INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENTREPRENEURIAL KNOWLEDGE
Issue 1, volume 14, ISSN 2336-2960 (Online)
www.ijek.org

COOKING SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS: MEDIATING EFFECTS OF COOKING PASSION, COOKING TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING, AND COOKING SELF-EFFICACY

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Received: 2 July 2025. Revision received: 24 February 2026. Accepted: 14 April 2026

ABSTRACT
The eating pattern and changing food choices of Nigerian youths, particularly those in Abuja, are increasingly characterised by eating out. Seventeen years after the introduction of bachelor of science degree in entrepreneurship into the Nigerian universities' curriculum, it is only natural to think that these graduates who were posted to the capital city of Nigeria for their national youth service corps (NYSC) ought to have started deploying their cooking skills (CSS) to establish mama-puts (unstandardised restaurants) to meet the food needs of the youths who eat out, become self-employed and create jobs. This is not the case, as evidenced by rising unemployment rates among youth and graduates. Hence, this study investigates the mediating effects of cooking passion (CPN), cooking tacit knowledge sharing (CTS), and cooking self-efficacy (CSE) in the nexus between CSS and entrepreneurial intentions (EIS). A cross-sectional research design, a criterion sampling technique, and a census method were adopted to select 187 respondents from a population of 238. The results from SmartPLS with bias-corrected 5,000 bootstrap resamples reveal that the direct and total effects of CSS on CPN, CTS, CSE, and EIS are positive and significant. Also, the indirect effect of CSS on EIS via CPN and CSE is significant, whereas the effect through CTS is non-significant. Thus, the acquisition and utilisation of cooking skills can trigger "mama put" formation and job creation among graduates and non-graduates through passion for cooking and self-efficacy. The study concludes by shedding light on the theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and future research directions.

KEYWORDS: Cooking passion, cooking self-efficacy, cooking skills, cooking tacit knowledge sharing, entrepreneurial intentions.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: D83, J24, L26.

Reference: Agbim, K. C., Oyenuga, M. O., Andah, R. A., & Oladele, T. O. (2026). COOKING SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS: MEDIATING EFFECTS OF COOKING PASSION, COOKING TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING, AND COOKING SELF-EFFICACY. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Knowledge*, *14*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.37335/ijek.v14i1.327

INTRODUCTION

The fact that people need food daily and that some cannot prepare the food they desire themselves makes food a lifestyle and a basic necessity, and a culinary or food business a required, permanent enterprise. As such, food preparation procedures and methods are taught as cooking skills (CSS). CSS can be acquired from the home, school, and via social media (Godara & Dev, 2021). The unprecedented rise in food programming, food reality shows, online food content, and food photos on social media is fostering an eating-out culture among viewers, particularly among the youth. At the same time, it is fueling the need for more food media, food businesses, and chefs and cooks. The hallmarks of these cooks include CSS, cooking passion (CPN), cooking tacit knowledge sharing (CTS), and cooking self-efficacy (CSE) (Traynor et al., 2021).

CSS represents the ability to perform food preparation tasks in the kitchen. Dalem et al. (2024) view CSS as a person's behaviour regarding meal preparation. This behaviour includes CPN. Passion is an emotional state that may trigger entrepreneurial intentions (EIS) (Ben, 2025; Biraglia & Kadile, 2017; Tanoto et al., 2024). Further, CSS is related to cooking knowledge (Corotan & Chavez, 2024). This knowledge is the awareness, identification, applied know-how, and competencies concerning food preparation that are accumulated through education, work, and life experiences (Agbim et al., 2013a&b). All knowledge is either tacit or emanates from it. Tacit knowledge was introduced by Michael Polanyi as personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1958), created in the minds of individuals who possess it (Agbim et al., 2013b). Thus, it is difficult to disseminate.

Nevertheless, tacit knowledge may be shared through learning-by-doing and/or learning-by-interaction (Kucharska & Erickson, 2021). It increases in value when it is shared and applied as innovation or utilised to create new knowledge or enterprise (Agbim et al., 2013b; Kremer & Steudten, 2021). Jiatong et al. (2021) aver that the desire to start a business can also be triggered by self-efficacy. This is because the learning of CSS among students can influence their self-efficacy and attitudes towards food (O'Kane et al., 2021). CSS is associated with CSE since the latter reflects an individual's confidence in using cooking techniques. Again, CSS is assessed by CSE (Jomori et al., 2018). The social cognitive theory (SCT) affirms that an individual's perception of his/her skills or abilities plays a crucial role in fostering EIS. The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) adds that such EIS can be triggered mainly by planned and goal-oriented behaviours such as cooking food for commercial purposes (Tantono et al., 2022).

Despite the foregoing, most youths who wish to start culinary businesses lack culinary skills (Nasution et al., 2021). In addition, young people lack CPN (Biraglia & Kadile, 2017). Most of the culinary knowledge possessed by teachers and students has not been translated to explicit knowledge and shared (Rahmawati et al., 2015), while studies on CSS and knowledge are scant (Hinalinan & Briones, 2023; Pascual et al., 2019). Studies on the learning of CSS at home and in school, and how it triggers culinary business intentions, are scant in developing countries (e.g., Martins et al., 2020). Again, consumer food choices and time spent cooking in the kitchen are changing at an unprecedented rate, particularly among young people. This is due to factors such as convenience, finance, lifestyle, office schedule, and lack of CSS (Surgenor et al., 2017).

It is evident in extant literature that several researchers have related cooking skills to factors such as attitude (Corotan & Chavez, 2024), healthy eating (Çelik et al., 2023), and knowledge and self-efficacy (Bruno, 2019), while the study that has associated cooking skills with entrepreneurial intentions was conducted with special focus on students (Dalem et al., 2024). As such, no study seems to have investigated the nexus between cooking skills and entrepreneurial intentions among entrepreneurship graduates. Again, despite the relatedness of the aforementioned factors with cooking passion, cooking tacit knowledge sharing, and cooking self-efficacy, no study seems to have brought to the fore the mediating roles of the latter factor. Thus, these research gaps were addressed by investigating the mediating roles of cooking passion, cooking tacit knowledge sharing, and cooking self-efficacy in the

relationship between cooking skills and entrepreneurial intentions among graduates of entrepreneurship in the Nigerian context.

