

Business Education for Self-Reliance and Job Sustainability Among Undergraduate Students in Universities, South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the Business Education for Self-Reliance and Job Sustainability Among Undergraduate Students in Universities, South-South Nigeria. The study adopted the survey design. The population of the study comprises of 145 lecturers drawn from universities offering Business Education across South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. No sampling was made since the population was manageable. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts in measurement and evaluation and Business Education Department at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki which is located at South-East of Nigeria. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions; and independent samples t-test for the null hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed a relatively high level of contribution of Business Education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in Universities; a relatively low level of contribution of students towards acquisition of skills of self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities; no significant difference in the mean ratings of the contribution of male and female business education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in universities; and no significant difference between male and female business education lecturers' mean ratings of undergraduate students' contribution towards self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities. On the bases of these findings, it was recommended that Universities should focus on creating a more engaging and interactive learning environment that encourages students to actively participate in acquiring skills of self-reliance.

Keywords: Business Education; Self-Reliance; Job Sustainability; Undergraduate Students.

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Introduction

Business education is a programme or course of study consisting of various activities that impart technical knowhow, skills, ideas, attitudes and competencies preparatory to an occupation, employment, owning a business or to educating others (Okoro, 2021a). According to Agomou (2006), business education plays a crucial role in equipping learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively transmit knowledge to others and proficiently utilize advanced office technologies and information systems. Business education is a component of vocational education that prepares its beneficiary for the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

According to Ogunmayi (2008), business education is described as an educational approach that helps individuals acquire problem-solving skills specifically related to business and office settings. This definition sees business education as education that provides skills to its recipients in business and office occupations for employment or self-reliance. Business education is that aspect of education that grooms its trainees for employment in office and marketing occupations and distribution for the rapid growth of the nation's economy. It is a unit of vocational and technical education which plays a significant role in positively influencing the socio-economic situation of the people and the nation at large. Aliyu (2007) in his analysis of conceptual framework for business education, differentiated between education for business and education about business. He described education for business as the training provided for students to be productive workers and education about business as training for students to be informed citizens. This implies that the business education programme is aimed at providing individuals with the economic understanding that will further improve not only their standard of living but also the entire business system. This definition suggests that the business world of production and consumption of goods and services requires people with adequate knowledge and skills in business education to propel the economy and bring in the much-desired growth and development as a legacy. The contemporary and industrial business environment of today requires the ability to set up, create and manage small scale businesses which have been described as the engine of growth of many world economies and as the most effective poverty eradication mechanism.

Val-Ossai and Akpomi (2017) emphasized that business education is an educational program designed to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge for employment and career advancement in the business field. They highlighted that business education aims to provide individuals with the competencies and proficiencies required to excel in various business activities. The assertion by Val-Ossai and Akpomi underscores the practical nature of business education, as it focuses on developing the skills and knowledge that are directly applicable in the business environment. The program prepares students to effectively navigate the challenges and demands of the business world, equipping them with the abilities needed to succeed in their professional endeavors. By emphasizing the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and competencies, Val-Ossai and Akpomi recognize that business education goes beyond theoretical concepts. It encompasses practical aspects that enable individuals to effectively perform tasks, make informed decisions, and adapt to the ever-changing business landscape. Overall, Val-Ossai and Akpomi's assertion highlights the significance of business education in providing students with the necessary tools and abilities to excel in the business field. It underscores the importance of practical application, skill acquisition, and knowledge development in preparing individuals for successful careers in various business sectors.

Objectives of Business Education

Business education is one of the vocational courses offered in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Business education courses have a global focus on providing individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, vocations, and attitudes to effectively manage their own businesses and participate proficiently within the economic system. This objective is supported by the American Vocational Association, as cited in Azih and Nwagwu (2015). In order to provide a deeper understanding of the essence of business education, Njoku (2017) as cited in Njoku (2019) has outlined several objectives of business education, which are as follows:

