriculum then undermines the ability of graduates to meet employer

requirements, which may result in increased unemployment or underemployment among the business-education population.

In order to address these lapses, higher institutions should pursue proactive measures to incorporate AI skills in the business-education programs. First, by incorporating AI modules into existing courses like marketing, finance, operations, students will be able to feel the applicability of AI in any business operations (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). In particular, a marketing-analytics course that covers the use of machine-learning case studies can serve as an example of how AI can be put into practice. Second, the institutions are to invest in experiential means of learning, such as AI laboratories, internship, and industrial-led projects. Theories of collaboration Incorporating partnerships with companies may lead to internship placements, during which students can work on genuine AI projects, which will increase their technical skills as well as their workplace preparation.

In addition, faculty development sessions are necessary to provide instructors with the necessary knowledge and confidence they need to present AI curriculum. The development of this study is the result of a strong mismatch between abilities required in modern work environments and skills graduates currently have. In the world context, employers are paying more attention to hiring people who can use AI tools to analyze data, automate, and make decisions (World Economic Forum, 2020). However, evidence suggests that many business education programmes still focus on the traditional theoretical teaching rather than the practical AI skills, thus leaving students unprepared to perform real-world activities. The discrepancy is specifically high in the developing areas, where the processes of the curriculum review are usually slow and the resources to implement technology are limited (Samuel et al., 2025).

Empirical studies on the level of mastery of AI among business undergraduates (and consequently, their employment eligibility) are limited in Nigeria, and, more specifically, in Anambra State. Without localized research, policymakers and educators lack data to justify curriculum reforms or targeted training interventions. Understanding this relationship can therefore inform strategies that enhance employability, reduce graduate unemployment, and align tertiary education with industry needs.

Research Questions

1. What artificial intelligence skills do business education undergraduates possess in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
2. What job readiness competencies do business education undergraduates possess in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
3. To what extent does artificial intelligence skill development predict job readiness among business education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Null Hypotheses:

1. Business education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not possess significant artificial intelligence skills.
2. Business education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not possess significant job readiness competencies.
3. Artificial intelligence skill development does not significantly predict job readiness among business education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job readiness among business education undergraduates refers to the ability to have the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to smoothly transition between academic preparation and the workforce. It has been empirically shown that preparedness of the undergraduates can be moderated by both curricular and extracurricular factors, such as being exposed to entrepreneurship education, technological aptitude, and professional development

programmes (Oguejiofor, Nzeribe, and Onyiorah, 2022). More specifically, the following competencies were defined as the critical determinants of employability in a twenty-first-century labour market: professional communication, problem-solving, time management, and flexibility to emerging technologies. A number of studies highlight the role of new teaching methods and online educational tools in enhancing work preparedness. According to Onyiorah (2021; 2022), the incorporation of distance learning and innovative modes of instruction can boost practical and analytical skills of students, which increase the workforce readiness. Similarly, business educator development has been observed to influence instructional delivery positively, thus preparing learners with relevant knowledge to perform their jobs (Onyiorah, 2023).

Moreover, technical skills like experience in search engine and email marketing also aid in self-employment preparedness, so training skills-based learning in the business education curriculum is significant (Okoro et al., 2025). Indirect impacts on motivation and preparation to get employment among students include family background and socio-economic factors (Oguejiofor and Onyiorah, 2023). These findings taken together suggest that job preparedness in undergraduates of business education is multidimensional and requires a combination of theoretical understanding, technical skills and exposure to modern technological resources. The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) skills is increasingly becoming significant in equipping students with technology-driven workplaces since it imparts not only computation but also problem-solving skills.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) skills combined with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enhance students' problem-solving skills, creativity, and digital competence in modern education. Through ICT tools such as computers, online platforms, and educational software, students develop analytical thinking and the ability to solve complex academic and real-life problems. Studies show that students' perception of ICT utilization in the post-COVID-19 era has improved access to learning resources and collaborative learning opportunities (Ikegbusi, Egwu, & Iheanacho, 2021). Effective classroom management and innovative teaching approaches further support the integration of technology to improve academic performance (Ikegbusi, 2025). Teachers' exposure to ICT also plays a vital role in enhancing students' digital literacy and engagement in subjects such as English language (Ikegbusi, 2021). Moreover, ICT promotes transparency and accountability in educational management and communication systems (Ikegbusi, Awadiegwu, & Oranusi, 2025). Overall, ICT remains a critical tool for modern education (Ikegbusi, 2018) and supports the development and implementation of AI-driven educational programmes that prepare students for future technological environments.