With the increasing number of entrepreneurship graduates in Nigeria, and Abuja in particular, it is only natural to think that the opportunity presented by the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) orientation in Abuja will trigger EIS for "mama put" among these graduates. This is because the Departments of Entrepreneurship and/or Entrepreneurship Development Centers in Nigerian universities promote food preparation techniques through their CSS or catering programs. This thinking is not totally so in Abuja, as evident from the increasing number of unemployed graduates and university undergraduates with high eating-out habits (Agbim et al., 2023). The NYSC is a mandatory one-year service in Nigeria for graduates.

The term "mama put" refers to small enterprises that prepare and serve commercial foods and drinks by the roadside. They are unstandardised restaurants that offer fast table foods mostly in areas that are dominated by low-income earners. The graduates of entrepreneurship who were posted to the city of Abuja for their NYSC are rarely transforming their food preparation knowledge and skills into "mama put" to meet the changing food needs of individuals in the city who cannot prepare the food they eat by themselves at home and/or lack the wherewithal to afford food from standardised restaurants. There is therefore a need to investigate the mediating roles of CPN, CTS, and CSE on the nexus between CSS and EIS to create "mama puts". Failure to carry out this study may imply overlooking the abounding opportunities for "mama puts" in Abuja. It may result to further deepening the waste of resources in teaching CSS and by extension increasing the rate of unemployment among graduates, particularly those who studied entrepreneurship.

The rest of the paper is organised thus the next section focuses on the theoretical foundation. This includes the hypothesis development. The next section discusses the research methods. This is followed by the results, the hypothesis test, and the discussion of the major findings. Finally, the theoretical and practical implications, along with the conclusion, are presented in the final sections.

1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The theoretical foundation of this study is laid on the SCT and TPB. The SCT, as postulated by Bandura (1986), posits that learning occurs in a social context, through dynamic, reciprocal interactions among individuals, their environment, and their behavior. Thus, the theory serves as a paradigm for understanding, predicting, and altering human behavior (Tantono et al., 2022), including eating patterns and food preparation. The TPB as theorised by Icek Ajzen in 1991, proposed that desired actions by individuals will usually be initiated by intentions. The TPB views intention as the best predictor of behaviour. As such, it is influenced by attitude, control, and norms. The intended personal attitude towards relevant activities and behavioural control manifests through an individual's perception of how easy or difficult his/her plans will be. The subjective norm is determined by others' opinions, which can encourage or hinder someone from implementing their plans (Ajzen, 1991; Tsaknis & Sahinidis, 2020).

1.1 Cooking skills and entrepreneurial intentions

Entrepreneurial skills can ignite entrepreneurial intentions among university students (Mujtaba et al., 2025). Students with limited CSS show little or no interest in cooking (Lavelle et al., 2019), whereas students who view CSS as important skills are committed to cooking (Czup, 2020). Even though most young people are enormously endowed with the requisite cooking capabilities, they show very little interest in establishing culinary enterprises. However, with the growing opportunities in the culinary sector in recent times, many culinary businesses have been started by young people (Chatterjee, 2023). Corroborating the foregoing, Dalem et al. (2024) affirm that culinary skills can influence entrepreneurial

desires or trigger the desire to start a business venture in the future. Xu and Lee (2025) demonstrate that restaurant entrepreneurship education fosters start-up intentions among graduating hospitality students. However, when the risks of venturing into the restaurant business are emphasised more than the benefits, it lowers the rate at which the students develop entrepreneurial intentions to become restaurateurs. Therefore, we propose that:

H1: Cooking skills have no significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions

1.2 Cooking skills and cooking passion

Entrepreneurial passion helps individuals to mobilise the requisite personal and vicarious experiences, and financial, human and social resources to overcome the barriers that are associated with new venture formation (Biraglia & Kadile, 2017). Proactive personality and entrepreneurial passion may foster entrepreneurial behaviour among university students (Sajjad et al., 2024). As the expression of enthusiasm for setting up a business, entrepreneurial passion (Chen et al., 2009) can keep an individual engaged in the practice of food preparation. Thus, exposing youths to culinary skills through training can foster a desire to learn these skills and work in the culinary sector (Abbas et al., 2021). Taggar et al. (2024) establish that positive passion emerges with higher team fit, while Morsiani et al. (2024) found that group management skills are associated with both harmonious passion and obsessive passion. Hence, we hypothesise that:

H2a: Cooking skills have no significant effect on cooking passion

1.3 Cooking skills and cooking tacit knowledge sharing

Cooking tacit knowledge and skills, such as food ingredients, preparation procedures, handling techniques, and safety practices, in an individual's cooking ideas, competencies, and experiences can be converted into forms that can be understood, absorbed, used, and reused by other individuals (Sullivan, 2019) in a social context. Farmer et al. (2021) argue that social networking facilitates the sharing and improvement of tacit knowledge (Rohman et al., 2020). As such, social networks are rich sources of skills, tacit knowledge, and business opportunities (Nonaka & Krogh, 2009). The practical activities associated with the acquisition of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills in such a network can help nurture participants to share and learn new knowledge and skills (Donnellon et al., 2014). The more knowledge is shared, the more requisite skills are developed, and relevant enterprises are formed (Setianto et al., 2020). Lack of cooking knowledge makes mastering and sharing practical CSS challenging (Farmer et al., 2021). Farmer and Hingst (2025) affirm that the development of cooking as a practice is associated with the transfer of tacit knowledge, and de Oliveira Andrade et al. (2025) argue that cooking skills are enhanced by sound cooking knowledge. Accordingly, we propose that:

H2b: Cooking skills have no significant effect on cooking tacit knowledge sharing