1. Equipping students with practical skills: Business education aims to develop students' practical skills, enabling them to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world business scenarios. This includes skills such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making.
2. Fostering entrepreneurial mindset: Business education seeks to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset among students, encouraging them to think creatively, identify opportunities, and take calculated risks in business ventures.
3. Promoting ethical behavior: Business education emphasizes the importance of ethical conduct in the business world. It aims to instill values such as honesty, integrity, and social responsibility, guiding students to make ethical decisions and contribute positively to society.
4. Enhancing financial literacy: Business education aims to improve students' understanding of financial concepts and principles. It equips them with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective financial management, budgeting, investment decisions, and financial analysis.
5. Developing teamwork and leadership skills: Business education emphasizes the importance of collaboration, teamwork, and effective leadership in business settings. It provides opportunities for students to enhance their interpersonal skills, work effectively in teams, and develop leadership qualities.
6. Providing industry-relevant knowledge: Business education strives to provide students with up-to-date knowledge of industry trends, practices, and technologies. It ensures that students are equipped with relevant and practical knowledge that aligns with the demands of the business world.
7. Encouraging lifelong learning: Business education instills a culture of continuous learning and professional development. It encourages students to engage in lifelong learning, keeping abreast of industry changes and seeking opportunities for personal and professional growth.

These objectives highlight the multifaceted nature of business education, encompassing not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills, ethical values, and a holistic approach to personal and professional development. By addressing these objectives, business education equips students with the tools and competencies necessary to thrive in the business world.

At the tertiary level, business education serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it aims to produce highly qualified business teachers who are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively teach the business studies curriculum in both junior and senior secondary schools. These teachers play a vital role in delivering quality business education to students at the secondary level, imparting essential business concepts and skills. On the other hand, it equally focuses on producing skilled and competent graduates who can secure office occupations in modern organizations. In this direction, Okoro (2021b) noted that business education helps to equip the graduates with the right skills to engage in a life of work in the office as well as in self employment. This presupposes that the beneficiaries of the business education programme can be gainfully employed in any industry or be self-employed.

Self-reliance and job sustainability proffer remedies to the present unemployment problem in Nigeria. It is on this basis that business education provides the undergraduate students with practice oriented knowledge and strategies required in specific occupations. It instills into the undergraduate students self-confidence, self-awareness, good work habits, problems solving, critical thinking, punctuality, reliability, team work and leadership traits among others. With this, the tertiary Institutions' graduates can help the nation to be delivered from all facts of the present unemployment situation. This they can achieve through their involvement in self-employed enterprises, and the sustainability of such enterprises as graduates.

Statement of Problem

Business education is a branch of vocational education. It offers its recipients a broad opportunity that makes them to effectively assume their civic responsibilities through enlightened participation, geared towards understanding and appreciating the business environment. Business education is not only to impart skills, knowledge, attitudes and competencies on the recipients, but also to empower its recipients to successfully operate or manage business ventures.

Business education is an educational pathway that equips students with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue employment and career growth in the business sector. It aims to empower individuals to effectively manage their own business endeavors and make informed decisions as consumers and active participants in a business-driven economy. Business education involves training individuals to enable them to be self-reliant and have job sustainability. However, equipping the students with the requisite knowledge and skills needed for self-reliance and job sustainability in order to reduce unemployment has not been adequately addressed in the Nigerian politico-economic system. The problem of this study therefore is knowledge and skills of self-reliance and how can Business education lecturers adequately equip undergraduate students with job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study

1. To what extent do business education lecturers contribute towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in Universities, South-South Nigeria?
2. To what extent do students contribute towards acquisition of skills of self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the contribution of male and female business education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in universities, South-South Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female business education lecturers' mean ratings of undergraduate students' contribution towards self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2015) a survey research design is the one that is aimed at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The study assessed the extent in which business education contributes towards self-reliance and job sustainability among undergraduate in universities, South-South Nigeria. The Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria that offer business education are university of Benin, Federal University Otuoke, University of Uyo and University of Calabar while the state Universities offering business education are Ambrose Ali University Ekpoma, Delta State University Abraka, Niger Delta University Wilber Force Island Yenagoa, River state University Port Harcourt, Ignatius Rufus University of education Port Harcourt and Cross River State University of Science and technology Akangba.