Recent findings prove that AI implementation in educational programmes increases digital literacy, promotes innovation, and develops a realistic understanding of difficult ideas (Anakpua et al., 2025). Indicatively, the AI-enhanced service-learning in STEM education enhances student cognition in higher levels like nanotechnology-based green materials, thus connecting theoretical knowledge and practical uses. Likewise, the awareness and the uptake of digital technologies, such as AI and Zoom platforms, facilitate successful learning and teaching processes, especially in blended learning environments and higher education (Enemu and Muogbo, 2023). Furthermore, it has been found that computer literacy forms the basis of acquiring AI skills, and students show an increased engagement rate when subjected to organized digital learning (Enemu et al., 2025; Okafor et al., 2023). Taken together, the findings indicate that the development of AI skills will enhance the analytical, technological, and practical skills of the students and make them better-equipped to contribute to their future employment and long-term learning success.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was descriptive. The descriptive design was adopted because it allowed gathering, summarizing, and interpreting data about the level of AI competencies and job readiness among students, as well as their demographic features without manipulating variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2023; Ikegbusi, 2022). All the business education undergraduates in tertiary institutions of Anambra State were the study population. Students (100-400) would have been included to make the representation wide. One hundred and six respondents were sampled, and it was done through a stratified random sampling method, in which a sampling was first stratified by the level of study, and a sample was then taken in proportion. This strategy maintained equal representation of the various levels of study thus improving the generalisability of the results.

A structured questionnaire was used to gather the data by providing online surveys using Google Forms. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Section A collected demographics information, such as age, gender, and level of education. Section B was a test of AI skills, including the ability to use AI tools, knowledge of basic machine learning principles, and an application of AI in business decision-making, AI-based problem-solving, and communication. Section C measured job readiness skills, such as professional communication, teamwork, practical problem-solving, time management and adaptation to new technologies. Section B and C were rated using a four-point Likert scale (1 Strangely disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, 4 strongly agree), which was convenient to quantify skills and competences among students.

The questionnaire also received a content validation process involving three business education and educational technology experts who tested the clarity, relevance, and congruence to the study objectives. To achieve reliability, a pilot study involving 15 undergraduate students of business education in a tertiary institution other than the study region was carried out. The alpha coefficients of the AI skills section and job readiness section were 0.86 and 0.84, respectively, which is indicative of high internal consistency and reliability. Participating institutions granted ethical approval and informed consent was granted by the participants before filling in the questionnaire. The use of Google Forms made it possible to collect online data efficiently, which meant that students could answer the questions remotely and remain anonymous and convenient. Respondents were assured of voluntary participation and confidentiality of their responses.

Collected data were analysed with the help of the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The demographic data, the AI skills, and the job readiness competencies were summarised using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings were represented in tabular and graphic formats to make them more understandable. Since the research was descriptive in nature, there were no inferential statistics, including correlation or regression, that were conducted, but instead the emphasis was on providing a wholesome profile of respondents skills and competencies and their areas of strength and weakness.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 106)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	16–20	42	39.6	39.6	39.6
	21–25	26	24.5	24.5	64.2
	26–30	22	20.8	20.8	84.9
	Above 30	16	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender	Male	54	50.9	50.9	50.9
	Female	52	49.1	49.1	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	100.0
Educational Level	100 level	61	57.5	57.5	57.5
	200 level	17	16.0	16.0	73.6
	300 level	12	11.3	11.3	84.9
	400 level	16	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents were aged 16–20 years (39.6%), followed by those aged 21–25 years (24.5%), indicating a predominantly young population. Respondents above 30 years constituted the least proportion (15.1%). Gender distribution was fairly balanced, with males (50.9%) slightly higher than females (49.1%). In terms of educational level, most participants were in 100 level (57.5%), while 300 level students represented the smallest group (11.3%), suggesting strong representation from lower academic levels.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Artificial Intelligence Skills Possessed by Business Education Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State (N = 106)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Ability to use AI tools effectively	106	2.08	1.399	1.956	.587	.235	-1.620	.465
Understanding of basic machine learning concepts	106	3.58	.715	.512	-1.737	.235	2.477	.465
Application of AI in business decisions	106	2.93	1.205	1.453	-.636	.235	-1.202	.465
Use of AI tools for problem-solving	106	3.25	.882	.777	-.675	.235	-.937	.465
Application of AI in communication tasks	106	2.20	1.320	1.741	.336	.235	-1.702	.465
Valid N (listwise)	106							