1.4 Cooking skills and cooking self-efficacy

Personal ability or skill to carry out entrepreneurial activities can contribute to the development of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Alammari et al., 2019; Hutasuhut, 2018). In turn, self-confidence or self-efficacy can enhance the utilisation of skills to achieve entrepreneurial outcomes (Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023; Jiatong et al., 2021). As such, skills can be used to predict one's level of self-efficacy (Wardana et al., 2020). Martins et al. (2020) empirically establish that CSS confidence can influence children's ultra-processed foods consumption patterns and further CSS (Esim, 2019). Policastro et al. (2023) assert that culinary literacy influences self-efficacy, while Lagrada and Arroyo (2025) conclude that high self-efficacy is associated with an advanced level of cooking skills. Thus, we hypothesise that:

H2c: Cooking skills have no significant effect on cooking self-efficacy

1.5 Cooking passion and entrepreneurial intentions

Entrepreneurial passion plays an important role in entrepreneurship development (e.g., Li et al., 2017; Mueller et al., 2017). Specifically, passion empowers individuals to overcome challenges associated with entrepreneurial development. It equally motivates would-be entrepreneurs to commit to transforming personal interests into successful enterprises (Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023). Individuals who are passionate about entrepreneurship exhibit intense emotions and a willingness towards new venture formation (Cardon & Kirk, 2015), especially among university graduates (Anjum et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial passion can lead a person to focus on what needs to be done in the new venture creation process by triggering the planning of context-related and conduct of action-oriented EIS (Biraglia & Kadile, 2017). In addition to contributing to the triggering of digital EIS (Prameka & Kurniawan, 2023), entrepreneurial passion influences EIS across diverse business ventures (e.g., Bignetti et al., 2021; Neneh, 2022). Wu et al. (2022) establish that entrepreneurial passion is the strongest predictor of willingness to be self-employed among college students, while Maziriri et al. (2024) find that parents' entrepreneurial passion can influence students' attitudes towards becoming technopreneurs. Thus, we argue that CPN may trigger EIS for the food business. Accordingly, the following proposition was developed:

H3a: Cooking passion has no significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions

1.6 Cooking tacit knowledge sharing and entrepreneurial intentions

Entrepreneurial knowledge enhances an individual's ability to identify and/or create business opportunities and to satisfy them through new venture formation (Martin et al., 2013). Similarly, the discovery and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities requires entrepreneurial knowledge (Oosterbeek et al., 2010). Hence, entrepreneurial knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge sharing, can trigger EIS (Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023; van Houten, 2023). Tacit knowledge is difficult to share (Nonaka, 1994). However, since it is personal and practical knowledge, it can be learned from the person who has it (Sternberg et al., 1995) through practice, experience, and socialization (Kucharska & Erickson, 2021). Involvement in knowledge sharing influences self-learning, self-study, innovative behaviour, tacit knowledge development, willingness to share, and the creation of innovative products and/or services (Kucharska & Erickson, 2021; Setianto et al., 2020). Karakaş et al. (2024) found that entrepreneurial knowledge influences students' entrepreneurial intentions. Babarinde and Elutide (2024) conclude that knowledge-sharing behavior is related to entrepreneurial intention. Thus, we argue that CTS may trigger EIS. Accordingly, we hypothesise that:

H3b: Cooking tacit knowledge sharing has no significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions

1.7 Cooking self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy drives entrepreneurship (Cardon & Kirk, 2015) by enhancing intentions (Ajzen, 2002) and enabling individuals to achieve outcomes (Jiatong et al., 2021), such as new venture formation (McGee et al., 2009). Thus, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is an antecedent of EIS (Bacq et al., 2017; Crespo et al., 2018) and higher EIS (Oktaviana et al., 2018), and a better predictor of EIS (Ceresia & Mendola, 2020; Kurjono et al., 2020). This suggests that "people with a higher level of self-efficacy demonstrate stronger EIS, while those with lower levels of self-efficacy demonstrate weaker ones" (Ndofirepi, 2022, p. 4). Maemunah et al. (2019) found that self-efficacy contributes to the development of interest in entrepreneurship among vocational high school students in Indonesia. Corroborating these assertions, Nasri and Morched (2023) and Monica and Anuradha (2023) in their separate studies affirm that entrepreneurial self-efficacy and EIS are related. Salami et al. (2023) argue that self-efficacy and EIS

are associated among university students, while Ye et al. (2025) conclude that entrepreneurial self-efficacy influences entrepreneurial intention of college students in Korea. Thus, we propose that:
H3c: Cooking self-efficacy has no significant effect on entrepreneurial intentions

1.8 Cooking skills, cooking passion, and entrepreneurial intentions

Skills can trigger entrepreneurial passion (Chen et al., 2009) and entrepreneurial desires or intentions (Dalem et al., 2024). Entrepreneurial passion can influence EIS (Anjum et al., 2021) and new venture creation (e.g., Gielnik et al., 2017). Entrepreneurial passion facilitates the surmounting of entrepreneurial barriers, the creation of new ventures, and the achievement of relevant business results (Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023). Ferreira-Neto et al. add that entrepreneurial passion mediates the relationship between creativity and EIS. Noreña-Chavez and Guevara (2020) establish that entrepreneurial passion significantly mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and innovative behaviour, while Murad et al. (2021) argue that this relationship is only partially mediated by entrepreneurial passion. Thuy et al. (2020) found that passion mediates the relationships between entrepreneurial identity centrality and entrepreneurship intention, and between entrepreneurial role model and entrepreneurship intention. Zhou et al. (2022) assert that entrepreneurial passion plays a mediating role between entrepreneurial institutional environment and entrepreneurial orientation. We further argue that the CSS and EIS may be mediated by CPN. Hence, we propose that:

H4a: Cooking passion has no significant mediating effect on the relationship between cooking skills and entrepreneurial intentions