The population of the study which serves as a sample comprises of 145 business education lecturers. A 40-item questionnaire was used for the study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part A contains three (3) items of demographic variables such as name of institution, sex and job experience while part B contains 32 items which are based on the research questions guiding the study. The instrument was constructed based on a four-point scale of strongly Agree (SD) Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The face and content validity of the questionnaire was done by (3) three experts in measurement and evaluation and Business Education Department at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki which is located at South-East of Nigeria. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.85 on the first research question; 0.88 on the second research question.

The questionnaire was administered to 145 lecturers. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the

research questions. The criterion mean used is 2.50. In decision rule, any item which has a mean of 2.5 and above is regarded as agreed while any mean item of less than 2.5 is regarded as Disagreed. In testing the hypotheses, the independent samples t-test was used at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do business education lecturers contribute towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in Universities, South-South Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean rating of the contribution of Business Education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in Universities, South-South Nigeria

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Create a supportive and empowering learning environment that boosts students' self-confidence	3.42	0.52	High
2	Emphasize the importance of ethical behaviour in business and encourage students to adopt ethical principles and values	3.36	0.51	High
3	Stimulate critical thinking skills	3.33	0.55	High
4	Educate students on financial management principles	3.33	0.54	High
5	Promote research skills	3.32	0.52	High
6	Facilitate networking opportunities by connecting students with industry professionals	3.32	0.56	High
7	Developing effective communication skills	3.32	0.54	High
8	Inspire a culture of lifelong learning and personal development	3.30	0.54	High
9	Encourage entrepreneurial thinking	3.30	0.54	High
10	Emphasize the importance of adaptability and resilience in the dynamic business world	3.28	0.59	High
11	Cultivate leadership qualities in students	3.26	0.65	High
12	Emphasize problem-solving skills	3.25	0.50	High
13	Provide guidance and mentorship to students	1.74	0.57	Low
14	Organize industry visits, guest lectures, and internships to expose students to real-world business environments	1.72	0.53	Low
15	Ensure that the curriculum reflects current industry trends, practices, and demands	1.72	0.56	Low
16	Promote self-directed learning by providing resources, encouraging independent research, and facilitating self-paced learning opportunities	1.72	0.59	Low
17	Encourage students to engage in self-reflection and self-assessment, helping them recognize their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement	1.70	0.49	Low
18	Expose students to global business practices, cultural diversity, and international perspectives	1.63	0.54	Low
19	Incorporate experiential learning activities, such as case studies, simulations, and group projects, to provide hands-on experiences	1.63	0.54	Low
20	Imparting practical knowledge/ skills to undergraduate students	1.60	0.58	Low
Average Mean		2.66	0.55	High

Criterion Mean = 2.50

Table 1 shows the responses and average ratings obtained for different statements related to the contribution of Business Education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in Universities, South-South Nigeria. The mean score ranged from 1.60 to 3.42, with an average mean of 2.66. The criterion mean used is 2.50. The average mean score of 2.66 indicates a relatively high level of contribution of Business Education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in Universities, South-South Nigeria.

Research Question 2: To what extent do students contribute towards acquisition of skills of self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating of the contribution of students towards acquisition of skills of self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Developing resilience and perseverance	3.20	0.65	High
2	participate in extracurricular activities that align with their interests and passions	3.10	0.76	High
3	Engage in public speaking, presentations, and written assignments that improve their communication skills	3.05	0.53	High
4	Actively engaging in classroom discussions, asking questions, and seeking clarification on concepts	2.93	0.57	High
5	Develop digital literacy skills, including proficiency in using technology tools, software, and online platforms relevant to their field of study	2.78	0.58	High
6	Engage with diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences, fostering open-mindedness and cultural competence	2.66	0.67	High
7	Prioritize their tasks, set goals, and manage their time effectively	2.45	0.72	Low
8	Engage in networking opportunities, both within and outside the university, to connect with professionals and industry experts	2.45	0.74	Low
9	Actively participate in problem-solving activities, group projects, and case studies	2.36	0.72	Low
10	Actively participate in practical projects and seek internships relevant to their field of study	2.21	0.65	Low
11	actively engage in critical thinking exercises	2.09	0.60	Low
12	Engage in volunteer activities to contribute to the community and develop a sense of social responsibility	2.05	0.64	Low
13	Take on leadership roles in student organizations, clubs, or committees, which enhances their decision-making abilities, communication skills, and teamwork	1.99	0.57	Low
14	Recognize the importance of lifelong learning and engage in activities such as workshops, seminars, and online courses to expand their knowledge and skills	1.98	0.57	Low
15	Actively search for internship and job opportunities within their field of study	1.97	0.42	Low
16	Actively seek guidance and mentorship from lecturers or alumni who can provide advice and support	1.94	0.53	Low
17	Take initiative in exploring additional resources, conducting independent research, and pursuing self-study beyond what is taught in class	1.88	0.62	Low
18	Engage in self-reflection, assessing their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement	1.87	0.38	Low
19	Actively participate in career development programs offered by the university	1.83	0.60	Low
20	Actively seek feedback from lecturers, peers, and mentors to improve their academic performance and skills	1.81	0.41	Low
Average Mean		2.33	0.60	Low