The results in Table 2 show that students demonstrated the highest competence in understanding basic machine learning concepts (M = 3.58) and using AI tools for problem-solving (M = 3.25). However, lower mean scores were recorded for ability to use AI tools effectively (M = 2.08) and application of AI in communication tasks (M = 2.20). This suggests stronger theoretical knowledge than practical proficiency. The standard deviations indicate noticeable variation in students' AI skill levels.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Job Readiness Competencies Possessed by Business Education Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State (N = 106)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis		
						Statistic	Std. Error	
Competence in professional communication and writing	106	3.29	.925	.857	-1.280	.235	.794	.465
Ability to work effectively in teams	106	1.98	1.324	1.752	.713	.235	-1.378	.465
Problem-solving competence in practical situations	106	3.18	.892	.796	-1.101	.235	.676	.465
Efficient management of time and tasks	106	3.33	1.002	1.004	-1.228	.235	.141	.465
Adaptability to emerging technologies quickly	106	3.05	.888	.788	-.593	.235	-.459	.465
Valid N (listwise)	106							

Table 3 indicates that students showed strong competence in efficient management of time and tasks (M = 3.33), professional communication and writing (M = 3.29), and problem-solving in practical situations (M = 3.18). Adaptability to emerging technologies was also relatively high (M = 3.05). However, ability to work effectively in teams recorded a low mean (M = 1.98), suggesting weakness in teamwork skills. Overall, most job readiness competencies were moderately developed.

Table 4: Model Summary of the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence Skills and Job Readiness (N = 106)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson	
1	.856 ^a	.732	.729	.43519	.73	28	.00	1.937	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Artificial Intelligence Skills

b. Dependent Variable: Job Readiness

Table 4 shows a strong positive relationship between artificial intelligence skills and job readiness ($R = .856$). The R^2 value of .732 indicates that 73.2% of the variation in job readiness is explained by AI skills. The model is statistically significant ($F = 283.976$, $p < .001$). The Durbin–Watson value (1.937) suggests no autocorrelation problem.

Table 5: ANOVA Results on the Influence of Artificial Intelligence Skills on Job Readiness (N = 106)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	53.781	1	53.781	283.976	.000 ^b
Residual	19.696	104	.189		
Total	73.478	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Job Readiness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Artificial Intelligence Skills

Table 5 reveals that artificial intelligence skills significantly predict job readiness, $F(1,104) = 283.976$, $p < .001$. The regression sum of squares (53.781) is substantially higher than the residual sum of squares (19.696), indicating that the model explains a large portion of variance in job readiness. Therefore, the regression model is statistically significant.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for the Influence of Artificial Intelligence Skills on Job Readiness (N = 106)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.471	.154		3.056	.003					
Artificial Intelligence Skills	.889	.053	.856	16.852	.000	.856	.856	.856	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job Readiness

Table 6 shows that artificial intelligence skills significantly predict job readiness ($\beta = .856$, $t = 16.852$, $p < .001$). The unstandardized coefficient ($B = .889$) indicates that a unit increase in AI skills leads to a .889 increase in job readiness. The constant ($B = .471$, $p = .003$) is also significant. Tolerance (1.000) and VIF (1.000) indicate no multicollinearity problem.

Table 7: Collinearity Diagnostics for Artificial Intelligence Skills and Job Readiness (N = 106)

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions	
				(Constant)	Artificial Intelligence Skills
1	1	1.962	1.000	.02	.02
	2	.038	7.147	.98	.98

a. Dependent Variable: Job Readiness

Table 7 presents the collinearity diagnostics of the regression model. The condition index (7.147) is below the critical threshold of 30, indicating no serious multicollinearity problem. The variance proportions are not excessively concentrated on a single dimension for

both the constant (.98) and artificial intelligence skills (.98). This suggests that the predictor variable is statistically independent and the regression estimates are stable and reliable.