1.9 Cooking skills, cooking tacit knowledge sharing, and entrepreneurial intentions

Skills acquisition promotes knowledge sharing (Gajam & Yıldız, 2023; Singh et al., 2021), while tacit knowledge sharing augments learning, enterprise creation, and productivity (Huie et al., 2020). More specifically, tacit knowledge sharing can influence EIS (Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023; van Houten, 2023). Conversely, knowledge sharing lowers turnover intentions (Srivastava & Pradhan, 2019). Further, knowledge sharing partially mediates the relationship between social capital and innovative behaviour. Again, tacit knowledge sharing mediates the relationships between affect- and cognition-based trust and innovative behaviour, but partially mediates the relationships among individual factors and innovative behaviour (Gajam & Yıldız, 2023; Wah et al., 2018). Yang et al. (2018) affirm that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between collaborative culture and product innovation and process innovation. Hu et al. (2023) conclude that tacit knowledge sharing partially mediates the relationship between psychological capital and breakthrough innovation. As such, we hypothesise that:

H4b: Cooking tacit knowledge sharing does not significantly mediate the cooking skills - entrepreneurial intentions nexus

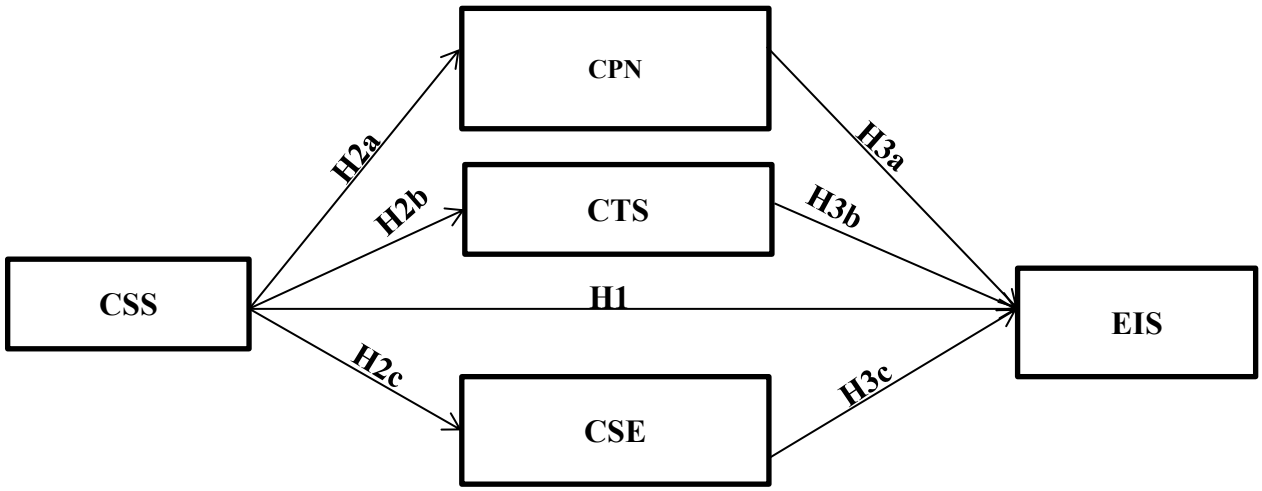
1.10 Cooking skills, cooking self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intentions

Entrepreneurial skills can facilitate the development of self-efficacy (Hutasuhut, 2018) and can be employed to estimate an individual's self-efficacy (Wardana et al., 2020). In turn, entrepreneurial self-efficacy can trigger EIS in such persons (Kurjono et al., 2020; Monica & Anuradha, 2023). Furthermore, entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the development of students' EIS (Tsai et al., 2016) and the nexus between creativity and EIS (Bellò et al., 2018; Bignetti et al., 2021). The direct effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on intention to pursue an entrepreneurial goal is statistically significant (Ndofirepi, 2022). Rastiti et al. (2021) found that self-efficacy partially mediates the effects of entrepreneurship education, economic literacy, and family environment on entrepreneurial intentions among vocational school students. Wu et al. (2022) establish that entrepreneurial self-efficacy completely mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. Lioe et al. (2023) conclude based on

an empirical study that entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively and significantly mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial network and resources, and EIS. Thus, we hypothesise that:
H4c: The relationship between cooking skills and entrepreneurial intentions is not significantly mediated by cooking self-efficacy

Based on the conceptualisations, the proposed conceptual framework showing the hypothesised relationships is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 **Conceptual framework of the relationships among CSS, CPN, CTS, CSE, and EIS**



(Source: Authors' own elaboration*)*

2 METHODS

A cross-sectional research design was adopted to study the population of 238 university fresh graduates of entrepreneurship who were posted to Abuja for the 2024 Batch "C" NYSC. Criterion sampling technique was employed to screen the graduates based on the following predetermined criteria: (i) the graduate is from a family that regularly and frequently prepares meals at home; (ii) the graduate learnt CSS from the parents starting from childhood to adolescent up to the period he/she gained admission into the university; (iii) in the graduate's family, all members participate in food preparation; (iv) while in the university, the graduate lived off-campus. This is to ensure that as a student, he/she has cooking utensils and prepares food by himself/herself; and (v) the graduate detests fries, processed foods, and eating out. Based on the aforementioned criteria, the study's target population is 187. The census method was employed due to the small size of the target population, while the unit of analysis is a fresh graduate.

The measures of CSS were adapted from Bruno (2019) and Lavelle et al. (2017). The CPN measures were adapted from Feng and Chen (2020). The measures of CTS were adapted from Kucharska (2017) and Pu et al. (2022). The CSE measures were adapted from Saoula et al. (2023). The variables in the questionnaire were measured on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The validity of the research instrument was confirmed by three lecturers in the Department of Entrepreneurial Studies, Veritas University, Abuja. The one hundred and eighty-seven (187) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the fresh graduates during their three-week NYSC orientation camp on a face-to-face basis. The demographic data of the graduates were analysed using frequency counts and simple percentages, and the results are presented in Table 1.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Demographic characteristics

Table 1 **Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	74	39.57
	Female	113	60.43
Age	20 – 25 years	100	53.48
	26 – 30 years	59	31.55
	30 and above	28	14.97
Marital Status	Single	72	38.50
	Married	115	61.50

(Source: Authors' own elaboration*)*

Table 1 shows that 39.57% of respondents were male and 60.43% were female. This implies that more females than males participated in the study. It can also be inferred from Table 1 that 53.48% of the respondents were aged 20-25 years, while 31.55% were aged 26-30 years. Lastly, the results in Table 1 show that 14.97% of the respondents were 30 years and above. This suggests that the majority of entrepreneurship graduates who participated in the survey were 20-25 years old. Finally, 38.50% of the respondents were single, while 61.50% were married. This indicates that the majority of entrepreneurship graduates who participated in the study were single. A two-way method using SmartPLS version 4 with 5,000 bootstrap resamples was employed to test the direct, total, and indirect effects. This method was adopted because it simultaneously analyses multiple pathways, estimates the indirect effects separately, and sheds better light on the relationships among the variables. The instrument's reliability was confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis (see Table 2).