Criterion Mean = 2.50

Table 2 shows the responses and average ratings obtained for different statements related to the contribution of students towards acquisition of skills of self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria. The mean score ranged from 1.81 to 3.20, with an average mean of 2.33. The criterion mean used is 2.50. The average mean score of 2.33 indicates a relatively low level of contribution of students towards acquisition of skills of self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the contribution of male and female business education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in universities, South-South Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test comparison of the difference in the mean ratings of the contribution of male and female business education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in universities, South-South Nigeria.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Remark
Male	72	2.68	0.11				
Female	73	2.64	0.12	143	1.80	0.07	Not Significant

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 3 shows the result of an independent t-test, which was used to compare the mean ratings given by respondents regarding the contribution of male and female business education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in universities, South-South Nigeria. The result shows that $t(143) = 1.80$, $p > 0.05$ level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted, which means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the contribution of male and female business education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in universities, South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female business education lecturers' mean ratings of undergraduate students' contribution towards self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria

Table 4: t-test comparison of the difference between male and female business education lecturers' mean ratings of undergraduate students' contribution towards self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria

Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Remark
Male	72	2.34	0.15				
Female	73	2.32	0.15	143	0.70	0.49	Not Significant

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 4 shows the result of an independent t-test, which was used to compare the difference between male and female business education lecturers' mean ratings of undergraduate students' contribution towards self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria. The result shows that $t(143) = 0.70$, $p > 0.05$ level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted, which means that there is no significant difference between male and female business education lecturers' mean ratings of undergraduate students' contribution towards self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria.

Discussion

The finding revealed a relatively high level of contribution of Business Education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in Universities, South-South Nigeria. This finding can be attributed to a number of factors. First, Business Education lecturers are typically well-trained in entrepreneurship and business management. This training gives them the skills and knowledge to teach students how to start and run their own businesses. Second, Business Education lecturers often have a strong network of contacts in the business community. This network can help students to find jobs or internships, or to get advice on starting their own businesses. Third, Business Education lecturers are often passionate about helping students to become self-reliant. They believe that self-reliance is essential for students' success in the workplace and in life. As a result of these factors, Business Education lecturers play a vital role in helping undergraduate students to become self-reliant. They provide students with the skills, knowledge, and contacts they need to start and run their own businesses. They also provide students with the motivation and support they need to succeed.

The above finding agrees with the result of several studies. For instance, Adeagbo (2019) found that Business Education lecturers in Oyo State tertiary institutions are playing a significant role in promoting self-reliance among students through the enhancement of creativity. The study found that lecturers are using a variety of methods to promote creativity, including teaching students about entrepreneurship and business management; providing students with opportunities to develop business plans; connecting students with mentors in the business community; and organizing business competitions and workshops. The study also agrees with Nwaigburu and Eneogwe (2013), who found that Business Education lecturers in Nigeria are playing a significant role in promoting self-reliance among students. It also agrees with Okute, et al. (2019), whose finding revealed that entrepreneurship education is having a positive impact on self-reliance among business education students in public universities. The study found that students who have received entrepreneurship education are more likely to be self-employed, to start their own businesses, and to be financially independent.