Table 8: Residual Statistics for the Regression Model on Artificial Intelligence Skills and Job Readiness (N = 106)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.3594	4.0259	2.9660	.71568	106
Std. Predicted Value	-2.245	1.481	.000	1.000	106
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.042	.104	.058	.014	106
Adjusted Predicted Value	1.3813	4.0268	2.9675	.71463	106
Residual	-1.42602	1.21844	.00000	.43311	106
Std. Residual	-3.277	2.800	.000	.995	106
Stud. Residual	-3.301	2.814	-.002	1.004	106
Deleted Residual	-1.44753	1.23083	-.00148	.44078	106
Stud. Deleted Residual	-3.473	2.914	-.005	1.018	106
Mahal. Distance	.000	5.040	.991	1.003	106
Cook's Distance	.000	.082	.009	.017	106
Centered Leverage Value	.000	.048	.009	.010	106

a. Dependent Variable: Job Readiness

Table 8 indicates that the predicted values range from 1.3594 to 4.0259, with a mean of 2.9660. The residual mean is approximately zero, suggesting no systematic prediction error. Standardized residuals range between -3.277 and 2.800 , indicating minimal outliers. Cook's Distance values (max = $.082$) are below 1, showing no influential cases.

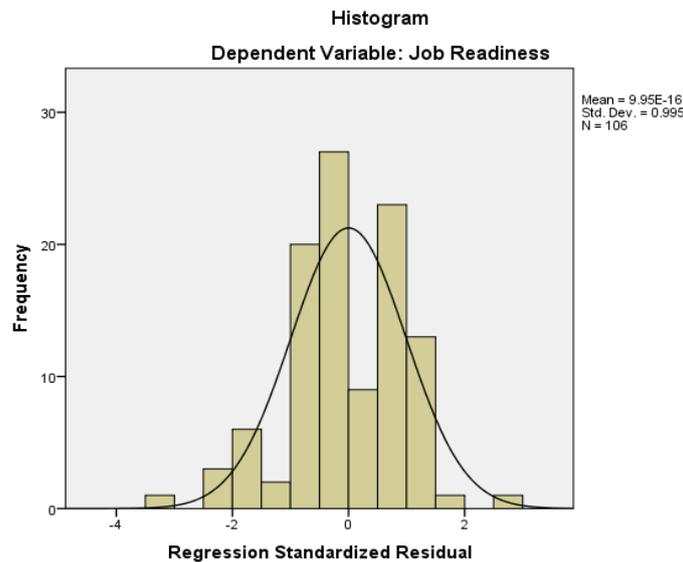


Figure 1: Histogram of Standardized Residuals for Job Readiness Regression Model (N = 106)

Figure 1 shows the distribution of standardized residuals for the regression model predicting job readiness from artificial intelligence skills. The histogram appears approximately normal, with most residuals centered around zero, indicating that the errors are symmetrically distributed. This supports the assumption of normality in the regression analysis. The spread of residuals is relatively even, and no extreme outliers are evident, suggesting that the regression model is appropriate and the predictions are reliable.

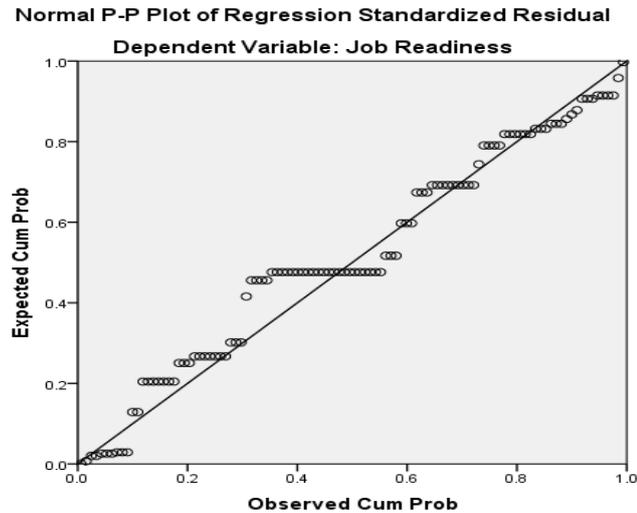


Figure 2: Normal P-P Plot of Standardized Residuals for Job Readiness Regression Model (N = 106)

Figure 2 shows the Normal P P plot of standardized residuals of the regression model to predict job readiness using artificial intelligence (AI) skills. The data points follow the diagonal reference line closely, thus proving that the residuals are normally distributed, thus proving the assumption of normality used in regression analysis to be met. The fact that the points follow the line indicates a small deviation to not follow a normal distribution, which supports the reliability and validity of the regression estimates.