3.2 Measurement model

Table 2 **Measurement Model**

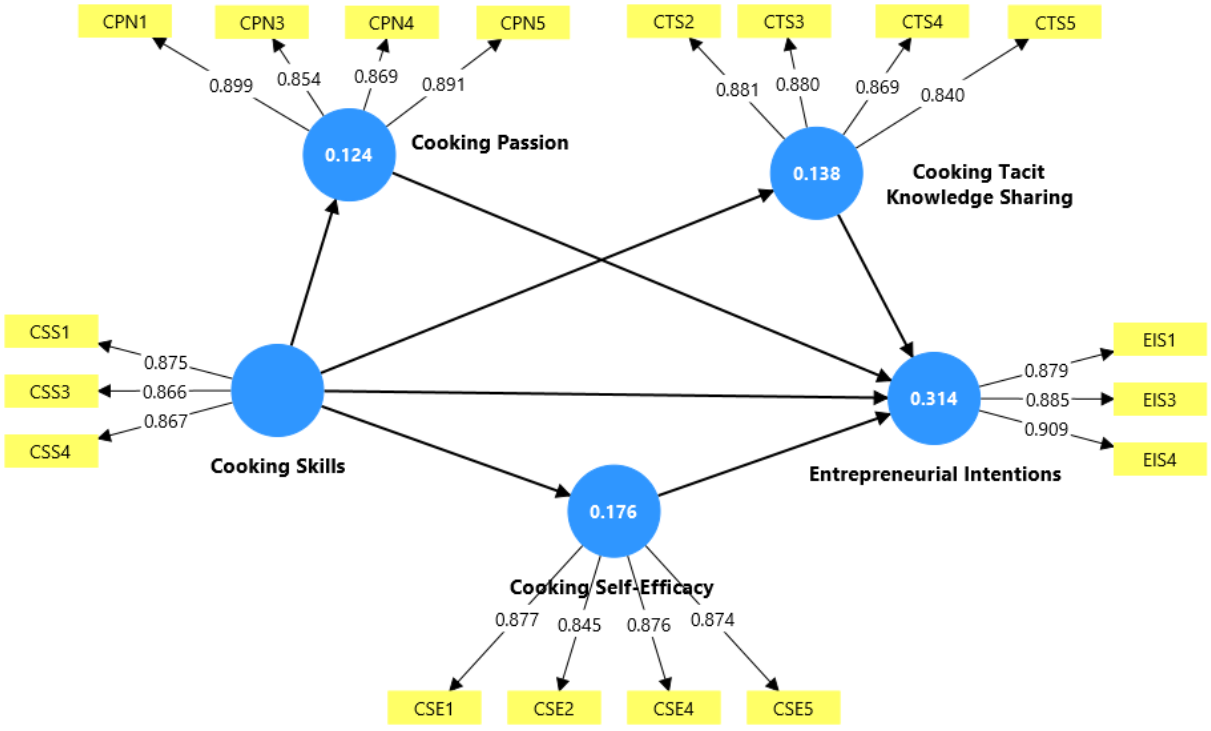
Variables	Indicators	Loading	AVE	CR (rho_a)	CR(rho_c)	Cronbach's α
CSS	CSS1	0.899	0.756	0.839	0.903	0.839
	CSS2	deleted				
	CSS3	0.854				
	CSS4	0.869				
	CSS5	0.891				
CPN	CPN1	0.877	0.772	0.905	0.931	0.901
	CPN2	0.845				
	CPN3	deleted				
	CPN4	0.876				
	CPN5	0.874				
CTS	CTS1	0.875	0.753	0.894	0.924	0.891
	CTS2	deleted				
	CTS3	0.866				

	CTS4	0.867				
	CTS5	deleted				
CSE	CSE1	deleted	0.754	0.891	0.924	0.891
	CSE2	deleted				
	CSE3	0.881				
	CSE4	0.880				
	CSE5	0.869				
EIS	EIS1	0.840	0.794	0.872	0.920	0.870
	EIS2	0.879				
	EIS3	Deleted				
	EIS4	0.885				
	EIS5	0.909				

Note: AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability, CPN = cooking passion, CSE = cooking self-efficacy, CSS = cooking skills, CTS = cooking tacit knowledge sharing, EIS = entrepreneurial intentions

(Source: Authors' own elaboration*)*

Figure 2 **Measurement model**



(Source: Authors' own elaboration*)*

Table 2 and Figure 2 present the results of the measurement model assessment for CSS, CPN, CTS, CSE and EIS. The factor loadings for the retained indicators ranged from 0.840 to 0.909, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. This result, therefore, confirms the indicator's reliability. Further, as recommended by Sarstedt et al. (2021), items with low loadings (CSS2, CPN3, CTS2, CTS5, CSE1, CSE2 and EIS3) were deleted to improve construct reliability and validity. The convergent validity, as indicated by AVE values, ranged from 0.753 to 0.794, exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.50. Likewise, internal

consistency reliability was confirmed across all constructs, with all values exceeding the 0.70 threshold. That is, the Cronbach's α values ranged from 0.839 to 0.901, rhoa values from 0.839 to 0.905 and rhoc values from 0.903 to 0.931. Overall, the measurement model for this study demonstrates adequate reliability and convergent validity, supporting the suitability of the constructs for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 3 **Discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker's criterion)**