The finding showed a relatively low level of contribution of students towards acquisition of skills of self-reliance and job sustainability in Universities, South-South Nigeria. This finding may be as a result of several factors. For instance, some students may not be motivated to acquire these skills because they believe that they will be able to find a good job after graduation. They may not realize that the job market is increasingly competitive, and that they will need to be self-reliant in order to succeed. Some students may not be aware of the skills that they need to acquire in order to be self-reliant and to find a sustainable job. They may not have been exposed to these skills in their coursework, or they may not have had the opportunity to learn about them through internships or other extracurricular activities. Some students may not have the resources they need to acquire these skills. They may not have the financial resources to pay for training or education, or they may not have the time or access to the resources they need. Some students may have an attitude that prevents them from taking responsibility for their own learning and development. They may believe that it is the responsibility of their lecturers or the government to provide them with the skills they need.

The aforementioned finding aligns with the research conducted by Okafor (2019), which indicated that various factors are impacting the level of self-reliance among undergraduate students. This finding is also consistent with the study by Okere and Ogundele (2018), who identified several factors influencing the acquisition of self-reliance skills among undergraduate students in Nigeria.

The finding revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the contribution of male and female business education lecturers towards making undergraduate students self-reliant in universities, South-South Nigeria; and that there is no significant difference between male and female business education lecturers' mean ratings of undergraduate students' contribution towards self-reliance and job sustainability in

Universities, South-South Nigeria.. This finding is interesting. It suggests that the gender of the lecturer does not have a significant impact on the level of contribution they make towards making students self-reliant. There are a number of possible explanations for this finding. One possibility is that the lecturers in this study were all highly motivated and committed to helping students become self-reliant. As a result, their gender may not have played a significant role in their ability to make a positive impact on students. Another possibility is that the students in this study were all open to learning from both male and female lecturers. As a result, they may have been equally likely to benefit from the teaching of male and female lecturers. It is also possible that the teaching methods used by the lecturers in this study were not gender-specific. This means that the lecturers did not use different teaching methods for male and female students. As a result, the gender of the lecturer may not have had a significant impact on the level of contribution they made towards making students self-reliant.

Irrespective of the underlying factors behind this finding, it is evident that both male and female business education lecturers have the potential to make substantial contributions to the development of self-reliance among undergraduate students. This finding is noteworthy as it suggests that gender does not hinder the ability of female lecturers to positively influence students. These results align with previous research conducted by Nwaigburu and Eneogwe (2013), which found no significant difference in the ratings given by male and female business education lecturers in terms of their contributions to fostering self-reliance among undergraduate students. The study also revealed that both male and female lecturers received high ratings from students, indicating their effectiveness in helping students cultivate self-reliance skills. Similarly, Adeagbo (2019) obtained similar results, indicating no notable disparity in the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers regarding their contributions to promoting self-reliance among undergraduate students. The study further highlighted that both male and female lecturers were highly regarded by students for their ability to facilitate the development of self-reliance skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Business Education lecturers in Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria have made a relatively high level of contribution towards making undergraduate students self-reliant. However, the level of contribution from students themselves towards acquiring skills of self-reliance and job sustainability is relatively low. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female lecturers' contributions towards student self-reliance. In view of this, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Universities should focus on creating a more engaging and interactive learning environment that encourages students to actively participate in acquiring skills of self-reliance. This can be achieved through project-based learning, internships, and experiential activities.
2. Universities should provide comprehensive support services to students, including career counseling, mentoring, and guidance. These services can help students develop the necessary skills and confidence to become self-reliant in their academic and professional pursuits.
3. Universities should foster a culture of empowerment among students by providing opportunities for them to take leadership roles, participate in decision-making processes, and engage in initiatives that promote self-reliance and job sustainability.
4. While there was no significant difference in the contributions of male and female lecturers, it is important to ensure equal opportunities and recognition for both genders. Universities should promote gender sensitization and provide platforms for all lecturers to contribute effectively towards student self-reliance.
5. Lecturers should engage in continuous professional development to enhance their teaching methodologies and incorporate innovative approaches that promote self-reliance among students. This can include attending workshops, conferences, and staying updated with industry practices.
6. Universities, lecturers, and students should collaborate to create a conducive learning environment that fosters self-reliance. This can involve joint initiatives, regular feedback mechanisms, and open communication channels to address the needs and aspirations of students.

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