Discussion

The descriptive statistics of Table 2 show that the competence of business-education undergraduates in Anambra State is observed to be higher in theoretical facets of AI, including the knowledge of fundamental concepts of machine-learning and the ability to use AI in problem-solution, but their practical skills, especially the skill to effectively use AI tools and the application of AI to communication-related tasks, are relatively less. This tendency implies an existing theory-practice gap in AI skills development among students. Surprisingly, in a similar study involving university graduates across several countries, higher AI knowledge and more active AI tool utilization were also linked to better employment outcomes, however, still, many graduates claimed to be unprepared to the practical side of AI utilization (Portocarrero Ramos et al., 2025). Likewise, a study conducted by Nguyen et al. (2024) revealed that current levels of understanding of AI are increasing, but practical work with AI tools is still low, which lowers the readiness of students to perform tasks in the real world. Conversely, other research emphasizes that the implementation of AI in the curriculum and training contributes to gaining practical skills significantly, such as IT-vocational graduates have better digital collaboration and communication capabilities when AI and ICT resources are introduced into the instruction, emphasizing the significance of practice-based learning (Kholifah et al., 2025). These results suggest that the restricted practical AI skills that have been found in the current study might be due to the lack of opportunities to interact with AI technologies in a practical way in the contemporary educational context.

Following the use of job readiness competencies (Table 3), students with an average score of 151.38 reported relatively high scores in time management, professional communication, and problem-solving in practical situations. The results comply with the overall study on employability where academic and informal interactions tend to build core skills like problem-solving and communication and lead to moderate levels of preparedness among students (Mkhize, 2025). Nonetheless, the reduced average of teamwork demonstrates a

weakness in teamwork skills, a vital element of successful work environments. This finding is also supported by the results of another study on employability that found that graduates frequently lacked interpersonal and collaborative skills despite receiving technical training (Odika & Tom, 2020, as cited in Kholifah et al., 2025) and confirms the necessity of curricula that include teamwork and cooperative project work.

The positive correlation between AI skills and job readiness ($R = .856$, $R^2 = .732$) proves that AI competencies already explain a high percentage (73.2) of the difference in job readiness among undergraduates. This observation concurs with Portocarrero Ramos et al. (2025), whose study has found that the acquisition of AI skills is a crucial distinguishing factor in terms of employment opportunities and professional orientation among the university graduates. Similarly, recent employment studies highlight that as employers grow more concerned with the skills over the degree, AI skills, such as technical and analytical skills, which are now becoming the core of employment in current skill-based hiring markets are more crucial (Gupta & Sharma, 2025). In addition, the research also emphasizes a wider international approach: graduates often indicate the absence of AI and digital skills that make them less confident and less willing to work (Cengage Group, 2023). Conversely, when AI training is combined with practice-focused learning in educational programs, students are in a better position to handle AI-affected work environments, which in turn can explain the predictive ability of AI skill training on job preparedness in this research.

CONCLUSION

The paper confirms the hypothesis that AI skill development is a robust indicator of job preparation among tertiary business-education undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. The results indicate that students have strong theoretical understanding of AI, especially on simple concepts of machine-learning and applications of AI in solving problems but have less practical skills in the utilization of AI tools and the application of AI to communication tasks. Job readiness competencies are moderately developed, and the strengths are observed in time management, professional communication, and problem-solving, yet weaknesses could be traced in terms of teamwork skills. Descriptive and regression analyses affirm the existence of a positive significant relationship between AI skills and job readiness, and that any enhancement of AI competencies has a direct positive effect on job readiness and employability of graduates. As a result, it is necessary to incorporate real-world AI training, field experiences, and business-specific applications in business school curricula. The development of AI-related skills in tertiary institutions and the policy makers will need to give priority to the development of AI-oriented skills so that graduates can be competitive in a labor market that is becoming more digital and automated.

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