	CPN	CSE	CSS	CTS	EIS
CPN	0.880				
CSE	0.429	0.868			
CSS	0.352	0.420	0.869		
CTS	0.378	0.340	0.372	0.868	
EIS	0.434	0.407	0.421	0.373	0.9

(Source: Authors' own elaboration*)*

The results of the evaluation of discriminant validity using Fornell-Larcker's criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) are reported in Table 3. The square roots of the AVE, which are reported along the diagonal, that is, 0.880, 0.868, 0.868, 0.868, and 0.900, represent the square roots of CPN, CSE, CSS, CTS and EIS, respectively. In each instance, these values exceeded the relevant inter-construct correlations, which ranged from 0.340 to 0.434. The strongest relationship was found between CPN and EIS (r = 0.434), since it is less than the square root of the AVE of these two constructs. This trend shows that each construct has a greater share of variance within its individuals than with other constructs in the model. Thus, it meets the Fornell-Larcker criterion and demonstrates sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 4 **Discriminant validity (HTMT criterion)**

	CPN	CSE	CSS	CTS	EIS
CPN					
CSE	0.477				
CSS	0.404	0.485			
CTS	0.420	0.381	0.430		
EIS	0.485	0.462	0.491	0.422	

(Source: Authors' own elaboration*)*

To further determine the validity of the discriminants, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) was employed. Table 4 reports that the values of the HTMT were 0.381-0.491, which are significantly lower than the conservative value of 0.85 (and the more liberal value of 0.90). The largest value of HTMT, which is within the acceptable range, was found between CSS and EIS (HTMT = 0.491), and CPN and EIS (HTMT = 0.485). The high levels of consistency in the HTMT ratios of all pairs of constructs give further support that the latent constructs are empirically distinct. Taken together, the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT findings confirm the strong discriminant validity of the measurement model.

3.3 Structural model

3.3.1 Descriptive statistics

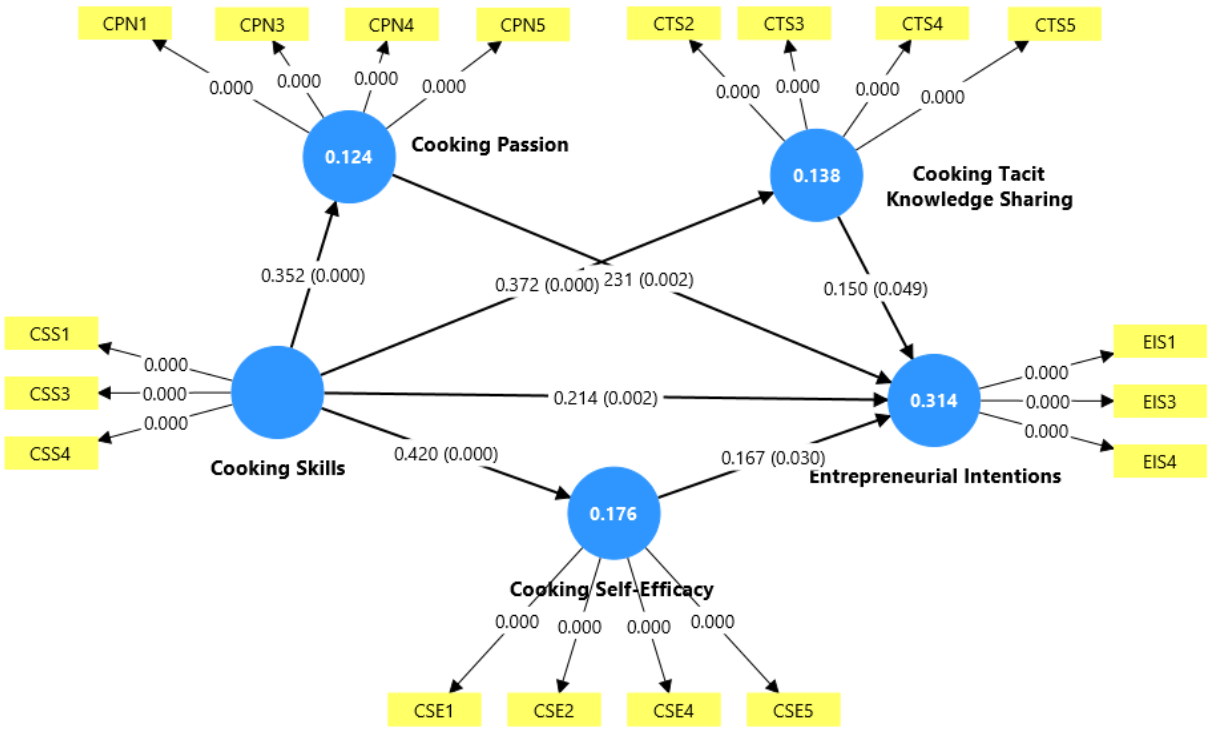
Table 5 **Mean, standard deviation and bivariate correlations of the variables**

Variables	Mean	SD	CPN	CSE	CSS	CTS	EIS
CPN	3.787	0.855	1				
CSE	3.777	0.843	0.429	1			
CSS	3.784	0.827	0.352	0.420	1		
CTS	3.800	0.832	0.378	0.340	0.372	1	
EIS	3.786	0.847	0.434	0.407	0.421	0.373	1

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics and bivariate associations among the study variables. Mean scores ranged from 3.777 (CSE) to 3.800 (CTS), indicating moderately high CPN, CSE, CSS, CTS, and EIS among the respondents. Standard deviations were not very high (0.827-0.855), indicating the lack of spread on the mean. The correlation results indicate that all constructs had a positive, moderate relationship. CPN (r = 0.434), CSE (r = 0.407), CSS (r = 0.421), and CTS (r = 0.373) were positively related to EIS. Likewise, CSE (r = 0.429) and CSS (r = 0.352) were positively related to CPN. The correlations, all significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), indicate meaningful relationships with no multicollinearity.

3.4 Test of hypotheses

Figure 3 **Structural Model**



(Source: Authors' own elaboration*)*

The regression model in Figure 3 shows that the direct effect of CSS on EIS is significant (β =0.128, p<0.000), while the total effect is significant and positive (β = 0.246, p < 0.001). Thus, H1 is supported. Figure 2 also shows that the direct effects of CSS on CPN, CTS, and CSE are significant and positive (β = 0.219, p < 0.001; β = 0.237, p < 0.001; β = 0.225, p < 0.001). Hence, H2a, H2b and H2c are supported. The results of the direct effects of CPN, CTS and CSE on EIS are significant and positive (β = 0.326, p < 0.001; β = 0.378, p < 0.001; β= 0.299, p < 0.01). Thus, H3a, H3b and H3c are supported.

Table 6 **Path coefficients of the structural model**

				Bias-correlated 95% CI	
Path	**B**	**T value**	**P values**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Direct Effects					
CPN -> EIS	0.231	3.112	0.002	0.082	0.371
CSE -> EIS	0.167	2.169	0.030	0.021	0.320
CSS -> CPN	0.352	5.614	0.000	0.230	0.471
CSS -> CSE	0.420	6.591	0.000	0.292	0.537
CSS -> CTS	0.372	5.630	0.000	0.243	0.495
CSS -> EIS	0.214	3.123	0.002	0.076	0.350
CTS -> EIS	0.150	1.967	0.049	0.005	0.301
Specific indirect effect					
CSS -> CTS -> EIS	0.057	1.815	0.070	0.002	0.122
CSS -> CSE -> EIS	0.072	2.012	0.044	0.008	0.145
CSS -> CPN -> EIS	0.081	2.625	0.009	0.026	0.149

(Source: Authors' own elaboration*)*

The structural model results in Table 6 and Figure 3 indicate that CSS has a significant and positive direct effect on EIS (b = 0.214, t = 3.123, p = 0.002; 95% CI [0.076, 0.350]), supporting H1. CSS also exerted significant positive effects on CPN (b = 0.352, p < 0.001), CTS (b = 0.372, p < 0.001) and CSE (b = 0.420, p < 0.001). Therefore, supporting H2a, H2b, and H2c. Further, CPN (b = 0.231, p = 0.002), CSE (b = 0.167, p = 0.030) and CTS (b = 0.150, p = 0.049) significantly predict EIS, supporting H3a, H3b and H3c. Regarding mediation, CSS demonstrates significant indirect effects on EIS through CPN (b = 0.081, p = 0.009) and CSE (b = 0.072, p = 0.044), supporting H4a and H4c. However, the indirect effect via CTS is not statistically significant at the 5% level (b = 0.057, p = 0.070). Thus, H4b is not supported.

4 DISCUSSION

First, our analysis shows that the direct and total effects of CSS on EIS are positive and significant. This suggests that EIS to start a "mama put" can be triggered in graduates who have acquired a substantial level of CSS. This finding is somewhat related to prior studies (e.g., Dalem et al., 2024; Dragin et al., 2022) that affirm that skills correlate positively with EIS. Before now, the culinary business was trivialised by young people, especially university graduates. However, with the high rate of joblessness, changing eating style and health status of families and youths in general, graduates are increasingly acquiring CSS and opening culinary businesses. However, while some graduates perceive the culinary business subsector as offering opportunities for significant entrepreneurial success, others do not (Çelik et al., 2023; Dalem et al., 2024). Nevertheless, generally, personal skills such as CSS can significantly influence the entrepreneurial intent of graduating students (Abbas & Osunsan, 2020).

Second, our results reveal that the direct effects of CSS on CPN, CTS and CSE are positive and significant. These findings imply that CSS can trigger CTS and facilitate the development of CPN and CSE. Corroborating this finding, De Chiara et al. (2024) assert that collaborative skills can foster a passion for circular entrepreneurship, while Corotan and Chavez (2024) conclude that CSS significantly influences cooking knowledge. Moreover, Smith et al. (2019) note that skills contribute to the development of self-efficacy. Smith et al. add that acquiring diverse skills alone is not enough. Such an individual must have confidence or self-efficacy that the possessed skill(s), when utilised, can enhance the achievement of desired tasks or goals.

Third, we found that the direct effects of CPN, CTS and CSE on EIS are positive and significant. This finding indicates that the positive emotion and drive that CPN generates can motivate graduates to start "mama puts" and, at the same time, help sustain the business, notwithstanding the challenges in the entrepreneurial environment. Again, tacit knowledge-sharing behaviour can encourage graduates to take short-term jobs in restaurants or hotels to gain cooking experience and interact with seasoned chefs, sharing cutting-edge food preparation procedures and techniques. This can be done with the intent of acquiring their tacit knowledge to create new tacit knowledge that will trigger the intention to engage in "mama put" formation. The result also indicates that graduates can engage in diverse cooking activities to develop confidence in their cooking abilities, to the point that they will be willing to start and/or own "mama puts". In support of the foregoing, Feng and Chen (2020) aver that entrepreneurial passion can drive an individual to persist in entrepreneurial activities by stimulating his/her positive emotions, creativity, innovation, and attitude.
Further, despite the difficulties associated with disseminating tacit knowledge, it can still be shared via personal experience, reflection, stories, extensive personal contacts, practice, regular interactions, networking (van Houten, 2023), and externalisation (when it is converted into explicit knowledge) (Nonaka & Konno, 1998). Again, it can be shared through social interaction (e.g., observation and imitation), experiments in the laboratory and digital media (Letmathe et al., 2012), apprenticeship, mentorship (Kucharska & Erickson, 2021), working with the expert, independent self-study and practice by the trainee, receiving feedback and effecting corrections if need be (Agbim et al., 2013b). The sharing of tacit knowledge is based on trust (Goffin & Koners, 2011). As these individuals internalise the shared tacit knowledge, they gain both self-efficacy and a sense of expert power. This confidence in their own knowledge can lead to greater willingness to share it with others and/or to transform it into a business (Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2016; Kucharska, 2017). In more practical terms, individuals will share rather than hoard knowledge that can stimulate EIS when they are confident in their knowledge (Göksel & Aydintan, 2017).

Fourth, our results reveal that the indirect effect of CSS on EIS via CPN and CSE is positive and significant. These findings are consistent with the findings of Feng and Chen's (2020) study, which found that creativity influences EIS only when mediated by entrepreneurial passion. This passion is exhibited by entrepreneurs as intense positive feelings toward inventing, founding, starting entrepreneurial activities, and developing entrepreneurship (Cardon et al., 2013). In addition, the relationship between entrepreneurship education (in terms of personal skills) and start-up readiness is partially mediated by entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Adeniyi, 2023). This is because entrepreneurial self-efficacy enhances an individual's readiness to start a business (Ajzen, 2020). Self-efficacy fosters entrepreneurial aspirations by influencing an entrepreneur to believe in his/her ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities and to perceive entrepreneurial challenges as surmountable (Salami et al., 2023).

Contrarily, the mediating effect of CTS in the relationship between CSS and EIS is not statistically significant. The non-significant mediating role of cooking skills via cooking tacit knowledge sharing on entrepreneurial intentions might reflect the contextual truth that skills alone cannot be converted into meaningful tacit exchange that can trigger venture intentions. Tacit knowledge is often described as

experience-based and inexpressible, and its entrepreneurial value may depend on enabling social or institutional conditions. Even though past research indicates that tacit knowledge transfer increases innovation and enterprise performance (e.g., Ferreira-Neto et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2023), the current result suggests that its mediation is not general; it is rather situation-specific.

Based on SCT and TPB, CPN, CTS, and CSE can serve as a bridge between CSS and EIS. As such, the acquisition of CSS and the sharing of cooking tacit knowledge are not sufficient to trigger EIS among unemployed entrepreneurship graduates. There is a need to actively and frequently engage them in food preparation. This will ensure that the graduates develop CPN and CSE through active participation in the activities of a relevant cooking or culinary social network. Ngah and Jusoff (2009) argue that social networks provide platforms for formal and informal face-to-face interactions that help to foster ties among the interacting actors. These relationships can facilitate the building of trust and motivate interacting members to share their experiences through collaboration (Huang, 2017).

4.1 Theoretical implications

First, the study extends the existing literature on CSS and EIS by investigating the mediating effects of CPN, CTS and CSE. Second, the study's framework presents CPN and CSE as bridges for transforming the CSS of entrepreneurship graduates into EIS for "mama puts". It also presents the interplay among CSS, CPN, CTS, CSE, and EIS as a strategy for reducing the unemployment rate among graduates. Third, the significant and positive interrelationships among CSS, CPN, CTS, CSE, and EIS indicate that Ajzen's (1991) TPB is validated among unemployed entrepreneurship graduates in the Nigerian context. Thus, behaviours such as engagement in food preparation can trigger the intention to create "mama puts".

4.2 Practical implications

First, knowledge of the positive effect of CSS on EIS can encourage entrepreneurship graduates to engage in more food preparation exercises, thereby triggering their EIS for "mama puts". This effort of the graduates can be enhanced by policymakers through the sponsorship of cooking classes and competitions during the NYSC orientation camps. Second, our study has shown that CTS is not a mediator of the CSS-EIS nexus. Graduates of entrepreneurship can draw on this knowledge to avoid all practices that promote cooking knowledge hoarding and inhibit the creation of new tacit knowledge based on shared tacit knowledge. Policymakers can motivate industry experts to share their tacit knowledge by encouraging all graduates to form social networks. The interactions among the actors in the network can easily facilitate the development of trust and tacit learning through shared experiences among the interacting graduates.

Third, the non-significant effect of CTS on the relationship between CSS and EIS emphasises the importance of seamless collaboration among seasoned chefs, cookery instructors/lecturers, and graduates in sharing cooking tacit knowledge. Policymakers can support policies that encourage cooking legends and facilitators to build the trust that fosters the sharing of cooking experiences among their collaborators. Such policies should also ensure that the graduates create new tacit knowledge that will inspire them to develop EIS to start mama puts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that the effects of CSS on CPN, CTS, CSE and EIS are direct, total and positive. Again, CSS had a positive and significant influence on EIS through CPN and CSE, but not through CTS. Notwithstanding the positive results, the study has several limitations. First, despite the advantages of the cross-sectional research design in this study, it did not capture changes in the study variables over time.

Second, the geographical scope of the study is graduates of entrepreneurship who are posted to Abuja for their one-year NYSC. This suggests that the interpretation and application of the results are limited to entrepreneurship graduates in Abuja. Third, the study only investigated the mediating roles of CPN, CTS and CSE in the CSS and EIS nexus; even when there are other factors that can influence this relationship, Fourth, with the increasing rate of unemployment in Nigeria, a critical look at the research model empirically suggests that there is room for another theoretical construct that can be used in place of CSS to improve the model fitness. Yet, these constructs were not employed. Fifth, the study data were generated from entrepreneurship graduates. Thus, the research findings are limited in scope and population.

Hence, students, academia, government, organisations and researchers who wish to conduct similar studies in the future should consider adopting a longitudinal research design and data. This is important, as it will enhance our understanding of the causal relationships among the variables that the cross-sectional approach did not bring to the fore. Future researchers can validate these results by expanding the scope to include at least one State from each of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, or another region of the world. Future studies can employ factors such as perception and family background as either mediators or moderators. Further researchers can replace the CSS with constructs such as soft skills or hard skills. Future studies should consider utilising parents and lecturers/instructors as respondents. This is the first study to show that CSS can directly trigger EIS for "mama puts" among entrepreneurship graduates and indirectly through CPN and CSE. As such, the study presents the development of intentions for "mama put" formation as a strategy to meet the food needs of individuals who cannot afford meals at standardised restaurants. It also serves as a framework to reduce the unemployment rate and promote job creation among CSS-qualified entrepreneurship graduates.

RESEARCH ETHICS, INFORMED CONSENT, AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

This study did not require formal research ethics committee approval, as it involved an anonymous questionnaire survey of adult university graduates and did not collect sensitive personal data. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time, and the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity; by completing the questionnaire, they provided their informed consent. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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